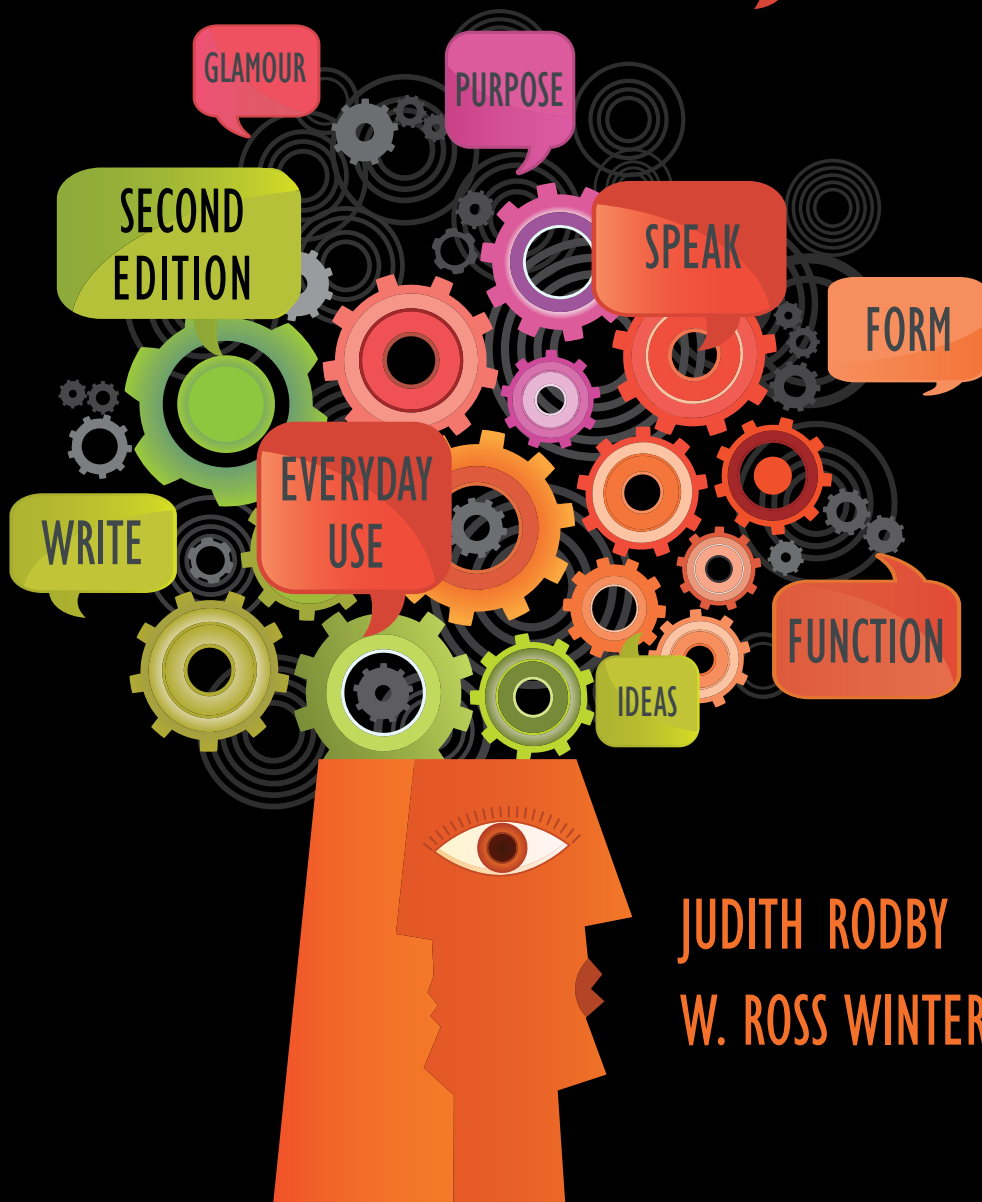


THE USES OF GRAMMAR



JUDITH ROBY
W. ROSS WINTEROWD

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Judith Rodby

W. Ross Winterowd

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Preface

The Uses of Grammar is the result of a painstaking process of field-testing in the classroom, refinement on the basis of student feedback, further testing, and further refinement. The authors' goal was to create the ultimately teachable textbook—without sacrificing intellectual and scholarly integrity.

Forms, Functions, Uses

Three questions constitute the superstructure of this book. What are the *forms* in the grammar of American English? How do those forms *function* in that grammar? And how are those forms *used* in speaking and writing—for various audiences in diverse situations to achieve the desired purposes?

