

Introduction to Linguistics – LANE 321

CHAPTER 8 – GRAMMAR

Introduction



- We have already considered two levels of description used in the study of language
- What are they?

ðə'lʌkɪbɔɪz

The luck -y boy -s

functional lexical derivational lexical inflectional

Grammar



- the lucky boys
- * boys the lucky
- * lucky boys the

asterisk * = unacceptable or ungrammatical

- English has strict rules for combining words into phrases.
 - article + adjective + noun ✓
 - noun + article + adjective ✗

Grammar



So, what is **GRAMMAR**?

One way of defining grammar

- The process of describing the structure of phrases and sentences in such a way that we account for all the grammatical sequences in a language and rule out all the ungrammatical sequences.

Traditional Grammar

- Concepts and ideas about the structure of language that Western societies have received from ancient **Greek** and **Latin** sources.
- These two languages were known as the languages of scholarship, religion, philosophy and knowledge;
- So, the grammar of these languages was taken to be the **model** for other grammars.
- The best known terms from that tradition are those used in describing **the parts of speech**.

The Parts of Speech (Syntactic Categories)

- The lucky boys found a backpack in the park and they opened it carefully.

The	lucky	boys	found	a	backpack
article	adjective	noun	verb	article	noun
in	the	park			
preposition	article	noun			
and	they	opened	it	carefully	
conjunction	pronoun	verb	pronoun	adverb	

The Parts of Speech (Syntactic Categories)

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--|
| • Noun | N | • boy, backpack, dog, school, roughness, earthquake, love. |
| • Articles | Art | • a, an, the |
| • Adjective | Adj | • happy, large, strange |
| • Verb | V | • go, talk, be, have |
| • Adverb | Adv | • slowly, yesterday, really, very |
| • Preposition | Prep | • at, in, on, near, with, without |
| • Pronoun | Pro | • she, herself, they, it, you |
| • Conjunction | Conj | • and, because, when |

Agreement

- Traditional grammar has also given us a number of other categories:
 - Number
 - Person
 - Tense
 - Voice
 - Gender

Agreement



Cathy loves her dog

The verb *loves* agrees with the noun *Cathy*

- *loves* not *love*
- **Number** (singular or plural)
- **Person**
 - 1st person = speaker
 - 2nd person = hearer
 - 3rd person = others

Agreement



- The different forms of English pronouns can be described in terms of **person** and **number**.
- We use:
 - *I* for **1st person singular**
 - *you* for **2nd person singular**
 - *he, she, it* (or *Cathy*) for **3rd person singular**.
- So, in the sentence *Cathy loves her dog*, we have a **noun Cathy**, which is **3rd person singular**, and we use the **verb** *loves* (not *love*) to **agree with** the noun

Agreement



Cathy loves her dog

The form of the verb must be described in terms of:

- **Tense** (Loves = present tense NOT past tense)
- **Voice** (active or passive)
- **Gender** (Cathy & her)

Grammatical Gender



- Some languages use grammatical gender
- **Natural gender** is based on sex (male & female)
- **Grammatical gender** is based on the type of noun (masculine & feminine)
- Nouns are classified according to their gender class
- **Articles** and **adjectives** have different forms to agree with the gender of the noun.
- Spanish
 - masculine (*el sol* = the sun)
 - feminine (*la luna* = the moon)
- German
 - masculine (*der Mond* = the moon)
 - feminine (*die Sonne* = the sun)
 - neuter (*das Feuer* = the fire)
- Arabic
 - masculine خاتم ثمين
 - feminine ساعة ثمينة

Prescriptive vs. Descriptive Approach



- **Prescriptive grammar** refers to the structure of a language as certain people think it *should* be used.
- **Descriptive grammar** refers to the structure of a language as it is actually used by speakers and writers.

The Prescriptive Approach



- It is one thing to adopt the grammatical labels to categorize words in English sentences;
- it is quite another thing to go on to claim that the structure of English sentences should be like the structure of sentences in Latin.
- That was an approach taken by a number of influential grammarians, mainly in 19th century England, who set out rules for the “proper” use of English.

The Prescriptive Approach

- Some familiar examples of prescriptive rules for English sentences are:

- You must not split an infinitive.
- You must not end a sentence with a preposition.

- Following these types of rules, traditional teachers would correct sentences like

- to
- *Who did you go with?* ×
 - *With whom did you go?* 痾

making sure that the preposition *with* was not at the end of the sentence.

* Although in real-life communication, both of them are correct!

The Prescriptive Approach

- Traditional teachers would also correct:

- to
- *Mary runs faster than me*
 - *Mary runs faster than I.*

and

- to
- *Me and my family*
 - *My family and I*

- According to them, in 'proper' English writing, one should never begin a sentence with *and!*

The Prescriptive Approach

- It may, in fact, be a valuable part of one's education to be made aware of this 'linguistic etiquette' for the 'proper' use of the language.
- If it is a social expectation that someone who writes well should obey these **prescriptive rules**, then social judgments such as 'poorly educated' may be made about someone who does not follow these rules.
- However, it is worth considering the origins of some of these rules and asking whether they are appropriately applied to the English language.

