Connecting Reading and Writing in Grammar Teaching:
A Functional Approach

Recap: Pre-Webinar Polls
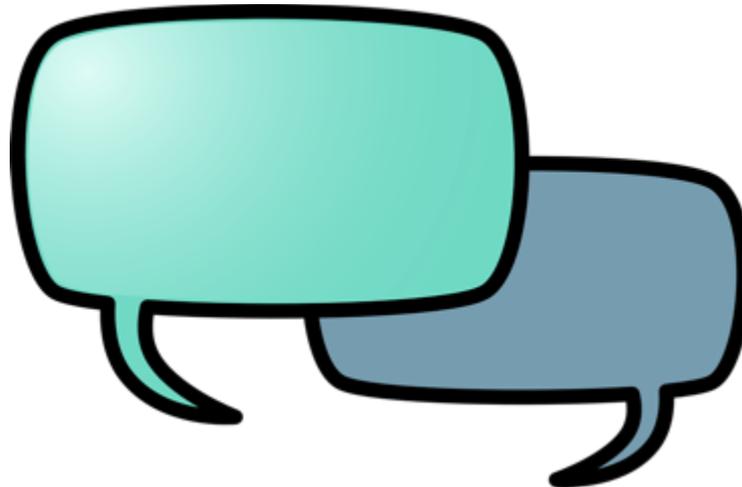
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☺ ☺	☺	😐	😐 😐

1. It's important to learn all of the grammar rules before reading and writing long texts.

2. Grammar teaching means correcting students' errors.

3. Grammar is not that important in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Warm-Up Chat

What do you think about when you hear the word *grammar?*

What do students think about when they hear the word *grammar*?

Goals for the Webinar

- Define *grammar* from a functional perspective

- Identify three functions of language

- Explore classroom applications of functional grammar

Grammar Translation

- Translation of written documents
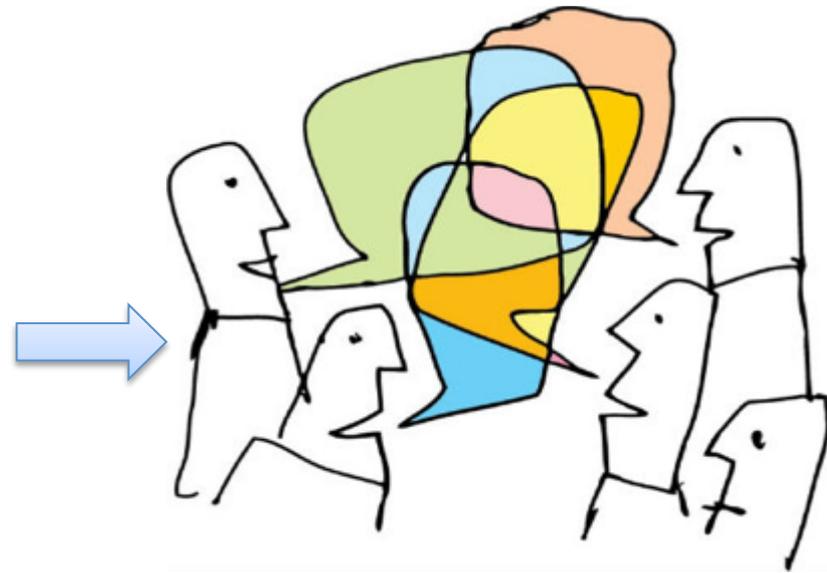- Focus not placed on communication

Communicative Language Teaching

Shifts from teaching to translate to teaching to communicate

Knowing about language

Using language to communicate

What is a Functional Approach to Grammar?

A focus on what grammar *does*:

- Makes meaning

- Connects ideas

- Creates social relationships

Why a Functional Approach in English?

- Connects grammar to meaning
- Fosters critical thinking
- Integrates all four language skills
- Promotes discussion
- Gives instructors deep knowledge of language

Three Grammar Functions

Language performs three acts simultaneously:

1.   Makes meaning

2.   Connects ideas

3.   Creates relationships

(1) Grammar Makes Meaning

How does language make meaning?

- **Participants:** Who or what is performing the action?

- **Processes:** What are the thinking, doing, feeling, or being actions?

- **Circumstances:** When, where, and how are the processes occurring?

