

JUN 13 1994

AN ARGUMENT FOR DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR
IN THE EIGHTH GRADE

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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June 1965

The purpose of this paper is to examine the descriptive or linguistic approach to the teaching of English grammar in the eighth grade. In order to have a frame of reference for the argument the features of the descriptive approach are compared with the features of the prescriptive or Latinate approach to the subject.

The first chapter is a general introductory discussion which contrasts and compares the two approaches. Included in this chapter are some illustrations and arguments which show how advocates of the prescriptive approach foster a right-or-wrong attitude toward language and grammar. This argument is designed to show that there is a need for re-examining our teaching of grammar.

In the second and third chapters the English parts of speech are presented. The prescriptive and descriptive definitions of the parts of speech are scrutinized. It is concluded that a descriptive classification of the parts of speech is more useful than a prescriptive classification since the former is shown to be more consistent, orderly and logical than the latter. These sections also show the techniques and methods used by a descriptive grammarian to analyze a language.

The English sentence is the topic dealt with in the fourth chapter. That it is extremely difficult and unnecessary to give a simple yet comprehensive definition of the sentence at the eighth grade level is the basic point developed. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to describing seven basic English sentence patterns and showing how a knowledge of these basic patterns can be applied in achieving basic goals of any eighth grade English program.

The purpose of the last chapter, Chapter V, is to draw some conclusions and make some remarks on usage and grammar. From personal experience in the classroom, the writer makes some observations concerning the success he has had since utilizing the descriptive approach.