**1 PACKAGING INFORMATION**

In this first unit we look at ways of organising your writing into ‘packages’ of information that will make your meaning clear to the reader. To do that, we need to consider three levels of packaging of English:

* + punctuation within and between parts of the sentence
  + the grammar of sentence construction
  + paragraphing

**Punctuation**

Task 1.1

Write in the names for these punctuation marks in the boxes below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **:** |  | **;** |  | **“ ”** |
| **( )** |  | **[ ]** |  | **\*** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **&** |  | **@** |  | **#** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **/** |  | **\** |  | **‘ ’** |

**Task 1.2**

All the punctuation has been removed from the text below. Read the whole text and put in slashes where there you think the sentences end. Then punctuate each sentence.

the university of edinburgh unlike other scottish universities is composed of colleges there are three of them sciences and engineering humanities and social sciences and medicine and veterinary medicine each college covers both undergraduate and graduate programmes of study although students are generally admitted to one college only they may have the opportunity to study subjects of another undergraduate programmess generally last three years or four for honours there is an extensive variety of postgraduate programmes of study including a 9 month diploma a 12 month masters and doctoral research programmes lasting at least 36 months

**Grammatical construction of the sentence**

*Terminology*

Any discussion of grammar requires some knowledge of the principal grammatical terms, so here’s a quick test to check whether you need to brush up your knowledge of terminology.

**Task 1.3**

Write down one example (not a definition) of each of these terms:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *term* | *Example* |
| a **clause** |  |
| a **phrase** |  |
| an **auxiliary verb** |  |
| a **transitive verb** |  |
| an **uncountable noun** |  |
| **indirect speech** |  |
| a **phrasal verb** |  |
| an **adverb** |  |

**Types of clause**

**Task 1.4**

Match the four clause types on the left with the appropriate definition on the right:

1. **main** clause **a** *clause joined to another by ‘and’, ‘but’, or ‘or’*
2. **relative** clause **b** *clause that can stand independently*
3. **co-ordinate** clause **c** *clause beginning with ‘who’, ‘which’, etc*.
4. **subordinate** clause **d** *clause that is dependent on another clause*

This terminology is helpful because it allows us to discuss the structure of a **text** (or sequence of sentences), which is a fundamental part of this course. It provides a way of analysing the formal components of a text - phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs - even if the content is hard to understand, as illustrated in the next task.

Task 1.5

The text below is part of an abstract for a talk. You may find it difficult to understand, unless you are a student of cognitive science or artificial intelligence. That doesn’t matter! What we want you to do is to analyse it grammatically into the categories shown under the box. Tick the categories to show which of them are present in the six sentences.

**Some Reasons for Avoiding Supervised Nets, and Ways of Doing So** [**i**](#_bookmark0)

**A** Neural networks can be divided into supervised and unsupervised. **B** Supervised networks, such as the multilayer perceptron trained with backpropagation on a sum-of-squares error function, are useful for representing how some properties of the environment co-vary with others (function approximation), but are biologically dubious. **C** Unsupervised networks, such as the Self-organizing Map, are often more biologically plausible, but are used almost exclusively to represent the resting state of the environment (density estimation).

**D** In this talk I will argue that, for a common class of problem, it is wrong to use unsupervised nets. **E** I will go on to describe some unsupervised models that do the same job better, and then try to motivate them from a computational and biological perspective. **F** There will be some maths but more pictures.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *main clause* | *coordinate clause* | *subordinate clause* | *relative clause* |
| Sentence A: | **** |  |  |  |
| Sentence B: |  |  |  |  |
| Sentence C: |  |  |  |  |
| Sentence D: |  |  |  |  |
| Sentence E: |  |  |  |  |
| Sentence F: |  |  |  |  |

**Grammar: rules and resources**

Grammar is often defined as the **rule system** of a language, but it is also useful to think of it as a **resource** for expressing meaning. For example, when we talk of someone ‘knowing’ the Present Perfect in English, we mean that they know how to form it ( by combining the auxiliary verb *have* with the *past participle* of the relevant verb), but more importantly in which situations it is used and which meanings it can convey. Thinking of grammar as primarily ‘rules’ tends to make people think there is a one-to-one relationship between grammar and meaning. As we will see in the next task, the same meaning can be expressed in different ways, and even with different tenses.

**Task 1.6**

Think carefully about the meaning of this sentence:

It's eleven years since the SDA Conference was last held here in Edinburgh.

Complete the eight sentences below in ways that express the same meaning as the one above.

