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Charts that Show Basic Transformations in English

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Charts that Show Basic Transformations in English

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the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for
International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.

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This project of Lawrence Fuller Allen is accepted in its present form.

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Abstract

This project is a teaching tool to be used in the ESL classroom. It consists of six large (30" x 20") multicolored charts. Each chart focuses on a particular "operator" verb in English ("be," "do," or the modals) and shows the role the operator plays in the grammatical transformations of question formation and negation. The student can actually see how the same sentence changes from the statement to the question form and from affirmative to negative. In addition to the charts themselves, the project includes a written description of the charts, suggestions for using them in the classroom, and tables presenting grammatical data and vocabulary breakdown for each chart.

Charts that Show Basic Transformations in English

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I. Introduction and General Description

The project consists of six charts that show basic grammatical transformations and word order in English. Each vertical column of a chart contains several alternate choices in beginning vocabulary for a particular part of a sentence. For example in Chart One which deals with the verb "be," the first column provides a choice of three WH-words ("how," "who," or "what"). (Note that this column can be covered up when no WH-word is desired, as in a statement.) The second column lists the various forms of the verb "be" -the present forms ("am," "is" and "are") on the blue flap, and the past forms ("was" and "were") on the red flap. This column is uncovered only for questions. The third column is for subjects - most are pronouns - ("I," "he," "you," etc.) Since the subject column must be used in all transformations, it cannot be covered up. The next column is for the verb "be" and is the same as the second column except that it also contains the contraction forms of "be" ("'m," "'s" and "'re"). By reading directly across the student can find the form of "be" that agrees with any of the subjects. For example, "He" is next to "is" as well as the contraction "'s," and the past form "was." So the student can read "He is," "He's" or "He was," just by lifting up the flaps that are over one another. After the verb "be" is the column for the negative "not." The final column has a selection of verb phrases that are appropriate with "be" such as "very happy," "Mr. Smith" and "a teacher." By taking one word from each column and reading horizontally, a simple sentence is obtained. It may be affirmative, negative, or a question. The charts can

be used to practice transformations of the sentence. For example, the sentence "I am very happy" from Chart One can be changed to a question by leaving the fourth column of the chart blank, and revealing the "am" that precedes the subject, thus producing "Am I very happy?" Or the contraction flap may be engaged: "I'm very happy," or the flap that contains the negatives: "I'm not very happy."

Each flap has a distinctive color. For example red indicates past tense. Red then is the color of the flaps for the operators "was" and "did" as well as the flap showing expressions of past time such as "yesterday."

The charts illustrate the basic sentence patterns that are usually taught to beginning students. The subject matter of the charts can be ordered in a progression as follows:

Chart 1: "To be" with noun and adjective phrases.

Chart 2: "To be" with Present Progressive (verb + ING).

Chart 3: Simple Present with "Do" as operator.

Chart 4: Past with "Did" as operator and past tense forms of regular and irregular verbs.

Chart 5: Selected Modals.

Chart 6: A cumulative chart showing all previous operators and tenses.

This sequence represents the basic operators in English starting with "to be," moving on to "do" and its past form, "did." Then the modals or auxiliary verbs and, finally, the cumulative chart are shown. The operator for the perfect tenses, "have," is not included in the charts.

II. Suggestions for Using the Charts

I intend the charts to be used mainly for correcting and reviewing grammar points rather than for original presentation. With some innovation, however, they could be used for presentation, perhaps in conjunction with other materials and techniques.

In learning the grammar of a second language the student goes through the following stages:

- 1) The student must accept and memorize a system that must seem arbitrary to him - a system that he can never see as a whole.
- 2) The student actively uses and accepts the system despite frequent mistakes.
- 3) The student realizes various patterns if not the whole system. He should be making only occasional mistakes. It can be said that he understands the system.

It is in these final two stages that the charts will be of most use because they will help the students to see the mechanics of the grammar, not as abstractions or as rules, but as consistent patterns.

