The authors describe their course in descriptive grammar and suggest classroom strategies.

Taking the G-r-r-r Out of Grammar

Stephen Tchudi and Lee Thomas

Respective secondary English teachers in our state are required to take a course in “Descriptive Grammar.” By the title of the course, one could guess that the requirement can be traced back to the 1960s and the linguistics revolution that displaced “traditional prescriptive” with the more modern, “descriptive” structural and transformational-generative grammars. The title doesn’t reveal that the course also came into the statutes under “back-to-basics” pressure: legislators may have thought they were remediating a lack of knowledge of correctness on the part of teachers—you know, the mythical progressive teachers who don’t mark errors and approve of anything that students spell or write. Although the descriptive grammar course at our university is intellectually much more respectable than a mere correctness course, students don’t always come to it bubbling with enthusiasm over the prospect of learning the intricacies of syntax (whatever that is). Moreover, because the course has, in the past, been taught mostly by university linguists who presented a detailed and technical transformational-generative perspective, students have questioned the usefulness of the course and its applications in teaching.

Still, when our students begin their first teaching assignments, they often report coming face-to-face with teachers committed to a traditional approach to grammar. Sometimes pressure for parts-of-speech grammar comes from community demands for basics; sometimes it comes from teachers who remain convinced that, despite research to the contrary, grammar is somehow vital in teaching writing; too often the grammar pressure comes about simply because that’s what’s covered in the standard-issue textbook. Whatever the causes, our students have often perceived that their descriptive grammar course failed to give them the tools they needed to cope with student- or first-year teaching.

Let us begin by saying that we believe in grammar. We even speak and write it! But we’ve studied the research and know that presenting traditional parts of speech and drilling away at usage items is no way to teach children to read, write, listen, and speak. We are also convinced that teachers should have a solid understanding of syntactic systems and structures—the rules, laws, circumstances, and conventions that govern how we use language.

In the summer of 1995, we decided to team teach the descriptive grammar course and to take a whack at revising it. Specifically, we wanted to make the course a bit more user friendly from a linguistics standpoint so that our students would not be intimidated by modern grammars, and we wanted to develop a course that would give our students better preparation for the demands placed on them in real-world teaching.

With that in mind, we decided to “take the g-r-r-r out of grammar.”

We found planning the course to be an enormous challenge, for it asked us to reconsider the question, “What is grammar good for?” Thus in describing and explaining some of our course (it is not possible to detail it all), we offer readers our answer to this issue’s question: “What should English teachers do about the teaching of grammar and usage?”

DEFINITIONS AND AIMS

On opening day, we announced our slogan, “Taking the g-r-r-r out of grammar,” and described that our aims for the course would be to:

- explore the concept of a “grammar” as a system of rules for any language in general and for English in particular;
- consider the purposes for describing grammars;
- present the basic concepts of English grammar: the nomenclature of traditional grammar and the philosophical/linguistic principles of transformational-generative grammar.
• explore the applications of grammar in real-world use, including writing, education, literature, and politics.

We wanted our students to come to a full understanding of the idea of a grammar—a system of rules, created by people to describe the behavior they observe in their language.

We wrote on the board:

specialists those bearded old Lithuanian ten linguistics

We then asked the students to rearrange the words into an English phrase, and to a person, they came up with:

those ten old bearded Lithuanian linguistics specialists.

We noted that “grammar” is what enabled them to make that decoding, and we asked them to articulate, if they could, the rules that require “those” to precede “ten” or “linguistics” to follow “Lithuanian.” Their struggles helped us make the point that the native speaker of a language knows a lot more grammar than he or she is necessarily able to describe! We also gave the students a copy of Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky” and helped them see that their intuitive, native grammar is what allows them to figure out that “slithy” is a description, not an action, that “toves” is a plural something or other, not the present tense of the verb “to tive.”

