# *LEARNING AND TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR, K–12*

**BARBARA M. BIRCH**
*California State University, Fresno*

PEARSON
Merrill
Prentice Hall

Upper Saddle River, New Jersey
Columbus, Ohio

# *Preface*

Because of mandated standards and high-stakes assessments for students, teachers, and schools, there is more pressure on English and language arts teachers to know about English grammar than there has been in the recent past. The goal of this textbook is to present teachers-to-be with three ways to look at grammar. We begin by looking at where future teachers need to be at the end of the book and comparing it with where students usually are at the beginning.

## The End Point

The first perspective is a **panoramic** one that surveys the issues and concerns relevant to the teaching of grammar. Teachers need to know the following:

- What the individual and societal attitudes and policies toward language and dialects are
- Who the learners are, what they know, and what they need to know
- How grammar instruction has evolved and what is to be taught
- How to incorporate English language and usage instruction into the English or language arts classroom

The ability to teach grammar depends on having at least two bodies of knowledge: knowing how English works as a system and knowing the conventional usage in Standard Written English and Academic English.

The **microscopic** perspective in Section 2 deals with parts of speech and common usage errors related to each part. The **macroscopic** perspective on English grammar in Section 3 incorporates the parts of speech learned in Section 2 into simple, consistent, dynamic, and learnable grammatical patterns and systems. It also presents common sentence-level usage problems. By the end of Section 3, you will feel confident enough to begin teaching grammar and usage in your classroom.

## The Starting Point

If that is the ending point, what is your starting point? What do you know right now? When someone says the word ***grammar*** to you, what do you think of? Former students of mine wrote the following answers to that question:

> When I think of the word "grammar," I think of all of the rules associated with proper English language usage; I don't think of "grammar" in a bad way, but rather in a way that requires a lot of work. (In being judged to be "right" by others.)

When I first hear the word "grammar," I often think about my friends. You see, they always seem to have bad grammar. I'm not saying mine is the greatest, but when I hear people say "they seen me at the store" instead of "I saw them at the store," it drives me nuts.

What comes to my mind when I hear "grammar" is speaking correctly. Knowing the difference between verb, adverb, pronouns, etc. Being confused by them all.

Grammar = the correct use of words, punctuation, and spelling. Also, boring, dry, and analytical in a meaningless way.

When I hear the word "grammar," I think about being in elementary school, rehearsing over and over on pronunciations and spellings of words. Also, practicing the usage of words on worksheets comes to mind.

It is easy to see that for many students, grammar is uncreative, tedious, and meaningless, and learning grammar is a confusing and frustrating process of memorizing rules and doing worksheets. Therefore, this book has three simple but very ambitious goals:

- To persuade students that grammar is a creative, interesting, and meaningful subject
- To make learning grammar clear and doable
- To motivate students who are future teachers to teach grammar in a better way

## The Learning Process

In order to get from your starting point to your ideal ending point, it is important for you to keep several things in mind while assimilating information from this book:

- Grammar learning is cumulative; it adds up, detail by detail, until there is a critical mass. When the critical mass is achieved, the details fall into place as a system. It is at this point that you will feel that you have learned something.
- While grammar knowledge is accumulating, it is easy to get overwhelmed by the details. There are a lot of facts, terms, and abstract concepts to learn, but no one can learn them all at once. Keep your eye on the goal: to integrate the details into a coherent whole.
- Memorization is a good way to store information in memory so that you can recall and recognize it in language analysis activities. It is impossible to recall and recognize information unless it is stored in memory.
- Hands-on activities with grammar facilitate the integrative and cumulative process. Get your hands "dirty" with language analysis and cooperative class projects. The more actively you learn, the more knowledge you will transfer from the book to your head, and the better you will apply your knowledge to language in the world. To this end, your instructor may ask you to keep a Language Notebook, a loose-leaf binder in which you note observations about language and do your written assignments.
- The best way for you to learn grammar is to teach it in your own classroom to your own learners. This book is not comprehensive, but it will give you a sound

basis for teaching grammar, and once you start, you will learn even more. As you work through this book, visualize yourself teaching the topic in your own classroom.

## Acknowledgments

I appreciate the helpful comments from reviewers Peggy Albers, Georgia State University; Harold Nelson, Minot State University; Larry Andrews, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Anna Bolling, California State University, Stanislaus; Margaret R. Moulton, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Emeritus); Lynn Gordon, Washington State University; Helen R. Abadiano, Central Connecticut State University; Debra P. Price, Sam Houston State University; Wanda G. Breedlove, University of South Carolina; Roberta Murata, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Carol P. Jamison, Armstrong Atlantic State University; Susan M. Blair-Larsen, The College of New Jersey; and Kyoko Sato, California State University, Northridge and editors Linda Montgomery, Dawne Brooks, Mary Irvin, and Amy Gehl. Any errors are, of course, mine. Many patient linguistics students have helped me and encouraged me throughout the years, and I thank them all. I am also grateful to my colleagues at California State University, Fresno, for the productive working environment we enjoy.

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# SECTION 1

# The Panoramic Perspective

Grammar is an object of study in academia, but it does not exist in a social vacuum. Grammar, like many other aspects of human behavior, stimulates controversy. The English-only movement and the Ebonics debate of the latter part of the 20th century showed that sociopolitical contexts affect our attitudes toward grammar. Everyone, from the most erudite literary scholar to your neighbor down the street, has an opinion about grammar. People judge others by the way they speak or write. Language attitudes form the basis for language policies in communities and schools.

