

# An Attempt to Employ Diagrammatic Illustrations in Teaching English Grammar: Pictorial English grammar

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## ABSTRACT

In order for intermediate students poor at English grammar to enjoy learning it, a unique methodology has been improved in the classroom. In this article illustrated vehicles relevant to the five basic sentence patterns are presented in order to show how helpful this method is to understand English grammar. Also, more enhanced areas of this theory are discussed, which clarifies the feasibility of this methodology. The items to be introduced in my method are gerund, the passive voice, the relative pronoun and so on.

**Keywords:** Basic sentence pattern, English grammar, Parts of speech, Nexus, Gerund, Passive voice, Relative pronoun

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of paper is to explore a special methodology in teaching English grammar to intermediate students. I focused on employing diagrammatic illustrations in which the function of parts of speech is highlighted, so that they can comprehend the concept of English grammar.

In this paper, contents of this method are introduced, showing the advantages of the methodology.

## 2. BACKGROUND SURVEY

The typical categorization of sentence patterns in teaching English grammar is shown below. S refers to a subject, V to a verb, O to an object and C to a complement.

- (I) 1st sentence pattern: S + V
- (II) 2nd sentence pattern: S + V + C
- (III) 3rd sentence pattern: S + V + O
- (IV) 4th sentence pattern: S + V + O + O
- (V) 5th sentence pattern: S + V + O + C

The presentation of the five basic sentence patterns is useful for students, because it systematizes and synthesizes English sentences in terms of syntax. Students can learn what English sentences look like, along with acquiring knowledge of the functions of different parts of speech. However, it is also an undeniable fact that there are quite a few controversial or as yet unresolved issues as to whether the sentence in question is categorized into one of the five basic sentence patterns appropriately. For example, the categorization of the sentence, *I want you to go there*, is problematic, because some grammarians regard it as being out of the five sentence patterns. In fact, even posing the question may not be meaningful, because the categorization of sentence patterns varies according to the theoretical viewpoint of individual grammarians. There are

many vague areas which are not worth discussing extensively in grammar books overseas. Despite the issues mentioned above, the categorization using the five sentence patterns can be useful to intermediate learners of English, who primarily need help in understanding the great differences in the construction of sentences in English and Japanese.

Taking the categorizations into account, the following section shows my own subdivision and the feasibility of using the subdivision along with the relevant illustrated vehicles.

## 3. VISUALIZATION OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Basically, the notion of visualized vehicles is based on the concept that each sentence pattern pertains to one basic vehicle chassis or a body of the sentence. Each basic sentence pattern is now presented, along with explanations of the function of figures.

The first sentence pattern is drawn:



The aim of this visualization is to make students understand the rule of grammar, so using this vehicle, they are taught some crucial rules.

Firstly, the chassis has a tire (or tires) and appears on the invisible ground. Secondly, the subject sits behind the wheel.

An example of the first sentence pattern is *I run*.

The other item which is not relevant to the body of the sentence but has a tire is a cart (see below).



P (standing for preposition) can be put on the ground with an object on it:



Then it can be connected to the body of the vehicle. Let me cite an instance in *I went to school*.



Note that *went*, which is the past form of *go*, has a chassis of the first sentence pattern, so *I went school* is not a correct sentence. Instead, a cart *to* is required to put *school* on it, which serves to illustrate the need for the preposition *to*.

Next let me skip over the second sentence pattern and move on to the third sentence pattern. Because the S + V + O pattern has a characteristic of having O, the body of the sentence is drawn:



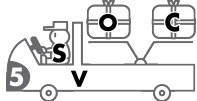
This shows that an object O mounts a carrying platform.  
 When two objects mount the same carrying platform in a row, this sentence can be regarded as the fourth sentence pattern:



Mostly, the first object tends to be an animate entity and the second one an inanimate object.  
 The other sentence patterns are the second sentence pattern and the fifth sentence pattern, both of which have a complement, C. The second sentence pattern is made up of S + V + C:



This figure looks like a deformed seesaw, indicating that the subject is equal to the complement, or in other words, V can be replaced by the symbol '='. So, *I am a teacher* can be regarded as *I = teacher*. The fifth sentence pattern comprises the identical behaviour between O and C on a carrying platform:



In this case, we can safely say that the condition of O = C is made by S by doing something related to V. So the sentence *I made them happy* is considered to be like the condition that *they are happy* is a result of the action *made by me*.

