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FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

1ST SEMESTER 2017

ASSIGNMENT 1

ENGLISH SYNTAX

ESY611S

COURSE: ENGLISH SYNTAX
COURSE CODE: ESY 611S
SUBJECT CODE: ASSIGNMENT 1
TUTOR MARKER: HAILELEUL ZELEKE WOLDEMARIAM (PhD)

Dear student,

Thank you for submitting your first assignment on time. It was our pleasure to mark it. If your marks are good, I hope this will motivate you to work even harder. If you are disappointed with your marks, please do not give up now. Remember you still have one assignment to try and make up for this.

At the same time we would like to remind you that by doing your assignment on your own, and not copying it from another will only be to your benefit in the coming exams.

Remember to read thoroughly through the questions before answering, especially the multiple-choice questions. Always try to answer as completely as possible, provide all the facts. Don't simply write down the answer, but show all your calculations. Avoid making unnecessary calculation mistakes and always write down the initial formula for any calculation.

Use this opportunity to revise the questions in Assignment One with the memorandum in hand. Give attention to the remarks of the marker-tutor in your assignment book. If there is anything that you are still unsure of, do not hesitate to contact a market-tutor.

We hope to see you at the vacation school and we are looking forward to your next assignment.

Regards,
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Assignment One

QUESTION 1 [60 marks]

1. Briefly explain the differences between syntax and grammar. [15 marks]

Candidates can define syntax and grammar briefly first and then compare and contrast the two concepts as follows:

- *Syntax* from *syn* (together) + *taxis* (arrangement) (Greek)
- The branch of linguistics that deals with how words are put together or arranged to form sentences.
- *The way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses or sentences* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).
- Syntax can also be described as:
 - *One of the four linguistic levels of language analysis the others being phonetics and phonology, morphology and semantics.*
 - Syntax involves the relationship between words that are put together to form sentences. It concerns the possible arrangements of words in a language.
 - The use of the phrase “possible arrangements” suggests that there is some order in the ways that words are put together to form sentences.
 - *The study of the structural rules of language or to the bodies of rules themselves*

On the other hand, grammar can be defined as

- A complete and accurate description of the properties of a language (Wiredu , 2008, p. 22).
- The body of principles underlying the forms of words and their relations to each other in the communication of thoughts and feelings (Chisanga and Mpepo, 1997, p. 85)
- A set of rules for constructing and analysing sentences both in speech and writing (Leech et al (1982, p. 3).

What is the difference then?

- The grammar of a language is the rules which govern the formation and usage of morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences. It is an overarching reference to both morphology and syntax.
- Put in another way, it is the general term referring to the set of rules in a given language including syntax
- This means by implication, that syntax is a subset of grammar, a part of what constitute the grammar of a language.
- It's about like the difference between the human body and legs, between a tree and a trunk, between an engine and a car.
- Syntax is a part of grammar, along with morphology, and in most usages, phonology.
- In other words, grammar is a broader term that includes syntax and it is according to Foster (2002) a description of the predictable patterns of a language.
- Syntax on the other hand is the study of the structure of sentences. English grammar is mostly syntax because it is analytic in nature with only 8 inflections as we have rightly observed in morphology.

2. Explain how syntax and phonology are interrelated. [15 marks]

Phonology deals with the study of speech sounds. It is further divided into two theoretical levels of phonetics and phonology.

Relations: Each word in a sentence is made up of sounds from the phonological level as can be seen in:

- I like these books. /aɪ/ laɪk/ ði:z/ bʊks/

Another relationship between phonology and syntax has to do with the function of stress and intonation in relation to sentences as in:

<u>Nouns</u>	<u>Verbs</u>
• 'contract	con 'tract
• 'transfer	trans 'fer
• 'record	re 'cord

- 'permit per 'mit
- 'survey sur 'vey
- 'insult in 'sult

3. Describe the major differences between possessive adjectives and demonstrative adjectives. Construct two sentences each to show these differences. [15 marks]

A possessive adjective (*my, your, his, her, its, our, their*) is similar or identical to a possessive pronoun; however, it is used as an adjective and modifies a noun or a noun phrase.

- a. My head goes woozy when you climb your ladder.
- b. Take his spoon and put it by your plate.
- c. She got her looks from her father. He's a plastic surgeon.
- d. It only wants its ball back.