This social and political panorama surrounds the learning and teaching of English grammar. Chapter 1 responds to the following questions: How are teachers to understand the sociopolitical and educational context for grammar instruction? How do teacher attitudes toward the learners language affect successful grammar instruction?

Chapter 2 addresses questions of grammar learning throughout the life span of an individual. Native speakers of a language acquire an unconscious knowledge of grammar that allows them to speak, listen, read, and write informally, but these abilities are not enough for academic tasks in high school and the university. Nonstandard speakers and English language learners face even greater challenges. Learning theory spells out how people learn and use knowledge actively.

Chapter 3 deals with the curricular context for grammar instruction. Teachers must consider the grammatical approach to take and the purpose of instruction, both of which differ for Standard English speakers, speakers of other varieties of English, and speakers of other languages.

Chapter 4 describes effective grammar instruction in a language arts or English classroom. Teachers make grammar instruction meaningful, communicative, and cooperative. They employ effective instructional methodologies and ensure that grammar learning happens by writing and carrying out multidimensional lesson plans.

# 1 Language Attitudes and Policies

There are thousands of languages in the world, and many of these languages are spoken within the borders of the United States. Each language is composed of a group of dialects. In American English, the typical pronouns in Georgia (*y'all*) are different from those used in Maine (*you*). Older people in rural areas use different phrases (*reckon, fixin' to*) from young people in inner cities. Even the same individual uses different words and grammar in a locker room and in a house of worship. People respond to variation in language in different ways, but variation is normal.

## LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

An ideology is a complex, semicoherent set of ideas, beliefs, and values that determine the way we think about the world. Our ideas, beliefs, and values surrounding the notion of language variation can be described in terms of two competing ideologies: the **colonial/imperialistic** and the **ecological** (Phillipson, 1992, 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The tension between these two ideologies explains some of the controversies surrounding language issues in the United States today, such as the bilingual education debate or the Official English movement (see Figure 1.1).

### The Colonial/Imperialistic Ideology

People who hold the colonial/imperialistic ideology believe that English is "better" than other languages and that Standard English is "better" than other varieties, such as Cajun, Pennsylvania Dutch, or African American English. "Better" may mean more logical, more pure, more comprehensible, more useful, more expressive, or more economically advantageous. They think that because English is the dominant language, everyone should learn it in order to take advantage of the benefits and opportunities of our society. To them, speaking English is a sign of loyalty or patriotism, and the right to speak a different language or dialect is not, and should not be, a basic human right like other human rights (e.g., participation in government, access to education, access to jobs, or freedom to travel).

In this ideology, it is "normal" for people to speak just one language, and therefore minority languages and dialects are superfluous. A bilingual or bidialectal society is a "problem." Advocates of this ideology cite the cost of printing voting materials or

Figure 1.1 Two language ideologies. Adapted from Tollefson, Phillipson, & Wiley (1996). See also Phillipson (1992), Tollefson (2000).

| *Colonialism/Imperialism* | *Ecology of Language* |
|---|---|
| People do not have language rights. | People have language rights. |
| One language is better than others; it should be used exclusively. | Languages are equal in value but may have different social functions. |
| Monolingualism is the norm; everyone should learn the dominant language. | Multilingualism is the norm for societies and individuals. |
| Laissez-faire or "survival of the fittest" is the attitude toward minority languages. | Minority languages are protected and maintained. |
| Multilingualism is a problem. | Multilingualism is a resource. |

driver education materials in other languages as a disadvantage. They complain that people do not understand each other at work and that miscommunications occur. They see Canada and India as common examples where multilingualism is divisive. Unfortunately, this ideology caused the near complete extermination of many Native American languages in the United States.

## The Ecological Ideology

People who agree with the ecological ideology think that the right to speak one's native language or dialect is a basic human right like the freedom to practice one's religion or the sociopolitical and economic equality of the races and sexes. To be "normal" in the global context is to be multilingual. Therefore, although people can learn the dominant language of their nation, societies should value and maintain their minority languages and dialects.

Even though each language or variety enjoys equal status, it may have different social functions. The Amish continue to speak German among themselves and English with outsiders. Many African Americans speak African American English some of the time while using Standard English in other settings. People may prefer one dialect for newspapers, television, and classroom instruction, but they may consider a second dialect more suitable in the neighborhood church. People may have one standard for academic writing, but they may accept a different standard for informal writing or popular songs. The point is that all dialects and languages are valued for what they offer as a "resource" to a culture. Switzerland, Spain, and Belgium are countries where multilingualism is the norm.

## A Continuing Debate

The debate about bilingual education is not a debate between English speakers and non-English speakers. Rather, it is a debate between those who hold largely colonial/imperialistic views (including many minority language speakers themselves) and

those who hold mainly ecological views (including many majority language speakers). Opponents of bilingual education see native languages, including their own, as superfluous and believe that to succeed in the United States, one must speak English. They also believe that bilingual education has not succeeded in teaching children English and therefore should be halted.

Proponents of bilingual education feel that children can become fluent in English while maintaining cultural and linguistic ties to their homeland, including the use of their familial language. They accept that not everyone in a society will become perfectly fluent in English. For them, it is okay for people to have varying degrees of fluency in English because it is not necessary to speak English in order to be a loyal and productive citizen. They believe that bilingual education can be more successfully implemented in a society where language diversity is valued and respected.

