

Introducing a Grammar and Writing Workshop

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Throughout my time working in the Writing Center at Lee University, I have noticed an overall lack of proper grammar techniques in the student body. According to our survey, sixty percent of students do not have a “working and competent knowledge” of the grammar needed in everyday writing and conversation. Of the forty percent of students who said they did, one can assume that at least some are unaware of their mistakes. Not only does this lead to lower essay scores in college, but can seriously impede students’ ability to write in their professional careers.

Most every occupation, regardless of the field, will require students to write in some capacity, and preparing Lee University through student-led grammar workshops could put them a step ahead of their coworkers. It would give future employees confidence in their speech and writing along with improving the professional quality of communication. By hosting monthly grammar workshops, English tutors could gain leadership experience while they instruct students on professional writing skills. With tea and games, students would be engaged in the workshops and would remember the important and practical information that is essential to their careers.

Grammar and writing are necessary parts of the workforce, and I can help all students master it in a low-cost, fun environment. In addition to rising grades, “Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing” will be the inspiration for many freshmen to taking writing seriously by boosting their confidence and making writing fun.

Current State of Lee University Underclassmen

I surveyed over fifty freshmen in ENGL 110. Within the survey, I found that sixty percent of Lee University students do not have a working knowledge of the grammar appropriate for everyday writing and conversation. Lee University averages a freshman class size of nine hundred and one. There are eleven professors within Lee’s English Department. Here lies the main problem. Going with the rate of sixty percent of students not being proficient in grammar, this leaves five hundred and forty students needing extra help, roughly fifty students per English professor. It is impossible for a professor to give extra help to this number of students as well as keep up with all their other classes.

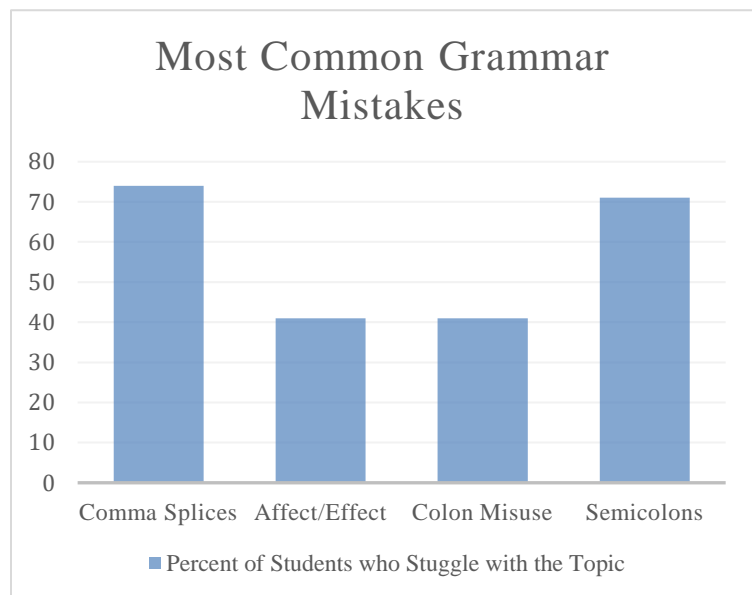


Lee, however, already has extra help available to students. For example, the university currently offers students aid on their papers at the Writing Center. The writing center’s goal, according to

their website, is to “help you improve as a writer,” achieved through “collaboration and conversation,” not through editing and “correcting your paper for you.” While this is a good resource, it does not greatly help the sixty percent of students that “Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing” is targeting. The students I am targeting need to improve as writers, but they are lacking basic knowledge in grammar. This program complements the services the Writing Center by providing students a solid foundation with which to write. Lee University also provides free tutoring for individual students or small groups. Despite the resources currently available, over half of Lee students are lacking grammar proficiency; this tells me there needs to be a solution. “Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing” aims to be a branch of tutoring that takes a different approach to help these students who are getting left behind.

My Solution

“Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing” will give students a refreshing perspective on writing. Hosting monthly sessions will teach students the most intriguing basics of grammar in a low-stress environment. The focus will be on topics that they care about and will use frequently. According to our survey, seventy-six percent of students said that they struggled with comma splices, followed closely by semicolons and the proper use of ‘affect’ and ‘effect.’ In each session, one tutor would teach a short lesson to all attendees that reviewed specific aspects of common grammar



mistakes like the aforementioned, and then other tutors would assist in the break-out section of the seminar. All students would receive a reminder sheet reviewing the lesson, and tutors would lead groups of ten to fifteen students in games and competitive activities to practice the material. The entire workshop should take around forty-five minutes to an hour, and it could be done at night; so students would not have a serious time commitment in their busy schedule. Starting the sessions will be simple.

