

SEARCHING FOR AN EFFECTIVE
METHOD FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR

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Introduction

Grammar plays an important role in four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. An English teacher who teaches one of these skills is facing with how grammar should be treated. A number of questions come to the teacher's mind. For examples: should grammar be consciously explained?, should it be taught in isolation?, should a grammatical explanation be inductive or deductive?, or how should the grammatical explanation be made? To answer such questions an English teacher needs to search for an effective method.

Methods for teaching grammar have changed in accordance with the fluctuation of approaches to the English language teaching. Traditional approaches tended to teach grammar as a separate skills. Current approaches, according to Long (1990), have tended to treat grammar as a component of other skills. This means that particular grammatical items are dealt with when they are needed for specific kinds of communicative tasks and functions. Before the introduction of communicative

approach, teaching grammar had been associated with the teaching of grammar rules to the students. Students, perhaps, had more grammar rules than Mathematical formulas. Grammar teaching was more likely to focus on getting students to know the form. Criticism has been addressed by language teaching methodologists and teachers to this model of teaching grammar due to the failure faced by the majority of students to use the language.

Since the introduction of Communicative Approach, the emphasis of teaching grammar has been given largely on the language use. Grammar is not explicitly given to the students, but by letting them to find the grammar rules themselves through communicative activities created by the teacher. English teachers through out Indonesia according to Makmur (1990), have adopted communicative approach in teaching grammar. Does this new approach promise success for teaching grammar? As far as language use is concerned, a number of studies have shown that students achieve more successful than the traditional approach (Rusdi, 1988; Januarisdi, 1988). However, this new promising approach has also raised new problems such as teaching materials, inexperienced teachers, students' confusion, and limited time (Refnaldi, 1992; Rusdi, 1991; Widdowson; 1990).

The controversy toward the most effective method for teaching grammar remains questionable. This article

is an attempt to search for an effective method for teaching new grammatical items, especially for presentation stage. The thesis, based on library research, forwarded is that the most effective method for teaching grammar is the one that incorporates meaning, Use, and form at one package of presentation. this is what is called "Three in one" method for teaching grammar. The following sub-topic will be discussed: The concept of grammar, aims of teaching grammar, over view of ESL methods for teaching grammar, success and failure of two most influential appraches in teaching grammar, the *three in one* method, and a model of teaching grammar through *three in one* method.

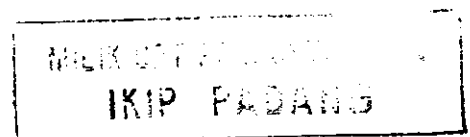
What is Grammar?

Our understanding about what we mean by grammar is considerably important before deciding any appropriate technique for teaching grammar. There is a great deal of confusion about grammar of the very many different ways in which the term is used in ordinary speech. The word *grammar* is derived from the Greek word meaning to write (Palmer, 1971). For this reason, perhaps, some believe that the grammar of the language is found only in the written language - spoken languages have no grammar or at least fluctuate so much that they are only partially grammatical. in a broader sense grammar covers all aspects of language which might include

Phonology and Semantics. In a narrow sense grammar is always associated with the concept of rules. In this article, the term grammar is used to refer to a narrow sense concept in which grammar can be grouped into three categories (Maley, 1992). Firstly, at word level grammar covers features like word-classes, morphology, pluralisation, etc. Secondly, at sentence level grammar includes features like word-order, tense, aspect and modality, etc. Generally these are kinds of rules which are mostly taught by many English teachers, because they are relatively easy to observe and describe. Thirdly, at discourse level, grammar comprises the way information is ordered and patterned in longer texts. This is, according to Maley, a deeper level of grammar which as yet, has not been given a lot of attention in teaching.

What should be achieved when presenting new grammatical items?

