LANE 321:

Chapter 7: Grammar

Introduction to Linguistics
Introduction

• We have already considered two levels of description used in the study of language

• What are they?

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

The Parts of Speech (Syntactic Categories)

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

For more information, read pp. 82 & 83.
The Parts of Speech (Syntactic Categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Adj</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>Adv</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>Prep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>Pro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>Conj</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- boy, backpack, dog, school, roughness, earthquake, love.
- a, an, the
- happy, large, strange
- go, talk, be, have
- slowly, yesterday, really, very
- at, in, on, near, with, without
- she, herself, they, it, you
- and, because, when

For more information, read pp. 82 & 83.
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**
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} person = speaker
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} person = hearer
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} 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.
Cathy loves her dog

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

- **Tense** \((\text{Loves} = \text{present tense NOT past tense})\)
- **Voice** \(\text{(active or passive)}\)
- **Gender** \(\text{(Cathy & her)}\)
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
Traditional Analysis

- Read p. 84-85
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

  - *Who did you go with?* ×
  - *With whom did you go?* ✔

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 20\textsuperscript{th} 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 \textit{as it was used, not according to some view of how it should be used}.
- This is called the \textit{descriptive approach}. 
• 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 fit
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).
Another type of descriptive approach is called constituent analysis.

It shows how small constituents (components) in sentences go together to form larger constituents.

For example, the sentence "An old man brought a shotgun to the wedding" contains:

- 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
Symbols used in syntactic analysis

S sentence  NP noun phrase  PN proper noun
N noun  VP verb phrase  Adv adverb
V verb  Adj adjective  Prep preposition
Art article  Pro pronoun  PP prepositional phrase

*  ungrammatical sentence
→  consists of / rewrites as
( )  optional constituent
{ }  one and only one of these constituents must be selected

S → NP VP
NP → {Art (Adj) N, Pro, PN}
VP → V NP (PP) (Adv)
PP → Prep NP
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]
```
3. Label each constituent using these abbreviated grammatical terms.

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

**Figure 7.5**
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

Homework: p. 92 (1, 2, 3, 4, & 6)

Thank you