
The idea of revitalizing grammar seems, as the authors mention, out of sync with the revitalization of writers and readers (p. 44). However, in revitalizing grammar, writers and readers must be the focus of the efforts. The authors say that “grammar is a tool for making meaning and not an end in itself” (p. 43), so I think that examining the way we think of and treat writers and readers will help us to find ways to effectively teach grammar, and vice versa.

The politics of grammar are “about conflicting social forces people would rather not discuss” (p. 43). Pervading schools at all levels, these politics separate us in power, rank, ability, and deeper, but basic, human differences like ethnicity. Teachers who subscribe to the prescriptive, “one-size-fits-all” (p. 44) concept of grammar perpetuate the cycle of limitation for both writers and readers through both their approaches to teaching and “correcting” grammar.

Effort on our part needs to grow beyond the basic, tired attempts and become more interactive, engaging, and worthwhile for students. “Almost anyone can ‘correct’ a draft,” the authors say; “Not everyone can respond to it in a comprehensive, sophisticated manner” (p. 44). We need to reexamine how we are teaching grammar because in teaching grammar we also teach students to be both writers and readers. They should be learning a skill that they can apply to their futures, not just a shopping list of errors to watch out for.

The authors clearly explain that marking right or wrong on a paper does not help to show students the application of grammar—“Pretending that grammar rules provide a smooth, toll-free
road to economic success is a harmful myth…” (p. 45). I know that as a teacher, I hope to be able to show students the usefulness of grammar in their writing. I wholeheartedly agree with the authors when they say, “Anyone who reads texts written for any purpose other than to fulfill a school assignment knows that originality and risk-taking are important parts of writing” (p. 48). Since I hope to one day teach college students, I think that this is a lesson I need to keep in mind at all times. Students who learn grammar for the sake of academic prose and not for the sake of their personal connections to writing can’t be expected to carry lessons out of the classroom.