

ESSENTIAL GRAMMAR FOR  
TODAY'S WRITERS, STUDENTS,  
AND TEACHERS

SECOND EDITION

Nancy M. Sullivan



## Praise for the previous edition:

“Having used *Essential Grammar* for five semesters and with roughly 350 students—mostly pre-service educators, I value the clear presentation of a functional approach to grammar. Over the course of the semester, as students apply the ‘tests’ that Sullivan includes for analysis, their understanding of the relationship between form and function develops considerably.”

—**Dr. Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi**

“Nancy Sullivan’s *Essential Grammar for Today’s Writers, Students, and Teachers* provides a fresh, clear approach to grammar for students in all disciplines, but particularly for future language arts teachers. Beginning with and building on the basics and working through verbal phrases and dependent clauses, Sullivan methodically explores the way English works. This reasonably-priced book includes virtually all the concepts needed for teaching English. Teachers will appreciate its streamlined approach: less reading and more doing is always good in a grammar class.”

—**Elizabeth Ruleman, Tennessee Wesleyan College**

“Nancy Sullivan’s *Essential Grammar for Today’s Writers, Students, and Teachers* achieves what few grammar texts accomplish: it presents its subject in a thorough, yet accessible style and format to vanquish the common fears both students and teachers have about learning and teaching this timeless topic. Equally important, the text is grounded in contemporary contexts across cultures, genres, and media, with examples that appeal to a range of audiences and alleviate the traditional assumption that the parts of speech and the way we use them to make meaning are a mystery to be mastered only by experts. In this way, *Essential Grammar for Today’s Writers, Students, and Teachers* will remain a valuable reference for its readers long after a course has ended; in other words, the book is indeed essential.”

—**Kristine L. Blair, Duquesne University**

“This textbook positions itself perfectly for pre-service teachers who may not have a strong background in grammar yet need to know these critical concepts in order to pass the certification exams. For that niche market, this book is more than adequate. The text is written to a general audience, however, so its usage is in no way confined to pre-service teachers and would be appropriate for anyone wanting to enhance their understanding the basic structure of English.”

—**Catharine M. Welch, University of North Texas at Dallas**



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# Essential Grammar for Today's Writers, Students, and Teachers

This innovative grammar text is an ideal resource for writers, language students, and classroom teachers who need an accessible refresher in a step-by-step guide to essential grammar.

Rather than becoming mired in overly detailed linguistic definitions, Nancy Sullivan helps writers and students understand and apply grammatical concepts and develop the skills they need to enhance their writing. Along with engaging discussions of both contemporary and traditional terminology, Sullivan's text provides clear explanations of the basics of English grammar, guides to punctuation, and a practical, hands-on approach to mastering the use of language. Complementing the focus on constructing excellent sentences, every example and exercise set is contextually grounded in language themes. This updated edition includes new sections in each chapter on Writing Matters (addressing key tools and concerns for writers) and Language Matters (addressing issues of social and regional dialect variation).

This is an ideal textbook for any writing course across disciplines where grammatical precision is important.

Online resources including additional exercises, links, and an answer key are available at [www.routledge.com/9780367148683](http://www.routledge.com/9780367148683). Instructor materials accompanying the text provide teachers with activities designed for face-to-face, hybrid, and online instruction to enliven these basic grammar lessons as well as writing activities to integrate these concepts into students' own writing.

**Nancy M. Sullivan** retired from the Department of English at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) in 2015. She started her teaching career as a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo, West Africa. Other countries where she has taught include Puerto Rico, Japan, China, and Hong Kong, where she was a Fulbright Scholar. She received a master's degree from Ohio University and a doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin. She was a member of the TAMUCC English Department for over twenty years; she occasionally teaches online for the department to stay current with grammar. Her research on the intersection of language attitudes, language usage, and identity has been widely published. Sullivan's keen interest in grammar usage has been inspired by her students, who continue to spark her curiosity with their insights and questions.



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# Essential Grammar for Today's Writers, Students, and Teachers

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Second edition

Nancy M. Sullivan

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# Preface

The purpose of this second edition remains the same as the first: Make basic grammar concepts and terminology accessible to future teachers who will need this knowledge for their own classrooms. The book is also designed to aid writers and students who are not pursuing teaching certification to analyze their grammatical choices and to make informed decisions based on the goals of their texts. Essential punctuation rules that support those structures and clarify meaning are provided. *Essential Grammar for Today's Writers, Students, and Teachers* remains a semester-long course book that does not assume a strong background in grammar.

