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Teaching Grammar in Academic English Courses

The aim of English Language Courses (ESP - English for specific purposes - courses) at university level is to prepare students for reading academic texts and to tackle the basics of academic writing. Such courses are usually two-term courses, comprising 60 teaching hours per course at the most. The classes are large, frequently of more than 50 students, and multilevel as far as the students’ linguistic competence of English as a Foreign Language is concerned.

In the workshop, the author will share her ideas on what grammar to teach and how to teach it so that it would be useful to students in their future encounter with authentic academic texts. Comments and criticism are expected and welcome.

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The university EFL courses

- the last EFL classes within the official educational system

- aim:
  - reading academic texts
  - simple writing tasks
  - preparation for an encounter with authentic academic texts
  - an autonomous & competent student

- time:
  - short

- students:
  - multilevel
  - near beginners - advanced

EFL in Academic Context

- primarily - text & discourse
- still - some grammar needs to be taught
Questions and (possible) answers

How to bridge the gap between what they know and what they need?

How to help them cope with academic texts they (will) encounter?

☑ use what they already know
☑ get them to think
☑ let them see and understand the underlying structure
☑ let them understand how texts function

What grammar to teach?

☑ The grammar related to the SENTENCE
Sentences are the building blocks of texts.

How to teach grammar?

☑ simplifications to reveal the STRUCTURE beneath the actual wording
☑ metaphors
☑ not much theory
☑ emphasis on the logical aspect of language
☑ active student participation
  (thinking about problems, drawing conclusions)
☑ demonstrating how to use grammar
  (grammar as useful and relevant to their studies)
WHAT (EXACTLY)

1. **Word classes**
2. **Sentence functions & sentence structure**
3. **Chunks performing basic stc. functions**
4. **Clause vs. sentence**
5. **Verb: finite vs. non-finite; Tenses: form**
6. **Simple connectives**
7. **Sentence analysis**

8. **Noun groups**
9. **Relative clauses, reduced**
10. **Other details relevant to academic texts**
   - N-V concord & sg. vs. pl.
   - (a) few/little
   - etc.
**How (Exactly)**

1. *Word classes*

Lexical/content words

vs.

Grammatical words

Their respective functions within the sentence

------------------------------------

The problem of twins
How (Exactly)

2 Sentence functions & sentence structure

Basic sentence functions: jobs

Basic sentence structure
Example 1: Building a sentence:

Students read books.

Educated **students** often **read** good **books**.

Well educated **students** fairly **often** read very good **books**.

Quite well educated **students** fairly often read very good **books**.

However, quite well educated **students** fairly often read very good **books**.
HOW (EXACTLY)

3 Chunks performing basic stc functions

Building blocks performing sentence functions
Little people working at certain positions

FORMS

❖ one word
❖ phrase (group)
❖ clause (NB NOT Verb)

◆ equals (no hierarchy at work)
❖ some special phrases / groups:
  noun groups
  gerund, participial, prepositional, to-infinitive phrases

4 Clause vs. sentence

• Punctuation
• No. of verbs ⇛
  One clause = one predicate = one verb
## How (Exactly)

### 5 Verb: finite vs. non-finite; Tenses: FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-FINITE</th>
<th>FINITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
<td>participles infinitives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Stc. function** | **Adj**
  | **Adv**
  | **N** | **V(P) only & always** |
| **Other** | Remember their verbal origin: eg take objects | time (PrPsF) voice (ActPass) aspect (SPrPf) |
How (Exactly)

Verb: Tenses: Form

- FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>AUXILIARY</th>
<th>MAIN VERB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finite</td>
<td>non-finite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHOICE</td>
<td>determined</td>
<td>any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEANING</td>
<td>grammatical</td>
<td>lexical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Progress: Be + Present Participle
- Passive: Be + Past Participle
- Perfect: Have + Past Participle
- Simple: Do + Infinitive
- Etc.

- FUNCTION
6 Simple connectives

and

or

but

7 Sentence analysis

1 Making up sentences

2 Analysing a more complicated sentence

Example 2

On the other hand, quite well educated students, patiently sitting in this classroom, who buy books with their own pocket money, read carefully evaluated books of good quality borrowed from the local library only from time to time.
Example 2, cont. (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ph</td>
<td>Adv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ph</td>
<td>Adj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cl</td>
<td>Adj</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, quite well educated students patiently sitting in this classroom, who buy books with their own pocket money, read carefully evaluated books of good quality borrowed from the local library only from time to time.
On the other hand, quite well educated students, patiently sitting in this classroom, who buy books with their own pocket money, read carefully evaluated books of good quality borrowed from the local library only from time to time.
On the other hand, quite well educated students patiently sitting in this classroom, who buy books with their own pocket money, read carefully evaluated books of good quality borrowed from the local library only from time to time.
Example 2, cont. (4)

On the other hand, students who buy books with their own pocket money carefully evaluated from time to time, are of good quality books, which are borrowed from the local library. Only patients sitting in this classroom carefully sit, with books read.
Example 2, cont. (5)

who buy books with their own pocket money

with their own pocket money

with their own pocket money

with their own pocket money

with their own pocket money

with their own pocket money

with their own pocket money
Example 2, cont (6)
Examples 3, 4, 5, 6

Changes in methods training may have broader implications for changes in research contexts of our discipline since current emphases seem to reflect themes in the structure of contemporary sociology and grant funding, its rewards, short turn-around time, quick publication, and individual academic entrepreneurship.

Plato assumed that forms, unavailable to sense, were far removed from materiate things. In his scheme they constituted, through dialectical organization, a transcendent realm of being set apart from, indeed posed in opposition to, the changing, moving world of physical particulars.

(When science operates without a sensitive conscience about the influence of its discoveries on the life of the world, it has excluded values from information.) This omission finds expression in the yearnings of those who feel lost in an age committed to technological progress and which seeks solutions to human problems in technology and economics.

By these means, and with in-depth examples from a large range of major works from all periods, the book shows how it is possible for the student to enter the often seemingly impenetrable world of a text and be able to make potentially original interpretations of it without removing its life.