

**Part**

**3**

**Language and the  
four skills**



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# 9

# Grammar

## Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the nature of grammar?
  - Sentence and text grammar.
  - Accuracy, fluency and complexity.
- What is the role of grammar in a syllabus?
  - Criteria for choosing syllabus items.
- What is meant by spoken grammar?
  - Some characteristics of spoken grammar.
- How does grammar affect language learning?
  - Features of learner language.
- What affects learners' accessing and use of grammar?
  - Factors affecting use of grammar.
  - Focus on form.
- What approaches are used to teach grammar?
  - Inductive learning vs. deductive learning.
  - Developing accuracy, fluency and complexity.
- How should grammatical knowledge be assessed?
  - Choice of task types.

## 9.1 Introduction

Grammar has traditionally played a central role in language teaching, but a definition of what grammar really is and how it should be taught has been a topic of controversy throughout the history of English language teaching. As we noted in Chapter 3, older traditions of language teaching saw knowledge of grammar – or *grammatical competence* – as providing the key to successful language learning and language use. In the nineteenth century, the grammar-translation approach made extensive use of grammar-based translation exercises – activities that are still used in some places today. Later methods used grammar-based oral and written drills to develop language skills, and language syllabuses were built around graded sequences of grammatical patterns and structures. In the 1980s, the discipline of second language acquisition, as well as the communicative approach, prompted a reassessment of the role of grammar in language teaching, as the focus moved to communicative interaction, rather than grammatical knowledge, as the essential condition for second language learning.

More recent approaches to language teaching such as task-based, text-based teaching and content-based teaching focus on the role of grammatical knowledge in carrying out tasks, in creating texts and in understanding content and information. Language teaching today also draws on the findings of corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis and acknowledge interrelationships between grammatical and lexical knowledge. This chapter will consider the nature of the grammar and its role in language teaching today and issues that are involved in teaching and assessing grammatical knowledge and use.

## 9.2 The nature of grammar

### Sentence and text grammar

It is useful to consider the role of grammar at two levels – the level of the sentence and the level of extended discourse or texts. Sentence grammar refers to knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses and syntactic structures used to create grammatically well-formed sentences in English. Knowledge of this kind tells us which of the sentences below are grammatically correct and which are not:

- When I will arrive, I SMS you.
- I will SMS you when I arrive.
- I learning French for three years.
- I have not been feeling well lately.
- Spanish spoken a lot in my family.
- Computers are used in almost every industry today.

This is the kind of grammar that is the focus of many grammar-reference books and grammar-practice books for students. For example, here is information about the past simple tense in a grammar-reference text (Carter and McCarthy 2006: 608–9):

Past time is seen as a time before the moment of speaking or writing, or as 'time around a point before the moment of speaking'. References to past time are most typically indicated in the verb phrase through the simple and progressive forms of the past tense.

*The past simple: definite time reference:*

References to definite past time, clearly separated from the moment of speaking, are normally made using the past simple. The most common type of reference to the past is through definite time adjuncts and definite time adverbial clauses.

- Did you watch that film *yesterday*?
- He went *at the end of November*.
- My grandfather died *about four weeks ago*.
- *When I was a lad*, I lived on a farm.



**Many students have access to a grammar book that presents the rules of sentence grammar. When do you think they use such a book? Do you think they are effective?**

Traditional approaches to grammar teaching and the design of coursebooks reflected a view of language that saw the sentence and sentence grammar as forming the building blocks of language, language learning and language use (McCarthy, 2001) as seen in coursebooks based on the audiolingual method or situational language teaching. The goal of language teaching was to enable learners to understand how sentences are used to create different kinds of meaning, to help them to master the underlying rules for forming sentences from lower-level grammatical units, such as phrases and clauses, and to provide practice in using them as the basis for written and spoken communication. Correct language use was achieved through a drill-and-practice methodology, and through controlled speaking and writing exercises that sought to prevent or minimize opportunities for errors (see Chapter 3). Practice in producing grammatically correct sentences was viewed as the key to learning, embedded within a methodology with the following features (Ellis, 2002: 168):

- 1 A specific grammatical feature is isolated for focused attention.
- 2 The learners are required to produce sentences containing the targeted feature.
- 3 The learners are provided with opportunities for repetition of the targeted feature.
- 4 There is an expectancy that the learners will perform the grammatical feature correctly; therefore, practice activities are success oriented.

- 5** The learners receive feedback on whether their performance of the grammatical structure is correct or not. This feedback may be immediate or delayed.



**Are coursebooks with these features still used in your country?**

We can see an example of classroom practice that reflects this focus on accurate mastery of sentence grammar (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 155–6):

[The students are looking at materials which have phonetic spellings of two characters, Benny and Penny, and drawings of two items, shirts and shorts.]

**T:** OK...Who can make the first sentence here?...Who wants to make a sentence about Penny...or about...Abdullah?...Make a sentence about Penny, please.

**S1:** What does Benn...

**T:** No, no questions yet...just make a sentence.

**S2:** Which one?

**T:** No...no questions.

**S2:** Ah...it's Benny?

**T:** Yes, tell me something about Benny.

**S2:** Benny washing...

**S3:** IS washing. Benny IS washing.

**S2:** Uh, shirt...er...on the last day...on the last day...no.

**T:** Yesterday?

**S2:** Yes.

**T:** OK...What did he wash yesterday?

**S2:** He was wash...er,...He washing.

**T:** Mohammed, can you help him?

**S3:** Benny washed his short...shirt.

**T:** Hmm...we don't say washed though, do we?

**S3:** WashED.

**T:** No, just one syllable...we say washt.

**S4:** Wash.

**S3:** Washt.

**S2:** Washt.

**T:** And we say 'tuh'...we write 'ed', but we don't say washED...we say washT...

**Ss:** washT...washT...washT...washT.

**T:** Yes, good, now Khalid, what did Benny do yesterday?

**S2:** He washt his shirt.

T: Good... Mohammed, can you make a sentence about Benny?

S3: He washed his shirt.

T: No, look at the picture.

S3: Oh, shorts, he washed his shorts.

T: That's right. Good.



**What was the role of grammar in languages you have studied? Did it move beyond sentence grammar?**

The importance of moving beyond the sentence level is now recognized in current approaches to grammar. Learners also need to know how grammar is used when sentences are connected in longer stretches of discourse to create texts (see Chapter 16). This can be called *text grammar*. For example, here is information about the past tense and other grammatical features that are used in a frequently used text type known as a *recount text*:

Recounts are either personal recounts, factual recounts or imaginative recounts. *Personal recounts* usually retell an event that the writer was personally involved in. *Factual recounts* record an incident, e.g. a science experiment or a police report. *Imaginative recounts* describe an imaginary role and give details of imaginary events, e.g. a day in the life of a pirate.

*Grammatical features of recounts:*

- Written in the past tense.
- Frequent use made of adverbs which link events in time, such as *when, next, later, after, before, first, at the same time, as soon as*.
- Recounts describe events and so make frequent use of verbs (action words) and adverbs (which describe and add more detail to verbs).
- Use of personal pronouns (personal recount).
- Passive voice may be used (factual recount).

