

ENGLISH LESSON 4

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COMPLEX SENTENCES

So far in these lessons we have only studied Simple Sentences. When we analysed them, ie. looked at each part of the sentence, we say that a Simple Sentence has a subject and only one finite verb, which is found in the Predicate.

However, as we saw in the last lesson, we do not use Simple Sentences all the time because they make our speaking and writing jerky and irritating to listen to or read. We make sparse use of Compound Sentences, too, for the same reasons. What, then, is the best way to speak and write well? What type of sentences have been used **in** the writing of these lessons, for example, and in the writing of anything which you may read, from novels to the newspaper?

To write fluently and pleasingly, we use what are called, "Complex Sentences". These are sentences which consist of a principal clause and one or more subordinate clauses. Or, in other words, they have more than one subject and more than one finite verb. They are, in fact, simple sentences which have been joined together in a flue and pleasing way.

You are probably quite used to using and reading Complex Sentences so do not think that because they are called "complex" that they are somehow a difficult thing which you now have to learn. They are not difficult; they are part of our every-day speaking and reading **but**, in order to write and speak correctly, we are now going to analyse them, ie. see how they are constructed.

Before we start the analysis, let us look at a description written firstly in Simple Sentences and then as a Complex Sentence and see how much more fluent the Complex Sentence is.

Simple Sentences

The new store opened its doors to the people. The people had waited impatiently for this event. The contractor had completed the new store only the day before.

Complex Sentence

The new store, which the contractor had completed only the day before, opened its doors to the people who had waited impatiently for this event.

You are sure to agree that the Complex Sentence describes the opening of the new store much more fluently than the Simple Sentences, although both forms are intelligible and contain

the same information.

When you write or speak, remember that it is not only necessary to be intelligible, you must also write and speak in an interesting and flowing manner.

Let us now examine the Complex Sentence in detail. As we have said, a Complex Sentence has more than one finite verb, so let us find the verbs in the sentence.

We can find three of them, and they are:

- a. had completed
- b. opened
- c. had waited

If there are three finite verbs, there must be three subjects; so we look for the subjects of the three verbs we have already found and we discover:

- a. the contractor had completed
- b. the new store opened its doors
- c. who had waited

So, in fact, as we have already noted, this complex sentence is composed of three simple sentences. However, when these simple sentences are combined to form a complex sentence, we call each one a "clause" rather than a sentence. Here we have three clauses and we have to find which one of them appears to have the greatest importance, ie. which one, by itself makes an intelligible statement.

- a. which the contractor had completed only the day before
- b. the new store opened its doors to the people
- c. who had waited impatiently for this event.

When we read the first, "which the contractor had completed only the day before", we realise that it is incomplete in its meaning unless we can be told something more. We do not know what it was that the contractor had completed the day before, ie. what the "which" refers to.

When we read the second clause, "The new store opened its doors to the people" we understand completely what is said, so the second clause is of greater importance than the first. We shall apply the test, however, to the third clause and read it: "who had waited impatiently for this event". Once again, unless we can be told something more, we cannot follow the meaning of the third clause; we do not know **who** had waited impatiently.

Thus clause two is of the greatest importance and so we call it the **Principal Clause**. The other clauses are the **Subordinate Clauses** because they only help the principal clause to increase its full meaning by telling us something extra about the words which form the Principal Clause. We shall now take each clause and examine it more closely.

In the principal clause we find the following:

Subject: The new store
Verb: opened
Object: its doors

In addition, in this Principal Clause, we find the words, "to the people". Because there is no finite verb in these words, they are called a **Phrase**. Now, what purpose do they serve in the Clause? A little hard thought will show us that they explain something about the opening. They tell us for what purpose the store opened its doors. The phrase, then assists the verb. Anything that assists the verb is called adverbial. We shall learn more about adverbs later, but for the moment, we can say that "to the people" is an adverbial phrase which tells more about the verb, "opened".

Now, let us take the clause, "which the contractor had completed only the day before".

Subject: the contractor
Verb: had completed
Object: which

Other words: "only the day before". This is another adverbial phrase which tells more about the verb, "had completed". It tells when she contractor had completed his work.

You may be puzzled to see that "which" is said to be the object of that clause so ask yourself the following questions:

Who or what did something? The answer must be, "The contractor did something". Then the contractor is the Subject of the Clause.

Now ask: What did the contractor do? Answer: "He had completed the new store". But the word "store" is not in this clause, so we have to have a pronoun to stand for the noun

"store".

That pronoun is the word "which". If the word "store" were in the clause, it would be the object of the verb, "had completed", but because the place of the word "store" is taken by the pronoun "which", "which" is the object of the clause.

Now let us examine the clause which contains the finite verb, "had waited".

Subject: who
Verb: had waited
Object: No object
Other words: impatiently - tells how they had waited.
 for this event - tells for what they had waited.

So both the word, "impatiently" and the Phrase "for this event" the verb of the clause and they are therefore Adverbial.

Now that we have separated the clauses, we can quite easily see it work they do. We already know which clause is the principal but what do the two subordinate clauses do? The first one, "which the contractor had completed only the day before", describes exactly which store is meant. The word "store" is a noun and _____ which describes a noun is an adjective. So the clause does the work of an adjective and is therefore called an adjectival clause.

The second subordinate clause, "who had waited impatiently for this event" describes the "people". But "people" is also a noun, as this clause is also an adjectival clause.

Here is a diagram to help you understand what you have just learnt:

<i>Principal Clause</i>	<i>Helping words, phrases & clauses</i>	<i>Words, and phrases and clauses helping words in subordinated elements</i>
<u>Subject</u> store	1. the new 2. which the contractor had completed only the	

day before

Verb

opened

to the people

who had waited impatiently for
this event (describes noun, people)

Object

doors

its

Let us take a closer look at the pronouns "who" (which stands for the noun "people") and "which" (which stands for the noun "store"). These two pronouns are not quite the same as the other pronouns which you have already learnt.

There were personal pronouns like, I, we, he, she, it, you and they. These pronouns, "who" and "which", not only stand for nouns but they also are linking words which relate their clauses to the Principal Clause. For that reason they are termed, **Relative Pronouns** because they link or relate their clauses to others. In their own clauses, you see that "who" is the subject of its own clause while "which" is the object of its clause.

In the case of "which", it retains the same form whether it is subject or object, but the pronoun, "who" is changed to "whom" when it is the object of its clause.

Let us analyse another sentence to make sure that we understand how complex sentences are constructed.

"Before he went to the library, the student collected the books which he wished to exchange."

First find the finite verbs and write out the clauses in which they occur. Decide which is the principal clause and write that down first.

the student collected the books

Principal Clause.

before he went to the library

Subordinate Clause telling when he collected the books.

which he wished to exchange

Subordinate Clause describing "books" .

Notice the following points about the clauses.

- a. The principal clause could stand by itself because it makes a clear statement which we can understand.
- b. Clause 2 has no clear meaning by itself but it tells us more about the verb, "collected" in the principal clause. Because it assists a verb, it is an adverbial clause. Because it tells us about the time when the collecting of the books took place, it is called Adverbial Clause of Time.
- c. Clause 3, like clause 2 could not convey any clear meaning by itself, but it describes the noun, "books" so that we know which books were collected. Because it describes a noun it therefore does the work of an adjective and is called an adjectival clause.

Clauses 2 and 3 are less important than the principal clause, although they help. They are therefore called "subordinate" clauses.

Now that you have understood how to break up a complex sentence into its various parts, let us take the various parts i.e. . some simple sentences and build their, up into a fluent complex sentence.

Some workmen in a Scottish village bought bread. They paid for it with nails. This was instead of money. Adam Smith tells this story. He tells it in his book, "The Wealth of Nations".

Now we combine those sentences to form a good complex sentence like this:

In his book, "The Wealth of Nations", Adam Smith tells a story *in* which some Scottish workmen paid in nails instead of money for tread which they had bought.

Now try the following exercise.

SELF-HELP EXERCISE 1

1. Break up the following sentence into its various clauses. Write down the clauses separately and say which is the principal clause and what part the other clauses play in the sentence.

While I was out of the classroom, my exercise book which contained some unfinished work, was collected by the teacher.

2. a. Combine the following sentences to form one complex sentence:

A constructional engineering firm had recently employe a young man. He was required to work in the firm's office. He found that his education was insufficient to enable him to do well. He would not be likely to win promotion. He decided to attend night school.

b. Combine the following sentences to form one good sentence:

A firm may control the available supply of a certain **kind** of goods. It has complete control. It is the only firm which sells this kind of goods. That firm has, therefore, a monopoly.

THE CORRECT ORDER OF WORDS AND CLAUSES

When you speak or write it is not only necessary to use the correct words, phrases or clauses; it is also essential that they are placed in their correct order. There is no difficult rule to learn about the order of words, it is simply a matter of common sense. Words, phrases and clauses which describe other words in a sentence must be placed close to the words they describe. If they are placed near to words which they are not meant to describe, the meaning not becomes confusing, but often ridiculous.

Look at the following sentence:

The chair cost ten shillings on which he sat.

It contains two perfectly intelligible clauses, 'but because the subordinate adjectival clause, "on which he sat", has been put in the wrong place, the meaning of the sentence is now rather ridiculous. The clause "on which he sat" is meant to describe the "chair" not the "ten shillings", so the sentence should have been written thus:

The chair on which he sat cost ten shillings.

Here is another sentence which contains all the correct words, but the meaning has been made absurd by the wrong order of the words.

The police are looking for a blue gentleman's overcoat.

The word, "blue", is an adjective which is intended to describe the noun, "overcoat"; but it has been placed in front of the noun, gentleman, so it now means that the gentleman is blue. As the sentence stands, it means the police are looking for an overcoat which belongs to a blue gentleman. As blue gentlemen must be very rare, the meaning of the sentence is ridiculous.

If, however, the sentence had been written like this:

The police are looking for a gentleman's blue overcoat,

we understand at once that they are searching for a blue overcoat which belongs to a gentleman.

SELF-HELP EXERCISE 2

A list of sentences is given below. Each sentence has been written with the words in the wrong order so that it appears to mean something which was not intended. Rewrite each sentence so that the meaning is corrected and, in each case, write notes to explain how the changes you have made have improved the meaning of the sentence.

1. He saw many dead men riding across the battlefield.
2. Wanted: A boy to open oysters with a reference.
3. This memorial was erected to the memory of John Phillips, accidentally shot as a mark of affection by his brother.
4. A piano is wanted for a gentleman with carved legs.
5. The smart young gentlemen of that day used to paint their faces as well as the women.
6. The procession was very impressive and nearly a mile in length as was also the sermon of the minister.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECH

Have you remembered what you learnt about inverted commas in the first lesson? In that lesson you learnt that they are used to record **Direct Speech**, ie. words which were actually spoken and which are now quoted. The first pair of inverted commas are placed at the beginning of the words quoted and the second pair are placed at the end of the words quoted. Here is an example of Direct Speech.

The boy came into the room. "You are very late," said his mother, "Go and wash your hands and come to the table for your lunch".

Now, suppose that some other person had been present to hear the mother speak to her

son, and later wished to relate the incident to someone else. He would give his account of the matter like this:

When the boy came into the room, his mother told him that he was very late and she ordered him to go and wash his hands and to come to the table for his lunch.

As you can see no actual words are quoted in this account, so no inverted commas are required. When the mother was actually speaking, the time was the "present", so she spoke in the **Present Tense**. She was speaking to her son, so the subject of the sentences she used was "You". Her words were therefore in the **Second Person**. But when the third person tells of the incident, it has become a thing of the past, so he frames his words in the **Past Tense** and, because he is now speaking about the mother and her son, he uses the **Third Person**. Therefore, the mother's words, "You are late", must be changed to "He was late", and the words "go wash your hands and come to the table for your lunch" must be reported as an order: "and she ordered him to go and wash his hands and to come to the table for his lunch".

