

Reading Chapter 19: Teaching Grammar & Vocabulary

Directions: Read the relevant textbook chapter. Then answer the questions below. Please provide specific examples from your own experiences when applicable. Turn in you answers either by email (jbrawn67@gmail.com).

1. What are the 3 dimensions of grammar?

2. What are the 3 ways that grammar can be taught? What's the difference between inductive, deductive and abductive teaching?

3. Why should grammar and vocabulary be taught in context? How can we teach grammar in context (give example)? How can we teach vocabulary in context (give example)?

TEACHING GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

Questions for Reflection

- What is grammar?
- Why is it important to consider discourse in teaching and learning grammar?
- What are some of the approaches to teaching grammar and vocabulary?
- How can learners' errors be treated effectively?
- What are some classroom techniques for promoting students' language awareness?
- What are some strategies for strengthening vocabulary and lexicogrammar?

I read [Hong's autobiography] when I was in high school back in Korea. [In the book] he said, on the first day of his new school [in the United States], he said to the class, "Hello, I'm Hong J. W. from Korea, it's nice to meet you." Then his classmates were laughing at him because of his awkward English pronunciation. So, he decided to study English very hard and thought that the only way to master English is through memorizing everything about English grammar and vocabulary. Thereafter, he studied very hard every day and night. He usually stayed up until 2 to 3 a.m. in order to study [the books of English grammar and vocabulary]. He said he used to memorize more than 100 English words per day. I was so impressed. So, I tried to do like him. I tried to memorize 100 English words everyday, and seriously, I did it! I put my watch right in front of me on the desk, and checked frequently if I was getting one word per three second. One word per three second! . . . I still have the book with me in my room here in Canada. I am still studying like him.

In this interview excerpt, Seong-jin, a student in an intensive English program at a Canadian university, talks about how he has been studying English since he went to Canada to improve his English skills. According to Seong-jin, Hong's autobiography illustrates how rigorously Hong studied in order to overcome the barrier of language when he arrived in the United States as a teenager, and how he was finally able to enter Harvard University and become one of the top graduates.

What's interesting here is that Seong-jin adopted a very traditional approach to studying English—form-focused memorization and individual study—even though he had traveled all the way to Canada to enroll in an intensive English program. Why would he still continue to believe that is the best way to “master” grammar and vocabulary? What did English grammar and vocabulary mean to him?

GRAMMAR

Whether you are a language learner or teacher, *grammar* may mean many different things. One common idea to all of us may be that it is something significant we need to tackle by exerting a great deal of time and effort in order to “master” the language. Nevertheless, many learners and teachers often struggle with grammar, figuring out how to just “pick it up” or how best to instruct it. Michael Halliday (1978) says, “Language is as it is because of what it has to do” (p. 19). Understanding and explaining grammar may seem complex, and it is indeed complex because it has “to do all the things we make it do for us” (Halliday, 2004, p. 5). As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, drawing on the principle of agency, we view language not as something we possess inside the head; it is something that we *do*. Language is a complex and dynamic entity that we *use* “to say things, do things, and be things” (Gee, 2011, p. 3).

This view of language has complex consequences for teaching grammar. Let’s look at some of those complexities.

Three Dimensions of Grammar

Diane Larsen-Freeman (2003, 2014) argues that in order to help language learners use language accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately, we need to explain the three interconnected and nonhierarchical dimensions of grammar: form, meaning, and use.

- The **form** dimension refers to observable structural components such as phonemes, graphemes, inflectional morphemes, and syntactic patterns.
- **Meaning** refers to the semantic level of the structural items including lexical and grammatical meaning.
- The **use** dimension accounts for meanings of utterances across different contexts and cohesion in discourse.

Consider this example: The modal *must* is placed in front of a verb to mean obligation or necessity. However, if an English learner tells an American friend, “I must take my baby to the doctor,” the friend might find the sentence awkward, as it sounds too formal in the context (Savage, 2010, p. 8). Thus, in order to fully understand how to use the language correctly and appropriately, learners need to be aware of the *use* dimension of the target structure.

Let’s look at another example: “That is enough.” In regard to *form*, the utterance consists of three single morphemes, where the verb *be* is inflected for the third person singular form *is*. The pronunciation would be [ðæt ɪz ə' nʌf], though a common variation in speech would contract the first two words and it would be pronounced as [ðæts ə' nʌf]. In the *meaning* dimension, *that* is a demonstrative pronoun referring to a preceding word. The copula *is* has the meaning of “having a particular state or quality” and shows the relationship between *that* and *enough*. The third word in the utterance, *enough*, is an

adjective in the predicate position meaning “adequate or sufficient.” In the *use* dimension the social function can vary depending on the tone used and what the antecedent of *that* is in the larger discourse. For instance, if a parent wants to reprimand a crying child, yelling “That is enough” is a command for the child to be quiet. If a waiter is filling your water glass, “That’s enough” signals that you have a sufficient amount to drink and want him to stop pouring more water.

The three dimensions are interconnected in the sense that a change in one dimension could change the other two (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). In the example above, “That is enough,” whether the form is contracted and how each word is pronounced will affect the meaning. In a classroom of rowdy students, emphasizing each individual word to bring the class to order will be very different than the contracted form *that’s enough* when notifying the person pouring water that you have enough in your glass. Furthermore, when political activists put up a sign saying *that’s enough*, it is an indication that they want to take an action in order to stop a particular social injustice.

Traditionally, language teaching methodology has focused on one dimension while ignoring others. The Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-lingual Method focus on form, somewhat on meaning, but ignore use almost completely. The Natural Approach on the other hand, focuses on use and meaning, but mostly ignores the form dimension. Learners of any language must learn *all three* of these components. Grammar is not only about form; it is about “what forms mean and when and why they are used” (Larsen-Freeman, 2014, p. 269).

Grammar and Discourse

Form, meaning, and use of language are context-sensitive and are co-constructed by the members of a particular discourse. Therefore, teaching language through discourse is inevitable. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2014) define **discourse** as “an instance of spoken or written language with describable internal relationships of form and meaning (e.g., words, structures, cohesion) that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience or interlocutor” (p. 427) in a particular context. In other words, context defines the way we use the language, and we need to take into account such factors as:

- who the speaker/writer is,
- who the audience is,
- where the communication takes place,
- what communication takes place before and after a sentence in question,
- implied versus literal meanings,
- styles and registers,
- the alternative forms among which a producer can choose.

