

Grammatical prescriptivism



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Grammatical Prescriptivism The purpose of this essay is to analyze an article that is an example of grammatical prescriptivism that I personally disagree with. The format that this paper will utilize is to first summarize the arguments made by the author with particular attention to correctly describing the grammatical structures that the author discusses. After this point I will discuss why I disagree with the author. For the purpose of this essay the article that will be examined, was written by Ojalvo in June of 2010 and is titled 10 Ways to Support the English Language Learning with the New York Times as it appeared in the New York Times. The article began with the statement that “ The New York Times can be quite accessible for English language learners.” The article then illustrated that there are ten tips that can be followed to help utilize the publication as a learning tool. The main argument to the paper is the fact that the New York Times is an excellent source for English as second language students. The first major tip in the article was that the New York Times (NYT) has a “ Look Up” function on the website for the reader to access the definition of any word. The second tip illustrates that articles and prepositions are easily put into context, insofar as one can ‘ scratch out’ the articles and prepositions from NYT Articles as a test to determine understanding. At this point it is important to highlight that the article also recommends several related articles that further reinforce the arguments made by Ojalvo. The third strategy highlights that a learner can start from a very small article and work up towards more difficult pieces. The fourth tip stresses the point that the NYT has an extensive photo database with captions that describe the action taking place in the picture. This can be a useful tool in relating vocabulary to actions/images. The following tip is titled ‘ Armchair Travel’ and was designed to help people plan

trips but could assist learners in serving as a talk track for student discussions. The sixth tip discusses how the NYT is an excellent tool for learning more of American culture which should put some of the language lessons into context. The next tip is titled ‘ The learning debate’ and describes how the publication has several articles that discuss how to best educate recent immigrants and as such should help discussion between students on best practice. The eighth tip relates to English language history and the author highlights that the NYT has a feature called “ On this day” archive which allows readers to go back and read older publications. The ninth point gives the reader access to a compare and contrast paragraph list which is a tool to help broaden English vocabulary. Lastly the article argues that the NYS is generally a reliable source of proper American English language. In many circumstances the article uses descriptive grammar such as, “...saying hello-is different from what one might be used to.” When one reads through the opinions section of the NYT you can see several examples of prescriptive grammar and descriptive grammar. The article itself has several colloquial expressions the stress the importance of feeling comfortable when learning English and from this perspective one could argue that this article does represent a good source of prescriptive grammar. Whilst the highlighted tips by themselves are excellent points for English language learning some of the points can be misleading and I am inclined to disagree with several points that the author makes. Firstly, I believe that the NYT may indeed be a good source for English language learning it remains a tool for reinforcing classroom learning. Anybody who has read the NYT sees that there are many grammatical errors that occur in the NYT. In fact it is the case that Corbett (2008) highlights some of the biggest errors that the NYT

had published. Moreover I have always stressed the importance of learning language in a method that feels comfortable to you. If one has never read the NYT than it would seem like an unrealistic learning tool. Lastly one could argue that many NYT articles could be very difficult for non fluent English speakers to understand. References Corbett, P. (August, 4th 2008) The Error That Won't Die. [online] Available at <http://topics.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/04/the-error-that-wont-die/> Accessed on February 3rd 2011.

Ojalvo, H. (June 7th 2010) 10 Ways to Support the English Language Learning With the New York Times. NY Times [online] Available at <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/10-ways-to-support-english-language-learning-with-the-new-york-times/> Accessed on February 2nd 2011.

FULL TEXT June 7, 2010, 3: 14 pm 10 Ways to Support English Language Learning With The New York Times By HOLLY EPSTEIN OJALVO Many people don't realize that The New York Times can be quite accessible for English Language Learners. Due to its focus on current events and news, using The Times to learn vocabulary and practice reading can be much more inviting and rewarding than a textbook. And NYTimes.com has some extra tools and features that are particularly useful for language learning. Here are 10 ideas for using The Times to teach and learn the English language. 1. Look It Up — An easy way to get ELL's started with The Times: Use the "look up" function, which allows users to instantly access the definition of any word in an article on NYTimes.com. Read the first four paragraphs of the entry Big Fancy Words in the After Deadline blog to learn about this function. As the blog explains, simply double click on any word in a full Times article (it doesn't work on article summaries, headlines or blog posts) and then click on the question mark icon that appears. You'll be linked to not only a dictionary <https://assignbuster.com/grammatical-prescriptivism/>

