A Morpho-Syntactic Approach to Teaching English Grammar

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This paper presents a morpho-syntactic approach to teaching English grammar to university undergraduates and/or to Grade 10,11,12 students for whom English is a Second Language (L2). Mainly, it focuses on teaching sentence construction, lexical categories, Tense, and Agreement. The theoretical alignment is Generative Syntax (Chomsky 1980-) as expounded in the Government and Binding Framework. Hence, the selected grammatical phenomena and categories will be looked at in relation to the Argument structure of the verb, predicate type, and complement selection, Tense as a linguistic expression of time (Reichenbach, 1947), and feature composition of lexical/ functional categories. How each of these different grammatical phenomena can be taught is illustrated in the form of teaching points so that the paper does not limit itself just to unraveling theory. Rather, each theoretical description is supplemented by instructions and activities for its practical application in the ELT classroom. Since this is a presentation of a teaching model, to be experimented with undergraduate learners, or with school students, an exact research problem or hypothesis was not formulated. Nevertheless, it attempts to answer the research question of how the insights of theoretical linguistics, mainly generative syntax, can be applied in the writing of a pedagogical grammar for L2 learners, in a broader perspective.