

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### JSS 2

### WEEK 11

#### NOUN AND VERB PHRASES

1. The term '**phrase**' in grammar refers to a group of words without a finite verb. A phrase does not have subject and a predicate, or both, and therefore cannot express complete thought. The following are types of phrases which are noun, verb, verbal, prepositional, adjectival, and adverbial phrases. We shall consider noun and verb phrases.
2. **THE NOUN PHRASE:** This is a phrase that can be replaced by a noun or pronoun. It consists of a noun or pronoun (as the headword) and its modifiers. Examples are:
  - A. The woman lawyer
  - B. Those students
  - C. A can of orange juice
  - D. A servant of the house
  - E. Two wretched beggars
  - F. Beautiful girls etc.

#### Sentence examples:

- A. Those students shared a can of orange juice.
- B. The servant of the house stole the money.
- C. Beautiful girls are seldom intelligent.

The underlined words are noun phrases.

3. **FUNCTIONS OF NOUN PHRASES** (Note that the underlined words are noun phrases).

#### As Subjects of Verbs.

- A. Poor financial reward has taken the shine off the teaching profession. (The noun phrase is subject of **has taken**)
- B. The University of Ibadan is the oldest university in the country. (Noun phrase is subject of **is**).
- C. Sixty-five workers including two members of senior management staff were affected in the purge. (The noun phrase is subject of **were affected**).

#### As Direct Objects of Verbs.

- A. Most Nigerians cannot afford three square meals a day. (The noun phrase is the direct object of **cannot afford**).
- B. The government still provides free bus services to school children. (The noun phrase is the direct object of **provides**).

#### As Indirect Objects of Verbs.

- A. We gave the widow and her children prompt attention. (The noun phrase is indirect object of **gave**).

- B. The government provides old people over 65 years free medical care. (Noun phrase is indirect object of **provides**).

### **As Apposition of other Nouns**

An appositional noun is one placed beside another noun to which the appositional noun is a reference. Consider the expressions:

- i. Chief Ikemba, the Governor of Imo State.....
- ii. Chief Ikemba and the Governor Imo State.....

In (i) above, 'the Governor of Imo State.....' refers to the noun 'Chief Ikemba'. It is in apposition to 'Chief Ikemba'. But in (ii), the same phrase does not refer to the noun 'Chief Ikemba'. It points to another subject (noun). An appositional noun or noun phrase must point backwards to an already given noun in the sentence which it normally lies close to. Examples of noun phrases functioning as apposition to other nouns are:

- A. Williams, the Prince of Wales, is now eighteen years old.
- B. Chief Ikemba, the Governor of Imo State, addressed the rally.
- C. Mrs. Henshaw, our new music teacher, sings like a nightingale.

### **As Complement**

A complement is a word or words, which qualify a subject or object. Complements are placed after the verb of the sentence in the order:

s+v+c+o → S

Where:

- s is for subject (small 's')
- v is for verb
- c is for complement
- o is for object
- S is for the entire sentence (capital 'S')

Unlike the appositional noun phrase, a complementary noun phrase is not placed beside the subject it modifies. It qualifies its subject from a 'distance', usually after the verb, examples.

1. Mr. Alabi is my Geography teacher.

2. Tyson was a champion boxer.
3. My lawyer has taken the matter to the Court of Appeal.

### **THE VERB PHRASE**

A verb phrase consists of a lexical (main/finite) verb and its auxiliaries. Examples are:

not used to being treated.

has been discharged.

do not count.

The verb phrase occupies the verb position in a sentence and indicates the action of the subject or its condition. Examples are:

- i. I am not used to being treated in his rude manner.
- ii. The patient has been discharged from the hospital.
- iii. Do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

### **Functions of the Verb Phrase**

Verb phrases function in two major ways:

- i. As Indicator of the Action of Subject  
He had begged them to forgive him.  
The Pastor was preaching an old sermon.
- ii. As Indicator of the State (Condition) of Subject  
The corpse is lying in state.  
Mr. Emeka did not teach today.  
Mrs Olu has recovered from the typhoid fever.

### **HOME WORK**

1. What is a phrase?
2. Explain noun phrase and give three examples.
3. What is a verb phrase?