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**A
Survey of
Modern Grammars**

A SURVEY OF MODERN GRAMMARS

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PREFACE

This handbook is intended for those who would like to know something of the findings of linguistic scholarship—especially with regard to the workings of the grammar of the English language—without necessarily wishing to become accomplished linguists themselves. The primary audience is presumed to be in-service and preservice elementary and secondary teachers of the language arts or English, but it is my sincere belief that any intelligent speaker of English will find added insight into the workings of his language in these pages.

I have written as simply as it is possible for me to write and have used very little of the enormously fascinating, but frustratingly complex, ¹⁰ detail of scholarly introductions to linguistic investigation and theory. Whenever linguistic terminology has been used, a careful attempt has been made to define terms and explain concepts as clearly as possible. A great many terms to be found in linguistics texts have been eliminated here because it was felt that they could be safely omitted without serious detriment to an overall grasp of the principles involved. Those unfamiliar terms that remain are not pure linguistic lingo. They are terms coined for new concepts in language study, and they have no counterparts in traditional terminology.

The field of language study, like most other areas of intellectual ²⁰ inquiry, has seen a virtual information explosion over the past several decades. Some of this information represents profoundly intelligent and important investigation into the communicative skills of man; some of it is pure hogwash. School boards, administrators, and faculties are inundated with “new English” textbooks and teaching materials, most of which claim to be based on linguistics. Many are well-planned, well-written, and quite effective in the hands of competent teachers; others have little to recommend them beyond the word *linguistic* in their sales brochures.

No effort is made here to judge between the worthwhile and the ³⁰ spurious. It seemed more realistic to attempt to place enough information in the hands of intelligent teachers, parents, and school administrators to give them some basis for making their own judgments. My primary goal has been to give teachers some of the background necessary for them to use the best of the new materials as effectively as possible, for it is my absolutely unshakable conviction that the fundamental processes in education are still firmly in the hands of teachers. Modern, well-equipped buildings, well-written, colorfully illustrated texts, elabo-

PREFACE

rate audiovisual equipment, and complex teaching machines can help competent, dedicated teachers enormously; these things will never replace teachers.

This handbook began as a series of study guides for those in-service and preservice teachers who were students in my Modern Grammars classes. The students were expected to make use of the more complete works available on the history of the language and linguistic study—traditional, structural, and transformational-generative grammar. These works, primarily written for beginning students in linguistics, or
10 made up of articles reprinted from linguistics journals, often assumed a knowledge of terminology and method that most students simply did not have. Those who were approaching this material for the first time were unable to see the beauties of the linguistic forest because they were surrounded by towering trees of unfamiliar detail. The attempt here has been to provide a mile-high view of the terrain; as a result, much of the detail is lost. The Suggested Reading included at the end of the book might, therefore, better be called Strongly Urged Reading. All should be a part of every English Department faculty library. In choosing these readings, I have made an attempt to list those works that combine
20 scholarly values with some degree of accessibility for the beginner. A few, such as Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, qualify much more strongly on the former count than on the latter, but have been included here because of their profound influence on the work of others. This handbook is intended to provide a grasp of broad outlines, a frame of reference, from which the more detailed and specific information may be considered and assimilated.

Linguists and teachers alike must realize that the teaching of English grammar in the schools is in a transition period that is confusing to both teachers and students. At the moment, teachers of English gram-
30 mar cannot do full justice to their students without a thorough knowledge of traditional, structural, and transformational-generative approaches to the problems of analyzing the grammar of the English language. New textbooks show a variety of emphasis and many of the best are combinations of whatever the writer finds most useful in each of the three approaches. Because of the constantly shifting nature of our population, a single English class is apt to be made up of students who have a bewildering variety of previous training in English grammar. A teacher must be prepared to alienate the student by telling him to forget everything he has learned before and begin again, or be prepared to see
40 and explain some connecting links between what he has learned and what he must now cope with. The latter course is easier on both student and teacher, but it can only be accomplished by a teacher who has knowledge of a variety of approaches to the problems of English grammar.