This is a very essential question in an effort to determine an appropriate method for teaching grammar, especially at the presentation stage. By having clear objective in mind a teacher can determine suitable techniques, and materials for teaching purposes. On the other hand if there is no clear target to achieve, the teaching will be vague. To answer the question in this sub-heading, Hubbard (1984) pointed out that in pre-



senting any new grammatical items there are two things a teacher should achieve. Firstly, to enable the students to recognise the structure well enough so that they can produce it themselves (established the form); secondly, to enable the students to know the clear usage of the rules being introduced (establish the meaning). Similarly, Harmer (1991) addresses three points a teacher needs to achieve when presenting a new particular grammar rule: form, meaning, and use. Harmer makes a strong claim that a teacher's job at presentation stage is to present the students with clear information about the language they are learning. Teachers, he asserts, must show the students what the language means and how it is used, and "they must also show them what the grammatical form of the new language is, and how it is spoken and written".

I will use these three aspects as the target objectives when presenting new grammatical items. Let me dwell for a while on clarifying what we mean by *form*, *meaning*, and *use*. I use the term *form* to refer to the rules of any particular grammar items which may include how the verb is formed, how certain nouns become plural, etc. Suppose, for example, the new grammatical items to be introduced is the third person singular of the present simple tense, the grammatical form we wish the students to know or to be aware of is clearly the occurrence of the 's' on the verb stem. Widdowson

(1972) described the difference between meaning and use the difference between signification and value, concepts which he later developed into usage and use. *meaning* could mean the examples generated from the grammar rules which bring or produce certain messages. *Use* refers to the way the target language users usually use any particular grammar. An Example will explain the difference between the concept of *meaning* and use. In a traditional example, to show the meaning of the present continuous tense, teachers might perform actions such as opening the door or closing the window. As they did these, they would say to their students "I'm opening the door. I am closing the window. I am drinking a glass of milk". This would be an adequate demonstration of the meaning, however, such activities would not tell students how the present continuous tense is naturally used. We, according to Harmer (1991), actually use it when there is some point or some value in commenting on other people's actions. There are some situations, however, where such commentary could be acceptable. For example, people giving a cookery demonstration may well be able to describe what it is that they are doing (Harmer, 1991).

It is then important to underline that when presenting any new grammatical rules, there are three things a teacher need to introduce: form, meaning, and use of the new grammar rules being presented.

An Over View of ESL Methods for Teaching Grammar

A number of methods which have been largely used by most teachers throughout the world will be reviewed. It is an attempt to show the variety of ways in which different methods deal with grammar teaching and may help our understanding of grammar teaching. The following methods will be briefly reviewed: grammar translation, the direct method, the audio-lingual method, situational reinforcement, cognitive code, the silent way, counseling learning, and methods derived from communicative approach.

Grammar translation

This method is associated directly with formal rule statement (Koolhoven, 1961). Teachers provide students with some examples where specific grammatical items can be used. After that teachers formulate the rules of grammar and students write down these rules. This method had dominated English classroom throughout the world until late seventieth. By looking at students' notes the following rules, as examples, might be found: (Subject + have/has + Verb participle + (since/for) + object) for present perfect tense or (Subject + shall/will + be + verb + ing + object) for present future continuous tense. Students work with rules of grammar is much more similar with how they work with mathematical rules.

The Direct Method

This method is characterized by the exclusion of the use of mother tongue. Teachers do not provide students with the rules of grammar, but by letting students to form the direct use of language. There is no mathematical. Grammatical explanation of the grammar rules (Simoes, 1976).

The Audio Lingual Method

The Audio-lingual method approaches grammar teaching through inductive presentation with extensive pattern practice (Lado, 1964). Teachers avoid writing in any attempts of explaining certain grammatical items. There are a grammar of variations used by teachers in approaching grammar. Some teachers do not explain any grammatical items at all. They only stress on getting students to listen as much as possible. It is the students who will search for grammatical rules. Other teachers might focus on a particular rules by isolating an example on the board. Usually grammatical explanation is done at the end of the lesson (Politzer, 1965) which is followed by some additional drills.

