



My Experience: Putting Grammar in Context



David Spencer

What might they all have in common???



TEACHING GRAMMAR

All images in this talk: Pixabay



Guilty pleasure

Something we like but feel we shouldn't.

My experience as a learner at Secondary school

My experience training to become a Secondary school teacher

My experience after 35+ years of teaching



As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

1) Grammar is clearly not the opposite of communication. It's a part of it and speeds up the process of learning to use a language.

David Wilkins:

*'While without **grammar** little can be conveyed, without **vocabulary** nothing can be conveyed..'*

from 'Linguistics in Language Teaching'
Edward Arnold (1972)



'Languages have structural features that are complicated and hard to learn.

For learners to master them, adequate experience, understanding and use of these features is necessary...

Michael Swan
from 'Teaching grammar - does grammar teaching work?'
Modern English Teacher 15/2/2006
<http://www.mikeswan.co.uk>

'Where time is limited and learners have little out-of-class exposure (as in most language-teaching situations the world over), this can only be brought about with the help of pedagogic intervention:

explicit teaching and systematic practice informed by a syllabus of known problems.'

Michael Swan
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As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

2) When we present grammar inductively (getting students to work out rules for themselves), it can be thought-provoking and mentally stimulating for the students.

Gateway to the World B1+

State and action verbs

1a Look at these sentences. Do the verbs in bold describe states and situations or do they describe actions?

- 1 I **have** curly hair.
- 2 I **love** music.
- 3 I **like** this font.
- 4 It **doesn't look** too official.
- 5 It **sounds** big and confident.
- 6 I **don't believe** it's important.
- 7 I **know** it says that I'm easy-going.
- 8 I **don't think** it's a good idea.

1b Look at the sentences again. Are they in the present simple or present continuous? Why?

1c Put the verbs in bold from 1a in the correct lists.

- 1 verbs of feeling and liking: _____, _____, hate, want, prefer, enjoy, need
- 2 verbs of thinking: _____, _____, remember, mean
- 3 verbs of the senses: _____, _____, hear, see, taste, smell, feel, seem
- 4 verbs of possession: _____, own, belong

1d Why are the verbs in the sentences below in the present simple in 1 but in the present continuous in 2?

- 1a I **think** psychology tests are fun.
- 1b He **has** a bike.
- 2a I'm **happy** because I'm **thinking** about the weekend.
- 2b He's **having** a good time at the party.

Check it page 16

As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

3) When we present grammar deductively (directly giving and explaining the rules), we can feel the satisfaction of supplying information, teaching students something they didn't know before.

As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

4) In most other school subjects, students expect to be 'taught' something, to receive information or content. Grammar, along with vocabulary, is the most obvious equivalent in our subject.



As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

5) With larger classes of teenagers, it can be easier to teach grammar and do (particularly written) practice than to do oral pair work or group work.



As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

6) Testing grammar is generally easier, less time-consuming and, in broad terms, more objective than testing speaking, for example.



As teachers of teenagers, what is there to like about grammar?

7) On account of the last two points, grammar can be a useful tool in controlling larger, more 'difficult' classes of teenagers.



YES, BUT...



Should we ever feel guilty about teaching, or the way in which we teach, grammar?

1) It can become easy to forget that grammar, or students knowing 'about' grammar, is not the goal of our teaching. Grammar is a means of achieving the goal – proficient language use.

'He can recite long lists of irregular verbs but he can't ask for a cup of coffee.'



Use it...don't lose it!

Use it...don't lose it!

Exercise 2 You have a friend who wants to become a teacher one day. Think of advice to give them. Use *must, mustn't, have to, should, shouldn't, had better, ought to*. Make a list of your ideas. Then compare your list with another pair. Are your ideas similar?

Reach higher page 138

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Should we ever feel guilty?

2) Beware becoming a pathological 'grammar obsessive'.



Teacher: How are you today, Ivan?
Ivan: Very bad. Yesterday my father have an accident.
Teacher: No, Ivan! That's terrible!
 It should be 'My father HAD an accident.'
 Past simple for a single, completed action with a reference.

specific time



Should we ever feel guilty?

3) The biggest chunk of our grammar lessons should be student practice, not teacher presentation.



Should we ever feel guilty?

4) Are we using written grammar practice or grammar exams, with their emphasis on grammatical precision, purely as a way to control the class, or even punish them? We need a principled approach, based on the achievement of good learning by our students.



Should we ever feel guilty?

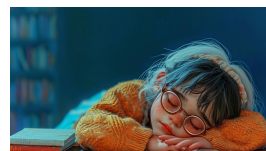
5) Just because in larger classes it can be easier to teach and test grammar than to have students doing other types of work such as speaking tasks, that shouldn't mean that we avoid all those other essential skills. Again, we need a principled approach.

Should we ever feel guilty?

6) Not all students 'get' grammar at the same pace, or feel positively disposed towards it, or learn it in the same way. We have to be ready to deal with this, in and outside the classroom.

Should we ever feel guilty?

