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# Grammar in the Secondary ESL Classroom

A REFERENCE FOR SECONDARY ESL TEACHERS (CORE AND EESL)

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# Introduction

Learning grammar is an integral part of learning a language. They go hand in hand and cannot be separated. To support students in comprehending and producing oral and written messages, teachers can work with students to help them in their continued grammatical **development**.<sup>1</sup> This document is intended to inform ESL secondary teachers about the latest developments in research with regards to the **learning** and **teaching** of grammar and to inspire them when it comes to selecting, adapting and creating grammar activities for their students.

The document starts with a brief historical description of how second or additional language (L2) teaching approaches have promoted the teaching of grammar. Secondly, information about how L2 grammar learning occurs is detailed. Thirdly, different means of teaching grammar are discussed and example activities that aim to illustrate the theoretical content of the document are provided.

The document also contains five appendices that provide supplementary information on the following topics:

- the presentation-practice-production model
- the presentation of grammar rules in the ESL classroom
- the successful implementation of the grammar activities presented in this document
- the selection, adaptation and creation of grammar activities in conjunction with students' grammatical development
- the choice of what grammar to teach

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<sup>1</sup> Words in **bold green** typeface indicate that a definition is provided in the glossary.



# 1. The Place of Grammar in the L2 Classroom Over Time

The place of grammar in the L2 classroom has always been debated. In this section, five **teaching** approaches will be discussed. The first three – grammar-translation, the Direct Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method – treat language as a structure that needs to be learned; these are structural approaches. The second two teaching approaches – Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching – conceptualize language in terms of meaning and communication. These are not the only L2 teaching approaches, but they have been or often are used in regular L2 classrooms in which grammar forms part of the teaching content.

## Initial approaches and grammar teaching

The first well-documented teaching approach in school contexts was grammar-translation, in which students translated literary works from one language to another. Traditionally, Latin was the target language.

A subsequent approach that gained popularity in the late 19th and early 20th century was the Direct Method, whose main innovation was to exclude the first language (L1) from the L2 classroom. This was partially a reaction to grammar-translation, but it also was done to match the conditions in which an L1 is learned. Based on theoretical understandings at the time, it was believed that a direct association had to be made in the student's mind between the form of a word or concept and its meaning in the L2. This approach was structured around vocabulary; grammar was secondary. When it was taught, students were more likely to be provided with examples and encouraged to come up with a rule (**inductive rule presentation**) rather than being taught a rule then provided with examples (**deductive rule presentation**). Despite the focus on meaning that this approach attempted to centralize, language was still understood in terms of its structure – words and rules to learn, rather than as a tool for communicating meaning.

In North America, geopolitical needs in the 1930s and 1940s led to the development of the Audio-Lingual Method, which was based on behaviourist theories of **learning**. Grammar was frequently not presented or discussed with students, but teachers decided what to teach based on differences between the L1 and the L2. The target grammar was then included in highly structured dialogues. Students were expected to pick up the grammar by memorizing these dialogues. When grammar was taught explicitly, rules were presented to students who then completed **exercises** in which they practised the grammar by applying the rules.



## Today's research-based grammar teaching approaches

In the 1960s, teaching approaches moved away from overall highly structured environments where grammar played a preponderant role to what is now often referred to as Communicative<sup>2</sup> Language Teaching (CLT). This change was influenced by research into languages and how they are learned, which reconceptualized what it meant to know a language as a language became understood as a means of communication. In terms of teaching languages, the main innovations focused on the importance of centralizing the communicative nature of language through helping students develop their communicative competence. Furthermore, as research uncovered the developmental nature of L2 **learning**, teaching practices shifted the focus away from grammar and accuracy toward using language to communicate and make meaning. Thus, contrary to the three structural approaches above, approaches since this shift are meaning-centred.

In the initial versions of CLT in North America (1970s), grammar was supposedly banished from the classroom because it was assumed that it would be acquired over time from **comprehensible input**. As research progressed, the importance of producing language during meaningful interactions was integrated into the classroom. To help students do this, **the PPP model** was popularized (see Appendix 1). This model took the Audio-Lingual Method of presenting and practising grammar, but added a final production stage in which students could **produce** language that included this grammar. As students were now using grammar in meaningful communicative situations (the production stage in the PPP model), they could make errors with the grammar they were learning. This meant that teachers could provide **corrective feedback**.

Corrective feedback was and is considered an excellent means of helping students become more accurate language users. Contrary to structural approaches in which errors were considered bad, it is now understood that due to the developmental nature of learning a language, making errors is normal. They do not need to be avoided and can, in fact, be very good indicators of how student grammar is developing.

Despite the initial interest in classrooms that focused only on meaning, things quickly shifted from this strong CLT to a more nuanced approach that advocated for the **teaching** of some grammar. In research, the teaching of grammar in an overall communicative approach is often referred to as form-focused instruction.

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<sup>2</sup> *Communicative* is used in this document to mean any teaching approach or method that centralizes the use of language and the importance of meaning. The MEQ English as a Second Language programs are communicative.



Today, in North America, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a branch of CLT, is the predominant research-based L2 teaching approach. Its innovations include:

- the importance of emphasizing comprehension or **input** practice as well as production or **output** practice
- its conceptualization of language **development** in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity
- its emphasis on collaborative work

In this approach, four criteria are used to define tasks:

1. The primary focus of a task is meaning (**language use**).
2. The end goal of the task is a **communicative** outcome of which the students are aware. Task success is measured in terms of this goal, not the accuracy of students' language, including the accuracy with which they use grammar.
3. Students rely on their own linguistic resources (and strategies) for task completion.
4. The task is designed to include a knowledge gap, so students need to share information, express opinions or reason with each other.

A task can be part of a task sequence in which different pre-task and post-task activities can be used to help promote **learning**. Some tasks or activities within the task sequence may focus on grammar to help students learn a **grammar point** implicitly or explicitly. This can be done before, after or during the task. Research has also shown that when students are given time to plan what they will do (pre-task), the language they use during the task is more accurate, more fluent and more complex. Furthermore, task repetition also helps students become more accurate and fluent, and to use more complex language.

To conclude, over the years, the emphasis on grammar has evolved. Originally, language was conceptualized in terms of its grammar, and it was believed that grammar was learned through applying rules and learning words. Due to research developments, language is now conceptualized as a means of communication and the goal of learning is to develop communicative competence. Over time, students become more accurate, more fluent and better able to use more complex language in terms of both comprehension and production. However, for different reasons, researchers also recommend **teaching** some grammar to help students in their grammatical development (see Appendix 5).



## 2. Current Research About L2 Grammar Learning

Theory and research into how L2 are learned in classroom contexts have shown that language **learning** best occurs through **language use**. In other words, language develops naturally over time, as students use it to **comprehend** messages (i.e. input) and to **produce** messages (i.e. output) for meaning. During this language use, grammar also naturally develops as the language is **processed** for its meaning. This type of grammatical **development** leads mainly to the creation of **implicit knowledge**, which is the linguistic knowledge used during spontaneous oral language use. (See sections 2.1 and 2.2).

Grammar refers to all linguistic regularities related to word order and word formation. It is often discussed in terms of grammar points, for example, the simple past or possessive determiners (see Appendix 5 for more information on grammar points). However, a grammar point can also be much narrower, such as one piece of information about possessive determiners with which students appear to be struggling. For example, students might use *my, your, our, their* quite accurately but struggle with *his* and *her*.

In addition, **grammar points** are not learned in a predetermined order. The speed and accuracy of learning a grammar point depend on different elements, such as these key factors:

- the number of hours of exposure to English in which the grammar is present (i.e. comprehension of meaningful oral and written **input** including the grammar)
- the number of opportunities to use the grammar in authentic **contexts** (i.e. production of meaningful oral and written **output**)
- whether the grammar carries meaning in conversation
- whether the grammar is similar in French or in students' other languages
- whether the grammar is different from French or from students' other languages

Students do not learn and use one grammar point perfectly before moving on to another grammar point. Each grammar point develops through language use over years. For instance, students do not learn the simple present perfectly before moving on to the present continuous. Even highly proficient users continue to make mistakes with the simple present. For example, they use the present continuous when the meaning requires the simple present, or they miss the third person -s with an infrequent verb.<sup>3</sup>

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**Students do not learn and use a grammar point perfectly before moving on to another grammar point.**

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<sup>3</sup> The adjective "infrequent" is used to refer to the rare number of times that a proficient speaker has come across a verb in the **input**.



In the following subsections, implicit and explicit knowledge of language and grammar are defined, theory and research on helping students create implicit and explicit knowledge are summarized, grammar rules and accuracy are discussed, challenges related to grammar points are explained, and grammar errors are demystified.

## 2.1 Implicit and Explicit Knowledge of Language and Grammar

Language **learning** refers to the process, but its outcome is language knowledge. As such, when thinking about how students learn grammar, it is vital to distinguish between implicit and explicit knowledge. A person can have both types of knowledge for a **grammar point**; they can co-exist. A person is said to have **implicit knowledge** of a grammar point if they can accurately **comprehend** it and **produce** it during spontaneous oral interactions, which takes time to happen. The opposite of implicit knowledge is explicit knowledge. A person is said to have **explicit knowledge** of a grammar point if they are conscious of how to form it or what it means.<sup>4</sup> Explicit knowledge takes time to access. As such, it is often impossible for it to be used during spontaneous oral interactions.

### How do children learn their first language?

Until they start school, most children have *implicit* language knowledge. A 3-year-old will say “I am not lying” or “stop stealing my toys,” but they have not been taught syntactic rules about negation or that the verb following “stop” is in its present participle form. They have implicit knowledge of these complex rules.

On starting school in English, children begin to have formal instruction about their first language. They learn that the sound /k/ is usually written with a *c* or *k*; they memorize the mnemonic “*i* before *e* except after *c*” as a rule for spelling and they learn to label parts of speech.

However, even after formal schooling begins, continued grammatical development is still largely implicit in nature – complex grammar continues to develop without formal instruction.

## 2.2 Helping Students Create Implicit Knowledge

According to theory and research in L2 education, students develop implicit grammatical knowledge by being provided with opportunities to use language for meaning. During this **language use**, grammar will be learned **incidentally**. As students are focused on language use and not grammar, most of this learning will be implicit and will lead to implicit knowledge. This can be done by providing frequent and varied opportunities for students to work with authentic **input** and **output** in which the grammar is used.

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<sup>4</sup> In this document, *meaning* is being used to refer to both what a **grammar point** means and how or when it is used.



Implicit grammar activities are detailed in sections 3.2 and 3.4.1, and ideas on grammar that may benefit from being taught implicitly are discussed in Appendix 5.

## 2.3 Helping Students Create Explicit Knowledge

Although a lot of grammar develops naturally over time, researchers also advocate for some explicit grammar **teaching** to help students create **explicit knowledge** as it can help them to become accurate more quickly. One important way of helping students create explicit knowledge is to have them think and talk about how grammar is formed and what it means (see section 2.5).

Explicit grammar activities are detailed in sections 3.3 and 3.4.2 to 3.4.5; and ideas on grammar that may benefit from being taught explicitly are discussed in Appendix 5.

## 2.4 Grammar Rules and Accuracy

Grammar rules can be used to describe regularities about word order and word formation. These rules are created based on looking at how language is used. This is why there are many exceptions. Rules capture grammatical regularities, but language does not always follow these regularities.

Research has shown that presenting a rule deductively or inductively<sup>5</sup> followed by a few exercises in which the students apply the rule can help them develop some explicit knowledge about grammar. However, being able to apply a rule in an **exercise** is insufficient for accurate use of the grammar point in the long term. Students become more accurate over time by using the grammar during **language use**.

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**Being able to apply a rule in an exercise is insufficient for accurate use of the grammar point in the long term.**

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Moreover, the rules stated in class are often rules that the students have already been taught multiple times. As **teaching** does not equal **learning**, some students may still not have explicit knowledge of these rules, but many will (see Glossary, “teaching vs. learning”). It may be frustrating to hear and read mistakes with this grammar during language use. However, this demonstrates the divide between explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge. Students may have some explicit knowledge that they may or may not use when writing or revising texts, but the necessary **implicit knowledge** for long-term accurate use is still being developed. For more information regarding the presentation of rules in the ESL classroom, see Appendix 2.

