A GRAMMAR OF SPOKEN ENGLISH

On a Strictly Phonetic Basis

BY

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SECOND EDITION, REVISED BY THE AUTHOR
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Preface to Second Edition

THE revisers desire to thank, in the first place, those readers of *A Grammar of Spoken English* of all nationalities, who, by their number and by their individual importance, have necessitated six reprints of the first edition and the preparation of a second.

Secondly, those friends who have helped materially, over the long period of fourteen years since its first publication, by candid criticism, both favourable and adverse, to indicate to the revisers what features of the work were most valued, and what details were obscure or inaccurate. Some of these. alas, have passed away: Lilias Armstrong and G. Noël-Armfield would have welcomed this revision had they lived to see it. But the survivors are numerous and will perhaps forgive the selection of two names for special mention as representatives of a larger body.

Dr. Sanki Ichikawa communicated criticisms of great importance to the author, and most of his suggestions have been incorporated in the revised edition. Also, eleven years ago— to the very day on which these words are being written— Dr. James Welton, formerly Professor of Education at the University of Leeds, was kind enough to send, by request, a detailed criticism of the whole book. This, too, has been of very great assistance to the revisers, who both desire to thank him for his masterly treatment of the first edition.

Thirdly, few books on English phonetics or English books on a phonetic basis are complete without an acknowledgment of the background of sympathy and stimulus derived from "D. J." This book is no exception. It owes its inception, if not its original conception, to his suggestive encouragement; and both its revisers wish to place on record.their debt to Professor Daniel Jones, of London University, for inspiration and encouragement in the pursuit of a subject which is still the greatest interest of their lives.

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H. E. P.
F. G. B.

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vii

Introduction

THE GRAMMAR AND THE DICTIONARY.

EVERY language, or variety of language, is made up of an enormous number of units vaguely considered and loosely designated as *words*. In each language (or variety of language), a word has one or more *meanings* or *semantic functions*. In order to know what particular meaning or meanings have become associated with a given word, we consult a *dictionary*. Thus the dictionary tells us that the word *horse* is associated with a certain animal, either by describing the animal or by giving the equivalent or equivalents of the word in the language assumed to be that of the reader. The dictionary tells us that the word *take* corresponds to certain activities (such as *seizing, conveying, conducting*, etc.), either by describing them or by giving the equivalents of the word in some other language. In similar ways, the dictionary furnishes us with the meanings of su￢h words as *good, five, quickly*, or *yesterday*. All words having a character comparable to those quoted above are considered by Sweet[1] as being *independent sense-units*, and he terms them *Full Words*.[2] But in addition to such full words we find words which have little or no independent meaning, but merely express relations between the different parts of a sentence; instead of having distinct *semantic* functions they have *syntactic* or *grammatical* functions. Such words (e.g. *of, to, the, is*) are termed by Sweet *Form-words*.[3] The distinction made between full words and form-words is in many ways a convenient one, but, as Sweet himself observes,[4] "it is not always easy—or even possible—to draw a definite line between full words and form-words."

The dictionary, then, gives us information concerning the functions (both semantic and grammatical) of words considered in detail. One who had no conception whatever of language and its nature might imagine that such information is all sufficient,

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[1] *New English Grammar*, §§52, 58.
[2] Now generally known as *Content Words*.
[3] Now generally known as *Structural Words*.
[4] *New English Grammar*, §61.

and that it is possible to learn a foreign language on a lexical basis alone. Indeed, the authors of some existing artificial languages seem to have had in view a system for which the dictionary would afford a complete key. But in natural languages we find that certain conceptions of number, time, relation, etc., are not represented by specific words, but by other linguistic devices such as word-order, inflexion, intonation, or the use of affixes; such devices I have termed *alogisms*.[1]

What may be expressed in one language by means of a structural word may be expressed alogistically in another, thus the French *boite à allumettes* is equivalent to the English *matchbox*, the relational idea represented by the form-word *à* being expressed by the English word-order. Conversely, the English *he will come* is equivalent to the French *il viendra*, the English structural word *will* being expressed by the inflected form of the French verb *venir*. Latin is characterized by alogisms, and Chinese by structural words. The tendency of English during the whole of its history is to substitute structural words for inflexions.