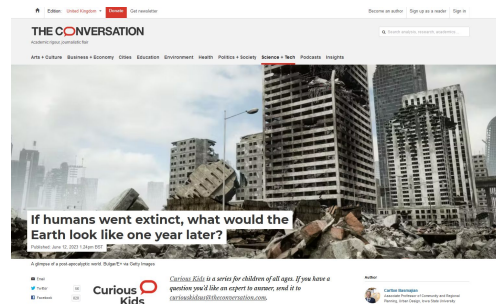
7) For any student, grammar can be complex, confusing, dull, and uninspiring, depending on how we present and practise it.



As always, and especially with teenagers, motivation is the key.

My experience: What works for me

1 Presenting and practising grammar in natural, motivating, content-rich contexts.



If humans became extinct,...

things would sound much quieter.

the sky would be bluer.

the air would be fresher.

at night everything would be dark because there wouldn't be any electricity.

there would be more insects, plants and wild animals.

...

My experience: What works for me

1 Presenting and practising grammar in natural, motivating, content-rich contexts.

Why?

- De-contextualisation is unnatural. 'Swim-swam-swum'
- Natural contexts exemplify and aid natural use.
- Context allows for meaningful, interesting, motivating, perhaps even funny input
- It seems to help make language more memorable

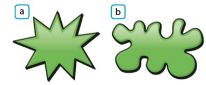


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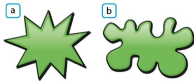


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Look at these two shapes. Individually, match each invented name (1–2) and type of food (3–4) to one of the shapes. Then ask others. Do you have the same answers?

- bouba
- kiki
- milk chocolate
- lemon



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3b Complete the text with the present simple or present continuous form of the verbs given.

Can shapes have sounds and flavours?

Attention, please! (a) _____ you _____ (look) at the two shapes carefully? What (b) _____ you _____ (think) is the name of shape A? There (c) _____ (not be) a correct answer. But 95% of people answering the question (d) _____ (believe) the answer is kiki. Kiki (e) _____ (sound) like 'key' and keys are angular, like shape A. And the letter K (f) _____ (look) angular, too.

I know what you (g) _____ (think) right now. What if your first language isn't English? (h) _____ you _____ (have) the same answer, that shape A is kiki? The answer is probably yes. And B is bouba, right? Maybe it's because bouba (i) _____ (be) round. Your lips (j) _____ (be) round when saying the word 'bouba'.

Now, what about food? A lot of people (k) _____ (think) that milk chocolate (l) _____ (belong) with shape B. It (m) _____ (seem) that the round shape goes best with sweet flavours. Right at this moment, I (n) _____ (have) a fizzy drink and it (o) _____ (taste) exactly like the kiki shape on my tongue! So, yes, strange but true – shapes (p) _____ (have) sounds and flavours!

— Neil and bouba effect by Wolfgang Köhler (1927)

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My experience: What works for me

2 Practising grammar within a game-like context.



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- 5 **SPEAKING** Look at the picture in 4 for two minutes, then close your book. Describe what you remember. Which pair can write the most correct sentences?
- 6 **SPEAKING** One of you closes the book and the other asks questions about the scene.
What was the lady in the hat doing?

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- 5 **SPEAKING** Look at the picture in 4 for two minutes, then close your book. Describe what you remember. Which pair can write the most correct sentences?
- 6 **SPEAKING** One of you closes the book and the other asks questions about the scene.
What was the lady in the hat doing?
She was carrying two bags.

My experience: What works for me

3 Using teenagers' competitive spirit to your advantage

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My experience: What works for me

Just say 'Yes!'

SPEAK	DO	HAD	YOU	ENGLISH	SHOULD
NEED	HAVE	OUGHT	HARDER	NEEDN'T	STUDIED
TO	DIDN'T	DONE	BUT	IT	BETTER

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Check it out!

Grammar reference

Present simple

Structure

Usage

Questions

Notes

Check it out!

Present continuous

Structure

Usage

Questions

Notes

Check it out!

Present perfect

Structure

Usage

Questions

Notes

Check it out!

Grammar test

Present simple and present continuous

Adverbs of frequency

State and action verbs

Verbals

Personality

Synonyms and partial synonyms

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Cumulative review

Grammar

Choose the correct alternative.

Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first sentence.

Match the adjectives to the box to complete the sentences.

Write the words for these definitions.

Match the words in the box to the categories.

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Cut-out Animation

Handwriting Animation

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Grammar is (not) a laughing matter!

A man/bear/penguin/horse walked into a bar...

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Grammar is (not) a laughing matter!

The past, the present and the future walked into a bar.

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GLOBAL TEACHERS FESTIVAL 2024
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Grammar is (not) a laughing matter!

*The past, the present and the future walked into a bar.
It was tense.*

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Grammar is (not) a laughing matter!

Why is nostalgia like a grammar lesson?



Grammar is (not) a laughing matter!

Why is nostalgia like a grammar lesson?

Because you find the present tense and the past perfect.

Thank you!

Any comments, questions, doubts...bad jokes?
You can contact me directly at:

www.facebook.com/teachwithdave

