



Readers' Forum

English grammar

With the solemn promise of introducing innovative approaches to the study of English language and its grammar, a number of text-books on English grammar has come into our market. But if perused with a critical eye it will transpire that most of them in the name of modernisation of English Grammar have begotten a big mess of it by confounding the traditional and modern approaches. Some days ago through these columns of your esteemed daily, we presented before our learned readers the inadequacy, deficiency and misleading information that abound in a text-book of English Grammar entitled "Basic English Language" a publication of the University of Dhaka. This time in the following paragraphs we would like to focus on the inconsistent and misleading aspects of another modern text-book English Grammar entitled "Practical English" by Dr Serajul Islam Chowdhury and M S Hoque.

Item 1.1 in the book bears the heading "Recognizing Sentences" and under it the sentences are exclamatory and imperative sentences. But in chapter XXI the sentences have again been classified in five categories, this time, of course, by inclusion of the left-out category of optative sentences. What necessitates this distinction in classification of sentences? Whatever explanation may be behind this, there is no denying that the readers become confused to ascertain the precise number of categories of sentences (simple) as a result of such arbitrary differentiation.

In chapter II words are grouped under two categories, viz. content words and structure words. The content words are then subgrouped under nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs; and the structure words under Prepositions, Conjunctions, Interjections, determiners, question words, and pronouns (though according to the arrangement in the

book the readers are not supposed to have acquaintance with these grammatical items under the subgroup at this stage). However, next to this, in item 2.3.1 under traditional classification of words as parts of speech nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are bracketed together as content words, while prepositions, conjunctions, interjections and pronouns as structure words. It's to be noted that in bracketing the traditional parts of speech into these two categories, mention is however made of auxiliaries, articles with alike determiners and question words which just as well form the class of words of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs respectively according to the traditional classification of words as parts of speech.

Item 2.3 of chapter II is a glaring example of illogical arrangement of grammatical items in the book. This item rather manoeuvres to acquaint the readers with the classification of words by their position in sentences. That is the same word may be a noun in one position, but an adjective in some other position in a sentence. Similarly items 2.4 attempts to classify words by their different forms, viz. singular, plural, possessive forms of nouns; base, s/es, ing, past and past participle forms of verbs, simple, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives etc; though the readers have been kept quite in dark about all these grammatical items till then. And the readers are supposed to have a comprehensive idea about these grammatical items only after going through the chapters IV to XIV of the book.

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