

From theory to practice. An individual approach to the teaching of grammar and lexis in English language education.

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Introduction

The subject of grammar and lexis within the field of Second Language Education could be considered extremely complex to say the least. And if there is any conclusion that can be drawn from the diverse approaches recommended in the available literature regarding the teaching of these disciplines in ESL, it is that there is no one way to teach, and that linguistic theory in second language education is a resource open to interpretation by individual teachers to suit their respective teaching contexts. A point made succinctly by Widdowson (1990: 30), who states that:

“The relationship between linguistic theory, the description of a particular language based upon it, and the way that language is actualized as behaviour in contexts of use is analogous to the relationship between a pedagogic theory of language learning, the devising of teaching materials based upon it, and the way that language is most effectively actualized for learning in the contexts of particular classrooms. The relationship is a pragmatic one in both cases; the connection between the ideal and the real needs to be established by mediation.”

In this regard, the practical application of theories related to the teaching of grammar and lexis in my own particular case must by necessity be framed within the boundaries of what:

- I. Is relevant and applicable to my own particular teaching context.
- II. Makes sense to me and my core beliefs as a language educator.
- III. Makes sense to the learners and is conducive to their linguistic development.

A background to my particular approach

In the discussion that follows, I shall present an overview of a publication related to vocabulary acquisition procured from the literature related to ESL with which I can strongly identify and aspire to replicate in my own teaching. The article in question puts forward several assumptions about the nature of vocabulary acquisition and from this I argue the case that neither grammar or lexis can be considered mutually exclusive

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and that both are intricately intertwined elements of language where “*there is no absolute distinction between the two, only a convenient distribution of semantic responsibility*” (Widdowson, 1990: 87). And that ultimately, “*Language is not right or wrong but about successful or unsuccessful communication*” (Lewis, 1993:167).

The model upon which I have based my current approach was inspired by an article by Sokmen (1992), who describes a classroom procedure for getting students to generate their own vocabulary as a means to expanding both lexical and lexically derived grammatical patterns from responses to magazine pictures. Her approach is very much learner centered and is summarized below.

1. *The English lexicon is organized. It is not an overwhelming mass of unrelated words.*
2. *Students need explicit help in order to learn ways to generate, organize, store and retrieve vocabulary. Learning words in context is not enough. Students need to analyze, organize, and associate words in meaningful and memorable ways.*
3. *When learners are engaged in making sense of the lexicon and are able to expand vocabulary to their own needs, they retain more words.*
4. *Vocabulary acquisition is a process. Students learn the meanings of words only after using the words many times.* (Sokmen, 1992: 16).

Sokmen’s original procedure was to present students with a set of three magazine pictures and ask them to make a description of one. From this description they were to choose a word from their L1 which was new to them in English. From these original “*seed words*”, she was then able to present students with word building activities which gave “*different perspectives on the words and their relationship to other words*” (ibid). From these initial vocabulary items, students were given tasks intended to help build a better understanding of the inter-relationship between lexical items. Such tasks included forming word associations, finding antonyms, forming collocations, and organizing words generated from original seed words into lexically hierarchical word families and moving from general to specific. It could be argued that from this general approach, by beginning with a list of simple vocabulary items generated by the students themselves and building outwards, students were in effect forming and internalizing grammar by default rather than as a separate learning process, thereby “*setting conditions for the emergence of syntax as a focusing device – the very converse of conventional practice*” (Widdowson, 1990:43).

