

Readings in

APPLIED
ENGLISH LINGUISTICS



Edited by
HAROLD B. ALLEN



APPLETON-CENTURY-CROFTS, Inc.

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



New York

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Preface

WHEN THE IDEA of this collection of readings on linguistics was first suggested to me, I was chagrined at not having thought that the increasingly serious problem I had been facing for several years was almost surely a problem for others as well, and that therefore it would be most helpful to publish such a volume for all those interested in the field.

Not many years ago it seemed enough for a person concerned with the teaching of English to know something of a fairly settled corpus of information about the language. For the secondary school teacher this usually meant a compact presentation of systematic traditional grammar, with perhaps—if he were lucky—a brief history of the English language. For the college teacher this meant Old English grammar, with perhaps some attention to early Germanic phonology and the grammar of Gothic or Old Norse and such ancillary language data as would inhere in the study of Chaucer and Shakespeare. The undergraduate English major not headed for teaching rarely was expected to acquire any organized knowledge of his language at all, except for the unrealistic grammatical rules of his freshman English handbook.

This ostensibly happy situation no longer exists. The far-reaching advances in the relatively new discipline of linguistics in the past few years are now being matched by specific developments in the study of our own language. The general English major and the undergraduate and the graduate student preparing to teach English are beginning to find that some knowledge of English linguistics is basic to their understanding of usage, to composition, and even to the criticism of literature. Further, so active are workers in English linguistics today, so rapid are the advances, that the student needs not only the synthesized information in a textbook or a series of lectures but also the content and points of view in current articles by these workers and by those seeking to apply their findings.

Experience over more than a dozen years has convinced me of the value of sending students to these current articles. While a teacher, or a single textbook, carries a certain weight in persuading the student of the validity of materials which may contradict deeply entrenched but uncritically accepted attitudes, the weight is multiplied when the student reads article after article presenting additional evidence and further cogent analysis. When a student is confronted with a new approach, he is entitled to know whether it is only the individualistic bent of his instructor or of his single textbook or whether, on the contrary, it is that of contemporary scholars

in the field. He is, in brief, entitled to learn what is going on in that part of the world of study and teaching in which he expects to do his own work.

But the student cannot easily learn this when the library lacks some of the needed publications, when a number of other students are trying to read the same articles in the publications it does have, when his time in the library is limited and current journals may not be removed, and when the library's having only one copy of a given journal prevents his reading articles in any kind of reasonable sequence. And with the recent rapid increase in the quantity of desirable articles which the student should read, the problem has become more and more serious. Hence this collection as a workable solution.

In this collection the student will find some duplication and overlapping. This use of printing space is deliberate, in the belief that desirable enforcement of understanding will result. The student will find also some disagreement among the authors. One writer, reluctant to cast aside completely notions long cherished, accepts the findings of linguistics only with reservations; others, accepting the basic premises of the linguist, differ among themselves in the use and presentation of linguistic findings. Such differences are natural in the rapid development of a young and lively science; and becoming aware of them is an aid, not a deterrent, in understanding the useful implications of that science.

Choice of the selections has been governed largely by their expected use and by the need to keep within reasonable limits. They are all within the broad framework of modern linguistic science, and a significant number deal particularly with structural linguistics. They are largely derivative and secondary articles, not statements of linguistic theory or reports of original research. Some are concerned with the explanation of the structural approach to the study of present-day English and with the resulting impact upon the teaching of composition and upon literary criticism; others concern structural correlations with the study of language usage and with the regional distribution of language variants in the United States. But except for Charles C. Fries's article explaining the linguist's attitude toward the study of verbal meaning and for such attention to vocabulary usage as is given in Robert J. Geist's discussion of *disinterested* the whole area of semantics (to say nothing of general semantics) has had to be omitted from consideration here.

Help in determining the contents of this book came from various colleagues known to be interested in the acquisition of sound linguistic information by those who teach English. To twenty was sent a suggested list of eighty-two articles. Critical comments from eighteen of them led to dropping twenty-four titles and adding seven others, making the present total of sixty-five. For these friendly suggestions I am grateful to the following: Virginia Alwin, Richard Beal, Margaret M. Bryant, MacCurdy Burnet, Dwight Burton, Frederic G. Cassidy, Thomas F. Dunn, Karl W.

