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ABSTRACT

An instructional module designed to help prepare college-level teaching assistants (TAs) for their duties in second language instruction is presented. The module addresses issues in explicit second-language grammar instruction and the classroom presentation and use of grammar-related instructional materials. An introductory section outlines theoretical and conceptual foundations for grammar instruction, including definitions of terms, the relationship of grammar to communicative competence, implications of task-based instruction for foreign language teachers, errors and error correction in language instruction, and teaching based on student learning styles. Specific classroom techniques are then presented, including use of examples and exemplification, analyzing and using the resources in the required textbook, supplementing the textbook with additional grammar activities, and planning and sequencing specific class activities. Contains 37 references. (MSE)

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Grammar in the Foreign Language Classroom
Making Principled Choices

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one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

Grace Stovall Burkart, Editor
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Grammar in the Foreign Language Classroom: Making Principled Choices

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Introduction

New foreign language teachers often go to one extreme or another in their work with grammar: One extreme is to ignore linguistic issues altogether and to focus either on literature or on a random collection of communication activities; the other extreme is to fall back on memories of their own language learning experiences, focusing class activities on grammar drills and descriptions of rules. In the first instance, the new teacher is ignoring one of the basic responsibilities of the foreign language teacher—to provide for the linguistic development of students. In the second instance, the teacher turns the foreign language class into a lecture course on linguistic theory and on grammatical information about the language being studied, carrying into language classes the content and methods from graduate courses on the structure of French, Spanish, German, Chinese, or whatever the teacher is studying. In both instances, new teachers are unaware of gains that have been made in putting grammar teaching and learning within the context of communicative competence and of the development of linguistic proficiency. Once a teacher has a conceptual basis for making decisions about "teaching grammar," then decisions about classroom activities can be made in a principled manner. Thus, this module focuses primarily on ideas that lie behind decisions about the presentation, practice, and use of particular grammar materials in foreign language classrooms.

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Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations for Pedagogical Grammar

As teachers of introductory courses in foreign languages, we seldom have much control over the selection of textbooks and materials that are assigned for our classes. Thus, we have little control over the grammar topics selected for presentation or over the organization and sequencing of the grammatical material that our students will be required to study. Our creativity as teachers in such situations depends on our having a clear understanding of the grammar of the language we are teaching and a similarly clear understanding of strategies we can use in presenting, explaining, practicing, and using the language featured in our textbooks and course materials. Teaching can be both more interesting and more effective when we combine knowledge about grammar with knowledge about communicative competence, about learning styles and strategies, and about the range of choices that teachers have for language-learning activities. First, however, we must be clear about what we mean when we talk about "grammar" and the "teaching of grammar."

"Grammar"

Grammar is a word of multiple meanings. As a result, discussions about the "teaching of grammar" often lead to miscommunication because the participants are talking about different things while using the same terminology. Grammar can refer to the structure of a language, to particular approaches to the study of linguistics and language(s) (transformational-generative grammar, case grammar, universal grammar, pedagogical grammar, and so forth), to usage ("he ain't got no grammar"), and to books or materials on a particular language ("a grammar of Farsi"). As Odlin (1994) points out, grammar can be developed as prescriptive rules that point out socially approved usage, as descriptive statements to give detailed information about a language, as explanations for an internalized aspect of the human brain, and as "generative" systems that seek to describe language in formal systems influenced by symbolic logic. Thus, the nature of grammar depends to a great extent upon the purpose of the scholar and the teacher and upon the academic tradition to which s/he belongs.

"Teaching grammar"

Teaching grammar is another phrase that can lead to miscommunication. At one extreme the phrase is taken to mean "teacher-fronted-lectures-about-details-of-the-structure-of-the-language." Certainly, many of us have suffered through that interpretation of the language teacher's role. Unfortunately, even those of us who recognize that such lectures lead to knowledge about the language rather than skill at using it can fall into the trap of giving lectures in our own class—such is the power of tradition. However, teaching grammar does not have to mean lecturing about structural abstractions. In this module, teaching grammar refers to the decisions made and actions taken by the language teacher to help students become both fluent and accurate in their use of their new language. These actions can be overt presentations of grammatical information when it can profitably be used by students, but they can also be the "behind-the-scenes" decisions made by teachers in the selection of materials and classroom activities.

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Research in second language acquisition (see, for example, Rutherford, 1987 and Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988) has shown that many adult students benefit from overt attention to grammar through a process termed "consciousness raising" that helps the learner be aware of the features of the language as a guide to further learning. At the same time, it has been found (Spada, 1987) that explicit grammatical instruction is not the only factor that contributes to increased proficiency in a language. Thus, appropriate attention to grammar is still a major task of the foreign language teacher. Deciding on what makes for "appropriate attention" is one of the major issues in language teaching today. Answers will need to include decisions about what grammar is, about how students approach the language learning task, and about the materials that the teacher uses both for in-class activities and for out-of-class study.

"Pedagogical grammar"

Perhaps more to the point for language teachers are discussions about the meaning of the term "pedagogical grammar." Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1988: p. 119) ask the following question about definitions for the term pedagogical grammar:

> It is therefore appropriate to ask what it is that we denote by the widely used citation pedagogical grammar (PG) because the term appears to occur with less than semantic consistency. Is PG, for example, a discipline, a formal abstraction, or a collection of facts about a particular language? If it is the latter, are such facts intended for digestion by curriculum designers, syllabus compilers, teachers, or learners? Or is PG all of these things? Is it possibly more than these?

For language teachers, the answer has to be some combination of the following (Byrd, 1994); knowledge about:

1. the structures and linguistic systems of a particular language;
2. second language acquisition (the results of research focused on learning to use the linguistic resources of a language);
3. foreign language pedagogy (the range of choices available for teachers to use in presenting, practicing, and using a new language with learners);
4. the learning styles and strategies used by different groups of students (at different ages with different purposes for their study of the foreign language); and
5. effective use of materials for the delivery of linguistic information and the development of proficiency.

Thus, pedagogical grammar combines knowledge about the structure of the language with knowledge and skill at helping foreign language learners working in classroom settings to become proficient users of the language. (See Figure 1 at the end of the text.)

