Defining God, Love, and Grammar

by

Jamie Johnson

May 2014

Director of Thesis/Dissertation: Dr. Nicole Caswell

Major Department: English

Based on textual research and general discussion in academia, a field-accepted definition of grammar for the purposes of first-year writing does not yet exist. In order to provide a working definition of grammar, forty-six participants completed a survey about grammar usage in the first year writing classroom. The participants were current first year writing instructors within the UNC school system. The results of the survey indicate that instructors use different definitions of grammar to provide to students; the definitions were mostly vague. Furthermore, it appears that most textbooks used in first-year writing do not provide definitions. This research suggests a definition of grammar that can be incorporated into a pedagogy centered on rhetorical grammar in the first year classroom.

Defining God, Love, and Grammar

A Thesis

Presented To the Faculty of the Department of English

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts

by

Jamie Johnson

May, 2014

DEFINING GOD, LOVE, AND GRAMMAR

by

Jamie Johnson

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF
DISSERTATION/THESIS: _____
                              (Name, Degree Here)

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
                              (Name, Degree Here)

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
                              (Name, Degree Here)

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF (Put Department Name Here): _____
                              (Name, Degree Here)

DEAN OF THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL: _____
                              Paul J. Gemperline, PhD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank those who have helped me through this process and made this study possible. I will forever appreciate your guidance, support, and feedback.

To Dr. Caswell: Thank you for making my graduate school experience exciting and challenging. You have been a wonderful supervisor, professor, and thesis director. Thank you for responding to countless e-mails and reading my drafts and providing feedback so quickly. Thank you for the encouragement you have given me since I started graduate school.

To Dr. Aceto: Thank you for introducing me to linguistics and instructing the most interesting classes I've ever taken. Thank you for providing me with feedback and sources to make this project better. Thank you for your guidance and support since my first day of graduate school.

To Dr. Morse: Thank you for teaching me almost everything I know about teaching first year writing. Thank you for your diligence, valuable insight, and detailed feedback. Thank you for helping me discover my passion in teaching.

To Jesse: Thank you for being the greatest graduate school friend during this process. Thank you for understanding why I had to work on this project over Spring Break. Most importantly, thank you for all the nights I won't remember during this process #BFF.

To my family: Thank you for the roots and wings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction

In a hypothetical first year composition classroom, an instructor assigns her students a rhetorical analysis. She tells them to choose a well-known speech and write a 1400 word paper analyzing the rhetorical features including ethos, pathos, and logos. Her grading rubric includes categories with assigned point values including: introduction, thesis statement, transitions, effective analysis of rhetorical situation, conclusion, and grammar. The grammar section comprises 10% of the rubric. After presenting this rubric to her class, a thoughtful student sometimes asks, "what do you consider grammar? If my thesis statement uses bad grammar, will I get points off for both sections?" The instructor responds, "Just make sure all your sentences are grammatically correct. Use correct punctuation, make sure you don't have any contractions, and none of your sentences end with prepositions." But she fails to provide the student with a clear definition of grammar and/or grammatical, fails to differentiate between writing style and grammar, and fails to explain the relation between grammar and rhetoric. Furthermore, the hypothetical definition provided to the student is only based on the instructor's personal preferences and do not highlight the differences between written grammars and spoken language grammars. Professionals in the rhetoric and composition and linguistics fields understand and relate to this scenario. Those of us teaching first year college composition have either been taught by this instructor in the past, know this instructor, or are this instructor.

Students entering the first year composition classroom represent various writing backgrounds. Some have been taught that writing is a process, similar to Donald Murray's ideology of teaching writing as process and not product and that grammar is a lower-order concern that should come last in the process (1972). On the contrary, many students insist that "good grammar" or "correctness" constitutes a good paper (Shaughnessy 1977). In "Never Say NEVER: Teaching Grammar and Usage" (1996), Peter Brodie provides an anecdote that features an explanation about why students are fixated on grammar, "When I ask parents what they recall from their English classes, they most often mention the nevers: Never split an infinitive, never end a sentence with a preposition, never begin one with *and* or *but*, never use a double negative or the pronouns *you* and *I*" (77). In other words, students have been told by prior English teachers and perhaps their parents that there are rules that govern a "good" paper. These "rules" are not necessarily rules concerning grammar, but rules based on historical teachings associated with power. "An Introduction to Language" (1993) describes the relationship between grammar and power. Fromkin and Rodman assert, "the rise of Capitalism, a new middle class emerged who wanted their children to speak the dialect of the 'upper' classes. This desire led to the publication of many prescriptive grammars" (14). Even though this happened in the mid-1700s (15), the correlation between grammar and power still remains today; the attitudes of the general public are often times in favor of prescriptive grammars, which will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 2.

Perhaps students learn the attitude that "good grammar" is directly correlated with "good writing" from instructors subscribing to a prescriptive approach. Prescriptive grammarians are concerned with how language "should be" according to traditional rules (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993) similar to those that Peter Brodie described. To complicate the problem, arguably few

students understand the differences between applying prescriptive approaches to expectations of academic writing while maintaining awareness of descriptive approaches. Furthermore, students have a difficult time learning writing as a process and not a product; as Shaughnessy suggests in *Errors & Expectations* (1977) students are under the impression that grammar, particularly syntax, is a matter of competence as opposed to style (44). Murray (2006) states that once a composition program teaches writing as a process a curriculum can be designed that works. Murray's approach to teaching writing as a process and not a product paired with Shaughnessy illuminating the issue of "correctness" creates a pathway to designing a curriculum in first year writing that incorporates a balance between grammar and rhetoric within this process.

First year composition instructors can assist their students with creating a balance between grammar and rhetoric in a number of ways. First of all, instructors need to define grammar to their students so the definition reflects both the instructor's expectations as well as the expectations of the academy. Furthermore, once instructors define grammar, perhaps instructors should explain basic linguistic concepts to their students in terms of prescriptive and descriptive approaches as well as basic differences between writing and speaking in any given language; this information is not only relevant to first year writing, but Shaughnessy asserts "linguistic data are interesting to students" (127). It is important for students to understand some history behind grammar in first year writing (and to become aware that there are differences between writing grammars and speaking grammars) in order for them to develop context. Next, their teachings within first year writing should balance grammar and rhetoric; perhaps by incorporating rhetorical grammar into the curriculum.

Background

The institutions comprising the UNC school system offer different first year writing

program sequences. At East Carolina University (ECU), the first year writing program sequence[1]

is currently situated by offering *Foundations of College Writing* typically taken in the fall, then

Composition the next semester for a total of two semesters and six credit hours of first year

writing. The courses are taught by tenured professors, tenure-track faculty, fixed-term faculty

holding graduate degrees, and graduate students. As a graduate student, I have observed many

teaching pedagogies and even have the opportunity to explore my own teaching pedagogy while

instructing first year writing. Prior to teaching, I worked as a consultant at ECU's *First Year*

Writing Studio (FYWS), tutoring students in their first year composition courses. As a consultant,

I learned about higher order concerns (HOC) and lower order concerns (LOC) in writing. For

example, organization, thesis statements, and transitions would all qualify as HOCs while

grammar and mechanics would qualify as LOCs. In "Teaching about writing, right

misconceptions: (Re)envisioning 'first-year composition' as 'introduction to writing studies,"

Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle identify HOCs, such as issues in literacy and rhetoric, as

the foundation of college writing and claim that colleges need to implement these skills into their

writing studies courses to better serve their students. However, many ECU students are

unfamiliar with HOCs versus LOCs and utilize the *FYWS* for help with grammar (an LOC).

Some students are under the impression that if their papers incorporated "good grammar" they

would receive a high grade on their assignment. A few students even brought in rubrics from

their instructors showcasing that "grammar" was worth as much as 20% of the assignment grade.

However, some instructors did not have a grammar section on their rubric at all. This was the

---

[1] The curriculum will change in Fall 2014; ECU will no longer have "first year writing" and will instead require two courses over two years.

point when I was introduced to the complicated issue of defining what grammar is for the purposes of first year writing.

My enrollment in linguistic courses gave me further insight into the grammar issues and debates. I learned about descriptive and prescriptive approaches, and that some people mistakenly use "grammar" and "stylistic choices" interchangeably. For example, I learned a sentence with a contraction or ending with a preposition is only "grammatically incorrect" according to the prescriptive preferences of the instructor in question. Likewise, I learned that a written sentence that adheres to regular and common patterns in literate society is grammatically correct according to a descriptive grammarian. For example, if I write that "I ain't got no money," it would not be considered grammatically incorrect in terms of speaking. Anyone reading it would understand that it means I am lacking funds. Pairing my linguistic knowledge with my observations in the *FYWS* via rubrics, I learned that different instructors appeared to have different approaches with teaching writing, especially concerning their linguistic pedagogies. Some subscribed to more prescriptive approaches, while others seemingly subscribed to descriptive approaches. Others seemed to incorporate both approaches; rubrics suggested differences between grammar and clarity. My curiosity led to my pilot study that took place in a research design course.

Pilot Study: Introduction and Participants

My pilot study aimed to answer the question of how an instructor's educational background informs his/her linguistic pedagogical choice when teaching grammar in *Foundations of College Writing* and/or *Composition* (English 1100 and 1200, respectively) at ECU. I chose to survey only instructors that were fixed-term faculty members. I desired a smaller sample size so I did not include professors, graduate students, or any other group that

might teach first year composition. This selection meant that there were only 37 eligible participants as opposed to closer to 100. Knowing that I would likely not get 37 responses, analyzing my results

thoroughly seemed more feasible. Furthermore, the fixed-term faculty members at ECU are typically the instructors who teach English 1100 and 1200. Although some fixed-term faculty members may hold PhD degrees or MFA degrees, most hold master's degrees from ECU's Department of English,. I chose not to survey graduate students teaching first year composition in order to avoid an inexperience bias; most graduate students do not have much experience in teaching first year composition.

Pilot Study: Methods and Design and Hypotheses

My pilot study's methodological choices were inspired by Pamela Takayoshi, Elizabeth Tomlinson, and Jennifer Castillo's "The Construction of Research Problems and Methods." According to these researchers, research should be done "as a recognizable process [including] articulating a research question, planning research methods, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing up findings" (97). With that said, I chose to collect data via survey after posing a research question. A survey provides results that can be coded in a more time-efficient manner, at least for my research purposes.

Appendix A outlines the survey questions. I asked participants to provide answers centered on where they received their degrees and their concentrations. I also asked how many years they had been teaching and if they had ever taken a linguistics course. Additionally, I inquired how familiar participants were with the phrases "descriptive approach" and "prescriptive approach." Participants were also asked to identify how much time they spent on grammar over the course of a semester and how much they weighed grammar when assessing

student work. I hypothesized that instructors that had received degrees in areas such as linguistics and rhetoric and composition would have been more likely to have taken linguistics courses, would have been more familiar with the approaches and would focus on other HOCs of writing. Likewise, I hypothesized that instructors with backgrounds in literature and creative writing would be more likely to not have taken any linguistics courses, would be less informed with the approaches, and would weigh grammar more heavily when assessing student work. The goal of this research was to learn more and set the framework for a larger study.

Pilot Study: Results and Implications

Out of 37 people the survey was sent to, 12 of them participated giving me a 32.4% response rate. The survey was anonymous so I coded responses with letters of the alphabet (A-L) starting with my first response. All participants held master's degrees in English. participants concentrated in technical and professional communication, two participants concentrated in linguistics, one participant concentrated in English studies, one participant concentrated in rhetoric and composition, two participants concentrated in creative writing, and four participants concentrated in literature. There was not a definitive correlation between concentrations and grammar approaches, but there was a suggested correlation between how long an instructor had been teaching with how they approached grammar in first year writing. Participants teaching for longer periods of time (10+ years) placed a greater emphasis on grammar when assessing assignments than participants teaching for shorter periods of time (less than two years). The following chart provides a sample of survey results; out of twelve participants, three had been teaching for more than ten years. All three of those participants answered "20% or less" to the question "On average, how much class time do you spend teaching grammar in your English 1100 or 1200 courses?" On the other hand, three participants responded that they had been

7

teaching for less than two years. All three participants responded with "5% or less" to the same question.