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<sup>5</sup> See **deductive rule presentation** and **inductive rule presentation** in the glossary.



## 2.5 Challenges Related to Grammar Development

A **grammar point** can be challenging because of its forms and/or its meanings. For example, a student could say “*I is eating*” (form error) or “*I eat now*” (meaning error) rather than the correct “*I am eating now.*” If a student can state that the sentence “*I am eating*” can be made into a negative statement by adding “*not*” between “*am*” and “*eating*,” this shows they have **explicit knowledge** about how negative sentences are formed in the present continuous. If a student can state that the present continuous can be used to talk about an action that is happening at the time of speaking, this shows that they have explicit knowledge about the meaning of the present continuous. If a student correctly uses the above examples in spontaneous oral communication, they also have **implicit knowledge** of it (see Appendix 5 for additional information about challenges related to learning grammar).

## 2.6 Errors: An Integral Part of Grammatical Development

Errors are frequent in L2 **learning**. They are normal and are very good indicators of grammatical **development**, especially when students are using oral language spontaneously. For example, when learning the simple past, both L1 and L2 students go through developmental stages (see Table 1 below). Appropriate and timely grammar **teaching** paired with **corrective feedback** should help students progress through the stages and learn the grammar point more quickly than if there is no planned grammar teaching (see Table 2 in section 3). However, this development takes a long time. Even with the best support, students will still need many years to be able to accurately use this grammar point.

**Table 1: L1 and L2 developmental stages when learning the simple past**

<b>Stage 1</b> (for L2 students, this stage can last a long time)	Regular and irregular verbs are mostly used inaccurately; the verb remains in its base form <sup>6</sup> ( <i>I walk to school</i> meaning <i>I walked to school</i> )
<b>Stage 2</b>	Frequent irregular verbs start to be used accurately ( <i>came, took</i> )
<b>Stage 3</b>	Frequent regular verbs start to be used accurately ( <i>wanted, asked</i> )
<b>Stage 4</b>	More and more regular verbs start to be used accurately AND irregular verbs may be used with <i>-ed</i> (rather than the previously accurate <i>came</i> and <i>took</i> , L2 students might use <i>comed, comed, taked, tooked</i> , etc.)
<b>Stage 5</b>	Irregular verbs start to be used accurately again, and more and more infrequent regular verbs are correctly marked with <i>-ed</i>

Adapted from Lightbown and Spada (2021, pp. 57-58).

<sup>6</sup> In this document, the base form of the verb refers to its infinitive form without the “to”.



### 3. Transferring This Research to the ESL Classroom

In the classroom, there are three broad means of helping students become more accurate with English grammar. The first involves no planned grammar **teaching**; instead, teachers use activities that foster the development of the three ESL competencies<sup>7</sup>. Over time, many **grammar points** will develop **incidentally**. The second is to use implicit grammar activities carefully selected by the teacher to provide students with opportunities to **comprehend** and **produce** the grammar. As students do not know they are being taught grammar; most learning that occurs should lead to implicit knowledge. The third means is to use explicit grammar activities in which students have opportunities to think and/or talk about grammar. Regardless of how the grammar is taught, students will not be able to use it accurately immediately – **learning** grammar takes time (see **teaching vs. learning** in the glossary). Table 2 details these three broad means of helping students’ grammatical **development**.

**Regardless of how the grammar is taught, students will not be able to use it accurately immediately – learning grammar takes time.**

**Table 2: Three broad means of helping students’ grammatical development**

HELPING STUDENTS’ GRAMMATICAL DEVELOPMENT	
<b>1. Activities that foster the development of the three ESL competencies</b> Students are provided with <b>comprehensible input and output opportunities</b> as they interact with others; listen to others and to texts; and read, view, write and produce texts. They are offered <b>corrective feedback</b> when they make mistakes during language use.	
<b>2. Implicit grammar activities</b> Students are provided with <b>planned and manipulated input and output opportunities</b> as they interact with others; listen to others and to texts; and read, view, write and produce texts (see sections 3.2 and 3.4.1).	<b>3. Explicit grammar activities</b> Students are provided with <b>planned, explicit grammar teaching</b> as they negotiate the form and meaning of grammar with others, mostly through collaborative activities (see sections 3.3 and 3.4.2 to 3.4.5).

In the following subsections, the three broad means of helping students’ grammatical development are detailed and activity examples are presented.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about ESL competencies, see MEQ Secondary ESL programs, <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/preschool-elementary-and-secondary-schools/programs-training-evaluation/quebec-education-program/secondary/english-second-language>



### 3.1 Activities That Foster the Development of the Three ESL Competencies

Using meaningful **communicative activities** that foster the development of the three secondary ESL competencies provides students with frequent opportunities to learn grammar. As they interact with others, listen to others and to texts, and read, view, write and produce texts, they will **incidentally** learn many **grammar points**. Even though these activities do not include planned implicit or explicit **teaching** of grammar, language and grammar **learning** will happen (see section 2). **Corrective feedback** will also naturally occur, which can help students to become more accurate.

### 3.2 Implicit Grammar Activities

Implicit grammar activities are also communicative activities that focus on **language use**. They aim to help students develop **implicit knowledge** of a grammar point, which is needed for long-term accuracy. Using these activities allows students to learn grammar incidentally as they practise comprehending and producing it without realizing the teacher has carefully selected the activities to teach grammar.

Implicit grammar activities are completed without the students or the teacher ever needing to talk about or think consciously about grammar. As such, they must respect certain conditions or characteristics, which are presented in Table 3 (see section 3.4.1 for an example of an implicit grammar activity).

**Table 3: Characteristics of implicit grammar activities**

IMPLICIT GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES	
Characteristics	Examples
1. Their topic is not related to grammar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recycling</li> <li>▪ nutrition</li> <li>▪ relationships with others</li> </ul>
2. Their <b>communicative</b> outcome is not related to grammar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ holding an interview</li> <li>▪ producing an infographic</li> <li>▪ writing a book review</li> </ul>
3. They focus on comprehending and producing language <sup>8</sup> in which the grammar occurs naturally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ interacting orally with others</li> <li>▪ listening to others and to texts</li> <li>▪ reading and/or viewing texts</li> <li>▪ writing and/or producing texts</li> </ul>
4. They do not include explicit grammar teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ no rules are given</li> <li>▪ no exercises are completed by students before the activity</li> <li>▪ grammar is not mentioned by the teacher</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> See the definitions for **comprehend** and **produce** language in the glossary.



If these conditions are not respected, the activity has not been designed to promote **implicit learning** of the target grammar and its **development** as implicit knowledge.

Often an implicit grammar activity will look like any other **communicative activity** used in the classroom. The difference, however, is important as the implicit grammar activity has been specifically selected, adapted or created for the **teaching** of a target grammar and, as such, is being used based on the teacher’s analysis of their students’ grammatical **development**.

The language used in implicit grammar activities will also be chosen and/or adapted to try to ensure that students do not have to pay attention to **processing** new or difficult language. This may free up attentional resources for grammar learning. This is done by minimizing the necessity for cognitive resources to be used elsewhere. Concretely, this means including easy, familiar vocabulary, topics and instructions.

### 3.3 Explicit Grammar Activities

Explicit grammar activities aim to help students **comprehend** and **produce** a grammar point by providing them with the opportunity to create **explicit knowledge** about how the grammar is formed and/or what it means (see section 2.5 and Appendix 5.1). They are designed to promote **explicit learning**. In this document, all explicit grammar activities presented require students to work together to reflect on language (see sections 3.4.2 to 3.4.5 for examples of explicit grammar activities). If used without **collaboration**, these explicit grammar activities are no longer activities that effectively promote grammatical development based on research into how languages are learned. The characteristics of explicit grammar activities as presented in this document are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Characteristics of explicit grammar activities**

EXPLICIT GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES	
Characteristics	Examples
1. They require students to reflect on how a grammar point is formed and/or what it means (see section 2.5 and Appendix 5.1).	<p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>observe how grammar is used in oral and written texts</li> <li>notice relevant similarities and differences between English and French, or any other languages</li> <li>formulate hypotheses about how grammar is formed and/or what it means</li> <li>test their hypotheses</li> <li>readjust their hypotheses based on feedback from peers and/or the teacher</li> </ul>
2. They require <b>collaboration</b> among students to reach a common goal.	<p>Students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discuss their hypotheses about how grammar is formed and/or what it means with peers</li> <li>test their hypotheses collaboratively</li> <li>get feedback about their own hypotheses from peers and/or the teacher</li> <li>give peers feedback about their hypotheses</li> </ul>



## 3.4 Getting Ready to Use Implicit and Explicit Grammar Activities in the ESL Classroom

The following section presents examples of grammar activities alongside information on how, why and when to use them in the ESL classroom. It is important to note that including grammar activities within a broader sequence of activities, fostering an interactive and collaborative classroom environment and using pedagogical flexibility are key factors that will support the successful implementation of implicit and explicit grammar activities in the ESL classroom (see Appendix 3 for more information about these key factors).

These activities are meant to inspire teachers when it comes to selecting, adapting and creating grammar activities for their students. They were created by Québec ESL teachers from different levels and regions to ensure general suitability. However, they may need to be adjusted to suit the teaching context and individual student needs. All of the suggested types of grammar activities in this document can be used for a wide variety of **grammar points**.

### 3.4.1 Determining the pertinence of teaching a grammar point

The suggested types of grammar activities in this document allow teachers to fulfill two distinct but complementary goals: providing students with opportunities to learn a grammar point and gaining a better understanding of their students' **development** of the grammar point. Table 5 presents questions that may help teachers determine the pertinence of **teaching** a grammar point with regard to these two goals. See Appendix 4 for additional information concerning which type of activity is most likely to suit students' needs.

**Table 5: Value of implicit and explicit grammar activities for teacher planning**

Reasons for teaching grammar	Questions that may help determine the pertinence of teaching a grammar point
<b>Provide students with opportunities to learn a grammar point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are students asking questions about this grammar point?</li> <li>▪ Are students trying to use this grammar point in spontaneous speaking or writing?</li> <li>▪ Are students making errors with this grammar point in their spontaneous oral communication?</li> <li>▪ Is this grammar point infrequent in the oral and written texts used in the classroom?</li> </ul>
<b>Gain a better understanding of students' development of the grammar point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are students already able to use the grammar point with few errors?</li> <li>▪ Are students using the grammar point, but sometimes or often with errors?</li> <li>▪ Are students avoiding using the grammar point or using French to convey their message?</li> </ul>



### 3.4.2 Determining the duration of the activity

The implicit grammar activity example should take between 110 and 150 minutes, depending on pedagogical choices as well as students' knowledge of the target grammar, their general level of English language development and their overall work speed. As **implicit learning** takes time, if they use the grammar inaccurately or not at all, the activity is still valid.

The explicit grammar activities described below should take approximately 50 to 75 minutes. It is possible to create shorter or longer activities. However, as the goal is the co-construction of explicit knowledge, students need time to reflect, discuss and get feedback. Using the explicit grammar activities discussed in this document will help students to think and talk about language and grammar. For the dictogloss and the error correction activities, students may not focus on the target grammar as they may spend time on other grammar points. Should this happen, the activities are still useful as students will focus on what they are ready to learn (see the flow charts in Appendix 4).

### 3.4.3 Determining how to group students

Various groupings may be used to carry out the activities. Grouping students in pairs generally ensures that each student has more opportunities to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions, yet it also provides them with less diverse input than if they were working in groups of three or four. Heterogeneous groups in terms of proficiency can allow stronger students to scaffold their classmates. However, if one student in a group is much more advanced than the others and does not collaborate well, that student might provide all the answers. As such, it may sometimes be a good idea to put students with similar proficiency levels together.

### 3.4.4 Teaching functional language

Students may be given functional language to collaborate effectively as they carry out implicit and explicit grammar activities. However, explicit teaching of functional language right before doing the activity could lead students to focus on using functional language rather than on the activity, so the likelihood of the grammar being **processed** is reduced. With this in mind, teaching students how to interact and collaborate could be done without direct reference to these activities (see Appendix 3).



