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To Teach or Not to Teach Grammar: Is There a Motivating
Compromise?

A project by

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Submitted to the subcommittee of
Education and Social Sciences Division of the
Lebanese American University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Education

August 2005

Major emphasis: TESOL

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Abstract

The debate of whether to teach or not to teach grammar has been of great significance in the language field. Nowadays, the teaching of grammar is being re-evaluated. Many researchers believe that grammar in itself is essential; it is the way it was treated that made it dull and ineffective. Therefore, the focus of this project is to find effective and motivating ways in which grammar can be introduced to students. The intent of this paper is to help teachers present grammar in a motivating way. Thus, this project provides teachers with a teaching kit that has a number of interesting and fun techniques to help students notice grammatical structures and apply them while communicating with each other in a relaxed environment. Teachers can adjust the proposed techniques according to the needs of their students. The provided kit is a guideline for teachers who are willing to innovate in the classroom and allow for continuous interaction between students.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my loving and supportive husband and to my devoted family.

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I would like to express my gratitude to the following people for their support in the accomplishment of this degree. My husband, my parents, my sisters and my family-in-law were always there to encourage me. I would also like to thank my professors who were a great source of help and encouragement. Dr. Bahous, I am really grateful for your continuous support. Dr. Harmoush, I would really like to thank you for your time and effort. Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Harb, Dr. Nabhani, Dr. Osta, Dr. Zeitouni and all the professors and staff at the Lebanese American University.

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Introduction

Grammar is one of the substantial aspects of a language. It is of great significance when we need to express complex meanings with maximum accuracy. It helps us to communicate more effectively. The importance of grammar should not be overshadowed by malpractice and ineffective teaching. Instead, methodologists and teachers need to find better ways to expose students to correct language and help them acquire it. There is no single approach or method that is the solution for the effective teaching of grammar. Some approaches were used for a long time and were later found to be ineffective. For example, the traditional approach to grammar teaching was practiced for years. However, it was found to create learners who were communicatively incompetent since this approach was based on rule memorization rather than practice. The communicative approach was also criticized for over-emphasizing meaning which was sometimes done at the expense of proper structure. This shows that limiting teaching to a single approach minimizes the effectiveness of such an approach. When several approaches are combined, they tend to complement each other. Therefore, flexibility and open-mindedness can help in trying innovative ways to treat grammar and finding a way that best fits the needs and interests of students.

Rationale

The status of grammar in our schools has changed throughout the years. Grammar was taught in a traditional way for a long time. Teachers explained rules and students were supposed to memorize them and go through boring drills and repetitions. However, many schools today think that it is wise to rather ignore grammar and leave it until it

arises naturally or by chance. This is due to the emphasis on meaning rather than structure. This was also influenced by the new Lebanese national curriculum which limited the teaching of grammar. The educational objectives of the English language curriculum focus on listening, speaking, reading, writing, cultural awareness, thinking skills, and study skills. Grammar is merely mentioned under one of the written communication objectives; it is stated under increasing competence in the mechanics of writing (NCERD, 1997). The new curriculum decreased the emphasis on grammar and consequently diminished its value. Whatever the reason for the decline of grammar was, it is obvious that there were slight efforts to reconceptualize the teaching of grammar in a way that makes students benefit from it and at the same time be motivated to learn it. Motivating students is the key for educating them. Trying to find new and creative ways to include grammar in our language classes should be carefully considered. There should be a compromise between sticking to traditional grammar and banning the teaching of grammar altogether. Students have the right to see another side of grammar- not just the boring, dry and mechanical one. Students also have the right to be aware of the different forms of a language and their different uses. It is unfair to deprive students from the benefits of grammar learning. Students must see grammar as a means of communication. By attending to the communicative needs of students with highly interesting content and in a realistic context and non-threatening environment, the students will be motivated to learn grammar; this grammar that has definitely survived all these centuries for a reason. Engaging students in activities that are meaningful and relevant to them is the key to reach the students and motivate them to learn grammar. Thus, a teaching kit will be provided in this project. This kit is an attempt to find a motivating compromise between

teaching grammar traditionally and not teaching grammar; it is a way to make students aware of grammar and help them apply it in a meaningful context. The kit is for teachers to use with elementary and intermediate level students who are studying English as a second language. It includes some of the most interesting techniques and games for teaching grammar so that creativity and humor lead the way of grammar into the classroom.

Literature Review

Introduction

The grammar debate has preoccupied theorists and practitioners for a long time. Different methods and approaches towards grammar have been presented throughout the years. Some approaches focused on analyzing the language while others focused on using it. Some approaches were cherished for a while but were later banned such as the traditional approaches. The struggle is not final even today. What is certain, however, is that no matter how sensitive the teaching of grammar is to the ups and downs in fashion and educational methodology, it has rarely been out of the classroom for a long time. Besides, no matter what we think of grammar, we cannot ignore that it is an essential part of effective communication. Therefore, we have to find the best way to incorporate it into the classroom.

Definition of Grammar

Grammar has been defined in many different ways. However, most definitions include the study of language structures and the relation between these structures. The Oxford American Dictionary defines grammar as: "the study of words and the rule for their formation and their relationships to each other in sentences; the rules themselves; speech or writing judged as good or bad according to these rules" (Ayoob, 1999, p.1). Most definitions also agree that grammar is a tool to create meaning especially when contextual clues are missing (Thornbury, 1999).

One definition describes grammar as "the way language is organized and patterned- particularly at the level of the sentence in order to make meaning" (Thornbury, 2004). According to Bygate, grammar is principles which determine how lexical items, phrases

and clauses are joined, and which identify their roles and relations in the communication of meaning (Corbett, 2004).

Asselin (2002) gives three meanings to grammar. The first describes grammar as the unconscious knowledge of language which enables people to use it and understand it. It is the knowledge that is learned naturally and informally by all language users. The second meaning of grammar refers to the conscious knowledge of language structures that is used to talk about the language. Finally, the third meaning is “linguistic etiquette”; i.e. rules about the correct and incorrect usage of language which are usually socially determined (Asselin, 2002). Schuster (1999) defines grammar as “an internalized set of rules that determine whether words and phrases communicate an intended meaning” (p.519).

History of Grammar

Teaching grammar started at least 4,000 years ago when the Babylonian scribes learned to write using word-lists which were prearranged in grammatical patterns; the words were Sumerian and Akkadian (Hudson & Braton, 2002).

Around the second century B.C., the ancient Greeks included grammar in the trivium of literary arts along with logic and rhetoric. Grammar was typically taught to Greek schoolboys (Weaver, 1996). According to Glenn (1995), the role of grammar in the trivium was not merely as rules of correctness but as one of style. Glenn describes this role of grammar as a lively and graceful language performance (Patterson, 1999).

Before that, Aristotle and the Stoics viewed grammar as a means of understanding language. However, since language is a product of the human nature, then, it is subject to

irregularities just like the rest of man's traits. Therefore, language cannot be explained by any firm system of grammar (Weaver, 1996).

However, the early grammars of the Alexandrians were attempts to impose order on language in order to understand it. The Alexandrian tradition dominated the study of grammar in American schools for more than two thousand years (Weaver, 1996).

Late in the second century B.C., Dionysius of Thrace published the first grammar book. It was used by Greek schoolboys until the twelfth century A.D. This book later formed the basis for Latin grammar (Weaver, 1996)

In the first century A.D., the Roman teacher of rhetoric, Quintilian, outlined his Institute of Oratory which was a curriculum including twelve books intended to train the perfect orator. At that time, grammar was a science that included lessons on speaking and writing well, as well as interpreting poems. "Students learned through memorizing the master rhetoricians' speeches and poems. When they were ready, students were allowed to write their own material mimicking the masters" (Patterson, 1999, p.3). There was a great demand on grammar teachers in ancient Rome. Grammar was mainly involved in naming the parts of speech and the effective use of the language.

