

SECTION

4

RULES OF WRITING

LANGUAGE AND USAGE

Rules of writing a Ghanaian language

INTRODUCTION

This section examines the rules for writing a Ghanaian language. The principles of writing in relation to nouns, verbs, pronouns and adjectives will be discussed. The rules that govern nouns will be discussed first, followed by the pronouns, then adjectives and then verbs and adverbs. This involves equipping you with the rules and usage of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in the Ghanaian language you study. The rules learnt can be linked to other subjects such as English.

At the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Construct sentences considering the rules of writing nouns and pronouns
- Construct sentences considering the rules of writing adjectives
- Construct sentences considering the rules of writing verbs and adverbs

Key Ideas

- Nouns act as subject, direct and indirect object, qualifiers/epithet and as head of phrase.
- Pronouns also act as subject and objects in constructions.
- Adjectives modify nouns. They normally occur after the noun they modify in Ghanaian languages.
- Verbs describe actions or states. Most Ghanaian Languages have no number agreement when using verbs. Nouns and verbs are usually written separately in most Ghanaian Languages, but when used with a pronoun they are used together.
- Adverbs modify verbs and can modify other adverbs.

Constructing Sentences Using Nouns and Pronouns

Nouns

Nouns were discussed in the last section. We mentioned examples of nouns and then discussed the categories that they fall into.

Thinking question: Can you recollect the types of nouns? Write them down.

Nouns are names of people, places, animals and things. Most often a sentence contains at least one noun. Nouns may occur with the article ‘a’, ‘an’, ‘some; or ‘the’.

Pronoun

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of a noun such as he, she, it, you, I, they, them, we, us, etc. They can function as a noun phrase.

Please note: In most Ghanaian languages pronouns are not marked to show gender. Is this the case with your language of study? Discuss with a partner and feedback to your teacher.

In this lesson, we discuss the rules in writing with nouns and pronouns.

Activity 4.1

Watch the video and share your ideas on the function of nouns with your peers.

[function of nouns YouTube video - \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rURutv7N_ns\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rURutv7N_ns)

Now, compare your notes on what you watched with what will be discussed below on rules/functions of nouns.

Rules/Functions of Nouns and Pronouns

1. The rules for constructing sentences using nouns differ from one Ghanaian Language to the other. Generally, nouns act as:

a. Subjects in sentences

Nouns in Ghanaian languages often are found in subject positions. They occur as the first word in most languages especially languages that construct sentences with the subject-verb-object order. For example:

- i. **Akos** went to church.
- ii. **Books** are expensive.
- iii. **Wisdom** is the key to success.

In the examples above we see the nouns **Akos**, **books** and **wisdom** in the subject position.

b. Objects in sentences (direct or indirect)

Nouns can also function as objects in sentences. The object can be direct or indirect. For example:

- i. We bought Ama **a book**. (Direct object).
- ii. I gave a pen to **Prince**. (Indirect object).
- iii. Kukua sent Hakim **a gift**. (Direct object)

- iv. Akuba bought a gift for **Hakim**. (Indirect object)

c. Qualifiers known as epithet (in some Ghanaian languages)

Nouns also act as qualifiers known as epithet (in some Ghanaian languages). This is a noun that modifies another noun. For example:

- i. The **rubber** bowl is with Adu.
- ii. The **school** gate is closed.
- iii. They bought a **leather** bag.

d. Head of the noun phrase

Nouns can also occur as the head of a noun phrase. For example:

- i. **Pens** are expensive.
 - ii. The new **room** is hot.
 - iii. We are **home**.
 - iv. A huge **building** collapsed today.
2. The rules for constructing sentences using pronouns differ from one Ghanaian Language to the other. Generally, pronouns act as:

e. Subjects in sentences.

For example:

- i. **I** went to school.
- ii. **We** watch movies every day.
- iii. **They** laugh heartily.

f. Objects in sentences (direct or indirect)

Pronouns also act as objects in sentences (direct or indirect). See the examples below:

- i. Akwasi saw **him**. (Direct object).
- ii. Ama gave a pen to **her**. (Indirect object).
- iii. Ama gave **her** a pen. (Indirect object)
- iv. The teacher gave **us** homework. (Direct object).
- g. Also in some Ghanaian languages, the pronoun in the subject position is added to the verb that follows it and written together as one word (e.g., Ga, Asante Twi).

