PROJECT 1

This is the first of four projects to be assigned this semester in Linguistic Applications in ESL.   It is due in class on **Tuesday, July 22**, 2003.

Introduction

You have been learning concepts and terminology from morphology and syntax. These two levels of linguistic analysis were familiar to you long before you took this course. I hope, however, that you've been able to consider these building blocks of language from a new perspective.

If someone asked you what sort of work might require a knowledge of how morphology and syntax work (and how to talk about it), editing, language teaching, and lexicography might come to mind. There's another set of common applications of linguistics that many of you encounter often: spell-checking and grammar-checking utilities in word processors and other software. Spell checkers are not just "dumb" dictionaries: they contain morphological rules that increase their efficiency. Likewise, grammar checkers rely on rules of morphology and syntax to flag possible errors or infelicities in texts.

In this project you will run a grammar checker on a piece of your own writing. You will then discuss the grammar checker's strengths and weaknesses in terms of morphology and syntax.

Procedures

1)   Select a piece of your own writing that is at least two pages long. A rough draft of an assignment for another class would be ideal.   If it hasn't been typed into a word processor, do that now.   Keep at least two printed copies of the paper handy: one for note-taking and the other for handing in.
2)   Explore the settings of the grammar checker on your word processor. If you don't have a word processor with a grammar checker at home, you can use a GW computer.
3)   Set up a method to keep notes on how the grammar checker treats your document. You might like to take notes directly onto a printed copy of your paper, or you might want to type your notes into another document.
4)   Run the grammar checker on your document.   Note each "flags" that the software brings up. For each flag, you should
      a)   Mark its position on the printed copy of the original text,
      b)   Keep a record of the type of "error" that was flagged,
      c)   Categorize the flag as morphological, syntactic, or other, and
      d)   Note your own opinion of the flag. Was it necessary? Helpful? Accurate?
5)   Write a paper of at least two pages double-spaced (excluding quoted examples) that discusses your findings in (4) above.   You should also address these questions briefly:
      a)   Would you recommend the use of a grammar checker to an ESL student? Why or why not?
      b)   On what (student-related) factors would this depend?
      c)   What changes or improvements would you suggest to improve the usefulness of a grammar checker to ESL students?

To hand in on July 22

1)   Your original document, annotated in the places flagged by the grammar checker (or with an attached sheet of annotations). Please mention which word processor you were using.
2)   Your paper