#### 4. ADVERBS

So far the vehicles with a cargo of the preposition have a tire (or tires) but adverbs also have a tire, so adverbs are drawn:



When a adverbial word, *yesterday* is added to the complete sentence, *I went to school*, the illustration is :



Focusing on the syntactic function, the prepositional phrase, *to school* also functions as an adverb. This shows that when the prepositional phrase functions as adverb, it has a tire, and that adverbs themselves also have a tire.

The straightforward explanation of the function of the adverb is: adverbs modify verbs. For example, *yesterday* can be compared in the following two sentences, firstly, *I remember yesterday*. vs. *I remembered this song yesterday*. Obviously, *yesterday* in the former sentence is an object of the verb *like* whereas in the latter it is an adverb. For Japanese students there are many adverbs which cannot be recognized as such, like *here*, *there*, *home*, and *abroad*. Therefore, visualization will make it easier to understand the structure of sentences.

Let's say, *I live here* can be drawn:



The sentence, *I live at here*. is not a correct sentence, which can be easily accepted.

#### 5. IMPERATIVES

When students are asked to put into Japanese a sentence like

*Always go there*, some of them answer incorrectly. They do not identify the sentence as an imperative, which comes from the fact that they do not regard *always* as the adverb. Or they may not expect any words before a verb in the imperative. But as a diagrammatic vehicle shows:



Imperative sentences have no subjects, and the presence of adverbs or adverbial phrases will not change the categorization of the sentence. What is more, due to the tire which helps the vehicle to move around easily, the position of adverbs and adverbial phrases is relatively without restriction. Students learn these concepts by an imperative sentence:

*Always put on socks here.*

*In case of fire enter here.* (description on a sign)

#### 6. ADJECTIVE PHRASES

The presentation of prepositional phrases has so far been restricted to adverbial phrases alone but we can not ignore that adjectival phrases are included as well:

*the boy with glasses*

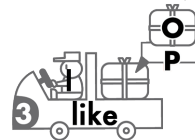
*the lady in jeans*

The phrase, *the boy with glasses* is drawn:



The pin which sticks in the noun, *the boy* indicates the modification to the noun.

The sentence, *I like the boy with glasses*. is drawn:

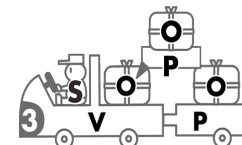


cf. : the boy : with : glasses

Then students can expand this visualization to more complex sentences:

*I took the boy with glasses to the station.*

If they can associate the sentence with the vehicle:



then they can be expected to understand the function of adjectival and adverbial phrases. However, the assessment of whether it is adjectival or adverbial depends on semantic judgment. In *I took the boy with glasses to the station.*, *with glasses* is an adjectival phrase and *to the station* is an adverbial phrase as follows:



We can easily surmise that adjectives which mostly modify nouns can be drawn:



## 7. TO INFINITIVES

The basic form of *to* infinitives can be represented as:



The form of *to* infinitives can be the result of a transformation of the complete sentence and all basic sentence patterns can be transformed into *to* infinitives.

This form can be divided into three forms, based on the notion above:




as nominal *to* infinitives,

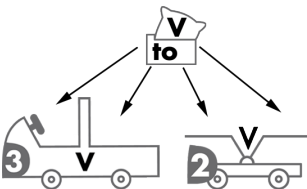


as adverbial *to* infinitives, and



as adjectival *to* infinitives.

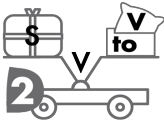
Nominal *to* infinitives,  can be placed in various positions :



For example, *I want to go* is drawn:



*My aim is to become a teacher* is drawn:

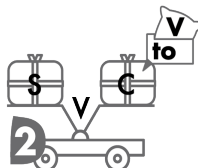


As for adverbial *to* infinitives and adjectival *to* infinitives, diagrammatic vehicles are respectively drawn:

*I came here to give him a present.*



*This is a song to make them happy.*

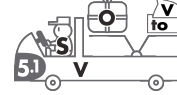


Note the removal of subjective information which occurs in the process of forming *to* infinitives.

## 8. EXTENDED SENTENCE PATTERNS

Sentences such as *I want you to go there.* and *I made her go there* are rather problematic, as it is debatable whether these sentences should be categorized into the fifth sentence pattern or not. An alternative would be to treat them as a sixth basic sentence pattern. However, my thesis categorizes such sentences into the fifth sentence pattern, so we can identify how similar the vehicle of these sentences are to those of the fifth sentence pattern.

