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CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE HUMANIDADES

CARRERA *Inglés*  
CÁTEDRA *Gram. Ingl.*

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Chapter

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### TWO APPROACHES TO TEACHING LANGUAGE

Over the years, language teachers have alternated between favoring teaching approaches that focus primarily on language use and those that focus on language forms or analysis. The alternation has been due to a fundamental disagreement concerning whether one learns to communicate in a second language by communicating in that language (such as in an immersion experience) or whether one learns to communicate in a second language by learning the *lexicogrammar*—the words and grammatical structures—of the target language. In other words, the argument has been about two different means of achieving the same end.

As with any enduring controversy, the matter is not easily resolved. For one thing, there is evidence to support both points of view. It is not uncommon to find learners who, for whatever reason, find themselves in a new country or a new region of their own country, who need to learn a new language, and who do so without the benefit of formal instruction. If they are postpubescent, they may well retain an accent of some kind, but they can pick up enough language to satisfy their communicative needs. In fact, some are natural acquirers who become highly proficient in this manner. In contrast, there are learners whose entire exposure to the new language comes in the form of classroom instruction in lexicogrammar. Yet they too achieve a measure of communicative proficiency, and certain of these learners become highly proficient as well. What we can infer from this is that humans are amazingly versatile learners and that some people have a natural aptitude for acquiring languages and will succeed no matter what the circumstances.

Of course, it is also true that for other learners, neither approach is entirely successful. Their language development may become arrested in an immersion environment, once their communicative needs have been met. For some, classroom instruction is unduly limiting. Perhaps a more important issue than whether to emphasize language use or language analysis in language teaching, then, is how to help all learners succeed to the extent they want or need. Moreover, we would hope to do so in a manner that improves upon or accelerates what learners are able to accomplish on their own. With regard to these aspirations, we can be less equivocal. We firmly believe that teachers will be better prepared to meet their students' learning needs if they have a firm grounding in the grammar of the language they are teaching.

If the approach focuses on language analysis, the connection should be easy to make. The more teachers know about grammar, the more expeditiously they should be able to raise a learner's consciousness about how the language works. They should be able to focus learner attention on the distinctive features of a particular grammatical form in less time than it would take for the learner to notice them on his or her own. Teachers may accomplish this in an explicit fashion by giving students rules and exercises with the appropriate grammatical terminology, but they can also teach grammar implicitly as well.

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**"THE GRAMMAR BOOK"**  
Original revisado y aprobado por el docente *GEORGE MURCIA*  
Cargo ..... Quien firma en conformidad con el estado del original.

Asking students to engage in particular tasks that require the use of certain structures is an implicit means of getting students to focus on and to practice form. In addition, a teacher might highlight properties of the grammatical structures by providing negative evidence—that is, helping students to see what is not possible in English. In this way, learners are encouraged to notice the gap between what they are producing and what the target language requires. Another example of teaching with an implicit focus on grammar is when teachers choose to “enhance the input” of their students by exposing them to language samples in which particular grammatical structures are highlighted or are more prevalent than they might be in ordinary communication.

However, even teachers who eschew implicit language analysis for their students—that is, those who favor teaching communication by having students communicate with no focus on form whatsoever—would be well served by their having a working knowledge of grammar. As teachers, they will have to answer students’ questions about grammar; and any diagnosis of student errors or questions concerning whether or not to give feedback—and if so, what kind—will be enhanced by teachers’ having a knowledge of how the grammar works. Indeed, even a communicative approach “involves a recognition of its [grammar’s] central mediating role in the use and learning of language” (Widdowson 1988:154). Using language grammatically and being able to communicate are not the same, but they are both important goals. Thus, the language teaching field would be well served by finding a way to help learners accomplish both (Ceice-Murcia 1992; Larsen-Freeman 1992).

