REVIEW ARTICLE

ENGLISH GRAMMAR - AN EFFECTIVE TOOL

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ABSTRACT

One of the most fundamental asserts of modern linguistic analysis is that all languages, if spoken, have a grammar, and also must have a phonetic and phonological system. Grammar is a set of rules and the systematic study and description of a language. This includes the structure of words, phrases, clauses and sentences. In the recent times, English has occupied the role of global language. The purpose of this research paper is to explore the role of English grammar in the facilitation of writing as well as speaking skills of students. The study and knowledge of English grammar helps the students in correction of mistakes and in enhancing the writing as well as speaking skills. Researchers also agree that, in the context of developing the ability to write and speak effectively, it is more effective to teach punctuation, sentence variety and correct usage.

Keywords: Grammar, Global Language, Writing Skill, Speaking Skill, Students

Introduction

The study of grammar is very important for the students to fight and cope up in this competitive world. Communication in English is a complex and challenging activity for many students, hence the teachers should focus on the grammatical concepts that are essential for clear communication of meaning. Though students may be effective in speaking the English language, they need guidance to become effective writers. They should be taught about transferring their knowledge of grammatical concepts from oral language to written language. In order to help the students to write in English with great competence and confidence the teachers can demystify abstract grammatical terminology by connecting their knowledge of oral language to written language.

Why Does Grammar Matter?

Grammar is often perceived as being a boring subject, but it is a part of everyone's daily life and getting to know how it works is as important as knowing about other subjects. Generally people associate grammar with errors and correctness. However, knowledge of grammar helps us to understand what makes sentences and paragraphs clear, precise and interesting and thus helps improve our writing skills. It is recognized by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible for us to talk about language. To be creative as well as analytical, one has to know the rules, i.e., grammar. Grammar helps us to put words together in a correct order and add the right endings to the sentences. Language learning and teaching becomes much more efficient if everyone knows the basics. The knowledge of grammar helps learners develop the habit of thinking logically and clearly. After studying grammar, learners are able to become more accurate when using a language. Grammar improves the language fluency. A person with a good knowledge of grammar can organise and express the ideas in his mind without difficulty, which further helps to speak, read and write the language more fluently.

Incorrect Grammar and Communication Issues

Clear communication is possible only with good grammar. Usage of proper grammar helps a person from being misunderstood while expressing thoughts and ideas. Unclear communication is the biggest issue caused by using incorrect grammar when writing or speaking. So grammar is very important to improve communication and writing skills. This only pertains to those who have a solid foundation of correct usage of words in the sentence as it includes the correct use of inflections, syntax, parts of speech, synthesis and word formation of the language, as well as the pronunciation, meaning and linguistic history of a particular word. Some of the most common mistakes made by students in English speech and writing are given below. Go through the examples and make sure you understand the corrections.

Incorrect: Everybody must bring their own lunch.
Correct: Everybody must bring his or her own lunch.

Incorrect: Its a cold day in October.
Correct: It's a cold day in October.

Incorrect: At eight years old, my father gave me a pony for Christmas.
Correct: When I was eight years old, my father gave me a pony for Christmas.

Incorrect: We drive usually to home.
Correct: We usually drive home.

Incorrect: He absented from the college yesterday.
Correct: He absented himself from the college yesterday

Incorrect: No less than fifty students were present.
Correct: No fewer than fifty students were present.

Unclear communications due to incorrect grammar not only create misunderstandings, but also make a poor first impression. If an employer receives a covering letter for a job application that contains grammatical errors and is poorly written they simply put it off or ignore it. It is also important to use correct grammar while writing on behalf of your organisation, as this can mean the difference between readers trusting your expertise or questioning your knowledge of the subject matter. A person with poor grammar skill can form a negative impression on others. Good grammar is even considered to be a mark of intelligence and education. Writing and speaking correctly gives you the appearance of credibility. Correct use of grammar is very important if a person wants to build a reputation as an expert in his/her profession.

Resources for Improving Grammar Skills

- Dictionary has grammar rules and usage tips for both the English speaking as well as those who have English as their second language.
- Bartleby.com is available to read online and has the complete text of William Strunk's "The Elements of Style".
- Write 101 offers a comprehensive collection of over 800 articles devoted to improve writing. Grammar, vocabulary, style, composition are some of the many topics covered on this helpful website.
- Daily Grammar offers free e-mail grammar lessons, Monday through Friday, with a quiz on Saturday to test the skills. The site also features a searchable archive of previous grammar lessons and quizzes.

Common Grammar Mistakes

The following are some of the most common grammatical errors committed in English usage, as indicated by experts:

- Run on sentences that combine two or more complete thoughts without the proper punctuation between clauses.
- Sentence fragments that lack a subject or verb.
- Confusing apostrophes that indicate possession with apostrophes that indicate omitted letters.
- Using two negatives in one sentence to indicate the opposite of what you actually mean.
- Sentences with an unclear antecedent--the noun to which a pronoun refers.
- Misplaced modifiers that either modify two separate words or appear to modify the wrong part of the sentence.
- Overuse of preposition phrases.

