UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

GRADUATION ESSAY

TOPIC:

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY STUDENTS OF THE THIRD YEAR OF THE LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLES OPCION ENSEÑANZA IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THEIR GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE AND THE ACTIONS THEY TAKE TO OVERCOME THEM

TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLÉS, OPCIÓN ENSEÑANZA.

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Introduction

This essay will list a series of problems students studying the third year of the Licenciatura en Idioma inglés Opción Enseñanza in the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador face during the process of developing their grammatical competence. In this sense the essay will present the reasons why students consider grammatical competence one of the most difficult abilities to develop in the process of acquiring or learning the English language.

This will be an argumentative essay, and based on the information gathered from different authors, teachers and students themselves. It will expose the real reasons why students have so many difficulties to get grammatical competence in English. In addition to this, the essay will provide a set of ideas intended to be useful for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process of the English language. The information provided in this essay will specifically help teachers and students with the issues they come across when teaching or learning the English language.

Difficulties Faced by Students of the Third Year of the Licenciatura En Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza in the

Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador in the Process of Developing their Grammatical Competence and the Actions they Take to Overcome them

In the process of learning English as a second or foreign language, students see themselves facing different kinds of problems regarding the different skills they are to possess in order to master the language. One of the most common difficulties students of the English language face is the development of their grammatical competence, which is vital and of great importance due to the nature of the career. Students of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador believe the development of grammatical competence is one of the most difficult issues and yet very important in the process of learning English.

Grammatical competence, according to one of the different authors that have studied and defined it, refers to the mastery of the language code, graphic or phonic.[1] In order to get a better understanding of what the research is about, research has been done, regarding grammatical competence in a wide variety of papers including different authors, such as Noam Chomsky, Canale and Swain, and Bachman among others, and different sources such as books and the internet which have been key to the development of the investigation as well as the information collected from the people interviewed. Teachers and students of the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador have made it possible to obtain the data necessary to the completion of this essay.

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[1] Scarcella and Oxford 1991,141

This research focuses on the difficulties a specific group of students in the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador studying the third year of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza face during the development of their grammatical competence and the actions they take to overcome them. The paper will provide options, techniques, and approaches to help students overcome these problems. The information provided if put into practice will enable them to use and understand the English language accurately, which will lead them to become fluent and, in general, help them manage this area of the language as professionals of English are expected.

Since the whole paper is based on grammatical competence and the implications it has in the learning process of students of the FLD, before continuing explaining in detail all the techniques, approaches, and the rest of the information, it is important to retake the grammatical competence topic, which is believed as necessary and of great importance to be explained in more detail. What follows is a series of considerations around grammatical competence and its use at the FLD.

Grammatical competence

Grammatical competence is part of a set of subcategories of communicative competence. It is a concept introduced by Dell Hymes and discussed and redefined by many other authors. Grammatical competence, as defined by Noam Chomsky, is the ability to recognize and produce the

distinctive grammatical structures of a language and to use them effectively in communication (Bachman,L 1990).

Michael Canale and Merrill Swain[2] defined communicative competence. According to their theory, communicative competence is made up of four different components or subcategories. The components are (a) grammatical competence, (b) socio-linguistic competence, (c) discourse competence, and (d) strategic competence. Grammatical Competence includes "knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics and phonology." According to these authors, grammatical competence focuses on sentence-level grammar. Canale and Swain's definition of Communicative Competence has undergone some other modifications over the years. These newer views are best described in Lyle Bachman's schematization of what he simply calls Language Competence.

Bachman defines what he calls **communicative language ability** as consisting of both knowledge, or competence and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate contextualised communicative language use.

Bachman's framework of communicative language ability has three components: (a) language competence,(b)strategic competence, and (c)psychophysiological mechanism. He provides a diagram in which he first divides language competence into (a) organisational competence, and (b) pragmatic competence. Each of these competencies again is shown as having two components. Organisational competence comprises (a) grammatical competence, and (b) textual competence; and

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[2] L. Pritchet 208, 1992.

pragmatic competence comprises (a) illocutionary competence, and (b) sociolinguistic competence.