### 3.4.4.1 Example of an implicit grammar activity: Art reproductions

#### Activity overview

Students will listen to descriptions of paintings or works of art and write their own descriptions.

#### Suggested level

Secondary Cycle One EESL students or Secondary Cycle Two, Year One, Core students

#### Meaningful communicative goal (to be shared with students)

To see what makes an effective and accurate description

#### Target grammar

Help students in the development of *there is* and *there are* in their affirmative form

#### Rationale for target grammar

These two constructions are challenging for students for different reasons:

- French *il y a* is invariable whereas *there is* and *there are* include a singular and a plural form.
- *There is* and *there are* can be translated in numerous ways in French (*il y a, nous sommes, se trouver, etc.*).
- Learning to conjugate the verb based on what comes after it (the subject complement) is a long-term challenge for L2 students.

#### Value for students' grammatical development

When reading and listening to texts that have been selected, adapted or created by the teacher, students are exposed to examples of correct grammar, which should help grammatical development. Asking students to draw while listening helps them to be more attentive to the correct input. This correct input may prime the students to **produce** the grammar later in the activity.



## Suggested procedure

Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are presented with the meaningful communicative goal of the activity as well as the instructions to complete the activity.</li></ol>
Unfolding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. Students first listen to a description of one famous painting or work of art that is read out to them. As they listen, students draw a reproduction of the painting or work of art (see below for suggested texts). The description should include many occurrences where <i>there is/there are</i> are used correctly.</li><li>3. After the students have drawn their picture, in pairs, they rewrite the description.</li><li>4. In groups of three or four, they compare their texts to make sure they have included all the details.</li><li>5. Steps 1 to 4 can be carried out a second time for extra <b>input</b> practice.</li><li>6. Students are provided with a picture of a famous painting or work of art<sup>9</sup> and they write a description of it. This is done in secret. This step can be done individually or collaboratively.</li><li>7. If students work individually, some of them will have the same picture, so before step 7, they could compare their descriptions and come to a common agreement on what they will read aloud to help their classmates to draw the most accurate picture.</li><li>8. In groups of three or four students who have worked on different paintings or works of art, each student reads out their description and the others draw what they hear. Based on the drawings, students choose the description that elicited the most accurate reproduction.</li></ol>
Wrap-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. In their group, students discuss the reasons why the chosen description elicited the most accurate reproduction.</li><li>10. As a class, students discuss what makes an effective and accurate description.</li></ol>

<sup>9</sup> For a class of 30 students, 6 to 8 different pictures should suffice.



## Suggested texts to be read to students in step #2

Note: The highlighting aims to draw attention to the target grammar. The text should be read normally, with no emphasis on the grammar. If some of the vocabulary is difficult, students can ask questions, the teacher can provide definitions or the teacher can modify difficult words.

### Painting 1: *Le Fils de l'homme* de René Magritte (1964)

This painting is set at the seaside. **There is** a sea wall and there are lots of clouds in the sky. **There is** also some blue sky below the clouds. At the front of the painting, **there is** a man wearing a dark grey suit. **There are** two buttons on the suit. **There are** no pockets. He is wearing a red tie and a white shirt. He is also wearing a bowler hat. Right in front of his face, **there is** an apple.

### Painting 2: *Vue sur mer* de Kim Veilleux (2017)

This painting is also set at the seaside, but **there is** a lot more going on. **There are** some cliffs in the background on the right side of the painting. **There are** two seagulls flying in the sky. At the front of the painting, on the left-hand side, **there is** a man playing an accordion. Behind him, **there are** three people on the beach. To the right of him, **there is** a family of three. The dad has binoculars. **There are** also two beach chairs. In front of the chairs, **there are** two cyclists.

## Ideas for integrating this activity into a broader sequence of activities

This implicit grammar activity could be integrated into a broader sequence of activities, as students:

- learn about a famous painter or artist, or visual arts in general
- refine their comprehension of the key elements that generally make up a descriptive passage and/or prepare to write one (e.g. in a short story or in a travel brochure)
- discuss what makes oral communication effective

This activity could also be integrated in an interdisciplinary project with the Visual Arts and the Français, langue d'enseignement, programs.

## Note

- Appendix 4.2 presents guidelines on how to continue **teaching a grammar point** following the use of an implicit grammar activity.



### 3.4.4.2 Example of a collaborative error correction activity

#### Activity overview

Students are provided with a short text that contains errors. They work in pairs or in small groups to identify the errors, correct them, and justify any and all changes they make.

#### Suggested level

Secondary Cycle Two, Core students

#### Overall communicative goal (to be shared with students)

To find the errors in the text and correct them

#### Target grammar

Help students understand and improve their use of relative pronouns *who*, *which* and *that*

#### Rationale for target grammar

Differentiating between *who*, *which* and *that* is challenging because:

- The main rule is semantic in English (who = people; that = things; which = things).
- *That* can only be used in clauses without a comma (defining relative clauses).

#### Value for students' grammatical development

During the activity, the students will need to negotiate the form and meaning of language with their classmates as they explain why they think there is an error in the text and make hypotheses about what would be a more appropriate formulation. This type of activity is likely to spark **metalinguistic discussions** on the target grammar. These negotiations help students build explicit knowledge about how language is formed and what it means.



## Suggested procedure

Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are presented with the overall communicative goal of the activity as well as the instructions to complete the activity.</li><li>2. Students may need to be given functional language to help collaboration.</li><li>3. Students are divided into pairs or small groups.</li><li>4. Each group of students is given one copy of the text.</li><li>5. Each group may also be given a handout to write down the errors that they identify, the corrections that they suggest as well as the justification they offer for each suggested change.</li></ol>
Unfolding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Using their prior knowledge, each group identifies the grammar errors that they think are in the text. They discuss each error, how it could or should be corrected, and why. Resources may also be consulted.</li><li>7. Once all group members reach an agreement, they write down the error, their suggested correction and the justification for their correction.</li><li>8. Students pair up with a student from a different group to see whether they have identified the same errors and corrections. If not, they discuss their hypotheses to come to an agreement.</li><li>9. Students may join a different team to compare their findings.</li></ol>
Wrap-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>10. The teacher could ask each group of students to share one or two errors as well as their proposed correction(s), possibly one they are sure of and one they struggled with. Other groups could agree or disagree with the group's findings. If needed, the teacher could provide the correct answer and provide or elicit the rule.</li><li>11. Alternatively, the teacher could project the correct text and ask students if they found all the errors. This can be done sentence by sentence or using a more general approach. If students struggled with one or more errors, they may be asked to observe the corrections in the projected text and discuss their hypotheses on what the rule could be.</li></ol>



### Suggested collaborative error correction text for teacher (no errors) for step #4

#### Activism Can Change the World!

Activists are people **who** try to bring about political or social change. Many activists have changed the world **which/that** we live in. Mother Teresa, **who** died in Calcutta, India in 1997, is well-known for her humanitarian actions **which/that** helped many people **who** were living in difficult conditions. Martin Luther King, **who** paid the ultimate price for his activism, has left a rich legacy in the civil rights movement. Many people **who** are still alive are changing the world. Malala Yousafzai, **who** was nearly killed for her beliefs in Pakistan, is an activist **who** believes everyone has a right to an education. Greta Thunberg advocates for the environment, **which** is degrading ever faster. In Canada, David Suzuki, **who** was born in Vancouver in 1936, has been advocating for the environment for many years. His work on the CBC program *The Nature of Things* has influenced people around the world. Maybe someone in this classroom will end up changing the world!

### Suggested collaborative error correction text for students (with errors) for step #4

Note: The highlighting aims to draw attention to the target grammar (errors). The text should be printed out, with **NO** emphasis on grammar.

#### Activism Can Change the World!

Activists are people **that** try to bring about political or social change. Many activists have changed the world **that** we live in. Mother Teresa, **who** died in Calcutta, India in 1997, is well-known for her humanitarian actions **which** helped many people **that** were living in difficult conditions. Martin Luther King, **who** paid the ultimate price for his activism, has left a rich legacy in the civil rights movement. Many people **who** are still alive are changing the world. Malala Yousafzai, **which** was nearly killed for her beliefs in Pakistan, is an activist **who** believes everyone has a right to an education. Greta Thunberg advocates for the environment, **which** is degrading ever faster. In Canada, David Suzuki, **that** was born in Vancouver in 1936, has been advocating for the environment for many years. His work on the CBC program *The Nature of Things* has influenced people around the world. Maybe someone in this classroom will end up changing the world!



### Ideas for integrating this activity into a broader sequence of activities

This collaborative error correction activity could be integrated into a broader sequence of activities as students:

- learn about activism or about great contributions to society
- prepare to write or produce a profile piece or a biography
- explore various ways to combine simple sentences

This activity could also be integrated in an interdisciplinary project, namely with the History of Québec and Canada or the Contemporary World program.

### Notes

- Collaborative error correction activities may be used to focus on one or more grammar points. The text is chosen accordingly.
  - ▶ If focusing on one grammar point, it is essential to ensure it is used **correctly and incorrectly** in the text. If it is always used incorrectly, the potential for **learning** is reduced as students do not need to reflect on the grammar point.
  - ▶ If focusing on many grammar points, it is not necessary to include both correct and incorrect examples, as the goal is for students to find different errors and discuss them.
- Appendix 4.3 presents guidelines on how to continue **teaching a grammar point** following the use of an explicit grammar activity.



### 3.4.4.3 Example of a consciousness-raising activity

#### Activity overview

Students work in teams of three or four and analyze sentences to work out a target grammar rule. In some sentences, the grammar is used accurately; in some others, it is used inaccurately.

#### Suggested level

Secondary Cycle One, Core students

#### Overall communicative goal (to be shared with students)

To discuss how a **grammar point** is used accurately and inaccurately and to find the grammar rule or rules

#### Target grammar

The use of *apostrophe* -s to indicate possession (genitive case)

#### Rationale for target grammar

The correct use of *apostrophe* -s to indicate possession is a long-term challenge. It is sometimes confused with \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. When the head noun is a person in a short noun phrase (*David's* backpack), the *apostrophe* -s is usually necessary. As French also has a similar structure to the English \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, students generally need longer to learn this.

#### Value for students' grammatical development

This type of grammar activity asks students to analyze regularities about how a grammar point is formed and what it means. As it gives students time to really think about the target grammar, this activity is particularly interesting for grammar that students may not notice in the **input** or that they use incorrectly in the **output**.



## Suggested procedure

Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are presented with the overall communicative goal of the activity as well as the instructions to complete the activity.</li><li>2. Students may need to be given functional language to help <b>collaboration</b>.</li><li>3. The class is divided into groups of three or four students.</li></ol>
Unfolding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Each student receives a handout with 4 or 5 examples of sentences using the target grammar. Two or three sentences are correct; the others contain mistakes and are identified as such. Students do not show each other their handouts.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. One student reads out all the sentences on their handout. The others look at their own handout to try to determine which sentences are correct and which are not. They justify their choices. The first student corrects them if needed. The next student reads out the sentences on their handout, and so on. Once all students have read their sentences, they try to come up with the rule or rules. They can also try to come up with the incorrect rules that were being used in the sentences that contained mistakes.<p>OR</p></li><li>b. Each student reads one correct sentence. The group discusses what the rule or rules for the target grammar might be. The students then read another correct sentence to see if their hypothesis is correct. Afterwards, they move to the incorrect sentences. After each student has read one incorrect sentence aloud, they try to understand what the error is (or errors are). The students then read another incorrect sentence to check their hypothesis. Students write down the rule or rules and explain their rationale as well as the errors on their handouts.</li></ol></li></ol>
Wrap-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Students share their hypotheses with another group of students or with the whole class.</li><li>6. The teacher confirms the rule or rules if correct, or explains the rule or rules, if incorrect</li></ol>



## Suggested consciousness-raising handouts for step #4

### Student 1

1. Maria's pen is on the table. (correct)
2. The children's laughter filled the cafeteria at lunchtime. (correct)
3. The desk of the teacher is clean. (incorrect)
4. The projects of the students are very creative. (incorrect)

### Student 2

1. The teacher's desk is clean. (correct)
2. David's backpack is blue. (correct)
3. The pen of Maria is on the table. (incorrect)
4. The supplies of the art teacher are organized. (incorrect)

### Student 3

1. The students' projects are very creative. (correct)
2. The art teacher's supplies are organized. (correct)
3. The laughter of the children filled the cafeteria at lunchtime. (incorrect)
4. The backpack of David is blue. (incorrect)

## Idea for integrating this activity into a broader sequence of activities

This consciousness-raising activity could be integrated into a broader sequence of activities, as students:

- learn various behaviours that allow them to keep the conversation going (e.g. listening to others and reacting to what others say, expressing ideas and thoughts, sharing their point of view, asking questions, using functional language and communicative strategies)
- focus on the formulation of a text they wrote by correcting errors of sentence structure and language usage

## Notes

- Using different handouts rather than one handout for the group helps students collaborate as they do not have the same information.
- Appendix 4.3 presents guidelines on how to continue **teaching a grammar point** following the use of an explicit grammar activity.