A teacher might use the following techniques with the chart:

1) Silent Way approach:

Using a pointer stick, the teacher would point to words to construct a sentence. After all the words are indicated, the students read aloud the sentence. Then the teacher would indicate one new word that is to be substituted and the students say the new sentence consisting of that new word, the previous word, plus any other necessary changes.

For example:

Original sentence: I'm studying English.

New word: She

Student response: She's studying English.

Notice that here the students not only have to insert the word "she" but also change the verb "to be" to agree with the change in the subject. If the students failed to do this, the teacher could point to the column that contains the forms of "to be," if this is not sufficient to ellicit a response he could point to the word "she" and then move the stick directly across to the column for "to be." This motion will suggest the agreement.

The teacher could substitute different parts of speech unpredictably so the students must be alert to changes throughout the sentence. To continue with the previous example:

I'm studying English.

* she

She's studying English.

* dancing

She's dancing.

* not

She's not dancing. (or: She isn't dancing.)

* they

They aren't dancing.

etc.

More advanced substitution drills could be obtained by changing the time words, thereby requiring the student to make a change in the operator or tense. For example, "everyday"

might be changed to "yesterday." This drill could be done with Chart 6, the Cumulative Chart.

2) Transformation approach:

With a chart in an original position (no flaps engaged), the teacher invites a student to read any of the positive statements displayed. (Only positive statements are possible in the original position.) After the student reads a sentence, the teacher repeats it to the rest of the class pointing out each word. Then the teacher asks the student to change the statement to a question. When the student has done this correctly, the teacher repeats it, engaging the flaps to show the transformation. Then the teacher asks a second student to answer the question in the negative. The teacher might say, "Answer this question using 'no.'" Then the same student is asked to answer the question in the affirmative. This will usually bring the statement back to its original form. Each time the teacher repeats and points to the chart. If the student makes an error, he should be encouraged to correct it himself. The teacher might help the student by pointing to the correct form or sequence on the chart.

After the students have mastered the exercise, the teacher should use sentences that are not on the chart in order to develop the students' independence from it.

3) Correcting errors:

If the charts can be left in the classroom, the teacher can refer the students to them even when grammar is not the principal concern. For example, if a student made the mistake,

"I don't can go.", the teacher could point to Chart 5 which shows how negatives are formed with modals. By observing Chart 6, the students could see that a sentence can have only one operator. The student might manipulate the chart himself until he is satisfied that he understands. The student is not just receiving an explanation, he is exploring the concrete functions of English.

The charts are not taught - rather they are learned when the students understand the English involved. Once the English is understood the charts will be "decoded" and they will be useful in further explorations of English.

Special note: Talking about grammar in the classroom.

The teacher should be careful when explaining grammar in the ESL classroom not to use terminology appropriate only in a graduate linguistics course. This is especially true if the students lack abstract linguistic understanding even in regard to their own language. I therefore suggest the following "translations" into simple English:

<u>Linguistic term</u>	<u>Classroom term</u>
operator	key word
WH word	special question word
modals	special helping verbs

Some grammatical words should be learned by students. For example the teacher might explain that

--a verb tells us the action or what's happening in a sentence;

--the subject is the word in a sentence that tells us who

or what is doing something;

--the tense is either past or present; and

--a negative sentence is when we say "no" to something.

"Nobody," "not" and "nothing" are negative words.

Description of the Charts

Chart 1 shows the verb "to be" with various noun phrases and adjective phrases. The various forms of "be" are given, so as to allow agreement with any subject (I am, you are, he is, etc.). The past tense forms ("was" and "were") are also available. Three WH words ("how," "what" and "who") are used. Any sentence can be changed to a negative or question.

This chart is especially effective for teaching contractions, which are complicated with "to be." The forms "he is," "he's," "he isn't" and "he's not" can all be expressed.

The chart displays a simple affirmative statement. The WH question words, the operator preceding the subject, and the negative "not" may be revealed by lifting the flaps. In the operator position, after the subject, there are alternative flaps showing contractions and the past tense of "be." The position can be left blank (for a question) by lifting up all flaps. The blank position is on the top in some columns and on the bottom in others.

The verb phrase column can be left blank to ask WH questions such as "How are you?" or "Who is he?".