It's important to grasp the significance of the interconnectedness of all features of discourse, as the patterns of language forms emerge out of discourse and are shaped by an ongoing process (Hopper, 1998; Bybee, 2006; Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2009).



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

What are some ways that English speakers compensate for the fact that the second-person pronoun *you* does not allow them to distinguish between singular and plural? If some or all of the L1s represented in your class distinguish the forms of singular and plural *you*, how would you teach a lesson that helps learners to use English words and phrases that disambiguate (when necessary) the two meanings?

Emergent Grammar

According to Hopper (1998), the patterns of language emerge through repeated use and become “sedimented” (p. 158) as fixed or semi-fixed patterns that may look stabilized. From this perspective, grammar is not the source of understanding and communication but “a byproduct of it” (p. 156). Earlier, Hopper (1988) argued that grammar is “a real-time activity, whose regularities are always provisional and continuously subject to negotiation, renovation, and abandonment” (p. 120). We are tentatively making meaning and making sense with patterns that have been previously used and that are familiar to us. Therefore, the patterns of linguistic rules are based on *frequency* (Bybee, 2006; N. Ellis, 2012). For instance, originally, the proper noun *Google* was used to refer to the online search engine, and now also functions as a verb to mean “to look up information online.” We often hear people saying, “Why don’t you google the word so that we know what it is.” In the Chinese language, a similar linguistic phenomenon has happened with the name of the company 百度 [baidu].

To capture this dynamic, complex, and adaptive nature of language, Larsen-Freeman (2003) proposed the term *grammaring*, which shifts the focus from the product of learning static grammar rules to the process of using grammar in real world communicative contexts. The notion of grammaring helps us move away from the usual traditions of teaching grammar as a body of knowledge and instead treats grammar as a *skill* to develop. Grammaring also refers to the organic process of using “grammar constructions accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately” (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 264).



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Have you noticed ways in which English is changing these days? What are some examples, say, of new words or expressions that have become accepted usage? At what point does “incorrect” grammar eventually become “correct,” and how do you draw the line between the two? How would you explain to your students the widespread use (by L1 speakers of English) of utterances such as “Between you and I . . .” and “Me and my buddy went to the ballgame”?

APPROACHES TO FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION

R. Ellis (2012) defines **form-focused instruction** (FFI) as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (p. 271). FFI approaches vary from traditional structure-based focusing primarily on form to more communicative approaches with attention to form while students are engaged in activities that are meaning-focused.

A glance through the last century of language-teaching practices reveals mixed opinions about the place of teaching language **forms**, depending on the method or era. In the Grammar Translation and Audiolingual Methods (see Chapter 2), formal aspects of language received central attention. In the Direct Method and the Natural Approach, overt focus on form was almost forbidden. Some manifestations of CLT, especially indirect approaches, advocated only a brief attention to form, while other proponents of CLT injected healthy doses of form-focused techniques into a communicative curriculum.

Nowadays only a handful of language-teaching experts advocate *no* focus on form (“zero option”) at all, a prime proponent of which is Krashen (1997) with his **input hypothesis** (see *PLLT*, Chapters 9 and 10). Current views of L2 classroom methodology are almost universally agreed on the importance of some **form-focused instruction** within the communicative framework, ranging from **explicit** treatment of rules, to **noticing** and **input enhancement** (Polio, 2007; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; R. Ellis, 2012), to **implicit** techniques for structuring input to learners. This consensus, of course, still leaves open a wide range of options from which you must choose, depending on your students, their purposes, and the context. In other words, we need to consider an *informed eclectic* approach to form-focused instruction (Savage, 2010).

Explicit Presentation of Forms

Explicit instruction attempts to help learners develop metalinguistic awareness of a rule that can be carried out *deductively* or *inductively* (Ellis, 2014). In a

deductive explicit presentation, the teacher begins a lesson by announcing the grammar focus: “Today we’re going to learn about the present progressive.” The teacher might then write examples of the target structure on the board or show a grammar chart or table in the textbook (e.g., “I *am* looking for my cellphone.” “She *is* buying a house.”). Afterwards, the teacher would follow up with an explicit explanation of the rule in detail, including the form, meaning, and use, saying something like: “The present progressive tense is formed with a present form of *be* (i.e., *am*, *is*, or *are*) and the present participle of the main verb. The present progressive is used to mean ongoing action at the time of speaking or for future events” (Cowan, 2008, pp. 362–363).

When providing an explicit presentation *inductively*, the teacher tries to elicit information from the students by presenting example sentences, sometimes by using input enhancement techniques such as **consciousness-raising** (e.g., highlighting or bolding the target forms):

It **is raining** now.

You **are study**ing**** English now.

She **is sleeping** now.

They **are having** lunch now.

Teacher: Can you see how we can form the present progressive tense?

Students: Use *is*, *are*, + verb *-ing*.

T: What time words do we use with this tense?

Ss: This moment, right now.

In addition to deduction and induction, *abduction* can be another approach to obtaining linguistic knowledge. Introduced by C. S. Peirce at the end of 19th century, *abduction* refers to the exploratory process of trying out tentative solutions to problems or facts to figure out what may happen, to see if they work, or to experience something new (Cunningham, 2002). According to van Lier (2007), unlike *inductive* (i.e., data-driven, extracting rules and patterns from examples) or *deductive* (i.e., rule-driven, from rule-learning to rule application) reasoning, in abductive learning learners come to understand hidden rules of language use through the process of exploring hypotheses and inferences.

Language teachers can start with abduction, taking experiential and exploratory approaches (e.g., puzzle-based learning) and then move on to either inductive or deductive tasks as relevant, followed with further exploration at a wider or deeper level. Consider the following example (adapted from van Lier, 2011a, p. 13):

Abduction in the L2 classroom

1. Choose an authentic text that incorporates some features you want to highlight. *Possible option: Input enhancement, relative clauses* (see p. 477 for an example)

2. Design an activity that focuses on these features. *Example: Relative clauses embedded into an information-gap map activity.*
3. Students work in groups and note the grammatical features or patterns they observe.
4. Students report their findings to the class.

