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An Advanced English Grammar

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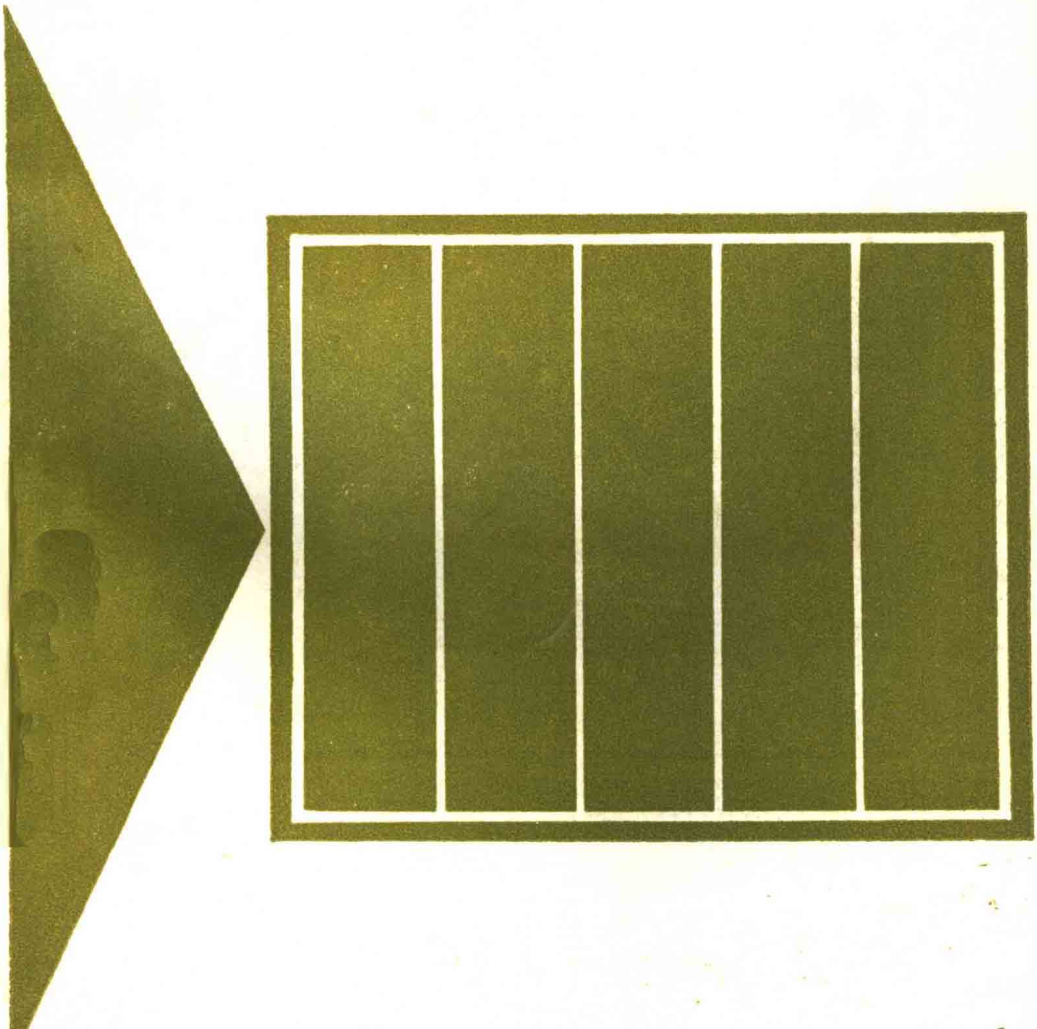

PREFACE

This book is intended for first-year university students in countries where English is a strong second rather than a first language. Consequently, it contains a fair amount of practical information about English usage – obviously not entirely new to the students though possibly in need of being revised – but, more important, it presents this material in a manner which, we hope, will be more satisfactory to the linguistic scientist than the presentation in many school grammars.