Language ideologies become educational policy when people vote them in and out of legislation. However, the dichotomy between the two ideologies often raises more questions for the language arts or English teacher than it resolves. How fluent should English learners become? What standards of accuracy in Standard English should be required to graduate from high school? How permissive should a teacher be toward usage errors in the classroom? A more fine-grained approach is a continuum of four language attitudes that people hold toward dialect variation: equality, description, prescription, and prejudice. However, before we can discuss these attitudes, we need to understand what the standard language is.

## VARIETY IN THE STANDARD

Although it seems like a contradiction in terms, there are in fact several standard dialects and not just one (Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999, pp. 14–17).

### Standard American English

The term for the dialect that has traditionally dominated over others in the United States is Standard American English (SAE). This dialect differs from many other regional and social dialects. SAE does not allow double negatives, which some other varieties allow. SAE has characteristic pronoun use (*themselves*, not *theirselves*) unlike some working-class or rural dialects. SAE has certain forms of the verb *be* (*isn't,* not *ain't*), which cannot be eliminated in sentences such as *He is a big man,* but some nonstandard dialects permit these verbal phenomena.

Historically, a dialect becomes the standard because the most powerful social group in the area speaks it. When it becomes the standard, it is used as the measure against which other dialects are compared. People consider the phrases and grammatical patterns of the other dialects "usage errors" that must be corrected. They insist that K–12 schoolteachers correct children's divergent speech and writing in school. However, the term "Standard American English" will not help educators know what usage to correct, whom to correct, and when to correct. Instead, educators need to think of the following four possible standards.

### Standard Spoken English

The acceptable way of speaking that may not follow all grammar rules in the books is called Standard Spoken English (SSE). Because it has some regional dialectical variation from north to south and from east to west, SSE is composed of several **local standards** that people understand everywhere from Florida to Washington. SSE might include words such as *gonna* or *wanna*. Sentence fragments are a normal syntactic structure. Of course, there is no punctuation or capitalization.

### Standard Written English

Standard Written English (SWE) is not localized to one region in the United States, and it has different grammatical features from SSE. For example, in SWE all sentences have subjects and predicates. Only subject pronouns can be used (*I*, not *me*) as subjects of sentences. Subjects and predicates must match each other in number agreement. Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a period. In style, SWE generally allows sentences to end with a preposition. It allows split infinitives, such as *to boldly go*. SWE is commonly used in fiction and news reporting (even in spoken news reporting).

### Academic English

Academic English (AE) refers to a more formal style of SWE used both in public academic speaking and in academic writing. AE generally follows most conventional rules of grammar, but it has some other characteristics, such as **passive voice** (*is expected to, is understood as*), **complex noun phrases** (*institutionalized government operations*), and **prepositional phrases** (*in quantitative measurement, against the norm*). It has a particular **register,** or choice of words, that is common in the university setting but rare in other settings (*maximal projection, statistical analysis, syllabus*). To succeed in high school and university work, learners need to master spoken and written AE with some fluency.

### Proper English

Many people are familiar with the term Proper English (PE), but in some ways PE is little more than a myth. It is a rigid speech or writing style to which some aspire but extremely few achieve. In PE, every grammatical rule that has come down through the ages must be strictly observed, and any deviations are strictly censured. You must say *an historic occasion.* You must say *it is I.* You must not end a sentence with a preposition. You must not split an infinitive. You must use *among* rather than *between* if you are speaking of a group that has more than two members.

## FOUR LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

The attitudes toward dialect diversity range over a continuum, from **language equality** on one extreme, through **description** as practiced by linguists, to **prescription** as many language arts or English teachers must adhere to, and to the opposite extreme

**TABLE 1.1**
***Attitudes Toward Language in Society***

| | Language Equality | Description | Prescription | Language Prejudice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is grammar? | Grammar is people's systematic usage in a community. | Grammar is a psychological system of rules, a body of knowledge in a person's mind. | Grammar is a body of public usage rules, a convention that people agree on. | Grammar is a code of proper conduct. |
| What is the standard? | There is no true standard; it is a cultural myth. | A standard dialect is a variety that has undergone standardization. | The standard is the variety that is acceptable in most public situations. | The standard, PE, is a meterstick against which other varieties are measured. |
| Is correctness absolute or relative? | There is no standard of correctness; it is a myth. | Correct speech or writing is relative to a speaker's situation. | Correct speech or writing is relative to a speaker's situation. | Correctness is absolute; rules must be followed no matter what the setting. |
| What or who is the authority for grammar standards? | There are no grammar standards; there is only the usage of the people. | The authority is the knowledge that an "ideal" native speaker has of his or her native language. | The authority for good usage comes from recognized practitioners of the language. | The authority for correctness comes from grammar books, "experts," and dictionaries. |

of **language prejudice** as we sometimes see exhibited in letters to the editor or judgmental media commentaries about language (see Table 1.1).

## Language Equality

As the most radical form of the ecological ideology, the language equality position holds that different varieties, including all nonstandard varieties, are resources for the individual and the society that enjoys them; thus, they are positive and to be nurtured and encouraged. For example, Oprah Winfrey's speech is always perfectly standard, yet at times she slips into a dialect with a slight African American or southern flavor when she wants to poke fun at someone or show solidarity with a guest or audience member. This is an important resource for her; it is a resource that not everyone has.