### 3.4.4.4 Example of a dictogloss<sup>10</sup> activity

#### Activity overview

Students work in small groups to rewrite a short text that is read aloud to them.

#### Suggested level

Secondary Cycle One, Core students

#### Overall communicative goal (to be shared with students)

To rewrite the text for its meaning

#### Target grammar

The homophones *your* (2nd person singular and 2nd person plural possessive determiner) and *you're* (2nd person singular and 2nd person plural subject pronoun + auxiliary *to be*)

#### Rationale for target grammar

Using oral language knowledge helps students to distinguish words when writing, as most words are pronounced differently. However, this is not possible with homophones as the words are pronounced the same way. Therefore, providing students with opportunities to use homophones in a reconstructed text can be helpful.

#### Value for students' grammatical development

During the reconstruction, the students naturally focus on language form and meaning when they are not sure how to say something or when they disagree with each other. These **metalinguistic discussions** help students build representations of how language is formed and what it means.

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<sup>10</sup> A dictogloss is not a dictation as it involves **collaboration** among students to reconstruct a text, which includes **metalinguistic discussion**.



## Suggested procedure

Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are presented with the overall communicative goal of the activity as well as the instructions to complete the activity. They are told that the activity is NOT a dictation; the text they reconstruct must respect overall meaning.</li><li>2. Students may need to be taught or reminded how to take notes and given functional language to help <b>collaboration</b>.</li></ol>
Unfolding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Students listen to a text that is read out to them:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. During the first reading, students simply listen.</li><li>b. During the second reading, students take notes (i.e. they write down keywords or the meaning of a sentence, draw pictures).</li></ol></li><li>4. Teachers may ask a few comprehension questions after the first reading.</li><li>5. Students work in small groups. Together, on one piece of paper, they rewrite what they heard. Their reconstruction of the text does not have to be identical to the original text as the goal is to respect the overall meaning of the text. Their reconstruction is not a summary.</li></ol>
Wrap-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Students may read their text aloud to the class or join a different group to compare their texts.</li><li>7. Students compare their text with the original text:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. for meaning (sentence by sentence) and determine the similarities and differences between the two texts, including any missing information</li><li>b. for form and determine the differences between the two texts, including any errors in language use (optional)</li></ol></li><li>8. If students use the target grammar inaccurately in their reconstructed text, teachers could decide to draw students' attention explicitly to it.</li></ol>



## Suggested dictogloss text

### Letter from Grandma

Dear Sweetie (any word that is authentic for a grandma to call her grandchild),

How are you? I hope **you're** well. We're so excited that **you're** coming to Florida!

**Your** grandfather is planning a day at the beach for you and **your** cousins, so don't forget **your** sunscreen and **your** bathing suit. **Your** mom told me **you're** doing well in your swimming competitions. Can't wait to see **your** skills!

I hope **you're** packed. Don't forget **your** passport! **You're** going to like it here because the weather is warm. **You're** not going to miss **your** snowsuit! **Your** bedroom is ready and filled with **your** favourite snacks.

See you soon,

**Your** favourite grandma

## Ideas for integrating this activity into a broader sequence of activities

This dictogloss activity could be integrated into a broader sequence of activities, as students:

- discuss their relationships with their grandparents or other significant adults
- compare the text components typically used in a letter with those used in an email, a text message, a social media post, etc.
- observe different models of letters to gain a better understanding of how the information and language are tailored to the purpose and audience
- plan to write a letter to a friend, a pen pal, a family member or an author, or from one fictional character to another, etc.

## Notes

- A third reading may be necessary.
- If a dictogloss activity is carried out individually, it affords fewer opportunities for **learning** through interaction and shared knowledge.
- Dictogloss activities can be used with or without focusing on a specific grammar point. The text is chosen or adapted accordingly. If the dictogloss activity does not focus on a target grammar, students discuss language that they want to discuss. The goal of the lesson is overall grammatical development led by the students' choices.
- Appendix 4.3 presents guidelines on how to continue **teaching a grammar point** following the use of an explicit grammar activity.



### 3.4.4.5 Example of a metalinguistic discussion activity

#### Activity overview

Students work in pairs or in small groups to discuss a set of guiding questions about a **grammar point**.

#### Suggested level

Secondary Cycle Two, Year One or Two, Core students

#### Overall communicative goal (to be shared with students)

To co-construct knowledge of a grammar point

#### Target grammar

The use of the morpheme -s in English

#### Rationale for target grammar

Differentiating between the various **contexts** in which morpheme -s is used (see Appendix 5, Table 11) or not used (i.e. compound nouns) can be challenging for students. Here are five contexts in which it is frequently used:

- Plural form of nouns
- Third person singular in the simple present
- Possessive noun (use of *apostrophe* -s to indicate possession)
- Contraction of the verb *to be* in present tenses
- Contraction of the verb *to have* in present tenses

#### Value for students' grammatical development

As students answer the questions together, they formulate hypotheses about how the grammar point is formed and what it means and, as such, they construct understanding of the grammar point with their classmates. Including an oral discussion, followed by written answers, gives the students time to really reflect on the grammar point.



## Suggested procedure

Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students are presented with the overall communicative goal of the activity as well as the instructions to complete the activity.</li><li>2. Students may need to be taught (in previous classes) or be reminded of the expected behaviours to adopt when interacting orally with their peers (see Appendix 3).</li><li>3. If needed, teachers may project the questions and explain them to students (comprehension check).</li></ol>
Unfolding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. In pairs or in small groups, students discuss possible answers to each question. They are encouraged to discuss all their ideas before moving on to the next question. At this point, students DO NOT write down their answers.</li><li>5. Once they have finished discussing all the questions, students can answer the questions either individually or collaboratively in writing. This way, students have extra time to access their explicit knowledge.</li></ol>
Wrap-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Students may join a different group to compare their answers.</li><li>7. Depending on how the discussions went, teachers could decide to:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. question students about what they have learned, observed or discovered</li><li>b. come back on a few questions with the class based on what they have observed during the activity (e.g. give examples, provide explanations)</li><li>c. ask students which questions were difficult for them and discuss their answers as a whole class (e.g. validate students' answers, ask students questions to elicit the correct answer, answer students' questions).</li></ol></li></ol>



## Suggested metalinguistic discussion questions (for students)

### Language Talk: Morpheme -s

1. Look at the following five sentences. How is -s used in each example?
  - a. A student's eating habits are important when preparing for final exams. Eating greens is essential.
  - b. My friend loves ice cream. She eats ice cream at least five times a week.
  - c. She's never tried pizza-flavoured ice cream even though she thinks she's adventurous with food.
  - d. In her mind, there's no doubt about it; she's convinced that ice cream makes her clever.
  - e. My other friends' ice cream habits are less extreme; they love chips that they buy in huge bags from the grocery store.
2. Correct the mistakes in the sentences. Explain what the mistake is and what the correction is.
  - a. She eat at the ice cream's shop.
  - b. The dogs food that my neighbour uses is organic as he is worried about his dog health.
  - c. Does she eats ice cream during the school's break?
  - d. He's going to the grocery store to buy snack, vegetable, fruit, cheese, milk and other dairy product.
  - e. I bought an ice cream cones and I put lots of sprinkle on top.
3. French also has a morpheme -s. How is it used in French? If you know any other languages, think about whether and how -s is used.
4. How would you teach the different ways to use the morpheme -s in English to students in Secondary I?



## Answers to the suggested metalinguistic questions (for teachers)

Note: Answers are provided here for teachers' benefit. They should not be given to students prior to the discussion.

### Language Talk: Morpheme -s

1. Look at the following five sentences. How is -s used in each example?

Examples	Explanation
a. A student's eating habits are important when preparing for final exams. Eating greens is essential.	<i>student's</i> : possessive noun <i>habits</i> : plural form of the noun <i>exams</i> : plural form of the noun <i>greens</i> : plural form of the noun
b. My friend loves ice cream. She eats ice cream at least five times a week.	<i>loves</i> : third person singular in the simple present <i>eats</i> : third person singular in the simple present <i>times</i> : plural form of the noun
c. She's never tried pizza-flavoured ice cream even though she thinks she's adventurous with food.	<i>She's</i> : contraction of the verb to have in the present perfect <i>thinks</i> : third person singular in the simple present <i>she's</i> : contraction of the verb to be in the simple present
d. In her mind, there's no doubt about it; she's convinced that ice cream makes her clever.	<i>there's</i> : contraction of the verb to be in the simple present <i>she's</i> : contraction of the verb to be in the simple present <i>makes</i> : third person singular in the simple present
e. My other friends' ice cream habits are less extreme; they love chips that they buy in huge bags from the grocery store.	<i>friends'</i> : possessive plural form of the noun <i>habits</i> : plural form of the noun <i>chips</i> : plural form of the noun <i>bags</i> : plural form of the noun



2. Correct the mistakes in the sentences. Explain what the mistake is and what the correction is.

Sentence	Mistake	Correction	Explanation
a.	eat	eats	An -s is added to the verb in the simple present with the 3rd person singular pronoun "she."
a.	ice cream's shop	ice cream shop	The -'s indicates possession, but the ice cream does not own the shop. This is a compound noun – ice cream shop.
b.	The dogs food	The dog food	Dog food refers to food that is for dogs. It is a compound noun. In this sentence, "the" determines which food (my neighbour's). When used in general, dog food takes no determiner, but also no -s as "food" is a non-count noun.
b.	his dog health	his dog's health	The health belongs to the dog. Possessive noun should then be used to mark possession. Apostrophe 's is needed here as a person's or animal's health belongs to him/her/them.
c.	Does she eats . . . ?	Does she eat . . . ?	The auxiliary to do takes third person -s so eat is in its base form <sup>11</sup> .
d.	school's break	school break	The break does not belong to the school. This is a compound noun. School defines the type of vacation. As such, it is being used as an adjective.
e.	snack, vegetable, fruit, cheese, milk and other dairy product	snacks, vegetables, fruit, cheese, milk and other dairy products	This is a general list so each noun is being used in its general sense (generic reference). As such: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ count nouns need an -s</li> <li>■ non-count nouns do not take an -s</li> </ul> Even though fruit, cheese and milk can be used as count nouns in certain contexts, this is not one of them as they are being used in their general sense.
f.	an ice cream cones	an ice cream cone	An ice cream cone is singular, so it does not take an -s.
g.	lots of sprinkle	lots of sprinkles	Sprinkle is a count noun and lots of requires count nouns to be in their plural form.

<sup>11</sup> In this document, the base form of the verb refers to its infinitive form without the "to".



3. French also has a morpheme *-s*. How is it used in French? If you know any other languages, think about whether and how *-s* is used.

*In French, the -s morpheme is used in the following ways:*

- *Plural -s attached to many nouns (les chiens), but it is not pronounced*
- *Plural agreement between adjectives and the noun they are modifying (les belles montagnes blanches)*
- *Used in different ways for conjugation*
  - ▶ *Very frequent with second person singular in the présent de l'indicatif (tu joues)*
  - ▶ *Only ending for the first-person plural nous in all tense/aspect combinations (nous étions)*
  - ▶ *Used for verb conjugation endings in the imparfait, the conditionnel présent and on the auxiliaries avoir and être in the conditionnel passé (je/tu \_\_\_ais, nous \_\_\_ions)*
  - ▶ *Sometimes used in the passé simple (verbs in the first group take -s with the second person singular and plural and the first person plural: tu aimas, nous chantâmes, vous dansâtes)*

4. How would you teach the different ways to use the morpheme *-s* in English to students in Secondary 1?

Answers will vary.