The function of the theoretical framework needs to be clarified. There is no evidence that a knowledge of grammatical theory facilitates the task of the practical learner, but it provides an insight into the workings of language which will benefit the prospective teacher. And it lends to the study of grammar a reflective, philosophical quality which seems appropriate in a university course. The intention, therefore, is that Part 1 of this book, where the theory is developed, should be read as a continuous text; Part 2 (except chapter 13) may be used as a reference work.

Our scheme of classification cannot hope to find favour with everyone, not even among linguists. It is an eclectic scheme, directly or indirectly indebted to a number of grammatical authors, who are too numerous to be listed here but among whom we should like to single out James Sledd. We recognise that there are other and possibly better ways of classifying the facts of English grammar. For instance, we have sometimes had qualms about our rigid distinction between morphological and syntactic word-classes, but any theoretical weakness is outweighed, we feel, by the pedagogical advantage. In any case we have tried not to be dogmatic but to take the students into our confidence at every step by giving them our reasons for whatever decision we arrive at. This book will have achieved its main aim if it stimulates its students into thinking for themselves about English grammar – even if that were to mean that they decided to reject our system of analysis.

Although we have been eclectic, it may seem to some that we have taken too little account of transformational-generative grammar. It must be borne in mind, however, that the quarrel between the extreme behaviourist and generative schools of thought is largely a local American one; certainly it makes little sense to those on this side of the Atlantic in whose thinking about language there has always been a place for transformations, and to whom empiricism is not irreconcilable with a generative point of

view. But a wholesale description in TG terms, as these are known at present, would conflict with our view that what we find in many areas of language, whether in levels of usage or regional differences or degrees of acceptability, is not a monolithic uniformity but a gradual shading or cline.

Many people have borne a hand in the shaping of this book. We are indebted to those students at Oslo on whom a first draft was tried out and whose astute criticisms have saved us from a number of pitfalls. Many colleagues, too, have made useful suggestions; we should like in particular to express our gratitude to Professor Eva Sivertsen for her sympathetic and constructive criticism. Despite all help many weaknesses no doubt remain, for which we alone are responsible.

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PART 1

CHAPTER 1

THE PHONEME

¶ 1. The most important function of language is to act as a signalling system by means of which people communicate with each other. This communication may be written or oral. In the present chapter we shall consider one of the signalling devices used in *spoken* English.[1] How is the function of signalling performed in English speech? Suppose an Englishman says, '*Give me a pen*', how does the person addressed know what he is asking for? How does he know that the man wants an instrument used for the purpose of writing rather than a vessel used for cooking, *a pan*? The answer is obvious: because *pen* sounds different from *pan*. Spoken language, then, uses differences in *sound* in its signalling system.

¶ 2. There are at least two ways of studying sounds. Either one can study the production, the articulation, of sounds, and the resulting sound-waves, the acoustic effects; these matters are sub-divisions within the field of *phonetics* (articulatory phonetics and acoustic phonetics). The second way of studying sounds is to consider their function, the way they form a system in the language that one is investigating; these things are the subject matter of *phonemics*. Pernaps an example or two will help to clarify the difference between phonetics and phonemics.

¶ 3. If the English word *pan* is pronounced with one's hand (preferably the back of the hand, which is more sensitive) in front of one's mouth, a distinct puff of breath will be felt after the initial *p*. If one pronounces the word *span*, one will feel little or no breath. In other words the two *p*-sounds are quite different in *articulation* (and also in acoustic effect, since one can hear the difference if one listens carefully); that is to say, the two *p*-sounds are different from a *phonetic* point of view.

