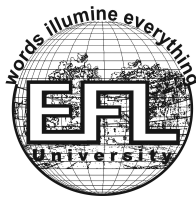

**Post-Graduate Certificate in the
Teaching of English**

**MODERN ENGLISH GRAMMAR
AND USAGE**

BLOCK

I

General Introduction



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Printed at

Publications Unit, The English and Foreign Languages University
Hyderabad - 500 605, India

Published by

The English and Foreign Languages University
Hyderabad - 500 605, India

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Hyderabad - 500 605, India

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MODERN ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND USAGE

BLOCK I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Contents

Introduction to the block	i
Unit 1	
What is grammar and why study it?	1
Unit 2	
Usage: acceptability and related factors	15
Unit 3	
Concepts and categories	31

INTRODUCTION TO THE BLOCK

This block attempts to provide an introduction to the course in **Modern English Grammar and Usage**. Some of you would have made a formal study of English grammar at some stage of your college courses. On the other hand there may be many among you who have not undergone any courses in grammar. We believe, however, that as teachers of English it is quite necessary for you to have a formal knowledge of English grammar.

Unit 1 states the various meanings of the term "grammar" and isolates those meanings which are relevant for our purposes. It goes on to classify grammar into various kinds and to provide a justification for its study by teachers.

The aim of any grammar is to (enable us to) distinguish between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in a given language. But *acceptability* itself is a broad and relative term. Unit 2 therefore discusses the criteria for acceptability in English; it also briefly examines the notion of Indian English and its relation to the question of acceptability.

Unit 3 introduces the tools as well as the processes of grammatical analysis. It provides an outline of the topics that will be discussed in detail in the later units.

Unit 1

WHAT IS GRAMMAR AND WHY STUDY IT?

Contents

1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 What is grammar?	2
1.2 Grammar implicit and explicit	3
1.3 Prescriptive and descriptive grammars	5
1.4 Linguist's grammar, learner's grammar and teacher's grammar	7
1.5 Why should teachers study grammar?	13
1.6 Summary	14
1.7 Recommended reading	14

Unit 1

WHAT IS GRAMMAR AND WHY STUDY IT?

1.0 Introduction

In this unit we shall try to explore the meaning of the word "grammar". We will also briefly examine the different kinds of grammar. We shall conclude by looking at the ways in which the present course in **Modern English Grammar and Usage** can help you as a teacher of English.

May I start by asking you a frank question? What do you feel in general about grammar? School children, while they are getting to know one another, always ask, "What is your favourite subject?" Perhaps, instead of putting it that way (since I know grammar is hardly likely to be anyone's favourite subject!), I should ask you, "What do you associate grammar with?" The answer would most probably be, "Boredom or boring and mechanical exercises"! Our image of the grammarian is that of a dull, lifeless person, far removed from the pleasures of this world or even the bliss of the next. The poet Robert Browning has taught us how to visualize a grammarian's funeral. Has anyone ever spoken about a grammarian's birthday party or wedding?

It must therefore be a surprise for you to learn that etymologically the word "grammar" is related to the word "glamour"! "That is impossible!", you are perhaps exclaiming, "Grammar is the most unglamorous thing in the world". I think, on the contrary (and so do my colleagues on this course), that grammar is, if not a glamorous, at least a very interesting, and often an exciting, subject of study. All of us (your course instructors) have had the good fortune of studying grammar with some exciting teachers and we hope we will succeed in making the study of English grammar interesting, and useful, for you.

1.1 What is grammar?

The dictionary defines "grammar" as the "rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences". This is a good, simple definition and it reflects the way we generally think of grammar. But quite often we use the word "grammar" in certain other senses as well. Shall we look at some of them?

Activity A

Consider the following statements. Say what the word "grammar" means in each of these. First put down your answers in your notebook, then compare them with those I have provided in the discussion that follows.

