

Prescriptivism and Descriptivism

A study on Attitudes Towards Language

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Abstract

The purpose of this study has been to find out whether people, mainly teachers, are prescriptive or descriptive in their attitude towards language, and whether grammar books, dictionaries and textbooks used in schools are in accordance with these attitudes. In order to study this problem a comparison has been made between the results of a linguistic study and the results of a questionnaire distributed to native and non-native speakers. The linguistic study has been based on information taken from grammars and textbooks commonly used in the Swedish compulsory school and at universities. The result shows that people in general are both prescriptive and descriptive in their attitudes towards language. However, a slight majority decided in favor of a descriptive attitude. In the text- and grammar books intended for pupils in the compulsory school system, a very limited number of language varieties are presented. The material used in schools is therefore not sufficient to give the pupils an adequate knowledge in order to meet the goal set up by the National Criteria, which is to reach an all-round communicative ability.

Keywords

Language, attitudes, prescriptive, descriptive, grammar books, dictionaries, textbooks

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Why study whether people are descriptive or prescriptive? My interest in linguistic attitudes has its roots in the different linguistic areas I have lived in during my lifetime. Discovering that people react differently to different varieties of speech, I began to dwell on why these attitudes existed and where they came from and later during my teaching education, what these attitudes might lead to in a learning situation. Attitudes towards linguistic issues are often discussed in terms of descriptive as opposed to prescriptive approaches. How are these attitudes dealt with in reality? What are teachers' attitudes? And how are linguistic choices dealt with in dictionaries, grammars and textbooks commonly used in schools?

1.2 Aim

The purpose of this study is to find out whether people, mainly teachers, are prescriptive or descriptive in their attitude towards language, and whether grammar books, dictionaries and textbooks used in school are in accordance with these attitudes.

1.3 Method and material

In order to study this problem a comparison was made between the results of a linguistic study and the results of a questionnaire distributed to native and non-native speakers. The linguistic study was based on information taken from grammars and textbooks commonly used in the Swedish compulsory school system and at universities.

The items chosen for the linguistic study are so-called borderline cases. A borderline case is a grammatical phenomenon that is sometimes hard to classify and often debated by teachers and grammarians. Depending on which language variety is being used people believe that one way or the other is correct. People's opinions on what is considered grammatically right or wrong concerning the issues discussed in this essay have been and still are debated and they are therefore interesting to study.

The linguistic study was based on grammar books and textbooks commonly used at universities: *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik*, *Introducing English Grammar*, *The Oxford Guide to English Usage* and *The English Language*. The study also included textbooks and

grammar books used in the compulsory school system: *Hargeviks engelska grammatik* (also used at senior high school), *Good Luck, Keepsake a Reference Book, Get it Together 2*, (exercise book B), *Wings Activity Book, Friends Textbook 3* and *A Piece of Cake delight, Workbook 1*. Finally two dictionaries were studied: *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. In the material presented above the following items were studied:

- The usage of *who* and *whom*.
- How the split infinitive is treated.
- What is recommended *between you and me* or *you and I*.
- The comparison of adjectives with *-er/-est* or *more/most*.
- What personal pronoun should be used to denote the common gender.
- How prepositions at the end of sentences are treated.

The questionnaire (see appendix 2) has been distributed to seven non-native speakers of whom five are English teachers. Seven native speakers answered the questionnaire (see appendix 1); two of them are students at a university and the other five are university teachers.

1.4 Definitions of the terms *descriptive* and *prescriptive*

[They] hold no sin so deeply red, As that of breaking Priscian's head. (Butler, 1663)¹

To have a *descriptive* attitude towards language means to describe the language without being hypercritical or expressing judgment. Cameron explains (2003:7) *descriptive* to be "norm-observing" whereas Fromkin and Rodman (1998:14) clarify that:

It does not tell you how you should speak; it describes your basic linguistic knowledge. It explains how it is possible for you to speak and understand, and it tells what you know about the sounds, words, phrases, and sentences of your language.

The contradictory *prescriptive* approach is "norm-enforcing" according to Cameron (2003:7, 9), who furthermore claims that prescriptivism in practice "is strongly associated with those forms that are most conservative, elitist and authoritarian". Fromkin and Rodman (1998: 534) define it to be: "Rules of grammar brought about by grammarians' attempts to legislate what speaker's grammatical rules should be, rather than what they are". There may be a danger of becoming judgmental and hypercritical when using prescriptive rules but, on the other hand,

¹ To violate the rules of grammar.

to encompass a strong framework of linguistic rules can make language learning easier and give language learners confidence.

One might wonder if it is possible to learn through an entirely descriptive approach. Will a prescriptive view allow enough flexibility and broadness to gain the optimal learning situation? The choice of attitude will be strongly connected to what goals are set up, in other words, what we want to achieve with the English language.

1.5 National criteria

The National criteria for the compulsory school in Sweden establish that:

The subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability [...] The subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures. (Skolverket, 2000, 07)

What an "all-round communicative ability" stands for is made clear under the headline "Structure and nature of the subject":

The different competencies involved in all-round communicative skills have their counterparts in the structure of the subject. Amongst these is the ability to master a language's form, i.e. its vocabulary, phraseology, pronunciation, spelling and grammar. Competence is also developed in forming linguistically coherent utterances, which in terms of contents and form are increasingly adapted to the situation and audience...The ability to reflect over similarities and differences between their own cultural experiences and cultures in English-speaking countries is developed continuously and leads eventually to an understanding of different cultures and inter-cultural competence. (Skolverket, 2004)

This paragraph emphasizes that the pupils shall become no less than masters of the English language. The education must therefore be broad and present the English language with all its varieties. Consequently, grammar skills are definitely of great importance in language learning situations.

2. Working with grammar

2.1 Grammar – an essential part of language

No language can be called a language without grammar. Even though the grammatical history of all languages is vaguely known there is a certainty that grammar has existed ever since the days of dawn, at least as long as the human language has been a fact. Without grammar, language will not make sense.

The English language consists of different varieties. Standard English is one of many varieties. The standard variety originates from a geographically and historically important area. It is a variant that has its roots in the London-Central Midland region (Börjars/Burridge, 2001:2) and is considered to be a kind of global or world standard and as Börjars and Burridges (2001:3) state: "it has been CODIFIED; in other words, recorded in grammars, dictionaries and style books." Nevertheless they also point out that even though it has reached this prestigious level it should not be taken as better than other variants: "NON-STANDARD (or VERNACULAR) must never be equated with SUBSTANDARD".