First, hire tutors. Six to eight tutors would be enough to host over seventy-five students; more could be hired if necessary. These tutors should have experience in the Writing Center, be a Studio Facilitator, or have a recommendation by the English Department staff. For the little faculty involvement needed, Dr. Ren has agreed to assist.

Second, begin planning sessions. Based on our research, comma mistakes and sentence fragmentation are large issues with the freshman population. The tutors would meet in a prior

planning seminar one week before the workshop to design an engaging lesson with a visual aid that discusses two or three different aspects of grammar or writing technique. In order to engage students in unique ways, the sessions will always be more than a review of grammar rules and could include videos, humorous examples, or tasteful satire. A game or interactive activity must also be designed in these sessions for the breakout portion of the workshop.

Third, find a location to host workshops. With over nine hundred students in the freshman class, these seminars could never host all of them, but the Rose Lecture Hall could seat two hundred students with additional classrooms for breakout activities to take place in. Because the games could involve movement or require the use of a whiteboard, a small environment would be easier for the tutors to manage. Education classrooms would provide the perfect place and should be reserved at the beginning of each semester.

Fourth, advertise. Advertisement would be simple with the help of the English Department. Professors could give extra credit to those who attend, and students would be encouraged to participate in order to learn helpful information. With the aid of these professors, students would also have constant reminders of location and time. Approximate attendance numbers could be collected in Rhetoric and Research and College Writing classes. Additionally, flyers could be designed by tutors and posted around campus and in the Writing Center, and video announcements could be displayed in chapel.

Fifth, purchase necessary supplies. The English Department is often known for its love of tea, a trend that can be passed on to “Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing.” With only four workshops a semester, hot tea and cookies can be purchased cheaply for a large number of attendees. Two ten liter water boilers and extra mugs must be purchased before the first session.

Sixth, host the session. With all the planning completed and the supplies acquired, the only thing remaining is to host the session! Let the tea flow and the lessons inform!

My Qualifications

As an employee of the Language and Literature Department, I have one-on-one experience with the needs and struggles of students and am familiar with the most frequent questions asked. In the Writing Center, I can see the most common grammar mistakes made and the current lack of practical knowledge that many students possess. I am continually interacting with new students and learning different ways to teach this material, and I have a strong connection to the faculty of the English Department. This, along with my background in writing, makes me a perfect candidate to begin a grammar workshop based on student need.

Costs and Benefits

*I estimate that "Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing" will cost **\$696.00** for each semester.*

Napkins	\$6.00
Variety of Teas (over 500 bags)	\$50.00
Cookies for Semester	\$86.00
Payroll for Eight Students	\$544.00
Breakout Resources	\$10.00

*Additional startup costs will total **\$217.00** and will include:*

36 Mugs from Dollar Tree	\$36.00
2 Ten Liter Water Boilers from Katom Restaurant Supply	\$181.00

The water boilers would belong to the Language and Literature Department and could be used for other various events. Students would be encouraged to bring their own mugs to cut on costs, so the purchased mugs would be extras. Breakout resources include games or printed materials for the interactive portion of the workshop.

The semesterly costs also include the payment of eight students. One student will commit a total of twelve hours a semester to "Quali-Tea Grammar and Writing" to spearhead the planning sessions and teach the workshop; he or she will also set up and tear down tea and cookies and will prepare any additional elements of each session. This student would be chosen based on merit and enthusiasm. Seven other tutors will accompany the leader to the planning sessions and workshop, totaling eight hours a semester per tutor. All students will be compensated at \$8.00 an hour.

Not only will this be a great opportunity for student leadership, but will also benefit the students who attend the sessions. This extra tutoring will raise essay scores and keep any students from falling behind in their studies. It will also teach them necessary communication and writing skills they might need for the corporate world.

These sessions would be entirely student run; very little professor involvement is needed. After the students have planned out the lesson, they could present it to Dr. Ren who would give helpful suggestions or edits in order to produce the highest quality work.

Conclusion

"Quali-tea grammar and writing" is a low-cost, high-reward solution to the issue of underclassmen falling behind in English. These sessions promote student leadership and students taking responsibility for their academic success. Please contact Lauren Vosler at (740) 249-8122 or lauren.vosler@gmail.com for more information.