Based on valuable feedback, some changes were made to the second edition. First, the “Did you know ...” boxes that developed the linguistics topics were removed but are now available in the **Companion Website**. In Chapter 3, the adverbial subject complement has been removed, leaving predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives as the two subject complements. I am most excited about the two new sections: **Writing Matters**, designed to help understand the grammatical choices available to us, and **Language Matters**, developed to provide opportunities to explore the language around us. Additional attention is paid to punctuation in this new edition with sections called **Punctuation Patterns**. Special highlighted boxes provide **Notes on ...**, which focus on information related to the grammar topic being explored. For example, in the section on pronouns in Chapter 1, “Notes on Gender Inclusive Language” addresses the use of the universal pronoun “they” in professional writing. Additionally, numerous exercises have been added to provide more practice activities. Answers to the first five questions in each exercise are provided at the back of the book. The others are online at the Companion Website ([www.routledge.com/9780367148683](http://www.routledge.com/9780367148683)). This **e-Resources** link will also contain a trove of valuable resources for students.

The **Instructors' Manual** offers a rich resource of creative and engaging activities that support the learning of grammar. Included are pedagogical suggestions that can be used to connect grammar to a writer's own texts. For example, at the beginning of

the semester, I ask students to write a “Grammar Literacy Paper”—a personal essay in which each student reflects on his or her own grammar journey. This paper is used throughout the semester to explore the grammar concepts that we are discussing in class. Activities related to this initial assignment are available on the website. There are also worksheets and games connected to each chapter. Instructors decide what, if any, additional activities to incorporate into their courses.

Finally, I hope you will agree with me that this book offers writers, students, and teachers relevant and interesting insights into language while exploring essential grammar terminology and punctuation. Please feel free to email me with your comments and suggestions. My email address is available on the instructors’ website.



# Introduction

There are most likely a variety of reasons why you are reading this introduction. You may be taking a grammar course required for teacher certification or a degree in English, or you may be convinced that a good foundation in grammar is essential for your career. My goal in writing this book is to provide you with the basics of English grammar that you will need to address grammar in your own future classroom or workplace. As a result of your grammar study, I promise that you will develop a stronger “metalinguistic” awareness (the ability to reflect on and analyze language) that will support better reading and writing.

In 2014, I wrote the first edition of *Essential Grammar for Today's Writers, Students, and Teachers* with my students in mind. Most were pursuing certification in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), elementary language arts, or secondary English. Knowledge of basic grammar is particularly important for future classroom teachers, who will be confronted with grammar terminology in the textbooks used in their own classrooms. Instructors and their students need a shared vocabulary to communicate clearly and effectively about their texts. When I first started to teach it, the course's goal was to provide a review of grammar. However, I found that many of my students had little or no experience with grammar terminology and concepts prior to taking the class. (So much for the course being a review!) Many students reported that their primary and secondary school teachers avoided discussions of grammar. If grammar was addressed at all, their teachers appeared to be uncomfortable with the material. As a result, many students no longer have the language required to discuss grammar related issues. I had an interesting experience one semester when I walked by a university classroom where basic Spanish was being taught. I heard the teacher explaining to the students that the *objeto indirecto* is similar to an indirect object in English. I chuckled and thought, “Good luck with that explanation!” Grammar knowledge can impact areas other than reading and writing, such as second language learning.

Our lack of grammar knowledge stems from the status of grammar as a classroom subject, which has been controversial over the past fifty years. After a report in the 1970s argued that grammar had little to no value in developing writing skills, the subject was dropped or greatly decreased in many schools. Now that students of that era are in their own classrooms teaching English, they tend to avoid grammar because they do not have the background or confidence to teach it.

The UK has acknowledged that ignoring grammar was a bad idea and has resulted in students not acquiring the skills needed for academic or professional writing. Their entire curriculum has been revised with required grammar standards for each grade. Teachers are given opportunities to learn or review grammar through classes and workshops. A comprehensive website (*Englicious*) provides grammar exercises and suggestions for classroom activities to incorporate grammar in different contexts to enhance the students' understanding. Of course, there are some who disagree with the new curriculum. I don't want to spend time debating the various viewpoints; however, it is important to note that there is a great deal of new research underscoring the value of grammar in the curriculum. Research has also shown that grammar instruction positively impacts both reading and writing skills. (See Companion Website for citations and helpful grammar websites.)

