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Language Power: Tutorials for Writers
Dana R. Ferris
Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014.

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How much time ought to be devoted to the study of language in an ESL composition course? How does one balance attention to sentence-level concerns with attention to rhetoric? Dana Ferris's text, *Language Power: Tutorials for Writers*, answers these questions masterfully with a series of 25 tutorials based on the underlying assumption that students reduce the number of sentence-level errors, and are more effective rhetorically, when they study language through a strategy- and needs-based, integrated, and authentic approach.

The tutorials are organized into three parts: Mastering the Basics, Developing Academic Language and Style, and Tackling Problem Areas. Each tutorial gives community college and university students opportunities to uncover what they already know (Discover), learn or review material (Focus), practice said material (Practice 1 and 2), and use what they have learned or reviewed to analyze their own writing (Apply). For example, in Tutorial 19, Verb Tense Shifts and Contrasts, students are first tasked with identifying and analyzing verb tense shifts in a published student essay. Then they are provided lessons on the literary present and time shifts in narratives and contrastive analyses of particular trouble spots, such as simple past versus simple present. Finally, students do sentence-level editing exercises before proofreading their own writing for such errors. At the conclusion of each tutorial are recommendations for further study. Interesting anecdotes that pertain to the tutorials' aims, illustrated with comics and photos, heighten student engagement.

In addition to the tutorials, diagnostic materials are included at the beginning of the text to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, including suggested Study Plans, which are suitable for charting individualized study paths for learners. An accompanying Error and Language Development Progress Chart provides a tool for students to

record their language issues in writing assignments and to observe the development of their writing throughout the course. At the conclusion of the text, a series of reflection activities ask learners to evaluate their own language development as it relates to their study of the text.

A soft copy of the instructor's manual is available with suggestions for responding to student writing and answer keys for the practice activities. This text is designed, as suggested in the Preface, for use in a writing or grammar course, with a reader or as a stand-alone text. And this versatility is ideal for a course with students of varying needs: Some students may need more work on sentence boundaries or punctuation, while others may be struggling with articles and noun forms. Based on these differences, students can work on those tutorials that most closely meet their needs.

Not only does *Language Power* meet individual student needs, but it capitalizes on many students' reality, that of composing on a computer. Assuming students have access to such technology, the revising and editing advice often encourages the use of electronic tools. For example, Tutorial 6, Writing Style and Lexical Variety, instructs students to analyze their lexical choices through use of an online website, the Vocabulary Profiler tool, and then write about how this influenced their word choice.

An additional advantage of this text is the kind of writing used in the Discover and Practice activities. Ferris often uses authentic student writing, as well as published writing, which invariably increases the authenticity of the text. Also, application activities, which often include step-by-step editing advice for specific grammatical forms, promote student autonomy and heighten student metacognition.

One drawback is the absence of suggested answers in the student text, limiting its effectiveness for self-study. For example, while students can complete the exercises individually, they must rely on the instructor's manual to check them. If suggested answers were included in the back of the student text, at least in part (such as for the odd numbers of an exercise), students could monitor their own progress as they work through the tutorials.

Overall, Ferris has effectively crafted tutorials suitable for most advanced English language learners. *Language Power* provides instructors with a comprehensive framework for providing language support as students continue to acquire academic English.

Grammar Choices for Graduate and Professional Writers
Nigel A. Caplan
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.

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Language analysis is often neglected in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses because many teachers lack the metalanguage required to explain grammar structures in precise terms. At best, teachers promise students to get back to them about a grammar-related question after consulting a reference work; at worst, teachers stick to the adage of "well, this is how we say it." With *Grammar Choices*, Nigel A. Caplan, an assistant professor at the University of Delaware's English Language Institute, tackles this problem by providing academic writers at graduate and postgraduate levels with the tools and terminology to study and practice grammar structures central to academic writing, whether on their own or in a classroom setting.

