



Fun

with
Grammar



Communicative
Activities
for the
Azar Grammar
Series



Suzanne W. Woodward



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Foreword

Fun with Grammar describes exactly what teachers and students should do with grammar: they should have fun with it. For me as a teacher, grammar class is always an opportunity for fun. I cannot imagine dry and dull ESL/EFL grammar classes. During classtime there are, of course, periods of focused concentration, especially during the first phases of a new unit when the students are trying to grasp an initial understanding of the form and meaning of a structure. We, as teachers, should know that even during those phases, explanations and examples can be enlivened by funny sentences using the students' names or by fun demonstrations or pantomimes.

Fun and humor are essential in ESL/EFL classrooms. Interaction and group participation engage students and make information more memorable and relevant. In my experience, many people approach grammar far too seriously, with long, unsmiling faces, in plodding academic style. That is not how I approach grammar nor how I intend teachers to approach my textbooks. Perhaps it should go without saying, but I am going to say it anyway: I heartily endorse having **Fun with Grammar!**

This resource book by Suzanne Woodward is exciting because it collects, categorizes, and details fun communicative activities to use in the classroom. Many teachers make up games as they go along and create interactive activities out of grammar exercises. With this book, teachers have an excellent resource for ideas and materials to support and expand upon the activities that make grammar fun.

The text is subtitled "Communicative Activities for the Azar Grammar Series" because the author's activities grew out of actual teaching experience using the Azar series. The exercises and activities in **Fun with Grammar** fit beautifully with the approaches and material in the Azar grammar textbooks, but are independent enough to be suitable for use with any grammar textbook. The activities in **Fun with Grammar** can also be used in other kinds of classes such as writing classes or speaking/listening classes quite independent of any grammar text or grammar focus to the class. For grammar (whether presented and practiced deliberately or not) underlies all skills.

This resource book is a practical and welcome tool for busy teachers. It provides all the resources needed, and they are right at your fingertips! The games and worksheets reflect and give structure to what actually goes on in effective ESL/EFL classrooms. In addition, teachers have a wealth of material for fun, interesting classroom activities. This book presents clever, innovative ways of creating authentic communication in a cooperative learning environment. Enjoy!

Betty Schramper Azar



To the Teacher

INTENDED USE

Fun with Grammar is a collection of communicative activities and games designed to supplement grammar lessons and “jazz up” ESL/EFL classes. Expanding upon text exercises and presentations, these games reinforce the grammar the students already know by providing realistic settings in which they may practice their knowledge. Included are types of activities and games to satisfy all teaching styles. Some games are competitive; some, such as activities that involve problem-solving and a sharing of information, are noncompetitive. All activities are interactive, designed to be done in class with other students. Some of the activities can be assigned as homework, but that is not the main intention of this book.

Fun with Grammar has been designed to assist you in several ways:

- to reinforce points that have been covered in a grammar text
- to provide oral or written practice with grammar forms and rules the students have already learned
- to provide practice in communication skills
- to liven up a grammar class (or any class).

Because **Fun with Grammar** contains activities for all levels and grammar points, it can be used as a source of activities for any grammar class or, indeed, for any other ESL/EFL class. Many writing classes focus on editing skills. This text provides activities (on articles, agreement, subordination, etc.) that a writing teacher can use to highlight those skills. The book can also be used in a conversation or listening/speaking class because all the activities and games are communicative and require spoken interaction with classmates. (For this reason, do not give out worksheets and let the students work individually.) In some cases the goal of the activity is to create sentences or paragraphs, but the students must work together to discuss what they will produce. The games, especially the competitive ones, work extremely well in a conversation class. They are fun, active, and allow the students to react spontaneously. Cooperation and conversation are keys to the activities.

Finally, a number of the activities are very short (5 to 10 minutes). They can be used as a warm-up activity or in the few minutes remaining at the end of a class.

ADAPTING LEVELS

One useful aspect of this book is that the activities are keyed to the Azar books: *Basic English Grammar* (the red series, low level), *Fundamentals of English Grammar* (the black series, intermediate level), and *Understanding and Using English Grammar* (the blue series, high-intermediate). The activities or games that are appropriate for two or three levels have more than one color designation. The color designations help you to find an activity quickly when you have only a few minutes before class. When you do have more time, you will want to look at some of the activities and games that are coded higher or lower than your level. Often they can be adapted to your level easily by using a more (or less) advanced form or more (or less) advanced vocabulary. You know your class best; use the color-coding as a guide, but do not let it limit your use of the activities.

If you are not using the Azar series, the games and activities in **Fun with Grammar** are still easy to use. If you are teaching a low-level class, choose activities designated “red.” If you are teaching a higher-level class, remember that “black” designates intermediate and that “blue” designates high-

intermediate. The games and activities are organized in this book by grammar point, so whichever grammar book you use, you will be able to locate the grammar point you need in the table of contents or index.