- (a) English grammar is dull, but I find chemistry very interesting.
- (b) Nesfield's grammar was a best-seller in India for a long time.
- (c) Gopal's spelling is O.K., but his grammar is horrid.
- (d) Varnammal's grammar is good, but her pronunciation is atrocious.
- (e) Neela's grammar is quite correct, but her vocabulary is quite limited.
- (f) Transformational-generative grammar is far more insightful than tagmemic grammar.
- (g) English has a lot of grammar, but my mother tongue hardly has any.
- (h) I have to follow grammar very strictly when I speak in English, but in my mother tongue I am free to speak as I like.

Discussion

- (a) "Grammar" here means a subject of study included in the curriculum.
 - (b) "Grammar" here obviously refers to a particular book of grammar, and it is compared with other books (on grammar or any other subject).
 - (c) (d) and (e) can be taken up together. In all these, "grammar" refers to a particular area (or aspect of proficiency or mastery) in the language. Overall mastery in English in this sense would mean mastery of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and grammar.
 - (f) "Grammar" here means the particular theoretical approach to language in general. "Grammar" in this sense refers to a linguistic theory.
 - (g) and (h). "Grammar" here obviously means a consciously learned and explicit set of rules and principles. We learn such a set when we learn a foreign language. Our mother tongue too has (in fact all languages have) its own set of rules and principles (as well as "exceptions" and variations). And when we speak (or even write) our mother tongue, we do follow these rules, but this following of the rules is quite unconscious. We have *internalized* these rules, as it were, and they come into play whenever we use our mother tongue. Since this process is generally unconscious, we have the feeling that our mother tongue (or any language we have learnt by mere exposure and use) has no grammar, whereas English (or any language that we study formally) has a lot of grammar.
-

1.2 Grammar implicit and explicit

I don't think your answers on the meaning of the word "grammar" in statements (a) to (h) above would have been very different from mine. You might have had some difficulty with (f) and perhaps you still have some doubts about (g) and (h), my explanation notwithstanding. Let me try to make the point clearer by asking you to look at the following sentences, all of which are *unacceptable* in some way or the other. (The asterisk mark * when placed before a sentence means that the sentence is unacceptable.)

- * (1) Why do the members of political parties sometimes behave like sheeps?
- * (2) My neighbour's daughter is five, but they still haven't sent her to the school.
- * (3) How can an ill horse run a race?
- * (4) He made us to realize our mistake.

I am sure you can right away correct all these sentences and make them acceptable, but before I ask you to do that, let me tell you what happened when I presented the same sentences to one of my friends, called Kiran, who is not an English teacher. I simply asked him if he thought these sentences were O.K. He said "No, they are not O.K." He in fact proceeded to correct them and make them acceptable. He said they should read as follows:

- (5) Why do the members of political parties sometimes behave like sheep?
- (6) My neighbour's daughter is five, but they still haven't sent her to school.
- (7) How can a sick horse (or a horse that is ill) run a race?
- (8) He made us realize our mistake.

However, when I asked Kiran what exactly it was that he found wrong with the sentences, whether he could explain the nature of the mistake in each case, he said, "Sorry, that I can't".

Then I took the "faulty" sentences to another of my friends, called Krishnaiah, who teaches English in a high school. He not only corrected the sentences but went on to say exactly what was wrong with each of them. His explanations were as follows:

Sentence (1) is wrong because "sheep" is a noun which does not undergo any change when a plural is formed.

"School" does not take an article when it refers to the institution (the "primary" purpose for which it is meant), whereas it takes the definite article when it means the building. ("Nowadays, children start going to school even at the age of three", but "I went to the school to pay my daughter's tuition fee".)

"Ill" is an adjective which can be used only predicatively (i.e. after the noun as part of the predicate), it cannot be used attributively, i.e. before a noun. "Sick" is an adjective which can be used both attributively and predicatively (We can say "The sick horse couldn't run the race" as well as "The horse was sick and couldn't run the race".)

Sentence (4) is unacceptable because the verb "make" can be followed only by the bare infinitive and not by the infinitive with "to".

