Grammar and Syntax: Understanding their Differences and Interrelatedness

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ABSTRACT

Many scholars affirm that syntax is a part of grammar. Some others illustrate it by saying that grammar is a book and syntax is a chapter of this book. This fact has attracted my attention to the extent that I attempt to answer the question: is it true that syntax is a part of grammar and grammar is not a part of syntax? To answer this question, I collected different ideas from scholars who write about grammar and syntax so as to analyze them. Therefore, this article aims at explaining that grammar is grammar and syntax is syntax although they share some common points. In general, sciences are interrelated. Although sciences are interrelated, each science distinguishes itself from other sciences by its properties, characteristics, methods, and subjects of study. Having this in mind, it is clear that grammar and syntax are interrelated and each of them is a particular discipline. This is to say that syntax is a discipline different from grammar which is also another discipline. A discipline cannot be a part of another discipline. If a discipline is a part of another discipline, therefore that discipline is not a discipline. It is not justifiable to say that syntax is a part of grammar and deny that grammar is not a part of syntax since a whole is made of parts. If syntax is a part, grammar is also a part. It means that grammar without syntax, grammar is no longer grammar because its part that makes a whole is missing. If this is true, syntax is a part of grammar, and grammar is a part of syntax. In fact, grammar and syntax are distinct disciplines.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars are convinced that syntax is a part of grammar, and grammar is not a part of syntax. This fact has carried many scholars off to the extent that they believe that it is true. Considered as a true fact, many articles and books spread it in the area of linguistics and grammar. ln fact, each discipline is distinct. This distinctive aspect is what makes to call a body of specific knowledge a discipline. This is to say that a discipline should not be a part of another discipline otherwise it is not a discipline. Syntax is a discipline, and grammar is also a discipline. This is why we call one "syntax" and the other one "grammar". To put it clear, syntax is a distinct discipline, and grammar in another one although they are interrelated as it is the case of all disciplines. Disciplines are "interdisciplinary", "multidisciplinary", and "transdisciplinary". This article attempts to explain that grammar and syntax are two different disciplines although they sometimes deal with the same matters which are studied differently. This fact shows that some notions of syntax are studied in grammar, and some notions of grammar are also studied in syntax. The question 'is it true that syntax is a part of grammar, and grammar is not a part of syntax?" is asked to guide this investigation. To answer it, some ideas are collected and analyzed with content analysis method.

II. BACKGROUND

Grammar and syntax are disciplines involved in language analysis. Both of them have rules and categories. Rules which are concerned with grammar are known as grammar rules while those concerned with syntax are called syntax rules. It is the same as grammatical categories and syntactic categories. Apart from grammar rules, syntactic rules, grammatical categories, and syntactic categories; there are also grammatical functions and syntactic functions. These rules, categories, and functions are very often used in the analysis of language structures. When using them, some people do not distinguish what is grammar and what is syntax. Because of their confusion, they use grammar rules and syntax rules interchangeably. This happens even for grammatical categories and syntactic categories, and grammatical and syntactic functions. Therefore, they do not pay attention to what grammar is and what syntax is. It

is important to know what grammar is and what syntax is.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Grammar

There are many definitions of grammar. The common point of many definitions is that grammar is a set of rules of language. For Chomsky, humans are born with the capacity to learn languages. He calls this capacity Language Acquisition Device. In the same vain, he introduced the notion of Universal Grammar to mean that the human brain is capable of generating language rules. The rules of language are studied in various ways. This is why there are different grammars.

A. Descriptive Grammar

Rossiter (2020), in the link https://linguapress.com/grammar/descriptive-grammar-english, says "descriptive grammar is grammar that takes account of how a language is really used, not necessarily of how it should be used." Nordquist (2025), in the link https://thoughtco.com/what-is-descriptive-grammar-1690430, views descriptive grammar as "an examination of how a language is actually being used, in writing and in speech". The focus of descriptive grammar is how language is or is being used. Simply put, descriptive grammar observes how language users apply the rules of language.

B. Prescriptive Grammar

In the link https://www.languagehumanities.org/what-is-prescriptive-grammar.htm Lapham (2024) writes "prescriptive grammar is a philosophy or approach to grammar that concerns itself with the establishment of grammatical norms that can be used to define spoken or written language as either grammatically correct or grammatically incorrect". Prescriptive grammar states the rules that language speakers or writers are supposed to respect when using language. The concern of prescriptive grammar is to state rules to be used by those who use language whereas syntax deals with rules related to phrase, clause, and sentence construction.

