GRAMMAR AND COMMUNICATION

2011

HEINLE INSTITUTE

Rob Jenkins

For additional handouts and PowerPoint:
esl-teacher.net

Jenkins_rob@sac.edu

**Santa Ana College
School of Continuing Education**

5 ESSENTIALS FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR

The role of grammar in the ESL/EFL classroom has changed over the past 100 years. The pendulum has swung from explicit grammar out of context to merely mentioning grammar structures only as they appear in instruction naturally and everything in between. Countless books and research have been published on how nonnative speakers learn a second language. American English grammar has been analyzed and dissected again and again. With all the analysis comes tedious rules and complications that many students are not equipped to process all at once. Many books are written with the assumption that students will understand the logic behind grammar charts without too much instruction. It seems that teachers often rely on the grammar charts to teach. With so much information, there is a tendency to teach *about* grammar instead of concentrating on the learner developing the skill of *using* grammar in real-life settings.

Grammar instruction should approach ***learning*** instead of merely providing instructional tools. It is better to learn one concept thoroughly then to learn thousands of tedious bits of information in a cursory fashion. Instructors should also recognize that there is a distinction between learning and acquiring. Acquisition only comes after exposure, awareness, abundant practice, and review. This learning cycle leads to acquisition. Each student masters a concept and internalizes it on his or her own timetable. When the learning process is acknowledged in the classroom, success is more easily defined.

1. Students learn better within a context

A great deal of second-language acquisition research suggests that an established context facilitates learning. Grammar taught for grammar's sake in isolation does not yield the same results as context can provide. Context is established effectively through visual and auditory means. Readings, pictures, thought provoking topics, challenging graphics, and authentic to near authentic listenings can greatly enhance instruction both in introducing the concepts and practicing them. The high-interest context provides a link to the students' background knowledge or schema, a controlled vocabulary, interesting academic study skill opportunities, and an opportunity to simulate the use of the structure(s) in real-life to near real-life situations.

2. Learning is approached differently by each student

Each student is motivated by different stimuli and approaches learning utilizing different learning modalities (learning styles). It is the instructors' responsibility to identify their students' learning styles and unique needs and attempt to address them. Lessons should have a variety of activities including those that incorporate reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a balanced way in order to provide opportunities for each student to excel in his or her personal approach to learning. Activities should be challenging but doable leading to student success and a boost in confidence. The four skills mentioned also provide opportunities for students to use the language in more authentic settings where skills are not intentionally isolated.

Rob Jenkins - Fall ESL Summit 2011

3. Students learn better in manageable chunks.

Since learning and acquiring a language is a process, it is imperative that students are not given more information than they can process at one time. It is far better to give them a little, have them practice, and then give them a little more. Often we see that books tend to "dump" information onto the students. This approach doesn't consider the limitations of the learner. Learning English and particularly grammar is a **_skill_** like playing a musical instrument**.** In order to be complete, some books have grammar charts that span two or three pages. This is not helpful to the students nor is it conducive to learning a skill.

Concepts should be divided into small manageable chunks. This serves two purposes.
1) students are not overwhelmed with more information than they can process at one time, and
2) instructors can pick what they want to emphasize and what they may want to spend less time on depending on their students' learning styles and needs.

4. Learning is facilitated by activities that move from controlled to open-ended.

Research has indicated that stimulating higher-order thinking skills facilitates learning. Bloom's taxonomy for example illustrates that there are differences between factual knowledge and conceptual information. The research does not suggest that lower-order thinking skills are not necessary; however, it suggests that these skills are not adequate in and of themselves. In grammar terms, we might say that the mechanical practice of drills and fill-in the blank exercises is important and essential to develop accuracy, but is not sufficient to develop fluency.

Exercises and activities should move from mechanical to meaningful to communicative. Mechanical exercises by definition can be performed with a clear understanding of the structure; however, they may not require much tie to context and certainly do not require higher-level thinking skills. Meaningful exercises require an understanding of the vocabulary as well and often times a transfer of information from a contextual stimulus to the activity. This of course stimulates additional thinking skills. Communicative activities are often personalized and provide students an opportunity to "use" the concept. Learning is about making connections with the learner. These activities can also be open-ended requiring the highest level of thinking skills. If provided systematically, this approach will best serve the learning process.

