Bridging the Grammar Gap: teaching English grammar to the iPhone generation[1]

BAS AARTS, DAN CLAYTON AND SEAN WALLIS

University College London

For second language learners, the value of the explicit teaching of English grammar has never been questioned. However, in recent times there has been dissent about whether or not to teach English grammar to native speakers. From the late 1960s onwards English grammar teaching in

However, the result of this has been the
, , ,: very few UK school teachers
teaching English today have explicitly been taught

much confusion about what is meant by 'grammar'. UCL's Survey of English Usage (SEU) founded by Professor (now Lord) Randolph

teachers and students of English as a second language; particularly advanced learners; 'lay'

similar visual highlighting device: a rectangle with a white outline, visible here as a shading around the rectangles: Subject Predicate. Students are taught a series of novel concepts in rapid succession, and we have found that visual cues like this can be a useful

Figures 1 and 2 also display glossary links in the text. These words are in dark blue with a thick dotted green underline. Tapping the word will open the

from the command bar). The feature encourages users to improve on their personal best scores.

Authentic examples can also help students see that the grammatical concepts they learn are relevant to their own language use, and that rules are not arbitrary, but informative. We strongly believe in learning through discovery, and that the App is an excellent way to get students to understand that grammar 'rules' are a shared framework which we use to communicate, rather than a set of restrictions that must be obeyed.

At the beginning of this article we noted how current UK secondary school teachers often find teaching grammar challenging (although this problem is not unique to the United Kingdom). iGE can help them in many ways. For example, the screen can be projected from an iPhone or iPad in a classroom, and exercises can be done collectively. We envisage the App as a resource for teachers to improve their own knowledge of grammar and gain ideas as to how they might teach grammar in the classroom, but also as a means of making grammatical analysis enjoyable for students of English. The numerous examples also allow iGE to be used for revision purposes.

iGE is published on Apple's ,, ⁀, and Google's ⁀ ⁀ ⁀. Alongside the complete iGE is a free 'Lite' version containing the glossary and the first three sections of the course. We would very much encourage feedback from ET readers via the App's home page (see Websites below for details). We are continuing to improve iGE in the light of comments from users.

The publication of iGE is just one way in which

and over again with the same examples, as is the case with printed textbooks. The App allows users' highest scores and fastest times to be recorded for every exercise, and these scores can be reviewed in the 'Exercise overview' (available