

TEACHING GRAMMAR....THE NIGHTMARE OF EVERY LANGUAGE TEACHER



As much as I remember, grammar has always been the nightmare of every language teacher out there. In fact, grammar is reckoned to be the *bête noire* of the majority of foreign language teachers as they find teaching a foreign language by itself already a challenging matter. Adding to that, the teaching of complex rules and illogical mechanism to the plate would make teaching even more exacting. Plus, teaching grammar has always been approached as a lecture where teachers say the rules and the students have to memorize those rules without any question asked.

Such approach through years, became a killer and a pain in the neck. While I am not a fan of teaching grammar per se, teachers who choose to teach it have to be extremely careful about how to approach it notably when teaching it to beginner students. Indeed, due to the fact that language grammar is nothing but a bunch of boring rules that students are often required to memorize without really understanding its logic, teaching it to beginner students sporadically would certainly freeze their avidity and eagerness in language learning. Other students would simply shut down their brain the moment teachers start talking about grammar. The bottom line is that beginner students are not interested in memorizing rules and just sitting listening to a lecture of guidelines.

In fact, I tried to dissuade teachers from doing so for many years because if grammar is not taught intelligently, teachers end up losing their students focus right away. Worse, with time students will end up despising even the subject in particular and learning in general. Personally, I never taught a lesson and

called it a grammar lesson because such thing should not have a place with beginner students in language learning. Beginner Students need to acquire and refine their listening and speaking skills before worrying their brain with rules about a language that they still fully don't understand. However, when sometimes we are obliged to teach a grammar part we, as teachers, have to outsmart grammar while involving and engaging our students without letting them feel that we are teaching them grammar.

Let's take grammar and try to teach it intelligently where students are involved without feeling any pressure. First, it is imperative to understand that Grammar rules often make no sense and are rarely steady. As a result, smart teachers should always move away from any confusing rules. In fact, when teachers teach abstract ideas and unknown rules about a language, they should always start with simple examples that include well known wordings to the students. The examples should always be used from within the classroom for the students to see and even touch for clarification purposes.

To understand better my point, allow me to have a glance on a grammar lesson where **COMPARATIVES** should be taught--. You can select one adjective that students are already familiar with. The adjective should be used in a sentence where students are involved fully and personally. To illustrate, the adjective **TALL** can be a good example where teacher invites two students to the board, Student A and Student B. In this operation, teacher has to introduce the item **TAPE MEASURE** and let the students touch it and feel it. Then, using the tape measure, teacher will measure the height of the two students then write the results on the board with the

name of the student and raise the question to the class.

-How tall is Student A.....? Student A is 1.45m

-How tall is Student B.....? Student B is 1.40m

The students would state the above answer. Then, teacher here would invite all students to look closely at the two students standing in the front and ask WHO IS TALLER? Student A or Student B? Students here are required to give just the name of the students who is taller. Then, teacher can state the full sentence for everybody to hear.

-Students A is taller than Student B.

Teacher can use the same question about other students in the classroom where the height is evidently different and provide the opportunity for students to answer. Teacher can also change the personal pronouns in the question to get the answer.

-I am taller than.....

-She is taller than.....

-We are taller than.....

-They are taller than.....

- Both Student A and Student B are taller than Student C.

After using TALL, teacher can use the opposite adjective SHORT giving the opportunity to another student taking the role of picking two short students and measure their height. Then, teacher can use the adjective LONG....describing students hair LONG and SHORT hair..... Longer than and shorter than After that, teacher can use FAST / FASTER.....WHO IS FASTER? Student C or Student D? To have fun,

teacher can pick two students and let them either run (very short distance) inside the classroom or in the playground if possible to decide who is faster. Teacher also can use calculation and decides who is fast in finding the result in pair work.

In addition, teacher can ask two students to lift one or two chairs and compare to see who is stronger. How much does a chair weigh? How much weight one student can lift? Teacher later can add the adjective heavy to reach the comparative heavier. Moreover, teacher can use the age to describe young and old. While in the first lesson teacher can talk only about short adjectives , in the second lesson he can present long adjectives like intelligent, comfortable, beautiful, important , different.

Teachers can think of so many adjectives where they can involve students to do things and participate safely without mentioning the word short and long comparatives and eventually irregular adjectives till students understand the language and grasp the idea that they are using to express comparison. Then teacher can move on in reinforcing the language in writing where students are invited to identify sentences that carry comparison before they are asked to produce their own sentences using either pictures or other means of support.

Finally, I must say that smart teachers who reflect on their teaching can fix a lot of problems in teaching and enhance learning. Also, it is my personal belief that any grammar wording for beginner students should be evoked briefly for identifying and naming purposes. Use the grammar wording as another vocabulary that enriches the language that can be used when needed.

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