## A DEFINITION OF GRAMMAR SUITABLE FOR BOTH APPROACHES

### THREE LEVELS INCLUDED

It is important, therefore, to define grammar in a way that suits both purposes—that is, a way that accounts for both the structure of the target language and its communicative use. In order to do so, we will need to take into consideration how grammar operates at three levels: the subsentential or morphological level, the sentential or syntactic level, and the suprasentential or discourse level. Traditional structural accounts have dealt with grammar at the subsentential and sentential levels. For example, at the *subsentential* level, the level below that of the sentence, verb tenses have been described through the use of verb tense morphology. In the case of English, verb tense morphology consists of auxiliary verbs and certain suffixes or word endings such as *-ing*. Thus, we could describe the verb tense morphology of the past progressive tense in English as consisting of the past tense form of the auxiliary verb *be* and the *-ing* added to the base form of the main verb.

*subsentential level:* past progressive = *be* (past tense) + base form of verb + *-ing* (morphology)  
was/were + walk + *-ing* = was/were walking

At the sentential level such accounts would describe the syntax of the English sentence or its word order and show where the past progressive tense form of the verb would be located vis-a-vis the other words in the sentence.

*sentential level:* One basic word-order rule in English is that verbs normally follow subjects and come before adverbials.

She was walking home from school that day.  
subject verb adverbials

Sentence-level grammars would also indicate the placement of the *be* verb in questions. The tensed *be* verb is inverted with the subject to make a yes/no question:

Was she walking home from school that day?

They would also discuss the formation of negative sentences. In English the *not* follows the *be* verb and can be contracted to it:

She wasn't walking home from school that day.

This book, too, takes as its basic subject matter the morphology and syntax of English. However, whereas traditional structural accounts have often stopped at the level of the sentence, wherever possible we also include an analysis of how the morphology and syntax are deployed to effect certain discourse purposes at the suprasentential level. This level is particularly important in communication and is often overlooked.

*suprasentential level:* One discourse rule is that narratives often begin with the present perfect tense as a “scene setter.” Then the past and past progressive tenses are used to relate the specific actions that occurred in an episode.

She has never been so lucky as she was one day last May. She was walking home from school that day when she ran into a friend.  
present perfect past past progressive past

Although much is unknown about how English grammar operates at the discourse level, in this book we include what we do know and suggest research for what we don't.

### ON THE NATURE OF GRAMMAR RULES

Probably the most common association with the word *grammar* is the word *rule*. In this book, we also use the term *rule*. But there are two qualifications we would like to make to the use of the term *rule* in connection with grammar. The first is that rules are not, as we shall see, airtight formulations; they always have “exceptions.” While rules may serve a useful purpose, particularly in meeting the security needs of beginning language learners, it is important that teachers understand that almost every linguistic category or generalization has fuzzy boundaries. Language is mutable—organic, even; therefore its categories and rules are often nondiscrete (Rutherford 1987; Larsen-Freeman 1997).

The second qualification we make concerning grammar rules is that they often appear to be arbitrary formulations. For example, learners of English are told that it is possible to place a direct object after a certain kind of two-word, or phrasal, verb when the direct object is a noun, but not when the direct object is a pronoun. The asterisk before the second example is a linguistic convention used to indicate ungrammaticality:

I looked up a word in the dictionary. (Direct object *a word* is a noun.)  
\*I looked up it in the dictionary. (Direct object *it* is a pronoun.)

Such formulations do appear to be arbitrary; and yet, if one views this very same rule from a discourse perspective, we see that this rule is one manifestation of an important generalization concerning English word order, a generalization that we introduce first in Chapter 2 and then revisit throughout the remainder of the book. Therefore, at least some of the arbitrariness of rules disappears when we view language above the sentential level.

Asking students to engage in particular tasks that require the use of certain structures is an implicit means of getting students to focus on and to practice form. In addition, a teacher might highlight properties of the grammatical structures by providing negative evidence—that is, helping students to see what is not possible in English. In this way, learners are encouraged to notice the gap between what they are producing and what the target language requires. Another example of teaching with an implicit focus on grammar is when teachers choose to “enhance the input” of their students by exposing them to language samples in which particular grammatical structures are highlighted or are more prevalent than they might be in ordinary communication.

