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From Thought to Action: Exploring Beliefs and Outcomes in the Foreign Language Program

H. Jay Siskin
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Chapter 10

TAs and Grammar Teaching: Beliefs, Knowledge, and Education[1]

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Introduction

Recent studies in the field of applied linguistics have called for changes in teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching, advocating a more discourse-oriented approach (Blyth, 1999; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Fox, 1993; Katz & Blyth, 2007; McCarthy & Carter, 1995). Blyth, for example, explains that "during the past decade, scholars in foreign language pedagogy have increasingly urged teachers to reexamine their commonly held practice of teaching grammar based on examples of decontextualized sentences taken primarily from the written language" (p. 183). Celce-Murcia and Olshtain agree that "there is growing agreement that teaching grammar exclusively at the sentence level with decontextualized and unrelated sentences, which has been the traditional way to teach grammar, is not likely to produce any real learning" (p. 61). Yet there is little evidence that teachers or textbooks have embraced a methodology that presents grammar as connected discourse. In fact, it may be argued that grammar teaching has changed very little over the last several decades. Whereas pedagogical innovations that reflect applied linguistic research have been implemented in the areas of teaching reading, writing, and vocabulary, the application of foreign language (FL) grammar pedagogy findings to the classroom has largely remained underdeveloped (Cheryl Krueger, March 12, 2004).

The widespread adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the foundation for FL teaching in the United States may be one reason for teachers' ambivalence about grammar instruction. However, CLT does not advocate teaching for communication at the expense of grammar; rather, it highlights the function of grammar as a tool to improve communication. Savignon (2002), one of the original advocates of CLT, asserts that "while involvement in communicative events is seen as central to language development, this involvement necessarily requires attention to form. Communication cannot take place in the absence of structure, or grammar, a set of shared assumptions about how language works. . . . [T]he findings of the Savignon (1971) study did not suggest that teachers forsake grammar instruction" (p. 7). Katz and Blyth (2007) agree that "the real issue is not *whether* grammar should be taught, but *how* (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Instructors must first acquire an understanding of what grammar is and then determine what it means to teach grammar. And most important, instructors need to have an open mind as to what constitutes "grammar

instruction" (pp. 10-11). In other words, enlightening instructors about advances in theories of grammar instruction is an essential element in moving the practical side of the field forward.

This article explores how teacher educators can guide teaching assistants (TAs) to develop a sophisticated understanding of grammar. Following the recommendations of Fox (1993), we focus particularly on introducing TAs to a discourse-based approach in which they study grammar within its pragmatic and sociolinguistic contexts. In order to shape instructors' attitudes toward grammar teaching, scholars and teachers must become aware of teachers' beliefs about grammar and grammar pedagogy. TAs may have misconceptions or outdated notions about grammar that need to be dispelled. It is also necessary to educate instructors about innovative methods for teaching grammar and to demonstrate how new approaches are more effective than traditional ones. At the same time, while learning about new methods, TAs should acquire metalinguistic knowledge about the grammar they are teaching (Fox, 1993). Without an understanding of language-specific grammar in context, TAs will not be able to implement the pedagogical techniques advocated by researchers. This type of training should be included in TA development programs.

With a focus on the practical aspects of TA education, this article is divided into two sections: (1) TA beliefs about grammar teaching and the effect these beliefs have on TAs' teaching and (2) TA knowledge about grammar instruction, including ways teacher trainers can help TAs develop an understanding of language-specific grammar in discourse and apply such knowledge to the classroom.

TA Beliefs About Grammar

Based on his review of the literature on teachers' beliefs about grammar, Borg (2003) comes to three main conclusions:

1. There is no suggestion in any of these studies that formal instruction is becoming less prevalent in language classrooms.
2. In reporting their beliefs about grammar teaching, teachers commonly refer to the impact that prior language learning experiences have had on their views; there is evidence that these experiences exert a more significant impact on teachers' views than the results of formal research into grammar teaching.
3. Teachers' and students' views about aspects of grammar teaching may differ considerably. Although there is no evidence to support this claim, it is suggested that such differences can be detrimental to the effectiveness of the formal instruction teachers provide (p. 100).

These findings have a strong connection to three of Lee and VanPatten's (2003) "misconceptions" about teaching grammar: "Belief 1: That's the Way I Learned, So . . ."; "Belief 2: Drills Are Effective Tools for Learning Grammar"; and

"Belief 3: Explicit Explanation Is Necessary" (pp. 117–123). TAs who have learned grammar by performing drills and listening to teachers explain rules are likely to gravitate toward teaching grammar in a similar way. Furthermore, Borg (2003) cites research that implies that teachers have not been particularly influenced by findings in second language acquisition (SLA) regarding methods for teaching grammar (p. 101).

Of course, generalizations about "teacher beliefs" should take into account the diversity among instructors. Instructors differ, for example, with regard to their age; their language learning experience (whether they have learned the target language formally or informally); their linguistic ability (whether they are native speakers, proficient non-native speakers, intermediate speakers, etc.); their research interests (whether they are seeking a literature or linguistics degree, for example, and whether they plan to teach grammar in the future or hope to be literature/cultural studies scholars/professors); and the academic environment in which they teach (how they perceive their own students' needs).

To address the potential lack of correspondence between how they have learned a language and how they are expected to teach it, TAs need to become aware of their preconceptions. If they are familiar only with the ways their own teachers taught grammar, they may not understand that certain approaches are not effective. For example, as Borg (2003) mentions, TAs often have the tendency to rely on drills and substitution-type exercises instead of more communicative grammar activities or tasks. Dispelling the notion that drills are effective tools for learning grammar, Wong and VanPatten (2003) make three major points: Drills are not necessary; drills may, in some cases, impede acquisition; and other types of (input-based) approaches are often superior to traditional approaches that advocate drills (p. 417). Exposure to research on grammar and to current instructional techniques can help TAs overcome their natural inclination to rely mostly on their own experience.

Fox (1993) recommends that "TA trainers require TAs to uncover their own assumptions about language. A simple way to achieve this is to distribute a questionnaire at the start of training" (p. 322). As they articulate their responses to the survey questions, TAs may uncover unsubstantiated preconceived notions about grammar and grammar instruction and begin to question them.

Questionnaire: What Is Grammar? (Some questions are taken or adapted from Katz and Blyth, 2007.)

