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: STRUCTURE :  
-----****5.0 Objectives****5.1 Grammar–Nature & Definition****5.1.1 Major Categories of Linguistic Theory****5.1.2 Grammar–Nature and Definition****5.1.3 Linguists and Grammar****5.1.4 Perspective and Descriptive Grammar****5.1.5 The Notion of ‘Standard English’****5.1.6 The Study of Form v/s the Study of Meaning****5.2 Check Your Progress****5.3 Let Us Sum Up****5.4 Points to Ponder****5.5 Key Words****5.6 Books Suggested****Answers**  
-----**5.0 OBJECTIVES**  
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In this unit we shall;

- the unit introduces grammatical structures to enable students recognize, understand and learn to interpret literary as well as non–literary texts,
- there is an introduction of Grammar as the topic with some definitions to make students learn its importance, relevance and also use grammar as an aid to learn and use a new language,
- the intricacies of English language can be understood if students learn grammar in order to even produce the language in correct form,
- samples of some grammatical structures are given for practice work that assist the learning in practical way,
- exercises provided in the unit are based on the grammatical structures explained here aiming to get students’ participation in language related activities,
- the perspectives of ‘Grammarians’ as against ‘Linguists’ have been explained to make students’ language learning decisions independently. Situational learning is at the core than stringent grammar rules.

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## 5.1 GRAMMAR– NATURE & DEFINITION

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### 5.1.1 Major Categories of Linguistic Theory :

According to contemporary linguistic theory, we can divide the description of any language into three major categories : Grammar (comprising of Morphology and Syntax), Phonology and Lexicon. As the unit is focused on Grammar we should first try to understand the subsets of grammar namely, morphology and syntax before moving into a deeper discussion on Grammar.

Morphology is a study that deals with the forms and structure of words, their arrangement in phrases and sentences is known as Syntax. Morphology is the study of the relationship between form and meaning with the words. Prefixes and suffixes, for example, are added to bases to change the meaning of the base in a number of ways. Various other processes can influence the ways in which words are made up, and there are generalisations about where the morphological markers will occur, as well as about how the bits or words interact with each other semantically. Phonology on the other hand deals with the sound system (involving sounds, stress and intonation) and Lexicon provides information about the individual items of the vocabulary (words, and idioms such as *kick the bucket*).

In each of the three major areas we may distinguish between the study of form and the study of meanings (the term semantics often being applied to the latter, the study of linguistic meanings). Thus, for example, the study of grammatical form will deal with grammatical categories such as past tense and interrogative clause, while the study of grammatical meaning will be concerned with the meanings associated with these categories (past time, question and others).

### 5.1.2 Grammar–Nature and Definition :

The idea that grammar is a set of rules, often seen as arbitrary or unrealistic, is only one narrow view of grammar. Such a view is based on the belief that : a) grammar must be explicitly taught; b) grammar is absolute and fixed, a target or goal that speakers need to attain in order to be “good” speakers or writers of the language; c) grammar is inherently difficult and confusing, its mysteries only apparent to teachers, language experts or linguists.

Grammar is a set of production rules for strings in a formal language. The rules of grammar indicate how strings can be formed from the alphabet of the language. This points to the fact that grammar can be thought of as a method for combining sentences, logically, in order to create meaning. Grammar does not deal with the meanings of the strings. It describes only the forms of the strings, and not how to use them or twist them according to context, which means that the purpose of grammar is to assist future creation of sentences and meaning depending on the situation that the speaker/writer encounters. The situational aspect influencing grammar is a crucial point of debate because language is not static, it changes and evolves and with it evolves the role of grammar.

Language is a living, fluid entity that changes in response to the society. Societal changes are reflected in language, for example— acceptance of certain pronouns, addition of new words adopted into language. Grammar is a reflection of a language at a particular time. No language is fixed, it evolves over time. Language is sounds that evolve into words, phrases and sentences. Language evolves organically reflecting the culture, habits of the speakers of the language. Only language that no longer have native speakers do not change. These are referred to as ‘dead’ languages like Latin & Sanskrit. However in case of English, where there are large number of speakers today with more numbers joining on a daily basis, the language will remain dynamic and ever changing. This change will be reflected in the way grammar is used.

Grammar is often called a set of rules; which is not required to learn in order to learn the language of native speakers. It is a signpost, a map to be used in the form of an extra assistance. There are detractors who say that the notion of grammar creates a sense of mystery, resentment and frustration sometimes with its trite rules and endless drills and mindless practice. However it should be seen as a system, that once understood logically can lead to better use of language, even if the language keeps adapting and evolving.

The English that is taught to non–native speakers is recognized as Standard English because the grammar for most part reflects formally educated native speakers’ shared rules.

### **5.1.3 Linguists and Grammar :**

Linguistics have a very different approach to the notion of grammar. From the linguist's point of view, it is not a collection of rules, often obscure and illogical, that must be taught rather it is a system or the ‘blueprint’ for creating language, while for grammarian, it is the written rules, when to use which form or structures. Linguists’ focus is on the evolving language with unique utterances, which follow shared mental rules of native speakers. According to linguists every language, including its dialects or variants, is systematic and orderly. Language and their variations are rule–governed structures, and are therefore “grammatical”. In other words, all languages consist of patters, or “grammars,” that make sense of the features of a given language that include the arbitrary symbols, sounds and words that make up that language.

