



English Language Teachers’ Summer Seminar 2026

Week 1: 27 – 31 July

Bringing Spoken Grammar into the Classroom

Tutor: Jon Hird

On this course you will

- develop your awareness of spoken grammar
- explore approaches to teaching spoken grammar
- add to your repertoire of grammar activities

Spoken grammar can be defined as elements of natural spoken communication, but which have not yet been incorporated into our everyday ELT teaching syllabuses. While useful in providing a broad grammar framework to build on, more conventional and traditional ELT teaching syllabuses arguably tend to favour tidy generalisations based on the so-called ‘big beasts of ELT grammar’ such as past simple v present perfect, reported speech, relative clauses, conditionals and so on. In this workshop, we go beyond the big beasts and take a look at high-frequency and teachable aspects of spoken grammar that we can introduce into our teaching to complement and extend our more traditional grammar teaching.

We begin by exploring some of the more global features of spoken grammar and then take a closer look at a specific spoken grammar area. For each, we will explore how we can introduce, explain and practise the language, either as a supplement or extension to the grammar we already teach or by creating our own spoken grammar lessons, possibly springboarding from examples of spoken grammar we come cross in our teaching materials or in the real world. We also look at ways of creating our own spoken grammar lessons, possibly springboarding from examples of spoken grammar we come cross in our teaching materials or in the real world. Throughout, we will also consider the spoken-like nature of social media communication. This course is for teachers who teach grammar at any level and who want to develop their own language awareness and understanding of spoken grammar, and to develop the skills to effectively teach it.

<p>Session 1 Monday</p>	<p>Some global features of spoken grammar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is grammar and what is spoken grammar. • An overview of some key features of spoken English.
<p>Session 2 Tuesday</p>	<p>Short responses and interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the use of auxiliaries and alternatives to auxiliaries in short responses. • A look at a range of other high-frequency short responses, response tokens and interactions, and at ways of teaching and practising them.
<p>Session 3 Wednesday</p>	<p>Topicalisation, fronting, heads and tails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A look at the different ways we use word order to shift focus and establish the topic in a sentence. • Ideas for teaching and practising fronting, heads and tails.
<p>Session 4 Thursday</p>	<p>‘Small items’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A look at some of those small, versatile and flexible discourse markers (such as <i>well, just, right, like, you know</i> and <i>I mean</i>) that Carter and McCarthy (2015) describe as ‘small items’ and ‘a key concept in spoken grammar’. • Ideas for teaching and practising ‘small items’.
<p>Session 5 Friday</p>	<p>Being vague and being emphatic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for being vague. • How we use hyperbole and other emphatic devices when speaking. • Ideas for teaching and practising vague and emphatic language.

Please note: This course schedule is intended to give an overview of the topics to be covered in each session; however, it may be liable to change at the tutor’s discretion.

SUGGESTED READING

There is no required preparatory reading for this course. However, you may wish to have a look at:

- Hird, J. (2025). *Spoken Grammar*. Pavilion ELT.
- Patterson, K. et al. (2011). *A Handbook of Spoken Grammar*. Delta Publishing.

- Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English: A comprehensive guide:*
- *Spoken and written English grammar and usage.* Cambridge University Press.