Thus my friend Krishnaiah was able to state and explain the rule that had been violated in each of the cases. However, something very interesting happened in the course of our conversation, which continued for sometime after Krishnaiah had given me these "explanations". I asked him how he found his students reacting to grammar, and he said, "Of course they don't like to do grammar exercises, but I make them to do". I found this interesting - I hope you won't think I am acting very superior! - because Krishnaiah was committing the very mistake which he so easily detected in one of the sentences which I had shown him. (Besides, he made another mistake in using "do" without an object: he should have said, "... I make them do the exercises".) I am quite sure however that he would have easily realized, and pointed out, the two mistakes if I had quoted his own sentence to him. In other words, though he had consciously learnt the rules of sentence-formation in English, he had not quite *internalized* these rules, with the result that he tended not to follow them whenever he was *using* English, not just *talking about* English.

Suppose we distinguish two kinds of linguistic ability in our discussion of grammar.

- (i) the ability to *use* the language (English or any other). By virtue of this ability, we produce acceptable sentences, distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable sentences or formations. This is the ability that my friend Kiran had.
- (ii) the ability to *talk about* the language, to use *metalinguage* about language. By virtue of this we can *introspect* about sentences (produced by us or by others), explain the rules or processes involved. This is the ability that my friend Krishnaiah displayed when I discussed the faulty sentences with him.

We can say that these two abilities derive from two kinds of knowledge. When we say that someone *knows* English, we may have in mind either (in some cases) or both (in some cases) of these kinds of knowledge. The first kind of knowledge, which we may call an *implicit* knowledge, enables the person to use English, to speak it, write it, understand it when it is spoken or written, and also to distinguish between well-formed and ill-formed sentences. The second kind of knowledge, which we may call an *explicit* knowledge, enables us to state the rules of sentence-formation (as well as word-formation) in English and also to say how these rules have been observed, or not observed, in particular instances.

Suppose we go a step further and say that what we have here are actually two kinds of grammar (or at least two meanings of the word "grammar"). Grammar A means an implicit or internalized knowledge of the rules of a language and it is unconsciously in operation whenever we use the language. Grammar B means an explicit knowledge of the rules of the language in question and it enables us to speak in a formal, technical, way about that language. All native speakers of a language possess Grammar A (since they can use the language in an acceptable way and can tell when it is not used in an unacceptable way). Not all native speakers of a language may have Grammar B; they may not be able to formally explain the rules and processes involved in sentence-making. On the other hand, foreign learners of a language may master Grammar B (which is after all only a codification of Grammar A) very well indeed in the sense that they are able to formally state the rules of the language and say how they are observed or broken in particular cases.

Let us now discuss another distinction. May I once again ask you to look at a few sentences?

Activity B

Say whether the following sentences are acceptable. Would you use them yourself? Even if you would, have you ever heard anyone say that sentences like these are not correct? Compare your answers with those provided in the Discussion which follows.

- (i) (a) Who do you want?
- (b) Bindu is the girl I spoke to.
- (c) He only died last week.
- (d) Has everyone brought their books?
- (e) My wife is taller than me.
- (f) One can't be thinking of his own problems all the time.

Discussion

All these sentences are acceptable: at any rate, they systematically or regularly occur in the speech of educated native speakers of English. However, there were--and still are--people who would dismiss all these sentences as "incorrect". These people would correct them as follows:

- (ii) (a) Whom do you want?
- (b) Bindu is the girl to whom I spoke.
- (c) He died only last week.
- (d) Has everyone brought his book?
- (e) My wife is taller than I.
- (f) One can't be thinking of one's own problems all the time.