If this is not a rule in your language of study, discuss the rule as it pertains to your Ghanaian language of study. Add to the rules above as they pertain to your Ghanaian language of study.

Activity 4.2

1. Define a noun and give at least ten examples. Share the answer with the whole class.
2. In pairs write down two functions of a noun. Join in with another pair and discuss with your group members.
3. Define a pronoun and give at least ten examples. Share the answer with the whole class.
4. Read the passage below and in your groups identify the nouns and pronouns.

Dogs

Dogs are well-known animals that are popular as pets worldwide. They come in various breeds with different qualities, physical characteristics, and colours. They are four-legged mammals that are descendants of wolves in the wild. When early man domesticated wolves for hunting, they adapted to human groups and evolved alongside to become close to people. They are very good at sensing human emotions such as love, hostility and fear and respond to people accordingly.

In general, dogs have an outstanding sense of smell. They also have excellent hearing power and can hear sound frequencies. What makes dogs so valuable is that they can be trained to perform various tasks. Service dogs can assist blind people daily, while emotional support dogs are excellent at comforting people who are feeling anxious. Dogs are also used in search and rescue and detecting faint scents that machines cannot. Despite all the beautiful ways dogs help people, they have a short lifespan of only about 10-15 years. While they have value in terms of service, most dogs are cherished as loving family members worldwide.

- a. Use five of the nouns identified to form compound sentences. Be ready to share your answers for class discussion.
- b. Use three of the pronouns identified to form sentences. Be ready to share your answers for class discussion.

Activity 4.3

1. Identify the function of the underlined words. Compare your answers with your peers.
 - a. The brilliant students travelled yesterday.
 - b. I sent Eden money.
 - c. The teacher wrote on the new blackboard.
 - d. They left for Navrongo.
 - e. The passenger bought bread for her.

Extended Reading

Fromkin, V. & Rodman, R. & Hyams, N. (2007) Introduction to Language. (Eighth edition) Thomson Wadsworth.

Click on the link below for a video on noun functions in English grammar.

[Noun Functions in English Grammar with Examples](#)

Constructing Sentences Using Adjectives

You have already learned about adjectives. In groups form three sentences using adjectives that you would use to describe the following:

1. Your classroom
2. Your best friend
3. Your school compound
4. Your family

An '*Adjective*' is a word that modifies or describes a noun. Adjectives describe the qualities of someone or something independently or in comparison to something else.

Please note: This concept should be treated as applicable to your Ghanaian language of study. For example:

- a. Kwadwo likes *old* houses.
- b. The boy is *tall* and *skinny*.
- c. Aku is *smarter than* her brother.

In (a), the word *old* is describing the kind of house that the speaker likes. In (b) the words *tall* and *skinny* describe the physical attributes of the boy. In (c), on the other hand, the words *smarter than* are used to compare Aku and her brother's level of intelligence.

Rules/functions of Adjectives

The rules for constructing sentences using adjectives differ from one Ghanaian language to another. General rules/functions about adjectives in a Ghanaian language:

1. It modifies a noun in a sentence.

For example:

- a. The *black* horse runs faster than the other horses.
- b. I saw a *huge* building.

2. They occur just after the nouns they modify.

For example:

- a. In Akan, Efie *tuntum* no abu 'The *black* house has collapsed'.
- b. In Ga, Yoo *agbo* ko etee shia 'A *big* woman has gone home'.

You also studied some different types of adjectives previously. Further examples are given below:

Using demonstrative adjectives to construct sentences

- a. ***This*** car is new.
- b. ***That*** house belongs to my father.

Using comparative adjectives to construct sentences

- a. This is a ***cheaper*** food.
- b. Your money is ***less than*** mine.

Using quantifier adjectives to construct sentences

- a. I bought ***some*** rice.
- b. There are ***many*** books in my box.

Using descriptive/qualifier adjectives to construct sentences

- a. The car is ***old***.
- b. The food is ***attractive***.