In my own particular case, instead of using pictures, I decided to use contemporary instrumental music. By utilizing students ‘interlanguage’ (Prodromou, 1997:20), and given the idea that individuals may use language patterns unique to themselves in L1, or ‘*Idiolect*’ (Coulthard, 2004: 431), I considered that the immediacy of the emotions, images or memories that music might create would give rise to a cognitive gap in how students felt and could express themselves in L1 which would in turn make them aware of what linguistic elements they lacked to be able to express the same way in L2. Any lexical items that students produced in L1 that were

new for L2 could be usefully manipulated in the same way as Sokmen had done, but with the objective of building from lexis to an awareness of lexis in the production of grammar in language and ultimately language as a means of expression. In other words I was saying to the students “*You don’t know what you don’t know until you try to actively use the language. It is only through engaging in the actual process of trying to express yourself that you will be exposed to what you still need to integrate into your mental lexicon.*” Thus, the overall concept of mediating between theory and pedagogical application in this instance was that “*Second language acquisition is largely a matter of learning new linguistic forms to fulfill the same functions (as already acquired and used in L1) within different social milieu*” (Saville-Troike, McClure and Fritz, 1984:60 in Saville-Troik, 2006: 54).

Having now introduced the background to my particular approach it is perhaps pertinent to give a brief description of some of the theoretical concepts that have formed the basis of my particular perspective on the teaching process. Given that lexis is the framework from which I am building my approach, it might be useful to begin with a look at L2 vocabulary acquisition before moving on to a description of what I understand by the term ‘grammar’.

Vocabulary acquisition in L2

Although considered a learning resource much undervalued in the past due to an over emphasis on syntactic approaches to language acquisition (Coady, 1997: 273), how is vocabulary acquisition best integrated into the learning process? Is it best left up to learners themselves to accumulate vocabulary? Or are lexical items better learned as part of an explicit teaching programme? Sokmen would seem to support the latter and I would concur. However, is focusing on vocabulary going to help with grammatical awareness? And just how much vocabulary is required for meaningful learning to take place?

Although Nation (1990: 16), has suggested “*a passive vocabulary of 2000 of the most frequently occurring words will cover 87% of words in an average text*” (Arnaud & Savignon in Coady and Huckin, 1997:158), Honeyfield (1977) has stated it is the rarer vocabulary items which fall outside the high frequency number that carry the highest information load (in O’Keefe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 48). Furthermore, even if a learner does achieve a basic threshold of 5000 of the most frequently occurring lexical items, rendering 90% of comprehension, it would take another 5000 additional words to reach 95 % comprehension (ibid: 49), reducing the number of unknown words in a text to around one in twenty but still falling short of the 97-98% coverage of words needed ‘*for a full, pleasurable engagement with the meaning of a text*’ (Hu & Nation in Nation 2001:147). That having been said, a word level of between ‘6-10,000 words would appear to be an achievable target with the right materials (O’Keefe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 50). However, the idea that learning words alone will aid language proficiency would seem to be somewhat misguided if for no other reason than words of and by themselves could not be said to constitute a language; a point put forward by Sweet (1964: 99) as far back as 1899 who noted that “*The worst kind of isolation is to begin the study of*

language by learning lists of words by heart”.

The evidence on balance, would seem to suggest that the study of vocabulary alone, as a means to improving linguistic proficiency, is a fruitless almost disheartening pursuit given the tendency for even the most frequently occurring words to collocate and chunk into blocks of information that take meaning more from contextual than purely linguistic knowledge. So creating a pedagogy which will aid L2 vocabulary acquisition:

“is as much to do with grappling with observing recurrent collocations and chunks (which will most often consist of words already known individually) as it is with simply pushing for a (never ending) linear increase in the vocabulary size based on single words never seen before” (O’Keefe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 53).

It is through understanding how lexical items manifest as chunks and how these are structured and processed in terms of syntax that gives a clue as to how lexis may be usefully employed in raising awareness about grammar. But in order to do this, it is necessary to understand what I mean when I refer to the term grammar. What follows is my understanding of the concept and how this relates to the pedagogical approach I take in this paper.

What do I mean by grammar?

If grammar were to be described from a so-called “*Layperson’s perspective*” it could be said to be “*about unchangeable rules of speaking and writing*” (O’Keefe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 104), “*the name we give to the knowledge of how words are adapted and arranged to form sentences.*” (Widdowson, 1990: 81), “*A description of the structure of a language*” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992: 161) or, from the perspective of Transformational Grammar, “*Language as it is structured in the speaker’s mind*” (ibid).

