

Introduction

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The goals of linguistics: prescriptive and descriptive grammars

1. Is there anything odd (or outright wrong) about the following sentences? Do you know what these phenomena are called?
 - (a) Which party did you meet him at?
 - (b) John wanted to quickly leave.
 - (c) Travelling to Finland, the weather got colder and colder.
 - (d) Me and her brother were late.
 - (e) I can't pay the rent regular.
 - (f) I didn't see nothing.
 - (g) Anyone wants this stuff can have it.
2. Decide if these sentences are acceptable from a descriptive or a prescriptive point of view.
 - (a) I ain't got time for that.
 - (b) He ate some cake the other day.
 - (c) Mary snuck out of the house yesterday.
 - (d) Is where post office the?
 - (e) That's the man who David talked to.

Linguistic analysis, the areas of linguistics

3. Write *a* or *an* in the spaces.
..... book apple union honour history uncle
..... hour year onion EU member European

Discuss the following:

- What is the *distribution* of *a/an*?
 - Is it sensitive to *spelling* or *pronunciation*?
 - How many indefinite articles are there?
4. Give the *word class* of each word using the following labels:
Noun (N), Verb (V), Adjective (Adj), Adverb (Adv), Preposition (P), Article (Art), Pronoun (Pro), Other (X)
 - (a) The cook made use of his excellent training.
 - (b) This school is training cooks.
 - (c) The Norwegians regularly cook for the German.
 - (d) This mushroom strikes me as dangerous.
 - (e) Strikes mushroomed all over Italy.
 - (f) Uggs woggled diggles.

Discuss the following:

- Where and how does the *word form* show word class?
- Where and how does the *word order* show word class?

5. For each of the following statements, say whether it is a *morphological*, *syntactic* or *semantic* fact about English.

- (a) Wherever *I saw a host yellow daffodils* is true, *I saw some yellow flowers* is also true.
- (b) The string of words **He it saw* can be made grammatical by placing the word *it* after *saw*.
- (c) Nobody could truly say they believe *X saw Y* if they didn't also believe that *Y* was seen by *X*.
- (d) The verb *hospitalise* is formed from *hospital* by adding *-ise*.
- (e) A witness who truthfully asserted *I saw a host of yellow daffodils* would have to answer *No* if asked *Was everything blue?*
- (f) The verb *fall* doesn't take the *-ed* suffix: *fell* occurs, not **falled*.
- (g) You cannot insert *every* in the sentence *A man's got to do what a man's got to do* and get a grammatical result.
- (h) When someone says *I was going to walk but I decided not to*, the sense is the same as if they had said *I was going to walk but I decided not to walk*.
- (i) *Of* can be the last word of a Standard English sentence.
- (j) A completed grammatical sentence of Standard English that begins '*I believe that we ...*' must continue in a way that includes at least one verb.

6. Observe the following text, taken from an interview with the roughest member of a teenage gang called the Jets in Harlem, New York. The interviewee uses a dialect called African American Vernacular English. Determine some its phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactical characteristics in terms of differences from Standard English.

You know, like some people say if you're good an' shit, your spirit goin' t'heaven ... 'n' if you bad, your spirit goin' to hell. Well, bullshit! Your spirit goin' to hell anyway, good or bad.

[Why?]

Why? I'll tell you why. 'Cause, you see, doesn' nobody really know that it's a God, y'know, 'cause I mean I have seen black gods, white gods, all color gods, and don't nobody know it's really a God. An' when they be sayin' if you good, you goin' t'heaven, tha's bullshit, 'cause you aint't goin' to no heaven, 'cause it ain't no heaven for you to go to.

[... jus' suppose that there is a God, would he be white or black?]

He'd be white, man.

[Why?]

Why? I'll tell you why. 'Cause the average whitey out here got everything, you dig? And the nigger ain't got shit, y'know? Y'understan'? So — um — for — in order for that to happen, you know it ain't no black God that's doin' that bullshit.

Reading

Varga, László (2010). *Introduction to English Linguistics*. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 8-38).

Available at: <http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/VargaLaszlo/ICEL-2010.pdf>