## Descriptive Versus Prescriptive Grammar

Introductions to grammar books typically describe their approach to the study of grammar as either **prescriptive** or **descriptive**. A prescriptive grammar is grounded in rules found in traditional grammar handbooks, such as "Never end a sentence with a preposition" (Why not?), "Don't start a sentence with a conjunction" (It's legal!), and "Don't split an infinitive" (What does that mean?). A descriptive grammar aims to describe the system of grammar used by native speakers.

In the field of linguistics, all dialects are considered legitimate forms of communication. In the real world, however, we all know that people judge some dialects as "better" than others. The term "Standard English" is generally applied to the dialect spoken by educated speakers; "Nonstandard English" can be described as dialectal varieties that follow other rules. Some dialects are stigmatized as being "incorrect" or "bad" English, to the point where speaking such a dialect can limit an individual's career opportunities. My South Texas students often talk about how extremely self-conscious they are about their "bad" speech, but, generally, it is simply their accent and not their grammar that is being pointed out as "different." Nevertheless, years of criticism have left a mark.

Some grammar books claim to be purely descriptive and not prescriptive, but the differences between the two approaches are not that clear-cut. In this book, I often point out the traditional definitions of terms and prescriptive rules because many of

those are still used in language arts books. I also point out that “use” and “rules” can differ; for example, would you use the word “whom” at a party with your friends just because you’re educated? Only if you wanted to be referred to as a show-off or a snob—or possibly worse. So, even though I fall into the descriptive camp, I am still describing the rules of the dialect used by educated speakers of English in the United States.

In this book, I provide both traditional and contemporary grammar terminology and definitions. When future teachers enter their own classrooms, they may find the traditional terminology still being used in textbooks. Therefore, I feel it is important to equip them with the language that they will need to be able to work with a variety of texts. In this book, I strive for consistency and keep to the basics of English language structure. For those of you who plan to teach, you should be able to apply what you learn here to any grammar book that you use in the future.

*Essential Grammar for Today’s Writers, Students, and Teachers* focuses on the function of the grammatical unit in the sentence, not its form. By contrast, you may have found that some books look primarily at the form. For example, in school, you probably learned that a noun is a person, place, or thing, right? So you would analyze the word “classroom” as a noun (thing). But what about the sentence “He had a great classroom experience”? Is “classroom” still a noun? If we are examining the function of a word, “classroom” would be labeled an adjective because it is modifying the noun “experience.” We look at words in context, and we analyze them by their functions within that context. (Your awareness of this approach is so important that I will mention it numerous times.) By studying grammar, you gradually will discover new ways to think about sentence structure. Punctuation plays an important role in clarifying that structure; therefore, I also point out important punctuation rules throughout the book.

## Organization of the Book

The book is organized into five chapters. We start small with word classes in Chapter 1 and end with larger constructions in Chapter 5—sentences with two or more clauses. Each chapter builds on the content of the previous chapters. Therefore, it is important to make sure that you have a good grasp of the material in each chapter before moving on to the next.

Each chapter begins with the important concepts (in bold) followed by a **Language Focus** box, which highlights an area of linguistic studies, for example, sociolinguistics and language acquisition. This language topic is expanded in the examples and exercises throughout that chapter, adding another layer of learning opportunities to the book. Of course, as a linguist, I tend to be biased about the linguistic topics, and I am convinced that you will find them interesting and relevant as well. At the very



least, I expect that you will gain a better understanding of language as a by-product of your grammar study.

Numerous exercises help you practice what you are learning and provide check-points to assess understanding. The answers to the first five questions in each exercise (with a few exceptions) are located at the end of the book. The answers to those beyond number 5 are located online at the Companion Website.

Throughout the book, **Punctuation Patterns** highlight punctuation associated with the grammar under discussion, such as comma patterns of essential and non-essential phrases and clauses. **Notes on ...** provide relevant information in shaded boxes; for example, **Notes on Prepositional Phrase Structure** in Chapter 2 points out the problem associated with confusing prepositional phrases with infinitive phrases.

At the end of each chapter are two new sections: **Writing Matters** and **Language Matters**. The Writing Matters sections are designed to help you make informed choices in your own texts. For example, Chapter 2 expands active and passive voice. We are often told not to use passive voice in our texts with little explanation; however, there are legitimate reasons to use passive based on the flow of information and focus. Those reasons are examined and the concept is practiced in the Writing Matters section of Chapter 2. The Language Matters sections allow you to critically examine the language around you. For example, Language Matters, Chapter 3, asks you to consider a specific dialectal variation, the rules of that variety, and its consequences, e.g., should it be considered incorrect English.

