Grammar: To Teach or Not To Teach?

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Agenda

• The grammar controversy
• Grammar topics for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels
• Strategies/tips for teaching grammar
• Ideas for creating student-centered grammar lesson plans
What is Grammar?
Grammar is...

- Grammar is “something that produces the sentences of a language” (Roberts, 1962)
- WHY?
Grammar is...

...Englishing very heavily...

Source: http://kaplan.do/illustrations
Grammar is...

• The umbrella gave the cat to the dog.
• Gave the umbrella the cat to the dog.
• The cat the umbrella gave to the dog.
• The umbrella the cat gave to the dog.
• Gave the cat the umbrella to the dog.
• The cat gave the umbrella to the dog.
Arguments AGAINST

• Grammar knowledge does not equal the ability to communicate;
• First language is acquired without Grammar;
• Grammar instructions are based upon discrete items;
• Language learners want to communicate effectively, but may not want any grammar instructions.
Arguments FOR

• Grammatical patterns provide Ss with limitless potential to create original sentences;
• Grammar allows to fine-tune ideas and make them as defined and unambiguous as possible;
• Fossilized grammar is accepted in some contexts;
• Discrete Grammar instructions are manageable teaching points.
Yes or No???

• The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.
• The vodka was good, but the meat was rotten. (Singer, 1990)

• Since the vowels were important in Greek language; therefore, after mixing consonant system with Greeks, the symbols for vowels emerged. (a CLB 7+ student)
Grammar Topics

• Beginner:
  • - Parts of speech
  • - Word Order/ Phrase Structure
  • - Subject – Verb Agreement
  • - Simple Sentences (Active/Passive voice)
  • - Compound Sentences
  • - Questions
Grammar Topics

• Intermediate:
• - Gerunds & Participles
• - Complex Sentences
• - Compound-Complex Sentences
• - Subject-Verb Agreement
• - Paragraph Writing
Grammar Topics

• Advanced:
  • - Pronoun Reference
  • - Restrictive/ Non-restrictive Clauses
  • - Ungrammatically formed sentences
  • - Summary Writing
  • - Paraphrase Writing
  • - Essay/Paper Writing
Grammar Activities

- The Grammar Activities should be easy to set up;
- The Grammar Instructions should be short and simple;
- The Grammar Activities should focus on students’ needs and interests;
- Students have an opportunity to focus on the form as well as meaning and use;
Grammar Activities (con’d)

• Students need to have opportunities to use the grammar in accuracy based activities;
• Students need to use the grammar items to communicate in fluency-based activities.
• Students need to use grammar outside of the classroom in their daily activities.
The Learning-Centered Approach

• ‘Learning is something done by the learner rather than something done to or for the learner’ (MacKeracher, 2004).

• Adult programs should ‘help adults realize their potential for becoming more liberated, socially responsible, and autonomous learners’ (Mezirow, 2000).
The Learning-Centered Approach

• Why to be autonomous learners???

• Learning enables learners to cultivate intellect through developing thinking and problem-solving skills, critical and reflective skills, and learning-to-learn skills (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982).
Student-Centered Grammar Lesson

- Information gathering activities
- Jigsaw, pair-share
- Inverted classroom, proofreading

- Implicit – Let Ss figure out easy grammar topics, but always restate the rules.
- Explicit – Difficult grammar topics: give examples and ask questions (elicit), and restate.
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What questions/suggestions do you have?
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• Thank you!