1. *The last time...*
2. *The SDA Conference…….. last...*

**C** It… in 2000......

1. *Eleven years have...*
2. *This is the first...*

**F** *2000...*

1. *The SDA Conference hasn't...*
2. *Not for eleven years...*

##### That task highlights grammar as a resource. One important technique for extending your knowledge of English grammar is to analyse the texts you read for your degree course and to notice the variety of ways of expressing the same basic meaning.

**Ways of packaging information in sentences**

English offers three ways of showing the relationship between ideas:

**Sequence**

Research grants from the British government are getting scarcer. As a result, universities are having to seek funding from private industry.

**Co-ordination**

Research grants from the British government are getting scarcer and universities are having to seek funding from private industry.

**Subordination**

As research grants from the British government are getting scarcer, universities are having to seek funding from private industry.

or

Universities are having to seek funding from private industry because research grants are getting scarcer.

On the next page is a table showing some of the commonest linking markers:

**sentence openers** and **conjunctions** (used in co-ordination and subordination).

**Task 1.7**

Put an appropriate marker in the space in each sentence:

1. You can attend a graduation ceremony and receive your degree certificate from the Chancellor of the University. you can graduate *in absentia* and get the certificate sent by post.
2. In some areas of England, domestic water consumption is now subject to metering.

some people on low incomes are washing less often.

1. Approximately 120 matriculated students take ELTT courses at ELTC each year.

they take a diagnostic test of English known as TEAM.

1. Sigrid scored less than 50% on TEAM. she did not apply for

English courses at ELTC because she should have taken ELBA, the test for non-graduating students.

**LINKING MARKERS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1 SENTENCE OPENERS** |  | **2 CONJUNCTIONS** | |
| **2A**  **Co-ordinating** | **2B**  **Subordinating** |
| **ADDITION** | *In addition [to NP], ... Moreover, ...*  *Also, ...*  *Apart from [NP], ... Furthermore, ...* | *...and ...*  *not only ..., but also ...* | *, who...*  *, which...*  *, where...*  *, when...* |
| **CONTRAST** | *However, ... Nevertheless, ...*  *On the other hand, ... In contrast, ...*  *In spite of [NP], ...*  *Despite [NP], ...* | *... but ...*  *...(and) yet...* | *although... whereas... while...*  *in spite of the fact that... despite the fact that...* |
| **CAUSE/ EFFECT** | *So...*  *As a result... Consequently... Therefore...*  *Thus...*  *Hence...*  *For this reason... Because of [NP],...* | *...(and) so...*  *...(and) hence...* | *so...*  *so that... because...*  *due to the fact that...* |
| **POSITIVE CONDITION** | *In that case,... If so,...*  *Then,...* | *...and...*  *...and (then)...* | *if...*  *as/so long as...* |
| **CHOICE/ NEGATIVE CONDITION** | *Alternatively, ... Otherwise,...*  *Instead of [NP],...*  *Rather than [NP],... If not,...* | *...or (else)...* | *If... not... unless...* |
| ***TIME ORDER/ LISTING*** | *Then... Afterwards,... First(ly),...*  *Second(ly),... Next,...*  *Prior to [NP],...*  *Before [NP],... Finally / Lastly,...* | *...(and (then)...* | *before...*  *after...*  *, after which... when...*  *now that...* |

**Note:** [NP] = Noun Phrase, which may include a noun, or a verbal noun (-*ing* form):

e.g. Instead of complaints, it would be better to offer advice Instead of complaining,

Task 1.8

Now do the same for this text about how parents correct or ignore their children’s language errors.

***Learning conditions***[***ii***](#_bookmark1)

The way in which parents correct their children’s errors in their first language tends to be limited to corrections of meaning. , in informal learning of a second language (i.e. not in the classroom) errors that do not interfere with meaning are usually ignored, because most people would feel they were being impolite if they interrupted and corrected someone who was trying to have a conversation with them! , they may ‘correct’ if they cannot understand what the speaker is trying to say.

, errors of grammar and pronunciation are rarely commented on, but the wrong choice of word may receive a comment from the confused listener. The only place where the correction of language errors is common is the language classroom.

**Task 1.9**

Rewrite the information below as TWO or THREE sentences. That involves deciding how the ideas are logically related, and then using a **marker** or **conjunction** (co-ordinating or subordinating) to match your meaning.

Learning English is not easy.

Learning German is in some ways more difficult.

German has different articles for masculine, feminine and neuter nouns. You have to change the endings of adjectives to match the nouns.

This is harder for speakers of English than for speakers of French. French also uses adjectival endings.

People say that knowing English helps you to start learning German. When you have passed the elementary stages, English is less help. At an advanced level, knowledge of English is no help at all.

