

# **Grammar or speaking? (Or both?)**

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Can you learn to speak without grammar? Can you learn grammar without speaking? Is there a special grammar of speech? What's the best way to learn speaking?

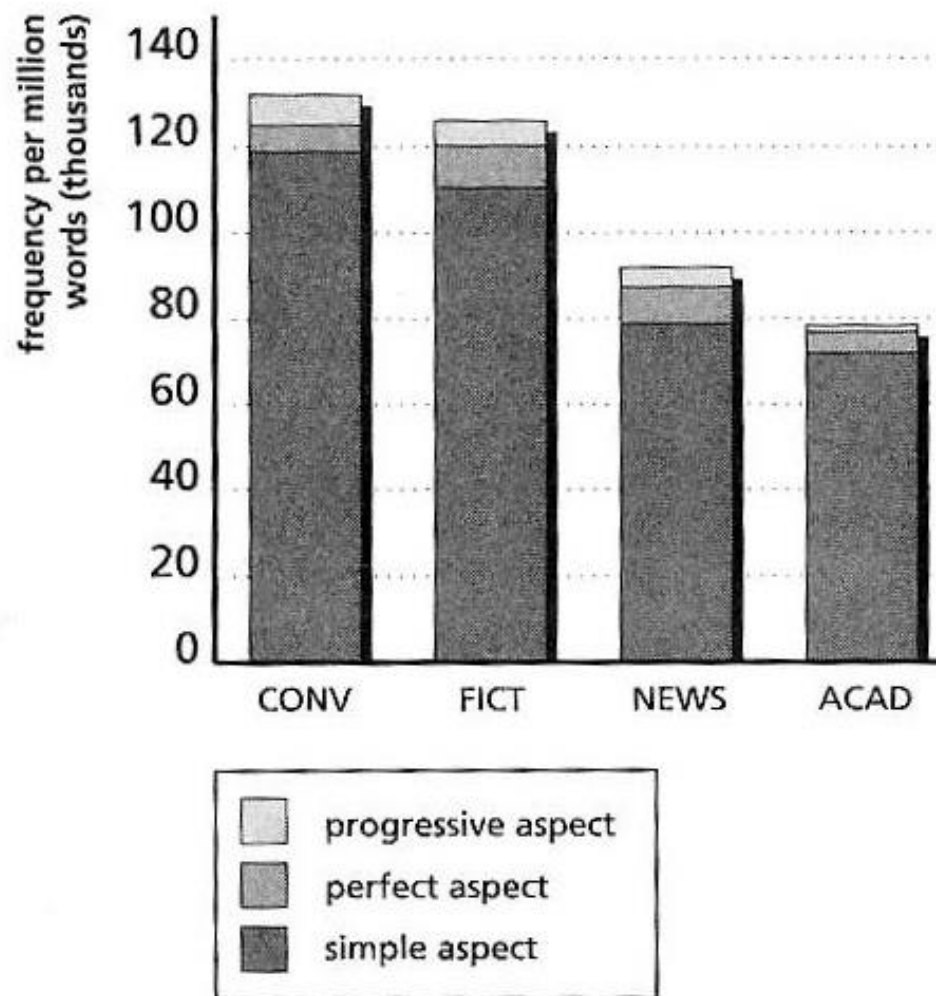
In this workshop I will address these questions and demonstrate ways that speaking and grammar can be integrated.

What do good speakers know?

