

*English
Grammar
A Linguistic
Study of its
Classes and
Structures*

Scott · Bowley · Brockett · Brown · Goddard



ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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PREFACE

Towards the end of 1966 a request was made to the Auckland English Association for a course on modern methods of teaching grammar. Out of that course grew this book, the publication of which was first announced at the last lecture. The book is particularly designed for sixth form use, the two parts being primarily intended for two consecutive sixth form years. The course is self-contained and consequently the early material, which has to be included because it will be new to most readers, is comparatively elementary; it can therefore with suitable dilution be introduced a good deal lower down the school. This has already been successfully done by some of the authors. Until the system used in this book becomes more familiar in schools it should be of use also in teachers' colleges, as well as in some university courses.

The text may be presented in class in more than one way. Most of the material in Part One is organised inductively and should require comparatively little comment. It is of course open to the teacher to present it in a condensed form of his own designing.

Although it has grown up in a New Zealand milieu, the book is not limited nationally; its contents are in general expected to be applicable wherever English is spoken and written.

The theory behind *English Grammar* is that of a group of British linguists, in particular M. A. K. Halliday and J. McH. Sinclair, to whom acknowledgment is gratefully made. We are also indebted to work done a few years ago in the University of Leeds by then members of the School of English. The linguistic model here adopted is in fact one which has been in general use by linguists in the United Kingdom for the past few years: articles making use of it have appeared in the *Journal* of the linguistic Association of Great Britain, while a full scale application of a similarly based description is *English in Advertising* by G. N. Leech (Longmans 1966).

While this school of linguistics has been our chief source we have of course not limited our attention to it. We have gladly made use of the publications of a variety of grammarians, from Jespersen on, particularly, perhaps, those of the workers in the transformational field such as Noam Chomsky, R. B. Lees and Paul Roberts. We have also found useful F. R. Palmer's *A Linguistic Study of the English Verb* (Longmans, 1965). It is also true to say that in several areas the text is based on the individual research of one or more of the authors.

Finally mention should be made of our indebtedness to Randolph Quirk's *The Use of English* (Longmans, 1962), a book at once practical, scholarly and humane.

It is on the whole from the school of linguists mentioned above that we derive the terminology, though every term has been carefully considered. Innovation has not been adopted for its own sake. Sometimes at first sight a traditional term may seem to have been unnecessarily discarded; if so there will have been a reason for the change. To explain the reason in every case would take too long; often it is because the traditional term refers to something more limited than the category we had in mind. *Reflexive pronoun*, for example, at first sight an appropriate name for the form *myself* is not suitable for that form's occurrence in *I did it myself*, so we have preferred a more neutral term. Terminology is a thorny subject; we merely wish to say that we have tried to handle it with care.

We are particularly grateful to Professor L. F. Brosnahan of Victoria University, Wellington, and to Mr J. A. Sinclair of Avondale College, Auckland, who kindly read much of the work in typescript. We also remember with gratitude suggestions and comments from a number of friends, including the information about Tongan kindly supplied by Sister Mary Felicia. For the paraphrase from the Book of Kings as well as for general advice about staging the presentation of material we are indebted to Emeritus Professor H. G. Forder. Any faults or surviving errors are of course our own.

In this the last paragraph of the book to be written I should like to pay tribute to my colleagues' perpetual willingness to co-operate and their long-sustained readiness for work throughout, not forgetting the wives who have contrived to make that work possible.

FORREST S. SCOTT

Auckland, October, 1967.