The following example of student writing is an example of a factual recount (author data):

### **A trip to Bali**

There were so many places to see in Bali that my friend decided to join the tours to see as much as possible. My friend stayed in Kuta on arrival. He spent the first three days swimming and surfing on Kuta beach. He visited some tour agents and selected two tours. The first one was to Singaraja; the second was to Ubud.

On the day of the tour, he was ready. My friend and his group drove on through mountains. Singaraja is a city of about 90 thousands people. It is a busy but quiet town. The street are lined

with trees, and there are many old Dutch houses. Then they returned very late in the evening to Kuta.

The second tour to Ubud was a very different tour. It was not to see the scenery, but to see the art and the craft of the island. The first stop was at Batubulan, a center of stone sculpture. There my friend watched young boys were carving away at big blocks of stone. The next stop was Celuk, a center for silversmiths and goldsmiths. After that he stopped a little while for lunch at Sukawati and on to Mas. Mas is a tourist center.

My friend ten-day-stay ended very quickly beside his two tour, all his day was spent on the beach. He went sailing or surfboarding every day. He was quiet satisfied.



**Can you find examples of text grammar in the text above?**

## Accuracy, fluency and complexity

Another dimension to grammatical knowledge involves the distinction between accuracy, fluency and complexity.

### *Accuracy*

Accuracy refers to the learner's ability to produce discourse that is free of grammatical errors. While grammatical errors may reflect gaps in the learner's knowledge of grammar, they may also be related to the amount of planning or reviewing time available (e.g. in writing an essay), the extent to which the learner is focusing primarily on meaning as opposed to grammatical form when using language, or the extent to which the learner is using controlled or automatic processing (see Chapter 2).

### *Fluency*

Fluency refers to the ability to produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication. Pawley and Syder, (1983) in a well-known paper, suggested that fluency depends on having available a large number of fixed sequences or chunks that can be accessed quickly (see Chapter 13) so that the speaker does not have to start constructing an utterance from scratch.

Communicative language teaching generally emphasizes the importance of a focus on both accuracy and fluency in language teaching. Other methods such as the natural approach (see Chapter 3) suggest that accuracy will take care of itself once the learner has developed the capacity to monitor his or her language use. The differences between accuracy-focused and fluency-focused teaching can be summarized in the following table:



Accuracy-focused teaching	Fluency-focused teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects typical classroom use of language.</li> <li>• Focuses on the formation of correct examples of language use.</li> <li>• Produces language for display (i.e. as evidence of learning), calling on explicit knowledge.</li> <li>• Elicits a careful (monitored) speech style.</li> <li>• Reflects controlled performance.</li> <li>• Practises language out of context.</li> <li>• Practises small samples of language.</li> <li>• Does not require authentic communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects natural language use.</li> <li>• Calls on implicit knowledge.</li> <li>• Elicits a vernacular speech style.</li> <li>• Reflects automatic performance.</li> <li>• Requires the use of improvising, paraphrasing, repair and reorganization.</li> <li>• Produces language that is not always predictable.</li> <li>• Allows students to select the language they use.</li> <li>• Requires real communication.</li> </ul>



**Can you suggest three examples of activities that practise accuracy and three that practise fluency?**

## Complexity

The development of fluency in language use may mean greater and more accurate use of known language forms, but it does not necessarily imply development in the complexity of the learner's language. For the learner's linguistic system to take on new and more complex linguistic items, the restructuring or reorganization of mental representations is required, as well as opportunities to practise these new forms. Van Patten (1993: 436) suggests that restructuring involves processes:

...that mediate the incorporation of intake into the developing system. Since the internalization of intake is not a mere accumulation of discrete bits of data, data have to 'fit in' in some way and sometimes the accommodation of a particular set of data causes changes in the rest of the system. In some cases, the data may not fit in at all and are not accommodated by the system. They simply do not make it into the long-term store.

Several factors can facilitate restructuring, most notably change in communicative needs. As the range of topics and contexts for language use changes, different grammatical resources are needed. Describing daily routines will require less complex grammar than discussing hypothetical situations, for example. Learners whose use of English is restricted to a very limited range of contexts, situations and activities are unlikely to have the need to develop a more complex knowledge of grammar.

## 9.3 Grammar in a language syllabus

### Criteria for choosing syllabus items

Language courses generally contain a grammar strand, and a number of criteria can determine which items of grammar will be included and in what order they will be sequenced.

#### *Importance*

While a language may contain a large range of grammatical distinctions and constructions, not all of these are necessarily useful to second language learners. A grammar syllabus in a course will typically focus on what are considered core features of English grammar. Core items are those that are simple and more central to the basic structure of English than items that are complex and peripheral. By these criteria, the following items would be taught early on in a course:

- Subject-verb (*The train arrived.*)
- Subject-verb-complement (*She is a journalist.*)
- Subject-verb-adverb (*The children are in the bedroom.*)
- Subject-verb-object (*We ate the fruit.*)
- Subject-verb-object-adverb (*I put the fruit in the bag.*)

Other features of core grammar include articles, adjectives, present simple tense, past simple, present continuous, prepositions of time and place, *be*, *have got*, *can*, *should*, *would*, *will*, *yes/no* and *Wh-* questions.

#### *Difficulty*

Grammar items may be selected based on the difficulty they present to students in tests or on lists of common errors made by second language learners. Contrastive analysis was used to predict difficulty in earlier periods of language teaching (see Chapter 2); however, this would only be an option in teaching monolingual classes.

#### *Differences between languages*

This also relates to contrastive analysis and involves selecting items that are most different from the grammar of the learner's mother tongue. Adverb positions often differ significantly between languages and, for this reason, may require greater attention than items that are similar among languages. For example, in French, adverbs can occur between the verb and the direct object, unlike in English, where they occur after the direct object (compare

the French word order of *John opened suddenly the door* with the English word order: *John opened the door suddenly*).

### Usefulness and frequency

A grammar item may be useful because learners will encounter it very frequently (such as irregular forms of verbs or the subject–verb–object sentence pattern), or because they will need it in the situations where they will be using English (such as the use of the passive voice in scientific writing or items that are typically tested on a university-entrance test). Corpus research has provided a great deal of information on the frequency of grammar items in different kinds of discourse, information that can inform the design of grammar syllabuses. (A corpus is a set of texts and language samples in a particular area, e.g. newspaper articles, casual conversations or lectures, that can be analyzed using computer concordancing programs in order to identify patterns of usage. It is a principled collection of texts, such as business letters, classroom language, learner writing or telephone conversations that can be used for different kinds of analysis). For example, Reppen (2010: 23) comments:

From corpus research, we know that academic reading relies heavily on nouns. From corpus studies of academic texts, we know that the ratio of nouns to verbs is heavily tipped towards nouns. In contrast, we find that in spoken language, conversation and even academic lectures, the use of nouns and verbs is fairly evenly distributed.

Corpus research is increasingly being used in the design of syllabuses for coursebooks. However, in language teaching teachers often have their own beliefs about what grammatical items they expect to see in a course and when they should be introduced – perhaps based on their own experience as language learners. For example, the progressive is often introduced very early in English coursebooks, although corpus research suggests the present tense is much more frequent than the progressive in spoken English. According to corpus research therefore the progressive should appear much later in the syllabus than is found in most courses. (Biber and Reppen, 2002).