We have spoken of *Semantic functions* and of *Grammatical functions*; we have seen that the content word *horse* corresponds to the idea of a certain animal; we have seen that structural words (such as *of*) and alogisms express conceptions of number, time, relation, etc. It would almost seem that the scope of the dictionary should be confined to content words, and that structural words and their alogistic equivalents should be relegated to the grammar-book. This, however, is neither possible nor even desirable, for in the first place, it is difficult to draw a line between content words and structural words; and in the second place, a given word may sometimes be one and at other times be the other. Moreover, in the majority of cases, a word expresses both a semantic conception and one or more conceptions of a grammatical order. The word *horses* not only evokes in our minds the idea of a certain animal, but it also evokes the conception of plurality. Even the word *horse* conveys, in addition to its primary (or semantic) meaning, the idea of "singularity." The word *took* corresponds to the ideas of seizing, conveying or conducting, etc., but also evokes the idea of "pastness." The word *better* suggests not only *goodness*, but also the idea of *relative* goodness. The

[1] *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages*, pp. 12, 39, 41, 45, and Appendix II.

word *me* suggests the *ego* and also the idea of the objective relation. The word *my* evokes the two ideas: the *ego* and that of possession.

The most reasonable and practical way of apportioning the respective duties of dictionary or grammar (and, indeed, this is the method generally adopted) is to consider as the scope of the dictionary the explanation in detail of content words and structural words alike, and to leave to the grammar-book the description and explanation of all phenomena which can be brought under general rules.[1]

The grammar-book, then, treats of all those laws of linguistic usage which cannot reasonably or conveniently be set forth in a dictionary. It does not take the words of a language one by one and explain the peculiar properties of each, but it classifies words into all sorts of categories and states the peculiarities of each category. To do this effectively and economically, it creates as many categories as are deemed necessary or expedient, and designates each category by a term which will enable us to recognize it.

The respective functions of dictionary and grammar may be described in another way. Certain pairs or groups of words are semantically incompatible with each other. We do not usually speak of *warm ice* or of *a triangle with four corners,* for such combinations of concepts are logically impossible.

But in most languages there are words mutually incompatible on other than merely semantic grounds. We do not say *this books,* in educated English speech we do not say *I are,* and no Frenchman ever says *le table.* This is quite another order of incompatibility. We do not speak of *warm ice,* for, as far as we know, such a substance does not exist; we do not speak of a *triangle with four corners,* for such a figure is inconceivable;

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[1] We have seen that the phenomena of language are of two kinds: those which can be brought under general rules and those which cannot. The only phenomena that can be brought under general rules are those that have something in common, by which they are associated together in the mind by the psychological process of *group-association* by which *association-groups* are formed. There are in every language an endless number of these groups, and one and the same word may belong to several such groups at once. Thus the words *trees, towns, boys,* form an association-group through having the same "inflection" -*s,* and having the meanings "more-than-oneness" in common. Sweet, *New English Grammar,* §20.

these would be nonsense expressions. But *this books are all mine*, *I are busy*, or *voici le table* are not nonsense expressions, they make sense but they offend against *grammatical* usage.

Now the dictionary only gives us such information as will enable us to avoid nonsense expressions, it is silent concerning the grammatical incompatibilities; for information and guidance concerning these, we must have recourse to *grammar*.

THE UTILITY OF A GRAMMAR.

We hear it frequently stated that the day of the grammar-book is past, and that the learning of rules and exceptions neither has value as a mental discipline nor is of any utility to the student desirous of acquiring the mastery of a living language. But while some belittle the use of grammar, others maintain, on the contrary, that no language-study can be successful without it. This divergency of views is probably due more to misunderstanding than to anything else, for those who discuss the subject are generally found to be at cross-purposes.[1] The term *grammar* is a vague one, and may be interpreted in various and contrary manners. The term the *teaching of grammar* is likewise capable of diverse interpretations. Most educationists are probably in agreement that the memorizing of "rules" (many of which are artificially-created devices of spelling) as a substitute for the memorizing of living sentences is a vicious procedure. They are probably also in agreement that the sort of English grammar taught in English schools to English school children must differ very widely (if not fundamentally) from that sort of English grammar which is intended to serve as a series of "directions for use" for the benefit of the foreign adult student of English.

Now this *Grammar of Spoken English* is intended to be used chiefly (but not exclusively) by foreign adult students of English, and by all teachers of spoken English. The fact that it is written *in English* shows that it is not intended to be put into the hands of beginners; it is designed to help (*a*) those who are already

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[1] "When a subject is thus hotly debated, and when it is difficult to discover a general consensus of opinion among practitioners upon any aspect of the matter, it is legitimate to suspect that the problem has hitherto not been sufficiently analysed or envisaged, and that the confusion of tongues arises from confusion of thought."—*Report of the Government Committee on the Teaching of English in England*, §255.

able to understand written English, and (*b*) the English teachers who serve as the medium of instruction in living English speech.

