

Pedagogical English Grammar
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Spring/Summer Term 2015

Course Description:

Pedagogical English Grammar introduces students to a perspective on English grammar that is intended to support effective teaching and learning of form in language. The course will concentrate on aspects of English grammar that are commonly taught, helping teachers develop greater understanding of how these areas of English grammar work. We will identify common problems for learners that arise in using English grammar and consider ways of teaching that will help students in achieving greater accuracy.

Course Objectives:

-- help teachers develop a greater understanding of commonly taught aspects of English grammar;

-- help teachers master a vocabulary for talking about English grammar that will allow them to access literature about teaching grammar and to interact with other professionals about grammar;

-- identify common learner problems with grammar and understand the factors underlying them;

-- identify teaching strategies that will help students achieve greater accuracy. At the same time, we will consider what our expectations should be for the development of learner language, especially in the context of using English as an International Language.

Course Structure:

The five face-to-face meetings of this course are concentrated into a brief three week period, which is not most conducive to learning the material in the textbook. So, reading and working on the material in the textbook will begin earlier. In addition, teachers will be asked to reflect on their teaching situation -- what grammar they are expected to teach, how they are expected to teach it, how students respond to grammar instruction. With the textbook material covered online, the face-to-face meetings can be used for practical work that makes use of what teachers have learned about grammar and their reflections on their teaching context in considering how teachers can use the textbooks they work with to present grammar and engage students in activities that will support learning. The conclusion of the course will be a session in which teachers present grammar lessons they have developed which show their learning and its relevance for their teaching context.

Textbook:

Yule, G. (1998). *Explaining English grammar*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Reading Schedule

(Dates given are due dates)

May 24th: Read Yule, ch. 1

May 31st: Read Yule, ch. 2

June 7th: Read Yule, ch. 3

June 14th: Read Yule, ch. 4

June 21st: Read Yule, ch. 5

June 28th: Read Yule, ch. 6

July 5th: Read Yule, ch. 7

July 12th: Read Yule, ch. 8

July 19th: Read Yule, ch. 9

July 26th: Read Yule, ch. 10

I recommend doing the exercises in the textbook as you read, as a way of checking your understanding. The answers are in the back of the book, so you can check your own work. I won't collect these but I will ask you to comment on what you've read each week in the course blog and if you have a question or problem with one of the exercises, it can be mentioned there.

We will also be reviewing two chapters in each of the face-to-face sessions, so you may want to refresh your impressions as necessary before each class session.

Reflective Blogging Schedule

(Dates given are due dates; this work can be submitted early, though)

Every week starting from when reading schedule begins, students will be expected to write a blog post of around 250-300 words (total - that's about 1 page, typed, double-spaced), consisting of three parts:

1. A response to the chapter read for the previous week (or to a specific question I pose about the chapter);

2. A response to a prompt about teaching grammar that I pose;
3. An evaluation of one of the teaching suggestions at the end of each chapter in Yule -- why you think it would or wouldn't work in your teaching context, how you might adapt it to your context; how it makes you think about teaching grammar, etc.

You don't have to answer all of these at once each week. You can break up the work, answering one part at a time over the course of a week, in any order. This may be easier to fit into moments of free time you have. But you do need to respond to all three parts each week.

The point of this work is to have you thinking about the content of the reading, about the practice of teaching grammar in general, and about ways of teaching grammar on a regular basis. Also, I think the practice of writing is good for developing understanding of course material and of your own practices as a teacher, both goals of this course.

There will be blog posts after the reading portion of the course, when we are meeting face-to-face. These will be designed to ask you to reflect on what we have done in the face-to-face sessions, and on what you have learned from the course as a whole.

May 31st: Blog Post 1

June 7th: Blog Post 2

June 14th: Blog Post 3

June 21st: Blog Post 4

June 28th: Blog Post 5

July 5th: Blog Post 6

July 12th: Blog Post 7

July 19th: Blog Post 8

July 26th: Blog Post 9

August 2nd: Blog Post 10

August 9th: Blog Post 11

August 23rd: Blog Post 12

Face-to-Face Meetings Schedule

There are five face-to-face meetings scheduled in August over a three-week period. Given the tightness of this schedule, I think it would be best to use this time to work together to consider how best to work with your teaching materials on teaching grammar, to work on designing specific lessons that you can use, to practice teaching, and to reflect together on some of the broader issues in teaching grammar. We will also use part of the time in each session to review material from Yule, just to clarify any points that have been hard to understand and to reinforce learning through review.

Meeting 1: Sunday, August 2nd:

1. Review of Yule, ch. 1 & 2;
2. What makes a good grammar rule?;
3. How is grammar presented in textbooks?;
4. What kind of grammar lessons do textbooks assume?

Meeting 2: Thursday, August 6th:

1. Review of Yule, ch. 3 & 4;
2. Written versus Spoken grammar;
3. Grammar across genres and texts;

Meeting 3: Wednesday, August 19th:

1. Review of Yule, ch. 5 & 6;
2. Planning grammar lessons;
3. Grammar-oriented activities;

Meeting 4: Friday, August 21st:

1. Review of Yule, ch. 7 & 8;
2. Assessing learner grammar;
3. Providing feedback about grammar;

Meeting 5: Sunday, August 23rd:

1. Review of Yule, ch. 9 & 10
2. Grammar Jamboree

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Quizzes: 20% of Final Grade

For each chapter of Yule, I will prepare a short (no more than two pages, and I will try to have them be just one page long) quiz focusing on the most important points illustrated in each chapter. The purpose of these quizzes is to help you remember key terminology, forms, and distinctions, not to test your grammatical accuracy.

Each week, I will email the quiz to everyone with a deadline for completing and returning it to me. Given the circumstances, the quizzes will be open book. You can even work together on them, if you wish.

I will post answers after the deadline for submission has passed. The greatest part of getting credit for the quizzes will be meeting the submission deadline, though proof of learning through correct answers will also be evaluated.

Weekly Blog Posts: 50% of Final Grade

See notes above about expectations for the length and content of the blog posts.

The big issue here is meeting the deadlines. I do expect people to keep up with the reading and complete this work each week. I will respond to posts individually as needed and collectively where common issues arise.

Grammar Jamboree Presentation: 30% of Final Grade

The Grammar Jamboree is a poster exhibition by students. Depending on the size of the class, you may work either individually or in pairs on this.

Students will choose a particular grammar point to explore in greater detail than we have done in class. This will require working with sources beyond the textbook to prepare a poster presentation about the grammar point. This poster presentation should include a description of the grammar point, should indicate teaching/learning problems regarding the grammar point, and indicate at least one pedagogical approach to teaching the grammar point.

Students will present these posters in an exhibition in class, and should be prepared to take questions and discuss the grammar point with other students and their instructor during viewing.