

Grammar can be understood at two levels: within the sentence and beyond the sentence.

Within the Sentence

Grammar within the sentence focuses on syntax, which is the set of rules for arranging words into a coherent phrase or clause. This level of grammar ensures that a single sentence is structurally correct and makes sense on its own. It's the traditional grammar taught in schools, dealing with parts of speech, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation.

Syntax: The rules for how words combine to form sentences. For example, in English, a typical sentence structure is Subject-Verb-Object (e.g., "The boy [S] kicked [V] the ball [O]").

Key Focus: Correctness and completeness of a single, isolated thought.

Beyond the Sentence

Grammar beyond the sentence focuses on discourse, which is the study of how sentences connect to form a cohesive and coherent text or conversation. This level of grammar, often called text grammar or discourse analysis, deals with the relationships between multiple sentences. It's what allows us to understand entire paragraphs, stories, or spoken interactions.

Key elements of grammar beyond the sentence include:

Cohesion: The use of specific linguistic devices to link sentences together. This includes:

Pronouns (e.g., "He," "she," "it") that refer back to a noun in a previous sentence.

Conjunctions (e.g., "therefore," "however") that show the logical relationship between ideas.

Repetition of key words or synonyms.

Coherence: The overall logical flow and understandability of a text. A text is coherent if a reader or listener can easily follow the line of thought, even if the grammatical links (cohesion) are not explicit. For example,

in the sentences "The alarm clock rang. I got up," the logical connection is understood without a word like "then."

Discourse Markers: Words and phrases like "so," "well," and "you know" that help guide the conversation and structure the flow of information.

The main difference is that sentence-level grammar focuses on getting the words right, while discourse-level grammar focuses on getting the meaning across by connecting those words and sentences in a logical way.