From the equality perspective, people have a right to speak the way they want. It is similar to racial, gender, or other types of equality based on human characteristics. If we substitute other human characteristics for the word *dialect(s)* in certain questions (e.g., Is *racial* diversity "normal?" Do the *sexes* have equal status?), we get a sense of the logic that underlies this attitude.

## Language Description

Language description is carefully neutral; it is an objective stance adopted by linguists in order to examine languages impartially. This attitude holds that language varieties differ but that they can be described neutrally, with neither a positive nor a negative evaluation. Equality and description may appeal in principle to many English or language arts teachers, but they are ultimately not totally satisfying because society holds teachers accountable for their learners' language usage. Therefore, the teacher's job, to teach SWE and AE, is in conflict with both of these positions.

## Language Prescription

This position resolves the conflict for many teachers. *Prescription* is the label for a position that all languages and varieties have merit and can be described without evaluation but that, whether we like it or not, people accept one variety of English in more public situations (e.g., school, the workplace, and writing) than others. This situation exists because of sociohistorical reasons and not because the standard dialect is better. Prescription combines what the linguist knows about language in society with the pragmatic realism of the high school English teacher facing a classroom full of minority dialect speakers.

The prescriptive point of view is based on the belief that dialectical variation is a changeable human characteristic (as opposed to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on) and therefore that people may choose to adapt their dialects if they can. However, prescriptivism must be carefully distinguished from language prejudice.

## Language Prejudice

To judge by critical comments in the media, language prejudice is still acceptable and even laudable at a time when other forms of prejudice have diminished or at least become more covert. In fact, it is not just minority language or dialect speakers who face language prejudice. People who internalize the idea that others speak or write PE perfectly and disparage their own speech or writing because they do not follow all the rules fall victim to prejudice as well.

Language prejudice is toxic because it sometimes masquerades as "standards" but insidiously excludes some portions of our population. It permits and even encourages judgment of the individual or social group whose language or variety differs from the standard. If not overtly racist or classist, it certainly begs the question of privilege because the closer someone's home language or dialect is to that of the school and the workplace, the more advantage he or she has over those who must learn the language. The farther someone's home language or dialect is from the standard, the more remediation he or she requires for academic success.

However, few people hold only one coherent attitude toward variation. Most linguists, for example, combine elements of language equality, description, and prescription. Naive armchair language critics probably combine elements of prejudice and prescription; for example, their attitudes may differ with respect to speech (prescription) or writing (prejudice). In addition, there is an important distinction between

**TABLE 1.2**
***Attitudes Toward Language Variation***

| | Language Equality | Description | Prescriptivism | Language Prejudice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Is variation "normal" and valued? | Yes, variation is normal and valued as a resource for societies and individuals. | It is normal and inevitable. | It is normal and inevitable. | Some variation is "local color," but some should be eradicated by remediation. |
| What determines a variety's acceptance? | All varieties are equal; therefore, all are acceptable. | Varieties are acceptable if they are appropriate to the situation. | Varieties are acceptable if they are appropriate to the situation. | Varieties are acceptable to the extent that they are close to PE. |
| Could varieties have the same functions? | Each variety could be used in any setting. | Theoretically, any language can communicate any message. | The standard has all functions; other varieties are more restricted. | PE should be used exclusively by everyone. |
| Does variation reflect privilege? | In an ideal world, the variety used in a setting reflects the speaker's choice. | Dialect variation reproduces social distinctions. | In the real world, use of the standard is a key to socioeconomic mobility. | Variation is not a question of privilege because everyone can learn PE. |

overt and covert attitudes. People may overtly display prescription and yet covertly hold prejudicial beliefs. People may overtly espouse one goal of prejudice (maintenance of a standard for the purposes of clarity) while subconsciously agreeing with another covert goal (maintaining the power status quo) (see Table 1.2).

## Teachers' Attitudes Toward Speakers of Dialects

One's attitude toward a language or dialect usually manifests as an attitude toward speakers of that language or dialect. For example, if people believe that everyone can learn PE, they might look down on someone who hasn't succeeded in mastering every grammatical nuance and think that he or she did not try very hard.

On the other hand, if people believe that all dialects are equal, then they realize that the dialect someone happens to speak does not say very much about intelligence, sense of humor, or moral character. Many people have family members whose grammar is nonnative or nonstandard but who are wise, witty, and full of integrity. On the other hand, there are those who speak and write a dialect very close to PE, but the ideas they express so well are faulty, boring, or malicious. In fact, people's language or dialect has more to do with place of origin, socioeconomic class, and education than it does intelligence, creativity, or morality.

**TABLE 1.3**

***Attitudes Toward Speakers of Language Variants***[a]

| | Equality | Prescription | Prejudice |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do people have dialect rights? | People have the right to speak and write in their native dialect or language. Language is a basic human right. | Yes, but there are social consequences for use of nonstandard. | No, only PE speakers have dialect rights. Others must adapt to the standard. |
| Is dialect related to intelligence? | It is related to ethnicity, region, education, setting, and socioeconomic class. | No, people can be intelligent no matter how they speak or write. | 1. Yes<br>2. No, but improper usage creates the impression of stupidity or ignorance. |
| Is dialect related to morality? | It is related to ethnicity, region, education, setting, and socioeconomic class. | No, "bad" grammar does not make someone morally suspect. | 1. Yes<br>2. No, but improper usage creates the impression of slovenliness or lack of character. |
| Is dialect related to productivity? | It is related to ethnicity, region, education, setting, and socioeconomic class. | No, productive citizens speak in many different ways. | 1. Yes<br>2. No, but improper usage creates the impression of carelessness or disrespect. |

[a] The description attitude is omitted because it is neutral with respect to teachers.