When words spoken by a person are recounted (told again) in this way they are reported in what is called "**Indirect Speech**" or "**Reported Speech**".

Now what happens if the mother herself wanted to report this incident to somebody else? She would tell the story in these words:

When he came in, I told him that he was very late and I ordered him to go and wash his hands and to come to the table for his lunch.

Look at the differences which are involved in the reported speech.

- a. Because the mother is now telling about what she said, she uses the First Person, "I".
- b. She is now talking about her son and not to him, so her words are in the Third Person and not in the Second Person. She uses "he" and not "you".
- c. She is telling of an incident which occurred earlier so she must speak in the Past Tense; she says, for example, "he was very late", instead of you are very late".

There is one more way in which the story of the incident might be related. The boy himself might tell a friend the story of what had happened. The words he would use to do so would be:

When I went into the room, my mother told me that I was very late. She ordered me to go and wash my hands and come to the table for my lunch.

In this case, you will notice that entirely different words have to be used.

- a. Because the boy is now talking, he refers to himself in the First Person and uses the words, "I", "me" and "my".
- b. Because he is talking about his mother, he refers to her in the Third Person and says, "my mother" and "she".
- c. As in the other examples given, the tense must be the past tense.

Remember that Reported Speech must always be in the past tense because it tells about something that has already happened.

SELF-HELP EXERCISE 3

1. Rewrite the following passage of Direct Speech as it would be told in Reported Speech by someone who had overheard the word-spoken.

A man met a friend, who had been ill, in the street. "Good morning", he said, "I am glad to see that you are well enough to be out of doors again. How are you feeling?"

2. Write the passage again in the words of the friend who had been ill when he told his wife about the meeting when he reached home.
3. Read the following passage carefully:

The young man told me that he had met a friend of his who told him that he had given up his work with the Dairy Produce Company and was now working for an engineering firm. He had asked his friend how he liked his new work and his friend had assured him that he liked it very much and considered that, by changing his work, he had greatly improved his prospects.

Now rewrite the passage in Direct Speech, giving an account of the conversation which had taken place between the young man and his friend. Imagine that the young man's name was Reuben and the name of his friend was Harry.

VOCABULARY AND SPELLING

When we say that the English language has a very rich vocabulary, we mean that the language contains an unusually large number of words from which writers and speakers may choose

those which will most exactly convey the meaning they intend. In a rich vocabulary, we find groups of words which have the same or nearly the same meaning. Such words are known as synonyms.

As an example, let us look at the words which in some way convey the idea of "goodness". Besides the word "good" itself, we can bring of other words such as "fine", "creditable", "worthy", "valuable", "beneficial", "kindly", "excellent", "moral", "benevolent" and many others which can all be used in sentences to give the desirable understanding of "goodness" which the author wishes to convey.

If you take the trouble to learn as many synonyms as possible -remember that your dictionary can help you- you will soon be able to write in an interesting and vivid way. If your are lazy and always use the word "good" to describe all aspects of "goodness" then your speaking and writing will be very dull and certainly not precise.

Before we do an exercise on synonyms, look at the following pair of words and see how they are used in sentences. Both mean that money is paid to an owner for the use of his property, so their meaning is similar, but they each also have their own precise meaning.

hire - rent

- a. We can hire the cups and saucers we shall need to provide the guests with tea at the Sports.
- b. "I am not likely to remain in this town for more than two years", said the man, "so I shall not buy a house to occupy for such a short period. I shall rent one instead.

The word "hire" is more suitably used when it is applied to similar items or movable property which is taken on hire for limited periods. The word "rent" is used when we talk about bigger items whirr, are immovable, such as houses, farms, playing fields or business premises.