For example, consider the following string of words. How many sentences can you come up with using these words and only these words ?

the, came, boy, books, home, with

Most speakers of English, who have some intuitive knowledge of grammar, will come up with two sentences :

- a. The boy came home with books.
- b. They boy with books came home.

What they do is use grammar to put this seemingly random string of words into a comprehensible sentence. Any other combination of words would produce sentences that would sound strange to English speakers

because they would not be grammatical; i.e. fit the “blueprint” of how words are combined in English to make sentences. A linguist deals with different grammar shared by different groups of speakers as all utterances are systematic in their generation, age or period. Hence all grammar is valid. For a grammarian, it is about strict adherence to rules in order to use the language correctly and views only one particular variety of grammar as ‘Standard’.

#### **5.1.4 Perspective and Descriptive Grammar :**

A linguists’ definition of grammar is descriptive whereas a grammarian's definition of grammar is prescriptive. Prescriptive grammar is the grammar taught in school, discussed in newspaper and magazine columns on language and on various social media, or mandated by language academies such as those found in Spain or France. Prescriptive grammar tells people how they should say something, what words they should use, when they need to make a specific choice, and why they should do so. At times, prescriptive grammar rules are overextended to the point that speakers hypercorrect, that is, they apply the grammatical rules in situations where they should not.

Take, for instance, the use of the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’. For many years, English teachers in the United States railed against the incorrect use of me, the object pronoun, in subject position as in :

1. \*Me and Kabir are going to the store,  
or
2. \*Kabir and me are going to the store.
3. \*Me and Shriya had lunch,  
or
4. \*Shriya and me had lunch.

There is a prescriptive grammar rule in English specifying that pronouns in subject position must be subject pronouns (I, you, we, he, she, it, they). According to this rule, speakers’ use of me in these sentences is incorrect because ‘me’ is the first person object pronoun. ‘Me’ in these sentences is in subject position, and the subject pronoun ‘I’ should follow any other noun subject or subject pronoun. From a prescriptive point of view, these sentences should be :

1. Kabir and I are going to the store.
2. Shriya and I had lunch.

In contrast to prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar describes how adult native speakers actually use their language. Unlike prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar does not say “this is right” or “this is wrong.” Instead, descriptive grammar focuses on understanding how language is organized into meaningful, systematic patterns, which are generally below the level of conscious awareness of most speakers. By understanding the patterns of English, we can help others in learning the language learning process.

Some people think that descriptive grammar means saying that everything is right and nothing is wrong. What we must consider is the

purpose for which a speaker is using language. If a person is at a white-collar job interview or sending in a college application, using stigmatized language forms is inappropriate. On the other hand, if the person is among a group of peers, using a different variety of language is part of in-group acceptance and identity. This is not to say that there should be no grammar rulebooks, manuals of style, or standards of usage; on the contrary, there is a need for standards, especially in formal language contexts and when we are teaching English to non-native speakers.

### **5.1.5 The Notion of ‘Standard English’ :**

There is no formal language academy or government institutions decreeing or legislating “correctness” for American English.

American Standard English exists on a continuum of “correctness” because language changes there is no agreement among language gurus on what is “correct” though some grammarians are slower to accept this fact than others.

The description of any language can be divided into three major areas.

1. Grammar – (Morphology & Syntax) Morphology deals with the form of words. Syntax deals with the arrangement of words to form sentences.
2. Phonology deals with sound system involving sounds, accent patterns and intonation.
3. Lexicon provides information about individual items of the vocabulary.

### **5.1.6 The Study of Form v/s the Study of Meaning :**

The traditional grammarians tend to see the straight relation between form and meaning. However, in many cases it is not always so. The study of grammatical form will deal with grammatical categories such as past tense, interrogative clause, passive voice and so on, while the study of grammatical meaning will be concerned with the meanings associated with these categories.

**For example :** Traditional grammar describes ‘past tense’ simply as a form of the verb which expresses the meaning ‘past time’.

Sentence – One day we decided to climb Mount Everest.

In the above mentioned sentence the relationship between form and meaning would be less direct if we changed the clause to ‘It would be interesting if we decided to play golf course’. Here in this example the event is not in the past but a possibility in future.

The type of approach adopted in the present day grammar is dependent on language which is evolving, hence the approach needs adaptation at regular intervals.

#### **● Illustrations :**

Read the following sentences in order to distinguish between form and meaning of grammatical structures.

1. I am leaving in the next 10 minutes (Future)
2. I am nervous. (Present)

3. I am about to fail. (Future)
4. I am almost done. (Perfect)
5. She was about to speak something. (Future)
6. We have good luck. (Present – Positive)
7. We hardly have good luck. (Present – Negative)
8. There is water everywhere. (Positive)
9. There is hardly any water anywhere. (Negative)

Structure with its rigid form cannot be taken as a set of patterns to be followed rigidly. A native speaker can easily discriminate the intricacies of meanings intuitively. However an EFL or ESL learner needs to be educated about the complexity of language rigorously.