Why do you think the progressive is introduced very early in the syllabus of many coursebooks?

## 9.4 Spoken grammar

Decisions about the choice of items to include in a grammar syllabus traditionally reflected information that was based on the study of written language. But the vast amount of research into spoken language found in corpus research as well as in disciplines such as

discourse analysis has revealed many differences between the grammar of written and spoken language. It will be useful to consider a few examples from research on spoken grammar and its implication for teaching grammar.

## Characteristics of spoken grammar

McCarthy and Carter (2001: 51–75) present a number of criteria for spoken grammar, including the following:

### *Establishing core units*

Spoken grammar raises the question of what a 'core unit' of grammar really is. In spoken language, the sentence is not the basis for a typical 'turn' or utterance. Conversational turns often consist just of phrases or of incomplete clauses or of clauses with subordinate clause characteristics, but which are apparently not attached to any main clause, as this partial transcript shows:

[Speakers are sitting at the dinner table talking about a car accident that happened to the father of one of the speakers.]

**Speaker 1:** I'll just take that off. *Take that off.*

**Speaker 2:** *All looks great.*

**Speaker 3:** [laughs]

**Speaker 2:** Mm.

**Speaker 3:** Mm.

**Speaker 2:** I think your dad was amazed, wasn't he, at the damage.

**Speaker 4:** Mm.

**Speaker 2:** It's not so much the parts. It's the labour charges for...

**Speaker 4:** *Oh that. For a car.*

Structures that are incomplete, interrupted or whose grammatical form is unclear such as *Take that off* are common features of speech, and this example is not actually an imperative in this conversation, but rather an elliptical form, a shortening of *I'll take that off [the insurance claim]*.

### *Phrasal complexity*

Students are routinely taught the order of adjectives before nouns in English (e.g. size before colour), and that there is considerable potential to have a large string of adjectives before the noun. While this could be appropriate in certain kinds of academic discourse, in conversation the number of adjectives tends to be limited. McCarthy and Carter (2001) provide these spoken and written examples:

*Spoken:*

- Yeah, it's *a big house*, six bedrooms.
- It's *a large house*, lovely, just right.

*Written:*

- Living in *a big, dirty communal house*, eating rubbish...
- The *cosy lace-curtained house*...

As they point out, 'it is not a question of what *can* be said, but what *is* routinely said'.

## *Tense, voice, aspect, and interpersonal/textual meaning*

Learners are usually taught that certain verbs such as *want*, *like* and *have to* aren't used in the progressive form. However, they may be used in the progressive form in conversation to show an indirect or polite stance toward the listener:

[Telephone enquiry to travel agent]

**Customer:** Oh, hello, my husband and I *are wanting* to go to the Hook of Holland next weekend.

As McCarthy and Carter (ibid) indicate: 'Here, once again, we have a case for separating spoken and written grammar, and for making sure that our spoken grammar reflects the range of tense and aspect choices open to speakers to create appropriate interpersonal meanings.'

## *Position of clause elements*

Grammar books tend to give fixed rules on the positioning of elements in the sentence and teach learners to avoid common learner errors, such as, 'He speaks very well English'. However, in casual conversation, positioning may be very flexible, as shown by these examples:

- I was worried I was going to lose it and I did *almost*.
- You know which one I mean *probably*.

Even more notable in conversation are elements placed entirely outside of the clause position, in what is known as left (or right) dislocation:

- *A friend of mine*, his uncle had the taxi firm when we had the wedding.

## *Clause-complexes*

Corpus evidence strongly argues for a re-examination of the types of clause-complexes found in spoken and written language and the need for rethinking the accepted

descriptions of main and subordinate clauses. For example, non-restrictive *which*-clauses may carry important evaluative information or be a response to feedback. McCarthy and Tao (1999) provide the first example and McCarthy and Carter (2001), the second (as cited in McCarthy and Carter, *ibid*):

- *Example 1:*

I can't angle it to shine on the music stand, and the bulb's gone, *which doesn't help*.

- *Example 2:*

Speaker 1: Well, actually one person has applied.

Speaker 2: Mm.

Speaker 1: *Which is great*.

While examples such as those above illustrate some of the differences between spoken and written grammar, the implications for teaching are not necessarily immediate, for a number of reasons. Firstly, differences in spoken grammar reflect features of casual conversation among native speakers. For advanced learners it may be useful to draw their attention to features such as these when they occur in authentic speech (e.g. on videos or the internet), although it is unlikely that they will need to use them productively. Secondly, some may reflect features of regional speech or of particular age groups. Despite these limitations, however, in the future we can expect to see grammatical syllabuses and resources for language teaching increasingly give more attention to the most frequent and distinctive features of spoken grammar. The following example from the *Touchstone* course (McCarthy et al., 2005), shows how information about *not* and *isn't* in spoken English is presented in a coursebook:

***In conversation ...***

People use *'s not* and *'re not* after pronouns.

She's *not* strict.

They're *not* nice.

Isn't and aren't often follow nouns.

My boss *isn't* strict.

My co-workers *aren't* nice.

## 9.5 Grammar and the language learner

Learning how to draw on grammatical knowledge in creating both sentences and texts is a central issue in second language learning and has been the focus of extensive research in applied linguistics. The language that learners produce when they are learning English reflects many different factors, such as their stage of grammatical development, the kind of

communication they are engaged in and the learner's first language, as well as the strategies the learner is making use of in communication (see Chapter 2). A number of processes are often involved, although it is not always possible to assign a feature of learner English unambiguously to a specific cause. In the example below a teacher describes how learning a foreign language can give a better understanding of learners' problems with grammar:

## ●● Understanding the learners' perspective

Living in Mexico, I learned Spanish. Some aspects of Spanish did not seem to cause problems, but other aspects did, such as the use of the subjunctive in Spanish. I tried to use the subjunctive, yet never really understood that it was a completely different tense in Spanish and that it required a way of thinking that was not part of my native language. I often used strategies to compensate for not knowing how to use the subjunctive correctly. These strategies helped me to get across my ideas. They seemed to work until I myself understood how to use the subjunctive. This mental process has helped me understand how students may be approaching learning English. Learning another language has given me empathy with my English students. While it is not necessary to know another foreign language if your native language is English, it does help the teacher understand and perhaps appreciate what our students are experiencing in the learning process.

*Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico*

## Features of learner language

### *Language transfer*

Transfer is the effect of one language on the learning of another. Positive transfer occurs when both the native language and English have the same form or linguistic feature. Languages may share aspects of grammar, such as some patterns of word order and the use of adverbs, and these may allow for positive transfer. Negative transfer or *interference* is the use of a native-language pattern or rule that leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language. For example, a French learner of English may produce *I am here since Thursday*, instead of *I have been here since Thursday*, because of the transfer of the French pattern, *Je suis ici depuis jeudi*, and *I like very much coffee*, instead of *I like coffee very much*, transferring the pattern *J'aime beaucoup le café*. The following sentences show the result of transfer from Spanish:

- What understand the children?
- Can the director to speak with me now?
- Will not to watch TV the boys tonight?

Learners with some language backgrounds, such as German, are likely to have fewer difficulties learning how to use definite and indefinite articles in English, because German



has an article system. Japanese learners, on the other hand, find the English article system difficult, because Japanese does not have a similar article system to English. An attempt to predict the linguistic difficulties of English by comparing the grammar of English with the grammar of other languages resulted, in the 1970s, in an activity known as *contrastive analysis* (see above and Chapter 2). A teacher comments on how she addresses the issue of language transfer:

### ● Teachers as learners, too

Being a native speaker of Portuguese and having worked with Brazilian learners for nearly two decades, predicting difficulties and language-transfer issues had been quite easy. Since I started teaching multicultural classes in Australia, I have always found it useful to learn grammar features of my students' native languages. This knowledge, however basic, has enabled me to better predict language-transfer issues and subsequent difficulties, when introducing new language features to learners. As a result, I make more informed decisions regarding how to present, explain and practise language items, which result in classes that are tailored to the groups in question. On top of that, as learners become aware of my efforts to 'walk in their shoes' and tend to their difficulties, a feeling of camaraderie is established, which contributes to a more successful learning atmosphere. In multicultural groups, where cultural awareness plays an important role, this kind of effort on the teacher's part helps build error tolerance and empathy among learners.

*Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia*

? **Have you ever attempted to learn about the grammar features of your students' native language(s)? If so, has it helped you to predict potential grammatical difficulties?**

## Overgeneralization

The process of overgeneralization refers to extending the use of a form, by analogy, to an inappropriate context. This is a normal and natural process, and both learners of English as a second language as well as children learning English as a first language often extend the use of grammatical rules to contexts where they do not occur, as in *I broke the vase* or *We goes to the beach*. Other examples of overgeneralization are seen in the following:

- Under no circumstances, we will accept these terms.
- They didn't like it; not I liked it.
- She was unhappy at the development; so I was.
- Now I see why did they behave like that.



Sometimes overgeneralization may mean over-using a grammatical form, such as the *-ing* form, as with these examples:

- I don't know why people always talking me.
- Yesterday, I didn't working.

A common form of overgeneralization is seen when learners attempt to make irregular verbs fit regular patterns, as with *break*, above, and also with cases such as *seened* (for *saw*), *ated* (for *ate*) and *wented* (for *went*). Ortega (2009: 117) comments:

This process typically manifests itself after a certain level of development has been reached, in that it presupposes that learners have at least partially figured out some regularity. After systematically overgeneralizing, the learning task is to retreat from the overgeneralization and to adjust the application of the form or rule to increasingly more relevant contexts.

## Simplification

Simplification occurs when learners reduce a complex aspect of grammar to a much simpler set of rules, and reflects a process that is used when messages need to be conveyed with limited language resources. For example, instead of making the distinction between *he* and *she*, the learner may use the masculine pronoun, or instead of distinguishing between first and third person in verbs (*I like*; *she likes*), the learner may use the first person rule for all persons (*I like*; *he/she like*). Ortega notes (ibid.) that simplification is common in the early stages of language learning and particularly in naturalistic learning situations. Simplification of aspects of grammar such as question tags occurs in some varieties of English. In colloquial Singapore English, for example, one encounters:

- That was your sister, is it?
- You are from the States, is it?

## Underuse

Sometimes learners may underuse a form they have studied and practised many times. For example, the learner may avoid using some constructions with *if*, such as *If I had known, I would have told her about it*, and use, instead, *I didn't know so I didn't tell her*, because it appears to them as more direct and easier to understand.

## Overuse

At other times, a learner may become over-dependent on certain grammatically correct forms and use them in preference to other forms that might be known and available. For example, the learner may become dependent on a phrase such as *last time* to refer to past events and use it when other ways of referring to past time could have been used:

- I like Thai food. I tried it *last time*.
- I know her. We met *last time*.

## Fossilization

Sometimes a learner's grammatical development appears to have stopped at a certain level, and recurring errors of both grammar and pronunciation have become permanent features of a learner's speech. This is referred to as fossilization. Fossilization refers to the persistence of errors in a learner's speech, despite progress in other areas of language development (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). For example, here are a few examples of fossilized errors in an adult, fluent speaker of English who uses English regularly and effectively, though often with a high frequency of what we might regard as basic grammatical and other errors:

- I doesn't understand what she wanted.
- He never ask me for help.
- Last night, I watch TV till 2 a.m.
- She say she meeting me after work.

Fossilized errors, such as those above, tend not to affect comprehension, although they might be stigmatized, due to the fact that they often reflect errors that are typical of very basic-level learners (such as omission of third person -s). Since fossilized errors do not generally trigger misunderstanding and hence do not prompt a clarification request from the listener, the learner may simply never notice them or be aware that they are there. The noticing hypothesis (see below) suggests that unless the speaker notices such errors, it is unlikely that he or she will correct them. A teacher educator comments on his experiences encountering fossilization among students:

### The fossilization problem

Fossilization, I am sure, is not an uncommon phenomenon in the ESL/EFL context. And it was often a common topic for me and my Chinese colleagues at the university. We were actually shocked at the fact that fossilization should exist in such young learners as freshmen or sophomores. For example, there were a few students who didn't seem to be able to use the correct subject-verb agreement and some others who refused to say good-bye to their incorrect pronunciation, though we as teachers repeatedly took turns to raise their awareness. It may be true that some types of fossilizations do not hinder communication, but my experience tells me that they may erode students' confidence in writing and speaking English, once they realize that they have fallen victim to these chronic complications, i.e. fossilizations of both grammar and pronunciation.

*Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore*



**If fossilized errors do not cause a communication breakdown, do you think they need to be corrected?**

## 9.6 Accessing and using learned grammar

A common concern for teachers is helping learners access and use grammar that has been learned. Failure to use previously taught or learned grammar may result from several factors.

### Factors affecting use of grammar

#### *Performance factors*

The learner may be focusing on formulating an idea and, due to other factors in the situation, may not produce error-free discourse. These factors include time pressure, the setting and the degree to which the learner has the opportunity to control the channels of communication.

#### *Automatic processing*

The distinction between controlled and automatic processing (see Chapter 2) suggests that learning involves development from a stage where tasks require considerable control, management and planning to a stage where they can be performed under automatic processing – a level where little conscious effort is required. The context for communication may influence the degree of automatic processing and hence the level of accuracy involved. A learner may speak relatively fluently, using automatic processing with good control of grammar, when carrying out a task with a partner. The same learner, when making an oral presentation in front of the class, may now be more conscious of his or her language (controlled processing comes into effect), and this may actually interfere with accuracy, resulting in more grammatical errors than were seen in the pair work task.

#### *Task factors*

The distinction between the two kinds of processing above suggests that use of grammar may also depend on the kind of task the learner is engaged in, since the amount of attention to accuracy may differ according to whether the task is reading a story aloud, telling a story, free conversation, an interview, a discussion, a written task and so on. Some tasks may require little attention to accuracy (such as free conversation), whereas others require much more (e.g. a written task). For some tasks, such as telling a story, the speaker may have access to available plans or schemas, from previous knowledge, that reduce planning time and effort. The result may be discourse that is linguistically different from discourse used during conversational interaction. It may be less hesitant, and the speaker may be able to employ more complex forms than were found in unplanned conversational interaction. Accuracy of performance on tasks may also depend on the amount of planning time that the task involves (Skehan, 1998).

**? If you speak English (or another language) as a second language, what kinds of activities pose the most and the least difficulty for you in terms of using grammatically accurate language?**

As with accuracy, the degree of fluency a person achieves may also depend on the context (e.g. speaking in public before an audience, rather than face to face), the kind of task the learner is attempting and the amount of time involved. Other factors that can influence fluency include the following:

### *Familiarity*

If an activity is familiar because it has been frequently encountered previously, it is likely to be performed more fluently – hence, the importance of practice in developing fluency. Practice can lead to the development of routines and strategies for managing the processes of communication, and as these processes become automatized, more fluent output may result. Nation (2011: 454) comments:

Fluency-development activities have the characteristics of being message focused, involving very easy material, involving some pressure to perform at a faster than usual speed and ... reasonably large quantities of language use.

### *Difficulty*

It follows from the above that tasks that are difficult either because of the nature of the task or the lexical load of the task are likely to involve more cognitive efforts than simple tasks, and this can influence how fluently they are performed.

## **Focus on form**

Research suggests that acquisition of grammar is facilitated if learners have opportunities to focus on form (i.e. to 'notice' aspects of grammar) at some stage during the performance of an activity – either before, during or after carrying out an activity. Harmer comments (2007: 54):

Students acquire language best when they have focused on it, either because they need it or have come across it in a meaning-focused communicative task or because in some other way, they have noticed language which is relevant to them at a particular time.

The nature of the output learners are engaged in has also been identified as an important factor in promoting complexification of the learners' grammatical knowledge (Swain, 1999; Skehan, 1998). The notion of *stretched output* refers to learners engaging in classroom tasks that call upon them to 'stretch' their language resources and to use more complex syntactic structures. Swain describes the use of dictogloss

activities, in which the teacher reads a short passage, at normal speed, containing specific grammatical structures. Students take notes and then work in small groups to attempt to reconstruct the passage, using the correct grammatical structures. (Dictogloss targets the use of written language.) Skehan (1998: 58) suggests that from these activities there emerges a mismatch between what the learner knows and what he or she needs to complete the task. The pressure to express meaning prompts the learner to search for the syntax needed to do so. As a result there is a restructuring of the existing language system. This can be seen as a co-construction resulting from collaborative consciousness-raising and the sharing of grammatical and analytic resources.

Activities in which students notice the difference between their language and that of more advanced learners (referred to as 'notice the gap' activities) can also promote restructuring. For example, students might complete a task and then watch a video of more advanced learners carrying out the same task.

### *The role of feedback*

The development of grammatical competence is a gradual and lengthy process, during which learners make use of a variety of sources of input about the nature of English and their use of English. Some of this is the feedback learners receive about their performance. Two important issues are: (1) How can the learner become aware of errors in his or her own production, and (2) What kind of instructional techniques are likely to be most effective in helping remove fossilized errors? Suggestions for addressing the first question involve learners becoming active monitors of their own language production through listening or viewing recordings of their own speech or through having others monitor their speech for fossilized errors in focused listening sessions. The second question raises the issue of error correction: What kinds of errors should be corrected, when and how?

## **9.7 Approaches to teaching grammar**

### **Inductive learning vs. deductive learning**

Current approaches to grammar in language teaching today vary from those that can be referred to as 'grammar first' to those that can be characterized as 'grammar last', as well as a range of positions in between. Approaches in the first category represent traditional views of the status of grammar in language learning. The assumption is that learners should build up knowledge and use of grammar step by step through activities involving presentation of grammar and controlled practice in using the grammar, then leading to more open-ended use of the grammar in simple, guided oral and written tasks. With this approach, teaching follows a predetermined, carefully graded grammatical

syllabus. Texts, dialogues and other forms of input serve as vehicles for presenting grammar.

An example of the latter category may involve using content, texts or tasks as the framework for selecting and practising language use, where grammar is only taught as it is needed to discuss the content, create the texts or carry out the tasks. This approach is seen in text-based teaching, task-based teaching, content-based teaching and CLIL (see Chapter 3). Less radical approaches involve including both a grammatical syllabus and communicative tasks, which together form the basis for teaching activities. This approach is typically seen in global ESL/ELT coursebooks such as *Headway*, *Interchange* and *Four Corners*.

Regardless of approach, teachers have a choice whether to teach grammar inductively or deductively. In an inductive approach, students are encouraged to ‘discover’ the rules themselves, based on the input presented to them. In a deductive approach, the rules are given to the students, along with language exemplifying them. There is no single ‘right’ way to teach or learn grammar. Many teachers use a combination of these two approaches, based on their students’ learning styles. Here, a teacher describes the advantages of using corpora to help students discover grammatical patterns:

### ●● Corpora as a tool for guided discovery

I’m a big believer in guided-discovery learning and fostering an environment where learners are cognitively active. When students discover information themselves, deeper learning transpires, the information is more memorable, students tend to be engaged, and other skills are encouraged, as well, such as problem-solving. Online corpora are one tool I use for this type of teaching. I also like the fact that if students get comfortable with using a corpus and concordancer, it becomes a tool they can use autonomously.

I use corpora in the classroom in a variety of ways. They are great for learning about many facets of language, including vocabulary, lexico-grammatical patterns and collocations. I personally like to use the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

One way to utilize COCA with advanced or upper-intermediate students is to help them discover the difference between *hope* and *wish*. Using the KWIC (keyword in context) feature, students can see each word in a natural context. The parts of speech are color coded, so students can easily look for the words in their verb forms only. I provide some guiding questions before they begin in order to facilitate their understanding. I want them to see that *hope* is used when something is still possible and *wish* is used when something is no longer possible/likely, so my questions are designed to make that difference salient. Going further, students investigate which verb tenses occur with each word by answering more guiding questions. They find that *hope* often occurs with present tense discussing future possibility, whereas *wish* occurs with past tense, in reference to the present, or past perfect, in reference to the past. If students have

studied conditionals, I try to help them make the connection that the meaning–tense connection follows the pattern of unreal conditionals, where past tense refers to the present and past perfect refers to the past.

*Marcella Caprario, teacher, New York, NY, US*



**Learners sometimes have strong preferences for either inductive or deductive grammar work. What is your own preference? Do you use both techniques in class?**

## Developing accuracy, fluency and complexity

There are several ways in which classroom activities can help learners develop the use of grammatically appropriate language, acquire more complex forms and also improve their fluency. These involve providing support at three different stages: prior to the activity, during the activity and after completing an activity.

### *Providing support prior to the activity*

Here there are two goals: (1) to provide language support that can be used in completing a task, and (2) to clarify the nature of the task so that students can give less attention to procedural aspects of the task and hence monitor their language use during their performance, while carrying out a task. Skehan notes (1996a: 53): 'Pre-task activities can aim to teach or mobilize or make salient language which will be relevant to task performance.' This can be accomplished in several ways.

### *By pre-teaching certain linguistic forms*

These forms can then be used while completing the task. For example, prior to completing a role-play task which practises calling an apartment owner to discuss renting an apartment, students can first read advertisements for apartments and learn key vocabulary they will use in a role play. They could also listen to and practise a dialogue in which a prospective tenant calls an apartment owner for information. The dialogue serves both to display different questioning strategies and to model the kind of task the students will perform.

