

Parts of Speech

In the first lecture, we learned that words can be divided into different parts of speech. But how do we know which word belongs to which part of speech?

The answer is that we use *tests*.

Three kinds of tests

1. The gap test

Consider the following types of examples

(1) _____ became very popular.
(2) I like to _____.
(3) Kim seems _____.

In examples like these, the gaps can only be filled by certain kinds of words. For example the gap in (1) can be filled with words like *pizza*, or *koalas*, but not words like *eat* or *happy*. Words which fit in the gap in (1) are called *nouns*.

In the same way only certain kinds of words fit in the gaps in (2), or (3). The kind of words that fit in (2) are *verbs*, and the type of word that fits in (3) are *adjectives*.

2. The modifier test

For almost any word we can add further words to change the meaning. These added words are called *modifiers*.

pizza	<i>delicious</i> pizza
eat	eat <i>slowly</i>
happy	<i>very</i> happy

Each part of speech has its own typical kind of modifier. For example nouns (like *pizza*) can be modified by adjectives. Verbs and adjectives can not be modified by adjectives. Instead they have their own modifiers.

3. The morphology test

In some languages all words that belong to a part of speech have a special beginning or ending that marks them. For example in English many adverbs (words like *slowly* or *normally*) end in *-ly*. However most parts of speech in English are not marked in any special way.

However many parts of speech have a number of forms.

pizza	pizzas
eat	eating , eats
happy	happier, happiest

English nouns always have a *plural form*. This form is usually marked with a final *-s*. Other parts of speech have their own forms.