

Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

4: Parts of Speech — Part I

Key Terms	Optional Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of Speech• Noun• Verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number• Tense

- 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 part of speech (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*
 - Whether we refer to something using a noun or a verb depends on how we want to use it in a sentence
 - 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
 - swim → a swim
 - speak → a speech
 - destroy → destruction
- 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
 - *swim/swim*
 - *dream/dream*
 - *love/love*
- In some other languages, like Latin, nouns and verbs usually have different forms
 - *natatio/natare*
 - *somnium/somniare*
 - *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 number; they can express quantity (e.g. *one dream/two dreams*)
- Verbs have tense; 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 organise our sentences
 - Nouns are used for the subject and object of a sentence (e.g. *Cows eat grass*)
 - As we have seen, in English the subject and the object go on either side of the verb
 - They refer to the participants in an event (e.g. cows, grass)
 - The verb is central to the sentence
 - 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