1.3 Prescriptive and descriptive grammars

We said that all the sentences cited in (i) above are regularly found in the speech of native speakers of English. However, there were, and even now there are, some grammar books which would dismiss all those sentences as "incorrect". Current usage accepts all these sentences but these grammars reject them as "incorrect" or "bad" English. Often such grammars have clearly stated "reasons"

for rejecting these sentences. In the case of the sentences in (i) above the reasons may be stated as follows:

- (a) The interrogative pronoun here should be in the accusative case as it functions as the object of "want". "Whom" is correct because it is the accusative case form; "who" is wrong because it is the nominative case form.
- (b) It is wrong to end a sentence with a preposition.
- (c) The position of "only" here creates ambiguity. Does it qualify "He" ("It is only he who died, not others") or "last week" ("He died only last week, not earlier")
- (d) "Everyone" is singular and so the subsequent pronoun should also be singular.
- (e) "Than" is a conjunction and the noun or pronoun which follows it should be in the nominative case. So it should be "I", not "me".
- (f) If you use the indefinite "one" once in a sentence, you should continue with it for the rest of the sentence and not replace it with "he". (On the other hand, "someone" can be replaced by "he" "his", etc.)

(Please do not worry if you have not been able to think up these "reasons" yourself, or even if you are not able to understand them at this stage.)

To repeat, there are some grammars which would, for the reasons mentioned above, call the sentences in (i) unacceptable or "incorrect". There are, however, other grammars which would consider all those sentences acceptable for the simple reason that they are all found in current usage. We call these two kinds of grammar *prescriptive* and *descriptive* grammars respectively. A grammar which lays down rules for the use of a language is a prescriptive grammar; such a grammar would call all those sentences "correct" which observe these rules and all those sentences "incorrect" which break these rules in some way or the other. A grammar which states the facts of the language as they exist and records sentences as they are spoken (or written) systematically by a large number of speakers is a descriptive grammar.

Now you should not think that only prescriptive grammars have rules and that there are no "rules" to be found in a descriptive grammar. In fact, a descriptive grammar also contains "rules" but these "rules" - "conventions" is a better word - are those that actually *underlie* the usage of native speakers. Even when these rules or conventions are actually broken by the native speakers themselves, a descriptive grammar records these "violations" in an objective way as part of changing or current usage.

Perhaps the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive grammars will become clearer if you compare it with the distinction between natural laws and the laws of the government. Laws like the law of gravitation or the law of planetary motion (which scientists speak about) actually describe the phenomena found in nature. On the contrary, the laws of a society or of a government (like traffic rules) prescribe what we should do and penalize us if we do not observe them. The "rules" of a descriptive grammar are like the natural laws stated by scientists: they are based on actual usage. The "rules" of a prescriptive grammar are like the laws of the government: they tell us how we ought to use the language.

Activity C

Look at each of the statements below and say whether you would assign it to a prescriptive grammar or a descriptive grammar. If the statement is a prescriptive one, say whether it is based on actual usage or it ignores usage in some way.

1. A preposition is always followed by a noun or a pronoun which completes the phrase introduced by the preposition. The preposition cannot be moved away from the rest of the phrase.
2. That it is a solecism to begin a sentence with *and* is a faintly lingering SUPERSTITION. The OED gives examples ranging from the 10th to the 19th c.; the Bible is full of them.
3. In American English and in very informal British English, . . . one frequently hears sentences such as *I'll see you Sunday*, in which the preposition *on* is omitted before a day of the week standing on its own.
4. How can we accept compounds like "vacuum-cleaner" and "bathing pool"? Surely, nobody would want to clean a vacuum; and surely, there is no pool which can bathe?
5. The foreign student of English must remember that, apart from (some) exceptions . . . a preposition is *not* used after verbs like *answer, approach, ask, attach, enter*.

Discussion

1. It is a prescriptive statement which ignores a large number of instances in which the preposition is split from its complement (e.g. Who did you leave the message with? The book you were telling us about is not available in the library. What a mess I've got into!)
2. A descriptive statement.
3. A descriptive statement.
4. These are rhetorical questions constituting prescriptive statements against the use of the compounds in question. The compounds are however part of usage.
5. It is a prescriptive statement so far as foreign students of English are concerned, but it is based on the usage of native speakers of English.

