

FUN GRAMMAR TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

It's necessary to change our view that grammar is taught only as a set of rules making or changing of sentences structure, but grammar is a flexible frame that can be changed based on the communicative needs. Grammar also can be taught not only by giving explanation and exercises, but grammar can be taught by fun evaluation, games or outdoor activity, song, and poems. These are the ways to increase students' motivation and interested in the material. Our class can be fun and interesting. The important thing in teaching and learning grammar is the students have experience to apply the grammar rules in a real communication and realistic context.

Key words: Fun grammar, teaching, real communication, and realistic concept

Grammar is central to teaching and learning of languages, which is also the system or rules of a language, and is used to find ways to construct the words in sentences. It is not required to study grammar for learning and teaching English language, because many people speak it as their native language without having studied it. However, it is essential to learn grammar "Rules for forming words and making sentences" (Oxford Learners Pocket Dictionary, 2008, p. 193) in order to utterly understand a foreign second language. It is also one of the more difficult aspects of language to teach well. Many people, including language teachers, hear the word "grammar" and think of a fixed set of word forms and rules of usage. They associate "good" grammar with the prestige forms of the language, such as those used in writing and in formal oral presentations, and "bad" or "no" grammar with the language used in everyday conversation or used by speakers of nonprestige forms.

Why do we learn grammar? Grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible for us to talk about language. Grammar names the types of words and word groups that make up sentences not only in English but in any language. As human beings, we can put sentences together even as children--we can all *do* grammar. But to be able to talk about how sentences are built, about the types of words and word groups that make up sentences--that is *knowing about* grammar. And *knowing about* grammar offers a window into the human mind and into our amazingly complex mental capacity.

However, despite years of English instruction at schools, it is found that students fail to use the target language competently for genuine communication. The major reason is that English puts great stress on written assessments rather than communication ability. The typical English teaching methods are form-based and text-based, and many teachers adopt Grammar Translation Method or Audiolingual Method on their teaching. English is taught by using dialogues for repetition and memorization, along with lots of systematic and intensive drills on sentence patterns and grammar rules. Grammar is regarded as the

cornerstone in English instruction, whereas conversational English is hardly practiced. There is no real communication in English classes.

Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English. It also can help everyone not only teachers of English, but teachers of anything, for all teaching are ultimately a matter of getting to grip with meaning. (David Crystal, "In Word and Deed," *TES Teacher*, April 30, 2004)

CONCEPTS OF GRAMMAR TEACHING

Old or Traditional Concept

Research over a period of nearly 90 years has consistently shown that the teaching of school grammar has little or no effect on students (George Hillocks & Michael Smith, 1991). In the limited view, grammar is seen, paradoxically, as the heart of language and at the same time as manifested in restricted and controlled production of correct sentences, based on a relatively formal and academic norm for written language. (Jack G. Richards, 2008, p.vi) Grammar is given too much priority in the class. Students do not learn English, but they learn grammar, the impact of this view in teaching grammar is many students who have known the main idea of the grammar rules and can pass the tests, when it comes to use the language in practice, they discover that they lack vital element, vocabulary and fluency.

Language teachers who adopt this opinion focus on grammar as a set of forms and rules. They teach grammar by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students on them. For some teachers, a grammar class consists primarily of the formal explanation of grammatical rules with all of the grammatical terminology necessary of the task. This results in bored, disaffected students who can produce correct forms on exercises and tests, but consistently make errors when they try to use the language in context.

The Reason of unsuccessful Grammar Teaching

The most common reason for teaching grammar as a system for analyzing and labeling sentences has been to accomplish some practical aim or aims, typically the improvement of writing. For decades, however, research has demonstrated that the teaching of grammar rarely accomplishes such practical goals. Relatively few students learn grammar well, fewer retain it, and still fewer transfer the grammar they have learned to improving or editing their writing. There are some reasons why grammar teaching does not work well that given by some experts as follows:

- 1) "Diagraming sentences . . . teaches nothing beyond the ability to diagram" (1960 *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*).
- 2) "The impressive fact is . . . that in all these studies . . . the results have been consistently negative so far as the value of grammar in the improvement of language expression is concerned. Surely there is no justification in the available evidence for the great expenditure of time and effort still being devoted to formal grammar in American schools" (DeBoer, 1959).
- 3) "None of the studies reviewed for the present report provides any support for teaching grammar as a means of improving composition skills. If schools insist

upon teaching the identification of parts of speech, the parsing or diagraming of sentences, or other concepts of traditional grammar (as many still do), they cannot defend it as a means of improving the quality of writing" (Hillocks, 1986).