Trained linguists will find much to lament in the omissions made here. They are justly proud of the great strides made in their field and feel that justification of their feelings should be based only on the enormous amount of detailed study that supports these findings. We can only agree with them that a teacher whose background includes thorough training in linguistics is a better teacher of the language arts. But the overwhelming demands on a teacher's time and energy must also be recognized. Many teachers who teach the language arts must also teach history, geography, literature, art, music, mathematics, and elementary science. In addition they must put in several hours a week in ¹⁰ pursuit of such nonscholarly occupations as "yard duty," attending faculty or Parents Club meetings, filling out the interminable forms required by this or that urgent school regulation, wiping noses, and instilling respect for the rights of others into the minds and hearts of their charges. While recognizing that linguistic research is a fascinating field, their most urgent concern is, understandably, how all this information can be reframed to elicit interest from the ten-year-old who evinces more concern for a ball of lint extracted from his jacket pocket than he shows for the workings of auxiliary verbs or the wondrously humanistic values to be found in consideration of his innate communi- ²⁰ cative skills.

Clearly, some bridges need to be built. This handbook is, then, an attempt at bridge-building.

San Rafael, California
February 1970

J. H. H.

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I should like to express my appreciation to those who have read all or part of this manuscript and offered helpful suggestions for its improvement. Any attempt to simplify tremendously complex material is most susceptible to the dangers of oversimplification. Thurston Womack of San Francisco State College fished me out of several such pitfalls, and Samuel Levin of Hunter College caught still other errors and misleading generalizations. Margaret Nearing of the Sacramento City College English Department contributed much to whatever understanding I possess of the problems of classroom teachers. This book owes a great deal to her straightforwardness, her total lack of pedagogical pomposity, and her kind encouragement. Among the elementary and secondary teachers who brought their classroom experience to a consideration of the manuscript and helped me to understand the audience I hope to reach were Gladys Baldwin, Katherine Blickhahn, Patrick F. Skinner, and Mary Ungersma. Many other teachers and soon-to-be teachers, who were students in my Modern Grammars classes at Dominican College and were, therefore, a practical proving ground for the early stages of the manuscript, contributed more than they know. They were so intent upon understanding what I told them—as opposed to just listening and taking notes to memorize—that they asked questions 10 and pursued points until I was forced to frame my explanations as clearly and understandably as it was possible for me to do. Finally, there is my remarkable family, whose contributions are impossible to itemize or define. I cannot dedicate the book to Chuck, Mike, and Leanna; it is, in a very real sense, as much theirs as it is mine. 20

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PART ONE

CONTEXTS FOR THE STUDY OF MODERN GRAMMARS

SOME BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

Before we take up a study of structural and generative grammars, it is well to begin with some orientation as to where we take up our study and some ideas as to the objectives we have in mind. Simplicity seems the best policy.

Man talks. He communicates his experience and thoughts, his hopes and fears to others; he transmits his accumulated knowledge to his children by means of oral sounds. Other men listen and comprehend. These facts are true of all communities of men, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated.

There are, of course, other means of communication. Hand signals, shrugs, nods, marks on paper, electrical dots and dashes, and smoke signals are a few of these. But the sounds made by man's vocal equipment are basic; the sounds and the patterns he forms with them are the raw materials of language.

Each language community has a set of mutually agreed upon methods for stringing together its sounds so that when one person speaks, another can be expected to understand what is said. Of the more than 3,000 languages known to exist in the world, only a comparative few have a written form of the language. Those that have no written form have, nevertheless, a grammatical system that is quite as complex as our own. Some systems are, in certain respects, even more complex. The fact that a language has a written form does not necessarily mean that its grammatical system is superior to the grammatical system of a language that has no written form. If a language is sufficient to the needs of those who use it, it is unrealistic to judge it by other criteria.

4 CONTEXTS FOR THE STUDY OF MODERN GRAMMARS

What is in the mind of man that enables him to organize his experience and thoughts into communicable form? No one knows. We only know that he does. And the organization is done in ways that are so highly complex that this ability alone sets mankind completely apart from all other life forms.

We do not know what is at the root of this ability, but its branches are all around us. We can take them apart and study them, classify them, compare them, and try to understand them.

The system of organization of any language is the grammar of that language. Various means may be used to analyze and sort out the grammar or system of any given language.

Most Americans are familiar with a grammatical analysis of English that is based on methods originated over 2,000 years ago. While it has the weight of all those years of scholarship behind it, it must be recognized that traditional means of grammatical analysis were developed to analyze classical Greek and Latin—both of which are quite different from modern English in several important ways. More recently, other methods have been developed for the analysis of languages, with specific means that allow for differences existing between languages. These means applied to the study of English have been further adapted to serve as educational materials in the elementary and secondary schools.

