

TESOL 503: Structure of English

Dr. Robin Barr
Office hours by appointment

Ph. 301-587-1305 (home)
email: rbarr@toad.net

Description: In order to teach a language, it is not enough to know how to speak it – you need to have a conscious knowledge of its structure. And yet the usual courses and textbooks on “English Grammar” for native speakers of English tend to focus on social shibboleths, like when to use *who* vs. *whom*, or *shall* vs. *will*, rather than on basic descriptions of word order, articles, or other structures that pose few or no problems for native speakers.

This course is intended to fill that gap. We will be examining a variety of basic and complex structures of English syntax and morphology, and comparing them to structures of other languages. Because English is a “moving target,” in constant change, we will also be gathering and analyzing data on English usage in current authentic discourse, so that your students will not be limited to the English in their textbooks. By the end of the term, you will have the tools to make your own investigations and analyses of other English structures, and will be familiar with the basic traditional and transformational terminology and concepts. Prerequisite: TESL-500 (Principles of Linguistics).

Requirements: Three-part portfolio, three quizzes, 7 problem sets, assigned readings, class attendance and participation.

Grading:	Portfolio:	40%
	Part I (Group project)	10%
	Part II (Journal)	10%
	Part III (Research project)	20%
	Exams:	25%
	Quiz I (In class)	5%
	Quiz II (Take-home)	10%
	Quiz III (In class)	10%
	Homeworks: 7 @ 5% each	35%

Readings: **The syllabus lists basic readings from GB, Baron, and Crystal for each class. Additional readings will be assigned from other articles.** The following textbooks were ordered at the campus bookstore:
Baron, Naomi (2001). From Alphabet to E-Mail. *Several chapters are assigned, but I recommend the whole book.*
Celce-Murcia, Marianne and Diane Larsen-Freeman (1999). The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher’s Course, 2nd edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle. **Abbreviated GB.** *This is our basic textbook and should be brought to class each day.*
Crystal, David (1995). The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. *A beautiful reference book that will be particularly helpful for your portfolio.*
Hurford, James R. (1994). Grammar: A Student’s Guide. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. *Optional: A useful reference book for grammar terminology, with cross-linguistic examples.*
Klammer, Thomas P., et al. (2006) Analyzing English Grammar, 5th edition. Longman. *Optional: Useful reference for further investigations into sentence structure.*

Exams: Quiz I will be a short (1/2 hour or so) in-class quiz, worth 5 points; Quiz II will be a take-home, worth 10 points; and Quiz III will be a longer (1 hour) in-class quiz, worth 10 points. The quizzes will give you the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of some basic terminology, tree structures, and transformations.

Homework: There are 7 homework exercises graded SAT/UNSAT, worth 5% each. In addition,

practice homework exercises, not to be turned in, are assigned from the chapters in the Celce-Murcia/ Larsen-Freeman Grammar Book, and should be done with the reading assignments *before* checking the answers in the back of the book. We will review some of them in class -- please be prepared with any questions. Material from these exercises may appear on the tests.

Portfolio: This is your opportunity to apply and demonstrate your improved understanding of English structure. The Portfolio has three sections: in Part I, you will join with some other students to gather, analyze, and report on data from authentic contemporary discourse; in Part II, you will collect and analyze five interesting examples of language in context (approximately one per week), similar to the Language Journal you may have kept in Principles of Linguistics; and in Part III, you will write and present a short research paper on some aspect of English structure that you find particularly interesting. See the separate Portfolio pages for instructions and format.

The portfolio is worth 40% of your grade. Parts I and II are worth 10 points each, and Part III is worth 20 points. Part I is due March 6, Part II is due April 10, and Part III is due on April 24.

You will need to refer to other grammars of English for your research projects. Here are some classics, most of which can be found in the library stacks or reference room:

MODERN GRAMMAR CLASSICS

Quirk, Randolph and Sidney Greenbaum. A Concise Grammar of Contemporary English. This is my favorite, and worth buying if you can find it.

Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik. A Grammar of Contemporary English. American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Houghton Mifflin. An excellent dictionary — worth buying (but get the big edition, not the student edition). Some entries (e.g. for *hopefully*, *ain't*, *comprise*) include usage notes based on a survey of their panel of “experts” (educated users of Standard English). Sometimes the judgment statistics change between the 1st and 4th editions, which may be interesting for your research.

OLDER GRAMMAR CLASSICS

Jespersen, Otto. A Modern English Grammar (7 vols.) An excellent, thorough, and linguistically solid description of English structures, their history, and development.

Poutsma, H. A Grammar of Late Modern English (5 vols.).

Curme, George O. A Grammar of the English Language (3 vols.).

