



English Grammar Day 2024 Programme

09:15-09:45	Registration
09:50-10:00	Welcome & Introduction
10:00-10:30	Shahan Choudhury, Anglia Ruskin University <i>Exploring children's and teachers' metalinguistic thinking about perfect and progressive categories of the verb</i>
10:30-11:00	Bas Aarts and Luke Pearce, University College London <i>Ten years on: grammar, spelling and punctuation in the National Curriculum</i>
11:00-11:45	Coffee*
11:45-12:15	Jonnie Robinson, British Library <i>Stokesy ct. Foakesy b. Woakesy. The grammar of nicknames in sport</i>
12:15-12:45	Devyani Sharma, Queen Mary University of London <i>Changing London grammar</i>
12:45-14:00	Lunch break*
14:00-14:30	Deborah Cameron, University of Oxford <i>Grammar, the media and the reporting of violence against women</i>
14:30-15:00	Jennifer Webb, English Teacher and creator of Funky Pedagogy <i>Grammar: possibility, craft and agency in the classroom</i>
15:00-15:45	Tea*
15:45-17:00	'Any Questions'-style panel discussion, chaired by John Mullan, UCL
17:00	Close

*Coffee/tea is included but lunch is not provided: there are numerous food outlets at the British Library and within a short walking distance nearby.



English Grammar Day 2024 Speakers

Shahan Choudhury is a lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University, teaching Research Methods and Academic English. His research specialism is in language and literacy. His PhD, which was supervised by Professor Debra Myhill, investigated children's and teachers' explicit understanding of grammar in English schools. As a former school teacher, he was fascinated by the role of research in developing 'good practice' in education, especially after embarking on learning Arabic as a Foreign language during the 2000s. He intends to continue sharing his knowledge and experience of language research.

Bas Aarts is Professor of English Linguistics and Director of the *Survey of English Usage* at University College London. He directs the [Englicious](https://englicious.org) project at UCL with free resources for teachers of English (englicious.org). He has published widely on English grammar.

Luke Pearce is an English Teacher and works on the [Englicious](https://englicious.org) project at the *Survey of English Usage*, UCL.

Jonnie Robinson is Lead Curator of Spoken English at the British Library and responsible for the Library's extensive archive of sound recordings of British accents and dialects. As a dialectologist, Jonnie has worked extensively with audio data deriving from two nationwide surveys of regional speech, the *Survey of English Dialects* and *BBC Voices* and in 2010 co-curated the world's first major exhibition on the English Language, *Evolving English: One Language, Many Voices*. As a sports enthusiast, he collects examples of vernacular English from the mainstream sporting press, broadcast and social media.

Devyani Sharma is Professor of Linguistics at Queen Mary University of London. Her research is on the social and cognitive systems underpinning new English dialects, language contact, bilingualism, accent variation, and language change. Her current ESRC-funded project, [Generations of London English](https://generationsoflondonenglish.com), looks at language change in real time over generations of Londoners. Her recent books include *From Deficit to Dialect: The Evolution of English in India and Singapore*, *The Oxford Handbook of World Englishes* and *Research Methods in Linguistics*. She leads the public initiatives [Accent Bias Britain](https://accentbiasbritain.com) and [Teach Real English!](https://teachrealenglish.com).

Deborah Cameron is Professor Emerita of Language and Communication at the University of Oxford: she's also a blogger, occasional broadcaster and sometime stand-up comedian. Her talk for English Grammar Day draws on her most recent book, *Language, Sexism and Misogyny* (Routledge, 2023).

Jennifer Webb is a teacher and Director of English and Literacy for the Carlton Academy Trust in West Yorkshire, where she supports a number of secondary schools. She hosts [www.FunkyPedagogy.com](https://www.funkypedagogy.com) - a site where she has built an extensive CPD library for English teachers and school leaders, whilst also freely sharing resources and articles rooted in her own classroom practice. She also curates 'The Reading List Project' as a vehicle for diversifying school libraries and English curriculum choices, and is the founder of *The Literacy Community*, a national grassroots collaborative project with over 800 literacy leaders in schools. She is the best-selling author of: *How to Teach English Literature: Overcoming Cultural Poverty* (2019), *Teach Like a Writer* (2020) and *The Metacognition Handbook* (2021) and *Essential Grammar* (2023), co-authored with Marcello Giovanelli.



English Grammar Day 2024 Abstracts

Shahan Choudhury *Exploring children's and teachers' metalinguistic thinking about perfect and progressive categories of the verb*

There has been much controversy over whether grammar should be taught, however, how it is learnt has received little attention. The grammar component of the English National Curriculum covers some important concepts, including various grammatical patterns about verbs. What are the semantic meaning differences between: 'Muhammad has eaten', 'Muhammad is eating' and 'Muhammad ate'? The study used grammar exercises and narrative writing samples as well as interviews. The purpose of the interviews were to explore their understanding and explanations of grammatical features required by the English National Curriculum by asking various questions, such as: Can children and teachers explain the difference between various grammatical patterns? Using empirical data from teachers and children in English schools, this talk discusses how grammatical patterns are understood, revealing some of the structural and semantic features that were taken into consideration. The research draws out connections between what children think and what teachers have taught them, and it indicates some conceptual patterns that children and teachers had developed when explaining perfect and/or progressive verbs.

Bas Aarts & Luke Pearce *Ten years on: grammar, spelling and punctuation in the National Curriculum*

Ten years after the launch of the National Curriculum for English in 2014, which included teaching specifications for grammar, punctuation and spelling and tests at Key Stages 1 and 2, we asked the teaching community what their experiences have been teaching the curriculum and whether they think it has made a difference to their pupils' literacy skills. We present the results of our questionnaire.

Jonnie Robinson *Stokesy ct. Foakesy b. Woakesy: the grammar of nicknames in sport*

Using a data set of nicknames of elite athletes he has compiled from the mainstream British sporting press and media, Jonnie will explore grammatical patterns in the way we create 'transparent' nicknames.

Devyani Sharma *Changing London grammar*

How is grammar changing in London today? Are the seeds of tomorrow's standard grammar visible in the vernacular of today? Our new project *Generations of London English* is tracking the changing language in real time, across speakers of different varieties of London English, with a focus on East and South London. This includes speech from teenagers and adults at different time points, re-interviewed participants from earlier Multicultural London English projects, and longitudinal tracking of children from their first year in school. This talk presents preliminary observations of grammatical change in London dialect, including features that are expanding or receding, the rule-governed nature of novel forms in vernacular syntax, and possible reasons for these cycles of change in language.

Deborah Cameron *Grammar, the media and the reporting of violence against women*

The way the news media report violence against women--crimes like rape, domestic homicide and the sexual exploitation of girls--has a significant influence on the way it is understood by the public at large, and it's been argued that the language of news reporting both reflects and reinforces common myths and biases. Discussions of this often focus on the words reporters use, but in this talk I'll consider the role played by grammar. Grammatical patterns may be less obvious to the average person, but they are no less important in shaping our perceptions.

Jennifer Webb *Grammar: possibility, craft and agency in the classroom*

This talk will challenge the perception of grammar education as a dry, irrelevant form of torture, and reclaim it as an empowering source of knowledge which fuels art and advocacy. Jenny will talk about language awareness in the English classroom, and the ways in which educators and students can use grammar to develop voice, confidence and enjoyment of language.