Situational Reinforcement

This method stresses learning language in terms of real situations (Hall, 1967). Since this method puts the importance of real language use several related

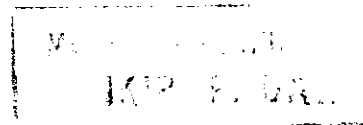
structures are presented at the same time. When we speak for example we use number of related structures. Teachers' basis for teaching is language in use. A written summary or chart is used to cover all major structures used in the written or spoken text.

Cognitive Code

This method stresses on the students' ability to use rules in orderly manner (Chastain, 1970). Grammatical items are consciously explained. Language rule is explained in isolation. Presentation is done deductively. It means teachers provide grammatical rules to the students. Oral or written explanation may be used to describe language use.

Counseling Learning

Students' needs and feelings are taken into consideration. Students and teacher relation is like a client and his or her counselor. The counselor (teacher) should know students' first language and the target language. In its practice, students say something in his mother tongue, and the counselor translates into English (the target language) (Curran, 1972). This method is rather expensive, because it requires many counselors (teachers). The counselor does not explain the grammar



rules to the learners, but by letting them to come up with their generalization. Grammar is not treated in isolation.

Method Derived from Communicative Approach

This method stresses the importance of the use of language for interaction as the reflection of the way people communicate. The interaction should be made as real as possible. Depending on their abilities, students should be given the opportunity to function in realistic conversational situations such as giving directions, apologizing, expressing, reactions to a visual presentation or entertaining in front of the class such as telling a Joke.

Students, for example, according to Rivers (1973) can practise questions in groups or pairs by making polite inquiries of each other, asking for specific information about a matter for which they have some vocabulary, interviewing some one or making telephone inquiries.

From these communicative activities teachers do not explicitly explain the rules of grammar. Students are allowed to search for the regularities of grammar themselves. It is assumed that grammar can be studied unconsciously.

The summary of the methods and their treatment of teaching grammar can be illustrated in the table 1 below:

Table 1. Methods and Grammar Teaching

Methods	Conciuos Grammar Explanation	Isolation of Rule	Presenta-tion	Explainer
Grammar Translation	yes	yes	deductive	teacher/book
Direct Method	yes or no	yes	inductive	teacher
Audio Lingual	yes or no	yes	inductive	teacher
Situational	no	no	inductive	book
Cognitive Code	yes	yes	deductive	teacher
Counseling Learning	yes	no	inductive	councilor and learner
Communica-tive	no	no	inductive	teacher and learner

Source Long (1990:285)

Success and failure of two previous methods

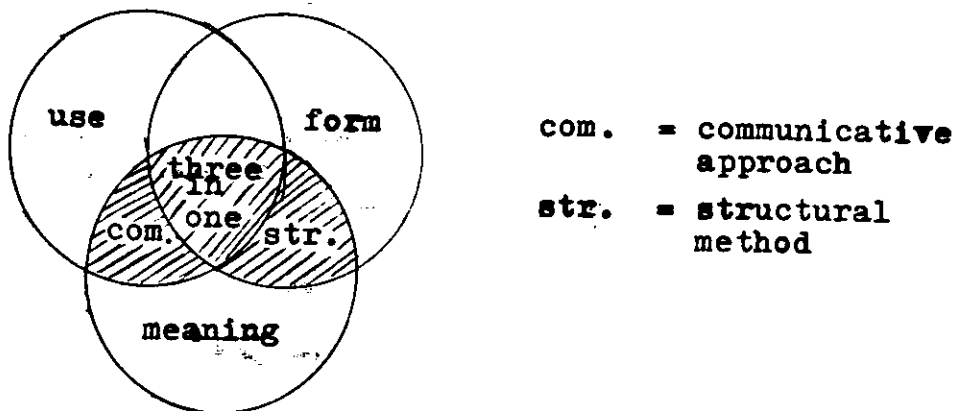
Let's briefly look at two previous methods, structural and communicative approaches, which have been used by many EFL and ESL teachers as the basis of their teaching. The aim is to evaluate what success each method has achieved in the three elements (form, meaning, and use) when presenting new grammatical rules.

