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THEORETICAL GRAMMAR: STRUCTURE, PRINCIPLES, AND FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

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Annotation:

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of theoretical grammar as a central field of linguistics concerned with the internal structure and systematic organization of language. The study explores the fundamental components of theoretical grammar, including morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology, offering detailed explanations and illustrative examples for each. Special attention is given to how these components interact to form a coherent linguistic system.

Furthermore, the article examines the role of theoretical grammar in identifying universal patterns across languages and its contribution to modern linguistic theories such as generative, functional, and cognitive grammar. The practical applications of theoretical grammar are also discussed, particularly in the areas of language teaching, translation, and computational linguistics.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that language is not a random collection of words, but a structured and rule-governed system shaped by deep underlying principles.

Keywords: Theoretical grammar, linguistics, morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology, language structure, grammatical theory, linguistic analysis, communication, language system, universal grammar.



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Introduction

Language is a unique and complex system that allows humans to express thoughts, emotions, and ideas. At first glance, language may seem simple, as people use it naturally in everyday communication. However, beneath this apparent simplicity lies a highly organized structure governed by rules and patterns.

Grammar plays a central role in this system. While traditional or practical grammar focuses on teaching correct forms and usage, theoretical grammar goes further by investigating the principles behind those rules. It seeks to answer fundamental questions such as: How is language structured? Why do certain grammatical patterns exist? How do humans acquire and understand language so efficiently?

Theoretical grammar approaches language as a scientific object of study. It analyzes not only individual elements like words and sentences but also the relationships between them. This field is especially important because it allows linguists to compare languages, identify universal features, and understand the cognitive processes involved in language use.

The aim of this article is to provide an in-depth exploration of theoretical grammar, explain its main components in detail, and highlight its significance in both theoretical and practical contexts.

Main Body

The Nature and Scope of Theoretical Grammar

Theoretical grammar is concerned with building abstract models that describe how language functions as a system. Unlike descriptive grammar, which records how people actually speak, theoretical grammar attempts to explain the underlying mechanisms that make language possible.



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One of the key concepts in theoretical grammar is the idea of systematicity. Language is not random; every element is connected to others through a network of rules. For example, when forming a sentence, speakers automatically follow grammatical patterns without consciously thinking about them.

Another important concept is universality. Despite differences between languages, many grammatical features are shared. For instance, all languages have ways to express time (past, present, future), relationships (subject and object), and negation. Theoretical grammar seeks to identify these universal principles.

Additionally, theoretical grammar studies:

The relationship between form and meaning

The interaction between different levels of language

The mental processes involved in language production and comprehension

Internal Structure of Words

Morphology is a fundamental branch of theoretical grammar that studies the internal structure of words and the rules governing their formation. Unlike syntax, which focuses on sentence structure, morphology examines how individual words are built from smaller meaningful units and how these units contribute to the overall meaning and grammatical function of the word.

At the core of morphology lies the concept of the morpheme, which is defined as the smallest unit of meaning in a language. Morphemes cannot be divided further without losing their meaning. Understanding morphemes is essential because they form the building blocks of all words in any language.

Morphemes are generally classified into two major categories: free morphemes and bound morphemes. Free morphemes can stand alone as independent words, such as book, run, happy, and student. These morphemes carry meaning on their own



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and do not require additional elements to function. In contrast, bound morphemes cannot stand alone and must be attached to other morphemes. Examples include prefixes like un-, re-, and suffixes like -ed, -ness, and -ing.

To better understand how morphology operates, consider the word disagreement.

This word consists of three morphemes:

dis- (a prefix meaning “not” or “opposite”)

agree (the root morpheme carrying the main meaning)

-ment (a suffix that turns a verb into a noun)

When combined, these morphemes create a new word that means “a lack of agreement.” This example illustrates how morphology not only builds words but also modifies their meanings and grammatical roles.

Another important distinction in morphology is between derivational and inflectional processes. Derivational morphology is responsible for creating new words by adding affixes, often changing the meaning or part of speech. For instance:

happy (adjective) → happiness (noun)

teach (verb) → teacher (noun)

In these cases, the addition of suffixes results in entirely new words with different grammatical categories.



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Inflectional morphology, on the other hand, does not create new words but modifies existing ones to express grammatical relationships such as tense, number, possession, or comparison. Examples include:

walk → walked (past tense)

cat → cats (plural form)

big → bigger (comparative form)

These changes do not alter the core meaning of the word but provide additional grammatical information.

Morphology also studies more complex processes such as compounding, where two or more independent words are combined to form a new word. Examples include:

toothpaste

classroom

mother-in-law

In such cases, the meaning of the compound word may be directly related to its components or may develop a more specialized meaning over time.

Another important concept is allomorphy, which refers to variations in the form of a morpheme depending on its phonological or grammatical context. For example, the plural morpheme in English can be pronounced differently:

cats /s/

dogs /z/

buses /ɪz/



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Morphology is closely connected to other branches of theoretical grammar. It interacts with syntax in determining how words function within sentences, and with semantics in shaping meaning. For example, the addition of a suffix can change both the grammatical category and the meaning of a word, which in turn affects how it is used in a sentence.

In addition, morphology plays a significant role in language learning and vocabulary development. By understanding how words are formed, learners can more easily recognize unfamiliar words and deduce their meanings. For example, knowing that the prefix *un-* often indicates negation allows learners to understand words like *unfair*, *unclear*, and *unknown* without needing to memorize each one individually.

In conclusion, morphology is a vital component of theoretical grammar that provides insight into the structure and formation of words. It demonstrates that words are not simple units but complex constructions made up of meaningful parts. By studying morphology, linguists and language learners can better understand how language creates meaning, expands vocabulary, and expresses grammatical relationships.

Conclusion

Theoretical grammar is a fundamental field that uncovers the internal organization of language. It demonstrates that language is a structured and rule-based system governed by complex principles.

By studying morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology in detail, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how language operates. Moreover, theoretical grammar connects language with human cognition, revealing how people produce and interpret meaning.



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In conclusion, theoretical grammar is essential not only for linguistics but also for education, technology, and communication. It provides the tools necessary to analyze, understand, and effectively use language in a wide range of contexts.

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