Please note: *State the rules governing how adjectives are used in your Ghanaian language of study.*

Activity 4.4

(Pair work)

1. Look at the list of ten adjectives below. Use them to form sentences. If you can, challenge yourself to form compound or even complex sentences.
 - a. Marvelous
 - b. Boring
 - c. Enraged
 - d. Ancient
 - e. Enormous
 - f. Correct
 - g. Bright
 - h. Lovely
 - i. Old-fashioned
 - j. Tedious
2. Now study the structure of your examples with a partner. What do you notice? Be ready to share your observations with the class.

Activity 4.5

1. Provide ten examples of adjectives.
2. Use five of the adjectives to form the following types of sentences.
 - a. Simple
 - b. Compound
 - c. Complex
3. Discuss the rules governing the use of adjectives in your language of study based on the examples that you have written.

Extended Reading

- Adomako, K., Odoom, J. and Sackitey, M. (2023). *Akan kasa nhyehyeeɛ wɔ Asante Twi mu*. Adonai Publications Limited (Topic on verbs, nouns and adjectives)
- Amegashie, S.K. (2004). *Evegbe ηηηη*. Aflao: Victus Printing Services, Market Square
- Fromkin, V. & Rodman, R. & Hyams, N. (2007). *Introduction to Language* (Eighth edition). Thomson Wadsworth. (topic on verbs, adverbs, nouns and adjectives)
- Joshi, M. (2021). *Nouns in the English Language: Types and examples*. Manik Joshi. (Topic on nouns)
- Thakur, D. (1998). *Linguistics simplified: Syntax*. Delhi: Bharati Bhawan. (open word class which are nouns adjectives, verbs and adverbs)

Constructing Sentences Using Verbs and Adverbs

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to construct sentences considering the rules of writing verbs and adverbs in your Ghanaian Language of study.

Writing sentences using verbs and adverbs in the various Ghanaian languages requires some rules. These rules help to ensure clear and coherent writing that communicates the intended message to the reader. Applying the rules of writing in the respective Ghanaian languages will help you construct meaningful sentences in your language of study.

Verbs

Before we get to the rules, let us remind ourselves about what verbs are. See the examples below. The words in bold are verbs.

1. The farmer **clears** the bush every farming season.
2. The children **walk** to school on Fridays.
3. We **jump** every morning to exercise our body.

A verb is a word, or a phrase used to describe an action, state of or occurrence. Verbs form the main part of a predicate of a sentence. In other words, a verb is the head of a predicate in a sentence.

Rules of constructing sentences using verbs

The rules for constructing sentences using verbs differ from one Ghanaian Language to the other. Here are some of the rules:

1. Verbs indicate the action a subject is performing in a sentence.

For example:

- a. The dog **barks** always at the gate.

Here, the verb **barks** tells us what the subject, 'The dog' does at the gate.

- b. The students **ride** to school every morning.

The verb 'ride' tells us the action of the subject, 'The students'

2. Verbs show the state of a subject in a sentence.

For example:

- a. Kodzo **became** happy after the examination.

Here, the verb 'became' tells us the state of the subject 'Kodzo' after the examination.

3. Verbs act as the head of the predicate.

For example:

- a. The saloon car **runs** at a top speed.

The verb 'run' is the head of the predicate, 'runs at a top speed'

- b. The students **ride** to school every morning.

Here also the verb 'ride' is the head of the predicate, 'ride to school every morning'

Please note: There are some other rules for writing verbs that are Ghanaian language-specific. Some examples are as follows:

4. In some Ghanaian languages, verbs are written separately from the subject pronoun in a sentence while in some the verb is put together with the verb as one word.

For example:

- a. O di sayim 'S/he has eaten food'.

Here, the subject pronoun 'O' is written separately from the verb '**di**'.

- b. Bɛ da bua 'They bought a goat'.

In this example, the pronoun 'Bɛ' is written separately from its verb '**da**'.

5. In some Ghanaian Languages, when a pronoun occurs at the subject position, the pronoun is written together with the verb.

For example:

- a. Wodzo ‘They are gone’.

In Ewe ‘wo’ is the pronoun (subj.) and ‘**dzo**’ is the verb.