The demonstrative adjectives "this," "these," "that," and "those," are identical to the demonstrative pronouns, but are used as adjectives to modify nouns or noun phrases.

1. I haven't had **this** kind of chili before. It's delicious.
2. **These** figures seem a bit high, but I'll concede.

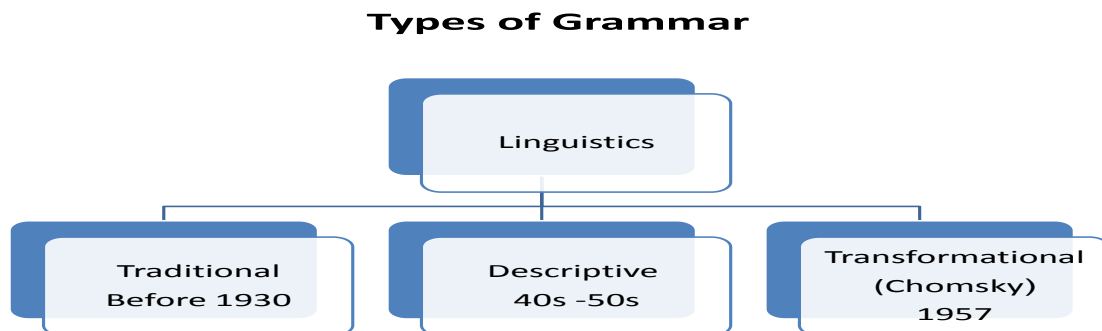
4. How many types of phrases exist in the English syntax? Discuss the different types of phrases providing two examples each. [15 marks]

A phrase is a group of words that stand together as a single unit, typically as part of a clause or a sentence. A phrase according to Dairo (1997, p. 116) is a group of words without a finite verb. It does not have a complete thought. For examples: The Vice chancellor (Noun phrase), in the garden (prepositional phrase), Kelly's baby (genitive phrase), very large (adjective phrase), too quickly (adverb phrase), might have been singing (Verb phrase). A phrase does not contain a subject and verb and, consequently, cannot convey a complete thought.

QUESTION 2 [40 marks]

Write an essay on comparing and contrasting traditional grammar and descriptive grammar.

Candidates might begin their essay by describing the different types of grammar and then compare and contrast traditional and descriptive grammar only.



Traditional Grammar

Traditional English grammar, also known as school grammar, is rooted in Greek and Latin.

Traditional grammar emphasizes:

- correctness, linguistic purism, literary excellence, the priority of the written mode of language and the use of Latin models.
- grammar rules were prescriptive, that is they were rules that dictated in precise terms the usage that every user of the English language should follow.

According to Williams (2005) we say that traditional grammar is prescriptive because it focuses on the distinction between what some people do with language and what they ought to do with it, according to a pre-established standard. The chief goal of traditional grammar, therefore, is perpetuating a historical model of what supposedly constitutes proper language. Do you remember examples of such rules?

1. Avoid ending a sentence with a preposition as in “who did you buy this from?”
2. Do not start a sentence with a coordinator such as “and” and “but” as in “But more frequently I have been going to the gym.”
3. After I or we as subject, use shall rather than will to express futurity as in “I will be able to go to the North next month.”

Descriptive grammar

- Descriptive grammar purely describes the grammatical constructions that are used in a language without reference to any subjective or intuitive judgements.

- In other words, proponents of this approach set out to describe English as it actually is rather than what people think it should be.
- Two models of grammatical descriptions developed from this approach:
 - Structural grammar
 - Systemic functional grammar

First, structural grammar otherwise known as structuralism dominated the field of linguistic studies from the mid-1930s and the 1950s.

- Notable among its proponents were American linguists such as:
 - Edward Sapir,
 - Leonard Bloomfield,
 - George Trager,
 - Bernard Bloch and Charles Fries
- A **structural approach** to grammar like the study of the physical sciences objectively employs a method of analysis that pays attention solely to language structure (Wiredu, 2008, p. 26). Illustrate the sentences below following this method of grammatical analysis:
 - The boys took the exam.
 - They could not pass the exam.
- The second model of description under the descriptive approach is systemic functional grammar.
 - Emphasis of this methodology is on the **choice and function of words in situational usage.**
 - It is an approach that ascribes meaning to usage taking into consideration the **socio-cultural context** in which language is used.
 - This model of grammar to some extent can also be viewed as a reaction to the structuralist approach that pays sole attention to form without any recourse whatsoever to meaning.