A functional grammar textbook, *Grammar Choices* self-consciously takes a descriptive approach, as is evidenced by the use of the word *choices* (as opposed to *rules*) in the title. The concise, 180-page paperback consists of a brief introduction that describes its purpose and format, as well as the following eight units: 1. An Approach to Academic Written Grammar, 2. Clause Combination, 3. Embedded, Noun, and Complement Clauses, 4. Verb Forms, 5. The Noun Phrase, 6. Hedging, Boosting, and Positioning, 7. Collocation and Corpus Searching, and 8. Beyond the Sentence. Each unit adheres to the same basic structure, in which a preview of the grammar topic is followed by an authentic example of graduate student writing taken from various academic fields that uses the grammar in question. After a brief description of how the grammar works, additional writing examples are integrated with approximately 10-15 exercises that vary from grammar analysis to writing assignments. Most units end with a section that invites students to investigate language use specific to their own disciplines. The University of Michigan Press supplements the book with vocabulary lists and exercises as well as a 47-page answer key, which can be downloaded as PDFs from the publisher's website.

The book can roughly be divided into two parts: While Units 1-5 focus on common grammatical issues that are challenging especially to nonnative speakers, who often lack the grammatical intuition of native English speakers, Units 6-8 comprise the more innovative part of the book, which addresses specific demands of academic writing. Unit 1 offers a review of the most elementary knowledge required to

form a sentence, including noun phrases and finite clauses as well as action verbs, reporting verbs, and linking verbs. Units 2 through 5 each deal with particular grammar topics in isolation; for example, students learn to recognize the differences between and successfully use transitive and intransitive verbs, restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses, and definite and indefinite reference. In particular, students of mine who are native speakers of East Asian languages have found Table 5.2 (p. 95) regarding the use of articles extremely insightful as a visual aid because of its clever organization. The units are logically structured and easy to navigate, and the assignments help to apply the acquired knowledge in a range of activities from sentence completion to essay-writing tasks.

The book truly proves to be an indispensable addition to the bookshelves of prospective scholars in the second part. For example, Unit 6 introduces modal verbs, adverbs, and conditionals that can be used to position oneself in relation to other scholars as well as evaluative language that is useful when one needs to assess the quality or importance of existing research. Of course, how this is done strongly depends on the discipline; however, Caplan provides at least a starting point as he compares and contrasts evaluative (i.e., positive or negative) and neutral terms. Unit 7 discusses corpus searching and collocations, and it provides links to language corpora such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) that are accessible online. In addition to these corpora, Caplan recommends Google Scholar as a resource where academic writers can test word combinations they are unsure of. While Unit 7 also provides a short list of skeletal sentences for academic contexts—writing templates that students can use to formulate the key statements of a thesis paper—its scope prevents it from discussing such templates in more detail. For this purpose, students might be better off with a college textbook such as Graff and Birkenstein's (2009) *They Say/I Say*, which offers a large number of rhetorical templates. Finally, Unit 8 discusses various writing strategies to link sentences, highlight new elements, and thus control the flow of information over the course of a text.

Grammar Choices may be used as a complement to *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (Swales & Feak, 2012), as the blurb on the back cover points out. For example, Unit 8 in *Grammar Choices* can be considered an extension of Swales and Feak's discussion (pp. 30-36) of information flow. The books are indeed cross-referenced; unfortunately, this is done rather clumsily. For example, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* is repeatedly referenced in Caplan's text by way of a full bibliographic entry, as if the reader had by now forgotten about it. Moreover, at times it is unclear from the way the book

is mentioned how exactly it deals with the topic at hand. The editors at the University of Michigan Press's EAP division can encourage the simultaneous use of both publications by addressing this weakness in future editions. Another drawback of *Grammar Choices* is that, because of its conciseness, students will have to look for additional examples and more detailed explanations elsewhere. But these are minor shortcomings, far outweighed by the book's strengths.

Overall, the eloquent and systematic explanations of grammar issues, the use of authentic writing examples, and the many wonderful charts that break down complex information into manageable chunks make this text a pleasure to use.

References

Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2009). *They say, I say: The moves that matter in academic writing* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Note: This review has been slightly modified from the print version.

Narrating their Lives: Examining English Language Teachers' Professional Identities Within the Classroom
Lía D. Kamhi-Stein
Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013.