Grammatical Analysis of Chart 1, "To be"

<u>Noun Phrase Structures</u>	<u>Verb Phrase Structure</u>	<u>Adverbial Modifiers</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Transformations Which Can be Performed</u>
Determiners: a, the	be + noun phrase	(none)	be (present)	contractions with be
Personal pronouns: I, he, it, we, you, they	be + adjective phrase		be (past)	negation
Names: Joe, Mr. Smith				yes/no questions
Determiners as pronouns: This, that				WH questions with how, who, what
Adjectives as noun-modifiers				

Vocabulary in Chart 1, "To be"

<u>Position</u>	<u>WH word</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>"Not"</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>
Top	(blank)	(blank)	I he it you we they the students Joe this that	am is are is	(blank)	pretty good very happy sad Mr. Smith a teacher students American a red book
2nd	How Who What	am is are is	-	'm 's 're 's is 's	not n't	(blank)
3rd	-	was were was	-	was were was	not	-
4th	-	-	-	(blank)	-	-

Chart 2. Present Progressive

This chart shows the Present Progressive tense ("to be" + Verb + ING). Since "be" is again the operator, this chart is similar to the first chart. For example, the same contractions of "be" with the subject are shown. The negative form is also the same. The past progressive is not illustrated in this chart. However, the teacher could refer the students to Chart 1 if he wants to develop the past progressive (e.g. "I was playing.")

This chart has time expressions appropriate for the present progressive tense, ("now," "right now" and "today.") The time-word flap can be lifted to reveal a blank position since such expressions aid the student's understanding of this tense. Both the time expression flap and the operator flap ("to be") are blue.

The verb phrase flap can be lifted up to reveal the "pro-verb," "doing." With this, the WH word "what" can be displayed to create the question, "What are you doing?".

Grammatical Analysis of Chart 2, Present Progressive

<u>Noun phrase</u>	<u>Verb phrase structure</u>	<u>Adverbial Modifiers</u>	<u>Operators</u>	<u>Transformations</u>
Personal pronoun: she	verb + noun phrase	Time (present)	present "be"	same as Chart 1
	verb + prepositional phrase (talking to him)		progressive	

Vocabulary in Chart 2, Present Progressive

<u>Position</u>	<u>WH word</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>"Not"</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>	<u>Time and space expression</u>
Top	(blank)	(blank)	I	'm	(blank)	playing basketball	now
			she	's		dancing	right now
			Joe	're		eating lunch	today
			you			studying English	
			we			speaking Spanish	
			they			talking to him	
2nd	What	am	-	am	not	doing	at school
	Where	is		is			at home
		are		are			in New York
3rd	-	-	-	(blank)	not	-	(blank)
					n't		

Chart 3. Simple Present with "Do" as operator

This chart shows the simple present with "do" as operator. When no flaps are engaged we have an affirmative sentence such as "I speak English." By engaging the flaps we can produce yes/no questions, WH questions and negatives as with the previous charts.

This chart focuses on subject/verb agreement with the third person singular. There are four third person singular nouns in the subject position. The chart shows their agreement with "does" or, if there is no operator in the sentence, with the main verb: "He speaks English." The "s" is shown by a thin orange flap that comes down after the verb. Orange, then, is the color for third person singular; notice that the operator "do" also is orange.

In addition, with this chart, by using the "pro-verb" "do" with the WH word "what" one can obtain "What is he doing?"

This chart contains frequency expressions appropriate for habitual actions: (e.g. "everyday"). The verb phrases provided are also appropriate for habitual actions.

The stative verbs see and understand may, of course, refer to either a habitual or a present state (e.g. "I see her," "I understand.")

Grammatical Analysis of Chart 3, Simple Present

<u>Noun phrase structure</u>	<u>Verb phrase structure</u>	<u>Adverbial modifiers</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Transformations Which Can Be Performed</u>
Name: Mary	intransitive verb (understand)	frequency expressions	do	contraction of do + not
	verb + particle (get up)			negation of do
	verb + infinitive (go to sleep)			yes/no question with do
				WH questions with when

SPECIAL SEMANTIC NOTE:
With active verbs such as "talk" the simple present tense denotes a habitual action. With stative verbs such as "see" or "understand," the simple present denotes either a habitual or a present state.