Traditional Analysis

Det.	Adj.	Noun	Verb	Noun	Prep.	Det.	Pl. Noun

My favorite activity is hiking in the mountains.

Functional Analysis

Participant		Participant	Circumstance

My favorite activity is hiking in the mountains.

Process

Activity: Close Reading Analysis

1. Teacher selects a short passage with which students are familiar

2. Students identify participants, processes, circumstances

3. Focus on each part and ask questions
   - Why did the author choose to use this language?
   - How does it contribute to the meaning of the text?

Activity: Change Sentences

1. Teacher re-writes text with blanks

2. Students fill blanks with different participants

3. Discuss how the different words change the meaning of the text

Let's try it out!

The young baseball players from Venezuela are playing at the Little League World Series.

Let's try it out!

The _____ baseball players from Venezuela are playing at the Little League World Series.

Extension: Apply to New Sentences

The young baseball players from Venezuela are playing in the Little League World Series.

The _____ teachers from _____ are working in the classroom.

(2) Grammar Connects Ideas

How does language connect ideas?

Example Cohesive Devices	Meaning
And, and then, furthermore	Addition
But, for example, instead, however, on the other hand	Compare/Contrast
When, then	Time
Because, so, despite, nevertheless, even though	Cause/Consequence
If, unless	Condition
In order to, so	Purpose
First, second, finally	Sequence

(adapted from de Oliveira & Schleppegrell, 2016, p. 47)

Activity: Identifying Cohesive Devices

1. Teacher selects short passage that students can understand

2. Students identify cohesive devices

3. Students document cohesive devices in chart and explain importance

Identifying Cohesive Devices

What connectors do you see?

Learning a new language is challenging for many adults because they are busy. However, language learning routines can make a big difference. For instance, students can review new vocabulary every night before bed. Another idea is to listen to the news in the language they are learning.

Identifying Cohesive Devices

What connectors do you see?

Learning a new language is challenging for many adults **because** they are busy. **However,** language learning routines can make a big difference. **For instance**, students can review new vocabulary every night before bed. **Another idea is** to listen to the news in the language they are learning.

Identifying Connectors

Cohesive Device	Meaning
because	Provides a reason that learning a new language is hard
However,	Introduces a contradiction
For instance,	Provides an example
Another idea is	Provides a second example related to the previous one

Activity: Sentence Combining

1. Take a text composed of short sentences
   – *Note: You can use student-produced texts*

2. Group related ideas

3. Combine sentences using connectors

4. Explain rationale for choice of connectors

5. Remember: no "correct" answer; the goal is discussion about language!

Sentence Combining Example

My pet Chihuahua is cute.

He is small.

Many Chihuahuas bark a lot.

My dog is calm.

He does not like strangers.

He is still nice to the neighbors.

Sentence Combining Example

My pet Chihuahua is cute **and** small. **Even though** many Chihuahuas bark a lot, my dog is calm. **However,** he does not like strangers. **Nevertheless**, he is still nice to the neighbors.

(3) Grammar Creates Relationships

How does language create relationships?

Modality = probability and obligation

Terms of Modality	Examples
Modal Auxiliary Verbs	will, can, may, should
Modal Adverbs	maybe, perhaps, arguably
Modal Nouns	possibility, requirement

Advice Columns: Full of Modality

DEAR ABBY: My friend is always tired and sick because she does not eat healthy foods. How can I help her?

I think the best approach would be to talk about this with your friend. **Tell** her that you are concerned about her health **and you might suggest** that she eat more fruits and vegetables. **It is essential** that you also eat healthy to show support.