In what way does such a grammar help such foreign students? What excuse has the author for presenting such a book to those who maintain that the living language is to be acquired by practice and not by theory? The answer is: *on grounds of economy*. To attempt to learn the whole of a language by the exclusive process of memorizing it word by word and sentence by sentence is a method obviously foredoomed to failure. It cannot be done, even by young children (whose capacities for language assimilation are often very remarkable), for the number of possible sentences in a language is practically limitless. However many words and sentences we memorize, a time comes when we must acquire the capacity for forming original sentences of our own. According to the old linguistic methods. we were assumed to build up such original sentences synthetically by dint of piecing together the ultimate units of which they ate composed. What usually resulted was a "pidgin" sentence, a sort of foreign caricature of some sentence of our own language. It is clear to-day that the process by which we succeed in forming original sentences is an entirely different one; *we form them* (consciously or unconsciously) *from analogous sentences which have been* (consciously or unconsciously) *memorized at some previous time.*

The process is that now known as *substitution*; it may be described concisely in the following way: Consciously or unconsciously a foreign student has memorized (among others) the sentence *If I'd seen him yesterday I should have spoken to. him.* Consciously or unconsciously he has memorized such isolated words or word-groups as *gone there, written, met, her, last week.* Consciously or unconsciously he has become aware that English grammatical usage allows him to replace *seen* by *met, seen him* by *spoken to him, seen him* by *seen. her,* and by *seen them, to him* by *to her* and *to them, spoken* by *written, yesterday* by *last week, last week* by *a few days ago, I'd* by *he'd, she'd* by *they'd, I should* by *he would, she would, they would.* In consequence therefore of having memorized the sentence and the isolated words and word-groups, *and having become aware of certain grammatical categories,* he is able to recognize at first hearing and to produce

instantaneously and automatically any of the following 1296 sentences, all of which (with one exception) are original or non-memorized.[1]

If I'd	seen	him	yesterday,	I should have	spoken	to him.
If he'd	met	her	last week, .	he would have	written	to her.
If she'd		them	a few days ago,	they would have		to them.
If they'd						

It is by the conscious or unconscious application of this process of substitution that we are enabled with perfect ease to form an unlimited number of correct sentences. But this process is only possible when the student by some means or other has become aware of the various grammatical categories. Without such knowledge he may proceed according to false analogies. Having memorized *ought you to go?* he may proceed to form by false analogy: *want you to go?* Having memorized *I hope to go,* he may derive from this: *I think to go.* He must come to know which are the chief grammatical categories and the contents of each; if he is not aware of the limited extent of the category *written, driven, ridden,* etc., he may introduce into it such an invented form as *arriven.*

This, then, is the chief function of a grammar-book; to furnish the student with a selection of those categories which will enable him to perform the greatest number of useful substitutions. In many cases the writer of the grammar can do nothing except set forth either the whole of the members of each category, or the most frequently-used members of it. In other cases a more concise procedure is possible, viz., to frame what is called a "grammatical rule." From the point of view of the author and publisher, the latter is the most economical method of procedure, for in that case the student himself will be enabled to draw up his own category. It is evident, however, that the safer procedure and the one more acceptable to the student is that which furnishes the actual members of the category, for the student may complain, and sometimes rightly, that it is enough for him to have to learn the contents of a given category without having, in addition, to work it out for himself from

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[1] See my 100 *Substitution Tables* (Heiter), *Principles of Language Study*, pp. 175-177 (Harrap), *Systematic Exercises in Sentence-Building, Classroom Procedures and Devices, Mechanism Grammar, Automatic Sentence-Builder* (the last four published by the Institute for Research in English Teaching, Tokyo).

abstract rules and formulae (which are not always models of clearness).

In this book the foreign student will find a selection of what the author considers to be the most useful grammatical categories of spoken English. In many cases the actual word-lists are provided, those being drawn from the author's selection of the 2500 most useful words. In other cases, the word-lists themselves are replaced by grammatical rules and explanations. Copious examples are given to illustrate every rule, and are so devised as to afford the fullest opportunities for the process of substitution. A serious endeavour has been made to give proportionate treatment to each subject according to its importance. The tendency throughout has been to show students how to form original sentences rather than to give detailed instructions concerning word building. All information which can better be given by a good dictionary has been omitted, except in a few instances in which the author has judged it expedient to encroach on the scope of the dictionary.

"Spoken" and "Written" English.

