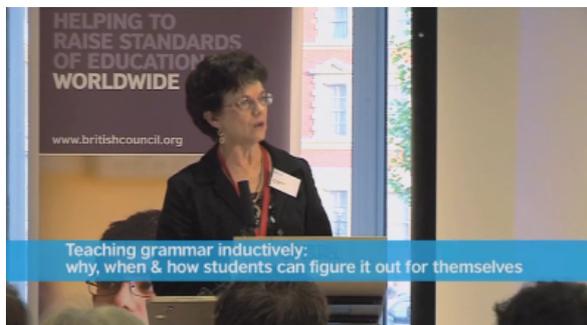


Teaching grammar inductively

<http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/content/inductive-grammar>



Catherine Walter

1. Some misconceptions about grammar teaching
2. Skills-based theories of how to learn and teach grammar
3. Task-based theories of how we learn and teach grammar
4. Teaching grammar explicitly: What does the evidence say?
5. When should we teach grammar rules inductively?
6. Planning to teach grammar inductively
7. Guiding students to learn grammar inductively: sorting, matching, multiple choice
8. Guiding students to learn grammar inductively: guided questions and giving part of the rule

1. Introduction

What does it mean to teach grammar inductively? What is the difference between inductive and deductive grammar teaching?

When teaching English grammar, what happens when learners are encouraged to work out grammar rules for themselves? Catherine Walter's session aims to explain the advantages there might be in teaching grammar in this way.

2. Session summary and objectives

Catherine Walter presents an academic overview of why and when teaching grammar inductively is a good idea. Catherine Walter refers during her talk to empirical researchers who have influenced thinking on this subject.

3. Who is this session for?

- English language teachers with an interest in grammar.
- Teacher trainers who need to present the subject of grammar teaching.
- Teachers taking a degree in English Language teaching, or on postgraduate Masters or Diploma courses who need a thorough understanding of grammar teaching.
- ELT academics with an interest in grammar.

4. About the speaker

Dr Catherine Walter is a lecturer in Applied Linguistics and is co-author of the Oxford English Grammar Course.

5. Before you watch

1. What do we mean by teaching grammar 'inductively'? What is the difference between inductive and deductive grammar teaching?
2. Consider how you deal with English grammar in your English language courses. Watch the seminar and then compare how you teach grammar with what Catherine Walter has to say about it. Do you agree with her?

6. Real life practice

Inductive approach – this is when learners WORK OUT THE RULE (guided discovery) for themselves by tapping into the grammar knowledge they already have buried in their mind. They do not learn grammar explicitly - it's similar to the way that a native speaker can use grammar correctly but cannot explain why a sentence is grammatical or not.

Deductive approach – this is when the teacher PRESENTS THE RULE FIRST.

Task 1

Student survey: Find out how your students feel about learning grammar. Keep an open mind yourself and ensure you do not influence them with your own thinking.

Your questions could relate to:

- How important they think grammar learning is
- How they prefer to learn grammar
- How much classroom time they like to spend on grammar rather than on other classroom activities and tasks
- How they think grammar learning helps develop their overall communicative competence

Share your results with your colleagues and the teaching community you belong to.

Task 2

Action research: You could conduct an experiment in class to compare how students respond to deductive versus inductive grammar teaching, or no explicit grammar teaching at all. This doesn't need to be too scientific in order to be interesting.

Basic steps

- Select 3 different grammar rules, one for three different lessons. Ensure that they are comparable in their level of difficulty.
- Prepare a deductive grammar lesson for the first rule, an inductive grammar lesson for the second rule, and a non-explicit lesson for the third rule.
- In each case, follow up the lesson with a short language test to find out if the students have learned the grammar rule well.
- Collect student feedback on 1) how they liked the lesson and 2) if they found it useful. Do they have a preference for one particular approach to grammar teaching?
- Compare the results from each lesson.

7. Top tips

1. The English language is constantly evolving. Read modern articles, journals, blogs and literature written in English. Consciously note any new language and how grammar and language usage change over time and in different contexts.
2. Experiment with the ways in which you deal with English grammar in your English lessons. Remember that learners learn in different ways. Ensure that the methods you use to convey meaning result in effective language learning for your students. If they are struggling to learn,
3. A confident teacher is one with a well-developed knowledge of the English language (amongst other things). Keep up to date with changes in the language as part of your on-going professional development.
4. Be part of an English grammar debate group with other teachers. If there isn't one, in your school, start one yourself. Enjoy healthy debate about grammatical issues. A simple way to do this is by sharing ideas via Twitter. Try searching using the hashtag #Grammar.
5. What is it to learn a language well? What is it to achieve communicative competence? You will have an opinion of how important you think correct usage of grammar is in achieving proficiency in a new language. Be conscious of this opinion, but know that not everyone necessarily shares your opinion!

8. Staffroom discussion

1. Grammar: do students need to learn grammar explicitly or not? This is a rather contentious issue, with teachers around the world holding different opinions on the matter. What is your opinion? Find out if your teaching colleagues agree with you.
2. Did you learn English grammar at school? If so, how was it taught? Do you teach grammar now in the same way you were taught?
3. If you didn't learn grammar at school, how do you feel about that fact now? How do you think it influences your teaching of English grammar?
4. Learning grammar tends to be associated with students developing their accuracy in the target language. Can you see any relationship between teaching explicit grammar and developing communicative fluency?
5. Individuals have managed to learn languages well for hundreds of years, regardless of the grammar teaching methods of the time. So what's all the fuss about? Discuss this assertion with your colleagues.
6. It is often said that regardless of your preferred way of dealing with grammar in your English course, it is essential that the English teacher has an excellent knowledge of English grammar themselves. Do you agree with this assertion, or do you think it is possible to be an excellent English teacher with little or no explicit grammar knowledge?

9. Downloadable resources and further reading

British Council blog:

Teaching grammar inductively – Catherine Walter

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/bc-seminars/teaching-grammar-inductively-catherine-walter>

Resources from Teaching English:

Planning a grammar lesson

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/planning-a-grammar-lesson>

Analysing language

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/analysing-language>