

Introduction

The majority of the exercises in this book take grammar completely out of context.

Whew. That was cathartic. I feel much better already.

Where is the *context* to all this *grammar*, the puzzled language scholar is no doubt asking. Doesn't this author *know* that second language learners acquire - never *learn* - language best when it's presented as part of a holistic content? Even the freshest TESOL instructor, bright-eyed and armed with myriad *Find Someone Who* activities, knows that grammar should be integrated within a larger subject or theme. Right?

Fine and dandy, that. Try it. I urge you, inspired teacher, to while away your hours designing and plotting a grammar exercise with only the faintest and most convoluted relevancy to the topic. What the teacher is generally left holding is something well-intentioned but which somehow fails to aptly convey either the grammar point or the subject. What frequently happens is that the grammar exercises are stretched thinly to suit the topic, leaving something like

John shouldn't have eaten the double-mint-chocolate cheesecake, because he could have developed diabetes and might have needed to monitor his blood sugar for the rest of his natural life. That would have been just awful!

The students will gamely struggle along through all of this. In all probability, they will leave the classroom more confused than previously, wondering at the apparent connection between past modals and blood-sugar diseases. The teacher, meanwhile, will be left holding an esoteric exercise which took eons to put together, and one which will go on to quietly gather dust atop the file cabinets.

Most hardened teachers know this dirty little secret of the trade. When was the last time you saw an old ESOL battle-axe cutting and pasting together a *Transitive/Intransitive Verb* board game of their own devising? Instead, they tend to leave these kinds of well-intentioned escapades to the newer teachers. Old hands instead opt for the easier and safer route, and stick to the book.

Texts that combine grammar and running themes often fare poorly. Tending to lean heavily in one direction – and more often than not, these days that direction tends to be toward content – many ESOL books do a lackluster job at conveying grammar in an easily understood manner. A few grammar exercises may be thrown half-heartedly into the mix, but by and large the impression is that these exercises were a mere afterthought, and not terribly good ones at that.

There are a few wonderful grammar books out there, ones which catch no end of flak for being superb at exactly what they are – explicit, unapologetic grammar texts. You know the ones, the dog-eared, coffee-stained books found in every English language bookshelf from the Ethiopian highlands to the steppes of Mongolia. The Blue One. The Purple One. And while other texts come and go, these staples remain. Unless they're surreptitiously lifted, as they frequently are.

The fact of the matter is, grammar is important. Students know it, as do many of us who somehow managed to learn a second language back in the day when *communicative language learning* meant nothing more than successfully ordering another beer in a foreign language. Practice is, of course, a cornerstone in the mastery of anything. One cannot expect to paint a Sistine Chapel without first having drawn one's fair share of wide-eyed kittens or dogs playing poker. Language is no different.

By the way, I **love** *Find Someone Who* activities.

Martin Jacobi

User's Guide

This photocopyable text is intended to be a helpful resource that is easy to use. It also offers considerable flexibility in its use. There is no need to diligently plow through it from beginning to end. Use it as you see fit. The objective is to develop grammatical accuracy, so use it in conjunction with texts focused on fluency and the other skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

As the title of this book suggests, this collection of one-page handouts is all about practicing specific points of English grammar. It does not present and explain the grammar, although there are limited explanations throughout the pages. Nor does it ask the students to use the grammar in activities such as role plays, games, and tasks.

There are three main types of exercises: traditional fill-in-the-blank, utterance-response, and pairwork. The first two need no explanation, although it should be noted that many of these exercises can be done in pairs, or even small groups, as well as in teacher-led oral question-answer practice. The fill-ins and many of the utterance-response exercises can also be done as written exercises or even homework.

A separate answer booklet is available in print or on line at www.ProLinguaAssociates.com for free downloading.

The pairwork exercises are also quite simple and effective. The students pair up as A and B. The pages are cut in half; each student gets one half of the page. Student A says something from their half of the page and Student B responds and then says something to A. And so on, back and forth. When they have finished they can exchange papers for more practice. An advantage to the pairwork exercise is that you can circulate, observe, notice difficulties and errors, and provide individual attention.

So go ahead. Pick and choose. Alternate fill-ins with pairwork and utterance-response exercises, and practice what needs to be practiced.