Cameron (2003:98) states that Standard English has been: "the mark of intelligent, educated speakers, and working-class children would suffer unless they were taught it and made to use it in school." Even though we want all varieties to be equal, negative attitudes towards different varieties do occur. Language education is therefore crucial and closely connected to pupils' self-esteem. We need the grammar and yet allow a movement within the language, divergences must be accepted.

2.2 Language varieties affect people

The all-around communicative aspect of language knowledge includes knowledge of English dialects and other forms of linguistic varieties. It also includes awareness of how people will respond to different styles in written and spoken language, which of course goes for both native and foreign speakers. People are more ruled by language intonation, vocabulary, word-order etc. than many of us admit, prejudice sometimes rules over good intentions. This is also pointed out by John Honey who does not believe that all varieties are equal and claims that: "varieties are differently *evaluated* because of social prejudice" (Cameron, 2003: 98). Whether language makes us the people we are, or on the contrary: people create the language,

it is in either case important to be aware of the concealed evaluation that often is at stake when people communicate.

Different nuances have an influence on people's associations and judgment. One way of approaching these attitudes could be to simply say "inappropriate in a particular context" (Cameron, 2003: 98) instead of talking about bad grammar.

In an article Finegan (1982) says:

English is now changing in exactly the same ways that have contributed to making it the rich, flexible, and adaptable language so popular throughout the world today. Living languages must change, must adapt, must grow. Shakespeare could not have understood Chaucer without study, nor Chaucer the Beowulf poet. Whether change is good or bad is not the question, descriptivists say, for change is inevitable.

Finegan claims that change is inevitable, which confirms the work of a descriptivist who pays attention to changes. A prescriptivist, on the other hand, wants to prescribe how language should be used, thereby running the risk of prescribing rules that no longer exist.

Wardhaugh (2002:5) states that "...no individual is free to do exactly what he or she pleases so far as language is concerned". Further on (2002:39) "[...] people's feelings about norms have important consequences for an understanding of both variation and change in language." Unequivocally many single aspects belong to linguistic phenomena and they are not easily ruled even though it is most exciting to follow people's reactions.

3. Grammatical phenomena

To what extent or degree grammatical errors should be judged may be seen as a stylistic dilemma, an artificial rule or as a matter of how the text will be valued. In the literature used for the purpose of this study terms like formal, natural and incorrect are frequently used. According to *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English*, formal language "is used in speeches, in serious or official writing or at official meetings or important social occasions". When something is referred to as *incorrect* it is "not following the rules of polite behaviour". Concerning *normal* the explanation goes "not unusual in any way, but happening just as you would expect". In the following chapters the study on what and how the grammatical phenomena are described in grammar books, textbooks and dictionaries will be presented.

3.1 The usage of *who* and *whom*

In Old English *hwa* was the interrogative form for *who* or *what* but it was also used as the indefinite pronoun like *anyone* or *someone*. According to Barber (1999: 124) "*which* and *that* were used as relatives" in Middle English, whereas *who* came into the language much later. The Lord's Prayer from 1611 is one familiar example of what a sentence could be like before the emergence of *who*: *Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*. A number of linguists have made contributions to the usage of *who* and *whom*, among them Greenbaum (1994: 33-34) who states that:

Correct performance marks the user as a responsible member of society; incorrect performance is viewed as contributing to the decay of the language. It therefore matters greatly to many that we spell *all right* as two words, that we preserve the distinction between *who* and *whom* (at least in formal writing), that we avoid dangling principles, that we do not use *flaunt* in place with *flout*.

Notice the connection that is made between the speaker and his or her language, correct language apparently makes us responsible members of society. Further on he claims that: "It seems merely a matter of chance that some variants are ignored while others are promoted or scorned." It sounds as if he has not found any system or order in previous and current changes of the English language.

According to *Hargeviks engelska grammatik* (1997: 64, 67) the interrogative pronouns used about people are *who* and *whom*. The latter is to be used in formal language when it is used as an object as in: "Joan of Arc, *whom* (less formal, *who*) many Catholics admire, was French". The form *whom* is also used after a preposition: "*For whom* (informal AE: *For who*) are you looking? (in general *Who* are you looking *for*?)". The difference according to this grammar book is whether you want to be formal or informal.

In *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* (2000: 218, 223) the authors point out that in general the interrogative *who* is more commonly used than *whom*. In a more formal style *whom* is used as in: "To *whom* should the application be sent?" It is on the other hand not commonly accepted to use the relative pronoun *who* instead of *whom*. In written language it is recommended to use *whom* as in "The Welsh actor, *whom* we all admire, was knighted yesterday." They also point out that *whom* is obligatory when it comes directly after a preposition "one of *whom*". In this grammar a stylistic aspect is added to the grammatical rules and also an aspect on what is commonly accepted.

Regarding interrogative pronouns *Introducing English Grammar* (2001: 60) claims that: "If one expects the answer to be a person, then there are three different forms: *who* (subjective case), *whom* (objective case) and *whose* (possessive). The authors claim that in ordinary speech *who* is used instead of *whom*. To some people, *whom* is still number one in written language and they add: "In most colloquial spoken varieties, *whom* would be classed an endangered species." Undoubtedly, the authors show different usage forms of *who* and *whom* but they also use a very strong expression when they predict the destiny of *whom*.

In the dictionary *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* (2000) the authors claim that the interrogative form is *who* while *whom* is the object form, informally *who*: "*Who did you give the book to (to whom did you give the book)?*" Regarding the relative pronoun *who*, emphasis is put on formal versus informal usage as in: "*The man about whom we were speaking*" but informally: "*the man who we were speaking about*". Again the differences are presented in terms of formal versus informal forms.

In *Longman's Dictionary* (1995: 1635) we find the following explanation:

Except in very formal English **who** is used instead of whom as an object in all kinds of questions [...] The same is true when **who** is used in relative clauses that add information but do not restrict the meaning of the noun they follow, often after a comma [...] In relative clauses that restrict the meaning of the noun, even **who** is rare as an object in informal or spoken English. Instead **that** or nothing is used [...] **whom** must be used immediately after a preposition, and you can avoid this by rephrasing the sentence.

In this quotation the emphasis is put on whether the language user intends to be very formal or not.

In *The Oxford Guide to English Usage* (1994: 230, 231) it is stated that: "Formal usage restricts the use of the interrogative and relative pronoun *who* to the subject of the clause only". In the guide, each rule is followed by examples from famous authors. The authors continue their clarification: "When the pronoun is the object or the complement of a preposition, *whom* must be used." Further on they claim that: "The use of *who* as object or prepositional complement is accepted informally, but should not be carried over into serious prose." On the subject of *who* and *whom* as relative pronouns the authors state that: "In formal usage, *who/whom* is always acceptable as the relative pronoun following an antecedent that

denotes a person" (1994: 233). Again the discussion goes around formal versus informal usage but there is also a prescriptive "must" used in their instructions.