### *By reducing the cognitive complexity of the activity*

If an activity is difficult to carry out, learners' attention may be diverted to the structure and management of the task, leaving little opportunity for them to monitor the language they use on the task. One way of reducing the cognitive complexity of the activity is to provide students with a chance for prior rehearsal. Dialogue work prior to carrying out the role play referred to above might serve the function of introducing students to the relevant structures.



## *By giving time to plan the activity*

Time allocated to planning, prior to carrying out an activity, can likewise provide learners with schemas, vocabulary and language forms that they can call upon while completing the task. Brainstorming activities fall into this area.



What kind of support would be useful to provide to learners prior to their practising an interview task?

## *Providing support during an activity*

A focus on language and skill in performance can be facilitated during the completion of an activity by choosing how the activity is to be carried out. The way it is implemented can determine whether it is carried out fluently, with a focus on target-language forms, or disfluently, with excessive dependence on communication strategies and with employment of lexicalized, rather than grammaticalized, discourse as well as the overuse of ellipsis and non-linguistic resources. Factors which can be varied in order to increase or decrease the level of fluency include:

- *Participation*: Whether the activity is completed individually or with other learners.
- *Procedures*: The number of procedures involved in completing an activity.
- *Resources*: The materials and other resources provided for the learners to use while completing an activity.
- *Order*: The sequencing of an activity in relation to previous tasks.
- *Product*: The outcome or outcomes students produce, such as a written product or an oral one.

For example, in conducting a survey task, the design of the resources students use could have a crucial impact on the appropriateness of the language used in carrying out the task. If the survey form or questionnaire students use provides models of the types of questions they should ask, it may result in a better level of language use during questioning and make other aspects of the task easier and hence more fluent, since less planning will need to be devoted to formulating appropriate questions.

Similarly, the order of an activity in relation to other tasks may influence the use of target structures. For example, if students are to carry out an activity that requires the use of sequence markers, a prior activity which models how sequence markers are used may result in more frequent use of sequence markers during the performance of the target task (see Swain, 1999).



What kind of support to help students during the 'carrying-out phase' would be useful in a group discussion task with intermediate-level students?



## Providing support after the activity

Grammatical appropriateness can also be addressed after a task has been completed. There are several activities of this type:

*Public performance:* After completing an activity in small groups, students carry out the same task in front of the class or another group. This can have the effect of prompting them to perform the activity using more accurate language, as well as more fluently, and can lead to stretched output as noted above.

*Repeat performance:* The same activity might be repeated with some elements modified, such as the amount of time available. Nation (1989), for example, reports improvements in fluency, control of content and, to a lesser extent, accuracy when learners repeat an oral task under time constraints.

*Performance by others:* The students might listen to more advanced learners (or even native speakers) completing the same task and focus on some of the linguistic and communicative resources employed in the process.



What kind of post-performance support could be provided for a role play?

## 9.8 Assessing grammatical knowledge

Assessment of grammar reflects the philosophy or approach that provides the framework for a language course. Grammar has a different status in communicative language teaching, task-based teaching and text-based teaching, for example, and each approach or method consequently involves a different strategy for assessing grammar. Traditionally, grammar was seen as the major contributor to second language development, and a student's performance on a grammar test was often seen as a measure of his or her overall language proficiency. Grammar was tested as an independent component of language ability. However, while this approach is still common today, increasingly grammar is assessed as a component of communicative ability and performance – particularly in relation to the productive skills of either writing or speaking. Jones (2012) comments:

At the lower end of Cambridge English Language Assessment's range of exams, both the Key English Test (KET) and the Preliminary English Test (PET) assess the four main skill areas and do not incorporate a separate grammar component. On the other hand, the higher-level exams do contain a separate 'Use of English' paper that, according to the First Certificate in English (FCE) Handbook, 'focuses on the language knowledge of structures and system(s) that underpin a user's communicative language ability in the written medium'.

And as Hughes (2003: 172) observes:

Control of grammatical structures was seen as the very core of language ability, and it would have been unthinkable not to test it. But times have changed. As far as proficiency tests are

concerned, there has been a shift towards the view that since it is language skills that are usually of interest, then it is these which should be tested directly, not the abilities that seem to underlie them.

Hughes suggests that grammar continues to be tested as a component of either a proficiency test or an achievement test, i.e. with a focus on *grammatical knowledge*, rather than *grammatical ability*, since a) grammar tests are relatively easy to administer and score, and b) grammar continues to be a separate component of many language courses. Here, we will consider the testing of grammar when it is a separate component of a course of study. Grammatical accuracy as a feature of other skills is discussed in other chapters (e.g. Chapters 13 and 15), and issues related to scoring in Chapter 20.

## Choice of task types

Jones (2012) distinguishes three task types that commonly occur in grammar tests.

### *Selected response*

A multiple-choice question is an example of this task-type, where students select one appropriate response from choices provided:

The building \_\_\_\_\_ in 1906.

- a. built                      c. had built
- b. was built                d. has built

A matching task is another version of a selected-response question. For example, the student is required to match each question with an appropriate response:

Question	Response
1. Going to see a film tonight?	A. No, I didn't.
2. How was the film?	B. Yes, I probably will.
3. I can't stand war films. Can you?	C. Actually, I quite like them.
4. So you went to the cinema?	D. All right, nothing special.

Questions such as the above test students' recognition of grammatical items, rather than their ability to use them.

## Limited-production tasks

These require some production of grammatical items, but in a controlled manner. Examples are:

### *Rearranging:*

Make a sentence out of these words.

like    movies    American    lot    I    a

### *Gap-filling:*

Fill in the gaps in these sentences.

A. What are you doing tonight?

B. I \_\_\_\_\_ (study) for tomorrow's test.

A. What kind of test?

B. We \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a grammar test.

Hughes (2003: 175) gives examples of using a longer passage for gap filling, and a rewriting task, where a set of related structures can be tested.

### *Gap-filling:*

In England, children go to \_\_\_\_\_ school from Monday to Friday. \_\_\_\_\_ school that Mary goes to is very small. She walks there each morning with \_\_\_\_\_ friend. One morning they saw \_\_\_\_\_ man throwing \_\_\_\_\_ stones and \_\_\_\_\_ pieces of wood at \_\_\_\_\_ dog. \_\_\_\_\_ dog was afraid of \_\_\_\_\_ man.

### *Rewriting:*

Say the same thing in a different way.

1. Tony is good at tennis.

Tony plays \_\_\_\_\_.

2. I saw Sara six years ago.

It's been six years \_\_\_\_\_.

3. When we arrived, a policeman was questioning the bank clerk.

When we arrived, the bank clerk \_\_\_\_\_.

However, commenting on tests of this kind, Purpura (2004) states:

Since the early 1960s, language educators have associated grammar tests with discrete-point, multiple-choice tests of grammatical form. These and other 'traditional' test tasks

(e.g., grammaticality judgments) have been severely criticized for lacking in authenticity, for not engaging test-takers in language use and for promoting behaviours that are not readily consistent with communicative language teaching. Discrete-point testing methods may have even led some teachers to have reservations about testing grammar or to have uncertainties about how to test it communicatively. While there is a place for discrete-point tasks in grammar assessment, language educators have long used a wide range of simple and complex tasks in which to assess test-takers' explicit and implicit knowledge of grammar.

