

CHAPTER NINE

SENTENCE IN ENGLISH

PREAMBLE

From the period of the Traditional Grammarians, the sentence had been recognised as an important aspect in English language, although their definition of a sentence appears to be ambiguous. Tomori (1999:50) posits that "a sentence is easily identifiable by its terminal punctuation mark: that is, the punctuation mark that comes at the end of the stretch of utterance". From this description, the obvious terminal marks are the full stop or period (.), the question mark (?) and the exclamation mark (!). In this regard, what is referred to as a sentence must carry appropriate punctuation devices. In this chapter, we will discuss the meaning of a sentence and the various kinds of sentences available in English.

1. MEANING OF A SENTENCE

A sentence is a group of words that has a subject and a predicate and expresses a complete idea. According to Eka (2001:40) and Udoka, (2020), "a sentence in English, particularly a formal one, usually has two major elements: a subject and a predicate". The subject is usually the noun or the pronoun. The subject can also be a noun phrase. The predicate is the remaining part of the sentence - the information about the subject.

Consider the following examples:

Subject	Predicate
I	hate frogs
Peter	is my friend
The man	arrived in a white car
Mary	introduced the guests

The above sentences indicate that the subject and the predicate can have one or more items. The Subject can be a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase. The predicate contains the predicator (a finite verb) and other elements such as the object. It should be noted that the predicator element contains more items than the subject element such as the Complement and Adjunct. So a complete sentence is likely to contain the following elements:

Subject		Predicate	Verb	Complement	Object	Adjunct
(s)	(P)	(V)	(C)	(O)	(A)	

The predicator portrays the verb thus, the major elements of a sentence are represented as follows: SVCOA

Examples: The Pastor buys a new car every year. The subject and the predicate are obligatory elements of a sentence although there are sentences that do not have fully expressed subjects but they convey meanings to the listener or hearers.

Consider the following below:

Jump Sleep Eat Clap Sing

The verbs cited above express actions that are meaningful just like well stated sentences.

From the above discussion, it is noticed that a sentence contains a complete idea and also expresses meaning. Observing the position, forms and meanings of words can help you to understand the relationship between parts of a sentence (Udoka 2005).

2. TYPES OF SENTENCES

Basically there are two types of sentences in English: the functionally determined sentences and the structurally determined sentences.

A. FUNCTIONALLY DETERMINED SENTENCES:

These types of sentences are determined by the functions they perform. They include the following sentences:

i. STATEMENTS: Such sentences express facts, information or ideas that are true. Consider the following examples:

1. It has been raining since last week
2. Nigeria is facing harsh economic problems

A statement can also express incomplete idea leaving the reader in the state of disbelief as in:

3. Bassey can lift 10 pounds of

The dotted lines indicate that the reader is likely to question in his minds "10 pounds of what?" So sentence (3) is a statement with implication

ii. IMPERATIVES: These are sentences that give orders or directives to people. They are also known as COMMANDS. There are two types of imperatives in English – the mild imperatives and the harsh imperatives.

Consider the following examples of mild imperatives

4. Please leave my class
5. Shut the door after you, please

Harsh or forceful imperatives could be seen in the following examples:

6. Remove your hands from the wall!
7. Leave my class!

Harsh imperatives occur mostly in spoken English or informal situation where the speaker expresses some sort of resentment. They carry exclamation mark (!) instead of a full stop that we find in mild imperatives.

We also have Negative Imperatives in English and they go with exclamation mark

8. Don't come in through the back door!
9. Don't use my car!

Negative imperatives emphasize what should be done by the listener. The use of the word "don't" helps to reinforce the commands. We also have single word imperatives which consist of verbal elements used as sentences so they have full stops.

10. Sleep
11. Rest
12. Dance

iii. QUESTIONS: These are interrogative sentences that occur in the following forms:

(i) WH- QUESTIONS: These are sentences that begin with wh-as in what, why, which, when, where, etc. Since they occur in the form of questions they need a question mark (?) at the end.

Note these examples:

13. Where were you last night?
14. When will you visit me?
15. What is your name?
16. Why are you so mean?

17. Whose dress is that on the table?
18. Which flower vase did you break?

ii) **POLAR QUESTIONS:** These are questions that require "Yes or No" for an answer (Essien 2010)
Consider the following examples:

19. Can I see you after school?
20. Is that why you came late?
21. Have you signed your course forms?
22. Was your performance encouraging?
23. He slumped, didn't he?

iii. **EXCLAMATIONS:** Exclamatory sentences express a state of emotion such as fear, happiness, joy, sorrow etc. They are also known as interjections. They carry exclamation mark (!)

Consider the following examples:

24. What a queue!
25. Peter jumped it!
26. Jesus wept!
27. Whao! You look great
28. My God! The man died.

iv. **REQUESTS:** In these types of sentences the speaker demands a favor from the listener as the following examples show:

29. May I use your pen?
30. Could you pass the salt?

Requests are rendered in mild forms but they carry questions marks.

B. **STRUCTURALLY DETERMINED SENTENCES:**

In all languages, sentences are structured in certain specific ways. By structure we mean that sentences are made up of individual words strung together in a linear order one after the other (Akmajian: 2008). Sentences are classified according to their structures or the elements contained in them. Thus we have the following structurally determined sentences in English.

i. **A SIMPLE SENTENCE**

A Simple sentence has one subject and one predicate either or both of which may be a compound .

Note the following :

31. John plays the piano
32. Mary wears jeans
33. John sings and plays the piano
34. John and Rose sing and play the piano
35. Mary and Rose wear jeans and glasses
36. Owing to her rudeness, she failed the interview

ii. **A COMPOUND SENTENCE**

As the name implies, a compound sentence contains two independent or main clauses which are sometimes separated by means of semi-colon or joined by a conjunction.

Consider the following examples:

37. You must leave early or you will miss the bus.

- 38. Peter entered the car and John drove off
- 39. I like beans; my sister likes rice.
- 40. We were tired so we stopped the dance
- 41. I don't know her name; people call her Princess

iii. A COMPLEX SENTENCE

A complex sentence contains one independent clause and at least one dependent or subordinate clauses.

Consider the following examples:

- 42. If I had money, I would travel to Lagos
- 43. Although the boy is twenty, he is still in the primary school.
- 43. Food prices have gone up because of the recent increase in petroleum products
- 45. Destiny stopped traveling by night since she lost her phone
- 46. The children came late even though their parents arrived on time
- 47. Peter drove the car carelessly before he lost control.

iv. A COMPOUND COMPLEX SENTENCE

A compound complex sentence has at least two main clauses and at least one subordinate clause.

Consider the following examples:

- 48. As soon as the man entered the hall, the lights went out; the audience clapped excitedly.
- 49. Bassey lost his father when he was in primary six and he has been struggling alone because he had no support.
- 50. Before the rains came, Okon had cleared his farm lands and planted his yams since he had no money to hire laborers.

v. A MULTIPLE SENTENCE

A multiple sentence contains a main clause and some verbal elements which do not express a complete meaning.

Note these examples:

- 51. Peter sang and danced and shouted nosily
- 52. The children jumped and clapped and danced excitedly.

These examples show that a multiple sentence lacks appropriate punctuation but relies on the use of the conjunction "and"

Our discussion on this chapter centered on the sentence as a unit of expression in language. Efforts have been made to explain what a sentence means and to identify the various types of sentences in English. Students should note them and identify them according to the functions they perform and the structures they exhibit in contexts of use.

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