The Prescriptive Approach

- Please read p. 86 – Captain Kirk's infinitive.
- It would be appropriate in Latin grammar to say you cannot split an infinitive. But is it appropriate to carry this idea over into English where the infinitive form does not consist of a single word, but of two words, to and go?
- There are structures in English that **differ from** those found in Latin, rather than think of the English forms as 'bad' because they are breaking a rule of Latin grammar.

The Descriptive Approach



- It may be that using the grammar of Latin is:
 - a useful guide for some European languages (e.g. Italian or Spanish)
 - less useful for others (e.g. English)
 - misleading for some non-European languages
- Toward the end of the 19th century, this became clear to linguists. The categories and rules that were appropriate for Latin grammar just did not seem to fit these languages.

The Descriptive Approach



- As a consequence, for most of the 20th century, a rather different approach was adopted.
- Analysts collected samples of the language they were interested in and attempted to describe the regular structures of the language **as it was used**, **not** according to some view of **how it should be used**.
- This is called the **descriptive approach**.

Structural Analysis



- One type of **descriptive approach** is called **structural analysis**.
- Its main concern is to investigate the distribution of forms in a language.
- The method involves the use of "test-frames" that can be sentences with empty slots in them.
- e.g.
 - The _____ makes a lot of noise.
 - I heard a _____ yesterday.
- *car, child, donkey, dog, radio*
- Because all these forms fit in the same test-frame, they are likely to be examples of the same grammatical category (i.e. nouns N)
- How about: *Cathy, someone, the dog, a car* ?
- They don't fi

Structural analysis



- for these forms, we require different test-frames
 - _____ makes a lot of noise.
 - I heard _____ yesterday.
- *It, the big dog, an old car, the professor with the Scottish accent.*
- *Cathy, someone, the dog, a car*
- These forms are likely to be examples of the same category.
(i.e. noun phrase NP)
- In the older, Latin-influenced, analysis of **pronouns**, they were described as "words used in place of **nouns**"
- More accurately, pronouns are words used in place of **noun phrases** (not just nouns).

Constituent Analysis



- Another type of **descriptive approach** is called **constituent analysis**.
- It shows how small constituents (components) in sentences go together to form larger constituents.
- e.g. *An old man brought a shotgun to the wedding*
- **At the word level**, how many constituents do we have?
- Nine constituents
- How do those nine constituents go together to form constituents **at the phrase level**?
- *An old man brought brought a shotgun to to the*
- Is this right? Are they proper English phrases?

Constituent Analysis



- *An old man brought a shotgun to the wedding*
- *An old man, a shotgun, the wedding* = Noun phrases (NP)
- *to the wedding* = Prepositional phrase (PP)
- *brought a shotgun* = Verb phrase (VP)
- This analysis can be represented in different types of diagrams.
- See p. 88

Labeled and Bracketed Sentences



- An alternative type of diagram is designed to show how the constituents in sentence structure can be marked off by using labeled brackets.

Labeled and Bracketed Sentences



This can be done by following the following steps:

1. Put brackets round each constituent
2. Put more brackets round each combination of constituents.

For example:

The dog loved the girl

- Try it!
- At the **word** level: *[the]* or *[dog]*
- At the **phrase** level: *[the dog]* or *[loved the girl]*
- At the **sentence** level: *[The dog loved the girl]*



Labeled and Bracketed Sentences

3. Label each constituent using these abbreviated grammatical terms.

Art (= article)	V (= verb)
N (= noun)	VP (= verb phrase)
NP (= noun phrase)	S (= sentence)

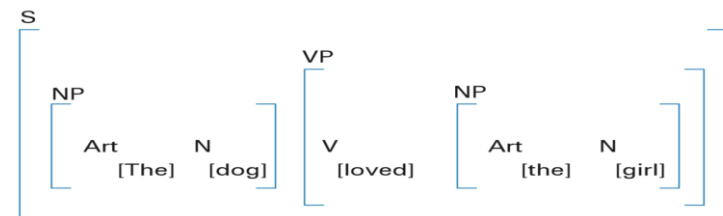


Figure 7.5

Labeled and Bracketed Sentences

In performing this type of analysis, we have not only labeled all the constituents, we have revealed the **hierarchical organization** of those constituents.

- **S** is higher than and contains **NP**
- **NP** is higher than and contains **N**
- **S** is higher than and contains **VP**
- **VP** contains **V + NP**

References

Yule, George. *The study of language*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Alroqi, Haifa. LANE 321 Introduction to linguistics lecture notes. King Abdulaziz University, 2015.

Thank you