These two approaches have different views and emphases. The Structural approach focuses attention on knowing the language. The primary task of teaching is to transfer knowledge and the learners can be left to find out how to use it for themselves (Widdowson, 1990). The assumption is that once learners have known the rules of grammar, the students will be able to use them in any situation. This approach has been successful in achieving two target objectives of grammar teaching: form and meaning. However, it seems to fail to enable students to use the grammar rules in a natural setting, as it has been pointed out by Widdowson (1990) that the disadvantage of structural approach is that "it does not allow the learner to use language in a natural way". It is to some extent true what Bourke (1989) pointed out that by putting students through a series of grammatical forms this will enable students to handle the form, meaning, and use relationship.

The communicative approach focuses attention to language use. It is clearly contradictory with structural approach. It concentrates on getting learners to use the language. If the structural approach focuses its contents on forms, then the communicative approach focuses its contents in terms of notions, and communicative functions. Through this approach, students are supposed to infer grammar rules from the created communicative activities. The followers of this approach,

those like Prabhu (1987), believe that "grammar in the classroom was to be only implicit, not explicit- that is to say, grammar was to use only for systematising language data and for organising practice materials, not for providing learners with an explicit knowledge of the rules". He believed that explicit grammar in the classroom would only lead to a knowledge about the language, not an ability to make correct sentences automatically. If we make an association between the target objectives of grammar teaching (establishing meaning, use, and form), and in the emphasis of communicative approach, it will be noticeable that this approach has been successful in establishing *meaning* and *use*, but not *form*. It appears that learners do not very readily infer knowledge of the language system from their communicative activities. Grammar, according to Widdowson (1990), which students must obviously acquire somehow as necessary resource for use, proves its self to be elusive. This approach does not appear to naturally to knowing, as it has been optimistically assumed. A study conducted by Green (1992), for example, indicated that German learners overall were unable to state a correct rule from communicative activities, although they were supposed to have learned one.

The success and failure of both approaches can be illustrated in the following Ven diagram:



The Venn diagram clearly shows that the structural approach has been successful in establishing form and meaning of a new grammar rule being presented, but it has failed to a large extent in enabling students to use the grammar they are studying. The communicative approach, on the contrary, has questionably succeeded to enable students to use and at the same time know the meaning of the new grammar rules, but it has failed to building students' awareness of the grammar rules.

An ideal presentation model is the one in the centre, where form, meaning, and use are incorporated. this is what I call effective technique for presenting new grammar rules.

If we consider these three elements (form, meaning, and use) as important, in the teaching processes, then they must be included. We can not just ignore or assume one of the aspects to be known or inferred by the students. While teachers have the responsibility to

introduce them all to the students in one package of presentation, they may, however, give different emphasis for each aspect depending on the goal of their presentation. If, for example, a teacher considers that it is more important for the learners to use the language rather than to know the rules, then they could give more time presenting or practicing the use of any particular grammar rules, however, it does not mean that the teacher would not introduce the form. Suppose teachers would spend 60 minutes for presenting *some* and *any*, they might spend 50 minutes presenting the meaning and use of these grammatical items, and another 10 minutes for explaining the rules (form).