¶ 4. Now the interesting thing is that if you ask an Englishman with no knowledge of phonetics whether the first sound in *pan* and the second sound in *span* are different, he will probably say no. On the other hand, a speaker of Hindi who did not know any English would say yes. How is this to be explained? It is obvious that the two sounds are markedly different in that one of them is followed by a strong puff of breath while the other is not (at

1. Unless anything else is expressly stated, 'spoken English' in this book refers to the type of English used by speakers of RP (Received Pronunciation).

least the puff is not so strong here). Why does a speaker of Hindi notice this difference, whereas an Englishman does not? The answer is to be found in the way the two languages, English and Hindi, *use* the *p*-sounds (aspirated and unaspirated, i.e. with or without a puff of breath). The essential thing about sounds from a phonemic point of view is that they are *used to distinguish between utterances* (e.g. *p* and *t* in English *pen*: *ten*), and this is the only important thing about them. Now in Hindi some utterances (words) are kept apart solely by the difference between an aspirated and an unaspirated *p*. In English, on the other hand, there are no words that are kept apart solely by one of them having an aspirated *p* [p^h] and the other an unaspirated one [p]. The difference between aspirated and unaspirated *p* is not utilised in English for the purpose of keeping different meanings apart; the lack of aspiration in *span* (and in *spin, spat, spade*, etc.) is due solely to the position after *s*. The difference between [p^h] and [p] is phonemically irrelevant in English because it never distinguishes between utterances (words). Somebody who grows up in an English-speaking milieu is conditioned by his linguistic environment to disregard it; he does not notice it at all. A speaker of Hindi, on the other hand, is conditioned to notice it, because it is phonemically relevant in his language.

¶ 5. To take another example. In Spanish a voiced *s* [z] occurs regularly before voiced consonants, but this is simply a variant of the unvoiced *s*. From a phonemic point of view the difference is totally irrelevant; the two *s*-sounds (voiced and unvoiced) are never used to distinguish between words of different meaning. In English things are different: [sins] *since* and [sinz] *sins* are two words of totally different meaning. So are [rais] *rice* and [raiz] *rise* and [si:l] *seal* and [zi:l] *zeal*. In English, then, the difference between voiced and unvoiced *s* is used to keep utterances apart. The difference is phonemic in English but not in Spanish.

¶ 6. When the difference between two sounds (like [z] and [s] in English) is used to distinguish between utterances, the sounds are said to be two different *phonemes* or to belong to two different phonemes. The other two sounds that we have considered, aspirated and unaspirated *p* ([p^h], [p]) are different phonemes in Hindi, but not in English. In English they are variants of one and the same phoneme /p/. Such variants are known as *allophones*.

¶ 7. Let us consider one more pair of English sounds. In British English there are two kinds of *l*, viz. the so-called 'clear *l*' and the 'dark *l*'. The question now arises, are they two different phonemes, or simply allophones of one and the same phoneme? In order to answer that question we must find out whether this difference between clear and dark *l* is ever used to distinguish between words of different meaning. Is it possible to find a

pair of English words of different meaning which differ from each other solely in that one of them has clear *l* where the other has dark *l*? The answer is no, because clear and dark *l* never occur in the same position in English. Clear *l* occurs only before vowels and dark *l* only before consonants or in final position. Clear and dark *l*, then, are allophones of one and the same phoneme /l/ in English. When two allophones, like clear and dark *l* in English, never occur in the same position, in the same environment, they are said to be in *complementary distribution*. This is a term that may be used about other linguistic elements too. It will be used several times in this book.

¶ 8. So far we have discussed three different pairs of sounds in English, viz. aspirated and unaspirated *p*, clear and dark *l*, and voiced and unvoiced *s*. We have found that the phonetic differences between these pairs are of two essentially different kinds. The differences between the first two pairs are – from a phonemic point of view – relatively unimportant because they are only allophonic; the difference between voiced and unvoiced *s* is phonemic, and consequently of greater importance. Having discovered that voiced and unvoiced *s* are two different phonemes in English, we naturally ask, How many phonemes are there in English? To answer that question it is necessary to take English sounds one by one, compare them with each other and see how many of them can be used to distinguish between utterances. We have already seen that the pair [sins]:[sinz] is a proof that [s] and [z] are not allophones of one and the same phoneme. Now, in the same way, pairs like