SELF-HELP EXERCISE 4

1. The following pairs of words have similar meanings. Use each word in a sentence to show that you know its exact meaning. Use your dictionary if you are not certain of the

meaning of any word.

earnest donation rescue debt abandon

eager gift liberate liability relinquish

2. Correct the spelling of the following mis-spelt words:

cotten

syllabis

accummulate

unkle

picnicing

illegal

dissipline

grammer

priveledge

entise

residance

managment

ancle

benifitting

disappointed

goeography

greese

monkies

woolen

center

immoveable

dissaster

mathmatics

metropollis



ANSWERS TO SELF-HELP EXERCISES

Exercise 1

1. Principal Clause: My exercise book was collected by the teacher.

Subordinate Clause: While I was out of the room
(Adverbial clause of time helping the verb, "was collected")

Subordinate Clause: which contained some unfinished work
(Adjectival clause describing the noun "book")

2. a. The required complex sentence could be:

A young man who had recently been employed by a constructional engineering firm to work in their office, found he had insufficient education to enable him to obtain promotion, so he decided to attend night school.

b. A firm has a monopoly when it has complete control of a certain kind of goods which is sold by no other firm.

Exercise 2

a. Riding across the battlefield, he saw many dead men.

"Riding across the battlefield" must be placed near "he". Before, the sentence said many

dead men were riding across the battlefield!

- b. Wanted: A boy, with a reference, to open oysters.

The sentence should tell us that only a boy who has a reference will be engaged, Before, the sentence said that the boy was required to use a reference to open the oysters!

- c. This memorial was erected as a mark of affection by his brother, to the memory of John Phillips, accidentally shot.

The sentence should read that The memorial was erected as a testify of affection. Previously it said, John Phillips was accidentally shot as a mark of affection!

- d. A piano, with carved legs, is wanted for a gentleman.

"With carved legs" obviously describes the "piano" so it must be placed close to the noun "piano". Previously it said the gentleman had carved legs!

- e. The smart young gentleman, as well as the women, used to paint their faces.

The sentence is supposed to tell us that both the men and the women of that day painted their faces. Before the order of the words was altered, it said that the men painted their faces some also painted the women!

- f. The procession, which was nearly a mile long, was very impressive as was the sermon of the minister.

The sentence now says that the procession and the sermon were very impressive. Before the order of the words was altered, it said that the procession and the sermon were both a mile long!

Exercise 3

1. In the street, a man met a friend who had been ill. He greeted him and told him that he was very glad to see that he was well enough to be out of doors again. He asked him how he was feeling.
2. When I was in the street, my friend met me and greeted me. He told me that he was very glad to see that I was well enough to be out of doors again and asked me how I was feeling.

3. Reuben and his friend Harry met one day, and Harry said, "I have given up my work with the Dairy Produce Company and I am now working for an engineering firm.

"How do you like your new work?" inquired Reuben.

"I like it very much," Harry assured Reuben, "and I consider I have greatly improved my prospects by changing my employment".

Exercise 4

- a. The student was most anxious to succeed in his studies so he made an earnest endeavour to overcome the difficulties.
(earnest means serious or zealous or determined)
- b. The interested class was very eager to learn, (eager means strongly desirous or keen)
- c. Generous people will always be willing to make a donation to a good cause, (donation means a contribution)
- d. He received a new watch as a gift from his employers.
(gift means something given without expectation of payment)
- e. The good swimmer was able to rescue the drowning man. (rescue means save)
- f. It was decided to liberate the caged birds, (liberate means, set free)
- g. Owing to his unwise extravagance, the man had fallen into debt.
(debt means something, usually money, owed and which at present cannot be paid)
- h. An Insurance Company undertakes great liability when it insures valuable property,
(liability means responsibility for any costs that may arise;
- i. The captain decided to abandon the ship.
(abandon means forsake or leave to its fate)
- j. One of the partners in the business relinquished his claim to a share of the profits,
(relinquish means to give up or cease to maintain a claim)

- | | | | |
|----|------------|--------------|-------------|
| 2. | cotton | privilege | grease |
| | syllabus | entice | monkeys |
| | accumulate | residence | woollen |
| | uncle | management | centre |
| | picnicking | ankle | immovable |
| | illegal | benefiting | disaster |
| | discipline | disappointed | mathematics |
| | grammar | geography | metropolis |

