Students often study grammar for years, yet still have difficulty applying it in real-world contexts. An experiential approach to grammar can address this issue by enabling students to use language in many different real-life situations.

In this session, we will:

• explore how experiential learning provides authentic, real-world communicative contexts for using specific grammar points.

• examine practical, creative activities for bringing grammar to life that can be tailored for different class sizes and learners of different ages or proficiency levels.
With over a decade of experience, Amanda Hilliard has taught English in the Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Ecuador, Tanzania, and Hungary, and in the United States in Georgia, Texas, and Arizona. Currently, she works as an ESL Instructor at Arizona State University and a TEFL Certificate Instructor at International TEFL Academy. Previously, she served as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow in Hue, Vietnam.

Amanda received her MA in TEFL/TESL in 2011 and her PhD in Applied Linguistics in 2017 from the University of Birmingham in England. Her research focuses on action research for English language teachers.
Bringing Grammar to Life with Experiential Learning

“I hear and I forget,
I see and I remember,
I do and I understand.”

- Confucius
Scenario:

Imagine you want to learn how to play basketball. Which method below would you choose?

A. Read a book about the rules of basketball.
B. Watch a video of a basketball game.
C. Talk to someone about their favorite basketball team.
D. Get a ball and practice on the court with your friend.
Goals of Session:

To understand experiential learning and how it can be applied to English language teaching

To acknowledge some advantages and challenges of experiential learning

To build understanding of the experiential learning cycle

To learn and apply a 4-step process to creating experiential learning lessons
What is experiential learning?

Experiential Learning is learning by doing.

“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”

Aristotle, 350 BC

“...connection between education and personal experience.”

Dewey, 1938

Kolb, 1984
The Experiential Learning Cycle in ESL/EFL: Four Phases

1. Prepare
   Exposure Phase

2. Do
   Participation Phase

3. Reflect
   Internalization Phase

4. Apply
   Dissemination/Transfer Phase

(Koenderman, 2000)
Experiential Learning Cycle in ESL/EFL

Phase 1: Prepare (Exposure Phase)

- Activate background schema, past experiences, and/or prior knowledge
- Understand activity objectives
- Set individual goals
- Teach important vocabulary/grammar
Experiential Learning Cycle in ESL/EFL

Do (Participation Phase)

Engage in the experience/activity
Experiential Learning Cycle in ESL/EFL

Phase 3

Reflect
(Internationalization Phase)

Reflect on experience, feelings, and language learning
Experiential Learning Cycle in ESL/EFL

Phase 4

Apply

(Dissemination/Transfer Phase)

Link classroom learning with the “real world”
Pause and Reflect

Think about your own classes.

How often do you incorporate these four phases into activities?

1. Prepare
   Exposure Phase

2. Do
   Participation Phase

3. Reflect
   Internalization Phase

4. Apply
   Dissemination/Transfer Phase

(Koenderman, 2000)
Experiential Learning Example: Restaurant Role-Play
Experiential Learning Cycle

**Phase 1**

Prepare

- Activate background schema, past experiences, and/or prior knowledge related to ordering food at a restaurant
- Teach important vocabulary/grammar
- Read restaurant dialogue
Prepare: Background Knowledge

Warm-up:
1. Do you eat out often?
2. What’s your favorite restaurant?
3. When was the last time you ate at a restaurant?
4. What did you order?
Waiter: Can I take your order?
Customer: Yes, I would like the hamburger and french fries.
Waiter: Good choice. Would you like anything to drink with that?
Customer: Yes, I would like a diet Coke.
Waiter: Okay, would you like to order anything else?
Customer: No, that’s all.

Waiter: How’s the food? Can I bring you anything else?
Customer: Yes, could I get some ketchup please?
Waiter: Of course. Here you are.