Among our objectives will be attempts to compare and contrast all these methods, not so much to choose “the best” as to understand the basic similarities and differences and to point out the strengths and weaknesses of each. This knowledge will enable us to understand the workings of Standard American English and to teach the language arts to elementary and secondary school students.

It is important that we grasp from the outset that these two specific areas of study exist side by side in the general field of language study. On the one hand, there is the attempt to understand man’s ability to communicate and the means he employs to that end *for its own sake*. The roots of this study are found in the basic philosophical quest into the nature of knowledge itself. How do we know what we know? How do we organize our experience? How do we communicate with others? This study is sufficient unto itself for most modern linguistic scholars. These scholars bear a relationship to teachers of English that is analogous to the relationship of the research scientist to the general practitioner of medicine. One seeks information; the other seeks to apply that information to the more efficient handling of specific problems.

On the other hand, the teacher of English deals with the more immediate task of applying the findings of the language scholars to the

training of the young in more effective and more efficient use of their innate language gifts. The teacher's task is one that the linguistic scholars are interested in—as they are interested in all facts of language and its use—but for the language scholars it does not loom so large in importance. The teacher is, by the same token, interested in language study but only as one facet of his primary function, which is to reach students as effectively as possible.

As we compare and contrast various methods used to analyze the grammar of the English language, we will look into the work of both the linguistic scholar and the English teacher. The orientation of each, the 10 objectives, methods, and problems of each must be kept in mind at every stage of the inquiry.

Ideally, those who wish to gain something worthwhile from a comparative study of this kind should have a background that includes a solid working knowledge of anthropology, at least one or two languages other than English, the history and development of the English language, and the history of linguistic study as it has evolved over the past 2,000 years. This ideal set of qualifications rarely exists. What can we do about it?

Perhaps if we examine what each of these areas of study can 20 contribute to an understanding of modern linguistic study, we can find means to fill in some of the missing pieces.

Anthropology, according to the *American College Dictionary*, is “the science that treats of the origin, development (physical, intellectual, moral, etc.), and varieties, and sometimes especially the cultural development, customs, beliefs, etc., of mankind.” Such a study would provide, as nothing else could, a broad awareness of the fact that all men may look out upon the same world but that they do not view that world from the same window. The differences that do exist in the highly varied interpretations of what is seen from all those other win- 30 dows can be contrasted for a far better appreciation and understanding of our own.

A knowledge of another language or languages is of prime importance. No collection of random examples can serve to point out how very different various languages are in their structure. Knowledge of two or more complete systems, even though the languages may be closely related, makes differences of grammatical structure a part of the student's awareness—not something he must be persuaded to believe.

It is most important that the student know something of the ways 40 in which English developed. Students of the structure of modern English should know that English began with the Germanic dialects brought to the British islands 1,500 years ago. They should know

something of the major influences of Latin and French, and of the minor influences of the Celtic and Scandinavian languages. They should know of the rapid changes in the structure of the language during the two centuries following the Norman Conquest when French was the language of the upper classes and of written record in England and English survived primarily as a spoken language, and of some of the changes brought about by other political, economic, and social factors. They should know, too, the conditions under which the traditional rules of “correctness” were established for the Standard British English and
 10 Standard American English of today. In addition to the wealth of information this provides about our own language, it demonstrates most vividly the fact that any language spoken by living people may also be recognized as a “living” thing. Living things, by their very nature, change—and language is no exception.

Finally, those who know something of the history of linguistic study will be aware of the basis for traditional methods and objectives of language analysis. They will be better able to compare these methods and objectives with those of modern linguistic analysis. Mere knowledge of the rules of traditional grammar is not enough. The student
 20 should know what lies behind those rules—who established them and how and why—before he can make an intelligent comparison with modern approaches.

This knowledge of the history of linguistic study will also provide an awareness that the application of scientific method to the investigation of how languages grow, develop, and work is not new but has a foundation of respected scholarship that stretches back over the past two centuries. The “New English” is new only to the elementary and secondary schools.

Some of the discussion of these topics will seem to stray rather far
 30 afield from our purpose, the study of modern grammars. As we continue, their relevance and significance will become apparent.

TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF LANGUAGE STUDY

When one human being communicates with another by means of spoken language, it can safely be assumed that several distinct events have occurred. These are:

1. An ideational stimulus to the mind of the speaker
2. The formulation of a language statement by the speaker
3. The physical act of speaking
4. Sound waves in the atmosphere
5. The physical process of hearing
6. The mental sorting of the language statement by the hearer
7. Understanding the idea by the hearer

10

There are those who argue that the first two of these are so closely interrelated that they constitute a single event. The same argument is often given for considering the final two items to be a single event. It is not necessary to settle this dispute for our purposes. For the moment, let us arbitrarily settle upon the seven items or events above as a touchstone for the discussion of how language scholars have approached the problems of analyzing and describing the language around them.

TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR THEORY

The Greeks

The earliest known efforts of Western man to analyze the phenomena of language dealt only with steps one and two above.

Plato began by searching for the source of man's knowledge. There were, he thought, universal truths, universal ideas, that lay behind the language of the Greeks. He did not consider that other languages were in any way worthy of study or consideration; they were barbaric. The Greeks spoke several dialects but these, in Plato's view, were simply decayed or degenerate versions of a once-perfect system
10 of communication.

Things thought about and spoken of and what was thought or said of them were not matters to be considered in the narrow light of grammatical forms and relationships but matters of detail in the much broader study of the thought processes by which man—Greek man—organized his experience, established relationships of ideas, drew conclusions, and made judgments. Plato treated matters that are, today, a part of the fields of philosophy, psychology, rhetoric, and semantics, as well as grammar. Man's knowledge and his ability to communicate with his fellows were a single, rich field of inquiry.

20 In order to pick out Plato's ideas on the limited subject of grammar, it is necessary to take them out of a much broader context. He spoke of *onoma*, or the name of one who performs an action, and *rhēma*, the name of an action, and the relationships of the ideas or meanings expressed by each. He felt that there were acceptable ways to express ideas and that deviation from these acceptable ways was clearly wrong. This belief in universality permeated his thinking to the point that, in the *Cratylus* dialogue, one of Plato's speakers argued for the belief that there was a valid relationship between words and the things or actions that they identified. He meant, of course, good Greek
30 words.

Aristotle believed that debate on this point was absurd. He insisted that language was arrived at by convention and agreement of the speakers of a given language. For example, *aēr*, the Greek word for *air*, was not based on some innate airiness of the sounds, but was simply a combination of sounds arbitrarily agreed upon among Greeks to express the notion of air.

It was Aristotle who initiated the use of the term *syndesmoi* to designate those words that did not fall into the *onoma* and *rhēma*, or noun and verb categories, but were used primarily to link nouns and

verbs together in grammatical constructions. The English translation for the word is *conjunction*, but Aristotle used it to apply to all words other than nouns and verbs.

Somewhat later, in the great learning center of Alexandria, a scholar named Dionysius Thrax pulled all the fragmented ideas about Greek grammar into a single short work called *The Art of Grammar*. Written in the first century B.C., the grammar was only about 400 lines long and yet for twenty centuries it has influenced the work of countless grammarians in the formulation of grammars for virtually all the languages of Europe.

The Art of Grammar divided the Greek language into eight parts of speech—noun, verb, participle, article, pronoun, preposition, adverb, and conjunction—defined these in a variety of ways, and outlined the uses of each in sentences. Consideration was also given to letters and to syllables since, to Thrax and his contemporaries, language study meant the study of *written* language and the conventions of correctness established by great writers.

The Greeks established for the world of language study the first terminology for discussing their subject; they established the practice of analyzing written representations of human speech which was to become one of the hallmarks of traditional grammatical investigation and evaluation; and, finally, they established as a basic assumption the idea that there was a universally correct and acceptable logic of language for man to follow in expressing his ideas.

The Romans

The Romans imitated the Greeks in linguistic matters as they did in many other areas of culture and learning. Some Romans, notably Julius Caesar and Quintilian, the rhetorician, raised questions of how far language scholars could go in setting up rules for the logic of language which differed from the way that the language was used by most of its speakers. This gap between scholarly rule and common usage widened into the distinct difference between the Latin of classical literature and the Vulgar (here meaning common) Latin spoken by the masses of Roman people. Still, the most influential works written on the grammar of Latin were to follow the pattern established by Thrax in writing of Greek.

The early standard Latin grammar was that written by Marcus Varro in the first century. A later work written by Priscian in the sixth century consisted of eighteen books on parts of speech and two on