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## 5.2 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

**CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTION FROM THE FOLLOWING.**

1. Grammar deals with \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. Set of Observations
  - b. Learners' Difficulties
  - c. Set of rules about Grammatical structures
2. Phonology is the study of \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. Sound system of a language
  - b. Meanings of Words
  - c. Grammatical Structures
3. Morphology deals with \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. History of the language
  - b. Meanings of the words
  - c. Arrangement of words
4. Syntax is the study of \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. Related to meaningful arrangement of words
  - b. Types of Sentence structures
  - c. Correct use of grammatical forms
5. Lexicon provides \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. Information about a particular word or idiom
  - b. Proper tips to arrange words
  - c. Correct order of words in a sentence

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

**REWRITE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES WHICH ARE GRAMMATICALLY INCORRECT.**

1. They does not like games.
2. She looks wonderful.
3. Why I am not invited for dinner ?
4. Were he present in the meeting ?

5. Don't Tanu look serious today ?
6. The sky appear immensely wide.
7. Girls wears fashionable clothes
8. Smoking is permitted nowhere.
9. Good habits brings good luck.
10. A student were punished.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

**CATEGORIZE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS UNDER DESCRIPTIVE & PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR HEADINGS.**

1. A set of rules to be followed rigidly to produce correct language.
2. A set of rules that is ever changing as per the situation.
3. Rules are not bounding but facilitating the learners.
4. A strict adherence to rules is demanded.
5. It increases language complexity.
6. It gives freedom to the learner to express.
7. It tends to be trite, boring and difficult to remember and apply.
8. It gives freedom and linguistic tolerance.
9. A traditional grammarian strictly follows it.
10. A linguist is more interested in finding out the complexities inherent in any language.
11. Change is not allowed in this section of learning.
12. Without change, no language survives.
13. It does not allow any deviation from the set rules.
14. It allows freedom and promotes innovations in language expressions.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

**YOU HAVE ALREADY READ ABOUT THE NATURE AND MEANING OF THE WORD 'GRAMMAR'. THE UNIT HAS INTRODUCED YOU TO THE EXPLICIT EXPLANATION ON WHAT TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS PREVAIL ON THIS TERM. ON THE BASIS OF WHAT YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD WRITE TWO DEFINITIONS OF THE WORD 'GRAMMAR' IN YOUR WORDS.**

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### 5.3 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, we have tried to give in-depth understanding of the term 'Grammar'. A student who is a second language learner needs to deal with challenges that come across while learning a foreign language. English being internationally acclaimed and accepted for communication gives its learners the scope for flexibility and innovative expressions.

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#### 5.4 POINTS TO PONDER

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- Grammar is helpful to an extent.
- More experiments with the language, the more you empower it.
- A linguist's approach is far more helpful than following strict rules of grammar. LSRW go a long way than any prescribed set of grammatical rules.
- Meaning conveyed is more important than the 'form' that is blindly followed.

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#### 5.5 KEY WORDS

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**Descriptive Grammar :** It is a set of rules about language based on how it is actually used.

**Prescriptive Grammar :** it is a set of rules about language based on how people think language should be used.

**Language intuition :** It refers to awareness that the speaker has of linguistic form

**Continuum of Correctness :** A language which changes with no formal language academy establishing it

**Linguists Vs Grammarians :** linguists study syntax, structure, phonetics of phonology of language. Grammarians study morphology and phonology of language.

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#### 5.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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W. S. Allen, "Living with Structure : A Guide to American English for Native and Non-native Speaker", London.1947

A Close, English as a Foreign Language, London 1962.

English Study Book by Jacqueline Chinnai

English Grammar : An Introduction by Peter Collins Carmella Hollo

#### Answer

<b>Check Your Progress 1</b>
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1. Grammar deals with Set of Rules about Grammatical structures
2. Phonology is the study of sound system of a language.
3. Morphology is arrangement of words
4. Syntax is related to meaningful arrangement of words
5. Lexicon provides information about a particular word or idiom

<b>Check Your Progress 2</b>
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1. They donot like games
2. She looks wonderful.
3. Why am I not invited for dinner ?
4. Was he present in the meeting ?



5. Doesn't Tanu look serious today ?
6. The sky appears immensely wide.
7. Girls wear fashionable clothes
8. Smoking is permitted nowhere.
9. Good habits bring good luck.
10. A student was punished.

<b>Check Your Progress 3</b>
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- |                  |                 |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Prescriptive  | 2. Descriptive  | 3. Descriptive   | 4. Prescriptive |
| 5. Prescriptive  | 6. Descriptive  | 7. Prescriptive  | 8. Descriptive  |
| 9. Prescriptive  | 10. Descriptive | 11. Prescriptive | 12. Descriptive |
| 13. Prescriptive | 14. Descriptive |                  |                 |

<b>Check Your Progress 4</b>
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Grammar is a set of rules, which is fixed. Any deviation from rules of grammar is a mistake.

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