

Graduate Thesis Assessment Rubric (Methodology, Linguistics)
 Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

Thesis Author: **Ivona Jelínková**
 Title: *Methods in English Teaching Grammar*
 Length: 58 pages
 Text Length: 45 pages

Assessment Criteria	Scale	Comments
1. Introduction is well written, brief, interesting, and compelling. It motivates the work and provides a clear statement of the problem. It places the problem in context. It presents and overview of the thesis.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
2. Literature review is comprehensive and complete. It synthesizes a variety of sources and provides context for the research. It shows the author's understanding of the most relevant literature on the subject matter.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
3. The methodology chapter provides clear and thorough description of the research methodology. It discusses why and what methods were chosen for research. The research methodology is appropriate for the identified research questions.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	Choosing a questionnaire <i>as the most appropriate tool due to a quantitative method</i> (p. 24) seems a perfectly legitimate way to survey 120 students but rather less so for a mere four teachers: in the latter case, even allowing for time constraints, possibly conducting interviews based on open questions would have proved more fruitful.
4. The results/data are analyzed and interpreted effectively. The chapter ties the theory with the findings. It addresses the applications and implications of the research. It discusses strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the research.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
5. The thesis shows critical and analytical thinking about the area of study and the author's expertise in this area.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
6. The text is organized in a logical manner. It flows naturally and is easy to follow. Transitions, summaries and conclusions exist as appropriate. The author demonstrates high quality writing skills and uses standard spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
7. The thesis meets the general requirements (formatting, chapters, length, division into sections, etc.). References are cited properly within the text and a complete reference list is provided.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	

Comments

This well researched, logically organised and neatly presented work offers a useful overview of the issues involved in grammar teaching. Any criticisms, such as they are, concern more the statements of the scholars cited in the work than the author of the thesis herself. Here are two examples, the first of which seems to introduce unnecessary complications into the grammar teaching process, while the second tends more towards rather too convenient simplification.

On p. 5 Thornbury is quoted thus: "Teaching grammar out of context is likely to lead to misunderstandings." Insofar as language is used primarily for effective communication and thus in most circumstances will inevitably be context-bound, this statement is undoubtedly true. That said, one is not quite sure what the implications are for the foreign language student, unless one wishes to embark upon a journey into speech act theory – which would probably be inappropriate for most learners at non-tertiary level. Fortunately, there is often sufficient pragmatic overlap between languages for an ostensibly declarative sentence such as "It's getting a bit cold in here" to mean, according to context, "Could you close the window?" or "How about turning on the heating?" In general, though, there are default meanings for specific grammar structures which can be taught and acquired; otherwise, learning a foreign language would become well-nigh impossible. In any case, one senses intuitively that the same context-bound problem applies also to vocabulary – and probably to a much greater extent.

On the second point, there are moments when it seems insufficient differentiation is being made between different levels of learners – both in terms of knowledge and maturity – and the most appropriate method(s) of instruction in each case. For instance, Scrivener's comments cited at the bottom of p. 15 seem a classic case of overgeneralisation, offering no hint as to the type of students being referred to. True, age is taken into account by various other scholars (pp. 17-18) but Krashen's "natural exposure" somewhat clouds the issue since it might be argued that learning a language in 45-minute classroom periods over several years will always be to some extent artificial.

Questions

What precisely is meant by *Nowadays the use of English is totally different from years ago* (p. 5)? Surely all modern languages are in a constant state of flux and English is no different from, say, Czech or German in this respect. From the context, one might assume the author has in mind the use of English in a Czech setting. But even in that case, how many more post-Velvet Revolution years will have to pass before the "English isn't what it used to be" argument becomes redundant?

On p. 1 the author refers to modern educational methods being *enjoyable and interactive* – but does this necessarily mean they are more effective than the traditional approach? Likewise, later in the work (p. 36) the reader learns that *[w]e can see very poor use of technology in English classes. Pitiable is also using authentic materials.* (The author even partially conflates these two categories of underused tools by including the notorious interactive whiteboard as an authentic material.) Be that as it may, is there any reliable evidence that employing all the latest super gadgets of our time in the instruction process will produce more competent speakers of a foreign language than the good old-fashioned blackboard, chalk and drills?

Recommended grade: 1 – Excellent

Reviewer: Andrew Tollet

Date: 16th May 2016

Signature:

