# How to teach Grammar

# What is Grammar?

- Language user's subconscious internal system
- Linguists' attempt to codify or describe that system

| | |
|---|---|
| • Sounds of language | • Phonology |
| • Structure and form of words | • Morphology |
| • Arrangement of words into larger units | • Syntax |
| • Meanings of language | • Semantics |
| • Functions of language & its use in context | • Pragmatics |

- "*Grammar is the business of taking a language to pieces, to see how it works.*" (David Crystal)

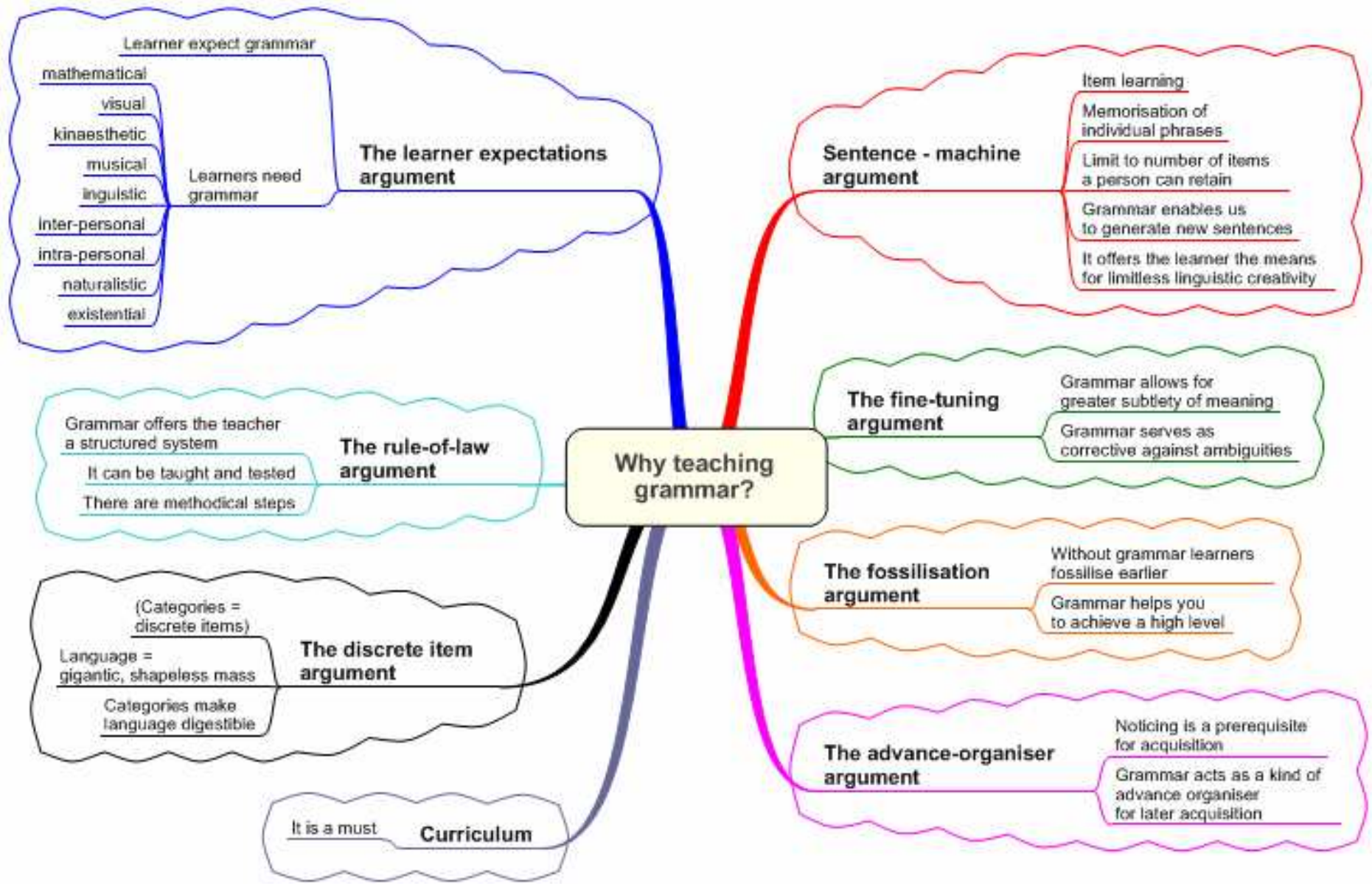
- Grammar is the system of a language. People sometimes describe grammar as the "rules" of a language; but in fact no language has rules. If we use the word "rules", we suggest that somebody created the rules first and then spoke the language, like a new game. But languages did not start like that. Languages started by people making sounds which evolved into words, phrases and sentences. No commonly-spoken language is fixed. All languages change over time. What we call "grammar" is simply a reflection of a language at a particular time.

- Grammar is the mental system of rules and categories that allows humans to form and interpret the words and sentences of their language.

- grammar adds meanings that are not easily inferable from the immediate context. The kinds of meanings realised by grammar are principally:
  - representational - that is, grammar enables us to use language to describe the world in terms of how, when and where things happen
    e.g. The sun set at 7.30. The children are playing in the garden.

  - interpersonal - that is, grammar facilitates the way we interact with other people when, for example, we need to get things done using language.
    e.g. There is a difference between:
    Tickets!
    Tickets, please.
    Can you show me your tickets?
    May see your tickets?
    Would you mind if I had a look at your tickets.

    Grammar is used to fine-tune the meanings we wish to express.


Why teaching grammar?
The learner expectations argument
Learner expect grammar
mathematical
visual
kinaesthetic
musical
linguistic
Learners need grammar
inter-personal
intra-personal
naturalistic
existential
Sentence - machine argument
Item learning
Memorisation of individual phrases
Limit to number of items a person can retain
Grammar enables us to generate new sentences
It offers the learner the means for limitless linguistic creativity
The fine-tuning argument
Grammar allows for greater subtlety of meaning
Grammar serves as corrective against ambiguities
The rule-of-law argument
Grammar offers the teacher a structured system
It can be taught and tested
There are methodical steps
The fossilisation argument
Without grammar learners fossilise earlier
Grammar helps you to achieve a high level
The discrete item argument
(Categories = discrete items)
Language = gigantic, shapeless mass
Categories make language digestible
The advance-organiser argument
Noticing is a prerequisite for acquisition
Grammar acts as a kind of advance organiser for later acquisition
Curriculum
It is a must

# Why should we teach grammar?

There are many arguments for putting grammar in the foreground in second language teaching. Here are seven of them:

**1) The sentence-machine argument**

Part of the process of language learning must be what is sometimes called **item-learning** — that is the memorisation of individual items such as words and phrases. However, there is a limit to the number of items a person can both retain and retrieve. Even travellers' phrase books have limited usefulness — good for a three-week holiday, but there comes a point where we need to learn some patterns or rules to enable us to generate new sentences. That is to say, grammar. Grammar, after all, is a description of the regularities in a language, and knowledge of these regularities provides the learner with the means to generate a potentially enormous number of original sentences. The number of possible new sentences is constrained only by the vocabulary at the learner's command and his or her creativity. Grammar is a kind of **'sentence-making machine'.** It follows that the teaching of grammar offers the learner the means for potentially limitless linguistic creativity.

**2) The fine-tuning argument**

The purpose of grammar seems to be to allow for greater subtlety of meaning than a merely lexical system can cater for. While it is possible to get a lot of communicative mileage out of simply stringing words and phrases together, there comes a point where 'Me Tarzan, you Jane'-type language fails to deliver, both in terms of intelligibility and in terms of appropriacy. This is particularly the case for written language, which generally needs to be more explicit than spoken language. For example, the following errors are likely to confuse the reader:

Last Monday night I was boring in my house.

After speaking a lot time with him I thought that him attracted me.

We took a wrong plane and when I saw it was very later because the plane took up.

Five years ago I would want to go to India but in that time anybody of my friends didn't want to go.

The teaching of grammar, it is argued, serves as a corrective against the kind of ambiguity represented in these examples.

**3) The fossilisation argument**

It is possible for highly motivated learners with a particular aptitude for languages to achieve amazing levels of proficiency without any formal study. But more often 'pick it up as you go along' learners reach a language plateau beyond which it is very difficult to progress. To put it technically, their linguistic competence **fossilises.** Research suggests that learners who receive no instruction seem to be at risk of fossilising sooner than those who do receive instruction.