definition (which includes an audio pronunciation of the word), but also to other related reference work entries. Explore a new word from an NYTimes.com or New York Times Global Edition article every day, and track the words you learn using our Vocabulary Log—you can use the “look up” feature to fill in the dictionary definition section. Challenge yourself, too, to use every new word in conversation and/or writing each day. More advanced readers of English may want to try the Learning Network’s Word of the Day feature and our ideas for developing vocabulary and construing meaning.

2. Ifs, Ands and Buts — The little words are sometimes the hardest! Start reading a NYTimes.com news article and you won’t get far before you see articles and prepositions like “a,” “the,” “in,” “on” and “at.” They are easy to read and understand in context, but when it comes time to write, these little words can create big problems for non-native speakers. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) is a useful resource for English language learning and writing skills—its ESL Instructors and Students section is especially useful for ELL’s. Take a look at How to Use Articles and Prepositions for Time and Place. Then test your understanding: Have a partner take out all of the articles and prepositions from several Times articles, and see whether you can fill them in correctly. Parts of speech in general can be confusing to many English language learners. For a fun overview of the challenges of the language, see Ben Yagoda’s guest entry for the Times Magazine’s On Language column.

3. Start Short — A lengthy feature article, a fact-packed news piece or a nuanced opinion piece might be daunting for an ELL to just dive into. Our short activities (some of which have been recommended elsewhere on this page) can give readers a “way in” to The Times. You might try these: Use our Connecting The New York Times to Your World sheet or The One-Pager <https://assignbuster.com/grammatical-prescriptivism/>

for doing some personal writing about an article Fill in our Fact/Question/Response Chart or K/W/L Chart to help you process the content of an article Create a class version of the Around the World with Different Currencies chart, based on students' home country currencies Work on verb tenses with the Identifying Cause and Effect graphic organizer Play a game, like The New York Times Scavenger Hunt or Page 1 Bingo Write Postcards based on Times photographs. 4. Picture It — There is a saying in English that “ a picture is worth 1, 000 words.” NYTimes. com photographs give you the opportunity to put this saying to the test. View one of the photo collections below (or another one of your choice, from the Multimedia/Photos archive or the Lens blog), then select a photo that you find especially interesting and make up a story about it. Our Telling a Times Story sheet provides a storyboard format for developing a story based on a Times article. (Or, use our Saying What's Unsaid sheet to create speech and thought bubbles for Times photos.) The galleries of reader photos in A Moment in Time and Documenting the Decade. Haitian childrens' own photographs of the devastation in their country in the wake of the earthquake there. Urban Camouflage features Japanese clothing that looks like vending machines and fire extinguishers. Stubborn Slow and Braying to Fans in Small Gyms is about playing basketball on a donkey. U. S. National Parks: A Camping Tour features beautiful photos of nature. And don't forget that drawing pictures is a fun and effective way of learning idioms. 5. Armchair Travel — One way to reinforce language skills is to talk about what you know well. Find a slide show of photos from the Travel section of NYTimes. com featuring your home country, and prepare your own commentary to accompany it. Use the “ Plan Your Trip” feature near the top of the Travel page to search for articles and <https://assignbuster.com/grammatical-prescriptivism/>

slide shows of popular travel destinations, including China, Costa Rica and Kenya. Show the slide show to your class or a group of friends, as you narrate orally. Then, take questions about your home country and explain how your own experiences compare with how The Times depicted it. As an alternative, search the Dining and Wine section or the Diner's Journal blog for articles about and recipes for world foods. Good examples include "Dried Limes, a Middle Eastern Secret for Flavoring Soups and Stews," "A Touch of Asia, Tangy and Hot" and a recipe for green papaya salad (som tum), and "A Chicken Soup With a Peanut Crunch," which includes a video of the author making the recipe, and the recipe for west African peanut soup with chicken. Then write your own recipe for something you know how to make. Start with a list of ingredients. Then prepare the directions—as these are always written in the imperative, it's a great way to practice using the second person, while also sharing a taste of home. Be sure to add some personal commentary—why this dish is a personal favorite, memories associated with the dish, and so on. Swap recipes with friends, and then have a world cuisine fair! Make the recipes and personal commentaries available for visitors to take home, and attach one of each to a large-scale world map to visually represent the origins of the international cuisines.