Bachman's figure shows each of these competencies as comprising some more aspects. Grammatical competence consists of (a) vocabulary, (b) morphology, (c) syntax, and (d) phonology/ graphology.

Grammatical competence refers to mastery of the language code, graphic, or phonic. Features such as rules of vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling, and linguistic semantics are included in grammatical competence. "Grammatical competence is an umbrella concept that includes increasing expertise in grammar (morphology, syntax), vocabulary, and mechanics. With regards to speaking, the term mechanics refers to basic sounds of letters and syllables, pronunciation of words, intonation, and stress.[3]" In order to convey meaning, EFL learners must have the knowledge of words and sentences; that is, they must understand how words are segmented into various sounds, and how sentences are stressed in particular ways. Thus, grammatical competence enables speakers to use and understand English language structures accurately and unhesitatingly, which contributes to their fluency.

Importance of grammatical competence

Grammatical competence is an indispensable part of the English language. The learning of the English language cannot be complete if the development of the grammatical competence

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[3] (Scarcella and Oxford 1992:141)

is not taken into account. A professional of English will not fully acquire and manage the language properly if he/she does not develop his/her grammatical competence. Even though grammatical competence is known to be a difficult matter for students, it is given great importance by students and teachers involved in this investigation.

It has been stated that students of the major in the English Language have all kinds of problems and difficulties to develop their grammatical competence. However, they all agree that grammar is of great importance in the learning of English as a foreign or second language. Teachers of the FLD agree with this statement. One of them expressed his ideas in these terms: "As future professionals of English, students must know this language." Imagine what the world would be if an English language professional confused **whether** with **weather,** for instance. In this major students are to manage all areas regarding the English language so that we can have an acceptable performance building a career. The second reason why teachers believe grammar is so important is that grammar is one of the fundamental sub skills for the use of a language. As mentioned before, grammatical competence enables speakers to use and understand English language structures accurately and unhesitatingly, which contributes to their fluency.

Grammar is what gives words a meaning. Without grammar what we would have is only a bunch of words, sounds, or letters with no meaning or message to communicate. Students of the FLD agree with this idea since they stated that "the language in general is made of structures that you use all the time." Even when a person uses the simplest structure of

a sentence he/she is using grammar, it is not something that can be taken for granted.

As we grow up we are taught how to structure our ideas correctly but as students of a major that intends to teach how to teach the English language, it is important to manage the skills that grammatical competence conveys at a higher level.

Grammar is not exclusive for students of a major, or language teaching professionals. Grammar is a tool we all need to use any language correctly regardless or our career if we want to give a good impression and be taken seriously by others. Why should we give grammar so much importance? Because like it or not, grammar is a yardstick with which people measure intelligence and competence. If you can't write a proper sentence in a résumè or a business letter there is the chance that, that potential boss or client may well assume that you are not smart, sophisticated, or detail-oriented enough to do business with him/her. Grammar matters. In fact, a solid mastery of the rules is becoming *the* skill to have in the 21st century business world.

As Jane Strauss states in her book *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*, ¨enterprises´ managers want to make sure adjusters, sales staff, and customer service personnel could write clear, accurate, grammatically correct reports. Grammatical competence should be developed during the process of learning the English language instead of random words that some schools in the country teach." Yes, some schools do not do a great job of teaching grammar. But many other schools, both public and private, do a fantastic job. But other

schools today face unprecedented pressures and challenges — economic, political, and sociological in nature—and teachers cannot work miracles. The result is that many young people come out of high school, and even college, without a firm grasp of the rules of grammar. Obviously, that shortcoming reveals itself in the labor force.

Students of the Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opción Enseñanza, at the FLD, can be the kind of teachers to make the difference in teaching English in a more complete, integral way by managing grammar at a high standard in order to be able to teach their students in their coming future.

Globalization and an increasingly diverse population mix are muddying the grammatical waters. As various cultures come together and influence each other — via outsourcing and immigration, for instance — the clear-cut rules that govern language tend to get lost. People are influenced by their friends, their classmates, and their coworkers. When different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds blend at work, our language patterns are influenced (Jane Strauss 2004). Of course, this is nothing new. Like all languages, English is always evolving. It is just that in today's world the changes are happening so rapidly that it becomes harder to distinguish the rules of grammar from common usage. The inevitable result: Confusion.

