# Unit 16

## Grammar Continued

**Cast:**
- Missionary Li Wei
- Teacher Zhang Dong
- 4-5 students

### Scene 16.1.   Missionary Li Wei at his table surrounded by grammar/language books

**Missionary Li Wei:**  As I tried to get my mind around the structure of my target language I discovered a couple of helpful hints.  Allow me to share them with you, so that you don't need to make the same mistakes I made!

First of all, your Language Helper is  probably not the best person to teach you grammar.  They may even be misinformed.  It is best to have a good reference grammar book on hand.  A professional teacher at a language school should also be able to answer grammar questions without leading you astray!

Secondly, a new point of grammar is probably best understood when it describes what you are already using in the language rather than when it explains ahead of time how the language works.  In other words, 'explanation after use' is much more understandable than 'explanation of the rules and then practice'.

Thirdly, I discovered that the most effective way to practice particular grammar points was when I consciously (not mindlessly) repeated correct grammatical patterns and kept not so much content and meaning but the form, the structure, the rules in mind while I did so. This is very difficult to do for an extended period because, as you know, your mouth can be going through a routine while your mind is "a million miles away".   Just repeating phrases or sentences or substitution drills over and over again is of little help without consciously thinking about what you are doing and what specific pattern you are trying to nail down.

### Scene 16.2.   Teacher Zhang Dong with students

**Teacher Zhang Dong:** In our last class we focused on two aspects of grammar.  Do you remember what they were?

**Student:**  Function and word order

**Teacher Zhang Dong:**  Very good.  Today we want to think about 2 more things.  They are sentence structure and word transformation, or morphology. Let's take a look at sentence structure first.

Sentences in any language generally have a certain structure.  In English the structure is almost always **Noun, Verb, Noun**.  You can see this is the following simple sentence: "The man built the house."  Man and house are nouns, and the verb comes between them. In other words, the basic sentence structure in English is **subject-verb-object** (or S-V-O)

In some other languages, such as Japanese, Korean, Turkish and some languages found in Papua New Guinea and South America, the structure is Subject-Object-Verb (S-O-V). In other words, the verb is the last word in a simple sentence.   There are also a few language where the verb comes first, but that is rare.

This basic sentence structure within each language remains pretty constant unless some special effect is required, such as emphasis.  For instance, you might want to heighten awareness to show that you are reaching the climax of a story: instead of the saying "The wolf fell into the pot", you might into, "Into the pot fell the wolf".  That, however, is done only to create an effect.

In short, it is important to get your mind around the way that basic sentences are formed in your target language.   Here is a handout that will help you identify 7 basic types of simple sentences you've got to get your mind around.  (NOTE: THIS EXAMPLE HAS TO BE ADAPTED TO CHINESE.

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### 7 Basic Types of Simple Sentences

1.  **Someone (or something) does an activity** (Intransitive: there is one actor or troup of actors doing one activity)
    - Sally yawned.  The book fell.  She is crying.
1.  **Some (or something) does an activity to another person or object** (Transitive)
    -   He saw Maureen.  They bought a book.  The dog chased the cat.
    *A sub type involved someone (or something) being acted on.  This is called a passive sentence.*
    -   Maureen was seen by him.  The cat was chased by the dog.
2.  **Someone (or something) acts on him/itself** (Reflexive)
    -   He shaved himself.  He hit himself
3.  **Someone (or something) is identified** (Equative or Classification)
    -   He is the President.  That is a tree.  Mehmet is a Turk.
4.  **Someone (or something) is described** (Descriptive).
    -   The mountain is huge.  Susie is cute.  He is old
5.  **Someone (or something is possessed** (Possessive)
    -   The book is mine.  The baby is Louis'.  The apartment is Ron's
6.  **The Location of something is stated** (Locative)
    -   The park is near the store.  She is at the store.  The computor is on the table.

### Multiply the Basics
#### Vary each of the 7 types above in the following ways:
-   Make them negative
-   Turn them into questions, both Yes/no and information questions
-   Turn them into commands
-   Turn them into exclamations

Once you've got your mind around the way these seven basic seven types of sentence structures are formed in your target language, you can modify them by replacing or deleting certain words or by expanding the sentence. For example, look at how these examples show how you can do all kinds of things with simple sentence structure.