I, to some extent, believe that grammar rules should be explicitly introduced to the students, especially in the EFL contexts. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, it saves time, and it is effective. Teachers perhaps would spend 10 minutes to explain how the new grammar rules work, and students would then directly know the exact regulations of a new grammar rule. The disadvantages of implicit presentation is that it takes time, and the teachers would not be quite sure whether the students have made correct inferences or not. I to some extent, disagree with Prabhu who believed that "explicit grammar in the classroom would only lead to a knowledge about the language not an ability to make correct sentences automatically". This

statement might work on the assumption that students will also have exposure to the target language outside the class which will give them an opportunity to re-shape the inference they have made during the implicit grammar teaching activities. In most EFL situations, like that of Indonesia, the exposure to the target language occurs only in the classroom. This is the place where I think explicit grammar teaching is more appropriate. By providing students with the rules of grammar, it will enable them to create many new sentences. The second reason is that research evidence shows that most students prefer teachers to give them the rules of grammar being taught. Fortune (1992) in his study on learners' views and preferences, found that 69% out of the sample space of 49 students preferred the teacher to tell them the grammar rules followed by further exercises. Similar finding found by Thaib (1993) where 80% out of 207 students at the Teacher's Training College in Padang, Indonesia wanted the teacher to tell them the rules of grammar being taught. A recent investigation, conducted by Malczewska (1993) revealed that 83% of the students that she studied preferred a teacher who explains grammar rules for them.

If what is learned is "controlled by the learner, not the teacher, not the textbooks, not the syllabus", as it is pointed out by Ellis (1993), then grammar

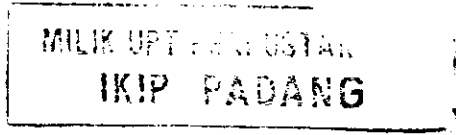
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rules need to be introduced explicitly because it is the preference of the majority of students.

The effective technique for presenting new grammatical rules is the technique that incorporates the meaning, use, and form of the grammar being presented. I called this technique as the "Three in One" technique for presenting grammar.

Should it be Councious Grammar Teaching?

By locking at the contexts of langauge input and the age of the learners in Indonesia there is still a place for a councious grammar teaching. In many situations, English langauge input for the majority of students at both Junior and Senir high School occurs in the classroom. Students generally learn English for four hours a week. It can not be guaranteed that students who learn English with complete communicative activities will soon be aware that govern sentences or utterances. There are rules take for example, a teacher is teaching grammatical items "some" and "any". She creates a number of communicative activities such as role play or games. She hopes that such activities will enable students to learn the underlining rules themselves. So that in the end of the activities students will be able to use "some" and "any" correctly. Will students be able to know and use the rules of grammar which have been practice? Only very few students, those



who are very intelligent and motivated, who could identify the regularities of grammar in such communicative activities. This is true what has been worried by Widdowson (1990) that students who are expected to state and identify the rules of grammar by themselves from created communicative activities remain confusion.

In the situation where English is a second or first language it can be true, because language inputs do not only take place in the classroom. It also takes place outside the classroom such as in the market or bus station. Although some students do not really understand the use of "some" and "any" after studying in the class, they still have many opportunities to listen to people using these grammatical items outside the class. The situation will be different in countries where English is as a foreign language such as in Indonesia. Here most language inputs occur in the classroom, mostly from English teachers. After the English contact hours, students speak and listen to people who are using Bahasa Indonesia. They do not have any other opportunities to listen to people using "some" and "any". This is the place, in my opinion, where rules of grammar need to be explained explicitly. By using the term used by Maley (1990) that grammar should be "injected" to the students. By having such explicit explanation students will know correctly the usage of specific grammatical items and in its turn they will be

able to use it. Besides that, in their spare time after school, they may look at their notes on grammar and will be able to generate new sentences based on the rules which have been studied.