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Larsen-Freeman (1991) recommends the visualization of grammar in terms of a pie chart divided into equal segments labeled form, meaning, and pragmatics (see Figure 1). The arrows indicate that you can start in any segment and flow to an adjacent segment. For example, English past tense verbs can be analyzed in terms of forms, the meanings of those forms, and the contexts in which those forms are used for those meanings. Form issues include pronunciation and spelling of the regular past tense verb form (spelled *-ed* and pronounced in one of three ways depending on the nature of the preceding sound). Other form issues include the spelling and pronunciation of the irregular verb forms. In the Larsen-Freeman formulation, meaning focuses on relatively more abstract statements. For the English past tense, meaning could include "events completed in the past" and "unreal, hypothetical meanings"—as in *I walked to class this morning* for past time reference and *If I walked to class, I would lose some weight* for the unreal, hypothetical meaning. Pragmatics is the study of the contexts in which forms are used. We use English past tense forms for past time meanings in a number of different past time narrative genres, including biography, autobiography, fiction, and case studies. We use English past tense forms for their hypothetical meanings in contexts where we are predicting, imagining, or supposing what might happen.

As Larsen-Freeman points out, thinking about grammar in terms of form, meaning, and pragmatics provides us with a strategy for understanding the grammar of the language we are teaching and for analyzing our own knowledge of that language. Most of us know more about the forms and meanings than about the use of those forms in context. Thus, the pie chart analysis suggests to us that we need to develop our knowledge of the pragmatics of the forms that we are teaching so that we can give students accurate information and appropriate practice. Understanding the use of forms in context is a powerful tool for foreign language teachers since it provides us with concrete ways to move away from abstract discussion about meanings of forms to more vivid, concrete, and useful contextualizations of the forms.

The relationship between linguistic theories and language teaching is an ambiguous one. The latest, most current ideas about linguistics can provide useful insights into language acquisition and language use. However, linguistic theory is not developed to provide answers to teaching or learning problems but is generally more focused on the nature of language and the biological, psychological, sociological nature of human beings (and closely related mammals). No single approach to linguistics has ever turned the key to unlock the secrets of the language-learning capacities of human beings and human societies. Studies such as Cook (1994) and Hubbard (1994) remind us of the wide variety of linguistic theories currently in vogue in the United States and of the possibilities and the difficulties involved in attempts to apply those theories to foreign language instruction. Thus, we must be careful about rigid and doctrinaire application of our most recent linguistic study.

We must also be careful that we are working from accurate information about the language that we are teaching. Lightbown and d'Anglejan (1985) point out differences between textbook and scholarly description and actual native speaker uses for both question

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forms and negation in French. When speaking to other native speakers, the French speakers in the studies they report on seldom used the *est-ce que* formation but preferred declarative statements with rising intonation to make *yes-no* questions. Indeed one study found that *est-ce que* was used primarily when native speakers talked with NON-native speakers. As for negation, the studies show that native speakers prefer a single negative form in speech (while using the double *ne-pas* negatives in writing and formal speaking). They comment that "in informal spoken French, the first particle is rarely heard; it is often deleted altogether, and even if the speaker produces it, it is such a reduced form that it is virtually inaudible in speech produced at a normal rate" (p. 424). Thus, learners who are dependent on native speakers for input may not realize that the first particle exists while those who have learned their French in the classroom may sound overly formal because they are using it in the wrong contexts. Lightbown and d'Anglejan also found that native speakers were not aware of these aspects of French and were astonished by the data collected in the research project. The implications for language teachers are clear: we must continue to study research that gives us detailed information about how our languages are actually used, and we must be very careful in distinguishing the ways that the language is used in various contexts.

Communicative competence

The communicative competence model provides a framework that puts the learning of language and grammar in the larger context of learning to communicate using that language (see Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1970; Schachter, 1990). The subsystems that make up communicative competence are generally listed as (1) linguistic competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence (for explanations aimed at language teaching, see Brown, 1994 and Savignon, 1983).

Linguistic competence is the baseline knowledge of and skill at using the linguistic features of a language. Sociolinguistic competence is knowing how to use those linguistic features appropriately in communication contexts. For example, students can learn about appropriate topics for conversation when meeting new people in a new culture—what can you talk about in initial encounters? Or students can learn about classroom use of language in a different culture—who can ask questions of whom in an Italian university classroom?

Discourse competence is knowing how to create and to participate in whole chunks of communication—whole conversations, whole paragraphs, whole telephone conversations, and so forth. A limitation of many teaching techniques and materials, especially those at lower proficiency levels, is that students do not have chances to participate in complete exchanges and negotiation of meaning in the back and forth pattern followed in most communication. It is relatively easy to say one thing in a new language, but ever so much more difficult to understand a response and then to provide another piece of the new language and to understand the response to that and then to provide another piece of the new language—participating in the chaining of utterances that makes up a whole piece of communication. When such activities are not included in a textbook, teachers can provide

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for them by adding dialogues, skits, role plays, and simulations that build on the content of the textbook but extend the text's activities to provide for discourse practice.

Strategic competence is having (1) strategies for recognizing and repairing communication breakdowns, (2) strategies for compensating for gaps in one's knowledge of the language, and (3) strategies for learning more about communication in that language and in that sociocultural context. How do you know when someone has misunderstood you? How do you repair communication that has broken down? What do you do if you don't know the name of something or the form of a verb you want to use? What kinds of circumlocutions or paraphrases can you use? As successful language learners themselves, teachers of foreign languages can search in their own experience to provide help for students. There is some danger, however, that a successful learner has forgotten the strategies that s/he used at initial stages of learning. Thus, the learning styles and strategies referred to later in this module and discussed in greater detail in another module in this series may help you to provide support for your students.

The communicative competence model can help language teachers look beyond the grammar-centered material that has been the traditional content of many foreign language courses to the other aspects of communication that need to be brought into our classrooms. The model does not imply that grammar should not be taught, but rather that grammar should be folded into the other components that make up the whole that we are teaching. Even in classes for beginners, we can help students learn to use their small initial inventories of vocabulary and grammar in contextualized activities. We can teach students strategies for using small amounts of language for large amounts of communication. We can teach students to have language learning strategies that help them continue to improve as language learners even outside of our classrooms.

Foreign language teaching in the United States has been profoundly influenced by the publication of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (see Omaggio Hadley, 1993 for a complete set of the guidelines and Scott, 1996 for information on the impact of the guidelines on the teaching of writing in foreign language programs at U.S. universities). As a result of the influence of the move to focus on proficiency (and careful definition of proficiency at various levels) and communicative competence (rather than abstract knowledge of grammar rules), many foreign language teachers are putting the study of grammar into the context of the development of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Omaggio Hadley (1993) provides detailed suggestions for embedding grammar in the communication activities done in class and for keeping grammatical explanations focused, appropriate, and brief (see especially pages 490-493).

Implications of task-based instruction for foreign language teachers

The current interest in task-based language teaching illustrates ways in which grammar can be put in contexts based on the needs of learners. "Task-based" refers to the selection of content and teaching activities based on analyses of the uses to which the language-learning will eventually be put (Long and Crookes, 1992 and Scott, 1996). The

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development of a task-based curriculum requires first a detailed needs analysis to specify the real world tasks that students will need to perform using the language and then the development of pedagogic tasks to use in teaching the knowledge and skill required for successful performance of the real world tasks. Real world tasks for English-speaking students taking introductory courses in a French, German, Spanish, Japanese, or some other foreign language could include using their new language to negotiate travel in a foreign country. However, students who plan to take advanced foreign language courses or who are majoring in a foreign language are likely to face a quite different assortment of real world tasks. Scott (1996) analyzes the writing tasks to be done by foreign language learners taking advanced foreign language courses in U.S. universities—and uses the results of her analysis to make recommendations for changes in the curriculum and materials for teaching foreign languages so that students learn to write in their new language from the beginning of their instruction—as a preparation for the tasks they will be required to undertake in advanced courses in literature and grammar. Thus, courses at different proficiency levels will need to include preparation for different types of tasks—and therefore to require different types of pedagogic tasks to bring the students to the necessary knowledge and skill for success in their communication after they have left the language classroom.

Discourse analysis has provided us with analytical tools that we can use to build profiles of the grammatical characteristics of certain types of communication. Biber (1988) and Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1994) illustrate the application of these discourse analysis strategies to English-language text—providing a model that can usefully be applied in other language settings. Biber demonstrates a point that is vitally important for all language teachers: different communication types can be characterized by the clusters of linguistic features that are common to those types. For example, academic writing in English such as that found in journal publications of research is generally characterized by use of present tense verbs, lots of nouns, lots of vocabulary, lots of long words, lots of prepositional phrases—and is more abstract and less interactive than conversation. In contrast, English conversation is characterized by linguistic forms that are used for a high level of interaction, with use of first and second person pronouns (*I* and *you*), questions, shorter words, fewer words (more repetition of vocabulary). Such information gives us solid data to use in filling out Figure 1 because we know what forms are being used in what contexts for particular meanings. Then we can cluster those forms together for the focus of lessons and materials when our students' needs are for the development of particular discourse types.

Thus, language teachers and materials writers need to move away from the idea of grammar *in* context toward the concept of grammar *from* context. Grammar in context has built its materials and lessons by selecting forms first and then seeking meanings and contexts for those forms. Discourse analysis tells us that a more authentic approach to language will start from discourse (that is, from context) and then move to form and meaning. In fact, a reformulation of the three subdivisions of grammar (Figure 1) might be useful for language teachers by getting us to look first at discourse settings and then at the language needed to communicate in those situations. In this reorganization of the pie chart (see Figure 2 at the end of the text), the form and meaning chunks are collapsed into one area, and the arrow

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points in only one direction, representing the move from discourse to form+meaning. That is, forms get their meanings in contexts, and contexts are the places where teachers do the needs analyses that lead to the definition of real world tasks that then lead to the specification of the language that must be taught for students to learn to carry out those real world tasks.

Errors and error correction in foreign language instruction

New teachers of foreign languages very quickly face the problem of dealing with the errors that learners make as part of the language learning process. Discussions of errors and error correction are abundant within the literatures on first and foreign language acquisition (see Ellis, 1994 for a summary of the issues and research on error types and error treatment and Scott, 1996 for a summary of research and practice in making corrections in foreign language writing). While there is little agreement on the answers, the following questions continue to be considered:

1. How is "error" best defined?
2. What is the role of the teacher in helping students to recognize errors?
3. What is the role of the teacher in helping students to learn to correct those errors?
4. What is the role of the learner in recognition and correction of errors?
5. How does error correction differ in teaching different skills—in teaching reading and/or writing as compared to teaching spoken communication?
6. What are the various types of errors (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and so forth)?
7. How can the various responses to errors be categorized?
8. What types of corrections actually lead to improved accuracy and fluency in language use?

What we really know is limited to all too few certainties: At all proficiency levels, learners produce language that is not exactly the language used by native speakers. Some of the differences are grammatical, while others involve vocabulary selection and mistakes in the selection of language appropriate for different contexts (errors in style and usage--in the discourse and sociolinguistic aspects of communication in a foreign language in a foreign culture).

Most learning occurs both in sudden rushes of easy acquisition and in halting steps that involve making errors, learning to recognize those errors, finding out how to do things more like native speakers, and gradually becoming more consistent in using the language accurately and fluently.

In addition, we recognize that teachers have two different types of responses to student production of the new language. Teachers reply by being emotionally supportive (affective responses) or by giving new information either about what was wrong or about what would be right (cognitive responses).

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We know that some language uses give us more time and motivation for seeking out and correcting errors. For example, the writing process often provides more time for attempts to produce language that is linguistically accurate—in contrast to the time limits usually involved in conversational uses of language.

We know that language learning involves some as yet undefined combination of input and output and corrective responses from more advanced speakers—and that accuracy seldom develops without both awareness of *in*accuracy and external motivation to change. Writers have proposed terms such as *treatment, correction, feedback*, and so forth to use as the basis for research and/or instructions for classroom teachers. See Ellis, 1994, for definitions of these attempts at clarification of the correction types.

We know that some students say that they want to have their errors pointed out—and that other students do not like such correction at all. We also know that no one much likes to have an attempt at genuine communication interrupted by a comment on a mistake in grammar or word choice.

We know that students often misunderstand the comments that teachers write on their papers and make corrections based on inaccurate guesses about what they should be changing (see Reid, 1993 for a general discussion of student understanding of teacher comments and Scott, 1996 for a discussion of the impact of corrections on the writing of foreign language students).

We know that making mistakes is part of the learning process. However, we also know that learners have different ways of dealing with errors and that different cultures teach their members different attitudes toward error and how to respond to error.

We know that teachers keep trying to make corrections in their students' speaking and writing but without theoretically sound information about techniques or results.

In the face of all of this lack of certainty, perhaps we classroom teachers should do two things: First, we should not think of ourselves as primarily being "correctors of errors" since we will not be able to carry out that role in anything less than a random manner. Second, we should think carefully about the feedback that we give students, trying to make it as consistent, coherent, and helpful as possible within the range of what we know about the ability of human beings to take in information and to use it. Third, we need to undertake classroom-based research through which we learn about what correction we can provide our students, in what settings, in what ways, that seems to be helpful to them as learners. In addition, we must keep up with the research work being done in this area to learn as much as possible about the processes through which human beings learn languages. Finally, we must be very careful that we are not using error correction in a way that undermines our students' desire to try to communicate in their new language.

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Understanding our students: the power provided for teachers from teaching strategies based on learning styles

While all teachers need to be aware of their students, foreign language teachers working in the U.S. context can especially benefit from knowledge about the learning styles and characteristics of their students. Teachers who are from the U.S. need to remember what it is like to be an undergraduate—and the many different kinds of people who can enroll in a particular section of a foreign language course. Teachers who come from other cultural backgrounds need information about U.S. academic culture and undergraduate behaviors in that culture along with information about the learning styles of the students who will enroll in their foreign language classes.

This knowledge of student learning styles and strategies is especially relevant when thinking about the place of grammar instruction in the foreign language class. Some students will benefit from learning rules; others will run away from such information and learn their grammar only indirectly through examples and activities rather than from explanation. Kolb's approach to learning strategies can be helpful in thinking about providing grammar instruction that is effective for students with a range of learning styles and strategies. Kolb (see for example Kolb, 1981a; 1981b) has combined study of learning styles with study of the ways in which learners like to use what they have learned. He reminds us that the purpose of learning is the use of the new knowledge and skills in some manner—and that our students can come to us with very different preferred patterns. These preferences profoundly influence the ways in which the students approach learning tasks. Kolb (1981b) describes a learning cycle that involves the following stages or "modes." (See Figure 3 and Table 7 at the end of the text for applications of Kolb's ideas to lesson planning.)

1. Learning from feeling ("Concrete Experience")
2. Learning from watching and listening ("Reflective Observation")
3. Learning by thinking ("Abstract Conceptualization")
4. Learning by doing ("Active Experimentation")

In the Kolb formulation, our learning styles are actually preferred combinations of these modes:

1. The *accommodator* combines concrete experience with active experimentation—learning by doing but also seeking information from other people. (In his "career map," Kolb suggests that this style is especially effective in management, public administration, educational administration, banking, marketing, government, and business.)

2. The *diverger* combines concrete experience with reflective observation—learning by watching and by working with other people. (In the career map, Kolb suggests that people who prefer this style might be especially effective in the fields of literature, theater, television, journalism, social work, psychology, policework, and nursing.)

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3. The *assimilator* combines abstract conceptualization with reflective observation—being less interested in people and in trying things out and more interested in theory is characteristic of this style. (In the career map, Kolb points to education, sociology, law, the ministry, mathematics, physical science, and biology for this style.)

4. The *converger* combines concrete experience and active experimentation—learning from doing with a focus on problem solving rather than on interacting with people. (In the career map, Kolb lists farming, forestry, economics, mining, engineering, computer science, and medicine for this style.)

Kolb emphasizes that we all use all of the stages or modes at different times but that people generally prefer to learn and to use their new knowledge in one of these patterns. For teachers of undergraduate courses at U.S. universities, the information is a valuable reminder that our classes are made up of people whose preferred ways of learning and using what they have learned can be radically different from our own.

In a discussion of the applications of Kolb's work to teaching, Bennett (1996) suggested that we consider, for example, the ways in which different people approach the learning of a new computer software package: (1) some people actually read the whole manual before attempting to use the software—these people can be characterized as *thinkers* who like background information before they try a new task. (2) Other people turn the software on and give it a try; they turn to the manual or to other users only when they get stuck and cannot figure out the software for themselves—they can be characterized as *explorers*. (3) Still a third type of learner would like to watch someone else use the software and to see how an expert does it—these people can be called *observers*. (4) The final group in Bennett's explanation are the learners who need interaction with other people and strong emotional involvement and support during the learning process. They would call for a friend to come and sit with them while they learned the new software together—and so can be called *feelers*.

These types of learners will show up in your language classes, too—the explorers are ready to give communication a try; the thinkers need to know a bit more about the language and about its communication styles before they jump in; the observers would hate jumping in and hate small group work and need to watch some interactions before they are required to do them, benefiting from watching videos or demonstrations (staged with the explorers, perhaps); and the "feeling" students who like to learn with others want to have teams and group activities and warm emotional support from the teacher. Figure 3 and Table 7 illustrate ways that information about students' preferred learning styles can be used by language teachers.

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Practical Applications

Examples and exemplification in the foreign language classroom

While in lower division undergraduate courses, we are often constrained in our selection of classroom activities and content by required textbooks, we have more flexibility for creative teaching than many of us are initially aware of. One of the most important roles of the language teacher is that of "provider of examples." Yet teachers seldom put much thought into the examples that they provide in foreign language classes—other than wanting them to be linguistically accurate.

Table 1 (at the end of the text) was developed to provide language teachers with an overview of the issues involved in the selection of good examples (Byrd, Liu, Mobley, Pitillo, Silva, and Sun, 1993). All teachers need to plan their examples carefully around two basic principles:

1. The examples must be accurate and appropriate. They must present the language accurately, be culturally appropriate for the setting in which they are used, and be to-the-point of the lesson.

2. The examples should be used as a teaching tool. Examples are presented in every class and give the teacher multiple opportunities to present vocabulary and cultural information. By focusing the examples on a particular theme or topic, the teacher can dramatically increase the encounters students have with particular information and vocabulary. For example, a teacher of French could use examples focused on several aspects of life in France—transportation, food, education. By using these themes repeatedly, the teacher recycles vocabulary so that students have many opportunities to observe that vocabulary in context as well as having repeated opportunities to learn useful information about France.

Teachers should also be aware of the dangers of using randomly selected examples—those that just pop into your mind while you are teaching. Many of us have experienced the negative consequences of providing un-thought-out examples that contain confusing information that then takes the class off track. Almost as bad is the embarrassment of not being able to think of an especially appropriate example.

Analyzing the resources provided in a required textbook

A language classroom, like most other classrooms for that matter, involves the interactions of teachers and students in the carrying out of activities provided for by materials. However, new teachers are also in the initial stages of understanding how to interpret and bring to life the information and activities provided for in their textbooks. Being aware of the range of information and activities focused on grammar (as well as the contextualization of grammar in the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in a textbook can help teachers to know what they already have and to make appropriate choices in adding additional information and/or activities to complement a textbook.

