

Setting Up a Framework of Spoken English Grammar

Although the 1920s already saw the publication of *A Grammar of Spoken English*, studies on spoken English up to the 1980s were mainly focused on phonetics, discourse intonation and conversation structures, rather than on grammar. True study of spoken English grammar has only a short history of one or two decades, for the study was not made possible until the early 1990s when large spoken corpora were constructed, causing a revolution in research instruments.

Since then, some grammatical features of spoken English have been revealed, but most research has typically incorporated them into the framework of written grammar, without recognizing that a spoken English grammar cannot operate within the framework of written grammar. Therefore, no well-developed framework for describing spoken grammar has been set up.

My research aims to set up a framework that can systematically capture features of spoken English grammar. I have established three criteria for such a framework. First, spoken grammar only needs to address features that are different from those of written grammar in order to be of any worth, and precisely for this reason cannot borrow the framework of written grammar. Second, a framework for spoken English grammar must incorporate spoken mode features in order to be interpretively adequate, because it is the differences between the two modes of communication that cause the differences in grammar between speech and writing. Third, the framework should present features in all proper areas of grammar, including phonology, lexis, syntax, and discourse.

I use published corpora as my research data. My data base comprises 180,000 words of natural conversation.

In this presentation, I will illustrate my framework, the criteria for setting it up, and evidence from my data that proves its validity.