Grammar Teaching

Appropriate grammar-focusing techniques:

1. Are embedded in meaningful, communicative contexts,
2. Contribute positively to communicative goals,
3. Promote accuracy within fluent, communicative language,
4. Do not overwhelm students with linguistic terminology,
5. Are as lively and intrinsically motivating as possible

When and how to teach grammar?

- Both form* and meaning should be emphasized**; learners need to have the opportunity to practice forms in communicative tasks.
- Focus more strongly on forms that are problematic for learners.
- Explicit (direct) grammar teaching is more effective at the intermediate to advanced levels than beginning levels
- Attend to both input-based (listening, reading) and output-based (speaking, writing) grammar.
- Both deductive and inductive approaches can be useful, depending on the context and purpose of instruction.
- Unplanned and incidental focus on form is valuable in that it treats errors that occur while learners are engaged in meaningful communication.
- Corrective feedback can facilitate acquisition if it involves a mixture of implicit and explicit feedback.
- Separate grammar lessons and grammar integrated into communicative activities are both appropriate, depending on the context.

How to enhance grammatical explanations:

- Keep your explanations brief and simple. Use the mother tongue if students cannot follow an explanation in the target language.
- Use charts and other visuals whenever possible to graphically depict grammatical relationships.
- Illustrate with many clear, unambiguous examples.
- Try to account for varying cognitive styles among your students. For example, analytical learners will have an easier time picking up on grammatical explanations than will holistic learners.
- Do not get yourself (and students!) tied up in knots over so-called exceptions to rules.
- If you don't know how to explain something (for instance, if a student asks you about a point of grammar and you are not sure of the rule), do not risk giving false information that you may have to retract later, which will cause even more embarrassment. Rather, tell students you will research that point and bring an answer back the next day.

References

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.

*In language learning and teaching, *form* means grammar structures, vocabulary items, and pronunciation points that are targeted directly or indirectly by teachers and learners.

**Studies show that learners cannot focus on form and meaning at the same time because their memory is limited. Communicative tasks tend to make learners focus on meaning, which would hinder learners from focusing on form. Therefore, learners' attention should be directed to forms from time to time. Focusing on form and meaning in a balanced way will enhance fluency (from focusing on meaning) and accuracy (from focusing on form) of language learners.