Vocabulary in Chart 3, Simple Present Tense

<u>Position</u>	<u>WH word</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>"Not"</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>	<u>Time expression</u>
Top	(blank)	(blank)	I	(blank)	(blank)	s	everyday
			you			es	every Monday
			the students				at 8 o'clock
			the class				in the morning
			Mary				at noon
			she				at night
			he				all the time
2nd	When	do	-	do	n't		speak English (blank)
	What	does		does	not		understand
							see her
							get up
							eat lunch
							go to sleep
3rd	-	-	-	-	-	do	-

Chart 4. Past with "Did" as operator and past tense forms of regular and irregular verbs

This chart is very similar to Chart Three except that it is in past tense. "Did" replaces "do" and adverbial expressions of past time ("yesterday," "last Sunday," etc.) are shown.

In the basic position with no flaps engaged, we obtain affirmative sentences in the past tense: "You asked a question." But if the sentence is transformed to a question or negative, the operator "did" takes the past tense form and the verb must revert to its present tense form "ask." Raise the dark flap to reveal the present tense form. This dark red flap has the suffix "ed" for regular verbs. The past tense forms of irregular verbs are written out in full. The regular verbs were chosen to show the full range of pronunciations of the "ed" suffix.

Grammatical Analysis of Chart 4, Simple Past with "Did"

<u>Noun phrase</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>	<u>Adverbial modifiers</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Transformations</u>
Name: Mike	verb + noun phrase	past time	did	negation with did
	verb + infinitive	then		contraction of did + not
	verb + prepositional phrase			yes/no questions with did
				WH questions with when

Vocabulary in Chart 4, Simple Past Tense

<u>Position</u>	<u>WH word</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Operator + "not"</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>	<u>Time expression</u>
Top	(blank)	(blank)	I	(blank)ed	yesterday
			you	ied	last Sunday
			he		brought	last week
			Mike		went	a year ago
			we		had	then
			they			
2nd	When	did	--	didn't	ask a question	(blank)
				not	want to dance	
					play the piano	
					study English	
					buy a coat	
					go to the party	
					have a cold	

Chart 5. Selected Modals

Chart Five illustrates the grammatical behavior of modal verbs. Five common modal verbs are used: "can," "will," "must," "would," "might" and "should."

The contractions of "will" and "would" are shown. The contractions in the negative forms are shown, including "won't." The negative non-contracted forms (e.g. "will not") are also shown. This flap has two colors, one (purple) standing for the modal and the other (gray) standing for the negation.

The verb phrases have future time expressions ("tomorrow" and "soon") which are appropriate for any modal.

In this chart only, the subject position can be lifted up to reveal a blank. This is so that the WH word "who" can be substituted for the subject, (e.g. "Who can go downtown?")

Notice that on this chart some grammatically correct but nonsensical sentences can be produced (e.g. "We might rain tomorrow.") By reading straight across one will arrive at more conventional statements.

Grammatical Analysis of Chart 5, Selected Modals

<u>Noun phrase</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>	<u>Adverbial modifier</u>	<u>Operators</u>	<u>Transformations</u>
quantifier some (some coffee)	verb + locative (go downtown)	future time	will, can must, would might, should	negation of modals contraction of modals with not yes/no questions with modals
it for impersonal condition (It might rain)				WH question with modal in- cluding questions about the subject (Who can go...?) conjunction with if for the conditional would

Vocabulary in Chart 5, Selected Modals

<u>Position</u>	<u>WH word</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Operator + "not"</u>	<u>Verb phrase + time expression</u>
Top	(blank)	(blank)	I we she you it Mary Mr. Jones they	can 'll must 'd might 'll would should	go downtown finish on time speak English like some coffee rain tomorrow come soon come soon if... be here
2nd	Who When	can will must would might should	(blank)	can't won't mustn't wouldn't shouldn't	-
3rd	-	-	-	cannot will not must not would not might not should not	-

Chart 6. The Cumulative Chart

The Cumulative or Master Chart combines many of the essential features of the other five. All three kinds of operators are given: "be," "do," and the modals. Each operator has the same color it had when it appeared on a previous chart. The past tense forms of the operators are, as before, a shade of red. The different kinds of operators appear on the same flap. To change a flap does not change the operator, it changes the tense of the operator.