PREFACE

vii

Dykema, George P. Faust, Alfred H. Grommon, Archibald A. Hill, Sumner Ives, Albert R. Kitzhaber, Donald J. Lloyd, Jessie R. Lucke, Francis Shoemaker, Erwin Steinberg, and Russell Thomas. I am also, and especially, grateful to the authors and publishers who have generously granted permission to reprint these sixty-five articles in this collection.

H.B.A.

University of Minnesota

Foreword to Students

FOR NEARLY A CENTURY and a half a growing number of scholars have been carrying on studies of language and languages according to the basic principles of what is now known as linguistics or linguistic science. As these studies progressed, they contributed more and more to a body of theory and of data which stood in direct contrast to notions of language handed down from classical philosophers. Especially as these studies threw more light upon the history and the structure of our own language did they come into conflict with long-accepted beliefs about the nature and the use of English.

Linguists for several decades have from time to time called attention to the fact that in the teaching of English, however, there was little or no recognition of the findings of linguistic science, and asserted that uncritical adherence to the older body of material constituted a serious "cultural lag." A decade ago it even seemed that this cultural lag would be widened, rather than narrowed, because of the progress of research in that area of language investigation generally called structural linguistics, again particularly with respect to the study of English.

But quite recently the picture has changed. Leadership in the National Council of Teachers of English and its constituent group, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and in the College English Association has in one way or another created a growing ferment of interest in the potential utility of structural linguistics in the teaching of English. Each of these organizations has committees concerned with this subject. National conventions of each have given lively attention to it in terms of papers, discussions, and continuing workshops. Regional and local meetings of teachers in various parts of the country have shown similar curiosity and interest. Journals and reports of various kinds have dealt with the subject. Furthermore, new textbooks in linguistics and in the application of linguistics in the teaching of composition are at last appearing, with others now under contract for publication within a year or two.

It may already be insisted upon that no prospective teacher of English should honestly consider himself prepared for his job unless he has some clear understanding of linguistic principles and some awareness of the implication of linguistics for his teaching of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, composition, and literature.

To aid in acquiring this understanding and this awareness selected recent articles have been brought together in this book. They will introduce you to some of the leaders who in one way or another are applying the

findings of linguistics to the teaching of English, who through writing and speaking and teaching are trying to reduce that cultural lag. This collection may be used as a text or as a supplement to a class textbook by revealing in greater detail some of the thinking of these leaders and by suggesting—through demonstration of points of difference—further constructive and critical thinking upon your part.

Although it is not imperative that the order of the articles be followed and it is true that some cross-reference will be necessary, still it has seemed reasonable to arrange them in seven major groups: the historical background, the present state of linguistics in the United States, the contribution of linguistic geography, linguistics and usage, linguistics and the teaching of grammar and composition, linguistics and the dictionary, and, finally, linguistics and literary study.

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Contents

Preface	v
Foreword to Students	ix

Part I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction	1
Historical Development of the Concept of Grammatical Proprieties	
<i>Karl W. Dykema</i>	2
Summary of Nineteenth-Century Historical and Comparative	
Linguistics <i>James B. McMillan</i>	9
Linguistics since Bloomfield <i>Archibald A. Hill</i>	14

Part II. LINGUISTICS TODAY

Introduction	25
Science and Linguistics	<i>Benjamin Lee Whorf</i> 28
Progress in Grammar	<i>Karl Dykema</i> 38
Revolution in Grammar	<i>W. Nelson Francis</i> 46
Basic Tenets of Structural Linguistics	<i>George P. Faust</i> 63
Terms in Phonetics	<i>George P. Faust</i> 68
Something of Morphemics	<i>George P. Faust</i> 74
Fries's <i>Structure of English</i> : A Review	<i>James H. Sledd</i> 80
The <i>What</i> and the <i>Way</i>	<i>Dwight L. Bolinger</i> 93
The Grammar of Spoken English: Its Relation to What Is Called	
English Grammar <i>Karl W. Dykema</i>	95
Meaning and Linguistic Analysis	<i>Charles C. Fries</i> 101
Resolution of Structural Ambiguity by Lexical Probability: The	
English Double Object. <i>W. Nelson Francis</i>	114
Notes on Nominal Compounds in Present-day English	
<i>Hans Marchand</i>	118
An Exploratory Inquiry into Lexical Clusters	
<i>Edward M. Anthony, Jr.</i>	128
<i>Language for Everybody</i> : A Review	<i>William Buell</i> 133

