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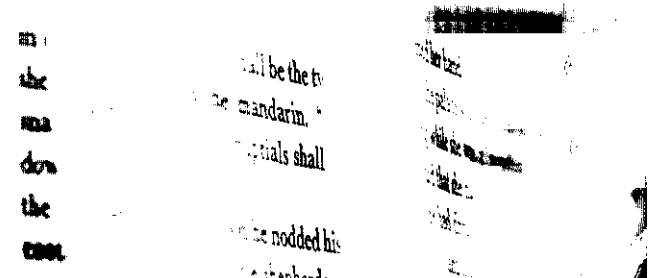

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The Oxford Dictionary of **English Grammar**

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English Grammar

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Introduction

Grammar, etymologically speaking, is related to *glamour*. Though few people might claim that grammar is glamorous in the modern sense, there is considerable interest in English grammar today and no shortage of grammar books, ranging from small basic books aimed at children or elementary-level foreign learners, through more advanced manuals to large scholarly works. The trouble is – they may be about the same language, but they do not always speak the same language. The very range of the grammar books on offer presents problems.

There are many ways of describing grammar, and a wealth of terminology. Some of it strikes the layman as jargon (*disjunct*, *matrix*, *pro-form*, *stative*); other words appear ordinary enough but conceal specialized meanings (*assimilation*, *comment*, *focus*, *specific*). Worse, the same terms, old or new – *comparison*, *formal*, *pronoun*, *reported speech*, *root*, *stress* – are used by different grammarians with different meanings.

Such difficulties are not entirely avoidable. Any subject of study needs specialist words. Different grammarians are entitled to analyse language in different ways, and fresh viewpoints may call for new terms. But while grammarians sometimes explain what they mean by a new or unusual term, it is rarer for them to point out that they are using an existing term in a different way. This is a cause of real confusion. Another problem is that new terms may in the end turn out simply to be alternatives for an old concept – a synonym in fact (e.g. *progressive*, *continuous*).

We have tried in this dictionary to indicate the range and variety of meanings that may lie behind a single term. The main emphasis is on the terminology of current mainstream grammar, but we have also included a considerable number of entries on the related areas of speech and meaning – more grandly known as phonetics and semantics. Users will also find some terms from generative grammar, which has greatly influenced mainstream grammar in recent years – but some of the more theoretical terminology of linguistics and semantics is excluded. We have also on the whole excluded outdated grammatical terminology, apart from a few traditional terms which may be familiar to the general reader.

The authors would like to thank Professor Flor Aarts, of the Katholieke Universiteit, Nijmegen, who read an early draft of the book: his comments, we believe, have led to many improvements, but the authors are alone responsible for any blemishes that remain. We

would also like to thank our families for their support, encouragement, and, at times, forbearance.

SC

ESCW

London, Oxford 1993

Organization

1 *Entries* are strictly alphabetical. Thus:

agent
agentive
agentless passive
agent noun

2 Where two or more terms are *synonyms*, the definition appears under the preferred term, usually with a reference to the alternative term, e.g.

folk etymology
. . . Also called *popular etymology*.

and the other term is cross-referenced, e.g.

popular etymology
The same as FOLK ETYMOLOGY.

3 Where a word is not a grammatical term in itself but forms part of a *phrase* which is dealt with elsewhere, this is indicated, e.g.

act See SPEECH ACT.

4 Where a term is dealt with at the entry for some larger term, this is indicated, e.g.

formulaic subjunctive See SUBJUNCTIVE.

5 Where two or more terms are in a *contrastive* relationship, this is stated at the beginning of both entries, e.g.

abstract . . .
. . . Contrasted with CONCRETE.

concrete . . .
. . . Contrasted with ABSTRACT.

6 *See* at the end of (part of) an entry indicates that further information will be found at the entry indicated. Sometimes the user is referred to a closely related word, e.g.

coordinate . . .
. . . See COORDINATION.

At other times the reference is to a 'background' concept, e.g.

fall-rise . . .
. . . See INTONATION.

7 *Compare* at the end of (part of) an entry indicates that although the entry is complete, it may be useful to read entries for related or

overlapping terms, or terms with which this term could be confused, e.g.

abbreviated . . .
. . . Compare BLOCK LANGUAGE, REDUCED *clause*.

These particular entries show that certain types of language that might reasonably be described as *abbreviated* are in fact given special labels.

8 *Cross-references* to other entries are given in small capitals. A cross-reference to a phrase listed within an entry is given in a mixture of small capitals (for the entry headword) and italics (for the remainder of the phrase), e.g. DUMMY *element*.

9 Words are marked with *part-of-speech labels* (*n.* = noun, *adj.* = adjective, *v.* = verb) only when they are used as more than one part of speech.

10 Where part-of-speech labels are conjoined (e.g. (*n. & adj.*)), the definition is framed so as to cover both uses, with parentheses surrounding the part of the definition that applies to only one of the two uses, e.g.

ditransitive
(*n. & adj.*) (A verb) having two objects.

which is equivalent to:
(*n.*) A verb having two objects. (*adj.*) Having two objects.

countable
(*n. & adj.*) (Designating) a noun with singular and plural forms.

which is equivalent to:
(*n.*) A noun with singular and plural forms.
(*adj.*) Designating a noun with singular and plural forms.

11 In certain entries for morphological terms, words and phrases quoted as examples are given *abbreviated dates* indicating their earliest known recorded appearance in English. In these, the number is that of the century and the preceding E, M, L mean 'early', 'mid', and 'late': 'E19' means '1800–1829', 'M19' means 1830–1869', and 'L19' means '1870–1899'. OE means 'Old English' (before 1150), ME 'Middle English' (1150–1349), and LME 'late Middle English' (1350–1469).

12 In many entries, *quotations* from works on language are given in order to illustrate the use of the word being defined. Only the author's name and the date of the work are cited: fuller details are given in the List of Works Cited.

13 *Derivatives* of a headword are listed undefined at the end of the entry if their meaning is plain once that of the parent word is known and if they are not found in special phrasal combinations.

A

A

ADVERBIAL as an ELEMENT of clause structure.

The symbol is used in some modern analyses of clause structure. See ADVERBIAL (1).

abbreviated

Shortened or contracted so that a part stands for the whole.

1 Designating language, or a clause or sentence, in which words inessential to the message are omitted and the grammar sometimes deviates from standard rules.

This is a very general term, since individuals will vary in how severely they abridge and exactly how they do it, when, for example, writing diaries or making lecture notes for private use.

Abbreviated sentences of a more predictable kind are a frequent feature of informal writing and conversation. Here the subject and part of the verb are often omitted.

Having a wonderful time here
See you soon
All news then
More tea? (= Would you like . . .?, Do you want . . .?)

Abbreviated language overlaps with ELLIPSIS, but has fewer 'rules'. Moreover, there is no need for the 'missing words' to be 'recoverable'.

Labels and printed instructions, too, often use abbreviated language; and here not only subjects but objects also are typically omitted, e.g.

Contains natural herb extracts
Avoid getting into the eyes

Other forms of abbreviated language appear in titles, notices, and newspaper headlines.

Compare BLOCK LANGUAGE, REDUCED *clause*.

2 **abbreviated clause**: the same as REDUCED *clause*.

3 **abbreviated form**: the same as CONTRACTION (2).

abbreviation

A shortened form of a word or phrase, standing for the whole.

This term is applied in three different ways.

abbreviation

(*a*) A string of letters—often spoken as such—formed from the initial letters of the (main) words of a phrase. Also called INITIALISM.

BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)
CBI (Confederation of British Industry)
ERM (Exchange Rate Mechanism)
OTT (over the top)
PC (personal computer)
UK (United Kingdom)

Sometimes the letters represent syllables of a word.

ID (identity or identification card)
TB (tuberculosis)

(*b*) A word (sometimes called a CLIPPING) standing for the whole, retaining at least one syllable of the original word.

ad (advertisement) (M19)
demo (demonstration) (M20)
flu (influenza) (M19)
pub (public house) (M19)
phone (telephone) (L19)
sitcom (situation comedy) (M20)

Clippings vary in their level of formality; *mike* (microphone) and *wellies* (wellington boots) are at the informal end of the scale. Other abbreviations are acceptable in formal contexts, e.g. *bus* (omnibus), *maths* (US *math*) (mathematics); or their origin may even be virtually forgotten, e.g. *mob* (from Latin *mobile vulgus*).

(*c*) A written convention which is unpronounceable in its shortened form. This includes abbreviations of personal titles, e.g. *Col.*, *Dr.*, *Mrs.*, *Sgt.*, etc. Also

St	(street or saint)	*etc.*	(etcetera)	*MS.*	(manuscript)
Fr.	(French)	*kg*	(kilogram)		
Gk.	(Greek)	*rpt.*	(repeat)		

There are a few special written conventions for plurals:

pp.	(pages)	*MSS.*	(manuscripts)
ff.	(following pages)		

Written Latin abbreviations are sometimes read out in their English equivalents, but some are only pronounced as letter strings, e.g.

e.g. (*exempli gratia*) (for example, /ˌiː ˈdʒiː/)
i.e. (*id est*) (that is, /ˌaɪ ˈiː/)
cf. (*confer*) (compare, /ˌsiː ˈef/)
a.m. and *p.m.* (*ante* and *post meridiem*: /ˈeɪˌem/, /ˈpiːˌem/).

Chemical formulae and other symbols can be regarded as a special type of abbreviation.

H_2O	(water)	&	(and)	–	(minus)
Fe	(iron)	+	(plus)		

Compare ACRONYM, BLEND, CONTRACTION, INITIALISM.

ability

One of the semantic categories used in the classification of modal verbs.

The term is particularly applied to the dynamic meaning of *can* and *could*. It contrasts with other meanings of these verbs such as PERMISSION and POSSIBILITY.

ablative

(*n. & adj.*) (In older grammar.) (A case) that expresses meanings such as *by, with,* or *from.*

This case, occurring and originally named in Latin, is not relevant to English, where such meanings are expressed by prepositional phrases. The corresponding semantic categories include AGENT, INSTRUMENT, MEANS. The nearest equivalent in English to the *ablative absolute* of Latin is the ABSOLUTE CLAUSE.

Compare CASE.

ablaut

(In historical linguistics.) A particular type of alternation of different internal vowels between related words or forms. Also called *gradation, vowel alternation.*

This term was taken over from the German philologist and folklorist Jacob Grimm, who used it in his *Deutsche Grammatik*, first published in 1819. It is a phenomenon common to all the Indo-European languages, which retains a functional role in English in the formation of the past tense and participle of irregular verbs. Several of the Common Germanic ablaut series are still perceptible in the paradigms

ride	rode	ridden
drink	drank	drunk
speak	spoke	spoken
shake	shook	shaken
fall	fell	fallen

Compare MUTATION.

The term is occasionally extended to cover *umlaut* or MUTATION as well, but historically the two are different phenomena.

See VOWEL CHANGE.

absolute

1 Used to describe the uninflected form of a GRADABLE adjective or adverb (e.g. *kind, soon*) in contrast to the comparative and superlative forms (*kinder, kindest, sooner, soonest*). The same as POSITIVE (2).

2 Non-gradable. See GRADABLE.

3 Used of the *mine* series of pronouns, contrasted with the *my*-type of determiners.

4 (In older usage.) Designating an adjective or verb when standing outside certain usual constructions or syntactic relationships, as:

(*a*) designating an adjective used without a noun as a nominal (e.g. *the poor*);

(*b*) designating a normally transitive verb used intransitively (e.g. *Have you eaten?*); and

(*c*) designating a comparative or superlative form of an adjective used without specific mention of a relationship (e.g. *I only want the best*).

1931 G. O. CURME The absolute comparative is not as common as the absolute superlative . . *higher education*; a *better*-class cafe.

See also ABSOLUTE CLAUSE.

• **absolutely** (in older usage, as 4(*a*) above.)

1884 *New English Dictionary* In 'the public are informed', 'the young are invited', *public* and *young* are adjectives used absolutely.

absolute clause

A non-finite or verbless clause containing its own subject, separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma (or commas) and not introduced by a subordinator.

A verb, if used, can be an *-ing* or an *-en* form.

The fight to board the train—*the women crushed against the doors, the children desperately clutching their mothers*—repeated itself at this provincial station
The platform empty once more, I settled down for the night

Except for a few set phrases (*weather permitting, present company excepted*) absolute clauses tend to be formal and written. If the subject is a pronoun it must be in subject, not object, case (e.g. *I refusing to go, Nicholas went alone*) so absolute clauses are sometimes called *nominative absolutes.* (This contrasts with the 'ablative absolute' of Latin grammar, where the comparable noun is in the ablative case.)

abstract

Used mainly of nouns that denote an action, idea, quality or state; contrasted with CONCRETE.

The traditional division of common nouns into abstract and concrete nouns is semantic. It therefore cuts across the more strictly grammatical classification into UNCOUNT and COUNT nouns, and as a way of trying to deal with syntactic differences is unsatisfactory.

The abstract label does fit many uncount nouns (e.g. *Everybody needs advice/fun/luck*; not **an advice/*funs/*two lucks*). But abstract nouns also include count nouns (e.g. *We had an idea/another quarrel/better solutions*; not **We had idea/quarrel/better solution*). Other abstract nouns have both count and uncount uses (e.g. *several important discoveries/an important discovery*; *a voyage of discovery*).

accent

1 *Linguistics.* The mode of utterance peculiar to an individual, locality, or nation, as in 'he has a north country/Irish/Scottish/American/French/German accent'.

Accents in Britain may be regional or social, the latter related to educational and cultural background. Linguists insist that everyone speaks with an accent, and that the standard RP accent (see RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION) is just one among many. Accent refers only to pronunciation and is distinct from DIALECT.

See also IDIOLECT.

2 *Phonetics.*

(*a*) The same as STRESS.

(*b*) Stress (in its narrower sense) accompanied by pitch change.

Loosely, *accent* and *stress*, and their associated pairs of terms (*accented, stressed*, etc.) are used interchangeably. But some phoneticians distinguish between *accent*, defined as including PITCH change, and stress, which is due to the amount of force or energy used to produce a sound, but which does not include a pitch change. By this sort of definition, accent can only occur on a stressed syllable (whereas stress may not involve accent).

See PITCH, STRESS.

• **accentual**: relating to (phonetic) accent, particularly in the sense of word stress (rather than nuclear pitch).

> 1962 A. C. GIMSON The accentual patterns of words are liable to change. Considerable changes of this kind have taken place within the last three hundred years, in addition to the large-scale accentual shifts affecting French importations in ME. Thus, in the seventeenth century, and still in American English, a secondary accent with a strong vowel fell on the penultimate syllable of such words as *necessary, adversary, momentary.*

accentuation: the occurrence of accent (in the sense of pitch change).

> 1973 J. D. O'CONNOR Accentuation . . is a feature of the utterance, giving prominence to those parts which are semantically important; stress is a feature of the word and is just as much a part of its shape as the sequence of constituent phonemes is. The two are certainly related in those languages which have stress as a word feature, even though it is fixed, because the features of pitch which mainly constitute accentuation centre around the naturally stressed syllable of the word to be accented.

acceptability

Of a language form or an utterance: the quality of being judged by native speakers as normal or possible.

(*a*) Native speakers may disagree over whether a particular utterance is grammatically acceptable or not. An individual's judgement of acceptability may be affected by personal, regional, or social background, by perceptions of 'correctness', and so on. For example, judgements differ over the acceptability of:

? You ain't seen nothing yet.
? She was realizing there was a problem.
? The house was building for three years.
? We convinced them to go.
? Either Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday would suit me.

