



TUTOR TIPS

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"Grammar, what big teeth you have" - PART 2 -

By Kay Smith

Immersion!
Attention!
Practice!



► Immersion, Attention and Practice: 3 keys to developing grammar

When learners have difficulty with a particular aspect of grammar that they seek to come to terms with, we should try to immerse them in contexts which feature the target grammar, draw their attention to the mechanics of it and devise tasks which engage them in practice. Where do you find "contexts which feature the target grammar"? They are all around us - in newspapers, magazines, songs, on the Internet.....

1. Use inspirational texts

You can find many inspirational texts, including poetry and lyrics, on the Internet. The one below gives useful "nitty gritty" practice of the 2nd conditional for ESL learners. It makes a good springboard for discussion and writing - all in second conditional.

Ideas



IF I HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE OVER - I'D PICK MORE DAISIES

- by Nadine Stair, an 85 year old woman*

I'd dare to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would be sillier than I've been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice-cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles but I'd have fewer imagined ones. You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had moments, and if I had it over again I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have. If I had my life over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the autumn. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

► What would you do differently?

For the 3rd conditional, Erma Bombeck's "If I'd Had my Life to Live Over" is very useful. The 3rd conditional baffles ESL learners no end as they usually hear it in its contracted spoken form. It is also a common source of errors among native speakers. Eg The words "I would have contacted you" are heard as "I'd've contacted you" and interpreted by many native speakers as "I would of contacted you". English language learners need to attend to and practise both the spoken contracted grammar and the written uncontracted grammar; native speakers need to attend to the differences between the two but practise the latter.

IF I'D HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE OVER

(By Erma Bombeck) **

I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the GOOD living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up! on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television and more while watching life.

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I wasn't there for the day.

I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment realizing that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later, now go get washed up for dinner."

There would have been more "I Love You's" and more "I'm sorry's" but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute look at it and really see it... live it. And never give it back.

2. Use newspapers

The task below is for learners wanting to write more "academically". It involves deconstructing a newspaper sentence, for learners to reconstruct.

Many learners, wanting to go on to tertiary study, write quite grammatically and accurately, but are aware that their writing "isn't like the text books". Academic writing has fewer verbs and longer noun groups than less formal writing styles. It also uses less colloquial language.

Choose a newspaper article on a topic that interests the learner. Take each nominalised sentence and break it into several less formal sentences. The learner can practise identifying colloquial language and re-writing the sentences as one nominalised ("newspaper-style") sentence. Look at the examples on the next page:

The people wanted a bike path.
 They put a request in to Council.
 Council knocked back the request.
 The people were angry.
 They demonstrated outside Council chambers.
Council's rejection of a request for a bike path led to an angry demonstration by residents outside Council chambers.

Work has not started yet on the new resort.
 Greenies have held things up.
 They are insisting on an environmental impact study.
 The workers are being put off because the company can't afford to keep paying them.
 Some of them are in a bad way financially - or so one of the company executives said.
According to a company spokesman, conservationists' insistence on an environmental impact study has delayed work on the new resort and led to financial hardship for workers who have had to be laid off.

It can be very helpful for learners to practise re-writing sentences with verb/s nominalised and then to consider the impact. Often this will lead to more formal word choices in the new sentence. Study the examples below to see how this works.

Example: Not many people attend church these days.
 Church attendance is low these days.

Example: The dog died and the boy was upset.
 The dog's death upset the boy.

The following task was designed to give Adult Tertiary Preparation students this kind of practice:

Look closely at each sentence. Underline the verb in each.

- Police will patrol more frequently.
- New units are being constructed; so, the housing crisis won't be so bad.
- If you don't discipline the students, the class will be unmanageable.
- If a student fails, s/he will be withdrawn from the course
- If the Council doesn't approve the plan, the resort will not go ahead

Complete this table

VERB	NOUN
Patrol	(Patrol)
Construct	(Construction)
Discipline	(Discipline)
Fail	(Failure)
Withdraw	(Withdrawal)
Approve	(Approval)

Re-write the sentences above using the nouns from the table.

- (Police patrols will increase.)
- (The construction of the new units will help ease the housing crisis.)
- (Without discipline, the class will be unmanageable.)
- (Failure will result in withdrawal from the course.)
- (Without Council approval, the resort will not go ahead.)

Consider the impact of the changes you have made.

Prior to doing word study of the kind in the previous task, it might be fun to try an activity such as the one below. Ask learner/s to write numbers 1 - 26 down a page, and then tell them what to write next to each. Then give them the text to fill in with their words.

1) Your name	14) A colour
2) The name of a country	15) A number between 1 & 100
3) An occupation	16) A noun (pl)
4) A number between 1 & 100	17) A number between 1 & 100
5) A school subject	18) A kind of food (pl)
6) A sport	19) A kind of food (pl)
7) A relative eg. Aunt, brother, wife	20) A liquid
8) A number between 1 & 100	21) A country
9) A noun (pl)	22) A class mate's name
10) A verb	23) An adjective
11) A verb	24) A noun (pl)
12) A hobby	25) An adjective
13) A verb	26) A noun (pl)

A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

My name is 1) _____. I come from 2) _____. In my country, I was a 3) _____. I can speak 4) _____ languages. I am very good at 5) _____ and 6) _____.

I came to Australia with my 7) _____ and my 8) _____ children. We came here because we didn't like the 9) _____ in my country. Here we can all 10) _____ and 11) _____ every day. I will soon join a 12) _____ club and learn to 13) _____.

I live in a nice 14) _____ house. It has 15) _____ bedrooms and a special room for all our 16) _____. So far we have 17) _____.

I don't really like the food here. The 18) _____ taste terrible and the 19) _____ are too tough. But I really like to drink Australian 20) _____.

One day I will travel to 21) _____ with my friend 22) _____. We hope to buy some rare 23) _____ 24) _____ and 25) _____ 26) _____ to sell here in Cairns.

PLEASE NOTE: These texts are reproduced from the following websites for education purposes only. The two inspirational pieces of text used in this tutor tip can be found on a number of different websites in a variety of versions.

* <http://www.devpsy.org/nonscience/daisies.html>

Erma Bombeck's text can be found on a number of websites including:

** www.storybin.com/lists/list116.shtml; <http://www.naute.com/inspiration/live.phtml>

The author acknowledges these websites as sources.