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**Gain Flexibility**

For example, using a transitive (type 2 in above example) type of sentence you can do the following:

1) **Replacement**
   - Plural for singular:                              "The dogs chased the cats."
   - Pronoun for noun:                                 "The dog chased her."
   - A name for a noun:                                "Fido chased the cat."
   - A question work for a noun:                       "Who chased the cat?"
   - A demonstrative or number for an article:         "This/one dog chased the cat"
   - Vary the pronouns:                                "I/you/they chased the cat."
   - An indefinite verb for a definite                 "The dog might chase the cat"

2) **Expansion:** Add modifiers to the 7 basic types
   - To the nouns:           "The big dog chased the cat; the dog chased the yellow cat"
   - To the verbs:           "The dog quickly chased the cat."
   - Time words:             "The dog chased the cat yesterday for three hours."
   - Location/direction words:   "The dog chased the cat in the park/up the tree."
   - Accompaniment:          "The dog and the hunter chased the cat."
   - Instrument:             "The man cut down the tree with the axe."
   - Numbers:                "The dog chased three cats."
   - Person Benefited:       "The dog chased the cat for me."
   - Person addressed:       "Bill, cut down that tree."

3) **Deletion**: Sometimes there are short forms
   - Where did you go? (I went) To town.
   - What are you making? (I'm making) Brownies.
   - I saw Peter. Who (did you see)?
   - Tracie drove home. What (did she do)?

4) **Rearrangement** of a sentence to make another of basically the same meaning
   - This book is mine > This is my book
   - That house is blue > That is a blue house

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**Teacher Zhang Dong:** Once you've got your mind around the different ways in which you can change your basic simple sentence, you can start putting some simple sentences together to create more complex sentences..

In the English language which, as we have seen, has a Subject-Verb-Object structure, we have several types of words which provide a joining function within the sentence. In actual fact there are about 16 possible patterns of joining English sentences.

Here are a few examples. The word which performs the joining function is underlined:
TEACHER ZHANG DONG WRITES EXAMPLES ON THE BOARD.
- For Christmas John receive a baseball <u>and</u> Mary was given a doll.
- The girl milked the cow <u>which</u> had the broken horn.
- The bear began to run towards me <u>so</u> I climbed the nearest tree.

In many foreign languages, however, this joining function doesn't happen with a simple joining word—they have special grammatical structures to do this.
Here are are more examples of non-simple sentence combination and how they are formed in English. You will have to identify the equivalent grammatical structure in your target language and drill those forms until they come easily, or you will always sound like a child speaking simple little sentences!

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**Non-simple Sentences**

Non-simple sentences are combinations of simple sentences. There are formed in various ways:
1) **Simple Linking**
    - With "and":
        Maureen prepared the potatoes. Hector prepared the cabbage >
        Maureen prepared the potatoes and Hector prepared the cabbage
    - Contrast:
        The younger son left. The older son stayed >
        The younger son left but the older son stayed.
    - With "or":
        Dwight will teach or he will travel
2) **Dependent combinations**
    - Time:         After she came, I left
    - Time:         While she sang, I slept.
    - Purpose:      I told him so that he would be safer.
    - Cause/effect  I did well because I worked hard.
    - Conditional   If…., (then)…. ;  If he had _____, I would have _____;
      etc.
3) **By Embedding**
    - relative clauses, either subject or object:
        The man *who* is sitting on the bench is reading the book *which* I had given him.
    - location:
        You are going to live in Istanbul. I live in Istanbul >
        You are going to live in Istanbul *where* I live.
    - Modify the subject:
        You did something. It hurt me > What you did hurt me.
    - Quotations, direct and indirect:
        He said, "No good." > He said that it was no good.

**Cut**

**Scene 16.4.    Teacher Zhang Dong in front of class**

**Teacher Zhang Dong:**  What have we considered so far with respect to doing grammar work?

**Students:** Function, word order, and sentence structure.

**Teacher Zhang Dong:**  Very good.  There is one last thing that you need to be aware of. It is called word transformation.  This phenomena is also called morphology, from the word " to morph", to change.

What I mean is that in certain languages, like Vietnamese, words never change form. In other languages, like English, some words can have different forms, depending on their relationship to the rest of the sentence or the type of information it seeks to communicate.

English, for instance has many variations in the verb roots it conjugates: throw, throws, throwing, threw, thrown; take > took; sing > sang; walk > walked. Forms of the verb "to go" include "go", "going", "went", and "gone".  Forms of the word "I" include "me", "my", "mine", "myself",.  You must pay very close attention to these kinds of changes when learning your new language!

There are different reasons why languages change the form of the same word.  In fact, all the traditional aspects of grammar in which a language causes words to change--like "person" (I, you, he), tense (past, future), mood (subjunctive, indicative), case (dative, nominative, etc.), gender (masculine, feminine), number (singular, plural), voice (active, passive)--generally fall under the category of word-transformation (e.g., bring, brought) or word-expansion (e.g., look, looking) or word-addition (e.g., was covered).