Table 1.1

Subject	Years	Concentration	Grammar
A	0-2 years	TPC	5% or less
D	3-6 years	Linguistics	5% or less
H	0-2 years	Literature	5% or less
J	0-2 years	Linguistics	5% or less
C	3-6 years	English Studies	10% or less
G	3-6 years	TPC	10% or less
K	7-10 years	Rhetoric and Composition	10% or less
E	3-6 years	Literature	15% or less
L	3-6 years	Creative Writing	15% or less
B	10+ years	Literature	20% or less
F	10+ years	Literature	20% or less
I	10+ years	Creative Writing	20% or less

After analyzing my results, I realized that while my study was interesting, it would not directly

benefit first year composition instructors or their students. It suggested that perhaps an

instructor's time spent teaching affects their grammar approach, but it did not explain how it can

help current and future instructors assist first year composition students with defining grammar,

since there does not appear to be a field accepted definition for the purposes of first year writing.

My interest shifted to how instructors and the textbooks instructors use are defining grammar and

how it is currently incorporated into their classroom as opposed to what informs their teachings.

Furthermore, a major limitation of the study was many of the multiple choice options given to

participants were vague. Regarding the earlier question, technically if a participant only spent

5% of time teaching grammar, responding with "20% or less" would be just as accurate as "5%

of less." The wording of answer choices was taken into account with the new study.

Statement of Problem

As a graduate teaching assistant, I am provided essentially with a "course in a box." I am

given a standard syllabus for *Foundations of College Writing* and *Composition* (two separate

courses, but both within the current first year writing sequence) with three or four required major

assignments along with a textbook for each course and a copy of example assignments written by

previous students. I am provided with additional resources such as ideas for in-class activities to

accomplish course objectives. But I am not required to define grammar or to teach grammar in

any specific way, even though one course objective for *Foundations of College Writing* is:

"express your ideas with clarity and with effective syntax and punctuation" (2013). The other

course objectives include, but are not limited to: "establishing work plans and timelines,

discovering significant questions to explore and address via writing, practicing drafting and

revising, and increasing awareness of organizational strategies" (2013). I am given freedom to

construct my own lesson plans and encouraged to seek support from experienced Ph.D. students and other English department faculty. I have been teaching for less than a year, so I take full advantage of reaching out for ideas and advice. From my personal observations, whether directly in a classroom or simply by having conversations, I have concluded that instructors vary in their personal beliefs and pedagogies when teaching first year composition. But there is a common thread: every instructor has a strong desire to help their students become better writers. However, instructors have different beliefs of how to successfully teach writing, and more notably, instructors have different beliefs about what qualifies as "good writing." Even scholars constantly debate what should be considered "good writing." According to Connors in *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory & Pedagogy* (1997), composition instructors rely too heavily on grammar and fail to strike a balance between grammar and rhetoric when teaching, which is part of the problem.

The governing problem is that there does not appear to be a field-accepted, overarching definition of grammar. Based on my short personal experiences teaching first year composition and my experiences in the *FYWS*, I assume instructors leave the definition of grammar vague and hazy. Furthermore, many textbooks used in first year writing do not offer clear definitions of grammar to students. As described in the hypothetical scenario at the beginning of the chapter, many students are left feeling conflicted and confused about how grammar will be assessed in their writing since it is possible that their instructors do not define it.

Definitions

The following definitions serve as a starting point for my exploration into how instructors and scholars suggest they should fit into a composition classroom. As discussed later in the chapter, a goal of this research is to suggest an overarching definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing. Within linguistics, these are commonly accepted definitions. The definitions alone also speak volumes about the need for a clear definition of what grammar is. While these terms are commonly defined in linguistics, definitions appear to be limited in the field of rhetoric and composition.

Descriptive approach (in linguistics): objectively analyzing and describing how language is spoken or written and with specific features in one variety but perhaps not in another.

Prescriptive approach (in linguistics): analyzing a language based on traditional beliefs on how it should be written alone based on empirical errors; only one dialect is "correct" and language shouldn't change.

Grammar: the sounds and sound patterns, the basic units of meaning, such as words, and the rules to combine them to form new sentences (Fromkin and Rodman 13).

Teaching grammar: used to learn another language or dialect (Fromkin and Rodman 16).

Rhetoric: according to Aristotle, achieving a mean between ordinary speech and poetic language and composing in a natural rather than artificial way (Butler 14).

Research Questions

The central question for this study is how can first year writing instructors effectively define grammar to their students? The four sub-questions include: (1) how are first year writing instructors currently defining grammar to their students? (2) if instructors are using textbooks, do the textbooks define grammar? If so, how is grammar defined? (4) how can instructors incorporate a proposed overarching definition of grammar for first year writing into a curriculum that favors rhetorical grammar?

Research Objectives

The objectives on researching notions of grammaticality in the first year writing classroom include:

- to connect the history of grammar with how it relates to the teachings of composition presently to provide the study with context of how grammar is relevant today

- to identify how first year writing instructors are defining grammar to their students

- to explore if textbooks used by first year composition instructors define grammar and critique those definitions

- to provide instructors with a suggested overarching definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing that can be incorporated into a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar

New Study

In order to meet my research objectives and answer my research questions, I surveyed

instructors teaching first year college composition in the UNC school system, which includes 17

schools. The survey inquired about the first year composition sequence, if the instructor uses a

textbook, and how the instructor defines grammar (if at all). The survey also asked instructors to

identify how much time in the semester they spend teaching grammar. Unlike the pilot study, the

participants will not be limited to just fixed-term faculty; participants will include all non-

tenured tract instructors. In Chapter 3 (Methods), I will detail the study including the methods,

participants, survey questions, and analysis tools.

Limitations

There are several limitations with this study. It is difficult to identify a specific

population of participants since institutions have different hiring requirements. What is defined

as "fixed-term faculty" at ECU might be different at another UNC school. Furthermore, different

institutions serve different needs and have various populations of students that would affect

survey results. Some instructors might also teach at multiple institutions. For example, an

instructor teaching at North Carolina State University might also teach at Wake Technical

Community College which could make a difference with how she answers questions.

Additionally, the survey will only represent results from only non-tenure track instructors

from the UNC school system. Participants are not required to respond and are not required to

answer all questions, so responses could be limited. The results depend on participants devoting

time to thoroughly answer the questions with honesty. Furthermore, due to time constraints for

analysis, participants will not always have the opportunity to answer open-ended questions; they must choose to either pick an option or not answer the question.

Conclusions

The following chapters aim to answer my research questions about defining grammar to first year writing students. My literature review (chapter 2) explains the history of grammar touching on its origins and how it has been taught in the history of the United States. The literature review synthesizes what scholars have to say about different grammar approaches, including descriptive and prescriptive approaches, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in such ways in order to establish that subscribing to a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar would be beneficial in regards to incorporating a proposed overarching definition of grammar into a first year writing curriculum. The literature review also confirms that the teachings between grammar and rhetoric are unbalanced due to the lack of relationship between the two. Finally, chapter 2 highlights how scholars believe grammar should be approached in the immediate future. Chapter 3, methodology, explores the limitations in depth and provides information about the participants and procedures used for this study. Chapter 4 analyzes the results from the survey, and Chapter 5 explains how the results paired with textual research form a definition for grammar and a suggestion, influenced by the work of Laura Micciche, for how to incorporate the definition into the teachings of rhetorical grammar.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The following chapter addresses a general language background according to Noam Chomsky as well as a brief history of grammar in relation to its place in the first year composition classroom from the origins of the word "grammar" to a paradigm shift. Chapter 2 provides the framework to explain the relation between grammar and rhetoric both past and presently in the first year composition classroom suggesting that an effective balance is complicated in the research. Furthermore, this chapter provides insight into why instructors choose to approach grammar from prescriptive and descriptive backgrounds highlighting instructors' personal experiences as well as public and academic attitudes. The descriptive and prescriptive approaches are important to understand when proposing a definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing. This chapter confirms that there does not appear to be an overarching, field accepted definition of "grammar" for first year writing and suggests that instructors often have a difficult time establishing a balance between teaching grammar and rhetoric. The literature within the chapter begins to help answer the central research questions presented in chapter 1: How can first year writing instructors effectively define grammar to their students? The literature review also suggests that perhaps first year writing instructors should subscribe to a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar in order to achieve a balance.

Language Background

Noam Chomsky, linguist and Professor Emeritus at MIT, combines two of his most well-known works "Language and Responsibility" and "Reflections on Language" into *On Language* in 2007. Chomsky offers general backgrounds on American language and ideas that are important to consider when establishing a definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing. In "Language and Responsibility" Chomsky explains that "perhaps we have a sort of universal grammar of possible forms of social interaction, and this is the system which helps us to organize intuitively our imperfect perceptions of social reality" (69). He elaborates on this concept later musing "everything in language must contribute to communication, to a better communication, and inversely, nothing is linguistic which does not contribute to communication" (85). It is important to understand that many writing conceptions are based on these "imperfect perceptions" related to communication that Chomsky explains. In other words, much of writing is based on past and present attitudes.

With that said, Chomsky provides an understanding to explain why it's important to teach writing in the first place; we need it in order to communicate effectively. Chomsky further clarifies the many ways language is used in addition to transmitting information: to establish relationships among people, to express or clarify thoughts, for play, for creative mental activity, and to gain understanding (88). Writing is one of the ways we establish relationships, express ourselves, and partake in creative activities. It is different from spoken communication because most of the world's languages are not written.

Chomsky indicates that attitude toward language contributes to grammar usage, which is a topic that I will investigate more thoroughly later in this chapter. Chomsky notes that "grammatical rules must take into account personal beliefs" (189) and that question of language

is basically question of power (191). This is certainly not limited to just the United States either. Chomsky provides an example that nobody spoke the classical Arabic used in writing in the schools; but the so-called spoken dialects were considered inferior (191). A central problem in writing, at least in the past, is that only those with extensive financial resources had access to education. In other words, the upper class was exposed to languages associated with literacy that might not have necessarily been spoken natively by many students. Those who were unfamiliar with these languages (usually in the working class) were looked down upon and seen as inferior to the upper class. Chomsky's notions directly relate to the history of grammar and how it affects modern teachings. Even in the United States, writing boils down to an issue of power. Often times, students are discouraged to use their own language and to instead use "proper grammar" because future employers will likely have more respect for someone who writes in Standard English as opposed to another language.

History of Grammar Etymology and Pedagogy

The word "grammar" originated from the Greek letter, "gramma" which came from "graphein" (draw or write). Grammata is the plural form, which refers to "the rudiments of learning" (Dykema 1993). The original word has such a broad meaning; it doesn't refer to syntax or mechanics like instructors may teach students today. Western grammar begins with the ancient Greeks. In fact, the direct source of the most commonly used grammatical terms comes from Dionsysius Thrax's "Techne Grammatike," a classical grammar handbook (Dykema, 24). Even from Thrax's handbook, it is difficult to extract a definition of "grammar" due to the source's unavailability. Considering the handbook was "published" well before the year 90 BC, a definition likely would not even be relevant at this point. However, many scholars have attempted to explain a history of grammar since then.

Connors (1979) explains the history specifically of English grammar in the United States. He begins his article by claiming that grammar is a prejudice, and "pinched-faced champions of 'literacy' forced gobs of questionable prescription down adolescent throats" (3). In that regard, Connors confirms Chomsky's earlier notion about attitudes of power toward grammar. He pinpoints the American Revolution (around 1775) as a time when Latin grammar was replaced with English grammar in schools, for reasons of pride or possibly common sense because no one spoke Latin natively. Elementary schools became known as "grammar schools." From about 1775-1850, grammar was not a creative field related to rhetoric; it was a mental discipline that involved memorizing terms and had nothing to do with writing essays (4).

In the 1880s, many institutions dropped grammar altogether from instruction. They claimed it was hateful to students and didn't help them speak or write better (Connors 5). Around this time, a new grammar pedagogy was born. Rather than learning grammar based on memorization, teachers began to show students how to use grammar in sentences (6). Many institutions in the United States instructed students to write and then evaluate their own sentences. Connors states that the relation between grammar and rhetoric was unknown before 1870 (7) and is still unknown in terms of my research. Those that taught formal grammar were placed under attack by others that said it was "sterile and impractical" (9). But at the same time, US culture gained awareness of status and professional worth. Particularly after the Civil War, Standard Written American English developed a new importance (10).

George Krapp's *Modern English* (1909) provided audiences with a clear differentiation between "standard English taught by rigid prescriptive grammarians" and good English. Krapp establishes the difference is that Standard English is based on convention, whereas good English is based on invention (14). Shortly after Krapp's publication, the NCTE was formed two years

later in 1911. The most active members were against prescriptive grammarians and by 1920, became known as "anti-prescriptivists" who assembled studies to disprove the usefulness of traditional grammar (15).