Waiter: Would you like any dessert?
Customer: No, thanks. Could you just bring me the bill?
Waiter: Sure, here you are. That’ll be twelve dollars.
Customer: Here you are. Thank you very much.
Waiter: My pleasure. Have a nice day.
Experiential Learning Cycle

Phase 2

**Do**

Students practice the restaurant role-play
**Starters:**
- Chips and Salsa
- Soup
- Salad

**Entrees:**
- Pasta
- Hamburger
- Cheese Pizza

**Desserts:**
- Ice cream
- Chocolate Cake
- Cheesecake

**Drinks:**
- Soda
- Juice
- Coffee

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**Do: Role-play Example**

**Customer:**
I would like . . .
Could I have . . .

**Waiter:**
Can I take your order?
Would you like . . .
Experiential Learning Cycle

Phase 3

Reflect

Students discuss how the role-play went, and their feelings during the role-play.
Think-Pair-Share

1) What did you like about the activity?
2) How was it similar to the last time you ordered food in a restaurant? How was it different?
3) What was difficult about ordering?
4) How did you feel during the role-play?
Experiential Learning Cycle

Apply

Phase 4

Students plan how to order food in “real life.”

Students think about how they might do things differently.
Apply: Example

Find the menu for your favorite restaurant online.
Imagine you’re ordering food.
Write down five specific things you would say when ordering:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Pop Quiz!
Imagine your students are doing a role-play for shopping at a market.

In which phase would students think about what went well or didn’t go well?

1. Prepare
2. Do
3. Reflect
4. Apply
Pop Quiz!
Imagine your students are doing a role-play for shopping at a market.

In which phase would they participate in the role-play?

1. Prepare
2. Do
3. Reflect
4. Apply
Pop Quiz!
Imagine your students are doing a role-play for shopping at a market.

In which phase would they learn new vocabulary and grammar?

1. Prepare
2. Do
3. Reflect
4. Apply
Pop Quiz!
Imagine your students are doing a role-play shopping at a market.

In which phase would they consider how to use the new language in their next visit to the market?

1. Prepare  
2. Do  
3. Reflect  
4. Apply
How about you?

What are some **benefits** of using experiential learning?
Benefits of Experiential Learning:

- Motivates students
- Creates positive self-image and confidence
- Leads to deeper learning and self awareness through reflection
- Improves other skills (in addition to language skills)
- Helps students transfer language skills to the “real world”
- Is compatible with many other approaches

(Knutson, 2003)
How about you?

What are some challenges of using experiential learning?
Challenges of Experiential Learning:

- Takes more time
- Requires training for teachers
- Requires different types of assessment
- Involves group/pair work

(Knutson, 2003)
Teaching Tips!

1. Make your **objectives clear**.
2. Create a **comfortable** environment for students.
3. Use **relevant, real, and engaging** activities.
4. Choose **appropriate activities** for your students.
5. When possible, give learners **choice** and **autonomy**.
6. Involve the **whole person**, including senses, feelings, and personalities.
7. Include opportunities for **reflection**.
Now let’s try creating a lesson plan together!
The Experiential Learning Cycle in ESL/EFL: Four Phases

1. Prepare
   Exposure Phase

2. Do
   Participation Phase

3. Reflect
   Internalization Phase

4. Apply
   Dissemination/Transfer Phase

(Koenderman, 2000)
Let’s try it together!

Step 1:
Think about the grammar point.
• How is it used in real life?
• In which situations would people use this grammar point?

**Grammar:** Imperatives/Commands

**Real-Life Uses:**
• **Giving directions/instructions** 🌟
• Giving orders
• Advising/requesting someone to do (or not do) something

**Activity:** Writing and following a recipe 🌟
Writing and Following a Recipe

I’ve brought in ingredients for making a salad. With a partner, choose your ingredients and write the steps for your salad below:

Ingredients:
- 
- 
- 
- 

Directions:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Now, let’s make it together in pairs!
Pause and Reflect

What makes this activity an experiential learning activity?
Experiential Learning = learning by doing!

Students are using English to write their recipes and make the food.
Let’s try it together!

Step 2:
Think about what students will need to know to complete the activity.
Prepare pre-activity materials/practice.

