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From Grammar to Grammaring in Teaching Grammar

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Abstract: Grammar is a lot conceived as language component even language competence. But for this article, the term grammaring coined by Larsen-Freeman (2001) as a process of doing grammar which she defines as the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. It is the fifth skill to refer to the process by which language learners use grammar to create messages through grammaticalizing or adding grammar to a sequence of words to create finer meaning distinction. Given that language should be used accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, emphasis is laid upon form, meaning and use. To apply this technique, practical activities which focus on language forms are language games, Cuisenaire rods, information gap, and sentence unscrambling tasks. Linking form with meaning can be carried out by using realia and pictures. At last, a practical way of going about sensitizing learners to the effect of context on language is through making use of role playing. In short, grammar as a skill is taught through various activities. Viewed from the students' production, the varied kinds of learning activities in grammaring seem to have worked well.

1 INTRODUCTION

For many decades, many experts conceive grammar as static descriptive idea which is based on rules known as traditional view; however in this paper, the writer goes with the theory of Diane Larsen Freeman who views grammar as the ability to use grammar accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately (2003). It means grammatical structures do not only have form, they are also used to express meaning (semantics) in context of appropriate use (pragmatics). For example, what factors in the social context may explain when and why a speaker A chooses the most direct way of answering which expresses complaint to the listener B, or moderate but still expresses a kind of dissatisfaction, or a mild way which shows politeness like in this example:

A: I won't go to the party.

B: Why?

A1: You haven't invited me.

A2: Nobody has invited me.

A3: I haven't been invited.

Based on that example, knowing grammar is not enough for real communication, but inadequate

knowledge of grammar would severely constrain one's capacity for effective communication. Grammar is lexicogrammatical resource for making meaning. In the process of making meaning, grammar changes in both form and meaning to ensure appropriate use in different situations. Thus, grammar is not list of rules which can be applied to any sentence regardless of the context of use. Successful communication is marked by a skill in exploiting the grammatical resource to match the meaning.

Based on writer's teaching experience and observation in grammar lecturer in other classes, the grammar is usually presented in texts with the learning objective is students' mastery both in form and meaning. The context which shows the grammar feature occurs does not become teacher's intention. Students were merely expected to understand the rules and apply them in some sentences or short paragraphs. So, there is only one correct answer for that application of rules, meanwhile, *passive or active* for instance can be both correct in different context. In other words, grammar teaching conducted so far does not provide the context of occur of certain grammar features. Like another example, what factors in the social context may explain when and why a speaker chooses a yes-no

question rather than an imperative to serve as request for information like *Do you have time?* versus *Please tell me the time.*

Some experts limit the context to mean context by interlocutors, their relationship to one another and the setting. *How old are you?* is asked by a doctor to the patient when filling the medical record is pragmatically appropriate, grammatically accurate and semantically meaningful. On the other hand, if the same question is addressed to a stranger whom one may meet accidentally, it is semantically meaningful and grammatically accurate, but pragmatically inappropriate in that context. (Takashima and Sugiura, 2000). Correct language thus varies according to the context.

Therefore, it is clear that for communicative purposes, grammar should be viewed as on-going process rather than being viewed merely as static knowledge and it should always be dealt with in a particular context. Then the job of the teacher is how to equip students to choose suitable options for particular contexts in real language use.

2 GRAMMAR AND GRAMMARING

2.1 Grammar and Grammar Teaching

Thornbury (2006) suggests that grammar is a description of the rules that govern how a language's sentence is formed. Grammar can explain why a given sentence is acceptable rather than the other. *E.g. We study last night, last night we study instead of, night last study we or we studies last night.* In addition to the notion of grammar concerning at the level of sentence, Weaver (1996) further elaborates that the study of grammar also concerns about the rules of morphology especially inflection and derivation. His view of grammar can be used to explain why the word *study* becomes *studies* instead of *study* as the word *write* becomes *writes*. The same view also gives hint why the sentence '*reading is important*' is acceptable instead of '*run is important*'. In brief, according to this view, grammar does not fully rely on the level of the sentence but also on the level of words.

Grammar is not only viewed from the nature of forming words into sentence but also viewed from semantic notion. This notion mentioned proposes that although grammar can bring us an understanding of how to form acceptable sentences, it also needs to provide us with the insight of whether the sentences formed are semantically

acceptable or not. This view is resulted from the phenomenon that not all sentences with correct grammar are meaningful. To clarify this view, Chomsky (1957) in Widodo (2006) once proposed the sentence '*colorless green ideas sleep furiously*'. The given sentence is grammatically correct, but it is semantically wrong as it does not make any sense or meaningless. Therefore, the study of grammar should also give concern on sentence meaningfulness.

Since grammar is the heart of language, studying language will inevitably bring the notion of grammar into attention. In fact, in the beginning of language teaching, grammar held a prominent position. It was common belief at that time that language was mainly composed of grammar and that mastering those rules was required for those who wanted to know the language. Hinkel & Fotos (2002:1) even mention that involving second language learners in analysing and memorizing grammar in written form became the instructional trend in language learning for more than 2000 years. On the other hand, students who learned second language in this period of time devoted most of the language training dealing with grammar.

Significantly influenced by the importance of grammar in language teaching, the early language teaching methods proposed mainly concerned on directing students to solely understand grammar. Grammar translation method proposed in 18th century and widely spread in the 19th century focused exclusively on involving students exploring grammatical rules and structure. In the learning process, the target language was segmented into various grammatical forms such as part of speech, tense, voice, etc. which were taught deductively through explicitly explaining them. The students were then expected to memorize the rule and translate the texts from the L2 to the L1.

Another language teaching method influenced by grammar instruction emerged in the beginning of 20th century, which were known as Audio-Lingual and Direct Method. Even though Audio-Lingual Method focused on drilling students with grammatical structures, it did not present grammar in the same way as Grammar Translation Method did. Unlike Grammar Translation Method exposing students to part of speech or tenses, the learning process in though Audio-Lingual Method was mainly devoted to studying structural and phonological component of language, in which the

target structure given was arranged from the simple into the complex ones (Nassaji & Fotos:2011).

In addition to these methods, many other language methods were then proposed which were heavily influenced by grammar such as Reading Approach, Oral and Situational Method, the Silent way, and Total Physical Response. Despite the differences in their underlying assumption, all those aforementioned methods were all grammar based. That is, classroom contents were organized mainly based on analyses of language forms with little focus on language function or real-life communication.

As language function was commonly negated in the early language teaching methods, the controversy about the importance of grammatical instruction came up. Some suggest that grammar instruction should be neglected in the language teaching; others maintain its necessity. Those in the favor of neglecting the importance of teaching grammar claim many FL students who have been studying grammatical rules for long period of time cannot use them. Hence, they conclude that grammar instruction is not necessary to help students gain mastery over the target language. Sharwood Smith (1994) in Nassaji and Fotos (2011) proposes that students' grammar is acquired naturally through students' exposure to the target language both spoken and written. This view maintains that students will indirectly learn and master grammar through their experience using language. Furthermore, this notion claims that grammar instruction will be only a waste of time and delay language production.

In addition, some researchers conducted on writing skill propose that grammar instruction will only give a little contribution to students' writing skill. Benati and Lee (2008) say that none of the studies reviewed for the present report provides any support for teaching grammar as a means of improving composition skills. If schools insist upon teaching the identification of parts of speech, the parsing, or diagramming of sentences, or other concepts of traditional grammar, they cannot defend it as a means of improving the quality of writing". In brief, it is evident that grammar instruction is not helpful in improving composition skill.

Despite these counter arguments against the grammar instruction, many still consider grammar is still needed to be taught to the students. White (1987), Thornburry (2000), and Nassaji and Fotos

(2011) agree that grammar instruction is still necessary as some grammatical points cannot be acquired through exposure only. Language consists of a large number of syntactic points some of which students cannot master just through experiencing language, direct instruction is still needed. In addition, Larsen-Freeman (1997) Richard (2002) say that even though grammar can naturally be acquired, it does not mean teaching grammar is insignificant. In fact, formal instruction can enhance the acquisition of grammar and speed up the process. In other word, Larsen-Freeman attempts to compromise the proponent and opponent of grammar instruction by suggesting that students can expose themselves to language as well as learn grammar since these two processes can be mutually helpful.

Although the failure of grammar instruction leads students to be able to use the language is evident in the EFL field, the blame should not be cast over the grammar itself but over how the grammar is presented in the instructional process. It can be seen in the EFL fields that grammar is taught from the traditional view. Newby (1998) suggests that traditional grammar sees a language as a set of forms and structures. The sentence is main unit of analysis and emphasis is placed on the students' ability to form sentence correctly. The importance of communication is negated in this kind of instruction since the most common form of grammar exercises given is gapped sentences and sentences formation rather than contextual use of grammar.

So, it can be concluded that the approaches to grammar teaching have undergone many changes since the beginning of language teaching. They can be viewed in terms of three general instructional approaches namely, focus on forms (grammar), focus on meaning and recent development focus on form (FonF) which calls for an integration of grammar and communication in second language teaching (Nassasaji and Fotos, 2011:14). Indeed, if the goal of second/ foreign language learning is to develop communicative competence and enable students to use the language accurately and fluently for real communicative purposes, a focus on grammar must be incorporated into communicative instruction. This article goes with recent model of grammar teaching for 21st century, grammaring which calls for an integration of grammar and communicative uses.

2.2 Concept of Grammaring

Various authors have defined grammaring differently. Larsen-Freeman (2001) defines grammaring to describe grammar not as a body of established knowledge in the traditional sense but as a skill that to be trained similar to other language skills such as writing or speaking. Furthermore, Thornbury (2001) advocates the concept of grammaring as more like a process that it is like verb-like rather than noun like. For example, in the conversation the speaker is choosing consciously or unconsciously the most appropriate utterance to express his/her feeling, while listener is choosing the most appropriate way of understanding the language choices made by the speaker (Takashima and Sugiura: 2000). These online interactive choices are referred to as the grammaring process which every language user is simultaneously engaged during communication.

In addition, Nan in 2015, grammaring was first put forward by Larsen-Freeman who regards English grammar not only as a set of structural patterns, but also as an important resource for making meaning and for adapting language appropriately to the communicative context. The grammar system is not static, but is rather evolving, due to the creativity of its users as they make new meaning, making it impossible to distinguish errors from linguistic innovations without an appeal to socio-political factors, such as who is doing the talking (Larsen-Freeman, 2012).

Meanwhile, according to Richard and Schmidt (2002), grammaring is sometimes used to refer the process by which language learners use grammar to create messages through grammaticalizing or adding grammar to a sequence of words to create finer meaning distinctions. The linguist Diane Larsen-Freeman proposes grammaring as an important process in second/ foreign language learning. Grammaring emphasizes grammar as a dynamic process rather than a system of rules.

Grammar is no longer conceived as a description of language or native speaker’s competence. Thus, a paradigm shift arose about the teaching and learning of grammar. The purpose behind teaching grammar is no longer the transmission of knowledge. Rather, teaching grammar is now performed to enable students to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. In this respect, Larsen-Freeman (2001) further states that “grammar teaching is not so much knowledge transmission as it is skill development”. Thus, different activities have started to focus on developing such a skill.

In short, in grammaring point of view, grammar has features of duality to English major that is it

should be taken both as knowledge and as ability. When viewed as knowledge, the focus is on rules for sentence formation, when viewed as ability the focus is in how grammar is used as a resource in the creation of spoken and written texts (Richards and Reppen, 2014).

2.3 Practical Activities for “Grammaring”

The practical activities that are used in “grammaring” fall into three categories as specified by Freeman’s definition of the term. Given that language should be used accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately, emphasis is laid upon form, meaning, and use. For example, in teaching phrasal verbs, the form is presented first. What should be explained is that a phrasal verb consists of a verb plus a particle such as “break up.” However, explaining form alone is not enough for understanding what the word means. Thus, meaning is a very important dimension to evade any possible confusion that surrenders the phrasal verb “break up,” as the latter cannot be guessed from the form only. Again, it is not enough merely to instruct students how to use “break up” in speaking or writing in English unless an explicit teaching has been supplied. Thus form, meaning, and use are equally important for the teaching and learning of grammar. In general, the practical activities that are used in “grammaring” can be categorized into: a. form, b. meaning, and c. use. Here in the table the concept of grammaring.

Table 1: Three Dimensions of Grammaring

	Form	Semantic	Pragmatics
Example	I go to Jakarta yesterday	Colourless green ideas sleep furiously	Someone: “How old are you?” A stranger: “ ???”
Problem in	accuracy	meaningfulness	appropriateness

Based on Table 1, there are three indicators which teacher should take into account when teaching grammar, namely the aspects of accuracy, of meaningfulness and of appropriateness. That form alone is correct is not enough; that form and meaning are correct is still lacking, the greatest one is if three dimensions are fulfilled.

2.3.1 A Focus on Form

Teaching grammar often means giving students rules and having students practice the rules in drills and

exercise. This is what is commonly called language form. A distinction is often made between language use and language form. In other words, there has been a continuous debate over whether to teach students the language or teach them about the language. For Larsen-Freeman, both language form and language use are equally important. In this vein, she states: “Teachers who focus students’ attention on linguistic form during communicative interactions are more effective than those who never focus on form or who only do so in de-contextualized grammar lessons” (Spada and Lightbown 1993; cited in Larsen-freeman 2002).

It is important to emphasize meaningful practice of form for several reasons. First of all, meaningless mechanical drills such as repetition drills commonly associated with behaviorist approaches to learning. Second, rules and forms learned in isolation is harder to retrieve in the context of communication. The last, students’ motivation to learn may decrease since they are not able to interact in a way that is meaningful to them.

To overcome those, in teaching process, teacher can apply several activities. Among the activities that focus on language form are language games, Cuisenaire rods, sentence completion, and sentence unscrambling tasks, among others. In general, there are three important activities, namely: games, use of rods, and sentence unscrambling activities.

For instance when teaching phrasal verb, grammaring can be applied to this grammar structure.

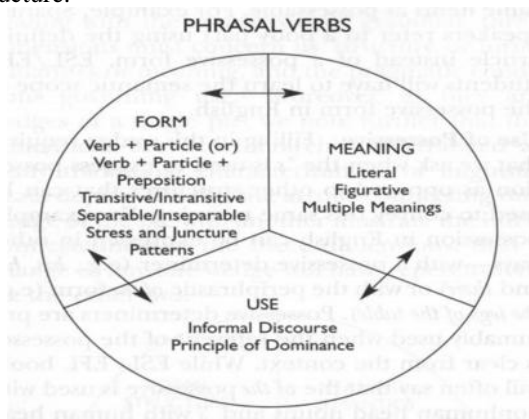


Figure 1: Phrasal Verb Analysis

Based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman’s analyses, the first, form of phrasal verbs are two-part verbs comprising a verb and a particle (e.g., *to look up*). Sometimes, they can be constructed with

three parts in that a preposition can follow the particle (e.g., *to keep up with*). As with all other verbs, phrasal verbs are either transitive or intransitive. A distinctive feature of phrasal verbs is that for many of them the particle can be separated from its verb by an intervening object (e.g., *Alicia looked the word up in the dictionary*). Phrasal verbs also have distinctive stress and juncture patterns, which distinguish them from verb plus preposition combinations:

Alicia looked up # the word.
Alicia walked # up the street.

In teaching phrasal verbs, activity like sentence completion can be carried out in order to instil the concept verb phrase form to the students. This is a useful problem solving activity. Here it is:

Table 2: Grammaring Task for Use Dimension

Get Expression	Example Sentences
get off,	I usually get off work early on Fridays. I leave at about 3.00.
get used to,	I don’t like to stay at work late. I always try ...by 5.30 to cook dinner.
get away with	I was so busy last week that I didn’t ...doing my homework.
get home,	I’m usually late, so my friends are always saying. “We have to ...”
get around to,	Sometimes I ... that people are annoyed with me for being late.
get going,	I like going out after class. It’s a chance to... my classmates.
get the feeling,	It’s hard for me to finish long novels. I just can’t ...them.
get to know,	I don’t know why people dress up for weddings. I just don’t ...
get through,	I’ll never ... wearing formal clothes. They don’t feel right.
get it,	I wish I could ...wearing jeans all the time. They’re so comfortable.

By doing these activities, students are invited to recognize form of get expression, students may relate to its meaning in the sentences.

2.3.2 A Focus on Meaning

When semantic dimension becomes a challenge for students, teachers should design different practice activities. It seems that meaning would call for some sort of associative learning where students have opportunities to associate the form and meaning of the particular target structure.

Linking form with meaning can be carried out by the use of different activities. In fact, meaning should call for some sort of associative learning (cf. Ellis 1998). This activity gives students the opportunity to associate the form with the meaning of a particular target structure. For example, it is by associating form and meaning that a phrasal verb can be understood. Moreover, meaning can also be made clear by using realia and pictures. By using real-world objects or pictures, the relationship between word and referent can be made more explicit. For example, if someone asks you what a cabbage means, and you have a cabbage, you will tell him this is a cabbage. Mimicry of the appropriate action is another way of making the meaning of linguistic “signs” more clear.

In teaching phrasal verbs, there are literal phrasal verbs, such as *to hang up*, where if one knows the meaning of the verb or the particle or both, it is not difficult to figure out the meaning of the verb-particle combination. Unfortunately, for the ESL/EFL student there are far more instances of figurative phrasal verbs (e.g., *to run into*, meaning “meet by chance”) where a knowledge of the meaning of the verb and of the particle is of little help in discerning the meaning of the phrasal verb. Moreover, as with single-word verbs, phrasal verbs can have more than one meaning (e.g., *to come across*, meaning “to discover by chance” as in *I came across this old book in the library*, or when used intransitively, “to make an impression” as in *Richard came across well at the convention*).

Moreover, in teaching phrasal verb dealing with semantic dimension, realia and pictures are very useful. Learning phrasal verbs are challenging for students. The fact is that meaning of phrasal verbs is often not detectable from combining the meaning the verb with the meaning of the particle. To overcome this semantic challenge, teacher gets students to practice operation like this:



*I want to **call up** my friend. First, I **look up** the phone number. Then I **write it down**. I **pick up** the receiver and **punch in** the number. The number is busy. I **hang up** and decide to **call back** later.*

(Adapted from Larsen-Freeman (2001))

By practicing this operation several times, the students can learn to associate the form and meaning of certain plural verbs (call up, look up, pick up). If students are given an operation with which to associate phrasal verbs, recall at lime later will likely be enhanced.

2.3.3 A Focus on Use

When use is challenge, it is because students have shown that they are having a hard time selecting the right form for particular context. Thus, relevant practice activities will provide students with an opportunity to choose from two or more forms the one most suitable for the context and how they wish to position themselves namely in cooperative way, polite way and assertive way. Students would receive feedback on the appropriateness of their choice. Students would receive feedback on the appropriateness of their choice.

Role plays work well when dealing with use because the teacher can systematically manipulate social variables to have students practice how changes in the social variables affect the form. The right form with the right meaning should be selected for the right context to ensure successful communication. A practical way of going about sensitizing students to the effect of context on language is through making use of role playing. The latter can be described, according to Larsen-Freeman (2003), as follows: “Role plays work well when dealing with use because the teacher can systematically manipulate social variables (e.g., increase or decrease the social distance between interlocutors) to have students practice how changes in the social variables affect the choice of the form”.

To teach the dimension of use, role playing can be considered one of the most effective activities for developing the appropriateness of the linguistic behavior of students due to its simulation of real-life contexts.

Furthermore, in teaching phrasal verbs, the use dimension of it should be really taken into account. When is a phrasal verb preferred to a single-word verb that conveys the same meaning (e.g., *put out a fire* versus *extinguish a fire*)? For the most part, phrasal verbs seem to be more common in informal spoken discourse as opposed to more formal written discourse. When is one form of a phrasal verb preferred to another; i.e., when should the particle be separated from its verb (e.g., *put out a fire* versus *put a fire out*)? Erteschik-Shir's (1979) principle dominance seems to work well to define the circumstances favouring particle movement: If a noun phrase (NP) object is dominant (i.e., a long, elaborate NP representing new information), it is likely to occur after the particle; if the direct object is short, old information (e.g., a pronoun), it would naturally occur before the particle.

In teaching phrasal verb, role plays are useful for highlighting other structural choices as well, for instance, to act out the of "get" verb phrases. Here it is:

Where are Luis and Rosa going? Do they want to go? Act out the conversation.

Luis: Rosa, it is 6.00. We're supposed to be there by 7.00. Weren't you supposed to **get off** work early today?

Rosa: Well, my boss called a meeting, and I couldn't **get out of** it. I had to go. Anyway, I don't **get it**, why is your cousin getting married on a Friday and not a Saturday, like everyone else?

Luis: I don't know. All I know is that my mother will never **get over** it if we walk in late. So we have to **get going**.

Rosa: OK. Uh, you don't think I can **get away with** wearing pants?

Luis: No way! It's supposed to be formal wedding. Look, I **got** your silk dress ready for you.

Rosa: Oh, I'll never **get used to** dressing up for these fancy weddings. Can we try **get home** early?

Luis: Rosa, I **get the feeling** that you don't really want to go.

Rosa: Well, I just hope I can **get through** the reception.

Luis: Oh, come on. Let's just go and enjoy it. It's a chance for you to **get to know** my family better. By the way, did you **get around to** buying a gift?

Rosa: Weren't you supposed to do that?

By doing this activity, when the writer sees students' production, they show improvement in terms of context, meaning and form. That teaching grammar is not merely based on memorizing rules is more interesting than that traditional one and draws students' attention to learn new grammar features since they get involve in discovering form, meaning, and use of the grammar feature by their own.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Grammar lessons are no longer about knowing language systems or declarative knowledge, but about knowing how to use language or procedural knowledge. Grammar should not be regarded simply as static knowledge but should be considered as a process in which that knowledge should be considered as a process in which that knowledge is being applied according to (meaning) semantic and the context (pragmatic). This application process is termed grammaring to help students how to figure out their language choices in grammar through the three dimensions (form, meaning and use).

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