C. Pedagogical Grammar

Studymaster, in the link https://www.studymaster.co.uk/explanations/english

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/tesol-english/pedagogical-grammar/, explains that "pedagogical grammar is an approach to teaching grammar that focuses on making grammatical rules comprehensible and applicable for language learners, primarily targeting their needs for communication and usability rather than theoretical knowledge". Pedagogical Grammar focuses on the rules that language learners are supposed to learn in order to communicate in the target language. Comparing to prescriptive grammar, pedagogical grammar deals with the teaching of rules of a language. This type of grammar teaches sentence structures such as V, SV, SVO, SVC, etc. whereas syntax analyzes phrasal structures such as NP, VP, AdjP, AdvP, PP, etc.

D. Reference Grammar

https://www.theknowledgeacademy.com/blog/types-of-grammar/ indicates that "a reference grammar explains how words, phrases, and sentences are formed in a language. It provides clear grammar rules and examples". Reference Grammar seems to be near syntax as the study of how phrases and sentences are constructed. The difference is that grammar provides grammatical rules while syntax provides syntax rules.

E. Theoretical Grammar

It is written in the link https://www.theknowledgeacademy.com/blog/types-of-grammar/ "theoretical grammar studies the basic building blocks of any human language. It focuses on explaining grammar rules in a clear and structured way". Theoretical grammar explains grammar rules.

F. Comparative Grammar

https://www.theknowledgeacademy.com/blog/types-of-grammar/ writes "comparative grammar compares different languages to see what's similar and what is different. It helps language learners and linguists understand the connections between languages". This is to say that comparative grammar focuses on the comparison of grammar rules of languages.

G. Traditional Grammar

https://www.theknowledgeacademy.com/blog/types-of-grammar/ indicates that "traditional grammar is a set of rules that explain how language should be used. It focuses on the difference between everyday speech and what is considered "correct" according to established standards".

Traditional studies how language is used, and how much grammar rules are respected or not respected.

H. Performance Grammar

https://www.theknowledgeacademy.com/blog/types-of-grammar/ shows that "Performance Grammar describes how English sentences are actually used in effective communications. It focuses on how people create and use language naturally". Performance Grammar deals with the use of grammar rules in communication.

I. Communicative Grammar

https://www.my-english-club.com/communicative-grammar.html affirms that "communicative grammar puts the accent on the actual act of communication. It gives the speaker all the tools for an effective transmission of the intended message". The concern of communicative grammar is the conveyance of message without any attention to grammar rules.

J. Functional Grammar

Panggabean (2011 :47) views functional grammar as "a way of looking at grammar in terms of how grammar is used. It is used for describing languages in functional terms. It focuses on the development of grammatical systems as a means for people to interact with each other". Functional grammar deals with the use of language that facilitates the conveyance of meaning in communication. Here, grammar rules are applied to render meaning easy to grasp.

K. Mental Grammar

Nordquist (2020) in the link https://www.thoughtco.com/mental-grammar-term-1691380 writes "mental grammar is the generative grammar stored in the brain that allows a speaker to produce what other speakers can understand. It is also known as competence grammar and linguistic competence. It contrasts with linguistic performance, which is the correctness of actual language use according to a language's prescribed rules". Mental Grammar is the natural processing of language by the brain for the sake of communication.

3.2 Syntax

Etymologically speaking, syntax means arranging together. Syntax is the study of how

words are arranged together within a sentence. In linguistics, syntax is one of the levels of the study of language. These levels are phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. Koeneman and Zeijlstra (2017) say that "syntax is the system of rules that we subconsciously follow when we build sentences". In this perspective, syntax is concerned with what happens in the human brain when constructing sentences. The human brain applies rules automatically to build sentences. This supports Chomsky's universal grammar. It is clear that rules of languages are naturally set in the human brain. If grammar is viewed as a set of rules of a language, one can understand that grammar is also a concern of syntax. Syntax seems to include grammar, and grammar refers to syntax for its analysis. This is why the assumption that syntax is a part of grammar is questionable.