LIST OF NON-LETTER SYMBOLS

	sentence boundary
	clause boundary
	group boundary
+	morpheme boundary
[[]]	boundaries of a rankshifted clause
[]	boundaries of a rankshifted group
<< >>	boundaries of an inserted clause
< >	boundaries of an inserted group
*	a non-attested sentence or form
→	is transformed into
&	indicates linkage
=	indicates apposition
—	indicates a broken element

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Where Grammar Comes In

LANGUAGE AND LIFE

Language is on its own. It is different from anything else we take part in. And it is something we take part in, not merely a subject to learn about. Some of us may talk a little more than others but we all talk a great deal. Mostly we do it to tell people things, occasionally in order to find out things, and as often as not to say whatever passes through our heads. Rosalind may not have been describing only her own sex when she said to Orlando, 'Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak'. Sometimes we listen to what is being said to us. At any rate spoken language is going on all around us; whenever people are not officially doing something else they seem to talk – in shops, streets, buses, schoolyards, houses, workshops and dance halls. From radio and television comes an almost constant stream of talk. And written language is all round us too, not only in books but in newspaper headlines, news columns and advertisements, on hoardings and in neon lights. If language is put in front of us in large enough letters we can hardly help absorbing it.

How did we come to be able to use language? People do not grow up into talking by the same means as they acquire the ability to eat, digest, sit up, walk and run, and fall in love. They do these things because they are born of parents and grandparents who do them and even if they were brought up by strangers in a strange land they would know how to do them. Their eyes, hair and other physical features may resemble those of some of their ancestors, with whom they are even likely to share characteristics of personality, but if children are brought up by strangers they will speak

the language of the strangers and not that of their parents. If, as has occasionally happened, they are kept alive by animals, they will not acquire human speech at all.

But neither is language something like swimming, which you may either be taught or acquire by imitation if there are enough members of the community who swim and you started early enough. Learning language is indeed something like this second way of learning to swim because it is acquired by imitation. But there is the big difference that not everyone learns to swim; indeed there are probably places where very few people know how to swim. But there is no community of human beings which does not talk; the only people who do not talk are those born without the necessary organs of speech, or those unable to hear others talking.

In many ways using language is more like wearing clothes than anything else. Everyone wears some kind of covering or ornamentation but there are many different ways of doing so. There are both clothes and words which are for purposes of utility; they are appropriate for the job to be done but they impress no-one. There are comfortable ways of speaking and writing which, like comfortable clothes, do very well at home but are not quite the thing for more momentous occasions. There are clothes of different materials. There are clothes that suit the sea and the open air, for tramping and for holidays. There are other clothes which do very much to make possible a magic occasion like a ball. And there are words for such occasions too. There are clothes for wearing only on the stage or in a film – clothes for pretending to be someone else in. And there are kinds of language for all these occasions too.

As with clothes, there are words and phrases used to declare that we are up to date with the latest 'in' habit. They catch on and are used over and over again like people wearing the latest trend. Then, as often happens with trends, they become first unfashionable, then dowdy, then quaint and finally period, like fashions of, say, five, ten, twenty and fifty years ago. This of course applies more noticeably to the area of language roughly called slang and it is often true (as was pointed out by C. P. Snow in *The Masters*) that people go on using slang words and phrases that were in vogue when they were young without realising that they are no longer fashionable – as sometimes happens with clothing styles and make-up too.

Another, though not quite parallel, comparison might be made between language and customs of eating; in this case the most

noticeable variation is between members of different communities; they may have, say, two, three, or four meals in a day or have no pattern at all; some have elaborate ceremonies that must be gone through whenever food is eaten; for some, certain foods are under a taboo or may only be eaten on special occasions; some use fingers, others knives and forks, others chopsticks. And strangers to the society, who do not know the customs, may be in danger of giving offence or of not noticing things that are done in their honour. In this way they suffer a failure of communication which is of course what happens when people do not understand each other's language.

Such comparisons with eating and dressing habits suggest why the study of language – **linguistics** – has recently come to be regarded as one of the social sciences, like anthropology and sociology and psychology; language is a part of human behaviour. We may note that animals do not wear clothes and not many of them have eating ceremonies: similarly, although they do communicate with each other to a certain limited extent, they cannot be said to have languages to anything like the extent humans have, whereas all human societies have languages, even though they differ greatly from each other

LANGUAGE: A SIGNALLING SYSTEM

Yet there is of course more to language than custom and fashion. Eating ceremonies are not found everywhere and for much of the time clothing does not have a great deal to say. The impressions they make on other people are mostly incidental to the main business of nutrition and keeping warm. From what has been said above it is clear that language has many purposes, but its main business is **communication**, the intimation to another being of what one wants or thinks, and for the great majority of people their words and phrases will be of one kind only – those which belong to the language their own community uses.