### Ideas for integrating this activity into a broader sequence of activities

This metalinguistic discussion activity could be integrated into a broader sequence of activities, as students:

- discuss relationships between characters in a novel, a graphic novel, a short story, etc. (possessive noun)
- explain a scientific phenomenon: cell division, fossils, oxidation, pasteurization, etc.
- describe a character's routines and habits

### Notes

- Some teachers have found it helpful to project a timer to help students manage their time during the discussion as well as to ensure they do not rush through the discussion.
- Appendix 4.3 presents guidelines on how to continue **teaching a grammar point** following the use of an explicit grammar activity.



## Conclusion

Grammar is central to language **development**. It is learned gradually through using language in which the grammar naturally occurs. It takes time to learn. Young children learn the grammar for their first language through constant use over 4 or 5 years; grammar that is more complex continues to develop over many years. L2 students' grammar will develop over time, as they are provided with many opportunities to **comprehend** and **produce** the grammar in authentic **contexts**. Using implicit and explicit grammar activities in the classroom will support them in this lifelong endeavour.



# Glossary

In this glossary, important terms have been defined. As many terms are used with different definitions in different contexts, the definitions pertain to how the terms have been used in this document. They are set in **bold green** type in the document and are presented in alphabetical order.

Word	Definition
<b>Collaboration</b>	This term refers to students working together to reach a common goal. When students collaborate, they build something together and need to use language to arrive at their goal. Collaboration increases the amount of time students spend interacting and using language. Collaboration is not the same as cooperation, which is where students divide work among themselves and then bring each part together. As opposed to collaboration, cooperation involves little interaction and thus reduces language <b>learning</b> opportunities.
<b>Communication breakdown</b>	When using language to communicate, incorrect use of grammar can lead to a misunderstanding, which may or may not stop the communication. For example:  Person A: I go to the supermarket.  Person B: Can you buy me some milk?  Person A: No, no, I go to the supermarket yesterday.  Person B: Oh, so you went to the supermarket.
<b>Communicative</b>	A communicative activity, purpose or goal is focused on the meaning of the message and <b>language use</b> , rather than on the formulation of the message and language form.
<b>Comprehend (language)</b>	To understand language and its grammar when reading or listening.
<b>Comprehensible input</b>	Input is considered comprehensible when its overall message can be understood by a student and it contains grammar that is still being learnt. For example, <i>How are you?</i> may be understood by a beginner student and it contains some grammar they can learn (e.g. simple present questions with <i>how</i> ; conjugation of the auxiliary <i>be</i> with the 2nd person singular subject pronoun). An advanced student would understand this input, but it is not considered comprehensible input for this student as this grammar has already been learned.
<b>Context and its derivatives (contextualized, contextualization)</b>	When referring to grammar (e.g. grammar in context, contextualized grammar), the term <i>context</i> refers to how the grammar is used in a meaningful situation. In class, for example, a <b>grammar point</b> is provided within a text rather than in individual sentences. Context is unrelated to whether grammar is discussed with students within a sequence of related activities or as a separate lesson.
<b>Corrective feedback</b>	A teacher or other student's reaction to an error; it can be given in many different ways and may or may not be obvious to the student.



Word	Definition
Decontextualized	See <b>Context and its derivatives</b> .
Deductive rule presentation	When a teacher presents students with a rule, this is deductive rule presentation. Teachers often do this before giving students an activity in which the rule may help them. Reminding students to write using the simple past tense before asking them to write about their last vacation is an example of deductive rule presentation.
Development	<p>The word <i>development</i> is used to demonstrate that <b>learning</b> occurs progressively. Students' grammar learning = students' grammatical development. In this document, the term <i>development</i> is used when focusing on the duration of the process.</p> <p>Long-term development refers to the very gradual change in the use of a <b>grammar point</b> (or grammar in general) that allows it, over time, to be used with increasing accuracy in a variety of contexts.</p>
Exercise	A grammar exercise is a controlled way for students to practise using a specific grammar rule. Note that an exercise can be completed accurately if students use a rule they have just been taught. An exercise usually includes grammar in a <b>decontextualized</b> way as it contains independent sentences. Common exercises are fill-in-the-blanks or sentence transformations.
Explicit knowledge	Explicit knowledge about grammar is anything that people <b>consciously</b> know about grammar. Usually this means that they know and can state a rule.
Explicit learning	This is how some language (and its grammar) <b>learning</b> occurs. It is conscious learning. (See also <b>Learning, Implicit learning, Teaching vs. learning</b> ).
Grammar point	Any rule or regularity about word order or word formation that is recognized in a language; a grammar point is often conceptualized as a whole structure (e.g. the simple past, possessive determiners), but can also be much narrower (e.g. regular verbs in the affirmative form of the simple past, <i>his vs. her</i> ).
Implicit knowledge	Implicit knowledge about grammar is anything that people <b>unconsciously</b> know about grammar. When a person says that something should be said a certain way because it just sounds right, they are likely using their implicit knowledge about language. This implicit knowledge is often transferred from their known languages (especially the mother tongue), which is why they make mistakes that sound like their other languages. Implicit knowledge is essential for spontaneous <b>language use</b> .
Implicit learning	This is how most aspects of language (and its grammar) are learned. It is unconscious <b>learning</b> . It occurs incidentally.
Incidental learning and its derivatives	Grammar <b>learning</b> is incidental when it happens during <b>language use</b> ; the student is not trying to learn grammar when it happens. This learning can be conscious (explicit learning) and lead to explicit knowledge; or it can be unconscious (implicit learning) and lead to implicit knowledge.



Word	Definition
<b>Inductive rule presentation</b>	When a teacher gets students to come up with a rule, this is inductive rule presentation. The elicitation often occurs when students are given a text or sentences that include the grammar. Students are expected to use these examples to come up with the grammar rule or rules applied in the examples.
<b>Input</b>	This term refers to any language, which naturally includes grammar, to which a person is exposed.
<b>Language use</b>	In reference to language <b>learning</b> and the <b>teaching</b> of grammar, language use refers to when students <b>comprehend</b> and <b>produce</b> language in authentic <b>communicative</b> situations with the goal being to transmit meaningful messages.
<b>Learning</b>	Learning is a process that humans go through to obtain knowledge. Learning can be easy or difficult; it can be explicit or implicit; it can occur quickly or slowly. (See also <b>teaching vs. learning</b> .)
<b>Metalinguistic discussions</b>	A metalinguistic discussion is a collaborative discussion about language and its grammar.
<b>Output</b>	This refers to any language, which naturally includes grammar, that a person produces orally or in writing.
<b>PPP model</b> (presentation-practice-production)	This is a means of <b>teaching</b> grammar. A rule is presented, then practised with <b>exercises</b> . Afterwards, a speaking or writing activity is used to help students produce the grammar in <b>context</b> (see Appendix 1).
<b>Process (language and grammar)</b> and its derivatives	The word <i>process</i> and its derivatives in terms of grammar refer to how the brain computes language and grammar. It is important for understanding <b>learning</b> , not <b>teaching</b> . For example, anglophones use the plural -s morpheme on nouns to understand about plurality. As the French plural -s is infrequently pronounced but other cues can be heard (e.g. <i>les tables</i> vs. <i>la table</i> ), francophones likely process determiners for plurality more than noun endings.
<b>Produce (language)</b>	To use language and its grammar when speaking or writing.
<b>Teaching</b>	Teaching refers to everything a teacher does or asks their students to do. This can include explaining something, giving instructions, getting students to work in groups, giving students homework, providing <b>corrective feedback</b> , etc. (see also <b>teaching vs. learning</b> ).



Word	Definition
<b>Teaching vs. learning</b>	<p>We often use <b>teaching</b> and <b>learning</b> as synonyms, but in education, it is vital to understand the difference between them. A teacher teaches. A student learns. There are four typical learning outcomes for teaching and none of them are related to the teacher's intention:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The entire contents of the teaching are learned by the student.</li><li>2. Part of the contents of the teaching are learned by the student.</li><li>3. Part or all of the contents of the teaching are learned incorrectly by the student.</li><li>4. The contents of the teaching are not learned by the student (but maybe something else is).</li></ol> <p>Learning something can also occur with no planned teaching. This is the fundamental idea for grammar learning on which communicative language teaching is based (see <b>incidental learning</b>). Through <b>language use</b>, grammar will be learned.</p>



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## Appendix 1 – Using the PPP Model

The *presentation-practice-production* (PPP) model is a type of explicit grammar **teaching** that involves the presentation of a grammar rule followed by controlled practice **exercises**, then practice activities in which the grammar can be used more spontaneously, or “produced.”<sup>12</sup> This model is frequently used in textbooks, workbooks, activity books, online handouts, etc. While research does support it to some extent, different pedagogical decisions within the PPP model can lead to reduced **learning** opportunities. In this appendix, each P in the model is discussed critically.

### Presentation

The first P, *presentation*, focuses on presenting a grammar rule. The rule can be provided orally or in writing for the students (**deductive rule presentation**). Alternatively, students can be presented with sentence-level or text-level examples of the grammar and asked to come up with the rule (**inductive rule presentation**). Presenting rules may not always be helpful for students:

- Firstly, students may not understand the information being shared.
- Secondly, the choice of rules to share is usually based on historical choices about what grammar needs to be taught. These historical choices have been shown to be problematic based on today’s understanding of learning as they do not take into account the students’ linguistic backgrounds, learning challenges and language needs.
- Thirdly, the presentation of rules often includes too much information for the students’ grammatical needs. If students are struggling to add the *-ed* morpheme to simple past regular verbs, it is not the right time to also tell them about spelling exceptions. These could be introduced much later in their **development** when they are using *-ed* more accurately.

### Practice

The second P, *practice*, usually consists of controlled **exercises** in which the students apply the rule. Research into L2 learning suggests that these exercises are unlikely to lead to much learning for a number of reasons, which are presented in Table 6.

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<sup>12</sup> Originally the practice stage called for the teacher to ask students to use the grammar orally in a highly controlled item-level drill. Nowadays, this step tends to be accomplished through controlled sentence-level exercises (e.g. fill-in-the-blank exercises), which are followed by activities in which the students are supposed to practise using the grammar in context (e.g. telling a story).



Table 6: Issues with controlled grammar exercises

CONTROLLED GRAMMAR EXERCISES	
Issues	Examples
<p><b>The grammar is often not presented in context.</b> Individual sentences often do not contain enough information about a <b>grammar point</b>'s forms and meanings for the student to start creating a useful representation of it.</p>	<p><i>I want <b>the</b> apple from that basket and I want <b>an</b> apple from that basket</i> are both possible, but they have different meanings. A fill-in-the-blank exercise including this sentence would expect one answer based on the rule that has just been taught.</p>
<p><b>Each sentence in the exercise is often on a different topic.</b> It is unlikely that students learn about grammar when their brains are jumping from one type of vocabulary to another. Their cognitive resources are likely fully employed <b>processing</b> the meaning of all the vocabulary, so the likelihood that they could also be <b>learning</b> the grammar is reduced.</p>	<p>I want <b>the</b> apple from that basket. <b>The</b> school on <b>the</b> corner is closed today. I love <b>vacations</b> as I can relax on <b>the</b> beach.</p>
<p>The grammar in these types of controlled exercises <b>is often used in a way that is difficult to imagine in authentic communication.</b> Any learning that takes place may not reflect how the grammar is used in real life.</p>	<p>A list of items in which <i>a/an</i> is used for first mention and <i>the</i> is used for second mention: <b>An</b> apple is on the table. <b>The</b> apple looks so tasty!</p>
<p><b>The sentences are often written for the grammar and not for the students.</b> It is unlikely that 13-year-olds will learn anything about the grammar at hand if the sentences focus on topics that have little relevance to them.</p>	<p>E.g. a mortgage; planning a fictitious end-of-year party</p>
<p>When completing these exercises, <b>students are losing opportunities to use language for general language development.</b></p>	<p>I.e. interact with others; listen to others and to texts; read, view, write and produce texts</p>
<p><b>Many of these exercises can be completed without understanding the sentences.</b> The students can simply plug in the rule to complete the exercise. Often, they do not even need to read the whole sentence to accurately complete the exercise.</p>	<p>Instructions – Fill in the blanks using the verbs in the simple past: <i>I _____ to school yesterday. (walk)</i></p>



## Production

The third P, *production*, aims at providing students with opportunities to use the target grammar during **language use**. Grammar carrying meaning is usually quite easy to integrate into production activities (see Appendix 5). For example, it would be easy to focus on the modal *should* in a class in which advice columns are discussed.