3.3 Grammar versus Syntax

Haines (2024) states "grammar is a set of rules governing correct word strings in a language or text" whereas "syntax is the arrangement or order of words and phrases to create clear, well-formed sentences". For MasterClass (2021), "grammar is a system of rules that governs the structure of language" whereas "a subset of grammar, syntax is a set of rules that describes the word order and structure of a sentence within a natural language". MasterClass (ibidem) adds "syntax is a part of grammar, the overarching rules dictating the structure of a language. All syntax rules are grammar rules, but not all grammar rules are syntax rules". Coldwell (2023) assumes that "syntax is the set of rules that govern sentence structure in a language and how words are arranged to convey meaning" whereas "grammar, on the other hand, is the set of rules that govern the structure of a language as a whole". Iseli (2023) believes that "grammar is a general term used to describe the system behind a language, while syntax is simply a subfield of grammar that particularly deals with how words are organized to make grammatical constructions". Osmond (2024) writes "basically, syntax is a part of grammar and the study of sentence while grammar is a discipline or an area of study when it comes to verb agreements and the building of punctuation". Hasa (2016) in the link https://pediaa.com/difference-between-grammar-and-syntax/ says that "Syntax is a field of linguistics that studies the structure of a sentence

whereas grammar is a set of structural rules that dictates the construction of sentences, clauses, phrases and words in a language".

3.4 Grammatical Categories and Syntactical Categories

According to the link https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/sentence/category.php a "grammatical category refers to specific properties of a word that can cause that word and/or a related word to change in form for grammatical reasons (ensuring agreement between words)". This is to say that each word has its grammatical category. It is a fact that words are classified in what is known as 'parts of speech'. The parts of speech are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Some scholars confuse parts of speech and grammatical categories. Each part of speech has its grammatical categories. Grammatical categories of nouns are number, case, and gender. Zubaydulla qizi and Abdulmutolib qizi (2023) write ''categories associated with nouns, such as number, case, and gender, provide syntactic flexibility and semantic precision''. Pronouns have grammatical categories such as person: the first person, the second person, and the third person. Verbs have grammatical categories such as tenses, aspects, mood, transitivity, voice, and argument agreement. Grammatical categories of adjectives are comparison and agreement. Here, the understanding is that grammatical categories are embedded in syntactic categories.

3.5 Grammar Rules and Syntax Rules

A rule is a requirement that guides the right use. https://www.fiveable.me/key-terms/english-grammar-usage/grammar-rules indicates that "grammar rules are the set of guidelines that govern how words and phrases are structured and used in a language". https://microfocus.com/documentation/visual-cobol/vc60/devhub/hrlhlhclanu922.html shows that "syntax rules are those rules that define or clarify the order in which words or elements are arranged to form larger elements, such as phrases, clauses, or statements".

3.6 Grammatical Functions and Syntactic Functions

https://fiveable.me/key-terms/introduction-linguistics/grammatical-function states

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"grammatical function refers to the role that a word or phrase plays in the structure of a sentence, indicating how it relates to other elements within that sentence". Words mainly play the roles such as: subject, verb, object, complement, and adjunct. These functions are also considered as syntactic functions. But, syntax views a sentence as a constituent made of subject and predicate. A word in a sentence can play different functions depending on the theory used during the analysis. https://www.bing.com/copilotsearch?q=grammatical+functions+versus+syntactic+functions&form=csbr and "Grammatical functions refer to the roles that constituents play within the grammatical architecture of a clause or sentence. They answer "who does what to whom" in a structural or relational sense and are essential for understanding sentence organization and agreement patterns". https://www.bing.com/copilotsearch?q=grammatical+functions+versus+syntactic+functions&form=csbr and "Syntactic functions or forms focus on the categorical and structural type of a constituent within a sentence. They describe what a segment of language is rather than what it does structurally". The following table from the link above shows the difference between grammatical function and syntactic function.

Aspect	Grammatical Function	Syntactic Function (Form)
Focus	Role in clause structure	Categorical nature/type of constituent
Example	Subject, Object, Modifier	NP, VP, PP, AdjP
Determined by	Position, agreement, and verb selection	Lexical category and internal structure
Relation to semantics	Sometimes corresponds to semantic roles (agent/patient), but not always	Independent of meaning, purely formal
Flexibility	Each NP/VP can realize different grammatical functions	One segment can be classified as one syntactic form at a time

(https://www.bing.com/copilotsearch?q=grammatical+functions+versus+syntactic+functions&form=csbrand)

IV. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Syntax, part of grammar

The word 'part' is opposed to the word 'whole'. Something which is a part of a whole is smaller than the whole. It is a portion, a section or a component of a large thing. If syntax is considered as a part or subset of grammar, it means that syntax is smaller than grammar. Now, what makes syntax smaller than grammar? MasterClass cited above says that "all syntax rules are grammar rules, but not all grammar rules are syntax rules". This can be understood in two ways: syntax is grammar, but grammar is not syntax ([S = G]) ; (G ≠ S]) or syntax is grammar, but some of grammar is not syntax ([S = G]) ; ([sG ≠ S]) . The first way is contradictory because if syntax equals grammar, therefore grammar equals syntax. In other words, syntax is grammar and grammar is syntax. This is to say there is no difference between syntax and grammar. The second way means that syntax is grammar, and grammar is partially syntax. If this is true, it means that grammar is sometimes syntax. As consequence, grammar is syntax to some extent.

