

Grammar

Grammar in the simplest sense is a set of rules, which people are supposed to follow. However, it is also concerned with patterns of behaviour in language, studying how language tends to be used. Grammar can also be described as the anatomy and physiology of language; we might dissect it to study it further.

Prescription and Description:

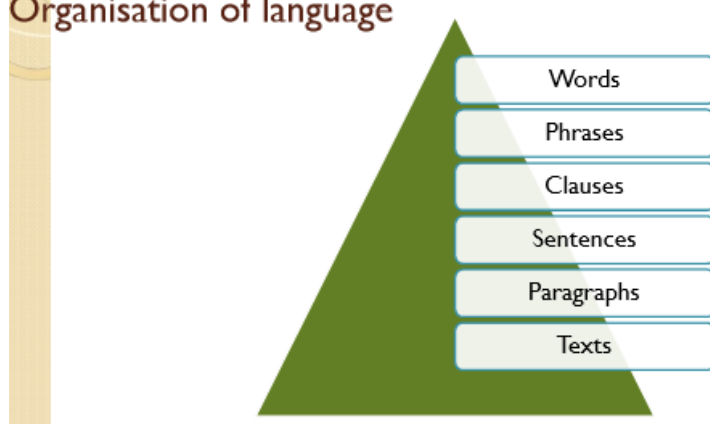
Prescription is the notion that something is incorrect or correct. A descriptive approach involves observing what is done, without necessarily saying whether it is correct or incorrect. Thus, the following section of 'incorrect language' would be studied by prescriptivists.

Incorrect Language:

- Double negatives are considered incorrect, such as 'I **didn't** do **nothing**'. Double negatives have existed within English for a long time;
'Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.'
- Double superlatives are also incorrect. These are also found in older English, in Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar':
'This was the **most unkindest** cut of all;'
- Split infinitives are also considered wrong where an adverb is put in-between (e.g. 'to **boldly** go'). By not splitting the infinitive in this case, the writer created an ambiguous meaning. This notion comes from the Latin, which treated split infinitives as wrong. But Latin is a completely different language; in English, we would have two words; 'to go'.
Not splitting an infinitive can lead to ambiguity;
'His writings continued **strongly to influence** the Covenanted stock of the Border country' (K. M. Elisabeth Murray, 'Caught in the Web of Words').

Organisation of Language:

Organisation of language



Grammar is a way of describing relations between words. To the left is an example of how to categorise English word forms.