Part III. LINGUISTIC GEOGRAPHY

Introduction	137
Linguistic Geography and Freshman English	
<i>Albert H. Marckwardt</i>	138

The Linguistic Atlases: Our New Resource	<i>Harold B. Allen</i>	142
Pronunciation of <i>Can't</i> in the Eastern States	<i>Sumner Ives</i>	150
<i>Grease and Greasy</i> : A Study of Geographical Variation	<i>E. Bagby Atwood</i>	158
The Pronunciation of <i>Catch</i>	<i>Raven I. McDavid, Jr.</i>	167
<i>Oughtn't</i> and <i>Hadn't Ought</i>	<i>Raven I. McDavid, Jr.</i>	169
On Accepting Participial <i>Drank</i>	<i>Harold B. Allen</i>	171
Some Social Differences in Pronunciation	<i>Raven I. McDavid, Jr.</i>	174
Use of Field Materials in the Determination of Dialect Groupings	<i>Sumner Ives</i>	185

Part IV. LINGUISTICS AND USAGE

Introduction		193
Secondary and Tertiary Responses to Language	<i>Leonard Bloomfield</i>	195
A Philosophy of Language	<i>James B. McMillan</i>	203
Prescriptivism and Linguistics in English Teaching	<i>Archibald A. Hill</i>	210
Cultural Levels and Functional Varieties of English	<i>John S. Kenyon</i>	215
How Fast Is Standard English Changing?	<i>Karl W. Dykema</i>	222
A Note on the Change of American English /t/	<i>W. P. Lehmann</i>	228
"Anything Goes"	<i>Robert J. Geist</i>	233
Doctrines of English Usage	<i>Charles V. Hartung</i>	235
The Language of the Cultivated	<i>Austin C. Dobbins</i>	245
<i>Showed</i> as Past Participle	<i>Russell Thomas</i>	248
Agreement of Subject and Verb in Anticipatory <i>There</i> Clauses	<i>David S. Berkeley</i>	250
Number Concord with <i>What</i> Clauses	<i>Francis Christensen</i>	254
"One of Those Who Is . . ."	<i>John S. Kenyon</i>	262
Pronominal <i>This</i> : A Quantitative Analysis	<i>Paul Roberts</i>	267
The Syntax of Deferred Prepositions	<i>M. Bertens Charnley</i>	275
The Inflected Genitive in Modern American Prose	<i>Russell Thomas</i>	286
Usage and Meaning	<i>Robert J. Geist</i>	291

Part V. LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION

Introduction		295
Some Assumptions . . . To Be Examined	<i>Herbert Hackett</i>	296
Linguistics in the Classroom	<i>Sumner Ives</i>	298
What Language Shall We Teach?	<i>A. J. Walker</i>	308

CONTENTS

xiii

Correctness and Style in English Composition	<i>Archibald A. Hill</i>	311
Mispronunciation?	<i>James B. McMillan</i>	317
Psycholinguistics and the Teaching of English Composition	<i>John B. Carroll</i>	319
The Uses of Structure and the Structure of Usage	<i>Donald J. Lloyd</i>	326
Grammar in Freshman English	<i>Donald J. Lloyd</i>	331
A "Linguistic" Approach to English Composition	<i>Donald J. Lloyd</i>	337
Structural Syntax on the Blackboard	<i>MacCurdy Burnet</i>	343
"Let's Teach Grammar Too"	<i>George G. Gates</i>	350
Coordination (Faulty) and Subordination (Upside-Down)	<i>James H. Sledd</i>	354
Structural Grammar and the Sixth Grade	<i>Robert J. Geist</i>	362