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Creativity can be exercised by a teacher in many different aspects of the teaching process. Creation of materials is only one of the many interesting challenges for a teacher. A useful metaphor for the classroom pictures the interaction of students and teacher as a dramatic presentation: the teacher takes the roles of director, producer, and actor while the students are primarily actors but can have other responsibilities for the unfolding action. The metaphor is especially helpful in clarifying the relationship of the teachers and students to textbook materials. The text is a script that needs interpretation and selection before it can come to life. As in the making of films and in the theater, creativity is not limited to the writing of the script, nor are all of the participants expected to be effective writers of the materials upon which the production is based. In the days--and sometimes only hours--before walking into a classroom to use a textbook, a teacher needs to focus on the resources that are available and on plans for turning that script into a class that is productive and satisfying for the teacher as well as for the students.

The following guidelines have been developed to provide guidance for a teacher in developing plans for a course in which a required textbook must be used. In using these guidelines, you will not be evaluating your textbook; rather, you will be inventorying it. "Evaluation" of textbooks is the judgmental process through which decisions are made about liking or disliking, choosing or rejecting a text. "Inventorying" is the later task of learning in detail the resources of content and activities that are provided in the assigned text. Answering questions such as the following, a teacher can develop a descriptive overview of a text that can be a resource for the rest of the term.

1. What is in this book? What resources does the book provide?
2. How does the book organize those resources?

Creating a content inventory

Language textbooks have two basic strands of content: (1) One strand has to do with the language being taught (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.), and (2) another strand has to do with the ideas and information presented in the readings, examples, illustrations, and activities. Many texts also include a third strand having to do with communicative functions (apologizing, introducing, questioning, etc.). Some texts will include a fourth strand having to do with development of particular skills needed by the students in other arenas (academic skills, survival skills, and so forth). Textbooks are usually conceived of by their authors as holistic units--as "books" for "courses." Thus, effective use of a text depends on recognition of the existence of these strands and the ways in which they have been woven together.

Table 2 (at the end of the text) illustrates how a linguistic inventory for each chapter might be organized: (1) the language areas, (2) questions to guide the inventorying of the linguistic materials, and (3) questions to inventory the teacher's knowledge of those areas. An inventory of topical content could be developed using a format such as that in Table 3: for each chapter or subdivision, the inventory provides a list of the topics that will be

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covered during the term. Similar tables should be developed for other content material provided by the text such as communicative functions, academic skills, and so forth.

Knowing the content of the textbook from the beginning of the term can provide teachers with many different opportunities: the themes and topics used in the text can be used as the basis for examples created by the teacher. In addition, by knowing ahead of time about content, a teacher can have time to make arrangements for special activities that can complement the basic textbook—for example, a film that deals with similar topics might be used to supplement a lesson. The point here is that prior knowledge gives the teacher more control over the content of her/his courses and provides time to make arrangements for special activities. Reading and analyzing a textbook ahead of time gives power to a teacher and a sense of having more control over the course than can occur when a teacher is just working from chapter to chapter and dealing with whatever surprises pop up on a daily basis.

Creating an activities inventory

By inventorying the sets of exercises given in the text, a teacher can make better decisions about which to use and about when to use them. Few textbooks are designed so that all of the materials in them are to be used in a particular term. The author expects the teacher to make informed decisions about which materials to use with particular groups of students. While Tables 2-5 are based on commonly recommended systems (such as the one in Skiero, 1991), the emphasis has been shifted from making evaluative judgments to developing awareness of the range of choices available for immediate use in the lessons planned for this particular academic term. Tables 2-5 show how an inventory of the activities in a textbook chapter might be organized. This inventory provides the teacher with information on activities that can be used for a variety of teaching purposes, in or out of class, in various organizational patterns, and appealing to various learning styles.

Understanding the sequencing and the format of the text

Textbooks are written for the teacher as well as for the student. An inventory can clarify which parts of the text are addressed to the teacher and need to be given special attention by the teacher. At the same time, such an analysis can reveal those parts of the text that appear to be addressed to students but are in fact intended for the teacher. For example, it is conventional to address instructions to the student, but in reality information about how to do an activity is meant for the teacher. Thus, if instructions are given in the target language, they are sometimes more linguistically complicated than the activity that they introduce. The textbook author expects the teacher to interpret the instructions in ways that make them understandable for students. Table 6 (at the end of the text) can be used to find those parts of the text that are intended as practical help for the teacher.

Other resources to use in planning to teach grammar and other materials found in a textbook

In addition to information provided by the textbook itself, another resource in learning about a text will be the other teachers who have used it before and wh have participated in the selection process. Often these colleagues can share copies of syllabi and lesson plans to show how they have worked with the text. The program's administrators are additional

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resources in learning about a text's values for the program and the ways in which it fits the overall goals of the program. Using the information gathered from these sources along with the syllabus for the course, you can make initial plans for the term that will be modified by the needs of your students as well as by your growing familiarity with the resources provided by the text and by greater understanding of the purposes of the course and of the overall program.

The completed inventory (Tables 2-6) will reveal areas of the text that the teacher might choose to supplement with other materials. That is, the inventory can be used as the basis for a plan for choosing additional materials to complement the resources already available in the text. For example, if the text has a variety of pair work for practice of communication, the teacher does not need to provide additional such materials. That same text might not include as much work as the teacher would like for assessment of the students' linguistic knowledge.

It is important to exercise good judgment about supplementing materials. Swales (1980) noted that some teachers and programs in English for specific purposes developed materials locally that did not seem much different from or better than the materials already available in published textbooks. He noted that so much energy was given to the creation of materials that not enough time and energy were left over to think about the most effective ways in which to use those materials. The textbook inventory is intended to help you avoid this waste of time, energy, and resources. With detailed knowledge of what is already available in the text, you can be more efficient in using time to develop additional materials. As importantly, you can have more time for planning creative ways to implement the materials.

It might very well be that initial negative attitudes that some teachers experience toward a new textbook derive from feelings that they have about other aspects of their teaching: fears caused by being in a new situation can be projected onto the textbook, or dissatisfaction about not having been part of the selection process can lead to the rejection of a book. When experiencing such feelings, teachers should be careful about problems that can result from telling students that they do not like the book. Negative statements from a teacher undermine the students' confidence not just in the text but in the course and in the teacher, too. This nonjudgmental inventorying has been developed to provide teachers with a helpful approach to use in taking a clear look at what is really going on in a required text and in making a descriptive analysis of the text to use in planning and carrying out a course that will be useful and pleasant for the students and for themselves.

