

IMPLICIT GRAMMAR TEACHING ACTIVITIES

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Definition: Activities that help students recognize and acquire grammar patterns within the sphere of 'authentic' use and with a focus on messages over abstract form.

Pros:

- ♦ Little or no grammar 'meta language' is used.
- ♦ There is increased motivation in that students immediately see applicability.
- ♦ It gently guides students to correct (and self correct) errors with low AF.
- ♦ Most students are more likely to retain acquired patterns than explicitly explained abstract 'rules.'
- ♦ Students are more likely to retain and be motivated by focusing on message and content over form.
- ♦ Problem-solving and 'figuring out' patterns builds confidence, communication skills and retention.
- ♦ It is fun, interesting and enjoyable for students and teachers while still meeting objectives and competencies.

General advice for Implicit Grammar Teaching Activities

1. **The teacher should really know the grammar point and, more importantly, WHEN and where that grammar point is used in real life.**

In other words, CONTEXT is just as important as FORM.

Example: Present Continuous.

Real examples of when it is used: Live sports reporting, interviews & phone conversations.

All three of these would make excellent role-plays/skits/dialogs and contexts for other activities.

2. **Before introducing the grammar point, build schema. SHOW this grammar in use, DON'T TELL.**

Use yourself, your own life, the students' lives, current events and so on.

The right question form will elicit the right statement form. Modeling is crucial.

Example: Present Continuous.

Teacher: (Modeling) What am I doing now? I am standing. (Writes this on the board.)

What are you doing now? (Elicit answers, write them on the board.)

3. **Always give at least FIVE ORAL AND WRITTEN EXAMPLES derived from authentic information.**

Example: Present Continuous.

(After simple activity above, the following is on the board)

I am talking. I am standing. I am smiling.

Jose is listening. Sue and Hiro are writing. We are studying English.

THEN look and show patterns.

4. **Keep it SIMPLE, then expand.**

Example: Present Continuous.

After positive statements, model and then generate real negative sentences

(I am NOT swimming. Hiro is NOT eating. We are not sleeping.)

Then Yes/No questions (Is Hiro writing? Am I smiling? Are you writing?)

Then WH questions (Where is Sue sitting? What am I doing? How are you feeling?)

In a relaxed manner, students will SEE the patterns, then SHOW them down.

Do this by underlining, using color markers or drawing boxes/circles.

5. **The Garden Path is best: Students do not have to know everything at once- one step at a time.**
Example: Present Continuous. Consider:
I am going to Tokyo tomorrow = future tense using a PC form.
I would not discuss nor introduce this until students had mastered PC as expressing NOW.
 Remember: MEANING and USE are always more important to most students than FORM.
6. **Come at the same pattern from many different ‘learner’ angles!’**
(See following Multiple Intelligence activity ideas.)
 The Kinesthetic learner, for example, may not ‘get’ the pattern until it is done physically.
7. **Students often acquire language and language patterns faster when interacting.**
 Always ask yourself: How can I make this a student-centered cooperative activity or task?
Example: Modals of advice
Students create posters in groups about how to avoid the flu.
8. **Alternate having students practice the grammar point ‘actively’ and ‘passively.’**
 Choral work and group work allows students to do both as do ‘class games’ and open activities like 20 questions, jeopardy and so on. Students acquire grammar patterns from LISTENING and READING as well as from SPEAKING and WRITING.
9. **Ask questions and avoid giving answers unless it is necessary and no students can answer or figure it out. Never lecture about grammar unless you are teaching linguistics!**
Example: Present Continuous.
Student: Is ‘Swimming is fun.’ Present Continuous?
Teacher: What do you think?
Student: It has an –ing word....
Teacher: Are all –ING words Present Continuous? And so on.
10. **Let students discover! Show! Find! Discuss! Compare! Self correct! Error correct!**
 Discovery = long term acquisition. And it is more motivating.
Example: Present Continuous.
‘People’ magazines are distributed. ‘Students, find PC sentences and then check and present them.’
11. **Avoid editing students. If the grammar point does not fit what the student is trying to say, then go with the student’s message. They can learn about a pattern by seeing what DOESN’T work too.**
 Acknowledging that what they are communicating is more important than the form being studied reinforces that grammar is a positive and empowering tool for real communication.
Example: Present Continuous.
S: I am living in Japan!
T: Yes, you live in Japan, but where are you living now?
12. **Make sure that everything you use is REAL, RELEVANT and IN A CONTEXT THAT IS MEANINGFUL! Using students realities to set schema = comprehensibility and motivation.**
 Most ‘fill in the blank’ grammar books are none of these things.
 Use students’ real information, real hobbies, real likes and dislikes, real experiences, real food preferences, real sports they play, real needs they have (shopping, going to the doctor, finding a job) and real and relevant life experiences. It can be what they are doing in class or anything else.
 Even just changing names in book exercises to student names makes it more effective.
13. **As students move from exploring and learning patterns to producing in activities, use a light touch.**
 Rather than correct directly, consider ‘gathering’ errors and then presenting them as a whole to the class later for group correction. No one is embarrassed!