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She has never been so lucky as she was one day last May. She was walking home from  
present perfect past past progressive

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past

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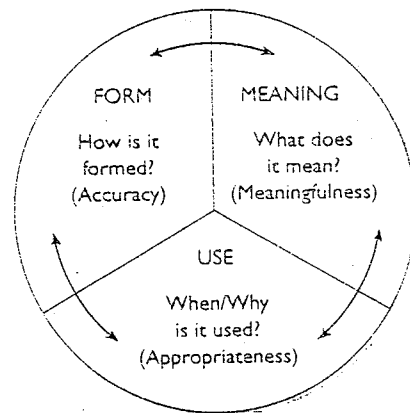
\*I looked up it in the dictionary. (Direct object *it* is a pronoun.)

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Another one of our firm convictions is that teachers (and consequently, their students) are helped by understanding English when generalizations can be made at the highest possible level of language. Indeed, what we seek to do in this book is to give *reasons, not rules*, for why English grammar functions as it does. Subsentential and sentential rules can sometimes appear arbitrary and make learning more difficult. Giving students reasons for why things are the way they are can aid students in learning English grammar, we believe. It also helps students see how grammar and communication interface, thus addressing, although not entirely avoiding, the common problem of students' not being able to activate their knowledge of grammar when they are engaged in communication.

### THE THREE DIMENSIONS

Another major departure from some traditional analyses of English grammar, and one we feel is in keeping with attempting to view grammar with a communicative end in mind, is the recognition that grammar is not merely a collection of forms but rather involves the three dimensions of what linguists refer to as (morpho)syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Grammatical structures not only have a morphosyntactic form, they are also used to express meaning (semantics) in context-appropriate use (pragmatics). We refer to these as the dimensions of *form, meaning, and use*. Because the three are interrelated—that is, a change in one will involve a change in another—it is helpful to view the three dimensions as a pie chart, with arrows depicting the interaction among the three.



The question in each wedge of the pie provides further guidance in terms of defining what that wedge represents. In dealing with form, for instance, we are interested in *how* a particular grammar structure is constructed—its morphology and its syntax. When dealing with meaning, we want to know *what* a particular English grammar structure means, what semantic contribution it makes whenever it is used. Its essential meaning might be grammatical: for example, in our sample sentence, *She was walking home from school that day when she ran into a friend*, the past progressive signals a past action in progress. Or its meaning might be lexical (a dictionary definition); for example, the meaning of the phrasal verb *run into* used in our example means “to meet by chance.”

Pragmatics, the domain of the use wedge of our pie, deals with issues concerning the choices that users of a particular language make when using the forms of language in

communication. As such, it is a broad category. We use it in this book to mean the “relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language” (Levinson, 1983:9). We can account successfully for the pragmatics governing the use of a particular grammar structure if we can explain *when* it is used or *why* it has been used instead of another structure with the same meaning. For instance, we would look to the use wedge of the pie to help explain why the narrator used the phrase *ran into a friend* instead of *met a friend by chance* (see Chapter 22). To elaborate on another example above, a pragmatic explanation would again be invoked to account for the difference between *I looked up a word in the dictionary* and *I looked a word up in the dictionary*, different versions of the same basic structure. ESL/EFL students need to know not simply how a structure is formed and what it means; they need to know why speakers of English choose to use one form rather than another when both forms have more or less the same grammatical or lexical meaning.

It is admittedly sometimes difficult to establish firm boundaries between the wedges in the pie, especially between the meaning and use wedges; as we have already pointed out, linguistic categories often have fuzzy boundaries. Nevertheless, we have found the three dimensions of the pie chart useful as a conceptual framework for teaching grammar. Since grammar does not deal simply with form, language teachers cannot be content with having students achieve a certain degree of formal accuracy. Language teachers must also help their students to use the structures meaningfully and appropriately as well. Thus, the three dimensions of form, meaning, and use make explicit the need for students to learn to use grammar structures *accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately*.

