



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

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!