Although Quintilian did support the belief that the major concern of the grammarian should be "rules of correctness", he also thought that standards for usage should be based upon the current practice of the educated, not upon ancient authority that has stopped to rule the speech of the learned individuals. This is an insight that is still unacknowledged even in our day (Weaver, 1996).

During the middle ages, the idea that grammar is a tool to train the mind was at its peak. Grammar was regarded as the most important subject of the trivium; it was seen as

the basis for all knowledge. It was a requirement for understanding theology, philosophy and literature. Grammar was so important in the Middle Ages that schools were called grammar schools. This tradition continued in Great Britain until the early 1970s for the highest achieving secondary-level students. A few of these elitist schools survive even today (Weaver, 1996).

In the eighteenth century, traditional grammar books were more abundant and more significant. That was the time of the industrial revolution, and the 'nouveau riche' mastered these books in order to become more socially accepted. During the eighteenth century, English grammar books were based on early Latin grammars even when the Latin prescriptions were inappropriate to English (Weaver, 1996). "This was the source of our 'rules' about standard prepositions and split infinitives, double logic, and agreements" (Hudson & Braton, 2002, p.6).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, learning grammar meant the memorization and recitation of "definitions, rules, paradigms, examples, and other grammatical features" (Woods, 1986, p.7). Grammarians were not worried whether students understand the information they were supposed to remember and recite.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, grammar exercises were introduced. They resembled exercises used in teaching grammar today; i.e. they included answering questions, using certain grammatical concepts in sentences, and reorganizing or joining sentences.

At the end of the nineteenth century, grammar was viewed as a way to develop writing. Good writing meant "error-free" writing. Because of this emphasis on writing, teachers were faced with paper loads that they had to correct. To handle this problem,

they focused on mechanical correctness; they were actually assessing writing for superficial correctness (Patterson, 1999).

During the twentieth century, the meaning of grammar shifted away from being a mental discipline into a way for developing writing (Weaver, 1996). In the second half of the century, the old traditional grammar teaching slowly died. A lot of schools in different countries went to the extreme and eliminated the formal instruction of grammar. This took place especially in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia while the old tradition survived in eastern and southern Europe as well as South America (Hudson & Bratton 2002). However, in recent years the teaching of grammar has been revived.

Approaches to Teaching Grammar

Old Approaches

Traditional Grammar Instruction

Traditional instruction of grammar prevailed for more than 2,000 years. This method was originally developed to analyze Greek and Latin. It divided the target language into eight parts of speech: verb, noun, pronoun, participles, articles, prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs. Learning the target language was mainly through focusing on the form and inflection of words and through translating sentences from the target language to the mother tongue (Celce-Murcia, 2001). With the study of English that emerged in the eighteenth century, the same method was used to study the language. Despite the fact that the traditional method was not as effective in studying English, it remained the basis of instructional pedagogy until recently. Actually, it is still used in many English as

Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms around the world. It manifests itself through the memorization of grammar rules and the translation of English into the native language (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Structural/ Audio-lingual/ Direct Approaches

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th century, linguists contrasted and explained world languages. They again reached the conclusion that it was not appropriate to use the eight parts of speech framework as a base to study all languages. Therefore, languages were now analyzed using three subsystems: phonology, morphology, and syntax. The audio-lingual and direct approaches appeared when this new view of language was coupled with the behaviorist stimulus-response principle.

These approaches were a reaction to the traditional approach which created learners who were communicatively incompetent despite their substantial knowledge of grammar rules (Celce-Murcia, 2001). With the new approach, formal grammar explanation was highly used. Contrastive analysis was also employed in order to detect systematic errors in second language learners. "Contrastive rhetoric is an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them" (Connor, 1996, p.5). Drills and repetition were highly exercised as a way to achieve accurate production of the target language (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Functional Approach

This approach was developed in the 1960's by British linguists who based it on the communicative needs of the language learner. Grammar was structured according to specific communicative or situational activities that the learner might come across in real life such as "asking questions" or language needed "at a restaurant". In such an approach, rules and drills were presented for particular grammatical or functional features of the target language. They also developed from easy to difficult. That is why such syllabi were called "synthetic".

Many English as a Second and English as Foreign Language textbooks today have a functional/situational base. Skehan (1998) calls this approach the three Ps: presentation, practice, and production. First, a specific structure is introduced. Then, students practice through different exercises and later other tasks are given to draw out the target structure during performance (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Universal Grammar

This idea came as a reaction to the structuralist view of the language. Chomsky rejected the structuralist idea and believed that language is a generative process which exists innately in the brain. To Chomsky, language is based on syntax and consists of two structures: surface (i.e. the utterance) and deep (i.e. the mental concept). Therefore, he concluded that it is possible to spot "syntactic universals for all languages." Chomsky also pointed out the difference between competence (i.e. the learner's knowledge about language) and performance (the learner's usage of language) (Chomsky, 1972, p.115).

Cognitive approach

This approach relied on cognitive approaches to human psychology and language acquisition. It was also affected by generative grammar theories such as the Chomskian theories of universal grammar which included universal phonetics, semantics, and syntax (Chomsky, 1972). This methodology was adopted in the 1970s and 1980s. It viewed grammar as too complex to be learned naturally. Therefore, grammar teaching was designed to build on the prior knowledge of students and to help them construct new meanings mainly through deductive learning (Celce-Murcia, 2001). This mental processing enabled learners to accomplish linguistic competence. The cognitive method of second language learning focused on traditional grammar instruction and intended to develop the analytical linguistic skills of learners (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Communicative/ Humanistic approaches

These approaches arose due to the increase of ESL learners especially in California during the 1970s. Although these learners had some knowledge of grammar rules, they were unable to communicate effectively. This triggered the communicative approach which is based on the idea that “the primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.161). Therefore, communicative activities were planned to help learners communicate better and feel positive about the instructional process as an attempt to make language acquisition easier. The communicative/humanistic approaches did not support formal grammar instruction.

These approaches believed that by presenting meaning focused input to the learners, they will be able to acquire grammatical forms and vocabulary in a natural way just like a child learns the first language. This was influenced by Krashen's Monitor Model which differentiates between acquisition and learning; acquisition originates our utterances in second language while learning acts as a monitor or editor for our speech (Krashen, 1982). Krashen believed that by presenting the learners with "comprehensible input" through meaningful activities in listening, speaking and reading, they will improve their linguistic competence. "We acquire language ... when we understand what we hear or what we read, when we understand the message" (Krashen, 1992, p.4). However, many researchers commented that certain types of grammatical knowledge cannot be accomplished merely by exposure to meaningful input; instructed learning may be needed (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). Researchers who study the effectiveness of this approach "work within a meaning-based or communicative approach, setting research agendas which aim to discover what form-focused practice are most effective, when they are best used and with which forms" (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p.37)

Focus on form

In the 1980s, a number of linguists, led by M.H. Long proposed this approach (Long, 1991). It came as a reaction to the limitations of a purely communicative approach and the focus on forms approach. "Focus on forms is characterized by a structuralist, synthetic approach to language, where the primary focus of classroom activity is on language forms rather than the meanings they

convey.”(Burgess& Therington, 2001, p.435). Focus on form tried to combine between the above two approaches in order to address their limitations. This approach is “meaning- based interaction that draws the learner’s attention to a formal aspect of the language.”(Klapper& Rees, 2003, p.228). Therefore, classroom activities focused on communicative tasks and grammatical concepts were explained when their misuse interfered with communicating a certain meaning. However, there is no grammatical syllabus (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Noticing and Consciousness Raising

Many educators today view grammar teaching as “consciousness raising”, which means building learner’s awareness of a specific grammatical aspect even if the learner is not able to use the feature directly. Fotos and Ellis (1991) note that the development of the knowledge of grammatical features through formal instruction can make these features more significant for the learners. Such knowledge makes it easier for them to internalize these structures. Mere input and interaction cannot ensure learner’s acquisition; however, they can “set the scene for potential learning” (Hinkel& Fotos, 2002, p.6). When a learner frequently notices a certain grammatical structure through communicative exposure, s/he will be aware of this structure and will unconsciously accommodate the difference between the noticed feature and her/his prior knowledge (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Current approaches

