

# A (very) short introduction to the English language for Italian speakers

## Some *general* difficulties

- Pronunciation: sounds and stress
- Spelling
- Premodification (esp. compound nouns)
- Word order
- Use of articles
- Countable/uncountable nouns
- Verbs: use of tenses; phrasal verbs

# Some specific difficulties of legal English

- Odd habits

Peculiar wording and phrases, sparse punctuation, foreign phrases, unusual pronouns, semi-archaic formulations

- Terminology and jargon

Polysemy, e.g., *distress*, *consideration*, *construction*, *furnish*

# Pronunciation - it *is* a nightmare!

- The vowel system of English is more complex:  
Italians do not differentiate between some vowels

e.g.     *word* - *war*  
          *sit* - *seat*; *ship* - *sheep*  
          *put* - *cut*; *bush* - *flush*

- Some consonant sounds must also be differentiated

e.g.     *race* vs *raise*  
          *advice* vs *advise*  
          *precedent* vs *president*

- Over-emphasis on word endings

e.g.     *I am Italian* > *I aM ItaliaN*  
          *What would you like to drink?* > *WhaT would*  
          *you liKe to drinK?*

# Pronunciation

## Stress in longer words

Be particularly careful with words that have more than two syllables: make sure you get the stressed syllable right.

*agriculture*                      /'ægrɪ,kʌltʃə(r)/

*comfortable*                      /'kʌmftəb(ə)l/

*contribute*                        /kən'trɪbjʊ:t/

*exhausted*                        /ɪg'zɔ:stɪd/

*vegetable*                        /'vedʒtəb(ə)l/

# Inconsistencies between spelling and pronunciation

Some words that have similar spelling are pronounced differently.

Examples:

*tough, though, thought, through,*  
*wage, wax, water*

Other words that have different spelling are pronounced the same:

*sun, son* (as in *cut* and *run*)

# Quick Test 1

Find the pair of words which rhyme:

*sweet*      *eat*      ×

*worse*      *horse*

*later*      *latter*

*blood*      *food*

*low*      *go*      ×

*quite*      *diet*

# Quick Test 2

Pronounce these words;

*availability*

*distribute*

*management*

*performance*

*police*

# NOUN + NOUN

Nouns can be put together in three ways:

1. Noun + Noun:  
a war film; a computer shop
2. Preposition structure:  
the top of the hill
3. Possessive structure:  
Jim's idea; my boss's office



# Premodification

There are 4 major types of premodification in English:

- **general adjective:** *a big pillow, official negotiations*
- **ed-participial modifier:** *established traditions, improved growth*
- **ing-participial modifier:** *growing problem, exhausting task*
- **noun:** *staff room, maturation period, company management*

NOUN + NOUN sequences:

- the premodifying noun is usually in the singular
- much used in newspaper language and academic prose because they condense information
- can be extended

e.g. New York Police > New York Police Department  
> New York Police Department scandal

# Meaning relationships expressed by noun sequences

## Composition

e.g.     *glass windows* (= windows made of glass)  
          *tomato sauce, water supplies*

## Purpose

e.g.     *pencil case* (= case used for pencils)  
          *brandy bottle, search procedure*

## Identity

e.g.     *men workers* (=workers who are men)  
          *member country*

## Content

e.g.     *algebra text* (=a text about algebra)  
          *market report, credit agreement*

# Meaning relationships expressed by noun sequences

(cont.d)

## Objective (process / action)

e.g. *egg production, waste disposal, taxi driver*

## Time

e.g. *summer conditions, Sunday school*

But what about  
*riot police?*

## Location

e.g. *Paris conference, tunnel trains*

## Partitive (X is a part of Y)

e.g. *cat legs, family member*

## Specialization

e.g. *finance director, Education Secretary, football fans,  
management consultant*

# Frequent premodifying nouns

*family* +

*affair*  
*argument*  
*background*  
*car*  
*company*  
*doctor*  
*entertainment*  
*friend*

*government* +

*action*  
*agencies*  
*approval*  
*bonds*  
*control*  
*decision*

Some premodifying nouns are plural.

Typical examples: *arms race / scandal / treaty*  
*sales force / tax*

**Esp. BrE**  *drugs administration / business / companies*  
*jobs market / crisis*

# When is a 'noun + noun' structure used?

- For well-known, usual combinations;  
for things that do not often go together,  
'noun + preposition' is used

a war film

a film about thieves

a history book

a book about violins

a postman

a man from the bank

road signs

signs of anger

a corner table

the girl in the corner

# **Which of these can be expressed by ‘noun + noun’ ?**

the door to the kitchen

a child in the garden

a box for matches

chairs for the garden

a man with a knife

a bottle designed for wine

# **‘noun + noun’ vs possessive ’s**

- ‘noun + noun’ used for common kinds of things
- possessive ’s used for something that belongs to a person, group, organization, country, animal

Compare:

a shoe shop

Jim’s old car

# Choose the correct noun group

a bus's station / a bus station

China's history / the China history

a horse's race / a horse race

the paper's editor / the paper editor

phone's number / phone number



# ADJECTIVES + NOUNS

Nouns can be modified with

compound adjectives:

*a **small-scale** experiment*

adverb-adjective combinations:

a **potentially irreversible** decline

and coordinated adjectives:

***strict and systematic** procedures*

# Focus on compound adjectives

**ADJECTIVE + PAST/PRESENT PARTICIPLE + HEAD NOUN**

**best-selling** book, **longest-serving** senator

**ADJECTIVE + NOUN / PAST/PRESENT PARTICIPLE +  
HEAD NOUN**

**free-market** economy, **right-wing** politicians,  
**performance-led** pay, **English-speaking** people

**PAST PARTICIPLE + HEAD NOUN**

**screened-off** entrance

# Identify the pre-modified nouns

## **Cameroon palm oil campaigner arrested in crackdown on activists**

*Nasako Besingi has been jailed after opposing a US-funded palm-oil plantation and supporters say this is linked to Cameroon's 'anglophone crisis'*

A prominent campaigner against palm oil plantations has been arrested amid a growing crackdown on environmental and human rights activists in Cameroon, according to local lawyers and NGOs.

Nasako Besingi, who has led opposition to a US-funded 73,000 hectare farm in a biodiverse rainforest, is among more than 100 individuals who have been detained during an escalation of tension between the predominantly French-speaking authorities and the country's large English-speaking minority.

# Identify the pre-modified nouns

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# COMPOUND NOUNS

Explain the meaning of the following

- 1.an oil tanker
- 2.the oil industry
- 3.an oil heater
- 4.an oil can
- 5.oil pollution

# What' s the difference?

1. a pipeline
2. an ink bottle
3. a book  
collection
4. a cornfield
5. a pencil case

1. a line of pipes
2. a bottle of ink
3. a collection of  
books
4. a field of corn
5. a case of pencils