Didactic Scenarios 1 - October

Answer the following questions, being as specific and detailed as possible. Also exemplify wherever possible. You may want/need to refer back to the written topics.

1. Comment on the following sentences:

   "I just picked up my English working in Britain, so I've never learned the grammar"

   "I've never learned English grammar", said by a native speaker.

2. What are the differences between a PPP approach (Presentation – Practice – Production) and a task-based approach to grammar? Which one would you favour?

3. The sentence below occurred in a letter of reference for someone applying for a job, written by a non-native speaker. What mistake has the writer made, and what explanation might a language teacher offer to help the writer avoid the error in the future?

   If you require further information on the applicant, I would be pleased to do so.
   (McCarthy 1991: 46)

4. What stages would you ask your students to go through to write a good composition?

5. What can you do to lower your students' anxiety with listening?

6. What is the difference between the following pairs of connectors? How would you explain it to your students?

   Despite vs. although

   Because vs. due to

7. Enumerate linkers, conjunctions and linguistic structures for the expression of the following relations. Write them from lower to higher level.

Cause:	Concession:
Result:	Condition:
Purpose:	Addition:
Contrast:	

8. Many of our students do not have an academic background, and so are not used to writing, even in their mother-tongue. Suggest ways to teach our learners to organise their compositions and write good paragraphs.

9. Do you think students find it difficult to distinguish between different levels of formality? Is this part of the curriculum? When should we start teaching it? And how?

10. Suggest 5 ways to teach your students learning and/or communicative strategies.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

Didactic Scenarios 1: Questions 1 to 5

1. **Comment on the following sentences:**

"I just picked up my English working in Britain, so I've never learned the grammar"

"I've never learned English grammar", said by a native speaker.

> Gather ideas from sections 4.1. and 4.2. in Topic 3.
>
> You must structure your dissertation on the basis that grammatical rules are always necessary if one is to master a language.
>
> The following concepts must appear (develop them):
>
>   - Conscious vs. unconscious knowledge of the language.
>
>   - Implicit vs. explicit knowledge.
>
>   - Inductive vs. deductive approach to grammar.

This belief that native speakers or people that acquire the language in a natural context do not have a grammar is the criterion used by the extreme version of the communicative approach to ban grammar from the language classroom.

However, of course they do have a grammar. The difference between "their" grammar and that of a student is the dichotomy between implicit vs. explicit knowledge.

The speakers of the two sentences above have an implicit knowledge of the language, *i.e.* it is stored unconsciously in their minds. We can certainly teach grammar like this. In that case, what we are doing is bring about linguistic behaviour that conforms to the rules, not knowledge about the rules themselves.

However, when one's students are not well suited for language analysis or when a particular linguistic rule is rather convoluted, it may make more sense to present grammar deductively and explicitly. Indeed, students, especially adults, usually request rules and report that they find them helpful.

As a compromise solution, Corder (1973: 133) suggests that a combination of both gives the best result: "learning is seen as fundamentally an inductive process but one which can be controlled and facilitated by descriptions and explanations".

For more information on this, please, refer to section 4 in Topic 3. Thank you.

2. **What are the differences between a PPP approach (Presentation – Practice – Production) and a task-based approach to grammar? Which one would you favour?**
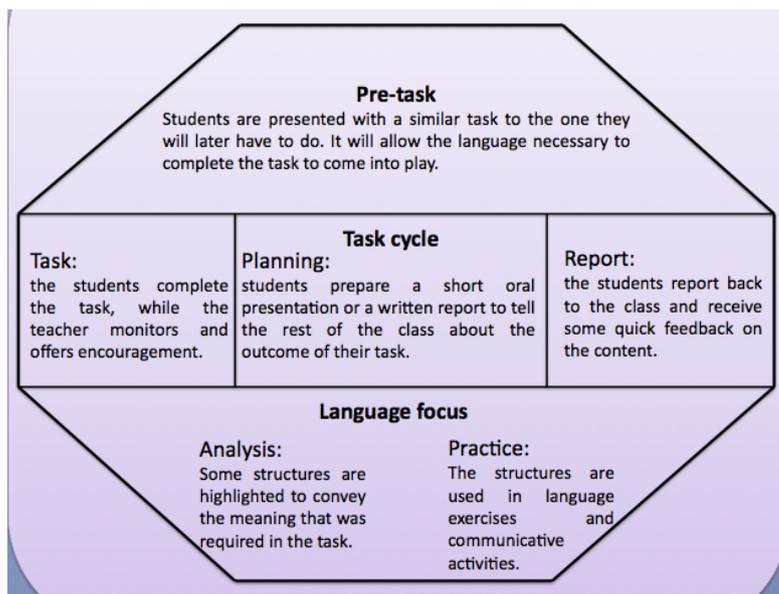
The basic difference is the <u>sequencing</u>, which has a tremendous impact on the teaching-learning process.

The PPP model may still be valid in some concrete circumstances, and indeed coursebooks sometimes still follow a Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model, which starts by giving a form and then demonstrating what might be done with it.

Willis (1996), however, proposes another model which is more consistent with the philosophy of the communicative approach, especially as concerns learner-centredness and experiential learning. In this model, the study exercise is prefaced with activities which show how much of the language in question is already known (a task-based sequence).

It is argued that in a PPP model learners are not primarily concerned with meaning, but rather with producing the appropriate form which has just been presented. In a task-based approach, however, the initial focus is on meaning and it is only after the task has been performed that forms are studied. This way, the production stage is brought to the front/beginning of the lesson, working as a trial run where learners attempt to put into words the meanings they wish to express.

The following chart shows the typical sequence of a task-based lesson:

Pre-task
Students are presented with a similar task to the one they will later have to do. It will allow the language necessary to complete the task to come into play.

Task cycle

Task:
the students complete the task, while the teacher monitors and offers encouragement.

Planning:
students prepare a short oral presentation or a written report to tell the rest of the class about the outcome of their task.

Report:
the students report back to the class and receive some quick feedback on the content.

Language focus

Analysis:
Some structures are highlighted to convey the meaning that was required in the task.

Practice:
The structures are used in language exercises and communicative activities.

Following a task-based sequence, learners will actively look for forms instead of receiving them passively from the teacher, something which very much favours incidental learning. Also, language is presented as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Undoubtedly, this is more efficient, motivating and engaging.

It is important to note that a task-based approach works very well with mixed-ability groups, very often found in the context of the Official Language Schools. This is so because task achievement does not depend on having a specific level of language ability.

3. The sentence below occurred in a letter of reference for someone applying for a job, written by a non-native speaker. What mistake has the writer made, and what explanation might a language teacher offer to help the writer avoid the error in future?

If you require further information on the applicant, I would be pleased to do so.
(McCarthy 1991: 46)

The problem with the sentence is that it uses the verbal substitutor ***do so***, so that the meaning of the resulting sentence is: *if you require further information on the applicant, I would be pleased to require further information on the applicant.*

However, we cannot use any substitutor here, since there is nothing of the first part of the sentence that we wish to repeat in the second. Thus, the correct version would be (suggested answer):

If you require further information on the applicant, I would be pleased to send it to you.

4. What stages would you ask your students to go through to write a good composition?

The same stages as with any type of writing (please, refer to section 4.2. in Topic 5. Thank you). Little by little, these steps will become more automatic + quicker + even done unconsciously.

Pre-writing: generating ideas	brainstorming listing clustering free writing reading activating background knowledge
Drafting & revising (<u>at all levels</u>)	1st revision: content (ideas, organisation, etc.) 2nd revision: form (look for mistakes + check there are instances of language of the level)
Editing: the final touch	Thinking about the reader becomes paramount.

You should include the following stages, and expound on them as far as the time available (and number of words permitted) allows you to:

− Pre-writing: generation of ideas. You can explain how important this stage is, the techniques that can be used (*e.g.* brainstorming, mind-mapping, clustering,

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listening, reading); suggest doing this activity in groups during classroom time so that students have enough ideas and don't get stuck when writing the composition later.
- Drafting and revising <u>at all levels</u>. Explain the different areas the students should revise, and in what order: organisation and relevance of ideas, paragraphing, form (spelling, grammar, vocabulary). Explain the importance of this step.
- Editing: the 'final touch'

Please check the image below for the differences between expert and novice writers.

Escritores expertos	Escritores novatos
Conciben el problema retórico en toda su complejidad, incluyendo metas relacionadas con el destinatario, el propósito comunicativo, el contexto, la organización y el contenido.	Conciben el problema de manera simple, sobre todo en términos de tema de redacción. No se plantean cuestiones de organización textual. No tienen en cuenta el posible destinatario del escrito.
Evalúan su progreso durante el proceso de composición analizando el texto producido en términos de las metas propuestas.	La evaluación del escrito se reduce a comprobar la adecuación al tema de redacción propuesto.
Controlan y están preparados para dedicarse selectivamente a las distintas actividades de la composición, según la etapa del proceso.	A menudo intentan hacerlo todo bien en el primer borrador. Se concentran en la elección de vocablos o en la puntuación, incluso en las primeras etapas, cuando los escritores expertos tienen metas más ideacionales.Son incapaces de dirigir y controlar su proceso de composición.
Planifican durante más tiempo, a distintos niveles de complejidad, y están dispuestos a cambiar sus planes durante el proceso de composición. Curiosamente, pocos escritores expertos comienzan con un detallado esquema que guíe su composición.	Planifican poco y la planificación se da básicamente a nivel de ideas que se incluirán en el texto.
Normalmente quedan poco satisfechos con el primer borrador. Creen que la revisión es una forma de construir el significado del texto. Revisan extensamente la estructura, contenido y planteamiento del escrito.	Muestran poca flexibilidad a la hora de revisar.La revisión se reduce a una tarea de detección y corrección de posibles errores de orden lingüístico u ortográfico. Se revisa a nivel de palabras y frases.

5. What can you do to lower your students' anxiety with listening?

Listening is one of the most difficult skills for three main reasons: (i) it escapes our control, (ii) there is no reciprocity, (iii) it is sometimes a disembodied voice. Indeed, listening can become a truly traumatic experience for some students.

To start with, we should follow this general model when we do a listening exercise:

Pre-listening	To activate background and linguistic knowledge Don't start cold.
While-listening	Establish clear objectives; every time students listen, they need to do it with a different purpose. 1st listening for general understanding (skimming) 2nd listening for specific detail (scanning) You might wish your students to read the questions first to know what the listening will be about or, quite on the contrary, you might want your students to listen straightaway (without having read the questions previously) so that they focus on the general meaning of the listening and not on answering the specific questions asked.
Post-listening	Respond to content, not only form.

Apart from this, we can implement the following tips:

- Exploit strategies and skills to the full (please, refer to topic 4. Thank you.).
  - Skills: prediction, scanning, skimming, recognising functions and discourse patterns, deducing meaning from context, distinguishing between literal and implied meanings, tolerating ambiguity.
  - Strategies: **metacognitive**: planning (previewing the organising principle of an anticipated learning task) and self-monitoring (checking, verifying or correcting one's comprehension); **cognitive**: inferring or elaborating (relating new information to prior knowledge or different parts of new information to each other); **social**: self-encouragement and self-reinforcement (providing personal motivation by arranging rewards for oneself when a task has been successfully completed).
- Foster a relaxed atmosphere (*e.g.* split listening, comparing answers in pairs, etc.)
- Integrate listening within a wider task. Do something different with it → not only "evaluation"
- Make students forget they're doing a listening.
- Use DVD's + real material (motivation + body language is highly helpful)

- Encourage students to practise listening at home through websites, films and series in original version, podcasts, songs. <u>Listen for pleasure.</u>
- Let them know that listening is like a sport: it requires perseverance and frequency.
- Make them aware that results will come <u>in the long term</u>, but they will come.

6. What is the difference between the following pairs of connectors? How would you explain it to your students?

Despite vs. although

Because vs. due to

Even at advanced levels, students still make mistakes with these pairs of connectors. However, the difference is clear-cut:

Despite is a preposition, and so it must be followed by either a noun (NP) or an –ing form. *Although*, however, is a conjunction, and so it is followed by a clause.

> *We went out despite the bad weather.*

> *We went out although the weather was very bad.*

The same difference applies to *because* and *due to*: *because* is a conjunction, and so it is followed by a clause, whereas *due to* is a preposition, and so it must be followed by a noun (NP).

> *We set off late because the plane was delayed.*

> *We set off late due to the play's delay.*

7. Enumerate linkers, conjunctions and linguistic structures for the expression of the following relations. Write them from lower to higher level.

Suggested answers:

	Basic	**Intermediate**	**Advanced**
Cause	*because, as*	*due to, because of, thanks to, as a result of, due to (the fact that)*	*since, for, owing to, on account of, given that, now that, … stems from, as caused by*
Result	*so, for this / that reason, then*	*that's why, so…that, as a result, as a consequence (of), consequently, and so*	*therefore, thus, hence, … leads to, thereby*

Purpose	*to infinitive, for*	*in order to/that; so as to/so that;*	*with a view to + -ing, for fear of/that, for + subject + to* (I'll open the door for you to enter, I'll close the door for you not to go out)
Contrast	*but, however, although*	*on the one hand…on the other hand, anyway, though, even so, on the contrary, in contrast (to), by contrast, contrary to, instead, apart from, despite (this), while, otherwise*	*nevertheless, nonetheless, yet, still, at any rate, notwithstanding, whereas, even though, in spite of, unlike, conversely, alternatively, in turn, whilst*
Concession	*although, but, if*	*despite/in spite of (the fact that), even though/though, (not) even if, however, whereas, while*	*regardless of, nevertheless, nonetheless, all the same, notwithstanding, yet*
Condition	*if, unless*	*provided/providing (that), as long as, in (that) case, only if, even if*	*imagine, suppose, supposing (that), so long as, on condition that, inversion with had, were or should, whether, provided that, if in doubt, if possible, if necessary, if so, if not, under no circumstances (+ inversino), given that*
Addition	*And, too, also*	*besides (that), as well (as), moreover, furthermore, apart from that, along with, in addition to […], in addition, plus, besides,*	*on top of that, what is more, not to mention, besides that, plus the fact that, likewise, in like manner, not only…but also, equally, additionally, then, further, by the same token, along with, similarly, not to mention*

8. Many of our students do not have an academic background, and so are not used to writing, even in their mother-tongue. Suggest ways to teach our learners to organise their compositions and write good paragraphs.

Make students aware that:

- Each paragraph should have between 3 and 5 lines, approximately. Very often, in our students' compositions each sentence corresponds to a paragraph. They should be made aware that a paragraph must consist of a series of sentences/lines.

- Each paragraph must correspond to a new idea. New idea → new paragraph.

- The first sentence in the paragraph should be the topic sentence: the controlling idea of the paragraph. A paragraph is unified around this main idea, with the following sentences providing detail and discussion.

- A paragraph should be ordered. In a well-ordered paragraph, the reader follows along easily. Order helps the reader grasp our meaning and avoid confusion.

- A paragraph should also be coherent and cohesive: sentences need to connect and work together as a whole. This includes coherence (the paragraph must make sense), use of connectors, and a consistent verb tense sequence.

- A paragraph should also be comprehensive and complete, well-developed. Usually, three supporting sentences, in addition to a topic sentence and concluding sentence, are needed for a paragraph to be complete.

Practical suggestions:

- When you correct your students' compositions, make comments on the internal organisation of the text, *i.e.* paragraphing. Mark how the paragraphs should have been organised, where a new paragraph should start, etc.
- Do extensive practice with connectors and linkers and encourage your students to use them.
- Work with jumbled texts which they have to put back in order. That way they gather insights into the internal organisation of paragraphs: how do they know the correct order? What were the clues? (cohesion, coherence, linkers, pronouns, etc.)
- Encourage your students to read. When they read, they are in constant touch with good models of writing. Good readers are generally good writers.
- Do controlled writing exercises followed by free writing exercises.

- Work with texts in which sentences have been removed and they need to decide which sentence goes where. This way, students become aware of the hints, structures and types of words preceding the gap and following the gap.

- Provide the students with a rubric for peer-review.

- Provide students with checklists to self-assess their writings before handing them in.

- Design a handout to practice the different stages of writing (pre-writing, drafting and revising, and editing)

- Use mindmaps to generate ideas. Mindmaps help to identify the main idea of each paragraph, which is shown in its topic sentences and is supported by other minor ideas stemming from it.

- We can get the learner to practice writing paragraphs according to <u>who, what, where, how, and why</u>.

- We can ask the learner to write a weekly account of the prior week, past weekend, etc., with primary attention given to organization (e.g., sequencing activities, developing a paragraph, using correct word order, etc.).

- We can teach the learner that the basic structure of almost all types of writing is: an introduction, a middle section where information is developed (body), and a conclusion or ending.

- We can make the learner take part in writing learning activities designed to cause the learner to want to be successful (e.g., writing a letter to a friend, rock star, famous athlete, etc.).

- We should make the learner proofread their written work.

- When giving feedback, we could ask the learner rewrite for better organization.

- We can recommend our students to use apps to improve their writing: Writing Challenge App, Writing Prompts, Story Builder, Write About This, Storyrobe, Google Docs, etc.

9. **Do you think students find it difficult to distinguish between different levels of formality? Is this part of the curriculum? When should we start teaching it? And how?**

The sociolinguistic variable of tenor or, in other words, the differences in levels of formality, is one of the most difficult areas to learn, even if in our own mother-tongue. It is not until we reach a certain level of maturity and cultural background that we are able to code-switch between registers.

At beginner levels, we should teach our students an informal – neutral style that allows them to manage in a variety of every day situations. As we move towards the intermediate level, nuances of formality should be included, this content becoming <u>paramount</u> in levels B2 and C1.

Being able to "move" between different registers highly distinguishes competent speakers from those who are less so (code-switching). Therefore, our students should be able to modify their discourse according to the situation in which they are using the language.

Ways in which we can teach formality:

- Provide students with two examples of the "same text", one written formally and the other informally. They need to find equivalent sentences in both registers. This allows them to express the same message with a different level of formality.
- Pay attention to the register of newly learnt words: register should be an added feature of meaning, together with pronunciation, common collocations, etc.

- Place the same situation in different contexts to show how language varies. For example: offering a friend something to drink vs a waiter asking customers what they will order.

- Odd-one-out exercise to cross out the form that is different regarding formality or informality.

- Game: give each student one card with "Formal" on it and another with "Informal" on it. They listen to phrases the teacher reads out like "Wassup?" and "I hope this email finds you well" and hold up the cards to indicate what they think about the formality they hear. They can then label the same phrases on a worksheet and try to draw up rules for formal and informal language from those examples.

- Project pictures of different real-life situations with captions that students need to fill in depending on the situation (for example, in a cafeteria or at a university class).

- Provide students with graphic organisers so that they can include formal and informal language exponents according to different situations.

- We can give learners mixed up formal and informal conversations or emails to sort out. It could be a formal exchange and an informal one to separate from each other and then put into order, or an email exchange (which can get more and more informal as it goes on) that you ask them to put into chronological order. The worksheets should be designed so that the students can use meaning and context clues to help them even if they are unsure about the differences in formality. They can then work together to identify the points that make the differences in formality obvious.

- A simpler version of the activity above is to just give them phrases or emails and their responses (e.g. "Hiya. How's it going?" "Great. You?") that they should match up from formality and meaning clues.

- If there are certain formal and/or informal phrases that students are likely to need often, there is also a memory game called Grammar Reversi that they can play. Make a set of about fifteen to twenty cards that have a formal sentence on one side and an informal version of the same thing on the other (e.g. "Dear Mr Smith" and "Hi John"). Students lay them in a vertical line on the table in front of them, representing the ladder that they must climb. It doesn't matter which side is showing. They climb the ladder by guessing/remembering the exact wording of the other side of every card, moving all the way from the bottom to the top. Any mistakes mean play passes to the next person, and all players must start at the very bottom each and every time. Cards remain turned over if they guess correctly, meaning the next person must change the formality the other way round.

- A more well-known activity is to get students correcting formality mistakes. I find this works best if the formality problems are mixed up with spelling mistakes, paragraphing problems, etc. You can give them a conversation or email exchange with a mix of such problems to sort out, or give them a succession of tasks that just have a single kind of problem that they should identify and then correct. For

example, the first email and response you give them has 15 spelling mistakes; then once they have found and corrected all of them you give a similar worksheet with 15 formality problems on it.

- In order to help our students develop sensitivity to formality and appropriacy, we should teach functional language in which we would focus on context and they will learn when to use those functions.

10. Suggest 5 ways to teach your students learning and/or communicative strategies.

There are <u>countless</u> ways to teach our students learning and/or communicative strategies. Indeed, this is the part you must work on in the "strategic learning" section of your Course Planning.

What needs to be highlighted is that strategies must be learnt <u>explicitly</u>. We cannot take for granted that our students will transfer them from their mother-tongue, or that they will learn them unconsciously.

Other ideas:

- "Information-gap" crossword in pairs where they have to paraphrase to explain the missing word: communicative strategy of paraphrasing.
- Encourage them to have a schedule of work.
- Make them write down their objectives for the year and develop an <u>action plan</u> to achieve them.
- Provide students with a table of useful expressions they can use in speaking production or interaction (agreeing, disagreeing, giving you time to think, clarifying, etc.).
- Invite them to write a learning diary in which they reflect upon their learning experience and progress. Ask them to write for 10 minutes every week/every couple of weeks.
- Teaching their partner as a way to review and settle knowledge ("tutorisation by stronger students").

- Play taboo game (explain something without using certain words so that the player guesses a word)

- In a reading or listening activity, show students how to predict the content of the text by having a look at the title and the pictures that may go with it.

- Show them how to use bilingual and monolingual dictionaries (depending on the level), allowing them to see how the information provided varies.

- Provide information on how to plan sequences, main ideas, structures and vocabulary for a presentation or a discussion

- Give support language and useful structures on board for them to use in communicative activities (scaffolding)

- Encourage students to use a vocabulary notebook, preferably divided into categories, in which they note down they new words they learn.

- End-of-unit reflection sheet to reflect upon what they learnt in the unit, what they enjoyed the most, what they still need to improve, etc.

- Encourage them to practise the shadowing technique so that they can improve their pronunciation.

- Using correction rubrics to make peer assessment and make them aware of how they are assessed and how can they improve.

- Guide them through their process of planning their speaking and writing