[sin] : [fin]
[sin] : [tin]
[sin] : [din]
[sin] : [kin]

etc., prove that [s] and [f], [s] and [t], [s] and [d], [s] and [k] cannot be allophones, but must belong to different phonemes. By using a procedure like this one will eventually find that there are probably twenty-four consonant phonemes in English. They are

/p,b,t,d,k,g,f,v,θ,ð,s,z,ʃ,ʒ,r,h,tʃ,dʒ,l,m,n,ŋ,j,w/.[1]

¶ 9. The number of vowel phonemes in English is a much more difficult question. Several different analyses have been suggested. In this book we shall accept the analysis which forms the basis of Daniel Jones's *Outline of English Phonetics* and *English Pronouncing Dictionary*. In this system of

1. Whether /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are separate phonemes or combinations of phonemes is a disputed point of no importance in the present context.

analysis there are twenty or twenty-one vowel phonemes in English, namely:

/i:,i,e,æ,ɑ:,ɔ,ɔ:,u,u:,ʌ,ə:,ə,ei,əu,ai,au,ɔi,iə,ɛə,ɔə,uə/.

One of them, /ɔə/, is not much used nowadays. Some of these vowels are phonetically complex; they are called diphthongs and are written with digraphs. Among those that are relatively simple from a phonetic point of view, there are some which are normally longer than others. These are called long vowels, and are written with a length mark, :.

¶ 10. Any English utterance can be split up into a number of segments, each of which can be identified as one of the forty-five phonemes that have just been enumerated. Thus the word *cats* contains the four phonemes /k/, /æ/, /t/, /s/: /kæts/. Similarly the word *import* contains /i/, /m/, /p/, /ɔ:/, /t/: /impɔ:t/. Now the latter sequence of phonemes may be pronounced in two different ways *to give two different utterances*: /'impɔ:t/ is a noun, /im'pɔ:t/ is a verb. How is this to be explained? We have seen that *phonemes* are the things a language uses to keep utterances apart, but here we find two different words with apparently the same phonemes, and still they are kept apart. The answer is, of course, that they are kept apart by means of stress. The noun has relatively strong stress on the first syllable; the verb has relatively strong stress on the second. Differences in stress can be used to keep utterances apart in English, and it will therefore be useful to recognise strong and weak stress as phonemes in English. The phonemes of /'impɔ:t/ and /im'pɔ:t/ are *not* the same. They have the same *segmental phonemes*, but there are other phonemes than segmental ones. Phonemes like strong stress are often called *supra-segmental phonemes*.

¶ 11. There are several supra-segmental phonemes in English. Consider the word *Peter* in the following sequences of remarks:

'Who did it?' — '\Peter' (said with a falling intonation).
'Who did it?' — '/Peter' (said with a rising intonation).

The first utterance, '\Peter' with a falling intonation, is an answer to the question 'Who did it?'. The second utterance, '/Peter' with a rising intonation, would not normally be understood as an answer, but as another question. The two utterances, then, convey different meanings. They have exactly the same segmental phonemes; they also have the same stress phonemes. The difference between them is brought out by means of intonation. Falling intonation is one supra-segmental phoneme in English, rising intonation is another.

¶ 12. Finally, consider the following two utterances:

Night rate	[ˈnaitreit]
Nitrate	[ˈnaitreit].

