Applying FMU

by Flora Debora

Applying a Form-Meaning-Use (FMU) Framework in Teaching Grammar

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Abstract

The teaching of grammar should enable students to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. The use of corpus, task-based teaching, and cooperative learning as presented in this paper may help learners gain mastery of grammar form, meaning, and use in an engaging and motivating way.

Grammar is very important 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, p. 54). Without any plan, an architect would not be able to 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. It is also very important to use accurate and proper grammar for clarity of meaning and intent. Knowing how and when to use correct grammar will help the 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, p. 9),

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

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