By the 1930s, the public attitude toward grammar teachings in the classroom was mixed. Many scholars set out to answer: what should grammar be and how can it help students write better? Charles Fries attempted to answer this question in 1952 with the publication of "The Structure of American English." He suggested a descriptive, non-normative approach but claimed most teachers were too lazy to learn it (18). At the time of Connors' publication in the late 1970s, he suggests traditional grammar is attempting a comeback (Connors 22).

Maxine Hairston's "The winds of change: Thomas Kuhn and the revolution in the teaching of writing" (1982) further explains this "comeback" with a paradigm shift where she compared Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" to the process of writing. She suggests that "breakdowns occur when old methods won't solve new problems and that we are at a paradigm shift in writing" (77). Hairston claims that "most of the new generation of scholars working in the field will adopt to the [new paradigm shift], and the older practitioners will gradually come around to it" (77). Furthermore, she states "those who cling to the old paradigm lose their influence in the field because the leaders in the profession simply ignore their work. When that happens, the paradigm shift is complete" (78). This directly relates to instructors teaching first year composition because "writing is being taught according to the traditional paradigm, just as they were untrained teaching assistants ten or twenty or forty years ago" (79). It can be concluded that since Hairston's article was published in 1982, perhaps we are at the beginning of a new paradigm shift. Part of that shift should ideally attempt to define grammar for the purposes of first year writing, since a field-accepted definition has yet to be achieved.

Donald Murray published an article that seems to align with the paradigm shift titled

"Teach Writing as Process not Product" (1973). Murray lists several implications of teaching the

process that imply instructors should de-emphasize grammar (even though it has yet to be

defined) within the classroom most notably in the third implication, "the student uses his own

language – we teach English to our students as if it were a foreign language. Actually, most of

our students have learned a great deal of language before they come to us" (5), the sixth

implication – "Mechanics come last – It is important to the writer … that nothing get between

him and his reader" (5) and in the tenth implication "there are no rules, no absolutes, just

alternatives" (5). Although Murray doesn't explicitly state that we should de-emphasize grammar

in the first year writing classroom, he certainly implies it. Back in the 1970s, this was relevant

especially since teaching writing as a process had not yet been fully established. But now that

many institutions subscribe to teaching writing as process, perhaps grammar should actually be

emphasized by simply defining it for the purposes of first year writing.

Present Usage

Dykema (1993) explains four distinguishable senses of grammar's present usage which

gives this study some context including: 1) complete structural patterns of a language are learned

unconsciously as a child acquires her native language(s). 2) Descriptive grammar is an attempt to

describe objectively and systematically this fundamental structure. 3) There is a partial

description of the language based on purist and historically misinformed pedagogical objectives

in writing called prescriptive grammar and 4) there is a conviction held by many people that

there is an authoritative book called "Grammar" and the conscientious memorization of which

will eliminate all difficulties from their use of language (23). Instructors and students should

understand that there are differences between spoken native language grammar, which is learned

without instruction, and written standard grammar, which is taught with instruction and is no one's native way of speaking.

Peter Trudgill offers some insight into present grammar usage in "Standard English: what it isn't" stating it is not a language, an accent, a style, or a register (122). It is also not a set of prescriptive rules (125). It is, however, a dialect that does not have an associated accent; it is purely a social dialect, as opposed to a geographical dialect (123). Trudgill explains there should not be a set of prescriptive rules because there are many idiosyncrasies in the English language. Some include: it fails to distinguish between the forms of the auxiliary verb "do" and its main verb forms, it has an unusual and irregular present tense verb morphology, it lacks multiple negation, it has an irregular formation of reflexive pronouns, and it fails to distinguish between second-person singular and second-person plural pronouns, having "you" in both cases (125). Although both Dykema's and Trudgill's arguments provide explanations of grammar's present usage and what it isn't, both fail to address a clear definition of what grammar specifically is.

Language Attitude and Identity

Arguments about what grammar is and how it relates to the teachings of first year composition seem to have a direct correlation with language attitude, just as Chomsky suggests. Perhaps attitude toward language should be considered when developing an overarching definition of "grammar." James Milroy's "The consequences of standardisation in descriptive linguistics" is not specific to the United States (revealed by the title) but is certainly relevant to this study in regards to a chief reason why instructors follow a prescriptive approach: public attitude. Milroy frames his notions by explaining that languages such as Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, French and Spanish are thought to have superior grammars (15) but there is not any empirical reason behind this. In fact, Milroy inserts "languages are not in themselves moral objects" (16).

21

Milroy then explicitly states the consequences of standardization stating that the interaction between scholarly linguistic attitudes to language and the publicly expressed attitudes of non-linguists and critics of linguists would be problematic.

Milroy explains that the general public has very strong attitudes toward linguistic "correctness" and denounce trivial mistakes in usage. However, a "more enlightened group" of scholars (18) have done research and promotes that it is wrong to discriminate on language usage. In fact, it is just as frowned upon to discriminate on language usage just as it is to discriminate upon race and skin color (19). Milroy makes excellent points and highlights one of the concerns of ignoring descriptive approaches when teaching writing; although there is a small group of informed individuals about language prejudice, the general public tends to be uninformed and uneducated about this concept.

Milroy argues that perhaps those that have a prejudice towards language have good intentions; they are defending language and culture. Perhaps this is disguised nationalism. However, they are authoritarian about it and condemn non-native speakers. This is the cause of a current argument that the prescriptive teaching of Standard English will be of benefit to the working classes (21) because the general misinformed public tends to accept the authority of many prescriptive pronouncements (22).

Hartley and Preston examined attitudes in "The names of US language: valley girl, cowboy, yankee, normal, nasal, and ignorant" (1999). As the title suggests, the general public were asked to describe certain dialects in the United States. There appears to be a general belief that southern vowels (even if used by both educated and uneducated people) are not standard, among other concepts (208). Likewise, if people write according to how they speak in the South, the general public attitude would be that it is not "correct" as according to prescriptive standards.

Avoiding Prescriptivism in a Definition of Grammar

Danielewicz and Chafe (1985) assert a viewpoint that highly discourages instructors from strictly enforcing traditional rules of grammar in "How 'normal' speaking leads to 'erroneous' punctuation." They examined the writings of freshman college students and found that the way inexperienced writers use punctuation often produces patterns found in spoken English (254) but they assert that this is not a problem by any means, "teachers need to be aware that inexperienced writers may actually be doing a good job of presenting the knowledge they have of speaking" (255). But the researchers are aware of the expectations of the academy too and provide a solution to fixing specifically punctuation errors in grammar, "if their nonstandard punctuation can be seen as inappropriate extensions of spoken language into a different medium, not as random errors, then teachers can concentrate on pointing out specific ways in which the requirements of writing differ from those of speaking" (255). The researchers conclude that "perhaps punctuating as one speaks can in some cases lead to a greater readability and greater impact" (256), which is in keeping with the goals of writing to begin with. Based on Danielewicz and Chafe's article, perhaps it can be assumed that punctuation might be part of grammar's definition and may be one of the words participants use to define grammar in the survey presented in Chapter 3.

Donald Murray (1993) explains why grammar should not be of great importance in the first year writing classroom in "Assumptions." Murray asserts that writing is thinking, and is one of the most disciplined ways of making meaning (336) and that we write to "explore our world with language" (337). Murray clarifies that traditionally, teaching writing "first emphasizes vocabulary, spelling, usage, and mechanics" and does not address organization, style, and appeals to the audience until later in the process. He notes that this does not work for most

students and that nontraditional teaching, which teaches the reverse process, is a more effective means for students to find their own voices (337). But Murray maintains that there is no "one way" which is important to remember for developing any curriculum pedagogy. What works for one student may not work for all of them. It is certainly an implication to explore in Chapter 5.

Lois Rosen (1993) informs that correcting grammar in student writing simply does not work in "Developing Correctness in Student Writing." She explains that traditionally, teachers try to get rid of errors in one of two ways (or both): by drilling grammar exercises, and/or pointing out all errors when marking student papers (371). Rosen summarizes a 1977 study where 66% of corrections made to student papers were specifically on mechanics and usage (372). A 1983 study concluded that one teacher marked 100% of errors simply because the "parents liked it" (373). Rosen poses the question: how does a teacher focus on content in student writing and still ensure that progress is also being made toward mastery of the mechanical and grammatical structure of written English? (373). Rosen's methods included letting students write and then providing them with the opportunity to experiment with all types of discourse (i.e. provide them with adequate time for all stages of the writing process). Rosen then used workshops via modeling, mini conferences, and peer reviewing. If students struggled with a specific element of grammar that inhibited clarity within their writing, a mini-lesson was taught – in no more than 10 minutes (375). Rosen suggests in her conclusions that instructors should "abandon the error-hunt" and publish student writing in order to give them a purpose (375). Rosen's idea of mini lessons in grammar might be a great addition to activities to complete in a first year writing classroom once a definition of grammar has been established.

Connors (1997) highlights the importance of a balance between rhetoric and mechanics (slightly favoring rhetoric) in "Composition-Rhetoric, Grammar, and Mechanical Correctness."

He frames his article mentioning that "a required course in English composition is just an American institution … more than any other subject, composition is based on perceived social and cultural needs" (112) and furthermore, "grammar as a discipline has little to do with composition" (116). Connors also suggests that besides instructors leaning too much on grammar lessons, it's also an issue that traditionally, English composition courses are taught in large setting lecture halls (140).

As of 1997 when this article was published, Connors argues that administrators need to be convinced that 25 students in one classroom is just too many and instructors should not be teaching as many as four courses in composition (170) and there should be a balance between rhetoric and mechanics (172). In 2014, it is common for a composition classroom at East Carolina University to have 25 students, and there are certainly fixed-term faculty members who teach at least four sections.

Arguments Asserting a Prescriptive Approach

David Mulroy's *The War Against Grammar* claims that the phenomena of not teaching grammar is ridiculous with reasoning such as "it is hard to give any kind of language instruction to students who lack the conceptual framework provided by the terms of basic grammar" (3) or if the teacher is confused as to what grammar is. Furthermore, Mulroy claims that learning grammar helps to improve adult literacy, SAT scores, and foreign language study (11). He further clarifies "the neglect of grammar has had other, obviously adverse effects, starting in academia but extending beyond its borders" (14).

Constance Weaver provides several reasons why traditional grammar has a significant place in the first year writing classroom. She explains that language is a human achievement that deserves to be studied (3) but fails to provide detailed reasons of why. She also points out that

25

teaching grammar helps students study something as a scientist does, it helps with clear and reflective thinking, and it aids in foreign language mastery, and offers students a chance to master socially prestigious conventions of spoken and written usage (3). Most markedly, Weaver suggests that grammar helps students use the language better – they become more effective listeners, speakers, readers and writers (4). Weaver is well aware of the counterarguments too. She explains why some instructors still teach grammar in a writing classroom. First of all, it is simply tradition. Instructors remember learning grammar in their own writing courses in college and pass it along to students. Weaver also notes that writers must learn "basic" skills (4).

Claywell (1995) has a similar argument in "Reasserting Grammar's Position in the Trivium in American College Composition." Claywell states that grammar is no longer an art according to theorists and that college composition is focused on rhetoric and logic for the most part (43). But he asserts that composition instructors are "in danger of repeating past mistakes" and says that we might not be doing our students a favor by "disassociating grammatical concerns from the instruction of writing" (44). Claywell is concerned that ignoring grammar will result in "the denial of some pressuring demands within the rhetorical situation of the classroom" (51). He also claims that the "systems underlying academic and business writing need to be available to and understood by the students … by modeling or pointing out options in the student writing" (51). Furthermore, Claywell argues that there are students that want grammar in the composition classroom; apparently, they believe it will benefit them in the "real world" (52). Claywell also states that to avoid grammar is a bias and concludes that perhaps while grammar is no longer to be an academic subject, it should be a tool for improvement (52).

Composition Instructors

"Grammar instruction: what teachers say" (Petruzzella 1996) and "Survey finds split between what college instructors and high-school teachers value in student writing" (Rooney 2003) serve to provide some insight into what first year writing instructors are currently arguing in regards to grammar in composition. In the latter article, Rooney describes a survey she gave to high school writing teachers and college instructors. Her conclusion was surprising as "while college instructors ranked 'grammar and usage' as a student's most important writing skill, high-school teachers ranked this skill the least important, behind sentence structure, writing-strategy organization, punctuation, and style." The problem with this is that it seems that punctuation and sentence structure should be a part of grammar, not separate from it. The results fail to note exactly how the research defined grammar and usage.