You must understand that it is for reasons of convenience that we make a sharp distinction between prescriptive grammars and descriptive grammars. There is, in fact, no grammar which is entirely prescriptive in the sense of laying down rules which are never observed by anyone. That is, most of the prescriptive "rules" are based on actual usage. Moreover, whether a grammar should be prescriptive or descriptive (as a whole or in parts) is determined by the purposes for which the grammar is to be used. That leads us to yet another classification of kinds of grammar.

1.4 Linguist's grammar, learner's grammar and teacher's grammar

On the basis of the purpose for which the grammar is intended, we can divide grammars into three kinds: *linguist's grammar, learner's grammar* and *teacher's grammar*.

Linguist's grammar: Linguists are interested in studying language as a system of signs (which means the study of the relationships among the signs), how language is acquired, how it is comprehended, how it is produced and so on. One school of linguistics today is interested in setting up a universal grammar which can be used to study all languages. Such a grammar attempts to view all linguistic activity in terms of certain transformational processes and operations. The goal of such a grammar (as well as of the linguistic theory behind it) may be

to understand the nature of the human mind through a study of human language(s). The linguist's grammar therefore is often based on philosophical speculation about the nature of language and the human mind and it is characterized by a rigorously developed set of technical terms and distinctions. There are of course different schools of linguistics but the linguist's grammar in each case is built on a particular hypothesis/theory of language. Moreover, the linguist's grammar is not (generally speaking) concerned with language teaching in any formal sense though it is interested in language acquisition.

Learner's grammar: A learner's grammar, as the name suggests, is meant to help the learner to learn the *language in question* (or rather to learn to use the language). We said that a linguist's grammar is invariably based on a linguistic theory (about the nature of language or language acquisition). The linguist's grammar may itself contain an account of the theory in question. A learner's grammar is also the result or end-product of certain theoretical discussions about the nature of language learning (especially learning in formal settings), but these theories are not described or even mentioned in the grammar itself. The theoretical questions that are asked before a learner's grammar is written are such as the following: (a) Should there be any formal teaching of grammar at all in a language teaching/learning programme? Does the formal learning of grammar help in language use? (b) If the answer to the previous questions is "yes", how much grammar should be taught and of what kind? (c) How should the grammar be presented? So, you see, a learner's grammar should keep in mind a wide range of considerations such as the particular educational theories that are current at the time, the extent of information to be provided, the particular educational environment, the age and level of the learners and so on. For example, at a time when language learning was viewed as a process of imitation and habit-formation, learner's grammars consisted of basic information followed by a lot of repetitive, often mechanical drills. (See a book like Stannard Allen, *Living English Structure*.) At present, however, when language learning is viewed more as a creative activity than as a mechanical activity, the focus is on indirectly presenting and teaching grammar items through tasks in *language use*. In other words, a learner's grammar today presents a minimum of formal information (sometimes in the form of do's and don't's), but it mainly attempts to induce and reinforce the mastery of grammatical skills (such as the proper use of tenses or the formation of interrogatives) through a series of meaningful, contextualized tasks.

Teacher's grammar: A teacher's grammar should obviously contain more *information* than a learner's grammar. After all it is a truism that the level of the teacher's knowledge should always be higher than that of the learner. Only then will s/he be able to solve the learner's problems as and when s/he encounters them. However, the teacher is not (and need not be) interested in the theoretical problems that concern the linguist. But, even though the linguist may disclaim any interest in pedagogic issues, some of the linguist's insights may prove valuable when they are applied to language teaching. The teacher's grammar makes these insights available to the teacher so that the teacher can filter them still further and pass them on, if and when necessary, to the students. A teacher's grammar may thus be said to occupy a middle ground between a linguist's grammar and a learner's grammar with regard to (a) the quantum and complexity of information presented and (b) the kind and number of technical terms employed. So far as the mode of presentation is concerned, a teacher's grammar need not be situationalized or contextualized as a learner's grammar has to be.

