



# Applying the FMU framework

## Flora Debora Floris

Describes using the Form-Meaning-Use approach to grammar.

Grammar is essential because it lays the groundwork for effective communication. This is depicted in Sesnan's metaphor that if language is a 'building', then the words are the 'building blocks or bricks', and grammar is 'the architect's plan' (Sesnan, 2001: 54). Without any plan, an architect would not build a building even though he has millions of bricks. In the same way, it can be said that knowing thousands of words in English means nothing if the person does not know how to use them. Therefore, it is also very important to use accurate and proper grammar to clarify meaning and intent. Knowing how and when to use correct grammar will help speakers avoid errors that obstruct the intended meaning and cause misunderstandings.

In the second or foreign language context, many language teachers focus on grammar as a stand-alone subject where grammar forms and rules are presented, and grammar exercises are assigned to their students. Often, this technique results in students who can get perfect scores on exercises but make errors when they try to communicate using the language because learners may know the grammatical rules but not the meaning and the use of the rules.

As noted by Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman (1999: 9):

Grammar is not merely a collection of forms but rather involves the three dimensions of (morpho) syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

For example, in the Jigsaw technique, each student will be responsible for mastering a particular topic and explaining that topic to other group members. The ultimate advantage of such activity is that each student will have opportunities to practise a range of language functions with people they know in a friendly, non-threatening natural setting.

Though CL provides benefits for learners' language development, some teachers have expressed their concern that students might start to 'learn incorrect language from their peers' (Renandya and Jacobs, 2017: 106). To this, Porter (1986) states that there is evidence that learners would not pick up each other's errors or miscorrect each other. In the same vein, Renandya and Jacobs (2017) believe that students can still learn from each other because each person has his/her own strengths and weaknesses as a language learner.

## Conclusion

All in all, the teaching of grammar in second or foreign language contexts should aim to assist students to use grammar accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Using corpora might be a good idea as the information obtained can be used to provide authentic examples of how a particular grammar feature is used in an authentic context. To teach grammar from the FMU point of view, TBLT might be implemented as it contextualises the teaching of grammar in a way that would lead to a naturalistic production of the target language; and CL might be used to facilitate a better language learning process. Learning grammar from the FMU perspective enables learners to see how meaning and context relate to form.

## References

- Celce-Murcia M & Larsen-Freeman D (1999) *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course* (2nd edn.) Heinle & Heinle.
- Jones T (2017) Using corpus linguistics. Retrieved on 5 July 2021 from <http://azargrammar.com/teacherTalk/blog/2017/08/using-corpus-linguistics/>
- Larsen-Freeman D (2001) Teaching grammar. In M Celce-Murcia (ed), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 251-266). Heinle & Heinle.
- Mayo MPG (2015) Collaborative tasks and their potential for grammar instruction in second/foreign language contexts. In A Benati, C Laval & MJ Arche (Eds.) *The grammar dimension in instructed second language learning* (pp. 82-102) Bloomsbury.
- Nunan D (1989) *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Porter PA (1986) How learners talk to each other: Input and interaction in task-centered discussions. In RR Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition* (pp. 200-22) Newbury House.
- Renandya WA & Jacobs GM (2017). Cooperative learning: Addressing implementation issues. *Indonesian JELT* 12 (2) 101-113.
- Richards JC & Rodgers ST (2001) *Approaches and Method in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sesnan B (2001) *How to teach English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thornbury S (2007). *How to teach vocabulary*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Willis J (1996) *A framework for Task-Based Learning*. Longman.



### Flora Deborah Floris

is a senior lecturer at Petra Christian University, Indonesia. Her main interests include language teacher professional development, English as an International Language, and technology-enhanced language learning.