6. Meet and Greet — A kiss on the cheek, a bow, a handshake, a question: How do you greet your friends? The Times reported that in American culture, more and more teenagers are saying hello with a hug. Read the article, then practice your listening skills and learn more about teens and hugging in the accompanying video. Then hold a "meet and greet" event, where people who are from various countries and/or have traveled and learned greetings from around the world share their greeting traditions, including both verbal and nonverbal

components (such as a handshake and a “hello”) and translating where needed. Afterwards, sit the participants in a circle and hold an open discussion about how it feels to experience a culture where a basic component of everyday life-saying hello-is different from what one might be used to. Reading The Times is a great way to develop your understanding of American culture. Use the Culture Shot sheet to describe and comment on Times photos that seem to capture American culture.

7. Learning Debate — How do you think ELL’s learn best? The Room for Debate blog has explored how best to educate immigrants. Read the posts on this subject, including the reader comments. (We also have a lesson plan on this topic.) To guide your reading and keep track of the arguments, use our Debatable Issues sheet, and/or our Problem-Solution Organizer. Then hold your own debate on this topic, in which participants draw on their own personal experiences and viewpoints as well as on their knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices. Afterwards, compare the views expressed during the debate with your school’s ELL program-how does it match up? If desired, write to school administration with suggestions on improving the ELL program.

8. Look Back — On This Day in History is useful for boning up on your knowledge of American culture and news reporting, as it features important past events in the U. S. and the world as reported in The Times. As you look through the list of historical events, see if you can identify the past tense form of the verb in each item-while many of the past tense verbs end in -ed, you may find some irregular verbs, too. Further down the page you’ll see a list of Current and Historic Birthdays. Often the first person on the list is someone who is well known in American culture. Do you recognize this person? At the bottom of the birthday lists is the link “Go to a previous date” that takes you to the On <https://assignbuster.com/grammatical-prescriptivism/>

This Day Archive. Find your birthday and then practice using the past tense by writing a short paragraph explaining a few of the historic events that happened on this date and identifying some of the people who share your birthday. A fun and engaging way to use On This Day in History is with our List, Group, Label activity. (Teacher directions are available here.) Hold a competition: Which group can guess the historical event based on a group of words taken from the Times front page article about it?

9. Compare and Contrast — Drawing comparisons between two things that don't seem to have much in common is an excellent way to practice and broaden your English vocabulary, as well as your use of comparison words. What do music and basketball have in common? In the NYTimes. com video Rhythms of Basketball and Music, a musician and a sports writer explore the similarities between the two based on the ideas of form, the evolution of players and the concept of improvisation. Before watching the video, explore these three similarities based on what you know about music and basketball. Then, as you watch the video, pay attention to how they develop and explain these similarities. (You may want to use our Venn Diagram.) Finally, write your own comparison exploring three similarities between two topics of your choice. As you write, use a variety of comparison words to keep the paragraph from sounding repetitive—check out this Compare and Contrast Paragraph list of helper words for some suggestions.

10. Eliminating Errors — Oops! The New York Times is generally a reliable source of correct English usage. But even the Times makes mistakes, and casual grammatical errors can often be found in quotations. NYTimes. com resources for looking at language errors and usage issues include the following: Our collection of five easy ways to learn grammar and ways to solve “ grammar emergencies” with The Times.

Our English skills bingo game. this lesson based on a common grammatical error made by President Obama. The blog After Deadline, in which weekly posts identify errors that appeared in previous Times articles and explains the mistake and solutions, such as Words to Watch, a list of typical errors caused by problematic words that are often confused, such as the homophones “ effect” and “ affect” and “ principle” and “ principal.” The On Language column in the Sunday Magazine The Times Topics pages on Grammar, the English Language and Language and Languages. Reviews of books on English language grammar and usage, such as this one.