Activity: Modality Scale

- Students <u>underline</u> modality

- Students sort phrases on a continuum from gentle/uncertain to firm/certain

- Students discuss rationales behind their sorting
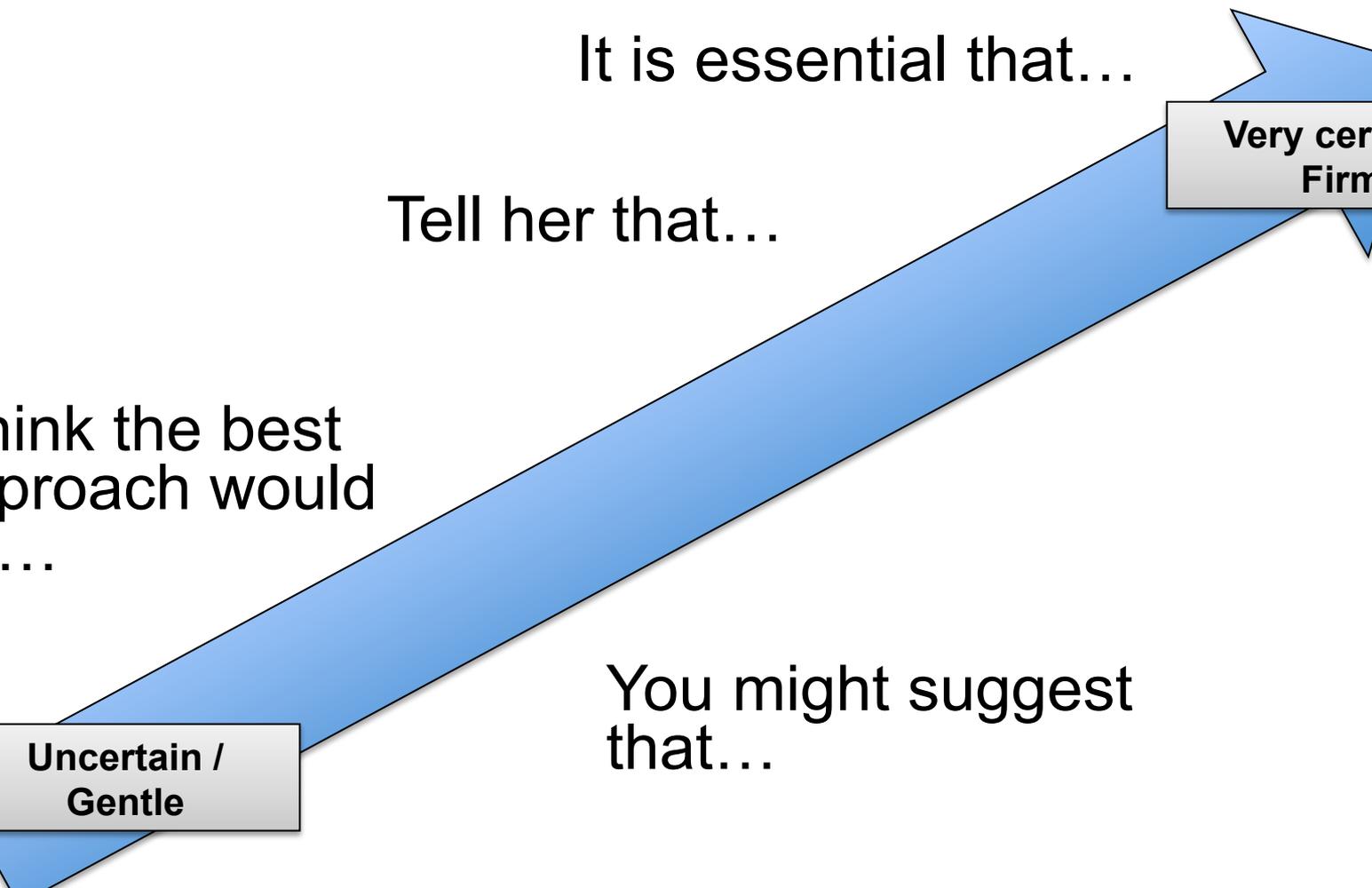
Modality Scale Example

It is essential that…

Very certain / Firm

Tell her that…

I think the best approach would be…

You might suggest that…

Uncertain / Gentle

Extension Activities with Modality

- Students act as advice columnists and write answers

- Students take on different roles (e.g., parent, friend) and give advice

- Compare columns and discuss language choices

Summary: Functions and Activities

Make Meaning
>Close reading analysis

Connect Ideas
>Sentence combining

Create Relationships
>Modality scale

Tips to Remember

- Select reading examples that are about topics familiar to students

- Connect grammar forms to meaning

- Focus on discussion; there may be more than one correct answer

- Start with noticing new grammar forms in text, and then begin using them in writing

Try it out and let me know how it goes!

See you on the Ning!

Selected References

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