



# Discovering Grammar with Consciousness-raising Tasks



Heather Benucci



AMERICAN ENGLISH

# + Grammar Lesson Planning

Students  
need to  
know the  
rules, right?

How can I make  
grammar less  
boring?

How can I  
make  
grammar  
more student-  
centered?

Inductive  
versus  
deductive?

My institution  
prefers we  
teach grammar  
like this.....

PPP, TBLT,  
or  
something  
else?



# + Our mission today



- We won't
  - Answer all of the questions on the previous slide 😊
  
- We will
  - Review concepts related to grammar teaching and Second Language Acquisition (SLA)
  - Explore Consciousness-raising tasks (CR tasks)
    - What are they?
    - Why use them?
    - How to use them?
  - Leave with information about a technique you can try in your classrooms

# + Grammar: to teach, or not to teach?

- Grammar translation method = YES, teach grammar
- Comprehensible input only (Krashen, 1982) = NO, don't teach it
- Communicative approaches with grammar instruction = YES, teach it
  - P-P-P
  - Task-based Language Teaching
    - Grammar teaching often occurs while involved in meaning-based tasks

Current consensus in the SLA community: some form of grammar instruction aids L2 acquisition and can speed it up (e.g., Norris and Ortega, 2000, Ellis, 2006)

# + The million-dollar question

Is there a BEST way to teach grammar?

Answer: SLA experts and practitioners don't know

- Second language acquisition processes are:
  - Hidden
  - Individualized



# + Where does that leave us?



L2 grammar acquisition is “...**a complex process** and almost certainly can be **assisted best by a variety of approaches**. But what is important is to **recognize what options are available** and what the theoretical **rationales** for these options are...”

– R. Ellis, 2006, p. 103

# + Where does that leave us?



In other words: variety is the spice of life **AND**  
grammar teaching!



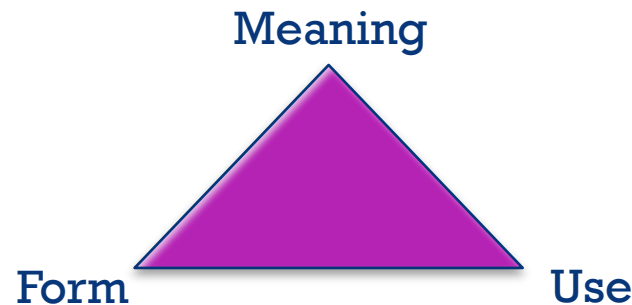
# + Grammar & SLA: concepts review



Aims of grammatical instruction = drawing attention to a grammatical feature

- Help students process, comprehend, and/or produce it

GOAL: students internalize the target form for use in meaningful communication



Drawing attention promotes **NOTICING**, an aid to acquisition



# + Grammar & SLA: concepts review

## ■ Types of knowledge

- **Implicit:** procedural, unconscious, acquired
- **Explicit:** declarative, conscious, can be learned/stated

- Example: third person singular –s

I/You/We/They like coffee.      Tina likess tea.

## ■ Explicit grammatical knowledge can become implicit knowledge

- Repeated and varied exposure
- Meaningful contexts

# + Grammar & SLA: concepts review

## Approaches in Grammar Instruction

Match the approach to the definition.

Deductive approach

?

1.) A rule is provided  
first;  
examples/practice  
follow

?