**4) The advance-organiser argument**

Grammar instruction might also have a delayed effect. The researcher Richard Schmidt kept a diary of his experience learning Portuguese in Brazil. Initially he had enrolled in formal language classes where there was a heavy emphasis on grammar. When he subsequently left these classes to travel in Brazil his Portuguese made good progress, a fact he attributed to the use he was making of it. However, as he interacted naturally with Brazilians he was aware that certain features of the talk — certain grammatical items — seemed to catch his attention. He **noticed** them. It so happened that these items were also items he had studied in his classes. What's more, being more noticeable, these items seemed to stick. Schmidt concluded that **noticing** is a prerequisite for acquisition. The grammar teaching he had received previously, while insufficient in itself to turn him into a fluent Portuguese speaker, had

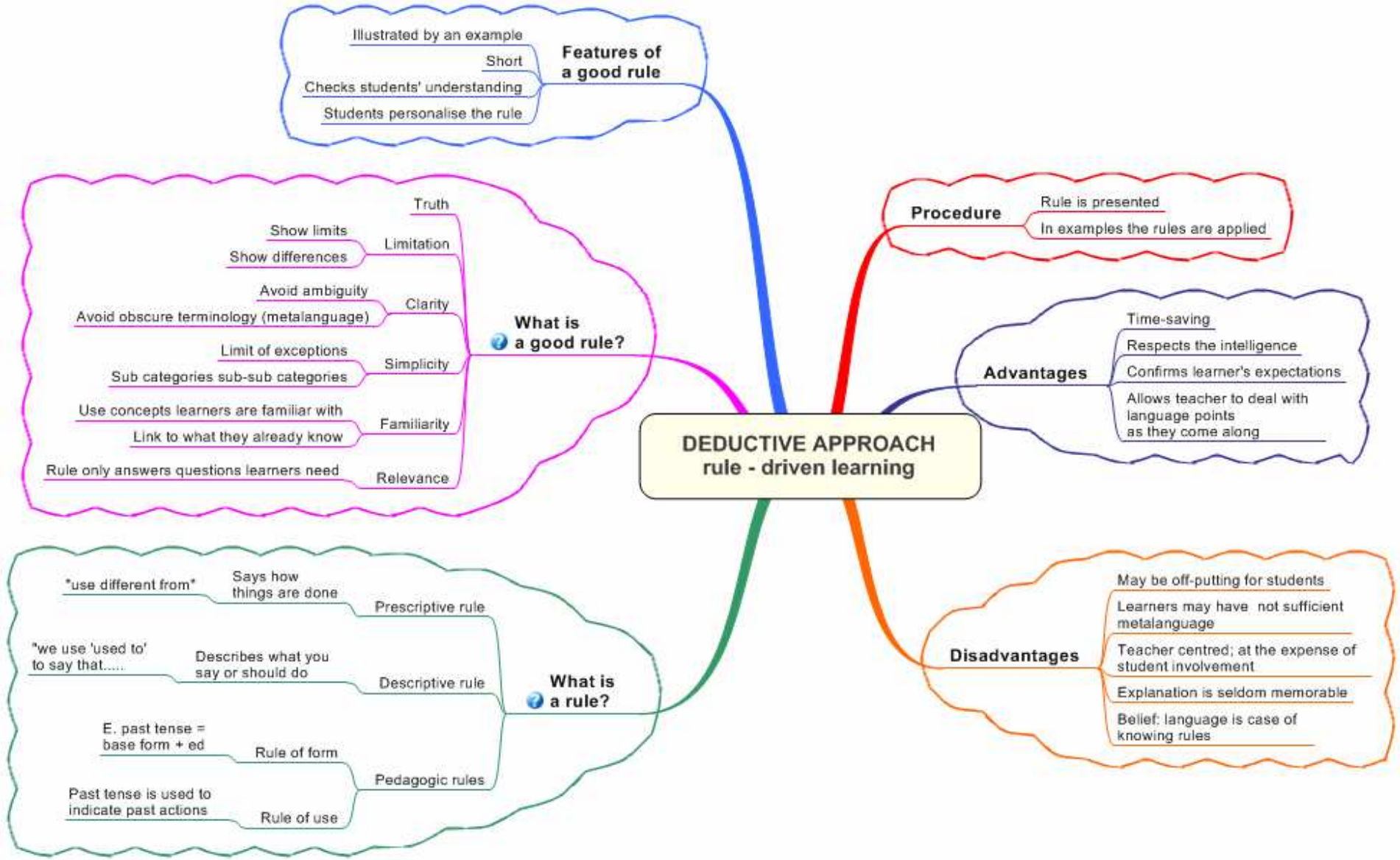
primed him to notice what might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and hence had indirectly influenced his learning. It had acted as a kind **of advance organiser** for his later acquisition of the language.

**5) The discrete item argument**
Language seen from 'outside', can seem to be a gigantic, shapeless mass, presenting an insuperable challenge for the learner. Because grammar consists of an apparently finite set of rules, it can help to reduce the apparent enormity of the language learning task for both teachers and students. By tidying language up and organising it into neat categories (sometimes called **discrete items),** grammarians make language digestible.

(A discrete item is any unit of the grammar system that is sufficiently narrowly defined to form the focus of a lesson or an exercise: e.g. *the present continuous, the definite article, possessive pronouns).*

**6) The rule-of-law argument**
It follows from the discrete-item argument that, since grammar is a system of learnable rules, it lends itself to a view of teaching and learning known as **transmission.** A transmission view sees the role of education as the transfer of a body of knowledge (typically in the form of facts and rules) from those that have the knowledge to those that do not. Such a view is typically associated with the kind of institutionalised learning where rules, order, and discipline are highly valued. The need for rules, order and discipline is particularly acute in large classes of unruly and unmotivated teenagers - a situation that many teachers of English are confronted with daily. In this sort of situation grammar offers the teacher a structured system that can be taught and tested in methodical steps.

**7) The learner expectations argument**
Regardless of the theoretical and ideological arguments for or against grammar teaching, many learners come to language classes with fairly fixed expectations as to what they will do there. These expectations may derive from previous classroom experience of language learning. They may also derive from experience of classrooms in general where (traditionally, at least) teaching is of the transmission kind mentioned above. On the other hand, their expectations that teaching will be grammar-focused may stem from frustration experienced at trying to pick up a second language in a non-classroom setting, such as through self-study, or through immersion in the target language culture. Such students may have enrolled in language classes specifically to ensure that the learning experience is made more efficient and systematic. The teacher who ignores this expectation by encouraging learners simply to experience language is likely to frustrate and alienate them.


DEDUCTIVE APPROACH
rule - driven learning
Features of a good rule
Illustrated by an example
Short
Checks students' understanding
Students personalise the rule
What is a good rule?
Truth
Limitation
Show limits
Show differences
Clarity
Avoid ambiguity
Avoid obscure terminology (metalanguage)
Simplicity
Limit of exceptions
Sub categories sub-sub categories
Familiarity
Use concepts learners are familiar with
Link to what they already know
Relevance
Rule only answers questions learners need
What is a rule?
Prescriptive rule
"use different from"
Says how things are done
Descriptive rule
"we use 'used to' to say that....."
Describes what you say or should do
Pedagogic rules
Rule of form
E. past tense = base form + ed
Rule of use
Past tense is used to indicate past actions
Procedure
Rule is presented
In examples the rules are applied
Advantages
Time-saving
Respects the intelligence
Confirms learner's expectations
Allows teacher to deal with language points as they come along
Disadvantages
May be off-putting for students
Learners may have not sufficient metalanguage
Teacher centred; at the expense of student involvement
Explanation is seldom memorable
Belief: language is case of knowing rules

# PRESENTING GRAMMAR

## APPROACHES

## The deductive approach – rule driven learning

A deductive approach starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rule is applied.
The grammar rule is presented and the learner engages with it through the study and manipulation of examples.

**Advantages of a deductive approach:**

- It gets straight to the point, and can therefore be time-saving. Many rules — especially rules of form — can be more simply and quickly explained than elicited from examples. This will allow more time for practice and application.
- It respects the intelligence and maturity of many - especially adult -students, and acknowledges the role of cognitive processes in language acquisition.
- It confirms many students' expectations about classroom learning, particularly for those learners who have an analytical learning style.
- It allows the teacher to deal with language points as they come up, rather than having to anticipate them and prepare for them in advance.

**Disadvantages of a deductive approach:**

- Starting the lesson with a grammar presentation may be off-putting for some students, especially younger ones. They may not have sufficient **metalanguage** (i.e. language used to talk about language such as grammar terminology). Or they may not be able to understand the concepts involved.
- Grammar explanation encourages a teacher-fronted, transmission-style classroom; teacher explanation is often at the expense of student involvement and interaction.
- Explanation is seldom as memorable as other forms of presentation, such as demonstration.
- Such an approach encourages the belief that learning a language is simply a case of knowing the rules.