(*b*) Linguists make a distinction between *acceptability* and GRAMMATICALITY, since sentences may be grammatically correct according to the rules, but unacceptable for some other reason. For example, a properly constructed, grammatically correct sentence could be so long that it becomes unacceptable because it is virtually impossible to understand. In this sense, acceptability is related to actual performance, while grammaticality is a feature of (more idealized) COMPETENCE.

Acceptability can extend to word formation. Thus, although the suffix *-ish*, meaning 'somewhat like', 'somewhat', combines with concrete nouns (e.g. *foolish*, *snobbish*, *kittenish*) and adjectives (e.g. *coldish*, *pinkish*), there could be degrees of acceptability as regards words newly formed with this suffix (e.g. *?yuppyish*, **idiotish*, *?trendyish*, *?*aquamarinish*).

• **acceptable**.

1962 A. C. GIMSON Any strongly rolled [r] sound, whether lingual or uvular, is not acceptable in RP.
1988 R. QUIRK Characters in Dickens can use *an't* or *ain't* for 'isn't' without any hint that such forms are other than fully acceptable.

accidence

(In older grammar.) The part of grammar that deals with the inflections of words; the way words change to indicate different grammatical meanings.

This category traditionally contrasts with SYNTAX. For example, the differences between

drive, *drives*, *driving*, *drove*, and *driven*

or between

driver, *driver's*, *drivers*, and *drivers'*

would come under accidence in a traditional grammar. In more modern grammar, the term has been superseded by INFLECTION, which, together with DERIVATION, is dealt with under MORPHOLOGY.

Apparently *accidence* was an alteration of *accidents* (plural), used around 1600 to mean 'the changes to which words are subject in accordance with the relations in which they are used', translating the Latin neuter plural *accidentia*; although it is possible that the latter was misunderstood as a feminine singular noun and rendered *accidence*.

accusative

(*n. & adj.*) (In older grammar.) The same as OBJECTIVE (1).

A traditional term, somewhat out of favour today as far as English is concerned.

acoustic phonetics

That branch of phonetics concerned with the way in which the air vibrates as sounds pass from speaker to listener.

Acoustic phonetics involves the measuring of sound features with instruments and electronic equipment that then present the information in visual form.

Compare ARTICULATORY *phonetics*, AUDITORY PHONETICS.

acquisition

Linguistics. The process of learning a language.

The term *child language acquisition* is used in descriptions of how children develop language ability.

See LANGUAGE ACQUISITION DEVICE.

acrolect

Sociolinguistics.

1 Originally, in a post-creole community, the social dialect most closely resembling the standard language from which the creole is derived.

2 The most prestigious or 'highest' social variety of a language.

The term is sometimes used in connection with mother-tongue English speakers. Thus standard British English with an RP accent may be considered an acrolect (unless the additional term HYPERLECT is introduced). It is also used of varieties of English in regions where English is a second (or third) language.

> 1977 J. T. PLATT I feel that in the case of Singapore English . . a very distinct non-British English acrolect is gradually emerging.

Compare BASILECT, HYPERLECT, MESOLECT.

• **acrolectal.**

acronym

Morphology.

1 Strictly, a word formed from (a) the initial letters of other words, or from (b) a mixture of initials and syllables.

E.g.

(*a*) *NATO* (=North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
NIMBY (=not in my back yard)
TINA (=there is no alternative)

(*b*) *radar* (=radio detection and ranging)
yuppie (=young urban professional + diminutive ending).

Sometimes included in the general term ABBREVIATION.

2 More loosely, an ABBREVIATION pronounced as a string of letters, especially letters that stand for the name of an organization or institution, e.g. *BBC, USA.*

This usage may be due to the fact that the specific term for this type of abbreviation (INITIALISM) is not widely known.

act See SPEECH ACT.

action

The process of acting or doing expressed by a verb.

Traditionally and loosely the term is used of any verb.

> 1884 *New English Dictionary* *Action of a verb, verbal action*: The action expressed by a verb; properly of verbs which assert *acting*, but conveniently extended to *the thing asserted by a verb*, whether action, state, or mere existence, as I *strike*, I *stand*, I *live*, I *am*.

Traditionally, transitive verbs used in an active tense are said to act upon their objects, which are given the role of 'patient'. But the concept is out of favour in modern grammatical theory, since obviously many verbs do not in any meaningful way imply actors, actions, or patients (e.g. *I heard screams*, *He's contracted hepatitis*).

actional

Of a passive verbal form: expressing a dynamic action rather than a state.

The usual meaning of most central passive verbs. Contrast STATAL.

action verb

A verb (also called an *event verb*) describing a happening that occurs in a limited time and has a beginning and an end. Contrasted with a STATE VERB.

e.g. *arrive, make, listen, walk*.

The terms *action* and *event*, used to describe verbs, are popular equivalents for DYNAMIC (sense 1) (similarly *state verb* is popularly substituted for *stative verb*). The alternative labels are not however strictly synonymous, since the verb in *I am growing old*, being in a progressive tense, must be described as *dynamic*, but less obviously denotes either an action or an event.

Compare DYNAMIC, STATIVE.

active

1 (*n. & adj.*) (Designating) the VOICE that attributes the ACTION of a verb to the person or thing from which it logically proceeds. As an adjective, often applied to clauses and sentences containing a verb in the active voice, and even to the verb itself.

The verbs in

> The sun *rises* in the east
> The early bird *caught* the worm

are in the active voice, in contrast to the PASSIVE voice. Many verbs, e.g. intransitive verbs, can occur only in the active.

1985 R. QUIRK et al. There are greater restrictions on verbs occurring in the passive than on verbs occurring in the active.

2 **active verb**: (in older usage) the same as ACTION VERB.

actor

The logical subject of a verb, particularly a dynamic verb.

The term is a semantic label, and roughly means the 'doer' of the verb, the person or other animate being that does the action. Broadly, the term can be used in relation to both transitive and intransitive verbs. It describes the subject of an active transitive verb and the by-AGENT of the corresponding passive sentence. Thus *the old lady* is the actor both in *The old lady swallowed a fly* (which can be described in terms of actor-action-goal) and in *The fly was swallowed by the old lady*); *actor* can also designate the grammatical subject of an intransitive verb (e.g. *Little Tommy Tucker* sings for his supper).

The term clearly makes more sense when restricted to a 'doer' that in a real sense initiates an action, than when applied to the subject of some 'mental process' verb (e.g. *She didn't like it*), or to a verb of 'being' (e.g. *She was old*). Some analysts therefore restrict the term and would exclude the old lady if her action was unintentional and involuntary.

Compare EXPERIENCER, SENSER.

adjectival

(*n. & adj.*) (A word, phrase, or clause) functioning as an adjective (including single word adjectives). e.g.

guide price
the *greenhouse* effect
the man *in the white suit*
an *I'm-all-right-Jack* attitude
Don't be so *holier-than-thou*

Some grammarians would loosely use the word *adjective* to describe all these, but it is sometimes useful to distinguish between true single-word adjectives and other words functioning adjectivally in a particular context.

Note that the terms *adjectival* and *adverbial* are not entirely comparable. *Adverbial* can denote one of the main elements in clause structure (the others being *subject*, *verb*, *object*, and *complement*); i.e., it is often a functional label. Adjectivals operate at a lower level, often as part of a noun phrase (which itself may function as subject or object). An adjectival may in some instances be the sole realization of complement (e.g. You look *hungry*), but the adjectival as such is not a functional element in clause structure.

•• **adjectival clause**: the same as ADJECTIVE CLAUSE (1).

adjectival noun: (in older usage) an adjective used as a noun.

e.g.

the *poor*
the *old*

Compare ABSOLUTE (4).

adjectival passive: the same as STATAL *passive*.

• **adjectivally**: in an adjectival manner, as an adjective.

adjectivalization

Morphology. The conversion of a member of another word class into an adjective; the use of such a word in an adjectival function.

The commonest way of forming an adjective from another part of speech is by adding an affix (e.g. *wealth, wealthy*; *fool, foolish*; *hope, hopeful*).

A well-known feature of English is the use of nouns in attributive position to modify other nouns (e.g. *greenhouse effect, holiday shop, wind instrument*. This usage too can be called *adjectivalization*, but such nouns do not take on the other characteristics of an adjective (**The effect is greenhouse*; **a more holiday shop*).

adjective

A major part of speech, traditionally defined as a describing word or 'a word that tells us something about a noun'.

In modern grammar *adjective* is usually defined in more grammatical terms. Formally, a CENTRAL adjective meets four grammatical conditions. It can

(1) be used attributively in a noun phrase (e.g. *an old man*)
(2) follow *be* or another copular verb and occur alone in a predicative position (e.g. *He looks old*)
(3) be premodified by intensifying words such as *very* (e.g. *He's very old*)
(4) have comparative and superlative forms (e.g. *an older person, most extraordinary*)

But not all adjectives pass all these tests. Adjectives with an absolute (i.e. ungradable) meaning fail (3) and (4) (e.g. **very unique*, **more unique than . . .*), while adjectives which are only attributive (e.g. *utter*) or only predicative (e.g. *afraid*) fail (2) and (1) respectively.

Adjectives other than attributive-only adjectives can sometimes take POST-POSITION:

people *impatient* with the slow progress of the talks

and for a few adjectives this position is obligatory:

the president *elect*, the body *politic*, the harbour *proper*

Adjectives used with indefinite compound pronouns must follow them:

nothing *special*, someone *silly*

Some adjectives are used with *the*, to function as a noun phrase. Used of people, the meaning is plural, 'people of that sort' in general:

the *great* and the *good*, the *poor*, the *disadvantaged*

but notice *the Almighty*. (A few participles also can, exceptionally, have singular meaning, e.g. *the accused, the deceased*.)

Other adjectives, prefaced by *the*, refer to abstract qualities, e.g.

the *bizarre*, the *grotesque*, the *occult*

Some are used nominally in set phrases:

in *public*, in *short*, for *better* or *worse*

Historically, adjectives were once called *noun adjectives* because they named attributes which could be added (Latin *adjectivus* from *adjicere* to add) to a *noun substantive* to describe it in more detail, the two being regarded as varieties of the class *noun* or 'name'.

1612 J. BRINSLEY *Q.* How many sorts of Nouns have you? *A.* Two: a Noun Substantive, and a Noun Adjective. A noun adjective is that cannot stand by itself, without the help of another word to be joyned with it to make it plain.

See also DEMONSTRATIVE *adjective*, QUALITATIVE *adjective*.

adjective clause

1 Commonly, another name for RELATIVE clause.

1932 C. T. ONIONS Adjective Clauses are introduced by Relative Pronouns.

2 A phrase, with an adjective head, which functions as a clause.

Keen to take part, he volunteered his services
The crowd, *angry now*, charged at the police

adjective complementation

A word or words added after an adjective to add to or complete the meaning in context.

Adjective complementation may be (*a*) a prepositional phrase

They were innocent *of the crime*
She is brilliant *at chess*

or (*b*) various kinds of clause

I am sorry *that you don't like it*
We were not very clear *why we had been asked*
You were mad *to tell them*
It's a very easy place *to find*
I've been busy *answering letters*

Such complementation may be obligatory, e.g.

She is fond of her mother (*She is fond)

or optional, e.g.

I am so glad (that you got the job)

adjective order

The order in which two or more adjectives come in attributive position.

When two or more adjectives premodify a noun, there is usually a 'natural' or a 'better' order for them. *Your wonderful new cream woollen jumper* is likely; **your woollen new cream wonderful jumper* is deviant. It has proved difficult to formulate comprehensive, satisfactory rules to describe the ordering, and there are often alternative possibilities, but in general the order is related to

the semantic properties of the adjectives: inherent characteristics (e.g. *woollen*) are closest to the noun and subjective judgements (e.g. *wonderful*) are furthest from it.

A typical order is:

determiners (if any) (*your*)
'central' adjectives (*wonderful/expensive/useful*)
colour adjectives (*cream*)
inherent characteristics —origin (*Welsh*)
—material (*woollen*)
attributive noun describing purpose (*golfing*) jacket

adjective phrase

A phrase functioning adjectivally, and consisting of an adjective as HEAD plus, optionally, words before and/or after.

e.g.

It was *very difficult/too difficult to understand/simple enough*.

Compare ADJECTIVAL, ATTRIBUTIVE.

adjunct

1 (In older usage.) Any word or words expanding the essential parts of the sentence; an optional, inessential, element in a structure.

The term has been variously used for words or phrases considered to be of secondary importance, including vocatives, adjectives joined to nouns, and also some adverbs.

In Jespersen's terminology it describes the functional role of a SECONDARY joined to a PRIMARY by JUNCTION.

> 1933b O. JESPERSEN A secondary can be joined to a primary in two essentially different ways, for which we use the terms *Junction* and *Nexus*. As separate names for the secondary in these two functions we shall use the terms *Adjunct* and *Adnex*.

In this usage, the term *adjunct* typically applies to an adjective in attributive position (e.g. a *silly* person).

2 (In present-day use, more specifically.) An element functioning like an adverb, whether a single-word adverb, an adverb phrase, or an adverb clause; sometimes the same as ADVERBIAL.

Adjuncts in this sense are of course usually marginal to sentence structure and therefore omissible. Thus in *Sadly, my neighbour died two months ago*, both *sadly* and *two months ago* could be omitted, leaving a still grammatical, meaningful sentence.

3 (In some modern grammar.) A particular subclass of adverbial, contrasted with CONJUNCT, DISJUNCT, and (optionally) SUBJUNCT.

In this categorization, only adverbials functioning as an element of clause structure (represented as *A*) are adjuncts. By this definition, *clearly* is an adjunct in the first sentence below, but not in the second:

He spoke clearly and to the point
Clearly, I could be wrong

Adverbial adjuncts of this special type often refer to place, time, or process (including manner, means, instrument, and the agentive with the passive). In general, these adjuncts come in end position, after the verb (and object, if any). But other positions are possible, and *frequency adjuncts* usually come in mid position (e.g. they *usually* come).

Adjuncts are sometimes divided on more functional grounds into PREDICATION and SENTENCE adjuncts.

adnex

(In Jespersen's terminology.) The functional role of a SECONDARY when joined to a PRIMARY by NEXUS. See ADJUNCT.

This means a verb or some other part of the predication.

1933a O. JESPERSEN *The dog runs*, nexus: *runs* . . . is adnex to *dog*.
1933b O. JESPERSEN The adnex may be any word or combination of words which can stand as a predicative . . e.g. a prepositional group. Could she have believed herself in the way?

The term is not in general use today. Compare SECONDARY and see SENTENCE ADJUNCT.

adnominal

(*n. & adj.*) (A word or phrase) attached to and modifying a noun.

Adnominals can precede or follow their head noun, and with it they form a noun phrase, e.g.

our wonderful new home
a country cottage
my parents' flat
somewhere *to live*
a place *of one's own*

• • **adnominal relative clause**: an ordinary relative clause, whether defining or non-defining (so called because it functions in the same way as other adnominals):

houses *that we've looked at*
Sandringham House, *which we visited*

The label is not common, but is used to distinguish this type of clause from the so-called NOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSE (when that is not included with the noun clause, as it is in many analyses).

advanced RP See RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION.

adverb

A major part of speech: a word that usually modifies or qualifies a verb (e.g. *spoke quietly*), an adjective (e.g. *really awful*), or another adverb (e.g. *very quietly*).