1. How would you define the term *grammar*?
2. Do you think that grammar should be taught, or do you believe that students generally pick up grammar through communicating in the target language? Please explain your answer.
3. Describe the role that grammar instruction played in your own language learning experience. Do you know what "methods" were used in your classes?

4. How did you feel about the way you learned/were taught grammar? Was it effective? Do you believe that you have mastered the grammar of the language you will be teaching?
5. Do you feel prepared to teach grammar? If so, would you feel comfortable teaching grammar drawing on the same methods that you experienced as a learner? Why or why not? Which techniques for teaching grammar used by your previous teachers do you think would be effective or ineffective in your classroom?
6. Does the idea of teaching grammar appeal to you? intimidate you? seem important to you?
7. Some experienced teachers report that their students insist on being provided with grammar explanations in class. Why do you think that students want to study grammar? What should teachers do when students ask them to explain grammar? Does it depend on the grammar point in question?
8. Do you think that you would benefit from a review of grammar? Would you like to have the opportunity to review grammatical topics throughout the semester during TA meetings?

After TAs have completed the survey, it is beneficial for them to compare their answers with those of other members of the group. Depending on the TAs' backgrounds, there should be a variety of answers to the survey, which should stimulate discussion. The ultimate goal of a consciousness-raising activity of this type is to lead TAs to reevaluate their initial beliefs and help them become open to new strategies for teaching grammar.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) point out that TAs often believe they were successful language learners precisely because of the (outdated) method that they used. The authors further explain that

> these instructors genuinely believe that what they did as learners in classrooms when they first started studying French, Spanish, German, or Russian caused their acquisition. It is difficult for them to accept the some thirty-five years of accumulated research in second language acquisition based on hundreds if not thousands of learners from different contexts. . . . Because they got explanations, because they practiced drills, and because they wrote out exercises, they think this is how they came to be advanced speakers of another language. (p. 118)

Lee and VanPatten conclude by asserting that "we must be cautious in projecting our experiences onto acquisition in general, and we must not ignore the findings of all the research we have so far" (p. 118).

TAs also believe they can explain grammatical structures if they are able to use them properly. In most cases, as Fox (1993) demonstrates, this is simply not true. Fox's study shows that French TAs,[2] including native speakers, do not enter graduate

school adequately prepared to teach grammar and, in particular, grammar in discourse. She asserts that without sufficient training in this area, TAs will not be able to create classrooms that allow students to develop linguistic behavior that "approximates that of the native speaker, the ostensible goal of communicative teaching" (p. 321).[3]

To help TAs with a native English background recognize the difference between the use of grammar on the one hand and the ability to explain grammatical rules on the other, it is helpful to begin by asking them to try to answer grammar questions about English. The following grammar questions highlight the difficulty of explaining grammatical phenomena in English when one has not thought about the "rules" governing their use. These questions should give native English-speaking TAs insights into the types of problems they may encounter in the FL they teach.

English Grammar Questions

1. When do you use *a* or *the* or omit the article in English? You may wish to cite the following examples to demonstrate the complexity of this question:
   a. Dogs are animals.
   b. A dog is a fine animal to have around the house.
   c. The black lab is a particularly friendly dog.
2. What is the difference between the use of the following two verb tenses?
   a. Have you eaten?
   b. Did you eat?
3. Why do people say: "There's two of them over there"?
4. When do you say *lie*, and when do you say *lay*?
5. When should one say *less*? *fewer*?[4]

Once TAs recognize the challenges of explaining grammatical phenomena such as these, they may become more willing to learn about grammar in discourse and about effective techniques for teaching FL grammar topics. In the following section, we discuss what TAs should know about teaching grammar, at both the theoretical and practical levels.

TA Knowledge about Grammar Teaching

In most language programs, TAs develop a basic understanding of second language (L2) methodology by participating in an L2 methods course and pre- and in-service activities such as workshops and meetings. TAs also receive guidance about more general teaching issues related to classroom management, assessment, materials development, principles for designing lesson plans, classroom goals and objectives, and perhaps a brief overview of methods for teaching the four skills and the ways these skills interact as modes of communication (interpretive, presentational, and interactional). In addition, TAs acquire knowledge of a particular subject (often in the field of literature and/or cultural studies) as they complete graduate degrees. As

Fox (1993) points out, however, most graduate TAs do not have adequate opportunities to refine their knowledge of the language they teach—with the possible exception of those who seek a degree in applied linguistics or an equivalent field.

As discussed previously, the teaching of grammar may not receive as much attention as it merits. Grammar is viewed as secondary to or in the service of communication; its complexity demands more time than pre- or in-service education allows; and language program directors (LPDs) expect to deal with grammar issues as they arise. However, time constraints and commitment to completing course work severely limit the TAs' opportunities to examine and reflect on their beliefs about the learning and teaching of grammar and to refine their own grammar knowledge.

In addition, the role of the textbook is problematic. While most textbooks are created with the novice teacher in mind—explanations are ostensibly geared toward teaching the instructor as well as students—often the texts are not sufficient for preparing TAs to teach grammar. By illustrating grammar points with isolated sentences out of context rather than by describing grammatical phenomena in discourse, textbooks often confuse learners and teachers alike. Katz and Blyth (2007) explain that LPDs need to help fill in the gaps in TAs' knowledge about grammar.

> Teaching assistants and new instructors want and need to know how they are supposed to present and teach grammar to their students, yet they seem to get mixed messages from supervisors, colleagues, and researchers. Should they assume that students can master a given grammar point by studying at home and then launching into the book's activities in class, or should instructors provide students with metalinguistic explanations of the target structures? What should instructors do if students come to class claiming that they simply did not understand the book's explanation . . . ? What if the instructors themselves do not completely understand the book's grammar descriptions? Where should they turn for help? (p. 9).

The following discussion is divided into two parts: a summary of important concepts in grammar pedagogy and language-specific (French and German) activities. The goal of both parts is to enhance TAs' understanding of grammar in order to prepare them better to (1) integrate grammatical topics into their classes and (2) answer their students' questions about grammar. We maintain that TAs must have opportunities to refine their own knowledge about grammar before they can be expected to explain grammatical features to students. The discussion section begins with an introduction to the topic of discourse grammar, focusing on the grammatical variation found in spoken and written forms, and continues with a discussion of register differences and other sociolinguistic and pragmatic concepts. We then provide a summary of some techniques that scholars advocate for connecting grammatical form and meaning. Interspersed in this section are activities that may be used with both TAs and students to help them understand discourse phenomena. In the final section, we provide language-specific mini-lessons that are not meant for TAs to use with their own students; rather the lessons are

designed to help TAs attain a conception of grammar that emphasizes discourse and variation.