The terms "spoken" and "written" are open to more than one interpretation. In the present case, the term *Spoken English* should be taken to mean "that variety of English which is generally used by educated people (more especially in the South of England) in the course of ordinary conversation or when writing letters to intimate friends." The term *written English* may be taken to cover those varieties of English that we generally find in printed books, reviews, newspapers, formal correspondence, and that we expect to hear in the language of public speakers and orators, or possibly in formal conversation (more especially between strangers).

The terms "spoken" and "colloquial" are frequently used synonymously; when this is the case, the term "colloquial" is assumed to have the connotation used above, and not that connotation which would make it synonymous with "vulgar" or "slangy." Similarly the term "written" is frequently used as a synonym of "classical" or "literary."

All words and examples are given in phonetic spelling, the only possible procedure to follow when dealing with the spoken form of a living language whose orthographic and phonetic

systems are mutually at variance.[1]   Moreover, since intonation is an integral part of the grammar of Spoken English, a liberal use has been made of tonetic signs.

THE GRAMMAR OF USAGE.

One of the most widely diffused of the many linguistic illusions current in the world is the belief that each language possesses a "pure" or "grammatical" form, a form which is intrinsically "correct," which is independent of usage, which exists, which has always existed, but which is now in danger of losing its existence.   For, according to this theory, there exist in all lands enemies of the language; those who, from perversity or from neglect, are attempting to defile the well of pure language. Among those enemies are assumed to be the careless slipshod writers who do not trouble to study their grammars, the uneducated who are too lazy to learn their own language, and the slovenly speakers who mumble their syllables instead of articulating them.   According to this theory, there also exist Defenders of the Faith (generally assumed to be the "best" authors and the "best" speakers), and there is waged a long and bitter struggle between the followers of Ormuzd and Ahriman.   Those who declare themselves as being "on the side of the angels" may indeed confess to certain shortcomings in respect to the "purity" or "correctness" of their personal speech, but endeavour to make up for those regrettable lapses by the zeal with which they pillory the lapses of their fellow-sinners.

" It has now become practically impossible for any writer so to express himself that he shall not run foul of the convictions

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[1] Not only do the aims of grammar teaching need restating, but its methods need radical reform.   Nearly all text-books on grammar are written as if English were a dead language.   Their rules, examples and exceptions are expressed in the form of our conventional spellings rather than of the spoken words or syllables which those spellings represent, often very inadequately.   Few school grammarians appear to realize that a living language is composed of sounds, not of letters ; for example, to state the rule for the plural inflexion of English nouns in terms of spelling without the use of phonetic symbols is quite misleading. . . . The teaching must be closely allied with phonetics, since the first fact to be learnt about language is that it is composed of sounds, and since there are some grammatical notions which it is impossible to convey without the use of phonetic symbols.—*Report of the Government Committee on the Teaching of English in England*, §§258, 264.

of some person who has fixed the employment of a particular word or construction as his test of correctness of usage. Should any person seriously set out to observe every one of the various and varying utterances put forth for his guidance by all the members of this volunteer army of guardians of the Speech, he would in process of time find himself without any language to use whatever."[1]

One of the best proofs of the prevalence of this theory is the persistence of that age-long series of enquiries "Where is English best spoken?" "In what part of France do they speak the most correct French?" "Where is purest German to be found?" etc., etc. The mere use in this connection of such terms as "best" or "correct" implies that there is in the mind of the enquirer an implicit belief in the existence of some standard or super-dialect the superiority or intrinsic "correctness" of which cannot be questioned. The only possible answer to such questions are: "The best Scottish-English is spoken in Scotland"; "The best American-English is spoken in the United States"; "The purest London-English is to be found in London"; "The most correct Parisian-French is used in Paris"; "The ideal Viennese-German is spoken in Vienna"; "The only pure form of Slocum-in-the-Hole-English is used at the village of Slocum-in-the-Hole."

With this our questioners are not satisfied; they say, "Oh, but I am not speaking of local dialects and suchlike depraved forms of language; where is the standard language spoken? Where do they speak Real English?—Genuine French?—Pure German?" etc. The answer is: "There is no Real, Genuine or Pure English, French, etc., and there never has been." But the chimerical idea of a standard dialect still persists. In vain do the most eminent and most respected linguistic authorities deny its existence; in vain do the most erudite grammarians and etymologists assure us that the sole standard is and always has been that of correct usage. From the time of Horace[2]

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[1] Professor Thomas R. Lounsbury in an article entitled *The Standard of Usage*.