David Crystal (1990: 27) looked at a BBC survey of letters sent to a radio series called *English Now* in 1986. On the list "Top ten complaints about grammar" *who* versus *whom* was in ninth place. The listeners claimed that "*whom* should be used, not *who*, in such sentences as: "*That's the man whom you saw.*" Crystal thinks that this is very formal indeed and claims that people often drop the relative pronoun in object position, as in: "*That's the man you saw.*"

To conclude, it seems as if the recommendations regarding the choice between *who* and *whom* in object position are in most cases a matter of formality. Even though there are some rules that may appear to be norm-enforcing, descriptive explanations are also given.

3.2 The split infinitive

The split infinitive is an ugly thing, as will be seen from our examples below; but it is one among several hundred ugly things, and the novice should not allow it to occupy his mind exclusively. (Fowler, 1908)

The history of the split infinitives goes all the way back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Just like many other English grammatical ambiguities, the phenomenon derives from the first language rules produced by people with knowledge of Latin. Due to its position in society Latin became the language that grammarians based their language rules and regulations on. Their task led them not only to describe the English language, but, at least in their own eyes, to improve the English tongue. The rule regarding the split infinitive turned out to be somewhat bizarre since the infinite in Latin was one single word, whereas it consisted of two words in English. Hundreds of years later this choice does not look logical, but, still, it was codified.

In *Hargeviks Engelska Grammatik* (1997) the authors claim that it is most common in informal speech to put an adverb between *to* and the infinitive. Nevertheless, they claim that normally it should not be done.

In *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* (2000) it is stated that an adverb may not be placed between *to* and the infinite. It is, however, admitted that the split infinitive is not unusual and is sometimes difficult to replace with a natural alternative. Finally, it is stated that certain adverbs may never split the infinitives; these adverbs are *not*, *merely* and *only*.

According to *Introducing English Grammar* (2001:182) the infinitival marker *to* is an auxiliary verb. The authors claim that it is common in English to split the infinitive and therefore *to* cannot be a part of the verb; it cannot be a preposition either. Provided that the sentence will be understood, it is normally allowed to leave out a verb phrase if an auxiliary verb is left behind as in: "She said that they may have been wanting to see some weird things, and they may". Another ending of that sentence would be: "and they may have been wanting to." The authors of this grammar do not only comment on what is common and normal. They also give a thorough background to their statements.

The explanation given in *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* (2000) is simply that when you split an infinitive a word is interposed between the infinitive mark and the infinitive.

In the *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995:1388), it is made clear that a split infinitive occurs in: "a phrase in which you put an adverb or other word between 'to' and an INFINITIVE" and that: "Some people think this is incorrect English". So, it is explained what the expression means but the writers also choose to inform their readers about an existing disagreement. The split infinitive is legitimate but according some people it is to some extent inaccurate.

The Oxford Guide to English Usage (1994: ix) has an overall aim to "resolve problems rather than describe the whole of current usage." Still, the authors present four ways in which to handle the split infinitive. The authors state that: "It is often said that an infinitive should never be split. This is an artificial rule that can produce unnecessarily contorted sentences" (1994: 216). Still, they say that: "Good writers usually avoid splitting the infinitive by placing the adverb before the infinitive." They further claim that in order to avoid ambiguity it is sometimes preferable to split the infinitive even if the meaning can be made clear through intonation. Under the headline "Avoidance of clumsiness" (1994: 217), certain adverb/verb collocations are described. The recommendation is to recast the sentence or split the infinitive rather than separating the adverb from the verb. Stylistic reasons or certain adverbial constructions are described under the headline: "Unavoidable split infinitive".

In Crystal's "Top ten complaints about grammar" (1990: 27) the *split infinitive* came second. The listeners were of the opinion that: "Split infinitives should be avoided, as in *to boldly go where no man has gone before*" which is a frequently cited sentence from *Star Trek*. Crystal's

comment on this is that many grammars object to this kind of usage but he also claims that: "there are many cases where alternatives seem artificial, as in *I want you to really try*, where *really to try* and *to try really* are very awkward".

In brief, the split infinitive is treated both prescriptively and descriptively in the material that this study is based upon. There are comments concerning informal versus normal usage, but there are also comments on what may not be done versus natural alternatives.

3.3 What is recommended *between you and me* or *you and I*?

David Crystal (1990) claims that the recommendations to say that *It is I*, is to prefer to *It is me*, goes back to the 1760s when some grammarians created rules for so-called correct usage. The rules became traditions and warnings were given against disobedience to these rules. This has continued throughout many generations.

The authors of *Hargeviks engelska grammatik* (1997: 48) claim that in informal language the objective case is more frequently used than in Swedish. In formal English the same case as in Swedish is used. This is clarified with the following examples: "Who is it? – It's only me" compared to the more formal: "It is only I". They give no comments on *between you and me* or *you and I*.

In *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* (2000: 188) the authors claim that in colloquial language you often hear the not generally accepted form *between you and I* instead of *between you and me*. The grammar gives both a broad analysis of the subject and illustrates differences between very informal language and hypercorrect language. One of the difficulties, they claim, is how to decide which form should be used after *but*, *than*, *as* and *like* since these words are not only prepositions but also conjunctions. This is also the reason why some people make hyper corrective choices as in "Nobody had seen it *but I*".

The authors of *Introducing English Grammar* (2001) mention the phrase *between you and me*, but the discussion in the grammar is about the correct position of this phrase in sentences and not about whether to use *I* or *me*.

The dictionaries *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* (2000) and *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995), both give examples of how to use the word *between*. This is in

both dictionaries exemplified with the phrase *between you and me*. No other options or comments concerning *you and I* are being presented in these dictionaries.

In *The Oxford Guide to English Usage* (1994: 234) it is stated that: "[t]here is often confusion about which case to put the pronoun in. If the two words linked by *and* or constitute the subject, the pronoun should be in the subjective case". But it is also explained that the "use of the objective case is quite common in informal speech, but it is non-standard". Secondly they claim that:

If the two words linked by *and* or *or* constitute the object of the verb, or the complement of a preposition, the objective case must be used [...] The use of the subjective case is very common informally. It probably arises from an exaggerated fear of the error indicated above [...] It remains however, non-standard to say: *Between you and I*. This last expression is very commonly heard. *Between you and me* should always be substituted.

In Crystal's "Top ten complaints about grammar" (1990: 27), the winning complaint was: "I shouldn't be used in *between you and I*". The BBC listeners claimed that: "The pronoun should be *me* after a preposition, as in *Give to me*." Crystal believes this to be true but he also adds that some people mix up the sometimes criticized *me* so that they do not think about the context and believe that it is more polite to use *I*.