Discourse Grammar

In their seminal articles, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) propose that communicative competence consists of four interdependent areas of knowledge:

1. Grammatical competence: the "building blocks" of language, including morphosyntactic structures, sentence patterns, sounds and sound systems, orthography, and lexicon.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: the factors that account for appropriateness of language in interaction; for example, forms of address, level of formality, and rules of interaction.
3. Strategic competence: the ways to make oneself understood and to compensate for deficiencies, for example, in vocabulary or grammar.
4. Discourse competence: the ways to combine grammar and meaning to achieve coherent and appropriate spoken and written text.

According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), discourse competence is the core or central competence in the Canale and Swain (1980) framework. They explain that "it is in discourse and through discourse that all of the other competencies are realized. And it is in discourse and through discourse that the manifestation of the other competencies can best be observed, researched and assessed" (p. 16). It is not only sociolinguistic and strategic competence but most significantly grammatical competence that is inherently linked to interaction and discourse.

What exactly is discourse grammar, and what do TAs need to know about it? The most important concept for TAs to grasp is that grammar does not exist in a vacuum and that appropriate grammar is determined by context. Celce-Murcia and Olstain (2000) provide the following definition of discourse:

> A piece of discourse is an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning (e.g., words, structures, cohesion) that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience/interlocutor). Furthermore, the external function or purpose can only be properly determined if one takes into account the context and participants (i.e., all the relevant situational, social and cultural factors) in which the piece of discourse occurs. (p. 4)

McCarthy and Carter (1995) make clear that

> a discourse-based view of language involves us in looking not just at isolated, decontextualized bits of language. It involves examining how bits of language contribute to the making of complete texts. It involves exploring the relationship between the linguistic patterns of complete texts and the social contexts in which they function. (p. 38)

A discourse-based view of language presumes the central tenet of sociolinguistics that language is a social act. Indeed, communicative competence constitutes the sociolinguists' response to (or rejection of) Chomsky's view of language as an exclusively mental phenomenon. In preparing to teaching language as discourse, TAs must first develop an understanding of some fundamental sociolinguistic concepts, namely that all languages vary; that spoken language systematically differs from written language; and that grammatical features interact with both the linguistic and extralinguistic contexts.

Linguists agree that not all grammatical topics require a discourse-based approach. As Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) explain, not every grammatical feature is dependent on context.

> Admittedly, there will always be a few local and fairly mechanical grammatical rules that learners need to practice, such as basic word order; making sure that determiners and their nouns agree; selecting the correct reflexive pronoun object; and using gerunds after prepositions. Such rules must be learned and practiced at the sentence level and then extended to automatic use in discourse-level contexts. Mechanical rules like these are the exceptions, however. Most of the "rules" to which we traditionally refer as the core of "grammar" should be taught as grammatical choices made at the level of discourse. (p. 68)

Typical discourse-level issues include spoken versus written language; levels of formality, or register; and social and regional variation.[5]

A discussion of spoken and written features will first sharpen the TAs' awareness of grammar as being inherently linked to context and register. TAs are then sufficiently prepared to discover such features in authentic speech samples (e.g., online speech corpora, broadcasts, and films). Once TAs understand that spoken language differs but is not inferior to written language, they are also better positioned to enhance their own language proficiency. Through studying spoken versus written language (see the upcoming section "Language-Specific Discourse Topics for French and German"), they realize that grammatical features interact with the mode of communication (spoken versus written). In addition, they learn that everyday spoken language is no less functional than written language, even though language purists tend to privilege the latter. Finally they understand that "appropriateness" goes both ways (i.e., features associated with the written language may be considered odd in spoken language and vice versa).

What Is Grammar Teaching?

TA education programs should also help these students become aware of recent research on the teaching of grammar. In an in-depth article, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) summarize the most important findings and recommendations for teaching grammar in today's classroom. They explain that "it is now suggested that among the essential conditions for acquisition of grammatical forms are (1) learner noticing and continued awareness of target forms; (2) repeated meaning-focused exposure to input containing them; and (3) opportunities for output and

practice" (p. 137). This section contains some techniques for teaching grammar that correspond to these conclusions. We have divided our discussion into the following three categories, which subsume those advocated by Nassaji and Fotos:

1. *Explicit instruction:* Explicit instruction need not be the equivalent of traditional grammar teaching.
2. *Consciousness raising:* Learners need to become aware of form-meaning connections in order to manipulate grammatical structures effectively.
3. *Input and output:* Learners should work with input before being required to produce output. When they create output, they should progress from forming sentences to producing connected (and meaningful) discourse (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

These areas are essential for effective grammar teaching and suitable for dealing with the complexities of grammar, including discourse and variation.

Explicit Instruction

New TAs may equate explicit instruction with traditional language teaching that entails a teacher-centered presentation of grammatical rules, typically based on the textbook explanation. Ellis (1997) explains that this is not the case. He breaks down the category of explicit instruction into two types: *direct* and *indirect*.

Direct explicit instruction takes the form of oral or written explanations of grammatical phenomena. They can stand by themselves or can be accompanied by exercises in which learners attempt to apply the rule they have learned. In indirect explicit instruction, learners complete consciousness-raising tasks in which they analyze data illustrating the workings of a specific grammatical rule (p. 48).

Ellis favors indirect explicit instruction for most grammar points: "An invitation to discover rules for themselves may be more motivating to learners than simply giving them the rules." McCarthy and Carter (1995) propose the 3 *I*'s as a technique for leading students to discover grammatical phenomena in context:

1. **Illustration:** Students examine grammatical features in authentic discourse.
2. **Interaction:** Students are led to discover the "interpersonal uses of language" in discourse (including how speakers interact in discourse).
3. **Induction:** Students posit a rule for a particular pattern or regularity in the data (p. 217).

The three-step process not only makes students active learners as they discover and posit grammar rules but also presents grammar as tied to discourse conditions.

