**Written Expression**

**First Year (L1)/ All groups**

**Lecture 3: Phrases**

A phrase is a group of related words, generally having neither subject nor predicate and used as though it were a single word. It is used as a single part of speech. It cannot make a statement and is therefore not a clause.

E.g. For you and her [no subject or verb] / To be the best [no subject]

**Note:** A group of words that has both a subject and a verb is called a ***clause.***

E.g. They will be here soon. [*They* is the subject of *will be.*]

After she leaves [*She* is the subject of *leaves.*]

Phrases can be classified as prepositional, verbal (gerund, participial, and infinitive), appositive, absolute, and noun phrases.

1. ***The prepositional phrase:*** It is the combination of a preposition and its object. In other words, it is the preposition followed by a noun or pronoun, with any modifiers they may have. This type of phrases usually functions as an **Adjective** or as an **Adverb**.

* I voted ***against the new idea.*** (The prepositional phrase functions as an **adverb** modifying the verb **vote).**
* The book ***on the table*** is mine. (The prepositional phrase functions as an **adjective** modifying the noun **book).**
* The river runs ***through rich farmland***. (It functions as an adverb modifying the verb **run).**
* Althea Gibson was graceful ***on the tennis court.*** [*On the tennis court* modifies the adjective *graceful.*]
* The child speaks quite clearly ***for a two-year-old*.** [*For a two-year-old* modifies the adverb *clearly.*]
* Do not confuse a prepositional phrase beginning with ***to****—*as in ‘***to me****’* or ‘***to Australia’****—*with an infinitive, such as ***to be***or ***to learn****.*

1. ***The Verbal Phrase:***

Verbals are formed from verbs and are used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. A ***verbal phrase*** consists of a verbal and its modifiers and complements. The three kinds of verbal phrases are the *participial phrase,* the *gerund phrase,* and the *infinitive phrase.*

1. ***The participial phrase:***

A participle**is a verb form that is used as an adjective**. There are two kinds of participles: -ing participles, called present participles, and -ed participles(Some are formed irregularly), called past participles.

a **sleeping** baby a **used** car

a **frightening** experience a **frightened** child

\*There are also perfect forms: **Having solved** most of the problems without any help, the students were exhilarated.

**Note:** Do not confuse a participle used as an adjective with a participle used as part of a verb phrase.

* ADJECTIVE The shrimp gumbo, **simmering** on the stove, smelled delicious.
* VERB PHRASE The shrimp gumbo **was simmering** on the stove.

A participial phrase consists of a participle and any modifiers or complements the participle has. The entire phrase is used as an adjective.

**Examples:**

* **Hearing the alarm clock**, the boy woke up.
* Airport security will question anyone **found with a suspicious object in their baggage.**
* **Disappointed by his best friend**, Paul refused to speak to him.
* I heard him **whispering to his friend.** [The participial phrase modifies the pronoun *him.* The prepositional phrase *to his friend* modifies the present participle *whispering(Adjective) and functions as an adverb.*]

***Notes:***

* A participial phrase must be placed as close as possible to the noun it modifies.
* When placed at the beginning of a sentence, a participial phrase is followed by a comma.
* It should be placed between two commas if it comes in the middle of a sentence, only if the information is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

E.g.The church, **destroyed by a fire**, was never rebuilt.

1. ***The Gerund phrase***:

A *gerund* is a verb form that ends in –*ing* and that is used as a noun. It is a verbal phrase that consists of a gerund and any modifiers or complements it may have. It is used as a noun functions as a ***subject, a direct object, an indirect object, a predicate nominative, or an object of a preposition***].

* ***Talking on the phone*** occupies most of his day. (Subject)
* My task for the weekend will be ***reading novels***. (Predicate nominative)
* I always begin my birthday by ***opening my gift***. (Object of preposition)
* I enjoy ***listening to music***. (Direct object)
* Mr. Brown, a part-time reporter for the local newspaper, is giving **working full time** careful thought. [The gerund phrase is the indirect object of the verb *is giving*]

1. ***The Infinitive phrase:***

An infinitive is a verb form that can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. Most infinitives begin with ‘*to’.* An *infinitive phrase* consists of an infinitive and any modifiers or complements the infinitive has. The entire phrase can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

* The material ***to be used***is very expensive. (Adjective)
* She wanted ***to leave school early***. (Direct object)
* She felt excited ***to reach the end of the year***. (Adverb modifying the adjective excited)
* She wants **to study marine biology.** [The infinitive phrase is the direct object of the verb *wants.* The noun *biology* is the direct object of the infinitive *to study,* and the adjective *marine* modifies *biology.*]

**Note:** Unlike other verbals, an infinitive may have a subject. An ***infinitive clause*** consists of an infinitive with a subject and any modifiers or complementsthe infinitive has. The entire infinitive clause functions as a noun.

E.g. I wanted **him to come to our powwow.** [*Him* is the subject of the infinitive *to come.* The entire infinitive clause is the direct object of the verb *wanted.*]

* Sometimes *to*, the sign of the infinitive, is omitted.

E.g. Did you watch her [to] **play** volleyball?

He will help us [to] **paddle** the canoe.

1. ***The Appositive Phrase***:

An *appositive* is a noun or pronoun placed beside another noun or pronoun to identify or rename it. An *appositive phrase* consists of an appositive and any modifiers it has. It may be a noun phrase and its modifiers, a gerund phrase, an infinitive phrase, or a propositional phrase.

* This book, *a long novel about politics*, will never be a best seller.
* John’s Robby*,* ***collecting stamps***, is so funny.
* His greatest ambition, ***to make a million dollars***, was doomed from the start.

An appositive phrase usually follows the noun or pronoun it identifies or describes. Sometimes, though, it precedes the noun or pronoun.

E.g. **A diligent and quick-witted student,** Mark always gets good grades. [The appositive phrase identifies the noun *Mark.*]

Appositives and appositive phrases that are not essential to the meaning of a sentence are set off by commas. However, an appositive that tells *which one of two or more* is essential to the meaning of a sentence and should not be set off by commas.

**NONESSENTIAL:** Is Karen’s sister, **Marcia**, also a sophomore? [The appositive *Marcia* is not essential because Karen has only **one** sister.]

**ESSENTIAL:** Jorge’s sister **Selena** is a sophomore. [The appositive *Selena* is essential because Jorge has **more than one sister**. Which one of the sisters is a sophomore? *Selena.*]

1. ***The Noun Phrase***:

It is either a single noun or a pronoun or a group of words containing a noun or a pronoun that function together as a noun or a pronoun, as the subject or an object of a verb.

* ***All the kids*** were sleeping.
* ***The boy in the blue jeans*** says he’ll do it.
* You are ***a true hero***.
* My book is ***my best friend***.

1. **The Absolute Phrase:** A noun followed by a participle may form a construction grammatically independent of the rest of the sentence. This construction is called an ***absolute phrase***. It is never a subject, nor does it modify any word in the sentence, but is used *absolutely* or *independently*.

* **The bus having stopped**, the tourists filed out.
* **The theatre being nearby,** I decided to walk.
* **The lights having come on,** the band began to play again.
* An absolute phrase is always separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.