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Basic English Grammar Rules

Sentence structure and parts of speech (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition and conjunction) are the basic grammar rules, among the hundreds of grammar rules. In addition, the punctuation rules should also be studied in order to fully understand basic grammar rules.

Sentence structure - subjects and predicates

Sentence is the basis to any language, which consists of a subject and a predicate and expresses a complete thought. The subject is the star of the sentence; the person, animal, or thing that is the focus of it. The predicate will tell the action that the subject is taking or tell something about the subject. The basic and important English grammar rules directly relate to sentence structure. Some of these rules specify that:

- A singular subject needs a singular predicate.
- A sentence needs to express a complete thought.
- Clauses, like any sentence, have a subject and predicate too.
- If a group of words does not have a subject and predicate, it is a phrase.
- If they can stand alone and make a complete thought, then they are independent and called sentences.
- If they do not express a complete thought, they are called "dependent clauses." An example of a dependent clause, which is not a sentence, is "when i finish my work".

Parts of Speech

Once you have a general idea of the basic grammar rules for sentence structures, it is also helpful to learn about the parts of speech

- A noun names a person, animal, place, thing, quality, idea, activity, or feeling. A noun can be singular, plural, or show possession.
- A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun, like: "I", "you", or "they."
- A verb shows action and can be a main verb or a helping verb, like: "were" or "has."
- Verbs also indicate tense and sometimes change their form to show past, present, or future tense. Linking verbs link the subject to the rest of the sentence and examples are: "appear" and "seem."

- An adjective modifies a noun or a pronoun. It adds meaning by telling how much, which one, what kind, or describing it in other ways.
- An adverb will modify a verb and tell more about it, like how much, when, where, why, or how.
- A preposition shows a relationship between nouns or pronouns. It is often used with a noun to show location, like: "beside", "in", or "on". It can also show time, direction, motion, manner, reason, or possession.
- Conjunctions connect two words, phrases, or clauses, and common ones are: "and", "but", and "or."
- One of them is the interjection. It shows emotion and examples are: "yea", "hurray", "uh-oh", and "alas."
- Articles are very useful little words that are also sometimes considered to be parts of speech. The articles are: "a", "an", and "the". Indefinite articles are "a" and "an" and "the" is a definite article.

Punctuation

In order to fully understand basic grammar rules, the punctuation rules should also be studied.

- All sentences must start with a capital or upper case letter.
- Titles of people, books, magazines, movies, specific places, etc. are capitalized.
- Organizations and compass points are capitalized.
- Every sentence needs a punctuation mark at the end of it. These would include a period, exclamation mark, or question mark.
- Colons are used to separate a sentence from a list of items, between two sentences when the second one explains the first, and to introduce a long direct quote.
- Semicolons are used to take the place of a conjunction and are placed before introductory words like "therefore" or "however." They are also used to separate a list of things if there are commas within each unit.
- Commas separate things in a series and go wherever there is a pause in the sentence.

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They surround the name of a person being addressed, separate the day of the month from the year in a date, and separate a town from the state.

- Parentheses enclose things that clarify and enclose numbers and letters that are part of a list. Apostrophes are used in contractions to take the place of one or more letters and to show possession. An apostrophe and "s" is added if the noun is singular and an apostrophe alone is added if the noun is plural.

Grammar Challenges for Present Scenario

In order to communicate efficiently, it is essential to understand the basic grammar rules. Hence to solve this problem, it is required to understand these basic rules and enhance the language competency of the students. Knowing about grammar means, as said by David Crystal in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language Cambridge University Press, 2003), "being able to talk about what it is we are able to do when we construct sentences--to describe what the rules are, and what happens when they fail to apply." In the present world of social networking and technology, people are more lazy towards grammar usage in their everyday communications. While using Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter, they tend to text messages by using sentences that are as simple as possible. On the social media, fragments of sentences are quite acceptable and grammar is usually felt unnecessary. Unfortunately, based on this habit, it is easy to get into a bad precedence of ignoring grammar. The complexities of the English language cannot be fully grasped by a computer. A computer grammar check can sometimes suggest the incorrect alternatives when attempting to fix common errors. There is no shortcut to learning English grammar.

Conclusion

To conclude, with the development of social network and technology, people become grammatically lazier. Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "Like everything metaphysical the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language." Thus, Grammar is extremely important. A grammatical error, even of a smaller magnitude if made, can confuse the person you are speaking to and even change the meaning of what you are communicating. English language is being looked upon proudly by its speakers and if used incorrectly it will be taken negatively by them. Nevertheless, this often causes misunderstanding among readers. Therefore, to overcome this problem, teaching grammar should be paid more attention in classrooms. In sum, we cannot deny the importance of grammar in communication. It facilitates the students to excel in seeking linguistic competence and able to display language skills in both writing and speaking activities.

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