[2] " . . . si volet usus,

Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi."
            —*Horace in his treatise on the Poetic Art.*

[. . . it it shall be the will of usage, in whose power is the decision and authority and the standard of speaking.]

down to the time of Hales,[1] Sweet,[2] Lounsbury,[3] Wyld,[4] Jespersen and Bloomfield, the standard of usage has remained supreme and unquestioned by those who have come to understand something of the nature of language. That usage is ruled by grammar is a thesis only defended to-day by the uninformed.[5]

The amateur grammarian or the "member of the volunteer army of guardians of the Speech," while pointing out in the abstract the proprieties or improprieties of speech, is generally perfectly unconscious of the forms of speech which he uses himself. He warns the unsuspecting foreigner against what he calls "vulgarisms," and says to him, "Don't ever use such vulgar forms as *don't* or *won't*; you won't hear educated people using them!" or "Never use a preposition to finish a sentence with!" or he may say, "I don't know who you learn English from, but you are always using the word *who* instead of *whom*."[6] Or we may

[1] "The vulgar grammar-maker, dazzled by the glory of the ruling language, knew no better than to transfer to English the schemes which belonged to Latin."—J. W. Hales.

[2] "The first object in studying grammar is to learn to observe linguistic facts as they *are* not as they *ought* to be, or as they were in an earlier stage of the language."—Sweet.

[3] ". . . were grammars and manuals of usage absolutely trustworthy. But no such statement can be made of most of them, if, indeed, of any. It is an unfortunate fact that since the middle of the eighteenth century, when works of this nature first began to be much in evidence and to exert distinct influence, far the larger proportion of them have been produced by men who had little acquaintance with the practice of the best writers and even less with the history and development of grammatical forms and constructions. Their lack of this knowledge led them frequently to put in its place assertions based not upon what usage really is, but upon what in their opinion it ought to be. They evolved or adopted artificial rules for the government of expression. . . . As these rules were copied and repeated by others a fictitious standard of propriety was set up in numerous instances, and is largely responsible for many of the current misconceptions which now prevail as to what is grammatical." —Professor Lounsbury.

[4] "A grammar book does *not* attempt to teach people how they *ought* to speak, but, on the contrary, unless it is a very bad or an old work, it merely states how, as a matter of fact, certain people *do* speak at the time at which it is written."—Professor Wyld.

[5] "There is no such thing as English Grammar in the sense that used to be attributed to the term."—The Board of Education's Circular on *The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools* (1910).

[6] See Coleman's *The Kind of English I use in Ordinary Conversation*, as quoted in my *English Intonation*, pp. 99-105.

hear him say, "Oh, I've got something else to tell you: don't say *I've got* instead of *I have*."

Now in the everyday speech of educated people those (and many other) so-called "vulgarisms" are constantly heard. Sweet calls them "theoretical vulgarisms," and observed their extreme frequency in the speech of those who so hotly denounce them. If such expressions are "ungrammatical" we must conclude that the vast majority of educated persons (not to mention the uneducated) have established *the usage of un-grammatical forms*. In which case the forms cease *ipso facto* to be ungrammatical.[1] The sort of English described and taught in the following pages is that used in everyday conversation by the vast majority of educated speakers of English. In pronunciation, in choice of words and expressions, and in grammatical usage, it represents faithfully the type of dialect which the author has carefully and conscientiously observed in the speech of the majority of those with whom he has generally come into contact. It is, moreover, the only spoken dialect which he feels competent to teach.

Scheme of Classification.

In books devoted to teaching grammar of the conventional type it is usual to establish two main divisions, these being variously termed:

1. *Accidence, Etymology, Parsing, the Grammar of Words.*
2. *Syntax, Analysis, the Grammar of Sentences.*

Without necessarily objecting to this twofold division, I find it more convenient and more in accordance with the nature of Modern Spoken English to adopt a different order of classification and to treat the various classes of grammatical phenomena under the following headings:

1. *Phonetics*, including the study of sounds, sound attributes (length, stress and intonation) and weakening.
2. *Parts of Speech*, their morphological and syntactical uses.
3. *Parts of the Sentence*, or the Syntax of the Sentence.
4. Certain *Logical Categories*, which cannot be treated under the foregoing three headings.

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[1] "Whatever is in general use in a language is for that reason grammatically correct."—Sweet's *New English Grammar*, §12.

For purposes of reference, the whole of the material has been divided into paragraphs numbered in the margin from **§1** to **§679**. Cross-references are given by quoting in the margin the appropriate paragraph number or numbers between parentheses, *e.g.* (§ 566).

Table of Contents

PART I. PHONETICS.

The Numbers refer to Paragraphs.