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References

Acknowledgements**English grammar in context**

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 **13%**
1.2 The importance of grammar

We want you to start thinking about what exactly we mean by a term like 'grammar' and how and why grammar differs in speech and writing. For some of you this will revise and build on your knowledge of previous study. Activity 1 is a way of raising questions in your mind and you will find some answers or explanations in the rest of the course.

Activity 1
 *0 hours 10 minutes*

Write down a few sentences which explain what you think grammar is about and why it is important. What do you expect to learn by studying English grammar? We shall come back to this activity again at the end of the course.

Discussion

In thinking about answers to these questions I have to admit that, in helping to write this course, I have expanded my own knowledge of the variety of interpretations of grammar and the applications of grammatical analysis. I started off many years ago as a teacher of English in various countries around the world, using a form of grammatical description which highlighted 'correct' usage such as knowing when to say *I have gone* and when to say *I went*. More recently, in analysing academic writing, I have applied a different model of grammar, one which foregrounds the idea of grammar as choosing forms to express different types of meaning. Also, in working with my Open University colleagues, I have discovered other grammatical systems and applications. You might be surprised to realise how many different areas of life utilise an understanding of grammar. Computer scientists involved in creating voice-recognition software need to understand grammar and the frequency of the likely patterns of the language; police experts need to trace typical language patterns used by individuals if they are to detect lies and forged documents; doctors and specialists in language disorders in children or in patients with head injuries need to know the typical grammar associated with particular contexts in order to understand where disruption or dysfunction is taking place. Of course, knowing grammar is a basic part of language learning and teaching and is also necessary in professions such as translating and lexicography (compiling dictionaries).

Many of the uses to which a knowledge of grammar is put are also starting to rely on the application of computer technology to language analysis. The new computational tools are changing the way we describe and understand language. Some of the activities that you will be trying out are important in writing many dictionaries and textbooks about English. But before we move on to recent approaches to grammar we shall take a short diversion into different types of grammatical description.

1 Why study grammar?

2 Developments in grammatical description



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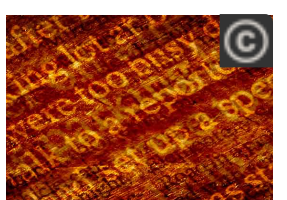
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