However, it is much more difficult to create or adapt good production activities for grammar that carry little meaning or whose incorrect use does not lead to a **communication breakdown** (see Appendix 5). For example, the distinction between *much* and *many* carries no meaning, and it is rare in normal language use that we would use these determiners frequently in one conversation. It is also very difficult to create good production activities for grammar that overlap in French and English, as incorrect use will likely be accepted by everyone. For example, comparatives in English are formed using two structures, one of which is identical to French. For these types of **grammar points**, which are often the very ones that need explicit **teaching**, teachers may use the explicit grammar activities detailed in this document.



## Appendix 2 – Presenting Grammar Rules in the ESL Classroom

Rules do not always need to be taught. Students can and do learn grammar without rules. In fact, many grammar rules are known only by linguists. However, for some grammar that is difficult for students to learn (see Appendix 5), providing a rule may be useful. The rule can be provided in different ways and at different times, for example, through **corrective feedback** or as a wrap-up after a collaborative error correction activity or a dictogloss activity. The important thing to bear in mind is that rules do not lead to **learning; language use** in which the grammar is used does. This is why students cannot be expected to use a **grammar point** accurately after being taught a rule.

In classroom contexts, rules are usually presented by focusing on the grammar point in the target language. For example, “many verbs can be conjugated in the simple past by adding *-ed*” (form) or “the simple past is used when talking about a past action” (meaning). This information is useful if it reflects the issue that students are actually having.

However, long-term challenges may not be related to these specific rules, which students have often been told and which they have practised applying multiple times. Challenges can also arise based on:

- A. rules that students may have transferred, implicitly or explicitly, from French or other languages (see section 5.2.2. A)
- B. rules that students do not need to **process** in order to comprehend a message (see section 5.2.2. C)

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**Long-term challenges may not be related to these specific rules, which students have often been told and which they have practised applying multiple times.**

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### **A. Rules that students may have transferred, explicitly or implicitly, from French or other languages**

Before thinking what rule to present about a grammar point, it is useful to think about whether the students’ errors are likely coming from other languages. If students seem to be making an error based on French grammar, rather than simply explaining the English rule, it is useful to compare the grammar between English and French. For example, if students are frequently saying things like “Yesterday, I have gone,” teachers could bring to students’ attention the fact that even though both tenses are formed in a similar way, in French, the *passé composé* is used to talk about past actions, whereas in English, the present perfect is used to talk about something that may be in the past, but it is important at the present moment.



## B. Rules that students do not need to process in order to comprehend a message

Another thing to bear in mind when thinking about which rules to present relates to whether the grammar has to be processed for a message to be understood. People naturally **process** language for its overall meaning before paying attention to grammar. This means that if L2 students understand the sentence, they may not process its grammar. For example, “I am 15 years old” contains important information about the use of the verb *be* with age. However, to understand the sentence, the students do not have to process that *be* (rather than *have*) is used. Their brains can simply process “I” and “15 years old” to comprehend the message (i.e. the person’s age).

Table 7 provides some information based on theory and research in language learning and education regarding the presentation of grammar rules in the ESL classroom.

**Table 7: Presenting grammar rules in the ESL classroom**

Key elements to consider	Explanation based on theory and research in language learning and teaching
How much information do students need?	A minimum of information is required. The focus is only on what students need to know to address the current issue. For example, if students are starting to compare things, the teacher could decide to teach comparatives. It may not be the right time to include superlatives. Or if students are making mistakes with <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> , it is not necessary to teach all the possessive determiners.
How long should any written explanation of a rule be?	As short as possible. Reading about language in a language they are learning is very cognitively demanding for students.
Who should provide the rule?	The teacher can choose to provide the rule ( <b>deductive rule presentation</b> ) or ask students to come up with it ( <b>inductive rule presentation</b> ). They are likely equally effective. Mixing it up for students may be the best idea.
When should the rule be provided?	Research suggests there is no difference in terms of <b>learning</b> . Rules may be provided before an activity as is often the case, but they can also be provided during or after the activity. Again, mixing it up for students may be the best idea.
How can the students be reminded about the rule?	It can be used for quick <b>corrective feedback</b> or for a quick reminder (if needed) in later classes. It can also be pointed out or elicited when listening to, reading or viewing a text that naturally includes the grammar.
What can be expected from students after they have been taught the rule?	It can be frustrating to teach a rule (again and again), but students continue to make mistakes (e.g. omitting the -s on the 3rd person singular verb in the simple present). However, these mistakes are normal as it is not the rule that is learned, but the language that is generated using the rule. Rather than repeating the rule, providing more <b>input</b> and <b>output</b> opportunities with the grammar alongside corrective feedback will foster accurate use.



## Appendix 3 – Working Toward the Successful Implementation of Implicit and Explicit Grammar Activities

As mentioned in section 3.4, including grammar activities within a broader sequence of activities, fostering an interactive and collaborative classroom environment, and using pedagogical flexibility are key factors that will help the successful implementation of implicit and explicit grammar activities in the ESL classroom. This appendix discusses these three factors.

### Including the grammar activity within a broader sequence of activities

Including an implicit or an explicit grammar activity within a broader sequence of activities provides a meaningful context for students' **learning** of language and grammar, and increases the likelihood of overall learning. Therefore, when using grammar activities, teachers may think about how they relate to broader pedagogical intentions and whether they are linked directly to:

- the development of one or more ESL competencies<sup>13</sup>
- a text genre explored with students
- a topic or issue addressed in class.

### Fostering an interactive and collaborative classroom environment

Creating a safe learning environment where students are encouraged to collaborate as they help each other, share their ideas, correct their misconceptions and arrive at a shared understanding is key to helping language and grammar develop. To foster such an interactive and collaborative classroom, students need to be provided with frequent opportunities to:

- communicate their ideas
- receive feedback about their ideas, including:
  - ▶ positive feedback (communication continues)
  - ▶ negative feedback (communication breaks down)
- adapt their message based on this feedback
- provide peers with feedback

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about ESL competencies, see MEQ Secondary ESL programs, <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/preschool-elementary-and-secondary-schools/programs-training-evaluation/quebec-education-program/secondary/english-second-language>



- co-construct knowledge about language
- push themselves into comprehending and producing ever more complicated ideas on increasingly varied and/or complex topics

In order to do so, students must be able to use the following behaviours while interacting orally in English:

- Begin a conversation
- Take into account the other speaker and their viewpoints
  - ▶ Listen attentively
  - ▶ Grasp the meaning of the other student's message
  - ▶ React to what the other student says
  - ▶ Validate personal understanding of the message
  - ▶ Readjust comprehension when necessary
- Keep the conversation going
  - ▶ Contribute to discussions
  - ▶ Elaborate on ideas and personal viewpoints
- End the conversation appropriately
- Use resources
- Use communication and learning strategies,<sup>14</sup> such as:
  - ▶ Asking for help, repetition, clarification, confirmation
  - ▶ Practising
  - ▶ Recasting
  - ▶ Stalling for time
  - ▶ Substituting
  - ▶ Taking risks

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<sup>14</sup> See Secondary Cycle One Core program p. 599 and EESL p. 623 as well as Secondary Cycle Two Core and EESL programs pp. 42-43.



## Using pedagogical flexibility

Pedagogical flexibility<sup>15</sup> is used in the ESL classroom to help students reach their full potential, considering their different capacities and needs. In order for all students to be able to take part in a grammar activity, different options or support may be offered. The list below includes examples of pedagogical flexibility that could be used as students carry out a grammar activity.

- Establishing classroom routines and/or arranging the classroom environment to promote interaction and **collaboration**
- Varying student grouping according to the pedagogical intention (e.g. pairs, small groups, homogeneous or heterogeneous groups)
- Providing a bank of functional language to support students during oral interactions
- Offering a variety of discussion questions to allow students to choose the one they want to talk about or considering the varying language levels when creating questions to be used during a **metalinguistic discussion**
- Providing **corrective feedback** to an individual student
- **Teaching a grammar point** to a small group of students who need extra support
- Using various means to teach strategies or to remind students to use them

The following strategies<sup>16</sup> may be particularly useful in helping students to carry out grammar activities or to reflect on them:

- Activating prior knowledge
- Comparing
- Inferring
- Self-evaluating
- Taking notes

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<sup>15</sup> MEQ has published four support documents which can be useful in understanding pedagogical flexibility:

- Differentiated Instruction: Helping all students achieve academic success: <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeq/ressources-pedagogiques/Differenciation-pedagogique-AN.pdf>
- Complementary Tool 1 of 3 – General Examples of Pedagogical Flexibility: <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeq/ressources-pedagogiques/Differenciation-pedago-outil-complementaire1-AN.pdf>
- Complementary Tool 2 of 3 - Examples of pedagogical flexibility related to the various subjects: <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeq/ressources-pedagogiques/Differenciation-pedago-outil-complementaire2-AN.pdf>
- Complementary Tool 3 of 3 – Suggestions for the Individualized Education Plan Process: <https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/education/pfeq/ressources-pedagogiques/Differenciation-pedago-outil-complementaire3-AN.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> See Secondary Cycle One Core program p. 599 and EESL p. 623 as well as Secondary Cycle Two Core and EESL programs p. 42-43.



## Appendix 4 – Fostering Students’ L2 Grammatical Development

The following three flow charts present guidelines that are based on theory and research in language learning and education. They are meant to help teachers choose appropriate grammar activities based on their students’ needs and level of English language **development**.

Appendix 4.1 aims to help teachers select an appropriate grammar activity based on their students’ use of a specific **grammar point** in spontaneous oral interaction. This choice also depends on the grammar point to be taught. Thus, the chart also includes information regarding:

- the grammar point’s frequency in teacher talk and texts students listen to, read and view in the ESL classroom
- how the grammar point’s inaccurate use impacts the comprehension of the student’s message
- the grammar point’s relationship to French

Appendices 4.2 and 4.3 aim to help teachers choose how to continue **teaching** a grammar point following the use of an implicit or explicit grammar activity.