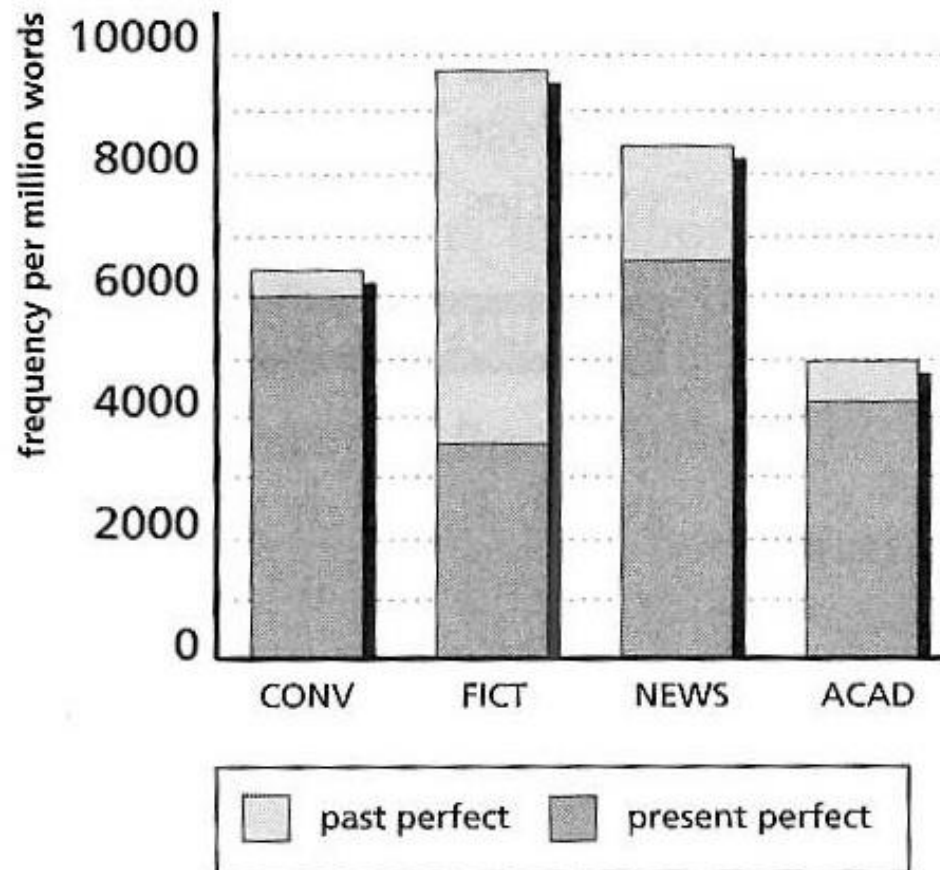
What can good speakers do?