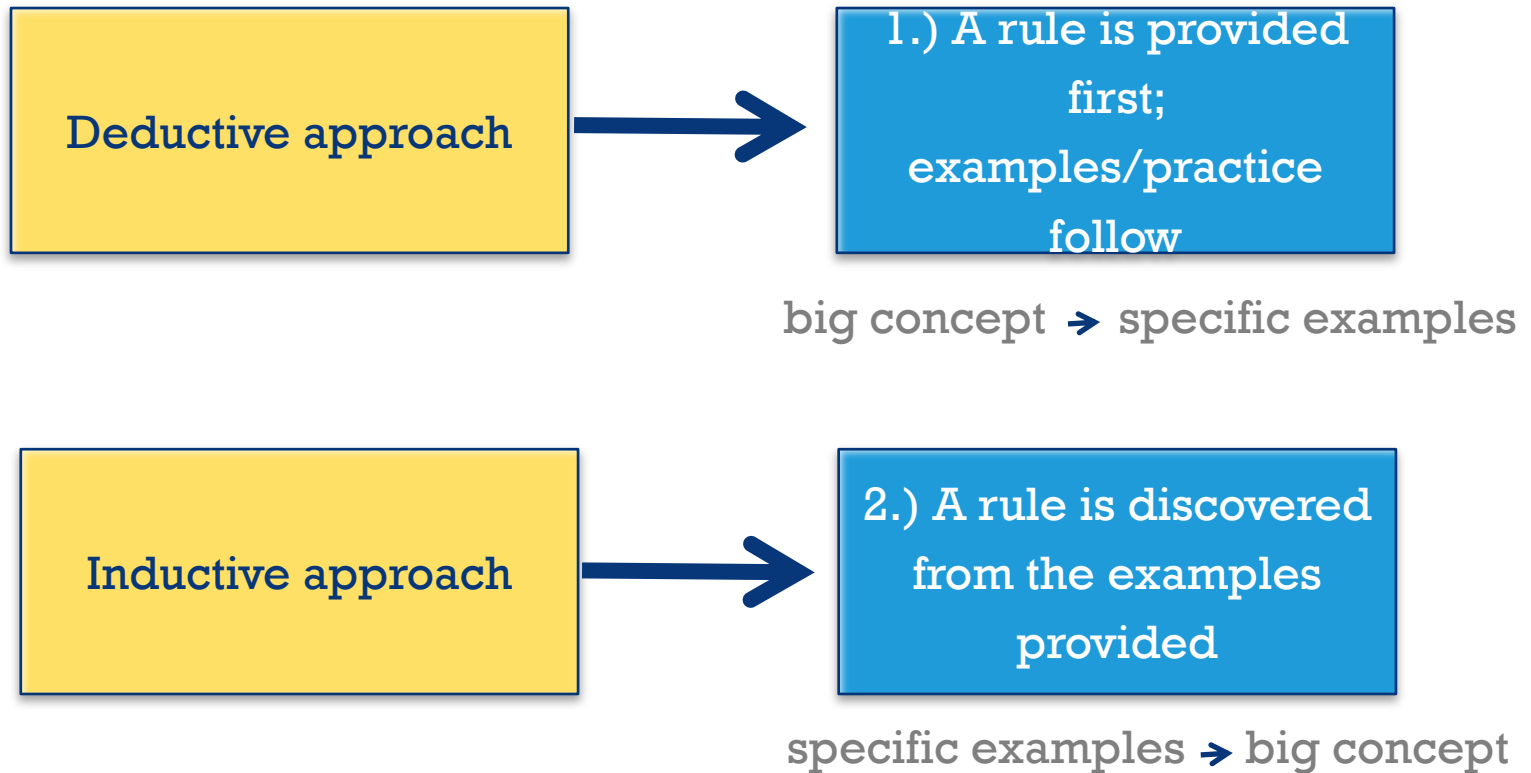
Inductive approach

?

2.) A rule is discovered  
from the examples  
provided

# + Grammar & SLA: concepts review

## Choices in Grammar Instruction



# + Inductive vs. Deductive



- Neither is superior – both can be effective forms of instruction
- Deductive approaches are more commonly used than inductive
  - Why might this be?
  - Share your ideas in the chat box
- Today we are going focus on one grammar instruction technique:

## Consciousness-raising Tasks

Let's do one together.....



# CR Task Example



- Students: university academic writing (EAP)
- Lesson focus: academic voice, formality in academic writing



## In each pair, what do you notice about the underlined words? (pair discussion)



1. The program was set up to improve maternal health in developing countries

2. The program was established to improve maternal health in developing countries.

1. Researchers found out adult second language acquisition processes follow predictable stages.

2. Researchers determined adult second language acquisition processes follow predictable stages.

1. America's economic growth rate has been fluctuating for the last five years.

2. America's economic growth rate has been going up and down for the last five years.

1. The aim of pronunciation instruction is not to completely get rid of the learner's accent.

2. The aim of pronunciation instruction is not to completely eliminate the learner's accent.

Reminder: circled items are LESS formal



Can you develop a rule based on observations?



Possible answer:

In academic writing, multi-word verbs (phrasal verbs) can often seem more informal than single word verbs

# + Extra Classroom Context



Prior to the CR Task: deductive, whole class discussion of other guidelines related to formality

In-task interactions:

- Identify the less formal sentence – individual
- Check results – whole class
- Compare the sentences examining the verbs – small groups
- Discuss findings and implications – whole class

After CR Task: discussion

- This guideline isn't true 100% of the time
- Ss may see “verb – formality” feedback; add to self-editing checklists