In sum, regarding the rules and recommendations about whether to use *between you and me* or *between you and I*, focus is put on whether the intention is to be formal or informal. Some of the authors explain the choice as a matter of colloquial and hypercorrect language.

3.4 Comparison of adjectives

During the early era of the English language *-er* and *-est* were used as endings of comparative and superlative adjectives. The endings were even more common than today and forms like *ancinetest*, *famousest*, and *shamefuller* were used. In the *Tales of King Arthur* for example, double comparatives and double superlatives could result in phrases like: "*more gladder, more lower, moost royalist, moost shamefullest*" (Fromkin & Rodman, 1998:458-459). Grammatical issues like these were frequently debated in the eighteenth century and still are.

In *Hargeviks engelska grammatik* (1997) it is stated that there are two ways of adjective comparison, namely using the endings *-er* or *-est* or adding *more* or *most*. It is emphasized that you cannot use both at the same time. One-syllable words mostly take *-er* or *-est*, whereas two syllable words plus *y* also take *-er* or *-est*. Many two-syllable adjectives take *more* and *most*, all longer adjectives and adjectives containing three syllables take *more* and *most* just like most adjectives ending in *-ed*. The authors point out that you may not use both alternatives at the same time, but many one- and two-syllable adjectives take both alternatives, such as "*common, cruel, narrow, polite, simple and stupid*". In front of the word *than*, there is almost always possible to use *more* as in "*more shy than...*" (1997:89). Regarding the case of *old, older, oldest* compared to *old, elder, eldest* it is explained that British English sometimes use *elder* and *eldest* about people related to each other; though, in front of *than* it is always "*older than*".

In *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* (2000: 278) the authors give a very thorough description of comparatives. It is stated that one-syllable adjectives take *-er* and *-est* apart from a few exceptions. Further on, most one-syllable adjectives placed in front of *than* take *more* and *most*. Adjectives ending in *-y, -ow, -le, -er* and *-ure* follow the same rule. Additionally, in AmE *older/oldest* is the common form of comparison. In BrE *elder/eldest* is used about family members, but in informal BrE there is a strong tendency to use *older/oldest*. Sometimes *elder* is used about members of a company (also *senior*). In the expression *an elder statesman*, *elder* is not a comparison of *old* but means someone experienced.

The authors of *Introducing English Grammar* (2001: 63) state that "Normally, the endings *-er* and *-est* are added to the adjective stem", and further on "[i]n some cases you also get a modification of the stem i.e. *old/elder/eldest*." It is, however, emphasized that "*elder/eldest* has given way to *older/oldest* and is confined to specialized contexts e.g. *elder statesman* or *elder brother*". The authors also say that adjectives that cannot take these inflections need *more* and *most*. They claim that adjectives with three or more syllables require *more* and *most*. Some adjectives consisting of two syllables need *more* and *most*, whereas some do not. All speakers, they claim, will however, not agree on this.

Concerning the comparison of adjectives the authors of *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* (2000) give information about the inflections *-er* and *-est* and whether the adjectives take *more* and *most*. Concerning the adjective *old*, they recommend *old, older, oldest* and

sometimes: *old, elder, eldest*. *Elder* is used about relatives, about the *Elders* (people in a congregation) and in expressions about traditions and customs, like *elder custom*.

In the grammar section of *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995) the authors give information about adjectives. Irregular inflections are always presented after each word, whereas regular inflections are not, except if there is a possibility of confusion. Regarding the word *old* the authors state that it is used:

...to describe either people or things. *Elder* means the same thing but you only use it to talk about people and usually only your close: *My elder/older daughter is at university*. [...] But you can also say: *elder members of the community*. **Older** but not **elder** can be used with **than**.

The authors also state that *elderly* is a more respectful way of saying old even though they believe that most people prefer to be called senior citizens, "and this is the most common polite and acceptable expression to use".

In *The Oxford Guide to English Usage* (1994:180) it is pointed out that whether to use the inflections *-er, -est* or *more, most* is "largely a matter of style". Several examples are given to show different possibilities. Finally, a few examples are given of what is not acceptable for instance: "substitute *better known, best dressed* and *hotter*." (1994:182)

Crystal (1990:31) presents a table of adjectives' characteristics. Among them the inflections *-er* and *-est* are listed and that they may take *more* and *most*. Crystal also says that: "[*a*]sleep and several other words beginning with *a-* cause problems." He claims that he has heard phrases like: "*They're very asleep* and *Two more asleep children I've never seen*". But Crystal does not think that this should be called normal usage.

To sum up what is written about the comparison of adjectives, most books in this study give very thorough information in a quite descriptive way. Most of the material presents the inflections and explains if the adjectives take *more* or *most*. Sometimes the information is a bit vague though, which, of course, can cause problems. For example, when information on whether to use a certain variety is explained to be "largely a matter of style", a non-native speaker with limited knowledge about what kind of style is appropriate in a particular context, may get into trouble.

3.5 What singular pronoun should denote the common gender?

The personal pronouns in OE were *he* (he), *heo* (she) and *hit* (it) and their possessive forms were *his* (his), *hiere* (hers) and *his* (its); these were called the grammatical gender but in Early Middle English the expression "natural gender" (Barber, 1999:160) became more common and a lot of the inflections died out. Today modern English lacks words to denote the neutral third person singular pronoun and problems how to put certain sentences together have arisen. For example, when there is a need to refer back to *someone* without knowing who this *someone* is the pronoun *he* is often used which sometimes is considered an unsuitable alternative.

The greater the notion of a correct English language became, the more delicate the feelings about the ordering of elements turned out to be and in 1560 a grammarian called Wilson made the following statement regarding men and women: "yet in speaking at the least, let us keep a natural order" (Coates, 1993: 24). By "natural order" he meant that men were superior to women. Another grammarian, Poole, was very precise when he claimed that "[t]he Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine"(Coates, 1993:21). Nevertheless, did Fowler (1908), express his view regarding the issue of how to denote the common gender by stating that "ungallant as it may seem, we shall probably persist in refusing women their due here as stubbornly as Englishmen continue to offend the Scots by saying *England* instead of *Britain*".

The authors of *Hargeviks engelska grammatik* (1997), state that the pronoun *they* is normally used when referring back to pronouns like *someone*, *anyone* and *everyone*. In very formal language they recommend to use *he or she*.