Consciousness Raising

Consciousness-raising activities are often a part of inductively based (or indirect) explicit grammar lessons. Ellis (1997) stresses that

> the goal of consciousness-raising (CR) tasks is explicit knowledge of grammatical structures, including some metalingual knowledge. . . . One major advantage of this discovery approach is that it provides opportunities for learners to interact in the target language while learning about it. (p. 160)

He provides the following definition of a consciousness-raising task:

> A CR task is a pedagogic activity where the learners are provided with L2 data in some form and required to perform some operation on or with it, the purpose of which is to arrive at an explicit understanding of some linguistic property or properties of the target language. (p. 160) Thus, the purpose is to focus on grammar and to come up with hypotheses based on the data that one receives.

The following activity, based on question 5 about English grammar discussed previously, may be used in the TA preservice workshop. It illustrates to TAs how they might implement consciousness-raising techniques for teaching grammar.

Instructions: Read the following paragraph, and then answer the questions below.

From a blog by a typical student:

I don't know if I have *fewer* problems than most people, but it sure seems as if I don't. I have *less* free time, *less* financial security, and *less* energy. I also have *fewer* friends, *fewer* dates, and *fewer* opportunities to buy new clothes and go to nice restaurants. If I had *fewer* inhibitions and *less* insecurity, maybe I could make something out of my so-called life. If only I could gain *more* confidence and make *more* connections with people. Maybe I should get a dog.

Questions:

1. What do you notice about the nouns that follow the word *fewer*?
2. What do you notice about the nouns that follow the word *less*?
3. What rule can you hypothesize about the types of nouns that follow *fewer* and those that follow *less*?
4. What do you notice about the nouns that follow the word *more* as compared to those that follow *fewer* and *less*?
5. What general rule can you hypothesize from all the data given above?

Through exposure to this type of activity early in their education, TAs learn to develop such activities as part of their grammar "explanations" in class. Note also that this activity is constructed around language presented in discourse. Although the mass/count noun distinction is fairly clear, sometimes certain nouns may be mass or count depending on their contexts (such as the word *coffee*; see Katz, 2001). Thus, simply providing a list of nouns preceded by *less*, *fewer*, or *more* is not as effective as providing a snippet of discourse.

Input and Output

Traditional language instruction emphasizes learners' prompt and accurate production of the language features they have studied. Methods that preceded the communicative approach, such as the audiolingual method (ALM), engaged learners in mechanical drills, while CLT promotes more meaningful and creative output. Research has demonstrated, however, that input plays a critical (and perhaps more important) role than output, especially in the early stages of SLA (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Learners will not successfully acquire a language without consistent exposure to comprehensible and meaning-bearing input.

Providing such input often proves quite challenging for novice teachers. Because they lack the experience to modify their speech appropriately, they may find it easier to resort to the students' L1 to "explain" instead of exemplify grammatical structures. More significantly, TAs may neither fully understand the concept of input nor appropriately distinguish between different types, such as structured and comprehensible input. For example, they may view a grammar explanation in the target language as input even though it lacks content to which the learner can react. Moreover, in a classroom with 20 to 25 students, the students' abilities may vary greatly; what one student understands, another may not.

Research that examines how learners process input can greatly contribute to grammar instruction. VanPatten's input processing model and structured input (and structured output) activities simultaneously focus the learners' attention on the form and meaning of utterances. As noted before, however, not all grammar features lend themselves equally well to structured input activities. In addition, such activities typically remain at the sentence level. It is important for TAs to recognize the limitations of a single approach to grammar instruction. To do justice to the complexity of grammar, grammar instruction needs to draw on multiple approaches.

Structured input activities, which rely on the principles of processing instruction, focus students' attention on morphology (e.g., past tense endings and adjective-noun agreement) and syntax (e.g., position of subjects and objects). They are designed to "push" the learner to process a particular grammatical feature to ascertain meaning. The following German example demonstrates that learners have to process both word order and case endings to determine "who does what" in the exchanges. The activity aims to refine TAs' understanding of German word order, in particular the role that morphology plays in its flexibility.

Wer weiß, was Anna macht? (Who knows what Anna is doing?)

Underscore the subject of the utterances in B that respond to utterance A. Then put a check mark next to the sentence that correctly restates the outcome of the exchange.

1. A: Telefoniert Anna schon wieder mit ihrem Freund?
   B: Nein, mit ihrer Schwester. Ihren Freund ruft sie morgen an.
   [ ] 1. Anna wird ihren Freund anrufen.
   [ ] 2. Annas Freund wird sie anrufen.

A: Is Anna talking to her boyfriend on the phone again?

B: No, to her sister. She will call her boyfriend tomorrow.

[ ] *1. Anna will call her boyfriend.*

[ ] *2. Anna's boyfriend will call her.*

(In the second part of utterance B, the object *Annas Freund* precedes the verb and the subject *sie* referring to Anna, follows. The correct paraphrase is 1.)

2. A: Fährt Anna mit dem Bus zu dem Restaurant?

B: Nein, ihr Vater fährt sie.

[ ] 1. Anna fährt.

[ ] 2. Der Vater fährt.

A: Is Anna taking the bus to the restaurant?

B: No, her father is driving her.

[ ] *1. Anna is driving.*

[ ] 2. *Dad is driving.*

(In utterance B, the subject *ihr Vater* is in sentence initial position. The correct paraphrase is 2.)

3. A: Sucht Anna den Assistenten, um über ihr Paper zu sprechen?

B: Nein, sie hat ihn gestern gesucht, aber er war nicht in seinem Büro.

[ ] 1. Gestern hat der Assistant Anna gesucht.

[ ] 2. Gestern hat Anna den Assistenten gesucht.

A: Is Anna looking for the assistant to talk about her paper?

B: No, she looked for him yesterday, but he was not in his office.

[ ] 1. *Yesterday the assistant looked for Anna.*

[ ] 2. *Yesterday Anna looked for the assistant.*

(In utterance B, the subject *sie*, which refers to Anna, precedes the verb; the correct paraphrase for the exchange is 2.)

4. A: Wie versteht sich Anna mit ihren Nachbarn?

B: Den Nachbarn aus Italien findet sie sehr nett.

[ ] 1. Anna mag einen von ihren Nachbarn.

[ ] 2. Ein Nachbar von Anna mag sie.

A: How does Anna get along with her neighbors?

B: She likes the neighbor from Italy.

[ ] *1. Anna likes one of her neighbors.*

[ ] *2. One of Anna's neighbors likes her.*

(In utterance B, *den Nachbarn* is the object and *sie*, referring to Anna, is the subject. The correct paraphrase is 1.)