Petruzzela's study seems to have fewer gaps. She claims "there are sometimes significant differences between what colleges teach prospective teachers in education courses and what practicing teachers in schools actually do. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of grammar instruction" (68). It is unclear as to whether the education courses are specific to composition, but the findings are relatable. An important piece of Petruzzela's study that Rooney's article fails to mention is how grammar is defined. Petruzzela's says "I concluded that researchers and classroom teachers often have different definitions of grammar or grammar instruction. When a study concludes that 'formal grammar instruction' has not shown measureable improvement in students' writing, it is often not clear exactly what 'formal grammar instruction' means, but it usually seems to refer to isolated memorization of rules and terminology and pages of skill and drill practice" (69). Since both of these articles were published at least a decade ago, further research on composition instructors is vital. Even more

notably, although Petruzzela's research asserts "different definitions of grammar" (69), grammar is never actually defined.

Mullin's article "The use of grammar texts: A call for pedagogical inquiry" (1995) provides important information about instructors' insight. Mullin frames his study with the knowledge that students think "good grammar" equals "good papers." After his time in the writing center, Mullins aimed to answer the question: How does grammar contribute or detract from ability to complete a writing task? Mullin chose to use a survey to answer his question (103).

Mullins 'results from 150 instructors at 13 different institutions suggested that most instructors agreed with the notion that "grammar is a distraction from the teaching of writing" (106). The instructors also generally agreed that grammar concerns should only be addressed after the first major graded assignment and furthermore, addressed from the perspective of the reader (106). Many instructors claimed they gave their students handbooks to use themselves because there simply wasn't enough time to teach it (106). Mullins also suggests that perhaps students and instructors look at grammar first because it's the easiest thing to fix (109). Mullins' study may have been very effective if he had provided a definition of grammar. A common thread throughout this research is that the word "grammar" remains unclear and vague.

Shuman in "Grammar for writers: how much is enough" (1995) also has an answer as to why instructors look to grammar, "English teachers feel pressure from the public to focus on grammar … efforts are applauded because it's suggested that teachers are maintaining high academic standards" (113). Shuman's argument is valid and important to consider when striking that balance between the descriptivism and what the academy expects in writing but still fails to provide a definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing.

28

Conclusion

The research indicates that although there are many ideas of how grammar should be approached when teaching writing, there is not a consistent definition of grammar for the purposes of teaching first year writing. It appears that studies that surveyed instructors about grammar in the composition classroom suggest that instructors are generally aware of different approaches (descriptive and prescriptive), but do not seem to agree on definitions of grammar and incorporating the definition into classroom practices; however, there are valid ideas that should fit into a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar.

The scholarly information discussed in this chapter was incorporated into devising survey questions which are explained in the following chapter, Methods. The survey results provided in Chapter 4 were analyzed using tools similar to Petruzzella (1996) and Mullin (1995), as discussed earlier in the literature review. Furthermore, the information provided in this chapter about different approaches to grammar and attitudes appear in Chapter 5, Discussion, which attempts to answer the research questions proposed in Chapter 1 using the survey results and scholarly feedback.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Introduction

In the past two chapters, I have suggested that an overarching definition of grammar is almost non-existent in the first year writing classroom. Scholarly research (Claywell, 1995) indicates that grammar teachings in the first year writing classroom are problematic; instructors face uncertainty on asserting grammar's place in first year writing and even debate if it belongs in the classroom. This chapter explains the methodological approach taken to research the current teachings of grammar in the first year writing classroom in order to suggest an overarching definition of "grammar." Once a definition is established based on current teachings and scholars' opinions it can be incorporated into a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar.

Furthermore, this chapter reviews the research objectives and questions used to create a survey targeting first year composition instructors teaching first year writing within the University of North Carolina (UNC) school system. This chapter details the IRB process, Qualtrics, and provides a list of the survey questions paired with methodological choices. This chapter also discusses limitations and an explanation of data analysis that will appear in greater detail in Chapter 4, Analysis.

Research Questions

The central question for this study is how can first year writing instructors effectively define grammar to their students? The four sub-questions include: (1) how are first year writing instructors currently defining grammar to their students? (2) if instructors are using textbooks, do the textbooks define grammar? If so, how is grammar defined? (4) how can instructors incorporate a proposed overarching definition of grammar for first year writing into a curriculum that favors rhetorical grammar?

Research Objectives

The objectives on researching notions of grammaticality in the first year writing classroom include:

- to connect the history of grammar with how it relates to the teachings of composition presently

- to identify how instructors state they are defining grammar, grammatical, and ungrammatical to their students

- to explore if textbooks used by first year composition instructors define grammar and critique those definitions

- to provide instructors with a curriculum pedagogy that strikes a balance between grammar and rhetoric and proposes an overarching definition of grammar based on what scholars say and what instructors suggest, in order to provide students with clarity.

Methodological Choices

I chose to explore my research objectives and attempt to answer my research questions through a survey. A survey offered the means to collect data about grammar usage in the first year writing classroom from a wide range of participants all over North Carolina in a short amount of time. As a student at East Carolina University, I have access to Qualtrics, a user-friendly data collecting software. My research philosophy has been shaped by Pamela Takayoshi, Elizabeth Tomlinson, and Jennifer Castillo's "The Construction of Research Methods and Problems." The authors explain research as a "recognizable process [including] articulating a research question, planning research methods, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing up findings" (97). A survey was the most appropriate tool for completing a "recognizable" process due to my prior experience in collecting data through a survey in my pilot study. Furthermore, a survey would give me a broad number of participants, as opposed to interviews or focus groups that would provide me with a limited number of participants given the time available.

Qualtrics was an available tool to collect my data. Information about Qualtrics is discussed later in the chapter. Participants were able to conveniently complete the survey online just by clicking on a link sent to their e-mail. This was the best option because I am physically at East Carolina University and I chose to survey instructors all over North Carolina. Qualtrics provided me with access to utilize its statistical analysis software which was helpful in evaluating the data collected.

The survey was sent to non-tenure track (NTT) English instructors teaching first year composition at the University of North Carolina (UNC) institutions. My sample was expanded to include instructors at all UNC institutions (including ECU) for the possibility of a greater number of results. As a way to focus my sample size, I chose to not include schools outside of

the UNC school system to allow for the perspective from just one specific group of instructors as opposed to many different groups.

NTT instructors were chosen as participants for a variety of reasons. From my understanding, NTT instructors are the group most likely to teach more first year composition courses at UNC's institutions as opposed to graduate students who just teach a couple of sections. Moreover, it appears that tenured or tenured-track faculty members only teach a few first year writing courses, or only instruct these courses occasionally. ECU's NTT instructors may teach four sections in a semester giving that group more current experience in teaching specifically first year composition. Due to their familiarity with the courses, I gathered that NTT instructors might have more awareness of current grammar debates from scholars centered on first year writing since they encounter these topics in their everyday work. Finally, based on my personal job search, it appears institutions mostly hire NTT instructors for teaching first year writing which gives some validation to my methodological choices concerning participants.

University of North Carolina Schools

Over 220,000 students are enrolled at the seventeen institutions of the UNC school system including: Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, NC Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, NC State University, UNC Asheville, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, UNC Greensboro, UNC Pembroke, UNC Wilmington, UNC School of Arts, Western Carolina University, Winston-Salem State University, and North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (University of North Carolina). Although institutions may have different requirements for first year writing, it can be assumed that most students will be required to take some form of first year writing.

As stated on the UNC website, the goals of the institutions are "to foster the development of a well-planned and coordinated system of higher education, to improve the quality of education, to extend educational benefits beyond campus borders and to encourage economic and effective use of the state's resources" (University of North Carolina). Researching notions in first year college writing fits well into this statement as the goal for this thesis is to suggest a definition of grammar that can be incorporated into a pedagogy favoring rhetorical grammar in order to improve quality of education. Table 3.1 lists each school name with the number of NTT instructors currently employed with the exception of UNC School of Arts as well as North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. Reasons are discussed later in the chapter in the limitations section, The WPAs at each institution were able to personally provide me with the number of NTT instructors; I knew ECU had 37 instructors based on my pilot study.

Table 3.1

Institution	# of NTT instructors
Appalachian State University	58
East Carolina University	37
Elizabeth City State University	4
Fayetteville State University	5
NC Agricultural and Technical State University	12
North Carolina Central University	13
NC State University	51
UNC Asheville	4
UNC Chapel Hill	17
UNC Charlotte	28
UNC Greensboro	17
UNC Pembroke	13
UNC Wilmington	19
UNC School of Arts	N/A
Western Carolina University	12
Winston-Salem State University	4
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics	N/A
Total:	294

Participants

The survey was sent out to 294 NTT instructors within the UNC institutions. The WPA at each institution either copied me on e-mails sent out to their faculty including the survey or gave me a verbal confirmation via telephone. Table 3.1 lists each school with the correlating number of instructors that are employed. I already had contact information for ECU instructors due to my pilot study. In order to send the survey to other instructors outside of ECU, Dr. Tracy Ann Morse (Director of Composition Studies at ECU and member of my thesis committee) assisted me with WPA contact information. I created a contact sheet with names of each of the other 16 UNC institutions and Dr. Morse filled in the contact names and e-mail addresses for 13/16. For the remaining 3 schools, I was able to find the WPA contacts through the websites.

I e-mailed each WPA briefly describing my research and asked if they would send my survey to their NTT instructors on my behalf. I explained that my study focused on notions of grammar in the first year writing classroom and that their participation would include taking an anonymous survey with questions centered on defining grammar. I explained the survey was voluntary and participant information would remain anonymous and protected through the data collecting software. Appendix C displays the e-mail I sent. For the most part, each WPA was extremely helpful and responded they would be happy to send out the survey. I was unable to solidify contact with the UNC School of Arts and North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics so those institutions are not included with the results. The survey was sent out about a fourth of the way through the semester to each WPA through e-mail, and the WPAs forwarded the link to their instructors. The survey was available for ten days.

IRB

Prior to contacting institution WPAs, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained on about 6 weeks into the semester through East Carolina University. Participants were informed that the survey was voluntary and that their identity would remain anonymous throughout the entire study. Participants were also informed that they would not be asked to reveal any identifying information, with the exception of the institution in which they were currently teaching. However, this information was only used to clarify first year writing sequences at the UNC institutions to understand the requirements and university structure. Furthermore, participants were not required to answer every question (which was also a limitation, discussed later in the chapter). Participants were informed that the survey would only take about 20 minutes to complete.

Methods

Qualtrics

Data was collected through a survey administered via Qualtrics, which is web-based survey software through ECU. It is available to faculty, staff, and students. Prior to creating a survey, Qualtrics requires the investigator to meet IRB criteria. Qualtrics stores data for three years before it is destroyed. All data was collected and stored through Qualtrics. Besides the convenience of the software, I chose to use Qualtrics because of its option for statistical analysis which I used to look at the survey's results. It is also very user-friendly. This was a benefit to both me and the participants taking the survey.

Survey

  Appendix C provides the survey that was sent out to participants about a fourth of the way through the semester. Participants were asked to answer 16 questions that were either yes/no, multiple choice, or open-response covering 7 areas:

1) **Demographic information** asked participants to identify their gender

2) **Educational background** asked participants to identify their highest completed degree, concentration, and if they had ever taken a linguistics course.

3) **Teaching background** asked participants to pinpoint how many years they have spent teaching altogether, and how many years they have taught first year writing. Participants were also asked how many total first year composition courses they were currently teaching.

4) **Institution and First Year Composition Sequence** asked participants to identify their institution and established how many first year writing courses the institution offered and if those courses were offered as one fall and one spring semester course, as a first year and a second year course, just as one semester, or something else.

5) **Textbook usage** asked participants used a textbook, and if so, identified whether it was required to use by the institution or if it was a personal choice.

6) **Grammar definitions** asked participants to provide their textbook's definition of grammar and grammatical. Participants were also asked to provide the definition of grammar they offer their students.

7) **Classroom practices** asked participants to explain if they made distinctions of different grammars for different audiences to their students and asked participants to identify how much time over a semester they devoted to grammar lessons.

Combined these seven areas allowed me to analyze how current instructors of first year writing are defining grammar to their students whether it's through textbook usage or personal definitions. It also enabled me to consider an institution's first year composition sequence in the implications of defining grammar and incorporating the definition into a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar.