Let me illustrate this classification of grammars (into linguist's, teacher's and learner's grammars) with a set of three examples. All the extracts given below deal with the grammatical topic known as subject-verb concord:

(a) Linguist's grammar

(Beginning of extract)

You normally ensure that the form of the verbal agrees with the number of the surface subject. For example, when the surface subject is third person singular, the present tense form of the verb ends in "s". In some cases, the verb is a kind of carbon copy showing a plural form when the surface subject is plural, and a singular form when it is singular. In other cases, when the verb is in the past tense for example, the form of the verb is the same regardless of whether its surface subject is singular or plural. Thus we have

the ballerina laughed

and

the ballerinas laughed

but not

*the ballerina laugheds.

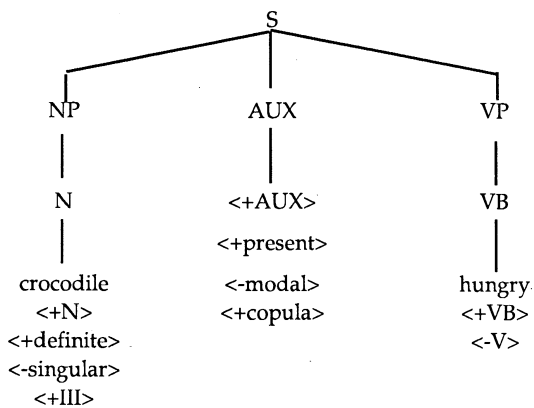
Since the "s" is only added to present tense verbs whose surface subjects are not merely <+singular>, but also in the third person <+III>, the person feature must be considered in transformations affecting agreement.

How may this kind of information be presented in terms of the kind of feature analysis used here? What processes are involved in agreement?

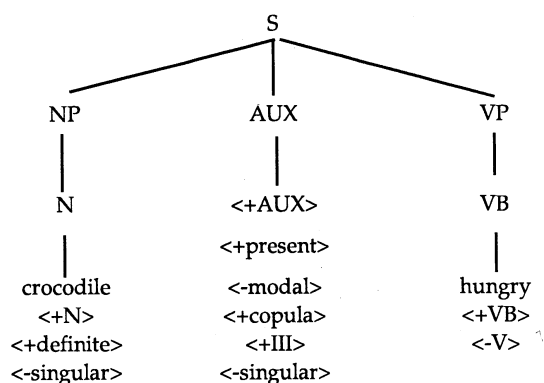
At least two steps are involved in agreement. The first affects the auxiliary segment. Remember that the copula transformation introduces a copula segment before adjectives such as "hungry" in the deep structure for

the crocodiles are hungry.

The auxiliary incorporation transformation then incorporates the copula segment into the auxiliary. As yet, however, there is no indication about which form of the copula is to be used in the structure, since both person and number features are missing from the auxiliary.



The third person plural form of the copula is needed if the auxiliary is to agree with its surface subject. The auxiliary must have, then, the features <+III> and <-singular>, the last two features marked on the subject. So the first transformation required for agreement, the auxiliary agreement transformation, as it may be called, copies the number and person features of the subject onto the auxiliary segment.



The word in the lexicon with features matching that of the auxiliary segment is "are".

(End of extract)

(b) Teacher's grammar

(Beginning of extract)

Subject-verb concord

Concord

Concord can be broadly defined as the relationship between two grammatical elements such that if one of them contains a particular feature (eg plurality) then the other also has to have that feature. The most important type of concord in English is concord of number between subject and verb. The normally observed rule is very simple:

A singular subject requires a singular verb

A plural subject requires a plural verb

On number in the verb phrase and noun phrase see 3.10 and 4.48 ff; the English verb inflections (except for the verb BE) only make a distinction of number in the 3rd person present. Hence sentences (1) and (2) are grammatical, while (3) and (4) are not:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) The window is open
(sing+sing) | (3) *The window are open
(sing+plur) |
| (2) The windows are open
(plur+plur) | (4) *The windows is open
(plur+sing) |