In *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* (2000: 205), it is explained that if the subject is a pronoun like *somebody*, *anybody*, *nobody* and *everybody* there are three different alternatives regarding the possessive pronoun, either you should use *his*, or *his or her*, or the plural *their*. The word *their*, is the most common one in *informal* language. Furthermore, the authors say that when the subject is *one* you may use *his* (in AmE) instead of *one's* as in "One should keep a record of one's (his) expenses." Another aspect is given on page 358 where the authors recommend to use the pronoun *he*, unless it must be emphasized that it refers back to a woman. *He or she* gives a clumsy and pedantic impression which leaves *they*, to be the normal and easy alternative.

The authors of *Introducing English Grammar* (1991:57) claim that the original meaning of the grammatical gender has now entirely disappeared and instead it "is directly related to biological sex". According to them it has often been considered grammatically wrong to let a plural pronoun refer back to a singular pronoun and therefore "*he* should be used instead". However, the authors consider this to be "linguistically quite unfounded". They also say that:

... English has many examples where for special purposes pronouns depart from their central meaning – as so often there is no perfect match between form and meaning here. Besides, surely so-called generic *he* would also be incorrect, if the same formal criterion were to apply across the board!

In their own text they have chosen to use *he* to refer back to a speaker and *she* to refer back to the listener. However, they also use *they*, as a gender-neutral pronoun and refer to Shakespeare, who also used it.

In *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* (2000) the writers claim that *he* is used about a male person but also in a sentence like: *Who is he?* meaning 'Who is it?' It is also underlined that *he* is used about people in general as in: "[~*who lives will see*]".

In the *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995), it is claimed that the normal interpretation of *he* is that it is to be used when the sex is unknown or is just anyone. The authors also state that:

Some people, especially women, do not like the use of *he* to include both men and women in a sentence like: *Everyone should do what he thinks best*. Instead they use **he or she, she or he, or they**: *Everyone should do what they think best*.

Their final recommendation is to avoid the problem by rewriting the sentence.

In *The Oxford Guide to English Usage* (1993: 187), it is stated that: "English has no singular pronoun to denote the common gender". The authors suggest that: "*he* (*him, himself, his*)" should be used and claim that "Many good writers follow this". What they call "Popular usage" has according to them: "for at least five centuries favored the plural pronoun *they* (*them, themselves, their*)". The authors claim that "this is entirely acceptable in informal speech" and that it is not unusual in "more formal contexts". The usage of *they* as a singular pronoun is according to them: "not yet universally acceptable as standard." In the guide there

are examples of how to use *he or she*, but it is claimed to grow "unwieldy with repetition". Their last advice is to recast the sentence as in: "*I think somebody should immediately address themselves to this problem.*" But this is "not generally regarded as acceptable in Standard English."

David Crystal (1990: 256) explains that not until the 1970s were social attitudes towards men and women woven into our language. He sees the lack of a sex-neutral third person singular pronoun in English as a problem and presents some of the words that are used in order to avoid the "*he* bias". According to Crystal sometimes *he or she*, or in written English (*s he*) is used, even though he finds it "stylistically awkward". In informal speech, the word *they* is widely spread, but some people do not think that a plural word should refer back to a singular word. Others simply recast the sentences, turn the singular into plural or simply invent new pronouns. One study made in American English between 1971 and 1979 showed that "the frequency with which such forms as *he* and *man* were used [...] fell from around twelve per 5,000 words to around four per 5,000 words during that period" (1990: 257). This gives an idea of how quickly language can change and also shows how language is connected to attitudes and changes in society.

To conclude what singular pronoun should denote the common gender, a surprisingly large number of grammarians recommend *he* as the best alternative. Even though some of the authors state that *they* or *he or she* is the normal choice this phenomenon is treated in a quite prescriptive way.

3.6 Prepositions at the end of sentences

Robert Lowth (Wikipedia) is the man responsible for the hostility many English people have towards ending a sentence with a preposition. He was also an opponent of *split infinitives*. His grammar, written in 1762 and based on Latin, was still used in education in the early 20th century. It is by no means certain that he knew what a turbulence he had created for coming linguists and for people in general. There is little reason to believe that he could have imagined that people would think of the rule as a "tombstone that should R.I.P." (O'Conner, 1996: 183).

The authors of *Hargeviks engelska grammatik* (1997) and *Engelsk universitetsgrammatik* (2000) have no objections to ending a sentence with a preposition.

Similarly, the writers of *Introducing English Grammar* (1991: 125) claim that:

From the point of view of prescriptive grammarians, prepositions shouldn't be left at the end of sentences. Since so many native speakers of English are happy to leave a preposition at the end of a clause, we assume that if there ever was a rule forbidding prepositions left at the end of clauses, then that rule is now rapidly losing ground.

They believe that even though some people think that prepositions should not end sentences and some people do, the rule will disappear.

The dictionaries *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995) and *Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok* (2000) do not argue about ending sentences with a preposition. In *The Oxford Guide to English Usage* it is explained that the phenomenon is "a natural feature" and that "[t]he alleged rule that forbids the placing of the preposition at the end of a clause or a sentence should be disregarded" (1994:206). Still, the authors claim that: "The preposition cannot be moved to an earlier place in many sentences" and in other cases "prepositions cannot come at the end" which is referred to as *unnatural*. The guide claims that the position of the preposition is often a "stylistic choice". Finally, it is recommended that: "One should be guided by what sounds natural. There is no need to alter the position of the preposition merely in deference to the alleged rule" (1994: 207).

David Crystal's (1990: 27) BBC public survey placed "A sentence shouldn't end with a preposition," in the sixth place on the top-ten list of complaints. He states that:

In formal English, the rule tends to be followed; but in informal usage, final prepositions are normal. Compare the formal *That is the man to whom I was talking* and informal *That's the man I was talking to*.

Regarding prepositions at the end of sentences the authors seem to agree on the fact that the rule will disappear even though some of them recommend avoiding it in formal writing.

3.7 Literature in the compulsory school

In general, the grammatical features discussed in this essay are not represented in textbooks and grammar books for pupils in the Swedish compulsory school. In the introduction to the

grammar section of *Good Luck Keepsake, a Reference Book* (2000) the knowledge of grammar is compared to the knowledge that a skilled mechanic has who knows enough rules to put an engine together. The authors claim that grammar consists of those rules that are necessary to know, i.e. how different parts in the language should be formed and put together. Their overall comments on the grammatical features are adjusted to the level of the intended pupils.

The authors of *Good Luck Keepsake* (2000) do not mention *whom* at all. The list of interrogatives includes only *who* with the explanation that it refers back to a person. About the comparison of adjectives the authors state that in most cases the second and third comparative form is made by adding *-er* and *-est*. It is explained that the spelling sometimes change and that *long adjectives* need *more* and *most*. Examples are also given of a few irregular comparatives. Nothing is mentioned about syllables. The authors present no information whatsoever about possessive pronouns other than the usage of *its* for Swedish *dess*. Recommendations about the split infinitive, *between you and me* and whether prepositions could end a sentence are not mentioned.