Limitations

There are several limitations associated with this study. While the English department at East Carolina University employs many fixed-term faculty members to teach first year composition, other UNC schools have different terms that may not be "fixed-term" faculty. Instead, I used the phrase "non-tenure track" employees to allow for a broader group of participants but maintained focusing the group on only NTT faculty not including graduate students. However, a limitation with this term is that different institutions have different hiring requirements for their non-tenure track employees. Not every instructor has the same educational level and degree. Also, some institutions only hire NTT for part-time teaching, which means that some employees may teach at multiple institutions besides a UNC school. For example, a NTT instructor might teach four courses at a UNC institution and three additional courses at their local community college.

Additionally, there are limitations within the survey process. The survey was dependent upon participants answering each question honestly and thoroughly. If a participant were in a rush, they may have skipped a question or chose not to answer it to the best of their ability. Likewise, a participant could have chosen to skip questions, which would cause fewer results. Furthermore, the survey reflects a small sample size of those teaching first year college composition. Although the survey was sent to all NTT instructors in the UNC school system

teaching first year composition, the survey was voluntary and participants were not required to answer all (or any) questions.

Data Analysis

I downloaded the survey's results onto Microsoft Excel through Qualtrics after ten days of leaving it open to collect data in order to glance at results. The first part of my analysis was partially inspired by Hartley and Preston's The names of US English: Valley girl, Cowboy, Yankee, Normal, Nasal and Ignorant (1999). Hartley and Preston asked participants to identify attitudes towards language in different areas of the United States. They had 17 different regions of the USA. Similarly, my research consisted of participants from 17 different institutions. Hartley and Preston created a table that centered on each region. I created four different tables centered on institution. Chapter 5 will discuss this limitation in greater detail, but I mistakenly asked instructors to identify their institutions in an open-response style question. As a result, I had to go through the data by hand and code their institutions (for example, one participant might have said they teach at ECU while another responds with East Carolina University. These are the same institutions).

The first section identified the first year composition sequence at each institution. I went through the results without using statistical options on Qualtrics to evaluate sequences. Generally, I just looked at each individual answer and tried to confirm at least two different sets of answers that listed the same first year composition sequence. I was interested in first year composition sequence in the hopes that it would help me in making a case for a pedagogy in chapter 5; if schools are more often requiring two courses in an entire year for first year writing, that gives more time for more writing-based activities than a sequence that only requires one course over one semester.

The second section analyzed the number of participants from each institution that completed the survey. I manually counted the number of responses and compared it next to the total number of people that were eligible to participate based on information from the institution's WPA if available. Knowing the number of respondents from each institution was important to ensure that results weren't favoring instructors just from one institution and that a sample size of at least one person was represented.

The third section detailed average teaching experience based on institution. I coded this by hand since participants were not asked about institution identification via close-ended question. I printed the results and wrote down the number of years each participant responded with how long they had been teaching first year composition. I added the numbers up for each institution then divided by the number of participants that answered the question in order to get the average. I repeated this process twice to get the same numbers in order to ensure accuracy in my results. This section was important because my pilot study suggested there was a correlation between the number of years an instructor had been teaching with how much weight they placed on grammar when assessing student work so I followed up on it for this study.

Finally, the fourth section evaluated how many sections an instructor was teaching grouped with the institution in which they taught. I analyzed this section in the same fashion as the third section; I wrote down the number of sections each participant responded with teaching, added up the numbers and divided by the number of participants that answered the question in order to find the average. I repeated this process twice to get the same numbers to maintain accuracy. I asked this question to confirm that it is NTT faculty that are more likely to teach first year writing.

I utilized the statistical analysis software provided by Qualtrics for the questions centered on textbook usage and definitions. I looked at basic results to analyze the questions asking if participants required textbooks, and if the textbook was a requirement by the institution or a personal choice. I created a cross-tabulation (a means to compare two or more questions with one another) between highest degree completed and textbook requirement to consider whether or not a participant with a PhD was more likely to use a textbook than a participant with a master's degree, or vice versa. Additionally, I created a cross-tabulation to compare a participant's background in taking a linguistics course with textbook requirement to see if that yielded any significant results. Finally, I also created a cross-tabulation between gender and textbook usage to see if that had any influence. In order to analyze the participants' textbook provided definitions of grammar, I didn't have to complete any statistical analysis because only one participant provided the definition. However, I was able to use the statistical analysis software provided by Qualtrics to evaluate how much time instructors from the survey were spending teaching grammar to students. I simply converted the table that Qualtrics provided in the basic results into the same style of tables I had created in Microsoft Word.

I imported question 14 (as seen in the Appendix) into Microsoft Word and completed key word searches on the following words and their variations: grammar, rhetoric, rhetorical, grammatical, style, audience, sentence, punctuation, structure, rules, correct, incorrect, mechanics, syntax, language, and verb tense. I completed this search in order to understand how current instructors of first year composition are defining grammar to their students and how they perceive making distinctions between different grammars for different audiences, if at all. Completing statistical analysis of current teaching practices of first year composition instructors along with key word searches will contribute to achieving an overarching definition for grammar

41

to use in a proposed curriculum pedagogy that balances the applied definition of grammar with rhetoric.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed my research questions and research objectives to provide the framework for my methods. I explained my methodological choices as well as the survey process including IRB, the research location, and the survey itself. I also discussed several limitations associated with this study. Chapter 4 will analyze the survey's results based on the data analysis section described in this chapter. Chapter 5 will review the study questions and objectives, provide a further analysis of the results, and suggest a definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing that could be incorporated into teaching rhetorical grammar.

Chapter 4

Introduction

As detailed in the last chapter, my research questions centered on defining grammar and achieving an effective balance between grammar and rhetoric in the first year writing classroom. I distributed a survey to non-tenure track (NTT) instructors teaching at the University of North Carolina (UNC) institutions. This survey provided me with the necessary data to understand the ways current instructors of composition are defining grammar and teaching it to students in first year writing. The following chapter provides the results from the survey described in chapter 3; although, an analysis of the results will be continued in chapter 5. This chapter explains the sample population with the basic demographic and educational background results and then breaks down results categorized by institution. This chapter also identifies the first year composition sequences at UNC schools. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes textbook usage and definitions of grammar as provided by participants. Finally, this chapter provides a key word analysis of definitions of grammar as stated by participants in order to establish framework for proposing an overarching definition in order to incorporate into a pedagogy for first year writing in chapter 5.

<center>**Sample Population**</center>

Out of 294 eligible instructors asked to complete the survey, forty-six responded giving the survey a 15.6% response rate. All forty-six participants responded to the demographic and educational background questions. Out of the forty-six respondents, there were thirty-one (67%) females and fifteen males (33%). Thirty-two participants (70%) held master's degrees, one participant (2%) held a professional degree, and thirteen participants (28%) held a doctorate degree. Twenty-six participants (57%) had taken at least one linguistics course and twenty participants (43%) had not taken any. All participants had been teaching first year composition for at least one year.

<center>**Breakdown by Institution**</center>

First Year Composition Sequence

Identifying each institution's first year composition sequence provided a framework in analyzing the implications of the results. For example, if an institution only requires one first year composition course to be taken in a semester, there would not be as much time to teach as many aspects of writing as there would in an institution that is set up for two courses in first year writing to be completed over an entire year. Different institutions in the UNC school system have different requirements for their first year composition sequences. Of the forty-six participants that responded to the survey, twenty-nine participants identified their institutions first year composition sequence. All participants that identified the first year composition sequence also identified their institution. Table 4.1 provides a list of each institution and its first year composition sequence based on participant identification, if available. As stated in Chapter 3, information for the UNC School of Arts and North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics is not available due to inability to establish a connection with the WPAs. Likewise, information

<center>44</center>

is not available for NC Agricultural and Technical State University because out of the two participants that identified with that institution, neither of them identified the first year composition sequence. Based on the information provided from the survey's participants, UNC institutions require either one or two courses in first year writing; out of the twelve institutions listed below with first year composition sequence information, two-thirds require two courses and only a third require just one course. Composition sequence is taken into account in Chapter 5, Implications.

Table 4.1

Institution	First Year Composition Sequence
Appalachian State University	2 courses (1 first year, 1 second year)[2]
East Carolina University	2 courses (1 fall/1 spring)
Elizabeth City State University	N/A
Fayetteville State University	2 courses (1 fall/1 spring)
NC Agricultural and Technical State University	N/A
North Carolina Central University	2 courses (1 fall/1 spring)
NC State University	1 course
UNC Asheville	1 course
UNC Chapel Hill	1 course
UNC Charlotte	2 courses (1 fall/1 spring)
UNC Greensboro	1 course
UNC Pembroke	2 courses (1 fall/1 spring)
UNC Wilmington	2 courses (1 first year, 1 second year)
UNC School of Arts	N/A
Western Carolina University	2 courses (1 fall/1 spring)
Winston-Salem State University	N/A
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics	N/A

---

[2] This is the current first year composition sequence; it will change in Fall 2014.

Participants' Identified Affiliation

Of the forty-six responses to the survey, forty-two participants identified the institution in which they teach. Table 4.2 lists the total number of NTT instructors at each institution as identified by the WPA and the number of participants that identified affiliation in the survey from each institution. There were not any participants that claimed affiliation with Fayetteville State University or Winston-Salem State University. Out of the four participants that chose not to answer the question, it is possible that they may have been affiliated with one of these institutions or perhaps none from either institution responded to the survey at all.

Notably, the greatest number of participants' identified their institution as East Carolina University. Due to my previously established connections with ECU's NTT faculty, it is possible they felt a personal obligation to complete my survey. Furthermore, the pilot survey explained in chapter 1 was sent to the same group; last semester this group was informed there would be an additional survey on similar topics. However, they were also informed that besides demographic questions, they would not be asked to answer questions they had already answered. Had I established relations with instructors at other institutions, I suspect I would have had a greater number of participants from those schools.

Table 4.2

Institution	# of NTT instructors	# of participants that identified affiliation
Appalachian State University	58	7
East Carolina University	37	9
Elizabeth City State University	4	1
Fayetteville State University	5	0
NC Agricultural and Technical State University	12	2
North Carolina Central University	13	1
NC State University	51	2
UNC Asheville	4	1
UNC Chapel Hill	17	4
UNC Charlotte	28	3
UNC Greensboro	17	4
UNC Pembroke	13	2
UNC Wilmington	19	4
UNC School of Arts	N/A	N/A
Western Carolina University	12	2
Winston-Salem State University	4	0
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics	N/A	N/A
Total:	294	42

Teaching Experience

  The results of my pilot study indicated a correlation between an instructor's numbers of years spent teaching with how much he/she teaches grammar in first year writing. It was suggested that instructors who had been teaching for more than 10 years spent at least 20% of class time on grammar lessons. On the other hand, instructors that had only two years of experience claimed to spend less than 5% of class time on grammar lessons. Due to this finding, I repeated this question in the survey. Table 4.3 shows how many years, on average, instructors spent teaching composition based on the survey. Because participants were given open-ended options when answering questions about their institution affiliation and number of years spent teaching, I had to code the responses by hand. In order to do this, I looked at each of the 12 institutions in which participants identified affiliation with the number of years each participant responded with when asked how many years they had spent teaching first year composition. I added the numbers together then divided by the number of responses in order to obtain the average. I repeated this process for each institution three times to establish accuracy. The average number of years an NTT instructor at a UNC institution has spent teaching composition was 9.92 years. This number is only based on results from those who completed the survey; it does not necessarily reflect 100% accuracy. Since there were not any participants that claimed affiliation with Fayetteville State University or Winston-Salem State University, information about the average number of years spent teaching composition is not available.

Table 4.3

Institution	Average number of years spent teaching composition (by participants that identified school affiliation)
Appalachian State University	14 years
East Carolina University	13 years
Elizabeth City State University	3 years
Fayetteville State University	N/A
NC Agricultural and Technical State University	7 years
North Carolina Central University	13 years
NC State University	12 years
UNC Asheville	10 years
UNC Chapel Hill	15 years
UNC Charlotte	2 years
UNC Greensboro	10 years
UNC Pembroke	17 years
UNC Wilmington	9 years
UNC School of Arts	N/A
Western Carolina University	4 years
Winston-Salem State University	N/A
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics	N/A
Total Average Years:	9.92 years

Instructor's Sections

Table 4.4 establishes how many sections of first year composition that instructors are currently teaching based on institution on average. Unfortunately, the survey did not account for instructors who teach at institutions besides a UNC institution. But the results confirmed that more than three-fourths of the survey's participants are teaching first year composition, although they are not teaching as many sections as I was predicting. It is possible participants answered the question based on how many sections they teach just at the identified institution. Though the question of number of sections was multiple choice, the question about institution was not, so I was unable to create a cross-tabulation. Instead, I coded this section similarly to the prior section; I went through each institution that had identified affiliation from participants and then wrote down how many sections each participant claimed to currently teach. I added up the numbers and divided by number of responses in order to get the average. I repeated the process three times for each institution in order to establish more accuracy.