Supplementing a textbook with additional grammar activities

After you know what resources are provided by your textbook (and any supporting materials that go with the textbook, such as audiotapes, computer programs, and additional activities provided in the instructor's manual), you can make efficient and effective decisions about adding other materials to your classes. There are many published resources in which language teachers can find supplementary activities. These include books such as Celce-

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Murcia and Hilles (1988) and Ur (1988), both of which give guidelines for using a large assortment of grammar and other activities that can be adapted for use in many different settings. In addition to published selections of grammar-teaching activities, many teachers also find suggestions for grammar teaching on the Internet through discussion groups for language teachers and through World Wide Web sites—some of which provide teaching ideas and others of which are actually planned for the language learner. Ideas about using e-mail to improve student grammatical accuracy as well as fluency can be found in Warschauer (1995a, 1995b). Finally, other teachers who have taught or are currently teaching sections of the same course are usually pleased to share ideas about activities that have worked well in their own classes.

Pulling it all together: what do I do in class on Monday?

Research has shown that most teachers organize their classes around their students and the activities that they want to do with that particular set of students on that particular day (McCutcheon, 1980). Who is going to be there? What are we going to do together? Thus, planning and delivery of a foreign language class that teaches grammar in the context of communication requires that a teacher organize a class session around the areas summarized in Table 7 (at the end of the text). In addition to these areas of language, content, and learning styles, teachers take certain practical issues into consideration in the lesson-planning process, including a major feature of teaching that experienced as well as new teachers struggle to control--the amount of time allowed for the class.

Building grammar presentation and practice around students and their learning styles

A technique that is used by intercultural communication trainers (Bennett, 1996) can be useful for us as language teachers in finding out about our students—and their ideas about and fears about learning the grammar of the foreign language they are studying. On the first day of class. give out two 3x5 cards (in two different colors if possible). Mention that you would like to know about their attitudes toward learning the grammar of the language and their previous experiences of learning grammar. Ask the students to tell you on one card what they hope to learn in the class and the things that they hope will happen in the class. Then ask them to write for you on the second card the things that make them nervous about the class and the things that they are afraid will happen. The information provided by the students themselves can help in the selection and presentation of activities and information in ways that meet the needs of students with different learning styles.

The Kolb framework also provides a useful strategy for organizing classroom activities to meet the needs of various learners. The framework can help you plan to give variety to the ways in which you present grammatical information and provide for practice and use of the grammar in various types of activities:

1. Explorations: Give the students some opportunities to try to use the language in skits, dialogues, simulations, and other communication settings.

2. Observations: Give the students some opportunities to observe more advanced

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speakers through watching skits, dialogues, and interactions but also through watching videos, CD-ROM presentations, or television and film segments.

3. Thinking and knowing activities: Give the students some information about the grammar of the language and about the cultures in which the language is used. But remember that this type of learning is background to moving the learners into actually trying to communicate in the new language.

4. Interactive, emotionally supportive teaching: Give the students a safe place in which to learn because they are going to have to make some mistakes and to learn from those mistakes.

We also need to remember that our students will bring an assortment of preferred uses of their senses in the learning process—visual learners (who like to have things written on the board and who take written notes), auditory learners (who can learn from listening), tactile learners (who like hands-on activities), and kinesthetic learners (who benefit from having opportunities to use their whole bodies in activities such as skits and role plays). Recognition of these different preferences should lead to the use of a variety of techniques in the presentation and practice of the grammar content of a foreign language course.

Building classes around time limits

Experienced teachers have found that students at lower proficiency levels have short attention spans for communication in their new language. Thus, it is often effective to plan classes in segments of 15-20 minutes with each segment clearly set off from the others. For example, a 60-minute class should have three to four segments, each of which can approach the language to be learned from a different angle.

The syllabus says that the grammar content is "X." The textbook provides some information about "X" and some activities for learning to use "X." What does the teacher do next? S/he works out a plan in a mental process that usually involves some written note taking that produces some sort of outline for the class. Such an outline could look like Figure 3, for a foreign language class focused on the grammar content of "X" as required by the departmental syllabus and the textbook. While this sample features the use of a popular song, that is just an example of the kind of contextualization and active learning that is possible in a foreign language class. Any of a variety of activities could have been used, many of which will be suggested in the textbook or in the ancillary materials that come with the basic textbook. The point of this sample class plan is that it includes activities that involve all the language skills and several different learning styles. The teacher is using her/his knowledge of the grammar of the language being learned in an array of activities that together help students learn how the language works and how to communicate in the language.

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Conclusion

Teaching grammar turns out to be a challenge that cannot be met just with knowledge about the grammar of a particular language. A foreign language teacher is required to orchestrate a number of important variables into a coherent whole. Table 7 with its list of the variables to be combined into grammar lessons and Figure 3 with its sample of a possible grammar lesson are offered as tools for use by new teachers in trying to keep up with all of these variables in the planning process. A course is made up of a series of class sessions that form a chain of linked activities through which the teacher creates the total package of the course.

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Suggested Additional Reading

Celce-Murcia, M. and Hilles, S. (1988). *Techniques and resources in teaching grammar.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The authors advocate an eclectic approach to the teaching of grammar that recognizes differences in learning styles, as well as the social, semantic, and discourse factors that are associated with grammar structures. They provide guidance in the preparation and presentation of a grammar lesson, showing how to match teaching techniques and resources to various types of grammar structures.

Lee, J. F. and VanPatten, B. (1995). *Making communicative language teaching happen.* New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

The entire book is a highly useful reference for teachers of foreign languages. Chapters 5-7 are devoted specifically to the teaching of grammar.

Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar practice activities: A practical guide for teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Organized in two parts, "Guidelines" and "Activities," the book focuses on meaningful and contextualized grammar practice. While the sample activities are keyed to specific features of English grammar, the underlying principles may be adapted for the teaching of other languages.