In the section about the comparison of adjectives in *Wings Activity Book* (2002) facts are given about the *-er* and *-est* rule and the changes in spelling which sometimes occur. The authors state that longer adjectives need *more* and (the) *most*. They also present some irregularities. The other items looked into in this essay are not discussed in this book.

In the workbook *A Piece of Cake* (1997) it is stated that short adjectives, that is one-syllable adjectives, take *-er* and *-est*. It is also stated that two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y*, *-ow*, or *-er* take *-er* and *-est* or *more* and *most*. Two-syllable adjectives not having those endings plus all three- or four-syllable adjectives are called long adjectives and take *more* and *most*. Three spelling rules are presented along with the fact that there are also a few irregular ones that must be learned by heart. No comments are given on the other grammatical phenomena discussed in this essay.

In the exercise book *Get it Together 2* (exercise book B, 1996), the writers give short and clearly descriptive explanations about the comparison of adjectives. The other items looked into in this essay are not discussed.

When comparing the textbooks with the exercise books and grammar sections that belong to them, most texts are in agreement with the grammatical rules and recommendations. However, one item was found in *Friends Textbook 3* (1992) in which the personal pronoun *he* was used to denote the common gender: "A puppy is always sweet. He's small and warm and cuddly. But how big will he be next year? What will he look like?" The puppy is referred to as a *he* without any indication in the text about what sex the puppy has.

After making a summary of the grammar books and textbooks for compulsory school it is obvious that the information is adjusted to fit a certain level of language knowledge. Out of the items dealt with in this essay the authors put focus on the comparison of adjectives. The other items are not dealt with neither in the grammar parts nor in the text books except for one textbook that recommends *he* to denote the common gender.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability

It is important to question the reliability of your own work. The choice of method, empirical evidence, analysis and consequences must be critically examined. Based on my experience and understanding I consider the different measuring instruments in this study to have different grades of reliability, still, I believe that they give an indication of peoples' attitudes towards language.

The low number of participants answering the questionnaire (see p.21ff.) in this study makes the reliability limited. The questionnaire consists of 22 statements which is a rather small number if the aim is to illustrate the whole spectrum of people's attitudes towards descriptive and prescriptive approaches. One particular thing that is missing in the questionnaire is the lack of statements about school literature. Two of the questions are not clear enough according to some of the respondents; therefore a few answers are missing in the summary of the questionnaire. It is hard to say whether the grammar books and dictionaries in this study represent a good collection of the literature that is used in schools. However, many of the respondents have given their personal views on what they find most important when talking about attitudes in a learning situation, which clarifies some of their checkmarks and gives credibility to the result of the study.

4.2 Result of the linguistic study

The result of the study of linguistic phenomena in dictionaries and grammar books shows that most of them intend to be descriptive. In many cases though, the information turns out to be norm-enforcing and prejudice. In the paragraphs below a summary of each grammar book is presented.

Hargeviks engelska grammatik – In this grammar book the attitude towards the issues discussed in this study are mostly descriptive and norm-observing. Sometimes though, no comments at all are given as whether to say *between you and me* or *you and I*. The authors recommend *he or she* or *they* to denote the common gender. This describes what is most common but does not cover all variants. Still, it is a quite descriptive grammar adjusted to suit pupils all the way up to senior high school level.

Engelsk universitetsgrammatik – This grammar's attitude towards grammatical issues is both descriptive and prescriptive. The reader gets thorough information about occurring varieties in the English language, but it also tells people how they should speak or write. The recommendations about split infinitives for example, are clearly norm-enforcing, whereas clarifications regarding the comparison of adjectives show a more descriptive attitude.

Introducing English Grammar – Undoubtedly, this grammar is the one in this study that shows the most descriptive attitude towards all kinds of grammatical phenomena. Their clarifications describe and do not express judgment, even though to call *whom* an endangered species is a quite strong remark.

Norstedts stora engelsk-svenska ordbok – The attitude towards language in this dictionary is descriptive when it comes to the comparison of adjectives but prescriptive when it comes to what personal pronoun should denote the common gender. Considering the adjectives several options are presented whereas regarding the choice of pronoun only *he* seems to be optional.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English – The attitude towards language in this dictionary is quite descriptive. It recommends many variants regarding what pronoun should denote the common gender. The usage note, however, is a bit remarkable since a *politeness*

reminder is directed to women who according to the authors "do not like the use of *he* to include both men and women" (1995:657).

The Oxford Guide to English Usage – In this guide the attitude towards language is intended to be prescriptive, which is also mentioned in the introduction of the book. Still, the information is quite thorough and presents many language variants. However, since a prescriptive view means to be norm-enforcing, the guide has to be called prescriptive just as the authors intended.

The English Language – Crystal presents a study which shows that many people are on the brink of being hypercorrect in their attitudes towards language. That is, they try so hard to apply a grammatical rule that they actually create grammatical errors. The author does not show all language varieties in his comments, but tries to give a picture of what people in general consider about language issues. Crystal also claims that people quickly changed attitudes towards the *he*-bias in the 1970s, which really had an affect on the English language.

In the text- and grammar books for the compulsory school system the selection of grammar issues seem to be made in order to keep the instructions simple enough for the hypothetical young language learner. Focus is put on what is considered to be basic grammatical knowledge and a limited number of language varieties are presented.

Altogether, the grammar books and the dictionaries in this study are both descriptive and prescriptive in their attitudes towards grammar. In order to explain different language variants the authors give a number of choices. In most cases the choices are divided into *formal* and *informal* alternatives. Other frequently used alternatives are *common*, *normal* and *accepted*. Some authors use more expressive terms to describe the different choices like: *clumsy and pedantic*, *linguistically unfounded*, *no perfect match*, *polite and acceptable*, *natural feature* and *artificial rule*. In some cases, expressions such as these reveal the authors' convictions on how people should speak, rather than how people actually speak.

4.3 Results of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was answered by seven non-native speakers all of whom work as teachers. It was also answered by seven native speakers, two of whom are students at a university and four of whom work as university teachers. When the results of their answers were compared

some differences appeared between the attitudes of the native and the non-native speakers. A summary of the answers from these two groups is presented in appendix number one, some of the results are, however, presented below.