A clause in the position of subject counts as singular for purposes of concord: *How you got there doesn't concern me; To treat them as hostages is criminal.* The same is true of prepositional phrases, etc acting as subject: *After the meeting is the time to speak,* etc. Nominal relative clauses on the other hand, since they are equivalent to noun phrases (11.14), may have plural as well as singular concord: *What were once human dwellings are now nothing but piles of rubble.*

Note

- [a] In fact, it is possible to generalize the rule of concord to "A subject which is not definitely marked for plural requires a singular verb"; that is, to treat singular as the "unmarked" form, to be used in neutral circumstances, where no positive indication of plurality is present. This would explain, in addition to clausal and adverbial subjects, the tendency in informal

speech for *is/was* to follow the pseudo-subject *There* in existential sentences such as

There's hundreds of people on the waiting list (14.26)

- [b] Apparent exceptions to the concord rule arise with singular nouns ending with the *-s* of the plural inflection (*measles, billiards, mathematics, etc.* 4.52), or conversely plural nouns lacking the inflection (*cattle, people, clergy, etc.* 4.57):
- [c] Plural words and phrases (including coordinate phrases, see 7.26) count as singular if they are used as names, titles, quotations, etc (see further 9.164):

Crime and Punishment is perhaps the best-constructed of Dostoyevsky's novels; but *The Brothers Karamazov* is undoubtedly his masterpiece.

(The titles of some works which are collections of stories, etc, however, hover between singular and plural: *The Canterbury Tales* exist/exists in many manuscripts.) Such noun phrases can be regarded as appositional structures with a deleted singular head: The book "Crime and Punishment", The expression "Senior Citizens", etc.

(End of extract)

(c) Learner's grammar

(Beginning of extract)

Singular And Plural Verbs

DIALOGUE

Buying a Scooter

- Salesman : Good morning, sir!
- Mr Kumar : Good morning. I want a second-hand scooter, please. Are these second-hand scooters?
- Salesman : No, sir, they're new. The second-hand ones are over there. This way, please. Here's a pretty blue-and-white scooter. It's had only one owner and the engine is very good.
- Mr Kumar : It has one new tyre and one old tyre. Strange, isn't it?
- Salesman : A nail went into the front tyre, sir. So the owner put in a new one. And the seats are new.
- Mr Kumar : How much is it?
- Salesman : Rs.2,000. But I could give it to you for a hundred rupees less.
- Mr Kumar : Make it two hundred less and it's a deal.
- Salesman : All right, sir. It's yours. Shall I change the other tyre too?

USAGE

Students need practice in using singular and plural verbs correctly, especially auxiliaries.

- X The children was poorly dressed.
/ The children were poorly dressed.
X The lions in the zoo is looking rather thin.
/ The lions in the zoo are looking rather thin.

- X The train don't stop at Arkonam and Katpadi.
/ The train doesn't stop at Arkonam and Katpadi.
- X The men in that field has stopped work early.
/ The men in that field have stopped work early.
1. Choose the correct form of the verb in the following sentences:
 - a. He...like the country. (don't, doesn't)
 - b. He says that there ... any restaurants in the country. (aren't, isn't)
 - c. There ... any department stores or cinemas (aren't, isn't)
 - d. One can... very good plays in town: one can ... wonderful meals in town; and one can.... beautiful clothes in town. (see, sees; eat, eats; buy, buys)
 - e. In the country all that a man can ... is to sit near a river and ... fresh air. (do, does; breathe, breathes)
 - f. In the country there... no music sabhas, museums or even good book-shops. (are, is)
 2. Re-write these sentences so that they refer to all popular film stars and not just to one:
 - a. A popular film star is busy throughout the year.
 - b. She is usually in eight or nine films at the same time.
 - c. In between films, she has to take part in any number of charity shows.
 - d. She has to be photographed every other day for promoting a new brand of soap or toothpaste.
 - e. She goes once a day to a beauty parlour, and twice a week to the hair-dresser's.
 - f. She finds it impossible to be present at every birthday party or wedding she is invited to.
 - g. It is no surprise then that she does not find time to pay her income tax!