The Internet Age has confused the issue even further. Instant messages and e-mail have changed the way people think about the rules of grammar and punctuation. It would not be at all unusual to receive the following "text message" on your cell phone: "im going 2 da office 4 a mtg." Now, imagine

receiving that message twenty years ago. Many of today's young people are so accustomed to seeing this kind of technological shorthand that it seems "right" to them. It is fast; it is informal; it is hip. The fact that it is a grammatical trainwreck doesn't bother them.

Summarizing, Grammar is an indispensable part of any particular language, considering that the systematic rules of the language play the most important role for mutual intelligibility and, in relation to this, for building social relationships via verbal communication.

Grammar is the basis to every language; it is the structure system that gives a meaning to our communication. The licenciatura en Idioma Inglés Opciòn Enseñanza is intended to teach a language and one of its goals is to do it the most accurate, professional possible way. For that reason, it is important that students commit themselves to master their grammatical competence as well as developing every aspect of the language they are studying.

Consequences of a poor grammatical competence

The main consequence a poor grammatical competence has on an English speaker is confusion. A simple grammar mistake is known for everybody to change or potentially change the meaning of a sentence, phrase or conversation. The message is very likely to get lost with only a little mistake while trying to communicate a specific message. Professionals of English are expected to manage all aspects of the English language. A professional that does not show proficiency in grammar at the moment of speaking or writing cannot be

trusted with a position that requires expertise in the management of the English language. A poor grammatical competence can also interfere with the reading skills of a professional that could misinterpret the message of a letter or an important business paper. In the teaching environment, a teacher with a poor grammatical competence can seriously affect an English student learning process and establish a weak base for the English language he/she is trying to master.

Teachers are supposed to be experts in the language and even though they are not machines to know everything in perfection, which should be the goal, they should be able to recognize when something is wrong or needs to be revised. A teacher is expected by students to be knowledgeable and confident of what he/she teaches. Otherwise, a student would not entirely trust the teacher and would question what the teacher teaches or corrects. Another common mistake people do that can create confusion is to literally translate from the Spanish to the English language, which is not totally advisable.

People try to apply the same rules from one language to the other with the intention to make it easier. The English and the Spanish languages do not share the same grammar rules. In order to learn to speak, read, write, listen, and understand the English language its own grammar rules must be studied in order to develop a grammatical competence.

There is a type of language described as a linguistic phenomenon that uses words in Spanish in phrases expressed in English or vice versa that people, mostly immigrants, use to

communicate, called Spanglish. In this phenomenon people overlook the grammar rules of both Spanish and English, showing a basic knowledge of both Spanish and English that limits their ability to competently communicate in English. People who use this type of language have very narrowed opportunities of professional growth. According to two thirds of the FLD teachers, poor grammatical competence confuses the people involved in the communicative process. Few teachers believe that it interferes with communication, depending on the level of the environment in which the communicative process takes place. In a professional environment, a poor grammatical competence interferes with the proficiency a professional of English must show at the moment of managing the language.

Difficulties to develop grammatical competence

There are different reasons why students find grammar difficult. These ideas are mostly based on their belief that grammar is hard to understand. They try to find different explanations or reasons, they claim not to have enough time to study, they do not fully comprehend how teachers teach, and so on. Most of the students in the FLD claim to have problems with grammar because of the way they are taught. According to them, some teachers do not use an effective way to teach grammar; while some other students agree that they do not give grammar the attention required to understand grammar.

The first step to carry out this research was to identify those difficulties students have to develop English grammatical competence. To that end, students were

administered a questionnaire that provided vital information
to the completion of this paper besides all the information
gathered through different means such us books and books
found in the internet.

The greatest problem students have is the lack of
interest they have in grammar. English grammar is a broad
topic and it might take some time to understand it, but with
the appropriate counseling and attention from the student it
is possible to develop grammatical competence. Students of
the FLD identify the lack of understanding of the English
structures they are taught as their major problem. They
mentioned some other difficulties that are believed to be
correlated to the one presented before. It is very possible
that they do not understand because of some other problems
they mentioned, like the lack of practice of the English
structures. Two thirds of them stated that there is not
enough time during classes to practice the structures and
since most of them take other classes and some have also a
job, they do not have that extra time to spend in practicing
the English structures.