5. A. Was macht Anna? Warum ist sie nicht an ihrem Schreibtisch?
   B. Ein Kollege hat sie gerade geholt, um das Projekt zu besprechen.
   [ ] 1. Anna hat einen Kollegen geholt.
   [ ] 2. Ein Kollege hat Anna geholt.
   A: What's Anna doing? Why isn't she at her desk?
   B: A colleague just got her to discuss the project.
   [ ] *1. Anna has gotten a colleague.*
   [ ] *2. A colleague has gotten Anna.*

(In utterance B, *ein Kollege* is the subject and *sie*, which refers to Anna, is the object. The correct paraphrase is 2.)

This activity helps TAs understand the significance of morphology (i.e., case endings) for identifying the subject and object in a sentence. When a masculine object precedes the verb, the form of the article marks it as such. In other words, the morphology carries the information that establishes the agent and the patient of a sentence. While TAs are typically aware of the flexibility of German word order, the activity provides them with the basis for understanding and explaining its relationship to morphology. To extend the activity into the realm of discourse, TAs also may discuss how the information in the preceding sentence motivates the placement of an object in the sentence that follows. Finally, the activity can serve as a model for designing structured input activities for TAs' own classes. A discussion to prepare TAs to do so may address, for example, for what level this particular activity would be suitable (intermediate high to advanced); if and how it could be modified for the beginning level; which other German grammar features may be suitable; and if and how the activity meets the requirements for structured input activity design (e.g., do learners have to attend to meaning while processing the grammatical feature, and does the activity focus on a single grammar point?).

The following structured input French activity also could be used with both TAs and language students. Its goal is to enhance learners' understanding of the use of the subjunctive in discourse. In this case, the choice of mood depends on whether the speaker believes that the referent exists in the world (indicative) or whether such a referent's existence is uncertain (subjunctive). Note that learners also are required to respond to the content of each utterance, thus personalizing the activity and requiring them to focus on meaning as well as on form.

Cet homme, existe-t-il? (Does this man exist?)

One of the "desperate housewives" is describing what she is looking for in a man. Choose the appropriate verb in each case, in the indicative or the subjunctive, based on whether the speaker believes that such a man exists in the world. Then, if you are a woman, tell whether you agree with the desperate housewife. Does such a man exist? If you are a man, tell whether you are this type of man.

Cet homme, existe-t-il? *(Does this man exist?)*
Etape 1: Existe-t-il? Choose either the indicative or the subjunctive form of the verb depending on whether this housewife believes that the man she is looking for exists.

1. Je cherche un homme qui fait/fasse la vaisselle. Hélas, je ne suis pas sûre qu'il existe! (*I'm looking for a man who does the dishes. Alas, I'm not sure he exists!*)
2. Je cherche un homme qui sait/sache me rendre heureuse. Et je crois l'avoir trouvé! (*I'm looking for a man who knows how to make me happy. And I think I've found him!*)
3. Je cherche un homme qui sait/sache jouer au football américain. Heureusement, ils existent partout! (*I'm looking for a man who knows how to play football. Happily, they're everywhere!*)
4. Je cherche un homme qui veut/veuille aller au centre commercial avec moi pour acheter des chaussures. Mais ces hommes sont difficiles à trouver. En fait, je ne crois pas qu'ils existent! (*I'm looking for a man who wants to go to the mall with me to buy shoes. But these men are difficult to find. In fact, I'm not sure they exist!*)
5. Je cherche un homme qui a/ait beaucoup d'argent. En fait, je viens de rencontrer un millionaire à une soirée! Quelle chance! (*I'm looking for a man who has a lot of money. In fact, I've just met a millionaire at a party! What luck!*)

Etape 2: Le connaissez-vous? (*Do you know him?)* Pour chacune des phrases ci-dessus, indiquez si vous connaissez un homme comme celui recherché par la femme—ou si vous êtes cet homme! (For each of the sentences below, indicate if you know a man like the one sought by the woman—or if you are this man!)

A Final Word on Textbooks

Much has been written over the past 20 years about the flaws and inadequacies of textbooks with regard to the teaching of grammar (Walz, 1986; Herschensohn, 1988; Di Vito-O'Connor, 1991; Glisan & Drescher, 1993; Giessing, 2003). The major criticisms of the way textbooks teach grammar are that explanations are overly simplified or linguistically unsound; grammar is taught at the sentence level when a more discourse-based approach may be required; activities require students to produce language that is not authentic (a kind of hybrid language for learners that a native speaker would never use); activities require students to produce language without any context; and no distinctions are made between spoken and written forms.

As Walz (1986) explains, textbook grammars do not reveal how languages are actually spoken: "Presentations of syntax seem to reflect what purists think the French ought to say, but they do not represent how educated native speakers really talk" (p. 18). Di Vito-O'Connor (1991) argues that textbook grammar explanations "actually mislead students as to the nature of the target language. Even more

important, such inaccurate representations of the target language encourage students to form false intuitions about native speech" (p. 393). To provide students with accurate representations of the target language, TAs must acquire knowledge and insights into issues such as spoken versus written distinctions and other sociopragmatic linguistic issues. Only then will TAs be able to identify those explanations in their textbooks that give inaccurate information.

Few instructional materials adequately distinguish between spoken and written forms, and they often ask students to produce structures that native speakers would not use. In addition, instructors do not always know which constructions native speakers would actually utter in naturally occurring discourse. For example, McCool (1994) expresses his surprise at the gaps in many experienced French instructors' sociolinguistic knowledge with regard to interrogative forms in discourse.

> At the close of an interesting question and answer period, I was astounded by the number of high school teachers who approached us to say that they were unaware that inversion was becoming less common in the spoken language. Obviously, teachers of French need to be aware of differences of style and register. They also must know which features have all but disappeared from the spoken language of the average Francophone. One of the best ways to accomplish this task is to move toward textbooks that clearly distinguish between formal and informal style and that accurately reflect the common usage of a spoken style that is rapidly becoming standard." (p. 59)

As Blyth (1999) notes, authors and publishers are understandably reluctant "to open the Pandora's box of discourse with its competing concerns and approaches" (pp. 184–185). TAs, however, need to explore the discourse dimension and learn where to find resources for supplementing inadequate textbook activities. Rather than waiting for textbook writing traditions to change, we promote changes in grammar instruction in teacher education. Such TA education begins with making TAs aware of how grammar functions in discourse.