Part VI. LINGUISTICS AND THE DICTIONARY

Introduction		371
The Freshman and His Dictionary	<i>Mitford M. Mathews</i>	372
Establishing and Maintaining Standard Patterns of Speech	<i>Clarence L. Barnhart</i>	376
The Use of Dictionaries in Language Teaching	<i>Archibald A. Hill</i>	379
Syllabic Consonants in Dictionaries	<i>John S. Kenyon</i>	384

Part VII. LINGUISTICS AND THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Introduction		393
A Report on the Language-Literature Seminar	<i>Harold Whitehall and Archibald A. Hill</i>	394
<i>From Linguistics to Criticism: A Book Review</i>	<i>Harold Whitehall</i>	398
<i>Pippa's Song: Two Attempts at Structural Criticism</i>	<i>Archibald A. Hill</i>	402
Linguistics and Teaching Introductory Literature	<i>Seymour B. Chatman</i>	407
Dialect Differentiation in the Stories of Joel Chandler Harris	<i>Summer Ives</i>	413
Index		421

Part I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

ANTHROPOLOGISTS tell us that widespread among both primitive and non-primitive people is the belief that language is something mystical if not sacrosanct. It may well be that persistence of this notion among speakers of the European languages is supported in part by the absence of easily available information about the variegated, if not shady, history of the grammatical ideas still commonly accepted.

Perhaps the best conspectus of this complex history is that by M. H. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe* (Bell, London, 1951). Robins, a lecturer in linguistics in the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, excellently provides in this volume an overview through the eyes of a modern linguist. For the teacher a good synoptic treatment is included in Robert C. Pooley's recent *Teaching English Grammar* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957). In the present collection Dykema opens Part I with an interpretive summary of the history of grammar in terms of its relation to the generally accepted corpus of knowledge in the schools.

McMillan then goes on to look briefly at the chief accomplishments of the first century of modern linguistic science. Although several general books on linguistics provide fuller summaries of nineteenth-century developments (notably Leonard Bloomfield's *Language*, Holt, 1933 and Louis H. Gray's *Foundations of Language*, 1939), the most detailed history is John Spargo's translation of Holger Pedersen's book, *Linguistic Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1931). One matter referred to by McMillan, the persistent confusing of philology and linguistics, has been carefully treated by George Melville Bolling in "Linguistics and Philology," *Language*, 5.27-32 (1928), and a related topic, the curricular problem arising from that confusion, is briefly dealt with by R. C. Simonini, Jr., in "Linguistics in the English Curriculum," *College English*, 19.163-165 (January, 1958).

Although Dwight Whitney in the nineteenth century and Franz Boas in the early twentieth were great pioneers in linguistic progress in the United States, it is to Edward Sapir and his successor at Yale, the late Leonard Bloomfield, that contemporary scholars look as the immediate leaders in linguistic science in this country. Sapir's *Language* (Harcourt, Brace, 1921) and Bloomfield's *Language* are still the basic texts any student in linguistics must thoroughly know before proceeding to graduate research in the field.

A brief detailed statement of the proliferation of linguistic study during the past quarter-century is that by C. M. Wise and Ruth Hirsch, "Directions in Linguistics," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 39. 225-231 (1953); the best comprehensive study is that of Robert A. Hall, Jr., "American Linguistics, 1925-50," *Archivum Linguisticum*, 3.101-125 (1951) and 4.1-16 (1952). For this Part it seemed desirable to choose Hill's article because of its careful treatment of the structural developments even though Hill admittedly has slighted or even ignored the work of scholars in other linguistic areas. Indeed, so much does the article limit itself to the research of the Smith-Trager group that for full comprehension the reader may want to return to it after reading the explanations in Part II of this collection.