It is important to be open to adapting the games or activities from one grammar point to another. Again, notes or suggestions for variations are often contained within the description of the activity. As you will note, several varieties of activity types (**Line-ups**, **Concentration**, and so on) are repeated in different chapters. You may find a type of activity you like and devise your own unique way of using it with a grammar point.

MATERIALS

Each game or activity lists the materials needed to implement it. If no materials are needed, that fact is stated. The worksheets are located at the ends of the chapters. When a worksheet is required, its number is given. Sometimes several worksheets are provided, either for different class levels or to include variations. Any other materials needed are easy to obtain. For example, if the directions call for 3" x 5" index cards, you may cut up the worksheet and use the slips of paper as cards, or paste the papers onto index cards for repeated use. (Index cards are also easier for students to handle than small pieces of paper.) If an activity uses an optional tape recorder, of course any other type of play-back instrument (CD player, LP player) may be used instead.

SUGGESTED TIME

The time suggested for each activity is the minimum amount of time needed to play a reasonable version of the activity. Many factors must be taken into consideration here. Some activities, such as **Line-ups**, are not affected by class size, but many, such as **Role Plays** and **Pantomimes**, are. You will need to adjust the playing time according to the number of participants. Because many "types" of activities are repeated, if you use them more than once (with a different grammar point), the explanation time will be greatly reduced or even eliminated. Also, many games can be played in several rounds. If the students are enjoying the activity, you may want to play several rounds; if not, cut it short. In addition, many of the activities list variations. The time required depends on whether the variation is used instead of the main activity. In one case, an activity is done entirely outside of class. In a few other cases, the activity is started in class and then continues as homework or outside of class. In these cases, it is not possible to give a definite time for the completion of the activity. Whether you want to conduct the activity entirely in class (more teacher-controlled) or send students out on their own will also affect the time needed for completion.

WORKSHEETS

The worksheets are located at the end of each chapter and are numbered consecutively throughout the book. They may be photocopied for class use. Also, do not feel you must use them as is. Instead, use them as models for your own worksheets. For example, if you have covered only the first half of the irregular verb list, you will not want to use a worksheet for **Concentration** that includes words from the entire verb list. Make your own worksheet that is appropriate to your class. Some of the activities are more fun and effective if you use the names of students in your class. To play **Human Bingo** and **Are You the One?**, among others, use information related to your students. If, for example, no one in your class is married, it makes no sense to use a worksheet that requires the students to find someone who is married.

On the other hand, many of the worksheets are generic and can be used in any class. You can use the printed worksheet the first time you do the activity and then, if you are reviewing at the end of the quarter or semester, make your own based on the model. Do not hesitate to adapt.

GROUPING

All of the games and activities in this manual involve student interaction in groups of two on up to the entire class, although most involve pair or small-group interaction. There are many ways to divide your class into groups. The simplest and quickest is to group them where they sit, which you will do occasionally, especially if pressed for time. But because students tend to sit next to the same students, it is beneficial to have them work with other classmates during these activities. When the students work on the exercises in their textbook, they probably work with those sitting next to them. Doing any of the activities in this book, then, provides a good excuse for mixing up the class. Here are a few suggestions for ways to divide the class into pairs or groups.

1. **Count off.** Decide how many groups you will need (usually determined by the size of the class) and have the students count off up to that number, then repeat. Group all the 1s together, all the 2s together, and so on.
2. **Cut-up cards.** Postcards work well for this activity, or you can use magazine covers. Cut each picture into the number of pieces according to the size of the groups you want (a minimum of three in each group). Hand out one piece to each student. The students circulate, trying to put the pictures back together. The students holding the pieces of each picture are the members of that group. The first time you do this activity, the students usually think that once they have put the picture together, the activity is over and they can return to their original seats. (They may or may not wonder what this has to do with grammar.) Therefore, you may need to call them back to get into the groups formed by their pictures. After the first time, they'll know what to expect. Hint: Try to use similar cards so that the students have to fit the pieces together, not just look for someone with a piece of the same color. If you pick up multiples of the same postcard while on your vacation, you may want to try using all the same card, but be sure to cut them differently. This method works well if you have an odd number of students. Cut some cards into four and others into three, and use the ones you need on any given day. Having sets of cards cut into different amounts will also help you group quickly when one or more students are absent.
3. **Deck of cards.** There are three ways you can use a deck of cards to group students. First, have students get into groups by the number of the cards they are holding (all 2s in one group, all 3s in another, etc.). If, for example, you have seventeen students, you would separate out four 2s, four 3s, three 4s, three 5s, and three 6s.