Language-Specific Discourse Topics for French and German

In his review of the relevant literature about teacher cognition and grammar teaching, Borg (2003) asserts that when considering teachers' beliefs about grammar, one should take into account their knowledge about grammar (whether their beliefs about grammatical "rules" are accurate) as well as their beliefs about how grammar should be taught. Regarding language instructors' ability to understand and teach grammar, Borg concludes that many teachers are strikingly deficient in this area.

> On the assumption that an explicit understanding of language plays a major role in the effectiveness of the work of language teachers, . . . findings suggested the need for language teacher preparation programmes to dedicate substantial time to the development of trainees' declarative knowledge about language. (p. 98)

LPDs should not be surprised that incoming TAs have gaps similar to those described by Borg. Many of today's graduate students have learned the target language in a communicative framework that had little emphasis on metalinguistic knowledge about grammar. Thus, with few opportunities to develop a sophisticated understanding of grammar, they rely on the textbook, whose limitations we discussed previously.

TAs may find themselves at a loss when it comes to explaining language-specific grammatical phenomena that are influenced by their discourse environments or that deviate from the normative standard. In addition, TAs may instinctively carry over normative beliefs about grammar from their native to their L2 that have the potential to inhibit the development of a sophisticated understanding of and proficiency in the L2. Sociolinguists (Atchison, 1991; Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 2000) have amply documented that prescriptive notions of "correct" grammar disregard actual use with its multifaceted and inherent variation. For example, TAs who favor literary or written language over colloquial speech may not acknowledge the systematic grammatical differences between the two codes. Similarly, they may stigmatize markers of a social or regional variety as "bad" or incorrect speech. Thus, it is important to make them aware of naturally occurring language use in discourse that differs from the prescriptive norms they may have learned when studying (or acquiring) the target language.

One way to raise TAs' consciousness about grammar in discourse is by asking them to respond to student inquiries about grammar. The following questions about French are based on some of the "mistakes" noted in Fox's (1993) article. TAs could be asked how they would answer these questions:

1. When would you say: *As-tu faim*? versus *Tu as faim*? versus *Est-ce que tu as faim*? (All mean "Are you hungry?")
2. Why do I have to say *J'ai acheté des pommes* (I bought some [indefinite article] apples) instead of *J'ai acheté les pommes* (I bought the [definite article] apples)?
3. Why can't I say *J'ai eu 16 ans* (I was 16 years old—*passé composé*)?
4. Why can't I say *Ma mère parle français?* (My mother speaks French) in response to a question such as *Est-ce qu'il y a quelqu'un dans votre famille qui parle une autre langue?* (Does anyone in your family speak another language?)

In answering the first question, TAs should explain to students that inversion is primarily a written construction and that the most natural way of asking a question in casual, standard speech is by using intonation. We will return to the issue of how to teach French interrogative constructions. For question 2, students need to understand that they can and should use the definite article after the verb *acheter* if *les pommes* (the apples in question) are identifiable to the addressee (see Katz, 2001). For question 3, TAs should be able to explain that, indeed, using the *passé composé* when referring to age is less common than using the *imparfait*, but

that there are times when the *passé composé* is appropriate (e.g., when indicating that one has had a birthday). In question 4, TAs should learn that in spoken French, when introducing a topic for discussion, speakers tend to use the noun followed by a subject pronoun, as in *Ma mère, elle parle français* (My mother, she speaks French) (Ashby, 1988).

Similarly, TAs could be asked to respond to the following questions that German learners may ask:

1. What is the difference between the two past tense forms "simple past," or preterite, and "conversational past," or present perfect, in German? Does present perfect suggest that there is some relationship to the present?

   Ich ging gestern in die Schule. Ich bin gestern in die Schule gegangen.

   (I went to school yesterday.)
2. How would you explain the oddity of the student's response?

   Teacher: *Erica, was hast du gestern gemacht?*

   Student: *Ich habe mein Auto gefahren.*

   Teacher: (Erica, what did you do yesterday?)

   Student: (I drove my car.)
3. Why is *geblieben* not in the final position?

   Wir sind zu Hause geblieben die ganzen sechs Wochen. (We stayed home for all six weeks.)
4. Why is the response inappropriate even though it is grammatically correct?

   Teacher: *John, wo triffst du morgen deine Freunde?*

   Student: *In der Stadt treffe ich meine Freunde.*

   Teacher: (John, where are you meeting your friends?)

   Student: (In the city I am meeting/meet my friends.)

Question 1 refers to the coexistence of two semantically equivalent past tenses whose use differs according to register and mode of communication. In spoken German, the conversational past, or present perfect, is almost exclusively used and the use of the simple past, or preterite, is largely restricted to more formal written German. The second question illustrates that the verb *fahren* (to drive) is almost always used intransitively; the transitive use would be appropriate when the focus is on a specific type of car (e.g., *ich fahre einen Porsche.* [I drive a Porsche.]). Question 3 illustrates that elements such as time expressions may move outside the verbal bracket for communicative effects (e.g., to put the emphasis on one particular part of the utterance). Question 4 demonstrates the limitations of teaching students that they can place any element, not just the subject, before the verb. The utterance is syntactically but not pragmatically correct since the new information (*in the city*) precedes rather than follows the old information (*my friends*). Without discourse rules, students will inappropriately employ what they perceive to be the relatively free word order in German.

The following concepts should be targeted in a mini-lesson with French TAs to make them aware of features of spoken French that differ from what is found in the written language.

Spoken Versus Written French

1. **L'effacement de *ne*: Ne *deletion***

   written French: *Je ne parle pas français*. (I don't speak French.)

   spoken French: *Je parle pas français*. (I don't speak French—missing *ne* particle.)

2. **Le manque des marqueurs interrogatifs: *The lack of interrogative markers***

   written French: *Parles-tu français? Est-ce que tu parles français?* (Do you speak French?)

   spoken French: *Tu parles français?* (You speak French?)

3. **La postposition des expressions interrogatives: *The postposing of interrogative expressions***

   written French: *Où vas-tu*? (Where are you going?)

   spoken French: *Tu vas où?* (You're going where?)

4. **La construction "topique": *The topic construction (introducing a topic for a comment)***

   written French: *Ma mère parle français.* (My mother speaks French.)

   spoken French: *Ma mère, elle parle français.* (My mother, she speaks French.)

5. **La construction "anti-topique": *The antitopic construction (reminding the addressee of the topic of a comment)***

   written French: *Ma mère parle français.* (My mother speaks French.)

   spoken French: *Elle parle français, ma mère.* (She speaks French, my mother.)