The diagrammatic vehicle in *I want you to go there* is drawn:

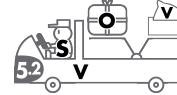


The difference between this one and the fifth sentence pattern is that the complement is replaced by the *to* infinitive. That is, the portion of the *to* infinitive, *go there* comes from the sentence, S1 *go there* (S1: subject). Then the question is: what does S1 imply? In this sentence pattern, the subject of the *to* infinitive refers to the noun preceding the *to* infinitive.

Visually, in the sentence above, the element O is a subject of the verb of the *to* infinitive. Therefore, S1 in S1 *go there* (S1: subject) is *you*. That is, we can associate with the complete sentence, *you go there*. When it comes to the interpretation of the sentence, *I want you to go there*, the process is, firstly, I want something and secondly, something means *you go there*. In this way, the relationship between nouns and verbs is called Nexus. My study postulates this sentence pattern as the Etoki5.1 sentence pattern. Japanese word Etoki is the original abbreviated expression of pictorial English grammar in Japanese.

What is noteworthy in this sentence pattern is that the verbs used are very specific: *want, tell, ask, allow, etc.*

Another vehicle which is included in the sixth sentence pattern, but here is referred to as the 5.2 sentence pattern, is employed:

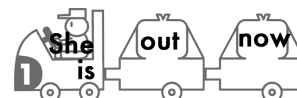


The typical sentence is *I made her go there*. The difference from the 5.1 sentence pattern is that in the 5.2 sentence pattern the *to* of a *to* infinitive disappears. However, we should note that there is a relationship of Nexus between O and V in the vehicle. The verbs in the Etoki 5.2 sentence pattern consist of causative verbs such as *make, let, have* and cognitive verbs such as *see, hear, find, etc.*

## 9. APPLICATION IN THE CLASSROOMS

Once students have understood the diagrammatic framework, it is time for them to apply it to grammar study. In this section, English sentences of the five basic sentence patterns and the visualized vehicles are presented with English words on them. Also, some comments are added to describe how to comprehend the structure thoroughly.

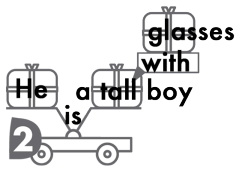
a) The first sentence pattern  
*She is out now.*



The verb *be, is* is the existential *be* and it is grammatically different from *be* in the second sentence pattern. In order to strengthen the understanding, it is expedient to let the student

associate this sentence with *She is home.* or *She is abroad.*

- b) The second sentence pattern  
*He is a tall boy with glasses.*

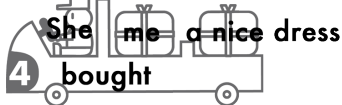


- c) The third sentence pattern  
*It has things like cheese or vegetable on top of it.*

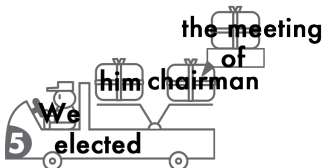


It seems to be a complicated sentence but is just the third sentence pattern. Note that it is common that prepositional phrases follow the third sentence pattern like this.

- d) The fourth sentence pattern  
*She bought me a nice dress.*

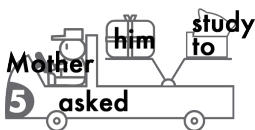


- e) The fifth sentence pattern  
*We elected him chairman of the meeting.*



In view of the second sentence pattern, a sentence, *he is a chairman of the meeting* can be focused on. Also *of the meeting* is not an adverbial phrase but an adjectival phrase.

- f) The Etoki 5.1 sentence pattern  
*Mother asked him to study.*



In the Etoki 5.1 sentence pattern, the notion of Nexus is crucial. Focusing on the relationship between *him* and *to study*, *he studies* should be understood. Then idea of interpretation is that mother asked him to do something and to do something means that he studies. In the following sections, these notions are extended to Ving form, the passive voice, relative clauses, conjunctions and attributives.

### 10. GERUNDS AND THE OTHER VING FORMS

Just as *to* infinitives have the three forms, the Ving form has the identical three forms in Table 1: the nominal form of Ving is a gerund, the adverbial form is a participial structure and the adjectival form is a present participle.

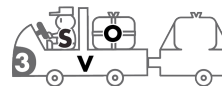
**Table 1 Each form in *to* infinitives and Ving form**

	<i>to</i> infinitives	Ving form
nominal form	①	④ gerund
adverbial form	②	⑤ participial structure
adjectival form	③	⑥ Ving present participle

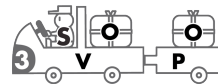
### 11. CONJUNCTIONS

In my class, I begin teaching by comparing three underlined words below.