What is a rule ?
In the Longman Activity Dictionary “rule” is defined as:

- a principle or order which guides behaviour, says how things are to be done etc, **(prescriptive rule**)
- the usual way that something happens ( **descriptive rule**). Descriptive rules are primarily concerned with generalisations about what speakers of the language actually *do say* than what they *should do*.

**Pedagogic rules** – they make sense to learners and provide them with the means and confidence to generate language with a reasonable chance of success.

Pedagogic rules can be spit up into:

**rules of form** and **rules of use**.

Examples of prescriptive rules:
Do not use *different to* and never use *different than*. Always use *different from*.
Never use the passive when you can use the active.
Use *shall* for the first person and *will* for second and third persons.

Examples of descriptive rules:
You do not normally use *the* with proper nouns referring to people.
We use *used to* with the infinitive *(used to do*, *used to smoke* etc.) to say that something regularly happened in the past but no longer happens.

Example for rule of form:
To form the past simple of regular verbs, add –ed to the infinitive.

Example of a rule of use:
The simple past tense is used to indicate past actions or states.

Example: (from Walker and Elsworth Grammar practice for Intermediate Students, Longman, 1986)

# Nouns, adjectives and adverbs

**1** ⊞
Subject and object pronouns

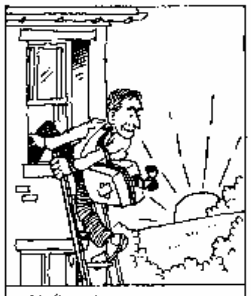
*Subject pronouns*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | you | he | she | it | we | you | they |

*Object pronouns*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| me | you | him | her | it | us | you | them |

- The subject is the person or thing doing the action:
  *I left early.*
  ***She** went home.*
  ***We** said goodbye.*
- The object is the person or thing receiving the action:
  *She telephoned **me**.*
  *I hit **him**.*
  *We saw **her**.*


*I left early.*

Write the correct *pronouns* for these sentences:

1 .... telephoned yesterday. (she)
*She telephoned yesterday.*
2 We watch .... for hours. (he)
*We watched him for hours.*
3 Hasn't .... arrived yet? (she)
4 .... don't understand. (I)
5 Are you talking to ....? (I)
6 Don't ask ..... .... doesn't know. (she/she)
7 This is Julia: .... have known .... for years. (we/she)
8 Nobody told .... the bus was leaving. (they)
9 Why didn't .... ask .... to come? (she/they)
10 Don't ask ..... Ask ..... (I/he)
11 .... think .... doesn't like ..... (I/he/I)
12 .... asked .... to invite ..... (they/he/we)

Many of the pros and cons of a rule-driven approach hinge on the quality of the actual rule explanation. This in turn depends on how user-friendly the rule is.
What makes a rule a good rule? Michael Swan, author of teachers' and students' grammars, offers the following criteria:

• **Truth:** Rules should be true. While truthfulness may need to be compromised in the interests of clarity and simplicity, the rule must bear some resemblance to the reality it is describing.
*It is surprising how many incorrect explanations you find in TEFL books. A good example is the distinction usually made between **some** and **any**, which goes something like:*
*Use **some**+plural countable/uncountable noun in affirmative sentences.*
*Use **any**+plural countable/uncountable noun in negative sentences and questions.*
*It still fails to explain:*
*Take **any** one you want.*
*I didn't like **some** of his books.*
*An explanation based on the difference in meaning between **some** and **any** might eliminate many of these problems.*

• **Limitation:** Rules should show clearly what the limits are on the use of a given form.
*For example, to say simply that we use will to talk about the future is of little use to the learner since it doesn't show how will is different from other ways of talking about the future (e.g. going to).*

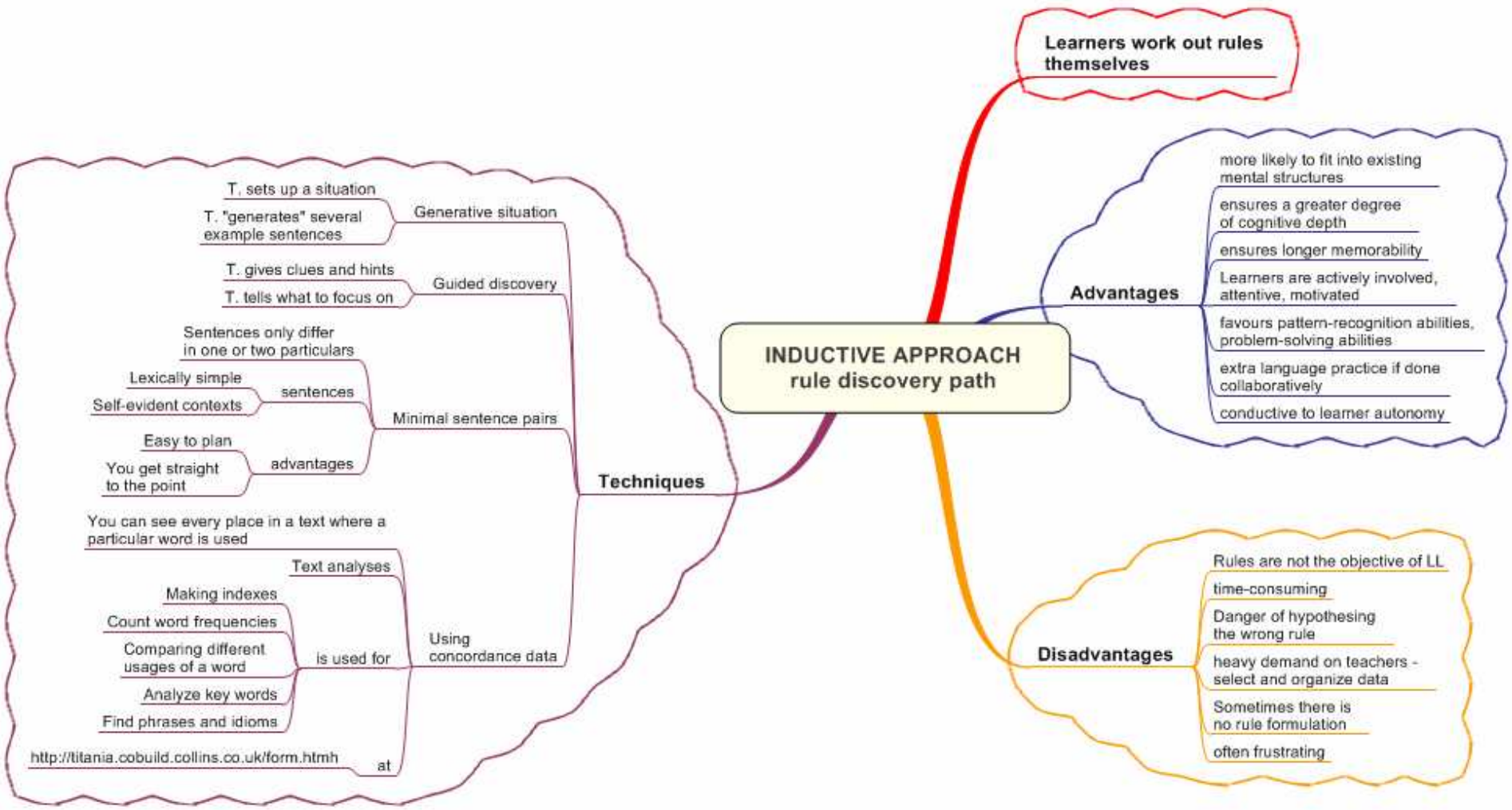
• **Clarity:** Rules should be clear. Lack of clarity is often caused by ambiguity or obscure terminology.
*For example: 'Use will for spontaneous decisions; use going to for premeditated decisions.' To which a student responded, 'All my decisions are premeditated'.*

• **Simplicity:** Rules should be simple. 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.

• **Familiarity:** An explanation should try to make use of concepts already familiar to the learner. Few learners have specialised knowledge of grammar, although they may well be familiar with some basic terminology used to describe the grammar of their own language (e.g. conditional, infinitive, gerund). Most learners have a concept of tense (past, present, future), but will be less at home with concepts such as deontic and epistemic modality, for example.

• **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. For example, Arabic speakers, who do not have an equivalent to the present perfect, may need a different treatment of this form than, say, French speakers, who have a similar structure to the English present perfect, but who use it slightly differently.

A lot depends on the teacher’s presentation of the rule. An effective rule presentation will include the following features:
it will be illustrated by an example
It will be short
Students’ understanding will be checked
Students will have an opportunity to personalize the rule.


