

## Re: History of French

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-09/1810.html>

---

**From:** Nathan Sanders ([nsanders.DIE.SPAM\\_at\\_wso.williams.edu](mailto:nsanders.DIE.SPAM_at_wso.williams.edu))

**Date:** 09/15/04

Date: Wed, 15 Sep 2004 00:09:40 GMT

In article <[ci7hei\\$4g8q@odds.stat.purdue.edu](mailto:ci7hei$4g8q@odds.stat.purdue.edu)>, [hrubin@odds.stat.purdue.edu](mailto:h Rubin@odds.stat.purdue.edu) (Herman Rubin) wrote:

> *Relatively few of the undergraduates at our universities*  
> *have a reasonable understanding of English grammar.*

*\*Which\* English? Their native English (which they are fluent in, certainly by the time they hit college), or the various illogical and/or unnatural rules they get taught in school to replace portions of their native language?*

Non-native speakers have a slight advantage because they don't have a native variant of English that specifically contradicts those rules.

> *Two senses of "grammar" are getting intermingled here:*  
> *>1) What any native knows and applies automatically*  
> *>2) Studying that grammar in hindsight, and teaching the results of*  
> *>such studies.*  
>  
> *As to "any native" knowing and applying it automatically,*  
> *my encounters with native Americans who are college students*  
> *indicate that neither is the case.*

Much of grammar isn't even noticeable because it's so automatic.

For example, schools don't have to teach native English speakers which prepositions go with which verbs because they already know before they get to school. However, it takes years of deliberate memorization for a non-native speaker to learn, while native speakers pick it up naturally and can use the correct prepositions with no conscious effort.

Nathan

--

Nathan Sanders  
Linguistics Program  
Williams College  
Williamstown, MA 01267

[nsanders@wso.williams.edu](mailto:nsanders@wso.williams.edu)  
<http://wso.williams.edu/~nsanders>