Historical Development of the Concept of Grammatical Proprieties*

KARL W. DYKEMA

LAST CHRISTMAS my daughter brought me this little book as a perhaps slightly ironic gift for her pedant father. It is entitled *A Short Introduction of Grammar*, and was published "At the Theater, Oxford, 1699." Since we are going to do a lot of talking about grammar during our three sessions here, it is appropriate that we begin with a passage from a grammar. Here then are some excerpts from the Preface:

Although the very great importance of having the first Rudiments of Grammar well laid, in order to all future progress in learning, is a thing manifest in its self, and acknowledged by all sober men; (those Empiricks who have pretended to a compendious art of teaching without Rule or Method, having been abundantly confuted by their shameful misadventures:) Yet the particular

* Originally a paper read at the meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in St. Louis, in 1954, this article is here reprinted by permission of author and publisher from *College Composition and Communication*, 5.135-140 (December, 1954).

Conduct of Grammatical Institution has in all times been variously discours'd, and no less diversly pursued . . . Grammar is the Sacrist, that bears the Key of Knowledge, by whom alone admittance can be had into the Temple of the Muses, and treasures of Arts; even whatever can enrich the Mind, and raise it from the level of a Barbarian and Idiot, to the dignity of an Intelligence. But this Sacrist is a severe Mistress, who being once contemned, will certainly revenge the Injury, it being evident that no Person ever yet despised Grammar, who had not his fault return'd upon him; . . . It would be observed farther that Grammar, as she is a severe Mistress, is also a coy one; and hardly admits any courtship but of the youthful votary. There are indeed many who by great industry, have redeem'd the want of early Institution but in the performances of such, there still appears somewhat of stiffness and force; and what has more in it of Art than Nature;

I think you recognize in these words a very familiar attitude, still frequently expressed or implied in some grammars today, though not usually in quite so arresting a style. But today the grammar which is referred to is that of English; whereas the final sentences of his Preface make it clear that this author was thinking of quite other things.

When on the other side he that begins an early Court, has greater assurances of favour; with little difficulty becomes a Denison of Rome and Athens, in whatsoever Climate he happens to be born; and makes their Languages his mother tongue; thereby obtaining a free address to all the wisdom of precedent ages, and the friendship of the Heroes of them; to treat familiarly with Xenophon and Caesar, Demosthenes and Cicero, Thucydides and Livy, or whomsoever else he chuses for an acquaintance. He first will read; then equal their Atchievements; and having fill'd his head with their arts and knowledge, will crown it also with their Laurels.

Whom these temptations cannot move to study, let him throw away his book, and like an illiterate criminal perish for not reading in it; let him live a fool, and dye a brute.

And the full title of the book reads: *A Short Introduction of Grammar, Generally To Be Used: Compiled and set forth for the bringing up of all those that intend to attain to the Knowledge of the Latin Tongue.*

This book is a reprint of William Lily's famous Latin grammar with considerable annotation both of the English Introduction and the Latin grammar itself. The validity of the views I have just read will be examined by some of the following speakers, who will expose them to the conclusions of linguistics. But since these views show such admiration for the "Denisons" of the ancient world, it may also be useful first to compare the attitudes expressed with those of the Greeks and Romans themselves, because the contrast is so remarkable.

Modern discussions of the attitudes of the ancients toward language are not numerous, and since I am no classicist myself, I must lean heavily on the few classicists, mostly French and German, who have discussed the

matter during the last hundred years.¹ The history of grammar has, perhaps understandably, been pursued by a limited number of scholars, partly, no doubt, because it is not a superficially glamorous subject, but also because the evidence is scanty and fragmentary.

It can, however, be stated that the educational institutions of Greece during the period of her glory had no place for grammar in them for the very simple reason² that it had not yet been invented. An attempt to formulate a grammatical theory and terminology is apparent here and there in Plato and Aristotle, and there was apparently a good deal of grammatical theorizing in the third century B.C. But the earliest extant Greek grammar, that of Dionysius Thrax, did not appear until the second century B.C. Yet the study of grammar did not become a part of either Hellenistic or Roman education since it had been developed as a part of the Greek intellectual passion for systematic analysis and description of every significant phenomenon, not as a pedagogical device. And it seems to have remained mainly a matter of speculation and controversy among the not inconsiderable group of thinkers who had inherited the name of grammarian from their teaching duties as instructors of reading and writing, i.e., teachers of letters.³

