

Transforming Grammar Instruction

Moving from a Traditional practice to a Functional practice

In a Traditional grammar activity, the structure is often as follows:

Examples -> Rules -> Exercise

In a Functional grammar activity, the structure is different:

Notice -> Explore -> Practice

The differences are significant.

1. In a traditional approach, we **provide** the learners with the rules. In a functional approach, the learners **discover** the rules. This process of discovery is crucial for adult learners. Remember, young children will **acquire** a language given sufficient and appropriate input and interaction, but adults require some active learning.
2. Functional language incorporates meaningful practice with the grammatical feature(s). This means providing opportunities to use the new features in authentic contexts.

Included below is an example of how I transformed one of my grammar lessons. The first two pages show how I originally presented the lesson. The following four pages show how I adapted the lesson to accommodate a more functional approach by making a few changes:

1. I added a "Noticing" and "Exploring" component.
2. I built in oral practice within a meaningful context.

You'll see that in my original lesson, I provided examples of prepositions of time along with rules for their use. After going through the examples, I provided a worksheet in which they were to refer to the rules in order to fill in the blank with the correct preposition.

In my revised lesson, my learners did much of the work. They had to **notice** the prepositions and the temporal references. They then **charted** and **explored** the patterns in order to **discover** the rules.

PREPOSITIONS WITH TIME

Traditional Approach: Examples -> Rules -> Exercises

Use **in** before a month or year or a future period of time.

- She was born **in** 1978.
- He moved to the use **in** November.
- My birthday is **in** April.
- I have a meeting **in** 20 minutes.
- She's having a baby **in** 4 months.

Use **on** before a day of the week or an exact date.

- I have to work **on** Monday.
- We have a meeting **on** March 30.
- They are going to New York **on** April 14.
- My interview is **on** Thursday.
- Tom works **on** Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Use **at** before an exact time.

- He starts work **at** 10:00 a.m.
- Her appointment is **at** 3:15.
- I went to sleep **at** 11:30.

Use **from** before a period of time that has a beginning and end.

- He works **from** 3:00 - 11:00.
- The teacher will be gone **from** October 8 to November 15.
- Our break is **from** 10:45 to 11:00.
- Their lunch break is **from** 12:15 - 1:15.

Do not use a preposition before yesterday, today, tomorrow, next or last.

- I will be gone tomorrow.
- She wasn't here yesterday.
- I have to work today.
- I don't work next weekend.
- My brother got married last month.

I have a job interview _____ March 29.

My birthday is _____ April.

She starts work _____ 3:30.

Andy works _____ 8:00 - 5:00.

I start my new job _____ two weeks.

He doesn't work _____ tomorrow.

Joe's break is _____ 2:30 - 2:45.

My sister is coming to visit _____ December.

She has a doctor's appointment _____ 4:15.

Hasna came to the U.S. _____ 2010.

PREPOSITIONS WITH TIME

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH: Notice -> Explore -> Practice

Step 1: Set stage

Explain to learners that you are giving them each a time for a (pretend) interview.

Then ask each student: "When is your interview?" As they answer, create sentences on the board. Ex: Teacher: "Kadra, when is your interview?" Kadra: "3:00." (Teacher writes on board: "Kadra's interview is at 3:00." Write a sentence for each student.

3:00	Wednesday 2:30	September	Friday
August 30	October	3:30	September 1 10:45
November	August 23 4:15		

Step 2: **Notice**

Learners will see a list of sentences on the board such as the following. Instruct them to come up to the board and draw a circle around each of the three prepositions (in/on/at). Then have them come up and underline the time, day or date after the preposition.

1. Kadra's interview is at 3:00.
2. Azin's interview is on Wednesday at 2:30.
3. Manuel's interview is in September.
4. Ali's interview is on Friday.
5. Halima's interview is on August 30.
6. Martin's interview is in October.
7. Mariana's interview is at 3:30.
8. Amin's interview is on September 1 at 10:45.
9. Luca's interview is in November.
10. Sadiya's interview is on August 23 at 4:15.

Step 3: **Explore**

Using the marked up sentences on the board, learners discover the rule by completing the following chart (in pairs or small groups)

What comes after <u>IN</u> ?	What comes after <u>ON</u> ?	What comes after <u>AT</u> ?
September	Wednesday	3:00
October	Friday	2:30
November	August 30	3:30
	September 1	10:45
	August 23	4:15

Follow up this activity with a discussion, where the learners help you write the rules.

When do we use “at?”

When do we use “on?”

When do we use “in?”

Step 4: **Practice** (literacy)

Fill in the correct word: *in, on, at*

1. Kadra's interview is ____ 3:00.
2. Azin's interview is ____ Wednesday ____ 2:30.
3. Manuel's interview is ____ September.
4. Ali's interview is ____ Friday.
5. Halima's interview is ____ August 30.
6. Martin's interview is ____ October.
7. Mariana's interview is ____ 3:30.
8. Amin's interview is ____ September 1 ____ 10:45.
9. Luca's interview is ____ November.
10. Sadiya's interview is ____ August 23 ____ 4:15.

Step 5: **Practice** (Interactive)

Using the original cards, have students mingle, trying out the new grammar points.

Ex:

Kadra: "Martin, when is your interview?"

Martin: "It's in October. When is your interview?"

Kadra: "It's at 3:00"

(Students then trade cards and mingle with other people so they get a chance to use the different prepositions in context.)