No-Prep Communicative Grammar Activities

As students become aware of a grammatical structure’s form and meaning, it is important to facilitate opportunities for them to use the target language in a communicative setting.

In this session, we will:

• examine how to create opportunities for students to personalize the content by engaging in dynamic, communicative grammar activities.

• explore ready-to-use activities for common grammar points at each proficiency level: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.
Stephanie Owens Upadhyay

Stephanie has over 10 years of TESOL experience, and she began her career as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Temuco, Chile. She has since taught (and learned!) in Turkey, India, and the United States. In her recent position as Director of Teacher Training and Academic Support at ELS, she provided professional development for teachers and directors, and led curriculum development and training projects. She is currently an English Language Specialist working with teachers in Ukraine.

Her professional interests include metacognition, student motivation, and increasing rigor in the classroom. Originally from Connecticut in the United States, Stephanie holds a CELTA and a Master’s degree in TESOL from Adelphi University.
Objectives

1. Participants will be able to identify features of the LEARN framework.

2. Participants will learn five grammar-focused activities to use in their classrooms.
Session Plan

- Explore what makes learning memorable
- Review the LEARN Framework
- No-Prep vs. No Plan
- Practical applications using LEARN
  - Advanced Grammar: Reported Speech
    - **Activity 1**: Rumor Mill
  - Intermediate Grammar: Passive Voice
    - **Activity 2**: Where Was It Made?
  - **Activity 3**: Fun Facts
  - Beginner Grammar: Superlatives
    - **Activity 4**: Internet Scavenger Hunt
    - **Activity 5**: Convince Me
- Recap and References
What makes a learning experience memorable?
What good memories of language learning do you have?

Consider specific activities that helped you remember concepts, vocabulary, and/or rules?
Learning Experience 1

Purpose of activity: Counting Practice

• Teacher poured colored toothpicks onto the floor.
• In groups, we collected two colors.
• At our desks, we divided our toothpicks into piles of one-hundred.
Learning Experience 2

Purpose of activity: Spanish Vocabulary Acquisition

• I read The Witches in English.
• I re-read the book in Spanish and looked at the pictures.
• I learned words like claws, wigs, masks.
Learning Experience 3

Purpose of activity: Identifying masculine and feminine nouns in Spanish

- Teacher hung posters of common suffixes around the room.
- We walked around and added words.
- We separated the posters into masculine/feminine.
- We created rules for identifying the gender of nouns.
What do you think made these learning experiences memorable?
• Novel
• Enjoyable
• Included repetition

• Linked to prior knowledge
• Enjoyable
• New words connected to pictures and L1

• Novel
• Linked to prior knowledge
• Vocab words connected to rules
The LEARN Framework
Link

Make a connection to **previous knowledge** or **personal experience**:

- Think of a time...
- What do you know about...
- Create your own example of...
Cultivate positive emotions:

• Interest
• Curiosity
• Humor
• Confidence
• Relevance
Anchor

Connect and organize **sets of information**:

- Concepts and images
- Mnemonic devices
- Graphic organizers
- Comparison of L1 and L2
- Form and meaning
- Movement and memory
Repeat and Reflect

Strengthen connections by reviewing concepts in small chunks:

• Reviewing concepts
• Reflecting on learning
• Quizzes & review games
Encourage students to pay attention by doing something in a **new way**: 

- New grouping
- New techniques
- New formats
- New location
Concept Check

Linking

Linking or connecting an idea to your experience or your prior knowledge

Anchoring

Summarizing learning by organizing and connecting sets of information
You will see two examples from a classroom.

Which one uses linking?

Which one uses anchoring?
As a class, students and teacher make a poster to compare the Simple Past and Past Continuous.

**Simple Past vs. Past Continuous**

**Simple Past**
- We use the **simple past** to talk about:
- Completed actions, habits and facts in the past.
- I went to the cinema yesterday.
- I always visited my grandparents in my summer holidays when I was little.
- I lived near Liverpool for a couple of years.

**Past Continuous**
- The **past continuous** is used to express:
- Interrupted actions, specific time as an interruption and parallel actions.
- I was watching TV when the phone rang.
- Last night at 7pm, I was having dinner.
- While she was doing her homework, her brother was playing football.
Students find pictures on their phones. They write captions to describe them using the simple past and past continuous.