- a) *I read the book yesterday.*



- b) *I read the book before lunch.*



- c) *I read the book because it was interesting.*



The aim is to make students identify the underlined clause in c), which is also adverbial in terms of function. The explanation is as follows.

In a), students are taught that *yesterday* is an adverb by showing that in Japanese translation, *yesterday* modifies the verb, *read*. In b), *before lunch*, which is an adverbial phrase, modifies the verb, *read*. Therefore, the identification of the underlined sentence in c) leads to an understanding of adverbial clause, which refers to a subordinating clause.

### 12. PASSIVE VOICE

Explaining what the progressive or the perfect sentence is in the classroom is not so difficult in Etoki because I have only to explain that transforming into the progressive and the perfect sentences is to undertake the procedure to exchange the V type engine mounted on the vehicle. That is, the finite verb can be changed into the *be* + Ving (the present participle) or the *have* + p.p. (the past participle), respectively.

When it comes to the passive voice, however, the procedure to transform from the original form is very different. In Etoki, another vehicle is employed for the passive voice:



The flow of transformation of the passive voice is illustrated in the picture of Fig 1 along with the Japanese translation.

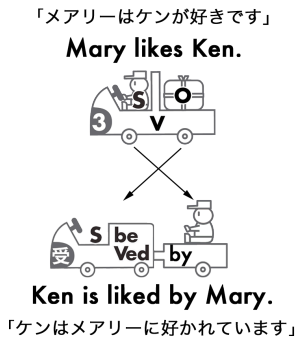
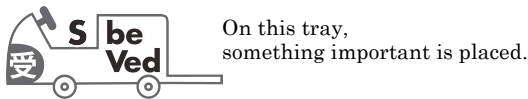


Figure 1 Transformation into the passive voice

As this picture shows, the object of a declarative sentence can be placed at the position of subject of the passive voice, which is the vehicle standing for the passive voice. The vehicle is followed by the preposition *by*, on which the subject of a declarative sentence is placed.

The passive voice is not so simple because in the fourth and the fifth sentence patterns, we must have a more sophisticated notion, which is depicted as a tray mounted on the rear of the vehicle:



Given that nominals mount a driving position, a carrying platform of vehicles or of prepositions in Etoki, this tray is design like that.

Then the point is what is placed on the tray. With this regard, as for the fourth sentence pattern, the object arrayed on the left in a declarative sentence is placed on the tray as illustrated in Fig 2.

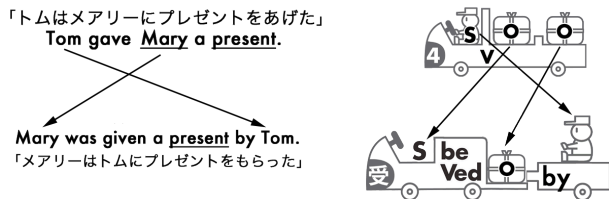


Figure 2 The passive voice of the fourth sentence pattern

Almost the same is true with the fifth sentence pattern as illustrated in Fig 3.

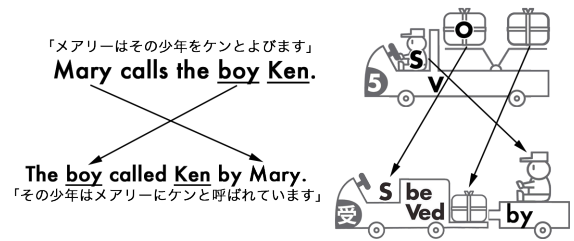


Figure 3 The passive voice of the fourth sentence pattern

In the Etoki 5.1 sentence pattern in Etoki, the part of the *to* infinitive is moved to the position on the tray, illustrated in Fig 4.

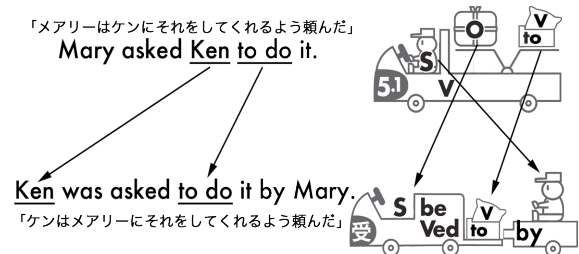


Figure 4 The passive voice of the 5.1 sentence pattern

Noticeably, in the Etoki 5.2 sentence pattern, the bare *to* infinitive comes back to the original form, the *to* infinitive as illustrated in Fig 5.