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Figure 1 One Way of Visualizing Grammar

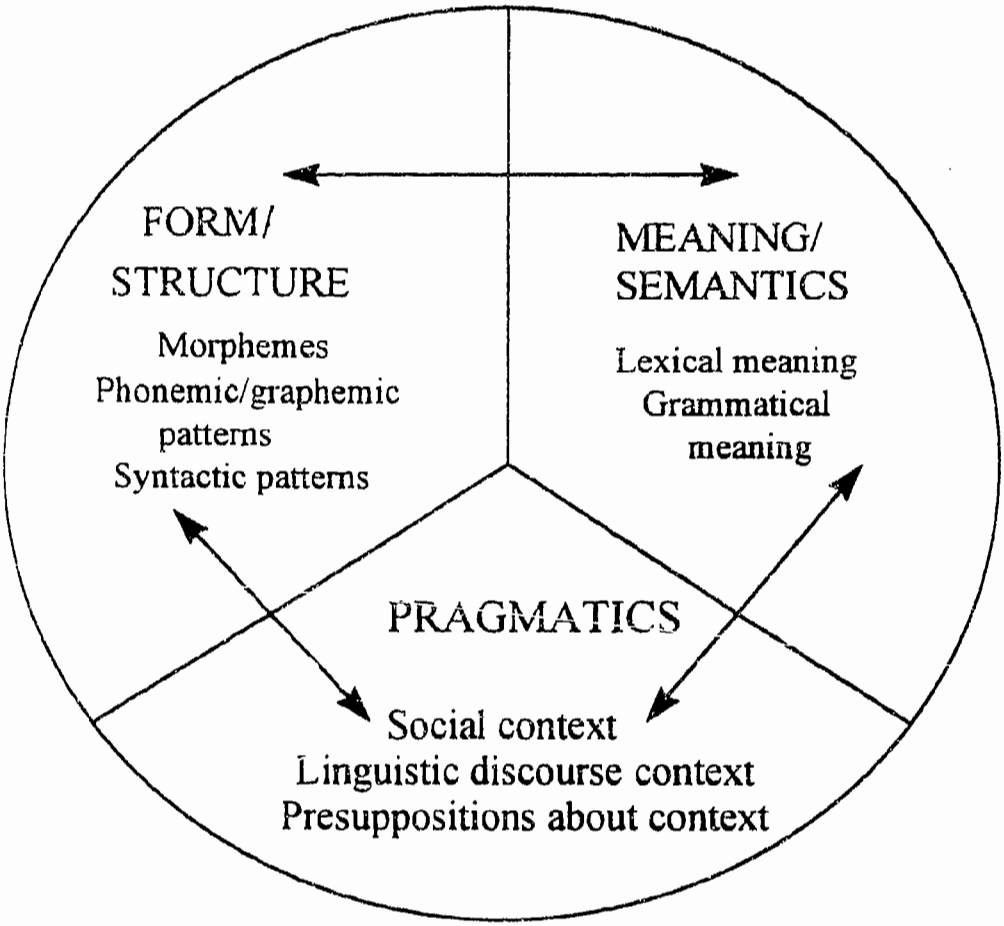

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Figure 2
Grammar from Context

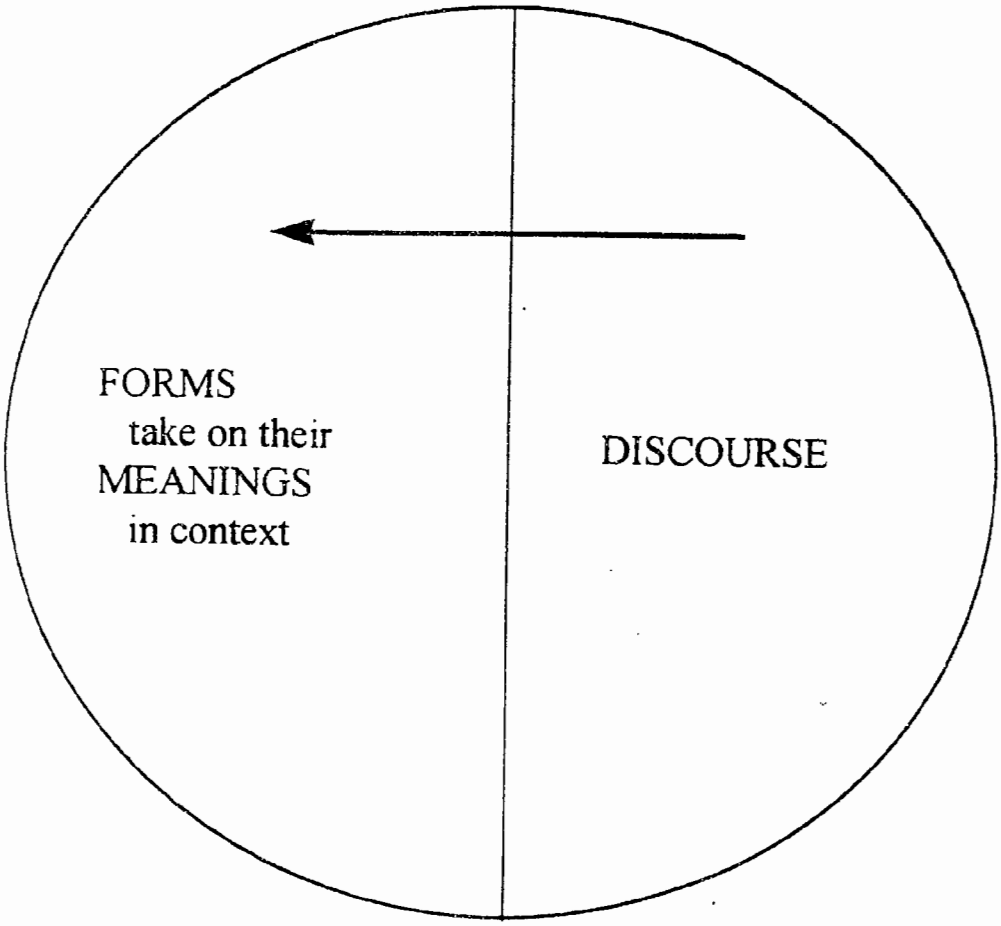

Table 1 Checklist for the Preparation of Examples

I. Accurate	Linguistic Accuracy	The example accurately reflects the language being studied.
		The example uses authentic language
	Accurate Content	The information in the examples is correct.
	Cultural Accuracy	The examples are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of the students and avoid so far as possible offensive content.
		The examples build on the students' knowledge base.
II. Clear	Free of language not involved in the particular point being illustrated.	Free of difficult or rare vocabulary.
		Free of irrelevant irregularities
	The relationship between the example and the principle is easily perceived.	
III. Interesting	Based on the background and educational, career, or job plans of the students	
	Credible and realistic	
	Novel in content and presentation within appropriate cultural boundaries	
	Humor used carefully with sensitivity to cultural differences	
IV. Usable in other contexts, providing enough information for learning	Interrelated sets of examples for complex content	
	Each aspect of a rule or principle given an example	
V. Contextualized	Commentary or instructional contextualization provided to point out the concept being illustrated	
	Free-standing lists of words and sentences avoided	
VI. Formatted attractively and clearly	Presented in a style that makes the examples easily distinguished from other instructional material	
	Presented in tables and charts where appropriate	
	Divided into appropriate chunks of material	