After the Language Matters section, **Chapter Review** exercises provide additional opportunities to engage with the material. Also included are a useful **Glossary** of the terminology used in this book and an **Index** to help you navigate to various subjects. Throughout the book, important terms and major headings are in bold, and examples are in italics.

An **e-Resource** link provides answers to exercises as well as a list of relevant online websites and materials that support learning and teaching grammar. An **Instructors' Manual** details activities that can enhance a grammar course such as a grammar-writing portfolio and focused grammar activities, which include a number of games. The purpose and challenges of each chapter are highlighted and additional multiple choice review tests are provided.

## What You Will Not Find in This Book

Let me briefly address what elements are not included in this book because there are reasons for their elimination. You will not find evidence of the grammar police trying to enforce the prescriptive rules of grammar. I realize that there are many ways of speaking and writing, and we choose the appropriate level of formality or informality based on our audience and communication goals. I am simply providing you with

the structures and terminology of English grammar based on educated native speaker usage.

You will not find a highly academic tone in this text. My goal is to communicate with you as I communicate with my students in the classroom. I may break the rules of formal academic writing, for example, by using a contraction, like I'm doing right now. Contractions are grammatical, but their usage in formal writing is discouraged because they give an informal tone to the text. Once you know the rules, you can choose to manipulate them to fit your communication goals. Here, my goal is to present grammar concepts not as a series of disjointed items but rather as an ongoing discussion that allows you to build on what you already know. With more knowledge, you can make grammatical choices that fit with what you are trying to achieve in your text.

You will not find a comprehensive examination of all grammar concepts, all exceptions to rules, or all of the possible sentence patterns of English. I made some difficult decisions about which grammar concepts to exclude from this book and what exceptions to point out. For instance, you will not diagram a sentence (although I do think there is a place for diagramming in some classrooms). As a result of such decisions, you are not paying for a book that covers too much material for a one-semester course. Additionally, by providing you with the essential foundation of English grammar, you are empowered to continue to explore more advanced grammar concepts according to your interest level.

## What I Think About Grammar

Even after twenty-plus years, I am continually amazed at how interesting grammar study can be. I learn something every semester from the questions that students ask and the knowledge and insight that they bring to the discussions. More importantly, I can always use the brain massage that I get when I investigate a perplexing grammar problem.

Finally, please take advantage of this book. Use it to build confidence in your own ability to teach or use grammar for professional and personal purposes. I hope you gain a new interest in grammar or at least develop a new respect for it as a topic worthy of intellectual pursuit.



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# Commonly Used Abbreviations

There are a number of terms abbreviated in this book with acronyms or shortened forms. I provide explanations within the text, but here is another reference point for those terms:

A	appositive
ADJ	adjective/adjectival
ADV	adverb/adverbial
DO	direct object
FANBOYS	coordinating conjunctions—for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so
IO	indirect object
IV	intransitive verb
LV	linking verb
N	noun
NP	noun phrase
OC	object complement
OP	object of preposition
P	preposition
PA	predicate adjective
PN	predicate nominative
PP	prepositional phrase
PRO	pronoun
PST	pronoun substitution test
TV	transitive verb
V	verb

## Commonly Used Abbreviations

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VCT	verb conjugation test
Ved	past tense form of verb (e.g., walked, ate)
Ven	past participle verb form (e.g., walked, eaten)
Ving	present participle verb form (e.g., walking, eating)
VP	verb phrase
*	indicates that the sentence is considered ungrammatical
?	indicates grammaticality is questionable

# 1

## Word Classes

In case you did not read the introduction (I recommend that you do), let me quickly point out some of the features of this book before you get started. At the beginning of each chapter, you will see a **Language Focus** box, which provides an engaging, language focused context for the grammar examples and exercises. Throughout the book, you will discover “**Notes on ...**” sections, which highlight significant issues, such as gender neutral language, **Punctuation Patterns** discussions, which point out important punctuation rules, and numerous exercises, which provide checkpoints to show where more work is needed. At the end of each chapter, you will see two critical sections that provide context for a deeper consideration of the grammar you are learning: **Writing Matters** and **Language Matters**. These are followed by **Chapter Review** exercises. The term “**linguistics**” is used throughout this book to refer to the study of language. As students of grammar, you are budding linguists!