We carefully introduced the distinction between a descriptive and a prescriptive grammar and explained that any grammar could be either. Any grammar can be used as a scientific description of how language functions, and any grammar can be turned into a set of laws or shibboleths about how people ought to talk or write. We learned, a bit to our surprise, that some of our students had heard about grammars in other language arts methods courses and had developed a simplistic set of formulae in their heads:

- traditional grammar = prescriptive = bad
- transformational grammar = descriptive = good

Traditional grammar, we explained, has often been used to make prescriptions: “Use **shall** to indicate intent”; “Never say **ain’t** north of Little Rock” (that’s a joke). However, traditional grammar doesn’t have to be used that way at all. It can offer descriptions, too: that words function in different ways and can be classified by “parts” of speech; that sentences include nouns and verbs functioning as subjects and predicates; that determiners precede nouns; that infinitive phrases are often divided by adverbs. One of our students observed that in its way transformational grammar is prescriptive, since it “prescribes” the rules that native speakers must follow to generate grammatical English sentences! Point taken.

As a follow-up for each class during the semester, we had the students complete what we called X-squared activities: “Explorations and Extensions.” These were hands-on projects that had the students apply and extend concepts we discussed in class, using their own resources, their own language, and intuitive grammar. During the week that we explored the idea of descriptive vs. prescriptive, we invited the students to:

- write a “grammar” for a part of your life: a description of the rules, laws, or principles that you are following to get an education, to raise a kid, to keep or perform well on a job.
- write a “how to” grammar of something you do well, say the basics of playing a musical instrument or tying your shoes or making a quilt.
- write the elements of your ethical grammar, explaining how you determine what’s “right” or “wrong.”
- create a fairy tale with a moral or “grammar” of human behavior.

We broke the class up into groups and had them discuss two key questions for the course: Why create grammars? Why study grammars? Students came up with such explanations as:

- Grammar is a way of understanding how language and people function.
- Grammar helps us understand language variation and change.
- Grammar helps us figure out what’s “basic” in a language and how it differs over social and cultural groups.
Grammar helps us describe developmental stages in language acquisition.

Grammar helps us make generalizations about how people learn languages.

To wrap up our exploration of the nature of grammar, we cautioned that the word grammar has very different meanings for the linguist, the teacher, the student, and the lay person (distinctions which we think ought to be at the core of the school language curriculum). We urged our prospective teachers, once again, to keep clear the distinction between prescription and description, and we gave them a few thou shalt nots:

- Don’t say grammar when you mean usage;
- Don’t confuse “good English” (whatever that is) with “good,” “proper,” or even “correct” grammar;
- Don’t use the word “grammar” when you mean spelling or punctuation;
- Don’t equate knowledge of grammar with high morals or the Queen’s English;
- Realize that everybody already knows an enormous amount of grammar.

With that as preparation, we felt more or less ready to take on what we regarded as the most difficult issue in the course.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR

One hears from the general public and media pundits that “nobody teaches grammar anymore.” Maybe our state is an exception to that popular norm, but we found that most of our students had, in fact, been taught traditional grammar one if not several or many times. The trouble was, the teaching hadn’t stuck and had mainly succeeded in making students self-conscious about their “grammar” (actually, a smattering of nagging usage items). Although traditional grammar is flawed as a descriptive, scientific grammar—something the transformationalists have observed for years—we decided to teach it as a descriptive grammar, because it is, in fact, the common system used in western education.

We decided to make our foray into traditional grammar as user-friendly as possible. We explained that our students had been done a disservice by those 600-page school “grammar” texts, which muddle descriptive and prescriptive grammar and compound the muddle by lumping usage, spelling, mechanics, vocabulary, the business letter, and footnote etiquette together. We claimed that for most people, knowing one page of traditional grammar is enough: a listing of the basic parts of speech coupled with usage items that happen to give that particular person a hard time. We suggested that students get out a sheet of paper and, over the coming weeks, write their own one-page grammar.

We were aided in our effort to make grammar accessible by Karen Elizabeth Gordon’s book, The Deluxe Transitive Vampire:
discussed the essence of peanuthood (or nounhood)—what all peanuts have in common—and the idea of modification (what distinguishes one nut from another). This exercise also allowed us to introduce a simple tree diagram which would help prepare students for the diagrams of transformational grammar (see p. 48).

Anticipating our work in transformational grammar, we had the students figure out where nouns are likely to fall in sentences, as well as what types of words they often hang out with. Looking at their own language, they discovered the simple rule of placing “the” in front of a word as a test of nouniness—you just can’t use “the” in front of a verb. Or you can try the plural test to see if you can make a word into more than one—one noun, two nouns—something that also doesn’t work with other parts of speech.