Most of the native speakers believed that any English variety is equally good as Standard English. This was not the case among the non-native speakers, but still they agreed more with the statement that all English-speaking countries should aim for the same standard variety, vocabulary and word-order, than the native speakers did. Both of the groups agreed that it is important to know the differences between formal and informal language. This was also the case concerning the statement which said that it is most important to be able to speak, write and read English with the standard variety as the norm. All of them also agreed that grammatical correctness in written English is important. Still, the people's attitudes towards the specific grammatical items of this study, gave answers that were spread all over the scale from "I strongly disagree" to "I strongly agree". In general, the respondents were however, not quite sure whether spelling and grammar rules given in dictionaries should be strictly followed and whether the literature is descriptive. Regarding the answers to the statement saying that: "All English-speaking people should speak and write as they like", the native speakers agreed whereas the non-native speakers did not. The answers to the statement that "incorrect language performance should be viewed as contributing to the decay of the language" differ widely especially among the native speakers. Last but not least, a majority of the respondents agreed to the statement "I believe in a descriptive attitude towards language".

Among the individual comments the respondents gave to the statement: "This is what I consider most important when talking about attitudes towards language in a learning situation", one native speaker said that:

It is necessary to be aware of Standard English forms of grammar and spelling. It is important to appreciate the impression likely to be given to an audience by deviation from this standard. It is, however, necessary on occasion to adapt style and forms of Standard English to match purpose and audience. This is particularly so in more informal circumstances.

Another native speaker claimed that: "It should be made interesting but the importance of grammar should be stressed." A different aspect reads as follows:

Let people speak how they want (grammars come naturally to native speakers); non-native speakers need guidelines but not strict rules and regulations). Any form of prescriptive attitude denigrates other dialects of English (and the word to use here is dialects; the politically correct word "varieties" [RP speakers (or variants) did/do not want their "variety" of language to be called a dialect because they had previously constructed the word dialect negatively] is an ideological construct). Keeping the English language a prescriptive subject is keeping it "snobby" and protecting previously erected castles, moats and drawbridges. The English language is not going to die out in the near future so ideas concerning language death and the Victorian and racist concepts of degeneration of language do not apply. There are not many people in England that can read and write to the standards of style and grammar that many Universities demand and therefore maybe a better word would be "ideal" (very few people actually live up to the standard).

Someone pointed out that "language learning is a matter of starting digging where you are, recognize yourself in the learning situation, and to find the best solutions for reaching your goals". Similarly, another respondent believes that necessary teaching qualities are: "Flexibility and empathy towards the learner". With emphasis put on the basic knowledge of English one respondent claimed that:

I think that it is important that there is a Standard English taught in schools at a basic level so that everyone can master the language. Later, more flexible styles may be adopted, which make pieces of writing more interesting and readable, but I think it is difficult to write well in any kind of style if there is no foundational knowledge of basic grammar rules.

One of the non-native speakers considered it most important in a learning situation "To give the pupils self-confidence to express themselves in English and don't be fear [sic] to say things wrong". Another respondent's recommendation was "rather [to] describe than prescribe language usage, a kind of learning by doing, to make a positive atmosphere in the learning situation". Furthermore, it is emphasized that "It is most important to be able to speak, read and write with the standard variety as the norm." According to a non-native speaker "[i]t is most important to let the language flow and not hinder it by constant grammatical corrections", whereas somebody else thought that "To be familiar with grammars is a helpful tool when it comes to learning languages." A comparable experience comes from another respondent:

I have always thought that the communicative part is the most important part of teaching a foreign language, but in my latest years of teaching I have learned that many pupils especially the weaker ones have great support in learning grammatical patterns.

The teachers who took part in this study emphasized different things based on their own experience and knowledge. Their answers to the questionnaire range from "I strongly disagree" to "I strongly agree". This also goes for the grammatical advice given in the grammatical material of this study. However, in general, the teachers believe that it is important to know the differences between formal and informal language and they also see the standard variety as a norm.

To sum up, according to the respondents' opinions in this study, grammatical correctness is important, even though dictionaries cannot fully be trusted. The material in a grammar should describe the language with all its amplitude. Still, they believe that incorrect language performance will probably not contribute to the decay of language. So, there is an ongoing conflict between accuracy and fluency. People do have different opinions on specific grammatical items and their consequences for the language learning situation.

5. Summary and Conclusion

"The English language is your most versatile scientific instrument. Learn to use it with precision." (Trigg, 1979)

The purpose of this study was to find out whether people, mainly teachers, are descriptive or prescriptive in their attitude towards language. The intention was also to find out whether grammar books, dictionaries and textbooks are in accordance with these attitudes.

A comparison was made between the results of a linguistic study and the results of a questionnaire. The comparison shows that people are both descriptive and prescriptive in their attitude towards language. It also shows that the contents of grammar books and dictionaries of this study are in accordance with them, that is, some authors express themselves in more prescriptive ways and some in more descriptive ways.

In the Swedish compulsory school system the aim for English as a subject is according to the National criteria (2000), an "all-communicative ability". Still, in the text- and grammar books intended for pupils in the compulsory school system used in this study, a very limited number of language varieties are presented. The reason why these books do not cover that many varieties is probably that the authors want to avoid ambiguities and make language learning easier for the pupils. This study shows that grammar books and dictionaries used at higher

levels, such as senior high schools and at universities, give a much broader picture of language varieties and contain much more information about how the English language works compared to the material used in the Swedish compulsory school system. In my opinion, also younger children need explanations of the differences between formal and informal choices. Nowadays, children come to school with a lot of previous knowledge of the English language. If they get the opportunity to discuss language issues they will achieve an understanding of how to use the phrases they have learnt in a correct context. An all-communicative ability will be difficult to reach for pupils in the compulsory school system, if no other information is offered than that given in the grammar sections of the material presented in this study.

Most teachers who answered the questionnaire of this study agreed with the statement that: "A grammar should not be stating what people should say, it should describe the language with all its amplitude". This verifies that the teachers of this study believe in descriptive information. Consequently, teachers, in particular those working in the compulsory school system, believe and are in need of descriptive teaching materials.

Börjars and Burrige claim that a non-standard variety should not be equated with a substandard variety. Still, in the questionnaire, people are of different opinions. This proves that language and its varieties affect people but in different ways. Wardhaugh says that no one is "free to do exactly what he or she pleases when it comes to language usage", and it seems as if he has drawn a correct conclusion. Most respondents participating in this study agreed that it is most important to be able to speak, write and read English with the standard variety as the norm, even though the non-native speakers agreed more to this than the native speakers did.

The authors of the grammar- and textbooks part of this study are all of them in some way very familiar with language teaching and their texts of course reflect their attitudes. Some of them believe in a more descriptive approach whereas others believe in a more prescriptive approach. One aspect of having both descriptive and prescriptive attitudes in a learning situation is that each individual pupil can find something that suits his or her own attitude towards language. This is in agreement with each teacher's main task, that is, to meet each pupil, right where they are in their learning process.