After learning about these features of the spoken language, TAs should watch a short film clip and note examples of various spoken phenomena. Next, TAs can share the spoken forms they have heard and discuss the appearance in discourse of the topic and antitopic constructions they have noticed (see Ashby, 1988 and Barnes, 1990 for in-depth explanations of the discourse properties of these constructions).

The following mini-lesson makes TAs aware of differences between written (and more formal) German versus spoken German. TAs must first understand that spoken German operates along a speech continuum ranging from standard to non-standard (Barbour & Stevenson, 1990) framed by written German on one end of the spectrum and regional dialects on the other. TA education should focus on the differences between the spoken standard and written German, and it should make TAs aware of non-standard features associated with regional and social variation in German. As the term suggests, the German spoken *standard* is widely accepted, while the non-standard may trigger negative attitudes and be viewed as less educated and less desirable speech.

Spoken Versus Written German

1. **Der Gebrauch von Perfekt: use of the conversational past**

   written German: *Wir sahen viele Kinder im Park.* (We saw many kids in the park.)

   spoken German: *Wir haben viele Kinder im Park gesehen.* (We have seen many kids in the park.)

2. ***Von + Dativ: von + dative case***

   written German: *Wir besuchen die Familie meiner Schwester.* (We are visiting my sister's family.)

   spoken German: *Wir besuchen die Familie von meiner Schwester.* (We are visiting the family of my sister.)

3. **Gebrauch von Pluperfekt: *use of the double perfect***

   written German: *Sie hatte ihm das vor zwei Wochen erzählt.* (She had told him two weeks ago.)

   spoken German: *Sie hat ihm das vor zwei Wochen erzählt gehabt.* (She had [additional had] told him that two weeks ago.)

4. **Verb in Zweitstellung mit weil: *verb-second position with weil***

   written German: *Er kommt nicht mit, weil er zu müde ist.* (He isn't coming along, because he is too tired—ist in final position.)

   spoken German: *Er kommt nicht, weil er ist zu müde.* (He isn't coming along, because he is too tired—ist in second position.)

5. **Demonstrativpronomen: *demonstrative pronouns***

   written German: *Ich habe mit Peter gesprochen. Er bleibt heute zu Hause.* (I talked to Peter. He [personal pronoun] is staying home today.)

   spoken German: *Ich habe mit Peter gesprochen. Der bleibt heute zu Hause.* (I talked to Peter. He [demonstrative pronoun] is staying home today.)

6. **Gebrauch des Indikativs in indirekter Rede: *use of the indicative in quoted speech***

   written German: *Der Mann sagt, er habe den Dieb gesehen.* (The man says he saw [subjunctive] the thief.)

   spoken German: *Der Mann sagt, er hat den Dieb gesehen.* (The man says he saw [indicative] the thief.)

The German past tenses readily introduce TAs to the differences between spoken and written German. Teachers and learners are generally aware that spoken German relies almost exclusively on the conversational past, while the preterite form is restricted to written German—in particular to narratives (Watzinger-Tharp, 1994). Articulating the different uses of these tenses in discourse will refine TAs' understanding of spoken German and prepare them for features with which they are less familiar. Standard spoken German expresses a possessive relationship

with *von* (of) + dative rather than the genitive (Sentence 2). The double perfect in Sentence 3 is regionally (South) marked and it may be stigmatized in the North as lower social class speech. Together, the first three features illustrate the German standard to non-standard speech continuum.

The following feature (Sentence 4) expands the discussion to the notion of language change. Verb-second word order in clauses introduced by *weil* (because), which deviates from the prescribed verb-final order, is commonly used and this rule "violation" has prompted concern about the decline of German among grammar purists. However, its frequent use across all regions and social groups suggests that verb second with *weil* is becoming (or has become) a feature of standard spoken German (Vandergriff, 2005; Watzinger-Tharp, 2006). Demonstrative pronouns in place of personal pronouns are also a widespread characteristic of spoken German that TAs may recognize but not fully understand. Finally, the subjunctive in quoted speech is a unique feature of newspaper German and is rarely, if ever, used in spoken German. Indeed, its use would be considered overly formal in everyday conversation; thus, it illustrates that the appropriateness of grammar and even standard features depends on the context.

The following mini-lesson for TAs serves as an example of how LPDs can make French TAs aware of language in context, focusing on differences between spoken and written question forms.

Mini-Lesson on Teaching YES/NO Interrogatives:

Step 1: TAs are asked to list the various ways of asking "Are you hungry?" in French. Expected responses (which should mirror what is found in contemporary textbooks) will include intonation (*Tu as faim?),* inversion (*As-tu faim?*), *est-ce que (Est-ce que tu as faim?),* and *n'est-ce pas (Tu as faim, n'est-ce pas?)*

Step 2: TAs share their responses with the group. The various forms are written on the board.

Step 3: TAs are asked which forms they believe are most prevalent in spoken and written French and whether certain structures are more formal than others.

Step 4: TAs view a short clip from a movie that contains a good number of questions and are asked to transcribe the questions.

Step 5: TAs analyze the types of question forms they heard in the movie and discuss the situations in which these forms are found. It is likely that most of the questions will be of the intonational variety unless the discourse setting is extremely formal.

Step 6: TAs make generalizations about the types of question forms found in spoken French.

Step 7: The LPD shares findings from studies done on interrogation that show that intonation is the main interrogative device used in spoken French, that inversion is rarely heard, and that *est-ce que* may be used in both written and spoken French but that it is not as common in spoken French as one might think (Di Vito-O'Connor, 1997). The infrequency of the tag question *n'est-ce pas?* (as opposed to *non*?) is also brought to the TAs' attention. They are encouraged not to teach their students to say *n'est-ce pas*, despite what textbooks advocate.

Step 8: TAs analyze the conversations in their textbooks and exercises that accompany textbook grammar sections on interrogation. They are asked to determine whether students are instructed to form questions in spoken French that do not reflect how native speakers actually converse; for example, they might discover that an activity requires students to use inversion or *n'est-ce pas* in an informal, oral setting.

Step 9: TAs design a lesson in which they raise their students' awareness of the use of intonation as the main interrogative device in spoken French. They prepare input activities and output activities to supplement or replace the activities given in their textbook.

