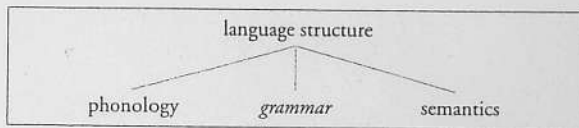


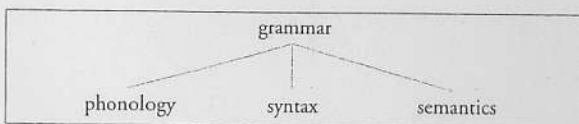
It is difficult to capture the central role played by grammar in the structure of language, other than by using a metaphor such as 'framework' or 'skeleton'. But no physical metaphor can express satisfactorily the multifarious kinds of formal patterning and abstract relationship that are brought to light in a grammatical analysis.

Two steps can usually be distinguished in the study of grammar. The first step is to identify units in the stream of speech (or writing, or signing) – units such as 'word' and 'sentence'. The second step is to analyse the patterns into which these units fall, and the relationships of meaning that these patterns convey. Depending upon which units we recognize at the beginning of the study so the definition of grammar alters. Most approaches begin by recognizing the 'sentence', and grammar is thus most widely defined as 'the study of sentence structure'. A grammar of a language, from this point of view, is an account of the language's possible sentence structures, organized according to certain general principles. For example, in the opening pages of the most influential grammatical treatise of recent times, the American linguist Noam Chomsky (1928–), writes that a grammar is a 'device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis' (1957, p. 11), to which is added the rider that the sentences produced must be grammatical ones, acceptable to the native speaker.

Within this general perspective there is room for many different positions. In particular, there are two quite distinct applications of the term 'grammar', yielding a specific sense and a general one. The specific sense is the more traditional: here, grammar is presented as just one branch of language structure, distinct from phonology and semantics. This is the approach used in this encyclopedia (§13):



The general sense of the term, popularized by Chomsky, subsumes *all* aspects of sentence patterning, including phonology and semantics, and introduces the term 'syntax' as the more specific notion:



SIX TYPES OF GRAMMAR

Descriptive grammar An approach that describes the grammatical constructions that are used in a language, without making any evaluative judgments about their standing in society. These grammars are commonplace in linguistics, where it is standard practice to investigate a 'corpus' of spoken or written material, and to describe in detail the patterns it contains (p. 414).

Pedagogical grammar A book specifically designed for teaching a foreign language, or for developing an awareness of the mother tongue. Such 'teaching grammars' are widely used in schools, so much so that many people have only one meaning for the term 'grammar': a grammar book.

Prescriptive grammar A manual that focuses on constructions where usage is divided, and lays down rules governing the socially correct use of language (§1). These grammars were a formative influence on language attitudes in Europe and America during the 18th and 19th centuries. Their influence lives on in the handbooks of usage widely found today, such as *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926) by Henry Watson Fowler (1858–1933).

Reference grammar A grammatical description that tries to be as comprehensive as possible, so that it can act as a reference book for those interested in establishing grammatical facts (in much the same way as a dictionary is used as a 'reference lexicon' (§18)). Several north European grammarians compiled handbooks of this type in the early 20th century, the best known being the seven-volume *Modern English Grammar* (1909–49) by the Danish grammarian Otto Jespersen (1860–1943), and *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985) by Randolph Quirk (1920–) et al.

Theoretical grammar An approach that goes beyond the study of individual languages, to determine what constructs are needed in order to do any kind of grammatical analysis, and how these can be applied consistently in the investigation of a human language. It is thus a central notion in any investigation of linguistic universals (§14).

Traditional grammar A term often used to summarize the range of attitudes and methods found in the period of grammatical study before the advent of linguistic science (§65). The 'tradition' in question is over 2,000 years old, and includes the work of classical Greek and Roman grammarians, Renaissance writers, and 18th-century prescriptive grammarians. It is difficult to generalize about such a wide variety of approaches, but linguists generally use the term pejoratively, identifying an unscientific approach to grammatical study, in which languages were analysed in terms of Latin, with scant regard for empirical facts. However, many basic notions used by modern approaches can be found in these earlier writings, and there is now fresh interest in the study of traditional grammar, as part of the history of linguistic ideas.

* ?

Two of the most important symbols in modern grammatical analysis. An asterisk is placed before a construction to show that it is ungrammatical. A question-mark placed before a construction shows that it is of doubtful grammaticality. For example, there is no doubt about the ungrammaticality of

*Who and why came in?

*That book looks alike.

But the status of the following sentence is less certain. Both are in use, yet there is something odd about them.

?Don't forget yours and my books.

?This is the car of the family.

One of the main aims of linguistic analysis is to discover the principles enabling us to decide the grammaticality of a sentence.

SO MUCH GRAMMAR IN A LANGUAGE

Probably the largest grammar produced for any language: *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985), by Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik. The amount of detail in its 1,779 pages comes as a surprise to many people who, because of the traditional focus on grammar as a matter of word-endings, have been brought up to think of English as a language lacking in grammar. But this book stands on the shoulders of even more detailed treatments of areas of the language; for example, *a* and *the* alone have warranted a 200-page study (P. Christopherson, 1939).