### A PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR, NOT A LINGUISTIC GRAMMAR

In aggregating facts about accuracy, meaningfulness, and appropriateness concerning the grammar structures contained in this book, we have drawn from a number of different linguistic schools of thought. Whereas linguistic grammars strive for internal consistency, pedagogical grammars, such as this one for teachers, are eclectic. We feel that insights into the structure of English can be gleaned from different types of analysis. For instance, certain linguistic theories tend to be formal—most concerned with accounting for well-formed strings or sentences. They can be invoked for explaining sentence-level phenomena such as why the reflexive pronoun *himself* in the following sentence must refer to Paul and not to Steve. (See Chapter 16 for the explanation.)

Steve said that Paul hurt himself in the lacrosse game.

Other theories are more functional, seeking to explain the occurrence of certain linguistic structures by exploring the communicative function they play in the organization of discourse. We had an example of this earlier when we looked at how the present perfect tense in English acts as a “scene setter.” Since we are interested here in accounting for both sentential and discourse-level phenomena, we look to both formal and functional linguistic theories for helpful insights into English.

Then, too, linguistic grammars are often inaccessible except to those specially trained to work within a particular paradigm. We have tried to make available linguistic insights without requiring that our readers bring a great deal of linguistic background knowledge with them. We have adopted some formalism, however. For instance, in elucidating the form dimension we have employed our adaptation of transformational generative grammar trees. Although such trees are no longer as visible in the linguistics literature as they once were, we have found them to be a very effective parsing device in

analyzing sentence-level syntax, and some linguists even claim that they describe sentences better than any other description of English to date (e.g., Lasnik and Uriagereka 1988:6). We also have turned to structural linguistics and corpus linguistics for observations relevant to the form dimension. For an understanding of the meaning dimension, we have drawn on insights in traditional, functional, lexical, cognitive, and case grammars. For the use dimension, our treatment comes from work in discourse and contextual analysis and in systemic functional grammar,<sup>1</sup> and again from corpus linguistics. In addition, many of the facts about English that we synthesize for each of the three dimensions originate with our own research and that of our students.

Finally, while many linguistic grammars go into great depth about a restricted set of structures, pedagogic grammars must be as comprehensive as possible in the number of structures they treat. We have tried, therefore, to cover the most frequently occurring structures with which ESL/EFL teachers have to deal in their classes. At the same time, we have been more selective about the amount of detail we include than a linguistic grammar might be. What we have compiled here is information that ESL/EFL teachers need in order to address the learning challenges of their students.

### ACQUIRING SKILL AS WELL AS KNOWLEDGE

Many people are under the impression that the facts about a given language are all known. Nothing could be further from the truth. Much is not known about English, particularly at the level of discourse and in the dimension of pragmatics. Thus, one of the reasons we ask readers to work with the formalism and frameworks that we provide is to give them some tools to go beyond the facts presented in this book. We use linguistic terminology for the same reason. Besides giving us a metalanguage with which to investigate English, the use of linguistic terms will allow readers to consult reference grammars and other sources in order to augment their knowledge as new facts become known. We are interested, therefore, not only in readers' acquiring knowledge from our text but also in their developing the means to go beyond what has been presented here. Incidentally, the pie chart has been a useful tool for us personally in helping us expand our knowledge about English. We can map what we know about a particular grammar structure on a pie chart and create our own research agendas for what we don't know. Many linguistic conundrums await solutions. We call explicit attention to some of these throughout the text, and we encourage our readers to join us in the fun of trying to figure them out.

Before going on, though, it is important to underscore a point to which we alluded earlier. Grammar can be implicitly taught to language students. Therefore, the metalanguage and grammatical descriptions featured in this book are for teachers, who we hope will use them as aids in their teaching, not as the object of the teaching itself. What ESL/EFL teachers should be helping students do is *be able to use* the structures of English accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Thus, ESL/EFL teachers might better think of what they do as teaching "grammaring"—a skill—rather than teaching grammar as an area of knowledge (Larsen-Freeman 1991).

