

Course- M.A EDUCATION
PAPER- VII
SEMESTER- 2nd
Topic- TEACHING
GRAMMAR :NEW TYPES
ACTIVITIES AND GAMES.



UNIT 18 TEACHING GRAMMAR : NEW TYPE ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Advantages of Grammar Games
- 18.3 Grammar Games
- 18.4 Grammar Practice Activities
- 18.5 Guidelines for Using Grammar Games/Grammar Practice Activities
- 18.6 Types of Grammar Games
- 18.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.8 Suggested Readings
- 18.9 Answers

18.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall learn the following :

- a) What are grammar (GGs) and grammar practice activities (GPAs)?
- b) The usefulness of GGs and GPAs in the ESL classroom.
- c) We shall also look at a number of GS and GPAs.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

Most of us do not have very pleasant memories of grammar classes during our school days. Except for the few gifted grammar 'whiz kids' who revelled in grammar, the average students generally used to dread, if not hate grammar. Perhaps this is due to the traditional approach to teaching grammar. The general pattern was to present the rules of grammar first, followed by a number of exercises which were mechanical and monotonous. Further, even if the students were able to do all the exercises correctly, there was no guarantee that they would be able to read and write English well solely based on their mastery of grammar.

Recently there has been a lot of rethinking on the teaching of grammar. Changes have been introduced with specific reference to two major issues:

- a) making grammar learning enjoyable;
- b) making grammar help learners to read and write better.

Before we proceed further let us understand what is meant by the terms "Grammar games" and "grammar practice activities".

Grammar Games (GG)

Grammar games are similar to play-way methods of teaching: Practice in important areas of grammar is provided through games. So while students think they are just playing a game, in fact they are unconsciously getting practice in a particular grammatical structure. Learning can, thus, become fun.

Grammar Practice Activities, as the term implies, provide practice in grammar. The practice will be made interesting and not mechanical like traditional exercises. Further these activities will provide opportunities for learners to use language for communication. As Earl Stevick cautions us, "Though a student may repeat over and over the forms of the language, in doing so he may not be using the language."

The GGs and GPAs help learners to engage in active language use - while learners are producing structures which they should practise, they are at the same time actively involved in communication. They listen, speak, understand and interpret. This improves their communicative competence.

18.2 ADVANTAGES OF GRAMMAR GAMES

1. Games help to motivate learners and sustain their interest.

As we pointed out earlier, grammar is serious study and requires hard work : Grammar exercises, though useful, may become mechanical and prevent learners from becoming actively involved. But the spirit of competition generated by a game can make them participate enthusiastically. In fact they master language structures, without being aware of the fact they are doing so. As modern language experts say, language is best learnt when the focus is not on language, but on meaning.

2. Games help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

While playing the game it is necessary for learners to listen to and understand what others say and also speak. In other words, games provide meaningful practice in real life contexts. By making the language convey information and opinion, games provide the key feature of 'drill' with the opportunity to understand the working of language as living communication. The 'quality' of the practice provided by these games is much richer than the amount or 'quantity' of practice provided by traditional grammar exercises.

3. Games provide practice in all the four skills : reading, writing, listening and speaking.
4. Games are useful in all the stages of teaching/learning sequences - that is presentation, practice, re-combination and free use of language. They can also be designed to suit various levels: primary, secondary or tertiary.
5. Games also have a diagnostic role: while the students play the games, the teacher could quietly observe the students' performance and identify their strengths and weaknesses. This feedback can prove very valuable to teachers for further planning of their teaching.
6. Games provide situations of genuine information gap/opinion gap. What is information gap? We speak or write because we want to pass on information or convey an opinion which the listener might be interested in. If the listener is familiar with the information or is of the same opinion, there is no gap and s/he will probably switch off. The information may seem terribly obvious. In many language classes, there is no information gap at all and opinions are rarely asked for. When the teacher asks the student, for instance, "Where is the book?" the student knows that the teacher knows the answer! The teacher is more interested in the form than the content of what the learner says. In grammar games, on the other hand, there is always a genuine information/opinion gap. This makes the game more interesting and life-like.

18.3 GRAMMAR GAMES

In this section we shall present to you a few grammar games.

Game 1: What am I doing?

Level: Secondary

Grammar: Present continuous tense

Procedure: Write a number of statements which describe different interesting actions, on different slips of paper. For example:

1. You are trying to keep awake in a boring class.
2. You are eating noodles with a fork.
3. You are trying to get change from your pocket in a crowded bus.
4. You are trying to thread a needle while travelling in an autorickshaw.
5. You are trying to switch off an alarm clock, lying in bed in the dark.

47

Teaching Writing and Grammar

Now ask students to volunteer each time to pick up a slip and act out the command. Ask the class to guess what action is being performed. In their attempts to guess they would come out with a number of sentences in the present continuous tense. Repeat this with another volunteer. This will give your learners a great deal of practice in the use of the present continuous tense. Compare this with a traditional exercise.

Change the verbs in the following sentences into the present continuous tense:

1. Ram climbs the mountain.
2. I walk to school.
3. You write on the blackboard.

Games 2: Noughts and Crosses

Level: Secondary

Grammar : Conjunctions

Procedure : Most of your students should be familiar with the game of noughts and crosses and the same rules apply, except that there are words instead of noughts and crosses. Draw the following on the blackboard.

and	either...or	as
though	but	neither....nor
if	since	because

Divide the class into two groups. The first group should choose one of the words and construct a sentence with it, e.g.

I like bananas but hate apples.

Now the second group should choose another word and make a sentence. They should be careful in the selection of words so that they win the game and not allow the other group to win. That is, they should select words across a row, down a column, or diagonally. This game can be adapted to apply to any grammatical area, e.g., parts of speech, propositions, conditionals

[Adapted from Rinvolucr M.]

Game 3: Tomatoes are red.

Level: Secondary

Grammar: Use of simple present tense for habitual actions.

Procedure: Divide the students into groups of 5. Ask each group to think of as many sentences as possible describing universal truths. Give a few sample sentences.

e.g. The sun rises in the east.
Honey is sweet.
Tomatoes are red.

Give a time limit of 10 minutes. The group that comes out with the maximum number of grammatically correct sentences will be declared the winner. You could make the game more challenging by asking the learners,

- a) to write sentences relating to one particular context,
- b) to use a different verb each time.

Game 4 : The Burglary

Teaching Grammar : New Type
Activities and Games

Level: Secondary

Grammar: Passive Voice

Procedure: Tell the children that a burglary had taken place in Mr. Gupta's house when he was on a holiday. When Gupta came back he was shocked to find the following :

The windows were broken.

The safe had been opened.

Now ask the learners to write ten more sentences about the burglary. This would provide a natural context for the use of the passive voice. You could make the task more interesting if you would give them a picture of the room after the burglary.

Check Your Progress 2

Given below are two exercises. Compare them with the grammar games presented above and discuss the relative merits of each:

Exercise 1 Fill in the blanks with the appropriate conjunctions:

1. Ram studied hard he failed.
2. I am angry, I will not punish you.
3. He was late he missed the bus.
4.you don't come by 9, we will leave the place.
5.you sow, so you reap.

Exercise 2 Change the following sentences into Passive Voice.

1. Rama killed Ravana.
2. John ate the apples.
3. Susan rang the bell.
4. I drank the coffee.
5. He taught me English.

18.4 GRAMMAR PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

a) Level: Secondary

Grammar: Present Perfect (Passive)

Draw two pictures of a classroom. In the first one put a number of things in a state of disorder, a state of e.g. Children all over the place, furniture messy, blackboard dirty, papers strewn all over, etc. In the second picture present a tidy, well organized classroom. Now ask the students to identify the changes that have taken place.

- (e.g.) The blackboard has been cleaned.
The children have returned to their places.
The floor has been swept., etc.

This provides a natural context for the use of the Present Perfect and the Passive form of the same.

b) **Level:** Secondary

Grammar: Gerunds as object

Procedure: Think of your last birthday. Tell us all that you remember about it.

- (e.g.) I remember { getting up very early.
wearing a new dress.
distributing sweets to my friends.

This will encourage students to use gerunds as objects in a continuous discourse in a natural context.

c) **Level:** Secondary

Grammar: Articles and Prepositions.

Procedure: Think of a number of telegraphic messages. Ask the students to expand them into complete statements. This will require them to insert articles and prepositions wherever necessary.

e.g. Exams postponed. Cancel ticket.

The examinations have been postponed. Hence the ticket you have booked for my return may be cancelled.

e.g. Arriving Madras Second G.T. Meet Station.

I am arriving in Madras on the second of this month by the G.T. Express. Please meet me at the station.

In fact the exercise could be adapted for other areas of grammar as well, e.g. Conjunctions.

d) **Level:** Secondary.

Grammar: Future Simple/Reported Speech.

Procedure: Divide the students into groups. Ask them to choose one of the group members to be the fortune-teller. He should sit apart while the other members of the group go to him one by one with questions like, "What will be my career?", "When will I get married?", "Will I become famous?" etc. They should note down his/her answers and come back to report them to the whole group.

e.g. He said that I would become a Professor of English.

He said that I would get married at the age of twenty- eight, etc.

18.5 GUIDELINES FOR USING GRAMMAR GAMES/GRAMMAR PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

- a) To begin with, when learners are not familiar with the new approach, games could be used to supplement the main course. Later, as teachers and learners acquire greater familiarity, games may be used as substitute for parts of the course.
- b) We must remember to choose a game appropriate to the level of the learner. The instructions should be clear. We may also use the mother tongue to explain the rules of the game, if necessary.
- c) At the beginning all learners may not participate enthusiastically. Some may feel shy and inhibited. Do not compel them to participate. A time will come when they are willing to participate.
- d) The teacher should be alert and note when learners begin to get tired of a game. At this stage, she should stop and change over to another activity. Otherwise there is the danger that learners may develop grammar game fatigue.
- e) In the course of playing a game, learners are sure to make mistakes. However the teacher should not stop the game in order to correct the mistakes. S/he should quietly note down the mistakes without interrupting the game, and take them up for discussion later.
- f) Grammar games could be used in three ways:
 - i) before presenting a structure — to diagnose learner's knowledge
 - ii) after presenting a structure — as feedback to find out how much learning has taken place,
 - iii) as revision.

Rinvolucris divides games into four types:

- a) **Competitive Games:** This includes traditional games like "noughts and crosses", "snakes and ladders", "double or quits", etc., which have been adapted to highlight a specific grammar point. Here students are asked to think consciously about grammar. These games pose a cognitive challenge.
- b) **Collaborative games:** In accordance with the humanistic approach, these games require warm cooperation among students rather than competition. The teacher generally remains in the background and plays the role of a facilitator.
- c) **Awareness Activities:** Here the students engage in activities which require them to think and feel about human relationships e.g. their childhood, friends, etc. Indirectly they practise grammar points. The students' focus is on what they are saying, not on the form they are using. On the other hand, the teacher's job is to control the structures.

52

- d) **Grammar through Drama:** During these activities, students are active, they practise grammar through movement; when students are shouting or disinterested these games are ideal. Or when you have a set of lively youngsters with a lot of energy to expend, this is the best way of channelising it.

Teaching Grammar : New Type
Activities and Games

Given below is a sample for each type:

- (a) **Competitive Games:**

Game: Find Who

Level: Secondary

Grammar: Simple past - Active/Passive

Give each student the following sheet, which they have to complete by locating the appropriate person from among themselves. Find a person, who, when aged between 3 and 10:

- a) rode a bike
- b) bit his father
- c) broke his leg
- d) had chickenpox
- e) fought with other children
- f) slept in the afternoons
- g) was spanked for stealing sweets
- h) was often made to stand in the corner
- i) was forced to drink milk.

Now the students must go around and find various people to whom these things happened. They should then write the name of the person on their sheet. Make sure that for each item they enter a different name. The winner is the person who gets the most names soonest.

(adopted from Rinvolucris)

- b) **Collaborative Games:**

Game: Sentence Collage

Level: Any

Grammar: Word Order

Take a long sentence, for example, Look dad, if you let me have my dress made the way I want, I'll have it done by your tailor.

Put each word on a separate slip of paper. Divide the class into groups of seven. Give each group a complete set of words. Ask them to form a sentence into which all the sentences fit grammatically and intelligibly. They may come out with a different sentence, which is fine.

(adopted from Rinvolucris)

c) **Awareness Activities**

Game: True Names and False Professions

Level: Primary

Grammar: Sentences with linking verb; vocabulary (professions)

Organise the students into groups of fifteen. First give your real name and a false profession, beginning with the first letter of your name, e.g. I am Peter the painter.

Now ask the student next to you to repeat your name and profession and then add his own.

(e.g.) He is Peter the Painter. I am Tina the Tailor, etc. The last person will have quite a few names and professions to remember!

(Frank & Rinvolucri)

d) **Grammar through Drama**

Game: One idea at a time

Level: Primary/Secondary

Grammar: Adjectives

Ask a learner to volunteer. S/he should think of an adjective and mime it. Others should try to guess what s/he is miming. An example is provided.

Learner 1 : Are you tired?

Mimer : (Shakes head)

Learner 2 : Are you lazy?

Mimer : (Shakes head)

Learner 3 : Are you bored?

Mimer : (nods head)

(Wright et al.)

Check Your Progress 5

Think of any popular game you have enjoyed playing. Can you adapt it to teach any specific area of grammar?

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18.7 LET US SUM UP

1. Grammar should be enjoyable and help learners to improve their skills in reading and writing.
2. Grammar games provide practice in grammar in an interesting way.
3. Grammar Practice activities provide practice in grammar in an enjoyable manner.
4. The advantages of grammar games: motivating, providing opportunities for meaningful use of language; practice in the four language skills; useful at all levels of learning; diagnostic; offer genuine information gap.

5. In order to make grammar games effective, we need to follow certain guidelines: gradual introduction; appropriacy to learner's level; no compulsion; variety; incidental correction.
6. There are four major types of grammar games: competitive games; collaborative games; awareness activities; grammar through drama.

Teaching Grammar : New Type
Activities and Games

18.8 SUGGESTED READING

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Makey, Sandra L. (1985). *Teaching Grammar*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English.

Rinvoluceri, Mario (1984). *Grammar Games*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ur. Penny (1988). *Grammar Practice Activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, Andrew, Betteridge, David and Buckby, Michael (1984). *Games for Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Channel 1-10 (1990). Madras : Orient Longman Ltd.

18.9 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

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| 1) Traditional Exercises | Grammar Games |
| Serious | Both serious and enjoyable |
| Mechanical practice | Meaningful practice |
| Learners conscious of learning grammar | Learners not conscious of learning grammar |
| Contrived | Related to real life |
| Individual work | Collaborative work |
| No information gap | Genuine information gap |
- 2) Advantages of grammar games: (Refer 18.2)
 - 3) Open-ended: no one correct answer possible.

Check Your Progress 2

The answers would be similar to the answers to Check Your Progress 1.1.

Check Your Progress 3

Open-ended

Check Your Progress 4

- (b) learner-centred ; (c) don't force learners if they are not ready; (d) need for variety; (e) incidental correction.