Next by looking at age of learners, which ranges from thirteen to fourteen when they firstly learn English, they need to know the rules of grammar due to their cognitive development. Students at this age have an ability to think analytical. Willing (1988) identifies a number of characteristics of analytical learners: 1) They like to study grammar; 2) At home they like to study English books; 3) They like to study alone; 4) They want the teacher to let them find their mistakes. By knowing the rules, they will be able to generate a number of new sentences. It is true that a child never consciously learns the rules of grammar, but there are a number of differences between a child acquires his/her first language and an adolescent learning a foreign language such as Junior or Senior High Schools students in Indonesia learn English. A child learns his/her first language since his/her first, but a foreign language learner begin studying English when he/she is thirteen or fourteen years old. The length of time is also different. A child learns his/her first language as long as his/her age. Until a child becomes a fluent speaker at around the age of five which means he/she has spent nearly 6920 hours, except sleeping 12

hours a day, learning the language. Junior and Senior High School students in Indonesia learn English for 6 years 2 hours a week which means around 620 hours effective time to learn English. Language inputs are also different. A child's language input is everywhere and from many different sources. It is different from foreign learners' language input which is mostly from the teacher.

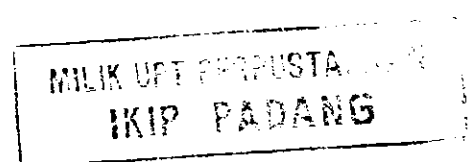
These differences will influence our approach to teach language. We can't force ourselves to teach to create situation which is similar to the situations under which a child learns his/her first language. In a foreign classroom contexts we do not teach children, but adolescent which a well-developed cognitive ability. Such differences will enable adolescent to learn grammar rules. Long (1990) stresses that learner's age is important in determining whether or not grammar rules should be explicitly explained. Lenneberg (1967) hypothesised that there is a critical period for language acquisition. In their study Dulay and Burt (1973) and Hale and Budar found that children learn language best in a natural environment through interaction with the target language speakers. Long (1990) suggests that formal second language instruction for children is advisable only when there is not enough contact of the children with the target language speakers in a natural setting. Emphasis in formal language instruction should

be on natural-like language practice and by not ignoring conscious grammatical explanations.

unlike children according to Krashen and Selinger (1975) adults are likely to have more benefit than children from formal language instruction. Long (1990) suggests that conscious grammatical explanation should be considered when teaching young adult learners. Most students in Indonesia are young adult learners, therefore conscious grammatical teaching should be considered to use. For Indonesian situation, pure communicative approach doesn't promise success, there is still a room for conscious grammar rules.

Three in One Method for Presenting Grammar

This method follows two phases. The first phase aims at establishing meaning and use of any grammatical rules being presented. I call this phase the "presentation of meaning and use". At this stage the teacher shows the students how the grammar is used in a natural context and at the same time the meaning can be simultaneously integrated. For this purpose teachers have their freedom to choose any activities that can show how a new language item is used in context. The most important thing a teacher should bear in mind at this stage is to use the grammar rules in a meaningful and natural context, not in isolated sentences. I use the term "context" to refer to the term used by Harmer



(1991) which means "situation or body of information which causes language to be used". Teachers can use the students' world such as their physical surroundings—tables, chair, maps, students' belongings. A good source of information for the types of context can be found in Harmer (1991).

In the second phase, the teacher guides the students' attention to the grammar rules by picking up examples of the uses of the grammar from the first phase. These examples can be written on the board. Students may then be asked to work in groups of three to discuss the grammar rules of the example sentences written on the board for five minutes or so. The teacher then invites some groups to tell the class the rules of grammar that they have just discussed. If the students can come up with the correct explanation, the teacher uses these ideas to explain it again to the rest of the class. Teachers may write the pattern of grammar rules on the board or just explain, either in English or in the students' mother tongue, how and when such particular grammar rules can be used. The teachers' jobs at this stage is to show the students how the new language is formed, how the grammar works and how it is put together.

The proportion must be given more to the establishment of meaning and use rather than explaining the rules of grammar at the presentation stage. If a teach-

er has 30 minutes for the presentation stage, 20 minutes are used for showing use and meaning, and the rest 10 minutes for explaining the grammar rules.