- 4) For most students, the systematic study of grammar is not even particularly helpful in avoiding or correcting errors (Elley et al., 1976; McQuade, 1980; Hillocks, 1986).
- 5) "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" (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, 1963).

New Concept of Grammar Teaching

Today, Conceptions of grammar are richer and more substantial. One that realizes the meaning potential of language through multiple interlocking or interdependent grammatical system. (Jack G. Richards, 2008, p. vi) This orientation implies that there is not in fact only one correct form of the grammar of a language but rather a range of options useful for different purposes and appropriate in different situation. Grammar is not a set structure but a flexible frame with interchangeable components that can be organized and manipulated in different ways. By manipulating linguistic components within a grammatical frame, speakers are able to produce a wide variety of constructions to meet their own communicative needs and the requirements of different audiences and genres.

Today, grammar shouldn't be taught "*by the book*". Grammar is not only about a group of rules in making or constructs sentences, but also about how grammar can be used in communication. The students want to learn English. They don't want to know all of these rules; they're not interested in them. They want to speak, read, and write in English. So, how do we as English teachers teach them essential grammar and give them what we need, rather than boring them to death with "the rules". the teaching of grammar means providing students with opportunities to use English in a variety of realistic situations in order to learn to communicate effectively. It's actually quite simple: by teaching grammar in context and in fun ways.

View of Psychological Aspect

Grammar learning viewed as a process has a social aspect in that learning to use a language means learning to interact with other communicators. Language learners elaborate their linguistic system in response to communicative need and the requirements or different audiences and purposes of communication, as these are revealed to them through feedback on performance. The grammar learning process is situated in the contexts of human meaning and human society. It means teaching grammar not only teach the rules of grammar and have the students master it, but the important thing is the students can communicate all things that they have learnt in real communication or realistic context.

Communicative Approach in Grammar Teaching

The communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence. The development, in the 1970s, of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was motivated by developments in the new science of sociolinguistics, and the belief that communicative competence consists of more than simply the knowledge of the rules of grammar. Grammar should not be the goal teaching and a focus only on form, but it embraces on meaning as well. According to Thornburry (2000):

Communicative competence is best achieved through communicating, through making meanings up. If so, the teachers' energies should be directed mainly at providing opportunities for authentic language use, employing grammar as a resource rather than an end in itself. As Leibniz is supposed have said: 'A language is acquired through practice; it is merely perfected through grammar.

This method is used to have one's students become communicatively competent. According this method that a language learner needs to understand and express and contextualization is a basic. Drilling may occur but peripherally. The technique that used is authentic materials, scramble sentences, language games, picture strip story, improvisation, debates and role-play. Thornburry said (2000) that communicatively competent also involves knowing how to use the grammar and vocabulary of the language to achieve communicative goal, and knowing how to do this in a socially appropriate ways.

Teacher Roles in Communicative Approach

It is a common knowledge that teachers have to stick to the teaching syllabus at school but it is really worth finding time for songs and jokes in class as they can give a fresh perspective on the language we are teaching. Through them, the language we have been dissecting into a serious of structural points becomes whole again. It should be our experience that songs and jokes in the classroom can revive our love and respect for English and can bring to mind the joy and exquisite beauty of the language we have chosen to teach, in a way that many of us have long forgotten.

Many high school students greet the concept of grammar instruction with grunts and groans. This requisite portion of any English class often means repetitious worksheets and essays bloodied with red pen. While it is vital that teachers instruct their students on the finer points of grammar, this instruction does not have to be painful. High school English teachers can add some pizzazz to their grammar instruction and increase their students' overall enjoyment of the lesson by engaging them in some fun grammar instruction activities.

The Principles of Using Communicative Language Teaching.

Communicative language teaching is considered an approach rather than a method. It refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures. There are principles of using communicative language teaching such as:

1. Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
2. Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal classroom activities.
3. Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
4. Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
5. Learning is a process of creative instruction and involves trial and error (Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, 2011).