It is indeed a very strange thing that different communities use different languages and so have different words with which to give form to their emotions and thoughts. It is not surprising that these emotions and thoughts often come out differently. To learn another language is not merely to learn a new set of sounds or marks on paper for saying the same thing; it is to learn that it is possible to think in a slightly different way from that to which one has become used, to understand that there is more than one way of

organising our experience and that the world is a rather greater place than one once thought.

Communication, then, is the main purpose of language, and language can be seen to have features in common with other communication systems (which indeed are often called 'languages'). There are some communication systems so simple that we can say everything about them in a few lines.

There is for example the system of traffic signals erected at busy intersections: the aim of the system is to indicate when it is safe to proceed beyond the road junction and when it is unsafe to do so. We will examine the New Zealand version of the system as it is a simple one.

The messages are conveyed by means of coloured lights which can be in three different states which mean three different messages:

RED	Stop
GREEN	Proceed
AMBER	Stop unless you would be unable to stop safely in the time available.

A system such as this consists of these parts:

- the **substance**, manifested by some material means, in this case electrically-produced light coloured by a glass filter. It is necessary that the substance be perceived by one of the body's senses, in this case sight.
- the allocation of the signals to the various *messages* which the system can convey; these messages relate to the **situation** of the traffic flow at the time. It is through this allocation that the receiver of the signals *understands* what is intended. There has to be some agreement of course as to the way in which the messages are allocated. It is not enough to know that there are three signals and three messages; you have to know for example that it is agreed that the red signal has the meaning 'Stop'; such a general agreement is called a convention.

This is a particularly simple system of course, not only because there are only three messages but also because no part of the substance can enter into more than one message. Consider now the code by which ships can transmit certain important and frequently-occurring messages to one another. The following is a selection of some of the messages which can be sent by means of longer or

shorter blasts on a ship's siren – a long stroke indicates a long blast, a short stroke a short blast.

- i) – I am turning to starboard.
- ii) – – I am turning to port.
- iii) – – – My engines are going full speed astern.
- iv) – – – You are standing into danger.
- v) — — — Man overboard.
- vi) — — — I require medical assistance.

Here are six messages; there is a difference from the traffic light system, in that whereas before there was a *different* colour for *each* message, in this system short blasts enter into five of the messages and long blasts into three of them. It is the *combination* of number and type that counts. That this is so is illustrated by the fact that the messages can be transmitted equally well by lamp as by siren: in other words it is not the perception of the substance itself (the sound waves produced by the siren or the light emitted by the lamp) that indicates the message but the recognition of the **patterns** in it. The patterns above can indeed be expressed in other ways than longs and shorts, e.g.

	a	a, a	a, a, a	a, a, b	b, b, b	a, b, b
or	a	2a	3a	2a + b	3b	a + 2b
or even	p	q	r	qx	z	py

The main point is that we do recognise differences between the patterns, although there may be more than one way of expressing those differences.

Although the system is still a comparatively simple one, its parallels with language are closer than in the traffic light system.

1. The patterns can be made by more than one substance (i.e. in more than one medium).

Navigational system

Language system

- i) ear perceives: Patterns in sound made by siren Sound made by voice and other speech organs
- ii) eye perceives: Patterns in light made by lamp Marks made by ink, etc. on paper, parchment

2. The same segment may enter into a number of patterns, the long blast or flash occurs in signals (iv), (v) and (vi) above; the sound *s* occurs in sand, spade, forks. It does not have any meaning until it forms part of a pattern.