Expansion:

5. Inductive: Students collect further examples illustrating the pattern(s) found and formulate a general rule.
6. Deductive: Teacher and students formulate a rule, check it in a grammar book, and look at examples that illustrate the rule.

The use of grammatical explanation and terminology must be approached with care. Following a few rules of thumb may enhance any grammatical explanations you undertake:



SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCING GRAMMATICAL EXPLANATIONS

- Keep your explanations brief and simple. Use the students' L1, if your context permits it, to help students to comprehend more easily.
- Use charts and other visuals whenever possible to graphically depict grammatical relationships.
- Illustrate with clear, unambiguous examples.
- Do not get yourself (and students!) tied up in knots over so-called "exceptions" to rules.
- If you don't know how to explain something (for instance, if a student asks you about a point of grammar and you are not sure of the rule), do not risk giving false information (that you may have to retract later, which will cause even more embarrassment). Rather, tell students you will research that point and bring an answer back the next day.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Reflecting upon your learning experience of a second or foreign language, what are some examples of encountering particular linguistic items of the target structure in deductive, inductive, and abductive ways? How would you modify the procedure of presenting the target rules if you were to teach them in the future?

Implicit Presentation of Forms

In an implicit approach to grammar instruction, the teacher does not employ structural analysis or technical terms to explain the linguistic rules. Instead, the target form is used in the utterances made to communicate with the students. The context of the utterances helps them to understand the meaning and sustain the communication (Savage, 2010). Consider the following examples provided in authentic context drawing on (a) the teacher's and students' current actions, (b) their personal lives, or (c) visuals (Savage, 2010):

- a. I am speaking now. I am not reading.
Suji is sitting on a chair now, not standing on it.
We are studying English now. We are not watching TV.
- b. I am living in the U.S. now. I was living in Canada before.
Tom is taking a cooking class these days.
- c. In this picture, what is this little girl doing now?
Is she running or swimming?
In this movie, to whom is the man speaking?
Is the man speaking to the police or to his friend?

Focus on Form

A **focus on form** (FonF) approach attempts to induce learners' incidental learning by drawing their attention to target forms while they are engaged in communicative activities. The emphasis is on the learners' noticing their knowledge about grammatical features, which is necessary for successful target language use and has been influential in task-based approaches to grammar instruction.

Noticing refers to "the process of the learner picking out specific features of the target language input which she or he hears or reads, and paying conscious attention to them so that they can be fed into the learning process" (Cullen, 2012, p. 260). Noticing is a natural process, but one considered to be essential to language acquisition (Schmidt, 1990) when learners are exposed to sufficient input.

A FonF approach can be considered more appropriate because:

- it is more in keeping with natural language acquisition (where rules are absorbed subconsciously with little or no conscious focus).
- it conforms more easily to the concept of interlanguage development in which learners progress, on variable timetables, through stages of rule acquisition.
- it allows students to get a communicative "feel" for some aspect of language before possibly being overwhelmed by grammatical explanations.
- it builds more intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover rules rather than being told them.

FonF usually occurs reactively when difficulties of the learner's performance are identified after or during the completion of a given task in which students use the grammatical knowledge available to them rather than particular grammatical points preselected and pre-presented by the teacher. The post-task stage is an important part of the process of acquiring necessary forms because it is this stage where learners compare their performance with correct forms such as in a reading text, or a transcript of a conversation.

Then it becomes the consciousness-raising (Sharwood-Smith, 1981) stage of the lesson: the teacher's role at this stage is to help students notice and pay attention to the gaps between their utterances and the correct forms by giving corrective feedback with further explanation, exemplification, and follow-up practice as required. A variety of tasks can be implemented for this stage such as dictogloss, jigsaw, and text-reconstruction tasks, which are exemplified later in this chapter.

Feedback on Errors

Existing research on corrective feedback supports the importance of feedback for successful acquisition of oral communicative competence. The practical question is determining which specific type of error correction is most beneficial and under what circumstances, the answer to which is unclear and has not been resolved (Loewen, 2012). Therefore, it is desirable to employ a variety of feedback options such as recasting, self-correction, and metalinguistic explanation (Loewen, 2012; R. Ellis, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2014). (See *PLLT*, Chapter 9 for an overview of error treatment in SLA and Chapter 16 of this book for a discussion of the treatment of spoken errors.) The important point to keep in mind is that we should adhere to principles of maintaining communicative flow, of maximizing student self-correction, and of sensitively considering the affective state and linguistic stage of the learner.

The treatment of grammatical (and discourse) errors in writing is a different matter. In process writing approaches, overt attention to **local** grammatical and rhetorical (discourse) errors is normally delayed until learners have completed one or two drafts of a paper. **Global** errors that impede meaning must, of course, be attended to earlier in the process. Studies have shown (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014) that certain attention to errors does indeed make a difference in final written products.

Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) developed a 12-point regulatory scale ranging from implicit to explicit strategies for writing tutoring sessions. As shown in Table 19.1, this scale describes a range of corrective feedback strategies differing in their degree of explicitness with different degrees of scaffolding. A teacher begins by asking students to identify errors in their own writing and then gradually moves to offering concrete examples of the correct sentences if the students fail to correct the errors by themselves. The goal here is to achieve self-regulation through the learners' self-correction.

Table 19.1 Regulatory scale—implicit to explicit (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 471)

0. Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors, and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.
1. Construction of a “collaborative frame” prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.
2. Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.
3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (for example, sentence, clause, line) – “Is there anything wrong in this sentence?”
4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.
5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (for example, tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).
6. Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but does not identify the error (for example, “There is something wrong with the tense marking here”).
7. Tutor identifies the error (“You can’t use an auxiliary here”).
8. Tutor rejects learner’s unsuccessful attempts at correcting error.
9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (for example, “It is not really past but something that is still going on”).
10. Tutor provides the correct form.
11. Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.
12. Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

If you were tutoring or conferencing with a student and were asked to provide feedback on the student’s essay, how would you use the 13-point regulatory scale developed by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994)? What are some factors you need to keep in mind before using the scale?