- We were playing outside when the ice cream truck came.
- They were eating ice cream when I took the picture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARN</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anchor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat and Reflect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Novelty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What do we mean by “no prep”?
**“No-Prep,” but not “No Plan.”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No-Prep</th>
<th>A Thoughtful Plan</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• No copying, printing, cutting, or creating documents/slides</td>
<td>• May have deliberate groupings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Includes materials that are already available, or can be generated by students</td>
<td>• Has clear instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requires basic learning tools like pen/paper (and maybe a phone)</td>
<td>• Has models and examples ready</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Has a method for students to share responses as needed</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can be accessed or adjusted at any point during a lesson plan based on students’ needs</td>
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Practical Applications Using LEARN – 5 Activities
Advanced Grammar: Reported Speech
Activity 1: Rumor Mill

Students will be able to share information (specifically, rumors) that they’ve heard using reported speech.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity</th>
<th>Rumor Mill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level</strong></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar Focus</strong></td>
<td>Reported speech, mixed verb tenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocab Focus</strong></td>
<td>Celebrities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td>Whole class mingle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>25-30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Ask students about a recent event or a well-known person and write them on the board.

Let’s brainstorm well-known people!

- Beyoncé
- Ronaldo
- Michael Jordan
- Taylor Swift
**Step 2:** Invent information about one of the people on the list. You can encourage students to add to the list.

**Taylor Swift**
- She bought a castle in Scotland.
- She is going to run for president in 2024.
- She eats 18 avocados a day.

Get students to reflect on this information.

1. Is it exciting or shocking?
2. Where did you hear it?
3. Would you tell someone else?
4. Is it true?
Step 3: Introduce the term “rumor” and “rumor mill.”

Rumor: A widely shared story about a person or event without confirmation.

Rumor mill: A place that generates a lot of rumors. Tabloids, the internet, a high school cafeteria...
**Step 4:** Teacher reviews activity rules. Students write down **three** rumors about celebrities.

### Rules:
- Discuss celebrities only
- Stick to approved topics  
  - Salary  
  - Behavior at work  
  - Weird habits or hobbies  
  - Friendships  
- Off limits  
  - Romantic relationships  
  - Rude language

### Language Reminders:
- Use a mix of verb tenses. We’ve studied:  
  - present  
  - simple past  
  - present perfect  
  - future
Step 5: Students stand up and exchange rumors.
- Tell **five** people your rumors
- Repeat **five** new rumors you heard
- Listen to at least **eight** rumors

Beyoncé owns three airplanes.

Did you hear? Beyoncé owns three airplanes.
**Step 6:** Students work in groups to make a list of the rumors they heard, using reported speech.

“I heard that...Taylor Swift *had bought* a castle in Scotland.”

“Someone told me...Taylor Swift *was going to* run for President in 2024.”

“A little bird told me...Taylor Swift *ate* 18 avocados a day.”
Step 7: Teacher checks and corrects sentences for accuracy. Students actively reflect on the activity.

- **Grammar check**: Students use a grammar chart to see if they accurately converted their sentences to reported speech.

- **Quick Response**: Students vote on which rumor was the craziest.

- **Critical Thinking**: Students do research to disprove the rumors.

- **Speaking/Writing**: Students discuss or write about the negative effects of rumors.
Which parts of LEARN are applied to this activity?

Link
Enjoy
Anchor
Repeat & Reflect
Novelty
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anchor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat and Reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Novelty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intermediate Grammar: Passive Voice
Activity 2: Where was it made?

Students will be able to talk about the origin of objects using the passive voice and names of countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity</th>
<th>Where was it made?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Focus</td>
<td>Passive voice (was made/were made)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocab Focus</td>
<td>Clothing, classroom items, countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Materials        | Whiteboard  
Optional: Sticky notes or world map |
| Interaction      | Group work                  |
| Time             | 15-20 minutes               |
Step 1: Provide a model for students.

I’m going to tell you about my outfit.

My dress was made in Turkey.

My earrings were made in Australia.

My shoes were made in China.
Step 2: In small groups, students look at their clothes and school supplies to see where they were made.

Step 3: Each student writes five sentences following the model on the board.
Step 4: Students read their lists to the whole class.

Step 5: While listening, students take notes such as:
- Tally or write the item
- Mark a map
- Make a bar graph with post-its (can also write what item)
Step 6: Recap

• **Drill:** Students repeat what they remember.

• **Memory game:** Students pick a post-it note and return the “item” to its owner.

• **Critical Thinking:** What conclusions can we draw from our lists?
Which parts of LEARN are applied to this activity?

Link
Enjoy
Anchor
Repeat & Reflect
Novelty
LEARN

Link
Enjoy
Anchor
Repeat and Reflect
Novelty

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Activity 3: Fun Facts

Students will be able to share interesting facts about their country using the passive voice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity</th>
<th>Fun Facts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Focus</td>
<td>Passive voice, <em>optional</em>: superlatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocab Focus</td>
<td>List of verbs to describe places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Whiteboard, example fun facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Whole class mingle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>25-30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Make a list of verbs commonly used to describe a country.