Adverbs form a notoriously mixed word class. Traditionally they are divided into various meaning-related categories, such as manner (e.g. *hurriedly*), place (e.g. *there*), time (e.g. *soon, often, tomorrow*), and degree (e.g. *very*). Some grammarians analyse them in much greater detail, and some have described categories that distinguish them according to different grammatical functions. See ADJUNCT, CONJUNCT, DISJUNCT, SUBJUNCT.

Loosely, in popular grammar, the term *adverb* is often used to cover ADVERB PHRASES and ADVERBIALS in general. More strictly, where the latter terms are used, *adverb* may be restricted to single words functioning adverbially.

See SENTENCE ADVERB.

adverb clause

Any clause (finite, non-finite, or verbless) functioning adverbially, that is, expressing notions such as time, reason, condition, concession, etc.:

I'll come *when I'm ready*
They succeeded *because they persevered*
Don't do it, *unless you're sure*
Although injured, he struggled on
While travelling, he contracted jaundice
Make it Thursday, *if possible*

In more traditional usage, only the finite clauses (i.e. the first three examples) would be included here.

Adverb (or *adverbial*) *clauses* are often classified on semantic grounds into such categories as clauses of TIME, PLACE, CONDITION, CONCESSION, PURPOSE, RESULT, COMPARISON, MANNER, and COMMENT.

adverbial

(*n.*) 1 (In some modern grammar.) One of the five elements of clause structure (symbolized by A), comparable to Subject (S), Verb (V), Object (O), and Complement (C).

In this sense, the adverbial may be a word, phrase, or clause:

You've done that *(very) well (indeed)*: SVOA
Hang your coat *on a hanger*: VOA
They arrived *the Sunday before last*: SVA
When you've quite finished, we can begin: ASV
Though disappointed, she said nothing: ASVO

The adverbial is the most optional element of clause structure. Subject and verb are usually essential, and many verbs make some sort of object or complement obligatory. Only a few verbs force the use of an adverbial (**Hang/*put your coat*).

2 Any word, phrase, or clause used like an adverb (including the simple adverb alone) whether functioning as an element in clause structure (i.e. as an adjunct) or at some other level.

Compare:

She dresses simply
That was a simply dreadful thing to say

In the first sentence *simply* modifies the verb and is an adverbial element in the sentence (which has an overall pattern of SVA). In the second, *simply* is part of a noun phrase (*a simply dreadful thing to say*, which functions as a complement (making the sentence SVC).

(*adj.*) Of or pertaining to an adverb; functioning like an adverb.

1872 R. MORRIS In Elizabethan writers we find the adverbial *-ly* often omitted, as '*grievous* sick', '*miserable* poor'.

• • **adverbial clause**: the same as ADVERB CLAUSE.

adverbial group: the same as ADVERB PHRASE (1).

adverbial conjunction: see CONJUNCTION.

adverbial particle: see PARTICLE.

adverbial phrase: the same as ADVERB PHRASE.

• **adverbially**.

adverbialization

The process of forming an adverb from another part of speech.

Adding *-ly* to an adjective is the most obvious example of this process (e.g. *bad/badly*, *pretty/prettily*). Another affix with the same result is *-wise* (e.g. *jobwise* 'as regards jobs or a job').

adverb particle See PARTICLE.

adverb phrase

1 A phrase functioning as an adverbial in clause structure and containing an adverb as head:

He speaks *very quickly indeed*
We were able to use the pool *as often as we wished*

Notice the postmodification in the second example by a clause of comparison.

2 A phrase functioning as an adverbial, whether it contains an adverb or not:

We'll be with you *in a moment*
They arrived *last night*

These would be classified as adverbials in many grammars.

affected

Semantics. Influenced, acted upon: used to describe the typical semantic role of the direct object.

The direct objects in the following are said to have an *affected* role:

I love *Lucy*
Lucy Locket lost *her pocket*

GOAL, OBJECTIVE, and PATIENT are sometimes used in this way, but distinctions are sometimes made.

In some theories about semantic roles, the subjects of COPULAR verbs, and even of INTRANSITIVE verbs, are said to have an affected role, e.g.

Lucy was in the garden
Her hat lay on the seat beside her

Compare RECIPIENT.

affective

The same as ATTITUDINAL and EMOTIVE.

affirmative

Of a sentence or verb: stating that a fact is so; answering 'yes' to a question put or implied. Opposed to NEGATIVE.

In some grammars the term POSITIVE is used with the same meaning.

Compare POLARITY.

affix

Morphology. An addition to the root (or base form) of a word or to a stem in order to form a new word or a new form of the same word.

An affix added before the root is a PREFIX (e.g. *un*-natural, *over*-weight); one added at the end is a SUFFIX (natural-*ness*, weight-*less*-*ness*). Affixes may be derivational (garden*er*) or inflectional (garden*s*).

Some non-European languages also have *infixes*, additions inserted within the main base of the word. In English the way in which the plural *-s* comes in the middle of some compounds (e.g. *hangers-on*) or in a few cases a swearword can be inserted within a word (e.g. *abso-bloody-lutely*) are perhaps marginal examples of this phenomenon.

See also DERIVATION, FORMATIVE, INFLECTION, MORPHEME.

• **affixation**: (*Morphology*) the joining of an affix or affixes to (the root or stem of) a word.

affricate

Phonetics. (*n. & adj.*) (A consonant sound) that combines the articulatory characteristics of a PLOSIVE and a FRICATIVE; there is a complete closure in the vocal tract, so that the following release is a plosive, but the release is slow enough for there to be accompanying friction.

Two affricates are recognized in standard English: [tʃ], the voiceless sound heard at the beginning and end of *church*, in the middle of *feature* /ˈfiːtʃə/, and at the end of *catch*; and [dʒ], the voiced sound at the beginning of *gin* and *jam*, in the middle of *soldier* /ˈsəʊldʒə/, and the beginning and end of *judge*.

1988 J. C. CATFORD It thus appears that the [ʒ] in [dʒ] is indissolubly linked with the [d] and the sequence must thus be regarded as a single, unitary affricate phoneme.

Controversially, /tr/ and /dr/ are sometimes analysed as affricates rather than sequences of phonemes.

• **affricative**: another term for AFFRICATE, now rare.

agent

The doer of the action denoted by a verb.

The term is particularly applied to the 'doer', in semantic terms, of the action expressed by a passive verb because in such a case the grammatical subject is not the doer, as the subject of an active verb often is. The agent is often indicated with a *by* phrase:

The two were kidnapped *by masked terrorists*
The child was saved *by the dog*

The agent is typically animate. In popular grammar, *agent* contrasts principally with INSTRUMENT and MEANS; in Case Grammar, the *agent* (or AGENTIVE) case is one of a set.

Compare ACTOR.

agentive

Syntax & Semantics. (*n. & adj.*) (Designating) a noun, suffix, or semantic role that indicates an agent.

In the phrase *this great ceiling by Michelangelo, Michelangelo* is agentive (the agent) and *by Michelangelo* is an agentive phrase. In the words *doer, farmer,* and *lover* there is an agentive suffix, *-er* (which contrasts with the comparative suffix *-er* in *kinder, nicer*).

1964 J. VACHEK The comparative suffix *-er* does not imply the change of the word-category of the basic word, while the agentive *-er* necessarily does so.

Verbs in context can be described as agentive or *non-agentive*. An *agentive verb* posits an animate instigator of the action. Contrast

The postman banged on the door (agentive verb)
The door was banging in the wind (non-agentive verb)

In Case Grammar the *agentive case* is defined semantically (together with OBJECTIVE, DATIVE, etc.), and so the subject of an active verb is frequently (though not always) agentive (the agent). This is a specialized use.

1968 C. J. FILLMORE The cases that appear to be needed include: *Agentive* (A), the case of the typically animate perceived instigator of the action identified by the verb.

agentless passive

A passive clause or sentence in which no agent is mentioned.

The agent is not mentioned because either it is unimportant or unknown, e.g. *Rome was not built in a day,* or the identity of the agent is deliberately concealed, e.g. *Mistakes cannot afterwards be rectified.*

agent noun

A noun with the meaning 'one who or that which does (the action of the verb)', and formed by adding the suffix *-er* or *-or* to a verb.

e.g.

actor, instructor, manufacturer, teacher, worker

Some agent nouns are inanimate (e.g. *computer, shocker*) and some have no independent base (e.g. *author, butcher*).

agglutinative See ANALYTIC.

aggregate noun

A noun that is 'plural-only' in form (e.g. *outskirts, remains*) or functionally plural-only, though lacking an *-s* (e.g. *people, police*).

A few aggregate nouns can take singular or plural verbs (e.g. *the works is/are in* Birmingham). Compare COLLECTIVE NOUN, PLURALE TANTUM.

agree

Be in concord; take the same number, gender, person, etc. (as another element in the clause or sentence).

See AGREEMENT.

agreement

The agreeing of two (or more) elements in a clause or sentence; the taking of the same grammatical person, number, or gender; CONCORD.

In English, the most generally recognized agreement (or concord) is that between a subject and its verb. As verbs have few inflections, this mainly affects the third person of the present simple of lexical verbs, where the singular *-s* ending contrasts with the plural and with the other persons of the singular (e.g. *He* or *she works*, but *I, we, you, they work*). The verbs *be* and *have*, and progressive and perfect tenses formed with them (I *am* working, She *has* worked), also must agree with their subjects.

Prescriptivists favour strict grammatical agreement. But *notional concord*, where agreement follows the meaning, is a common feature of English, and acceptable to most grammarians:

Everybody knows this, don't they?
Neither of them approve (*more strictly* approves)
The committee have decided (. . . has . . .)
£10 is all I have

A minor type of verb agreement, called *proximity agreement* (or *proximity concord*), is the agreement of the verb with a closely preceding noun instead of the noun head that actually functions as subject of the sentence in question. Such agreement may be marginally acceptable when it supports notional concord, but is generally considered ungrammatical:

?No one except my parents care what happens to me
??A parcel of books have arrived for you

Number agreement also normally exists between subject and subject complement (e.g. *She is a pilot*; *They are pilots*) and between a direct object and an object complement (e.g. *I consider her a brilliant pilot, I consider them brilliant pilots*).

Number and gender agreement affects pronouns and determiners, e.g.

He has lost *his* umbrella
She blames *herself*
There were *many* problems and *much* heartsearching

air-stream mechanism

Phonetics. The system of air movement used in the production of speech sounds.

Most speech sounds, including all normal English phonemes, involve expelling air outwards in an egressive air stream. (Sounds made by drawing air into the body are INGRESSIVE.) Most sounds are also made with lung air (a pulmonic air stream), but other air mechanisms are possible: compare CLICK.

alethic

Necessarily and logically true.

The term, taken from modal logic, comes from the Greek word *alethes* 'true', and is concerned with the necessary truth of propositions. It is sometimes used in the analysis of modal verbs, though most grammarians include this meaning in EPISTEMIC. The distinction between alethic and epistemic modality, when it is made, is that alethic modality is concerned with logical deduction (e.g. *If she's a widow, her husband must have died*), whereas epistemic modality relates to confident inference (e.g. *They were married over fifty years—she must miss him*).

allograph

1 A particular printed or written form of a letter of the alphabet (or more technically of a GRAPHEME).

Thus a lower-case ⟨a⟩, a capital ⟨A⟩, an italic ⟨*a*⟩, and a badly scribbled letter *a* are all allographs of the same grapheme.

Compare GRAPH, PHONEME.

2 *Phonetics*. (Less usually.) One of a number of letters or letter combinations representing a phoneme.

Thus the ⟨f⟩ of *fish* and the ⟨gh⟩ of *cough* are both allographs of the phoneme /f/.

allomorph

Morphology. An alternant of a morpheme; any form in which a (meaningful) morpheme (in sense 1) is actually realized.

allophone

The English plural morpheme has three regular *allomorphs*: an /s/ sound as in cats /kæts/, a /z/ sound as in dogs /dɒgz/, and an /ɪz/ sound as in horses /'hɔːsɪz/. We can also talk of a *zero allomorph* in *sheep* (plural), and various irregular allomorphs in *mice*, *geese*, and so on.

Also called MORPHEMIC *variant*.

• **allomorphic**: of or pertaining to an allomorph.

Compare FORMATIVE, MORPH.

allophone

Phonetics. Any of the variants in which an (idealized) phoneme is actually realized.

Many allophones, that is actual articulations, are possible for any phoneme of a language, depending on individual people's pronunciation, but the main allophones of any particular language are conditioned by their relationship to the surrounding sounds. Thus in standard English the /l/ phoneme has a CLEAR sound when it precedes a vowel (as in *listen* or *fall in*); a somewhat DEVOICED sound when preceded by a voiceless plosive (as in *please*, *clue*), and a DARK sound when it occurs word-finally after a vowel (as in *fall down*) or when it is syllabic (as in *muddle*).

• **allophonic**: of or pertaining to an allophone. **allophonically**.

alternant

Any of the possible variants of a particular feature of the language.

1 *Phonology*. A particular vowel in one word viewed as a variant of the corresponding vowel in another word when the two words are connected by a process of derivation or word formation.

ei /ɪ/ in *deceive* and the second *e* /e/ in *deception* are alternants.

2 *Phonology*. Occasional term for ALLOPHONE. Also **allophonic alternant**.

3 *Morphology*. Another word for ALLOMORPH. Also **morphemic alternant**.

This label includes both phonologically conditioned alternants (e.g. plurals /s/, /z/, and /ɪz/), but also such 'grammatical' alternants as *-ed*, *-en* (as in *heated*, *frozen*) for the past participle morpheme.

• **alternance, alternation**: the existence of alternants and the relationship between them. **alternate**: vary between alternants.

> 1935b J. R. FIRTH Vowel alternance is also a very important morphological instrument in the strong conjugation of verbs. There are thirty vowel alternances for our babies to learn.
>
> 1974 P. H. MATTHEWS When the forms identifying a morpheme vary, a normal usage is to talk of an alternation between them; for example, the allomorphs of the English morpheme CATCH alternate between [kætʃ] and [kɔː].

alternative question

A type of question which names possible answers but does not leave the matter open.

One of the three main types of question, in contrast to *WH*-QUESTION and YES-NO QUESTION. An alternative question can begin with a *wh*-word, e.g.

Which do you `like—'coffee, 'tea, or `wine?

or may be more like a yes-no question, e.g.

Would you like 'coffee or `tea?

But it differs from both in intonation.

An alternative question implies that one, and only one, of the options is possible. Each option receives a separate pitch, and the final option is said with a fall, showing that the choice is complete.

alveolar

Phonetics. (*n. & adj.*) (Of or pertaining to) a consonant sound made by the front of the tongue against the hard ridge formed by the roots of the upper teeth.

The main alveolars in English are /t/ and /d/ (often dental consonants in other languages), which are alveolar plosives; /n/, an alveolar nasal; and /s/ and /z/, which are alveolar fricatives. The actual articulation of these alveolar phonemes is affected by adjacent sounds, so that not all their allophones are in fact alveolar.

• **alveolarity**: the quality of being alveolar; an instance of this.

Latin *alveolus* means 'a small cavity', and hence 'a tooth socket'.

ambient *it*

The same as DUMMY *it*.

ambiguity

Ability to be understood in two or more ways; a word or phrase that can be so understood.

(*a*) *Lexical ambiguity*. Some ambiguity is due to a word or phrase having more than one meaning; e.g. *I don't seem to have a chair* (was the lecturer complaining that she had nothing to sit on, or that there was nobody to introduce her?).

(*b*) *Grammatical ambiguity* (or *structural ambiguity*) has a variety of causes, including ellipsis (or uncertainty whether there is ellipsis) within a noun phrase; e.g.

