Effective Grammar Teaching: Balancing Input and Output

This presentation will help you enrich classroom time by examining how to incorporate the practice of real language into grammar lessons.

Participants will:
• consider what “real communication” means
• examine the motivating impact that creativity and opportunities for personal expression have on language learning
• work with sample lesson plans and communicative activities that balance language input and output

The activity ideas and practical steps outlined in this session are applicable for classes of any age, ability level, or level of access to technology.
Spenser Lemaich works as an English for Academic Purposes and exam preparation instructor and teacher trainer in Indonesia, and he was previously Director of Studies at a private language school. He recently served two years as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow, teaching Linguistics and TEFL Methodology courses.

Spenser has spoken frequently on ELT methodology, second language acquisition, and culture instruction in classroom teaching. He is a strong advocate of engaging students through critical and creative thinking and using learners’ mother tongue in language instruction. His MA in TESOL degree is from Biola University.
Effective Grammar Teaching: Balancing Input and Output
Today’s Topics

1. The **importance of balanced input and output** in communicative teaching

2. Balancing input and output in **lesson planning**

3. **Activities** for increasing student output and supporting creative expression in grammar practice
Discussion Question 1

Look at pictures of two different classrooms.

Which classroom do you think would be more effective for grammar teaching? Why?
Classroom B
Discussion Question 1: Reflection

Lecture versus interactive environment
  • Input alone will not produce fluency in productive skills
    (Brown & Larson-Hall, 2012)

What is a communicative classroom?
  • Learning by sharing and using language rather than simply being told about it
Teaching versus Learning* - First Insight into Input

Balancing Input and Output in a Course

“A course should include a roughly even balance of:

• meaning-focused input

• language-focused learning

• meaning-focused output and

• fluency activities.”

(Nation and Macalister, 2010, p. 39)
Teacher: Give me a sentence that starts with I...
Student: I is the...
Teacher: Stop! You should never say I is – you should always say I am. Now try again - what did you want to say?
Student: I’m sorry. I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.*

What mistake did this teacher make?

*This joke was modified from a submission to the Internet TESOL Journal submitted by Monirul Hassan http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html
Discussion Question 2: Reflection

- A classroom **out of balance**!
  - Too much **focus on language forms**
  - Not enough **engaging for meaning**
Output as Creative Expression of the Individual
“Teacher, we have studied these same grammar lessons year after year, but we still have trouble with them and make mistakes using them.”
Discussion Question 3: Reflection

• Primary issue: a lack of communicative skills practice
  • Learning *about* language or learning to *use* language?
  • Learning *lessons* or *practicing communication*?

• Skills-integrated grammar use begins in class and extends beyond
Recap: Importance of Balance

**Question 1:** Input alone is not enough $\rightarrow$ communication

**Question 2:** Output needs meaning, creativity, and personalization

**Question 3:** Skills-integrated grammar practice begins in class
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Finding the Balance: Planning

1. Entering/exploring a topic
2. Focusing on language
3. Responding to/developing the topic
Sample Lesson 1: *there is* and *there are*

- **Students:** Beginners
- **Aim:** Students will be able to describe objects in a room using *there is* and *there are* structures for singular and plural
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Responding to the Topic:
Written Gallery Walk as Communicative Writing
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1. Explore topic: review vocabulary
2. Teacher models language (sing./pl.)
3. Personalize through description
4. Interact: read, question, and find author
“A course should include a roughly even balance of:

• **meaning-focused input** - working with room images
• **language-focused learning** - model sentences
• **meaning-focused output** - describing a room
• **fluency activities.**” - reading & finding the author

(Nation and Macalister, 2010, p. 39)
Communicative Writing – Online Space
Online Collaborative Space (www.padlet.com)

SP7 New things and things you're proud of

Anonymous 20d
My first travelling with my son

Anonymous 20d
How do you feel about trying new things?
trying a new thing? that might be great for person like me, who enjoyed a life and wants to make up with a new people around. New things isn't just a new hobbies. It can be anything, maybe try a new job or new cities? Travelling is my favorite hobby, you can try a new city, food, culture, languages, or even a new friends.