THE CRITERIA OF EXPLAINING GRAMMAR RULES IN TEACHING GRAMMAR

Grammar is a description of the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed. Grammar is also partly the study of what forms are possible and a tool for making meaning. The rules explanation should not make students confused, feel bored, and frustrated. It is teachers' job to explain that the grammar rules can be understood and used

easily. Michael Swan (as cited in Thornburry, 2000) offers the criteria of explaining grammar rules as follows:

1. Truth: Rule should be true because it can express a realistic situation
2. Limitation: Rules should show clearly what the limits are on the use of a given form.
3. Clarity: Rules should be clear. Lack of clarity is often caused by ambiguity or obscure terminology.
4. Simplicity: Lack of simplicity is caused by overburdening the rule with sub-categories and sub-sub-categories in order to cover all possible instances and account for all possible exceptions. There is a limit to the amount of exceptions a learner can remember.
5. Familiarity: An explanation should try to make use of concepts already familiar to the learner.
6. Relevance: A rule should answer only those questions that the student needs answered. These questions may vary according to the mother tongue of the learner.

But remember that rules are only one component of an explanation. The rules also should be exemplified and illustrated where possible, and that running checks are made on the state of students' understanding.

SOME SUGGESTIONS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR

Thornburry (2000) suggested some ways of teaching grammar that can be used by teachers in the class as follows:

1. Make your purpose of teaching grammar to find out or understand how the students construct sentences, not just to master grammar rules. The teacher can do this through asking the students to read the grammar book, but it is more beneficial when combined with other aspects of language learning: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. Introduce to the students what is grammar and why they have to learn/study grammar at the beginning of teaching.
3. It is better for English teachers to explain to the students what grammar is, and why they have to learn/study grammar. If the students know the purposes, the important, the usage, the function, and beneficial of grammar in studying / learning English, they will have high motivation to learn grammar. When the motivation comes from within the students, the students will want to learn English to achieve their own goals.
4. Use variety techniques of teaching grammar.
5. Grammar is perhaps so serious in learning another language and sometimes students think it is bored. How to make our students focus to master the material, one way of focusing students' energy is through doing games.
6. Make it to be fun and interesting. It is better if grammar is taught not only by long explanation, teachers' speech, giving exercises that all, but it can be taught by using games or outdoor activity, songs, drama / role-play, or practice in pair or group work.
7. If necessary, do evaluation at the end of teaching by giving some exercises or homework.

8. Exercises are still needed to measure or know students' mastery on the lesson . It also can be used as a feedback for teacher to give the students a enrichment or remedial.

THE WAYS OF MAKING GRAMMAR FUN AND INTERESTING

Games

Language games as classroom techniques for fun, games have a special role in any foreign language teaching program because they facilitate foreign language learning especially for young learners. With the introduction of communicative language teaching, English language teaching and learning has become much more demanding for teachers and learners just like any other innovation poses challenges for its users.

Games have become crucially important for English language learners and teacher not only because they provide enjoyment and relaxation, but also as they encourage students to use their language in a creative and communicative manner. Similarly, so it can be suggested that games are used not only for young learners but also for students at junior or senior high school, it also can be used for students at university.

By using games, students can be relax, have fun, and focus on the purposes of games, students anxiety is lessened, they begin to have more confidence in using the language and increased motivation. Through the use of games, learning also may occur incidentally without the students even realizing it as peers work with each other to solve the problems and construct meaning.

The goal of learning language is communication. In order to the goal can be achieved, teachers should choose and select games that can make students interact and communicate each other actively, play the games, and also challenges involved.

Through games, students must be communicating with each other to accomplish a goal. The classroom becomes more authentic. Games can be used to create opinion gap situation to approximate more relevant language exchange.(Wright et.al., 1983 in Language Games: Innovative Activities for Teaching English, 2009: 3)

The Reasons to teach grammar with games

1. Arif Saricoban and Esen Metin, authors of "Songs, Verse and Games for Teaching Grammar" explain how and why games work for teaching grammar in an ESL classroom. They say, "Games and problem-solving activities, which are task-based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech, are the examples of the most preferable communicative activities." They go on to explain that grammar games help children not only gain knowledge but be able to apply and use that learning.
2. Additionally, games have the advantage of allowing the students to "practice and internalise vocabulary, grammar and structures extensively." They can do this because students are often more motivated to play games than they are to do desk work. Plus, during the game, the students are focused on the activity and end up absorbing the language subconsciously. One can also add that fun learning games usually contain repetition, which allows the language to stick.

3. While games are motivating for the students, probably the best reason, according to Saricoban and Metin, to use games is that "the use of such activities both increases the cooperation and competition in the classroom." One can use games to add excitement through competition or games which create bonding among students and teacher.
4. Aydan Ersoz, author of "Six Games for the ESL/EFL Classroom" also explains more reasons why games do work for teaching grammar. Learning a language requires constant effort and that can be tiring. Ersoz says games can counter this as because: Games that are amusing and challenging are highly motivating. Games allow meaningful use of the language in context. <http://EzineArticles.com/484516> Retrieved on June 12th, 2013).

The Steps of Using Games or Outdoor Activity in Teaching Grammar

There are some steps of teaching grammar by using games or outdoor activities. Before doing or choose what games will be used, it is better for us to do some steps (Mario Rinvoluceri, 2006) :

1. Do a lot of preparations; master the material and the rules of games, amount of copying of material/worksheet, making cards or the other tool that needed.
2. Have the students to learn the material which will be taught before or give task in group. If it is possible, ask each group to present their tasks.
3. Make sure that the instruction or procedures of games or outdoor activity can be understood by all students clearly.
4. Do feedback to know students' understanding.

Feedback is the last stage or step in teaching-learning process. Feedback involves giving a response to the students. Most effective teachers encourage students to send accurate feedback to them so that they may judge the appropriateness /understanding of material.

The Advantages of using Games in Teaching Grammar

Games as language learning activity can be entertaining and engaging as well as challenging. Games play an important \role in students' language development with regard to both their first and second languages (Pelligrini & Grada, 2000;Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby, 2006) (Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen,2009;134).

There are some advantages of using games in teaching grammar as follows: (Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, in Language Games: Innovativ Activities for Teaching English 2009;134)

1. Games as Entertainment

Games as engaging learning tolls are strongly connected to motivation and interest. Motivation refers to desire to be engaged in a task and is driven by curiosity or interst. When students are curious about and interested in something, they respond willingly with prolonged engagement, focused attention, and increase knowledge recall. Games provide a playful mode of learning and a setting where language learners can exercises creativity and use imagination, and find satisfaction.

2. Game as Tools for Cognitive Development

Playing games involves cognitive skills that facilitate the acquisition of second-language literacy. When games involve thinking, problem solving, and rule negotiation, language

learners are required to make an effort to understand others and make themselves understood in authentic situation. Games enhance students' cognitive thinking abilities and promote the use accurate language forms.

3. Games as Social Interaction.

Games as learning tools also provide opportunities for social interaction. When playing games, all members of groups share ideas each other and work collaboratively. Problem solving, reflection and analysis are also promoted interactively. Games give opportunities for students to use language to express themselves clearly with focus on language forms too. Playing games create opportunities for using language in an authentic and meaningful way.

Songs

Nowadays, Grammar teaching has been mainly based on communicative activities, the teaching of grammar gained a new insight. In the teaching of grammar, technique-resource combinations are often modified to structure-discourse match and if well developed, they can be used effectively for all phases of a grammar lesson. In order to make a grammar lesson effective, beneficial, and interesting a teacher should use some well-developed and fascinating techniques in the classroom, the examples of such integrated sources and techniques -the use of songs.

Since the meaning is an important device in teaching grammar, it is important to contextualize any grammar point. Songs are one of the most enchanting and culturally rich resources that can easily be used in language classrooms. Songs offer a change from routine classroom activities. They are precious resources to develop students abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They can also be used to teach a variety of language items such as sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, adjectives, and adverbs. As stated by Lo and Fai Li (1998:8), learning English through songs also provides a non-threatening atmosphere for students, who usually are tense when speaking English in a formal classroom setting. (<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Saricoban-Songs.html>).