In the interest of balance, having said that grammar can be taught implicitly, let us also offer our view that the choice of ways of helping students use English structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately is contingent upon a number of factors, not the least of which are the learners' own particular cognitive styles. Teachers may help some students by giving them explicit grammatical descriptions and rules, but doing so may not help others. Our point here is simply that any explicit grammatical information should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. If a student can recite a rule but can't apply it, we will have failed in our "grammaring" efforts.

## THE LEARNING PROCESS

No less important to language teachers than understanding the content of what they are teaching is an understanding of the process by which the content is learned. While it is beyond the scope of this book to treat the language acquisition literature in depth here (for books that do, see Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Ellis, 1994), suffice it to say that with anything as complicated as language, it is not likely that the learning process will be a simple, invariant one. That is to say, we sincerely doubt that language acquisition could ever be accounted for by attribution to a single process such as habit formation or rule formation. On the contrary, it is intuitively appealing—to us, at any rate—to attribute language acquisition to a variety of processes, each of which is responsible for some particular aspect of language. For instance, we might hypothesize that habit formation or simple memorization plays a role in the acquisition of formulaic language (lexicogrammatical units such as "How are you?" and "I see what you mean"). On the other hand, hypothesis testing leading to rule formation is a plausible way to describe, although not necessarily explain, the acquisition of generalizations or principles that operate in the language, such as where to place *not* in an English sentence in order to express a negative message. While such attributions are speculative on our part, and we eagerly await the results of the concerted effort that is now being undertaken to research the efficacy of focusing on form,<sup>2</sup> we find the exercise useful for thinking about how one might go about teaching the three dimensions of language. Following the line of reasoning above, one might legitimately expect the different dimensions to be acquired through different means; therefore, it makes sense to think about using a variety of teaching techniques as well.

### A MULTIFACETED TEACHING APPROACH

Please note that we do not argue simply for an eclectic teaching approach. Instead, we advocate a multifaceted approach—using different teaching techniques for teaching different aspects of the three dimensions. The choice will be conditioned by the learning challenge. For instance, what we are trying to achieve when we are teaching learners some structural aspect of English is their being able to accurately produce that structure on their own. We submit that what would assist learners to be able to do so is abundant practice with the particular target form. We might even go so far as to say that *purposeful, not rote*, repetition of a particular syntactic pattern, such as having students play "twenty questions" to practice yes/no question formation, should be incorporated into a lesson on some aspect of form.

When working on some part of the meaning wedge of the pie, however, purposeful repetition might be much less important in bringing about the desired objective of having students be able to use a particular form meaningfully. In the place of purposeful repetition, we might recommend an activity in which students are given an opportunity to associate a particular form with its meaning. An example that springs readily to mind is the technique teachers often employ to have students learn to associate the meanings of certain phrasal verbs with their forms. The students first watch the teacher and then, later, perform actions themselves signalled by the teacher's use of certain phrasal verbs: *Stand up, turn around, sit down*. Such a simple introduction allows the students to forge a meaningful bond between the form of each verb and its meaning.

To practice the use dimension, the activity should require students to make some choice within a context and to receive feedback on the appropriateness of their choice. For instance, after being introduced to the pragmatic difference between *look a word up* and *look up a word*, students might be asked to fill the blanks in a passage, choosing

between the two forms with *look up* as well as the two forms with other phrasal verbs. Further examples of the application of these pedagogical principles will be offered for each structure we treat in this book.<sup>3</sup>

The three previous examples and most of the others we present in this book are practice activities, appropriate to the middle “p” in the “three p” teaching sequence of *present, practice, produce*, which has long guided teachers of grammar as well as teachers of other aspects of language. It should be acknowledged, however, that with the evolution of more communicative approaches, not all teachers adhere rigidly to this sequence. For instance, it might be that the need to teach grammar arises only when teachers notice that students are struggling to produce (the third “p”) a particular grammatical structure during some communicative activity. At this point, a teacher might choose to conduct a practice activity, with or without initially presenting (the first “p”) the structure. Alternatively, many teachers today subscribe to the practice of discovery or inductive learning, letting students figure out for themselves the generalizations about a particular grammatical structure. Thus, one teacher might have students engage in some meaningful consciousness-raising task or practice activity first in order for the students themselves to induce the rule that another teacher, following a more traditional approach, might have presented initially.

