

An Introductory English Grammar

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Name of the Course: Syntax

The third lecture : Basic Sentence Patterns

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Basic Sentence Patterns

- ❖ To speak English does not merely mean to string words together in some random fashion.**
- ❖ Otherwise, we carefully arrange our words, for the most part unconsciously, into patterns.**

Basic Sentence Patterns

- ❖ Any sentence you write or utter must be based on these basic patterns.
- ❖ In English, we use nine basic sentence patterns. Within these patterns, there are different positions. Each position is the home-slot of a particular grammatical meaning .

Basic Sentence Patterns

For example, in “the girl bought a dress” the noun ‘girl’, in isolation, means simply “young female human being”. But by dint of occupying the first position in this pattern it acquires the additional meaning of the performer of the action.

❖ In another example such as: “the girl is happy”
the girl is not the performer of the action but,
in this position in this pattern, has an added
grammatical meaning of “that which is
described

Basic Sentence Patterns

❖ We have nine basic sentence patterns:

N be Aj

Food is good.

Generally speaking, the subject always occupy the first position in the nine patterns. This means that every N in the first position of the sentence is subject.

Basic Sentence Patterns

- In the above sentence which is based on pattern 1, the grammatical meaning of the subject is “that which is described”.
- the grammatical meaning of the “verb to be” is “may be described as”.

Basic Sentence Patterns

❖ In this pattern the third slot should be inhabited by adjective which has the grammatical meaning of “that which described”

❖ One of the characteristics of this pattern is that it is capable of the following expansion:

That food is good > That good food is vey good

Basic Sentence Patterns

pattern 2: N be Av

- ❖ This pattern differs from pattern 1 in the following respects:**
 - 1. The verb to be in this pattern usually has the meaning of “be located” or “occur”.**

Basic Sentence Patterns

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2. Pattern 2 is not capable of taking the pattern 1 expansion.
3. The third position is occupied by a type of uninflected word that is called adverbial.