Step 10: TAs consider effective approaches for teaching the use of interrogative structures in discourse. Based on the findings in Valdman (2000, 2003), TAs learn that WH (who, what, where, why, which, when, and how) questions are more complicated than simple yes/no questions and that using intonation with WH expressions can sometimes create stigmatized utterances, as in *Où tu vas?* (Where are you going?). After TAs discuss Valdman's (2000) and McCool's (1994) suggestions about when to teach which interrogative structures (such as teaching only intonation and *est-ce que* forms at the beginning level and not teaching inversion until students are more advanced and ready to begin writing extensively), they devise strategies for teaching interrogation in their elementary or intermediate classes.

The following mini-lesson presents a similar step-by-step approach for a mini-lesson on the German subordinate conjunction *weil* (because). It teaches both syntactic and pragmatic differences of *weil*-clauses with variant word order (verb-second versus verb-final). The English glosses also specify clauses with verb-second word order, which deviates from the prescriptive verb-final standard.

Mini-Lesson on Teaching Clauses Introduced by Weil

Step 1: TAs indicate whether they consider the sentences correct [✓], perhaps acceptable [?], or incorrect [X] (adapted from Stevenson, 1997, p. 99).

1. *Hans bleibt zu Hause, weil er kochen muss.* (Hans is staying home, because he has to cook.) [ ]
2. *Hans bleibt zu Hause, weil er muss kochen.* (Hans is staying home, because he has [verb second] to cook.) [ ]
3. *Weil er den ganzen Tag schläft, schafft er nichts.* (Because he sleeps all day, he doesn't get anything done.) [ ]
4. *Weil es ist so schönes Wetter, machen wir einen Spaziergang.* (Because the weather is [verb second] so nice, we'll go for a walk.) [ ]
5. *Maria kommt, weil sie zu beschäftigt ist, nicht zu der Party.* (Maria won't come, because she is too busy, to the party.) [ ]
6. *Hans bleibt, weil er muss die Katze baden, zu Hause.* (Hans will stay, because he has [verb second] to bathe the cat, at home.) [ ]
7. *Der Bildschirm ist kaputt, weil da ist alles nur schwarz.* (The monitor is broken, because everything is [verb second] just black.) [ ]

8. *Der Bildschirm ist kaputt, weil da alles nur schwarz ist.* (The monitor is broken, because everything is just black.) [ ]

Step 2: The TAs share their responses to the eight example sentences. Their responses are likely to vary greatly because of the lack of context. Next, TAs discuss possible contexts for each utterance.

Step 3: The TAs discuss the conditions under which they may hear utterances that "violate" standard grammar rules (i.e., *weil*-clauses with the verb in second rather than final position).

Step 4: The LPD prompts discovery of the syntactic restrictions of verb-second *weil*-clauses, which are possible only when they follow main clauses.

Step 5: The LPD provides additional authentic data that demonstrate the frequent use of verb-second *weil*-clauses in spoken German. If possible, the data should provide examples of the different types of causality.

Step 6: The TAs reconsider the responses they gave initially; and with the guidance of the LPD and by drawing on recent research (Watzinger-Tharp, 2006; Vandergriff, 2005), they arrive at the following analysis of current *weil*-clauses: Sentence 1 complies with the standard rule of verb-final placement of the verb in a *weil*-clause, while Sentence 2, with verb-second order, may be considered in violation of this rule. However, in spoken German, verb-second order occurs frequently and is not stigmatized (i.e., not associated with lower-class speech). Sentences 3 and 4 demonstrate the syntactic restriction of verb-second order: It is possible only when the *weil*-clause follows the main clause. Sentences 5 and 6 illustrate a similar restriction for *weil*-clauses that are embedded within a main clause. Sentences 7 and 8 also contrast verb-final and verb-second order. However, the *weil*-clause in Sentence 7 does not provide the actual cause for the TV monitor to be broken, but rather the reason for the utterance itself (*I am able to say it's broken, because it's all just black*). For such utterances, verb-second order is in fact more appropriate than the verb-final order in Sentence 8.

Step 7: Following the analysis in Step 6, TAs discuss to what extent such variation may be incorporated in their own classrooms. At the very least, teachers should use authentic speech data to make learners aware that verb-second order has become acceptable in everyday spoken German.

Step 8: TAs prepare a lesson that allows students to discover variant word order of *weil*-clauses and discuss at which levels such a lesson (or parts of it) may be appropriate for their own teaching.

Mini-lessons of these types are useful for helping TAs develop their knowledge about the target language in discourse. Such lessons also give TAs ideas for designing activities to lead their own students to discover the grammatical variation of the target language.

Conclusion

TA education programs introduce TAs to concepts fundamental to the teaching of an L2, including but not limited to communicative competence, the role of input,

the relationship of form and meaning, and the interdependence of language and content. It is less clear whether programs succeed in presenting a sophisticated theory of grammar that enables TAs to teach grammar as discourse within a sociolinguistic framework. The current article suggests strategies for introducing TAs to pragmatic and sociolinguistic concepts essential not only for recognizing and analyzing discourse-sensitive grammatical features, but also for attaining high-level proficiency.

The mini-lessons and step-by-step analyses that target characteristics of spoken French and German do not immediately transfer to the TAs' language classrooms. They do, however, provide TAs with models for examining, critiquing, and ultimately modifying and developing learning activities grounded in current language pedagogy and reflecting a discourse-based view of grammar. Teacher education that incorporates sociopragmatic linguistic concepts can help broaden beliefs about grammar in general. Such a practice also may encourage authors and publishers to expand the scope of the L2 grammar teaching materials they produce.

Notes

1. We would like to thank H. Jay Siskin and an anonymous reviewer for their feedback on an earlier version of this article.

2. Even though Fox's study concentrated on French TAs, her findings can be applied to other languages as well.

3. The issue of whether approximating native speaker norms is the goal of the communicative classroom (Blyth, 2003; Kramsch, 1997) is beyond the scope of this article.

4. The question regarding when one should use which article in English (1) is beyond the scope of this article, but we refer readers to Master (1995) for a detailed explanation. In Number 2, the difference between the two past verb tenses is related to whether the act of eating has some influence on the present state of affairs. In Number 3, informal spoken English allows *There are* to contract into *There's*. In Number 4, one should *use lay* in tenses other than the preterit only when it is followed by a direct object: *He will lay the blanket on the baby*. We discuss the distinction between *less* and *fewer* later in this article.

5. Pragmatic factors such as topic and focus, old and new information, and identifiability and activational states (Lambrecht, 1994) also have a profound impact on discourse grammar.

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