

科目：語言學短文評論 適用：外文所語言組

編號：143

考生注意：

1. 依次序作答，只要標明題號，不必抄題。
2. 答案必須寫在答案卷上，否則不予計分。
3. 限用藍、黑色筆作答；試題須隨卷繳回。

本試題

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The following passage is taken, with slight changes, from the eighth edition of *Language Files*, edited by Thomas W. Stewart, Jr. and Nathan Vaillette:

To most people, the word **grammar** means the sort of thing they learned in English class or in other language classes, when they were taught about subjects and predicates and parts of speech, and told not to dangle participles or strand prepositions. To a linguist, however, "grammar" means something rather different; it is the set of elements and rules that make up a language. Actually, linguists recognize three distinct things called "grammar": (1) **mental**, or *competence*, grammar, (2) the linguist's description of the rules of a language, the **descriptive** grammar, and (3) the socially embedded notion of the "correct" or "proper" ways to use a language, the so-called **prescriptive** grammar.

The *mental* grammar consists of those aspects of a speaker's knowledge of language that allow him or her to produce grammatical utterances—that is, a speaker's linguistic *competence*. This kind of grammar is made up of knowledge of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Everyone who speaks a language has a grammar of that language in his or her head, but details of this grammar will vary among dialect groups and even among speakers of the same dialect. Note that this idea of grammar has to do with whether particular sentences or utterances are acceptable in general with respect to their structure, but this does not directly determine their appropriateness in particular situations. You can imagine producing perfectly grammatical sentences that are pragmatically unacceptable or stylistically odd—for example, answering a question with a wholly irrelevant statement or using lots of slang on a graduate school application. Knowledge of pragmatics and language variation is not usually considered to be part of grammar proper, though it is an important part of your knowledge about language.

Linguists concern themselves with discovering what speakers know about a language and describing that knowledge objectively. They devise rules of *descriptive* grammar. For instance, a linguist describing English might formulate rules (i.e., descriptive generalizations) such as these:

1. Adjectives precede the nouns they modify.

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2. To form the plural of a noun, add -s.
3. The vowel sound in the word *suit* is produced with rounded lips.

Descriptive grammar, then, is created by linguists as a model of speaker's linguistic competence.

When most people think of "grammatical rules," they think of what linguists call rules of *prescriptive* grammar. Prescriptive rules tell you how to speak or write, according to someone's idea of what is "good" or "bad." Of course, there is nothing inherently good or bad about any use of language; prescriptive rules serve only to mold your spoken and written English to some norm. Here are a few examples of prescriptive rules; you can probably think of others.

1. Never end a sentence with a preposition.

NO: Where do you come from?

YES: From where do you come?

2. Never split an infinitive.

NO: ... to boldly go where no one has gone before

YES: ... to go boldly where no one has gone before

3. Never use double negatives.

NO: I don't have nothing.

YES: I don't have anything. I have nothing.

Notice that the prescriptive rules make a value judgment about the correctness of an utterance and try to enforce a usage that conforms with one formal norm. Descriptive rules, on the other hand, accept the patterns a speaker actually uses and try to account for them. Descriptive rules allow for different varieties of a language; they don't ignore a construction simply because some prescriptive grammarian doesn't like it.

So, if prescriptive rules are not based on actual use, how did they arise? Many of these rules were actually invented by someone. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scholars became preoccupied with the art, ideas, and language of ancient Greece and Rome. The classical period was regarded as a golden age and Latin as the perfect language. The notion that Latin was somehow better or purer than contemporary languages was strengthened by the fact that Latin was by then strictly a written language and had long ceased to undergo the changes natural to spoken language. John

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Dryden's preoccupation with Latin led him to write: "I am often put to a stand in considering whether what I write be the idiom of the tongue . . . and have no other way to clear my doubts but by translating my English into Latin." From many writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the rules of Latin became, whenever remotely feasible, the rules of English. The rules above are all results of this phenomenon.

Speakers of English have been freely ending sentences with prepositions since the beginning of the Middle English period (about 1100). There are even some instances of this construction in Old English. Speakers who attempt to avoid this often sound stilted and stuffy. The fact that ending sentences with prepositions is perfectly natural in English did not stop John Dryden from forbidding it because he found it to be non-Latin. His rule has been with us ever since.

Since the early Middle English period, English has had a two-word infinitive composed of *to* plus an uninflected verb (e.g., *to win*). English speakers have always been able to split this two-word infinitive by inserting words (usually adverbs) between the *to* and the verb (e.g., *to quickly hide*). There have been periods in English literary history when splitting infinitives was very fashionable. However, eighteenth-century grammarians noticed that Latin infinitives were never split. Of course, it was impossible to split a Latin infinitive because it was a single word (e.g., *describere* 'to write down'). But that fact did not prevent the early grammarians from formulating another prescriptive rule of English grammar.

The double negative rule has a different source. In Old and Middle English, double and triple negatives were common, and even quadruple negatives existed. The following sentence from Old English illustrates this; it contrasts two negative words and was entirely grammatical.

ne bið ðær nænig ealo gebrowen mid Estum  
not is there not-any ale brewed among Estonians  
'No ale is brewed among the Estonians'.

By Shakespeare's time, however, the double negative was rarely used by educated speakers, although it was still common in many dialects. In 1762, Bishop Robert Lowth attempted to argue against the double negative by invoking rules of logic: "Two negatives in English destroy one another or are equivalent to an affirmative." Of course, language and formal logic are

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different systems, and there are many languages (e.g., Russian and Spanish) in which multiple negation is required in some cases for grammaticality. Certainly no one misunderstands the English-speaking child or adult who says, "I don't want none." But Lowth ignored the fact that it is usage, not logic, that must determine the descriptive rules of a grammar.

It is somewhat surprising that rules that do not reflect actual language use should survive. There are several reasons, however, for the continued existence of prescriptive rules. First, they provide a standard form of a language that is accepted by most speakers of that language; adherence to prescriptive rules allows a speaker to be understood by the greatest possible number of individuals. This is especially important for a language such as German, which has dialects so different from one another that their speakers cannot always understand each other. Second, a set of standard rules is necessary for students learning English (or any other language) as a second language. Imagine the chaos if there were no guidelines for learning English (or Spanish, or German, or Russian, etc.). Thus they serve a very useful purpose for language teachers and learners as well. Finally, and most important, there are social reasons for their existence. Nonstandard dialects are still frowned upon by many groups and can inhibit one's progress in society. The existence of prescriptive rules allows a speaker of a nonstandard dialect to learn the rules of the standard dialect and employ them in appropriate social circumstances. Therefore, prescriptive rules are used as an aid in social mobility. This does not mean, however, that these judgments about dialects are linguistically valid. The idea that one dialect of a language is intrinsically better than another is simply false; from a linguistic point of view all dialects are equally good and equally valid. To look down on nonstandard dialects is to exercise a form of social and linguistic prejudice.

Write, in English, a review of the passage. In the review, summarize the passage IN YOUR OWN WORDS (about 150), and then state (in about 300 words) your opinions about the main ideas of the passage. You are encouraged to draw examples from your native language to illustrate your points. (100%)