

INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR TO ADULT AND PART-TIME LEARNERS

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Abstract. Teaching grammar is a fundamental responsibility of language instructors, providing students with the tools to communicate effectively. Grammatical structures form a critical part of this linguistic toolkit. However, teaching grammar can sometimes feel monotonous or challenging, particularly after years of practice. To revitalize grammar lessons, adopting innovative strategies tailored for English language learners is essential.

Key words: Psychological factors, Anxiety, Aptitude, Attitude, Motivation, Integrative motivation, Instrumental motivation, Social group identification, Lang

The researcher strongly believes that activity-based or task-based instruction is the most effective approach. It is important to first define “task” and its relevance in a language learning context. According to Breen, a “task” refers to a variety of work plans designed to facilitate language acquisition, ranging from simple exercises to complex activities like group problem-solving, simulations, or decision-making. Since many learners, unless deeply interested in literature or linguistics, find grammar tedious, the researcher emphasizes the need for creative techniques to make grammar instruction engaging. Exploring unconventional approaches can transform grammar classes into stimulating and enjoyable experiences. Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) identify several task types suitable for grammar instruction:

- Jigsaw tasks, where students combine pieces of information to form a complete picture.
- Information gap tasks, where students share and negotiate information to fill knowledge gaps.
- Problem-solving tasks, which involve finding specific solutions to problems.
- Decision-making tasks, where students discuss options to resolve open-ended problems.
- Opinion exchange tasks, where students share perspectives without the need for consensus.

Given the preferences and attitudes of modern learners, it is critical to use engaging materials and resources to teach grammar effectively. ESL teachers are encouraged to explore creative methods to make lessons enjoyable. Lynch highlights the importance of lowering learners' affective filters-conditions that reduce anxiety and improve learning. Activities that are novel and engaging can lower these filters, enhancing student participation and retention. Songs and Music: Songs transcend age and gender barriers and can make grammar lessons memorable. Students can sing along, analyze lyrics, and identify grammatical structures like tenses or

prepositions. Resources like “Classroom Songs” and “ESL Songs for Teaching English” offer creative ways to incorporate music into lessons. Fairy Tales: Stories like The Ugly Duckling evoke nostalgia and provide context for grammar practice, such as prepositions (“the ducklings in the water,” “swimming in front of the mother duck”). Story Stick: Students collaboratively create a story by adding one sentence at a time. This activity fosters listening, speaking, and narrative skills while allowing teachers to address grammatical errors in context. Games: Games encourage interaction, reduce monotony, and create a dynamic classroom atmosphere. Hong advocates for their use but emphasizes selecting activities aligned with instructional goals. Ersoz notes that challenging and amusing games motivate students and allow meaningful use of language in context.

Effective grammar instruction integrates both implicit and explicit techniques. Implicit methods like input flood expose learners to texts with frequent instances of a target structure, while input enhancement uses visual cues like bolding or underlining to highlight grammatical forms. Explicit methods include consciousness-raising tasks, where learners deduce grammar rules from presented evidence, and focused communicative tasks, where target structures are essential for task completion. Error correction strategies also play a vital role. For example, the garden path technique introduces a grammatical rule and then challenges learners to consider exceptions. Collaborative dialogues allow students to construct sentences together, while instructional conversations guide learners through using new forms. Activities should balance meaningful communication with opportunities for grammatical accuracy.

Language learning ultimately takes place within the learner's mind, where mental structures or mechanisms process and organize the language they are exposed to. In the context of teaching and learning in Indonesia, students commonly face challenges not only related to linguistic issues but also non-linguistic problems. Additionally, numerous factors affect the success of learning, particularly when it comes to learning English as a foreign language. According to Slameto (1987), these factors can be categorized into two main groups: internal and external factors. Internal factors are related to the learner's personal attributes, such as physical condition, psychological state, and anxiety levels. External factors, on the other hand, involve elements outside the learner's control, such as their environment, school, family, and other external influences. Recent research in language acquisition highlights the positive impact of exposure to linguistic input in facilitating language learning. This suggests that teachers should maximize the use of the target language and provide as much input as possible, especially during the early stages of learning. However, in practice, using the target language in the classroom often presents a challenge for teachers, particularly when working with beginners who have limited language proficiency. The dilemma lies in balancing the need to use the target language with the learners' lack of sufficient proficiency to understand it fully. As a result, teachers must adapt their language to align with the learners' proficiency levels. This raises the question: what characteristics should a teacher's language have in such situations? This question serves as the foundation

for the current study. Students' psychological factors, such as anxiety, aptitude, attitude, and motivation, play a critical role in the success of learning English as a second language. These factors are strongly supported by evidence from various research studies. Additionally, three types of motivation significantly influence language acquisition: integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, and social group identification. To address language anxiety, five key strategies are identified as effective: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer support, and resignation. Preparation involves managing potential challenges by enhancing learning and study techniques. Relaxation focuses on reducing physical symptoms of anxiety. Positive thinking serves to suppress negative cognitive processes that contribute to anxiety. Peer support involves seeking out fellow students who may also face difficulties in understanding lessons or managing anxiety. Lastly, resignation refers to students' reluctance to take active measures to reduce their anxiety. To optimize second language acquisition, these strategies provide valuable alternatives for foreign language teachers. Furthermore, it is essential for teachers to prioritize and address students' psychological factors throughout the language learning process.

In adult education, the emphasis on communicative instruction has sometimes overshadowed explicit grammar teaching. However, research supports embedding explicit grammar instruction within meaningful tasks and activities, providing learners with opportunities to practice and refine their skills. The debate over grammar instruction has evolved over the years, encompassing a spectrum of approaches from explicit to implicit. A balanced, context-driven approach that integrates form and meaning can enhance learners' grammatical competence while maintaining engagement and motivation.

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