Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

3: Parts of Speech — Part I

Key Terms	Optional Terms	
 Part of Speech 	Number	
• Noun	• Tense	
Verb		

- Introduction: Parts of Speech
 - You may have already learnt some things about parts of speech (e.g. nouns, verbs...)
 - Every word in every language is a specific <u>part of speech</u> (grammatical category)
 - If you know what that part of speech is, that tells you how the word can be used
 - The parts of speech are different from each other, but each of them shows similar behaviours in all languages
 - In the next three lessons, we will provide an overview of what the parts of speech are and of their relationships
 - We can begin by looking at nouns and verbs
- Nouns and Verbs
 - Nouns and verbs are perhaps the most fundamental parts of speech
 - All languages have nouns and verbs
 - All languages use nouns differently from verbs, and vice versa
 - There are some sentences made only of nouns and verbs:
 - Fish swim
 - Cows eats grass
 - People sometimes say that nouns are words for things (*stick*, *stone*, *tree*) and verbs are words for actions (*run*, *jump*, *kick*)
 - The full picture is a bit more complicated
 - There are many nouns that refer to actions as well (a *jump*, a *kick*, an *action*)
 - There are many verbs that do not refer to actions at all (know, like, remain, forget)
 - What a verb like *forget* refers to is neither a thing nor an action
 - This is also true of a noun like forgetfulness

Activity 1:

Take some time to think of different nouns and verbs. Which ones refer to things, and which ones refer to actions? Which ones are harder to classify as either things or actions?

Word	Noun or verb?	Thing	Action	Neither
tree	noun	✓		
forget	verb			✓

- Whether we refer to something using a noun or a verb depends on how we want to use it in a sentence
 - o I like bikes
 - I like *dreams*
 - I like *running*
 - Yesterday I biked
 - Yesterday I dreamt
 - Yesterday I ran
- When we use *dream* as a noun, we are talking about an experience
- When we use *dream* as a verb, we are talking about the process of having this experience
- However, there is still some truth to the idea that nouns are things and verbs are actions
- The most typical nouns are words like *tree*, referring to things
- The most typical verbs are words like *run*, referring to actions
- In a way, when we use a noun to refer to something, we're saying that it's more like a thing
- When we use a verb to refer to something, we're saying that it's more like an action
- Forming Nouns and Verbs
 - It's possible to use nouns to create verbs
 - From the noun bike we can create a verb to bike, meaning 'ride a bike'
 - However, this is not possible with all nouns
 - There is no verb to car; instead, we have to say drive/ride in a car
 - It's also possible to use verbs to create nouns
 - There are many different ways of doing this
 - \circ swim \rightarrow a swim
 - \circ speak \rightarrow a speech
 - \circ destroy \rightarrow destruction

Activity 2:

Take some time to think of different nouns. For each noun, try to find an associated verb. How many different types of relationship can you find?

Noun	Verb	Change
bike	bike	none

- In a language like English, it is not always possible to tell from the shape of a word whether it is a noun or a verb
 - o swim/swim
 - o dream/dream
 - o love/love
- In some other languages, like Latin, nouns and verbs usually have different forms
 - o natatio/natare
 - o somnium/somniare
 - o amor/amare

These words mean the same things as the English examples above. The first word in each pair is the noun, and the second is the verb.

- However, even in English it's possible to tell whether something is a noun or a verb by how it's used
- For example, nouns have <u>number</u>; they can express quantity (e.g. one dream/two dream<u>s</u>)
- Verbs have <u>tense</u>; they can express position in time (e.g. *I dream/I dreamt*)
- We will look at number and tense in more detail later on
- Language and Thought
 - Nouns and verbs can provide different ways of expressing the same concept
 - A concept like dreaming or swimming can be seen as a thing and expressed by a noun
 - The same concept can also be seen as a process and expressed by a verb
 - There is no difference in what dreaming or swimming involves in the real world
 - Instead, this is a distinction in language, about how we organize our sentences
 - Nouns are used for the subject and object of a sentence (e.g. *Cows eat grass*)
 - o As we have seen, in English the subject and the object go on either side of the verb
 - o They refer to the participants in an event (e.g. cows, grass)
 - The verb is central to the sentence
 - o It identifies the event, to say what is happening with the cows and the grass
 - Language is a basic human feature
 - All languages express thoughts, from abstract ideas to more concrete things
 - Any thought can be expressed in more than one way
 - Looking at nouns and verbs can show us some of the different ways that thoughts can be expressed in language
- Conclusion
 - Nouns and verbs are two of the most basic parts of speech
 - Nouns are for whatever is 'thing-like', but not just for actual things
 - Verbs are for whatever is 'action-like', but not just for actual actions
 - Often the same concept can be expressed both as a noun and as a verb
 - However, nouns and verbs play different roles in a sentence
 - The use of nouns and verbs shows the freedom that people have in putting their thoughts into words