These utterances apparently have the same segmental phonemes; they have the same stress phonemes, and they may have the same intonation phonemes. But they are usually kept apart, at least in careful speech. There is something there that reveals to the hearer whether the speaker is talking about a sum of money payable for a nightly service or about a chemical substance. There is apparently yet another phoneme in English that we have not discovered so far. How does *night rate* differ from *nitrate*? Some people might be tempted to say that there is a pause in the middle of *night rate*. But this is not necessarily the case. If by pause is meant a temporary cessation of speech, it can be demonstrated that *night rate* and *nitrate* are different even if there is no pause in the middle of the former. The difference is one of *transition*, and by transition we mean the way of getting from one sound to another. The transition from the /t/ to the /r/ is different in the two utterances. In *night rate* there is said to be *open transition* between /t/ and /r/; in *nitrate* the transition is said to be *close*. Open transition is often regarded as a phoneme and is commonly called *juncture*, indicated thus /+/. The phonetic facts about juncture are rather complicated; but in our example it will be noticed that the /ai/ in *nitrate* is longer than the /ai/ in *night rate*, and that the /r/'s are different. In *night rate* the /r/ is voiced, in *nitrate* it is unvoiced. In other words it seems that the presence of a juncture is recognised by what it does to the sounds that precede and those that follow it. Whatever the phonetic nature of a juncture is, it is an important feature of English speech, because it is sometimes used to distinguish between utterances.

¶ 13. It will have been noticed that there is a space between *night* and *rate* in spelling. That is one way of indicating juncture in conventional spelling; another is to use a hyphen. But it should be noted that there is no absolute correspondence between juncture in speech and open spaces or hyphens between words in English spelling. Thus there is sometimes no juncture in speech where a space is found in writing: *find her* is sometimes pronounced in exactly the same way as *finder*.

¶ 14. Here are some examples of pairs of utterances that are kept apart by means of (a) stress and (b) juncture:

(a)	a ˈdancing-master	:	a ˈdancing ˈmaster
	a ˈplane accident	:	a ˈplain ˈaccident
	a ˈblackbird	:	a ˈblack ˈbird
	a ˈbull's-eye	:	a ˈbull's ˈeye
	ˈcooking-apples	:	ˈcooking ˈapples

(b)	see+Mabel	:	seem+able
	cease+taking	:	ceased+aching
	that+span	:	that's+Pan
	that+stuff	:	that's+tough
	it+swings	:	its+wings.

¶ 15. The principles that have been applied in this chapter to the analysis of the sound structure of English will be found useful in studying the grammatical structure as well. To recognise a structural feature we normally require a regular distinction on both the formal level (i.e. the audible or visible aspect of language, sometimes called the expression) and on the level of meaning (the semantic level, the content). The words listed under A in a dictionary have one formal feature in common (they begin with *a-*) but very little else, while the words *coal, night* and *blackamoor* have a semantic element in common (they indicate something dark) but hardly any similarity in their external form. On the other hand most words ending in *-ed* in English will be found to share a semantic element in addition to their distinctive form. They constitute a grammatical category.

CHAPTER 2

THE MORPHEME

¶ 16. The phoneme may be said to be the smallest functional unit in the language. But phonemes as such convey no meaning; a /p/ by itself means nothing. The next linguistic unit that we shall discuss, the morpheme, is the smallest *meaningful* unit. By calling it the smallest meaningful unit in the language we indicate that the morpheme cannot be broken up into smaller parts without seriously injuring or destroying its meaning. Let us take an ordinary English utterance and analyse it from a morphemic point of view:

The cat devoured the rat. /ðə + ˈkæt + di ˈvauəd + ðə + ˈræt/.

We want to find the morphemes of this sentence. The morpheme has just been defined as the smallest meaningful unit in the language. This definition contains two requirements that must be fulfilled by any unit that is to qualify as a morpheme: a morpheme is a meaningful unit, and it is the smallest meaningful unit in the language. Let us experiment with some sequences of phonemes:

/kæ/ as in /ˈkæt/. Does this sequence occur in other utterances in English? Yes, it occurs for instance in *cab, catalogue, catch.* Is it a meaningful unit? Do these instances of the sequence /kæ/ have one meaning in common? No, therefore /kæ/ is not a morpheme in English; it is not a meaningful unit.