Now in the study of spoken language the part concerned with the

substance is called **phonetics** and the part concerned with messages or meanings is called **semantics**. Both of these are of course much more complicated than in the system we have been considering. But in between them comes the area of patterns, or **form**, at which we will now look more closely.

Form in language comprises a number of studies.

We have seen that the segments in the navigational system do not have a meaning until they are part of a pattern; in this they are like the language units which are, in the case of the spoken medium, the segments called phonemes and in the written medium the segments called graphemes; the patterns which these segments form usually comprise what we know as words. The segments themselves do not have meaning; the words do.

What the segments themselves do possess is significance, distinctness from one another. In the navigational system it is essential that the short segments are clearly distinct from the long ones; in practice it would still be possible to read a signal consisting of short and long flashes of light if the shorts were a little longer than usual, but if their length increased so much as to make the reader uncertain whether they were shorts or longs the system would become inefficient because the distinction between its segments would have been lost. It is the same with the segments in human language. We know that we do not all make our letters in exactly the same way; some of us cross *t*'s with a stroke that goes right through the upright, others with a bar that stays on the right side of it; for others the bar is almost non-existent. This does not necessarily make our writing inefficient unless our *t* becomes indistinguishable from some other letter. Again some of us use an *r* which is of a quite different type from that which others write or we may even write both kinds of *r* ourselves in different moods or in different positions in words. These varying kinds of *t* (and *r*) are called **allographs**; they all represent a single unit of writing, the **grapheme**. Even printers sometimes use variant allographs which are members of the same grapheme, e.g., the *f* used when the letter is doubled, *ff*, or before *i*, *fi*.

Similarly in the spoken form of the language there are certain distinctive segments. Even one person does not always pronounce a certain sound, say the vowel *a* or the consonant *t* in exactly the same way. Among other reasons they may vary because of the sounds on either side of them. And certainly all the people who speak to us do not produce exactly the same sound. Yet within certain limits we do recognise a distinct sound as an *a* or a *t*; such a significant sound is

called a **phoneme**. The various varieties of it are called **allophones**. Two allophones which are clearly different in sound are the *l*'s in *lisp* and *milk*, yet we acknowledge them to be a single phoneme, because in no position in a word is there any doubt which is to be used; they never clash.

The area of language concerned with phonemes and the circumstances in which they can combine (e.g., in English syllables *t* can precede *a* but not *k*) is **phonology**, one of the divisions of language concerned with form. So far this would be paralleled in the navigational system by a listing of the segments that occur, the possibility of their combination with each other and any limitation there might be in the number that can occur in the combined units to which a meaning is allotted.

A difference between this system and human language now appears however. In the former the combined units each have a meaning but there is little possibility of these units combining with each other in a still greater unit to which each contributes something of their meaning. This, however, is what happens in language; there exist greater and smaller units or, as we may alternatively put it, there are units of different **rank**.

SIGNALLING UNITS: FORM IN LANGUAGE

We said that the combined units of the signalling system (which we will now leave) were rather like words; words, however, are not the only units of language that have meaning: there are several ranks of such **units**, which we will briefly mention.

First there are some units which do have meaning but are not reckoned as words because they can only be used in combination with other units. (There is nothing quite like this in the navigational system.) Such units are: *er* in *singer*, *player*, *fiddler*; the *ing* in *singing*, *playing*, *walking*; the *ness* in *goodness* and *weakness*; the *pre* in *pre-war*, *pre-Raphaelite*, *pre-school*. These units are hardly words, for they cannot be used except in combination with other units; yet they do have a meaning as can be quickly seen by assuming hitherto unknown words. If there were a verb *sping* we would know that a *spinger* was someone who was in the habit of *spinging*; that is, we know what the *er* in *spinger* means even if we have never seen the word before and do not know what *sping* means. So there must be a unit smaller than that of the word, a unit which is of a lower rank. We call such a unit a **morpheme**.

In practice, however, a unit may at the same time be both a mor-