Writing and Following a Recipe:
• Read a recipe/watch a short cooking video
• Review key vocabulary/phrases⭐
• Act out a recipe or practice filling in verbs in a recipe first ⭐
**Prepare: Background Knowledge**

**Warm-up:**
Check the boxes for your opinion below. Then, discuss with a partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like cooking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always follow a recipe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when cooking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like trying new ingredients and recipes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a good cook.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepare: Vocabulary Review

Cooking Vocabulary:

Cut  Pour
Slice Stir
Rinse Bake
Mix  Fry
Fruit Salad:

Ingredients:
- 3 cups of Strawberries
- 2 cups of raspberries
- 6 kiwis
- 1 pineapple
- ¼ cup of honey
- 2 tsp lime zest
- 1 ½ tbsp lime juice

Directions:
1. _________ the strawberries in half.
2. _________ the raspberries.
3. __________ the kiwis into small pieces.
4. __________ the pineapple into large chunks.
5. In a separate bowl, __________ the honey, lime zest, and lime juice together.
6. __________ the dressing over the fruit and _________ together.
Let’s try it together!

Step 3
Add a review or reflection task to help students solidify the grammar point.

Examples:
• Review student mistakes/grammar from the activity.
• Have students reflect on what went well (or didn’t go well), what was easy/difficult about the activity, etc.
• Connect it to students’ past experiences.
• Have students think about new language they learned. ★
Imagine you’re a student and you’ve just completed the recipe writing activity. How would you answer the question below:

What new language did you learn while writing your recipes?
Reflect: New Language Word Wall

You could take student reflections and create a word wall like this!

Recipe Vocabulary

Ingredients
- Cucumber
- Bell Pepper
- Spinach
- Teaspoon

Measurements
- Cups
- Teaspoon

Verbs
- Chop
- Dice
- Stir

Recipes
- Recipe Vocabulary
- Ingredients
- Measurements
Let’s try it together!

Step 4
Link classroom learning to the “real world.”

Examples:
• Have students reflect on how they could use this in real life
• Have students reflect on how they could apply it to a different situation
• Ask students to plan what they will do in a real-life situation
Apply: Example Activity

Think about your favorite recipe.

What ingredients do you need and what cooking verbs would you use?

Write down three ingredients and three steps for the recipe. Then, share with a new partner:

Ingredients:
1. 
2. 
3. 

Steps:
1. 
2. 
3.
Lesson Plan: Writing a Recipe

Objective: Students will be able to use imperative verbs to write and follow a recipe.

Materials: Worksheets, vegetables/utensils for making salads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Warm-up</td>
<td>• Write and follow recipes</td>
<td>• Review vocabulary and grammar from lesson</td>
<td>• Write three ingredients and steps for a different recipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce vocabulary</td>
<td>• Share</td>
<td>• Create a word wall</td>
<td>• Share with partner/whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fill-in-the-blanks recipe worksheet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How could you assess students during this activity?
## Assessment: Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ingredients</strong></td>
<td>Ingredients are clearly listed with measurements.</td>
<td>Ingredients are listed without measurements.</td>
<td>No ingredients or measurements listed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps</strong></td>
<td>All necessary steps are included in recipe.</td>
<td>Recipe may be missing 1 or 2 steps.</td>
<td>No steps listed in recipe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>Recipe uses at least 3 cooking verbs and 3 new ingredient vocabulary words.</td>
<td>Recipe uses 1-2 cooking verbs and 1-2 new ingredient vocabulary words.</td>
<td>Recipe does not use new vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>Each recipe step uses imperative verbs in the correct form to give commands.</td>
<td>Recipe uses some imperatives to give commands, but has a few mistakes.</td>
<td>Recipe doesn’t use imperatives to give commands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Work</strong></td>
<td>Students work well together and stay on task.</td>
<td>Students work together and mostly stay on task.</td>
<td>Students don’t work well together or stay on task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Could also use self-evaluation, participation points, or formative assessments for activities.
How might you adapt this activity if you couldn’t involve food in-class?
Modifications/Adaptations

Have students act out the recipes without using real food

Have students create a cooking video outside of class to post on a class website (great for digital classes!)
Let’s try creating another lesson plan together!
Let’s try it together!

Step 1:
Think about the grammar point.
• How is it used in real life?
• In which situations would people use this grammar point?

Grammar: Be going to

Real-Life Uses:
• Future Plans ★
• Predictions
• Express that something is about to happen

Activity: Making a group travel itinerary ★
Example: Group Travel Itinerary

You are going to take a three-day trip with your classmates.
Fill out the table below with information for your trip.
Be ready to share your answers with the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where are you going to go?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are you going to pack?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you going to do there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you going to get there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you going to stay?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pause and Reflect

What makes this activity an experiential learning activity?
Experiential Learning = learning by doing!