Total activity time: 10 minutes



# + Describing the CR Task

Questions	Answers
1. Was the task deductive or inductive?	Inductive
2. Did the task develop implicit or explicit knowledge?	Explicit
3. Did the task isolate a language feature?	Yes – verbs forms and formality
4. Did you receive examples that included the target language (TL)?	Yes – pairs of sentences
5. Did you use brain power while examining the examples to complete the task?	Yes – compare/contrast, analysis
6. Did you develop a rule about the TL?	Yes
7. Did you have to produce the TL?	No
8. Might you <b>notice</b> the key aspect of the TL in future input or your own output?	I hope so 😊

# + Consciousness-Raising (CR) Activities

- Primarily inductive
- Develop explicit, declarative knowledge
- During task: TL performance is not the goal, TL awareness is
  - The target language feature is **isolated**
  - Learners receive **data** that illustrate characteristics of the target feature
  - Learners use **intellectual effort** to understand the feature
  - Incomplete understanding leads to **clarification** through more data, description, or explanation
  - Learners **might develop a rule** to describe the feature

# + Consciousness-Raising (CR) Activities

- Immediate TL use is not the focus, but CR tasks...
  - Can include opportunities for student-student communication
  - Can be used in lessons along with communicative practice
    - Warm up
    - Presentation
    - Change of pace in lesson
    - Review
    - Use alongside implicit practice
- Metalinguistic knowledge is not required, but can help
- Most effective with intermediate and above learners



“CR...can be seen as **guided problem solving**. Learners are encouraged to **notice** particular features of the language, to **draw conclusions** from what they notice and to **organize their view of language....**”

- D. Willis & J. Willis, 1996



# + Benefits of CR Tasks

- Can you list some possible benefits of CR tasks in the chat box?

CR tasks....

- Promote noticing, increased awareness of target form in input and output
- Can assist with self-monitoring
- Can involve cooperative learning
- Appeal to analytical learners
- Can be motivating – solving a puzzle
- Encourage critical thinking
- Encourage learner autonomy
- Offer change of pace



Remember: **variety** is the spice of life AND grammar teaching!



# + CR Task: *For* and *Since*



- **Students:** Adult learners, intermediate
- **Theme:** Work experience
- **Objective:** Students will be able to...
  - Use, orally and in writing, the **present perfect with *for* and *since*** to describe events that began in the past and continue to the present  
*I have worked at the hospital for 3 years.*
  - Distinguish situations in which *for* and *since* are grammatically appropriate (amount of time vs. a point in time)

# + Lesson Flow



- Homework review
- Inductive CR Task: *for/since*; small groups
- Whole-class deductive presentation: present perfect
- Develop a work experience list: individual work
- Short interviews using work list: pair work
- Next lesson: reviewing job ads and selecting applicants; group work



## Work Experience

### Bob's Family Restaurant Employees



<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date joined</u>	<u>Length of time</u>
Marta	Waitress	2008	3 years
William	Cook	2001	10 years
Sally	Manager	1998	13 years
Robert	Janitor	2006	6 months

**Part 1.** Study the sentences about the employees. When is '*for*' used and when is '*since*' used?

- The waitress has been working at the restaurant *for* 3 years.
- William has been working at the restaurant *since* 2001.
- Sally has been working at the restaurant *for* 13 years.
- The janitor has been working at the restaurant *since* February.

**Part 2.** Which of the following sentences are ungrammatical (not allowed in English)? Why? Put an 'X' next to the ungrammatical sentences.

- Marta has been working at the restaurant for 2008.
- The cook has been working at the restaurant since 10 years.
- The manager has been working at the restaurant since 1998.
- Robert has been working at the restaurant for 6 months.



**Part 1.** Study the sentences about the employees. When is '*for*' used and when is '*since*' used?

- a. The waitress has been working at the restaurant *for* 3 years.
- b. William has been working at the restaurant *since* 2001.
- c. Sally has been working at the restaurant *for* 13 years.
- d. The janitor has been working at the restaurant *since* February.

**Part 2.** Which of the following sentences are ungrammatical (not allowed in English)? Why? Put an 'X' next to the ungrammatical sentences.

- X a. Marta has been working at the restaurant for 2008.
- X b. The cook has been working at the restaurant since 10 years.
- c. The manager has been working at the restaurant since 1998.
- d. Robert has been working at the restaurant for 6 months.

**Part 3.** Try and make up a rule to explain when is '*for*' and '*since*' are used.

---

---

---

**Part 4.** Make up two sentences about a.) how long you have worked in your current job OR b.) how long you have lived in your home. Use '*for*' and '*since*'.