In the beginning of my exploration of grammar within the context of SLA, I was struck by the degree to which my thinking about the subject was limited to such fixed perspectives. And although I have no clear recollection of the actual process, these are beliefs that were no doubt internalized from my early experiences at school where grammar was the means by which my first language was ‘formalized’ into sets of rules upon which subsequent linguistic proficiency was assessed. Had I not found myself teaching English as a second language, these prescriptive definitions of grammar are the terms that would probably still suffice were I to be asked to summarize the concept. In reality, the subject is far broader and complex. Accordingly, it would be pertinent to provide a more concise reference which will serve as a useful introduction to a definition of grammar and its relationship to lexis which I will go on to describe later.

“A grammar can be a written volume, such as a descriptive reference grammar prepared by a linguist

for consultation by other linguists, or a teaching grammar prepared for language students. The term grammar also refers to the discipline that focuses on morphology (word structure) and syntax (sentence structure) whether from the perspective of language learning (for example French grammar, Latin grammar), from the perspective of language description, or from the perspective of general linguistics where 'grammar' has the status of a sub-discipline alongside phonetics, phonology, semantics and so on" (Evans & Green (2006: 484).

It would be reasonable to conclude then, that what is referred to as 'grammar' will mean different things to different people depending on the context of respective educational and professional fields. However, a more concise definition of grammar as a linguistic entity is provided by Willis (2003: 48) who describes it thus:

"A complimentary element of linguistic structure comprised of syntactic frames, determiners and sets of structural elements such as tense and aspect which combine and interact with lexical items in the form of set collocations and phrases."

From this perspective, while it could be argued that set collocations and phrases assume forms which could be assigned prescriptive grammatical labels on paper, their actual linguistic function could be considered to be lexical. To better explain this, it would be useful to look briefly at 'grammar' in the process of L1 acquisition where the intimate relationship between this term and lexis can be more clearly expressed.

Grammar and L1

Whether first language acquisition is considered to be primarily *Behaviourist* (that language is learned primarily by imitation), *Innatist* (that children are hard wired for language acquisition), *Interactionist* (where learning occurs through social interaction), (Lightbrown & Spada, 2004: 9-22), or a combination of all three of these models, it would be reasonable to suggest that a child's initial experience of conscious communication, is predominantly "*functional*" (Tomasello, 2003: 35). Whether or not this communication is verbal or non-verbal, it represents a stage of cognitive development whereby infants gain an ability to transfer mental representations of the world into meaning through forms that can be used to articulate needs, feelings, thoughts and emotions about their environment to those around them.

One important consideration within the context of this discussion is that even at this early stage it has been shown that "*lexical and grammatical development are highly intercorrelated*" (ibid: 42). And that this may be due to the possibility that:

"Learning words and learning grammatical constructions are both part of the same overall process" whereby "learning the communicative significance of a complex expression or construction shares many acquisition processes with learning the communicative significance of a single word" (ibid: 93).

So that while words of and by themselves cannot be said to be grammatical, they may attain grammatical form when a user gains the skill to convey meanings associated with their cognitive relationship with the world. In this respect, grammar could be said to “*emerge from*”, rather than “*pre-exist*” in interaction (Hopper 1998 in O’Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 70) which builds from the so-called “*idiom principle*” proposed by Sinclair (ibid: 60), who suggests that chunks of language definable on paper as grammatically coherent in the sense of their being prescriptively ordered, are in fact stored and elicited as lexical items in the process of communication which is defined by the context in which it takes place. This phenomena becomes apparent within the field of corpus linguistics where it is revealed that:

“Large numbers of language users, separated in space and time, repeatedly orientate towards the same language choices when involved in comparable social activities. And what corpora reveal is that much of our linguistic output consists of repeated multi-word units rather than just single words” (O’Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 61).