PRESCRIPTIVIST “USAGE” CLASSIC

Fowler, H.W. The New Fowler’s Modern English Usage, ed. R.W. Burchfield. This is the latest edition from Oxford University Press. You will probably want to look at earlier editions of the same book in order to trace the development of particular shibboleths or proscriptions.

Course Policy: All course work is subject to the standards and procedures of the University Academic Integrity Code. All work must be one’s own unless appropriate collaboration has been approved in advance. Collaboration and discussion are encouraged on the homework exercises, exam preparation (but not during the tests), and on some parts of the Portfolio.

SYLLABUS -- TESOL 503: Structure of English
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I. Course Overview.

Class 1. (1/17) Introduction to the study of English grammar. Methodology. Prescriptivism/Descriptivism. Readings: GB: Chapters 1, 2, and exercises; Crystal: Chapters 7, 13, 16.

II. Basic Phrase Structure.

Class 2. (1/24) **Homework 1 due.** Syntactic frameworks, review of phrase structure rules and tree diagrams. "Parsing" (parts of speech) and constituency tests. Start on group projects (Portfolio Part I). Readings: GB Ch. 3, 4, 5, and exercises. Baron: Ch. 2, 4. Haussamen article. Start looking up items in Hurford, Grammar: a Student's Guide, and continue through term.

Class 3. (1/31) **Homework 2 due.** Written and spoken English. Copula, subject-verb agreement. Readings: GB Ch. 6, 16; Crystal Skim Ch. 18-22. Sheidlower article.

Class 4. (2/7) **Homework 3 due.** The auxiliary (AUX), affix-hopping. Quiz review. Readings: GB Ch. 7, 8, and exercises; Crystal Ch. 16. Chomsky chapters.

III. Favorite Transformations.

Class 5. (2/14) **QUIZ I (in class today).** More about AUX: modals, tense & aspect, passive voice. Cross-linguistic comparisons. Readings: GB Ch. 9, 18, and exercises.

Class 6. (2/21) **Homework 4 due.** Sentence-wide issues: Imperatives, Topicalization, Negation, Yes/No Questions, Do-support, Emphasis. Readings: GB Ch. 10, 11, 12, and exercises.

Class 7. (2/28) **Homework 5 due.** More transformations: Wh-questions and relative clauses. Readings: GB Ch. 13, 14, 28, 19, and exercises.

Class 8. (3/6) **PART I OF PORTFOLIO DUE.** Presentation of group projects. Non-referential *It* and *There*: dummy subjects in Extraposition. Readings: GB Ch. 23, 30, 31, and exercises. **Take-home Quiz II distributed.**

IV. Syntax, Semantics, Morphology, and the Lexicon.

Class 9. (3/20) **TAKE-HOME QUIZ II DUE.** Presentation of group projects, cont. Introduction to the lexicon: form-classes, morphology. Readings: GB Ch. 3 (review), 15, and exercises. Crystal Ch. 14, 15.

Class 10. (3/27) **Homework 6 due.** Nouns: case and articles. Regularity and irregularity: verbs, comparatives, plurals. Readings: GB Ch. 20 and exercises; Crystal Ch. 8 - 12; Jaeger and Pinker articles.

Class 11. (4/3) **Homework 7 due.** Prepositions and case. Lexical semantics. Prototype theory. Raising and EQUI. Readings: GB 21, 22, and exercises; Fillmore article.

Class 12. (4/10) **PART II of PORTFOLIO DUE.** Interaction of lexicon and syntax. Verb classes. Quiz review. Readings: Crystal Ch. 19, Baron chapter 6.

Class 13. (4/17) **QUIZ III (in class today).** Spelling and punctuation, if we get this far.

Class 14. (4/24) **PART III OF PORTFOLIO DUE.** Discussion of research projects.

Class 15. (5/1) Discussion of research projects (cont.).

PORTFOLIO INSTRUCTIONS AND FORMAT

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PART I (10%) DUE Thursday, March 6. GROUP DATA GATHERING PROJECT.

The goal of Part I of the portfolio is to become aware of differences between the grammar rules found in traditional prescriptive grammar books or ESL textbooks and the ways in which English is currently being used. The research is to be designed, carried out, and written up jointly in groups of two to four students. There are two components to this exercise:

(1) Linguistic Analysis:

Identify and collect examples of a construction in English in which there is a mismatch between prescriptive or textbook usage and authentic contemporary usage, e.g. a shibboleth or other prescriptive rule. Discuss the differences between usages, balancing the examples you find in spoken or written materials with discussions from formal grammars (e.g. Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, or other grammars like those listed in your syllabus).