4.2 Syntactic Rules versus Grammatical Rules

In the analysis of language, there are syntactic rules and grammar rules. Syntactic rules are word order, phrase structure, subject–verb agreement, modifier placement, question formation, etc. and grammar rules are sentence structure (subject and predicate) and basic word orders (SVO, SVC, etc.), parts of speech, subject–verb agreements (singular and plural), verb tense/aspect, pronoun agreement (number and gender), punctuation, modifiers, parallelism, capitalization, voice, and word choice.

4.3 Syntactic Categories versus Grammatical categories

Syntactic categories are different from grammatical categories. Syntactic categories are lexical categories (parts of speech), phrasal categories (Noun Phrase, Verb Phase, etc.), and Functional categories (determiners and auxiliaries). Grammatical categories are number, case, gender, person, tense, aspect, mood, voice, and degree.

4.4 Syntactic Functions and Grammatical Functions

Syntactic Functions are the types of phrases whereas Grammatical Functions are the roles that words play within a constituent. That is to say that syntax does not deal with the word roles within a constituent. It deals with Noun Phrases, Verb Phrases, Adjective Phrases, Preposition Phrases, etc. whereas grammar deals Subject, Verb, Object, Complement, etc.

V. RESULTS

5.1 Common Facts between Grammar and Syntax

Referring to the above analysis, grammar and syntax have common facts that make them look alike. These facts are parts of speech and word order. This is to say that both grammar and syntax deal with the parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, etc.), word order, and subject–verb agreement.

5.2 Different Facts between Grammar and Syntax

Apart from the fact that grammar and syntax have the parts of speech and word order in common, the above analysis shows that grammar and syntax deal with language differently. Syntax focuses on the parts of speech whereas grammar focuses on the properties of the parts of speech. Syntax rules are concerned with how phrases are combined whereas grammar rules are concerned with how subject, verbs, object, etc. are combined. As far as functions are concerned, syntax deals with the types of phrases; grammar deals with the roles played by words within a sentence.

VI. DISCUSSION

Grammar and syntax are two distinct sciences. As all sciences, they have some common points which are viewed differently. Let us start with parts of speech and word order. As far as parts of speech are concerned, they are mainly syntactic categories which have their grammatical categories. Each syntactic category has a grammatical category. In this perspective, grammar is related to syntax because before analyzing the grammatical categories one should start with syntactic categories. It means that grammar needs syntax before it looks at its own categories. For example, syntax deals with nouns whereas grammar deals with the properties of nouns which are numbers, gender, cases, etc. To put it simple, before dealing with numbers, gender, or cases (which are grammatical categories of the syntactic category 'noun') one should start looking at nouns which are a syntactic category. If the parts of speech are studied in grammar, it is for the sake of analyzing their grammatical categories. For the word order, syntax deals with phrase structures whereas grammar deals with subject–predicate structure. In another way, syntax deals with how words are combined in phrases and how phrasal structures are combined into sentences whereas grammar deals with how subjects, verbs, and objects are combined into clauses and sentences. Regarding functions, grammar looks at the roles that words play in the structure whereas syntax looks at the types of phrases in the structure. There is no confusion between grammar and syntax. Each of them is an entire discipline that has its specific subjects of study. Thus, syntax is not a part of grammar. It is an entire and distinct discipline with its specific subjects of study. What is right is that syntax and grammar are interrelated, but each of them has its specific scope.

VII. CONCLUSION

The idea that syntax is a part of grammar was the problem that brought to this discussion. The discussion was guided by the question "is it true that syntax is a part of grammar and grammar is not a part of syntax?". The objective was to explain that

grammar is grammar and syntax is syntax. Different views of scholars were analyzed with the content analysis method. After the analysis, it was found that grammar and syntax share some common points. These common points are not studied in the same way in grammar and in syntax. This fact distinguishes syntax from grammar to the extent that it is not right to say that syntax is a part of grammar. What is acceptable to say is that grammar and syntax are interrelated. Although they are interrelated, each of them is an entire and a distinct discipline.

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