As a brief example, one could consider the way in which collocations have arisen round new lexical items which have appeared in the English language such as ‘*the Internet*’, to ‘*surf*’, to ‘*access*’, to ‘*go on*’ etc. which were not derived by mutual consensus, but were absorbed into the language by their frequency of use.

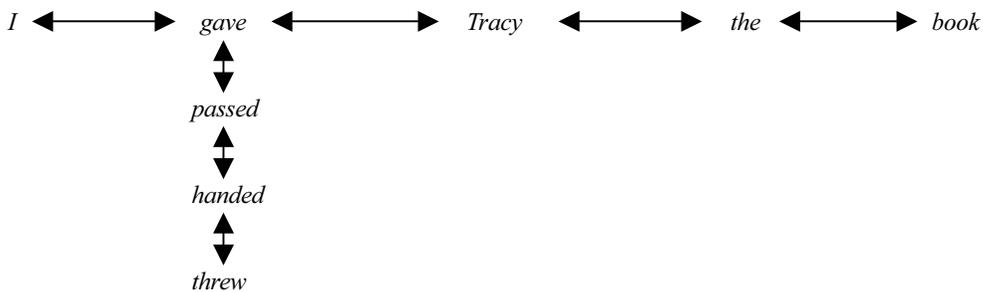
In other words, while a great deal of what is construed as ‘rules’ in grammar may be ‘*deterministic*’ in instances of placement of the definite article or its omission, grammar is better thought of being comprised more as ‘*probabilistic*’ elements which “*state what is most likely or least likely to apply in particular circumstances*” (O’Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007: 104) and based to a large degree on statistically significant patterns of language usage and choice depending on social context (ibid: 61) According to Barker (2006: 48) It is this “*tension*” between language as a set of rules and language as a system of choice which makes frequency so important. In this respect:

“... the only way in which grammar creates meaning is by setting up mutually exclusive choices, and it exists purely as a record of the choice itself; the significance of the choice – whether a past tense verb relates to past time or present or future time or modality – is determined elsewhere” (Sinclair 2000:193).

Grammar as choice

To see grammar more as a system of choice involves a brief discussion of linguistic theory which will help to contextualize my approach to integrating lexis and grammar within the same pedagogical framework. The following example is taken from Richards, Platt & Platt (1992: 369).

In the following sentence: *I gave Tracy the book*, I have cited a sentence where the lexical items interact with the purely grammatical items (grammar words) to produce a sentence which has a syntactic meaning and creates an image of an action taking place in space and time. Their placement is on a horizontal plane (running from left to right) and the linguistic relationship they assume within the realm of linguistic theory is said to be ‘*Syntagmatic*’. However, if any one of the items in the sentence cited can be replaced on an imaginary vertical axis as in illustrated below:



↔ = syntagmatic
 ↔ = paradigmatic
 (from Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992:369)

I could be said to be providing myself with a linguistic choice as to what words I can use to establish meaning within the context of the utterance. This system of choice along the vertical axis is said to be ‘*Paradigmatic*’. Were I to change the syntagmatic relationship by rearranging the words; for example, *The book, I gave Tracy*. I could be said to be exercising a choice by which I wish to convey information to establish meaning, but in reordering the words I am aware that I am creating a structure where I may be expected by a listener to add some other piece of information about the book such as ‘*The book I gave Tracy wasn’t much good.*’ This is not to say that the sentence ‘*The book, I gave Tracy*’ as a single utterance is ungrammatical in terms of its syntactic structure, but that its use as an utterance in normal conversation would seem odd depending on the context. So at the level of systemic-functional linguistic analysis, language could be said to be operating “*primarily, if not exclusively on the paradigmatic level*” (Sinclair, 2000:195). In this respect, by asking learners to generate their own language through L1, I am aiming to access their own linguistic preferences by reference to their idiolectal language processing. However, in addition to grammar as a symbol of linguistic choice, there is one other element that is useful in garnering a greater understanding of its function in concert with lexis in the production of meaning, and that is its relationship to context.

