

Introduction to AU TESOL Working Papers
Special Edition
Innovative – and Communicative – Materials for Teaching Grammar

This third volume of the AU TESOL Working Papers represents a slight departure from our two previous volumes in that the current one does not contain research papers, but materials for teaching grammar structures. It is, however, as its predecessor issues, composed entirely of contributions from students in the AU TESOL program; and what is more, these contributions stem from students' projects completed in one AU TESOL course, *Teaching Grammar*. In this course, students observed real life occurrences of and uses of English grammar structures in order to see how grammar realizes a variety of communicative functions in real life interactions. Based on their observations, students adapted real life dialogs for teaching purposes and designed grammar teaching materials that rival those in textbooks by first-rate publishers.

The design of the grammar materials follows the approach to grammar teaching that the AU TESOL Program adheres to, and which represents an excellent instantiation of Communicative Language Teaching: the Hourglass Model. According to this lesson design and grammar teaching approach, language learners are first introduced in the language presentation phase to a new grammar structure in several short and realistic dialogs (if the goal is oral interaction), which emphasize a particular form-function connection. In the highlighting phase that follows, learners are led to discover the target structure formation and its communicative use. Subsequent practice activities move from controlled to semi-controlled to free/communicative practice to provide learners with gradually more independence and choice in meaningful practice tasks. This approach is described in detail in the article "Theoretical Underpinnings of Effective Grammar Instruction" (written for WATESOL News by me in conjunction with two of the students whose work is published in this volume, Elise Couper and Bryan Woerner); the article follows this introduction and precedes the teaching materials in this volume. It provides useful background and theoretical reasoning for the teaching materials, all of which implement the Hourglass Approach described therein.

Our current volume consists of seven teaching materials/ grammar lessons, which appear in a format that allows them to be readily used as classroom materials/worksheets. All of the materials contain answer keys at the end of the respective lesson, which should make it easy for teachers to use them in class. We allow users – teachers who would like to use the materials with their classes – to make copies of the lessons, but we ask that the materials designers, the students in the AU TESOL Program, are properly acknowledged. We thank for everyone's cooperation in advance.

While a volume like this one cannot cover all grammar structures, the selection includes major grammar structures, all with a clearly linked communicative function depicting realistic communicative situations in which learners are likely to find themselves in. The targeted learner audiences are all adult learners in adult

education programs and whose proficiency levels range from (high)-beginner to (low)-intermediate.

Bryan Woerner designed a lesson for intermediate learners, in which the **present progressive** tense is used with future meaning to signal a speaker's polite refusal to a question/request.

Judith Yancey's materials target beginning learners and teach use of **some/any with count and non-count nouns** in communication situations where colleagues ask each other about supplies in the workplace.

Keite Leite created materials for teaching **tag questions** (present tense, verb *be*) to high-beginners to show concern or empathy when a colleague or classmate expresses a problem with studying English.

In another lesson, *Keite Leite* has targeted **comparatives** as a way to teach high beginners to make suggestions.

Comparatives are also the grammar structure taught in *Tiffany Shao's* materials. Her lesson is targeted at low-intermediate level learners and uses comparatives to give advice to someone when shopping. Both comparatives lessons have in common that the comparative structure occurs without the *than*-complement – as the students in our *Teaching Grammar* class discovered, *than* was omitted more often than included in real life conversations, yet nearly always included in available teaching materials.

Elise Couper provides high-beginning learners with materials that teach them and help them practice reporting information to each other in a lesson on reported speech.

Emily Evans and *Jo-Anne Saxe* designed materials for **yes/no questions** for intermediate learners, who learn how such questions can be used to help someone make a decision.

All in all, the grammar materials compiled in this volume combine creativity and user appeal, but more importantly, they represent a sound understanding of how English grammar works and can be made accessible – and usable – for English language learners.

Sigrun Biesenbach-Lucas
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