INDUCTIVE APPROACH
rule discovery path
Learners work out rules themselves
Advantages
more likely to fit into existing mental structures
ensures a greater degree of cognitive depth
ensures longer memorability
Learners are actively involved, attentive, motivated
favours pattern-recognition abilities, problem-solving abilities
extra language practice if done collaboratively
conductive to learner autonomy
Disadvantages
Rules are not the objective of LL
time-consuming
Danger of hypothesing the wrong rule
heavy demand on teachers - select and organize data
Sometimes there is no rule formulation
often frustrating
Techniques
Generative situation
T. sets up a situation
T. "generates" several example sentences
Guided discovery
T. gives clues and hints
T. tells what to focus on
Minimal sentence pairs
Sentences only differ in one or two particulars
sentences
Lexically simple
Self-evident contexts
advantages
Easy to plan
You get straight to the point
Using concordance data
You can see every place in a text where a particular word is used
Text analyses
is used for
Making indexes
Count word frequencies
Comparing different usages of a word
Analyze key words
Find phrases and idioms
at
http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/form.htmh

# The inductive approach – the rule-discovery path

What are the **advantages** of encouraging learners to work rules out for themselves?

- Rules learners discover for themselves are more likely to fit their existing mental structures than rules they have been presented with. This in turn will make the rules more meaningful, memorable, and serviceable.
- The mental effort involved ensures a greater degree of **cognitive depth** which, again, ensures greater memorability.
- Students are more actively involved in the learning process, rather than being simply passive recipients: they are therefore likely to be more attentive and more motivated.
- It is an approach which favours pattern-recognition and problem-solving abilities which suggests that it is particularly suitable for learners who like this kind of challenge.
- If the problem-solving is done collaboratively, and in the target language, learners get the opportunity for extra language practice.
- Working things out for themselves prepares students for greater self-reliance and is therefore conducive to learner **autonomy.**

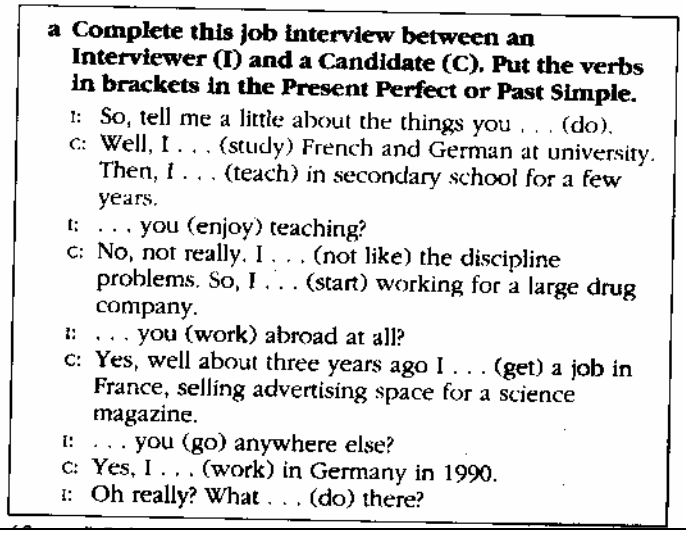
The **disadvantages** of an inductive approach include:

- The time and energy spent in working out rules may mislead students into believing that rules are the objective of language learning, rather than a means.
- The time taken to work out a rule may be at the expense of time spent in putting the rule to some sort of productive practice.
- Students may hypothesise the wrong rule, or their version of the rule may be either too broad or too narrow in its application: this is especially a danger where there is no overt testing of their hypotheses, either through practice examples, or by eliciting an explicit statement of the rule.
- It can place heavy demands on teachers in planning a lesson. They need to select and organise the data carefully so as to guide learners to an accurate formulation of the rule, while also ensuring the data is intelligible.
- However carefully organised the data is, many language areas such as aspect and modality resist easy rule formulation.
- An inductive approach frustrates students who, by dint of their personal learning style or their past learning experience (or both), would prefer simply to be told the rule.

Research findings into the relative benefits of deductive and inductive methods have been inconclusive. Short term gains for deductive learning have been found, and there is some evidence to suggest that some kinds of language items are better 'given than 'discovered'. Moreover, when surveyed, most learners tend to prefer deductive presentations of grammar. Nevertheless, once exposed to inductive approaches, there is often less resistance as the learners see the benefits of solving language problems themselves. Finally, the autonomy argument is not easily dismissed: the capacity to discern patterns and regularities in naturally occurring input would seem to be an invaluable tool for self-directed learning, and one, therefore, that might usefully be developed in the classroom.

Examples:

<table>
<tr>
<td>ii. A factory needs workers. Yesterday Bill read their advertisement in the paper. It said these things:<br>"We are a very large firm, pay very high wages, and have a good pension-scheme."<br>Bill is at the factory today. He now knows that all those things are not true. At this moment he is saying these things to the manager:<br>"YOU SAID YOU WERE A VERY LARGE FIRM but you are really a small one!<br>YOU SAID YOU PAID HIGH WAGES but they are really very low.<br>YOU SAID YOU HAD A GOOD PENSION SCHEME. You really haven't one at all."</td>
<td>Example1:<br><br>taken from "English in Situations" (O´Neill, OUP 1970<br><br>Generative situation:<br>The teacher sets up a situation in order to "generate" several example sentences of a structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5<br>Find the rule<br>Look at these sentences:<br>You know Norma and Joe, don't you?<br>They work every day.<br>Joe talks to tourists, and Norma writes letters.<br>We always go to their travel agency.<br>The agency offers tours to many different countries.<br>I like the service there too.<br>▶ There is a final s on the verb only with certain subjects. What are they?<br>☐ I ☐ you ☐ he ☐ she ☐ it ☐ we ☐ they<br><br>Now apply the rule!<br>Circle the right verb.<br>I see/sees Norma almost every day, or she call/calls me. She and Joe sometimes come/comes to my house on weekends.<br>Joe usually tell/tells us some funny stories.</td>
<td>Example 2:<br><br>The principles of the guided discovery approach were originally intended for self-instruction as part of the kind of programmes which were used in language laboratories. They soon adopted for classroom use, and coursebooks promoting an inductive approach to language learning are now more or less standard. An example of an inductive presentation of the present imple from New Wave 1 (Longman 19988) is shown on the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching differences between past simple and present perfect<br><br>(Teacher writes the following three sets of sentences on the board:)<br>1a I've seen all of Jim Jarmusch's films.<br>b I saw his latest film last month.<br><br>2a Since 1990, she's worked for three different newspapers.<br>b She worked for the Observer in 1996.<br><br>3a Have you ever been to Peru?<br>b When were you in Peru?</td>
<td>Example 3:<br>Minimal sentence pairs<br><br>By presenting two sentences that are only different in one or two particulars, the teacher is better able to focus the students' attention on exactly how the choice of form determines a difference in meaning.<br><br>The sentences should<br>• be lexically simple<br>• have fairly self-evident contexts</td>
</tr>
</table>

| | |
|---|---|
|  <br>**a Complete this job interview between an Interviewer (I) and a Candidate (C). Put the verbs in brackets in the Present Perfect or Past Simple.**<br>I: So, tell me a little about the things you . . . (do).<br>C: Well, I . . . (study) French and German at university. Then, I . . . (teach) in secondary school for a few years.<br>I: . . . you (enjoy) teaching?<br>C: No, not really. I . . . (not like) the discipline problems. So, I . . . (start) working for a large drug company.<br>I: . . . you (work) abroad at all?<br>C: Yes, well about three years ago I . . . (get) a job in France, selling advertising space for a science magazine.<br>I: . . . you (go) anywhere else?<br>C: Yes, I . . . (work) in Germany in 1990.<br>I: Oh really? What . . . (do) there? | As with all rule-explicit presentations, this approach demands a basic command of grammar terminology on the part of the learners.<br><br>Hypotheses must be tested. That stage is essential in the presentation. It also shifts the focus back on to the learners. |

The minimal pair approach is designed to overcome the lack of economy of the generative situation. By getting straight to the point, the minimal pairs presentation combines the best features of an explanation-driven approach and a discovery approach. It is also relatively easy to plan and to set up. In terms of efficacy , it relies heavily on the choice of sample sentences. More problematic still is the lack of context, which can sometimes lead students to the wrong conclusions, or, more frustratingly, to no conclusion at all.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | The've been painting the kitchen. | There is nothing to help students untangle the difference between these two sentences. |
| B | They've painted the kitchen. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | What a mess!"<br>"Yes, they've been painting the kitchen." | Whereas, with slightly more context, the difference in meaning starts to take shape: |
| B | "The flat is looking nice."<br>"Yes, they've painted the kitchen." | |

Example 4: **Using concordance data**

**Concordance**, text analysis and concordancing software, is for anyone who needs to study texts closely or analyse language in depth. This is the most powerful and flexible software of its kind, with registered users in 52 countries.