Grammar and its relationship to context

In this regard, while a language ‘can’ be studied and learned structurally, its very nature as a conduit for human interaction requires that it also draws upon contextual frameworks in order for it to achieve its functional capacity, which is ultimately the establishment of meaning, or “*meaning potential*” (Saville-Troike, 2006: 53). Under this system, grammar is not so much a system of descriptive rules, but rather “*a resource*

for the adaption of lexis” (Widdowson, 1990: 86). Accordingly:

“The greater the contribution of context in the sense of shared knowledge, and experience, the less need there is for grammar to augment the association of words. The less effective words are in identifying relevant features of context in that sense, the more dependent they become on grammatical modification of one sort or another” (Widdowson 1990: 86).

In essence, the further away from context, the more grammar is needed to modify the meaning of lexical items to create meaning in time and space for the reader/listener. The concept of relying on ‘grammaticalization’ to reduce reliance on context is, according to Saville-Troike (2006: 57), common to all languages and part of a process “*driven by communicative need and use and is related to the development of more efficient cognitive processing*” (ibid. 58).

So it could be argued that although grammar represents a structural framework for analysis in linguistic theory, in practical terms it is the means by which language is processed and articulated either verbally or physically (if the language of the hearing impaired is to be given equal status as a language) with the greatest efficiency and economy. The role of lexis is part of the structure of language and that of choice along the vertical line of paradigmatic relations and statistically significant groupings of both lexical and grammatical chunks (grammatical in terms of closed set, non-lexical items) organized along the syntagmatic plane and dependant on context for the degree of its grammaticalization.

So how can these aspects of language described above be mediated from theory to a reasonably sound pedagogical outcome as alluded to in the opening paragraph? What I describe below is not intended as a comprehensive solution to the problem of how to teach grammar and lexis in ESL, but rather one approach to teaching these subjects relevant to my particular teaching context and a stepping-stone to developing a more effective pedagogy and research area within the field of Second Language Acquisition.

From theory to practical application

The limits of space prevents me from giving a complete analysis of the class procedure I utilized as a means of replicating Sokmen’s methodology and the results I obtained are by no means conclusive. However, I have procured some useful data from which I can usefully develop a more pedagogically sound approach to the original concept of music as a means to generating lexis and ultimately, grammatical awareness.

As introduced earlier, my proposed study was based on the idea, similar to Sokmen, that students are capable of creating their own vocabulary which could be manipulated into an awareness raising exercise of grammatical constructs if students were given the right stimulus and follow-up activities. In this particular study, permission was gained from all students to use any data I received for research purposes and whose

work is represented below.

As described above, the idea in this instance was that listening to music might directly create a response within the students that would likely be in L1. As they listened, they would write down words that represented what images and feelings the music created in their minds.

The second step was to work in groups to examine the different ways the vocabulary they had produced could be expanded and created through discussion of antonyms and collocations and on to actual sentences.

Below is an example of some of the data produced by four students (out of a class of 20 at approximately mid-intermediate level) during the first listening phase of three pieces of instrumental music chosen for their especially emotive moods. The songs presented in order are listed along the top row, and the responses elicited by the students are listed in the vertical column.

