

TEACHING GRAMMAR INDUCTIVELY – JUST AS EASY AS IT SOUNDS!

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Being engaged and interested in what one is learning because it is meaningful and enjoyable aids the learning process, be it a grammatical topic or anything else. Teachers in the EFL classrooms continuously search for innovative, out-of-the-box ways to teach grammar communicatively and authentically using genuine, ‘real-life’ situations. Immersing students in a range of creative activities can make them feel more excited about the grammar journey ahead of them.

Inductive teaching begins with many examples presented by the teacher, from which generalizations are made and a rule is eventually inferred. This approach correlates with *The Direct Method*, in which learners experience the grammar using the language but are not taught it explicitly. According to Thornbury (2002), the rules of the language are acquired out of the experience of understanding and repeating examples that have been systematically graded for difficulty and put into a clear context.

The two inductive lesson ideas presented in the current article range from simple recognition exercises to more complex production exercises. Recognition activities require students, at any grade or level, to identify, or recognize a certain pattern, whereas production activities involve using known information in new situations and creating new sentences and speech samples, both in a controlled manner and freely. By following a set of simple instructions, students can learn new grammatical patterns in context and internalize them more readily. So what is the procedure?

1. What is the Correct Sequence of Events Here?

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Each group is given a set of sentences on small cards. Each sentence is broken down to two parts and the students match the two parts to form proper sentences. For example:

Until she went to <u>Australia</u> ,	she had not seen a <u>kangaroo</u> .
The <u>train</u> had left	when he arrived <u>at the train station</u> .
Because he <u>hadn't studied</u> ,	he <u>failed</u> the exam.

Note: each part consists of lexical “clues” that facilitate comprehension, guide students towards the correct answer, and help them construct logical pairs. (See underlined words: *kangaroo* and *Australia*; *the train* and *the train station*; *hadn't studied* and *failed*). The matching, at this point of the lesson, does not rely on grammatical knowledge but rather on the context and theme that link ideas.

- The teacher asks some students to read their answers to the class.
- The teacher / one of the students writes a few examples on the board so students can see what their classmates wrote. All the sentences should have the same form in common, i.e. *had* + Past Participle (V3).

- Next, students are given a set of pictures.



Adapted from Bibi and Eshel’s presentation in the course “Pedagogical Grammar”,
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- The students are asked to place the pictures in a certain order of their choosing and to produce a sentence describing the situation, while using the same structure as the one presented on the cards (the Past Perfect Simple). For example, after the dragon had kidnapped the beautiful princess, the prince went looking for her in his gigantic castle.
- Next, students are asked to place the pictures on the board in the order they chose and to write the sentence they produced next to the pictures.
- To sum up the inductive part, the teacher shows a short video of the Past Perfect Simple (youtu.be/iIL8LDt1gZU.) The teacher instructs the students to pay attention to the structure of the sentences used in the video.
- Finally, the teacher generalizes as she reaches the deductive section of the lesson by writing the form of the Past Perfect Simple on the board.

2. The “Have you ever ... ?” Questionnaire

As with the first activity, the teacher presents samples of language and the students have to come to an intuitive understanding of the rule by discovering what it is. Giving clear instructions is essential as the teacher checks a student’s ability to interact with other classmates using the intended grammatical feature.

The procedure:

- Each student gets a worksheet with 15 different sentences on it:

Have you <i>ever</i> ridden a horse?	Have you <i>ever</i> swum in the Mediterranean sea?	Have you <i>ever</i> seen anything strange?
Have you <i>ever</i> seen a shooting star?	Have you <i>ever</i> gone to a concert?	Have you <i>ever</i> been to a party?
Have you <i>ever</i> been to the mountains?	Have you <i>ever</i> been abroad?	Have you <i>ever</i> built a sand castle?
Have you <i>ever</i> gone anywhere by train?	Have you <i>ever</i> been to a summer camp?	Have you <i>ever</i> received a letter?
Have you <i>ever</i> been stung by a bee?	Have you <i>ever</i> fallen off the bike?	Have you <i>ever</i> spent the night in the woods?

- Next, pupils mingle around the classroom, asking others questions according to the information in the worksheet. The idea is to find another pupil who meets the requirements in a particular box by asking questions in the target form (the present perfect simple in this case).
- The other pupil answers: “Yes, I have” or “No, I haven’t.” If the answer is “yes”, the student holding the worksheet gets the other student’s signature and is then ready to move onwards and look around the room for another student who will answer another one of his questions.
- The first student to collect signatures in all the boxes is the winner of the competition.

Benefits of Teaching Grammar Inductively

Teaching grammar inductively can make a difference when it comes to bridging the gap between students' grammatical knowledge/competence (what they know) and their performance (what they actually do – write or say.) Students who are bored by circling suffixes and the third-person-singular forms on grammar worksheets will find it interesting to learn grammar inductively as it whets the “appetite” surrounding issues of grammar, showing clearly how enjoyable it can be. Once students rely on real life situations and speak to real audiences, free production is easier to achieve and the outcome is more memorable. It is the teacher's responsibility to engage students in the process of learning grammar communicatively and in context.

The benefit of inductive grammar instruction lies in its meaningfulness, as it exposes students to more authentic, thought provoking tasks that improve their communicative abilities. Inductive grammar teaching, if conducted properly, can result in deeper processing and the enhancement of the learners' confidence and autonomy. In other words, students' involvement in the learning process leads to meaningful learning, which activates the students and enhances imagination and acquisition of the target tense.

Limitations – What Can Go Wrong When We Teach Grammar Inductively?

Time and energy spent working out rules may mislead students into believing that rules are the objective of language learning. In addition, inductive teaching can place heavy demands on teachers in planning materials and preparing visual aids or audio aids (Power Point, YouTube, Prezi, etc.) Finally, and not surprisingly, some students would prefer simply to be told the rules instead of figuring them out on their own, as some students immediately look for “a take home message.”

Conclusion

Inductive teaching allows the learner to formulate and discover the grammatical rule (to induct) and empowers the students to problem solve and learn how to learn a language (Adair-Hauck and Donato, 2002). It is worth mentioning that the above classroom ideas can be used for any grade, level, time of year/day, or grammatical form – it is all a matter of making the relevant adjustments so that students can make the best out of their learning experience.

References

Adair-Hauck, B., & Donato, R. (2002). The PACE Model: A story-based approach to meaning and form for standards-based language learning. *The French Review*, 76, 265-296.

Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to Teach Grammar*. (5th edition). Essex: Pearson Education.

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