This is where attitude becomes very important for the English or language arts teacher. A negative attitude toward the way a learner speaks or writes may unconsciously be part of a negative attitude toward the learner or the learner's background or group. Others, including learners, perceive this negative attitude no matter how much the teacher tries to hide it. In short, if teachers have a negative attitude toward their learners, it cannot help but affect their relationship, their ability to teach, and their learners' motivation (see Table 1.3).

In Andersson and Trudgill (1990), we find a quote that sets out the three attitudes and their repercussions for nonnative or nonstandard speakers of English and their instructors:

> Prejudice against lower-class dialects is not dissimilar to racial and sexual prejudice. We believe it is highly undesirable and that it is our job as linguists to work against ignorance about dialect differences and for greater dialect tolerance. Unlike racial and sexual prejudice, however, it is possible to guard oneself against dialect prejudice by changing one's dialect, or by mastering an additional dialect, if one wishes. In an ideal and truly egalitarian and democratic society, it would not be necessary to do this. In our society, however,

> many people are under considerable pressure to do so. Teachers are therefore entirely justified in teaching pupils who do not use Standard English how to write this dialect so that they can protect themselves against this prejudice and advance socially, educationally, occupationally and economically if they wish. We do not want children to leave school only to suffer as cannon fodder in the job market. (pp. 122–123)

### Language Policies in Education

People who held the colonialist/imperialistic ideology had an adverse effect on bilingual education in California when they passed a voter initiative severely limiting it. The public outcry over the proposed use of Ebonics, or African American English, in schools caused the Oakland School Board to reverse its policy decision allowing Ebonics in the classroom. It is clear that the ideologies and attitudes affect teachers and learners when they are converted into policies for the school or classroom. Policies ultimately become curricula (see Table 1.4). For more information, see the language policy Web site at *www.language.policy.org.*

School policies under the language equality position would hypothetically dictate that language arts or English teachers have very little to do. They would not need to instruct their students on the niceties of usage or style; at most, they would focus on the clear expression of ideas. At the other extreme, under the language prejudice position, educational policies would theoretically mandate remediation for almost everyone, nonnative and native speakers alike, because very few people under the age of 18 speak or write PE these days. The teacher would spend a lot of time doing grammar drills and correcting compositions with red pens. A more reasonable alternative, prescriptivism, is consistent with SWE and AE as realistic goals instead of PE. In fact, learners study and use nonstandard speech in the classroom to heighten their interest in language.

## TEACHING TO THE STANDARDS AND THE TESTS

The language ideologies and attitudes of legislators and educational policymakers reach the classroom and the classroom teacher by means of language arts standards and language arts assessment.

### Grade-Level Curriculum Standards

All states set up grade-level language standards that form the basis for curricula in the schools and the content of textbooks. For example, California has English–Language Arts Content Standards for kindergarten through grade 12. These standards are the same for English speakers and for English language learners. To cite the document,

> Nearly 25 percent of children in California enter school at various ages with primary languages other than English. The standards in this document have been designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student. No student is incapable of

**TABLE 1.4**

***Attitudes Reflected in School Policies***[a]

| | Equality | Prescription | Prejudice |
|---|---|---|---|
| What is the language goal of the language arts curriculum? | The curriculum should increase language awareness and appreciation for diversity. | The goal is to empower students to gain access to education if they choose. | The goal is to maintain clarity, beauty, and logic of PE (and status of PE speakers). |
| What is the teacher's role? | Teachers are advocates for equality. | Teach SWE with respect for native dialects and varieties. | The teacher should teach proper usage. |
| What is the teacher's attitude toward variation in the classroom? | Teachers inform students about variation. | Teachers inform students about variation and encourage bidialectalism. | The teacher tries to eradicate grammar errors. |
| Should schools allow variation? | Yes. | Yes, it should be allowed for the purposes of learning content or SWE. | No, it is racist; it implies that some cannot learn proper usage; it condemns students to low status. |
| Can language standards be changed? | Yes, they should be close to the way people use language. | Yes, they should be changed to reflect current usage, if necessary. | No, it is dumbing down and an erosion of culture. |
| What is the language arts curriculum? | Literacy with no focus on accuracy or style in writing; clarity of expression is the only ideal. | SWE with some remediation for some students with some grammatical features. | Remediation for everyone in mechanics and usage. |

[a] The description attitude is omitted, as it generally attempts to be apolitical.

> reaching them. The standards must not be altered for English language learners, because doing so would deny these students the opportunity to reach them. Rather, local education authorities must seize this chance to align specialized education programs for English language learners with the standards so that all children in California are working toward the same goal. Administrators must also work very hard to deliver the appropriate support that English language learners will need to meet the standards. (p. vii)

In California, each grade level has specific standards in the same categories, as seen in Box 1.1. Specific grammar standards for various grade levels are shown in Boxes 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4.