Processing instruction

In this approach learners are exposed to explicit instruction, and they are encouraged to process input through different activities; these activities aim at

helping learners understand a target structure without trying to produce it. These tasks drive learners to make meaning-form connections in input (Lee & Van Patten, 1995). Input processing supports comprehension skills (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

Interactional Feedback

This approach refers to negotiating feedback through strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetitions, etc. Learners are guided during these strategies in order to aid their comprehension. Interactional feedback helps learners pay attention to features of the language including grammatical structures. Researchers found that feedback negotiated between the learner and the teacher was more effective than feedback that was given randomly and without negotiation (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

Textual Enhancement

This method involves highlighting certain grammatical features in texts. It can be done through boldfacing, italicizing, underlining, or capitalizing the target features. This increases the chance of these items being noticed by learners. The idea behind this method is that when learners are frequently exposed to a target item, this will help them notice the form (Schmidt, 1990). Studies on textual enhancement propose that this strategy is not sufficient for acquisition. Acquisition might occur in the case of constant noticing activities with sufficient occasions to produce the intended form skills (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

Task-Based Instruction

Focused tasks

Nunan (1989) described communicative tasks as: “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (p.10). Recently, however, communicative tasks were designed to focus learners’ attention to target forms. Ellis (2003) called these tasks “focused” ones in comparison with the unfocused ones which only focused on communication. Such focused tasks are planned in a way that encourages learners to notice and understand target forms in carefully planned input. Research on the use of focused tasks suggest that they are very efficient especially with complex grammatical structure that cannot be easily understood through formal instruction (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

Collaborative output tasks

Research showed that mere exposure to meaningful input was not enough for accurate Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Therefore, it was suggested that producing output plays an important part in SLA. “When learners attempt to produce the L2, they notice that they are not able to say what they want to say, and this “pushes” them to achieve greater accuracy” (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004, p.136). When learners attempt to produce the target language, they have to use deeper syntactic processing for accurate production skills (Swain, 2000).

A summary of the approaches

<i>Approaches</i>	<i>Origin & History</i>	<i>Main Idea</i>	<i>Practice</i>	<i>Instruction</i>
Traditional Grammar Instruction	Originally developed to analyze Greek and Latin	Focusing on the parts of speech and inflections of words	Rule memorization and translation from English to native language	Formal grammar instruction
Structural/ Audiolingual/ Direct	End of the 19 th century	Language divided into 3 subsystems: phonology, morphology and syntax	Drills and repetition; contrastive analysis	Formal grammar instruction
Functional	Developed by British linguists in the 1960's	Focus on Communicative needs of learners	Situational activities e.g. at the restaurant	Communication rather than formal instruction
Universal Grammar	Supported by Chomsky	Language based on syntax; two structures for language: surface and deep	Help students understand the difference between surface and deep structure	Formal instruction
Cognitive	1970's and 1980's; generative grammar theories	Mental processing and building on prior knowledge	Deductive learning; develop analytical skills	Traditional grammar instruction

Communicative/ Humanistic	1970's; supported by Krashen	"comprehensible input"	Communicative activities	Against formal instruction
Focus on Form	1980's; led by M.H. Long	Meaning-based interaction; attention to form	Communicative activities; explaining grammar concepts when need arises	No grammatical syllabus
Noticing and Consciousness Raising	More recent approach	Noticing grammatical structure through communicative exposure "input enhancement"	Activities to raise learner's awareness of grammatical forms	Explicit instruction; communicative exposure
Processing Instruction	Supported by Van Patten	Making meaning-form connections in input	Activities that enhance understanding rather than production of target form	Explicit instruction
Interactional Feedback	Supported by many researchers	Negotiating feedback to draw attention to aspects of target language	Repetitions, classifications, confirmation checks	No formal instruction
Textual Enhancement	Least intrusive and explicit method of focus on form	Frequent exposure to target structures	Highlighting grammatical features	No formal instruction

Task-Based Instruction	Supported by many researchers	Exposure to meaningful input and production of the target language.	Communicative tasks that focus on form; collaborative output tasks	No formal instruction
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To teach or not to teach grammar

“There is no doubt that knowledge –implicit or explicit- of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of a language.” (Penny Ur)

“The effects of grammar teaching ...appear to be peripheral and fragile.” (Stephen Krashen)

“A sound knowledge of grammar is essential if pupils are going to use English creatively.” (Tom Hutchinson)

“Grammar is not the basis of language acquisition, and the balance of linguistic research clearly invalidates any view to the contrary.” (Michael Lewis)

These quotes- found in Thornbury (1999, p.14) - are just a few among many that show how varied the attitudes of linguists and practitioners towards teaching grammar are. In this part, many of the arguments with and against grammar will be presented.

The case for grammar

Throughout the centuries, many reasons have been given to support the teaching of grammar. One of these reasons was that language is an ultimate human accomplishment that is worthy of study. Other reasons stressed the benefits of studying grammar which included grammar as a promoter of a mental discipline, an aid for better listening and speaking skills, and a facilitator for the study of other languages. In his book “How to

Teach Grammar”, Thornbury (1999) explains some of the arguments that support the case for grammar teaching.

Arguments for teaching grammar

The sentence-machine argument

Grammar empowers us with a machine that gives us the ability to create a huge number of original sentences. This gives language users the potential for unlimited linguistic creativity (Thornbury, 1999).

The fine-tuning argument

Grammar helps us eliminate subtle language mistakes that would interfere with the clarity of the message we wish to convey. It helps in decreasing ambiguity when communicating with others. “Grammar is vital if we want to be listener/reader-friendly and if we want to express our meanings with any precision.” (Willis, 2004, p.4)

The fossilization argument

A person may be able to pick up a language without formal instruction. However, this would put her/him at a greater risk of reaching a state where s/he can no longer progress; i.e. her/his linguistic competence fossilizes (Thornbury, 1999).

The advance-organizer argument

Although grammar instruction might not be enough to turn a person into a fluent speaker of the target language, it helps the learner notice certain grammatical features of the language when spoken that might otherwise have gone unnoticed (Thornbury, 1999).

The discrete item argument

Grammar can be a way for sorting out a language and classifying it into clear categories. This helps guide the learners through language which might seem to them as something gigantic and unattainable (Thornbury, 1999).

The rule-of-law argument

Grammar helps teachers who are confronted by disobedient and unenthusiastic teenagers to teach and test in orderly steps. It presents teachers with a planned system which makes their lives easier (Thornbury, 1999).

The learner expectation argument (1)

Learners often come to class with certain expectations of the learning experience. These expectations might be due to previous classroom experience. It might also be due to the learners' desire to acquire the language through an efficient and well-organized way especially after being frustrated from trying to pick up the target language in a non-classroom setting (Thornbury, 1999).

The case against grammar

Since the 1930s, a lot of research focused on the value that can be attributed to formal grammar. A substantial percentage of this research claimed that the contribution of grammar to language learning is insignificant (Weaver, 1996).

Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer wrote a report for the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1963 in which they reached the following conclusion: "In view of the widespread agreements of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some

instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing.” (p. 37-38)

However, Kolln (1981) reviewed some of the earlier research summaries where she revealed flaws in the design and realization of the Braddock et al. research. Actually, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer were conscious of these weaknesses at the time; they admitted that there were weak points in the method and analysis of the research studies from which they generalized. Therefore, it is not sure how valid the research supporting the idea of the insignificance of grammar is (Weaver, 1996).

Arguments against teaching grammar

The knowledge-how argument

To know how to do something does not mean you can do it. Language is a set of skills that need to be learned by using these skills and not merely by studying about them (Thornbury, 1999).