- grow
- manufacture
- build
- discover
- invent
- make
- find
Step 2: Have students convert the verbs to the past participle.

- grow: grown
- manufacture: manufactured
- build: built
- discover: discovered
- invent: invented
- make: made
- hold: held
- find*: can be found

Step 3: Provide an example of a fun fact.

Every year, a new Christmas stamp is designed for the Post Office.

The oldest house in my town was built in 1730.
Step 4: Students use the word bank to write 3-5 fun facts about their town or country.

“The best pearls are cultivated in Thailand.”

“The largest clock face was built in Saudi Arabia.”

“The number 0 was invented in India.”

“Microchips are manufactured in Taiwan.”
Step 5: Students stand up and mingle and have to talk to at least three people to learn about their country.
Step 6: Recap Options

- **Make a choice**: Students *vote* on what country they would like to visit or learn more about based on what they heard.

- **Superlative summary**: Students *choose* the most interesting fact they heard.

- **Reflection**: Students *make* a chart on what they learned and what was reinforced.

- **Project**: Students can use their fun facts to *make* a PPT/video/poster about a country.
Learn

- Link
- Enjoy
- Anchor
- Repeat and Reflect
- Novelty
What fun facts would you like to share about your country?
Beginner Grammar: Superlatives
Activity 4: Internet Scavenger Hunt

Students will be able to use superlatives to ask and answer questions about a country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity</th>
<th>Internet Scavenger Hunt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Focus</td>
<td>Superlatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocab Focus</td>
<td>Countries, geography/weather terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>List of questions, Whiteboard, smartphones*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Pairs or small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>15-20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Step 1:** Give students list of questions about a country they might not know about. The questions should all use the superlative.

1. What’s the tallest mountain in Brazil?
2. What’s the rainiest place in Brazil?
3. What’s the most expensive city in Brazil?
4. What’s the longest river in Brazil?
5. What’s the most popular tourist attraction in Brazil?

**Step 2A:** In groups, students try to predict the answers.

**Step 2B:** They use their phones to look up answers using a search engine.
Step 3: In groups or pairs, students make their own set of questions about a different country.

Step 4: Groups/pairs exchange their lists and answer each other’s questions.

Step 5: Recap
- Superlative summary: Students share the most interesting fact they learned.
- Critical Thinking: Introduce the concept of Fact versus Opinion
Low-tech Adaptation

**Step 1:** Make the sample questions about your local area, so students are likely to know the answers.

**Step 2:** Tell students you’re going to read an article about a different place (the article should be pre-selected and contain answers to superlative questions).

**Step 3:** Students complete a KWL chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I know about Chile</th>
<th>Things I want to know about Chile</th>
<th>Things I learned about Chile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The driest desert is the Atacama.</td>
<td>What is the tallest mountain in Chile?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What other topics or grammar points would work for this Internet Scavenger Hunt?
Activity 5: Convince Me

Students will be able to use superlatives to persuade the teacher/a classmate to take them up on their suggestion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity</th>
<th>Convince Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Focus</td>
<td>Superlatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocab Focus</td>
<td>Activities, attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Small group “debate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>25-30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I’m planning on taking a vacation, but I haven’t decided where to go.

**Step 1:** Ask students for their input.

- Other possible decisions:
  - Where to live
  - Phone to buy
  - Car to buy
  - Which sports team to support
  - Where to shop
  - A pet to get
Step 2: Brainstorm with students useful adjectives they can use and/or categories to talk about.

Adjectives:
- beautiful
- expensive/cheap
- nice/friendly
- best
- delicious

Categories:
- food
- shopping
- activities
- safety
- people
Step 3: In groups of four, students pick a city and/or country to write about.

Step 4: Individually, they write five sentences about the place.

Step 5: They combine their sentences into a list of ten, prioritizing and correcting.

Istanbul has the most delicious food.

The Grand Bazaar is one of the largest markets in the world.
Step 6: Groups take turns sharing sentences in a debate style, and the teacher decides where to go.

Large Class option: two groups present to another group for a vote, rather than the teacher.

Step 7: Recap:
Students listen to each group presentation and pick a place to go.
Extension: They research the place and create a travel plan using *be going to* to talk about their itinerary.
Recap and References
Which activity are you most excited to try?

• Rumor Mill
• Where was it made?
• Fun Facts
• Internet Scavenger Hunt
• Convince Me
References


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