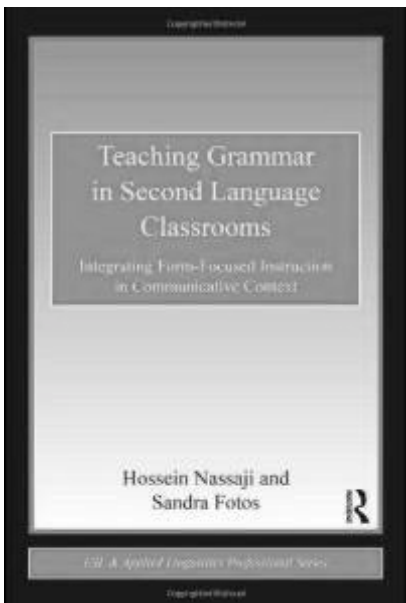


**Teaching Grammar in Second Language Classrooms: Integrating Form-Focused Instruction in Communicative Context**

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Teaching Grammar in Second Language Classrooms: Integrating Form-Focused Instruction in Communicative Context		
<b>Author:</b>	Hossein Nassaji & Sandra Fotos (2011)	
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The role of grammar teaching has been a contentious issue in ESL and foreign language pedagogies (henceforth, language teaching) for decades. In this book, Nassaji and Fotos not only succeeded in affirming the importance of grammar instruction in language teaching but also in informing practitioners how grammar could be best taught in actual classrooms based on theoretical and empirical evidence. Each chapter introduces the theoretical background of a particular approach, theory, or construct of second language acquisition (SLA) substantiated by empirical evidence. Then, appropriate grammar teaching examples are illustrated and questions for reflection and additional useful resources are listed. As the authors suggest, the book is recommended for both researchers/graduate students who are interested in SLA theories and practitioners who are interested in learning sound research-based grammar pedagogies. Inasmuch as the book is written for both types of readers, however, it may be more suitable for SLA

researchers/graduate students who are interested in SLA theories and their ramifications in grammar teaching. Without an SLA background, some portions of the chapters may not be easily accessible to practitioners unfortunately.

Chapter 1 describes how views toward grammar teaching have changed over decades. As many of the readers are probably familiar with a constant shift in language teaching paradigms, the role of grammar teaching has accordingly shifted like a pendulum. This chapter thus sets the stage for recent increased attention to grammar teaching in current language teaching communities.

The rest of the book is divided into three parts: input-based options with a focus on grammar, interaction- and output-based options with a focus on grammar, and instructional contexts and focus on grammar. The first part is further divided into three chapters: focus on grammar through processing instruction, textual enhancement, and through discourse. These chapters mainly discuss the importance of input in grammar learning. The first chapter on processing instruction is based on VanPatten's (e.g., 2002, 2007) input processing model of SLA. According to this model, grammar can be successfully taught by processing input in order to connect form and meaning without necessarily enforcing production drills. The second chapter also emphasizes that grammar can be taught by input if the target forms are externally manipulated so that saliency of the target forms is heightened and learners are likely to notice and process them. The third chapter describes how grammar should be taught in meaningful discourse so that learners can understand how grammar is used in actual contexts. What is particularly notable and enlightening in this section is the inclusion of the chapter on discourse. Since grammar has often been analyzed at a sentential level, grammar teaching has often neglected the importance of larger linguistic contexts of discourse. The authors convincingly advocate that grammar should be learned in a larger context at the discourse level. Furthermore, situating grammar at the discourse level is a timely approach in current SLA research as systemic functional grammar has gained popularity in recent years.

The theme of the second part of the book is interaction- and output-based grammar teaching. This part is further divided into three chapters: focus on grammar through interactional feedback, focus on grammar through structured grammar-focused tasks, and focus on grammar through collaborative output tasks. The authors draw theories and constructs from the field of SLA such as the interaction hypothesis, recasts, task-based approach, output hypothesis, sociocultural perspective, and languaging to name a few and provide empirical findings for each. From reading this section, the reader will be able to perceive what the authors' stance on grammar teaching is with respect to language teaching. In addition to the role of input as discussed in the first section of the book, the authors stress the importance of learner output and corrective feedback in order to elevate learners' grammatical competency. Even explicit teaching of grammar (in learners' L1 or L2) before and/or after meaning-based communicative activities is helpful. Throughout the book, their view of grammar teaching, that is, the importance of meaning-based communicative activities in addition to implicit/explicit grammar teaching, production activities, and corrective feedback, is reiterated. What is notable in this section is the inclusion of the recent pedagogical method of languaging proposed by

Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, Suzuki, and Brooks (2009). Languaging such as discussion or self-reflection in the L1 about the L2 is said to lead to acquisition of target forms by promoting attention to them, thus enhancing processing. The inclusion of languaging in this book, a recent model of SLA, demonstrates the authors' up-to-date knowledge of SLA which is refreshing since it keeps practitioners abreast of the one of the most current research-based grammar pedagogy, something that is lacking in previous grammar resource books.

The last part of the book treats instructional contexts and focus on grammar which consists of a single chapter entitled "The Role of Context in Focus on Grammar." Mainly, the chapter discusses the differences between ESL and EFL contexts and how these contextual differences affect the best way of teaching grammar (e.g., native vs. non-native teachers, amount of target language exposure outside the classroom, target language proficiency levels, goals of learning the target language, etc.). The authors extensively discuss how EFL contexts differ from ESL contexts; thus, this chapter provides an abundance of useful information for prospective English teachers abroad.

Overall, the book successfully connected theories/empirical findings of SLA with sound research-based grammar pedagogies. However, as an informed reader, I felt a lack of additional references in the book. First, where the paradigm of historical shifts in language teaching is discussed in Chapter 1, the author lists Richards and Rogers (1986) under useful resources. The updated second edition which was published in 2001 should be listed instead. Second, the authors extensively discuss and compare the different cognitive models of attention proposed by Schmidt (2001) and Tomlin and Villa (1994), but they only listed Schmidt (2001) under useful resources. Although Schmidt's (2001) model is more widely accepted by SLA researchers, it would be fair to list Tomlin and Villa's (1994) article along with Schmidt's (2001) book chapter since they are equally contrasted in Chapter 3. Third, where the age of learners in ESL and EFL contexts is discussed in Chapter 8, the authors do not include significantly important works such as Larsen-Hall (2008) and Muñoz (2006). These works provide essential findings regarding learners' starting age (a.k.a. age of acquisition) in EFL contexts. In my opinion, these studies are critical in discussing age of learners and learning contexts, especially in ESL and EFL contexts. Lastly, the title of the book may be somewhat misleading. Most of the empirical findings and grammar teaching examples are based on the English language. Since the book is entitled *Teaching Grammar in Second Language Classrooms*, it would be more appropriate to include examples from other languages.

With some shortcomings, this book is highly recommended to both SLA researchers and practitioners. The book covers important concepts of SLA overall and nicely tie them to appropriate and useful grammar pedagogies.

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