He was wearing new red socks and boots (were the boots new and red too?)
They are advertising for teachers of French, German, and Russian (separate teachers of these languages, or people capable of teaching all three?)

As prepositional phrases can not only appear in noun phrases but also function adverbially in clause structure, there is often considerable doubt as to what they refer to:

These claims have been dismissed as mere bravado *by the police* (the context might make it clear that the meaning is 'dismissed by the police', but it sounds rather like bravado by the police).

Similarly *to*-infinitive clauses, which also have a multiplicity of functions, may be ambiguous:

Railmen defy union order *to stop coal shipments* (probably the railmen are carrying on working, but they could have decided to stop shipments in defiance of union orders).

Ellipted clauses of comparison are another frequent cause of ambiguity:

I had better taste in films than girls (was the writer's taste in films better than his taste in girls, or did he have better taste in films than girls had?)

In complex sentences, ambiguity can arise when not just a phrase but a whole finite clause is open to more than one interpretation. (Intonation may disambiguate if the sentences are spoken.)

I didn't go because it was my birthday (did the speaker not go at all, or go for some other reason?)

He said he wouldn't lend me the money and I couldn't go (did he say that I couldn't go, or could I not go as a consequence of not being lent the money?)

I'll tell you when they arrive (is it that I will inform you of their arrival, or that when they arrive I will tell you something?)

(*c*) A further type of ambiguity is caused by the fact that many English words can be interpreted as more than one part of speech; headline English is a rich source of such ambiguity:

Fine old houses are demanding mistresses (are they crying out for capable chatelaines, or are they proving themselves to be hard-to-please, bossy rulers?)

Peking bars escape from 'terror' purge (was the Chinese government taking measures to prevent dissidents from escaping, or had the city's drinking venues escaped some harsh new decree?)

He gave her dog biscuits

ambilingual

(*n.* & *adj.*) (Designating) a person who has complete mastery of two languages.

1959 J. C. CATFORD In everyday speech the word 'bilingual' generally refers to a person who has virtually *equal* command of two or more languages. If a special term is required for such persons of equal linguistic skill (which is very difficult to measure) I should prefer to call them 'ambilinguals'. Ambilinguals are relatively rare.

• **ambilingualism.**

Compare BILINGUAL.

American See GENERAL AMERICAN.

anacoluthon (Pronounced /ænəkə'lu:θɒn/. Plural **anacoluthons, anacolutha.**)

Syntactic discontinuity within a sentence; a sentence which either breaks off while incomplete or switches part-way through to a different syntactic structure; discontinuity of this kind as a general phenomenon.

Informal spoken language often contains anacoluthon, much of which may pass unnoticed by the listener, e.g.:

One of my sisters,—her husband's a doctor and he says if you take aspirin your cold *will go in a week, but if you do nothing it will take seven days*
It's a course which I don't know whether it will be any good
I thought that you were going—well, I hoped that you were going to help
Why don't you—it's only a suggestion—but you could walk

The term was formerly used in rhetoric but has been adopted into linguistics. In rhetoric, the general phenomenon was called *anacoluthia* and an individual instance *anacoluthon*.

• **anacoluthic, anacoluthically.**

analogy

Imitation of the inflections, derivatives, and constructions of existing words in forming inflections, derivatives, and constructions of other words.

Analogy normally governs the patterns of word-formation. Recent years for example have seen numerous new verbs with the prefixes *de-* (e.g. *deselect*) and *dis-* (e.g. *disinvest*) and nouns beginning with *Euro-* (e.g. *Eurocrat, Eurofare, Eurospeak*). Other new nouns have been formed with such well-established suffixes as *-ism* (e.g. *endism, handicapism*). New verbs almost always inflect regularly (e.g. *faxing, faxes, faxed*) by analogy with regular verbs.

In historical linguistics, the term *analogy* is used in connection with the tendency for irregular forms to become regular (e.g. *shape, shove*: past tense *shaped, shoved*, in the 14th century *shoop, shofe*; past participle *shaped, shoved*, in the 14th century *shopen, shoven*). Interestingly, irregular patterns are sometimes spread by analogy: for example, the historical past tense form of the verb *dive* is the regular *dived*, but the irregular *dove* arose in British dialects and American English during the nineteenth century; similarly *scarves, hooves*, and even *rooves* have tended to replace the historical and regular plurals *scarfs, hoofs*, and *roofs*. Analogy probably accounts for the recently developed pronunciation of *covert* (traditionally /'kʌvət/) to rhyme with *overt* and *dissect* (traditionally /dɪ'sekt/) to rhyme with *bisect* (each pair of words has a certain amount of shared meaning).

Over-regularization by analogy is seen in the early efforts at speaking English of both young children and foreign learners, who may well say *He goed, mouses, sheeps*, and so on.

Compare OVERGENERALIZATION.

analysable

Capable of being analysed; particularly used of words that can be broken down into constituent morphemes. Contrasted with **unanalysable**.

Compare *dis-interest-ed-ness* with *interest*, which cannot be analysed further into morphemes (although *in-* or *inter* are meaningful elements in other words, such as *inborn, incurable, interfaith*).

analyse

Distinguish the grammatical elements of (a sentence, phrase, or word).

There are many ways in which sentences, clauses, etc. can be analysed. Simple sentences or clauses may be analysed into subject and predicate, or into such elements as subject, verb, object, complement, and adverbial. Complex and compound sentences are often analysed into types of clauses, e.g. coordinate and subordinate; adverbial, nominal, and so on. A word may be analysed into its base and suffixes (e.g. *dis-interest-ed-ness*).

analysis

The process of breaking up sentences, phrases, and words into their constituent parts.

See also COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS, CONTRASTIVE *analysis*, DISCOURSE *analysis*, IMMEDIATE CONSTITUENT, MULTIPLE *analysis*.

analytic

1 *Morphology*. Designating a language without (or with few) inflections. Also called ISOLATING.

In an analytic language, word order plays an important role in establishing meaning. In extremely analytic languages most words consist of single morphemes. Analytic languages contrast with *synthetic* languages, which rely heavily on changing the form of words, and *agglutinative* languages, in which words are built up from smaller words or units, each contributing a bit of grammatical meaning.

English, having few inflections, is more analytic than, say, Latin or German, but it has some synthetic characteristics (e.g. *happy/happier/happiest*; *time/times*) and some agglutinative features (e.g. *mis-understand-ing*, *bio-degrad-able*).

By analogy, the contrast between analytic and synthetic is sometimes applied to features of English. Thus multi-word verb tenses (e.g. perfect *have taken*) and periphrastic adjective comparisons (e.g. *more unusual*, *most unusual*) are analytic, while corresponding single word forms (e.g. *took*; *odder/oddest*) are synthetic.

2 *Semantics*. Designating a sentence that is necessarily true by virtue of the words themselves, without reference to any particular circumstances or situation, in contrast to SYNTHETIC (2).

E.g. *The sea is wet*, which is universally true; by contrast *The sea is cold* would need to be verified at a particular place and time, and is therefore not analytic.

anaphor

1 A word or phrase that refers back to an earlier word or phrase.

In *My cousin said he was coming*, *he* is used as an anaphor for *my cousin* (which is its ANTECEDENT). But more usually *he* would be described as a PRO-FORM substituting for *my cousin*.

▮ **zero anaphor, null anaphor**: a 'space' where a word or words have been ELLIPTED (the latter being the more usual label).

anaphora

1 The use of a word or words as a substitute for a previous linguistic unit when referring back to the thing, person, happening, etc., denoted by the latter.

Pronouns and other PRO-FORMS are frequently used anaphorically to avoid repetition. But sometimes a noun is repeated, and then the identity of reference is usually shown by a marker of definiteness (*the*, *that*, etc.) in the later (*anaphoric*) reference:

> Old Mother Hubbard
> went to the cupboard
> to get her poor dog a bone;
> But when *she* got *there*,
> *the* cupboard was bare,
> and so *the* poor dog had none.

She and *there* refer back to *Old Mother Hubbard* and *the cupboard* (line 2). *The cupboard* (line 5) and *the poor dog* (line 6) refer back to lines 2 and 3.

The term anaphora is sometimes extended to include more indirect reference, e.g. *I've still got a book of nursery rhymes I had as a child, but the cover is torn.* Obviously *the cover* refers back to *the book*.

2 Loosely, a hypernym for both *anaphora* (sense 1) and CATAPHORA.

When the term is so used, the two types are then distinguished as *backwards*, *backward-looking*, or *unmarked order anaphora* (= (1) above) and *forwards*, *forward-looking*, *anticipatory*, or *marked order anaphora* (=cataphora).

• **anaphoric**: involving anaphora (*anaphoric ellipsis*: see ELLIPSIS). **anaphorically**.

> 1914 O. JESPERSEN *The little one* is used anaphorically if it means 'the little flower' or whatever it is that has just been mentioned.

Compare ANTECEDENT.

and-relations

A self-explanatory label for SYNTAGMATIC relations. Contrasted with *OR*-RELATIONS (i.e. PARADIGMATIC relationships).

Anglo-Saxon

The same as OLD ENGLISH.

animate

Denoting a living being.

The term is particularly used in the classification of nouns. Animate nouns (e.g. *girl*, *tiger*, etc.) refer to persons and animals in contrast to **inanimate**

nouns (e.g. *girlhood, zoo*) referring to things, states, and ideas. In English this distinction is almost entirely a matter of meaning, not grammar, although there is rough correspondence in some personal and relative pronouns: *he, she, who* usually have animate reference; *it, which* are mainly used in connection with inanimate referents.

anomalous finite

A finite verb form capable of forming the negative by adding *-n't* and of expressing questions by inversion.

This category includes all the MODAL verbs; all uses of *be*; *do* as an auxiliary verb; and some uses of *have* (e.g. *I haven't enough money*, but not, for example, forms using *do*-support: *I don't have enough money*).

This is a somewhat dated term for dealing with the problems of *be*, *do*, and *have*, which sometimes are, and sometimes are not, auxiliary verbs.

Compare DEFECTIVE, IRREGULAR.

antecedent

A word or words to which a following word or phrase grammatically refers back.

Typically antecedents are noun phrases to which personal and relative pronouns refer, e.g.

My brother telephoned to say he'd be late

My brother is the antecedent of *he*.

Such a grammatical relationship can exist even when the pronoun refers back not to the identical person or thing, but to a previous linguistic form, e.g.

I've lost *my umbrella* and shall have to get a new *one*

Less obviously *do, so, do so, there, then*, and a few other pro-forms can refer back to antecedents which may be verbal, adverbial, or clausal, e.g.

I *cried* more than I'd ever *done* before in my life
You could *buy a yearly season ticket*, but I don't advise *doing so*
'*Petrol prices are going up again.*' 'Who told you *that*?'

Loosely, despite the meaning of the word, the term *antecedent* is sometimes extended to refer to phrases that come later than their pro-forms, e.g.

If you see *her*, will you give *Mary* a message for me?

Compare ANAPHORA, CATAPHORA, PRO-FORM.

anterior

Phonetics. Of a speech sound: made in the front part of the mouth. Contrasted with **non-anterior**.

Anterior consonants are made with some stricture in front of the palato-alveolar area. Thus LABIAL and DENTAL sounds can be so classified.

anterior time

Time preceding some other time referred to by tense or other means.

The term is sometimes used in describing the meaning of perfect tenses. For example, in

(i) You're too late. They'*ve already left*
(ii) This time next week, he'*ll have forgotten* all about it
(iii) I realized *I had lost* my key

the perfect tenses indicate time before points in (i) the present, (ii) the future, and (iii) the past. The third type of anterior time, as in (iii), is commonly called *before-past*.

anticipated dislocation See DISLOCATION.

anticipation

Psycholinguistics. A slip of the tongue by which a linguistic element is used earlier than it should be.

This is a term used by some psycholinguists for part of what many people would call a *Spoonerism*, e.g.

The cat popped on its drawers

anticipatory

1 Anticipating the 'real' subject or (more rarely) object, when the latter is postponed until later in the sentence by EXTRAPOSITION.

In the first sentence below, *it* is an anticipatory subject, and in the second *it* is an anticipatory object:

It is better *to have loved and lost* than never to have loved at all
I take *it that you agree with me*

There is considerable confusion in the usage of the several terms available to describe various functions of the word *it*. For some grammarians, *anticipatory it* (used with extraposition) and *preparatory it* are identical, but they distinguish this usage from DUMMY (or EMPTY or PROP) *it*. Others use all or some of these terms differently, or use one of them as an umbrella term.

See also INTRODUCTORY.

2 *Phonetics & Phonology.*

Of modification to speech articulation: occurring under the influence of following sounds. Also called REGRESSIVE; contrasted with PROGRESSIVE.

In everyday speech, the /d/ sound in *good boy* may be articulated more like the following /b/ sound; or the final /s/ of *this* in *this ship* may tend towards a 'sh' sound /ʃ/. These are examples of *anticipatory assimilation* (also sometimes called *regressive assimilation*).

3 **anticipatory anaphora**: see ANAPHORA (2).

antonym

Semantics. A word opposite in meaning to another.

For example, *good*, *thick*, *few*, and *life* are antonyms of *bad*, *thin*, *many*, and *death*. More accurately we should talk of a word that is opposite in some of its meanings to other words. For example the antonym of some meanings of *old* is *young*, and of others is *new*.

Some linguists distinguish various types of opposite meaning and reserve the term *antonym* for gradable opposites (e.g. *good/bad*), excluding both COMPLEMENTARY terms (e.g. *life/death*) and relational CONVERSES (e.g. *buy/sell*, *teach/learn*, *husband/wife*).

Compare HYPONYM, SYNONYM.

• **antonymous**: that is an antonym. **antonymy**: the relationship of opposite meaning that exists between pairs of words (itself the opposite of SYNONYMY).

Compare BINARY, COMPLEMENTARY, COMPLEMENTARITY.

apex

The TIP of the tongue. See also APICAL.

aphaeresis (Pronounced /æ'fiərəsɪs/. Plural **aphaereses**.)

1 The omission of a sound at the beginning of a word, regarded as a morphological development.

The now unpronounced sounds at the beginning of *gnat*, *knight*, *psyche* are examples. This is now usually handled as a type of historical ELISION.

2 The omission of a syllable at the beginning of a word, as routinely occurs in (a) contractions or (b) clippings.

e.g. (a) I'll (=I (wi)ll), You've (=You (ha)ve), He'd better (=He (ha)d); (b) (omni)bus, (tele)phone.

This phenomenon would now be dealt with under *elision*, *contraction*, *clipping*, and so on.

This is a somewhat dated term, taken via historical linguistics from its original use in rhetoric.

aphesis (Pronounced /'æfəsɪs/.)

The gradual loss of an unstressed vowel at the beginning of a word (e.g. of *e-* from *esquire*, giving *squire*).

> 1885 *New English Dictionary* *Aphesis* . . . It is a special form of the phonetic process called *Aphaeresis*, for which, from its frequency in the history of the English language, a distinctive name is useful.

This term, which was introduced by J. A. H. Murray, editor of the *New English Dictionary* (the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*) in 1880, was used in the diachronic study of English; in phonetics the phenomenon it covers would be treated as an aspect of ELISION.

• **aphetic**: (pronounced /ə'fetɪk/) pertaining to or resulting from aphesis.

apical

Phonetics. Made with the APEX (tongue tip).

The tip of the tongue is not normally involved in the formation of English speech sounds, though it is used in the articulation of a trilled [r].

Compare LAMINAL.

apocope (Pronounced /ə'pɒkəpɪ/.)