We took a similar approach with other parts of speech: first having the students play around with the word in many contexts, then figuring out how you can recognize and name it in a sentence. With verbs, for example, we had students write 101 verbs that show what you can do with such nouns as a peanut, a brick, a candy bar, a computer, a brain. We got into descriptive adverbs and had students translate “walk” into “ambled slowly,” “steal” into “poached stealthily,” and “cook” into “fry oilily.” Our students invented new verbs, e.g., “compuflop” for a computer failure. They wrote paragraphs using only “is/are” verbs (or “verbs of being”) and paragraphs of action verbs. (They rewrote Hamlet’s soliloquy using only action verbs to see what that does to procrastination!) We had them invent weird complex verb tenses (having helped them figure out that English has only two inflected verb tenses, present and past, the rest being compound forms). What tense would you call “what a person thought he/she might do just moments before the decision to do that thing became necessary?” (Answer: “past perfect thoughtfulness.”) We had them do parts of speech cross dressing, an activity we call “Latinizationabilization,” where you use Latin suffixes to take an ordinary noun (say “frog”), turn it into a verb or action (“frogify”—something witches do to princes), then flip it back into nounhood (“frogification”). We invite the reader to add another suffix to re-

constitute that last word as a verb. Or to play around with suffixes for the antidotal verb, “kissfrog.”

Some of these activities are clearly more sophisticated than one would use in a middle school or high school, but many of them (e.g., 101 ways to verb a brick, figuring out words in “Jabberwocky”) have been used in the schools for years. The point is that we wanted to disfearize traditional grammar for our students through some serious language play, something that can be done with students at any level.

EXPLORING TRANSFORMATIONAL-GENERATIVE GRAMMAR

The expanding complexity of generative linguistics led to some serious soul searching on our part as instructors. It is impossible to teach both theory and mechanics of generative grammar in a single semester introductory class (as our past courses had miserably demonstrated). So what elements of this model did our students need to understand? And why? We tried to answer the nagging questions, “What will our students ever use this for?” “And their students?”

We decided that the essence of the generative model for our class should be, first, an understanding that there are different units of language that can be usefully analyzed and, second, that there are different approaches to analysis. One can focus on the word, the phrase, the sentence, or passages of discourse through various grammatical models such as traditional, structural, generative, tagmemic, functional, and so on. The nomenclature of traditional grammar suggests a concreteness about word categories that is moderately useful in schools and standard in the workaday world, but it is scientifically inadequate, or at least unhelpful, in many circumstances. We felt that learning about the transformational-generative approach would create a greater flexibility in our students’ analysis of language as well as develop a healthy skepticism about “right” and “wrong” in language. To achieve this, we explored the structure of words through morphology, generative descriptions of parts of speech, beginning phrase structure, and just a couple of classic transformations such as yes/no question formation and the passive transformation.

We used Jeffrey Kaplan’s book, English Grammar: Principles and Facts, Second edi-
tion (1995, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), a text which contained far more material than we were intent upon teaching, and we adapted an exercise developed by Bill Reynolds in Exploring English Grammar (1974, New York: Random House).

EXPLORING LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

We turned now to children. We viewed two videos on language acquisition from The Human Language Series (1995, New York: Ways of Knowing). We discussed the research on the grammaticality of “baby talk” and described how linguists go about charting an infant’s grammar, looking for syntactic regularities in sentences as short as two words: “Bye-bye mommie.”

Then, in what proved to be one of the most popular aspects of the course, we brought some two- and four-year-olds to class, children from the university preschool. To prepare, our students thought about questions to ask the children and came to class well-armed with toys and games. The children (bless them) were not intimidated by the college students, and after initial shyness, both groups got on quite verbally. The college students took notes on the conversations, and following the departure of the children, spent two days analyzing and reporting their observations. The college students were, almost without exception, shocked and amazed to discover virtually all the adult structures we had discussed in previous weeks revealed in “baby talk.”

“They were using participles!” chortled one student.

“And I heard a gerund.”

At first, our students were inclined to attribute this precociousness to the fact that these children were in a university school setting, probably from “good” homes. We punctured their unconscious elitism and pointed out that all children are linguistic geniuses, able to master this system with ease. Our conversations moved into matters of language learning, reinforcement, generalization, and rule-generation, and the ongoing language ingenuity of all students.

