Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives
Volume 2

Editor
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Teaching Grammar through Virtual Model, Kinesthetic Activities and Folklore

Professor Neelam Tikkha

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Introduction

Grammar has been a killer like Mathematics for children as well as adults since ages. Learning of grammar was and is seen as a very uninteresting and a frustrating exercise. The teaching of grammar is another difficult task because 90% of students give up thinking that it is an unachievable task and a tough and boring routine. Mention the word *grammar* and the students cringe. Not only the students, but teachers cringe too.

In a world of fast-paced media, it is difficult for students to understand the importance of grammar. If learning grammar is a frustrating exercise, it will always get a step-sisterly treatment and neglected by learners.

The Objective of This Paper

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014**
Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives Vol. 2*
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The objective of this paper is to present models and activities that make learning of grammar an interesting exercise.

The models have been tried on learners of English who are speakers of other languages. The age group considered was between six to sixty years, since learning process of grammar is alike for children as well as adults.

Less Impressive Success Due to Failure in Addressing the Needs of Different Types of Learners

Teaching Grammar should be fun and successful ESL teaching is all about variety, movement, using resources that appeal learners. A number of teachers try hard to teach tenses, or vocabulary or try to make students practice conversation. They try to give good illustrations, great examples, but somehow the target achieved is not hundred percent. The reason is failure in addressing different types of learners. "…most authorities in the field generally agree upon four basic learning styles: auditory learners, visual learners, kinesthetic learners, and tactile learners… "It is essential to incite the different learning styles to achieve the target. Kinesthetic and tactile features overlap a lot so at times they are treated as one."

Auditory Learners

Some students learn a lot from lectures, explanations, tapes and oral instruction and are called as auditory learners. Such students would like to have games where recitation, repetition, dictation, and listening for clues are a part of the activity.

Recitation games: Chinese Whispers, Jazz Chants, and Karaoke Night are excellent games for auditory learners. Karaoke Night is an especially good game in Japan, where most students will express themselves through singing. Another, exercise is to speak in rhyme which will help create interest in boring exercises.

A variation of Jazz Chants with snatches of rhythmic dialog and a metronome, or hand clapping will help emphasize in improving fluency. History of Jazz, blues and classical Indian music will make learning interesting. Such lessons are very effective for students studying English as a hobby, or for travel.

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Visual Learners

These learners focus more on the illustrations and read the text silently. They will benefit more with role plays and images. Another exercise could be by showing animated stories to the students. Use of You tube and slide share will make lessons very impressive. Demonstrations can teach simple present tense. Some interesting scenarios in videos can be shown effectively to improve the language. Visual learners can assimilate more information and knowledge by reading then by listening to lectures. The games should also be designed in such a way that enhances visual learning. For example, visual learners can be made to use games with shapes,that would give visual cues that can help them with learning and using English.

Board Games: The games can be created very easily, for example, Word Snakes and Ladders. A number of board games can be developed by using imagination and creativity that are available in the market which can be successfully used in the classroom. Shelley Vernon[i] suggests the use of "Folder games" which "involve making a game board, often based on commercial boards, and using them to practice grammar, vocabulary, phonics, and spelling. The boards can be laminated onto a manila folder and then the pieces and cards needed for the game stuck in a baggie stapled to the inside. Grammatical Chutes and Ladders, Parts of Speech Path Finding (based on the Candy Land Board), and A Day in the Life (based on the game Life) where students participate in mini-role-plays generated by the roll of the dice and scenario cards are all fun to play. The boards should not be decorated in a childish way, since that will turn off adult students, but they can still be colorful."[ii]

Picture games – Pictures, flash cards or anything that uses pictures as their starting point can be effectively employed. Advanced learners can be involved in picture captioning or comic strip re- writes. If comics from different countries are used, it would result in sophisticated discussions about what constitutes humor in different countries. A number of students after some point of time reach a certain level and then reach a stagnant stage. The only reason is that they find it difficult to go beyond academic or basic survival situations. Studying humor through these visual games can help to bridge that gap.

Celebrity Profile: Another interesting way for any kind of learner is to paste celebrity pictures on the wall and ask them to write their biography. In case a learner selects profile of

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a film star, they can be asked to write the famous dialogues of the movies and asked to translate into English. They can also be asked to make sentences for example: Salman Khan's hit movie was *Tere Naam*, He is a host for Big Boss show. He has been a top star.

Mind Mapping Games: are also very interesting way to learn grammar and language. Colorful maps should be drawn and through words sentences should be developed. Reading is an important aspect and visual learners benefit with reading. Treasure hunt, writing summary helps improve language skills. Ten sentences should be given to arrange in an order. This game has the added bonus of fitting tactile learners as well.

Tactile and Kinesthetic Learners: These learners need to use the whole body to imbibe learning. Tactile learners are also physical learners, but they are more likely to learn things from model building and hands on instruction." Interestingly, there was a study done in the late 1980s (Reid, 1987) that found the self-reported preference among English Language Learners for language lessons was Tactile/Kinesthetic by a wide margin. This just goes to show how important it is to try and integrate more physical and experiential elements into our English lessons."[iii]

Kinetic games can be divided into three broad groups: Touch Games, Spatial Games, and Craft Games.

Touch Games – The most common game is for improving vocabulary by keeping things in a bag and the students are asked to identify and describe them in full sentences. To increase the difficulty level the audience has to guess the things as one person feels.

Another, interesting game could be giving parts of a sentence and asking them to rearrange themselves so that a correct statement is formed. In this game even punctuation card is made so that sentence that is formed is correct in all respect.

Descriptive Composition

These games involve creating drawing of directions to a place or maps. This game has additional benefit and involves auditory exercise as well. Learners can be divided in a group of two and asked to describe the face of each other.