**Relative clauses**

**LANGUAGE BOX: Relative connectors**

**in subject position**

*The student who (or that) saw me yesterday was absent this morning.*

*The book which (or that) proved most helpful was the one by McKenzie*

**as object**

*The supervisors who (or that, or less commonly whom) students appreciate most are those that give the clearest advice.*

*The equipment which (or that) I avoid using is the gas spectrometer.*

[N.B. In object position, you can omit the connector: *The equipment I avoid using*…]

**as a possessive + noun**

*South Korea is a crowded country, whose capital looks increasingly like Hong Kong. I was talking to two Italian researchers, whose English was hard to understand.*

**with a preposition**

*The address to which you have to send the form is shown on the back*

(or: *The address which you have to send the form to is…*)

**with a quantifier / noun / adjective**

*There were three lecturers in the office, none of whom knew much about it. The library had a variety of books, the most popular of which are on short loan. We had a long meeting, by the end of which she had accepted our proposal.*

**with a place / time expression**

*The Student Union is the place where you’ll find most adverts for flats. Childhood is said to be the period in our lives when we learn fastest.*

**in combination**

*In Scottish universities, the Rector is an elected officer, one of whose responsibilities is to represent the interests of the students in Senate meetings.*

**Task 1.10**

Write definitions of the words below, using the relative connectors on the right.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **university** | **campus** | *who, in which, at which, when,* |
| **department** | **lecturer** | *into which, who, that, where,* |
| **graduation** | **seminar** |  |
| **student loan** | **postgraduate** |  |

**Task 1.11**

For practice, write a description of the institution where you work or study in your home country. Use as many as possible of the relative connectors shown on page 8. Write 100-150 words.

NB - You should not send this to your tutor, but you can compare your text with that on page 14 of this unit.

### Paragraphing

##### The definition of **paragraph** in *Wordfinder* is ‘a section of writing which covers a particular idea’. So when writing a text we should make sure that we start a new paragraph when we move to a new point, or to a new development of an existing point. A good test for whether or not to begin a new paragraph is whether we could invent a heading for it.

Task 1.12

Tony Lynch received this e-mail from a Chinese professor. As you will see, the text is clear enough but the writer did not divide it into paragraphs. Read it and decide (1) where you would make a new paragraph and (2) what heading you would give each one.

[A.J.Lynch@ed.ac.uk](mailto:A.J.Lynch@ed.ac.uk) April 14, 2008

Dear Tony Lynch

I have recently read your interesting article in the ELT Journal and could not help writing to you to thank you for your wonderful ideas. I have been a professor of English for 40 years and working/supervising more than 30 foreign teachers over the past 15 years. Most of them are native, but unqualified teachers. Every day we are trying to help our students and, inevitably, we have to react to their mistakes. It seems to me that all of us have not been consciously aware of when and how to react to our students’ mistakes. A typical picture in my class is to “step in as soon as learners encounter communication problems”, as you said in your article. My reaction has often been to interrupt their speech. My foreign colleagues’ more diplomatic reaction does no good either in facilitating our students’ learning. You are right to ask us teachers “to think about when and how (much) we should help”. To my foreign colleagues, I’d like to ask: Why? Non-professional language teachers need to know that correction is needed and they should not let all the significant mistakes go unchecked. I have been trying your suggestion in my class and I can see positive results. It is a little painful for me to resist my temptation to step in as soon as the problems come out, but it is also very rewarding to see my students’ more relaxed and confident learning manner in their learning process. That is just a beginning and I’ll try to tailor some methods to my teaching practice and help my students better in their English learning. I am writing to see if there is an opening at your

university for me to do a one-year research, because I’ll take a sabbatical starting from 2009. I wanted to go the USA but now I have changed my mind telling myself “Why not to go to a British university like Edinburgh?” The great English language originated in the UK! But I don’t know much about your country, especially your higher education institutions. Maybe there is not as much opportunity in the UK as in the USA, but I’d like to try. It would be very kind of you if your could convey my letter to the director of your centre or some other schools. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Extension Tasks**

**[Please do not send these tasks to us. If possible, show your answers to the tasks to another student and ask them for their comments and corrections.]**

You could practice the grammar studied in this unit by trying the following task(s):

**Task 1.13**

Write a text of about 100 words about a controversy or problem in your academic field. Write notes first and then decide how to connect the ideas. Write your text as a single paragraph containing no more than four sentences.

**Task 1.14**

Think of a new development in your field – something that has changed the way people work or think about an issue. Write a text describing the development and explaining why it is important.