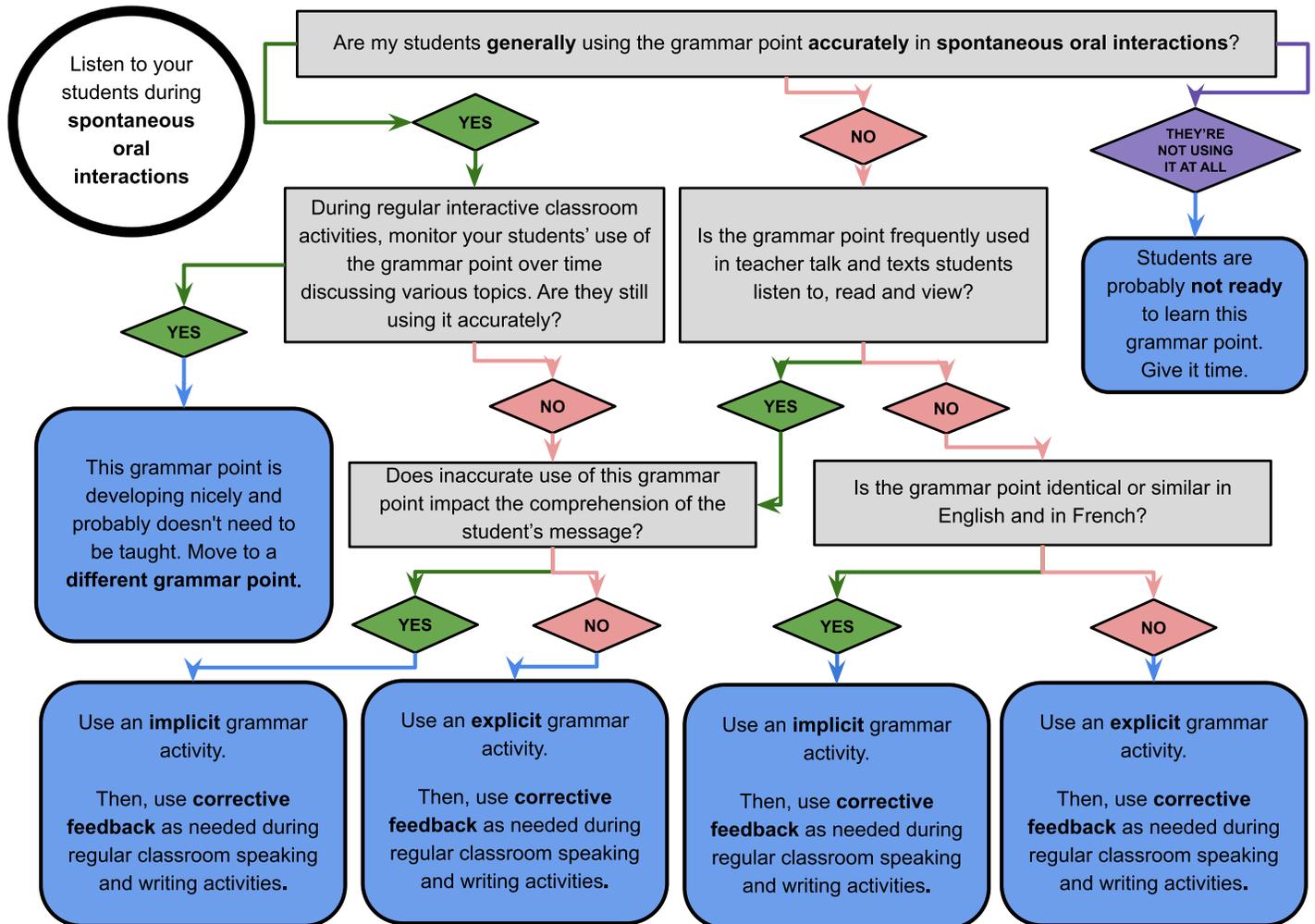
The descriptors answering the initial question in the flow charts in appendices 4.2 and 4.3 correspond to the following:

- **Mostly accurately:** students used the grammar point correctly more than 70% of the time.
- **Partly accurately:** students used the grammar point correctly about 50% of the time.
- **Mostly inaccurately:** students used the grammar point correctly less than 30% of the time.
- **They did not use it at all:** students did not use the grammar point during the activity.



## Appendix 4.1 – Selecting a grammar activity

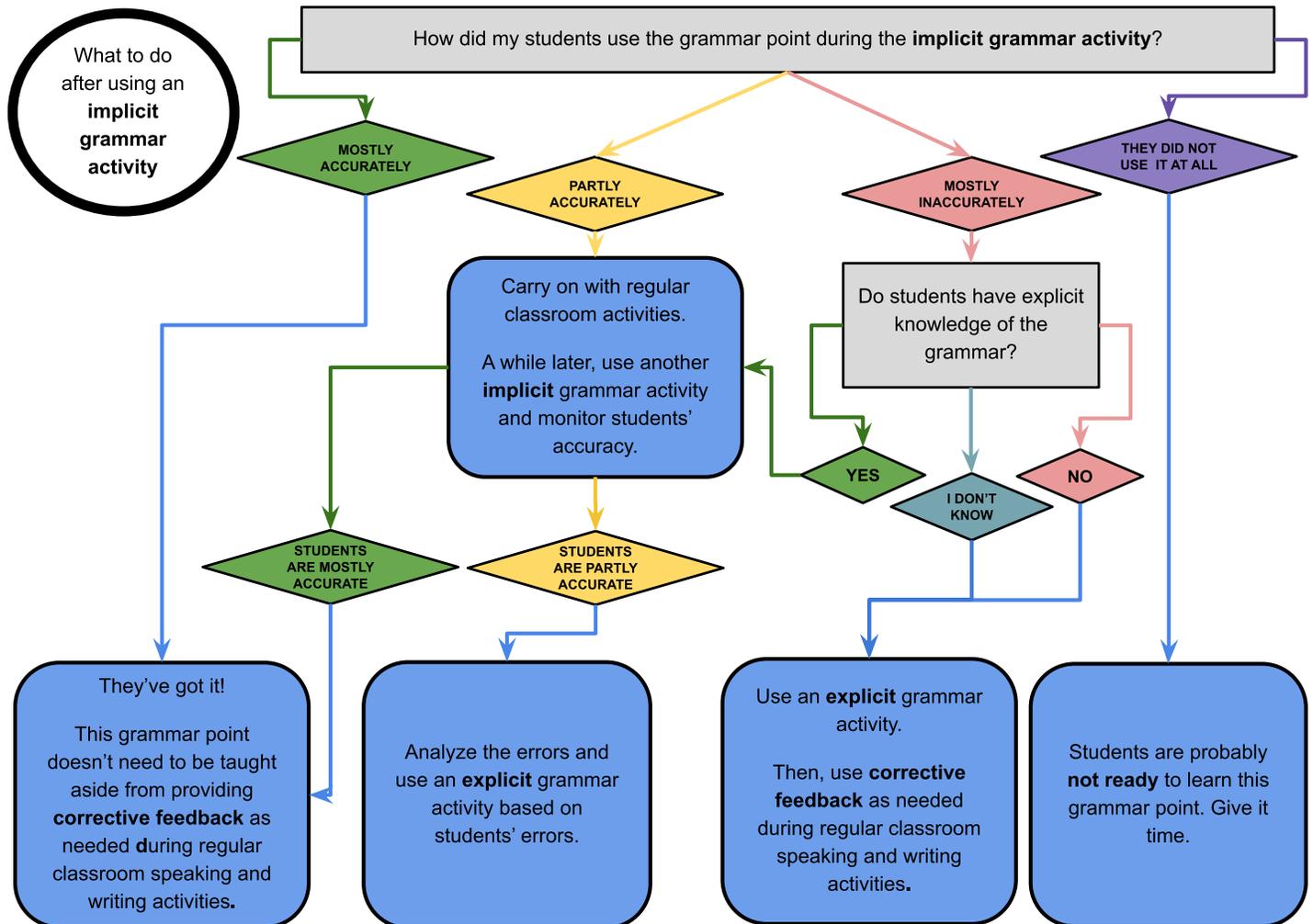
This flow chart presents guidelines to help teachers select an appropriate grammar activity based on their students' use of a specific **grammar point** in spontaneous oral interaction.





## Appendix 4.2 – Continue teaching a grammar point after using an implicit grammar activity

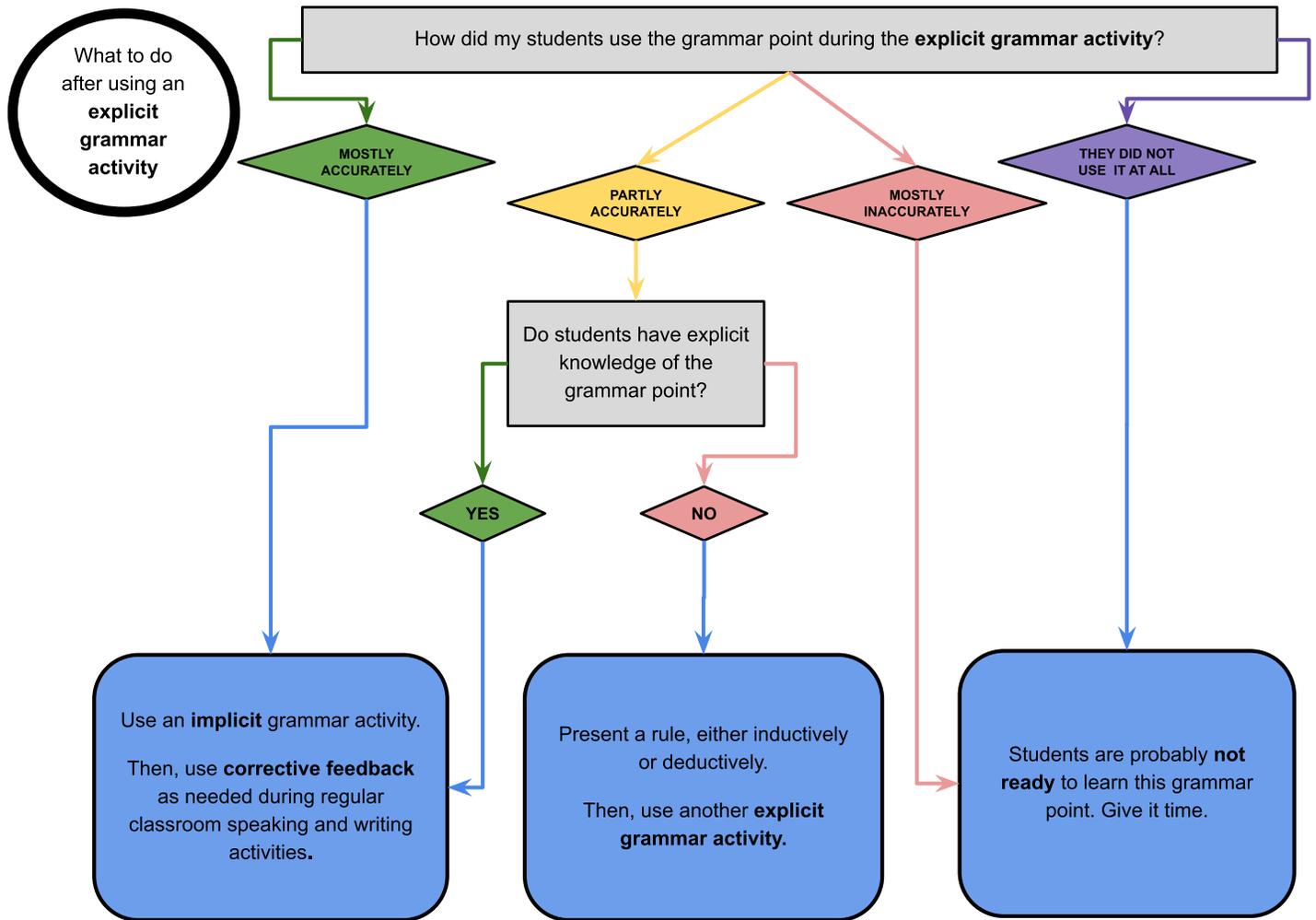
This flow chart presents guidelines to help teachers choose how to approach a grammar point with their students after using an implicit grammar activity to teach this **grammar point**.





## Appendix 4.3 – Continue teaching a grammar point after using an explicit grammar activity

This flow chart presents guidelines to help teachers choose how to approach a grammar point with their students after using an explicit grammar activity to teach this grammar point.





## Appendix 5 – Choosing What Grammar to Teach

In the secondary ESL classroom, teachers are responsible for choosing what grammar to teach, implicitly or explicitly, based on their students' needs and level of English language **development**. This appendix is based on scientific publications written by a wealth of L2 grammar experts, mainly in North America (see the references on pp. 41-42). It may be used as a guide by teachers to help in the selection of grammar to target in the ESL classroom.

In the first section of this appendix, a distinction is made between a **grammar point's** forms and meanings as students often have challenges related to one or the other. In the second section, grammar points are presented in terms of whether they should develop over time through **language use** or whether they may benefit from planned **teaching**.

### 5.1 Grammar: Form and meaning

As mentioned in section 2.5, a **grammar point** can be analyzed in terms of how it is formed and what it means. A general grammar point such as the present perfect actually includes many different rules and regularities, such as how to form affirmative yes/no questions with the present perfect or how the meaning of the present perfect often refers to one's experience up to the present moment. Sometimes, certain parts of a grammar point are easily learned, but others are not. For francophones, for example, the many forms of the present perfect are usually relatively easy to learn as they are similar to the *passé composé*. As the conjugation of *to have* develops, it will be naturally integrated into the present perfect. However, **learning** when to use the present perfect rather than the simple past, the past continuous or the simple present is a long-term challenge.

Knowing about a grammar point's different forms and meanings is essential for understanding students' errors and deciding what part of the grammar point to focus on implicitly or explicitly in class. In that respect, **teaching** a grammar point usually consists of teaching the part or parts that are causing problems for the students at a given time rather than all the rules about the grammar point.

