Introduction

This is a pedagogical grammar—it is addressed to prospective teachers. It is addressed primarily to those students who will at one time or another teach English (and, in one sense or another, English grammar) to non-native speakers of English, but in many ways it is also appropriate as an introduction to English grammar for students who will teach native speakers of English about the grammar of their own language.

This book is an introduction, not a reference grammar. Students who already have a basic understanding of English grammar should not use this book but should be referred to already available reference grammars. Certainly a number of excellent reference grammars already exist, for example, the monumental *A Grammar of Contemporary English* by Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik.

This book is also an introduction to English grammar. And, as is in some senses inevitable, certain assumptions recognized or not have to be made when writing a grammar. However, the primary consideration the needs of the prospective (and, practicing) language teacher. Thus, in contrast to so many ‘modern’ texts, it is not an introduction to some particular linguistic theory presented in the guise of an introduction to English grammar being foisted on students with other interests and goals. If that is what is being sought, it will not be too hard to find, but it will have to be found elsewhere.

Students need information about several things that are often either omitted or slighted even in supposedly pedagogical grammars: written English (and its relationship to spoken English) and the aspects of English which, although they cause little problem for native speakers do cause problems for non-native speakers of English (countable and uncountable nouns, the determiner system, the meanings of the various verb constructions, and so on). A greater emphasis on written English was necessary because most of my students either intend to teach or at least are more concerned with written than spoken English. Thus, this text has sections on spelling, including the crucial connection between word parts and the spelling of English, and it has an appendix on sounds that includes much on how these sounds are represented in the spelling system.

Primarily the neglected areas were concerned with written English. For this text, the decisions about what to include and what not to include were dictated by the fact that the text
was designed to be useful to those students of mine that plan to go into teaching—this means that attention is paid to the grammar of the written word not just the spoken word. Thus, the sections on word parts deal both with the determination of word parts and with how they are spelled in English. Because of the concern with the written word as well as the spoken word, those who are concerned with the grammar of written text—English majors, and so on—will also find this approach compatible with their needs.

This book is also written for teachers and prospective teachers: teachers who teach speakers of standard English, teachers who teach speakers of non-standard English, and teachers of English to speakers of other languages. However, most of the subjects are included because they are a necessary part of any introduction to English grammar.

The two areas where this introduction differs from other introductions are in its teaching orientation and in its realization that much of English grammar only makes sense on the discourse level. Thus, as part of its teaching orientation, the book includes suggestions for the classroom, comments on the pedagogical importance of various grammatical facts, and pieces of assorted materials.

The intent is to prepare teachers for their classrooms. As a natural consequence, descriptions are designed to be as consistent as possible with what is perceived as the teachers' actual classroom needs. For instance, the appendix on the sounds of English makes no attempt at describing the whole range of phonetic variation found in even standard English, let alone the various dialects of English. Instead, the focus is on just those distinctions that correlate with what might be taught in the classroom—spelling, reading, writing—and found in all variants of standard English.

Comments on how something or other might be taught have been included throughout. For this, there is no apology. Although these may, of course, be ignored, the practice of presenting the material to prospective teachers in one course and then totally putting off explaining how to teach the material until another course is in itself bad teaching. One of the most obvious ways to understand a concept is to see a clear illustration of it; thus, both prospective teachers and non-teachers alike should find the examples of how something might be taught useful for understanding the grammar itself. For the prospective teachers, the fact that some of the examples are helpful for future classroom use is a bonus.

A note to the users of this text

The key to mastering this material lies in understanding the examples. The secret, if there is any "secret," does not lie in memorizing the definitions—understanding them does
help however—nor does it lie in studying the words of the text apart from their connection to the examples. For some, this will cause difficulties. The belief, a belief probably as old as language itself, that true understanding comes from understanding the "real" or "true" meanings of words (or definitions) is a form of word magic. Words are merely a reflection—often a poor reflection—of a relationship outside of the world of definitions. Once the relationship is understood, the words used to describe that relationship will be quickly understood. The words may even be a guide to understanding, but apart from this they have no value.

A second benefit to focussing on understanding the examples lies in the multiplicity of different terms that crop up. Once the relationships in the examples are understood, it is easy to adjust to a new author's terminology. Without such understanding, a change in terminology is often baffling.

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