- b. Eɖu te ‘S/he has eaten yam’.

In Ewe ‘E’ is the pronoun (subj.) and ‘**ɖu**’ is the verb.

6. When the first- and third-person singular pronouns occur at object position, it is written together with the verb in some of the languages.

For example:

- a. Wofom ‘They beat me.’

Here, the first-person singular pronoun ‘m’ (object position) is written together with the verb ‘**fo**’ in the sentence.

- b. Kofi wui ‘Kofi killed it.’

In Ewe here ‘i’ is the third person singular pronoun coming after the verb, ‘**wu**’ in the sentence.

- c. Wodzui ‘They insulted him.’

Here ‘i’ is third person singular pronoun coming after the verb ‘**dzu**’ in the sentence.

Please note: The rules should be treated as applicable to your Ghanaian language of study.

Activity 4.6

Explain the concept of a verb in your own words. Provide ten examples of verbs.

Activity 4.7

Use the examples in (Activity 4.6) to form five sentences for each of the following.

1. simple sentences
1. compound sentences
2. complex sentences.

Activity 4.8

(Pair work)

1. Look at the list of ten verbs below. Use them to form sentences. If you can, challenge yourself to form compound or even complex sentences. All the examples are in the infinitive form – you may need to change them depending on your subject.

- a. Shout
- b. Carry
- c. Love
- d. Smell
- e. Become
- f. Stumble
- g. Learn
- h. Detest
- i. Feel
- i. Relax

Now study the structure of your examples with a partner. Do your examples match the rules that you have studied in this lesson? Be ready to share your observations with the class.

Activity 4.9

1. Explain the types of verbs studied in this lesson.
2. Provide at least five examples of each of the types of verbs studied and use any one of the examples from each type to form sentences.

Additional Activity

In groups explain the rules of writing sentences using verbs in this lesson. For example:

- a. When the pronoun occurs at the subject position.
- b. When the pronoun is at the object position.

Adverbs

We have just looked at the rules of constructing sentences using verbs. Now, let us look at the rules of constructing sentences using adverbs.

Do you remember what adverbs are?

An adverb is a word or phrase that modifies or qualifies a verb or another adverb expressing a relation of place, time, degree, etc. Some examples of adverbs used in sentences are as follows:

1. They came **here**. (place)
2. We arrived at **7 a.m.** (time)
3. The team played **happily**. (degree)

The adverbs in the above sentences are; **here**, **7 a.m.** and **happily**.

Rules/functions of Adverbs

The rules of constructing sentences using adverbs differ from one Ghanaian Language to another.

Here are some rules/functions:

1. Adverbs act as the head of adverb phrase.

For example;

- a. The men spoke **very loudly**.
- b. The show ended **abruptly**.

The adverbs **loudly** and **abruptly** act as the adverb phrases as well as heads of the phrases respectively.

2. They act as an adverb modifier.

For example;

- a. They play **very well**.
- b. The students performed **extremely well**.

In the above sentences, the adverb **very** modifies the adverb **well**, while **extremely** also modifies the adverb **good**.

3. Adverbs can be joined to any other word class and written as one word. (*Discuss as applicable in your Ghanaian language*).

Activity 4.10

1. Explain the concept of an adverb within your group and compare your explanation to those of other groups.
2. Provide ten examples of adverbs in your language of study.

Activity 4.11

Use the examples in stated in question 2 of Activity 4.10 to form 5 sentences for each of the following types of sentences:

1. simple
2. compound

3. complex

Activity 4.12

(Pair work)

1. Look at the list of ten adverbs below. Use them to form sentences. If you can, challenge yourself to form compound or even complex sentences.
 - a. Loudly
 - b. Today
 - c. Here
 - d. Beautifully
 - e. Quickly
 - f. Tomorrow
 - g. Outside
 - h. Normally
 - i. Repeatedly
 - i. Now
2. Now study the structure of your examples with a partner. Do your examples match the rules that you have studied in this lesson? Be ready to share your observations with the class.