With **Concordance**, you can

- make indexes and word lists
- count word frequencies
- compare different usages of a word
- analyse keywords
- find phrases and idioms
- publish to the web
- ...and much more

**Concordance** is being used in

- Language teaching and learning
- Data mining and data clean-up
- Literary and linguistic scholarship

- Translation and language engineering
- Corpus linguistics
- Natural language software development
- Lexicography
- Content analysis in many disciplines including accountancy, history, marketing, musicology, politics, geography, and media studies

A concordance derives its power for analysis from the fact that it allows us to see every place in a text where a particular word is used, and so to detect patterns of usage and, again, to marshal evidence for an argument. Since words express ideas, themes and motifs, a concordance is highly useful in detecting patterns of meaning as well. The concordance focuses on word-forms, however -- not on what may be meant but what is actually said. It is an empirical tool of textual research. (you can use Corpus Concordance Sampler free at **http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/form.html**)

*Example: -ing form or infinitive after „remember*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Francois de Menil, told me I | remember | feeling that Fred was like my |
| lower in saturated fats - even so, | remember | to limit the amount of these you |
| slipped me a two-shilling piece. I | remember | going bright red and handing it to |
| strong, strangely warm wind. I | remember | having experienced something |
| service team. [p] [p] Please | remember | to complete the Direct Debit |
| that of Tom's girl. Personally, I | remember | leaving the track team for the |
| expensive heating being wasted. | Remember | o turn your heating system off |
| personally. [p] I find it hard to | remember | to take my Pill every day and I'm |
| Street, London E1 9BS. [p] | Remember | to state the systems you own and |
| all the drinks you have this week. | Remember | to include all your drinks, not |
| sex that isn't available now. I can | remember | going to a dance hall and being |
| Take the casualty to hospital and | remember | to take with you any empty tablet |
| mark, take colour photos of them. | Remember | to include an object, such as a |
| Travel Points, it is important to | remember | to put your card through the swipe |
| And if you are boarding your dog, | remember | to ask your vet about protection |
| we are hoping someone will | remember | seeing her. We are extremely concerned for |
| with a minimum amount of care. Just | remember | to let All Terrain shoes dry away |
| the famous are already there - just | remember | to add your family's and friends' |
| Don't you | remember | asking me to fetch one? |

# Functional - notional Approach

## Objective
- Explain language in terms of people do with it
- How to use language to live

## Notions
- A concept, an idea
- Specific
  - Vocabulary
    - Dog
    - House
    - Etc.
- General
  - Time
    - Size
    - Emotion
    - Time past
      - Ago
      - In ...
      - Last...
      - When..., before,... after..

## Functions
- Communicative act
- Use of language to achieve a purpose
- Examples
  - Making request
  - Making offers
  - Apologising
  - Inviting
  - Promising

## Functions - categories
- Personal
  - Clarifying one's ideas
    - Hate
    - Love
    - Fear,...
    - Etc.
- Interpersonal
  - Maintain desirable social relationship
    - Greeting
    - Introducing
    - Offering
    - Sharing wishes
    - Etc.
- Directive
  - Accepting / refusing direction
    - Making requests
    - Persuading someone
    - Responding to instructions
    - Etc.
- Referential
  - Reporting
    - Identifying items
    - Summarising
    - Evaluating
    - Etc.
- Imaginative
  - Creativity / artistic expression
    - Discuss a poem, a film
    - Create rhymes, stories
    - Solve mysteries
    - Etc.

## Advantages
- Communicatively useful expressions
- Focus on communication
- Suitable to beginners

## Criticism
- Order
  - What first?
  - Complain
  - Apologize
- Range
  - Can I...?
  - Would you mind if...?
- No structures syllabus
  - Not analytical
- Higher level
  - More complex?
  - More obscure?

# Functional-notional Approach

**History**
In 1972, the British linguist D.A. Wilkins published a document that proposed a radical shift away from using the traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary to **describe language to an analysis of the communicative meanings that learners would need in order to express themselves and to understand effectively.** This initial document was followed by his 1976 work Notional Syllabuses, which showed how language could be categorised on the basis of notions such as quantity, location and time, and functions such as making requests, making offers and apologising. Wilkins' work was used by the Council of Europe in drawing up a communicative language syllabus, which specified the communicative functions a learner would need in order to communicate effectively at a given level of competence. At the end of the 1970s, the first course-books to be based on functional syllabuses began to appear. Typically, they would be organised on the basis of individual functions and the exponents needed to express these functions. For example, many course-books would begin with the function of 'introducing oneself', perhaps followed by the function of 'making requests', with typical exponents being 'Can I ….?', "Could you ….?', "Is it alright if I ….?' and so on. These would often be practised in the form of communicative exercises involving pair work, group work and role plays. It is interesting to compare this approach with a grammatical syllabus. In a typical grammatical syllabus, structures using the word 'would' tend to appear in later stages of the syllabus, as they are held to be relatively complex (eg "If I knew the answer, I would tell you"), whereas in a functional syllabus 'would' often appears at a very early stage due to its communicative significance in exponents such as 'Would you like ….?', which is extremely common and of great communicative value even to beginners. The need to apply a grammatical name or category to the structure is not considered important within the framework of a purely functional syllabus.

*Finocchiaro, M. & Brumfit, C. The Functional-Notional Approach. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (1983).*

*This method of language teaching is categorized along with others under the rubric of a communicative approach. The method stresses a means of organizing a language syllabus. The emphasis is on breaking down the global concept of language into units of analysis in terms of communicative situations in which they are used.*

**Explanation of specific terms:**

**Notions** are meaning elements that may be expressed through nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives or adverbs.
A notion is a concept, or idea: it may be quite specific, in which case it is virtually the same as vocabulary (dog, house, for example); or it may be very general – time, size, emotion, movement – in which case it often overlaps with the concept of "topics".
A notion may be "time past"; this may include past tenses, phrases like *a month ago, in 1990, last week,* and utterances using temporal clauses beginning with *when….., before…., after….* and so on;

A **function** is some kind of communicative act: it is the use of language to achieve a purpose, usually involving interaction at least between two people. Examples would be suggesting, promising, apologizing, greeting, inviting.
"Inviting" may include phrases like *"Would you like to….? I suggest…., How about…? Please…*

*Task: Have a look at the items listed in the box below. Can you sort them into separate lists of notions and functions?*

| *Notions and functions* | | |
|---|---|---|
| *location* | *offer* | *request* |
| *obligation* | *promise* | *spatial relations* |
| *advise* | *the future* | *food* |
| *threat* | *crime* | *instruction* |
| *apology* | *the body* | *remind* |
| *probability* | *expressions of opinion* | |

A **situation** may affect variations of language such as the use of dialects, the formality or informality of the language and the mode of expression. Situation includes the following elements:
A. The persons taking part in the speech act
B. The place where the conversation occurs
C. The time the speech act is taking place
D. The topic or activity that is being discussed

**Exponents** are the language utterances or statements that stem from the function, the situation and the topic.

**Code** is the shared language of a community of speakers.

**Code-switching** is a change or switch in code during the speech act, which many theorists believe is purposeful behaviour to convey bonding, language prestige or other elements of interpersonal relations between the speakers.

**Functional Categories of Language**
Mary Finocchiaro:The Functional-notional Approach: From Theory to Practice (1983, p. 65-66) has placed the functional categories under five headings as noted below: *personal, interpersonal, directive, referential,* and *imaginative.*

- **Personal**

  Clarifying or arranging one's ideas; expressing one's thoughts or feelings: love, joy, pleasure, happiness, surprise, likes, satisfaction, dislikes, disappointment, distress, pain,

anger, anguish, fear, anxiety, sorrow, frustration, annoyance at missed opportunities, moral, intellectual and social concerns; and the everyday feelings of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleepiness, cold, or warmth

- **Interpersonal**

Enabling us to establish and maintain desirable social and working relationships:
greetings and leave takings
introducing people to others
identifying oneself to others
expressing joy at another's success
expressing concern for other people's welfare
extending and accepting invitations
refusing invitations politely or making alternative arrangements
making appointments for meetings
breaking appointments politely and arranging another mutually convenient time
apologizing
excusing oneself and accepting excuses for not meeting commitments
indicating agreement or disagreement
interrupting another speaker politely
changing an embarrassing subject
receiving visitors and paying visits to others
offering food or drinks and accepting or declining politely
sharing wishes, hopes, desires, problems
making promises and committing oneself to some action
complimenting someone
making excuses
expressing and acknowledging gratitude

- **Directive**

Attempting to influence the actions of others; accepting or refusing direction:
making suggestions in which the speaker is included
making requests; making suggestions
refusing to accept a suggestion or a request but offering an alternative
persuading someone to change his point of view
requesting and granting permission
asking for help and responding to a plea for help
forbidding someone to do something; issuing a command
giving and responding to instructions
warning someone
discouraging someone from pursuing a course of action
establishing guidelines and deadlines for the completion of actions
asking for directions or instructions