Purpura goes on to say that discrete-point items lack construct validity, i.e. they don't test the ability that they are designed to test:

For example, if we wished to make claims about test-takers' ability to use grammar to argue for or against some public policy, a selected-response task would not be likely to provide the type of evidence needed to support this claim, since a selected-response task does not require students to understand and respond to an interlocutor's opinions, express a coherent set of opinions, provide support for opinions and work collaboratively to resolve policy implications. The challenge, then, is to specify the characteristics of a task that will, in fact, provide a consistent measurement of the construct we are trying to get at in this particular situation.

### *Extended-production tasks*

According to Jones (2012: 254), 'these tasks measure an examinee's ability to use grammatical forms and structures to convey meaning at discourse level, through writing and speaking... and could include essays and report writing and speaking tasks involving information and problem solving, simulation and role-play activities'.

## **9.9 Conclusion**

The role of grammar in language learning, language use, and language teaching, is one of the most complex issues in language teaching and one which continues to attract controversy and debate. Issues related to grammar are often framed as simple choices. Should one use a deductive or inductive approach? Should a focus on form occur before or after students complete a task? Should feedback on errors occur when an error is made or at a later time? The overview provided in this chapter has, hopefully, highlighted the fact that a number of factors need to be considered before issues such as these can be addressed, such as the stage of development the learner is at, the context in which language is being used, the learner's preferred learning style, the learner's first language, the type of task or text involved and so on. One point on which agreement is more certain however is the fact that grammar does not exist in isolation: it is always part of something else, evident in both sentences and texts, and is also an important component of each of the four skills. However, grammar should not simply be left to chance. A well-planned language course should reflect the central role grammar plays in both written and spoken language and provide learners with opportunities to develop grammar as a communicative resource.

## Discussion questions

- 1 Examine two coursebooks of a similar level and compare the range of grammatical items they include and the way they are taught.
- 2 Select a reading text from a coursebook. What features of text grammar does it contain?
- 3 What kinds of accuracy-focused and fluency-focused activities do you use in your teaching?
- 4 Take a text from a low-level coursebook and rewrite it so that it would be suitable for learners of a higher level. Then examine the kinds of changes you made. In what ways is the language of the revised text more complex?
- 5 Some learners are not very concerned with the accuracy of their grammar and are satisfied if they can make themselves understood. What arguments could you offer to suggest they take the issue of accuracy more seriously, if you believe it is important?
- 6 What are some other beliefs you think your learners hold about the role of grammar in language learning? How might these beliefs influence their approach to learning?
- 7 Collect some samples of written errors from your learners. Do you find examples of a) language transfer, and b) overgeneralization?
- 8 Select a grammatical item from a coursebook. Suggest ways of teaching the item a) inductively, and b) deductively.

## Appendix 1:

# Teaching the passive voice

Look at the sample lesson plan for teaching the passive voice and the handouts prepared for students, submitted by Marcella Caprario, a teacher in New York. What stages does the lesson consist of? What approach to teaching grammar does the lesson reflect?

## Sample lesson plan for teaching passive voice with newspaper articles

### 1 Goals

- To raise students' awareness of the passive voice, to encourage noticing of this structure.
- Students will be able to identify the basic formal structure of the passive voice.
- Students will be able to articulate some of the reasons for using the passive voice.
- Students will work together communicatively, using linguistic problem-solving skills.

### 2 Resources

- Two short newspaper articles of appropriate level, containing examples of the passive voice. It is best if the articles have a variety of tenses and/or a mix of singular and plural.
- Comprehension questions for reading.
- Guided-discovery worksheet.
- Gap-fill or other controlled-practice activity.
- Video recording device (optional).

### 3 Timing

- 90 minutes (the length of the performance portion depends on the size of your class).

### 4 Grouping

- Solo, pairs, small groups (three to five), whole class.

### 5 Activities

- Reading.
- Grammar tasks.
- Dialogue writing.
- Role-play / dialogue performance.

### 6 Sequencing

- Lead in.
  1. Teacher distributes a brief high-interest newspaper article of appropriate level that has at least a few examples of the passive voice, with some general comprehension questions.
  2. Students answer the comprehension questions and briefly discuss the article in pairs.
  3. Teacher checks comprehension.

- Once students comprehend the article well, teacher shifts to a language focus by writing the passive-voice examples from the text on the board and distributes the guided-discovery worksheet.
- 1. Make sure all students are familiar with the metalanguage on the worksheet, particularly *doer* and *receiver* of a verb. Teacher can put a chart on the board showing the metalanguage next to an example, if the students need more scaffolding:

present tense	<i>go/goes</i>
base verb	<i>go</i>
V3	<i>gone</i>

- Students copy the sample sentences from the board onto the worksheet.
- Students complete Section A (form focus). I recommend using a think-pair-share model where students work alone first, then with a partner and, finally, the teacher elicits the correct answers from the whole class.
- Students complete Section B (meaning/use focus) in the same manner.
- Students complete Section C (structure formula and consolidation of previous sections) in the same manner again.

There are several reasons for using passive voice, all of which are probably not exemplified in one brief article. The teacher may wish to make students aware of this fact, but highlight that the general reason behind any use of passive is to draw focus onto the receiver of the action and/or away from the doer.

- Teacher distributes the second brief article.
  - Students scan for examples of the passive voice and underline them.
  - In pairs or small groups, students discuss why the writer has used the passive voice in each case.
  - Teacher goes over the answers when groups have finished.
- Practice.
  - Teacher distributes a gap-fill or other controlled-practice activity.
  - Teacher checks answers.
- In small groups of three to five, students create their own news stories, which they will perform for the class as a news-broadcast role play. Students should try to use the passive voice in appropriate places, but also to be creative. Video-recording these can be fun if the students are up for it. (I use my Android to record.) Teacher takes note of any errors in the passive voice.
- Closure.
  - Teacher writes errors on the board when performances are finished, and students use the guided-discovery worksheet to help them make corrections in pairs or small groups.
  - Students come up to the board to write corrections. (If time is an issue, teacher can elicit the corrections and write them him/herself.)

3. Teacher reviews the lesson and assigns homework:
  - a Students look for an article with at least one example of the passive voice. They should underline all examples of the passive and write down why they think it was used. Collect this assignment next class.
  - b Students choose one of the stories their group came up with for the news role play and write up a brief news article, using appropriate examples of the passive voice. Collect this assignment next class.

**Handout**

## PASSIVE VOICE

SAMPLE SENTENCES (copied from the board):

Sentence 1:

Sentence 2:

Sentence 3:

Sentence 4:

### **SECTION A – FORM**

- 1** Circle the verb *be* in each sample sentence.
- 2** Underline the main verb (the one with *be*) in each sample sentence.
- 3** What form is the main verb in? Circle a choice below.  
past                      present                      base                      V3
- 4** What time periods are the sentences talking about? Circle all correct choices below.  
past                      present                      future
- 5** How do you know the time period in each sentence? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6** What is in the subject position (before the verb), the doer of the verb or receiver? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7** If the doer of the verb is included, what word appears directly before it (we can call this the 'doer phrase')? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8** If the 'doer phrase' is included in the sentence, where does it occur? \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\* STOP HERE \*\*\***



## SECTION B – WHY USE IT?

- 1 What is the action (verb) in each sentence? (List them all.)  

