PART I. BEGINNING LINGUISTICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE

KEY TOPIC(S):
- Prescription vs. Description: Prescriptive vs. Descriptive Rules of Grammar

READING ASSIGNMENT 3
The purpose of this session is to examine the notions of prescription and description in the study of language further.

PAIR DISCUSSION – Working in pairs, answer the questions that follow.

1. What would you say is the overall idea the authors want to explore in this text?

2. In the text, the authors mention three different kinds of grammar. List and explain briefly all three kinds using your own words.
3. How far do you think this file expresses the personal opinion of the authors and how far is an objective statement?

4. The authors argue that ‘the prescriptive rules make a value judgement about the correctness of an utterance and try to force a usage that aligns with one formal norm’. What do the authors mean by ‘value judgement’?

What are your thoughts in relation to this idea? Do you agree with it? Give reasons for your answer.
5. The authors argue that many prescriptive rules are not based on actual use but on historical events. Do you think we should keep language rules, as the ones described in the text, just for historical reasons? Why?

6. Are the authors in favour of descriptive grammar? How about prescriptive grammar? Give reasons for your answers.

7. What do the authors mean by the sentence ‘It is somewhat surprising that rules which do not reflect actual language use should survive’?
Do you think grammar should include rules which do not reflect **actual language use**? Why?

8. Based on your readings, exercises, and participation in the classroom sessions, discuss in what ways your views about what is ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ in a language have changed so far.