SOME IMPLICIT GRAMMAR TEACHING ACTIVITIES GROUPED BY M.I.

Note: Many, of course, activate more than one M.I.

Linguistic learner

Word/phrase/sentence puzzles
Word scramble
Diagrams with words
Reading floods
Speed/cooperative writing/editing activities

Logical/mathematical learner

Any puzzles and pattern-activities
Sentence strips
Strip scramble activities
Cloze exercises
Error Correction
Hangman

Visual/Spatial learner

Color code sentence work
Rods activities and pattern drills
Write/draw/write/draw activities
Creative (sensory) visualization writing activities
Board Games/Ven Diagrams
Collages

Naturalistic learner

Out of class targeted grammar activities-
Surveys of all kinds about the natural world
Out of class interviews and observations
Sensory description writing assignments
Writing/speaking about nature hikes etc.
Pattern practice with an animal/plant etc. focus
Roleplays

Musical learner

Grammar pattern-focused songs
Jazz chants
Created jingles
Grammar raps
Stress-pattern practice
Skits

Bodily/ kinesthetic learner

Any TPR derived grammar activities
All mime activities like charades
Human 'rods' grammar activities
All physical grammar games- relay races, find someone who etc.

Interpersonal learner

Interactive one-on-one activities, interviews etc
Time line pair work
Board games
Info gap games, class surveys, group games
Group writing tasks (posters, FAQs, op-ed letters)
Oral group pattern games like 'time's up' or 'around the room activities'

Intrapersonal learner

Individual cloze exercises
Error correction activities
Madlibs
Targeted creative writing (ex: favorite place)
Individual projects (family tree, auto-biography etc.)
Individual word puzzles (crossword etc.)
Journaling

A combination of grammar activities is recommended.

- ♦ Focus on inductive teaching using all 4 skills language skills.
- ♦ Generate a lot of real examples *THEN draw attention to patterns
- ♦ Use colored pens, shapes, symbols and other visual cues to show form.
- ♦ Use students and student information that is authentic most of the time.

Some useful resources:

[Practical Techniques: For Language Teaching](#) by Michael Lewis

[Practical English Usage](#) by Michael Swan

[Fun with Grammar: Communicative Activities](#) by Suzanne W. Woodward

[Five-Minute Activities: A Resource Book of Short Activities](#) By Penny Ur, Andrew Wright

[Grammar Dictation](#) by Ruth Wajnryb (both Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers)

[Grammar Games](#) by Mario Rinvolucri

[Shenanigames, Grammar-Focused Interactive ESL/EFL Activities](#) By J. Kealey & D. Inness

[Instant Grammar Lessons](#) (Photocopiable) by Alan Battersby