Extended reading

- Owu-Ewie C. (2020). *Mfantse kasa ngyegyee na kasa mbra ho adzesua buukuu ma nsowdo skuul esuafo*. Shine Prints Company Limited.
- Ago, S.A. (1992). *Agoo*. Ghana Publishing Company.
- Amartey A.A. (1966). *Omanye aba*. Bureau of Ghana Languages.

Review Questions 4.1

1. Explain in your own words the term epithet. Give two examples and share with your peer.
2. Your teacher will provide you with a passage containing errors. Read the passage provided by your teacher and identify the errors.
3. Discuss the direct and indirect functions of pronouns in your language of study. Compare with other languages that you may study or know.
4. Provide five examples of nouns acting as heads of phrases in sentences in your language of study. Discuss with the whole class.
5. In pairs, write out ten sentences with pronouns as subjects and discuss whether they are written together with the verb. Compare with other Ghanaian languages and discuss in class.

Review Questions 4.2

1. Read the passage below and identify ten adjectives in it.

So many people are realising how destructive our actions are affecting the environment. Environmental preservation should be a top priority for us all. However, few people have little knowledge about taking good care of our environment. Our unconcerned attitudes are contributing to the daily destruction of our environment. For example, indiscriminate disposal of garbage, waste disposal, loitering of plastics, etc. if these bad attitudes are not checked, a time will come when future generations will have to combat unbearable consequences of our negligent behaviours. It is therefore incumbent on you and I to do our utmost best to salvage our environment. It is our sole responsibility to take proactive actions to preserve our God-given planet. The consequences of our attitude towards our environment have been frequent flooding, low production of food crops, etc.

2. Use the adjectives identified to form ten complex sentences.

Review Questions 4.3

1. Read the following passage carefully and identify all the **verbs** and **adverbs**.

As they hastily finished their projects, they carefully reviewed every detail, making sure everything was perfectly in place. They then confidently submitted their work knowing they had done their absolute best. The teacher thoroughly examined, nodding approvingly at the excellent work. The students beamed proudly, feeling incredibly accomplished.

2. Use the verbs and the adverbs identified from the passage to form five sentences, taking the rules you have learnt into consideration.

Answers to Review Questions 4.1

1. An epithet is a noun that modifies another noun. Most often the epithet occurs before the head noun. E.g. The **school** wall is broken.
3. The answer is based on the passage provided. Ask your teacher for the answers to the passage provided. Check this against your work.
4. The answer is based on the Ghanaian language of study. E.g. the indirect may not have any preposition/postposition/particle preceding it. The direct may have no particle after it.
5. Nouns as head of phrases
E.g.
 - I saw the tall **tree**.
 - The old **car** has been sold.
 - The farmer sold very fresh **flowers**.
 - An old **building** is not safe for habitation, etc.
5. In some Ghanaian languages, the pronoun is written together with the verb, and others are written separately from the verb when in the subject position. For example, the pronouns Akan, Ga, and Ewe are written together with the verb in the subject position, while Dagbani, Gurene, etc., are not written together with the verb in the subject position.

Answers to Review Questions 4.2

1. Read the passage below and identify ten adjectives in it.
 - a. many
 - b. destructive
 - c. environmental
 - d. top
 - e. few
 - f. little
 - g. good
 - h. unconcerned
 - i. daily
 - j. indiscriminate
 - k. bad
 - l. future
 - m. unbearable
 - n. negligent
 - a. utmost
 - b. proactive
 - c. God-given
 - d. Frequent
 - e. low
2. Use the adjectives identified to form ten complex sentences. The following are some examples.
 - Sweeping is part of my *daily* activity.
 - Disrespecting is a *bad* attitude.

Answers to Review Questions 4.3

1. **verbs** --- finished, reviewed, making, submitted, examined nodding, beamed.
Adverbs --- hastily, carefully, perfectly, confidently, thoroughly incredibly proudly.
2. Write the sentences based on the passage you have read.

References

1. Haspelmath, M. (2001). Word classes and parts of speech. *In International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp16538-16545). Doi:10.1016/Bo-08-043076-7/02959-4
2. Lier, E. V. (2024). *The Oxford handbook of word classes (oxford handbook)*. Oxford University Press.
3. Miguel, J., M. G. (2015). *Transitivity and word classes*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ivitra.9.13gar>
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