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October 5, 2019

Grammar 3340-001

### Grammar Instruction Applied:

#### Identifying and Incorporating Word Classes

#### **Lesson Summary**

Sessions one through three of the nine-session lesson plan “The Magnetism of Language: Parts of Speech, Poetry, and Word Play” ensures students can identify word classes like adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, verbs, conjunctions, interjections, and prepositions in others’ writing and correctly incorporate these word classes into their own writing. Each session is estimated to last fifty minutes. In the first session, students define each of the above word classes by relying on their prior in-class learning (Simon 2012). The teacher then introduces students to the site Wacky Web Tales where students can complete mad libs that solidify their word class knowledge (Simon 2012). Next, in the second session, students determine the word classes in Lewis Carroll’s nonsensical poem, “Jabberwocky.” As students correctly decipher the poem, they learn that there are certain grammar indicators that mark the presence of each word class. As a class, the teacher helps students determine the nonsense words’ word classes, referring to examples from “Jabberwocky” on an overhead projector or digital interface, and helps students form specific rules that state when each word class occurs (Simon 2012). The teacher can supplement this discussion of word classes with an explanation of context clues and explain how pairing knowledge of familiar words’ definitions with unknown words’ placement can help determine the meaning of unknown words (Simon 2012). In session three of the lesson plan, the teacher places the students in groups to reread “Jabberwocky,” and students use context clues and the grammar rules previously determined to discuss the poem’s nonsense words’ word classes and meanings with classmates. Each student group works with only one stanza of “Jabberwocky” and then writes two paragraphs to summarize the action of

“Jabberwocky” and tell what they learned about determining word classes for unfamiliar words from the class discussion and their interaction with “Jabberwocky” (Simon 2012). The teacher gathers these summaries to ensure understanding. Then, for the remainder of class time, students use their cell phones or tablets to access the Word Mover app and begin to construct their original nonsense poems (Simon 2012).

### **Signifiers That This Lesson Is a Grammar Lesson**

This lesson plan focuses on the following word classes: adverbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, verbs, conjunctions, interjections, and prepositions. This focus is evident because students are asked to directly interact with each word class by defining each word class, recognizing indicators of each word class, applying word class knowledge to “Jabberwocky,” and creating poems to solidify understanding of each word class’ function and location in relation to other word classes. Since the teacher discusses word classes’ definitions with the students, encourages them to use this knowledge to determine word classes of unfamiliar words in “Jabberwocky,” instructs students to fill out mad libs that focus on word classes and construct their own poems using this knowledge, each of the three lesson sessions has a focus explicitly clarified to students. Throughout each session, the teacher continues to refer to the specific word classes by name as the students analyze and discuss “Jabberwocky” and create their poems.

Since this lesson plan includes every word class, I will limit the following discussion to the word classes I often see students struggle with in the writing center: verbs, adverbs, and conjunctions. Sullivan offers definitions for, explanations of, and indicators of verbs, adverbs, and conjunctions. Verbs initiate and determines a sentence’s predicate and introduce the subject’s action or state of being within a sentence; they also convey tense and can include helping words like *have* in *have been* to further establish tense (Sullivan 2015). If a word can be tensed, it is a verb. Furthermore, verbs are either linking, transitive, or intransitive. A linking verb includes “be” verbs such as *am* or *were* and verbs of sense like *seem* or *become* to link the following complement back to

the subject (Sullivan 2015). Transitive verbs display action and have a direct object, both an indirect and direct object, or a direct object paired with an object complement. (Sullivan 2015). Sullivan distinguishes intransitive verbs by emphasizing they do not require a complement (2015). Adverbs incorporate multiple word classes as adverbs can modify adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs. When adverbs modify a verb, they elaborate on the time, manner, place, or frequency of the verb in context and can move around in the sentence; these include words that end in -ly like *clearly* in “She spoke *clearly*” or *home* in “She went *home*” (Sullivan 2015). Sullivan adds that adverbs modifying verbs tell how, when, where, or how often the verb does the action (2015). Additionally, adverbs modifying adjectives or other adverbs intensify that adjective or adverb; for example, *very* is the intensifying adverb in “She ran *very* quickly” as it modifies the adverb *quickly* (Sullivan 2015).