---

---

---

---



## CR task: *for/since*



- Option to provide more scaffolding for rule formation with matching or fill in the blank



- With this activity we...
  - Started the lesson with inductive, moved to deductive
  - Primed students to notice language needed for later activities
  - Engaged thinking skills: analysis, hypothesis building, comparison



# CR Task: Comparative Adjectives



- **Audience:** teens, intermediate learners
- **Theme:** shopping for electronics, getting a good deal
- **Objective:** Recognize and produce comparative adjectives (orally and/or in writing)
  - Given example sentences, discover general rules for using *adjective + -er/-r than* versus *more + adjective than*
  - *taller* versus *more efficient*



# Lesson Flow



- Situational presentation to elicit comparative forms; whole class
  - Teacher shows pictures of smart phone and feature phones
  - No grammar explanation; teacher records Ss' suggestions on board
- CR task; pair work
  - Ss work out rules for forming comparatives
- Communicative task; group work
  - Ss review and evaluate real electronics advertisements; must decide what to buy and why; present decisions to the class

## Comparative Adjectives

A. Look at the advertisements and read the sentences. Write the base form for the comparative adjective after each sentence.

**Viza 26" LCD TV**

500 cd/m2 brightness  
excellent clear picture

**\$499.99**



**Polara 19" LCD TV**

300 cd/m2 brightness

**\$299.99**



Diaz, et al. (2010), p. 117

### Base Form

1. The Viza is **brighter** than the Polara.
2. The Viza is **clearer** than the Polara.
3. The Viza is **fancier** than the Polara.
4. The Viza is **larger** than the Polara.
5. The Viza is **more modern** than the Polara.
6. The Viza is **more expensive** than the Polara.

1. *bright*
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

clear  
fancy  
large  
modern  
expensive



**Dirt Angel**  
good performance  
2-year warranty  
15 lbs.  
**\$59.99**

**Haber**  
powerful performance  
5-year warranty  
25 lbs.  
**\$99.99**



Diaz, et al. (2010), p. 117

### Base Form

1. The Dirt Angel is **cheaper** than the Haber.
2. The Dirt Angel is **smaller** than the Haber.
3. The Haber warranty is **longer** than the Dirt Angel warranty.
4. The Haber is **heavier** than the Dirt Angel.
5. The Haber is **more useful** than the Dirt Angel.
6. The Haber is **more powerful** than the Dirt Angel.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

cheap  
small  
long  
heavy  
useful  
powerful

**B. Put each base form adjective into the correct column, then write the comparative form next to it.**

1-syllable base	2-syllable base	3-syllable base
<i>bright</i> → <i>brighter</i>		
clear - clearer	fancy - fancier	powerful - more powerful
large - larger	modern - more modern	expensive - more expensive
cheap - cheaper	useful - more useful	
small - smaller	heavy - heavier	
long - longer		

**C. Use the information in your chart to guess which three comparative forms are correct and which three are incorrect. Put an 'X' next to the incorrect forms.**

- \_\_\_ 1. The Pacific cell phone plan is cheaper than the Ex-tel plan.
- \_\_\_ 2. The Pacific plan is more convenient than the Ex-tel plan.
- X** 3. Ex-tel cell phones **are moderner** than Pacific phones.
- X** 4. Pacific customers are **more happy** than Ex-tel customers.
- \_\_\_ 5. Pacific cell phone reception is clearer than Ex-tel reception.
- X** 6. Pacific customer service is **efficienter** than Ex-tel customer service.

**D. Complete the rules for making and using comparative adjectives:**

1. For one-syllable adjectives like *clear*, add the ending **-er** to the word.  
If the one-syllable word ends in 'e' like *large*, add the ending **-r** to the word.
2. For two-syllable adjectives that end in 'y' like *happy*, change the ending to **-ier**.
3. For other adjectives with two or more syllables like *convenient*, add the word **more** before the adjective.
4. Use the word **than** after the adjective when comparing two things.

clear  
fancy  
large  
modern  
expensive  
cheap  
small  
long  
heavy  
useful  
powerful



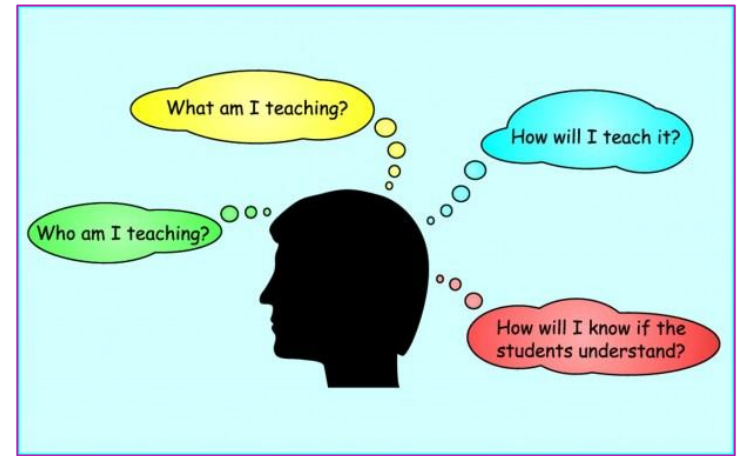
# CR Task: Comparative Adjectives



- In this task
  - Students worked collaboratively
  - Students used classification and comparison skills
  - Students are primed for communicative activity
  