Besides averaging the number of years each participant had spent teaching based on institution, I was able to obtain statistical data via the software provided by Qualtrics. Out of 45 total responses to this question, nearly a fourth (22%) of participants identified they were not currently teaching any sections of first year composition, which explains why some of the numbers shown in Table 4.4 seem low. The initial e-mail sent out to WPAs indicated the survey specifically targeted to NTT instructors currently teaching composition, but there may have been some minor errors when the survey was distributed. For example, it is possible that e-mail server lists hadn't been updated since the prior semester or year. I assume that those participants at least recently taught first year composition, which does not decrease the reliability of their answers. Furthermore, the statistical information indicated that nearly three-fourths of participants (71%)

currently teach between 1-4 sections which was surprising; I expected most NTT instructors to teach more sections. I suspect that institutions place a cap on the number of sections in which each faculty member can teach.

Based on my conversations with current NTT faculty members at ECU, quite a few of them teach four sections at ECU and teach an additional three courses at one of the local community colleges. Since 3 participants (6%) identified to teach more than 5 sections, I suspect they were answering the total number of sections in which they are currently teaching at both the UNC institution and perhaps their local community college. For this reason, some of their answers to other questions might be based on their teaching experience both at a UNC school and at another institution, like a community college.

The survey did not ask how many students were in each section, although it would be a good question to ask in further research. However, I was able to obtain some of this information simply by verbally asking those affiliated with different institutions. Since I personally teach first year writing at ECU, I know that each section is capped at 25 students. According to a correspondence I have at University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G), each section for first year writing is capped at 20 students. My contact at North Carolina State University (NCSU) claims a 25 person limit in each first year writing section.

Table 4.4

Institution	# of participants that identified affiliation	average # of sections participants are currently teaching
Appalachian State University	7	3
East Carolina University	9	4
Elizabeth City State University	1	1
Fayetteville State University	0	N/A
NC Agricultural and Technical State University	2	2
North Carolina Central University	1	1
NC State University	2	2
UNC Asheville	1	3
UNC Chapel Hill	4	4
UNC Charlotte	3	4
UNC Greensboro	4	3
UNC Pembroke	2	1
UNC Wilmington	4	4
UNC School of Arts	N/A	N/A
Western Carolina University	2	3
Winston-Salem State University	0	N/A
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics	N/A	N/A

Textbook Usage and Definitions

Textbook Requirements and Implications

Participants were asked if they require their students to use a textbook. This was just a yes or no question, so I was able to use the statistical software provided by Qualtrics to obtain these answers as opposed to coding by hand. Of the forty-three responses, thirty-three participants (77%) required their students to use a textbook; however, participants were not asked to provide the title of their required textbook. This would be a good question in a project that expands the research. I created a cross-tabulation for the question asking if participants used a textbook with the question that asked participants to identify their gender. Out of the fourteen males that answered the question, twelve participants (86%) claimed to require a textbook. Out of the twenty-nine females that answered the question, twenty-one (72%) required a textbook. I created this cross-tabulation in order to examine whether or not gender was a factor in requiring a textbook, but the results didn't appear significant enough to state this is a definitive factor.

Participants that responded definitively to requiring a textbook were asked if they were required to use a textbook by the institution or if it was a personal choice. Thirty-five participants responded to this question establishing that twenty-three participants (66%) used a textbook based upon personal choice while twelve participants (34%) used a textbook that was required by the institution. As stated before, it would have been helpful to ask participants to provide textbook titles; further research should include this question. The results to this question establish that perhaps instructors have some freedom when making decisions on how to teach the curriculum; this option gives more freedom in developing a pedagogy in chapter 5 based on the survey results.

Participants were asked to identify their highest completed degree as part of the demographics section. I cross-tabulated this information with textbook requirements. Out of the forty-two participants that answered both questions, thirty-two participants (76%) held master's degrees and ten participants (24%) held doctorate degrees. Twenty-six participants with master's degrees (82%) required students to use a textbook, while only four participants with doctorate degrees (40%) had a textbook requirement.

Furthermore, I created a cross-tabulation for the following questions which yielded significant results: Do you require your students to use a textbook? Have you ever taken a linguistics course? Twenty participants responded definitively to have taken a linguistics course, and nineteen of those participants (95%) also required their students use a textbook. On the other hand, thirteen participants responded to have never taken a linguistics course, and only three of those participants (23%) required a textbook. I asked if participants had taken a linguistics course before because chances are that they would have been introduced to the differences between descriptive approaches to grammar and prescriptive approaches to grammar thus increasing awareness of different attitudes towards language and writing as discussed in chapter 2. Considering 95% of participants that took a linguistics course also require their students to use a textbook, educational background might inform pedagogical approaches in the first year writing classroom centered on grammar.

Textbooks Defining Grammar

Participants were asked if their textbook provided a definition for "grammar" and to provide the definition if it did. Thirty-two participants responded to this question. Thirty-one participants (97%) answered that their book did not provide a definition for grammar. One participant (3%) provided their textbook's definition for grammar as "element of style; analytical

55

understanding of how language is structured and used." Thirty-three participants identified whether or not their textbooks provided a definition for "grammatical." Thirty-two participants (97%) claimed their textbooks did not provide a definition, and one participant (3%) identified the definition as simply "rules." This was the same participant that provided the textbook definition for grammar. I suspect there was more to the definition than just "rules" but since I do not have the title of the textbook, I cannot confirm this. Even though the textbooks instructors used didn't typically define grammar, instructors still provided students with definitions as evidenced by the survey.

Participants Defining Grammar to Students

Of the forty-six survey responses, thirty-eight (83%) participants responded to the following question: How do you define "grammar" and/or "grammatical" to your students? If you have a definition, please explain in 5 sentences or less. Of the thirty-eight participants that responded to the question, six (17%) responded that they do not define it at all. The remaining thirty-two participants provided some sort of definition. In order to analyze results and apply them to the next chapter on a discussion and implications, I exported the responses for the question to Microsoft Word and completed a word search on the most commonly used words (more than twice) in the definitions provided by participants and how many times the words were used. Table 4.5 establishes what words instructors are most commonly using in their definitions of grammar to their students based on the survey.

Table 4.5

Grammar	37
Rules	22
Correct	15
Grammatical	15
Style	14
Proper	14
Syntax	14
Sentence / Sentence Structure	12
Clarity	10
Tense	8
English / Standard English	8
Convention	7
Dialect	4
Words	3

Additionally, of the thirty-two participants that provided definitions, five (16%) indicated they only give their students a definition in an "as needed" situation, such as in conferences or when explicitly asked about grammar during class. Eleven participants that provided definitions (34%) used vague words and phrases in their definitions such as "stuff," "things," "all of that," and "something." Arguably, words such as "rules" and "style" are vague too if not given context but most will agree that telling a student that grammar is "syntax and stuff" is unclear and will leave a student feeling confused and frustrated. The results from this section further indicate a need for an overarching definition of grammar to use in the context of first year writing that can also be applied to a pedagogy that balances grammar and rhetoric.

Teaching Grammar in the Classroom

Table 4.6 provides a breakdown of how much time instructors spend teaching grammar in their classroom. Of the forty-six responses, forty-three participants (93%) answered the question. Close to 75% of participants identified that they spend less than 30% of class time over the entire semester teaching grammar. No participants responded to the options between 30% and more than 50%. A fourth of participants answered they teach grammar on an as needed basis. Participants that responded "on an as needed basis" explained that they either touch on it when they provide feedback on papers, in one-on-one conferences, or when they realize their class as a whole needs instruction on a particular subject. Two participants claimed not to teach grammar at all. Unfortunately, the question did not ask what approach instructors took to teaching grammar; it is unclear whether or not instructors required their students to complete drills of traditional grammar instruction or if they used a more modern approach, like asking students to identify "grammar errors" in everyday use and to explain why they identified such "errors." However, since 95% of the participants that answered the question claim that they do teach grammar to some extent, this suggests the necessity for an overarching definition of grammar especially since textbook definitions were limited and instructors' definitions were all different from one another and usually vague in nature.

Table 4.6

#	Answer	Response	%
1	5% of class time or less	11	26%
2	5%-10%	9	21%
3	10%-20%	6	14%
4	20%-30%	7	16%
5	30%-40%	0	0%
6	40%-50%	0	0%
7	More than 50%	0	0%
8	On an as needed basis (explain)	10	23%

Conclusion

Chapter 4 provided the results of the survey with a beginning analysis to be continued in

chapter 5. This chapter establishes that based on the survey, if instructors are using textbooks in

their first year composition courses, the textbooks do not provide definitions for "grammar" or

"grammatical" for the most part. However, the survey results suggest that some instructors still

teach grammar to their own students using their own definitions. Chapter 5 will discuss

implications and explanations of the results in greater detail and provide a definition for grammar

that can be used in first year writing based on what instructors said in the survey combined with

more clarity.

Chapter 5: Implications

Introduction

The following chapter discusses the survey's results provided in Chapter 4 including definitions of grammar from the survey. This chapter suggests an overarching definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing and states that this definition should be incorporated into a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar. Finally, this chapter offers insight for further research in notions of grammaticality in the first year writing classroom.

Summary of data

Chapter 4 provided a general description of the data collected from the survey. Forty-six participants teaching at the UNC school system responded to the survey out of the 294 eligible participants. Out of the institutions that were identified by participants, approximately 2/3 had a two course composition sequence and 1/3 had just one course. Participants identified their institution affiliation; the greatest numbers of identified participants were from ECU, likely due to my personal connections. The average amount of time participants had spent teaching composition was nearly 10 years and most of them are currently teaching about 4 sections. Over three-fourths of participants answered definitively to implementing a textbook requirement, and two-thirds of those participants chose their textbook based on personal choice. Only one participant claimed their textbook provided a definition of grammar but did not provide the textbook's title; however, thirty-eight participants were able to provide their personal definitions of grammar, such as "a set of tools and guidelines to follow." Most definitions incorporated the

words "rules," "correct," "grammatical," "style" and "proper" based on an analysis completed on a word search through Microsoft Word. As for teaching grammar in the classroom, about three-fourths of participants answered they do teach grammar in class, but spend less than 30% of class time doing so. About a fourth of participants claimed to teach grammar on an as needed basis, such as after grading the first assignment or during individual conferences.

Textbook Definitions of Grammar and Implications

Based on the survey, more than three-fourths of instructors used a textbook in their classrooms. Of those instructors, more than two-thirds used a textbook based upon personal choice. Since participants were not asked to provide textbook titles, this information is not available. Instructors were also asked to provide their textbook's definition of grammar; out of the thirty-three instructors that answered the question, only one claimed their textbook defined grammar at all. The participant simply wrote "rules" as the definition.

There are several implications of textbook usage and grammar in the first year classroom. Of course, this is only based on a small population; therefore, survey results are not generalizable. Even though only one instructor claimed their textbook defined grammar does not mean that most textbooks used in first year writing do not provide definitions. However, it is an issue worth discussing and noting since 97% of the respondents use textbooks that do not define grammar, yet nearly 75% of the respondents of the survey spend at least 5% of class time over the semester teaching grammar. There does not appear to be a field accepted definition, which makes it a more complicated term.

At East Carolina University, graduate teaching assistants are required to use a textbook for each first year writing course. The textbooks change every two years, but for the Fall 2013 semester, I was required to use Lester Faigley's *Backpack Writing* (2007) for *Foundations of*

College Writing, the first course in the current first year composition sequence at ECU. The book

is a total of 447 pages and is divided into three parts: The Writer as Explorer, The Writer as

Guide, and The Writer as Researcher. Faigley discusses topics such as understanding the

rhetorical situation, planning, drafting, revising, and proper source documentation. His book is

filled with examples and challenges students with exercises within each chapter. While

grammatical concepts are discussed, the book lacks a definition of "grammar." This came to my

attention at the beginning of the semester when I had a student explicitly ask about grammar

usage in the course; I flipped through the textbook and was unable to find anything specific.

Composition, the second course in the current first year writing composition sequence at ECU,

also requires a textbook: Miller-Cochran and Rodrigo's *The Wadsworth Guide to Research*, 2nd

edition (2014). At a little over 400 pages in length, this textbook centers on research writing

concepts such as understanding plagiarism, integrating sources, and finding secondary resources.