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In the last two decades, the need to recognize teachers' linguistic and racial identities and cater to practices that will lead to an appreciation of this diversity in the classroom has been a critical issue in the field of TESOL. In this vein, with the intention of exploring English language teachers' professional identities in the classroom, Lía Kamhi-Stein resorts to autobiographical narratives, a genre still unaddressed in TESOL but one that has become a powerful tool in fostering teacher development. Through the analysis of teachers' stories in her new publication, *Narrating Their Lives: Examining English Language Teachers' Professional Identities Within the Classroom*, the author examines how teachers construct their identities, and how these identities influence their teaching practices. This reader-friendly, reflective, and inspirational piece will surely speak to the soul of English teachers and teacher educators from all across the world.

The book is divided into five chapters, preceded by an introduction in which Kamhi-Stein includes the theoretical framework guiding this work (language teacher identity) and the methodology chosen (narrative research). A succinct and accurate review of the literature on language teacher identity in the introduction gives evidence of the author's thorough bibliographical inquiry, as well as her expertise in the field. Kamhi-Stein concludes this section by stating that the teachers' perceptions, beliefs about teaching, and the struggles they face affect both their personal and professional identities, and consequently, the actions they take in the classroom.

The first chapter is about the author's own English as a foreign language (EFL) learning experiences. Kamhi-Stein describes her first steps as an EFL learner to explain how this experience has influenced her identity, her beliefs about teaching and learning, and her teaching practices. For instance, the intimidating way in which she was required to participate during oral work had an impact on the environment she constructs in her own classrooms. She purposefully tries to create a comfortable learning atmosphere that encourages participation from all the students. This serves as a good transition to introduce the teachers' stories presented in the following two chapters.

The second chapter includes the stories of three teachers who are nonnative English speakers. By reading about the process each teacher went through to learn a foreign language and fit into another culture, readers can become aware of the value that these kinds of teachers have in the foreign language classroom. These teachers emphasize the need for teacher educators and those in hiring positions to consider English as an international language and appreciate teachers' diverse linguistic and cultural identities.

Chapter 3 presents the stories of three native English-speaking teachers and describes how these white, US-born teachers have also felt like outsiders and struggled to fit into a linguistic community. Interestingly, their pedagogical insights are similar to those of their nonnative English-speaking counterparts. The three native English-speaker teachers advocate for the appreciation of different varieties of English, mainly through culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education.

In Chapter 4, Kamhi-Stein analyzes the teachers' narratives by exploring their pedagogical practices and then connects these to the scholarly field of second language acquisition. This chapter is particularly useful for teachers who wish to incorporate some of the teachers' techniques in their own English language classrooms. Here Kamhi-Stein provides educators a valuable resource, as they can benefit from a variety of practical ideas to incorporate into the classroom to raise

students' awareness of their linguistic identities and help them appreciate cultural diversity.

The last chapter of this book is inspirational for teachers. The author explains how she uses autobiographical narratives as a required assignment in an educational sociolinguistics course to promote teacher reflection and awareness. In Kamhi-Stein's own words, "If students act in the awareness developed, they can enhance their own instructional practices and their own sense of professionalism as teachers" (p. 129).

Kamhi-Stein's approach of using narrative to explore teachers' various experiences and their impact on their teaching practices is one of the text's biggest strengths. As Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014) put it, narrative research can be "an especially apt approach to investigate how language teachers and learners are situated in specific social, historical, and cultural contexts, in which the primary context is viewed as the teachers' and learners' lives" (p.11).

The writing style and organization of the book flow smoothly, helping readers connect with both the author Kamhi-Stein and the teachers' stories she presents. Questions at the beginning and end of each chapter allow readers to reflect, as they read the stories, on how their own experiences might also shape their identities and affect their teaching practices. Moreover, using multiple voices makes the narratives honest, personal, and appealing. As English professor and Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Donald Murray (1989) suggests, voice is "what attracts the reader and communicates to the reader. It is that element that gives the illusion of speech" (p. 150).

The reflective nature of Kamhi-Stein's work, the combination of scholarly research and personal narrative, and the author's thorough discussion of how to apply her findings make this book informative and inspiring to any teacher, new or veteran. Many TESOL educators would agree that there is a strong need to shift our research and teaching practices to embrace approaches that will lead to a greater understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. Without a doubt, through *Narrating their Lives*, Kamhi-Stein artfully invites us to advocate for such a change.

