When "steel meets steel": grammar doesn't need to be dull

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My younger son tells me that talking about language – especially grammar – is boring. But it doesn't need to be. Especially if you are sneaky!



To illustrate, I decided to review Brown's

14 grammatical morphemes while
attending <u>Ironfest</u>, the annual festival of
steel and stuff you can make with it, including swords, armour, steam engines, and tanks.

What?

To <u>recap</u>, back in the 1960s and 1970s, clinical psychologist Roger Brown studied the grammatical development of three typically developing children of approximately 2 to 4 1/2 years of age. From these studies, he identified 14 grammatical morphemes, which he found could be measured reliably over time:

- 1. Present progressive -ing
- 2. Preposition in
- 3. Preposition on
- 4. Regular plural -s
- 5. Irregular past tense verbs (e.g. came, ran, sat, broke)
- 6. Regular possessive –s
- 7. Uncontractible copula (It is [X]. Yes, it is/was. There I am.)
- 8. Articles (a, the, an)
- 9. Past tense regular -ed
- 10. Regular third person –s (e.g. Dad eats.)
- 11. Irregular third person (does, has)
- 12. Uncontractible auxiliary (e.g. She was dancing.)
- 13. Contractible copula (He's handsome.)
- 14. Contractible auxiliary (Dad's yelling.)

So let's get to it. Here's how my review went down!

1. Present progressive -ing

The soldiers are marching.

2. Preposition in

Rapunzel is in the tower.



3. Preposition on

The warships are floating **on** the water.

4. Regular plural -s

The **queens** are smiling.



5. Irregular past tense verbs (e.g. came, ran, sat, broke)

The soldiers **held** their shields.



6. Regular possessive –s

The falconer's peregrine falcon.



7. Uncontractible copula (It is [X]. Yes, it is/was. There I am.)

Was the sun going down? Yes, it was.



8. Articles (a, the, an)

A carriage is parked on the grass.



9. Past tense regular -ed

The band played.



10. Regular third person –s (e.g. Dad eats.)

The performer balances.



11. Irregular third person (does, has)

The man **has** a steam engine and **does** a lap of the showground.



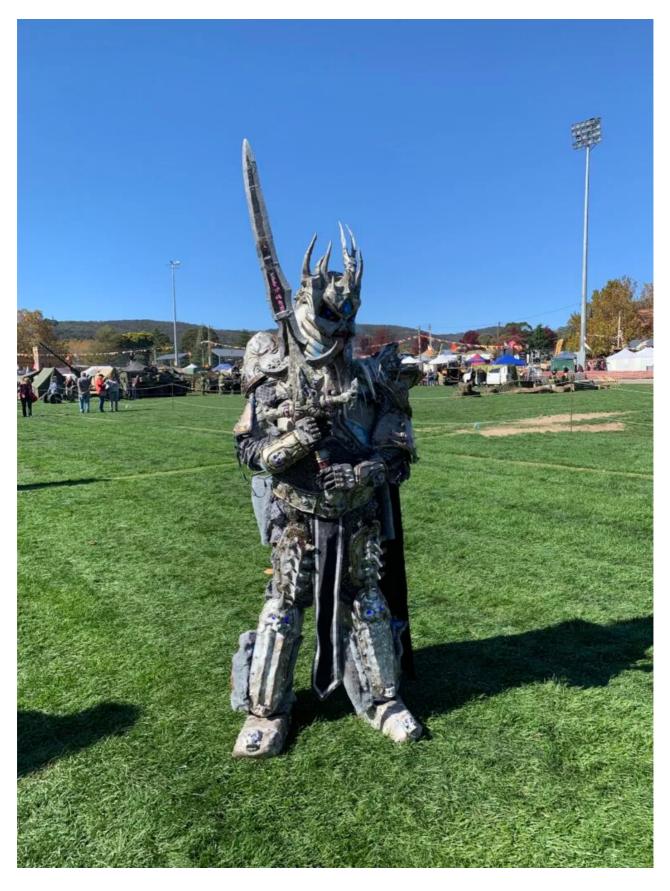
12. Uncontractible auxiliary (e.g. She was dancing.)

He was cycling.



13. Contractible copula (He's handsome.)

He's scary.



14. Contractible auxiliary (Dad's yelling.)

The wrestler's jumping.



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Principal source: R. Brown, A First Language: Early Stages, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1973).