

Teaching Grammar to Beginners

Things to do

1. Use pictures, diagrams, video clips, and real materials/events as scaffolding as much as possible.
2. Make explanations simple and clear.
3. Design various meaningful activities through which learners can practice the grammatical points as much as possible.
4. During the activities, bear in mind the grammatical points and be sure to draw their attention to the grammatical points, if necessary.
5. When using reading materials, the grammatical points can be bolded so that the learners can pay attention to them for comprehension.
6. Try to maintain the dynamic interplay between communication-oriented class and grammar-focused class.
7. If learners are adults, a deductive way of teaching—explanation of the grammar rule first and practices later—can be more effective, because adult learners are good at deductive way of thinking and analyzing information. When you have learners analyze language information, start with pair work or group work first. Remember: they are beginners even if they are adults.
8. If learners are young, an inductive way of teaching—various types of mini-activities first and brief checking of their comprehension of the rule later—might be better, because they tend to learn second or foreign languages just like their mother tongues. While the young learners are exposed to various types of fun activities for a grammatical point, they learn the grammatical points naturally through repetition.

Things not to do

1. Don't use technical grammar terms such as clause, subordinate, conditionals, and tenses. If you already teach your students what subject, verb, and objects are for very basic grammatical points, you may use them. Other than that,

- don't go too deep. At this level, long grammar explanations might not benefit the learners.
2. Don't think grammar is not important for beginners. Grammar is important for learners of every level to become better communicators. The point is that learners should not be overwhelmed with grammatical rules at this stage of learning. Be strategic and wait for the best timing.
 3. Don't stick to target-language-only policy, believing that the more input learners get, the more they will learn the language. Even if this is true, using the learners' language briefly for grammar learning can be highly effective for beginners or even intermediate-level learners.

References

- Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.