
In the words of the authors, this book is 'an introductory course in English grammar for use in English-medium schools, colleges and universities' (p. xi). It would certainly benefit South African pupils, students and teachers (the latter two groups at both English and Afrikaans-medium institutions of tertiary education) if *English Grammar for Today* were prescribed as a textbook in departments of English. Students in departments of Linguistics oriented to English should also find this a useful book. Judging from the views on grammar reflected in many classrooms and in essays of students in departments of English and Linguistics, there is without doubt a great need for a book of this nature in this country.

A particularly important part of this book, therefore, is the Introduction, which, in the words of the Preface, provides a 'reorientation: dispelling myths, ... seeking a new appraisal of the value of grammar in present-day education' (p. xi). One of the reorientations is the place assigned to the prescriptive approach to grammar. After the observation that 'linguists who write grammars are concerned with describing how the language is used rather than prescribing how it should be used' (p. 5), prescriptive rules of grammar are not dispensed with outright, but shown to be rules of grammatical etiquette, of value in the sense that linguistic behaviour often has a communicative effect, either negatively or positively, and that this effect may be exploited by the language user. In the place of the prescriptive distinction between good and bad grammar, the distinction between good and bad communication is introduced. The following paragraph gives some indication of the strength and potential of the approach to grammar prevailing in this book:

Since using language is a skill, it is inevitable that some people are more skilled in this respect than others. There is no need to shrink from evaluation of this skill - for example, saying that one writer has a better style of writing than another. It is helpful, for this purpose, to be aware of the grammatical resources of the language, and the various possibilities which may be open to the user who wants to make effective use of the language. In this way we gain conscious control over the skill of using language. This is one of the main reasons for learning about grammar. (p. 13).
The largest and main part of the book is the 'Analysis', which presents a 'method for describing the grammatical structure of sentences' (p. xi). The grammatical analysis is based on Halliday's systemic grammar, and throughout the detailed and comprehensive description of grammatical structure the authors relate information about grammatical forms and structure to meanings, uses and situations. The structures that are described in Chapters 2 to 7 are arranged according to the rank scale of words, phrases, clauses and sentences, eventually leading to the parsing of sentences illustrating subordination and coordination. The grammatical description is not limited to the constituent structure model, however, but is extended to include the description of transformations, i.e. both basic and derived structures are described. A valuable aspect of this section of the grammatical description is that attention is given to the stylistic function and the communicative effects of transformations. The reader is made aware of the difference in the impact of, for instance, passive as opposed to active structures.

In the third part of the book, 'Applications', the method of grammatical analysis described in the 'Analysis' is applied to the study of style in the sense of discourse analysis and the analysis of literary discourse. The chapter devoted to literary stylistics makes stimulating reading and shows, by means of an illustrated method of stylistic analysis, that a knowledge of grammar is essential to the appreciation of literary style.

In this part the chapter on problem areas of usage ranges from the much debated use of personal pronouns (for instance, the choice between who and whom in certain cases; and the well-known confusion in the use of I/me) to the more current problem with the generic masculine. An interesting solution suggested by the authors is what they call their 'principle of discretion': 'When you are faced with the dilemma of either disobeying a prescriptive 'rule' or awkwardly and conspicuously obeying it, reformulate the sentence so that the dilemma does not arise' (p. 173).

The last of the applications is that of grammar to composition, a useful chapter of precepts of good linguistic behaviour in written composition, illustrated by many examples.

Each chapter of this book is concluded by a brief summary of its contents and a section containing groups of exercises referred to in the chapter itself, answers to which are provided at the end of the book, together with useful suggestions for further reading. These exercises stimulate student or reader participation, since they are interesting and formulated in such a way that they invite comments and creative activity on the part of
the reader. Cross-references in the text ensure continuity in the reader's progress through the book. At the beginning of the book, a list is given of the symbols and conventions used in the text, and at the end a detailed index of seven pages is provided, leaving the reader with an impression of well-structuredness.

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The theory of the 'metastructure' of short texts on which Michael Jordan has based his text book is that of Eugene Winter's *Towards a Contextual Grammar of English*. It posits that there are four parts to the metastructure: 'Situation - Problem - Solution - Evaluation'. After showing how closely linked the writing of short texts is to the writing of summaries, Jordan begins his account of the metastructure with straightforward texts which follow the basic paradigm, and then proceeds to consider variations. For example, a text may consist only of 'Solution - Evaluation', 'Problem - Solution' or 'Problem - Solution - Evaluation'; or the sequence of the components may be varied.

In the course of the book the four parts of the metastructure are identified and analysed in two ways: linguistically and semantically. Each short text which the author quotes is analysed for the linguistic features which signal the different parts of the text. For example, overt signals of 'Problem' are words such as 'snag', the negatives 'unavailable, incompatible', words such as 'smelly, stain', and words of quantity, 'not enough, lack, too'. All such signals are classified and listed in separate indexes at the end of the book. More complex, semantic, signals are also illustrated at length.

For his analysis of the semantics of the metastructure, Jordan concentrates in the last chapters on the nature of 'Problems' and 'Evaluation'. His chapter on 'Problems', for example, deals with 'Decisions signalled as problems, dilemmas and decisions, needs and aims, corporate aims, formal requirements, psychological problems, "need-to-know" problems'. The index on Types