Figure 6.2

## Frequency of simple, perfect, and progressive aspect across registers



**Figure 6.3**  
**Frequency of past perfect and**  
**present perfect aspect across**  
**registers**



**Figure 6.7**  
**Frequency of finite passive v.**  
**non-passive verbs across registers**

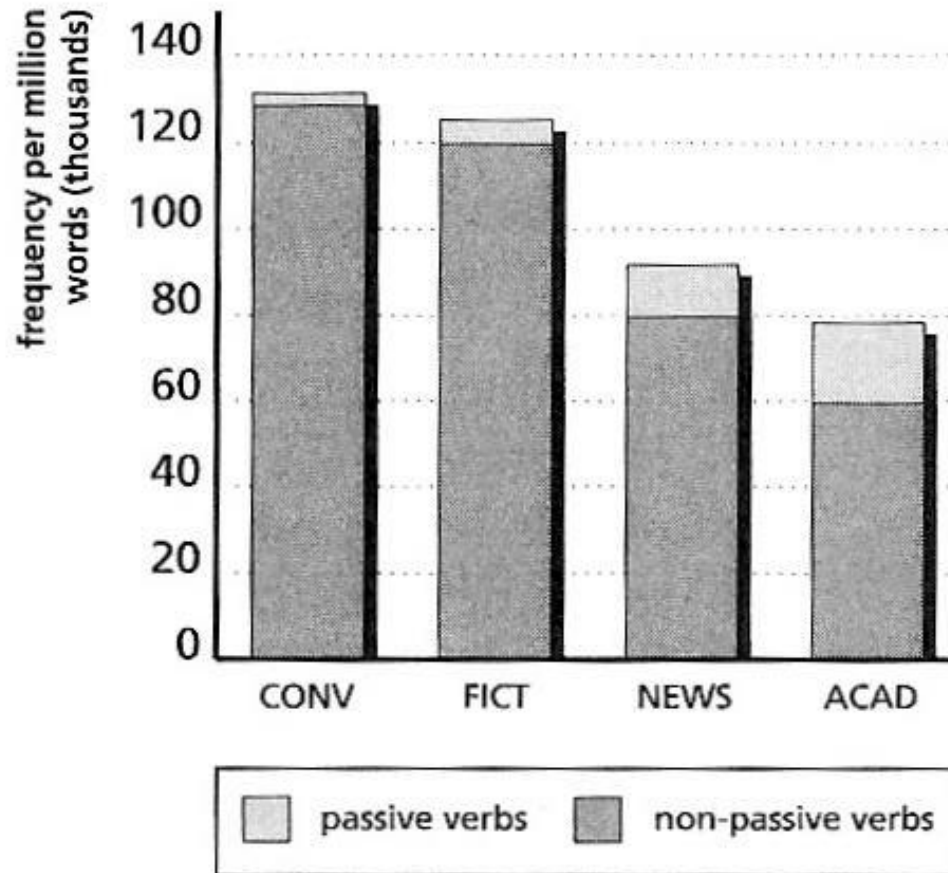


Figure 8.12  
Prepositional v. other  
postmodification across registers

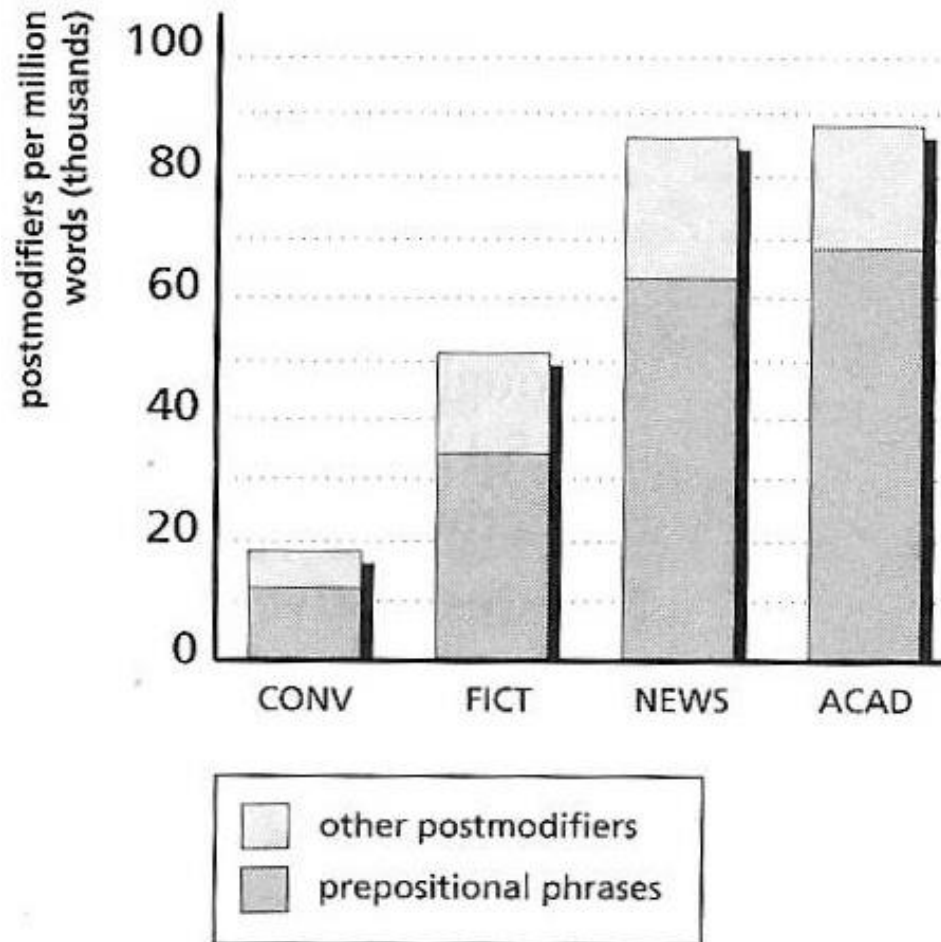
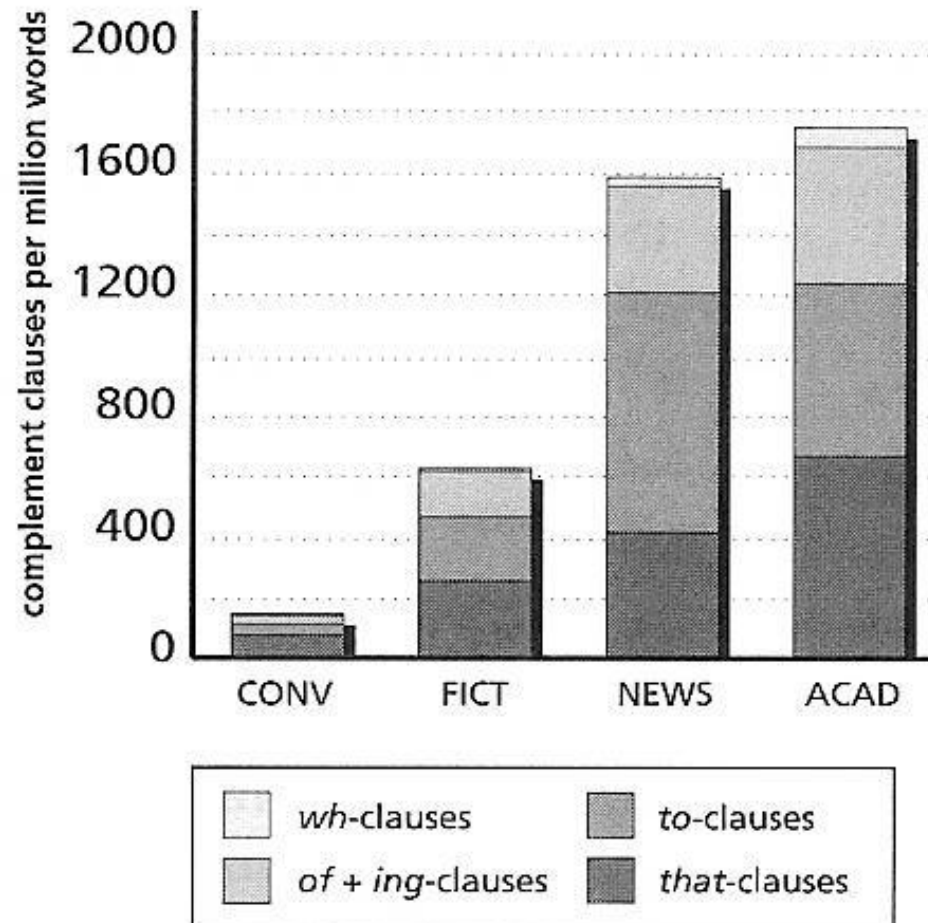