(2) Survey of Contemporary Usage:

Conduct a survey of at least 5 people per group member about this construction. Because this is a sociolinguistic and historical question, you will probably want to control for other variables, or at least identify them. For example, do you want all your subjects to be native speakers of English? (Probably, but not necessarily.) Are you comparing different social or regional dialects? Different age groups? If some of your subjects are not native English speakers, you should probably control for proficiency level and native language.

You may administer a written survey, interview the speakers on their views, or observe their usages in a public place without explicitly discussing your observations with them. Ideally, you will have at least 50 pieces of data per group member. Analyze your findings, write them up and present them jointly, with handouts or visuals. LENGTH: 3-4 double-spaced, typed pages, not including the surveys.

PART II (10%) DUE Thursday, April 10. JOURNAL.

The goal of Part II is to develop heightened sensitivity to grammatical usage in contemporary spoken and/or written English. For this exercise, you will:

- (1) Identify five (5) examples of English usage that are of linguistic interest (e.g. of the sort we discuss at the beginning of class).
- (2) Explain clearly and distinctly, using formal linguistic terminology where appropriate, why the example is of linguistic significance.
- (3) Wherever appropriate, provide other examples that illustrate the same point.
- (4) Hints for selecting examples:
 - (a) avoid hackneyed examples, e.g. *Everyone brought their favorite books.*
 - (b) select from varied sources, e.g. newspaper columns, cartoons, billboards, overheard conversations, television advertisements. Do NOT rely on a single source, e.g. a single newspaper article or SPAM e-mail on "Sins of English Grammar."

LENGTH: Each entry should be ½ - 1 page long, exclusive of clippings or other data, which you should attach. Therefore, the total length of Part I should be 2½ to 5 pages.

Portfolio (cont.)

PART III (20%) DUE Thursday, April 24. RESEARCH PROJECT.

NOTE: By Thursday, March 27, confirm your topic with Dr. Barr.

The goal of Part III of the portfolio is to give you the opportunity to do research on one aspect of English structure, of your choice. As a mini research paper, this component should include:

- (1) a title
- (2) a clear statement of the issue, problem, or hypothesis
- (3) discussion of what other sources have had to say about the issue
- (4) what new ideas or information you are bringing to the discussion
- (5) a bibliography (Note: any consistent bibliographic and citation format is fine.)

Possible topics might include a further exploration of items from Part I or Part II of your portfolio, or research into a different area, e.g.:

- abbreviations or jargon (e.g. on the Internet or e-mail)
- etymologies, folk-etymologies, or etymythologies
- differences between British and American syntax
- topics from chapters of *The Grammar Book* we did not go over in class (e.g. complement clauses)
- a grammatical construction that interests you because it is difficult to teach or hard to learn
- contemporary use of *like*, *y'all*, or other dialect features.
- teaching irregular verbs, punctuation, negation, prepositions, other special topics
- particular grammatical idioms (e.g. "That's the way the cookie crumbles")
- historical evolution of a grammatical construction, e.g. subjunctive, do-support, *have got*

LENGTH: 6 - 8 double-spaced typed pages, including bibliography. If this is an extension of material from Parts I or II of your portfolio, please also include that material, and cite it appropriately.

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- (1) Each component of your portfolio should reflect what you have been reading and what we have been talking about in class. That is, your portfolio should display a level of sophistication that you did not have before this class. It should also be carefully organized and clearly written, reflecting a level of care that you would want to model for your students, or that would not embarrass you if viewed by a job interviewer.
- (2) Even those parts of your portfolio that you write independently will benefit from discussions with others in the class, to share ideas, experimental designs, and so forth. Also, consult me for suggestions of topics, or for comments on your drafts and experimental design. If possible, confer with both native and non-native speakers, since the two groups have different experiences in learning English grammar.
- (3) Collaboration is required for Part I, encouraged for Part II (as long as you write up your own journal independently), and possible for Part III with permission. If you want to do a group project, each member of the group needs to write up a separate 6-8 page section of the final report.

QUESTIONNAIRE

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NAME: _____ E-MAIL: _____

PHONE(s): _____

Are you: _____ in the TESOL certificate program

_____ in the TESOL MA program

_____ in the MAT ESOL program

_____ an undergraduate (Major: _____)

_____ in another graduate program: _____

Please list all the languages you have experience with (including English), and your level of proficiency (native speaker, fluent, 1 semester, my roommate speaks it, etc.):

What is your background in linguistics or related fields? When did you take *Principles of Linguistics* or the equivalent introduction, and from whom?

Are you taking any other TESOL classes this term? Which ones?

Where are you from? (City, state, country)

What are you most looking forward to learning in this course?

What questions do you hope we will address in this course? I'll try to answer them if I can!