The communication argument

To be able to communicate using the target language does not only involve knowing the grammar but knowing how to use this grammar to generate meaning in a socially appropriate manner. This is called communicative competence (Thornbury, 1999).

The acquisition argument

If a person is able to acquire her/his first language without being taught grammar rules why can't s/he acquire a second language in the same way? Krashen was one of the most prominent supporters of this argument. He said that formal instruction results in learning but not in acquiring a language. According to Krashen, “acquisition

occurs when the learner is exposed to the right input in a stress-free environment so that innate learning capacities are triggered.” (Thornbury, 1999, p.19)

The natural order argument

According to Chomsky, grammatical items are acquired in a certain order that is not respective to the order in which they are taught. This means that trying to change this natural order will eventually fail (Thornbury, 1999).

The lexical chunks argument

This argument involves chunk-learning as opposed to rule-learning. Language chunks are bigger than words but mostly smaller than sentences. If a person acquires these chunks, it would help her/him save planning time when faced with a real interaction situation. It would also help in language development once the chunks are analyzed into their component elements in a later stage. Acquiring these chunks can be more practical and useful than studying abstract grammar categories (Thornbury, 1999).

The learner expectations argument (2)

Many learners join English classes in order to have a chance to use the language rather than just study about it. Adult learners in particular put a high priority on “conversation” in the classroom. They are not satisfied with mere grammar instruction (Thornbury, 1999).

Is there a compromise?

Many misconceptions about grammar led to a trend of ignoring grammar instruction and labeling it as a useless and sometimes harmful process. Some educators believed that grammar is acquired naturally and therefore does not need to be taught. In refuting this

argument, Larsen-Freeman (1997) admits that while this statement is true for some learners, others might not be able to achieve accurate proficiency in English. Larsen-Freeman believes that instruction helps in accelerating students' natural acquisition of grammar.

Other educators claimed that grammar is a collection of meaningless forms. Larsen-Freeman argues that grammar is neither unidimensional nor meaningless. Grammatical structures have three interdependent dimensions: form, meaning and use. "Grammatical structures not only have form, they are also used to express meaning in context appropriate use." (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p.252)

"Grammar is boring" is a statement often heard from teachers. Brown (1996) says that these teachers' frame of mind is set around the disastrous 3 D's: dull, dismal and dreadful. According to Larsen-Freeman, this myth is due to the idea that grammar can only be taught by using dull drills and rote learning. In order not to fall into this trap, teachers should try to teach grammar creatively by engaging students in relevant and fun activities (2001). Otherwise, students will perceive the teacher's negative attitude towards grammar which will affect their own attitude.

Some teachers claim that due to students' different learning styles, some would not be able to learn grammar. Although, students might learn at different rates, research has not yet shown that some students cannot learn grammar. (Larsen-Freeman, 1997)

Other teachers go as far to claim that proper grammar and speech are not the norm; it is a form of "elitism". Brown (1996) wonders where one can draw boundaries for allowing countless variations of what is proper. These teachers argue that they do not want to stifle pupils' imagination with rules of grammar. Whiteneck (2001) says that

students, who were led to believe that context is significant while mechanics are not, think that they write creatively and that the form of writing that he wants his students to use is boring and oppressive.

In the 1970's and 1980's, a lot of research results showed the flaws in traditional grammar instruction. However, instead of finding alternative approaches, many teachers stopped teaching grammar altogether (Asselin, 2002). Hudson and Braton (2002) state that: "The problem with old fashioned grammar was not that it was grammar. It was to do with both context and methods- with what was taught and how it was taught." (p.6) Mullen (1993) accuses educationalists who abandoned grammar teaching that they mistakenly pictured that they can reach the end without thinking about the means. Their end was a fluent, self-assured, and eloquent student- but one who achieved this proficient level without having to go through the basics of the language which include grammar.

Although grammar teaching has been a controversial issue among educators and methodologists, it remained one of the foundations in English language teaching worldwide (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). "No matter how vulnerable grammar is to the flow of fashion in educational methodology, it hardly ever disappears from language classes for a long time" (Hudson & Braton, 2002). Hudson and Braton (2002) state that an understanding of grammar remains vital in a person's ability to communicate efficiently.

Mulroy (2003) quotes Danielle Allen, a young intellectual, describing the value of grammar.

Learning grammar taught me how to think, to pay attention to the neat and precise relationships between things, to look for subtle differences, to grapple with complexity. I always felt as if a world of logic resided in my grammar lessons, and when I got to high school English classes, even classes on novels, plays, and short stories, was leaps and bounds ahead of students who had never had the same chance to study grammar. (p.114)

Therefore, it is not a question of whether to teach or not to teach grammar, but rather what the most efficient way for grammar teaching is (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). The challenge would be in finding a systematic way for treating grammar in the language class without making it a boring and dry study of form (West, 1998).

It is very essential that we teach grammar for good reasons not bad ones. Swan (2002) explains seven bad reasons that encourage teachers to teach grammar and two reasons that should be the goals for teaching grammar. The seven bad reasons are that grammar is there, it is tidy, it is testable, it is a security blanket, it is what made me who I am, it gives power, and it has to be taught as a whole system. However, Swan indicates that the two good reasons for teaching grammar are comprehensibility and acceptability. Grammar helps us to be understandable when we communicate and it increases our chances of being accepted in social settings rather than being subject to prejudices.

“Any pedagogical grammar should be “eclectic” in nature since we may not know exactly which pedagogy works for whom. Therefore, flexibility is an important consideration for a sound pedagogical approach” (ZhonggangGao, 2001).

No matter which method the teacher chooses to follow for teaching grammar, gradually laying the ground for grammar instruction is very important. One of the most efficient ways to start with is exposing students to language at an appropriate level of difficulty (Richards, 2002). According to Krashen, this can be done through reading. “Students first acquire (absorb subconsciously) a great deal of grammatical competence through reading” (Krashen, 1998). After being exposed to real language, learners can be given tasks that would involve real language use. Therefore, learners are encouraged to

engage in message-focused tasks even though their language is still grammatically imprecise. (Ellis, 2002)

“First we should encourage learners to engage in meaning. Once they have done this with a degree of success, we can look at ways of expressing their meanings with greater precision and listener/reader friendliness” (Willis, 2004).

It can be very helpful for students if the teacher aims to teach grammar as awareness by providing opportunities for learners to notice linguistic forms as they read or communicate during meaningful language tasks. Students can also be guided to notice grammatical forms in their own writing (Vavra, 1996).

Providing opportunities for students to practice language while paying attention to forms helps them to gradually acquire grammatical structures and internalize them. The teacher should downplay the grammatical shortcomings of students in order to encourage them to use language. As Leibniz said: “A language is acquired through practice; it is merely perfected through grammar” (Thornbury, 1999, p.25). When students try to produce structures while communicating, they have the chance to test their hypotheses on how grammar structures are formed, what they mean, and when they can be used (Larsen- Freeman, 2001). In other words, they get to test the hypotheses they have formed while being exposed to language before they start explicitly focusing on grammar.

According to Larsen- Freeman (2001), “Grammar teaching is not as much knowledge transmission as it is skill development.” (p.255) Filling students’ heads with grammar rules will not help them be proficient users of the language. What teachers should aim for is enabling students to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately

(Larsen- Freeman, 2001). In an address to teachers, Thornbury (2004) says: "It is unlikely that any of the grammar you teach will take hold if there are not frequent opportunities for putting it to practical use. This does not mean simple doing exercises. It means using language creatively in instruction" (p.41) "Doing grammar at the expense of opportunities to use language for original, creative and meaningful interaction is time largely misspent" (Thornbury, 2004, p.40).