APPLIED GRAMMAR

We hope it is clear by now that our approach involved not so much teaching grammatical systems as fostering an attitude or frame of mind toward language. “Thinking grammatically” gives one fresh perspectives on language, and grammars themselves offer a variety of tools to use as we examine communication. Now we wanted to talk about outcomes: what knowledge of grammars can do for the speaker, writer, listener, thinker, reader,. . . and teacher.

Literature and Style. We spent some time in class looking at a grammatical approach to literature. We began by (re)assuring students that the first obligation of the reader is to respond or react to a text—to laugh or cry or become angry or thoughtful. But then, we suggested, it’s interesting to look at the language that generated a response in us. Along with examining content and rhetoric, readers can look at:

- whether the writing is nouny, verby, adjectivey, or adverby.
- whether it is Latinate or Anglo-Saxon in vocabulary.
- sentence length and sentence patterns (we introduced the grammatical nature of the loose, periodic, and balanced sentence).
- syntactic inversions, especially in poetry, where it is also interesting to examine how the effect of rhyme and meter causes writers to skew their syntax.
- grammatical parallelism.
- ambiguity (where transformational grammar is especially useful in helping people see alternative kernel sentences leading to ambiguous surface structures).
- breaking a passage down into its core, kernel sentences and discussing how the writer grammatically pasted these together and the effects of alternative ways of doing that cut and paste job.
- pushing grammar to its limits to create sentences and phrases on the fringe of comprehensibility.

We then turned the students loose on short passages from literature. Our students reported that they found this approach genuinely helpful. They could see the underlying grammatical simplicity in the “complicated” writing, for instance, of Francis Bacon and Samuel Johnson. They could note the traits of oral grammar in the texts of Nikki Giovanni and Ntozake Shange. The students could appreciate that good old grammar gave them tools to understand passages that they normally would have found intimidating, and they found this a
useful alternative to the “guess what the author meant” approach so common in many of their classes. Grammar, we hypothesized, actually empowered them to interpret literary texts on their own.

We closed the grammar-and-literature segment with a cautionary note: “Don’t take this approach directly into your elementary, middle, or senior high school classrooms; and don’t use this approach as a back door entry to ‘teaching grammar.’” Rather, we urged them to adapt the idea and to think about the theory of the grammatical approach to literature, not the specific grammatical tools. While younger learners might or might not be ready for an introduction to grammatical terminology, everybody can count words in sentences, notice whether words are long or short, break a long sentence down into short ones and recombine it. The approach is not dependent on the mastery of any particular grammar.

The Nature of Standards. Language and power relationships seemed to be a topic that surfaced throughout the course. We began with William Labov’s classic article, “The Logic of Nonstandard English” (1969, Georgetown University Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press). Labov analyzed the dialect of Black English (BE) and demonstrated that it is both grammatical, that is, rule-governed and predictable, as well as logical, a medium for communication. Our students could see descriptive grammar at work in the habitual “be,” copula deletion, and other rules of BE. Judgments that BE constructions were “wrong” or “illogical” came under scrutiny. One student said: “Wait, labeling items from BE ‘bad grammar’ or ‘wrong’ isn’t very meaningful.”

Our students began to generalize by viewing BE as one dialect of many and by recognizing that there is a prestige dialect in the U.S. which we often call “Standard English,” the so-called “educated” variety of the language. It seems appropriate to assist young people in both understanding this dialect for all of its benefits while maintaining other dialects they control for other situations. We thought about the language skills of our foreign language informants and realized that to be bidialectal is like being bilingual in many ways. (And we realized that many “nonstandard” speakers of English are far more multilingual than we.)

Grammar, Power, and Inclusion. We took up the “deficit hypothesis,” that is, the view that the “problem” of nonassimilation or poor performance in school lies in the individual child or in “deficient” family values (“They don’t value education.”). The topic allowed us to explore the power relationships in educational institutions. Who decides what dialect or register should be appropriate in school? What does control of this dialect “get” for a student or a member of U.S. society? How can we usefully conceptualize and work with dialects and registers? These open questions led us to heated debate, yielding to the conclusion that what goes on in schools is often like club membership: “If you can’t talk like me, the teacher, then you can’t be in the club. And by the way it’s your fault, not mine, nor the institution’s.”

