THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING GRAMMAR

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Abstract. In this work are discussed some of these difficulties and suggest solutions from my own experience. One of the problems generally faced by most of the teachers of English is the poor standard of the students. Students are even ignorant of the basic rules and structural patterns which they are supposed to have learnt at the lower level. If a teacher directly starts his teaching at the graduate level without trying to know the level of the students, his efforts will not bear any fruits as he will not be able to raise a structure over a feeble foundation.

Key words: Activities, teaching grammar, grammar points.

Grammar is a main component of any language in the world. Without grammar, you can't understand, for example, the time of action whether it happened in the past or in the present. We can say that grammar is abstract in the mind and it becomes concrete in the use. Teaching grammar is serious and has a lot of challenges that teachers face. The biggest problem is that students find the grammatical lesson so difficult and boring. To solve it, I prefer the "Communicative" way of teaching grammar than the traditional way. Grammar, as we all know, should be presented in context. Whatever the technique is used to present grammar, it should followed by guided practice. This GP helps the learner process the language. Free practice is widely advisable: interaction should be encouraged and multiplied[1].

The best way to lay a solid foundation for your students' understanding of grammar points, from the simple to the most complex, is to provide a clear and well-organized model, right at the beginning.

If we follow this solid model with lots of relevant examples, the students can immediately begin to build their own sentences using this grammatical tool box. They will quickly be on their way to controlled practice, and then to the ultimate aim of language learning, using the material independently and fluently to express what they want to say.

There is a knack to providing good grammatical models, and here are my top tips for building a strong foundation for your students:

How to Explain ANY Grammar Points: 13 Great Ways

1.   Divide and Conquer

Before you reach for a grammar textbook, isolate your grammar point and take a really close look at it. How does it work? What constituent parts does it have? Parse out the structure, learning for yourself, from the inside out, how it is formed and used.

What kind of conjugations can you see? What forms are the verbs in? How are the different elements ordered?

2. Call the Professionals

Then it's time to get some guidance from the grammar experts. A solid grammar book is indispensable to successful ESL teaching, so try to find one that's packed with clear explanations and good examples. I often find that the textbooks guide me towards explanations of those strange exceptions to the rule, and justify oddities of the language in ways I wouldn't have discovered on my own. There are numerous online resources - including BusyTeacher, of course!

3. Test the Rules

Composing your own examples is a terrific way to make intimate contact with the grammar point. Prove the rules that you just encountered in the textbook. Do they always apply? When you change something about the structure, why does it sound wrong? Which aspects of it are your students likely to find difficult? Using the structure yourself puts you in your students' shoes, as you're using just the same material that they'll shortly be working with[2].

4. Ask, Don't Tell

A lot of the time, depending on which level you're working with, your students may actually have seen your target structure before. They might be fluent with it - in which case, treat your study of the grammar point as a brief review - or they may be aware of it, but not yet able to use it independently. Try to elicit the structure, even before introducing it. If the students can walk you through the different elements, order, conjugations and exceptions, so much the better.

Move as quickly as you can from presentation of this material - diagrams on the board, initial examples from the textbook, a quick story - to practice, so that the teacher backs away and allows the students to begin using the structure by composing examples. Ask questions throughout this process; some good check questions come from making deliberate mistakes with the structure and seeing if the students can spot them, and from asking about time, direction of action, etc. Initially, these questions can be closed (yes/no) but you could then branch out into other forms, as well as asking for corrections, e.g.:

Teacher:	So, if we say that 'he had eaten breakfast before he went to school', does that mean he was hungry when he got to school?
Students:	No, he wasn't.
Teacher:	Good! Is it OK if I ask, 'Had he eaten after he go to school'…?
Students:	(After some thought) No… That's wrong… 'Had he eaten before he went to school'.
Teacher:	Good job! If he got to school at eight o'clock, what time might he have eaten breakfast?

Students:	Maybe seven?
Teacher:	OK, that's probably true, but how about a full sentence, guys?
Students:	He might have eaten breakfast at seven o'clock.
Teacher:	Great job with the past modal!

I firmly believe that this kind of active, engaged dialogue is the best way to encourage the students to really wrap their minds around the structure and its implications, rather than simply repeating a dry, academic process because they've been told to. Grammar work should be relevant and personalized by using your students themselves and little narratives through which the meaning of the structure becomes clear. Adding other structures (a past modal in our example above) cements this understanding by connecting the new structure to language the students already know[3].

5.   Using Timelines

Draw a straight line across part of the board, with 'NOW' somewhere on it. When presenting a tense, especially a continuous or perfect form, mark the actions and events on the line and illustrate the connections between them. Your students' understanding of tenses can be transformed with this simple tool.

6.   Using Direction Arrows

The fastest way to teach the passive form, for example, can be to use directional arrows to explain the action of the verb, i.e. who is doing and who is receiving the action. These can be used to connect the words of the sentence, or cartoon characters who are playing out the events of the sentence.

7.   Indicating Strength

A vertical line with the lexical group hanging off in descending order of strength can quickly show the relationships between the group's members. Modal verbs are a good example:

Must

Need to Should

Can / May

Ought to

Coloring the words (from red down to blue) also gets this point across well.

8.   Using Cartoons

Simple line drawings help enormously, and I encourage newer teachers to include basic drawing in their new skills set. They can replace the verbs along a timeline, requiring the students to remember both the verb and its conjugation. They can express the strength of modal verbs, as above, or express count ability in nouns, the direction of action in presentation of the passive/active grammar point, etc.

9.   AND / OR Gates

These symbols, taken from the study of electronics, help us teach the conditional forms by showing each condition and its potential results.

10.   Example after Example

Your students will tell you, through their body language, facial expressions, responses and levels of distractibility, when they're now able to create the examples without any further help. As you proceed through your own examples, be aware of their reactions, and only provide as many examples as necessary before turning over responsibility to your students.

To sum up, according to the work, using games to teach learners can enhance student motivation, confidence, and vocabulary acquisition, because of the advantages of challenging content it is easier to capture their attention than with traditional teaching. However, it may alternately increase student anxiety due to peer pressure.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE

1.   Ready, Tom. Grammar Wars: 179 Games and Improvs for Learning Language Arts. Colorado Springs, CO: Meriwether Publishing, 2000

2.   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_game

3.   http://www.aft.org

4.   http://www.ibe.unesco.org

5.   http://esl.about.com

6.   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Teachers should implement rearrange words to form meaningful sentences. It took a lot of explaining and many examples to help her understand the different tenses and how to use them. In English, there are so many- present, past, future, past participle, present progressive, etc...and also gerunds, which can act as nouns. Explaining the difference between these tenses was very hard, especially with the language barrier between us Generally speaking, in teachers' perceptions, both teachers and students invariably face serious difficulties with regard to EFL grammar instruction, students facing them to a greater extent than teachers. It is obvious that EFL teachers consider these difficulties quite serious, which suggests that serious attention needs to be paid to them. There may be generally recommended ways of teaching EFL grammar (for example, the implicit method), but it would not be proper to adopt them universally without looking at the possible difficulties that might go with those methods suggested. While a less favoured method might pose fewer problems and hence be more effective, a more favoured method might be less effective owing to greater difficulties or problems in implementing it. The difficulties may also be influenced by the context in which a particular method is used