After students are helped to notice grammatical forms in their reading and in communicative language tasks, the teachers can start to explicitly talk about grammatical rules and help students discover these rules by themselves. It is recommended that technical terms should be kept to a minimum. It also helps students to understand better when topics are presented in segments. Teachers should attend to students' needs by focusing on areas of grammar that might cause problems to students. Teachers can also innovate in class by varying teaching methods and presenting information in a way that is meaningful to the students instead of adhering to the ways shown in the textbook. "It is not the adherence to a particular teaching method but teachers' involvement with the grammar-focused activities and their ability to personalize teaching and to make activities engaging that often promotes successful learning." (Richards, 2002, p.10)

From the different recommendations on finding an effective way to teach grammar, it seems sensible that the secret to finding a compromise between teaching grammar traditionally and abandoning grammar and leaving it to chance lies in attempting to find a balance between grammar and communication.

“Research has shown that teachers who focus students attention on linguistic form during communicative interactions are more efficient than those who never focus on form or who only do so in decontextualized grammar lessons” (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p.251).

Conclusion

Grammar is a vital aspect of language. Despite malpractice in teaching grammar, it remains an important component when teaching a language. Therefore, the question is not whether to teach grammar or not but rather how to teach grammar in a motivating and effective way. Students should first be exposed to the language through reading materials that are appropriate to their level and needs. They can later start practicing the language; grammar is a skill that needs to be developed through practice. Teachers can guide students to notice grammatical forms as they use the language in meaningful contexts. Students should be encouraged to use the target language creatively. To this aim, teachers can plan motivating activities that engage the learners in practicing the language and noticing its different forms. The teaching kit provided in this project contains interesting grammar teaching techniques that can help instructors present grammar in a very enjoyable and effective way.

The Teaching Kit

Introduction

The activities in this teaching kit offer teachers increased resources for focusing on grammar in a way that is motivating and relevant to students. These learner-centered activities help students become aware of different grammatical structures while communicating in challenging, creative and humorous game like contexts. These contexts make learning personally meaningful to the students.

It is the teacher's job to choose tasks and materials that engage the learners. Tasks and materials that are involving, that are relevant to their needs, that have an achievable outcome, and that have an element of challenge while providing the necessary support, are more likely to be motivating than those that do not have these qualities. (Thornbury, 1999, p.26)

Teaching Techniques

1- Using Flashcards

Technique: *You use flashcards to help learners practice challenging speaking activities in which they use the new language focus.*

Language focus: *Count/ Non-Count Nouns*

Level: *Elementary*

Resources: *Flashcards- clothes line- pegs*

Preparation:

- *Draw a person who is shopping on a flashcard*
- *Use the rest of the flashcards to draw different count and non-count items.*

The drawings should be big enough for the whole class to see. The flashcards should have things we count, things we do not count, things in containers, and quantities of things.

Procedure:

- ① Show the flashcards of the person who is shopping.
- ② Start showing the different items he is shopping for. Say some sample sentences. For example: "He wants to buy..." (a jar of coffee, some tea, a kilogram of flour, etc.)
- ③ Show the cards one by one and ask different students what the man wants to buy. Echo a student's answer if it is correct. If it is wrong, say it the correct way. Reshow cards occasionally to revise the answers.
- ④ Hang a clothes line on the board. Divide the board into two halves: countable and uncountable nouns. Now, hold each card and ask if the students can count what they see on the card. For example, "pens" can be counted. Hang this flashcard on the countable side of the clothes line with a peg. Another example could be "rice" which is uncountable and should be hung on the other side of the clothes line.
- ⑤ Keep showing the cards and ask the students where you should hang it.
- ⑥ Divide the class into two halves: "shoppers" and "shopkeepers". The shoppers have to write a shopping list and go buy them from the shopkeepers. Distribute the flashcards randomly among the shopkeepers.
- ⑦ Shoppers have to ask for the items they need in the correct way. (e.g. "Could I have some tea?") If the shopkeeper has the flashcard with tea on it, the shopper can cross the item from their shopping list. Otherwise, s/he has to go around and see who has what s/he needs.
- ⑧ Shoppers and shopkeepers can later swap roles.

(Scrivener, 2003)

2- Using pictures "1st" situations

Technique: You use pictures that prompt students to use the target language.

Language focus: Present Progressive

Level: Elementary

Resources: Pictures

Preparation: Draw some pictures on cardboard and hang them on the board in class. The pictures include two big pictures of two people speaking on the phone and six small pictures of what people were doing at a party.

Procedure:

- ① Ask the students to listen carefully to the conversation going on between the people on the phone. Give names to these characters.
- ② Divide the conversation into six parts according to the small pictures you hang randomly on the board.
- ③ When you finish each conversation ask students to show you the picture you are talking about. Ask them what is going on in the pictures. For example: "What is Emma doing?". Help the students to answer correctly: "She is dancing."
- ④ Repeat the same procedure with other pictures.
- ⑤ When you finish, recap the conversation by pointing at each picture one by one to check if the students can ask answer questions correctly.

⑥Now, divide the class in pairs and ask them to act out the roles of the people on the phone. They have to ask questions about the pictures. Encourage the students to add new ideas to the dialogue you read to them.

(Scrivener, 2003)

3- Creating Imaginary Situations

Technique: *You provide memorable contexts for the new language focus by setting up interesting imaginary scenes in class.*

Language focus: *Can/ Can't*

Level: *Elementary*

Resources: *Classroom objects; a toy or model of an element*

Procedure:

① Act as a TV announcer. Welcome the students to the 2005 Olympics.

Students have to pass the Olympic test to become Olympic champions.

②Ask a student to come to the front and try to stand on one foot. Then, say:

“Contestant # 1 can stand on one foot. Congratulations!”

③Pretend to be contestant # 2 and fail to stand on one foot. Then, as an

announcer say: “Contestant #2 can't stand on one foot.”

④Repeat the procedure with different tests. Ask different students to try to

“touch their toes”, “walk with a book on their head”, “stand a pen on their fingertip”. Comment on what the students can or can't do. You can include funny tests like asking the students to touch their nose with their tongue.

⑤Write some of your comments on the board for the students to notice them.

You can highlight can and can't.

⑥ Show the students how they can ask and answer questions. E.g. Can you stand a pen on your fingertip? Yes, I can. / No I can't.

⑦ Now, divide the class into pairs: TV announcers and Olympic contestants. Let them practice different tests and comment on the results.

(Scrivener, 2003)

4- Using Information Gaps

Technique: Students communicate by sharing information in a speaking activity while focusing on the target grammar structure.

Language Focus: Prepositions

Level: Elementary

Resources: A simple picture of a kitchen; pictures of objects that could be found in the kitchen (e.g. pot, plate, apples, etc.)

Procedure:

① Hang the picture of the kitchen on the board and ask the learners to copy it.

② Hang the picture of the plate somewhere in the kitchen. Ask the class about its place. Question: "Where is the plate?" Answer: "The plate is on the table.")

③ Show the students different pictures hung in different places in the kitchen and ask them about the location of the items. Make sure the students add these items to their picture.

④ Help students produce sentences such as...

It's on the top/bottom shelf

on/under the table

next to/behind the fridge

between the table and the fridge

- ⑤ Tell the students that this is the kitchen of a person who has lots of mice everywhere. Ask them to secretly draw three little mice somewhere in the picture.
- ⑥ Ask the students to work in pairs. Each student has to find out where the mice of the other student are then add them to her/his picture. Students exchange information until they can find out where each others' mice are.
- ⑦ Go around and give feedback to the students. Help them with language problems and let them focus on prepositions.
- ⑧ Students can then change partners. Now, each student has six mice on her/his picture. The pairs should now communicate to find out where each others' mice are. Their language will be much better in the second round.

(Scrivener, 2003)

5- Doing Role Plays

Technique: Students create role plays using a framework that you provide.

Language Focus: Will/I'll in offering help or promising

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: A role play preparation grid

1	2	3
---	---	---

Who are you?

Who are you talking to?

Where are you?

What are you talking about?