## THE SYLLABUS FOR THIS TEXT

We do not deal explicitly with issues of syllabus design in this text. The issue of learnability, or student readiness to learn a particular aspect of the target language, has important implications for the selecting and sequencing of content for ESL/EFL students. Unfortunately, not enough is known about learnability at this point to move us to endorse one sequence of grammatical structures over another, although we do know that students do not master all aspects of one form before moving on to tackle another. The process of language acquisition is not a matter of simply aggregating one structure after another in linear fashion. The process is a gradual one: and even when learners appear to have mastered a particular structure, backsliding may occur as their attention is diverted to a new learning challenge. Thus, it makes sense to recycle various aspects of the target structures over a period of time: revisit old structures, elaborate on them, and use them for points of contrast as new grammatical distinctions are introduced. It also makes sense to think of a grammar syllabus as a checklist rather than an ordered sequence. In this case, it would be a teacher's responsibility to see that students learn the checklist of grammatical items by the end of a given course or period of time, but the choice of sequence would be left up to the teacher and would depend on his or her own approach and the students' needs.

Nevertheless, because this is a text for teachers and because we are teaching *about* the language and not teaching the language itself, we have sequenced the structures with which we deal in an order corresponding to their increasing complexity. While readers may not choose to make their way through the book in a strictly linear fashion, they should be aware that material that appears later in the text often builds upon what has been introduced in earlier chapters.

## WHICH ENGLISH?

Another issue for which we should make our assumptions explicit has to do with “which English” we analyze here. English is not a single uniform language. Instead, many dialects of English are spoken around the world. As native speakers of North American English,

we have chosen to focus our analysis on this dialect, although we acknowledge that many “Englishes” are spoken elsewhere. Though there may be some grammatical differences among dialects of English, they share a significant central core of grammatical units and relationships that enables us to speak of the grammar of English. We also, however, attempt to call attention to major exceptions to the generalizations we make when they do not apply to other dialects, especially to British English.

But even within a particular regional dialect there is variety. What we describe here is Standard English. Which dialect of English is considered Standard English is really more the result of historical sociopolitical factors than linguistic ones. Thus, there is no inherently superior dialect. It is true, however, that those who can use the standard dialect of any language enjoy access to opportunities that others lack. This alone is a good reason for helping students in an ESL context become bidialectal if Standard English is not their native dialect.

Even within Standard English, we encounter variability. The fact of the matter is that language is both an abstract system and a socially constructed practice. As a social construct, it is fluid, changing as it is used (Larsen-Freeman 1997). Since our grammar is descriptive of what English speakers do, it must reflect the variable performance of its users. We report the variability where we have usage studies that reflect what native speakers judge to be acceptable.

Finally, this is not a prescriptive grammar. We are not prescribing what *should* be said. We are more interested in accounting for what native speakers of English *do* say. Prescriptive grammars tell us to say *It is I*, not *It is me*. They also tell us always to use *whom* in object position. A prescriptive grammar can be abused by those who insist on outdated conventions or those who try to tell others what a form ought to mean rather than the meaning understood in general usage. Nevertheless, we feel that prescriptive grammar has its place in formal writing, at least, and students who are preparing to take standardized examinations like the TOEFL will need to know the prescriptive rules. Thus, while our grammar is mainly descriptive, we will call attention, whenever possible, to different norms where there is an obvious conflict between description and prescription.