Students are using English to create a real travel itinerary in groups.
Let’s try it together!

Step 2
Think about what students will need to know to complete the activity.
Prepare pre-activity materials/practice.

Group Travel Itinerary:
-Read Travel Brochures/Travel Itineraries
-Review Travel Vocabulary/grammar
-Read about a trip someone is planning to take☆
Prepare: Background Knowledge

Warm-up: Discuss the questions with a partner.
1. Describe your last vacation. Where did you go and what did you do?
2. Look at the picture. Would you like to take a vacation there? Why or why not?
3. What do you need to think about when planning a trip? Write down at least five things.
Hi John –

I’m so excited about my family trip to London next week. We’re going to fly, arriving early on Friday morning. We’re going to stay in the Marriott Hotel near Big Ben.

On the first day, we’re going to visit Parliament House and Buckingham Palace. I can’t wait to see the changing of the guards! On the second day, we’re going to ride the London Eye. We’re also going to walk around Hyde Park. The last day, we’re going to see St. Paul’s Cathedral and Kensington Palace.

The weather is nice this time of year, so I’m going to pack some shorts and t-shirts, along with some comfortable tennis shoes since we’re going to walk a lot! I’ll tell you all about it in school when we get back from vacation.

Your friend,
Tim
Let’s try it together!

Step 3
Add a review or reflection task to help students solidify the grammar point.

Examples:
• **Review difficult grammar from the activity.**
• Have students reflect on what went well (or didn’t go well), what was easy/difficult about the activity, etc.
• Connect it to students’ past experiences.
• Have students think about new language they learned.
Reflect: Example Activity

“Be going to” Contractions:
- I am going to = I’m going to
- He/she is going to = he’s/she’s going to
- You are going to = you’re going to
- We are going to = we’re going to
- They are going to = they’re going to

Examples from presentations:
- We are going to spend three days in Thailand.
  = We’re going to (gonna) spend three days in Thailand.
- We are going to go to the art museum downtown.
  = We’re going to (gonna) go to the art museum downtown.

Spoken English:
- Going to = gonna
Let’s try it together!

Step 4
Link classroom learning to the “real world.”

Examples:

• Have students reflect on how they could use this in real life
• **Have students reflect on how they could apply it to a different situation**
• Ask students to plan what they will do in a real-life situation
Apply: Example Activity

Work with a partner and write down three other situations in which you could use “be + going to.”

1. 
2. 
3. 

Other uses of “be + going to”
- Weekend plans: “My family’s going to go to the zoo on Sunday.”
- Plans for after class: “We’re gonna study for the test at our favorite café.”
- Talking about the weather: “It’s probably going to rain tomorrow.”
Lesson Plan: Group Travel Itinerary

**Objectives:** Students will be able to use “be going to” to make and present a travel itinerary in groups.

**Materials:** Reading worksheet, internet for research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td>Create and present travel itineraries</td>
<td>Review vocabulary and grammar from lesson</td>
<td>List other situations to use “be going to”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading worksheet</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How might you adapt this activity to make it more challenging for advanced learners?
Modifications/Adaptations

Have students create and present a more complicated itinerary with more details and vocabulary

Have students create an online brochure/advertisement for their trip (great for digital classes!)
Let’s Review!

Experiential Learning = learning by doing!

**Step 1:** Choose a real-life situation/use for the grammar point and create an activity that will give students the experience of using the grammar point in real-life.

**Step 2:** Prepare pre-activity materials/practice.

**Step 3:** Add a review or reflection task to help students solidify the grammar point.

**Step 4:** Link classroom learning to “real world.”

Adapt/modify activities to fit your class.
Pause and Reflect

Which activity will you try using with the experiential learning cycle?


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Thank you!

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Reflection Questions

1. What types of grammar activities do you, or could you, use to help your students connect the target language with real-life situations?

2. What aspects of learning are important to consider when preparing students to use grammar in authentic contexts?

3. Do you often allow students time to reflect on their learning performance after an activity? How might this practice help students develop as learners?