

# 1.1 RECOGNIZING STATEMENTS

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## Learning Objectives

- ❖ Recognize a statement by the way it sounds and looks.
- ❖ Identify the two core characteristics of a statement.
- ❖ Use the core characteristics of a statement to identify it in texts.
- ❖ Note that there are different types of statements.
- ❖ Begin the process of separating a core group of statements from others that are partial statements.

## Dan is the man in the van – statements in the calypso

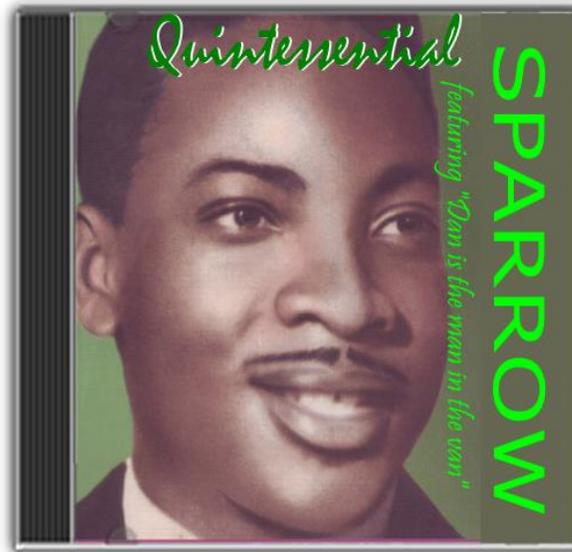


Figure 1.1 - The Mighty Sparrow, featuring "Dan is the man in the van"

Click on the link on the course page to listen to the calypso *Dan is the man in the van* by the calypsonian, the Mighty Sparrow of Trinidad and Tobago.

Listen to the whole calypso then replay the first verse and chorus only. Even if you do not completely understand what the calypsonian is saying, try to identify any lines that you consider to be statements in that verse and chorus only. *Hint*: the title of the calypso is itself a statement.

Play audio recording of '**Dan is the man in the van**' at this point.

Now that you have listened to it, let's see if your selections are similar to mine. Here are some lines that I selected from the chorus of the first verse-chorus segment:

- i. *Pussy has finished his work long ago and now he resting (an'ting)*
- ii. *Solomon Grundy was born on a Monday*
- iii. *Winking, Blinking and Nod sail out in a wooden sloop*

I also identified one statement at the beginning of the verse:

- iv. *According to the education yuh (you) get when yuh small,  
You will grow up with true ambition and respect from one  
and all.*

The three selections from the chorus, the one from the verse, and the title, are all statements. They all share a common feature. However, when we look more closely, they are not completely alike. The first three and the one at the beginning of the verse are not exactly alike. This suggests that there are different types of statements. We will return to that matter later.

This calypso was composed and sung by The Mighty Sparrow, a Trinidad and Tobago calypsonian. The artiste uses the work to highlight what he considers to be absurdities in the curriculum of the British colonial education system to which West Indian children, like himself, were exposed to. In each verse, he is strong in his criticism of what children were taught, and, in the chorus, he introduces lines from a random selection of nursery rhymes and stories to prove his point. Following is a verse and chorus towards the end of the calypso:

Verse

*How I happen to get an education my friends, me eh know (I don't know)  
All dey teach me is about Brer Rabbit and Rumpelstilskinno  
Dey wanted to keep me down indeed  
Dey try their best but didn't succeed  
Mi head was duncy and up to now ah cyah read (I can't read).*

Chorus

*Who cares about  
Peter, Peter was a pumpkin eater  
Some little little people tie Gulliver  
When I was sick and lay a bed, I had two pillows at my head  
The goose lay the golden egg  
Spider ketch a fly  
Morocoy with wings flapping in the sky  
Dey beat me like a dog to learn dat in school  
If mih head was bright ah would a' be (I would have been) a damn fool.*

There are statements in both the verse and chorus of this segment of the

calypso. Those in the verse present the calypsonian's reflections on his experience as a pupil in the West Indian primary school system. Those in the chorus are lines from a random selection of nursery rhymes and stories learnt during his school days.

Review this segment and identify the lines that are statements in both the verse and the chorus.

## Key features of a statement



**Figure 1. 2 – The Midnight Robber is a traditional character of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. A lot of his 'robber talk' is in the form of statements.**

A statement presents information with the intention that those to whom the information is directed must accept it as presented. Whether the intended recipient accepts it or not, is not the issue here. It is a statement because of the intention of the presenter.

There are two distinguishing features of a statement. First, it conveys information about actions, events, states, conditions, behaviours, operations that, **according to the speaker or author**, are/were, exist, have existed; are happening, have happened. As a result, the main verb or verbs in the sentence or sentences will be in the present, simple past or perfect tenses. The information conveyed may be either in the affirmative (is, exists, is happening etc.) or in the negative (is not; does not exist; never happened etc.).

Secondly, a statement is communicated firmly and with conviction. There is nothing tentative or doubtful about a statement. Its meaning is unambiguous. The speaker or author expresses himself or herself in such a way as to leave no doubt about his or her confidence about the information he/she is

communicating. In fact, the use of the present, past, perfect tenses reinforces this quality of a statement.

