Main Features of Sentence Structure

and

A Quick Overview of Your Foreign Language

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SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Introduction

There are many ways to learn a language. It is true that infants do not learn their mother-tongue by formally studying the analysis set out herein. Well, how do they learn? Evidently, they learn a few key words and how to associate them logically. They can start to do this with a measure of God-given faculties formatted ready for such linguistic activity. With experience and training and some effort by themselves they extend their range of words and logical patterns.

We seem to have varying degrees of difficulty in learning a new language later in life. Whatever the reason in our case, if our circumstances do not permit us to learn quite like a baby, or if we find it difficult to break away from expressing thoughts only in our first language, the following should help us to build up a structural pattern from simple beginnings.

This document should help in the learning and analysis of most languages that exist. The logic of communication is basically the same in all languages, although the preferred way of expression may vary, as may the structure used to present it.

e.g.	I have a book	↔	My book exists
e.g.	You friend	↔	You are a friend
e.g.	We must go	↔	Our going will be
e.g.	We must go	↔	To us going is obligatory
e.g.	How do you feel about it?	↔	How does it strike you?

It will be helpful to remember that whatever the form of expression used, even if abbreviated, behind it there is a structure that must exist or be inferred. This structure has to obey rules of logic consistently, especially if words are omitted as understood. Matters such as gender, quantity, and 'case' must be adhered to.

e.g.	He is a singer.	*not*	He is a songstress.
e.g.	You are my friend.	*not*	You is my friend.
e.g. It's a joy for you and me.		*not*	It's a joy for you and I.

Although this may be obvious in a short, simple sentence, more care is required with long, complex sentences.

If we apply this pattern of approach, we will be able to learn other languages more quickly, understand what others are saying more readily, and present facts accurately, clearly, respectably and motivatingly. (2 Tim 1:13; 2:15).

See also an example of the fully developed use of this pattern of approach to the overview of a language as used for a fast introductory course in Bengali (Romanized script only). This is freely usable online or printable from our website at www.jaspell.uk/learn_bengali_language.htm.

With best wishes,

Jasper

Simple Sentences

A simple sentence needs a *doer* and a *process done.* Descriptions may attached to the doer and to the process. An *object* may also be present when stating the effect of the process.

To communicate an idea clearly you need at least:-

	doer	+	process being done
	(noun or pronoun)		(verb)
e.g.	Children		sing
e.g.	People		think
e.g.	Truth		is
e.g.	Observers		will know
e.g.	he		heard

Each of the above examples can stand alone as a simple sentence. See below about more complex sentence structures made of a main clause and other clauses. Each of the above examples can be a *main clause.*

Description (adjectives) may be attached to the doer:-

e.g.	Most; Which?; Happy...	children
e.g.	Some; How Many?; Honest...	people

Description (adverbs) may be attached to the process done:-

e.g.	sweetly; often?; naturally, well...	sing
e.g.	sometimes; when?; how?; honestly; fast.....	think

From these four elements we can communicate many simple, clear sentences. These have one process (one verb). Each can stand alone or can be a main clause in a more complex sentence structure.

e.g. (The core of the sentence is shown in bold print.)

(Most)	**children**	(often)	**sing.**
(Happy)	**children**	**sing**	(naturally).
(Honest)	**people**	**think**	(honestly).
(Some)	**people**	**think**	(fast).

Each of these descriptors (the adjectives and adverbs) can be expanded:-

e.g.   (Most happy, honest) children sing (often and naturally).

The expansions can be quite long:-

| *e.g.* | Children | joy-loving... |
| *e.g.* | Children | untrained and without fear of listeners' opinions... |

e.g.	sing	...at the top of their voices;
e.g.	sing	...from their hearts;
e.g.	sing	...on Friday evenings just before their neighbours' normal bed-time.

A descriptor can even be expanded into a minor clause with its own doer (noun or pronoun) and process (verb):-

e.g.   **Children** (who are happy) **sing** (naturally).

<u>Presence of an Object within a Simple Sentence</u>

A basic clause may also include some form of 'object':-

An object is impossible for some processes (intransitive verbs):-

e.g.   **Children come**   (...??books??).

This object is optional for some processes depending on the circumstances (verbs that can be transitive or intransitive):-

| *e.g.* | **Children read** | .... |
| *e.g.* | **Children read** | ...**books**. |

For other processes (transitive verbs) the object is necessary.

| *e.g.* | **Children bring** | ...**books**. |

Changing Forms of Object Nouns and Pronouns According to 'Case'

Depending on the process affecting the object, most languages modify the object noun or pronoun in some way. Some change the word itself, but others attach another element either before (preposition) or after it (postposition):-

e.g.   (using) the book, of the book, to the book, through the book, by way of the book, from the book, in/on/at the book. (Add here also: "Oh the book!"

Multiple Main Clauses

A sentence needs at least one main clause. The sentence:-

"I came, I saw, I conquered."

contains three, each with its own *doer* and *process done*. Similarly:-

"He laughed, and he laughed and he laughed."

Note the connectives like 'and', 'or' and 'but' that would fit here.

Complex Sentences

Common Structures

Any sentence needs a main clause. One or more minor clauses may be added, each reporting its own action by means of a process done (verb). The word that would state the process may be omitted in some languages, if it can be inferred obviously by the reader or listener. Note also the connective words like 'that', 'because', 'therefore', and 'then' that would fit here.

e.g.   **He says** {[that] I [am] his friend}.
e.g.   **He says that** {because I am kind to him}.

Conditional Sentence Structure

Conditional sentences are a very important tool in helping someone to reason on matters instead of only repeating statements learned by rote. Conditional sentences comprise two parts. The main clause states the main process, but this is qualified by a condition stated in the minor clause. The order of the two parts is sometimes reversed.

e.g.   **I will go**, {if you come too}.
e.g.   {If you come,} then **I will go.**

Some languages may compress the condition into a conditional participle:-

e.g.   *In the case of you coming* **I will go.**

Interrogatives, Correlatives and Relatives

Some languages make frequent use of pairs of expressions to identify logical parcels of information more easily. The rendering of this type of structure in your own first language may appear less easy.

The correlated expression is like the main clauses described above. This is shown in bold below. It is linked to a related clause which presents details about it with active expression. A matching interrogative term should be used in forming a question to draw out the desired logically relevant response:-

e.g.   **Who cares?**
     One {who loves} **cares. ~**
     {*The one who* loves,} : **such one cares.**

e.g.   **How will the earth be?**
     {*As* in heaven,} : **so it will be on earth. ~**
     {*In the way* it is heaven} : **in such a way it will be on earth.**

Common Forms of Expression Without Equivalent

All languages have forms of expression that are not matched exactly in other languages. An acceptable alternative way has to be found of communicating enough of the original information.

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF YOUR FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Introduction

Let us cover the main features of the foreign language that you want to learn. Being aware of sentence structure we should quickly be able to achieve a simplified but effective system of communication that is essential if fluency and rapid progress are to be gained. (Heb. 5:14) This will form a robust framework on which to culture finer points of the language.

Accordingly, we should consider:-

> Doers (nouns and pronouns);
> Process done (verb)— a simple past, present and future tense;
> Descriptions attached to doers and objects (adjective);
> Description attached to process done (adverb);
> Changing forms of objects according to 'case';
> Connectives;
> Conditional sentences;
> Interrogatives, correlatives and relatives;
> Common forms of expression without equivalent

Doers (nouns and pronouns)

Nouns do not need special listing here. You learn them from your vocabularies and dictionaries or your list of so many hundred most used words.

The pronouns are listed here. This is their form, if they are the *doer* (subject, nominative case) in the clause.

e.g. *He* said to me that *I* should tell him.

Note that in most languages this form of the nouns and pronouns may be modified in various ways, if they occur as the object. See the

later consideration of "Changing Forms of Objects According to 'Case'".

Singular			Plural		
Common			Common		
I			we		
you			you		
he			they		
she			they		
it			they		
Honorific			Honorific		
you			you		
he			they		

Process Done (verb)— a Simple Past, Present and Future Tense

We can make a table in the following pattern to suit a typical verb family. If your foreign language has several different or irregular verbs, then you can make more tables or create suitable lists. The main idea initially is to focus on the minimum of information about verbs that is needed to get started and achieve practical, effective communication.

e.g.   Complete the table for the verb 'to see':-

Person	Past	Present	Future
Common			
I, we			
you			
he, she			
it			
Honorific			
you, YOU			
he, she, they			

Descriptions Attached To Doers and Objects (Adjective)

A selection of useful adjectives should be learned. For some languages it may be necessary to make a table or list showing the way that adjectives have to be modified — perhaps by changing their endings — according to the gender (masculine, feminine, neuter...), their plurality, or even object.case of the noun or pronoun to which they are attached.

e.g.   List here a selection of useful adjectives and how they get modified.
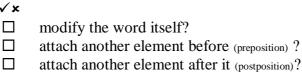
Description Attached To The Process Done (Adverb)

A selection of useful adjectives should be learned.

e.g.   List here a selection of useful adjectives.

Changing Forms Of Objects According To 'Case'

A noun or pronoun representing a thing that is the object in a clause is usually a modified form of the word that would be used if it were the doer (subject). In your foreign language must you:-

    ✓✗
- ☐   modify the word itself?
- ☐   attach another element before (preposition) ?
- ☐   attach another element after it (postposition)?

You can tabulate the changes required according to 'case', and, if necessary, gender and plurality. (Keep it as simple as possible to begin with.)

e.g.   (affecting) the book, of the book, to the book, through the book, by way of the book, from the book, in/on/at the book. (Add here also: "Oh the book!"

e.g.   (affecting) the man, of the man, to the man, through the man, by way of the man, from the man, in/on/at the man. (Add here also: "Oh the man!")

xxx		
affecting the xxx		
of the xxx		
to the xxx		
through the xxx		
by way of the xxx		
from the xxx		
in/on/at the xxx		
Oh the xxx!		

affecting the man		
of the man		
to the man		
through the man		
by way of the man		
from the man		
in/on/at the man		
Oh the man!		

affecting the book		
of the book		
to the book		
through the book		
by way of the book		
from the book		
in/on/at the book		
Oh the book!		

Connectives

A list of useful connectives should be learned.

Make short list of common connective words or phrases:-

e.g.   and, but, then, therefore, for this reason consequently, so, because, that

Conditional Sentences

How do you have to modify a minor clause (that states a condition)?

Do you add a word like 'if'?   ✓✗ ☐

e.g.   What word(s)?➔   ....

How do you have to modify a main clause (that states the main process) if it is linked to a condition? Do you add a word like 'then': for example, as a connective when the qualified statement is put after the conditional clause?   ✓✕

□

e.g.   What word(s)?➔   ....

In some languages the order of the main and minor clauses can be swapped:-

e.g.   **I will go**, {if you come too}.
e.g.   {If you come,} then **I will go.**

Can the order of the main and minor clauses be swapped?✓✕➔ □

Give some typical examples of conditional sentences.

Qualified Statement	Condition

Condition	Qualified Statement

✓✕

Does your foreign language use conditional participles?   □

e.g.   *In the case of you coming* **I will go.**

If so, then give some examples:-➔ ....

Give some typical examples of conditional sentences using conditional participles:-.

Condition Using Participle	Qualified Statement

Interrogatives, Correlatives and Relatives

<u>Interrogatives</u>

You need a selection of most useful interrogative words:-

e.g.   what? who? why? when? where? how? whether?

Give a selection of interrogative words:-➔

what?	
who?	
why?	
when?	
where?	
how?	
whether?	

May some of these need to be modified according to   ✓✗
gender, plurality and 'case'?   ☐

Correlatives and Relatives

✓✗

Does your foreign language use correlatives and relatives?   ☐

If so, then give some examples using the most common ones:-➜

xxx	The xxx which	such xxx
[*e.g.*]	[That (the thing) which it says	such (thing) is true.]
thing		
things		
person		
persons		
reason		
reason		
time		
time		
place		
place		
manner		
manner		

Common Forms of Expression Without Equivalent

The main information in the original language has to be identified, and an acceptable alternative way has to be found of communicating enough of this in a way that is comfortable in the new language.

Give examples of some of the most important ones, especially if their construction is difficult to grasp-

First Language	Other Language

Additional Features

It may be beneficial to add other important features of the foreign language in order facilitate a rapid but sufficiently accurate start to meaningful, fluent communication.