- **Referential**

talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking *about* language (what is termed the metalinguistic function: = talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future
identifying items or people in the classroom, the school the home, the community
asking for a description of someone or something
defining something or a language item or asking for a definition

paraphrasing, summarizing, or translating (L1 to L2 or vice versa)
explaining or asking for explanations of how something works
comparing or contrasting things
discussing possibilities, probabilities, or capabilities of doing something
requesting or reporting facts about events or actions
evaluating the results of an action or event

- **Imaginative**

Discussions involving elements of creativity and artistic expression
discussing a poem, a story, a piece of music, a play, a painting, a film, a TV program, etc.
expanding ideas suggested by other or by a piece of literature or reading material
creating rhymes, poetry, stories or plays
recombining familiar dialogs or passages creatively
suggesting original beginnings or endings to dialogs or stories
solving problems or mysteries

**Task**: In the table shown below each column represents a different basis for selection of language: situation, function, vocabulary, etc. In each row one of them is filled in; can you fill in some suggestions for the others?

| Coordinating different language categories | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Situations** | **Topics** | **Notions and Functions** | **Grammar** | **Vocabulary** |
| Getting to know someone | | | | |
| | Road accidents | | | |
| | | Making requests | | |
| | | | Future tense | |
| | | | | farmer, secretary, etc |

**FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR**

People who study and use a language are mainly interested in how they can do things with language --- how they can make meanings, get attention to their problems and interests, influence their friends and colleagues and create a rich social life for themselves. They are only interested in the grammatical structure of the language as a means to getting things done. A grammar which puts together the patterns of the language and the things you can do with them is called a functional grammar."
[COBUILD, 1990]

**Objective**
The main objective of a functional grammar is to explain language in terms of what people do with it, how they use the language to live. It tries to do that by adopting more of a semantic

and pragmatic orientation inside the grammar. It does not see semantics and pragmatics as extra levels of organization but sees them as integral to the organization of the grammar.

## Criticism

- Order

Criticisms of functional approaches include the difficulty in deciding the order in which different functions should be presented. Is it more important to be able to complain or to apologise, for example? Another problem lies in the wide range of grammatical structures needed to manipulate basic functions at different levels of formality (for example, 'Can I …..?' as opposed to 'Would you mind if I …..?"). In addition, although it is possible to identify hundreds of functions and micro-functions, there are probably no more than ten fundamental communicative functions that are expressed by a range of widely used exponents.

- no structures syllabus

There is also the apparently random nature of the language used, which may frustrate learners used to the more analytical and "building-block" approach that a grammatical syllabus can offer. Another apparent weakness is the question of what to do at higher levels. Is it simply a case of learning more complex exponents for basic functions or is one required to seek out ever more obscure functions (complaining sarcastically, for example)?

## Advantages

On the positive side, however, there is little doubt that functional approaches have contributed a great deal to the overall store of language teaching methodology. Most new course-books contain some kind of functional syllabus alongside a focus on grammar and vocabulary, thus providing learners with communicatively useful expressions in tandem with a structured syllabus with a clear sense of progression. In addition, the focus on communication inherent in the practice of functional exponents has contributed greatly to communicative language teaching in general. Finally, the idea that even beginners can be presented with exponents of high communicative value from the very start represents a radical shift from the kind of approach that began with the present simple of the verb 'to be' in all its forms and focused almost entirely on structure with little regard for actual communication in the target language.

## Solutions to the tasks:

*Functions are: offer, request, promise, advise, threat, instruction, apology, remind, expressioin of opinion. The rest are notions.*

| Coordinating different language categories | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Situations** | **Topics** | **Notions and Functions** | **Grammar** | **Vocabulary** |
| Getting to know someone | Tstes, hobbies | Inquiring, informing, greeting | Interrogative forms<br>Verb (e.g. enjoy + - ing | Swimming, sports, etc. |
| Reporting an accident | Road accidents | Time past<br>Narrating<br>Describing | Past tense | Road, car, drive, etc. |
| Shopping | Clothes | Making requests | Modals<br>Would, could, might | Clothes,<br>Adjectives of colour, size, etc. |
| Planning a holiday | Travel, accommodation | Future time<br>Predicting<br>suggesting | Future tense | Train, plane, etc.<br>Hotel, camping |
| Asking about or describing a profession | Professions<br>Activities<br>Equipment | Requesting information<br>Describing activity | Yes/no questions<br>Present tense | farmer,<br>secretary, etc |

**Grammar in situational context**

**Situation in context**

- Imperative forms — follow a recipe
- Future tense / Conditional — plans for a class field trip
- Simple past / Past negation — report past events
- May, might / Any, some,.. — buy a gift
- Present t. "to be" / Possessive pronouns — answer personal questions name, address,..
- Location prepositions / May, can,... — tell how to find an object
- Present perfect tense / Present perfect progressive — fill in a 'medical history form
- Habitual present / Personal pronouns — report daily schedules
- Would like.... / What, when,... — invitation on the phone
- Past conditional / If clauses — report an actual past event discuss conditions under which a different outcome might have resulted

**Generative situation**

Teacher sets up a story in order to "generate" several example sentences of a structure

**Advantages**

- permits presentation of a wide range of language items
- language in context
- situation explains meaning
- ideal for inductive approach - rule discovery learning
- students are active partners - Co-creators
- more memorable than simple explanations
- high rate of efficacy

**Disadvantages**

- time consuming compared to presentation
- requires a resourceful teacher — stories, pictures

# Teaching Grammar in Situational Contexts - Using a generative situation

The generative Situation is a situation which the teacher sets up in the lesson in order to "generate" several example sentences of a structure.

**Advantages:**
A situational context permits presentation of a wide range of language items. The situation serves as a means of contextualising the language and this helps clarify its meaning. At the same time the generated examples provide the learners with data for induction of the rules of form. Students can be involved in the development of the presentation as well as in solving the grammar 'problem': this makes it less dry than a traditional grammar explanation. Moreover, the situation, if well chosen, is likely to be more memorable than a simple explanation. All these factors suggest that this approach rates high in terms of **efficacy.**

**Disadvantages:**
If students are in the wrong mind-set they are unlikely to do the kind of cognitive work involved in the induction of grammar rules.
This kind of presentation also takes more time than an explanation. Time spent on presenting language is inevitably time spent at the expense of language practice, and it is arguable that what most students need is not the presentation of rules but opportunities to practise them. Thus, the generative situation loses points in terms of its **economy.** And it also requires a resourceful teacher who not only is able to conjure up situations that generate several structurally identical sentences, but who has also the means (and the time) to prepare the necessary visual aids.

**Example:**
Teaching **should have done** using a generative situation

Step 1:
By means of a picture on the board (a drawing, photo, or picture cut from a magazine) the teacher introduces a character she calls Andy. She draws a rough map of Australia, placing next to it a picture of a four-wheel drive vehicle. She elicits ideas as to how these pictures are connected, establishing the situation that Andy has decided to drive across the Australian desert from the east to the west. She elicits the sort of preparations a person would need to make for such a journey. Students suggest, for example, that Andy would need a map, a spare wheel, lots of water, a travelling companion, food, a

first aid kit, and so on. The teacher selects some of these ideas, and writes them in a column on the board, and one or two ideas of her own:

To do this kind of journey, you should:
*take a map*
*take water*
*not travel alone*
*advise the police*
*not travel in the wet season*

Step 2:
The teacher then explains that Andy made no preparations. He didn't take a map, he didn't take water, he travelled alone, etc. She asks the students to imagine what happened. Using their ideas as well as her own, she constructs the following story:
Andy set off, got lost, got very thirsty, set off in search of help (leaving his vehicle behind), got trapped by sudden flood waters, etc. The police set out in search of him but couldn't find him because he had abandoned his vehicle and left no note. The teacher checks these facts by asking one or two students to recount them.

Step 3:
The teacher asks the class: *Well, what do you think of Andy?*, eliciting answers like *He was stupid.* Teacher: *Why?* At this point, students may venture sentences, like *He must take a map.* Having thus established the idea of disapproval of past actions, the teacher models the sentence: *He should have taken a map,* repeating it two or three times. The students repeat the sentence in unison and then individually. The teacher reminds the students of the concept of disapproval by asking *Did he take a map? (No). Was that a good idea? (No) So* ...? The students respond: *He should have taken a map.* She then repeats this process using the example of travelling alone, eliciting, modelling, drilling, and concept-checking the sentence: *He shouldn't have travelled alone.*
Further prompting elicits example sentences, such as:
He should've taken water. He shouldn't have left his car.
At strategic points, the teacher recaps the sentences that have been generated, using the words on the board as prompts. So far, nothing has been written on the board.