- Correct production / immediate acquisition is not expected
  - Students' awareness raised through noticing the form and expending mental effort

# + Creating a CR task

- ❑ Select the target language
- ❑ Decide what aspect you want to highlight
- ❑ Select a text or situation to develop the sample data
  - ❑ Can you use an authentic, real-world text?
- ❑ Decide how students should manipulate the data to understand the target language
  - ❑ See D. Willis and J. Willis' suggested list of options (on the Ning)
  - ❑ Are you provided level-appropriate scaffolding?
- ❑ Decide if you want students to state a rule
- ❑ Decide how / if you want to link the task to other parts of a lesson
- ❑ Consider assessment





# + CR Tasks: Options

## ?? Definition Matching ??

Identify 6

Classify 3

Hypothesis building/checking 5

Cross-language exploration 1

Recall 4

Reference training 2

1. Students look for similarities and differences between patterns in their language and English
2. Students use reference resources during discovery activities: dictionaries, grammars, and study guides
3. Students sort a set of data according to similarities and differences
4. Students are asked to remember and reconstruct elements of a text to highlight significant features of the text
5. Students make a generalization about TL or asked to check a generalization against more language data
6. Students search a set of data to discover a pattern or usage

# + CR Tasks: Options

Identify

Classify

Hypothesis building/checking

Cross-language exploration

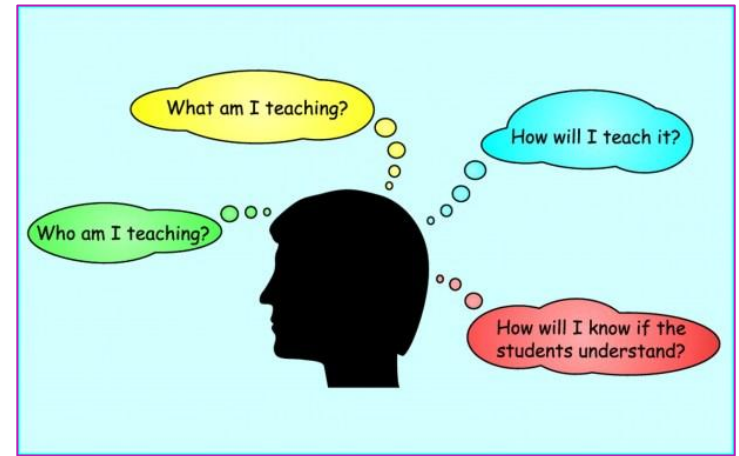
Recall

Reference training

6. Students search a set of data to discover a pattern or usage
3. Students sort a set of data according to similarities and differences
5. Students make a generalization about TL or asked to check a generalization against more language data
1. Students look for similarities and differences between patterns in their language and English
4. Students are asked to remember and reconstruct elements of a text to highlight significant features of the text
2. Students use reference resources during discovery activities: dictionaries, grammars, and study guides

# + Creating a CR task

- ❑ Select the target language
- ❑ Decide what aspect you want to highlight
- ❑ Select a text or situation to develop the sample data
  - ❑ Can you use an authentic, real-world text?
- ❑ Decide how students should manipulate the data to understand the target language
  - ❑ See D. Willis and J. Willis' suggested list of options (on the Ning)
  - ❑ Are you provided level-appropriate scaffolding?
- ❑ Decide if you want students to state a rule
- ❑ Decide how / if you want to link the task to other parts of a lesson
- ❑ Consider assessment



# + To sum up



- There is no one “best” way to teach grammar
- Equip yourselves with a variety of techniques
  - Deductive and inductive approaches
- CR tasks are one more resource in your teaching toolkit
  - Inductive; develops explicit knowledge
  - Students examine a data set and draw conclusions about language
  - Promote noticing

# + A final thought



“....Teachers not only want learners to **achieve the self-discovery of grammar rules** encouraged by CR [tasks], but also the **self-expression of them in communication.**”

- Crivos & Luchini, 2012, p.143



Thank you!



**A E** AMERICAN ENGLISH  
[americanenglish.state.gov](http://americanenglish.state.gov)