	Song 1	Song 2	Song 3
Feelings How do you feel when you hear the song/melody?	<i>S1: lonely, gloomy. S2: sad, unhappy, dark, dismal. S3: sad, tragic. S4: sad, surprise</i>	<i>S1: sad, unhappy. S2: worry. S3: old, lonely. S4: mystery</i>	<i>S1: soft, warm. S2: comfortable, warm, happy. S3: peaceful, grand, relaxing. S4: nostalgic, warm</i>
Vision What do you see in your mind's eye? What images is your mind creating as you listen?	<i>S1: the sea in winter, dark forest, snow, blue. S2: little girl, darkness. S3: dark sky and sea. S4: rain, sea</i>	<i>S1: autumn, melancholy S2: ghost, river, cloud S3: sunset, evening sunlight. S4: forest.</i>	<i>S1: spring, flowers come out, little birds are singing. S2: water, memory, flower garden. S3: in the water with dolphins. S4: river, birth, earth.</i>
Association Can you make any associations with a memory or image in your life?	<i>S1: ----- S2: loneliness, uneasy, anxious. S3: ----- S4: funeral</i>	<i>S1: ----- S2: In my bed, family S3: ----- S4: -----</i>	<i>S1: I notice that flowers are coming out in the garden. S2: ----- S3: ----- S4: planetarium</i>
Other	<i>S1: expanse S2: ----- S3: ----- S4: -----</i>	<i>S1: ----- S2: ----- S3: ----- S4: -----</i>	<i>S1: spring S2: ----- S3: ----- S4: -----</i>

While single word descriptions were the norm, the vocabulary the students produced were a rich source of materials from which they could build their own expressions given that the music was creating emotions that were closest to themselves and how they would express their own feelings through their idiolectal language.

Having established their own ‘seed’ or ‘core’ words, students could then explore how these vocabulary items interact with other linguistic elements in the language from which grammar arises. So in essence, I guided students to the point where they become aware of the possibility that it is “*the words that create the grammar*” (Lewis, 1993:128), and that the semantics of the language are created partly by deterministic elements, partly by pre-fabricated structures, partly by choice and always by functional necessity governed by context.

Below is a model of how I demonstrated the development of lexical items into grammatical constructs based on the vocabulary produced by the students for the category ‘feelings’ from song one, taken from the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2002).

Core word	Collocating element
lonely	VERBS: be, feel, look, seem, become, get ADVERBS: desperately, extremely, terribly, unbearably
gloomy	VERBS: be, feel, look, seem, sound, become, get ADVERBS: decidedly, very, pretty, rather PREPOSITIONS: about
sad	VERBS: appear, be, feel, look, seem, sound, become, grow, make sb. <i>This music always makes me sad.</i> ADVERBS: all, desperately, immensely, particularly, profoundly, really, unbearably, very, a bit, a little, quite PREPOSITIONS: about <i>She was still feeling <u>very sad about</u> her father's death.</i>
tragic	VERBS: be, seem ADVERBS: genuinely, particularly, really, terribly, very, quite, rather

From this exercise, students were exposed to the idea that words do not appear in isolation and are dependent on co-text in determining their functional meaning in any given context. Students were then encouraged to work in groups to produce their own collocations which they then formed into sentences and checked against the examples listed in the collocation dictionary. Additional development of the core words was provided through brainstorming and forming lexical networks adapted from ideas concerning collocation networks (Barker, 2006: 116) where students wrote out word association networks to expand on their core

vocabulary and to explore the concept of word families and lemmas. I then asked them to provide a written summary of the images the core vocabulary created in their minds to see how they could apply the process of generating vocabulary as a means of expression. Six examples are provided below.

1. *First I felt the music was warm. And I imaged the scenery of spring. Many beautiful flowers were in bloom there. I felt like I was in the field of the flowers alone.*

And then, I associated the word “warm” with “heart”. I thought the music warms my heart. And as opposite meaning, the word “break” came to mind. The word “heart” also has “physical” meaning, so the word “ill” came to mind. And I thought “warm heart” and “warm feeling” had almost same meaning. Then I thought the warm color is orange. The scenery I imagined was a vague orange as a whole. Finally, I associated the word “warm” with the opposite words such as “cold” and “winter”.

2. *I was in the fog. It is like in the heaven. And there was my grandmother. (I liked my grandmother very much. But 7 years ago she was died. So it is happy for me to feel as if I could meet her). I was tender during I heard that music. And I could remember many memories. Gradually more and more people was coming out in my image. They looked at me with smiling.*

The color of the image was white because the fog was around me. And the world was mild and peaceful. I feel like sleeping in a sofa or bed.