Figure 8.23  
Distribution of noun complement  
clause types across registers





## What grammar do learners need to know?

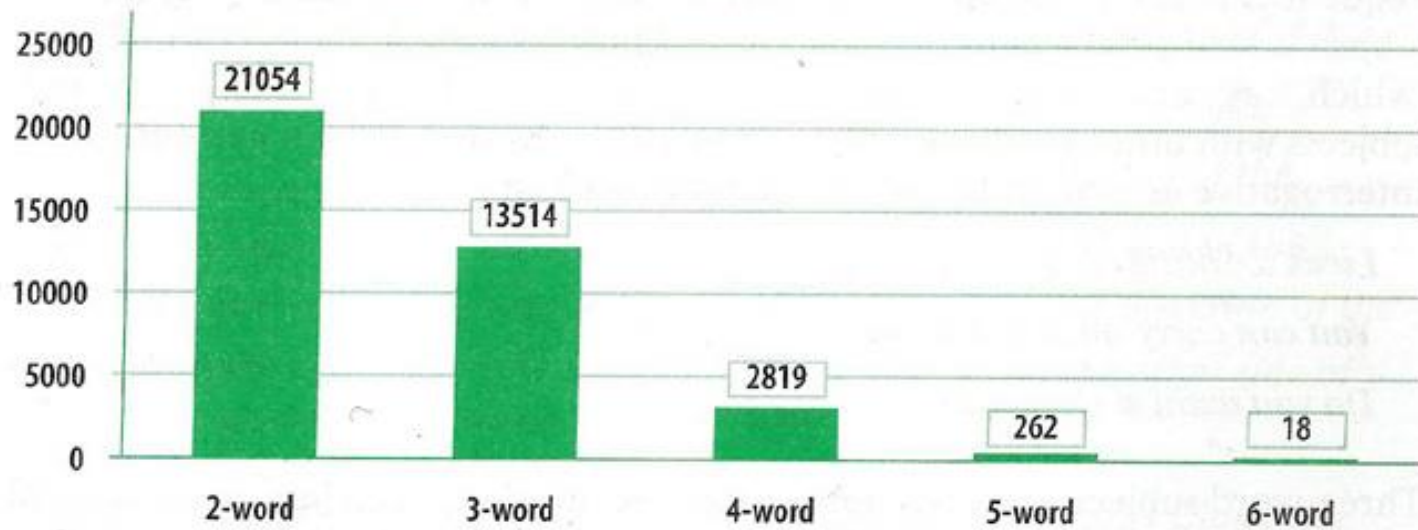
- some basic conjunctions (*and, so, but*);
- the use of deictic devices (*here/there; now/then, this/that, etc.*);
- a command of simple verb tense forms, both present and past;
- familiarity with the use of aspect both to frame and to background information in narratives, as in *it was snowing...I'd been working...*
- a knowledge of the most frequently occurring modal and semi-modal verbs;
- the ability to formulate questions...
- one or two all-purpose quotatives, of the *he said...and then I said...* type.

(from Thornbury and Slade 2006)

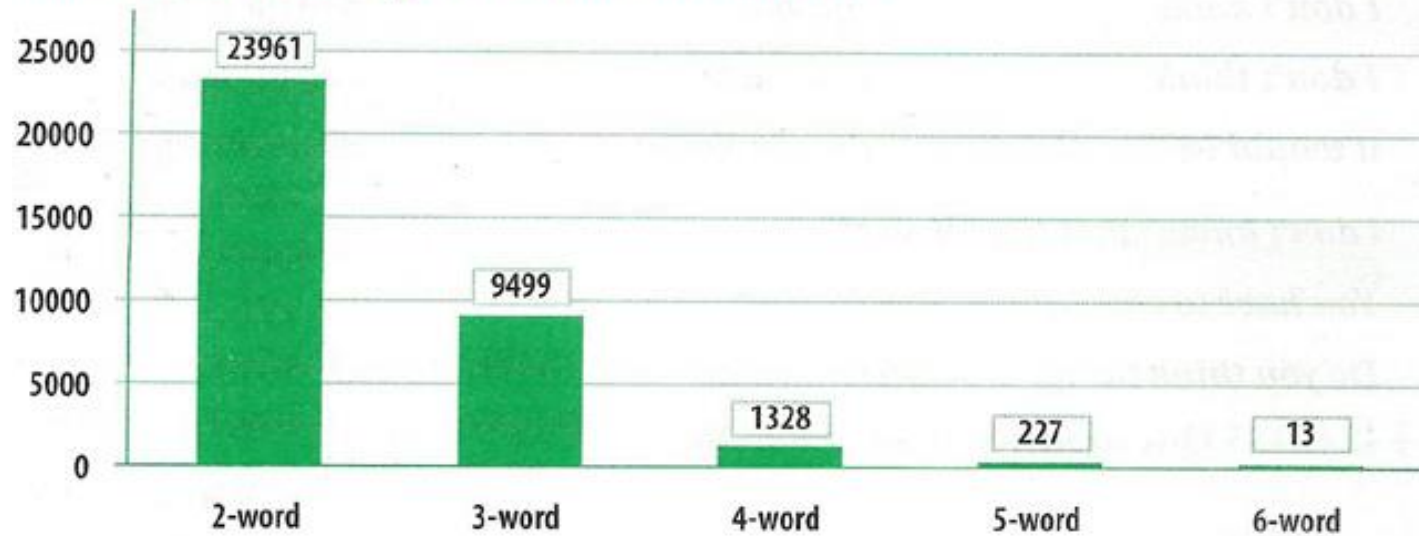
	Word	Freq.
1	YOU KNOW	28,013
2	I MEAN	17,158
3	I THINK	14,086
4	IN THE	13,887
5	IT WAS	12,608
6	I DON'T	11,975
7	OF THE	11,048
8	AND I	9,722
9	SORT OF	9,586
10	DO YOU	9,164
11	I WAS	8,174
12	ON THE	8,136
13	AND THEN	7,733
14	TO BE	7,165
15	IF YOU	6,709
16	DON'T KNOW	6,614
17	TO THE	6,157
18	AT THE	6,029
19	HAVE TO	5,914
20	YOU CAN	5,828