**Box 1.1 California Standards Categories**

Reading
- Word analysis, fluency, systematic vocabulary development
- Reading comprehension
- Literary response and analysis

Writing
- Writing strategies
- Writing applications

Written and oral English language conventions
- Students write and speak with a command of English conventions appropriate to this grade level

Listening and speaking
- Listening and speaking strategies
- Speaking applications

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**Box 1.2 California Grammar Standards for Grade 3 (p. 19)**

Sentence structure

1-1 Understand and be able to use complete and correct declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in writing and speaking.

Grammar

1-2 Identify subjects and verbs that are in agreement and identify and use pronouns, adjectives, compound words, and articles correctly in writing and speaking.

1-3 Identify and use past, present, and future verb tense properly in writing and speaking.

1-4 Identify and use subjects and verb correctly in speaking and writing simple sentences.

Punctuation

1-5 Punctuate dates, city and state, and titles of books correctly.

1-6 Use commas in dates, locations, and addresses and for items in a series.

Capitalization

1-7 Capitalize geographical names, holidays, historical periods, and special events correctly.

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**Box 1.3 California Grammar Standards for Grade 7**

Sentence structure

1-1 Place modifiers properly and use the active voice.

Grammar

1-2 Identify and use infinitives and participles and make clear references between pronouns and antecedents.

1-3 Identify all parts of speech and types and structure of sentences.

1-4 Demonstrate the mechanics of writing (e.g., quotation marks, commas at end of dependent clauses) and appropriate English usage (e.g., pronoun reference).

Punctuation

1-5 Identify hyphens, dashes, brackets, and semicolons and use them correctly.

Capitalization

1-6 Use correct capitalization.

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**Box 1.4 California Grammar Standards for Grades 9 and 10**

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of Standard English conventions.

Grammar and Mechanics of Writing

1-1 Identify and correctly use clauses (e.g., main and subordinate), phrases (e.g., gerund, infinitive, and participial), and mechanics of punctuation (e.g., semicolons, colons, ellipses, and hyphens).

1-2 Understand sentence construction (e.g., parallel structure, subordination, and proper placement of modifiers) and proper English usage (e.g., consistency of verb tenses).

1-3 Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, and syntax.

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## High-Stakes Testing

Testing is "high stakes" if the positive or negative outcome of test has an impact on the test takers' future opportunities: promotion to the next grade, high school graduation, college entrance, college graduation, and professional success.

### *Standardized Testing*

In many states, standardized tests begin in the elementary grades to measure how well learners are achieving the curriculum standards. For example, California uses the

**Box 1.5 Questions Similar to California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Based on the State's Curriculum Standards**

Choose the answer that is the MOST effective substitute for the underlined part of the sentence. If no substitution is necessary, choose "Leave as is."

1. Job requirements are <u>stocking shelves, sweeping and mopping the floor, and assisting customers</u>.
   A. stocking shelves, sweep and mop the floor, and assisting customers.
   B. to stock shelves, sweeping and mopping the floor, and assisting customers.
   C. to assist customers.
   D. Leave as is.

Choose the answer that is the MOST effective substitute for the underlined portion of the sentence. If no substitution is necessary, choose "Leave as is."

1. The foothills of the Sierra Nevadas are dry and golden <u>in summer however in winter they are wet and green</u>.
   A. in summer, however in winter they are wet and green.
   B. in summer; however, in winter they are wet and green.
   C. in summer: however in winter, they are wet and green.
   D. Leave as is.

Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

2. The chef baked Joan's birthday cake for her mother and _____.
   A. I
   B. she
   C. her
   D. he

Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 9), which has objective reading, language, writing, spelling, and listening tests that measure learning of the language arts standards within a language context (SAT 9, 1999).

The SAT 9 has alternative language subtests, one of which tests knowledge of grammar and usage. This subtest is a traditional grade-appropriate test of mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and usage), sentence structure, content, and organization. For example, at a high school grade level, to succeed in this test, learners need to be able to recognize and correct an error in subject–verb agreement, fragments, run-on sentences, and awkward constructions, such as nonparallel structure, redundancies, and misplaced modifiers.

Massachusetts also has grade-level language standards based on the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks,* which can be found at *www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks.* The achievement of grade-level standards is measured each year with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS, 2002). The English Language Arts

**Box 1.6 California Exit Exam Results, 2002**

Gender
- 59% of girls passed.
- 50% of boys passed.

Ethnicity
- 74% of white students passed.
- 60% of Asian students passed.
- 46% of African American students passed.
- 42% of Hispanic students passed.

Language background
- 64% English-only students passed.
- 63%–66% English-proficient students passed.
- 28% English learner students passed.

Economics
- 64% of non-economically disadvantaged students passed.
- 40% of economically disadvantaged students passed.

(ELA) exam includes a reading test during which students read a passage and answer grade-appropriate questions about meaning, vocabulary, usage, part of speech identification, font, and punctuation. Its writing test is a two-session response to a writing prompt. Test takers use the first session to write a first draft of a composition; after a short break, they revise their first draft and submit the second draft to be scored.

### *High School Exit Exams*

Many states have high school exit exams with English/language arts as a content area to be tested. For instance, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam described previously is also a high school exit exam because students must achieve a certain score on the 10th-grade test in order to graduate from high school.

