

**Excerpt from Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, book 1, ch 4.**

[17] ... Following [the discussion of letters] the teacher concerned will note the number and nature of the parts of speech, although there is some dispute as to their number.

[18] Earlier writers, among them Aristotle himself and Theodectes, hold that there are but three, *verbs*, *nouns* and *convinctions*. Their view was that the force of language resided in the verbs, and the matter in the nouns (for the one is what we speak, the other that which we speak about), while the duty of the convinctions was to provide a link between the nouns and the verbs. I know that *conjunction* is the term in general use. But *convinction* seems to me to be the more accurate translation of the Greek.

[19] Gradually the number was increased by the philosophers, more especially by the Stoics: *articles* were first added to the *convinctions*, then *prepositions*: to nouns *appellations* were added, then the *pronoun* and finally the *participle*, which holds a middle position between the verb and the noun. To the verb itself was added the *adverb*. Our own language dispenses with the articles, which are therefore distributed among the other parts of speech.

[20] But *interjections* must be added to those already mentioned. Others however follow good authority in asserting that there are eight parts of speech. Among these I may mention Aristarchus and in our own day Palaemon, who classified the *vocable* or *appellation* as a species of the genus noun. Those on the other hand who distinguish between the noun and the vocable, make nine parts of speech. But yet again there are some who differentiate between the vocable and the appellation, saying that the *vocable* indicates concrete objects which can be seen and touched, such as a "house" or "bed," while an *appellation* is something imperceptible either to sight or touch or to both, such as the "wind," "heaven," or "virtue." They added also the *asseveration*, such as "alas" and the *derivative* such as *fasciatim*. But of these classifications I do not approve.

...

[22] Boys should begin by learning to decline nouns and conjugate verbs: otherwise they will never be able to understand the next subject of study. This admonition would be superfluous but for the fact that most teachers, misled by a desire to show rapid progress, begin with what should really come at the end: their passion for displaying their pupils' talents in connexion with the more imposing aspects of their work serves but to delay progress and their shortcut to knowledge merely lengthens the journey.