In the basic position, with no flaps engaged we read a sentence in the present progressive: e.g. "I'm going to school now." The "ing" suffix is on a separate flap. We can change the sentence to "I go to school," by leaving the operator position blank and lifting the "ing" flap. But the time expression used before, "now," is no longer appropriate. We should change it to one of the time expressions appropriate for habitual actions. These are found on a gold flap below the blue flap that contains present time expressions. There are also time expressions for past and future tense on other flaps. All of these time expressions are in the final position. The colors are important because they permit the student to match time expressions with the appropriate tense of the operator.

Let's return to our example, "I go to school." Suppose the student wants to say "She" instead of "I." Then the student must use the orange flap in the verb suffix position to obtain "s." Thus the student reads: "She goes to school." This is similar to Chart 3.

The past tense of the verbs is available, as on Chart 4.

In the second-to-last column there are expressions of place or alternatively, expressions of direction. Using this column the student can practice the difference between

"I go home." (direction)

"I eat at home." (place)

All verbs used are intransitive. The verbs can, however, be used with prepositional phrases. Prepositional phrases with pronouns are displayed when all the flaps on the second-to-last column are lifted. The student can obtain such statements as "Joe doesn't dance with her." Nowhere else on the other charts are object pronouns used.

This chart has all the previous WH words plus "why." The verb position can be replaced by the "pro-verb" "do," to obtain sentences such as "What do you do?" or "What are you doing?"

Grammatical Analysis of Chart 6, The Cumulative Chart













<u>Noun phrase</u>	<u>Verb phrase</u>	<u>Operators</u>	<u>Transformations</u>
direct object pronouns	verb + prepositional phrase	be	contractions of be with the subject
me, you, him, her, it,		be (past)	contractions of all operators with not
us, them	verb + direction	do	yes/no questions with all operators
	verb + place	do (past)	WH questions with how, what, where,
	verb	will	when, why
		can	
		could	
		won't	

Vocabulary in Chart 6, Cumulative

<u>Position</u>	<u>WH word</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Operator</u>	<u>"Not"</u>	<u>Verb</u>	<u>Verb ending</u>	<u>direction place preposition + noun</u>	<u>Time expression</u>
Top	(blank)	(blank)	I you he she the class Joe we	'm 're 's	(blank)	go eat come walk dance play	ing	to school home to the kitchen there here	now right now today
2nd	How What Who Where When Why	am are is does do can will	-	am are is does do can will won't	n't 't	went ate came walked danced played	(blank)	at school at home in the kitchen there here	everyday once a week in the morning every Saturday
3rd	-	were was did could	-	were was did could	-	do	s	with me you him her it Joe us them	tomorrow next week next month soon
4th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(blank)

IV. Color Key

Each color has a specific meaning in the charts. This meaning may refer to a syntactical function or a tense. The colors have consistent meanings throughout all six charts. As a general rule, the teacher should not teach the colors as such, but rather let the students learn their meanings intuitively as they use the charts.

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | 1 WH words, "do" as a "pro-verb" |
|  | 2 "be" in the present tense, present tense time expressions, the suffix "ing" |
|  | 3 Subject and object pronouns |
|  | 4 Negative ("not") |
|  | 5 Verb phrase |
|  | 6 Past of "do" ("did"), past of modals, past time expressions |
|  | 7 Past of "be" and modals |
|  | 8 "Do" as operator, "s" suffix of verbs in the third person singular, time expressions which are appropriate for habitual actions |
|  | 9 Modals, future time expressions |
|  | 10 Expressions of direction |
|  | 11 Expressions of location |
|  | 12 Prepositions |