**Table 1:** Top 20 two-word clusters

**tribution of clusters occurring 20 or more times in spoken texts**



**tribution of clusters occurring 20 or more times in written texts**



	Word	Freq.
1	I DON'T KNOW	5,308
2	A LOT OF	2,872
3	I MEAN I	2,186
4	I DON'T THINK	2,174
5	DO YOU THINK	1,511
6	DO YOU WANT	1,426
7	ONE OF THE	1,332
8	YOU HAVE TO	1,300
9	IT WAS A	1,273
10	YOU KNOW I	1,231
11	YOU WANT TO	1,230
12	YOU KNOW WHAT	1,212
13	DO YOU KNOW	1,203
14	A BIT OF	1,201
15	I THINK IT'S	1,189
16	BUT I MEAN	1,163
17	AND IT WAS	1,148
18	A COUPLE OF	1,136
19	YOU KNOW THE	1,079
20	WHAT DO YOU	1,065

**Table 2:** Top 20 three-word clusters

**Table 1: 20 idioms occurring 10 or more times (from the CANCODE 100 idiom list)**

	idiom	occurrences
1	fair enough	240
2	at the end of the day	221
3	there you go	209
4	make sense	157
5	turn round and say	139
6	all over the place	75
7	be a (complete / right / bit of a / absolute / real) pain (in the neck/arse/bum)	73
8	can't/couldn't help but/ -ing	69
9	over the top	53

	idiom	occurrences
10	good god	44
11	be/have a/some good laugh(s)	41
12	the only thing is/was	41
13	good grief	38
14	keep an/one's eye on	37
15	half the time	34
16	up to date	30
17	take the mickey	25
18	get on sb's nerves	24
19	how's it going	21
20	along those lines / the lines of	20

O'Keeffe, A., McCarthy, M., & Carter, R. 2007. *From Corpus to Classroom*. CUP.

What is... the most fundamental guiding principle [to conversational proficiency]? It is this:

*Memorize perfectly the largest number of common and useful word-groups.*

Palmer, H. (1925) Conversation. Re-printed in Smith, R. (1999) *The Writings of Harold E. Palmer: An Overview*. Tokyo: Hon-no-Tomosha, p. 187)

## *Speakers need to be able to*

- work fast, be spontaneous, and cope with unpredictability
- anticipate and plan ahead
- ignore inessentials, and carry out the task using minimal means
- be accurate
- be versatile, i.e. perform a range of different speaking tasks about a range of different topics
- be reliable, i.e. perform the task equally well under different, even adverse, conditions
- interact, including the management of turn-taking , i.e.
  - recognizing the appropriate moment to get a turn
  - signalling the fact that they want to speak
  - holding the floor
  - recognizing when other speakers are signalling their wish to speak
  - yielding the turn
  - signalling the fact that they are listening

Awareness raising

Appropriation

Autonomy



- learners need to become aware of features of the target knowledge-base
- they need to integrate these features into their existing knowledge-base
- they need to develop the capacity to mobilise these features under real-time conditions

## References:

Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. 2006. *Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge University Press.

Thornbury, S., & Slade, D. 2006. *Conversation: From Description to Pedagogy*. Cambridge University Press.

Thornbury, S. 2005. Awareness, Appropriation and Autonomy. *English Teaching Professional*. 40, 11-13

## Websites

Compleat Lexical Tutor: <http://www.lextutor.ca/>

Scott Thornbury's website: <http://www.thornburyscott.com>