

return

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Reflection 1  
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You've got a lot out of this reflection —  
you learned what H had to say, & then indeed  
reflected. The exposition doesn't have a clear structure,  
but that's OK for our purposes. 4/19-1

After reading Higgs' article "Teaching Grammar for Proficiency" I became more aware of the value of the teacher with regard to language teaching, but still unsure of how to approach grammar in a productive manner. Higgs specifically mentions two opposing methods of foreign language teaching and acquisition, grammar based versus proficiency based. Although his argument against teaching strictly grammatical structures and purely conversational courses is sound, his reasons fail to encompass every aspect of language acquisition. Although he is well informed on the subject and certainly has the experience to back it up, there are a few oversights in his approach, especially with language specific grammatical structures. Nonetheless, Higgs' overall theory for foreign language teaching and acquisition has a promising future.

but, alas,  
he's dead  
now

Higgs' debate on grammar is something I found quite intriguing, in that it gives cause for some thought on what exactly grammar is. Krashen's definition is certainly valid as a model of the traditional view of grammar and something I feel is important when learning a second language. "Conscious learning" seems like the approach any new teacher would want to pick up and begin using due to its logic. Thinking back on my own experience learning German, however, I remembered that I wasn't quite "conscious" of what I was learning at the time. I certainly performed, mimicked and reproduced the desired outcome relatively free of errors, but I could never have explained to anyone why something was in the dative or accusative case following certain prepositions or because of its status as a certain type of object in a sentence. In this respect Higgs' definition of grammar makes much more sense for language teachers wanting their students to be aware of what grammar is, without making it the main focus

yes - memory  
can be  
practiced

what, how,  
why are all  
different  
aspects of  
grammar

of the classroom. Although Higgs' definition is too broad, in my opinion, it covers everything in Kashen's definition without requiring that the rules or structures of a language be conscious in the learner. Again, this was certainly the case for me as I progressed, and it was not until second and third year German that the rules and structures became imbedded in my head and I was "conscious" of their presence.

1) ≠ 2)  
Cor at least  
not completely)

Higgs' further explains grammar by making a point of what a teacher should or should not waste time on during class time, specifically grammatical structures and their corresponding terminology. The goal of the language teacher is to help students attain a desired level of proficiency, and although it is ideal to teach them this without getting their hands covered in grammar, it is at some point a necessary step in becoming proficient or fluent; the ability to reproduce a second language like that of a native speaker. This becomes a problem when one perceives that a nonnative speaker has the ability to produce spontaneous utterances like those of a native speaker. Here, I begin to agree with Higgs', in that teachers need to begin with those constructs that learners can already produce in their native language, and that when there is a discrepancy between the native and foreign languages, those differences need to be dealt with. However, without explaining the differences grammatically, not necessarily using grammatical terms, one would not understand the reasoning behind saying "es ist mir kalt" instead of "ich bin kalt;" the list of comparable expressions only gets worse. The basis for this reasoning is that learners of a foreign language are generally much older than the age at which one first learns their native language and it is impossible to expect someone to learn on such a level. Higgs' comes to this conclusion when he states that classroom time

We shouldn't  
waste any  
time  
(that's the  
ideal,  
of course)

I'm still not  
sure. There  
are situations  
where a language  
is learned  
perfectly, but  
still without  
explicit  
grammar.

This would  
be an  
interesting  
MA research  
topic

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is one of the major aspects impeding student progress, but remains against the traditional method of pounding grammar into the students in all cases, while it should only be used when there are discrepancies between the two languages.