1 The omission of a sound at the end of a word.

This has happened historically in such words as *lamb*, *damn*, and happens currently in rapid or colloquial speech, e.g. *you an(d) me*, *fish an(d) chips*, *cup o(f) tea*. The more modern term covering this phenomenon is ELISION.

2 The omission of a syllable or syllables at the end of a word.

This has happened historically with the loss, since Old English times, of many verb inflections (e.g. OE *we lufodon*, ME *we loveden*, *we lovede*, ModE *we loved*; OE *sungen*, ModE *sung*). Today it happens as a type of CLIPPING (e.g. *auto(mobile)*, *des(irable) res(idence)*, *long vac(ation)*, *spag(hetti) bol(ognese)*, *trad(itional)*).

Like *aphaeresis* and *aphesis*, *apocope* is an old term from diachronic linguistics.

Compare APHAERESIS, SYNCOPE.

apodosis (Pronounced /ə'pɒdəsɪs/. Plural **apodoses**.)

The main clause in a complex sentence, particularly in a CONDITIONAL sentence.

e.g. *I would be upset* if they found out.

apo koinou (Pronounced /'æpəʊ 'kɔɪnuː/.)

Applied to a construction consisting of two clauses which—unusually—have a word or phrase that is syntactically shared.

In *There's a man outside wants to see you, a man* is both the postponed subject of *-'s* (=*is*) and the subject of *wants*.

The term is not in general use today; such a construction would be called a BLEND or treated as deviant. But see CONTACT CLAUSE (b).

The term comes from Greek *apo koinou* 'in common'.

apostrophe

The sign (') used in order to indicate (a) the omission of a letter or letters, as in *don't*, *thro'*, the *'90s*; and (b) the modern genitive or possessive case, as in *boy's*, *men's*.

The apostrophe is rarely used in abbreviations that are no longer felt to be contractions (e.g. *(in)flu(enza)*) or in colloquial abbreviations (e.g. *info(rmation)*). *O'clock* is an obvious exception.

The possessive apostrophe originally marked the omission of *e* in writing (e.g. *fox's*, *James's*), and was equally common in the nominative plural especially of proper names and foreign words (e.g. *folio's* = *folioes*); it was gradually disused in the latter, and extended to all possessives, even where *e* had not been previously written, as in *man's, children's, conscience' sake.*

In modern English the use of the apostrophe to mark ordinary plurals (e.g. *potato's*, *ice-cream's*) is generally regarded as illiterate and is disparagingly referred to as the 'greengrocer's apostrophe'. It is usually acceptable with the less usual plurals of letters and dates, e.g.

Mind your *p's* and *q's*
That is what people did in the *1960's/1960s*

The current rules for possessive apostrophes are:

Add *'s* to a singular word (e.g. *the boy's statement, an hour's time, Doris's husband, her boss's address*)
Also add *'s* to plural words that do not end in *s* (e.g. *the men's action, the people's will*)
With plural words ending in *s* only add an apostrophe at the end (e.g. *ladies' shoes, the Lawsons' house*).

Names from ancient times ending with *s* do not necessarily follow these rules (e.g. *Socrates' death*).

It is an error to use the apostrophe with possessive pronouns (e.g. *hers, its, ours, theirs, yours*). *It's* means 'it is' or 'it has'. For 'belonging to it', the correct form is *its* (e.g. *The cat hasn't eaten its food*).

appellative

(In older grammar.) (*n.*) A common noun used as a name, particularly when addressing someone, e.g. *Mother, Sir, Doctor.*

In modern grammar, dealt with as a VOCATIVE.

(*adj.*) Of a word, especially a noun: designating a class, not an individual; common, in contrast to PROPER.

1755 S. JOHNSON As my design was a dictionary, common or appellative, I have omitted all words which have relation to proper names.

applied linguistics See LINGUISTICS.

apposition

A relationship of two (or more) words or phrases, especially noun phrases, such that the two units are grammatically parallel and have the same referent. e.g.

Our longest reigning monarch, Queen Victoria, reigned from 1837 to 1901
The second edition of *OUP's biggest dictionary, the Oxford English Dictionary*, was published in 1989

Grammarians vary in their use of the term *apposition*. In the narrowest definition (*full apposition*), both parts are noun phrases, they are identical in reference (i.e. in an *equivalence* relationship), and either part could be omitted,

as in the examples above, without affecting the grammaticality or the essential meaning of the sentence.

More loosely, apposition may include pairs of units where not all these conditions apply (*partial apposition*). One part may be a clause (see APPOSITIVE CLAUSE). Or the relationship may be one of example, not identity, e.g.

A monarch, for example a twentieth-century monarch, may have limited powers

Or the omission of one part may result in an ungrammatical sentence, e.g.

A very important person is coming—the Queen (we could not say *is coming—the Queen*)

Apposition is predominantly non-restrictive (the second part adds information but is not essential), but restrictive apposition is possible (e.g. *the author Graham Greene*).

Grammarians also disagree about whether many such structures as the following show apposition or not:

the number thirteen
my sister Mary
the expression 'greenhouse effect'

and structures joined by *of* where the two parts share identity, as in *the city of Oxford, that fool of a man.*

appositional

Of or pertaining to apposition.

• • **appositional compound**: a compound which, semantically, is a hyponym of both of its constituent words.

e.g. manservant, drummer boy, oak tree.

appositive

(*n. & adj.*) (An element) standing in apposition to another element.

1990 S. GREENBAUM & R. QUIRK Appositives need not be noun phrases; compare:
She is *bigger* than her brother, *heavier*, that is.
Sixthly and *lastly*, I reject the claim on ethical grounds.
He *angered*, nay *infuriated*, his audience.

appositive clause

A finite clause often introduced by *that*, defining and postmodifying a noun phrase, and sharing identity of reference with it, e.g.

They had the idea *that everything would be all right in the end*

Or a similar, but non-defining clause:

They ignored Wendy's very sensible suggestion, (namely) *that the police should be told*

Such clauses are grammatically distinct from relative clauses. The *that* is a conjunction, not a pronoun, so these clauses have their own subject (and object), and *which* is never possible. The preceding noun is an abstract noun, such as *belief, fact, idea.*

The term *appositive clause* can be extended to non-finite clauses, e.g.

The request, *to send money*, shocked us
My work, *looking after these old people*, is rewarding

appropriacy

Sociolinguistics. The quality of being suitable to a given social situation.

The concept of appropriacy is linked to those of FORMAL versus INFORMAL, REGISTER, and so on.

• **appropriate.**

approximant

Phonetics. A sound made with an unimpeded airflow; contrasted with STOP and FRICATIVE.

Phoneticians group speech sounds in different ways. *Approximant* is used as a general term covering sounds made in various manners of articulation.

1971 P. LADEFOGED For the moment we may consider the approximant category to be simply a convenient general term to include what others have called semivowels, laterals, and frictionless continuants (as well as vowels).

1991 P. ROACH The term 'approximant' is usually used only for consonants.

Compare CONTINUANT.

arbitrary

Lacking any physical or principled connection.

Most language is arbitrary in this sense, however systematic its grammar. There is no inherent reason why a particular domestic animal should be *dog* in English, *chien* in French, *Hund* in German, *perro* in Spanish, and *cane* in Italian.

Compare ICONIC, ONOMATOPOEIC.

archaic

Of a word or grammatical structure: no longer in ordinary use, though retained for special purposes.

archaism

1 The use of words or grammar characteristic of an earlier period of the language.

2 An instance of such usage.

Some archaisms survive in special registers, such as legal or religous language, or they are familiar from literature, proverbs, and so on. Archaisms include

(*a*) individual words, e.g.

albeit
methinks
perchance

thou/thine/thee/thy
whence
whereat
ye

(*b*) verbal inflections, e.g.

goeth
knowest

and (*c*) some grammatical structures, e.g.

Our Father, *which art* in heaven (= *who are*)
He who hesitates is lost (= *Anyone who*)
All that glisters *is not* gold (= *Not everything that . . . is . . .*)
We *must away* (= *must go/leave/be off*)
Would that I could help (= *I wish*)
So be it
If it *please* your lordship
He has come but once in *these two years past*

argument

Semantics. A major element in a proposition.

The term is used in a technical sense from predicate calculus, as a part of logical semantics. Roughly speaking, an argument is the person, other animate being, or inanimate entity involved in the action of the verb.

1984 R. HUDDLESTON Semantic predicates may be classified according to the number of arguments they take. Thus "love" (the semantic predicate expressed by **love**) takes two; "sleep" (as in *Ed was sleeping*) takes one; "give" (as in *Ed gave me the key*) takes three.

The term hardly appears in mainstream grammar, where the phenomenon would be dealt with in terms of *intransitive*, *transitive*, *ditransitive verbs* etc.

article

A name for *the* (**definite article**) and *a, an* (**indefinite article**).

The articles are sometimes classified as a distinct part of speech. Earlier grammarians considered them to be a special kind of adjective.

1711 J. GREENWOOD There are two *articles*, *a* and *the*. These are really Nouns Adjective, and are used almost after the same Manner as other Adjectives. Therefore I have not made the Article (as some have done) a distinct Part of Speech.

In fact articles are much more like DETERMINERS than adjectives in their usage, and modern grammarians usually classify them as a subclass of determiner.

See also ZERO *article*.

articulate

Phonetics. Produce a speech sound.

See ARTICULATION.

articulation

Phonetics. The physical production of speech sounds.

Speech sounds are described in terms of both their PLACE and their MANNER of articulation. For example, English [p], [b], and [m] are bilabial sounds (made with both lips). In manner, [p] and [b] are plosives: that is, they are made by a complete closure followed by a release (an 'explosion') of air; [p] is voiceless and [b] is voiced. By contrast, [m] is articulated in a nasal manner, for though the lips are closed during its articulation, air escapes through the nose.

Compare COARTICULATION, DOUBLE ARTICULATION.

articulator

Phonetics.

1 A movable vocal organ.

> 1942 B. BLOCH & G. L. TRAGER The vocal organs are conveniently divided into two kinds: *articulators*, organs which can be moved more or less freely and can thus be made to assume a variety of positions; and *points of articulation*, fixed points or areas lying above the articulators, which these may touch or approach.

2 Any vocal organ, moving or not, involved in the production of speech sounds.

In this second usage, the moving organs may be termed *active articulators* and the others *passive articulators*.

articulatory

Phonetics. Of or pertaining to vocal articulation.

The International Phonetic Alphabet is largely based on articulatory features.

• • **articulatory phonetics**: the branch of phonetics concerned with the ways in which speech sounds are physically articulated.

> 1964 R. H. ROBINS Speech can therefore be studied in phonetics from three points of view. 1. It can be studied primarily as the activity of the speaker in terms of the articulatory organs and processes involved; this is called articulatory phonetics.

Compare ACOUSTIC PHONETICS, AUDITORY PHONETICS, SYLLABLE.

artificial language

A specially invented language, usually intended as a means of international communication.

Esperanto is perhaps the best known artificial language, but many others have been invented.

aspect

A category used in describing how the action of a verb is marked.

English is often considered to have two aspects: PROGRESSIVE (as in *I am/was writing to Robert*), which stresses action in progress (or incomplete action); and PERFECT or PERFECTIVE (as in *I have written to Robert*), which stresses completed action. This distinction of incomplete versus complete meaning is an oversimplification. More seriously, the analysis of 'perfect tenses' as showing aspect is itself disputed. See also PHASE (3).

Traditionally both aspects are treated as part of the tense system in English, and we commonly speak of tenses such as the present progressive (e.g. *We are waiting*) or even the past perfect progressive (e.g. *We had been waiting*), which combines two aspects. There is a distinction to be made, however, between tense and aspect. Tense is more concerned with past time versus present time and is based on morphological form (e.g. *write, writes, wrote*); aspect is concerned with duration, and in English is a matter of syntax, using parts of *be* to form the progressive, and of *have* to form the perfective.

• **aspectual**: of or pertaining to an aspect or aspects.

Aspects model, Aspects theory. See STANDARD *theory*.

aspirate

Phonetics.

(*n*.) (Pronounced /'æspərət/.) (In popular parlance) the sound of *h*.

This use is illustrated by the old joke:

A: I've got a 'orrible 'eadache.
B: What you need is a couple of aspirates.

In phonetic terms English /*h*/ is a voiceless glottal fricative.

The use of *aspirate* by grammarians of the past to mean 'fricative' (e.g. *th, ph,* etc.) is now obsolete.

(*v*.) (Pronounced /'æspəreɪt/.) Articulate (a sound) with an audible release of air.

In English the term is relevant to the description of plosives. The voiceless plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ are aspirated in the final stage of their articulation when in initial position in a stressed syllable (e.g. *pun, two, careful*). In contrast, the same phonemes have little or no aspiration when initial in unstressed syllables (*per*'mission), when preceded by *s* (*s*tory), or in final position, i.e. followed by silence (Bad luc*k*!). See also ASPIRATION.

• **aspirated**: articulated with an audible release of air (contrasted with **unaspirated**).

Aspirated and *voiceless* articulations often occur together, but are distinct phenomena. *Voiced* and *voiceless* refer to the state of the vocal cords throughout the articulation of a phoneme; *aspirated* and *unaspirated* refer to the final release stage of plosion.

> 1971 P. LADEFOGED Aspirated and unaspirated refer to the state of the vocal cords during and immediately after the release of an articulatory stricture. In any aspirated sound the vocal cords are in the voiceless position during the release; in an unaspirated sound they are in a voiced position during this period.

aspiration

Phonetics. (Articulation accompanied by) an audible release of air.

> 1962 A. C. GIMSON The fortis series, /p,t,k/, when initial in an accented syllable, are usually accompanied by aspiration, i.e. there is a voiceless interval consisting of strongly expelled breath between the release of the plosive and the onset of a following vowel. When /l,r,w,j/ follow /p,t,k/ in such positions, the aspiration is manifested in the devoicing of /l,r,w,j/, e.g. in *please, pray, try, clean, twice, quick, pew, tune, queue.*

assertion

Pragmatics. A declaration that something is true.

In general, assertions tend to be made in grammatically positive sentences. Nevertheless, assertion is a pragmatic rather than a grammatical category, and other syntactical forms can make an assertion, e.g.

> Isn't it hot today? (= it is hot today)
> Wrong number! (= you have dialled/I got a wrong number)
> If you believe that, you'll believe anything (= you cannot possibly believe that)

assertive

Of words and other sentence elements: typically used in positive statements; contrasted with NON-ASSERTIVE elements (typical of questions and negative statements).

Certain determiners, pronouns, and adverbs which, by reason of their meaning, are more usual in positive statements, are replaced by a corresponding set of *non-assertive* forms in negative and interrogative statements. Assertive forms include the *some* series of words (*some, someone, somewhere,* etc.) and adverbs such as *already*, which contrast with the non-assertive *any*-series and adverbs such as *yet*. Compare, for example:

> I've already planted some spring bulbs

with:

> I haven't planted any bulbs yet
> Have you planted any yet?

The demarcation between assertive and non-assertive is not rigid. Although non-assertive forms are often impossible in positive statements (e.g. **I've already planted any*), assertive forms may be possible in questions and negative clauses, where they suggest a markedly positive meaning (e.g. *Have you planted some bulbs already?*). Non-assertive forms occasionally occur in positive statements (e.g. *Any* small bulbs would be suitable).

• • **assertive territory**: a term applied to the whole predication in positive statements, an area where assertive forms may be expected.

Similarly the predication of negative statements and questions is *non-assertive territory*. Non-assertive territory also includes clauses expressing other kinds of tentativeness, such as condition (e.g. *If anyone calls*, say I'm designing St Paul's).

Compare NEGATIVE.

• **assertiveness**: the fact of being assertive.