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- 2 Who or what is the doer of the action in each sentence? (List them all.)  

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- 3 In these sentences, which is the speaker or writer more focused on, the doer of the action or the receiver? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Do we have to include the doer in each sentence? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Can you guess why the speaker or writer put the focus on the receiver of the action in each example? (There may be different reasons for different sentences.)

**\*\*\* STOP HERE \*\*\***

### **SECTION C – PUT IT ALL TOGETHER**

What's the form? Use your answers from Section A to help you.

Subject + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

(+ \_\_\_\_\_).

What are some reasons for using this form?

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Do you think it is more common to include the doer of the verb or leave it out when using this grammar structure? Why do you think so?

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## Appendix 2:


## A secret

Look at Activity 4 below from the textbook *English Unlimited* (Clementson et al., 2010). How do the activities address the differences between spoken and written grammar?

11.1

### A secret

**LISTENING**



*Jhulan and Rahul, Suresh's parents*

**VOCABULARY**  
Relating a conversation

**PRONUNCIATION**  
Quoting

**WRITING AND SPEAKING**

**1** • 3.2 Listen to part of a conversation between Suresh and Meninda.

- Who has a secret? Who are they keeping the secret from?
- What do you think it might be about?

**2** • 3.3 Listen to a conversation between Meninda and her sister Indra about Suresh, their cousin. Were your ideas in 1 correct?

**3 a** What can you remember? Who:

1 wants Suresh to take the job?	4 has turned down a job?
2 wants to go travelling for a year?	5 is going to be upset?
3 tells Suresh to talk to his parents?	6 is going to talk to Suresh?

• 3.5 Listen again to check.

**b** What do you think about Suresh's plan? Do you think he should tell his parents?

**4** Look at the sentences from the conversation and discuss the questions.

Say is the most common word used to report direct speech.	1 He said, "You know I've been offered this great job ..." 2 Then I said to him, "Have you found something better?" 3 He says, "Look, I want to tell you something. ..." 4 ... and then he says to me, "Well, I said no!"
Meninda also uses these very informal expressions to report direct speech.	5 And he goes, "No, I've got a more interesting plan." 6 I went, "You can't do that! You've got to tell them!" 7 So I'm like, "Yeah! So what are you going to do?" 8 I was like, "When are you going to tell them?"

1 Do the highlighted words and expressions report:  
 • the exact words people say? • a summary of what they say?

2 Do they introduce:  
 • only statements? • only questions? • both statements and questions?

3 When the speakers use the present tense, is this:  
 • to show when something happened? • to make a story more dramatic?

**5 a** When you quote someone's exact words, you pause and your voice goes up.  
 • 3.4 Listen to these extracts from Meninda and Indra's conversation:

**MENINDA** So then he said, // ↑ "You know I've been offered this great job by that law firm?"  
 So of course I say yeah, and then he says to me, // ↑ "Well, I said no!"  
 I said, // ↑ "You're mad!" Then I said to him, // ↑ "Have you found something better?" And he goes, // ↑ "No, I've got a more interesting plan!"

**b** • 3.4 Listen again, then practise saying the sentences.

**6 a** Meninda and Indra persuade Suresh to tell his father about his plans. In pairs, discuss these questions.

- How do you think Suresh and his father will feel?
- What do you think the result of the conversation will be?

**b** Write the conversation between Suresh and his father.

*Suresh: "Dad, there's something I need to tell you." ...*

**c** Imagine you're Suresh. Work with a new partner and relate the conversation to Meninda. Use some of the highlighted expressions in 4.

**7** • 3.5 Listen to the actual conversation between Suresh and his father. Were your conversations similar or different?

So, I say, "Dad, there's something I need to tell you." So he goes, ...

## Appendix 3:

# Adding information

Look at Activity 2 below from the textbook *Viewpoint* (McCarthy et al., 2012). Which of the characteristics of spoken grammar, discussed in this chapter, does this activity include?

- 2 Grammar Adding information**
- A Check (✓) the sentence that has a complete meaning if you remove the words in bold. Then read the grammar chart.**

1. We love to read about celebrities' problems, **which the media will often invent**. ☐
2. There are even shows **that pay for plastic surgery**. ☐

### Defining and non-defining relative clauses

**Grammar extra**  
See page 146.

Defining relative clauses define, identify, or give essential information about a noun.

*There are shows **that/which pay for plastic surgery**.*

*We love to read about the people **(who/that) celebrities date** and the clothes **(that) they wear**.*

Non-defining relative clauses give extra information about a noun.

They do not begin with *that*. Notice the use of commas.

*Celebrity magazines, **which outnumber news magazines**, are everywhere.*

*It's natural to talk about celebrities, **who we see as successful people**.*

A *which* clause can add information or a comment to the clause before it.

*This obsession is normal, **which is reassuring**.*

*Celebrities come into our homes, **which almost makes them family**.*

### In conversation ...

*That* is more common than *which* in defining relative clauses.  
Non-defining and *which* clauses often give opinions as well as information.

### Common errors

Do not use *which* for people, or *what* in relative clauses.

- B Complete the interview extracts with *who*, *that*, or *which*. If you can leave them out, write parentheses ( ) around them. Sometimes there is more than one correct answer.**

1. **Miki** I like to read about the problems (~~that~~) celebrities are having. \_\_\_\_\_ makes me feel better about *my* problems. I don't want to know all the details of their marriages, \_\_\_\_\_ should be private, but ... just a few things.
2. **Tariq** I'm interested in celebrities \_\_\_\_\_ can do other things. For example, there's Natalie Portman, \_\_\_\_\_'s a scientist. She's published in journals, \_\_\_\_\_ is interesting.
3. **Miguel** Well, I'll occasionally read the gossip in magazines, \_\_\_\_\_ is probably all untrue anyway. It's a distraction from work, \_\_\_\_\_ I think we all need. And it gives me something to talk about with my co-worker Jo, \_\_\_\_\_'s really into celebrity gossip and stuff.
4. **Salwa** Actually, I'm not interested in celebrities, \_\_\_\_\_ I feel set a bad example. You know, they often think they can do anything just because they're famous, \_\_\_\_\_ is ridiculous, really.

## 3 Viewpoint Who's into celebrity gossip?

**Class activity Ask your classmates the questions. Are you a celebrity-obsessed class?**

- Are you interested in celebrities? If so, what interests you about them?
- How closely do you follow celebrity gossip? Which celebrities are in the news at the moment?
- What other celebrity gossip have you heard about in the last year?

*"I'm interested in the clothes that celebrities wear. I mean, they wear some weird things, which is always fun."*

### In conversation ...

Use *I mean*, ... to repeat your ideas or say more.

## 4 Speaking naturally *which* clauses See page 138.

## Further reading

- Ellis, R. (2006) 'Current issues in the teaching of grammar: An SLA perspective', *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 83–107.
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