Another way to use a deck of cards is to group students by suit (all hearts in one group, all clubs in another). This limits you to having four groups at most.

You can also group students by card color. Obviously, this limits you to two groups, but the method works well for pairs or teams. For team division, half the class would receive red cards, the other half, black. For pair division, use a combination of color and number: the two red 2s are one pair, the two black 2s are another, the two red 3s are another, and so on.

Cards work well in dividing students for jigsaw activities by combining two of these methods. Imagine that you want to divide students into small groups and then, after a certain activity, divide the original groups and have one member of each group form a new group. This can be accomplished by having students get into groups by number. When you are ready to split them up again, have them reform by suit.

4. **Paper draw.** This is a quick way to group, especially if you forget to bring your cards. There are two ways to do it simply. The easiest is to cut or tear up pieces of colored paper (such as five pieces of red, five pieces of blue, four pieces of green). Put the papers in a

hat and have students pick one out without looking, then form groups by color. If you do not have colored paper, simply cut up enough pieces of paper for your class and number them (or if you want to be creative, use nouns—dogs, cats, and so on). All students with the same number (or noun category) form a group.

5. **Class list.** Group the class by reading off names from the class list. After the first time, it's better to skip around rather than to read alphabetically. For example, skip every other name. The first three names you call form one group. Then continue with the next three names. You can start from the top, the bottom, or somewhere in between. You may need to mark off names as you call them to avoid getting confused.
6. **Student choice.** To form pairs, you can put the names of half of the class on papers in a bag, then have the other half pick out a name to be a partner. You can put the name of every other student in the bag, or the names of the first half of the class list. This can be a somewhat controlled pairing, so if you have some strong and some weak students, put the names of the strong students in the bag and have the weaker ones pull the names out. This avoids having two very strong or two very weak students pairing up. Keep track of whose name is in the bag so you know who should be picking out a name. You can also do this by nationality. If your class is fairly well divided between two nationalities, put the names of all one nationality in the bag and have the others draw names. Even if your class is not divided neatly in half, this can be useful. If you have a large group of the same nationality who hesitate to mix, put all their names in the bag (or have them all draw names) so they cannot possibly end up with one another.
7. **Match.** This division is also for pairs. Prepare some quick matching activity related to the grammar point (or to review one). For example, you might prepare cards, half of which are questions and the other half, answers. Distribute them and have the students find their match. Once they have found the partner whose card matches theirs, you're ready for the "real" activity.
8. **Miscellaneous.** There are other ways to divide into groups that work well in a conversation class. In a grammar class the time is usually limited and it is not possible to spend much time on activities not directly related to grammar. If you have more time or teach an integrated-skills class, you may find some other method useful occasionally. For example:
 - a. **Line-ups.** Have students line up according to some criterion such as hair color or birth month. Once they have formed the line, divide them into groups (the first four, the next four, and so on).
 - b. **Interests.** Have all students whose favorite season is spring go to one corner, summer to another, and so on. This method has a few disadvantages: you can have only four groups, and the groups may end up being very uneven (five summers, six springs, one winter, three falls). Any interest can work: favorite ice cream, type of movie, color. If it works, this is a fun way to divide, but it is not as predictable as some of the other methods described above.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER GROUP

Most of the games and activities specify the number of group members. Although a certain number is sometimes necessary (**Tic Tac Toe** with handout, for example), this is just a guide for the instructor. How many students you put into each group will depend mainly on how many students are in your class.



If the instructions specify pairs and you are left with one extra student, you can solve this in a couple of ways. (a) Make one group of three, either randomly (the last three students) or intentionally (two stronger students with one weaker, or three quiet students who will not be overpowered by more outspoken classmates). (b) Work with the last student yourself, a useful stratagem, especially if one of your students is not quite up to the ability of the others. Be aware of the student's feelings. It may be better to form a group of three so one student does not feel singled out.

Do not let one student work alone. Sometimes a student says he/she is willing to do the activity alone (or even prefers to), but these activities and games are interactive and often cannot or should not be done alone.

When dividing into small groups, use your judgment. Again, the division will be a direct result of the number of students in your class. While it is nice to have even groups, it is not always possible. Keep the numbers as close as possible. If you are doing groups of five and then are left with two students, do not let them work as a pair. Either have two groups of six or create a new group by borrowing students from some of the other groups.

What happens when your groups are all set up and working and a student walks in late? If you have some smaller groups, add the late student to one of them. If all groups are equal, randomly assign him/her to a group, or put him/her in a weaker group (so that there are more students to generate ideas) or in a group that needs someone of a different nationality.

Just remember to be flexible. It won't matter if you have one more or one less than the suggested number. Even when an activity calls for a specific number because of assigned roles, a different-sized group can be accommodated. Simply assign two members of the group to the same role and have them split the role.



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