5. *Learning how to learn facilitates acquisition*

Learning is more than acquiring knowledge. Students are learning grammar for a purpose. Whatever the purpose, if they learn to process information, negotiate meaning, and identify with the learning process, they will be successful in not only their grammar class, but also in future activities. These skills should be encouraged through the text and the lesson planner. Study skills and strategies include working with others in groups and teams, negotiating, compromising, coming to consensus, incorporating higher-level thinking skills, etc. Many programs identify these skills as essential in all classroom settings and in life. These are often identified as SCANS skills, EFF skills, and/or SLO's.

Other academic skills are essential for future academic success including reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Reading skills include skimming, scanning, reading for comprehension, etc. Writing skills include, paraphrasing, summarizing, outlining, etc. Listening skills include focused listening, listening for the main idea, listening for understanding, etc. Speaking skills include turn taking, paraphrasing, summarizing, etc.

Although emphasis has to be given to learning grammar in a grammar text, it is beneficial to incorporate learning strategies and skills into grammar instruction. In other words, students learn grammar by using these skills and in turn learning to learn.

FINAL WORD ABOUT LEARNING

With an emphasis on the learning and the learner, there is a better chance of students developing the skills they need to go beyond the classroom. If students "learn" in the classroom and cannot transfer what they have learned to the real world, there is little use for the course and there is more of a chance that the student becomes frustrated and uncertain of his or her abilities.

Learning the skill of using grammar, or as Diane Larsen-Freeman coins it *grammaring,* is part of a learning process. The better students understand and integrate themselves into the process, the more success they will have.

For discussion on the above information, please email

jenkins_rob@sac.edu

PRESENTING GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES

Method	Explanation
By example Students look at a picture and the instructor asks questions: "What is she wearing?" "What is he wearing?" etc. The instructor accepts all answers (grammatically correct or not). After every response, the instructor says the answer correctly and writes the correct sentences on the board.	At low levels, the instructor might show students several examples to help establish a pattern until students grasp the concept. At higher levels, students might develop their own rules through various activities based on the patterns. The instructor can also give them the rule.
Comparing and contrasting The instructor describes what he or she regularly wears. "I wear a tie every day". He then asks students what they wear. The instructor writes responses on board. The instructor then asks students what they are wearing *right now*. The instructor accepts all answers (grammatically correct or not). After every response, the instructor says the answer correctly and writes the correct sentences on the board. He compares them to the simple present responses.	Students see how structures that they have already learned are similar and different than the new structure. At low levels, the instructor might show students several examples to help establish a pattern until students grasp the concept. At higher levels, students might develop their own rules through various activities based on the patterns. The instructor can also give them the rule.
By oral and/or written explanation After establishing the context and introducing the objective, the instructor might write the following: Subject + be + base-"ing"	At lower levels, the instructor should avoid using *metalanguage* (for example, saying something like "To form the present perfect, use "have" plus the past participle form of a verb."). Describe the structure in basic terms. At higher levels, instructors might use metalanguage.

Using charts

Subject	be	Base+ing	Example
I	am	wearing	I am wearing red pants.
you we they	are	wearing	You are wearing a green blouse
He She It	is	wearing	She is wearing black boots.

At low levels, students need guidance to understand charts. This might be a new learning style for them. The instructor should never assume students know how to read charts at any level.

Chart from: Jenkins: ELT Advantage online course: Practical Ideas for the Adult ESL/EFL Classroom

Lesson Plan: *can/can't*

WARM-UP and INTRODUCTION

    Context: Establish a context by discussing careers, job hunting, classified ads, etc. Find a high interest occupation or something perhaps unique and interesting. Ask the class to discuss different job qualifications and characteristics needed for the job. Depending on the level, consider readings or other stimuli.

    Introduction: *State Objective*: By the end of class, you will be able to use the modal *can* to describe abilities. Introduce examples of describing abilities. Ask students if they *can* do some of the job requirements discussed.

PRESENTATION

    Present by Example: Use classified ads to discuss what students can do. Present structures inductively by continuing to ask students what they can do specific to the ads. As they respond, write sentences with *can* on the board: *Silvia can speak Spanish. Oscar can paint,* etc. Describe the structure with the following formula: *Subject + can + base.* Use the chart to solidify what students have just learned.

PRACTICE & EVALUATION

    Mechanical (Accuracy) Practice:

    Have students complete a handout on affirmative *can* Exercise A.

PRESENTATION

    Present by Chart: Use the chart to compare the use of *can* and *can't*. Then compare the simple present with the use of a modal. Show how the base form doesn't take an "*s*" in the third person.