All this variability manifests itself most often in gradient, rather than absolute, judgments of acceptability; that is, certain forms sound more acceptable than others. This is especially true of spoken, as opposed to written, discourse. However, we do not want to leave readers with the impression that anything goes in English. Despite the variation, there is still consistency of intuitions among speakers of English about what they consider grammatical concerning core grammatical structures in English.

This leaves us to define what ungrammatical means. In this book we restrict the use of the term “ungrammatical” to mean unacceptable to native speakers of English. For example, only the last form in the following list is ungrammatical:

- He did not say anything. (Standard Dialect of English—prescriptive for writing)
- He didn't say anything. (Standard Dialect of English—descriptive of writing and speaking)
- He didn't say nothing. (Nonstandard Dialect of English)
- \*He no say. (Ungrammatical)

The last item on the list, its ungrammaticality signaled with an asterisk, is characteristic of the “interlanguage” produced by many ESL/EFL students. Such utterances provide important clues to what those students have yet to learn in English.

## DEFINING THE LEARNING CHALLENGE

It is not possible to teach everything about English to ESL/EFL students. Further, as instructional time is usually so limited, it is not even possible to teach ESL/EFL students

all that is presented in this book. Students will need to learn it, but it doesn't all have to be taught. Where we have attempted to be comprehensive, within limits, ESL/EFL teachers of grammar will have to be selective. Teachers have to, therefore, choose what to focus their students' attention on, trusting that students will be able to acquire on their own other aspects of English grammar. Thus, it is important that teachers define students' learning challenges: What is it that students most need to learn about a particular structure that they will not easily pick up on their own?

Knowing something about students' native dialect or language is very helpful in defining students' learning challenges. However, we can't devote sufficient space in this book to report all the findings from contrastive linguistics. What we do is to selectively include information about language typologies—that is, how other types of languages differ from English.

Students' learning challenges will depend not only on what knowledge they bring of their native language or dialect but also upon what they already know about English. Since the most effective instruction builds on what students already know, ESL/EFL teachers should continually assess what their students know about English and know how to do in English.

It also helps to define students' learning challenges by knowing where English is inherently difficult. Difficulties often arise when forms are exceptions to paradigms, when they are infrequent, marked, nonsalient, when one form has many functions, when there are semantic overlaps among forms, when the linguistic behavior of forms defies easy generalization, and so on. We hope to contribute to teachers' knowledge about these learning challenges by providing relevant facts about the form, meaning, and use of each major morphological and syntactic structure of English. With regard to these facts, we have attempted to be as comprehensive as space permits. Knowing, however, that instructional time is so limited, we conclude our treatment of each structure by discussing what our experience has led us to believe are the most challenging aspects of that structure.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS

Each chapter includes our analysis of the form, meaning, and use of a particular grammar structure or cluster of structures and any other pertinent information. Following the analysis, we provide teaching suggestions that illustrate ways of raising students' consciousness about certain aspects of English grammar and providing the necessary structured and communicative practice. We label each of these activities according to the dimension—form, meaning, or use—it addresses. We also include exercises of two types: The first allows readers to check their own comprehension of the material presented in each chapter, and the second asks readers to apply what they have learned to teaching issues. An example of the latter type of exercise is one in which we list actual errors made by ESL/EFL students and invite readers to analyze the errors and then suggest ways in which they might help learners bring their production to closer alignment with the target use. We also include sample answers to the exercises in an appendix at the end of the book. The final feature of each chapter is a list of references that allow readers to explore further the structure in focus.

### YOU CAN LEARN GRAMMAR!

It has been our experience that some readers approach the task of learning grammar with some trepidation. While we understand this feeling, we have learned that by carefully reading the material in each chapter and conscientiously doing the exercises at the end, each reader does develop a working knowledge of English grammar. Moreover, some actually come away from the experience believing, as we do, that learning grammar is fun!

