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Analysis of Chapter Thirteen: Parts of Speech: Structure Classes in *An Introductory English Grammar* by Norman C. Stageberg

Basic Information

An Introductory English Grammar by Norman C. Stageberg is a cornerstone textbook for advanced students of English grammar, widely adopted in college-level linguistics and English language courses. First published in 1965, the fifth edition, co-authored with Dallin D. Oaks and published in 2000 by Harcourt College Publishers, is the focus of this analysis, as no specific 2020 edition is documented in available sources. Spanning 481 pages, the book provides a systematic exploration of English grammar, covering topics such as morphemes, syntax, phonemics, and parts of speech, with an emphasis on structural and transformational approaches. It is a key resource in English-speaking countries and ESL contexts, notably Vietnam, where it is a staple for English majors. Chapter Thirteen, “Parts of Speech: Structure Classes,” focuses on the classification and function of structure classes (also referred to as function words, such as prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and auxiliaries), complementing Chapter Twelve’s discussion of form classes. This chapter is particularly relevant for third-year geography students, who require precise language skills to articulate spatial relationships, processes, and descriptions in academic and professional contexts.

Stages of Development

The evolution of *An Introductory English Grammar* reflects Stageberg’s dedication to refining grammatical instruction across multiple editions. The first edition (1965) introduced a clear, structural approach to grammar, making complex concepts accessible. Subsequent editions incorporated pedagogical feedback and advancements in linguistic theory, with the third edition gaining traction in non-English-speaking regions like Vietnam. The fifth edition (2000), revised with Dallin D. Oaks, marked a significant update after a 15-year gap, integrating modern linguistic tools like tree diagramming and transformational grammar, and adding chapters on usage and language variation.

Chapter Thirteen, “Parts of Speech: Structure Classes,” was developed to provide a clearer and more comprehensive analysis of function words compared to earlier editions. It was refined to include updated examples and exercises that reflect contemporary English usage, ensuring relevance for modern learners. For geography students, the chapter’s focus on structure classes—such as prepositions for spatial relationships (e.g., “near the river”) or conjunctions for linking ideas (e.g., “climate and topography”)—supports academic tasks like describing geographic phenomena or writing analytical reports. The iterative revisions ensure the chapter meets the needs of advanced learners in diverse educational settings.

Objectives

The primary objective of Chapter Thirteen is to equip students with a thorough understanding of structure classes—prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and auxiliaries—as essential components of English grammar. Unlike form classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs), which carry lexical meaning, structure classes serve grammatical functions, facilitating sentence cohesion and clarity. The chapter aims to enable third-year geography students to identify and use these function words accurately, enhancing their ability to

articulate complex relationships in geography, such as spatial connections (e.g., “The city is located between two mountains”) or causal links (e.g., “because of erosion”).

The chapter seeks to teach students how structure classes operate syntactically, for example, how prepositions establish spatial or temporal relationships, or how conjunctions connect clauses to describe geographic processes. Through practical exercises, it encourages students to apply these concepts to real-world language use, such as constructing sentences about urban planning or environmental changes. For non-native speakers, the chapter supports mastery of English grammar for academic purposes, while its clear explanations and structured exercises aid instructors in teaching these concepts effectively in geography-focused ESL contexts.

Contributions: Parts of Speech Structure Classes

Chapter Thirteen, “Parts of Speech: Structure Classes,” makes significant contributions to English grammar education, particularly for third-year geography students. The chapter provides a detailed framework for understanding **structure classes**, which are critical for sentence construction and clarity:

- **Prepositions:** Defined as words that link nouns to other elements, prepositions (e.g., “in,” “on,” “between”) are crucial for geography students describing spatial relationships, such as “The river flows through the valley” or “The city lies near the coast.”
- **Conjunctions:** These connect words or clauses, including coordinating conjunctions (e.g., “and,” “but”) and subordinating conjunctions (e.g., “because,” “although”). They enable students to articulate complex ideas, such as “Deforestation occurs because of agricultural expansion.”
- **Pronouns:** Substituting for nouns (e.g., “it,” “they”), pronouns help maintain cohesion in descriptions, such as “The mountain is steep; it attracts climbers.”
- **Auxiliaries:** Including verbs like “be,” “have,” and “do,” auxiliaries support verb phrases (e.g., “is eroding,” “has changed”), allowing students to describe ongoing or completed geographic processes.

The chapter’s emphasis on the **syntactic roles** of structure classes, such as prepositions in prepositional phrases or auxiliaries in verb constructions, provides students with tools to construct precise and cohesive sentences. Exercises, such as analyzing sentences like “The region, which lies beyond the desert, thrives despite challenges” to identify pronouns (“which”) and conjunctions (“despite”), reinforce practical application. These skills are particularly relevant for geography students, who need to describe spatial patterns, causal relationships, or environmental dynamics in essays, reports, or presentations.

For third-year geography students, the chapter’s contributions are significant in academic contexts. Its clear framework supports accurate communication in geography coursework, enabling students to articulate complex ideas with precision. The book’s global adoption, especially in ESL settings like Vietnam, underscores its impact, helping non-native speakers master grammar for cross-disciplinary tasks. The *Headway Oxford Impact study* (2019), though focused on a different series, reflects similar pedagogical success, suggesting Stageberg’s work supports student progression. By bridging theoretical grammar with practical application, Chapter Thirteen equips geography students with the

linguistic tools needed for advanced academic and professional success in a globalized field.