California has a specially drafted exit exam (CAHSEE, or California High School Exit Exam [CAHSEE, 2002]) for 10th-grade high school students, including English language learners. If they do not pass, they may take the test up to seven more times, and anyone who does not pass receives "supplemental instruction." The test includes questions on grammar and usage, punctuation, and capitalization. Box 1.5 shows some sample questions based on the test. Some interesting results published for the CAHSEE are shown in Box 1.6.

Beginning in 2004, North Carolina 11th-grade students need to pass a high school exit exam consisting of a single test of 100 questions on four domains, one of which is English, reading, and grammar (NC High School Exit Exam, 2002). English language learners may have special accommodations (including extra time) to complete the test. To assess grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage, the test has a multiparagraph reading passage with errors to which the six questions following the passage are directed. See Box 1.7 for a sample adaptation.

**Box 1.7 Another Format for High School Exit Exam Questions**

To assess grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage, the North Carolina High School Exit Exam has a multiparagraph reading passage with errors, to which the six questions following the passage are directed. Here is an example question of that format.

Ms. Jean Smith, CEO
Denton Enterprises
6770 First St.
Black Mountain, NC 27033

Dear Ms. Smith:

(1) I am a high school student at Jefferson High with a background in art and ceramics. (2) I am very interested in your corporations marketing department because I would like a career in business administration in the arts and crafts area. (3) I would also like to work in sales. (4) And, I have very good people skills. (5) Which is what people tell me all the time. (6) I would like to call you next week to talk to you about setting up a partime internship program that I could do during my senior year. (7) I have a lot of ideas to discuss with you. (8) We can set up a business or sales internship that would be as good for your company as it would be for me.

1. Which correction should be made to sentence 2?
   A. Change your to *you're*
   B. Change corporations to *corporation's*
   C. Change arts to *art.*
   D. Change business administration to *Business Administration*

2. Which of the following is a fragment?
   A. I would also like to work in sales.
   B. And, I have very good people skills.
   C. Which is what people tell me all the time.
   D. I have a lot of ideas to discuss with you.

3. Which correction should be made to sentence 6?
   A. Insert a comma after *next week.*
   B. Change I would to *I'd.*
   C. Capitalize internship program.
   D. Change partime to *part-time.*

***University Entrance Exams***

The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT, 2003) has a math, a verbal, and a writing skills section. The 30-minute writing skills section has 39 multiple-choice questions on identifying sentence errors in usage, grammar, or diction (19), restructuring sentences (14), and improving paragraphs (6). Test takers must complete 39 questions in 30 minutes.

Beginning in 2005, the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) will include a 25-minute essay to test organization, expression, and use of conventions of SWE (SAT, 2003). The scoring standards on grammar and usage for the essay range from "consistent facility in use of language, variety of sentence structures, and vocabulary" for the highest score to "usage and syntactical errors so severe that meaning is somewhat obscured" for the lowest score. There will also be a 25-minute multiple-choice test on improving sentences and identifying errors (diction, grammar, sentence construction, subject–verb agreement, proper word usage, and wordiness).

The English Placement Test (EPT) is a test designed to indicate which English course (or remediation) is appropriate for applicants to the California state university system, the largest university system in the United States (EPT, 2003). Students with a low score take remedial English or are encouraged to go to a community college for the first 2 years of higher education.

The EPT test has a composition that is evaluated for sentence and paragraph structure, usage, and grammar. The test also has a composing skills section of 45 multiple-choice questions. Among other things, test takers must read a statement and restructure it and then select which version of a sentence is worded clearly, logically, and correctly. The questions have to do with conversion of active verbs to passive verbs and vice versa, identification of the referent for an antecedent, parallel structure, and subject-verb interruption and agreement.

That is not the end of language arts testing in the California state university system. There is a systemwide upper-division writing requirement that students must pass in order to graduate (e.g., GWAR, 2003). Finally, potential teachers need to pass the CBEST (California Basic Educational Skills Test) in order to become a teacher (CBEST, 2003). This test has two essay questions evaluated on content, organization, coherence, style, word choice and usage, and syntactic complexity and variety.

## LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD

Many high-stakes tests have only a few questions on grammar, usage, and punctuation out of their total number of questions. However, in the course of a student's school career, these small percentages add up, and lack of success in written expression in SE or AE has important repercussions for school success, promotion from grade to grade, high school graduation, admission to college, scholarships, graduation from college, and career choice. Ultimately, language ideologies and attitudes affect us all as individuals and as a society; they have a huge impact on learners in the language arts or English classroom.

## EXPLORING CHAPTER PERSPECTIVES

### *Discussion Questions*

1. Select several of the questions in this chapter's tables and contrast the various responses. What implications do they have for you personally?
2. Which language attitude do you think your language arts or English teachers had as you were growing up? Which attitude, if any, did your parents have? Which attitude do you hold?
3. Have you heard people make prejudicial comments about others' speech or writing? What did they say? Does this attitude appear in one of the tables? Did it refer to an individual's intelligence, morality, or productivity?
4. By what means do you think teachers communicate their positive and negative attitudes even if they do not say anything openly?
5. What overt and covert language policies were in effect at your high school? How did you feel about the standardized testing you went through?
6. How confident do you feel about teaching the items mentioned in the grade-level standards? Did you learn these in school? Discuss the terms you can define and make a list of the terms you cannot define.