3. *As I listened to the music, what I imagined first was ocean. I could see something swimming in the water. It might be fish, dolphins, whales or a mermaid. Listening to this music made me relax and feel comfortable. When I thought of the words ‘relax’ and ‘comfortable’, ‘hometown’ immediately came to my mind.*

I found that almost all the words which came to my mind were positive words.

4. *First, I imagined country river in spring and many animals and flowers around there. It’s very nostalgic world. I feel warm, and relax.*

Second, I remembered my mother. I missed my mother. And I see some birth, for example, baby, flower, birds, more over planet.

Third, I imagined space, stars. They are shining. I feel that I became large. I imagined virtual scene. At every situation, I was just looker.

5. *I imagined the field where butterflies and birds are flying and singing. Last time I felt same feeling. I didn’t imagined particular field but scenes of Europe, especially North Europe like Norway of Finland came to my mind. The air of the field is very clear and pure nature exists.*

The field is so bright and I imagined both life and death. The light means the pleasure of life and the road to death and in my mind death is the beginning of a new adventure or journey.

Of course death contains darkness. So I imagined the beauty and the darkness from this music. I think people’s

heart is composed of both dark and light side, so I wrote down the word "heart" twice.

Related to the field, I imagined some words which associated with nature. In my mind the color of nature is blue and green, especially blue, so I imagined sky and ocean. When I listened to this music I felt relived and for me the color which relieve me is blue.

6. I felt very calm when I listened to the music during class. But I actually see something more like feeling. The image come from my mind is heaven. People are laughing each other and I can see a feather of anjel. Next, my view was changed. I saw a death by the music. It's not "hard death." It's like death with happiness. A man is nearly death and he is on bed in hospital, but the man is surrounding everyone he met in his life. I see his happiness life by the music. But the story is continuing. After a few moment, he is dead with happiness. Nobody is crying. He was actually taking good life. After he was dead, his soul released from his body and his soul went to up and up. And he reach a river. The river is very beautiful. Many flowers which I can not see in real world bloom in front of the river. He entered the river, and he could not go back. However, he didn't want to go back real world. I did all things which he should do did in his life. In the river, he melted to water and he is a part of water. I can imagine whole life of a man by the music.

Summary and conclusion

In this essay I have argued the case that grammar and lexis need not be considered mutually exclusive and in light of corpus linguistic studies into the nature of language in use, it might be possible to construct a pedagogy similar to that of Sokmen, where an awareness of the relationship between lexis and grammar can be meaningfully taught by tapping into learners interlanguage and L1 ideolect. My approach has been to not to dismiss grammar as a useful tool for linguistic analysis or a reliable measurement of proficiency, but to change the perception of how it is used as a teaching strategy in the process of second language acquisition. There is still an obvious need for students to learn more complex grammatical constructs such as the passive voice and the relative clause etc. and developing an appropriate pedagogy for guidance in these areas is a subject which merits further investigation. However, given the way in which students have managed to be so creative with L2 in this particular study has given me hope that I can pursue this approach with a greater awareness of what students might be capable of doing if given the right stimulus and focused classroom management. Also, given the positive results in this instance, I have to pose the question as to whether the onus on grammar as a means of direct language instruction is really conducive to meaningful language production, or if the means of expression carried by all language learners in L1 can be harnessed in such a way that embraces what any one individual can produce from their own sense of self. Gaining an insight into how a learner relates to the world through such means of expression is by far a more satisfying and motivating exercise than attempting to convey the mechanics of language in a way that removes the language from meaningful context and also removes it from the learners themselves. The words garnered from the examples above might lack grammatical precision in the prescriptive sense of the word, but they elicit feelings that I can relate to and that

for me in my particular teaching context is progress indeed, both for myself and the learners.

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