IS AN ENGLISH GOOD ENGLISH? CONNER SAYS 'NO'

By JUDI TRAVIS

Into what could have been a pinch-yourself - to keep awake, stop-looking-at-watch-and -quiet-fidgeting lecture, Dr. Jack Conner injected his usual pungent humor and piercing observations to make his point, "The Notion of Correctness in Language," a delightful and enlightening experience. Language, he argued, is an effective tool to help us understand new things. Our own tradition of language, unlike the dead Latin tradition.

Caesar Said It

English teachers, in their "learned ignorance," continue to promulgate misconceptions of what is correct. What was right for Caesar is only confusing to today's over-refined educated world. For example, Latin infinitives are single words, meaningless when split.

Not someone says, "To hurriedly meet the curfew, it may sound horrible, but it does make sense.

Another misconception pointed out was the recognized role that a preposition is something you mustn't end a sentence with. (Hmm) This is so by definition; a preposition is a word that comes between another word.

It's Us or Shakespeare.

Many of those who appoint themselves to be authorities on correct English say that usage is determined by what is practiced by the greatest writers. Either we're following Shakespeare or we're not.

You can't find out what correct English is by reading a traditional grammar book because it's wrong. It's as simple as that.

Does It Exist?

Does correct English really exist then? If it does, it is not the invention of grammarians. It exists in the mouths of people. English is flexible; correct English is nothing other than what the English-speaking person speaks. If it is effective, it is correct.

No, you can't find your way through it, nor do we have to convey what it is intended to convey, and it is our duty to know what is intended wherever possible.

Hilarious Examples

Some hilarious examples of ways that the following sentence could be interpreted if pronounced in a different manner:

I saw a man who told his wife, "I was in the men's room when you called."" 

If not practiced, grammar is dead or suffers severe injury. The dead are always with us in the literary tradition, and the future is always with us in the living tradition.

Do I make myself clear?