References

Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Murray, D. (1989). *Expecting the unexpected: Teaching myself and others to read and write*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Summit 1 **(2nd ed.)**
Joan M. Saslow and Allen Ascher
White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, 2012.

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Imagine an adult academic or college ESL classroom where students are engaged with each other, discussing controversial topics and current events, all the while learning a new grammar form. The classroom is noisy, the students are using the target language, and the instructor lectures minimally. *Summit 1* can help create this classroom.

Summit 1 from Pearson Education is a multimodal well-balanced textbook for high-intermediate adult learners. *Summit 1* takes off where *Top Notch 3*, also from Pearson, leaves off. It serves as a great medium for creating a communicative classroom environment where, as linguist David Nunan (2003) argues, students can feel free to participate in authentic spoken and written English with an emphasis on meaning and fluency over form and accuracy while still allowing for rigorous grammar instruction. This text allows students to learn to implement grammar quickly in everyday conversation.

The practical advantages of the *Summit 1* curriculum are that it incorporates multimodal instruction as well as being well researched and corpus based. A DVD, website, audio CDs, and e-book are available, making for a very high-tech class, as students have now come to expect.

Summit 1 is organized into 10 units that incorporate authentic materials and real-life communication goals. Units are titled New Perspectives, Musical Moods, Money Matters, Looking Good, Community, Animals, Advertising and Consumers, Family Trends, History's Mysteries, and Your Free Time. Each unit has four distinctive lessons plus a writing activity and review. In *Summit 1,* grammar is taught in an authentic manner that allows students to apply the language immediately. The book incorporates the Longman Corpus Network through notes written directly into the teacher's edition. This is extremely helpful to busy instructors who might not have time to search a corpus before every lesson. There is no need to wonder if there is a different or more common usage; the corpus notes are right there in the teacher's edition. The lessons are planned around topics that engage critical literacy.

In addition, because it is corpus based, the grammar in the book was chosen in a manner that is useful to the immediate needs of students. The grammar is relevant to high-intermediate adult learners

who need to use the language quickly and it does not overreach into academic language that may not be useful to students. The text has students focus on meaning over form. For example, Unit 1 teaches gerunds and infinitives and focuses on only three verbs to demonstrate how a single verb can have one meaning when followed by an infinitive and another meaning when followed by a gerund. The three verbs studied in conjunction with gerunds and infinitives—*remember*, *forget*, and *stop*—are meant to not overwhelm students and keep their focus on the communicative function.

The incorporated DVD, website, audio CDs, and e-book are useful tools that support student learning. The DVD uses authentic TV news documentaries that engage the learner in deeper conversation on topics relevant to the community at large, allowing the learner to become authentically involved in issues relevant to both English learners and the community as a whole. For example, in Unit 2, the DVD incorporates a video documentary about Beck, an artist who is well known in the US but might be unknown to someone from another country. The website also provides expansion activities for the instructor to incorporate into instruction. Instructors might refer students to the DVD or website to watch a documentary for homework, for instance, so that they can spend class time facilitating student discussion.

The e-book provides additional opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The CD-ROM, included with the student textbook, is engaging with 15 different types of exercises per unit that include drag and drop, typing, and games and puzzles to maintain student interest and interaction. The CD-ROM can be used in the classroom or used to support study at home. For example, students could practice the target grammar from Unit 1 through a drag-and-drop exercise that differentiates among gerund and infinitive use with *remember, forget,* and *stop*. This allows ambitious learners to continue to make progress when class is not in session and to make meaningful gains as they practice with fun games and exercises.

The only real disadvantage to *Summit 1* is that perhaps it gives too much. It includes far too much material for a typical ESL college or adult semester-long class. This may make it difficult for instructors, particularly inexperienced instructors, to decide which parts of the text and accompanying materials to use and which to skip. Also, students will likely be paying for a book and use only part of it.