PRACTICE & EVALUATION

    Mechanical (Accuracy) Practice:

    Have students complete Exercise B on the handout.

PRESENTATION

    Briefly return to the classified ads to reestablish the context. This time elicit both *can* and *can't* responses.

PRACTICE & EVALUATION

    Mechanical-Meaningful-Communicative (Accuracy-Fluency) Practice:

    Have students complete Exercises C, D, E, and F on the handout.
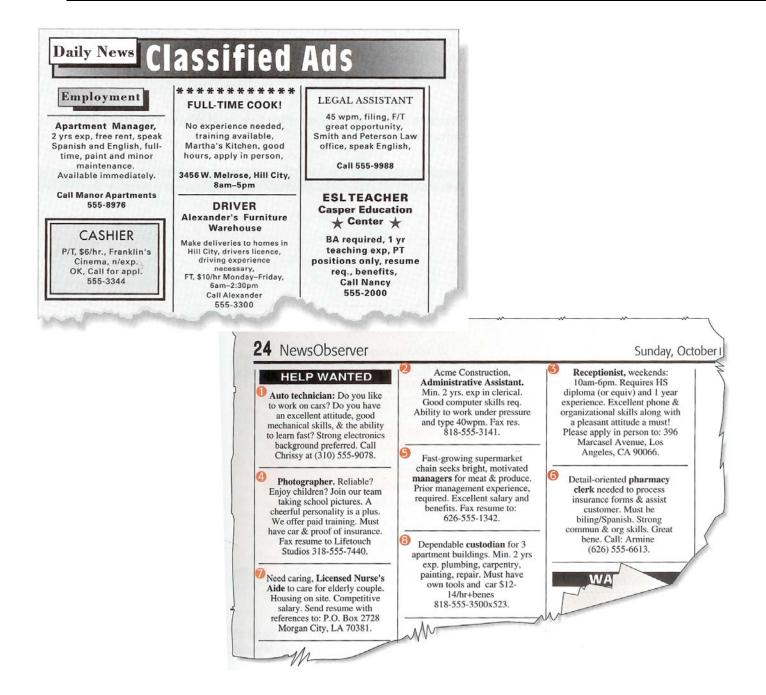
APPLICATION (Fluency) Practice and Evaluation:

> **Round Table**: Ask students in groups, each in turn, to write one sentence describing what they can do. Then ask students from another group to attempt to decide who wrote which sentence. (see handout *Can & Can't Roundtable*)

Establish Context

Rob Jenkins - Fall ESL Summit 2011

Present Structures

Daily News — Classified Ads

Employment

Apartment Manager,
2 yrs exp, free rent, speak Spanish and English, full-time, paint and minor maintenance. Available immediately.

**Call Manor Apartments
555-8976**

CASHIER

P/T, $6/hr., Franklin's Cinema, n/exp. OK, Call for appl.
555-3344

★★★★★★★★★★★★
FULL-TIME COOK!

No experience needed, training available, Martha's Kitchen, good hours, apply in person,

3456 W. Melrose, Hill City, 8am–5pm

DRIVER
Alexander's Furniture Warehouse

Make deliveries to homes in Hill City, drivers licence, driving experience necessary, FT, $10/hr Monday–Friday, 6am–2:30pm
Call Alexander
555-3300

LEGAL ASSISTANT

45 wpm, filing, F/T great opportunity, Smith and Peterson Law office, speak English,

Call 555-9988

ESL TEACHER
Casper Education ★ Center ★

BA required, 1 yr teaching exp, PT positions only, resume req., benefits,
**Call Nancy
555-2000**

24 NewsObserver — Sunday, October I

HELP WANTED

① **Auto technician:** Do you like to work on cars? Do you have an excellent attitude, good mechanical skills, & the ability to learn fast? Strong electronics background preferred. Call Chrissy at (310) 555-9078.

④ **Photographer.** Reliable? Enjoy children? Join our team taking school pictures. A cheerful personality is a plus. We offer paid training. Must have car & proof of insurance. Fax resume to Lifetouch Studios 318-555-7440.

⑦ Need caring, **Licensed Nurse's Aide** to care for elderly couple. Housing on site. Competitive salary. Send resume with references to: P.O. Box 2728 Morgan City, LA 70381.

② Acme Construction, **Administrative Assistant.** Min. 2 yrs. exp in clerical. Good computer skills req. Ability to work under pressure and type 40wpm. Fax res. 818-555-3141.