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#### Suggestions for Further Reading

For readers who would like to investigate different schools of linguistic thought, we can recommend the following:

- Allen, J. P. B., and H. Widdowson (1975). "Grammar and Language Teaching." In J. P. B. Allen and S. Pit Corder (eds.), *Papers in Applied Linguistics* (vol. 2), 45–97. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, K. and J. Miller (1996). *Concise Encyclopedia of Syntactic Theories*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.\*
- Edmondson, J., and D. Burquest (1992). *A Survey of Linguistic Theories*. Dallas, Tex.: The Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Herndon, J. (1976). *A Survey of Modern Grammars* (2d ed.) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

For readers who would like to investigate different issues for teachers of grammar to consider, we recommend:

- Bygate, M., A. Tonkyn, and E. Williams (1994). *Grammar and the Language Teacher*. London: Prentice Hall International.
- Harmer, J. (1987). *Teaching and Learning Grammar*. Essex: Longman.
- Holisky, D. (1997). *Notes on Grammar*. Arlington, VA: Orchises Press.

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- Odlin, T., ed. (1994). *Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rutherford, W., and M. Sharwood Smith, eds. (1988). *Grammar and Second Language Teaching*. New York: Newbury House Publishers/Harper & Row.
- For teachers' books containing ESL/EFL grammar teaching activities, we recommend:*
- Celce-Murcia, M., and S. Hilles (1988). *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Grammar*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar Practice Activities: A Practical Guide for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- For more information on the sociopolitical aspects of dialect use and how social power relationships motivate choices of linguistic form, see:*
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- For a useful summary contrasting English with a number of other languages, consult:*
- Swan, M., and B. Smith, eds. (1987). *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## ENDNOTES

1. For those who would like to know more about these various grammars, we have listed some references at the end of this chapter.
2. Although to us, of course, it is an oversimplification to talk about focusing on form without also examining the meaningfulness and appropriate use of the form.
3. Additional examples can also be found in Larsen-Freeman (1991) and the four-volume series for ESL students, *Grammar Dimensions* (1993; 1997), for which Larsen-Freeman served as series director.
4. We are grateful to Francisco Gomes de Matos, personal communication, for recommending this reference.

# GRAMMATICAL METALANGUAGE

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to a metalanguage—a language to describe language. For many of you, the words in our metalanguage will be familiar, and you may wish only to skim this chapter. For some of you, this chapter provides an initial exposure to some common linguistic terminology, and you may need to study it more closely in order to become familiar with the new terms. Learning the vocabulary of any new language, however, takes time. Be patient. These new terms will become more meaningful as you encounter them in context throughout the book as you explore the grammatical structures of English.

Some ESL/EFL teachers choose not to use grammatical terminology with their students, feeling that it presents an additional learning burden. Other teachers find that by using the terminology, they can call their students' attention to certain aspects of English grammar more efficiently; thus, they conclude that students' time spent learning the terms is a worthwhile investment. Then, too, some teachers find that their students are more fluent in the metalinguistic terms than they are! As we stated in the previous chapter, we do not want to give the impression that knowing the terms is knowing the grammar. Nevertheless, for teachers, knowing the terms can be helpful in several respects.

First of all, the terms provide a discourse, a way of talking about grammar, that helps in the conceptualization of grammar. Use of the terms also serves a referential function, providing a means to identify these concepts when referring to them subsequently. Finally, by learning the metalinguistic terms, teachers will have better access to the many linguistic resources available to them apart from this text.

In the previous chapter, we discussed the three levels of grammar we address in this book: subsentential, sentential, and suprasentential levels. We use this ternary hierarchy in introducing the metalinguistic terminology in this chapter.

## SUBSENTENTIAL TERMINOLOGY

### THREE CRITERIA: SEMANTIC, STRUCTURAL, AND FUNCTIONAL

It may surprise some readers to learn that even identifying standard parts of speech is an enterprise fraught with difficulty. Consider, for example, the standard definition of a noun with which many of you are familiar: "A noun is the name of a person, place or thing." This definition works for the nouns *Kevin*, *Cincinnati*, and *eraser*, but it becomes problematic when we think about a word such as *blue*. Those of you conversant with part-of-speech terms may immediately identify *blue* as an adjective since it is a descriptive word. But one could