

CORSO DI LAUREA IN  
COMUNICAZIONE INTERLINGUISTICA APPLICATA  
ALLE PROFESSIONI GIURIDICHE

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Lesson 1 – 17 February 2020:

Prescriptive and Descriptive Grammar

Questions Forms

M Hammersley – 17 Feb 2020

# Types of Grammar

Primary grammar

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

Secondary grammar

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

# 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

# Types of Grammar

‘Historical’ grammar:

- I dare say he hath erred.

‘Contemporary’ grammar

- I was like that is well wrong.

‘Non-standard’ grammar

- You ain’t right.
- He done it on purpose.

‘Text’ language

- Wot U duin 2nite?

# Descriptive 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

# Prescriptive Grammar

Linguistic formulation is defined by rules: there is a 'right' and a 'wrong' form:

- 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

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

# Question Forms

It's estimated that there are up to 7,000 different languages in the world. Languages are grouped into families that share a common ancestry. For example, English is related to German and Dutch, and they are all part of the Indo-European family of languages. Another group of Indo-European languages is the Romance languages, such as French, Spanish and Italian, which come from Latin. Nearly every language shares a broadly similar grammatical structure, even though they may not be linked in vocabulary or origin. In many parts of the world where communities were historically isolated from each other, multiple languages may have developed. Papua New Guinea, for example, where many tribes were isolated by mountain ranges, has around 830 different languages. The world's five most spoken languages, according to figures from UNESCO, are Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish, Hindi and Arabic. Mandarin Chinese has around a billion speakers and most come from north and south-central China. The United Nations uses six official languages to conduct business: English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Arabic.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Families that share a common ancestry.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
From Latin.
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
A similar grammatical structure.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Papua New Guinea.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
A billion.
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
From north and south-central China.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_  
English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Arabic.

# Question Forms

- 1 How long **has Anton been working** at the university?
- 2 Who **has been** to Italy before?
- 3 I was just wondering if **we'll arrive** on time?
- 4 Do you know where he comes **from**?

We form most questions by putting an auxiliary verb before the subject. For the present and past simple, we use the auxiliary *do/does/did*.

*Does Sam speak French? Where **did they** go?*

*Have you been to Italy? When **are you** leaving?*

# Subject Questions

## Subject questions

When we are asking about the subject of a sentence, the word order is the same as in a statement and the question word replaces the subject. We do not use the auxiliary verbs *do/does/did*.

*Which countries **border** Russia?*

(NOT ~~*Which countries do border Russia?*~~)

*What **happened**?* (NOT ~~*What did happen?*~~)

- However, we use *don't/doesn't/didn't* in subject questions to ask about negative ideas.

*Who **didn't receive** the email?*

# Indirect Questions

## Indirect questions

If we begin a question with a phrase like *Do you think ...*, *Do you know ...* and *Have you any idea ...*, we do not put the auxiliary verb before the subject and we do not use the auxiliary verbs *do/does/did*. The word order is the same as in a statement.

*Do you know where **Dariusz works**?*

(NOT ~~*Do you know where does Dariusz work?*~~)

*Have you any idea where **Alex is**?*

(NOT ~~*Have you any idea where is Alex?*~~)

# Indirect Questions

Rewrite the questions as indirect questions. Use the word in brackets.

1 What time will you be arriving? (know)

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2 Is it going to rain? (think)

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3 How many languages do they speak in India? (idea)

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4 What time does the museum close? (idea)

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# Direct and Indirect Yes/No Questions

Direct Question	Indirect Question
Is the restaurant closing now?	Can you tell me if the restaurant is closing now?
Was he late for the meeting?	Can you tell me if he was late for the meeting?

  

Direct Question	Indirect Question
Does David live in London?	Can you tell me if David lives in London?
Did she call John yesterday?	Can you tell me if she called John yesterday?

# Direct and Indirect Information Questions

Direct Question	Indirect Question
Why is he unhappy?	Can you tell me why he is unhappy?
When is the restaurant closing?	Can you tell me when the restaurant is closing?
Why was he late for the meeting?	Can you tell me why he was late for the meeting?
What were you doing at 3pm?	Can you tell me what you were doing at 3pm?

# Questions with Prepositions

## Questions with prepositions

When we are asking about the object of a preposition, the preposition usually goes at the end of the question.

*What are you looking **at**?*

*How long did you wait **for**?*

We can, however, sometimes put the preposition at the beginning of the question, but this generally sounds very formal, or rather old-fashioned.

***For** how long did you wait?*

In this formal style we can use *whom* as an object in a question.

*For **whom** did she work?*

# What corrections are needed?

- When begins the lesson?
- Work you every day?
- Who does the report prepare?
- Where flew the plane?
- Do you have got a brother?

# What corrections are needed?

- How many people do work here?
- For how long have I to wait?
- Should anything happen, can I ask for help?
- Do you think thy may be right?
- Think you not that it's time to go?