The book does briefly mention using a grammar checker in a paragraph titled "proofreading" in

the second chapter (34) but does not provide a definition of grammar.

It is a possibility that writers of textbooks for first year writing do not believe grammar

should be included. Maybe it is assumed that students should already have a basic understanding

of grammar prior to entering the first year composition classroom. In "Assumptions" (1993),

Donald Murray claims that it is more of a tradition to emphasize the teachings of grammar in

first year writing, such as vocabulary, spelling, usage and mechanics (337). Perhaps textbook

authors agree with Murray and focus more on the higher order concerns (HOCs) as discussed in

Chapter 1. But it is also entirely possible that first year writing textbooks aren't defining

grammar because the word is abstract and difficult to define; in other words, perhaps the authors

remain unclear on one definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing. Furthermore,

grammar might not be a part of the course goals as set by the departments. But as noted in the

survey results in Chapter 4 and in my pilot study in Chapter 1, many instructors are still teaching

grammar to some extent even if it is not a course goal.

Instructors defining grammar and implications

Although first year composition textbooks do not appear to supply definitions of

grammar, instructors are certainly defining it to their students based on results from the survey.

In fact, 83% of participants from the survey provided their own definitions in which they give

students. Out of thirty-eight responses to this particular question, not a single response was

duplicated; every participant reported defining grammar differently to their students. For

example, one instructor that identified affiliation with ECU defined it as: *rules we impose on*

language in order to make ourselves understandable to each other within a given linguistic

community. But another instructor at ECU defined it as: *tense verb form; using the nominative*

case pronoun in subject position; observing number agreement between pronouns and

antecedents; refraining from using a reflexive pronoun in subject position, etc. As for another

example, another participant defined grammar as: *the study of how language works*. The

different definitions that don't necessarily relate to one another demonstrate the need for an

overarching definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing. The different definitions

especially become problematic when students are set to take more than one first year writing

course; as suggested in Chapter 4, different institutions have different requirements for their

writing programs: Based on the survey results, 66% of UNC institutions use a two course

composition sequence while 33% require one course for first year writing. In an institution that

requires more than one course for composition, it is highly possible that a student will have

different instructors for his or her different classes.

For example, let's say that Jill enters East Carolina University as a freshman. Since she is attending ECU, she will need to take two courses in first year writing to satisfy the school's requirements. In high school, she learned about grammar as a set of rules and learned how to diagram sentences. She proclaims to "not be good at grammar" and therefore not be a "good writer" just like many first year college writers (Sommers, 1982). Since Jill desires to do well in his English courses, she knows he must pay attention in his writing classes.

After Jill buys the textbook, *Backpack Writing* (Faigley, 2007) she realizes it doesn't give a definition for grammar; she is curious as to how it is defined since the instructor's rubrics reserve sections for "grammar." She asks his instructor how grammar is defined. The instructor provides a similar definition as stated in the introduction of Chapter 1 of this thesis by proclaiming "just make sure your sentences are correct and you have commas and colons in the right places." Jill learns this instructor's grading style and adheres to her writing preferences. The next semester, Jill has a new instructor for the next writing course in the sequence. The new instructor uses a different textbook based upon the instructor's personal choice. This textbook also does not provide a definition of grammar, though the instructor provides his own definition as "the accepted usage of Standard Written English" (an example of a definition from the survey). Jill is not told about what is considered "accepted" and this might even be the first time he has heard of the phrase "Standard Written English." The instructor also tells Jill and the other students they need not worry about sentence structure, but to focus on mechanics. At this point, Jill is confused.

It is difficult to achieve an overarching definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing based alone on the survey. It is evident that different instructors have different ideas of what grammar is when applied to teaching first year writing. Notably, instructors have even

better ideas of what it isn't, especially since the word "not" was used twenty-four times out of thirty-eight possible definitions. Many responses focused on grammar "not" being the "be all end all" to writing in their definitions; yet, focusing on the negatives will not help students with their writing. Seven definitions used the word "accepted" in some fashion, such as the "accepted usage" or "accepted form" or "accepted use of Standard Written American English." While the word "accepted" could be incorporated into definition of grammar for first year writing, it would be helpful to also understand what "accepted" means and in what context. Do instructors mean that it is accepted within the university in terms of writing? Or are instructors referring to acceptance in the general community of writers or a community of speakers? Furthermore, who decides what is acceptable? These are the types of questions instructors should ask their students when discussing how grammar will be used within their classrooms. Other commonly used words in definitions provided by instructors as listed in Chapter 4 such as: rules, correct, grammatical, style, proper, syntax, sentence structure, clarity, tense, Standard English, convention, and dialect can certainly be used once an overarching definition is provided to students for the purposes of first year writing.

Scholars Defining Grammar and Implications

Depending on a scholar's background and concentration, grammar is defined in a multitude of ways. For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on definitions provided by linguists Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman (1993) from "An introduction to language" and rhetoricians Neil Daniel and Christina Murphy (1995) from "Correctness and clarity: Finding answers in the classroom and the professional world." The two definitions seem to well-represent the fields and demonstrate relatable implications to how instructors defined grammar based on the survey.

65

Fromkin and Rodman (1993) define grammar of native speakers as follows: the sounds and sound patterns, the basic units of meaning, such as words, and the rules to combine them to form new sentences … grammar, then, is what we know; it represents our linguistic competence (13). As presented in Chapter 2, instructors and students should be aware that there is a difference between speaking natively community-based dialects and writing in the standard. They also establish two different ways in which grammar is used: as a reference to the grammar speakers have in their brain/mind and as a model or description of this internalized model (13). Based on personal experience as a student and as a graduate teaching instructor of first year composition, it seems that most first year writers are familiar with the latter use of grammar according to Fromkin and Rodman. The scholars also assert that "purists" believe that language change is corruption and there are certain "correct" forms that all educated people should be both speaking and writing (14) and that these people prescribe, as opposed to describe, the rules of grammar (15), which is based on a "prescriptive approach to grammar." These "purists" are focused on rules that defined grammar hundreds of years ago, often according to Latin (15), which English isn't directly related to. For the purposes of providing a definition of grammar to first year writers, it is important to understand the word from a linguistic point of view (which provides historical information that can be applied to today's teachings) as defined by Fromkin and Rodman and applied in ways demonstrated in Chapter 2, the literature review.

Neil Daniel and Christina Murphy (1995) define grammar similarly to how instructors defined it in the survey by using some of the same words. Daniel and Murphy assert that the term "grammar" is the "heart of the problem" in first year writing and that different groups of people have different ideas as to what it signifies; teachers, linguists, and copy editors all have different ways of defining grammar (225). Similar to Fromkin and Rodman, Daniel and Murphy define

grammar in multiple ways. Firstly, they say it is "a field of inquiry, a branch of the social science

of linguistics" (226). Based on this definition alone, it is established that "grammar" is an

extremely complex term since it is a "branch" of study and it is vital to be reminded that any

"overarching" definition that can be achieved is strictly for the purposes of first year writing in

order to provide some level of clarity to students. Daniel and Murphy further define grammar as:

"internalized language rules or an abstract system that enables to create and utter spoken

language" (226) which is significant in terms of this research simply because grammar is

abstract. As a professor at ECU pointed out to me, faculty treat defining grammar as if defining

"God" or "love." But since instructors are indeed using it in their classrooms, it is worth coining

an overarching definition specifically for first year writing.

Finally, Daniel and Murphy define grammar as "a set of conventions, collectively known

as usage, that govern written discourse" (226), the closest way as defined by instructors in the

survey based on words like "conventions," "govern," and "usage." Still, words such as

"conventions" are abstract. Daniel and Murphy propose achieving a balance between clarity in

student writing with "correctness" by eliminating first year writing courses altogether and instead

having courses that are field-oriented for students (233). For example, all students majoring in

business will be enrolled in a writing course (not necessarily their first year) that focuses

specifically on writing in the business industry. The instructor would teach grammar conventions

based on what is most important in the students' future careers according to what professionals

argue; therefore, that classroom would incorporate a definition that is grounded more in writing,

rather than speaking as a native speaker. Daniel and Murphy argue that students will be more

likely to view their writing as important if it is based on their major as opposed to a traditional

first year writing course (233). Defining grammar would be simpler in a major-specific course,

since this is the "heart of the problem" (225). However, a curriculum that divides students up based on major might be problematic since many students change majors frequently. But Daniel and Murphy's definition should be incorporated into a definition of grammar specifically for first year writers.

Overarching Definition of Grammar

Scholars provide adequate definitions of grammar based on research and historical information, but the problem is that these definitions do not appear to be used in many textbooks that instructors are using in the first year composition courses; based on the survey, most instructors claim that grammar isn't defined at all. The instructors that provided personal definitions given to their students are sometimes similar to how scholars define grammar using some of the same words, but definitions remain ambiguous and unclear, especially using words like "accepted" and "conventions" that have implications of their own. Based on words used by scholars and instructors from the survey, I am proposing the following definition of grammar in which instructors could provide to first year writers:

Grammar (for writing): a structural set of conventions imposed on written language in which we use to communicate effectively with different audiences who may or may not know the historical "rules" of English.

Beyond defining the term, instructors should explain the definition to their students by providing a brief history relevant to first year writing as well as an explanation for how it will be applied to first year writing. For example, an explanation accompanied with the definition given on the first day of class might be as follows:

You might be under the impression that "good" writing is the equivalent to "good" grammar due to what your elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers told you. But you should know that writing is about understanding how to communicate with your audience. You should know that much of the implications associated with writing are related to power and attitude. Many people have the attitude that those who write in a way that adheres to a pattern that is not Standard American English are uneducated and that those who write according to historical rules and conventions are more intelligent. This is not true. No language, including written language, is superior to another. The grammar you choose to use doesn't define your capabilities as a human. However, when you apply for internships, jobs, and other programs, you will come across people with what we call a prescriptive attitude toward grammar and writing. This is one of the audiences that you will learn to address in this first year writing course. In that case, we will occasionally have lessons centered on some aspects of the type of grammar associated with writing Standard American English in which you are familiar with learning.

Since instructors from the survey do claim to at least spend some time on grammar lessons (however they define that), perhaps it would be beneficial to explain the differences between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to language. First of all, this would enable students to understand the importance of focusing on other issues in writing, such as the HOCs discussed in Chapter 1, and it would also encourage future generations to show positive attitudes towards language.

Balancing Grammar and Rhetoric: Rhetorical Grammar

Laura Micciche (2010) explains a pedagogy in "Making a case for rhetorical grammar" that would be appropriate to apply to first year writing courses in the UNC school system presented in this thesis since part of the system's mission statement includes:

> To discover, create, transmit, and apply knowledge to address the needs of individuals and society. This mission is accomplished through instruction, which communicates the knowledge and values and imparts the skills necessary for individuals to lead responsible, productive, and personally satisfying lives; through research, scholarship, and creative activities, which advance knowledge and enhance the educational process. (University of North Carolina).

Micciche's pedagogy informs the connection "between writing and thinking" (252) to both "reproduce and challenge cultural values, truths, and assumptions" (252). Micciche asserts that grammatical choices writers make (such as pronoun use, verbs, etc.) represent relations between the writer and the writer's world, which means that writing is both what we say and how we say it, but beyond simply sentence level (253). Micciche claims that reserving grammar instruction for last when drafting papers is detrimental to students developing their writing because in this case, this type of instruction tends to use formal grammar drilling lessons which are not helpful to students. Micciche suggests that instead of resorting to "self-conscious correction" perhaps "rhetorical grammar instructor … emphasizes grammar as a tool for articulating and expressing relationships among ideas … it generates persuasive, clear thinking that reflects on and responds to language as work, as produced rather than evacuated of imperfections" (253). Micciche's assertion reflects the UNC mission statement for the purposes

of relating it to first year writing instruction. All students graduating from the UNC institutions should absolutely be able to write in a manner that demonstrates "clear thinking."

Rhetorical grammar, as used by Micciche in her classes, encourages students to experiment with written language then reflect on the interaction between content and grammatical form (255). For example, in writing practice, students might be asked to construct a sentence with a dependent clause and then they are encouraged to describe "the discursive effects of subordinating one idea to another" in order to explain how a sentence level choice might "reflect configurations of power" (255). Besides in their own writing, Micciche exposes her students to different writing styles of other authors most notably that of bell hooks due to her "expression of identity" (256). Students are instructed to think about the grammar as a tool for communication by looking at different writing styles.