Features

We believe these features will make *The Uses of Grammar* effective and interesting:

- Boxed materials, including “Challenger” and “For Discussion” items, will stretch the students’ understanding of the principles presented in the text and encourage classroom discussion of concepts.
- The examples illustrating principles and the items in the exercises throughout the text reflect real-life language use: quotations from celebrities, periodicals, literature, and a wide array of “everyday” language users.

Preface

- The Instructor’s Manual accompanying *The Uses of Grammar* contains (1) an alternate table of contents, enabling instructors to base their courses on the traditional structure, moving from parts of speech to phrases, clauses, and sentences; (2) answer keys to all of the exercises in the book; and (3) some of the authors’ ideas about teaching grammar.
- A companion website is available online (www.parlorpress.com/grammar). Its base consists of (1) additional exercises keyed to the sections of chapters in the book; (2) answer keys to these exercises; (3) a “chapter” on the system of punctuation; and (4) an extended discussion of English as a second language. The website will grow in response to adopters’ feedback and the need to address issues regarding language and teaching that arise on occasion (e.g., issues about public figures’ use of language).

Language Learning and English as a Second Language

One of the most important uses of grammar is understanding the processes whereby people learn languages. English as a second language (ESL) is an educational, social, and political problem. What are the most effective ways of teaching speakers of other languages to be fluent in English? What are the social consequences, particularly in the United States but also worldwide, of the inability to speak English? Should English be the official language of the United States?

The problems of ESL are implicit subjects throughout the chapters of this book, and Chapter 17 directly addresses ESL, as do materials at the companion website.

The Flexibility of This Book

The structure of *The Uses of Grammar* results from our many years of teaching undergraduate grammar courses, Judith Rodby at California State University–Chico and Ross Winterowd at University of Southern California. The traditional structure of grammar textbooks moves from the smallest unit to the largest: parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.) through phrases and clauses to sentences. There are, of course, good reasons for preferring this structure—not the least of which is what we call “the grammarian’s dilemma” or “the grammatical circle”: you can’t understand the whole without understanding the parts, and you can’t understand the parts without understanding the whole. Our way out of this dilemma is the structure we have chosen for this book, but there is no reason in principle why students and teachers should not begin with an understanding of parts of speech and work upward, toward the structure (the syntax) of sentences. For this reason, we have provided an alternate table of contents in the Instructor’s Manual.

An Attitude Toward Grammar

When mathematicians speak of the *elegance* of their subject, they are thinking about the underlying consistency and neatness, and about the fundamental simplicity of the field: from a handful of basic principles, mathematicians develop theories and equations that attempt to explain the nature of the universe.

Consider the elegance of grammar. The articles you read in the newspaper this morning, the novel by Dickens you enjoyed last week, the speech delivered by your senator on the Fourth of July, the instructions for operating your new computer—underlying these and all other uses of the English language are just eight basic patterns that make up sentences and the structures derived from sentences. One of our main goals in this book is to change attitudes toward grammar. It is not a dull, nit-picking subject; it is as elegant as mathematics or music.

The Ongoing Process

Some wise person said, “No piece of writing is ever finished. It’s just abandoned.” Or, to state the idea as a cliché, there’s always room for improvement. We urge users of this book to contact us through the companion website with suggestions for revision. What should we delete? What should we add? What should we change to make the explanations clearer? What should we rearrange?

Acknowledgments

The suggestions of reviewers were a significant factor in our revisions and refinements of this book, and we express our sincere appreciation to Douglas Biber, Northern Arizona University; Daniel R. Davis, University of Michigan–Dearborn; William Gustafson, Southern Connecticut State University; Charles Hill, University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh; Paul Justice, San Diego State University; William Provost, University of Georgia; William Roberts, University of Massachusetts–Lowell; Lois Spitzer, University of Nebraska; and Beth Rapp Young, University of Central Florida.

We were particularly fortunate in working with the editor of the first edition published by Oxford University Press, Janet M. Beatty, whose commitment to the project was invaluable. Jan is a member of a professional group that is growing appreciably smaller: editors who are book people, committed to the art, ethics, and responsibilities of publishing.

Preface

We are indebted to David Blakesley at Parlor Press, who patiently and efficiently guided us in preparing this second edition for publication. We also want to thank Chelsie Messenger at Clemson University, who designed the interior of this edition, and Terra Williams, who proofed the final manuscript. Finally, we are delighted to have our book appear under the Parlor Press colophon.

Judith Rodby
W. Ross Winterowd