**The Role of Grammar Practice**

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According to Scott Thornbury (1999), grammar practice helps students:

1. Improve their accuracy (use correct grammar).

2. Improve their fluency (speak and write without pauses and get their meaning across).

3. Reorganize their knowledge, integrate new knowledge into old – that is, engage in restructuring.

*Types of Grammar Practice Activities.*

**Controlled activities.**

• Repetition – students are asked to repeat what the teacher has said or what they have heard.

• Drills – repeating structural patterns through oral practice.

Drills can be useful teaching and learning material because they provide practice of small, manageable chunks of language. This helps to build confidence and gives learners an automatic use of structures and expressions that have been drilled. Repeating a communicative situation/task more than once gives a learner a chance to gain confidence, increase fluency and attempt more complex language structure or vocabulary.

Grammar can be practiced in a meaningful, engaging way:

• Repeat in the manner of the word. Ask students to repeat a sentence with the target grammar item softly, loudly, sadly or happily.

• Disappearing dialogue. Write a dialogue on the board and give students some time to practice it. After the students are comfortable with the dialogue, omit a word or phrase and ask students to perform it. This time they have less of a written record and are required to remember the dialogue. Repeat the above stage until all the dialogue has gone.

• Running dictation. Type or write a short text on a piece of paper and paste it on the wall. Ask students to work in groups. Each group sends their representatives to the front of the class to read the text, line by line. The representative then dictates the line back to their group. The representative travels back and forth, reading and dictating, until their group finishes. The group that finishes first is the winner.

• Jazz chants. One more way to work with the target grammar is by creating jazz chants. They work for English as a 'rhythmical' language and help to focus on accuracy in a fun way. Accompanied with clapping, and/or stomping, chanting does not need any equipment and can boost energy and bring laughter into a 'serious' grammar class.

• Dictogloss. The teacher reads a short text written to illustrate a particular language item once or twice at a normal speed. Students listen carefully and try to understand what they hear. While listening, they can write down some key words. After listening, they work individually or in pairs and try to reconstruct the text it as accurately as possible. Finally, students compare their text with the original.

**Controlled practice.**

Teachers want students to think about and use specific language item(s) accurately as often as possible. In order to complete these activities, students have to use the target grammar structure, but also have freedom to somewhat personalize the language and contribute their own ideas. This maintains students’ interest but also challenges them. Here are some examples:

• Story chains.

• Two truths and a lie. Tell the students to write down three sentences about themselves, two true sentences and one that is a lie. Each of the sentences should contain the target grammar structure.

• Guessing games. The students have to find out what a mystery object is or who a mystery person is by asking 20 YES/NO questions.

• Quizzes. The students have to write general knowledge questions. After they have prepared the questions, the students are divided in two teams and ask each other the prepared questions.

**Free practice activities.**

Here the students have complete freedom in the language they produce. The teacher cannot predict what will be said before the activity begins. Students have the greatest opportunity to personalize the language, experiment, and incorporate previously learned grammar and other language points.

• Information gap.

An information gap is created when two (or more) students have different bits of information. They have to share these pieces if they want to understand the whole thing. They have to talk to each other to close the information gap.

• Other free practice activities include role plays, simulation, debates, discussions, composing and telling stories, etc.