Still, *Summit 1* is a great choice for a high-intermediate ESL class because its communicative approach allows students a lot of authentic opportunities to interact with the language. *Summit 1* makes learning

meaningful and fun for the students and provides wonderful support to the teacher to assist in explaining the somewhat difficult high-intermediate material. With its accompanying CD-ROM and supplemental DVD, website, and e-book, the *Summit 1* curriculum is a great choice to move ESL classes into a more high-tech setting and encourage 21st-century learning.

Reference

Nunan, D. (2003). Methodology. In D. Nunan (Ed.), *Practical English language teaching* (pp. 3-22). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation: An Easy-to-Use Guide With Clear Rules, Real-World Examples, and Reproducible Quizzes **(11th ed.)**
Jane Straus, Lester Kaufman, and Tom Stern
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

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The newest edition of *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* is a welcome contribution to the numerous texts that aim to teach English grammar, punctuation, and usage in a logical, self-paced, and entertaining manner. This concise and user-friendly reference guide and workbook is characterized by clear explanations of grammar, punctuation, and usage and numerous examples and activities. The 2014 edition includes the latest updates on English usage and grammar, new quizzes, and an improved two-color, lay-flat design that makes photocopying easier.

A distinct strength of *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* is its clarity and conciseness, which can be attributed to the authors' efforts in extracting the essence from grammar rules and clarifying these with real-world examples. Therefore, the comprehensive and straightforward content provided by *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* is suitable for anyone who wants to understand the major rules and subtle guidelines of English grammar and usage without being overwhelmed. It is a versatile tool for everyday use because it covers the most common and salient grammar and punctuation questions, serving as an essential reference for proofreading one's writing. By breaking down complex rules into digestible parts and illustrating

with ample examples, the authors make learning English grammar and usage simple and fun.

In addition, the accompanying photocopiable quizzes can be of great benefit to classroom instructors. Diagnostic tests help in identifying students' problem areas before they start using the lessons. Ready-made mastery tests can assess how well students have learned a lesson. The lessons and quizzes can be easily used beyond the classroom as well. English learners may use the book to supplement a class or even on their own, thereby developing learner autonomy. It is organized such that users can move at their own pace and address needs as they arise.

Not surprisingly, *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* is grammar based. In the first chapter, users are introduced to various parts of speech. They are taught to identify subjects and verbs so that they can make sure they agree with each other. Pronouns and their usage are addressed in the next section. Distinctions between adjectives and adverbs are clearly stated with practical examples in the following section. After that, the authors illustrate the meanings and usage of prepositions with abundant examples. At the end of this chapter, the authors offer users suggestions on how to write with more clarity and coherence, which in turn helps students express themselves more effectively.

Chapter 2 concentrates on confusing words. This whole chapter is organized alphabetically according to a list of homonyms and other confusing words. The text offers not only definitions, but hundreds of the words in this chapter are exemplified with contextualized examples of their use. Because of this, after reading this chapter, users will know how to properly use *assure, ensure,* and *insure,* and they will no longer mix up *affect* and *effect.*

Mechanics are clearly presented in the following chapters. Chapter 3 addresses punctuation through a great number of representative examples. For instance, it illustrates the rules governing the use of high-frequency punctuation, including period, ellipsis mark, comma, semicolon, colon, question mark, quotation mark, parentheses, apostrophe, hyphen, and dash. Chapter 4 deals with numerals, while Chapter 5 addresses homonyms and other easily confused words, such as *affect* and *effect.*

The most distinguishing feature of the book is its versatility. Not only can it be used as a reference book, but it also serves as a workbook with all the quizzes and tests found in Chapter 6. Students will gain more confidence as they assess their skills and see improvement in their knowledge. The answer key is in Chapter 7. An online version of the entire book, created by one of the authors, Jane Straus, is avail-

able at *GrammarBook.com*, in order that all learners of English should have access to understanding English usage.

On occasion, the brevity of some explanations detracts from this otherwise great text. Some of the grammar rules should be explained in greater detail. For instance, articles and prepositions, which are a challenge for many ESL students, need more attention. Incomplete descriptions of grammar concepts can result in more confusion and lead students to make more errors than they fix.

Overall, the newest edition of *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* proves a valuable reference and source of practice for all who want to become more experienced writers. Instructors will be pleased especially with the wealth of quizzes and multitude of examples that help them explain difficult grammar concepts to English learners.