We then turned our grammatical tools loose on the topic of gender and language. We explored sexist language at two levels: discrete grammatical items and the broader aspects of discourse. Students debated the use of items such as “chairperson,” “he/she,” and “human beings” rather than “man.” At the discourse level we explored such issues as whether or not one gender “has the floor” more often than another. Who interrupts more? Who does the work of maintaining a conversation? Who gets called on more often in American schools? How does men’s and women’s grammar differ?

Students had the opportunity to work outside of class on all of these topics. They could tape discourse at a formal or informal gathering of men and women and make an analysis of gender roles in their discourse. Students “translated” a paragraph from a well-known text such as the National Anthem, or a ritual such as a marriage into informal, colloquial nonsexist language. They also wrote in BE, created their own definitions of Standard American English, and observed teacher expectations in classrooms concerning discourse and turn-taking.

English as a Second or Additional Language. Our earlier work in language acquisition led smoothly into discussion of the ESL student. Our students reflected critically on unsupported maxims such as “Use of the first language in the classroom should be prohibited”; “Children learn English
faster if they are exposed only to English”; “Teaching literacy skills in the first language is a waste of time”; and the perennial “sink or swim” maxim, “My grandparents learned English with no special help, so students today should, too.”

Discussion groups used what they had learned about dialects and registers and concluded that the acquisition dynamics as well as classroom dynamics are indeed quite similar for students who do not control the prestige dialect and students who do not speak English.

The Grammar and Usage Fair. Knowing political and schoolhouse realities, we had to tackle the question of usage. Adapting a technique we learned from Celeste Resh at Mott Community College in Michigan, we had our students demonstrate in a hands-on way that they knew the difference between grammar and usage. We presented a list of usage items that typically give people problems—lay/lie, sit/set, effect/affect—and we asked each student to adopt a usage item that had given him or her a hard time over the years. Students then studied usage handbooks we had placed on reserve outside our offices. We asked them to study the grammar underlying usage rules and then to develop teaching visuals to present difficult usage items. Our students created posters, mobiles, mock newspaper reports, and even skits to teach about a grammatical menagerie of troublesome items: who/whom and whoever/whomever; subject-verb agreement; sexist language; split infinitives. At our usage fair, students milled about examining the displays, taking tear-off reminders that some students had supplied, and writing notes for their own future use. Students took away many ideas for teaching usage in an active way.

Grammar and the Schools. We opened this unit by alluding to Robert Frost’s “road not taken,” suggesting that in our view, schools had missed a lot of interesting grammatical byways. We wanted our students not to be hypnotized by the Interstate of Correctness and Propriety; we wanted them to have a look at the side roads.

We described three areas of “knowledge” that we feel are important in the schools: knowing grammar, knowing parents and administrators, and knowing kids.

Knowing Grammar. So, at last we reached what was the bottom line for many of our students: How much “grammar” do kids need to know?

We argued (as we had modeled in the course) for a user-friendly introduction to traditional grammar. We campaigned against the six-weeks-every-year approach and noted that a quick review of parts of speech takes a few minutes or days, not months. We proposed that secondary teachers might initially introduce parts of speech grammar in the middle school and review it occasionally in the senior high years. This treatment would be a far cry from the annual voyage through “grammar” advocated by the typical textbook series. It would also differ in tone. “Teach the parts of speech quickly and playfully,” we begged. “And above all,” we added, “don’t immediately link grammar to matters of correctness and usage; teach traditional grammar as a set of tools for discussion and analysis.” We also reminded the prospective teachers that they should not be perturbed about students who didn’t “get it” immediately (or late), and we urged them to dedicate themselves to finding alternatives.

We proposed that teachers show their kids how to use that knowledge of grammar to consult a usage handbook or a computer “grammar checker.” There are many ways for students to get their writing into audience-acceptable form, including editing conferences, peer-group proofreading, using charts and posters of usage demons, developing a personal usage file (kept as part of the writing portfolio), and writing centers.

What about transformational-generative grammar?

Here we advocate a motor cruise at the senior high level, an exploration of the big ideas of T-G grammar—phrase structure and transformation, core grammars and markedness, language acquisition—done as an exploration of how language works, not practical study that would somehow improve correctness and style or lead to artificially combined long sentences. We don’t favor teaching the details of transformations, but we do see it useful to show students how kernel or simple sentences can be reworked and combined to generate new meanings and links. We reminded students of how easy it was for them to see this kind
of grammar at work in the language of our guest preschoolers, non-native speakers, and classic writers, and we pointed out that as teachers they can do similar explorations.