Anonymous 20d
How do I feel about trying new things
I can't really answer this because I haven't tried any new things recently, but I once tried to snorkel and it was really fun though I'm quite good at swimming but swimming in the sea is really different so it challenged me and I succeded, and I hope any other new things I'll do in the future will be fun.

Anonymous 20d
i admire one of the legend of F1, his name is Ayrton Senna, he is a racer from Brazil. He is a hero for Brazil, and he is my idol. He gave inspiration for a lot of people, especially people in Brazil, he was the spotlight of F1 back in the 80s and 90s, when Brazil was nothing in the eye of the world, Senna proudly represent his nation with racing in F1, he was the God of raining condition, while others used to slow down when it rains, but at Senna he

Anonymous 20d
Last year I went to Papua, that was the new place I have ever gone. I was feeling excited because the place was so far from Surabaya.
I have ever gone with my friends for the duty reason and an animal welfare cos we were released the habitat Papau animal call 'Kasauri Bird', we were very happy cos the mission was compile and the baby Kasauri could life in there habitat place...
Sample Lesson 2: present perfect and past simple

- Students: Pre-intermediate adults in a language school
- Aim: Students will be able to describe general life experiences using the present perfect and specific details using the simple past tense
1. Explore topic: review vocabulary

Another way?
Journalist: I’m here with Ann Johnson, world traveler. What’s the most interesting trip you’ve ever taken?

Ann: Hmm...that’s a difficult question. One of the most interesting was when I visited the old city of Petra in Jordan. I went there last summer.

Journalist: Have you ever done anything dangerous?

Ann: I swam with crocodiles in Botswana 2 years ago.

Journalist: What’s next on your travel list?

Ann: I haven’t ridden on the Trans-Siberian Railway in Russia. And I’ve never seen the statues on Easter Island in Chile.
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Dialog/text of an interview of a world traveler

Analysis of text: Ss find examples of tenses & positive/negative/question forms

3 or 4 students claim to have had an experience (only one has). Other Ss ask questions and guess who
Sample Lesson 2: present perfect and past simple - interaction

I have swum with dolphins.
Balancing Input and Output in Lesson 2

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3. Activities for increasing student output and supporting creative expression in grammar practice
Increasing Output: Think, Produce, and Communicate
Building Topics Through Brainstorming

Teams think of 3 experiences:

What experiences might a famous world traveler have?
1.) She has hiked in the Himalayas.
2.) She has cruised on the Nile.
3.) She has toured Europe.

In the language focus, the teacher generates model sentences:
- *She has visited* Europe many times.
- *She went* to France in 2010, 2012 and 2016.
Focusing on Language

Teacher models language

Text analysis:
find examples
Language Focus Through Competition

Grammar Gamble
Teams get 100 points.
Teams are asked to secretly identify an error in a sentence
Confident: offer a large number
Unsure: offer a low number

Points awarded based on identifying the error.

I have ever visited the Taj Mahal in India.
Thinking – Role Play Activities

Situation: Job Interview

Student A: Employer
Student B: Prospective employee

Provide support if necessary

- Sentence frames: Have you ever worked in ___ before? When?
- List of topics to cover
- Time to brainstorm ideas
Communicative Sharing
Mingle/Find Someone Who...

Students use a survey with blank names

___ has swum in the ocean.

___ has never traveled abroad.

* ask a follow-up question
Communicative Sharing - Question Card

• Students have a question and must ask everyone else in class

Example:

*Have you ever eaten something unusual?*

*What was it? When did you eat it?*

*Where were you?*
Closing Comments
References


• Internet TESL Journal Jokes page: http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html


Thank you!

Email: americanenglish@state.gov

americanenglishwebinars.com
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