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Medley of different learning and teaching style rejuvenates the interest of the students and helps stimulate their senses. The use of varied style helps in retaining the interest of the pupil, reduces boredom and makes learning effective and it will give students essential practice in integrating different learning styles into their own style. Students will be doing more than just expanding their English when they play games. They will be expanding their minds.

Games Songs, Folklore, and Stories

All types of learners love songs games and stories. The distributed and mixing of the three will make learning interesting, but the stories must be short and easy enough for beginners, though more elaborate texts can be included for ESL pupils with advanced knowledge. The stories help revising the common vocabulary presented there, and introducing more popular English words and vocabulary themes. Mock celebrations of special days in the year like Diwali, Holi, Lorhi, Id, Christmas can be done in ESL classroom with a focus on grammar. The celebration of special days also help learners discover many cultural aspects of Indian festivals from Holi to Lorhi and the festivals of English-speaking world, celebrated in the States, from a typical English Christmas, to Halloween, and other internationally famous days such as Valentines, Father's Day, Women's Day, Environment Day and Mother's Day. Learners can celebrate mock birthday party. They can make mysterious shapes with straw and one person to guess what they are saying. Akbar-Birbal stories can be presented in the form of small skit. Shakespeare's plays can also be acted out as short skits. The skits can teach a variety of tenses . **Valentine's Day Story** can be a tale of romance of Heer Ranjha or Romeo and Juliet. **Easter story** can teach prepositions, present and simple past tenses. Other tenses that can be used are future and past perfect. The Easter bunny may have some eggs to deliver to teenagers who have been good. **April Fools'** story can show naughty April Fools' tricks. **Mother's Day** story can show mom too busy with cooking and taking care of the family and does not have time to even think of Mother's Day, but when family presents with bouquet of flowers she is cheered up and goes sentimental. **Leisure Time** or **Summer and Winter Vacation** stories can focus on simple past, past continuous and conditional.

Folklore, Folktales and Myths

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Folktales are stories passed on from one person to the next by word of mouth or by oral tradition. Folktales take place anytime, anywhere and most interestingly animals can talk in folk tales. There is also an element of myth associated with each folktale. Discuss the myth, read aloud, and add another column to write the elements of myths including elements such as supernatural characters, extraordinary powers or tools, natural phenomena, etc. Use of folktale brings them close to their culture and helps to explore and write their own folktales and their own myths.

The activity fulfills a number of objectives and students will learn to:

- Appreciate diverse cultures and traditions through folklore and folktales
- Compare historic world cultures with contemporary ones
- Demonstrate understanding of the genres by responding to questions
- Follow the writing process to create writing in different genres
- Identify unique characteristics of the genre: myth, folktale, folklore, and fairy tales
- Produce written work to show evidence of knowledge of the different genres
- Read and listen to genre examples to increase knowledge of genre characteristics
- Read myths and folktales to increase knowledge of world cultures and traditions
- Respond to questions about the folktale genre to demonstrate understanding
- Tell an original folktale to class members using appropriate fluency skills
- Use Web tools to access information about different cultures.

The students can be asked to read Cinderella , Snow White and the Seven Dwarf, Ramayan and Mahabaharat and then explain the element of supernatural in it. For example conversion of pumpkin into a carriage, the use of *Brahmastra, agni pariksha* and so on.

Friggatriskaidekaphobia[iv], and Superstitions

Learners can be asked to make a list of phobia's superstitions and belief and then one person can be asked to be an iconoclast and asked to break them. This would help them learn vocabulary and also make sentences.

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Different Kinds of Errors

First, it is important to distinguish between different kinds of errors. Joseph Williams distinguishes between three kinds of rules: inviolable, optional, and folklore.

It is also important to point out the rules that students learning English usually break and commit errors as far as English language is concerned. Joseph Williams[vi] distinguishes between three kinds of rules: inviolable, optional, and folklore.

"Inviolable rules are those that define the fundamental structure of English. These rules define the language and are the only ones that can be called grammatical rules. Violating these rules marks a writer as careless if not illiterate. Leaving the "s" off of a third person singular regular verb is an error of this kind.

"Optional rules are points of usage that we may choose to observe or not depending upon the rhetorical situation. Optional rules often govern areas where the language is undergoing change, such as whether one should use the pronoun "one" or whether one should use "whom" as the object of a verb or preposition. (One should, though, if one does so among friends one is likely to suffer ridicule.)

"Folklore refers to "rules" that are not rules at all. Much of *The King's English*, *The Elements of Style*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and many, many other usage guides consist of what Williams calls folklore. Examples of folklore range from the seemingly grammatical requirement to use "that" not "which" with restrictive clauses (pure convention not grammar) to the completely arbitrary rule to use a comma before the last item in a list. Or is the rule that

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one should not use a comma before the last item in a list? Simply because a "rule" might be folklore doesn't mean the "rule" doesn't have considerable power. The split infinitive might be pure folklore, a mere chimera of a "rule," but as every writer knows one splits at one's risk.''[vii]

To Conclude

Finally, these Virtual models with grammar games and kinesthetic activity, help making learning grammar a wonderful exercise. Application of grammar via folklore brings home the concept and can greatly enrich any course of study in language and literature by providing alternative perspectives and by emphasizing diversity within the target culture. It also motivates students and assists them to remember the lessons in lucid manner reducing boredom and absenteeism.

Notes:

[i] Shelley Vernon, How to Teach English For Different Learning Styles,
http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/Articles/Learning_Styles.htm, downloaded on 16.11.13.

[ii] ibid.
[iii] ibid.

[iv] Friggatriskaidekaphobia, again …September 13, 2013 by grammarcops,
http://grammarcops.wordpress.com/

[v] Ibid.

[vi] http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/wacgrammar.php
[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Ibid.

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