Knowing Parents and Administrators. Thinking pragmatically, we urged students to get to know the school and state curricula: what is truly required in grammar mastery? We reported our experience that some teachers seem to think that the school curriculum requires a great deal of grammar, or that nationally standardized tests are grammar-based. Our observation is that grammar is not overly-stressed in most school and state guidelines and that current standardized tests such as the California Test of Basic Skills and the Scholastic Aptitude Test, while including usage items, do not test students over grammatical terminology.

We tried to prepare our prospective teachers for the reality that in many but by no means all schools, they would be stereotyped as new teachers and as members of the X-generation who don't know nuthin' about grammar and don't care neither. We reported instances where the old guard (old in spirit if not in age) might well have tried to disabuse new teachers of their “liberal” college educations. We argued that the approach to grammar we had advocated, coupled with their new or rediscovered knowledge of grammar, would get them through with an intellectually respectable teaching of grammar and allow them to communicate successfully with the guardians of grammar. We strongly recommended the idea of developing an information sheet for parents and administrators explaining what the teacher is doing, e.g.,

- Why errors on papers are marked selectively.
- The concept of a varieties of “good grammar.”
- How the teacher is helping non-native speakers learn English.
- How “home” dialects are respected.
- How kids can learn to help themselves with usage.
- How parents can help kids with usage matters and proofreading.

Knowing Young People. Most important is that teachers need to know their students’ abilities and growth patterns. There is no magic moment when a spoonful of grammar will make all linguistic ailments disappear. Most important, we stressed, is that taking a grammatical perspective on language helps us analyze children at different levels and to understand why, for example, “invented” or “phonetic” spelling makes great sense in the early elementary grades but is less appropriate at the high school level or why one might want to crack the correctness whip with graduating seniors while focusing language development in the middle school on factors such as fluency and voice. We suggested that our prospective teachers use their grammar, not primarily as something to teach to children, but as a tool to understand what kids are doing with language and how to determine the ways the teacher can help move them to the next levels of understanding and performance.

Finally, having covered those areas of grammar knowledge, we went back to Frost and “the road not taken.” The projects which our students had been working on all semester now came center stage.

PRESENTATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

Each student had been working on what we called the “G-r-r-reat G-r-r-r-ammar Project.” They were to think about grammar in the broadest sense, to choose an area whose grammar they wanted to research, to collect a “corpus” of examples of that language, to write about its grammar, and to make a presentation to the class. Here some of the roads not taken merged. Our students wrote grammars of television’s McLaughlin Report, baseball rules and lingo, American Sign Language, Shakespeare’s plays, McDonalds’ TV ads, the English Only movement, the Internet, political correctness, foreign languages, Gaelic (with help from texts), and bumper stickers in the university parking lot. We had grammars of mathematics, debate, history, rock-and-roll groups, romance novels, basketball coaching, and job interviewing. There was a Grammar of Road Signs, a Grammar of Music, a Grammar of Fashion, Gang Grammar, Football Grammar, a Grateful Deadhead Grammar, an Electrician’s Grammar, a Grammar of Fairy Tales (which tracked two fairy tales through three versions, including a politically correct one), Twin Language Grammars, Code Switching, African Drumming Grammars, and a Grammar of Tarot Cards. Last, but not least, was a grammar of arm and hand gestures based on a videotape of one of the instructor’s classroom mannerisms.

The word grammar has very different meanings for the linguist, the teacher, the student, and the lay person.
Those last days of the class were action-packed and richly informative, reminding us and our students of the amazing range of possibilities in the study of that old devil grammar. We had obviously packed a great deal into the course, probably, like most ambitious instructors, included too much. Nevertheless, we believe that packing all the components of grammar into a single course was important for a matter of perspective. Our prospective teachers (like kids in the schools, parents, and administrators) need a broad perspective on language, a big picture that puts some of the day-to-day items, from spelling glitches to sexist language, into a pattern of linguistic understanding.

We didn’t imagine that we had turned our students into linguists or grammarians, but we did think that we had successfully defanged the g-r-r-rowling demon that was g-r-r-rammar.

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