A Lexicogrammatical Approach

The term **lexicogrammar**, originally coined by Michael A. Halliday, represents a view that lexis and grammar are two inherently connected parts of a single entity and should not be treated separately. Grammar is considered as “a meaning-making resource and to describe grammatical categories by reference to what they mean” (Halliday, 2004, p. 10). From this view a grammatical structure may be lexically bound and lexical items also have grammatical features (Liu, 2013). This approach has been supported by corpus research, which illustrates strong connection between contextual patterns.

Figure 19.1 Sample of corpus-based lexicogrammatical error worksheet (Liu & Jiang, 2009, p. 66)

Computer Lab Worksheet (Assignment #2) English Composition 2	Name _____ Spring 2006
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A. Write down the problems noted on your paper.

1. Crazy mobs who contributed to ostracize her
2. bored and boring
3. interested and interesting

B. Find a sentence on the corpus that uses the word/phrase (for each of the sentences you wrote above) in the desired way. Write the sentence below.

1. Levin makes a special case for Debord as a film-maker whose aim was to contribute to the ultimate destruction of cinema as a spectacularist medium.
2. I'm bored Wasn't that a damn boring game!
3. Helen is not interested in making lists about her life.
Informal admissions are also interesting.

C. Describe how this word/phrase is used.

1. After the ^{phrase} "contribute to": most of sentence has noun, not a verb
2. If something needs to be bored, it should be in passive position.
However, being accompanies something active.
3. Same pattern applies to "Interested" and "Interesting."
"Interested" for a passive thing and "Interesting" for a active thing.

D. Rewrite your sentences using the information that you learned from the corpus

1. Crazy mobs who contributed to ostracizing her.
2. The students are bored because of boring class.
3. The audiences were interested after the singer made the show interesting.

The sample activity in Figure 19.1 was used in Liu and Jiang's study (2009) in composition classes at an American university to help students recognize lexicogrammatical errors in their writing. A worksheet was provided for students to complete as shown in the sample. Students then followed the procedures below (Liu & Jiang, 2009, p. 65):

- List the lexicogrammatical problems that his/her instructor has marked.

- Find examples from an electronic corpus (e.g., the British National Corpus [BNC], the Corpus of Contemporary American English [COCA]) that use each lexicogrammatical item in the desired way and write one example down on the worksheet.
- Rewrite his/her original sentence using the information learned from the corpus.

In this sample worksheet the target linguistic forms were the use of proposition “to” in “contribute to,” and the difference between present and past participles used as adjectives as in “bored and boring” and “interested and interesting.” The worksheet shows that the student was able to address the problems successfully using the corpus information.

PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR

As discussed so far, varied opinions on how to teach grammar can be found in the literature on language teaching. The overall consensus in recent communicative methodology is that judicious attention to grammatical form is not only helpful, if appropriate techniques are used, but essential to a speedy learning process (Loewen, 2011; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Ellis, 2014). The question is what the optimal conditions are for teaching grammar, and what degree of overt attention should be included in such form-focused instruction. van Lier (2011a) noted that “grammar activities can be along a continuum from implicit to explicit, and at any point along the continuum inductive and/or deductive work may be carried out” (p. 13). A lesson may start with a more implicit focus, which may then shift to becoming more explicit, or vice versa.

Following are some principles that underlie effective grammar teaching, taken from the current literature (Loewen, 2011; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; van Lier, 2011a; Ellis, 2014).



PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR

- All three dimensions of grammar—form, meaning, and use—should be emphasized.
- Take a lexicogrammatical approach to presenting new linguistic items to students (see Chapter 12 for sample activities to raise such awareness of language using corpus data).
- Learners need to have the opportunity to practice and use forms in communicative tasks.
- Attend to both input-based (comprehension) and output-based (production) grammar and vocabulary.
- Deductive, inductive, and abductive approaches can all be useful, depending on the goals and emergent needs of the learner in a particular context.

- Incidental focus on form is valuable in that it treats errors that occur while learners are engaged in meaningful communication.
- Corrective feedback can facilitate acquisition if it involves a mixture of implicit and explicit feedback.
- Explicit grammar lessons and implicit grammar integrated into communicative activities (FonF) are both viable, depending on the context and learners' needs.
- Instruction needs to consider learners' individual differences. Try to cater to their different needs by involving a variety of learning activities. Make use of learner-training materials to help make them aware of their own approaches to learning and encourage them to alternate different strategies.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

What are some of the possible individual differences you might encounter among students in their preferences for learning the forms of language? If some students lean toward analytical, deductive styles and others prefer inductive, incidental learning, what would you do?

GRAMMAR TECHNIQUES

Following are some sample techniques for teaching grammar, especially for helping learners notice and pay attention to grammatical features they need for the completion of given tasks.

1. Charts, Objects, Maps, and Drawings

Some practices for calling students' attention to grammatical forms have been around for decades and still serve as effective devices (Thornbury, 2006; Azar & Hagen, 2011; Saslow & Ascher, 2011). There is always a useful place for a *chart*, for example, that requires a student to notice and check off certain forms. In Figure 19.2, frequency adverbs are the focus.

Likewise, *objects* (or pictures of objects), *maps*, and other *illustrations* help to make focus on grammatical forms somewhat concrete. A page full of common articles of clothing, for example, could aid in the noticing of possessives:

This is *my* jacket.

These are *Oscar's* glasses.

Are these *your* shoes? No, they are *Lucy's*.

Figure 19.2 Frequency adverbs (Brown, 1992, p. 99)

EXERCISE 1

Read the paragraphs on page 98 again. Then choose the appropriate adverb of frequency.

	never	seldom	sometimes	often	usually	always
1. Keiko works hard.						✓
2. She is on time for work.						
3. She is late or sick.						
4. She is early for work.						
5. She types letters.						
6. She files.						
7. She makes copies.						
8. She makes mistakes when she types.						
9. She answers the phone politely.						
10. She is angry.						

Now say the complete sentences.

1. Keiko always works hard.	
2. She is always on time for work.	
3. _____	7. _____
4. _____	8. _____
5. _____	9. _____
6. _____	10. _____

Maps are traditionally favorite aids in introducing and reinforcing certain grammatical and lexical features of language. Asking for directions (“Where is the post office?”) and responding (“Go down this street, turn right, walk about half a block, and it will be on your left”) are among a number of possible formal elements that can be included.