Teaching Grammar Procedure with Songs

There are various ways of using songs in the classroom. The level of the students, the interests and the age of the learners, the grammar point to be studied, and the song itself have determinant roles on the procedure. Apart from them, it mainly depends on the creativity of the teacher.

1. At the primary level of singing the song, the prosodic features of the language is emphasized. At the higher levels, where the practice of grammar points is at the foreground, songs can be used with several techniques.
4. 2) A teacher's selection of a technique or a set of techniques should be based on his or her objectives for the classroom. After deciding the grammar point to be studied, and the song and the techniques to be used, the teacher should prepare an effective lesson plan. Before listening to the song, it is also beneficial to let the students know which grammar points should be studied. At this stage, pictures may also be used to introduce the theme of the song. Through such gaps, grammar is highlighted. This stage can be developed by the teacher according to the needs of the students and the grammar point to be studied.

5. 3) In the follow-up, integrated skills can be used to complete the overall course structure. Many songs give a chance for a written reaction of some kind. Opinion questions may lead the learner to write about his own thoughts or reflections. Some songs deal with a theme that can be re-exploited through role plays. Acting may add enthusiasm to the learning process.
6. 4) Some songs deal with themes, which can lead to guided discussion. By leading the students into a discussion, the grammar point could be practiced orally and, in a way, naturally. (<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Saricoban-Songs.html>).

The Advantages of using song in Teaching Grammar

There are many advantages of using songs in the classroom.

- 1) Through using contemporary popular songs, which are already familiar to teenagers, the teacher can meet the challenges of the teenage needs in the classroom. Since songs are highly memorable and motivating, in many forms they may constitute a powerful subculture with their own rituals.
- 2) Furthermore, through using traditional folk songs the base of the learners knowledge of the target culture can be broadened. Correctly chosen, traditional folk songs have the dual motivating attack of pretty tunes and interesting stories, plus for many students- the added ingredient of novelty (Hill, 1999:29).
- 3) Most songs, especially folk songs, follow a regularly repeated verse form, with rhyme, and have a series of other discourse features, which make them easy to follow. (<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Saricoban-Songs.html>).

Poems

Poems can also be used in teaching grammar. Poems, like songs, contextualize a grammar lesson effectively. Since poetry is often spoken, repeated, dealt with, and considered, it acts as an effective tool for practicing a specific grammatical structure. Through repeating and considering the poem, the grammatical structures become more deeply internalized. Thus, poetry not only provides a rewarding resource for structured practice of grammar, but also a proper basis for review. a series of poems were used to review and reinforce grammar rules the students should have 'learnt'.

If a poem that exemplifies a particular structure is also a good poem, it engages the eye, the ear and the tongue simultaneously while also stimulating and moving us; this polymorphic effect makes poetry easier to memorize than other things for many students.

By using poems in teaching grammar, teachers can involve students in interactive and rewarding grammar drills by designing pattern poems which focus on a particular aspect of grammar or syntax. Awareness of phrase and sentence structure, teachers can focus students attention on an aspect of linguistic structure and invite students to make poems using that structure

In poems, there is also an important aspect to be learnt by students that is the rhythmic nature of the language. Similar to songs, poems have an enormous linguistic value as they

provide authenticity and cultural views. A poem's capacity to comfort the reader or the listener also increases its effectiveness as a teaching resource. Once a poem or song has been learnt, they stay in the minds of the students for the rest of their lives, with all the rhythms, grammatical features and vocabulary.

The steps of using Poems in teaching Grammar

Before using poems in teaching grammar, there are some consideration should be done by the teachers such as:

- 1) In the selection of a poem, the teacher should first consider the grammatical structure to be presented, practiced, or reviewed, then the level and the age of the students.
- 2) Next the theme and the length of the poem and its appropriateness to the classroom objectives. It is advisable to select a poem from 20th century poets. As older poems often provide a more difficult lexicon and syntax, and as they reflect some old-fashioned ideas, it is more convenient to use contemporary poems than older ones.
- 3) Poems, which reflect cultural themes, universal features, humanistic values, or emotional aspects, will be more relevant to the foreign language learners.
- 4) Finally, through taking the classroom objectives into consideration, a teacher should effectively benefit from poems as teaching aids. (<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Saricoban-Songs.html>)

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