Procedure:

- ① Create a situation where a student forgets her/his school bag at home. Her/his friends offer her/him things such as pens, food, paper, etc. The teacher states a few sample sentences. (e.g. I'll lend you my pen. I will give you half of my sandwich.)
- ② Divide the class in pairs. One student takes the role of the person who forgot the bag and the other takes the role of the friend who offers to help. Let the students fill in the preparation grid after copying it.
- ③ The students have to carry on a conversation where one offers the other to borrow her/his stuff. Later, students exchange roles.
- ④ The teacher goes around the class and gives feedback. She can collect some correct sentences and write them on the board.
- ⑤ You can change the situation later. Now, one student has to imagine that s/he is an old lady carrying some heavy bags at the station and another student offers help. They have to carry out another conversation together. They also have to fill out a preparation grid for this situation.
- ⑥ Later, change the partners and ask each pair to come up with a third situation and how one offers help to the other.

(Scrivener, 2003)

6- Using a Diary

Technique: Use a sample diary to explain the intended grammar point. Then, use the diary format as an information gap activity and let the students compare their diary entries.

Language Focus: "Going to"

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: A blank diary frame

Procedure:

- ① Draw the diary frame on the board. Tell the students about your plans for next week and add them to the diary frame. (e.g. Tomorrow morning, I'm going to go grocery shopping.)
- ② Ask your class to tell you about your schedule using the diary on the board. Encourage them to use "going to".
- ③ Ask the students if the sentences talk about the past, present, or future. Ask them if they think the chance for carrying out the plans is small or if they are definite plans. Try to show the students that "going to" is used for definite plans in the future.
- ④ Ask learners to draw a diary frame in their copybooks. Then, ask them to write down the things they are going to do in the next few days.
- ⑤ Divide the class in pairs and ask them to question each other about their plans. Then, rearrange the pairs and ask each student to tell his/her present partners about the plans of his/her previous partner.

(Scrivener, 2003)

7. Telling a Story

Technique: The teacher tells a true or partially true personal story that includes lots of examples of the target language in an interesting and motivating context.

Language Focus: Simple Past "was"/"were"

Level: Elementary

Resources: Write a short story about your life. Include lots of examples of “was” and “were”, in addition to funny details.

Procedure:

- ① Choose the keywords from the story you have written. Write three or four of these keywords on the board in a random order.
- ② Ask the students to look at the words on the board and try to guess the story you have. Let them discuss the issue in pairs. Ask some volunteers to give you their ideas without giving them any feedback.
- ③ Add the rest of the keywords in a random order and ask the students if they can think of the story. Let them share their ideas.
- ④ Now, read the story you have in an interesting way. Let the students discuss whose predictions were close to the original story. Then, let them put the keywords they see on the board in order. This helps students to remember the sequence of events.
- ⑤ Write the whole story on the board and leave out “was” and “were”. Ask the students to figure out how they can fill the spaces. When they give you the answers, ask them why they used “was” here and “were” there. Let them try to come up with the rule.
- ⑥ Ask the students to write a short story of their own. Encourage the use of “was” and “were”.

8-Using Pictures “2”. Stories

Technique: Students try to recreate a story using a sequence of pictures.

Language Focus: Simple Past Tense (regular and irregular)

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: A short story that includes regular and irregular past tense verbs. The story should be simple and have a clear sequence so that it can be easily illustrated in a few pictures.

Procedure:

- ① Stick the first picture on the board and ask students to tell you who and what they can see. Add the rest of the pictures one by one and let the students give you their ideas and sentences.
- ② Do not write any sentence on the board; it is more challenging for the learners to try to remember what was said. Ask the students to try to remember the simple past verbs they used to tell the story and write them in a list.
- ③ Now, read the story you have written and ask the students to check their list of verbs. Then, ask the learners to dictate the story to you while you write it on the board exactly as they say it. When a student gives you a wrong sentence, ask the rest of the class if they are happy with the sentence or whether they want to change something.
- ④ When the story is complete and you have corrected the mistakes with the students, ask them to copy it.

(Scrivener, 2003)

9- Dictating Keywords

Technique: Give learners keywords that they have to use to recreate a story.

Language Focus: Regular and Irregular Simple Past

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: A short story that includes about 15-20 verbs in the simple past
(regular and irregular).

Procedure:

- ① Dictate the verbs to the students in the correct order of your story.
- ② Divide the class in pairs and ask them to check the lists of words they have.
They have to make sure that they have all the words and check their spelling. When the students finish, ask them to dictate the list to you and help you with the spelling of difficult words.
- ③ The students have to work in pairs to come up with a story including all the verbs in order. They can add some verbs themselves.
- ④ Make sure that the students discuss the story orally instead of focusing on a piece of paper. They should not try to guess your story but create a new story themselves.
- ⑤ Pairs can join other pairs to tell them what they came up with. When they finish, let a few students share some of the stories.
- ⑥ Finally, tell your story in an interesting way but do not give the impression that your story is the correct one.

(Scrivener, 2003)

10- Using Real Objects

Technique: Explain a language point using real objects.

Language Focus: "Used to" for talking about past habits

Level: Intermediate

Resources: Two sets of objects: half representing old hobbies and the other representing current hobbies. Put the old items in an old bag and the new one in a new bag. These are mystery bags.

<i>e.g. Old Hobbies</i>	<i>Current Hobbies</i>
- a bicycle pump	- a car part
- a comic	- a newspaper
- a tennis ball	- a chess piece

Procedure:

- ① First show the students the new mystery bag and tell them that it belongs to a man called John. Ask them to guess what is in the bag. Do not give them any feedback on their suggestions. Take out the first item from the bag such as the car part. Let the students give you a sentence about John. (e.g. John has a car).
- ② Show the class the other items in the bag and ask them to make some sentences. (e.g. He reads the newspaper). Then, put the items back in the bag.
- ③ Now, show the students the old mystery bag and tell them that John found this while he was tidying up his closet. He has not checked what is in it for a few years.
- ④ Show them the objects one at a time and encourage them to make sentences about John using the past tense. For example, show them the bicycle pump. They might say: "He had a bike." Tell the students that their sentences are correct but there is another way of talking about old habits by using "used to". (e.g. He used to have a bike.) Now, show them the car part and let them repeat the sentence they

formed earlier (He has a car). Ask them to join the two sentences as such: He used to have a bike, but now he has a car.

⑤ Ask the students to use the other objects to form similar sentences.

(Scrivener, 2003)

11- Turning Lessons upside-down

Technique: You guide learners to use the intended language form without directly teaching it.

Language Focus: Comparisons

Level: Elementary

Resources: Animal pictures drawn on flashcards.

Procedure:

① Stick the flashcards randomly on the board. Ask the students to copy the pictures. As they are drawing, make sure that the students know all the names of the animals.

② Ask the class for words that can describe the different animals. You can teach them a few adjectives yourself.

③ Draw a line connecting two animals. Ask the students how these animals are different. Answer the questions yourself to give the students an example. (e.g. Lions are bigger than rabbits.)

④ Ask the learners to work in pairs. They have to connect two animals and describe how they are different.

⑤ Go around and listen to the students. If they are not using the target language, ask questions like: “What you think? Are rabbits friendlier than lions?”

⑥Ask the students to think about the sentences they have formed or heard. Help them to deduce how we make comparisons depending on whether the adjective is one, two or three syllables.

⑦Ask each student to choose an animal and write five sentences to compare it to other animals. Let each student read her/his sentences without saying the name of the animal. Let the rest of the class guess what animal it is.

(Scrivener, 2003)

12. Listening and Speaking

Technique: You give your students a chance to hear the target form of language while being used in different ways.

Language Focus: Adverbs of Frequency

Level: Elementary

Resources: Chairs

Procedure:

①Tell the students that they are going to watch a “chat show” where a celebrity will be asked some questions to find out interesting things about her/him.

②Ask the class to work in groups of three to form questions that they would like to ask to the celebrity starting with: How often do you ...? (e.g. go to the cinema, go shopping, etc.) As the groups prepare their questions, go around and help if necessary.