2. Dialogues and Conversations

For over half a century *dialogues* have been successfully used to focus learners on form and meaning simultaneously. For beginners, they provide models for practice while injecting some meaning and reality, even if *all* the lexical and grammatical components are not completely understood. For intermediate learners, dialogues and other conversations give learners a chance to confidently produce language, and then to vary the models with their own creative additions.

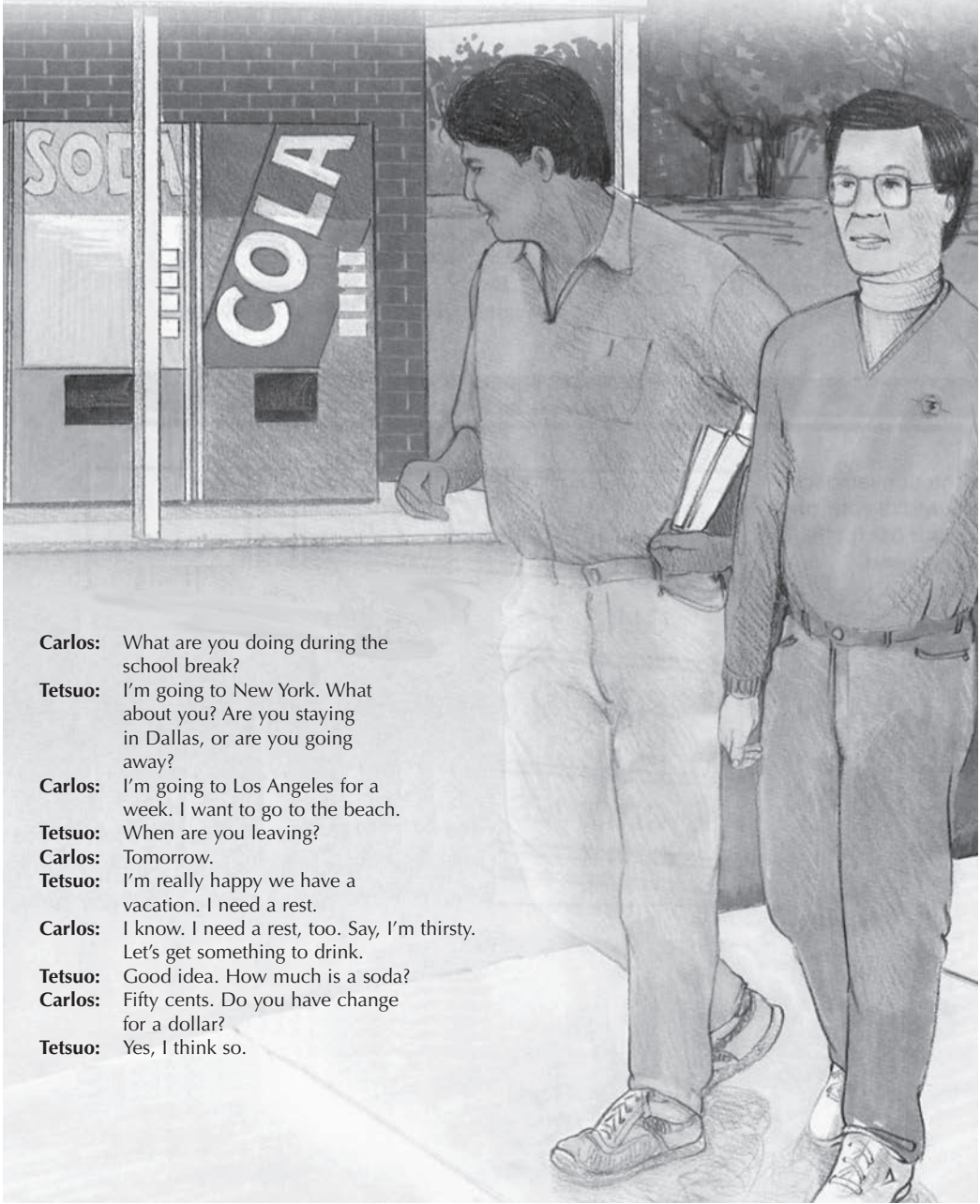
In Figure 19.3 (page 476), a conversation is presented to students. They can listen to it on an audio recording, read it, repeat it to get the “flow” of the conversation, practice it with different partners, and eventually (as their level permits) expand on it to share their *own* vacation plans. The focus is on the present progressive used for future planned events.

Figure 19.3 Present progressive, future events

Lesson
2

What are you doing next week?

Look at the picture. Then listen as you read the conversation.



Carlos: What are you doing during the school break?

Tetsuo: I'm going to New York. What about you? Are you staying in Dallas, or are you going away?

Carlos: I'm going to Los Angeles for a week. I want to go to the beach.

Tetsuo: When are you leaving?

Carlos: Tomorrow.

Tetsuo: I'm really happy we have a vacation. I need a rest.

Carlos: I know. I need a rest, too. Say, I'm thirsty. Let's get something to drink.

Tetsuo: Good idea. How much is a soda?

Carlos: Fifty cents. Do you have change for a dollar?

Tetsuo: Yes, I think so.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Suppose your intermediate students have practiced the dialogue in Figure 19.3. How would you expand on the forms that have been practiced? What specific tasks or activities could you ask them to perform that would build communicatively on the dialogue?

3. Input Enhancement

A more recent common technique involves highlighting (or boldfacing) certain target grammatical forms in a reading text or stressing (or slowing down, or using hand gestures) certain forms when speaking. Consider the example text in Figure 19.4.

Figure 19.4 Input enhancement in written texts (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 46)

Classroom Activity

Instructions: Please read the following text. Then in groups of two, discuss the following questions:

The teacher **has told** me that I have homework today. It will have to be completed by tomorrow. I **have looked** at it, and it looks very difficult. I have asked my brother if he **has** ever **worked** on homework like this. He **has** never **seen** an assignment like this before. This will be the first time that I **have needed** help!

Questions for Discussion

1. Has anything like this ever happened to you as a student?
2. What do you think the problem with the student's homework has been?
3. Do you think homework is useful?
4. Do you think homework will help learners to study harder?

Input enhancement in oral texts:

Example (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 42)

Student: And she caught her.

Teacher: She CAUGHT her? [Enhanced with added stress]

Student: Yeah, caught her.