Step 4:
The teacher then clears the board and writes up the following table:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *He* | *should have* | *taken water.* |
| | *shouldn't have* | *traveled alone.* |

She asks students, working in pairs, to add further sentences about tze situation t the table. Individual students read sentences aloud from the table.

Step 5:
The teacher then asks students to imagine the dialogue when the police finally find Andy. She writes the following exchange on the board:

*Police:* *You should have taken a map.*
*Andy:* *I know I should. I didn't think.*

Students, working in pairs, continue writing the dialogue along the same lines, and then practice it aloud, taking it in turns to be the police officer and Andy.

-

| Situation or Context | Points of Grammar |
|---|---|
| Follow a recipe or instructions from a boxed cake mix to bake a cake. | Imperative verb form<br>Present continuous tense |
| Give directions to another person to get to a store, the post office, or a bank using a map. | Present tense<br>Non-referential it |
| Discuss plans for a class field trip to the zoo. | Future tense<br>If-clauses<br>Conditional tense |
| Describe a past vacation, weekend, etc. | Simple past tense<br>Question formation<br>Forms of verb to do<br>Word order in negation |
| Role play a shopping trip to buy a gift for a family member or friend. | May, might<br>Collective nouns and quantifiers (any, some, several, etc.) |
| Answer information questions: Name, address, phone number, etc. | Present tense of verb to be<br>Possessive adjectives |
| Tell someone how to find an object in your kitchen. | Locative prepositions<br>Modal verbs (can, may, should) |
| Fill out a medical history form. Then role play a medical interview on a visit with a new doctor. | Present perfect tense<br>Present perfect progressive |
| Make a daily weather report | Forms of verb to be<br>Idiomatic expressions |
| Report daily schedules of people (in the class, buses in the city, airline schedules, trains, etc.) | Habitual present<br>Personal pronouns<br>Demonstrative adjectives |
| Extend an invitation over the telephone to someone to come to a party | Would like…Object-Verb word order<br>Interrogative pronouns |
| Explain rules and regulations to someone, i.e. rules for the school cafeteria; doctor's instructions to a sick patient | Modal verbs: Can, must, should, ought to<br>Adverbs of time & frequency |
| Report a historical or actual past event and discuss conditions under which a different outcome might have resulted | Past conditional and past perfect tenses<br>If clauses |
| React to the burglary of your house or apartment in the presence of another person upon discovery (active voice) and in making a police report (passive voice) | Present perfect tense<br>Contrast between active and passive voice<br>Direct and indirect object |

# Teaching Grammar through texts

If learners are to achieve a functional command of a second language, they will need to be able to understand and produce not just isolated sentences, but whole texts in that language. Language is context-sentitive; which is to say that an utterance becomes fully intelligible only when it is placed in its context.

Coursebook texts tend to be specially tailored for ease of understanding and so as to display specific features of grammar. This often gives them a slightly unreal air, as in this example:

(Contrasting Present Progressive – "Going to" Future)

This is Mr West. He has a bag in his left hand. Where is he standing? He is standing at the door of his house.
What is Mr West going to do? He is going to put his hand into his pocket. He is going to take a key out of his pocket. He is going to put the key into the lock.
(from Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Progressive English Course,* Oxford University Press, 1954)

**Authentic texts or classroom texts?**
*Advocates of authentic texts argue that not only are such specially written EFL texts uninteresting - and therefore unmotivating - but they misrepresent the way the language is used in real-life contexts. On the other hand, the problems associated with authentic texts cannot be wished away, either, as any teacher who has attempted to use a dense newspaper article with low level students will have discovered. The linguistic load of unfamiliar vocabulary and syntactic complexity can make such texts impenetrable, and ultimately very demotivating.*

A compromise position is to take authentic texts, and to simplify them in ways which retain their genuine flavour. This is the approach generally adopted by coursebook writers nowadays. Another alternative is to write classroom texts, but to make them more engaging than the example quoted above. In fact, with only the slightest change, the text about Mr West could be made somewhat more attention-grabbing:

*This is Mr West. He has a bag in his left hand. Where is he standing? He is standing at the door of his house. What is Mr West going to do? He is going to put his hand into his pocket. He is going to take a gun out of his pocket. He is going to point the gun at...*

The **implications** of this context-sensitive view of language on grammar teaching are that:
• Grammar is best taught and practised in context.
• This means using whole texts as contexts for grammar teaching.

**Advantages of using texts:**
- They provide co-textual information, allowing learners to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar grammatical items from the co-text.
- If the texts are authentic they can show how the item is used in real communication.
- As well as grammar input, texts provide vocabulary input, skills practice, and exposure to features of text organisation.

- Their use in the classroom is good preparation for independent study.
- If the texts come from the students themselves, they may be more engaging and their language features therefore more memorable.

**Disadvantages**

- The difficulty of the text, especially an authentic one, may mean that some of the above advantages are lost.
- The alternative - to use simplified texts - may give a misleading impression as to how the language item is naturally used, again defeating the purpose of using texts.
- Not all texts will be of equal interest to students.
- Students who want quick answers to simple questions may consider the use of texts to be the 'scenic route' to language awareness, and would prefer a quicker, more direct route instead.

No single method of grammar presentation is going to be appropriate for all grammar items, nor for all learners, nor for all learning contexts. A lot will also depend on the kind of practice opportunities that the teacher provides. In the next chapter we will look at a range of practice types.

# Teaching Grammar through stories

Everyone loves a story. Stories can be used for both eliciting and illustrating grammar points. The former employs inductive reasoning, while the latter requires deductive thought, and it is useful to include both approaches in lesson planning. In addition, a well-told story is the perfect context for a structure-discourse match, but the technique can also be used effectively for a structure-social factor match. Storytelling is one of these extremely versatile techniques, and once you get the hang of it, it can be a convenient and natural grammar teaching tool. You may even find that it is the technique that holds students' attention best, as well as the one they enjoy most.

Grammar points can be contexualized in stories that are absorbing and just plain fun if they are selected with the interest of the class in mind, are told with a high degree of energy, and involve the students. Students can help create stories and impersonate characters in them. Students will certainly appreciate and respond to your efforts to include them in the storytelling process, but they will also enjoy learning about you through your stories.

Stories should last from one to five minutes, and the more exaggerated and bizarre they are, the more likely students will remember the teaching points they illustrate.

Storytelling is traditional in almost all cultures. We can tap into that tradition for a very portable resource and a convenient and flexible technique for teaching any phase of a grammar lesson. A story provides a realistic context for presenting grammar points and holds and focuses students' attention in a way that no other technique can. Although some teachers are better at telling stories than others, almost any of us can tell stories with energy and interest. Students naturally like to listen to stories, and most are remembered long after the lesson is over.

# Teaching grammar through songs and rhymes

## 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. Learning English through songs also provides a non-threatening atmosphere for students, who usually are tense when speaking English in a formal classroom setting.

Songs also give new insights into the target culture. They are the means through which cultural themes are presented effectively. Since they provide authentic texts, they are motivating. Prosodic features of the language such as stress, rhythm, intonation are presented through songs, thus through using them the language which is cut up into a series of structural points becomes a whole again.

There are many advantages of using songs in the classroom. 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. Furthermore, through using traditional folk songs the base of the learners knowledge of the target culture can be broadened.

In consequence, if selected properly and adopted carefully, a teacher should benefit from songs in all phases of teaching grammar. Songs may both be used for the presentation or the practice phase of the grammar lesson. They may encourage extensive and intensive listening, and inspire creativity and use of imagination in a relaxed classroom atmosphere. While selecting a song the teacher should take the age, interests of the learners and the language being used in the song into consideration. To enhance learner commitment, it is also beneficial to allow learners to take part in the selection of the songs.

### Teaching Procedure

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.
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. Some examples of these techniques are:

- Gap fills or close texts
- Focus questions
- True-false statements
- Put these lines into the correct sequence
- Dictation
- Add a final verse
- Circle the antonyms/synonyms of the given words

- Discuss

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. Since songs are listening activities, it is advisable to present them as a listening lesson, but of course it is necessary to integrate all the skills in the process in order to achieve successful teaching.

When regarding a lesson plan, as a pre-listening activity, the theme, the title, or the history of the song can be discussed. By directing the students toward specific areas, problem vocabulary items can be picked up in advance. 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. In the listening stage, some of the techniques listed above can be used, but among them gap filling is the most widely used technique. Through such gaps, the vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation are highlighted. This stage can be developed by the teacher according to the needs of the students and the grammar point to be studied.