Conjunctions can be used to link the above word classes and arrange them into functional phrases. For instance, coordinating conjunctions conjoin sentences or words of the same word class and include words like *and*, *but*, and *so* (Sullivan 2015). For instance, *and* links two nouns in the sentence “The boy *and* girl played a game.” Correlative conjunctions have a different function in that they are pairs or words that can alter a sentence’s meaning; they include word pairs like *neither/nor* and *both/and* in the sentence “The girl was *both* a popular athlete *and* an honor student” (Sullivan 2015).

### **Target Audience Population**

As a campus writing consultant, I could use this lesson to work with Del Mar or TAMUCC college freshman in remedial English courses as they seek homework help at the writing center. This lesson would act as an appropriate refresher when said student is expected to incorporate these word classes correctly within their writing. Since I know this student’s performance is not equivalent to their grade level and is affecting their ability to comprehend what they read and construct organized sentences when writing, I could provide more accessible examples of these word classes functioning in spoken English. We could also discuss, if necessary, when and how to choose a conjunctive word

to introduce and connect ideas in a paper or how to identify and move adverbs to create varied sentence structure.

### **Making It My Own**

I could adapt this lesson to a remedial English student at Del Mar or TAMUCC who is struggling with distinguishing between and applying different word classes. Although I appreciate that this lesson comprehensively exhibits how the different word classes interact with each other, this approach would be unattainable as a consultant and too overwhelming for a writing center client in the typical thirty-minute session. Also, while this lesson plan incorporates fun activities, like magnet poetry, to convey students' concept comprehension, this is not appropriate for my target population.

However, I could appropriately apply this lesson to my target population by condensing the lesson and choosing to focus on one word class or the difference between two similar word classes. For instance, some homework at Del Mar reintroduces conjunctions functioning as transition words to English-speaking college freshman who are struggling to write fluid, cohesive papers. Such assignments may provide two parts of a sentence and expect the student to choose the appropriate conjunction from a list. The lesson plan acts as if students can already recognize and use each word class. However, a student struggling with an assignment that focuses on conjunctions indicates the opposite. So, unlike the lesson plan, I would spend more time on helping the student correctly define what a conjunction is at the beginning of a session. I would also forgo the plan's suggested mad-lib activity in exchange for working with the student to formulate some examples of conjunctions in use. To do this, I would introduce them to the FANBOYS acronym as a remembrance tool as well as correlative conjunction pairs. Next, I would use a paragraph from the student's own writing to discuss their conjunction use or how they could incorporate conjunctions to improve their writing. The student could then begin working on their homework, using their refreshed knowledge of each conjunction's function to choose an appropriate conjunction for each given sentence. Lastly, if time allows, I could solidify their knowledge of conjunctions by showing them "Jabberwocky" and asking

them to find the conjunctions as they explain why each word is a conjunction in that context. I would explain that the student can incorporate this strategy when reading course material as well; for instance, learning to associate the conjunction *and* with elaboration of the previous statement and the conjunctions *but* and *however* with contrasting statements are valuable for reading comprehension and establishing a fluid written argument.

### Reflection

Overall, I have realized that grammar instruction regarding word classes is best served gradually in small portions. Previously, I have used word class terms like *conjunction* and *adverb* freely in consultations with writing center clients. I have assumed that the clients would be familiar enough with the term *conjunction*, for example, to know its purpose and determine when they should consider using them in various places in their paper. However, I now know that determining a student's content terminology knowledge is vital prior to my frequent use of a grammatical term. For instance, a L2 student may not know to apply conjunctive words such as *so* to transition between sentences or ideas. I must be aware of a student's understanding of grammar to ensure that my instruction and advice is helpful and orients the student within their writing and their interaction with their audience.

Additionally, I know writing center clients could easily become overwhelmed during discussions of word class distinctions. Before this course, I had not explicitly heard that there are 'tests' that determine a word's word class. Memorizing these tests has helped me immensely—especially when a word looks like it could be a part of a couple word classes. Also, the tests provide a quick way to introduce clients to word classes and can easily be applied to a 30-minute session in the writing center. If a student has trouble distinguishing between adverbs and verbs, for example, I can relay the word class tests by explaining that a verb can be tensed or emphasizing that an adverb can modify a verb, adjective, or another adverb and is moveable in a sentence (Sullivan 2015).

## References

Simon, C. (2012, October). The Magnetism of Language: Parts of Speech, Poetry, and Word

Play - ReadWriteThink. Retrieved from <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/magnetism-language-parts-speech-1058.html?tab=1#tabs>.

Sullivan, N. M. (2015). *Essential Grammar for Today's Writers, Students, and Teachers*. New

York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.