4. Input Flood

Another technique presents texts that contain a target structure that appears frequently or repeatedly, and is therefore more salient. This may trigger syntactic priming, as speakers tend to “produce a previously spoken or heard structure” (Mackey & Gass, 2006, p. 173). Figure 19.5 (page 478) is an example.

Figure 19.5 Input flood, definite and indefinite articles (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 43)

To the teacher:

The target forms below are the English definite and indefinite articles. The sample text includes frequent instances of these target forms. It should be noted that the target forms should not be textually enhanced.

A chipmunk sat on some branches in a great big tree. It was very hungry, so it decided to leave the tree and look for food. It climbed off the branches and reached the trunk of the tree, and went down the trunk to the ground below. The chipmunk saw lots of grass, and in the grass lay many acorns! The chipmunk, in its delight, took as many acorns as it could, put them in its mouth, and ran back up the tree trunk to its nest. There the chipmunk had a very good meal.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

In Figure 19.5, an example of Input Flood is given. Suppose your high beginning students have just read the sample passage. What could you do next to help them to *notice* definite and indefinite articles? What kinds of tasks or activities would help them to move from this text to producing (orally or in writing) a text that includes articles?

5. Input Processing

Because it may be difficult for learners to attend to meaning and form in the input at the same time, a more explicit technique, input processing, was proposed by VanPatten (1996). It is important that the text used for input remain reasonably natural, and that the learners make the necessary connections between form and function in authentic contexts of L2 use. Consider the following exercise in Figure 19.6.

Figure 19.6 Input processing, present and past tenses (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, pp. 30–31)

Instructions: Listen to the following sentences and decide whether they describe an action that was done before or is usually done.

- | | | |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| 1. The teacher corrected the essays. | Now () | Before () |
| 2. The man cleaned the table. | Now () | Before () |
| 3. I wake up at 5 in the morning. | Now () | Before () |
| 4. The train leaves the station at 8 am. | Now () | Before () |
| 5. The writer finished writing the book. | Now () | Before () |
| 6. The trees go green in the spring. | Now () | Before () |

Figure 19.7 Dictogloss technique (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 113)

To the teacher:

You intend to teach or practice the use of relative clauses. You may choose a text such as the following, in which several instances of this structure occur.

Friendship

We are always looking for good friends. These days it is hard to find true friends whom we can trust. Certainly, it is important to be considerate of those who care for us. However, a true friend is someone who is sincere and loyal, and is with us through tough times. We don't have to wonder if a friend, who is busy with a new partner and three kids, will have time to comfort us after a bad day. However, a true friendship is like a bridge that is built with planks of loyalty and fastened with nails of sincerity. It is that kind of connection that binds us together.

Procedures for completing the task:

1. **Preparation and warm-up:** discuss the importance of friendship and the different ways in which someone can be a friend. Examine the different characteristics of a good friend. Also, tell the class that they are going to hear a text on friendship. Ask them what they guess the text would include. Explain difficult vocabulary such as *trust*, *loyalty*, *sincerity*, and *considerate*.
2. **Dictation:** read the text at a normal pace. Ask learners to jot down the words related to the content as you read.
3. **Reconstruction:** ask learners to form groups of two or three and pool their resources to reconstruct the text as closely as possible to the original.
4. **Analysis and correction:** when they finish, ask learners to analyze and compare their versions. Go around the class and help learners to correct their errors. Do not show learners the original text until after the text has been compared and analyzed.

6. Dictogloss

Dictogloss, a variation on the *dictocomp* technique described in Chapter 18, is a task-based procedure designed to help L2 learners internalize certain grammatical elements that are built into a text (Wajnryb, 1990). Through the reconstruction of a text, students come to notice certain grammatical features. In Figure 19.7, students are not asked to notice relative clauses, even though they are embedded in the text. Only at the last stage of the procedure will students possibly become aware of using relative clauses.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

From what you have learned in this chapter about teaching grammar, in the last phase of the dictogloss technique above, how would you “go around the class and help learners to correct their errors”? How would you “correct” them, or in some way help them to *notice* errors?

TEACHING VOCABULARY

The other “half” of form-focused instruction is vocabulary—the thousands of lexical building blocks that are available to the average user of a language. As we consider vocabulary teaching, be reminded again that lexical items are basic to all of the four skills, and so vocabulary is not a “skill” as we normally use the term. The skill comes in the efficient storage (competence) and adept retrieval (performance) of those units. How vocabulary should be taught has stimulated some controversies over time, which we’ll first take a brief look at here.

Historical Perspectives

While traditional language-teaching methods highlighted vocabulary study with lists, definitions, written and oral drills, and flash cards, there was a period of time when “the teaching and learning of vocabulary [were] undervalued” (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 5). In the zeal for natural, authentic classroom tasks and activities, vocabulary focus was swept under the rug. Further, as teachers increasingly perceived their role as facilitators and guides, they became more reluctant to take the directive and sometimes intrusive steps to turn students’ focus to lexical form.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, we saw a revival of systematic attention to vocabulary learning across a number of proficiency levels and contexts. Ranging from very explicit focus, such as that found in Michael Lewis’s (1993, 1997, 2000) *Lexical Approach*, to more indirect approaches in which vocabulary is incorporated into communicative tasks, attention to lexical forms is now more central to the development of language curricula (Nation, 2001, 2003, 2005; Read, 2004).

One of the recent “hot topics” in vocabulary teaching is whether learners are better served in the long run with **incidental** exposure to lexical items (that is, as a by-product of communicative activities), or with **intentional**, explicit focus on vocabulary. In the earlier years of CLT approaches, “the concept of incidental learning offered the seductive prospect that, provided the learners had access to sufficient comprehensible input, L2 vocabulary acquisition would largely take care of itself” (Read, 2004, p. 147). However, Schmitt (2008) observes that many features of vocabulary require deliberate attention, as learners may not notice the features of use if they are focusing on the meaning of task. In fact, research shows that intentional vocabulary focus accounts for significant gains in acquisition (Laufer, 2003; Read, 2004).