(End of extract)

Activity D

Examine the three extracts given above. What characteristics of the respective types of grammar (linguist's, teacher's and learner's) do they display? (Please do not worry if you do not understand some of the terms or statements especially in (a) and (b).)

Discussion

- (a) This extract from Jacobs and Rosenbaum's *English Transformational Grammar* is based (like the rest of the grammar) on the theoretical distinction between surface structures and deep structures. It is also based on the notion that "our knowledge of the idiosyncratic properties of words may be represented as a kind of internalized dictionary, called a lexicon". Notice also the other technical terms used such as the copula, auxiliary agreement transformation. The extract describes agreement as the result of certain operations.

- (b) The extract is from Randolph Quirk, et al. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, pages 359-60. There is quite some formal information presented here (a teacher's grammar) but there isn't, obviously, any linguistic theory underlying the information. The notion of concord is explained in terms of analysis rather than operations. There is considerable additional information provided in the extract which would help the teacher clarify any doubts which the students might have about concord. The mode of presentation however is more that of the linguist's grammar than that of the learner's grammar.
- (c) This is an extract from M.P. Bhaskaran and D. Horsburgh, *Strengthen Your English* (pages 5-6), a learner's grammar. The quantum of formal grammatical explanation/information is practically nil. The extract is based on the view that what the students need are a few illustrations of concord observed with parallel sentences showing the violation of concord. Note how the terms "concord" and "subject" have been avoided. Only "verb", "auxiliary", "singular" and "plural" (terms which are already likely to be known to the students) have been used. The one-sentence statement and the examples have a remedial purpose, teaching students how to avoid mistakes of this kind.
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1.5 Why should teachers study grammar?

The present course attempts to present a grammar which we would like to call a teacher's grammar. You might perhaps ask, why should teachers study grammar?

We believe that every teacher of English should have a thorough knowledge of the facts of the language. There is an unending debate about whether formal English grammar should be taught to learners (especially in the Indian situation where English is neither the mother tongue nor exactly a foreign language) and, if it should be taught, how much of it is to be taught, and how it is to be taught. A teacher's grammar should help teachers to discuss these questions in an intelligent and informed way and arrive at workable decisions. A knowledge of the facts of English should help the teacher in the matter of syllabus design (whenever he/she has a say in it), and classroom teaching and testing (especially remedial teaching and testing). The grammar can provide a list and description of the major grammatical items out of which the syllabus maker and teacher can make a selection. Even if there is no formal teaching of grammar, a teacher's grammar can help the teacher to locate problem areas in the students' English and devise lessons accordingly.

There is another way in which a teacher's grammar can be helpful. We said earlier that a learner's grammar may have to be prescriptive in a broad sense, especially when the language taught is a second or foreign language, as is the case with English in India. A teacher's grammar will help the teacher in establishing a sound descriptive basis for the prescriptive grammar which may have to be taught to the students. For example, let us take the following two sentences:

- (a) The book to which you referred is not available.
(b) The book you referred to is not available.

A teacher's grammar (which is generally speaking a descriptive grammar) will help the teacher to see (and tell his/her students) that while both these sentences are acceptable, the first is more formal than the second. The teacher will therefore not mark either of these sentences as wrong, he/she would simply point out the difference between the two.

1.6 Summary

In this introductory unit we have looked a little closely at the term "grammar". We first saw that "grammar" could mean either (a) the ability to use a language in an acceptable way or (b) the formal knowledge of the rules or conventions that underlie such acceptable use of the language. We then classified grammars first into (a) descriptive and (b) prescriptive ones and then, into (a) linguist's (b) learner's and (c) teacher's grammars. We also tried to see how the present course, which attempts to present a teacher's grammar, may be useful to you as a teacher of English in India.

1.7 Recommended reading

Quirk, Randolph. 1972. "On Conceptions of Good Grammar", in *The English Language and Images of Matter*. London: Oxford University Press.

Quirk, Randolph, et al. 1972. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.
(Read Sections 1.8 to 1.14)