In the follow-up, integrated skills can be used to complete the overall course structure. Since many songs are on themes for which it is easy to find related reading texts, it may lead the learner to read a text about the singer or the theme. Besides, 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. Finally, 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.

Exploitation of songs for grammatical structures can be illustrated through several examples. For present tense 'Let It Be' by the Beatles, for past tense 'Yesterday' by the Beatles, for present progressive 'Sailing' by Rod Stewart, for present perfect 'Nothing Compares to You' by Sinead Occonor, for past perfect 'Last Night I Had...' by Simon and Garfunkel, for modals 'Blowing in the Wind' by Bob Dylan, and for conditionals 'El Condor Pasa' by Simon and Garfunkel can be used. However, it should be kept in mind that songs, which provide frequent repetitions, or tell a story, or provide comments about life, or introduce cultural themes are the effective ones, since they provide authentic and meaningful material.

## Poems

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. 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.

Like songs, poems exaggerate the rhythmic nature of the language. Thus it is an important aspect to be taught, since English is a syllable timed language with stressed syllables being spoken at roughly equal time pauses, even in everyday speech. 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 learned, they stay in the minds of the students for the rest of their lives, with all the rhythms, grammatical features and vocabulary.

Poems may bring the use of creativity and the rhythm into the language classroom, though they may also bring some difficulties. Poems are not constructed in a simple way and syntactically they are at a higher level than prose, thus it might be very difficult for a foreign language learner to comprehend them completely.

There are three main barriers for literature including poetry. They are linguistic, cultural, and intellectual barriers. Linguistic difficulties are the problems caused by the syntax or the lexicon of the poem. Cultural difficulties include imagery, tone, and allusion. At the intellectual level, the students should be intellectual and mature enough to understand the theme of the poem. These difficulties could be easily removed if the teacher provides a poem which is syntactically and thematically appropriate to the level, age and the interests of the students. Thus, by removing or minimizing the potential problems, poetry can provide an enormously rich, enjoyable and authentic context for foreign language learners.

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, 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. Poems, which reflect cultural themes, universal features, humanistic values, or emotional aspects, will be more relevant to the foreign language learners. Finally, through taking the classroom objectives into consideration, a teacher should effectively benefit from poems as teaching aids.

**Teaching Procedure**

At the teaching stage of a poem, it is not advisable to talk about the meaning of the poem in advance. Since they offer a reading and listening activity, poems could be presented through a reading plan. At the pre-reading stage, students might be motivated through some enthusiastic talks about poetry or the poet. Some necessary vocabulary can also be handled at this stage. At the reading stage, in order to create images and stress the prosodic features, the teacher may want the students to close their eyes while he/she is reading the poem. After the poem has been read at least twice, it is better to elicit the primary responses of the students about the poem. Next, after distributing the poem to students, students may be asked to read it either loudly or silently. In order to practice the determined grammar point, students may be asked to paraphrase the poem. Through transforming the verse into prose students get acquainted with the structure.

After easing the grammar and understanding the vocabulary, students get an idea about the theme of the poem. Reading the paraphrased poem reinforces the grammatical structure under consideration. Asking questions about context may follow the reading. Through asking Wh-questions, providing additional information about the culture, and asking students to share their experience with the subject matter, the cultural content of the poem becomes more real and vivid. Words, pictures, and shared experiences can eliminate the gap that is created by different cultures, as no one can deny that poems cannot always evoke the same sounds, sights, smells, and associations for both native speakers and foreign language learners. After discussing the surface content of the poem, students may again asked to close their eyes and visualize the poem while listening to it.

As a follow-up activity a discussion may be held. After reviewing the plot of the poem and providing adequate artful questions, the students will eventually discover the deeper meaning of the poem. As being a facilitator, a teacher should always avoid telling the meaning. After each student grasps his or her own meaning, it is proper to discuss the depth of the poem. In this procedure, the teacher's aim is to support the students in their attempts to understand the poem and make it relevant to their lives. Once they have understood it and perceived its relevance, they will have no objection to practicing the poem or even memorizing it, for it will have become special for them. At the follow-up stage, providing the determined structure, students may also be asked to write a poem about anything they want. In such a procedure the four skills are effectively integrated to practice or present any grammar point.

Since every class is different, teachers should creativity determine the teaching procedure. It is not advisable to apply one procedure too strictly. A teacher should adopt the activities according to the needs of the learners. However, it might not be very useful to use poems for young students or for beginners. Instead of poems, using nursery rhymes or songs would be more helpful since they provide more joyful and easier contexts. From pre-intermediate to advanced levels, it is really beneficial to use either songs or poems. Several poems can be adopted from contemporary poem books. The poems of the W.H. Auden, Robert Frost, Stanley Kunitz, Delmore Schwartz, W.D. Snodgrass, Theodore Roethke, Gary Snyder, Richard Wilbur, and Robert Lowell, etc. are suggested for the language teachers who want to use poems in their grammar lessons.

## Some rules for teaching grammar

What conclusions are to be drawn about the teaching of grammar? Here are some rules of thumb:

• The **Rule of Context**:
Teach grammar in context. If you have to take an item out of context in order to draw attention to it, ensure that it is re-contextualized as soon as possible. Similarly, teach grammatical forms in association with their meanings. The choice of one grammatical form over another is always determined by the meaning the speaker or writer wishes to convey.

• **The Rule of Use:**
Teach grammar in order to facilitate the learners' comprehension and production of real language, rather than as an end in itself. Always provide opportunities for learners to put the grammar to some communicative use.

**• The Rule of Economy:**
To fulfill the rule of use, be economical. This means economising on presentation time in order to provide maximum practice time. With grammar, a little can go a long way.

• **The Rule of Relevance**:
Teach only the grammar that students have problems with. This means, start off by finding out what they already know. And don't assume that the grammar of English is a wholly different system from the learner's mother tongue. Exploit the common ground.

• **The Rule of Nurture**:
Teaching doesn't necessarily cause learning - not in any direct way. Instead of teaching grammar, therefore, try to provide the right conditions for grammar learning.

• **The Rule of Appropriacy**:
Interpret all the above rules according to the level, needs, interests, expectations and learning styles of the students. This may mean giving a lot of prominence to grammar, or it may mean never actually teaching grammar at all - in any up-front way. But either way, it is your responsibility as a teacher to know your grammar inside out.

**Some conditions**
The Rule of Nurture argues for providing the conditions for grammar learning. What are these conditions? If the answer to this much disputed question could be reduced to a handful of essentials, they would probably be these:
• **The input** learners get:
will it be presented in such a way that the learners are likely to engage with it, thus ensuring a reasonable chance of it becoming intake?

• Their **output:**
will it be of sufficient quantity and/or quality to ensure that they have opportunities to develop both accuracy and fluency?

• **The feedback** they get:
will it be of the type and quantity to ensure that some of their attention is directed at form?

• Their **motivation:** will the content and design of the lesson be such that learners are motivated to attend to the input, produce optimal output, and take account of the feedback?
Here are six teacher "confessions". Which rule did the teacher break, in each case?

1. I explained it and drilled it - and still they made mistakes. So I explained it and drilled it again.
2. I taught my business class the present perfect continuous using a fairy tale.
3. I presented the rules of adverb order, and then we did some exercises in the book. Tomorrow I'm going to do the second conditional.
4. They don't have any problems with the past tense, but I'm going to teach it again because it's in the book.
5. I gave them five sentences in different tenses and asked them to work out the difference. Then we did some sentence gap-fill exercises.
6. The presentation took about 40 minutes. That left me ten minutes for the role play.

What's wrong with the following example?

**Lesson: How not to teach the past perfect**

**Step 1**
The teacher introduces the lesson by telling the class that they are going to have a grammar lesson. He writes on the board 'past perfect'. He then explains the rules of formation and use of the past perfect (as in *he had worked*...), including how the past perfect is used to refer to a time anterior to an established past reference, and how the past perfect is also used in reported speech to transform direct speech instances of the past simple and the present perfect. He also points out that the past perfect functions in conditional clauses to refer to hypothetical past time (as in *If I had known you were coming*...).

**Step 2**
He asks if the class understands, and then distributes an exercise, which involves converting past simple and present perfect structures into the past perfect, as:

*I went to the beach → I had gone to the beach.*
*She has seen the movie → She had seen the movie.*

The students work on this individually and then take turns to read their answers out aloud. The teacher corrects any errors.

**Step 3**
In the remaining ten minutes of the lesson, the teacher sets up a game of “Hangman”, the vocabulary game in which the class are allowed several guesses at the gapped-out letters.

1. The rule of Nurture
2. The rule of Appropriacy
3. The rule of Use
4. The rule of relevance
5. The rule of Context
6. The rule of Economy