

# Activity Based Grammar Teaching

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**Abstract:** *In recent years increasing numbers of teachers, in all subjects, have been looking for ways to change the traditional forms of instruction in which knowledge is transmitted, in a one - way process, from a dominant teacher to a class of silent, obedient, "passive" learners. They have sought ways to make the classroom more "student - centred" and have investigated the different ways in which students can play more active roles in discovering and processing knowledge. Grammar teaching has often been regarded as a structure based formal activity. After the integration of several sources and techniques, which are mainly based on communicative activities, the teaching of grammar gained a new insight. In the teaching of grammar, technique - resource combinations are often modified to structure - discourse match and if well developed, they can be used effectively for all phases of a grammar lesson. Grammar teaching in the 1990s shows influences from the following general areas: what might be called 'traditional grammar'; communicative teaching, dating from the late 1970s, the learner - based approaches that became influential in the 1980s; recent theories of second - language acquisition from applied linguistics. In order to make a grammar lesson effective, beneficial, and interesting a teacher should use some well - developed and fascinating techniques in the classroom. In the present paper, I have made an attempt to present such integrated sources and techniques - the use of songs, poems, games, problem solving activities etc in grammar teaching.*

**Keywords:** Traditional grammar, student - centered, communicative approach

## 1. Introduction

In many parts of the world, English language teachers have changed, or are changing, from a traditional approach to teaching formal grammar rules to a more communicative approach to teaching how to use grammar meaningfully in context. The outcome of this is the task - based teaching. This is the approach which has attracted a lot of attention over the past twenty - five years is a task based approach to learning and teaching. In task - based approaches, the focus of classroom activities is on the task, and ultimately on meaning.

Grammar is the mental system of rules and categories that allows humans to form and integrate the words and sentences of their language. The role of grammar has always been an argumentative focus in linguistic field. Grammar teaching has experienced some representative periods. In the 1950s and 1960s, Chomsky's "grammatical competence" claimed that knowing a language equals to knowing the grammar of that language. In the 1970s and the 1980s, with the birth of the concept "Communicative Competence", Hymes idea that knowing a language should also include being able to use the language for Social & Communicative interaction.

Traditional grammar teaching methods:

Teachers teach the rules of the grammar. Almost every student spends most of their time memorizing rules of grammar in or after class. Correspondingly, grammar class became the dullest class and most students got confused by so many rules.

Many students complain that they are eager to learn grammar well since grammar is the fundamental knowledge in English but they couldn't help falling asleep on grammar class. Actually, grammar teaching should not just maintain its rule - listing routine. Instead, some new attempts should be involved. Teaching grammar through tasks such as songs,

poems, games, plays, storytelling etc can pursue the appropriate practical use of grammar.

### 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 student's 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. 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.

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.

### Idioms through the following song:

Idioms  
Jim Thompson

"Search me, "  
"Hit the deck, "

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"Adding fuel to the flame. "

"Let it slide, "

"It's not my bag, " and

"Go against the grain. "

He said, "Kick the habit",

I said, "Let me get my shoe"

It means: Stop a behavior I probably shouldn't do.

### 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.

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.

### Parts of a Sentence

A sentence, sentence, sentence

Is complete, complete, complete

When 5 simple rules it meets, meets, meets.

It has a subject, subject,

And a verb, verb, verb.

It makes sense, sense, sense

With every word, word, word.

### Games and Problem solving activities

Games and problem - solving activities, which are task - based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct

speech, are the examples of the most preferable communicative activities.

Such activities highlight not only the competence but also the performance of the learner. Yet they are the indispensable parts of a grammar lesson, since they reinforce a form - discourse match. In such activities the attention is on the discourse context.

Both games and problem - solving activities have a goal. Games are organized according to rules, and they are enjoyable. Most games require choral responses or group works, whereas problem - solving activities (though they are structured) require individual response and creative solutions. Games and problem - solving activities are generally used after the presentation, in the practice part, because such communicative tasks can only be handled after mastering sufficient grammar and lexical points.

## 2. Conclusion

Teaching is a developing art, which requires innovative and creative ideas to enrich its effectiveness. All these resources such as songs, poems, games etc assist our teaching of grammar by providing a relaxed atmosphere and motivated students. Such activities are student centered, hence, by using them we give a chance to our students to express themselves, enjoy themselves during learning, and use the reserves of their minds.

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## Author Profile

**Mr. M. Gangadharan**, working as an Assistant Professor of English in Kuppam Engineering College, Kuppam, has been in teaching field for five years. He holds an MA in English. He has participated in many seminars, conferences and workshops on ELT.