English Language and Translation 2
2nd Language - 2018-19

Lesson 1: Prescriptive and Descriptive Grammar

6 November 2018

Elements of Grammar and Syntax

- Prescriptive and descriptive grammars
- Verb forms (tense, modality, aspect, voice)
- Sentence structure (word classes, clause elements, word-order)

What is Grammar?

'Types' of Grammar:

Primary grammar

'intuitive', 'unconscious' knowledge, understanding and application

Secondary grammar

'conscious', 'learned' expertise approximating to primary grammar

What is Grammar?

'Types' of Grammar:

Scientific/academic grammar

precise, detailed specification for research and analysis

Pedagogic grammar

for learners (and teachers) of language

What is Grammar?

'Types' of Grammar:

Regional variations:

I have finished already. (BE)

I finished already. (AE)

The majority are right. (BE)

The majority is right. (AE)

What is Grammar?

'Types' of Grammar:

Written grammar
derived from and applied to written representations of a language

Spoken grammar
derived from and applied to spoken representations of a language

What is Grammar?

'Types' of Grammar:

'Historical' grammar:

I dare say he hath erred.

'Contemporary' grammar

I was like that is well wrong.

What is Grammar?

'Types' of Grammar:

'Non-standard' grammar

We was robbed, it weren't no penalty.

You ain't right.

He done it on purpose.

'Text' language

Wot U duin 2nite?

What is Grammar?

Description of the structure and/or of the constituent parts of a system (language) used to formulate a communication that has meaning.

Structural analysis (identifying a noun):
The _____ is on the table.

Constituent analysis:

Noun Phrase	Verb	Prepositional Phrase
The pen	is	on the table

What is Grammar?

Description of the:

Constituent parts (building blocks) of the linguistic System

Order in which the building blocks are placed (word order)

Particular modifications that the building blocks may undergo (inflections)

What is Grammar?

All the previous cases are examples of Descriptive Grammar, which:

Describes and illustrates how a language is actually exploited in practice by (both 'primary' and 'secondary' grammar) users e.g. Practical English Usage (Michael Swan)

Recognises that grammar changes over time

Recognises that grammar will vary in different historical, geographic, social etc. contexts

What is Grammar?

In contrast, in a Prescriptive Grammar:

Linguistic formulation is defined by rules

There is a 'right' and a 'wrong' form

However, these rules might be inappropriate to the language system to which they are applied

Right or Wrong?

What shall we talk about?

We need to fully understand the difference.

Hopefully, we can come to some conclusions.

We didn't discover nothing last time.

If I was you, I would think again

Example: the Future

Collect language examples which refer to future time to illustrate usage in English

Do not think in terms of 'rules', but of descriptive cases which 'reliably' illustrate how the sense of future time (or a reference to the future) is communicated

Use source materials from a business/corporate context to provide the examples