③Put these chairs at the front of the class with one chair facing the other two. Sit in one chair and invite two students to come to the front and interview you as if

you are a celebrity. Answer using a variety of adverbs of frequency and try to explain further to give clues about their meaning.

e.g. Student: How often do you go shopping:

Teacher: About twice a week. Usually on Saturday morning and once during the week.

④ Later, ask other students to come and interview you. Then, ask for a volunteer who can act as a celebrity and ask two students to interview her/him. Pay attention to students' answers and correct when necessary.

e.g. Student: I go often to the cinema.

Teacher: Good. "I go often." Can you change the order?

Student: I often go.

(Scrivener, 2003)

13- Auctioning Sentences

Technique: You give your students practice in identifying mistakes and editing sentences by using the idea of an auction.

Language Focus: First Conditional

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: Write a list of ten sentences- five correct and five wrong ones. Include only one mistake.

Procedure:

① Divide the class into six teams depending on the number of students. Let each team choose a name for itself and write it on the board. Give each team 300 units of the local currency and write the number under each team's name.

② Write the list of ten sentences on the board. Explain the rules of the game to students:

- Half the sentences are not correct.
- Each team must try to buy correct sentences only.
- The team that has the highest number of correct sentences at the end is the winner.
- Students will have ten minutes to discuss the ten sentences and decide which ones are correct and which are not.

③ Before you start the game, explain what an “auction” is. Now tell the students that you will sell each sentence to the three teams that make the highest bids.

Emphasize that if they think a sentence is incorrect, they must bid “0”. Besides, they should not spend all their money on buying one sentence.

④ Now start auctioning sentences one by one. Students have to write their bids on a piece of paper and hold it in the air. Sell the sentence to the team without saying whether the sentence is correct or not.

⑤ When the sentences are sold, go over them again and let the students tell you

which ones are correct and let them correct the wrong ones. Now, count the number of correct sentences each team got and determine the winner.

(Scrivener, 2003)

14- Grammar In an Envelope

Technique: You give each student more practice in her/his area of weakness.

Language Focus: Any topic that a student needs more practice in.

Level: Higher Intermediate

Resources: Envelopes; activities on various topics

Procedure:

- ① Make copies of extra activities for each student depending on her/his needs.
- ② Put them in envelopes and write on them "Top Secret"
- ③ Give students their envelopes and tell them that these are their missions. Ask them not to start until they hear the music. Play the theme from "mission impossible".
- ④ The first student who finishes and has all the correct answers wins.

(www.eslcafe.com)

15- Car Race Game

Technique: You use a fun game to review any grammar point.

Language Focus: Revision of any grammar point

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: Two model race cars; tape; a dice

Procedure:

- ① Draw a race track on the board and divide it into numbers (at least 30)
- ② Tape two cars to the beginning of the track.
- ③ Divide the class into two groups and assign a speaker for each.
- ④ Show the first group a sentence and ask them if it is right or wrong. If the speaker with the help of the group gives the right answer s/he can throw the dice.

The group's car will move the number of steps they get in the dice. If the answer is wrong, the group's car stays in its place.

⑤The same goes for the second group. The group whose car reaches the finish line first is the winner.

(www.eslcafe.com)

16- The Wonderful Game of "Would You?"

Technique: You use an interesting game to familiarize students with the intended language focus.

Language Focus: Second Conditional

Level: Intermediate

Resources: Slips of Paper

Procedure:

①Write down conditional sentences on slips of paper learning the if-clause blank.

(e.g. If -----, I'd jump with joy.)

②Divide the class into teams depending on the number of students and give each team five slips of paper.

③Each team has to come up with an if-clause that suits the sentence. They should make it as ambiguous as possible.

④Then, the team should cut up the conditional sentence into two parts and give it to the other team. The latter should try to reorder the other group's conditional sentences. Students usually end up with funny results.

e.g. If pigs flew, I'd get married.

⑤ To make the activity even more challenging, each team has to tell the other how many correct sentences they have. Now, this team has to think again to see how they can figure out the correct order of the sentences.

(www.eslcafe.com)

17- Question Race

Technique: You enhance the students' production of questions and answers using a fun activity.

Language Focus: Question and Answer Formation

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: Colored Flashcards; Masking tape

Procedure:

- ① Divide the class into four teams. Then divide the board into four columns and each column into two- one for Yes/No questions and answers and one for Wh- questions and answers.
- ② Pass out the flashcards. Each team gets a different color. The mission of each team is to create as many correct questions and answers and write each one on a separate card.
- ③ Each team chooses a runner who has to go and tape each card with the question and answer in the team's column on the board. (either in the Yes/No or Wh- questions)
- ④ Encourage the students to pay attention to the quality of the questions and answers not just the quantity.

⑤ When the assigned time is up, go to the board and check out the cards of each team. Give one point to each card if the question and answer are correct. If only part of the card is correct, give half a point. Count the number of points for each team and determine the winner. You can give the students prizes of nominal value. (www.eslcafe.com)

18- Simple Future Tense and Tarot Cards

Technique: Students have the opportunity to practice the intended grammatical form while enjoying an interesting activity.

Language Focus: Simple Future Tense

Level: Intermediate

Resources: Tarot cards that you can make yourself

Procedure:

① Show the students the tarot cards you have made. The cards could have simple pictures such as: a broken heart, money, no money, travel, family, work, be careful, etc.

② Discuss with the students how each picture makes them feel.

③ Ask a student to come to the front of the class and ask you about her/his future.

Act as the fortune teller and ask the student to draw out one of the tarot cards. Tell the student about her/his fortune. (e.g. You will travel around the world.)

④ Divide the class into groups. Give each group a number of cards. Assign a fortune teller for each group. The members of the group have to ask the fortune teller about their future. Let the student exchange the role of the fortune teller. A student can draw two to three tarot cards.

(www.eslcafe.com)

19. A Room With a view

Technique: Students use prepositions in a fun and relevant activity.

Language focus: Prepositions

Level: Lower Intermediate

Procedure:

- ① Ask students to draw a plan of their room.
- ② Divide the class into pairs. Let them pretend that they are talking on the phone. They have to carry on a conversation so that each one can draw the room of the other person. They have to use prepositions of place to guide the partner as s/he draws.
- ③ When the students are done, let each student check if her/his partner drew something similar to her/his room.

(www.eslcafe.com)

20. Go Fish

Technique: Students practice asking and answering using the present perfect in an engaging activity.

Language Focus: Present Perfect (Have you/ Have you ever?)

Level: Intermediate

Resources: Flashcards

Procedure:

- ① Make up 16 sentences using the present perfect. (e.g. I have been to Paris. I have met Ricky Martin.)

- ② Make 4 copies of each sentence on flashcards.
- ③ Divide the class into groups of four or five. Give each group seven cards. Each student takes one card and the rest go in the middle as the pond. Students pick up any matching cards from the pond to make pairs.
- ④ Now, each student goes around and asks a question according to the card s/he has. (e.g. Have you ever been to Paris?) If s/he asks the question to a person who has the same card then that person replies: "Yes I have" and gives the card to that person. If the student asked doesn't have that card, s/he says "Go Fish".
- ⑤ The first person who makes pairs of all his cards wins.

(www.eslcafe.com)

21- Adverbs of Frequency

Technique: This is another game that engages the students and helps them practice another language point.

Language Focus: Adverbs of Frequency

Level: Intermediate

Resources: Flashcards

Procedure:

- ① Divide the class into two teams A and B. Give each student a card with an adverb of frequency written on it. (e.g. sometimes, never, only once, etc.)
- ② Now, the game begins. A student from group A asks a student from group B a question. Student A has to come up with a question that would make student B respond with the word on his card. E.g. If student A has the word "never" on

her/his card, s/he can ask student B the following question: "How often do you speak Japanese?" Hopefully, Student B will say "never".