This chapter focuses on major word classifications. These classifications traditionally were referred to as the eight **parts of speech**, but they are now more commonly called **word classes**. Understanding these classifications is critical to your success in this course. Important grammatical concepts to learn in this chapter are **noun, adjective, pronoun, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection**.

### Language Focus: Language and the Brain

Researchers in the fields of psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics investigate how languages are learned, lost, produced, understood, and stored in the brain. Some of the questions that these linguists ask include the following: How do we learn a first or second language? How do our short- and long-term memories affect language processing? What processes are involved in making the sounds that form words? Where do we store word meaning, and how do we access this information? How do we take a series of sounds and get meaning from them?

Before we begin our exploration of these individual word classes, it is important to look at the bigger picture—the **sentence**, also referred to as a **clause**. Using traditional terminology, a clause is divided into two parts: the **subject** and the **predicate**. When a clause functions alone as a grammatical unit, we refer to it as a complete sentence. Clauses are **independent** (can function alone) or **dependent** (cannot function alone, for example “after we took the test”). We explore clauses in great detail in Chapter 5. Until then, we will be examining independent clauses, or what we will refer to as sentences. Sentences need a subject and predicate (the exception being a command with an understood subject “you,” e.g., “Sit down”), and, for the most part, they must be in this order:

<u>Brains</u>	<u>evolve.</u>
subject	predicate

Above, the subject is *Brains*, and the predicate is *evolve*. The predicate must contain at least a verb. No matter how long it is, a grammatical sentence will have a recognizable subject and predicate:

<u>The complex human brain</u>	<u>has stimulated much research into its design.</u>
subject	predicate

In the example above, the subject is *The complex human brain*, and the predicate is *has stimulated much research into its design*, with *has stimulated* as the verb. Following traditional terminology, *brain* would be considered the **simple subject** within the **complete subject** (*The complex human brain*), and *has stimulated* would be the **simple predicate** within the **complete predicate** (*has stimulated much research into its design*).

In more contemporary approaches, the terminology differs slightly. The sentence is divided into the **subject noun phrase** and the **verb phrase**:

head noun	head verb
↓	↓
<u>The complex human brain</u>	<u>has stimulated much research into its design.</u>
subject noun phrase	verb phrase

A subject noun phrase must have a **head noun** (*brain* in the above sentence), and the verb phrase must contain at least a **head verb**, also referred to as the **main verb** (*stimulated* in the sentence above). In this book, we will use the terms subject noun phrase, head noun, verb phrase, and head verb.

Word order is essential for comprehension of English sentences. For example, the sentence *The doctor stimulated the patient’s brain* would have a different meaning if rearranged as *The patient’s brain stimulated the doctor*. Understanding the subject noun phrase–verb phrase ordering of an English sentence is vital to understanding

the meaning of the sentence. Let's rearrange the sentence above to illustrate how this works:

*has stimulated the complex human brain into its design much research.*

The sentence has not met our expectations for an English sentence and thus fails to convey its intended meaning.

As mentioned in the introduction, this book classifies words by their function in a sentence. This means that we will always consider the function rather than the form of the word. To do so, the word must have context. For example, the word "human" has a noun form, but in the subject noun phrase shown above (*The complex human brain*), *human* functions as an adjective describing what kind of *brain* (a human brain, not a monkey brain). You will get a better understanding of function versus form analysis as we move through this chapter.

## Nouns

The traditional definition of a **noun** is that it names a person, place, thing, or idea. That definition is sometimes useful, but it eventually will lead you astray, as you will discover as we move forward. Instead, we will look at some tests that will help you identify nouns and examine the sentence slots that nouns occupy. First, let's review some of the terminology associated with nouns.

In traditional grammar, the major classifications of nouns are common and proper, count and noncount. **Common nouns** are not capitalized (language, brain, symbols). **Proper nouns** are capitalized; they are, for example, names of specific people (Toni Morrison, Noam Chomsky), places (Budapest, the Vatican, the Center for Applied Linguistics), or holidays and events (Hanukkah, Christmas, Holi, Mardi Gras).

The term **number** refers to a feature of **count** and **noncount** nouns—a distinction between those that can be counted (one brain, two brains) and those that cannot (\*one oxygen, \*two oxygens; \*one ice, \*two ices). (The asterisk is used throughout this book to indicate language that would be considered ungrammatical by a native speaker.) Count nouns have both singular forms and plural forms (brain, brains; neuron, neurons; wish, wishes, etc.) and can be used with numbers (two brains; 1,000,000 neurons; three wishes). Noncount nouns (also called **mass nouns**) do not have plural forms and cannot be counted, but they can be used with words such as "little" and "much" (little oxygen, much ice, much fluency, etc.).