But somewhere in the development of Western culture, grammar became a tool for teaching a foreign language. Early in the sixth century Priscian used grammar to teach Latin in Constantinople;⁴ but for the most part grammar was a part of the textual analysis of the classics, of works in the Greek or Latin which was still the student's own language. Perhaps as the student's knowledge of those classical languages became more uncertain, grammar somehow was used as a means of teaching him the language itself. At any rate in early modern times it is firmly established as the foundation for the study of the classical languages, and among the earliest books printed in fifteenth century Italy are grammars of Greek and Latin.⁵

The author of the book I quoted is well aware of the ancient grammarians. He cites Priscian, Donatus, and Varrus in his notes.⁶ And it can hardly be doubted that all well-educated men of his time were aware of the classical provenience of the grammar they had studied. It must have seemed axiomatic to them that the method of learning Latin and Greek through formal grammar represented a tradition going back to the ancients

¹ Particularly H. Steinthal, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern* (Berlin, 1863); Th. Benfey, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie in Deutschland* (München, 1869); and H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité* (Paris, 1948).

² Marrou, p. 236.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁵ J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship* (Cambridge, 1908), Vol. 2, pp. 61, 71, 77.

⁶ *A Short Introduction* . . . pp. 21, 23, 28.

themselves. The prestige of everything classical was so great, particularly in the eighteenth century, that this association of grammar with ancient literature gave it a fundamental place in educational practice.

It was against such a background that the vernacular began gradually to claim a place for itself in the curriculum. Inevitably a grammatical treatment of it came to be prescribed, though there are protests, like Sidney's in his *Apologie for Poetrie*, where he writes:

Another will say it wanteth Grammar. Nay truly, it hath that prayse, that it wanteth not Grammar: for Grammer it might have, but it needes it not; beeing so easie of itselife, and so voyd of those cumbersome differences of Cases, Genders, Moodes, and Tenses, which I thinke was a peece of the Tower of Babilons curse, that a man should be put to schoole to learne his mother-tongue.⁷

But even so intelligent and emancipated an educator as Comenius, who first published his *Great Didactic* in his native Czech (1628-32), wanted to teach the children in his Vernacular School "to write . . . in accordance with the grammatical rules of the mother-tongue." (ch. 29, 6 ii.)⁸ Perhaps Comenius's rules for Czech would have been more than a slavish translation of Latin grammar into the vernacular, since his approach to language teaching was based on a good deal more intelligent analysis of the problem than was common in his day. Most of the grammatical analysis of the vernacular was, however, based on the already existing works which had been devised to introduce students to Latin grammatical concepts by approximating them in English translation. These works now became the foundation for grammars of the vernacular whose purpose was to prescribe the correct use of English, for example, with the same authority and simplicity as was done for Latin in the standard school grammars.

The eighteenth century grammarian of English faced enormous difficulties, of most of which he was probably unaware. First, he was faced with the mass of material that a total living language with all its dialects presents, though of course he did not recognize that he had this problem. Second, he was totally unprepared to make an original and independent analysis of any language because he had never been confronted with the problem of analyzing a language for which no formal description existed; that is, he had no acquaintance with a methodology of linguistic analysis. Third, he was fatally handicapped by an intimate acquaintance with the concepts of classical grammar, concepts which had come to be accepted as universals, though many of them had little relevancy to English; these preconceptions also prevented him from noticing many grammatical phenomena peculiar to English. Fourth, the cultural atmosphere in which he

⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, p. 70 (London: A. Constable & Co., 1905).

⁸ J. A. Comenius, *The Great Didactic*. Translated and edited by M. W. Keating (London, 1896) p. 420.

worked tended to make him look upon English as an inferior or at best a defective language; he therefore considered himself as in duty bound to improve and—as the expression was—to ascertain the language. Fifth, he found himself in a position never enjoyed by his classical predecessors, the position of enjoying a large audience, made up principally of members of the middle class who had social aspirations. This last point is of tremendous importance because it explains how formal English grammar got itself so firmly established in the schools. For we must not forget that especially during the past century and a half a very important function of the schools has been felt to be that they should help the ambitious to push their way socially upward into a class where control of a particular variety of English was an important means of admission.