③If student B doesn't say "never", then it is group B's turn to ask questions. The team that has all his adverbs of frequency said by the other team wins.

(www.eslcafe.com)

22- Noun Phrase Mix Up

Technique: Students match the elements of a noun phrase and physically create it.

Language Focus: Noun Phrase

Level: Elementary

Resources: Index Cards

Procedure:

- ①Write a sufficient number of noun phrases. Write each article, adjective and noun on a separate card.
- ②Distribute the cards among the students. They are not allowed to show the cards to each other. Now, each student goes around the class to complete his noun phrase. If s/he has an adjective, then s/he has to look for a person with an article and a person with a noun.
- ③When s/he finds them, the three students stand next to each other showing their noun phrase. You can write the correct phrases on the board.
- ④Repeat the round and encourage students to form other noun phrases with other students.

(Pennington, 1995)

23- Definitions Game

Technique: *Students play a game to match relative clauses with main clauses in order to form sensible definitions.*

Language Focus: *Clause Pattern*

Level: *Higher Intermediate*

Resources: *Index Cards*

Procedure:

- ① Cut index cards in half. Write a main clause on one half and the matching relative clause on the other half. It is easier to have different colors for the index cards' halves. Make as many as necessary depending on the size of the class.
- ② Divide the class into groups of three. Give each group an envelope with main clauses and relative clauses which they have to match. You can demonstrate what they have to do by guiding three students to try and play the game in front of the class.
- ③ When the game begins students open the envelope and place the stack of main clauses aside from the stack of the relative clauses in the middle of the table. Each student takes four main clauses.
- ④ By turn, each student draws one card of the relative clauses. If it matches any main clause s/he has, s/he reads it to the others and discusses whether it is a good sentence. If the relative clause does not match any of her/his main clauses, s/he places it in the discard stack which others may draw from.

- ⑤The same goes for other students in the group. The group with the most completed sentences is the winner.

(Pennington, 1995)

24. From Beginning to End

Technique: *Students practice the past tense by writing a story in a motivating way.*

Language Focus: *Past Tense*

Level: *Intermediate*

Procedure:

- ①Write a few sentences that might serve as the beginning of a story. Then write a number of intriguing sentences each of which can be a possible ending to the story.
- ②Divide the class into four groups. All the groups use the same beginning but each one gets a different ending.
- ③Now, each group should make a sensible plan for the story that might lead to the designated end. The planning time should not exceed 15 minutes.
- ④When the planning is over, one member of each group tells the group's story. The class discusses the story and votes for the best one.
- ⑤The students can now write the whole story.

(Pennington, 1995)

25. Be Honest

Technique: *Students contrast the present perfect and simple past by asking "Have you ever?" questions and then probing for details using when,*

where, and why with the past tense.

Language Focus: Past tense; Present perfect tense

Level: Low Intermediate

Procedure:

① Write a list of questions that start with "Have you ever..."

e.g. run after someone? lied to someone? Broken something?

② Ask the students to think about the questions. Then, start asking different students whether they have ever done something. Get more details by asking why? when? where? how?

③ Now, the students can work in pairs. Each student has to write "Have you ever...?" questions about their own experiences and ask her/his partner then probe for more details with when, where, how, how, and with whom.

(Pennington, 1995)

26- What had happened before?

Technique: Students become familiar with the difference between the past perfect and the simple past by reading about events in a famous person's life.

Language Focus: Past Perfect

Level: High Intermediate

Resources: a text; a map; index cards

Procedure:

① Get a text about Magellan's circumnavigation of the world.

② Choose important dates from Magellan's story and write them on cards with the event that took place.

- ③ Hang the map of the world on the board in class. As you read the story of Magellan's trip, attach each card you have near the place where a certain event took place.
- ④ When you finish reading the story, highlight the main event again using statements as: "By the time Magellan reached the Philippines, he had been at sea for..."
- ⑤ Give the students several examples then ask them to form similar statements with the help of the cards on the board.
- ⑥ As homework, you can ask students to ask an old family member about her/his life history. Each student has to write the story and form a "life road" instead of the map; s/he can use it when s/he presents the life story in class.

(Pennington, 1995)

27- The Beautiful Princess

Technique: Students practice the future conditional by helping you tell an interesting story through role play.

Language Focus: Future Conditional

Level: Intermediate

Procedure:

- ① Set the scene of "The Beautiful Princess". Tell the students that a long time ago there was a very beautiful princess that princes from all over the world wanted to marry her. The princess always asked the same question: "What will you give me if I marry you?"

②(Pointing at a male student), the first prince was from (X: indicate nationality).

He came to the princess and asked if she would marry him. The princess (point at a female student) asked him the regular question. The prince replied (with your help: "If you marry me, I will give you a golden ring. But if you don't, I won't.")

③Repeat the same scene with different princesses and princes whom you choose from your students as you tell the story. Each prince can offer something to the princess.

④You can ask students who are not involved with the scene at the moment to tell you what the princess asked and what the prince replied. This would emphasize the if-clause again.

⑤The story can go on for as long as you want. At the end, you can highlight the future tense by asking students: "What time are we talking about?" "What word did we use in each example?" (Answer: If)

⑥Ask: "Who will the princess marry?" The students will not be able to decide for sure. You can tell them that this is why we use "if" (to indicate that we don't know what will happen for sure).

(Pennington, 1995)

28- Interest Survey

Technique: Students practice reporting responses and reported speech by talking about their interests.

Language Focus: Reporting speech

Level: Intermediate

Procedure:

- ① Divide the class into groups and assign a topic to each group. (e.g. work, sports, movies, food, etc.). Each group has to form questions about one topic. Then they write the questions on the board.
- ② Let the class help you in correcting the structure of the questions on the board.
- ③ Each group assigns one of its questions to each of its members.
- ④ Now, each student asks the same question to each member of the group. Then s/he reports the results to the group. The student can give examples of what her/his friends said. For example: "Sara said that she likes Italian food." Later, each group gives a report of their findings to the whole class.

(Pennington, 1995)

29- Riddle in the Middle

Technique: Riddles can be an interesting way to help students practice asking questions and giving responses.

Language Focus: Yes/No questions; responses

Level: Intermediate

Procedure:

- ① Make a list of riddles enough for the whole class. Cut the list up into strips to make individual riddles.
- ② Put students into a circle with one student in the middle. If it is a big class, you can have two circles.
- ③ Give each student a riddle with its answer. Students should not show the riddles to each other.

- ④ Now, the student in the middle states the riddle and waits for an answer.
 - ⑤ In turn, students ask yes/no questions to try to get more information in order to guess the riddle. (e.g. Can we eat it? Does it have more than five letters?)
 - ⑥ The student in the middle offers short responses only. (e.g. No, you can't.)
 - ⑦ The student who guesses the answer of the riddle goes into the middle to state her/his riddle. If a student has been in the middle before, the teacher can choose another student who has not.
 - ⑧ The procedure goes on until all the students had the chance to be in the middle.
- (Pennington, 1995)

30- Miming

Technique: You mime and encourage students to say what you are doing.

Language focus: Past progressive + "when" or "and" + simple past

Level: Lower Intermediate

Resources: A sufficient number of prompt cards that your students can use. Each prompt card has a sentence that describes something that happened using the intended language focus.

e.g. You were drinking orange juice...

when you spilt it over your trousers.

Procedure:

- ① When you come into class, pretend that you cannot speak. Write "I have lost my voice" on the board.

- ② Stand in a place where the whole class can see you and mime the first sentence- one part at a time. Encourage the students to come up with the sentence; write it on the board.
 - ③ Try another sentence then ask if a student is willing to mime the next sentence.
 - ④ When the class has got the concept, divide the class into pairs and give each student a prompt card. One student has to mime and the other has to say the sentence.
 - ⑤ When pairs finish their sentences, they can exchange with other pairs until the whole class has tried all the mimes.
- (Scrivener, 2003)

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