

English grammaticography for university students in Italy (1999-2011): pedagogical grammars or pedagogical presentations of linguistic theories?

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Abstract

University grammars of English have been a prolific genre in many European academic contexts in the last hundred years, as a result of a long-standing tradition of scholarly research into English grammar, particularly in north-Western Europe. In Italian universities, the teaching of English language in faculties for language professionals for a long time boiled down to practical language classes while more academic courses focused exclusively on literary or philological topics. It was not until an overhaul of teaching and research areas was carried out at the turn of the last century that 'academic' English courses alongside practical language development classes were made a compulsory part of Modern Languages degrees in Italy. A limited number of Italian university grammars of English were published between 1999 and 2011. These have been scrutinized with a view to ascertaining what kind of role the authors of Italian university grammar books of English deemed their books might play in the newly established 'academic' English language curriculum and whether they considered themselves 'pedagogical' writers addressing an audience of advanced-level non-native learners of English. The analysis has shown that the emerging genre of Italian university grammars of English is more akin to pedagogical presentations of linguistic theories than fully-fledged pedagogical grammars of English.