### *Cooperative Exercise: An Opinion Piece*

A. **Homework.** Read the following guest opinion piece from a newspaper. While you are reading, underline all the insulting and negative words that the author uses and identify all the behaviors that are lumped together in her mind. What effect do these negative expressions have on you as a reader? What is the author saying about the behaviors she mentions? Write your answers in a notebook devoted to language, your Language Notebook.

B. **Pair Work.** Students who have prepared ahead of time form pairs to compare the insults and negative expressions you found. Then discuss the following questions, noting the main ideas from your discussion in your Language Notebook. Unprepared students begin at Step A and proceed to Step B in pairs.

   i. The author of this editorial says, "We have somehow, in the span of 40 years, developed a repugnance for the scholarly traditions that so many of our grandparents and great-grandparents championed and cherished." What were your parents or grandparents doing, watching, and reading 40 years ago? Where do you think this author got the idea that people were more scholarly 40 years ago? Do you think they were?

   ii. Should this person be a language arts teacher? Why or why not?

C. **Class Work.** Each pair presents several main points from their discussion and then reflects on the cooperative experience as a whole class. Use generalizations to report on answers to these questions. How did each pair work together? Did both people participate as much as they wanted to? Did all pairs participate in the class discussion?

## HELLO? IS ANYONE OUT THERE SPEAKING PROPER ENGLISH?

by Margaret A. Boardman,
*Fresno Bee,* December 13, 1997

There is a story by Ray Bradbury about a man who is allowed to go back in time to kill a dinosaur. He is told to stay on a conveyor belt and shoot only the beast described because its death will not bring about any changes in the space-time continuum.

The man does not listen, steps off the belt and, in so doing, kills a butterfly under his boot. When he returns to his own time, things have changed. Signs are spelled with odd characters. More ominously, a demagogue, previously scoffed at, has been elected president.

I often wondered who killed the butterfly that changed America's history. What senseless boot stepped off the conveyor belt of time and mutated us into the land of the Philistines?

### Strange Misspellings

The dead butterfly shows up in the strange misspellings that can be found all over town. "Congradulations!" reads a big sign in a large discount store touting a local team.

"We have moved those products to Isle 2A," broadcasts another. Alongside Gilligan's Isle, we presume. In grocery stores we are urged to buy "avacados," "cantalopes" and "tomatos." Shades of Dan Quayle. In addition, educated persons using what used to be fairly commonplace words find that many people have no idea what they're talking about. Recently a friend asked for the "gourmet" section of the grocery and was directed to Budget Gourmet frozen dinners, the only item within the clerk's ken containing that word.

"Have you rode the Ferris wheel?" inquires a lead anchor on the local news. Switching to another station, the very next line we hear from the reporter is, "Symbols are weaved into. . . . " On the radio a newsman tells us of something happening in Doddy County, Fla. It takes a moment to realize he is pronouncing the letters D-a-d-e as if they rhyme with body. King Ungrammatical, Queen Malaprop and Prince Mispronounce rule.

America seems to revel in its dim-witted behavior. Certainly it has raised the moronic to the level of godhead. One need only survey Jim Carey's tasteless, fatuous personifications and 90 percent of television sit-coms to see that this is true. . . .

Smartness has become equated with freakishness. Examine, if you doubt it, those who portray well-read, intellectually curious characters: the effete Crane brothers on "Frasier," Urkel the nerd on "Family Matters," the precociously prissy Gracie on "The Nanny," and the misfit Lisa on "The Simpsons."

We have somehow, in the span of 40 years, developed a repugnance for the scholarly traditions that so many of our grandparents and great-grandparents championed and cherished.

Do you think this "dumbing down" holds no consequences for you? Its effects, in fact, are sweeping. Whether it is in county offices where expensive, tax-funded computers sit idle on every desk because employees are given improper or no training, or in businesses where calls go unanswered because no one understands the new phone system, or in printed publications where grammatical errors abound because a spell-check program is the only thing standing between the reader and illiteracy, we are all affected.

*(Continued)*

Slovenly Brain Misuse

Worse still, this slovenly misuse of our brains leads to cruelty and stupidity of all sorts: addiction, racism, child abuse, street crime, and demagoguery.

Charles Dickens forewarned us in "A Christmas Carol:"

"This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want," he has his ghost of Christmas present admonish Ebenezer Scrooge. "Beware them both . . . but most of all beware this boy." It is past time we took Mr. Dickens' warning to heart.

If not so frightening, it would be a fascinating phenomenon. After all, Americans are not stupid. Listening to fans discussing the plot turns and character motivations of their favorite soap operas make it clear that these are minds capable of fairly complex thought patterns.

Dim-Witted America

Yet hoping that such good minds might focus on literature, environmental concepts, political and historical influences, or community problem-solving appears a profitless wish indeed.

## ◆ *Writing Assignment*

Write a short essay in your Language Notebook in response to one or both of these prompts. Save your essay(s) for later use.

1. Write a letter to the author of this guest editorial expressing whether you agree or disagree with her and why.
2. Look up the language arts standards for your state on the Internet. Do you feel that your education in language arts will allow you to meet those standards? Will your background knowledge in grammar permit you to help your students meet the standards the way you would like to? Why or why not?

### Introspection

Look at your essay(s) carefully and proofread for spelling, punctuation, and nonstandard or non-SWE usage.

## ◆ *Find Out More*

### Language Attitudes

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