⑤ Fast-growing supermarket chain seeks bright, motivated **managers** for meat & produce. Prior management experience, required. Excellent salary and benefits. Fax resume to: 626-555-1342.

⑧ Dependable **custodian** for 3 apartment buildings. Min. 2 yrs exp. plumbing, carpentry, painting, repair. Must have own tools and car $12-14/hr+benes 818-555-3500x523.

③ **Receptionist,** weekends: 10am-6pm. Requires HS diploma (or equiv) and 1 year experience. Excellent phone & organizational skills along with a pleasant attitude a must! Please apply in person to: 396 Marcasel Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90066.

⑥ Detail-oriented **pharmacy clerk** needed to process insurance forms & assist customer. Must be biling/Spanish. Strong commun & org skills. Great bene. Call: Armine (626) 555-6613.

WA

Mechanical Practice (Chunk Grammar)

Using the modal *can*			
Subject	Modal *can*	Base	Example
I		use	I can use an expensive camera.
You		stand	You can stand for long periods of time.
He, She, It	can	listen	He can listen carefully.
We		take	We can take risks.
They		suffer	They can suffer quietly.

A. Unscramble the words and write sentences.
Example: Elizabeth / prepare / dinner / can   *Elizabeth can prepare dinner*.

1. can / Mario / design buildings
   _____

2. they /can / take care / of children
   _____

3. The police officer / a gun / carry / can
   _____

4. well / can / the teacher/ explain
   _____

Using the modal *can* (Negative)			
Subject	Modal *can*	Base	Example
I, you, we, they, he, she, it	cannot can't	use	I can't use an expensive camera.

B. Rewrite the sentences with *can't.*
Examples: I fix cars for Albert's Auto Repair.   *I can't fix cars.*

1. The secretary types 65 words per minute.   _____

2. We make hamburgers and French fries.   _____

3. The store manager speaks English.   _____

4. The delivery person drives a van.   _____

Note: This is only a sample of a more extensive worksheet. More practice may be in order.

Rob Jenkins - Fall ESL Summit 2011

Mechanical – Meaningful - Communicative

C. Write what people *can* and *can't* do.
     Examples: He <u>can</u> work on Fridays. (yes)
           They <u>can't</u> design a house. (no)

1. I _____ type 45 words per minute. (no)

2. Maria _____ speak English. (yes)

3. Arman _____ drive a truck. (no)

4. I _____ care for the elderly. (yes)

John	Mary	Carlos
Profession: doctor	**Profession:** nurse	**Profession:** receptionist/clerk
Duties:	**Duties:**	**Duties:**
• checks on patients • diagnoses illnesses • keeps good records • prescribes medication • performs surgery	• checks on patients • keeps good records • assists doctor • takes blood pressure • takes temperatures	• sets appointments • keeps good records • greets patients • files • answer phones

D. Write sentences using can or can't using the information above about employees at a doctor's office.
     Examples:
          The doctor/medication: The doctor can prescribe medication.
          The nurse/illnesses: The nurse can't diagnose illnesses.

1. The nurse/surgery _____

2. John and Mary/patients _____

3. The clerk/patients _____

4. John, Mary, Carlos/records _____

E. Think of a few professions. Tell your partner two or three things you can do and maybe something you can't do in that profession. Ask your partner to guess the profession(s).
     Example:
          Student A: I can type. I can answer phones. I can't speak French.
          Student B: Are you a secretary.
          Student A: Yes!

F. In a group, imagine you have a company. Identify the names of four jobs within the company. List the duties of each job and discuss what each employee can do.

Note: This is only a sample of a more extensive worksheet. More practice may be in order

Application – (Personalize)

In a group, each in turn writes one thing he/she can do. (no names)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Ask another group to identify who wrote which sentence.

Grammar Lesson Plan

Warm-up	
• Uses previously learned content to begin a lesson.	

Introduction	
• Focuses student attention on the lesson • Objective state	

Presentation	
• Introduction of new information • Instructor checks on student comprehension. • Prepare for practice	By Example, Comparison and Contrast, or Oral and Written Explanation

Practice	
• Students practice new knowledge through different activities. • Practice is guided through materials. • May be whole group, small group, pairs or individuals. • Instructor models each activity, monitors progress, provides feedback	Mechanical (Accuracy)
	Meaningful – Communicative (Fluency)

Evaluation	
• Instructor evaluates students on attainment of objective. • Can be oral, written, or by demonstrated performance.	

Application	
• Students apply new knowledge to own lives or new situations.	

Jenkins, Johnson 2010