Sentences can have very subtle shifts in meaning when you make little changes using "little words" (as in English) or suffixes (as in Turkish) or suffixes and infixes (as in Arabic).  Knowing the function of these little words, suffixes or infixes, and how they can cause words around them to "morph", or change in form, is very important.  There are rules of grammar which determine how and when these little words or other indicators get added or subtracted, depending on what a person wants to say.

Such words or indicators are very common and get used a lot and, as I said, they are often very subtle in the way they shift meaning.  You must pay very close attention to them. Here you _must_ focus on meaning.  Let me give you some examples:

> I go.
> I am going.
> I am going to go.

I am going to be going.

Go home.
He goes home.
He goes to school.
He goes to the park.

In doing grammar work you need to say what it is that the added or subtracted word or construct does to the meaning of the sentence. In other words, you need to sit down with your language helper and say, "With that word (or suffix, or infix), the sentence means such-and-such; without it, it means such-and-such. When you add it, this is where it goes."

One common reason why words change form is due to something called "case". Case refers to little indicators attached to words that tell you how that word is related to the rest of the sentence. In English we use case on pronouns, but not on nouns. For instance, when we say, "He hit him" you know that "he" is the subject and "him" is the object of the verb to hit. You cannot turn the sentence around and say, "Him hit he". "Him" MUST be the object of a verb. In English, regular nouns are not subject to case changes. For example, "John hit Fred" and "Fred hit John" are both correct. This is not necessarily the case with other languages. In Turkic or Slavic languages, for instances, a word will look and sound slightly different if it becomes, say, the object of a verb. In fact, different verbs may make the object take on different forms. The word will look different again if it is the object of a preposition. In fact, different prepositions may make cause words to "morph" differently. In many Turkic languages case endings actually play the part of prepositions. This is a very important concept to get your mind around!

**Fade and Cut**


**Scene 16.5.    Missionary Li Wei standing beside an engine.**

**Missionary Li Wei:**  Allow me to give you some concluding advice on how to study your target language's grammar in a systematic way:

- focus on various sentence types
- focus on what happens to words and sentences when you change them from singular to plural or from plural to singular
- focus on word order of each kind of questions (who, what, where, when, etc.)
- focus on how negatives are expressed (where does the "not" go in the sentence)
- focus on the structure of commands
- focus on all the simple tenses (past, present future)
- focus on all the pronouns, what happens to the verbs when you use each one, and what happens when they are acting or acted upon
- focus on where descriptions (adjectives and adverbs) go in the sentence. Do they go before or after the words they describe?

- focus on sentences that use "want to", "like to", "need to", "have to", "try to", etc, because these sentences employ 2 verbs: "I want to go to town" etc.
- focus on complex sentences—sentences that begin with "if", "since", "after", "when", "although", "because of", etc.
- focus on how to express things more softly: eg, "I would like to go" vs. "I want to go".  Also learn how to express a wish or state something that isn't presently true: "I wish I could do better than than", "I hope I will be able to learn the language well", "If only you had been there", "I wish I were in Hawaii".

Practice by using the three grammar learning techniques you saw me model earlier: the Sentence transformation drill, the Single Sentence Pattern Drill, and the Complex Sentence Pattern Drill".

You may also want to keep track of what you are learning using a grammar checklist grammar book.   Your ultimate goal is to be able to recognize all points of grammar, know how they affect meaning, and know how to use them in speech and writing. Remember:  grammar is like an engine with a limited number of interlocking parts.  You have to get your mind around each part and understand how it related to the other parts…

**Fade and Cut**

**Scene 16.5.    Things learned in this lesson**

- Your language helper is probably not the best person to teach you the rules of grammar.
- "Explanation after use" is more understandable when learning grammar than "explanation of the rules followed by practice".
- The best way to practice particular grammar points is to consciously repeat correct patterns.
- The basic sentence structure within particular languages remains pretty constant, unless some special effect is required.
- Learn to identify the 7 basic types of simple sentences, then learn to modify them.
- Once you can modify basic simple sentences you can start putting them together to create more complex sentences.  Identify the ways your target language connects simple sentences and practice them.
- Pay close attention to word transformation.   When you see a word "morph", ask "when does it do that?"
- "Case" refers to little indicators attached to words that tell you how that word is related to the rest of the sentence
- Focus on where descriptions (adjectives and adverbs) go in the sentence.  Do they go before or after the words they describe?
- Focus on sentences that use "want to", "like to", "need to", "have to", "try to".
- Focus on sentences that begin with "if", "since", "after", "when", "although", "because of", etc.

- Focus on how to express things more softly: eg, "I would like to go" vs. "I want to go".
- Learn how to express a wish or state something that isn't presently true: "I wish…", "I hope…", "If only…".