Another classroom practice for rhetorical grammar that Micciche writes about is having students find different genres of writing that are interesting to them. A student may choose a syllabus from another class, a textbook, a newspaper article, or something else. Micciche instructs them to answer the question of how is the piece of writing "directed or crafted" as opposed to "correct or incorrect" (257). Her goal is to not only have her students rhetorically analyze the grammatically conventions, but to realize that language changes over time; which is why the study of rhetorical grammar is extremely relevant today (256).

UNC institutions would benefit from subscribing to a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar in the first year composition classroom combined with providing students with a definition of grammar for the purposes of first year writing. The mission statement wants students to "apply knowledge." Paired with the basic knowledge first year writers already have about grammar with the instruction they receive at the beginning of their first year writing

course, students can apply their knowledge to "real life" scenarios and situations like Micciche explains which makes their first year composition course(s) even more relevant.

The proposed definition provided above fits in with Micciche's case for rhetorical grammar on the grounds that it is specific enough for students to understand, but open enough for students to interpret when completing activities centered on rhetorical grammar. The definition also clarifies that grammar does not only refer to written language, but spoken language too, which is an important aspect from a linguistic point of view.

Since my research project started based on my own experiences with tutoring first year writing students and teaching first year writing as a graduate student, I plan to incorporate the results and implications into my own classroom when I (hopefully) teach first year writing as a career. I would explain grammar to students from a historical approach to connect with how it is relevant today and then provide the students with the above definition. I would encourage a group discussion about the "rules" imposed on written grammar and who governs the rules and why. I would then have them read parts of Micciche's article in order to help the students understand why I choose to use rhetorical grammar and even have students suggest different exercises and activities they may be interested in that relate to rhetorical grammar.

Further Research

The research presented in this thesis demonstrated different ways grammar is used and defined in first year writing classrooms according to current non-tenured track instructors of first year writing in the UNC institutions. This research also incorporated definitions from current writing instructors with scholars' definitions to form an overarching definition for grammar to use specifically in a first year writing classroom and suggested that instructors teach students about attitudes towards grammar and a little bit about the history of grammar. Finally, this

research suggested using rhetorical grammar in first year writing in order to achieve a balance between grammar and rhetoric. There are several implications for further research.

First of all, further research could include a larger sample size with fewer survey questions than what I used. For instance, instructors comprising different schools from different states could simply be surveyed two questions: 1) How do you define grammar to your first year writers and 2) What defines a successful first year writer? The answers from these questions could be analyzed via key word search.

An interesting research project relating to this study would be asking employers their definitions and attitudes toward grammar in relation to recently graduated students applying for jobs with their companies. This would give some insight into what topics are most important to teach in first year writing, as deemed appropriate by those companies that hire recent graduates.

Further research should include a closer study of textbooks used in the first year writing classroom. Another survey could ask what textbooks instructors are using; those textbooks could then be acquired by the researcher for a textbook analysis. It would also be beneficial to ask participants if grammar and syntax is part of the course goals; knowing that information would help explain why instructors teach or define grammar, or why they do not.

Finally, further research should include students as participants. The ultimate goal of researching implications of first year writing is to simply benefit students. A research question for students could be: what do you think grammar is and how does it relate to writing? In this case, a longitudinal study could be done: this question could be asked both before the course and after the course to see what students learn and apply it to future teachings of first year writing.

Implications

The major implications of this study include:

- First year composition course instructors need to be more transparent on how they will use grammar in their classroom

- Instructors could be more clear by using a definition of grammar specifically designed for first year composition

- Instructors should explain audience awareness to their students and how it relates to "acceptable" forms of writing

- The overarching definition of grammar could be incorporated into a pedagogy that favors rhetorical grammar which aligns with the UNC mission statement and balances using grammar and rhetoric.

Conclusion

This research confirms that defining grammar is difficult due to its ambiguous nature. However, defining grammar specifically in first year writing serves as a benefit to students in order to provide clarity in their thinking and analytical skills. After providing an overarching definition of grammar to students, an explanation is necessary followed by some background about language from a linguistic viewpoint as well as grammar's history. A pedagogy that allows for rhetorical grammar would make sense to use in the UNC school system due to its mission statement centered on "advancing knowledge." Students would not only learn conventions that are generally accepted by their future employers, but why these are the accepted conventions based on the rhetorical situations.

More importantly, adhering to a pedagogy centered on rhetorical grammar would help eliminate old attitudes that anything not written in "Standard American English" is bad,

uneducated, or inferior. Perhaps current attitudes of those that prescribe the rules of grammar cannot be changed; but future attitudes can be shaped. In Peter Brodie's (1996) words, maybe in the future writing instructors can look forward to not teaching students "inherited rules that dull writing" (77) and instead, focus on writing as a means to communicate with different audiences, as it should be used.

References

Brodie, P. (1996). Never say never: Teaching grammar and usage. *The English Journal*, *85*(7).

Butler, P. (2010). *Style in rhetoric and composition* (pp. 13-17). New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Chomsky, N. (2007). *On Language: Language and Responsibility and Reflections on Language*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Claywell, G. (1995). Reasserting grammar's position in the trivium in American college composition. In S. Hunter & R. Wallace (Eds.), *The place of grammar in writing instruction: past present future* (pp. 43-54). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.

Composition Program (2013). "Standard Syllabus: ENGL 1100." Department of English, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC.

Connors, R. J. (1997). *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, theory, and pedagogy* (pp. 112-170). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Connors, R. J. (1979). Grammar in American college composition: An historical overview. In D. A. McQuade (Ed.), *The territory of language: linguistics, stylistics, and the teaching of composition*. N.p.: Southern Illinois University Press.

Daniel, N., & Murphy, C. (1995). Correctness or clarity? Finding answers in the classroom and the professional world. In S. Hunter & R. Wallace (Eds.), *The place of grammar in writing instruction: past present future* (pp. 103-113). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.

Danielewicz, J., & Chafe, W. (1985). How "normal" speaking leads to "erroneous" punctuating. In S. W. Freedman (Ed.), *The acquisition of written language* (pp. 3-32). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Downs, D., & Wardle, E. (2007). Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions:

(Re)Envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies.' *College Composition and Communication* 58.4 (2007): 552–84.

Dykema, K. W. (1993). Language, culture, and the American heritage. In L. M. Cleary & M. D. Linn (Eds.), *Linguistics for teachers* (pp. 23-44). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Faigley, L. (2011). Backpack writing (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Fromkin, V., & Rodman, R. (1993). An introduction to language (5th ed., pp. 13-16). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Hairston, M. (1982). The winds of change: Thomas Kuhn and the revolution in the teaching of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, *33*(1), 76-88.

Hartley, L. C., & Preston, D. R. (1999). The names of US English: Valley girl, cowboy, yankee, normal, nasal and ignorant (11th ed.,). In T. Bex & R. J. Watts (Eds.), *Standard English: The widening debate* (pp. 207-238). New York, NY: Routledge.

Micciche, L. R. (2010). Making a case for rhetorical grammar. In P. Butler (Ed.), *Style in rhetoric and composition* (pp. 250-264). New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Milroy, J. (1999). The consequences of standardisation in desciptive linguistics. In T. Bex & R. J. Watts (Eds.), *Standard English: The widening debate*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mission Statement. (n.d.). In *University of North Carolina*. Retrieved March 17, 2014, from http://www.northcarolina.edu/?q=about-our-system/our-mission

Mullin, J. (1995). The use of grammar texts: A call for pedagogical inquiry. In S. Hunter & R. Wallace (Eds.), *The place of grammar in writing instruction: past present future* (pp. 103-113). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.

Murray, D. (2011). Teach writing as process not product. In V. Villanueva & K. Arola (Eds.), *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory* (3rd ed., pp. 3-6). N.p.: National Council of Teachers of English.

Murray, D. (1993). Assumptions. In L. M. Cleary & M. D. Linn (Eds.), *Linguistics for teachers* (pp. 337-339). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Petruzella, B. A. (1996). Grammar instruction: What teachers say. *English Journal*, *85*(7), 68-72.

Rooney, M. (2003, April 9). Survey finds split between what college instructors and high school writing teachers value in student writing. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Rosen, L. M. (1993). Developing correctness in student writing: alternatives to the error-hunt. In L. M. Cleary & M. D. Linn (Eds.), *Linguistics for teachers* (pp. 371-383). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Shaughnessy, M. P. (1977). *Errors & expectations: A guide for the teacher of basic writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shuman, R. B. (1995). Grammar for writers: How much is enough? In S. Hunter & R. Wallace (Eds.), *The place of grammar in writing instruction: past present future* (pp. 103-113). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.

Sommers, N. (1982, May). Responding to student writing. *College Composition and Communication*, *33*(2), 148-156. Retrieved March 17, 2014

Takayoshi, P., Tomlinson, E., & Castillo, J. (2012). The construction of research problems & methods. *Practicing Research in Writing Students: Reflexive and Ethically Responsible Research*, 97-121.

Trudgill, P. (1999). Standard English: What it isn't (11th ed.,). In T. Bex & R. J. Watts (Eds.), *Standard English: The widening debate* (pp. 117-128). New York, NY: Routledge.

Weaver, C. (1979). *Grammar for teachers*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Where did you receive your undergraduate degree?
2) Where did you receive your master's degree?
3) What was your concentration?
4) How many years have you been an English instructor?
5) How many years have you taught at ECU?
6) Have you ever taken a linguistics course?
7) How familiar are you with the term descriptive linguistics?
8) How familiar are you with the term prescriptive linguistics?
9) Would you say that you subscribe to a descriptive approach in the classroom when teaching grammar?
10) Would you say that you subscribe to a prescriptive approach in the classroom when teaching grammar?
11) When evaluating a student's project in English 1100 and 1200, how much weight does grammar (including sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation) carry in the overall assessment?
12) In what ways do you think your educational background informed your linguistic pedagogy (approach to grammar) in the first year writing classroom?
13) On average, how much class time do you spend teaching grammar in your English 1100 or 1200 courses?
14) What is your perception of a paper that is well organized but uses poor grammar.

APPENDIX B: IRB STATEMENT

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled "Defining grammar in the first year writing classroom" being conducted by Jamie Johnson, a student at East Carolina University in the English department. The goal is to survey 250 individuals in the UNC school system. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. It is hoped that this information will assist us to better understand a curriculum pedagogy for first year college composition. The survey is anonymous, so please do not write your name. Your participation in the research is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any or all questions, and you may stop at any time. There is no penalty for not taking part in this research study. Please call Jamie Johnson at 919-702-4885 for any research related questions or the Office for Human Research Integrity (OHRI) at 252-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

Please select your gender.
Male
Female

What is the highest degree of school you have completed?
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Professional Degree
Doctorate Degree

What is your concentration?

Have you ever taken a linguistics course? If so, how many?
Yes (specify how many)
No

How many total years have you spent teaching?

How many years have you taught first year composition?

What institution(s) do you teach at?

What is the composition sequence at your institution?
      a) 1 course
      b) 2 courses (1 fall, 1 spring)
      c) 2 courses (1 first year, 1 second year)
      d) other (explain)

How many total sections of first year composition are you currently teaching?
      a) 0
      b) 1-2
      c) 3-4
      d) 5-6
      e) more than 6

Do you use a textbook?
Yes
No

If you use a textbook, is it a personal choice or is it required by your institution?
Personal choice
Required by institution
Not Applicable

Does your textbook have a definition of grammar? If so, what is it?
Does not define
Yes (specify definition)
Not Applicable

Does your textbook have a definition of grammatical? If so, what is it?
Does not define
Yes (specify definition)
Not Applicable

How do you define grammar to your students? If you have a definition, please explain in 5 sentences or less.

Do you make distinctions to your students between different grammars for different audiences? If so, how?

On average, about how much over the entire semester do you devote to grammar lessons?
       a) 10% of class time or less
       b) 10%-20%
       c) 20%-30%
       d) 30%-40%
       e) 40%-50%
       f) more than 50%
       g) on an as needed basis (explain

APPENDIX D: E-MAIL TO WPAS

My name is Jamie Johnson. I am a graduate student at East Carolina University in the English department. Dr. Tracy Morse is our WPA and she gave me your contact information.

I am hoping to receive my MA in May. I am currently working on my thesis about grammar in the first year writing classroom. I am investigating ways to effectively teach grammar to students and researching how instructors define grammar to their students. I plan on collecting data via survey. I'd like to survey non-tenure track instructors currently teaching first year composition in the UNC school system.

I was wondering if I sent you a survey link if you would mind sending it to your non-tenure track employees teaching first year comp. I can also provide any additional information about the study if you'd like.

I appreciate your time.