A situation that can make the attainability of a
grammatical competence a problem is the lack of exposure of
students to real sources of the English language since the
process takes place in a Spanish speaking environment.
Students mentioned the fact that they are not very often
presented to real sources of the English language, in order
to be exposed to the structures they have to master.

As somebody may know, it is quite different to practice a
conversation that is written in a book and probably has

nothing to do with the reality of a student and to have a conversation that is proper of an individual and to his/her own level of the language. This is in addition to the interests of the different types of students a teacher may have in his/her classroom. The problem of the lack of exposure to real sources of the language   is probably the most common.

There are many situations that may interfere with this to happen since these students are learning this language as a second tongue. Another problem students have in the process of developing their grammatical competence, according to them, is the lack of analysis of the structures they are presented in their grammar classes. This is due to the lack of time they have. The time a class takes is enough only to be introduced to the new structures. The analysis of the content seen in class as well as the practice and study outside the classroom is responsibility of the students.

The lack of interest of grammar in general, was presented by a third of the students interviewed as a problem they face to develop English grammatical competence. The author of this essay thinks all of the problems and situations these students face can be a reason why they lose their interest in English grammar. Students may have had experiences that lead them to believe grammar is too complicated for them to understand it.

The lack of attention is a sign of the lack of interest students have in grammar. This was a conclusion after a survey was passed to students of the FLD in a study about grammatical competence. Only a fourth of students accepted

the lack of attention to the structures as one of the problems they face. A very little number of students say they do not have problems with grammar.

Teachers, as facilitators of the language learning process, also identified the difficulties their student face to develop grammatical competence. Information was gathered from teachers regarding this topic. Teachers and students agree that students lack interest for grammar in general. Almost all teachers interviewed believe that students do not give English grammar much importance. They also agree in a second problem, the lack of exposure to real sources of language in which the structures studied are used.

Both teachers and students coincide in all of the problems even though in different percentages, but there are no teachers who believe that a student has no problems with grammar.

Approaches to develop grammatical competence

When teaching a language there are different aspects teachers take into account. One of the most important things to consider in the learning process is the approach applied to teach. In the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of El Salvador, for example, most teachers limit themselves to use one single type of approach to teach grammar but there are some different approaches that can be useful for them in order to develop their students´ grammatical competence such us three I´s and ESA approaches.

After having interviewed six professors of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, who

were teaching English Grammar, five of them admitted that they applied the so-called Three PPPs Approach, which has been designed by Tomlison (1996). On the other hand, the other professor said that he usually made a mixing of both approaches, Three I's and Three Ps. He believes that a mixture of both approaches is what teachers should use to provide activities based on the needs and interest of students.

'Three Ps' approach is a methodology that organizes the teaching of a linguistic item in three distinct stages: Presentation of the item, practice of the item, and, finally, production of the item (Tomlison, 1998).

PPP or the three P´s is a to communicative language teaching used by teachers of the FLD to develop grammatical competence. Each P stands for one of the three stages. The first stage is *presentation*. During this stage the teacher introduces the knowledge to be learned through pictures, dialogues, classroom situations (imaginary or real), etc. The teacher has to make sure students understand the concept underlying the language to be learned using vocabulary students already know. Once students have understood the concept, they are provided with the language model and engaged in drills with the purpose of creating statement, question and answer forms for the target language. This stage is a very teacher-oriented stage where error correction is important for the success of the process.

The second stage is *practice*. During this stage, communicative activities are developed in order to allow students to get familiar and confident with the new language

through frequency. Some of the activities are: information gap activities, dialogue creation and controlled role plays. Activities are mostly directed by the teacher and corrected if necessary as the classroom gradually becomes more learner-centered. With these activities the teacher has the opportunity to measure students´ accuracy and to guide them to the appropriate use of the language to be learned.

The third and last stage is *production,* which is seen as the culmination of the language learning process. During this stage students have transcended from being students of the language to independent users of the language. At this level, the teacher's role is to facilitate a realistic situation or activity where students instinctively need to apply the language they have been studying and practicing. While students are engaged in theses activities the teacher is available to any appeal from students, but, only if they request it.

The PPP approach is relatively straight forward, easy to understand by both, students and new emerging teachers. It has also been criticized for the very same characteristic that makes it the easiest method for beginner teachers, which is the fact that it is too teacher-oriented and over controlled.

The second approach some teachers use is the three I´s approach. Three I´s is an alternative methodology that values the need to put the spoken language right at the center of the syllabus. It considers the acquiring of cultural awareness the only guarantee of success. This cultural awareness can only be created if learners are exposed to

material that reflects real features of the spoken language. Three I´s stand for Illustration, Interaction and Induction. Illustration means learners look at real chunks of language, at real data of spoken language available. This stage is intended to produce appropriate and motivating responses in learners.

A crucial stage then follows: Interaction. Learners and teacher analyze together the material, talk about what they notice, and try to form views. At this point discourse awareness activities are put into practice, activities which focus on particular discourse patterns of the language studied. Through observation students are asked to comprehend and formulate the rules governing the language studied. Finally, during the Induction stage, conclusions are drawn about the features of the language analyzed.

Both, three P´s and three I´s methodologies are different from each other; both have characteristics that must be useful in a classroom. It is left to the teachers to decide what they consider to be more useful and effective for their students in their process to develop their grammatical competence.

As a way to enrich this research, an alternative to PPP and three I´s methodologies is presented, that is, Harmer's ESA, which stands for Engage, Study and Activate.
Even though PPP methodology has worked effectively for generations, it has been criticized for providing students with only pieces of language one piece at a time.

In How to Teach English (Longman 1998) Jeremy Harmer proposed
a different three stage model, the ESA model.

During the *Engage* phase, the teacher tries to arouse
the students' interest and engage their emotions. This might
be through a game, the use a picture, audio recording or
video sequence, a dramatic story, an amusing anecdote, etc.
The aim is to arouse the students' interest, curiosity and
attention. The PPP model seems to suggest that students come
to lessons ready motivated to listen and engage with the
teacher's presentation. Since one of the main problems in the
FLD is student's lack of interest, this might be an activity
teachers can use to catch their attention and arouse their
interest.

During the second phase, *Study*, activities are those
which focus on language (or information) and how it is
constructed. The focus of study could vary from the
pronunciation of one particular sound to the techniques an
author uses to create excitement in a longer reading text;
from an examination of a verb tense to the study of a
transcript of an informal conversation to study spoken style.
There are many different styles of study, from group
examination of a text to discover topic-related vocabulary to
the teacher giving an explanation of a grammatical pattern.
Harmer says, 'Successful language learning in a classroom
depends on a judicious blend of subconscious language
acquisition (through listening and reading, for example) and
the kind of study activities mentioned here.

During the *Activate* phase, students do not focus on
language construction or practice particular language

patterns, but use their full language knowledge in the selected situation or task. The idea is to have them all apply the language they know and to use it as communicatively as possible.

A complete lesson may be planned on the ESA model where the 50-60 minutes are divided into three different segments. It is very unlikely that these segments will be equal in duration. Activate will probably be the longest phase, but Study will probably be longer than Engage. In this format, ESA would appear to be little different from PPP. This repeated ESA model works well with older teenagers and adults and gives lessons richness and variety which students appreciate. It would be wrong to give the impression that Engage, Study and Activate are each single activities. They are phases of the teaching/learning process which may contain one or more activities.

Grammar Strategies

In order to ease the process of developing grammatical competence, there are some techniques a student can carry out to overcome those issues he/she has in the process. Ideas useful for and provided by teachers and students of the FLD will be presented.

The practice of grammar structures is an activity that can help students analyze and understand since it gives them the opportunity to get familiar with its usage and, in time, the practicing of the content studied will allow them to feel comfortable with the structures when they find it in a reading, listen to it or at the moment of using it in any

given situation. The practice of grammar structures seems to be very useful for teachers since all of them in the FLD consider it necessary and suggest students to practice grammar as much as possible.

The practice of grammar structures would be easier for students if they get more interested in this matter. Showing a little more interest in grammar, students would pay more attention to it and would investigate on their own in order to learn more about grammar. Teachers agree with this idea since an 83% of the FLD teachers stated that the lack of interest in grammar that students show is what keeps them from mastering grammatical competence. So they recommend that students get interested in grammar and ask questions in class (i.e. to learn from peers and the teacher).

Another activity that could help students in the process of developing their grammatical competence would be to get in contact with the language as much as possible, that would be to read as much English as possible, to listen to English as much as possible and of course, to speak in English as much as possible so that they can internalize different vocabulary and analyze it, which is something 50% of the teachers recommend to get familiar with structures and beware of the ways some phrases or structures are used. Teachers and students of the FLD, based on their experience, highly recommend other students to do the activities previously described since they believe in their usefulness.

FLD students from their own experience have come up with some ideas that work for them in the process of developing grammatical competence and as to the advice

students can offer to other students troubled with grammar is to interact with their classmates practicing the structures. 63.8% of the students interviewed agree with this idea. Some other ideas mentioned by students are practicing outside the classroom and to practice with native speakers.

Final suggestions by some authors

Here are some alternatives that can help students and teachers in the development of grammatical competence. These are specific activities that have the potential to help a student cope with the difficulties the process might represent.

Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) put forward the metaphor of scaffolding to refer to the strategies carried out by an expert who wants to adjust a task to the level of competence of a learner. These strategies include proposing a form of the act to be performed; raising and maintaining the learner's interest; simplifying the task; correcting the results, and reducing the stress during the learning process. Another fundamental concept is that of prolepsis, which refers to presupposition of some knowledge on the part of the speaker. The listener is challenged to interact with the speaker in order to get the supposed information. The result would be communication in the class which is believed by students and teachers of the FLD as the most effective activity for developing grammatical competence, what makes it convenient for their interest.

The following ideas are useful for teachers to allow their students to apply critical thinking skills to language learning:

- Teach the grammar point in the target language or the students' first language or both. The goal is to facilitate understanding.
- Limit the time you devote to grammar explanations to 10 minutes, especially for lower level students whose ability to sustain attention can be limited.
- Present grammar points in written and oral ways to address the needs of students with different learning styles.

To promote engagement in language learning:

- Encourage students to use the language spontaneously to communicate ideas, feelings, and opinions.
- Identify informal out-of-class language learning experiences.
- Ask students to evaluate their progress in terms of increasing in their functional proficiency.

Students' motivation for learning a language increases when they see connections between what they do in the classroom and what they hope to do with the language in the future. Their attention increases when classroom activities are relevant to their other interests.

The Daily Two

- Introduce grammar concepts through "the daily two."
- Each day write on the board two sentences that demonstrate a balance of correct and incorrect applications of the concepts upon which you are focusing.
- Establish a routine that requires students to rewrite in a notebook the two sentences, making the necessary grammatical corrections as they write.
- As you review the sentences give them succinct, immediately applicable grammar instruction.
- Teach the correct vocabulary to describe the grammatical concept and explain the underlying rule, or prescription for application.

Each set of the remaining weekly sentences should be used to practice correct application of the grammatical concepts for that week, and reinforce concepts from previous weeks. While other minor problems might be included, such as end marks and beginning capitalization, the emphasis must be to practice and reinforce the major concepts.

The Weekly Five

o Continue grammar instruction by expecting students to apply the grammatical concepts you are teaching in their own writing.
- If the concept is subject-verb agreement with an interrupting phrase, assign students to apply that construct in at least four sentences during an in-class writing assignment.

- Collect the papers and carefully select five papers appropriate in topic to be shared with the class.
- White out the students' names and make enough copies of the paper for each student.
- Review with the students the grammar concepts found in the 'daily two' and ask students to proofread the student papers in search of either correct or incorrect application of those ideas, and then discuss.

One a Day

   o Finally, weave grammar instruction into reading instruction and study.
- Ask students to search for examples of the grammar concept in a piece of literature or nonfiction being read or studied by the class.
- Turn this into a contest by having pairs or small groups skim to locate examples of the concept to point out to the class.
- Ask students to explain how incorrect usage of grammar in the passage might affect the reader.

Grammar games (Mario Rinvolucri, Grammar Games: Cognitive, Affective and Drama Activities for EFL Students.)

    Teaching grammar through games has proven to be one of the most successful methods of helping students acquire

grammar skills. "Grammar Games" by Mario Rinvolucri succeeds exceptionally well while encouraging students to enjoy themselves. This book is my top choice because it's a great way to expand on key concepts that can be rather dry at times.

Jumbled Sentences

Purpose: Word Order / Review

Choose a number of sentences from the last few chapters (pages) that you have been working on in class. Make sure to choose a nice mixture including adverbs of frequency, time signifiers, adjectives and adverbs, as well as multiple clauses for more advanced classes. Type (or write on the board) jumbled versions of the sentences and ask the students to reassemble them.

Variation:
If you are focusing on specific grammar points, have the students explain why certain words are placed in certain places in a sentence.

- Example: If you are working on adverbs of frequency, ask students why 'often' is placed as it is in the following negative sentence: 'He doesn't often go to the cinema.'

Finishing the Sentence

Purpose: Tense Review

Ask students to take a piece of paper out for a dictation. Ask students to finish the sentences that you begin. Students should complete the sentence you begin in a

logical manner. It's best if you use connecting words to show cause and effect, conditional sentences are also a good idea.

- Examples:

I like watching television because..., Despite the cold weather,... If I were you,...
I wish he...

Listening for Mistakes
Purpose: Improving Students' Listening Abilities / Review

Make up a story on the spot (or read something you have at hand). Tell students that they will hear a few grammatical errors during the story. Ask them to raise their hand when they hear an error made and correct the errors. Intentionally introduce errors into the story, but read the story as if the errors were perfectly correct.

Variation:
Have students write down the mistakes you make and check the mistakes as a class when finished.

Question Tag Interviews
Purpose: Focus on Auxiliary Verbs

Ask students to pair up with another student they feel they know reasonably well. Ask each student to prepare a set of ten different questions using question tags about that person based on what they know about him / her. Make the exercise more challenging by asking that each question be in a different tense (or that five tenses are used, etc.). Ask students to respond with short answers only.

- Examples:

You're married, aren't you? - Yes, I am.

You came to school yesterday, didn't you? - Yes, I did.

You haven't been to Paris, have you? - No, I haven't.

Other techniques (NCLRC *the essentials of language teaching*)

The following techniques might be useful for students to develop their grammatical competence.

Deduction: This means using rules to work out the answer or how to do something. It is especially useful for grammar.
- Example:

Rule: To change normal speech to reported speech.

- Example:

Mr. Chan - "I <u>will see</u> her tomorrow."

Reported speech – 'Mr. Chan said that <u>he would see</u> her the next day.

Recombination: This means joining together things you already know to make new things.

- Example:

You know that the <u>simple past tense</u> is used to describe things that happened in the past which have finished, and you know that the <u>present perfect tense</u> is used to describe experience. So you can make a sentence that includes both of them.

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- Example:

"I first <u>visited</u> America in 1990. Last summer I <u>went</u> there again, so I <u>have been</u> there twice."

Writing your own grammar book

Using new grammar: After you learn some new grammar, use it in conversation or writing, and see what your listener's or reader's reaction is: Do they understand you? You can ask "Did I say that right?"

Get a grammar book:

Go to a bookshop and look at the different grammar books. Choose one that you understand.

Read and listen: you must read and listen to others to see how writers and speakers use English grammar to communicate with them.

Conclusion

Grammar is difficult yet very important for the mastering of a second language. There are many techniques that can help a student overcome all the difficulties that he/she may face during the development of his/her grammatical competence. This paper has presented some of them. Even though it is a difficult matter, grammatical competence can be successfully developed if only the student is determined to acquire or learn the language to its highest level and becomes responsible for his/her own language learning process. Having teachers as facilitators is an advantage students have and this advantage should be taken. Students are provided with all the resources, teachers, libraries, and an environment where to develop all the language abilities required by the major. What students need is to get self conscious of their own learning process.

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