How much effect the teaching of grammar has had on the actual language habits of those who have been exposed to it during the last 200 years is a moot point which deserves much fuller study than it has received. But one tremendous success the teaching of formal grammar has certainly had. It has instilled a well-nigh universal faith in its efficacy for curing all manner of linguistic ills. Like many another faith it prescribes a regimen that few of the faithful are willing to submit to. Perhaps for that very reason—for the reason that few have really tested it—the faith remains nearly as strong as ever among the people as a whole. And therefore like all attacks on a faith, those who question it are looked upon as heretics, though fortunately the punishment for grammatical heresy is somewhat milder than burning at the stake. Still, the grammarian's fate is a precarious one. Though Dante counts Donatus among the blessed, he consigns Priscian to Hell for sodomy. Professor Curtius has tried to unravel the threads of medieval tradition which moved Dante to treat the two grammarians so differently, but has been unable to discover more than a misinterpretation of Priscian's dedication of his work to a patriarch named Julian. Later writers confused this Julian with the more famous Roman emperor, Julian the Apostate, and thereby prepared the way for Priscian's damnation.⁹ Perhaps some of you will consign us to a similar fate by interpreting our labors here as dedicated to some horrible linguistic apostasy whereas we are really dedicating ourselves to a better understanding of the true nature of language.

The eighteenth century grammarian worked, then, under almost insuperable handicaps, and were it not for the unfortunately tremendous influence his work has had we could examine it more coolly and recognize his often considerable contributions. He is certainly not to be condemned for the honesty with which he described his purpose. Unlike many present-day grammarians he usually stated quite frankly that he didn't like the language as it was and had written his grammar to reform it. Today many

⁹ Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern, 1953) p. 51, note 1.

a grammar states in its preface that it will describe the language of cultivated writers while it actually reproduces with only minor revision the prescriptive grammar of the eighteenth century.

I have attempted to trace briefly the Western grammatical tradition from its origin down to our own day with some interpretive comments intended to show that the use to which grammar has been put in the last several hundred years is one which its originators never dreamed of and one which has had some rather unhappy results. I should like to add a word more about this intellectual and social phenomenon which has had such an effect on Western culture.

Dionysius Thrax's little *technē*, as he named it, has been called the most influential book in the Western culture after the Bible.¹⁰ In it are to be found virtually all the standard grammatical terms, and the classifications which he presented remain those of all standard grammar books. Yet his little book represents the latest and one of the least of Greek intellectual achievements. Still it might have been otherwise if the Greeks had not been so certain that they had nothing to learn from another culture. Alexander the Great introduced them to India, where one of the most penetrating schools of descriptive grammar had culminated nearly a century earlier in the work of Panini (c. 400 B.C.). But grammatical analysis like all other Greek intellectual achievements was to be a purely native development, and perhaps because it came as a sort of after-thought in the evening of the Greek mind, it is a lesser accomplishment, legitimately ignored in our usual study of Greek thought. From this already modest achievement the Romans derived their even less original grammar of Latin, which was in no way improved during the Middle Ages by being mixed with a large portion of philosophy.¹¹ Finally this inadequate framework was used to describe the Modern European vernaculars and proved a very incomplete and distorting basis for our modern grammars. You may feel that these are hard words, that though there may be weaknesses in our traditional grammars, on the whole what they describe is recognizable in the language itself. It is, of course. Greek and English are both Indo-European languages and will therefore have a great deal in common, especially when compared to a non-Indo-European tongue. To this extent a common grammatical pattern will do to describe both languages. But Greek is quite incomprehensible to one who knows only English; the languages as living media of communication are very different. A comprehensively descriptive grammar will be as much concerned with the differences as with the similarities, and it is in describing these differences that classical grammar fails, as I think the structuralists have conclusively demonstrated. It is also true that a foreign

¹⁰ Franz Susemihl, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur in der Alexandrinerzeit* (Leipzig, Vol. 2, 1892) p. 172.

¹¹ R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Medieval Grammatical Theory in Europe . . .* (London, 1951), Ch. III.