How do you know whether a word is a noun? It is easy if the word is a count noun because it will have both singular and plural forms (language/languages), and it can take an article (a, an, or the), a possessive (his, our, John's) or a number (one, two, three, etc.) in front of it: a language, her language, two languages. (Articles,



possessives, and numbers are discussed in the next section on adjectives.) You can ONLY do this to nouns. (Note that there may be one or more adjectives between the determiner, possessive, or number and the noun—for example, “the two comprehensive research studies.”)

The challenge is that mass nouns and most proper nouns do not have different singular and plural forms, and you cannot always use articles or numbers to prove their “nounhood.” For example, you cannot make “milk” or “honesty” plural (\*milks, \*honesties) or put an article (a, an, or the) in front of “honesty” (\*the/a honesty is important). But you can put “the” in front of “milk” (The milk turned sour). Even “honesty” could take a determiner in certain contexts: *The honesty of her testimony was questioned*. Both nouns accept a possessive modifier (his milk, Jane’s honesty).

The ability to change a noun from singular to plural and to use an article, possessive, or number in front of it are just a few tests that can be used to recognize a large number of nouns, but obviously, more noun tests are needed. These will be discussed later in this chapter. In the meantime, let’s practice identifying nouns by using the singular/plural and article/possessive/number tests.



### Exercise 1.1 Practice Nouns

Find and underline all words functioning as nouns in the following sentences by using the singular/plural and article/possessive/number tests. The number of nouns is indicated at the end of each sentence.

#### **Example:**

Our brains are complex machines. (2)

singular/plural test: brain/brains, machine/machines

article test: the brains, the machines

possessive test: their brains, your machines

number test: two brains, sixty machines

1. The brain has a left hemisphere and a right hemisphere. (3)
2. Some psycholinguists study the organization of the brain. (3)
3. Researchers conduct fascinating experiments on people. (3)
4. Brain scanners have facilitated psycholinguistic studies. (2)
5. Linguists may define language as a set of rules. (4)
6. How do adults learn another language? (2)
7. Most people process written language rapidly. (2)

8. One psychologist believed errors in speech reveal repressed emotions. (4)
9. Young children acquire nouns earlier than verbs. (3)
10. Our mental dictionary is interesting to researchers. (2)

Answers to questions 1–5 are in back of book; for all remaining answers, visit:  
[www.routledge.com/9780367148683](http://www.routledge.com/9780367148683)

Now that you've underlined all of the nouns, pay attention to where they are found in the sentences. Did you notice that all the subjects are nouns? (1. *brain*; 2. *psycholinguists*; 3. *Researchers*; 4. *scanners*; 5. *Linguists*; 6. *adults*; 7. *people*; 8. *psychologist*; 9. *children*; 10. *dictionary*). With few exceptions, subject slots are occupied by nouns or pronouns (pronouns will be discussed later in this chapter after adjectives), and, as subjects, they precede the verb of the sentence (in questions, word order can change, e.g., "Are you happy?"). Nouns are also located in other slots in the above sentences, such as in the object slot after the verb. For example, in both numbers 6 and 7 above, there is one object noun after the verbs *learn* and *process*: *language*. We will look more closely at those noun slots in Chapters 2 and 3.

## Adjectives

In this section, we review the most common terminology associated with **adjectives**. The traditional definition is that an adjective modifies a noun or pronoun. In reality, adjectives do a lot more work than the traditional definition gives them credit for. They can change, expand, qualify, quantify, add to, and enrich the concepts of the nouns and pronouns that they modify. Here, you will learn to recognize words that function as adjectives, and, in the following chapters, you will be introduced to other adjective forms.

There are two types of adjectives: **determiners** and **descriptive adjectives**. Determiners include articles (the, an, a), demonstratives (this, that, these, those), numbers (one, two, first, second, etc.), possessives (my, your, John's, psycholinguist's, etc.), and quantifiers (some, few, several, many, etc.). Descriptive adjectives represent the largest number of adjectives (tall, short, small, gray, sloppy, difficult, etc.). We add new descriptive adjectives to our language all the time, change the meanings of existing ones, and even invent them for the moment. For example,

*That dessert was fabulicious!*

*I got paid to be part of an experiment at school. What a sweet deal!*