



TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR AND ITS DRAWBACKS

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ABSTRACT

Human interest in the study of a human language is as old as human civilization. The scholars of language study have shown greater interest in the origin of language than in language itself. When we want to study any particular language, we must know the grammar of language which is the basic thing for understanding any language. Behavior of language means how words are formed, how words are related to each other. The study of language has fascinated countless scholars for its complexity. The interest in this kind of language study is as old as Plato. We can observe three ways of language study. The old one is traditional grammar. Traditional grammarians defined English language on framework of the Latin language. They applied Latin Language's grammatical rules to other languages. The structuralists strongly reacted against the thinking of traditional grammarians. They said that it is wrong to apply one language rules to another language. The structuralists put forth the drawbacks of Traditional Grammarians in the description of English language. The structuralists named these drawbacks as the 'Fallacies of Traditional Grammar.'

WHAT IS GRAMMAR:-

Before we proceed further we must clarify the concept grammar. There is great deal of confusion about what is grammar precisely is? In our day to day use the term grammar is used for various meanings in various contexts. The origin of the word grammar is found in the Greek word. First definition of grammar we can make like this, "Grammar is a science of structure and uses of language".

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Another definition of grammar we can make like this, “Grammar is the rules of language behavior”. So far as the rules of grammar are concerned, many scholars have attempted to write grammar of English. If one book of grammar could catch entire truth about a language there could be only one book. Who so ever might write it.

Traditional Grammar:-

The grammar which describes a language on the model of Latin language grammar is known as the ‘Traditional Grammar’. The grammarian who describes a language on the model of Latin grammar is known as ‘traditionalist’. Some traditional grammarian says that grammar is associated only with the written form of language. Traditional grammar describes a language on the model of Latin grammar. Traditional grammarians used the framework of Latin grammar in the description of another language. Traditionalist said that spoken form of languages does not need to have grammar and only written forms of languages needs to have grammar.

But this thinking was opposed by Structural Grammarians (Structuralists) because according to them there are some languages are in the world which doesn’t have written form. These languages do not have grammar also. In the early decades of the 20th century, the weaknesses of the traditional grammar were realized. It became necessary for some anthropologists to see language in a new perspective. They proposed some radically different method of studying language behavior. This second land mark of language study is known as ‘Structural Grammar’ (Structural Approach to Grammar). In the second half of the 20th century an American linguist Noam Chomsky was responsible for yet another landmark in a language study. His vision of language behavior is revolutionary. His approach to language study is known as ‘Transformational Grammar’. These new approaches to language study put forth the drawbacks of ‘traditional grammar’.

Traditional Grammar and Its Drawbacks:-

In the 1930s and 1940s there was a great outcry against the Traditional Grammar (Traditional Approach to Grammar) in Europe and America. This was the period when the structuralism was fast developing as a scientific discipline. The structuralists strongly reacted against the thinking of traditional grammarians. The structuralists named these weaknesses of traditional grammar as ‘Fallacies of Traditional Grammar’. These are as follows.

1] Latinate Fallacy: -



The first defect of traditional grammar according to structuralists is the use of one language framework in the description of another language. It is said that most of the traditional grammarians who wrote an English grammar were trained in Latin grammar. So, they used the framework of Latin language in the description of English language. But according to structuralist English language and Latin language have different structures and frameworks. Hence we cannot use the Latin framework system to examine English language system. It would be like using the Sanskrit framework to describe German language. What the structuralists tried to say is that it is wrong to impose one language framework in the description of another language. Each language has unique sense and unique grammar.

2] Logical Fallacy:-

This is the second weakness of the traditional approach to language. This is called as the 'Logical Fallacy'. Traditional grammarians assumed that the laws of logic and the principles of grammar are the same. According to the structuralists laws of language are not logical.

3] Semantic Fallacy:-

Structuralists pointed out that many of the traditional grammars categories were based on meaning. They called it as the Semantic Fallacy'. 'Semantic Fallacy' means the use of meaning in the definition of grammatical categories. Structuralists said that meaning cannot be studied scientifically because it is not verifiable. Meaning according to them is a matter of introspection therefore it is beyond the scope of scientific investigation. Examples of this kind of fallacies are as follows.

- i) A noun is the name of a person, place or thing.
- ii) An interrogative is a sentence that asks a question.

Structuralists objected the use of meaning as a tool in grammatical analysis. Another problem with the meaning based definitions according to structuralists is that these definitions gives scope to subjective interpretation and it cannot be used with precision.

4] Prescriptive Fallacy:

The traditional grammar tended to be prescriptive. Structuralists pointed out that grammar of any language must be scientific and descriptive.

5] Mixing of Different Criteria:-



Some of the traditional grammars definitions are based on meaning, some on function and some are on form. According to structuralists it is unscientific to mix up different criteria's in defining one language system. Structuralists preferred on consistent set of criteria for defining language system.

6] Lack of Explicitness:-

The term explicitness has a technical meaning in linguistics. It means clearly and precisely stated. Testability is an important feature of scientific theories, statements. So clearly and unambiguously stated statements are the truth and can be tested. These statements are explicit statements.

7] Written Form Fallacy:-

Traditional grammarians ignored the spoken form of the language and wrote grammar based on the written form structuralists named these drawbacks as a written form fallacy. Traditionalists neglected the phonology. They concentrated on syntax and morphology. But according to structuralists spoken form of language is the only important thing to be studied.

8] Ignoring Language Variation: _

Traditionalist believed that only the language of great literature is worth paying attention to. Traditionalist neglected the other variations such as informal language, formal language, market language. Traditional grammarians were not interested in these types of languages so the traditional grammar is incomplete.

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