1985 R. QUIRK et al. The contrast between assertiveness and non-assertiveness is basically a logical one.

assimilate

Phonetics. Make or become more similar in articulation (to an adjacent sound); (of use to) undergo assimilation.

1970 B. M. H. STRANG In the word *Tuesday* the opening sequence /tj/ can readily assimilate to /tʃ/ . . . Early NE [New English] had assimilated /dj/ to /dʒ/ and /tj/ to /tʃ/.

See ASSIMILATION.

assimilation

Phonetics. The effect on a speech sound of the articulation of other adjacent sounds; a kind of COARTICULATION.

This is a common feature of speech, though one that many native speakers are unaware of. In *anticipatory assimilation* (or *regressive assimilation*), the sound is influenced in its articulation by the following sound and not pronounced as it would be in isolation. For example, in some people's pronunciation of *width* the voiced /d/ has been assimilated to /t/ by the following voiceless /θ/, and in some people's pronunciation of *length*, the velar /ŋ/ has been assimilated to /n/ by the following dental /θ/.

In current speech, assimilation frequently occurs across word boundaries, as when *that case* becomes /ðæk keɪs/ or *this shop* becomes /ðɪʃ ʃɒp/ or *ten more* becomes /tem mɔː/.

A reverse type of assimilation (*progressive assimilation*) is found when a sound is changed by the influence of a previous one. This is an established and regular feature of the ending *-s* of verbs and nouns, which usually has a voiced /z/ sound (or /ɪz/ after all sibilants) but after voiceless sounds other than sibilants is /s/ (e.g. *taps*, *heats*, *dock's*, *griefs*, *Keith's*; compare *tabs*, *heeds*, *dog's*, *grieves*, *youths*, *eyes*, *seems*, *runs*, *dolls*, *pieces*, *daisies*.) Similarly the past tense *-ed* ending /d/ or /id/ is devoiced to a /t/ sound after a voiceless consonant other than *-t* itself (*roped*, *lacked*, *bussed*, *roofed*, *pushed* versus *robed*, *lagged*, *buzzed*, *grooved*, *rouged*, *hated*, *headed*).

In *coalescent assimilation* (or *reciprocal assimilation*), there is a two-way influence. Historically this has occurred in words like *soldier*, *picture*, or *fissure*, where the reconstructable earlier pronunciation ['sɔuldjər], ['pɪktjuːr], ['fɪsjuːr] has become ['səʊldʒə], ['pɪktʃə], ['fɪʃə]. In current colloquial English, similar assimilation occurs in phrases such as *What d'you want?* /wɒtʃə wɒnt/ or *Could you?* /'kʊdʒuː/. This coalescent assimilation is also known as *yod coalescence*.

asyndetic

Not connected by conjunctions. Contrasted with **syndetic**.

The term is particularly applied to the coordination of words or clauses without an overt marker, as in

I came, I saw, I conquered.
Sad, white, frightened, her face was the picture of misery.

Such coordination is less usual than coordination with a conjunction and is therefore stylistically marked.

Compare PARATACTIC.

asyndeton

The omission of a conjunction. (Chiefly a rhetorical term.)

attachment rule

The 'rule' that the notional subject of a subjectless subordinate clause has the same referent as the subject of the superordinate clause.

This 'rule', sometimes called the *subject-attachment rule*, is a regular characteristic of English syntax, e.g.

Set loose by a freer economy and the easing of travel restrictions, they were selling fruit between one province and another

where it is the *they* of the main clause who were *set loose*.

There are exceptions where the rule need not apply, but failure to observe it often results in absurd MISRELATED constructions or HANGING PARTICIPLES.

attitudinal

Semantics. Relating to attitude or conveying an attitude.

A category of meaning (contrasted with COGNITIVE or REFERENTIAL meaning). Comparable terms sometimes used are AFFECTIVE or EMOTIVE.

A speaker or writer's choice of words may be affected by his or her attitude to the listeners or readers addressed. Thus *attitudinal varieties* of language (e.g. formal, informal, neutral, casual, slangy) contrast with regional or social varieties (determined largely by the speaker's origins), and with varieties affected by the 'field of discourse' (such as the journalistic, the literary, and so on). Attitudinal meaning is also conveyed by INTONATION in spoken English.

Compare CONNOTATIVE, INTERPERSONAL.

Many individual words are neutral as regards attitudinal meaning, but some are not. Compare *offspring, child, kiddy* or *terrorist, insurgent, guerilla, freedom fighter*.

• • **attitudinal disjunct**: the same as CONTENT DISJUNCT.

attitudinal past: the past tense used to express the speaker's attitude, usually a tentative one, rather than to refer to past time; e.g., *Did you want something?, I was hoping you could help*.

attitudinal prefix: a prefix that primarily describes an attitude, e.g. *anti*-social, *pro*-American.

attraction

The same as *proximity* AGREEMENT.

attribute

1 An adjective or noun preceding a noun and describing or expressing a characteristic of the noun; e.g. *new* in *the new library* or *power* in *power struggle*.

2 An adjective (phrase) or noun (phrase) acting as subject or object COMPLEMENT, and identifying or adding information about the subject or object, as *capable* in *She seems capable*, or *a capable person* in *We find her a capable person*.

The second meaning is less general than the first and also potentially confusing, although, etymologically, the sense is 'a word or phrase denoting an attribute of a person or thing' however that may be expressed within the sentence.

See ATTRIBUTIVE, PREDICATIVE.

attributive

1 Designating (the position in a sentence taken by) a noun or adjective that is an attribute (sense 1); contrasted with PREDICATIVE.

Some adjectives can only stand in attributive position (e.g. *former, inner, mere, lone, main, indoor*). Nouns used attributively cannot normally be transferred to predicative use (**the effect is greenhouse*, **this holiday is bank*), though a small number of predicative uses of nouns may be the historical result of such a transfer (e.g. *She is frightfully county, So Regency, my dear*).

Attributive adjectives are sometimes classified in more detail according to meaning. Subclasses include INTENSIFYING *adjective* (e.g. *pure invention, utter madness, total stranger*), RESTRICTIVE *adjective* (also called LIMITING or LIMITER ADJECTIVE) (e.g. *a certain person, the main trouble, that very day*), and adjectives related to nouns (*the criminal code, medical students*).

2 (In Systemic-Functional Grammar.) Designating any relationship in which an attribute is ascribed to an entity.

This may be a quality (e.g. *sensible* in *She is sensible*), a circumstance (e.g. *in the garden* in *She is in the garden*), or a possession (e.g. *a lovely garden* in *She has a lovely garden*).

• **attributively**.

auditory phonetics

The study of speech sounds from the point of view of the listener, concerned with the way the ears and brain process and perceive the speech sounds reaching them.

Compare ACOUSTIC PHONETICS, ARTICULATORY *phonetics*.

autosemantic

Semantics. (*n. & adj.*) (A word or phrase) that has meaning outside a context or in isolation.

> 1962 S. ULLMAN Full words are 'autosemantic', meaningful in themselves, whereas articles, prepositions, . . and the like are 'synsemantic', meaningful only when they occur in the company of other words.

Since most lexicographers manage to ascribe meanings to all words, and not merely to 'full' words, and even many full words change meaning according to context, the term is obviously somewhat relative.

Compare FULL *word.*

auxiliary

(*n. & adj.*) (A verb) used in forming tenses, moods, and voices of other verbs. In older grammar called *helping verb.*

(*a*) The verbs used for this purpose in English include *be*, *do*, *have*, and the MODAL verbs (sometimes called the *modal auxiliaries*).

An auxiliary cannot function as the only verb in a complete sentence. Apparent exceptions to this principle are in fact examples of ellipsis or substitution. Auxiliaries thus contrast functionally with MAIN verbs.

(*b*) On formal grounds an auxiliary can also be defined as a member of a class that is grammatically distinct from other verbs, notably in the way in which it forms questions by inversion of subject and verb (e.g. *Are you ready?*, *Can you help?*; but not **Want you to help?*) and negatives by simply adding *-n't* (e.g. *They aren't*, *We mustn't*, *She doesn't*; but not **She wantn't*). (See NICE PROPERTIES.) Auxiliary verbs thus contrast with LEXICAL verbs (*full verbs*), which form questions and negatives with (auxiliary) *be*, *do*, and *have*.

Both definitions fit the modal verbs. The verbs *be*, *do*, and *have*, however, present problems, since they can be used both in an auxiliary function and as the MAIN verb of a sentence, and *do* as a main verb uses *DO*-SUPPORT for questions and negatives, unlike *be* and *have*. In some grammatical models, therefore, the terms *auxiliary* and *main* are reserved for the functional role of verbs in sentence structure, and other terms are used for the formal classifications.

> 1985 R. QUIRK et al. We shall find good grounds for distinguishing 'auxiliary' and 'main', as functional terms, from the terms which define classes of word. Of these, there are three: MODAL verbs . . always function as auxiliaries; FULL verbs . . always function as main verbs; and PRIMARY verbs . . can function either as auxiliaries or as main verbs.

See also SEMI-AUXILIARY.

a-word

A word beginning with the syllable *a* and belonging to a class of words (some more like adjectives, the others more like adverbs) that mainly function predicatively.

Grammarians have variously classified *a-words* as adjectives and as adverbs, but few even among the adjective-like ones can be used in attributive position, e.g.

The children were afraid/alone/ashamed/awake

but not

*An afraid/alone/ashamed/awake child was crying

Some of the more adjective-like words can be used attributively if modified, for example:

You see before you a very ashamed person

and some can be modified by *much* (which typically goes with verbs), e.g.

I am very much afraid that . . .

The more adverb-like *a*-words can follow verbs of motion, e.g.

They've gone abroad/aground/away

Some *a*-adverbs have identical prepositions, e.g. *aboard, above, across, along, around*, etc., as in

We hurried along (adverb)
We hurried along the road (preposition)

There are also some words beginning with *a-* which are prepositions only (e.g. *amid, among*), but prepositions are usually excluded from the *a*-word category.

B

back

Phonetics. Of a speech sound: made in the back part of the mouth.

Vowel sounds are traditionally classified into *back*, CENTRAL, and FRONT vowels, the back vowels being made with the tongue humped towards the back of the mouth. The English back vowels are the vowels as pronounced by a standard speaker in:

hard [hɑːd]	hot [hɒt]
law [lɔː]	food [fuːd]

Among English consonants, the somewhat vowel-like h-sound /h/ and the non-standard GLOTTAL STOP /ʔ/ are both far back sounds, but there are no 'throaty' pharyngeal sounds like those that occur in Arabic and some other languages.

Compare UVULAR, VELAR.

back-formation

Morphology. The formation of a new word by the removal of (real or apparent) affixes etc. from an existing word; a word that is an instance of this.

A back-formation is revealed by the fact that the date of its first use is later than that of its apparent derivative. The majority of back-formations in English are verbs.

Examples in English are:

burgle (L19)	from *burglar* (M16)
caretake (L19)	from *caretaker* (M19)
housekeep (M19)	from *housekeeping* (M16)
liaise (E20)	from *liaison* (M17)
reminisce (E19)	from *reminiscence* (L16)
scavenge (M17)	from *scavenger* (M16, from earlier *scavager*)
shoplift (E19)	from *shoplifting* (L17)

backshift

(*n.*) The changing of a present tense to a past tense in a subordinate clause under the influence of a past tense in the main clause

e.g. I didn't apply for the job, although I was female and had the right degree

Where logically present tenses would be possible.

When using the past tense of a reporting verb (e.g. *He said, They thought, I remarked*) it is common to shift the tenses of the words spoken or thought

into past tenses too. Thus

'I am sorry I haven't asked them yet. I will.'

may (with backshift) become

Mark said he was sorry he hadn't asked them yet, but he would.

Similarly a past tense (*'I asked them'*) may become a past perfect (*He said he had asked them*).

Backshift (sometimes known as the *sequence of tense rule*) is not, however, automatic. Importantly, if the time frame of the person writing or speaking is the same as that of the original speaker whose words are being reported, tenses do not need to change:

He said he wouldn't / He said he won't } be around in the year 2050.

(v.) Change (a tense) in this way.

1985 R. QUIRK et al. The past subjunctive . . or hypothetical past . . is backshifted to *hypothetical past perfective if there is a change in time reference.*

Compare FREE *indirect speech*.

backwards anaphora See ANAPHORA.

bahuvrihi

Morphology. Of a compound noun: having the meaning 'a person or thing possessing a certain characteristic'.

The term is derived from a Sanskrit word, formed from *bahu* 'much' and *vrihi* 'rice', and literally meaning 'having much rice'. In English grammar it is usually applied to compounds with a non-literal meaning that cannot be deduced from the literal meaning of the separate parts. It is particularly used of somewhat pejorative words, in which some unflattering attribute stands for the person alleged to possess it. English compounds of this type include:

blockhead (M16)	hunchback (E18)
butterfingers (M19)	lazybones (L16)
egghead (E20)	loudmouth (M20)
fathead (M19)	paleface (E15)
highbrow (L19)	*scatterbrain* (L18)

The term is sometimes used in a wider sense to include other compounds in which the head element cannot be equated with the whole. For example, just as an *egghead* or a *scatterbrain* is a person, not a kind of head or brain, so a *hardback* is not a type of back, but a book with this characteristic.

Compare EXOCENTRIC.

bare infinitive

The infinitive of a verb without a preceding *to* particle.

Bare infinitives are thus identical with the BASE form of the verb. They are used after

the main modal verbs; e.g. *I must go, I shall return!* and can occur with semi-modals; e.g. *You needn't bother*
the verb *do* in questions and negatives; e.g. *Does he know? They didn't say*
verbs of perception; e.g. *We saw/heard them go, I felt it bite me* (these verbs can also be followed by *-ing* forms)
the verbs *make* and *let*; e.g. *Make/let them wait*
a few fixed expressions; e.g. *make do, make believe, (live and) let live, let go*
and in various other patterns; e.g. *I'd rather try than do nothing.*

A bare infinitive is only rarely interchangeable with a TO-INFINITIVE, and some of the verbs listed above need a *to*-infinitive when used in the passive, e.g. *We were made to wait.* The verb *help* is unusual, in that both the bare infinitive and the *to*-infinitive are often possible, e.g. *Please help (me) (to) do the washing-up.*

base

Morphology.

1 The basic or uninflected form of a verb. Also **base form**.

Go, *like*, and *sing* are bases or base forms, in contrast to *went*, *likes*, *sang*, which are not.

The base form of a verb functions (*a*) non-finitely

as the infinitive (e.g. *You must go*).

(*b*) finitely

as the imperative (e.g. *Listen!, Be quiet, Have a biscuit*)
as the present indicative tense for all persons other than the third person singular (e.g. *I always listen* as opposed to *He always listens*) (the verb *be* is an exception to this)
as the so-called present subjunctive (*They insisted that he listen*).

2 A basic element in word-formation. Also **base morpheme**.

(*a*) Usually the base is an irreducible 'core', to which one or more affixes are attached; e.g. *sing* + *-s* = *sings*, *great* + *-er* = *greater*, *great* + *-ly* = *greatly*. *Infectious* consists of a base *infect* + a suffix *-ious*; *indiscreet* consists of the negative prefix *in-* + the base *discreet*.

(*b*) Various problems arise however in the analysis of some less simple words, which sometimes do not consist merely of an affix or collection of affixes attached to a core word. For example, *unanswerable* consists of the negative prefix *un-*, the word *answer*, and the suffix *-able*. But we do not normally have a word **unanswer*; we can only attach *un-* to *answerable*.