A Presentation Model of Three in One Technique

Suppose, for example, that the new grammar to be introduced is the third person singular of the present simple tense to the students at low intermediate level. The grammar point a teacher wishes to teach is clearly the occurrence of the 's' on the verb stem. The following is one of the possible approach a teacher can do in following the Three in One technique. The model activity is a class of Indonesian students learning English.

Presentation Phase I (establishing meaning and use)

After greeting the students, the teacher distributes the following questionnaire to be filled in by the students.

Instruction : Write your short answers to the following questions

Name :

1. Where do you live ? _____
2. What is your most favourite sport ? _____
3. How do you go to school ? _____
4. How many hours do you study every night ? _____
5. What is your most favourite subject ? _____

The students' responses may be like the following:

Name : Hartono

1. Where do you live ? <u>Jln. Surapati, Jakarta Selatan</u>
2. What is your most favourite sport ? <u>Camping and soccer</u>
3. How do you go to school ? <u>by bicycle</u>
4. How many hours do you study every night ? <u>two</u>
5. What is your most favourite subject ? <u>History</u>

After completing the questionnaire, the teacher collects and puts them on the table. Then the teacher randomly selects two or three questionnaires and tells the class the details of the person in the questionnaire. The following conversation may occur:

Teacher : Look what we've got here. (teacher picks one of the questionnaires). Ah, ha. This is from Hartono. He lives on Jln. Surapati, Jakarta Selatan. He likes camping and playing soccer. He goes to school by bicycle. He spends two hours a night to study. He likes to study history. Any questions for Hartono?

Ss : (students might raise questions)

T : Let's see the second one. Can you guess whose this is?

Ss : Mira, Lucy, Didin, that's mine sir. (speak in turn)

T : Oh, that's right. This is from Lucy. She lives in Bogor with her parents. She likes dancing and singing. She walks to school. She enjoys learning English. If you have any questions, please ask questions directly to Lucy.

Ss : (Ask questions, and Lucy answers)

T : (teacher does the same activities two or three more times)

(After doing such activities, the teacher then asks two or three students voluntarily to do the same thing)

T : Who can do like what I have done? Can you try Andy? (teacher notices that Andy has some kind of willing to try). Come on Andy. Don't be afraid.

Andy : (Come in front of the class)

T : Pick up one of those questionnaires and tell the details of the person to your friends.

Andy : (Pick one of the questionnaires). This, this ...from Melati. She ...she lives in Purwokerto. She likes hiking and swimming. She studies one hour a night. She likes Biology.

T : Very good, Andy.

(Teacher invites two more students to do the same thing)

Phase II (showing and explaining the form)
(teacher writes on the board ten model sentences using third person subject in simple present tense)

T : Now, I want you to work in groups of four. Think of the grammar rules that you can identify from these examples (pointing to the board).

Ss : (Discuss in groups for 5 minutes).

T : Right, what have you found? Any voluntary group? group 2. Come on (You may use Indonesian).

Group 2 : We use's at the end of the verb if the subject is he, she.

T : Good. Do you think so? (Ask question to group 3)

Group 3 : Yes, but we also add 's' to the verb if the subject is someone's name such as Melati or Tony.

T : Very good. We can then summaries that we add 's' to the verb stem if the subject is third person singular such as he, she, it, Toni, Anna, my brother, etc. Clearly, it can be shown in the following paradigm:

3rd Person	Verb + s	Object
He	lives	in Jakarta.
She	likes	camping.
It	takes	time to do it.
Ranti	loves	Abidin very much.
Abidin	dislikes	Ranti.

Ok, now we have break time. Next week we'll do more practice for this lesson. See you.

In conclusion, when presenting any new grammar rules there are three things a teacher should achieve: form, *meaning*, and *use* of the grammar being presented. These three elements should be incorporated at the presentation stage. The *Three in One* method is, in my opinion, the best possible method for presenting grammar, because it incorporates *form*, *meaning*, and *use* in one presentation package.

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