A further development in vocabulary teaching is the rapid growth of **corpus linguistics** and the volumes of raw data that are now available in corpora that encompass spoken and written language, genres of each, as well as data from a number of varieties of world Englishes. Researchers (e.g., Conrad, 2005; Liu & Jiang, 2009; Reppen, 2010) have described numerous ways in which corpus linguistics has improved our collective capacity to expose learners to real-world language. We have ready access not just to statistics such as word frequency

counts, but more important, **collocations** (words that tend to appear in the company of other words). **Concordancing** enables learners (and textbook writers) to see words in context (McCarthy, 2004). And these voluminous corpora provide data banks through which we can more closely examine and appreciate associations between grammatical and lexical units (Hunston & Francis, 2000).

Current practices in teaching vocabulary, especially in view of the technology of corpus linguistics, are clearly not simply a rebirth of the same methods of half a century ago. Rather than viewing vocabulary items as a long and boring list of words to be defined and memorized, lexical forms are seen in their central role in contextualized, meaningful language. Learners can be guided in specific ways to internalize these important building blocks of language.

Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary

Below are some guidelines for the communicative treatment of vocabulary instruction:

1. Allocate Specific Class Time to Vocabulary Learning

In the hustle and bustle of our interactive classrooms, sometimes we get so caught up in lively group work and meaningful communication that we don't pause to devote some attention to words. Noting the incremental nature of word learning (Zimmerman, 2014), it is important to have students meet target words several times. Webb and Nation (2013) note that at least somewhere between 7–16 encounters of any new word are required for gaining necessary knowledge. Furthermore, the spacing between the repetitions is also important to keep in mind. For example, spreading 20 minutes across a few days at progressive intervals will be much more effective for long-term recall than spending 20 minutes all at once (Webb & Nation, 2013).

2. Help Students to Learn Vocabulary in Context

The best internalization of vocabulary comes from encounters (comprehension or production) with words within the context of surrounding discourse. Data from linguistic corpora can provide real-world actual language that has been printed or spoken. Rather than isolating words and/or focusing on dictionary definitions, learners can benefit from attending to vocabulary within a communicative framework in which items appear. Students will then associate new words with a meaningful context to which they apply. For example, for a beginning level of students, pictures, realia, and gestures can be used to describe meaning in context. For a more advanced level of students, encourage them to consult online corpora (e.g., the British National Corpus, or the Corpus of Contemporary American English: COCA) to gain knowledge of patterned sequences, particularly collocations or words that go together (Liu & Jiang, 2009).

The concordance examples in Figure 19.8 (page 482) show the use of the word *interesting* in context from the COCA.

Figure 19.8 Concordance examples of the use of *interesting* from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

The screenshot shows the COCA website interface. At the top, it says "CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH" and "450 MILLION WORDS, 1990-2012". Below this, there are search options and a table of concordance results for the word "interesting". The table has columns for "KEYWORD IN CONTEXT DISPLAY" and "FREQU". The results show various contexts where "interesting" is used, such as "interesting part of the game implementation", "interesting areas", "interesting opportunity", "interesting question", "interesting changes", "interesting finding", "interesting temporal comparison", and "interesting idea".

KEYWORD IN CONTEXT DISPLAY	FREQU
1 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	43892
2 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
3 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
4 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
5 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
6 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
7 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
8 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
9 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
10 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
11 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
12 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
13 2012 ACAD Communications A B C	
14 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
15 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
16 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
17 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
18 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
19 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
20 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
21 2012 ACAD SpeechLanguage A B C	
22 2012 ACAD AnPublicHealth A B C	
23 2012 ACAD AnPublicHealth A B C	
24 2012 ACAD AnPublicHealth A B C	
25 2012 ACAD TeachingExceptional A B C	
26 2012 ACAD TeachingExceptional A B C	
27 2012 ACAD LibraryResources A B C	

These samples of concordance can provide students with instances of “real language use, helping learners to know how to use language that is appropriate in different contexts” (Reppen, 2010, p. 20).



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Search the Internet for a major *corpus* of English or another language of interest (e.g., for English, try the Corpus of Contemporary American English or the British National Corpus). Look up a somewhat uncommon word and notice its most frequent *collocations*. How might you use those collocations in teaching the use and meaning of the word in its contexts?

Learner’s dictionaries also offer good resources for clear definitions and examples sentences drawing on a limited number of words. Unlike commonly used online/electronic dictionaries designed for native speakers, good learner’s dictionaries (e.g., the *Oxford Basic American Dictionary for Learners of English* or *Merriam-Webster’s Learner’s Dictionary*) additionally include information about collocation, grammatical forms, register, word parts, and so on (Zimmerman, 2014).

3. Engage in “Unplanned” Vocabulary Teaching

In all likelihood, most of the attention you give to vocabulary learning will be unplanned: those moments when a student asks about a word or when a word has appeared that you feel deserves some attention. These impromptu moments are very important. Sometimes, they are simply brief little pointers; for example, the word “clumsy” once appeared in a paragraph students were reading and the teacher volunteered:

T: Okay, “clumsy.” Does anyone know what that means? [*writes the word on the board*]

Ss: [*silence*]

T: No one? Okay, well, take a look at the sentence it’s in. “His clumsy efforts to imitate a dancer were almost amusing.” Now, was Bernard a good dancer? [*S1 raises her hand.*] Okay, Mona?

S1: Well, no. He was very bad dancer . . . we see this in next sentence.

T: Excellent! So, what do you think “clumsy” might mean?

S2: Mmm, . . . not graceful?

T: Good, what else? Anyone?

S3: Not smooth, eh, . . . uncoordinated?

T: Great! Okay, so “clumsy” means awkward, ungraceful, uncoordinated. [*writes synonyms on the board*] Is that clear now?

Ss: [*most Ss nod in agreement*]

Sometimes, such impromptu moments may be extended: the teacher gives several examples and/or encourages students to use the word in other sentences. Make sure that such unplanned teaching, however, does not detract from the central focus of activity by drifting into a long and possibly irrelevant tangent.

4. Encourage Students to Develop Word-Learning Strategies

Included in the discussion of teaching reading in Chapter 17 were such strategies as guessing vocabulary in context. A number of clues are available to learners to develop word-attack strategies. Consider the following examples (Kruse, 1987; Ur, 2012).



SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT (ADAPTED FROM KRUSE, 1987; UR, 2012)

1. Word building

- a. *Suffixes*, examples: *goodness*, *familiar*, *happily*
Practice word formation through exercises in which the student adds and subtracts suffixes
- b. *Prefixes*, examples: *informal*, *unnatural*, *international*
Substitute various root stems with prefixes (*inter*+action);
Add prefixes (violent → *nonviolent*)
- c. *Roots*, examples: *help* + *ful*, extra + *ordinary*

2. Definition clues

- a. *Parentheses*, example: We saw a panther (large black cat) on the Safari.
- b. *Synonyms* and *antonyms*, example: A birthday is an observance, that is, a remembrance of someone's day of birth.
- c. *Superordinates*, example: *animal* is the superordinate of *dog*, *lion*, *mouse*

3. Inference clues

- a. *Specific*, example: Peru is trying to *restore* some of its deteriorated monuments. Machu Picchu is being partly rebuilt by curators.
- b. *Restatement*, example: Some products are designed to stop *perspiration*, but this bodily secretion of salty liquid can actually help to cool you.
- c. *Contextual cues*, example: The old dog *snuffled* and *moped* as he sadly walked from room to room.

4. Word associations

- a. *Linking meaning*, example: fat + pig, tall + tree
- b. *Collocations*, example: tell the truth, make a copy

Considering that only a small fraction of the word list can be covered inside the classroom, it is necessary for students to develop effective strategies for learning vocabulary on their own. Word-learning strategies refer to “the planned approaches that a word-learner takes as an agent of his or her own word learning” (Zimmerman, 2014, p. 297). Once they encounter unknown words, they can try to figure out how the words are used by asking questions such as:

- Is the word countable or uncountable?
- Is there a particular preposition that follows it?
- Is it a formal word?
- Does it have positive or negative connotations? (Zimmerman, 2014, p. 298)

An effective way to encourage word-learning is to urge students to use *vocabulary notebooks* to enter new words, and to review them daily, once they identify their learning goals. Studies show that in order to understand television shows learners need to know about 3,000 word families and have knowledge of proper nouns (Web & Rodgers, 2009). If they wish to read novels and newspapers comfortably, they need to have a vocabulary size of 8,000–9,000 word families (Nation, 2006). The fact that increasing vocabulary size will influence the degree to which they can understand and use language may motivate them to be determined to expand their vocabulary notebooks.



Unfortunately, professional pendulums have a disturbing way of swinging too far one way or the other, and sometimes the only way we can get enough perspective to see these overly long arcs is through hindsight. Hindsight has now taught us that there was some overreaction to the almost exclusive attention that grammar and vocabulary received in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. So-called “natural” approaches in which grammar was considered damaging were equally overreactive. Advocating the “absorption” of grammar and vocabulary with no overt attention whatsoever to language forms went too far. We now seem to have a healthy respect for the place of form-focused instruction—attention to those basic “bits and pieces” of a language—in an interactive curriculum. And now we can pursue the business of finding better and better techniques for getting these bits and pieces into the communicative repertoires of our learners.

FOR THE TEACHER: ACTIVITIES (A) & DISCUSSION (D)

Note: For each of the “Classroom Connections” in this chapter, you may wish to turn them into individual or pair-work discussion questions.

1. (A) Tell pairs to look at the following:
 - a. “Oh! That’s just great!” [falling intonation]
 - b. “Good to see you again, Helen. You’ve lost some weight, haven’t you?”
 - c. “Brrrr! It’s sure cold in this house!”

The “surface” grammatical meaning differs from potential “deep” structure meanings. Ask the pairs to identify those meanings, and, if possible, to think of other examples. Then have them devise a few techniques that could be used to teach such pragmatic aspects of English, and share their ideas with the rest of the class.

2. (A) Have students observe a class in which the teacher uses some form-focused instruction. Evaluate the effectiveness of the class using the six criteria on pages 467–468. Ask them to share their observations with the whole class.
3. (A) Assign a separate, different grammar “point” to every *two* pairs and have them do the following: one pair figures out how to teach that point with a *deductive* approach and describes students for which such an approach is justified; the other pair is directed to do the same with an inductive approach. Pairs then present their suggestions to the whole class for comparison.
4. (D) Review the section on error treatment in Chapter 16 (pp. 380–384). Observe a class and try to determine which principles of error correction were followed. How *explicitly* did the teacher treat grammatical (as opposed to vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.) errors?
5. (A) Six grammar-focusing techniques are illustrated in this chapter (pp. 474–479). Tell groups or pairs, each assigned to one technique, to

demonstrate (peer-teach) that technique to the rest of the class. Ask the class to offer collective critiques of what worked well, what didn't, and why.

6. (A/D) Ask students to think of one particular grammar point in English that is challenging to explain. List the points on the board and then assign them to pairs (one point for each pair). Ask them to analyze it in terms of the *three dimensions* of Larsen-Freeman's grammar model (p. 463).

FOR YOUR FURTHER READING

Loewen, S. (2011). Focus on form. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*: Volume II (pp. 576–592). New York, NY: Routledge.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2014). Teaching grammar. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. Brinton, & M.A. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (4th ed., pp. 256–270). Boston, MA: National Geographic Learning.

Spada, N., & Lightbown, P. (2008). Form-focused instruction: Isolated or integrated? *TESOL Quarterly*, 42, 181–207.

These three articles offer comprehensive surveys of research on form-focused instruction, with an emphasis on the teaching grammar. Extensive bibliographies are included.

Nassaji, H., & Fotos, S. (2011). *Teaching grammar in second language classrooms: Integrating form-focused instruction in communicative context*. New York, NY: Routledge.

A comprehensive overview on the topic of L2 grammar instruction with thoughtful integration of theory, research findings, and many practical examples and classroom activities.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching language: From grammar to grammaring*. Boston, MA: Heinle/Cengage.

An insightful framework for a reconceptualization of grammar and the way it is taught, featuring grammar as a dynamic complex system.

Thornbury, S. (2006). *Grammar*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

A comprehensive collection of practical classroom techniques, activities, and worksheets for teaching grammar to secondary and adult students. It covers three levels of grammar in use: word, sentence, and text levels.

Reppen, R. (2010). *Using corpora in the language classroom*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

An excellent volume including the overview of corpus linguistics and clear explanations, instructions, and examples about how to use corpora and corpus tools for classroom applications.