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Table 8 discusses the present continuous in terms of form and meaning. As language is constantly evolving, particularly in terms of its meaning, it is important to use up-to-date linguistic references for information.

**Table 8: The present continuous – Forms and meanings**

THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS
<b>Forms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>-ing</i> (present participle)</li><li>▪ auxiliary <i>be</i></li><li>▪ negation = subject + auxiliary + NOT (or other adverbs) + verb</li><li>▪ question = auxiliary + subject + verb contractions (oral and written)</li><li>▪ contractions (oral and written)</li></ul>
<b>Meanings</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ current action (e.g. <i>I am sitting</i> in front of my computer.)</li><li>▪ temporary situation (e.g. <i>I am working</i> from home.)</li><li>▪ planned future events (e.g. <i>I am making</i> spaghetti tomorrow.)</li><li>▪ predictions with strong evidence (e.g. <i>They are not getting</i> back together.)</li><li>▪ (negative) comment about action with <i>always</i> (e.g. <i>My teacher is always giving</i> us homework.)</li></ul>

Adapted from Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016)

## 5.2 Grammar development

A lot of grammar develops over time through **incidental** learning with little or no planned **teaching** as students interact with others; listen to others and to texts; and read, view, write and produce texts (see section 5.2.1). However, some grammar may benefit from planned teaching (see section 5.2.2).

### 5.2.1 Grammar that should develop incidentally over time

Table 9 presents examples of **grammar points** that are likely to develop through **language use**, possibly with some **corrective feedback** and therefore should require little or no planned teaching.



**Table 9: Examples of grammar points that are generally picked up incidentally**

Grammar points	Examples
The sentence structure subject-verb-object (SVO), even with pronouns	The dog ran after his tail. I'm reading an excellent book. I love her!
Pronunciation differences of the three <i>-ed</i> morphemes	She visited (pronunciation "id") her father in the hospital. He cleaned (pronunciation "d") the mess in the kitchen. They stopped (pronunciation "t") going after a while.
<i>More</i> + comparative adjective and <i>most</i> + superlative	You look <b>more tired</b> than usual. Are you all right? These are my <b>most precious</b> possessions.
The distinction between the simple past and the past continuous	When I <b>was walking</b> to school this morning, I <b>saw</b> an injured bird.
Regular plural -s	Three dogs, four cows
Prepositions <u>of location</u>	The cup is <b>on</b> the table The painting is <b>above/over</b> the bed

### 5.2.2 Grammar that benefits from planned teaching for long-term language development

Many reasons make grammar difficult for students to pick up **incidentally** and therefore should benefit from planned **teaching** for students' **long-term development**. They generally correspond to one or more of the criteria below. Please note that these criteria are not independent, and this list is not exhaustive.

- A The grammar works differently in the L1 and the L2.
- B The grammar has multiple uses.
- C The grammar is unlikely to be processed for its form and/or meaning during **language use**.
- D The grammar is infrequent in the input to which students are exposed.



## A. The grammar works differently in the L1 and the L2

Some differences between the L1 and the L2 may be difficult for students to pick up. Table 10 provides a few examples of the differences between French and English. It is important to note that just because grammar works differently in the L1 and the L2 does not mean it must be taught. If the grammar is meaningful and frequent in **input** and **output** opportunities, it will likely be picked up incidentally (see section 5.2.1 for examples). A good example of a grammar difference that does not lead to issues is pre-verbal object pronouns – francophone ESL learners do not say things like “I you love” (*Je t’aime* = I love you).

**Table 10: Examples of grammar points that differ between French and English and that may not be picked up incidentally<sup>17</sup>**

Grammar points	Examples		Form or Meaning Challenge
	Correct	Incorrect	
Non-use of <i>the</i> with a plural noun for generic use	I love shoes.	*I love the shoes.	Meaning challenge
Word order possibilities after verbs that take two objects	I gave my shoes to him. I gave him my shoes.	*I gave to him my shoes.	Form challenge
Possessive determiners <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> in contexts where the possessor and the possessed have different genders	James visited <b>his</b> grandma yesterday.	*James visited <b>her</b> grandma yesterday.	Form challenge
Adverb placement (when it differs from French)	I <b>often</b> watch TV on Friday nights.	*I watch <b>often</b> TV on Friday nights.	Form challenge
Comparative adjectives with the -er suffix	I’m taller <b>than</b> my brother.	*I’m <b>more tall(er)</b> than my brother.	Form challenge
The use of <i>than</i> with comparative adjectives	I’m taller <b>than</b> my brother.	*I’m taller <b>that</b> my brother.	Form challenge
Impossibility of using the present perfect with a past time adverb	I have already finished my assignment.	*I have finished my assignment yesterday.	Meaning challenge
Use of <i>who</i> vs. <i>which</i> vs. <i>that</i>	The person who(m) I love The person that I love	*The person which I love	Meaning challenge
Count and non-count nouns and determiner use	How <b>much</b> money do you have? How <b>many</b> friends do you have?	*How <b>many</b> money do you have? *How <b>much</b> friends do you have?	Form challenge

<sup>17</sup> An asterisk (\*) is used to show that an example is ungrammatical.



## B. The grammar has multiple uses

Some morphemes and words are used for only one reason. *More* is always an adverb, for example. However, some morphemes and words are used for many **grammar points** (see Table 11). This makes it more challenging for students to pick up the grammar **incidentally** as students are being exposed to competing information.

**Table 11: Examples of grammar with multiple uses**

Grammar	Challenge for students
<b>-ed</b>	<p>This morpheme is used in multiple grammar points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ simple past tense (<i>he walked</i>)</li> <li>▪ past participle in perfect aspect for many verbs (<i>he has walked</i>)</li> <li>▪ past participle in passive voice (<i>The movie was filmed in Montréal.</i>)</li> <li>▪ adjective suffix (<i>The heat makes me tired.</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>that</b>	<p>This word is used for many parts of speech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ subject or object pronoun (<i>that is cool; what is your opinion about that?)</i></li> <li>▪ relative pronoun (<i>The table that sits four is the nicest.</i>)</li> <li>▪ determiner (<i>That dress is cool.</i>)</li> <li>▪ adverb (<i>She was going that fast!</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>-s</b>	<p>This morpheme is used in three different grammar points; it is also the contracted form for <i>is</i> and <i>has</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ plural form of nouns (<i>two chairs</i>)</li> <li>▪ third person -s in the simple present (<i>He rides the bus every morning.</i>)</li> <li>▪ possessive noun (<i>Sarah's bike</i>)</li> </ul> <p>The L1 may also add to the challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Even though French and English both use plural -s, in French it is rarely pronounced, so French students may <b>process</b> plurality using other cues (e.g. determiners, plural subjects or verb forms) as -s is not a good cue in oral communication.</li> <li>▪ For third person -s in the simple present, a challenge could come from French verbal morphology. Students are often taught to add -s to second person singular verbs (<i>tu parles</i>).</li> <li>▪ As French requires that adjectives be marked for plurality, this may also be done in English.</li> </ul>



### C. The grammar is unlikely to be processed for its form and/or meaning during language use

Much grammar can be picked up **incidentally** through **language use**, but some grammar may not. The main reasons for this are:

- a. the grammar carries no or little meaning
- b. the grammar does not need to be processed for its meaning to comprehend the message
- c. the grammar is difficult to hear in the input

#### a. The grammar carries no or little meaning

Many **grammar points** carry little or no meaning so during **language use**, they do not need to be processed.

When students **comprehend** language, they only need to **process** language for meaning to understand a message. If this grammar carries no or little meaning, students do not need to process the grammar in the input.

When students **produce** language during oral interaction or as they write texts, they receive feedback on incorrect grammar that causes **communication breakdowns**. However, when grammar points do not carry clear meaning or something else carries the same meaning, students can use them incorrectly. Examples are provided in Table 12.

**Table 12: Examples of grammar points that carry little or no meaning**

Grammar points	Examples	
	Correct	Incorrect
Prepositions after verbs and adjectives	fond <b>of</b> depend <b>on</b> interested <b>in</b>	*depend <b>of</b> *interested <b>at</b>
Phrasal verbs (their particles and their syntax)	<b>Look up a word</b> <b>Look it up</b>	* <b>Look up it</b>
Non-count nouns that are not liquids or substances and their associated determiners	<b>some</b> advice or <b>a piece of</b> advice <b>lots of</b> homework <b>some</b> information <b>much</b> knowledge <b>little</b> research	* <b>many</b> advices * <b>a few</b> homeworks * <b>many</b> informations * <b>many</b> knowledges or *much knowledges * <b>a few</b> research



Grammar points	Examples	
	Correct	Incorrect
Argument structure after verbs (what types of words must be used based on the verb used)	look forward to <b>doing</b> I want her <b>to go</b> (want + pronoun + infinitive form)	*I look forward to <b>do</b> *I want <b>that she goes</b>
Formation of compound nouns	<b>Bus stop</b>	* <b>the stop of the bus</b> * <b>the bus's stop</b>
Comparative and superlative adjectives	my dog is <b>bigger</b>	*my dog is <b>more big</b>
Possessive noun vs. "the _____ of _____" structure	the winner's medal	* <b>the medal of the winner</b>
Possessive noun vs. compound nouns	medal <b>of</b> honour	* the honour's medal
Plural -s when used with other plural markers (e.g. <i>two, are</i> )	<b>two dogs</b> the dogs <b>are</b>	* <b>two dog</b> *the dog <b>are</b>
Third person singular -s morpheme in the simple present	The girl likes to play soccer.	*The girl like to play soccer.
Simple present and present continuous	I <b>work</b> on the weekends. (regularly) I <b>am working</b> on the weekend. (exceptionally)	*I <b>am working</b> on the weekends. (regularly) *I <b>work</b> on the weekend. (exceptionally)

## b. The grammar does not need to be processed for its meaning to comprehend the message

Some grammar that carries meaning does not need to be processed in order for the reader/viewer/listener to comprehend the meaning of a message. For example:

### 1. Subject-verb inversion for questions

The context and intonation often tell us that a question is being asked. For example, in a café, it is clear that the server will use a question to ask a client what they would like to drink. In a written text, a question mark is placed at the end of the sentence. So a student who hears or reads, "Do you want milk?" will probably **process** only new and meaningful words, which in the context of a café interaction, would be only the word *milk*. There is no need to pay attention to the use of the auxiliary *do* and subject-verb inversion in this interaction.



## 2. The (when it is used and when it is not used)

“The” is the most frequent word in the English language, but its meaning often does not need to be processed for the reader/viewer/listener to understand the general meaning of the communication. A student who hears or reads “The dogs in your post were so cute. Are they yours?” does not need to **process** *the* for its meaning of specificity to comprehend the message, especially as *in your post* provides the same information. Furthermore, in English, when talking about a noun in general terms, *the* is not used. Rather, if the noun is countable, it is used in its plural form. If it is non-count, it is used with no determiner – *dogs* are my favourite animal; *beauty* is in the eye of the beholder. Students whose first language does not require the definite article for generic use, such as French, do not need to process the lack of *the* to comprehend the message.

### c. The grammar is difficult to hear in the input (listening/viewing)

Certain morphemes can be difficult to hear in the **input**, so even though the grammar is present, there is no exposure as the listener does not (always) hear it. Furthermore, these morphemes may not need to be processed in written input in order for the reader to comprehend the overall message.

A good example is the past *-ed*. This is frequently not heard in spoken input, so how can it become available for learning? Even when reading, it is frequently unnecessary to **process** the *-ed* as the reader has already situated the text in the past due to the presence of a time adverb (yesterday), a date (in 1815), the topic being discussed (the Second World War), an initial verb (it was raining heavily), etc.

Other **grammar points** can also be difficult to hear in normal speech:

- ‘ll (will) vs. no auxiliary verb (I’ll go vs. I go)
- that vs. than
- no vs. not

## D The grammar is infrequent in the input to which students are exposed

Some grammar may not be frequent in texts that students listen to, read and view, including classroom talk. Research has shown that in Québec ESL classrooms, the possessive determiner *your* is the most frequently used possessive determiner (72% of teacher talk) followed by *my* (11%). This means opportunities to learn *his* and *her*, which present a long-term challenge, are rare.