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Table 2 Inventory of Linguistic Content of Chapter (----)		
Language Area	**List of Content:** What items are presented? Is there an emphasis on anything in particular?	**Self-Knowledge Questions:** Is there anything here that I'm not sure about? How can I learn more ASAP?
Grammar		
Sounds and or pronunciation patterns		
Rhetorical patterns		
Reading skills		
Writing skills		
Vocabulary		

Table 3 Inventory of Non-Linguistic Content in Chapter (-----)

Topics or Themes	**Questions about Content:** Be sure to make notes on the location of the topic including page numbers. • What topics are introduced? • What ideas and/or information is presented? • Do these recur in other places in the book? • Do any themes tie any of the topics together into sub-units?	**Self-Knowledge Questions:** • Do I need to know anything else to deal with these topics effectively? • Where can I get that information ASAP?
Topic #1		
Topic #2		
Topic #3		
Topic #4		
Topic #5		

Table 4 Inventory of Activities in Chapter (----)		
Purpose of the Activity	**Location of the Activity:** Note page number and activity number	**Comments**
Introduction of content		
Practice		
Use of Content for Communicative Purposes		
Assessment of Knowledge or Skill		

Table 5 Inventory of Potential Uses for Activities in Chapter (-----)

Location: Page # & Exercise #	In class	Homework	Needs several days	Group	Pair	Individual	Teacher-led	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Combination	Notes

Table 6 Inventory of Materials Addressed to or Intended for the Teacher

Preface or Information for the Instructor: • Is there one? • What information does the author provide about the use of the book? • What organizational pattern is used? • Is strict sequencing required?	
Table of Contents: Students are unlikely to use this much. Generally, it is designed with the teacher in mind as a way of providing an overview and a guide to the content of the book. • How do the chapters seem to relate to each other?	
Chapters or Other Subdivisions: • How are they organized internally? • Do they seem to follow the same patterns? • Where are the exercises? • How can you tell exercises from other content of the chapters? • What formatting tools are used • bold print, color, etc.?	
Wording of Exercises: The convention is that instructions are addressed to students in the command form. The reason that simple activities sometimes appear to have complex directions is that the author is writing to the teacher but must work within the pretense that the directions are for the students. Thus, for effective use of the materials, the teacher often must interpret the directions for the students. • How are the exercises worded? • What does the author tell you about the activity • how to organize it, materials that might be needed, etc.?	
Index: Few students are skilled users of indexes. Often the index is more important for the teacher. • How it is organized? • What kinds of terms or words are indexed?	
Appendices: Students are unlikely to notice them unless the teacher uses them. • Are there any? • What is in them? • How are they to be used? • How can they be worked into the plan for the course?	
Glossary: • Is there one? • How is it organized? • Is it tied to the text in any way • through numbering or bold type? • What does the author say about using it?	
Supplementary Materials: • Is there an instructor's manual? • How can you get it? • What is in it that can help you plan your lessons?	

Figure 3 Sample Class Plan for a 60-minute Lower-Proficiency Class on Grammar Topic "X"

1. Pre-class chit-chat, using the language being taught (i.e., the target language. Gives the experimenters a chance to try out using the language for communication. Makes the feelers feel included. Gives the observers a chance to watch the language in action. Gets everyone starting to move toward the focus of this class.

2. Opening: information provided in short explanation of a series of examples that illustrate the grammar topic and provide content that is useful for the students. (This activity provides the thinkers and visual learners with some support and gets the rest of the class focused on the work of the day.) [5-10 minutes]

3. Activity #1: Students work in pairs to decide on answers for a series of exercises in the textbook. They write their answers on a sheet of overhead transparency film and then share their answers with the whole class. (This activity involves reading, writing, a little talking and listening, and some human interaction for the students who learn best working with others.) [15-20 minutes]

4. Activity #2: Listen to an audiotape of a popular song in the target language that just happens to have an example of the grammar topic being studied. Tell the students to listen and to write down any words that they understand. Let them listen 2-3 times. Check to see what anyone could understand. Give out a copy of the words. Let them sing along with the tape if any of them are the kinds of students who enjoy such activities, or just play it again, now that they have visual support to know all the words. Ask them to point out the grammar feature being focused on in today's class. [15-20 minutes]

5. Activity #3: Use a written activity (or several if they are short) from the text and have the students work individually to write the answers to give to you. Go from student to student to provide help and to make suggestions. Be sure that this is not a test but a learning activity (to support the students who like to work individually and to find out how they are doing in a brief informal assessment). [15-20 minutes]

6. Closing Activity: Briefly say one important point about the grammar studied in the class and point to how it works in the song. Sing it if you can, or just quote the words. Remind them of the assignment for the next class.

7. Post-Class Activity: Be available for the observers to come ask their questions, and for the students who need emotional support to be sure that they are still on track and in sync with you and the class. Converse as much as possible in the target language.

Table 7 Components of the Foreign Language Grammar Lesson Used in Sample Grammar Lesson of Figure 3

Grammar Topic	Language Skill	Instructional Purpose	Content	Activity Type	Grouping of Students	Learning Styles
Provided by the textbook or the syllabus	1. Listening 2. Speaking 3. Reading 4. Writing 5. Combination (reading, then writing)	1. Introducing 2. Reviewing 3. Practicing 4. Assessing 5. Using for communication	1. Food 2. Animals 3. Art 4. Shopping 5. Family relationships 6. Education 7. Peace 8. The environment 9. etc.	1. Observing 2. Participating	1. T talks to whole group 2. Individuals work alone 3. Pairs work together 4. SS (3-5) work in small groups 5. Whole class does activity together	1. Cognitive (thinking, observing, exploring, feeling) 2. Sensory (auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic)