

Slide 1

Learners' Languages as a Classroom Resource
 – an English language teacher's guide
 Noun phrases and verb phrases

FOCUS ON WORD ORDER – FOR STUDENTS WHOSE 1ST LANGUAGES DIFFER IN CANONICAL ORDERING OF SUBJECT NOUN PHRASES, VERB PHRASES AND OBJECT NOUN PHRASES.
 THIS LESSON ALSO RAISES SOME COLLOCATIONAL AWARENESS AND BASIC WORD-CLASS ISSUES.
 LEVEL (COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK, A1 / A2).
 THE LESSON FORMAT CAN BE ADAPTED BY CHOOSING DIFFERENT MARKER SENTENCES AND CAN THEN BE USED AT ALL LEVELS.

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You can ignore this as far as a lesson is concerned – it is for your information.

Slide 2

The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- This sentence has three main parts – can you find them?
 (You have 10 seconds)
- Did you get these three?

The young man
 quickly ate
 the cheese sandwich.

If students struggle with parsing the sentence, it may be useful to speak it aloud phrasing it in the three sections with slight pauses.
 As The young ---- quickly ate ---- the cheese sandwich.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- There are two noun phrases and one verb phrase. Which is which?
- What are these parts of the sentence doing?

The young man	subject
quickly ate	verb
the cheese sandwich	object

The term 'phrase' is probably going to need explanation if this is the first time an exercise of this sort has been done. Simply saying that it is a group of words which live together in a sentence will do for the moment.
 The second question is quite difficult to phrase at this level so will need a bit of work and exemplification for students who have not encountered the terms before. Bear in mind that nearly all languages have subjects, verbs and objects so it is not an opaque area.
 Three questions help: Who/What does it? (Subject)
 What happens? (Verb)
 Who/What does it happen to? (Object)

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- How are the noun phrases made?
- Article (determiner) + adjective + noun
- Here the determiner is **the**. Which of these words can you use instead?

a	one	this
difficult	six	usually
he	her	very
often	that	woman
old	they	

Many languages do not have articles and most that do, do not use them in the same way as English.

However, all languages have determiners of one sort or another so this is a good time to teach the expression.

It is not a good time to run an impromptu lesson on article use.

The right answers are on the next slide.

For teaching purposes, they are:

A (young man or cheese sandwich)

One (young man or cheese sandwich)

That (young man or cheese sandwich)

This young man (or cheese sandwich)

Her young man (or his cheese sandwich)

Six (young men or cheese sandwiches – note the plural forms here)

The other words cannot be used as determiners.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- We can use these because they are all determiners.

A young man
One young man
That young man
This young man
Her young man
Six young **men** – careful!

You can extend the last phrase to include other plural determiners such as *these* or *those* at this point.

Make sure that if the students have included any non-determiners in their list that the concept is clear and the reasons why some words are not determiners are clear, too.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- The adjective in the first noun phrase is **young** and in the second noun phrase it's **cheese**. (*cheese* is a special kind of adjective telling us what sort of sandwich it was)
- Which of these words can you use instead? In which parts?

a	good-looking	this
difficult	her	usually
he	interesting	tall
often	that	fat
old	nice	

The noun *cheese* is being used here as a classifier and is not an adjective properly understood.

Note that many languages are averse to using words like *cheese* (a noun, usually) as classifiers and prefer some form of genitive construction like *a sandwich of / from cheese* etc. If you have languages in the room that do that, it is worth some extra exemplification and explanations. Here are some more examples to use:

the railway station, the classroom door, the petrol station etc.

Compare these to *the large station, the tall*

door, the ugly station etc. all of which are adjective modifiers.

When it comes to people, however, English, too, prefers a genitive construction – *the teachers' room, the students' lounge* and so on.

As long as the difference between a classifier and an adjective is understood, that is enough for now.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- We can use these because they all work as adjectives.

difficult man	difficult sandwich X Why not?
old man	old sandwich
good-looking man	good-looking sandwich
interesting man	interesting sandwich
nice man	nice sandwich
tall man	tall sandwich X Why not?
fat man	fat sandwich

Make sure that the students understand that there is nothing grammatically wrong with the phrases marked with an X – this is an elementary case of collocation.

You could extend this part to get examples from them of adjectives that do and do not collocate with nouns that they know – *fat / big classroom, interesting / tall / good-looking table, nice / sunny car, difficult / easy teacher* etc.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- How do we make the verb phrase?
 - adverb + verb
- Which of these are adverbs and which are verbs?

slowly	cheese	smelt
comfortable	young	took
drank	happily	enjoyed
opened	happy	
easily	smoked	
hungry	stole	

Here there are also three adjectives (*comfortable, hungry, happy*) and one classifier which is also a noun, *cheese*. This is a good time to remind the class about this word class and differentiate it from others. You could give the class a clue in the form of looking for the *-ly* ending if you feel they need it.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- Here they are.
- What verb phrases are possible? Do they all make sense?
- Can you change the noun phrase so that the sentences make sense?

Adverbs	Verbs	
slowly	drank	
easily	opened	
happily	smoked	
	stole	the cheese sandwich
	smelt	
	took	
	enjoyed	

Collocation, again, but here the learners are being challenged to change the noun phrase rather than an adjective so that it collocates with the verb. Make sure that they offer noun phrases which fit the determiner + adjective + noun pattern. For example, *I easily opened the box* now is not a good time to suggest that *I opened the box easily* is also possible unless the class is ready for this alternative.

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The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- Now translate the sentence into your 1st language. Write it down.
- Do the parts come in the same place?
- How does your language make a noun phrase like this?
- Does your language use determiners?
- Where does the adjective come?
- How does your language make a verb phrase like *quickly ate*?
- Does the adverb come in the same place?

If you have groups of 1st language speakers in the class, it makes sense to get them to work together. At the end of this exercise, they should work with speakers of other languages to explain how their first languages make sentences like this. Find out about the canonical word orders in each of the languages in the class. At the end, get some feedback and emphasise the important issues.

Slide 11

The young man quickly ate the cheese sandwich.

- What sort of verb is *ate*?
- Why is it different from *walked*?
- Ate* works with a subject and an object. You can't say *I smiled the food*, but you can say *I ate the food*.
- Which of these verbs are like *ate* and which are like *smiled*?

walked	opened	cried
smoked	laughed	listened
saw	talked	did
liked	enjoyed	replied

The issue here is transitivity but the class will not need the word. Many languages exhibit the distinction but do so in different ways. Some make no distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs and this is a cause of much confusion. Some languages make verbs which are transitive in English intransitive and *vice versa*. Transitivity is a basic feature of verbs in all languages and you need to raise awareness here.

Slide 12

Your turn!

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In our sentence:

- A noun phrase = determiner + adjective + noun
- A verb phrase = adverb + verb (that takes an object)

How many sentences like these can you make?

An old man quickly smoked a cigarette.

My best friend slowly opened the letter.

That green dog easily

Keep going!

Most classes enjoy making nonsense sentences like *Those blue dogs happily liked the stupid apple.*

Providing they are getting word order and patterns right, let them have some fun. This lesson is essentially about structure, not meaning, and making up sentences to amuse is memorable and reinforces the patterns. This is also a good time to input some vocabulary – adjectives, nouns and verbs (of both sorts).