Figure 5 The passive voice of the 5.2 sentence pattern

### 13. Relative pronouns

The function of modification is indicated like a pin, ▲ or ▼, so that the relative pronoun and the following relative clause follows the pin:

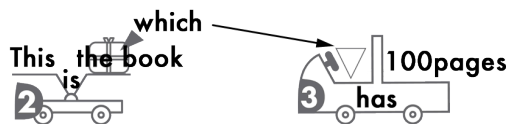


In Etoki, the relative clause looks to be floating, while main clause exits on an invisible ground.

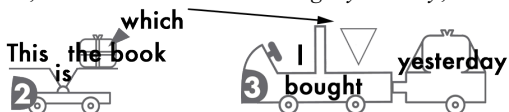
Other than the pin, which shows the function of modification, there are two items. One is a triangle illustrating the position of

an antecedent, which is in the main clause. Therefore, the arrow shows the location of the antecedent in the relative clause.

The same is true with in *This is the book which has 100 pages*, which is drawn:

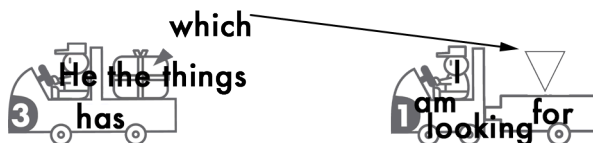


In *This is the book which I bought yesterday*, the difference is that the antecedent is visualized in the position of object of the relative clause whereas in the former examples they are visualized in the position of subject of the relative clause. The sentence, *This is the book which I bought yesterday*, is drawn:



So far, the antecedent is a complement of the main clause.

In *He has the thing that I am looking for* Etoki is shown like below:



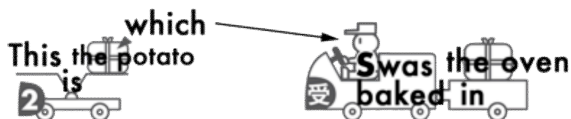
Some of the students look annoyed by the position of a preposition which ends the sentence. By explaining the structure in Etoki, they can understand it with ease.

#### 14. ATTRIBUTIVES

Let me discuss the structure of *This is the potato baked in the oven*. We can simply say that *baked in the oven* is the attributive phrase which modifies the potato. In Etoki, the explanation of structure starts with the sentence, *This is the potato which was baked in the oven*. Etoki illustrates the structure:



transformed into the passive voice

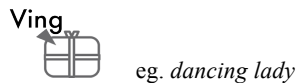


What should be noted firstly is that the relative clause comes from *Someone baked the potato in the oven* shown above on the right side. Then it is transformed into the passive sentence, *was baked in the oven*. More importantly, in the sentence, *This is the potato which was baked in the oven*, *which was* can be omitted. Eventually, *This is the potato baked in the oven*, is completed as the sentence commonly used.

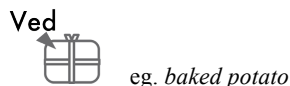
The same hold true with the sentence, *I like the lady dancing over there*. In this case, an original sentence can be regarded as *I like the lady who is dancing over there*. Then *who is* can be

omitted, resulting in *I like the lady dancing over there*. If there is no adverbial phrase in each case above, that is, *This is the potato baked in the oven*, and *I like the lady dancing over there*, the past participle and the present participle can be moved before the noun. That is, *This is the baked potato* and *I like the dancing lady*.

It is safe to say that one of the Ving forms is the present participle, which modifies the noun from in front, which is drawn:



And the other is the past participle, which also modifies the noun from in front:



More importantly, in the sentence which includes the relative clause,

- 1) If the words are arrayed like:  
relative pronoun + be verb + the present participle,  
then relative pronoun + be verb can be omitted.
- 2) If the words are arrayed like:  
relative pronoun + be verb + the past participle,  
then relative pronoun + be verb can be omitted.

Note that there is only a difference in underlined words between 1) and 2).

#### 15. APPLICATION TO MULTI-MEDIA

Based on the notion of Etoki, I have already done several things such as publishing an Etoki English grammar book written in Japanese (Takahashi, 2004) and broadcasting of my lecture in local TV. Especially, in the television program, by showing a moving presentation which is one of the function of Keynote by Apple, I could give an interesting and persuasive lecture to viewers. It is hoped that a multi-media technology will create a fascinating methodology for those who want to comprehend the concept of English grammar.

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