A related problem is this: we can sometimes analyse a word as containing an affix, but what remains is not recognizable as a core word. *Gratuitous* apparently has the adjective suffix *-ous* (compare *pompous, monstrous, outrageous*), just as *gratuity* has a noun suffix *-y*, but we do not recognize *gratuit-* as a word.

Some linguists reserve the term *base* for units of these two types (*answerable* in the context of *unanswerable* and the incomplete form *gratuit-*). They may then refer to units such as *answer, sing, great* (as core words to which

additions can be made as in 1 above) as ROOTS or STEMS. Thus *base* may be seen 'basic' than *stem* or *root*.

This is, however, an area where terminology is confused.

1985 R. QUIRK et al. In some linguistic descriptions the minimal unit in morphology and word formation is called 'morpheme', with the further distinctions 'inflectional morpheme' (eg: plural *-s*), 'free morpheme' or minimal free form (eg: *pole*), 'bound morpheme' (eg: *un-*, *jeal-*), with the latter necessarily further subdivided between 'affixal morpheme' (eg: *un-*) and 'stem morpheme' (or 'root' or 'lexical morpheme', eg: *jeal-*). What we are calling BASE might in this framework be termed 'base morpheme'. It should be noted that linguists differ in their terminology for these distinctions, some reversing our use of STEM and BASE, others using 'root' for what in this book is called 'stem'.

3 **base component**: (in Generative Grammar) a major part of the grammatical apparatus, along with such other constituents as the TRANSFORMATIONAL *component*.

In the Aspects model, the *base component* contains the categorial and the lexical sub-components.

1980 E. K. BROWN & J. E. MILLER These two—the . . phrase structure rules and the lexicon—comprise what is referred to as the 'base component'.

Basic English

A variety of the English language, comprising a select vocabulary of 850 words, invented by C. K. Ogden, of Cambridge, and intended for use as a medium of international communication.

The word *basic* was a clever acronym for *British American Scientific International Commercial* (*English*). Ogden's book, *Basic English*, was published in 1931, and the idea enjoyed some vogue. But the language produced tended to be unnatural and un-English, an artificial language rather than simplified English.

Basic English is not to be confused with the computer language called BASIC, or Basic, an acronym for *Beginners' All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code*.

basilect

Sociolinguistics.

1 Specifically, in a community in which a CREOLE has been current (a post-creole community), the social dialect that is furthest away from the standard language and nearest to the creole.

2 More generally, the least prestigious variety of a language. The term can be used to describe dialects of people speaking English as their mother-tongue, and may also be applied in communities where English is used as a second or third language.

A basilect is closer to the standard language of which it is a version than either a creole or a PIDGIN.

See ACROLECT, MESOLECT.

- **basilectal**: of, pertaining to, or characteristic of a basilect.

  1977 J. T. PLATT Basilectal Singapore English is not a creole but what I have termed a 'creoloid'. It did not develop from a pidgin in the typical manner of a creole . . . There is a gap between the most basilectal form of Singapore English and the English-lexicon pidgins used in Singapore.

BBC English

Standard English, as supposedly spoken by professional BBC broadcasters.

In its early days the British Broadcasting Corporation encouraged a standard non-regional 'educated' accent among its broadcasters. The policy was established by the first managing director, John Reith, who sought 'a style or quality of English that would not be laughed at in any part of the country' and was implemented by the Advisory Committee on Spoken English, established by Reith in 1926 and succeeded, during the Second World War, by the BBC Pronunciation Unit. BBC policy has been considerably modified since the 1950s, and 'BBC English' is now only one of the accents heard from newsreaders, announcers, and other programme presenters.

Compare RP.

before-past See PAST PERFECT.

benefactive

(*n. & adj.*) (Indicating) the case or role taken by a noun (or noun phrase) referring to a person or animal that is intended to benefit from the action of the verb. Contrasted with RECIPIENT.

In an inflected language such as Latin, *benefactive* could describe the meaning of the dative case. In English this 'intended recipient' meaning is often indicated by a *for-* phrase. In

I bought her a present
I bought this for you
She got the poor dog a bone
He found himself a job

her, *you*, *the poor dog*, and *himself* have benefactive meaning. Some grammarians call objects that allow a prepositional construction with *for* '*benefactive objects*': so they distinguish between *her* in *I gave her a present* (recipient role) and *her* in *I bought her a present* (benefactive role).

Compare DATIVE.

beneficiary

Semantics. The person (or animal) who benefits from the action of the verb; see BENEFACTIVE.

bilabial

Phonetics (*n. & adj.*) (A speech sound) made with closed or nearly closed lips.

The English bilabials are /p/, /b/, and /m/, as in *pan*, *ban*, and *man*.

(Compare LABIAL, LABIO-DENTAL.

bilateral

Phonetics. With the air released around both sides of the tongue.

A bilateral articulation is the normal articulation of LATERAL sounds in English. It contrasts with *unilateral* articulation, by which the air, unusually, is released around one side only.

bilingual

(*adj*.)

1 Able to speak two languages fluently.

2 Spoken or written in two languages (e.g. *a bilingual dictionary*).

(*n*.) A person who speaks two languages fluently.

• **bilingualism**, (rarely) **bilinguality**.

(Compare AMBILINGUAL.

binary

1 Designating or relating to a pair of features in a language which are *mutually exclusive, or the opposition between them.*

(*a*) *Phonetics*. The contrasts between nasal and non-nasal or voiced and voiceless articulations are said to be *binary oppositions* or *binary features*. Such features are sometimes marked with a plus or minus sign. Thus /p/ is characterized as [-voice] and /b/ as [+voice].

(Compare DISTINCTIVE FEATURE.

(*b*) Binary (dichotomous) contrasts are a notable feature of vocabulary, which contains many pairs of words of opposite meaning. The phenomenon is often dealt with under *antonymy*. Antonyms, however, include, or may be restricted to, gradable pairs (e.g. *good/bad*, *high/low*), whereas binary opposition, strictly speaking, characterizes pairs with an ungradable, all-or-nothing contrast (sometimes called *complementaries*), such as *alive/dead*, *married/single*, *human/non-human* (contrast the gradable *inhuman*). *Converse* relations (e.g. *buy/sell*, *husband/wife*) can also be considered binary.

(*c*) In Generative Grammar, both syntactic and semantic binary contrasts are made. Nouns, for example, can be characterized as + or − ANIMATE, + or − ABSTRACT. An alternative notation for [+ or −] is [±]. The system has considerable limitations, since by no means all syntax or vocabulary lends itself to this kind of either/or analysis.

(Compare COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS.

2 **binary noun**: the same as SUMMATION *plural*.

binding See GOVERNMENT-BINDING THEORY.

binomial

A phrase containing two parallel units joined by a conjunction, in which the order is relatively fixed. Sometimes called *irreversible binomial.*

e.g.

blood and thunder	ladies and gentlemen
heaven and hell	one and all
highways and byways	thick and thin
knife and fork	

Compare FIXED PHRASE.

biunique

Phonology. Consisting of or characterized by one-to-one correspondence between sound and phoneme.

The term is used in some theories of phonology that assert that there is a 'reversible' correspondence between phonemes and the sounds (ALLOPHONES) by which they are realized. But this idea is disputed.

•• **biuniquely. biuniqueness.**

blade

Phonetics. The tapering section of the front of the tongue, immediately behind the tip. Also called *lamina.*

In describing how speech sounds are articulated it is useful to label the speech organs in some detail. Tip, blade, and sides (rims) of the tongue articulate with the teeth in making the English *th*-sounds, /θ/ as in *theatre* and /ð/ as in *then.* Consonants primarily involving the blade are /t/, /d/, /s/, and /z/.

blend

A word, phrase, or construction formed by the merging of parts of two other linguistic elements.

(*a*) *Morphology.* Examples of *lexical blends* (also called *blend words, word blends*) are:

bit (= binary + digit) (M20)
brunch (= breakfast + lunch) (L19)
camcorder (= camera + recorder) (L20)
fantabulous (= fantastic + fabulous) (M20)
smog (= smoke + fog) (E20)
televangelist (= television + evangelist) (L20)
motel (= motor + hotel) (E20)

Note that while most blends are formed by joining a pair of words at the point where they have one or more letters or sounds in common (e.g. *mo*tor + *ho*tel), a few are not formed in this way (e.g. *brunch, camcorder*).

(*b*) Syntactic blends include such structures as

I would have liked to have done it (*I would have liked to do it* + *I would like to have done it*)

Neither claim impressed us, nor seemed genuine (*Neither claim impressed us or seemed genuine* + *The claims neither impressed us nor seemed genuine*)

I do not dare refuse ((modal) I *dare not* refuse + (ordinary verb) I *do not dare* to refuse)

This is a general term covering various types of structure, which might be regarded as merely stylistically awkward, or as grammatically dubious or anacoluthic. A dated term for a particular type of blend is APO KOINOU.

• **blending**: the process by which a blend is formed.

Compare CONTAMINATION.

block language

A type of structure different from normal clause or sentence structure, but often conveying a complete message.

Block language is found especially in notices and newspaper headlines. It sometimes consists of single noun phrases (e.g. *No exit, Essex's snappy reply to a negative image*). Other block language has a sort of abbreviated clause structure, with articles, auxiliary verbs, and other minor words omitted (e.g. *Tanks met by rain of stones, 19 dockers dismissed unfairly, Jailed racing driver's bail request rejected*).

Bloomfieldian

(*n*.) An adherent of the linguistic theories of Leonard Bloomfield, the American linguist (1887–1949).

(*adj*.) Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of Bloomfield or his theories.

Bloomfield's book, *Language* (1933), became an influential textbook, particularly in the United States. The approach is associated with STRUCTURAL *linguistics* and with theories of behaviourist psychology, and the reaction against this position led to the development of GENERATIVE GRAMMAR in the 1950s and 1960s.

borrow

Morphology. Take (and often adapt) (a word) from another language.

borrowing

Morphology. The taking over of a word from a foreign language; a word so borrowed (also called a LOANWORD).

The term is somewhat misleading, since 'borrowed' words usually become a permanent, not a temporary, part of the borrowing language. Many borrowings are modified to bring them into line with the phonological rules of their new language.

As has often been remarked, the richness of the English vocabulary is in large part due to borrowing from many other languages of the world, sometimes in

such a way as to allow fine denotative, connotative, or stylistic distinctions between semantically related or nearly synonymous words to grow up.

Loanwords attain different degrees of assimilation into the language. Some are totally assimilated to the native word-stock and are phonetically and orthographically integrated (e.g. *butter*, *fail*, *gas*, *umbrella*). Others are fully part of the English vocabulary, but retain traces of their foreign origin in their pronunciation, spelling, or inflection (e.g. *addendum*, *phenomenon*, *genre*, *faux pas*). A third group may be well assimilated in their form, but remain semantically tied to a foreign context (e.g. *matador*, *rajah*, *sampan*, *samurai*, *tundra*). Finally, there is a category (into which all loanwords must initially fall) of words which have not yet achieved general currency but occur in very limited contexts, such as during an English-speaker's stay in a foreign country, in news and current affairs, or in travel writing, books on foreign cuisine, anthropological works, etc. Examples would vary from one person's vocabulary to another's, but might include *desaparecido*, *intifada*, *peshmerga*, *tiramisu*, and *Waldsterben*.

Surprisingly few words have been borrowed into English from the neighbouring Celtic languages (Welsh, Gaelic, and Irish). *Bannock* and *crag* are among the few early borrowings from Old British; *coracle* and *flannel* came from Welsh later; *clan*, *slogan*, and *whisky* from Gaelic; and *banshee*, *galore*, and *shamrock* from Irish.

Borrowing from Latin has been constant from the very earliest times, and has always included quite central vocabulary items, such as *cheese*, *kiln*, *pillow*, and *tile*, borrowed before Old English was recorded. Later Latin loans tended to originate in a learned context but many have since become general (e.g. *focus*, *inflate*, *orbit*). Many Latin loanwords have come, virtually unchanged, through the intermediary of French (e.g. *condition*, *oracle*, *superior*) and in the same way, many borrowings from ancient Greek have come through Latin (e.g. *abyss*, *cemetery*, *history*), though some are direct loans (e.g. *acme*, *kudos*, *rhizome*).

The Scandinavian settlement in late Old English times had a marked effect on the English vocabulary: Danish- and English-speaking communities lived side by side for some time, so that penetration was deep and all-pervasive. Even form words, such as *they*, *them*, *their*, *though*, and *near*, were borrowed. Nearly all early Scandinavian loanwords are central items such as *cast*, *egg*, *law*, *take*.

French has contributed more than any other language to the English vocabulary, starting with the earliest post-Conquest loanwords (e.g. *castle*, *prison*, *war*). Borrowing at all levels of vocabulary was especially heavy during the later middle ages, greatly affecting the core vocabulary (e.g. *age*, *blue*, *chase*, *front*, *people*, *search*, and so on); more recent borrowing has been mostly at the learned and cultured level (e.g. *avant-garde*, *surrealism*).

Other important European sources of loanwords have been Dutch (e.g. *brandy*, *deck*, *hoist*), Low German (e.g. *hawker*, *smuggle*) and, of course, Italian (e.g. *motto*, *semolina*) and Spanish (*alligator*, *mosquito*).

Loanwords from outside Europe tended, in the earlier period of exploration, to come through other languages such as Dutch and Portuguese. As English-

speaking settlements grew up, first in North America and then in other parts of the world, and as Britain imposed its political and commercial domination during the nineteenth century, direct borrowings came from a large number of other languages, e.g. *sheikh* (Arabic), *boomerang*, *kangaroo* (Australian Aboriginal), *lychee* (Chinese), *taboo* (Tongan), *mocassin*, *skunk* (Algonquian), *judo*, *tycoon* (Japanese), *caddy*, *rattan* (Malay), *thug* (Hindi), *bungalow* (Gujarati), etc.

Owing to migration, ease of travel, mass communication, and similar factors, words of foreign origin abound in present-day English speech and writing, particularly in the fields of cookery, the arts, and politics. It is difficult to predict whether any given word will become part of the vocabulary in the long term.

bound

1 *Morphology*. Of a morpheme: normally occurring only in combination with another (*bound* or *free*) form; not FREE.

Bound morphemes (or *bound forms*) include inflections such as

-s, *-ing*, and *-ed*

and affixes such as

de-, *dis-*, *un-*, and *-ly*.

2 Of a clause: subordinate.

In some grammatical theory a *bound clause* is roughly the same as the subordinate clause of traditional grammar, but the terms *subordinate* or *dependent* are much more common.

§ See GOVERNMENT-BINDING THEORY.

bounded

Of the referent of a noun: capable of being conceived of as a separate unit.

• **boundedness**.

This terminology is not very general, but is intended to deal with the problem that many COUNT nouns (e.g. *difficulty*) can also be interpreted as mass nouns.

> 1984 R. D. HUDDLESTON In *another cake*, *cake* has a bounded or individuated interpretation . . in *so much cake* it has an unbounded or mass interpretation.

When nouns are divided into either COUNT or UNCOUNT (usually the same as MASS), it is usual to describe nouns with membership of both categories in terms of *overlap* or *conversion*, the latter a recognized process of lexical morphology. The use of the term *boundedness* for noun meaning makes it possible to restrict the concept of COUNTABILITY to noun classes:

> 1984 R. D. HUDDLESTON An uncountable noun . . cannot sustain an individuated interpretation; the converse, however, does not hold. As the examples with *cake* . . show, particular instances of countable nouns can receive mass interpretations. It is precisely for this reason that I have treated countability and boundedness as distinct concepts.

bracket

Phonetics & Phonology. Each of the paired typographical marks used to enclose phonetic transcription.