A teacher with an all-descriptive attitude towards language can provide a great number of language options for his or her pupils. Thereby the focus will be put on each pupil's ability to speak and understand, without being hypercritical or expressing judgment. Such an approach may help pupils to build up and maintain their self-confidence. The danger with a focus put on how you speak instead on how you should speak is that each phase of language learning gets too extensive. Pupils who have learning difficulties are sometimes in need of patterns and firm rules. So, the positive aspect of a teacher having an all-prescriptive attitude towards language is that he or she presents a limited number of variants. The grammar becomes straight and clear. The language user can rely on the rules and feel confident. The risk of being all-prescriptive in the approach to language is that the focus will be put entirely on how the language should be spoken instead of how it can be spoken. To be able to reach the all-round communicative ability a certain flow of the language must be rewarded and encouraged. The consequence of each approach of course differs depending on people and situation.

Competence in language is a prestigious and personal matter. The language of each individual reveals who they are and therefore, to criticize someone's language often becomes the same as to criticizing someone's personality. Still, without being aware of how your language will be seen by others, incorrect opinions might arise about your personality. As often pointed out, knowledge, in this case knowledge of language attitudes increases our consciousness and helps us to look at things from many different perspectives. People's descriptive and prescriptive attitudes towards language will continue to change and vary. Hopefully, time and increased knowledge will lead us to a deeper awareness of language learning. Linguistic choices are a topic that engages us all.

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Appendix 1, Native speakers

This is a summary of the answers to the questionnaire about attitudes towards the English language and some of its linguistic issues. To indicate the respondents degree of agreement a 5-point scale was used, ranging from 1 for "I strongly disagree" and 5 for "I strongly Agree". The respondents were also free to comment on any of the questions on the last page. The figures show where the respondents put their marks.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. A world-wide discussion on what the English language should be like is good for everyone.	1	2	1	1	1
2. All English-speaking countries should aim for the same standard variety, vocabulary and word-order.	3	3		1	
3. All English-speaking people should speak and write as they like.	2		2	2	1
4. Any English variety is equally good as Standard English.	2		2	1	2
5. I have a good knowledge of what is considered to be Standard English.				2	5
6. It is not important to know the difference between formal and informal language.	3	3			1
7. It is most important to be able to speak, write and read English with the standard variety as the norm.	1		2	3	1
8. The approach to grammatical issues in school should be descriptive without expressing judgment and without being hypercritical.		2	1	3	1
9. The approach to grammatical issues in school should be norm-enforcing.	2		3	1	1
10. A grammar should not be stating what people should say, it should describe the language with all its amplitude.		1	2	3	1
11. Grammatical correctness in written English is not important.	5		1	1	
12. Style is more important than grammatical correctness in written English.	2	4		1	
13. Spelling and grammar rules given in dictionaries should be strictly followed.		3	1	1	2
14. All dictionaries are descriptive.	1		5	1	
15. Whether to use the adjective form <i>more or most</i> or the ending <i>-er and -est</i> is largely a matter of style.	1	2	1	1	2
16. When referred back to everybody, somebody or nobody the pronoun <i>he</i> should be used instead of the more troublesome <i>he or she</i> like in: <i>Everybody thought that he was entitled to the bonus.</i>	3		2		

17. An adverb may not be placed between <i>to</i> and <i>the infinitive</i> in written English as in: <i>What would it be like to actually live abroad?</i>	2	2	1	1	1
18. It is correct to say <i>between you and I</i> .	1	2	2	1	
19. I consider it too formal to use <i>whom</i> in a sentence like: Whom did you see?	1	1	3	1	1
21. Incorrect language performance is viewed as contributing to the decay of the language.	1	1	2	2	1
22. I believe in a descriptive attitude towards language (definition of descriptive: to describe the language without being hypercritical or expressing judgment, so called norm-observing).		2	1	4	
23. I believe in a prescriptive attitude towards language (definition of prescriptive is to be norm-enforcing, to legislate what speaker's grammatical rules should be, rather than what they are).	1	3	1	2	
24. This is what I consider most important when talking about attitudes towards language in a learning situation:.....					

Appendix 2, Non-native speakers

	1	2	3	4	5
1. A world-wide discussion on what the English language should be like is good for everyone.		2	1	2	2
2. All English-speaking countries should aim for the same standard variety, vocabulary and word-order.		1	1	5	
3. All English-speaking people should speak and write as they like.	2	4		1	
4. Any English variety is equally good as Standard English.	1	2	4		
5. I have a good knowledge of what is considered to be Standard English.		1	3	3	
6. It is not important to know the difference between formal and informal language.	3	3		1	
7. It is most important to be able to speak, write and read English with the standard variety as the norm.			2	2	3
8. The approach to grammatical issues in school should be descriptive without expressing judgment and without being hypercritical.	1	1	2	3	
9. The approach to grammatical issues in school should be norm-enforcing.			5	1	1
10. A grammar should not be stating what people should say, it should describe the language with all its amplitude.		3		3	1
11. Grammatical correctness in written English is not important.	1	6			
12. Style is more important than grammatical correctness in written English.	2	3	1	1	
13. Spelling and grammar rules given in dictionaries should be strictly followed.	1	1	1	3	1
14. All dictionaries are descriptive.	1	1	2	2	1
15. Whether to use the adjective form <i>more or most</i> or the ending <i>-er and -est</i> is largely a matter of style.	1	2	3	1	
16. When referred back to everybody, somebody or nobody the pronoun <i>he</i> should be used instead of the more troublesome <i>he or she</i> like in: <i>Everybody thought that he was entitled to the bonus.</i>	2	2	2		1
17. An adverb may not be placed between <i>to</i> and <i>the infinitive</i> in written English as in: <i>What would it be like to actually live abroad?</i>	2	2	2	1	
18. It is correct to say <i>between you and I</i> .	5	1			1
19. I consider it too formal to use <i>whom</i> in a sentence like: <i>Whom did you see?</i>	1		1	3	2

20. Incorrect language performance is viewed as contributing to the decay of the language.			4	3	
21. I believe in a descriptive attitude towards language (definition of descriptive: to describe the language without being hypercritical or expressing judgment, so called norm-observing).		2		3	2
22. I believe in a prescriptive attitude towards language (definition of prescriptive is to be norm-enforcing, to legislate what speaker's grammatical rules should be, rather than what they are).	1	3		3	
23. This is what I consider most important when talking about attitudes towards language in a learning situation:.....					