/di ˈvauəd/. Does this sequence occur in other utterances in English? It does, e.g. in *He devoured the apple.* Has it the same meaning in these cases? It apparently has (it means something like 'ate up quickly or greedily'). Is it then a morpheme? We cannot tell yet, because of the second requirement. We have to find out whether it can be broken up into smaller units which are also meaningful in such a way that the meaning of the whole is related to the meanings of these possible smaller units. The form /di ˈvauəd/ can be broken up into /di ˈvauə/ and /d/ and both these are meaningful units in English. The first has the meaning 'eat up quickly or greedily'; the second has the meaning that is often described as 'past tense', i.e. it tells us that the act of devouring took place in the past. The same meaning is seen, for instance, in *rubbed* and *loved.* We find, too, that the meaning of the whole unit /di ˈvauəd/ is clearly related to the meanings of these two smaller units. The unit /d/ cannot be further divided;

consequently it is a morpheme in English. Can /di 'vauə/ be further divided without injuring or destroying the meaning? The answer is no, and so /di 'vauə/ is another morpheme in English. It turns out then that /di 'vauəd/ is not one morpheme, but two.

By means of a procedure like this we can find all the morphemes in our sentence, and indeed in any English sentence. Our sentence contains the following morphemes (morphemes are usually put between braces):

{ðə} {'kæt} {di 'vauə} {d} {ðə} {'ræt}.

¶ 17. A very important method in grammatical analysis is the so-called substitution technique. What is meant by this term is perhaps best explained by an illustration. A sentence like the one we have been discussing is sometimes called a *test frame*.

ðə	'kæt	di 'vauəd	ðə	'ræt

By substitution is meant a procedure in which one item in such a test frame is replaced by another item, while the rest of the frame is kept unchanged. The general grammatical structure is kept unaltered; thus

ðə	'kæt	di 'vauəd	ðə	'ræt
mai	'kæt	di 'vauəd	ðə	'ræt
mai	'kæts	di 'vauəd	ðə	'ræt
etc.				

¶ 18. Suppose, now, we apply the substitution technique to our test frame and look at some of the utterances that we produce.

1	2 3	4 5	6	7 8
ðə	'kæt	di 'vauə – d	ðə	'ræt
ðə	'kæt – s	di 'vauə – d	ðə	'ræt
ðə	'dɔg – z	di 'vauə – d	ðə	'ræt
ðə	'dɔg – z	'tʃeis – t	ðə	'ræt
ðə	'fɑ:mə – z	'brænd – id	ðə	'kau – z
ðə	'sɑ:dʒənt – s	'dril – d	ðə	ri'kru:t – s
ðə	'dʒʌdʒ – iz	'sentəns – t	ðə	'kriminl – z

As will be seen, the morphemes in these examples have been separated into numbered columns.

¶ 19. Let us now have a look at the morpheme in the fifth column. We find three different forms in this column /d/, /t/ and /id/. Are they three different morphemes? Apparently not, because they all have the same meaning, 'past tense'; they are semantically similar or identical. What is the distribution of /d/, /t/, and /id/ as expressions of 'past tense', i.e.

when is /d/ used to express 'past tense', and when are /t/ and /id/ used? The answer is that /d/ occurs after a voiced sound (except /d/); in this position /t/ and /id/ are never found. Conversely, /t/ occurs after an unvoiced sound (except /t/) and here /d/ and /id/ are never found. And finally /id/ occurs after /t/ and /d/, where /t/ and /d/ never occur. In other words, /d/, /t/ and /id/ as expressions of 'past tense' are in complementary distribution; they are therefore not three different morphemes, but three different variants of one and the same morpheme. Such variants are known as *allomorphs*. An alternative definition of the term 'morpheme', then, would be *a group of allomorphs that are semantically similar and in complementary distribution*. Note that the allomorphs need not be *phonemically* similar.

¶ 20. Similarly, if we look at the third column, we find three different forms of the morpheme expressing 'more than one', /s/, /z/, /iz/. They are allomorphs of one and the same morpheme because they are semantically similar and in complementary distribution. (/s/ occurs after unvoiced sounds except hissing sounds, /z/ occurs after voiced sounds except hissing sounds, and /iz/ occurs after hissing sounds: cf. ¶ 36.)