The usual convention is to use square brackets [ ] for accurate phonetic values, and oblique strokes / / for phonemes.

bracketing

Linguistics. A method for showing the internal structure of a clause or sentence, using pairs of brackets.

At a simple level the technique may be useful. We might for example contrast

[He]	[looked up]	[the word]	[in his dictionary]
subject	verb	object	adverbial

with

[He]	[looked]	[up the chimney]
subject	verb	adverbial

More complicated sentences may involve brackets within brackets, which make the analysis difficult to read. For these TREE DIAGRAMS are often preferred.

Compare BRANCHING.

branching

Linguistics. (*n. & adj.*) (The connections between main and subordinate units) that can be symbolized by a branch (depending in a specified direction) within a TREE DIAGRAM.

The word sometimes occurs with prefixes, i.e. *left-branching*, *right-branching*, and *mid-branching* (also called *medial branching* and NESTING). Thus initial subordinate clauses are *left-branching* and final subordinate clauses are *right-branching*. Right-branching clauses tend to be easier to understand. Compare

I danced with a man
who danced with a girl
who danced with the Prince of Wales.

and (left-branching)

I danced with a man
a girl
the Prince of Wales danced with
danced with.

breaking

Phonetics. The process by which a pure vowel sound in certain contexts becomes a centring diphthong.

This process is particularly likely to happen before /l/ (closing a syllable). Thus words such as *feel* /fiːl/ or *meal* /miːl/ are frequently realized in RP as

[hɔ:d] and [məl]. Historically, a similar process happened before /r/ (which, in word final position, has been lost in RP); so *beer* was originally [bir] which by breaking became [biər] (now /biə/).

The term originated in historical linguistics, where it denoted a similar change of vowels in Old English; it is a rendering of German *Brechung* 'breaking'.

breath

Phonetics. Expiration of air without any vibration of the vocal cords; contrasted with VOICE (2).

breathed

Phonetics. Of a speech sound: made without vibration of the vocal cords.

The term was used by the British phonetician Daniel Jones in his *An Outline of English Phonetics* 1918 (ninth edition, 1962). The more usual term today is VOICELESS.

Compare ASPIRATION.

breath-group

Phonetics. A word or succession of words, whether a sentence or part of a sentence, uttered without pause, in a single breath.

A somewhat dated term, roughly equivalent to TONE UNIT, *tone group*, or TONNE-GROUP in more modern analyses of intonation.

> 1962 D. JONES It is usual to employ the term breath-group to denote a complete sentence that can conveniently be said with a single breath, or, in the case of very long sentences, the longest portions that can conveniently be said with single breaths.

Briticism

A word or phrase that is of distinctively (modern) British origin, particularly in contrast to a different American equivalent.

British English

The variety of English used in Great Britain, as contrasted with those used in other English-speaking areas.

broad negative

A word which is almost negative in meaning and in its grammatical effect, or that is mainly used in a negative context.

The term is not in general use. It includes not only adverbs that are normally classified as SEMI-NEGATIVE (such as *barely, hardly, scarcely, seldom, rarely*, etc.) but also words such as *bother* and *necessarily* which normally appear in negative contexts and which some grammarians might call NON-ASSERTIVE.

broad transcription

A systematic method of representing in a rather general way (normally using the symbols of the INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET) how spoken language sounds; an example of this. Contrasted with NARROW transcription. Also called *broad notation*, *broad script*.

The term is used in two related ways:

(*a*) A purely PHONEMIC transcription. Here symbols are restricted to the phonemes of the language, i.e. the set of sounds that differentiate meaning. Thus in English the /t/ phoneme would be represented by this one symbol in all situations, regardless of the fact that the phoneme is realized by various allophones, e.g. being aspirated in a stressed initial position (*time*) and unaspirated after *-s* (*stay*), and ignoring also the fact that it may not always have alveolar articulation.

(*b*) A PHONETIC transcription, showing some articulatory details (e.g. aspiration), but not very many, in contrast to a narrow transcription showing a lot of detail.

A broad phonemic transcription (*a*) is generally felt to be simplest to use, but a knowledge of the allophonic systems of the language is needed if such a transcription is to be read aloud with even approximate accuracy.

by-form

Morphology. A collateral and sometimes less frequent form of a word.

This is an old-fashioned term from philology. It is generally used for a word form which has essentially the same origin as a related word but a distinct pronunciation and spelling, and which has had significant currency among speakers and writers of standard English. Examples in the *Oxford English Dictionary* include:

chaw (LME) besides *chew* (OE)
clift (LME) besides *cliff* (OE)
commonality (LME) besides *commonalty* (ME)
harrow (as in *the Harrowing of Hell*) (ME) besides *harry* (OE)

The *by-form* may be regarded as a subcategory of DOUBLET.

Compare HETERONYM (2).

C

COMPLEMENT as an ELEMENT in clause structure.

A symbol for a consonant in phonological structure.

calque

Morphology.

(*n.*) The same as LOAN TRANSLATION.

(*v.*) Form (a word or expression) as a loan translation (on a foreign word or expression).

1958 A. S. C. Ross M[oder]n E[nglish] *That goes without saying* is a translation-loan of (better, is calqued on) M[oder]n French *cela va sans dire*.

cardinal number

A number denoting quantity (*one, two, three*, etc.) in contrast to an ORDINAL number. Also called **cardinal numeral**.

cardinal vowel

Phonetics. One of a standard set of eighteen vowels, devised by the phonetician Daniel Jones (1881–1967) as a basis for describing the vowels of any language.

The system is mainly physiological. The vowels are described primarily in terms of tongue position and the amount of lip-rounding is specified.

There are eight primary vowels: four front vowels, defined according to the height of the front of the tongue, and four back vowels, where the height of the back of the tongue is relevant. The eight secondary cardinal vowels have the same tongue positions, but the lip-rounding or lip-spreading is different. Two further vowels are identified as depending on the centre of the tongue being raised.

The cardinal vowel system is conventionally presented in a stylized diagram, on which the actual vowels of a particular language can be superimposed. Thus the /iː/ sound in English *need* is a high (or close) front vowel, but not quite so high as the idealized cardinal vowel 1; while English /ɑː/ in *hard* is a low back or (open) vowel, near in sound to cardinal 5, the lowest or most open back vowel. [See diagrams p. 443]

Compare LIP POSITION.

case

1 The functional role of a noun or noun phrase in relation to other words in the clause or sentence.

2 The form of a word (shown by inflection) expressing this.

In English (unlike Latin, which has six cases) the only distinction of case in nouns is between the COMMON case (i.e. the ordinary base form for the singular: *boy*, with plural *boys*) and the GENITIVE (*boy's, boys'*). Even this analysis is disputed, since the genitive inflection can be added not only to a word, but also to a phrase (e.g. *the King of Spain's daughter*), which may not even end with a noun (e.g. *the man opposite's car*).

Among pronouns, six show distinctions between SUBJECT case and OBJECT case—*I/me, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them, who/whom*. Apart from these few morphological distinctions, 'case' distinctions in English are shown by word order and the use of prepositions, and so the traditional case names (*nominative, accusative, dative* etc.) taken over from Latin are generally considered inappropriate.

case grammar

A theory about clause organization developed in the late 1960s by the American linguist Charles Fillmore (b. 1929), which analyses the semantic roles of nouns and noun phrases. The theory, along with other developments within generative grammar, grew to some extent out of dissatisfaction with early STANDARD THEORY.

In this analysis case is not a category of surface syntax (as in traditional grammar) but of meaning. Thus, in

The burglars broke the door down

the grammatical subject is agent; but in

The jemmy made little noise

it is instrument; in

The neighbours heard nothing

it is dative; and in

The whole place was a mess

it is locative.

The original six cases recognized were AGENT(IVE), the initiator of the action, INSTRUMENTAL, DATIVE (2), FACTITIVE (2), LOCATIVE, and OBJECTIVE. Subsequent adaptations and revisions introduced the EXPERIENCER case (formerly *dative*), RESULT (formerly *factitive*), SOURCE, GOAL (2), and PATIENT.

Case grammar is a useful contribution to the study of relationships between grammar and meaning, but is not now generally considered to offer universal solutions.

> 1976 F. R. PALMER The deeper the investigation, the more complex it seems to become . . . A particularly difficult problem is *My ear is twitching. My ear* could be agent since it is 'doing' the twitching, or experiencer, or even location (*I have a twitch in my ear*).

catachresis (Plural **catachreses**.)

Wrong application of a term, use of words in senses that do not belong to them (H. W. Fowler, 1926.) An old-fashioned term, originally rhetorical.

Examples given by Fowler were the 'popular' use of *chronic* = severe, *asset* = advantage, *conservative* (as in 'conservative estimate') = low, *annex* = win, and *mutual* = common.

1589 G. PUTTENHAM Catachresis, or the Figure of abuse . . if for lacke of naturall and proper terme or worde we take another, neither naturall nor proper and do vnfruly applie it to the thing which we would seeme to expresse.

• **catachrestic, catachrestically**.

cataphora

The use of a pronoun or other PRO-FORM to point forward to a later word, phrase, or clause; an example of this process. Sometimes called *forwards anaphora*, but usually contrasted with ANAPHORA.

Examples:

What I want to say is *this*. Please drive carefully.
If you see *him*, will you ask Bob to telephone me?
Here is *the news*. In the House of Commons, the Government had an overwhelming majority . . .

cataphoric

Of or involving cataphora.

1976 M. A. K. HALLIDAY & R. HASAN The presupposition may go in the opposite direction, with the presupposed element following. This we shall refer to as cataphora . . . The presupposed element may . . consist of more than one sentence. Where it does not, the cataphoric reference is often signalled in writing with a colon.

•• **cataphoric ellipsis**: see ELLIPSIS.

category

A CLASS *of items with the same function; one of the characteristics of such a class.*

This is a very general term, used in different ways by different grammarians. In some analyses, nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc. (i.e., parts of speech) are *categories; in some, noun phrase, verb phrase, etc. are; in some, subject,* predicate, etc. are. Sometimes the term is reserved for characteristics of such elements, e.g. ASPECT, TIME, CASE, GENDER, or PERSON.

In Scale-and-Category Grammar, four categories are contrasted with three (or four) scales. The categories are:

UNIT (five units are recognized—sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme)
STRUCTURE (concerned with the free or bound relationships within a unit)
CLASS (concerned with such matters as classifying sentences into simple, compound, or complex)

SYSTEM (concerned with the range of choices in any particular area: for example, the person system offers three options.)

• **categorial**: relating to categories.

In early Generative Grammar the *categorial component* is the set of grammatical rules that forms an important part of the theoretical apparatus; and *categorial rules* (or *phrase structure rules*) are rewriting and expanding rules.

catenative

(*n. & adj.*) (A lexical verb) that is capable of linking with a following verb.

(*a*) Strictly, with a directly following dependent verb.

e.g.

want (to go); *begin* (walking); *go* (shopping); *get* (hurt).

Chance juxtapositions are not catenative. Contrast:

We stopped + to talk to the old man (= in order to talk)

with

We *stopped talking* to the old man (catenative)

or

You only helped me + to satisfy your own conscience (= in order to satisfy)

with

You only *helped me to answer* one question (catenative)

(*b*) (Popularly.) More widely, including the above types of verb and similar verbs with an object, e.g.

want (them to go); *watch* (them go/going); *have* (the house painted).

Some of these are classified in different ways in different grammars.

causal

Of a clause: expressing cause or reason. (An older term.)

e.g.

As you are not ready, we must go without you.

causative

Semantics. (*n. & adj.*) (A word, especially a verb) expressing causation.

The term is particularly used in connection with verbs. In classic semantic theory, the verb *kill* is a causative verb, meaning 'cause to die'. Other causatives include verbs of motion such as *place* or *put*, i.e. cause (something) to be (in a place), and more general verbs that have a result, e.g. *elect* (*They have elected my brother as chairman*).

In popular pedagogic grammar, *get* and *have* are the prime causative verbs, as in *Get your hair cut* or *We've had the house painted.*

The term is sometimes applied to other linguistic units. *Because of* can be described as a causative preposition; in *She died of a fever, of a fever* is a causative adverbial.

...atively.

...ONATIVE.

...giving rise to an event or state, considered as one of the semantic ...ised in the classification of adverb clauses and prepositions (e.g. ...e *if*). Often conflated with REASON.

...ntral

...ith, at, or forming, the centre.

central determiner: a determiner that must follow a PREDETERMINER (such as *all, both, such*), but precede a POSTDETERMINER (such as a number).

...The most frequent central determiners are *a/an* and *the*, possessives (*my, her, its, our, their*), and demonstratives (*this, these, that, those*). e.g.

such a nuisance
all our yesterdays
my two left feet
both those two criminals

central vowel: (*Phonetics*) a vowel made with the centre of the tongue raised towards the middle of the roof of the mouth, where the hard and soft palates meet.

In standard English (RP) the central vowels are:

- the sound in *hut, come, blood*
- the sound in *bird, nurse, worm*
- the sound at the beginning of *ago* and the end of *mother*
- the sound in *foot, put, wolf, could.*

Having the main features of a particular word class.

central adjective: an adjective that can be used in both ATTRIBUTIVE and PREDICATIVE positions.

central coordinator: see COORDINATOR.

central modal: a true MODAL VERB, contrasting with a SEMI-MODAL.

central passive: a true PASSIVE verb having a regular active counterpart, in contrast to a *semi-passive* or *pseudo-passive* verb.

central preposition: a preposition having all the characteristics of a preposition, in contrast to a MARGINAL *preposition.*

central meaning: see MEANING.

centrality: the fact or quality of being central.

centralized

Phonetics. Of a vowel: articulated with the centre of the tongue raised more than the front or the back.

The term is generally reserved for the articulation of a normally front or back vowel nearer to the centre of the mouth than usual. In a broader sense most English vowels are centralized to some extent if measured against the CARDINAL VOWEL system.

centring diphthong

Phonetics. A diphthong that moves towards a central vowel position for its second element. Contrasted with CLOSING DIPHTHONG.

Standard RP has three centring diphthongs:

/ɪə/ as in *dear, here, idea*
/ʊə/ as in *tour, during*
/eə/ as in *fair, where, stare*

chain

(Designating) a relationship between two linguistic units such that they can occur together in a larger unit.

•• **chain and choice**: the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships that exist between linguistic units.

The contrast between *chain* and *choice* can be applied at various levels of language analysis. Thus, if we take the words *bat, cat, fat, hat,* etc., the letters *b, c, f,* and *h* are in a chain relationship with *-at,* but in a choice relationship with each other (and the same is true of the sounds to which they correspond).

At a higher level, if we wish to add one word to complete the following: *The cat . . . on the mat,* the chain relationship requires a verb, but the choice is wide (*is, jumped, lay, lies, sat, slept,* etc.).

Compare AND-RELATIONS, PARADIGM (2), SYNTAGM.

choice

(Designating) a relationship between two linguistic units such that only one can be used in a particular context.

See CHAIN. Compare OR-RELATIONS.

Chomskyan

(*adj.*) Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of (the theories of) the American linguist Noam Chomsky (b. 1928).

(*n.*) An adherent of Chomsky's theories.

Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) introduced Transformational-Generative Grammar and gave a radically new direction to linguistics. He has continued to develop his theories and has published extensively ever since: on language and the human mind; on phonology (his best-known contribution being *The Sound Pattern of English* (1968) with M. Halle); and also, critically, on American foreign policy and politics. His latest version of generative grammar is GOVERNMENT-BINDING THEORY (or *government and binding*).