As expected, the sentence (or sentences) will end with a period (full stop). A statement will not end with a question mark, since it is the opposite of a question.

While the statement is expressed with confidence and conviction, it does not mean that it is true. You should not view a statement as being automatically true: in fact, all of us may have had the experience of someone uttering a false statement. If someone says, for example, that the sky is green, that is a statement, but it is certainly not true. We will go further into issues related to the truth of statements when we examine facts, as one type of statement. What makes that utterance a statement is not whether it is true or false, accurate or inaccurate. What makes it a statement is that it communicates information which, according to the author/presenter has taken place. Further, the person presenting it does so with firmness and conviction.

### Statements in future tense

In general, the tenses used in statements are, as noted above, present, past and perfect tenses. Nonetheless, there are times when statements feature the use of the future tense. Some refer to these as '*simple statements of fact about the future*'. The thinking is that the use of the auxiliary 'will' to refer to future actions or events, serves to convey a sense of certainty that the actions/events will take place. Thus, the sentence "*The performance will start at 8.30 p.m.*" is recognized as a statement of fact about the future.

This type of statement, when it occurs in text, is more likely to be found in less formal writings, such as newspapers, magazines, blog posts rather than the more formal academic texts. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged.

### Partial statements

Do utterances such as '*Come here*', '*Don't touch that*' qualify as statements? Some people have doubts about that. They are commands, orders, telling someone what to do. They do not present information about what is or was, exists or existed, is happening or has happened. We will return to the matter of 'partial' statements later.

## Examples of statements

Following are some examples of statements. Examine each in relation to the key features outlined above.

- i. *According to the education you get when you small, you will grow up with true ambition and respect from one and all.*
- ii. *Some little, little people tie Gulliver.*
- iii. *Dey beat me like a dog to learn dat in school.*
- iv. *Barbados' educational system is based on the British system and schooling is compulsory to age 16.*
- v. *The Ancient Greeks also participated in early tourism.*
- vi. *Over the last century, the Caribbean has been transformed from a colonial plantation economy into the world's most tourism-dependent region.*
- vii. *Communication can be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning.*
- viii. *Effective communication takes preparation, practice and persistence.*
- ix. *Communication influences how you learn.*
- x. *An individual's employment circumstance is a key driver of his or her desire and ability to travel.*
- xi. *Governments are a fact in tourism and in the modern world.*
- xii. *The meteorological service says that there will be little or no rainfall during the dry season this year.*

While many statements may be contained in a single sentence, what is more likely in academic texts, is that individual sentence-statements combine within a longer segment of text to present information about a single idea. The longer segment may be a paragraph or a series of paragraphs. Consider the following two extracts:

**Extract 1.1**

Jonkunnu is an essential festival in many areas of the Caribbean. In some cases, people spend virtually the entire year preparing their costumes and saving up for the big day, when the almighty carnival takes centre stage. The most traditional bands consist of a Cowhead or Horsehead, a King, a Queen with a veil, a Devil, and 'Pitchy-Patchy' dressed in tatters and rags, performing acrobatics; but over the years many more characters have been added, from both African and Caribbean influences. Spectators can be heard to cry 'Jonkunnu a come!' and the excitement brings people from their homes to line the streets to enjoy the entertainment.

**Extract 1.2**

... [T]ourism events also generate negative sociocultural impacts which must be managed. Major events as well as smaller localised events have unintended social consequences such as substance abuse, bad behaviour by crowds and an increase in criminal activity. The Reggae Sunfest in Jamaica is an example of an event that has experienced all the above consequences. There is the further challenge of social dislocation in some instances. A case in point is the temporary removal of street dwellers in the capital city of Port of Spain in an attempt to clean up the streets for the arrival of delegates for the 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad.

All the sentences of each of these excerpts are statements. They all present information in a firm, unambiguous manner, with the intention that readers

would accept the information. The first deals with a Carnival-type Caribbean festival, known as Jonkunnu. Each sentence provides some piece of information related to this topic. The second highlights the effects of tourist-related events on a community and provides examples of specific events at which such effects were observed.

## Types of statements

It is likely that some of you have gone one step further and recognized that both these excerpts contain statements of **fact**. If you did, you would have correctly identified one type of statement, namely facts. We will look more closely at this type in the section that follows. Then, in the next two sections, we will be looking at two other types namely **assertions** and **generalisations**. Finally in the last section, we turn attention to the group of ‘**partial**’ statements that we briefly referred to earlier.



Figure 1.3 - Facts, Assertions, Generalizations & Partial Statements

Before moving on from this section, review Extracts 1.1 and 1.2 again as we will be discussing aspects of both in the follow-up section on ‘Facts’.

## Key Takeaways

- ❖ A statement is content that clearly states something.
- ❖ There is nothing tentative or doubtful about a statement.
- ❖ Its meaning and intent are firmly conveyed.
- ❖ While all statements share the same core attributes, there are also specific features that distinguish among different types.
- ❖ Facts, assertions and generalizations are three types of statements.
- ❖ 'Partial statements' should be treated separately.

**Go to self-check mini- test 1.1 on Course Page**