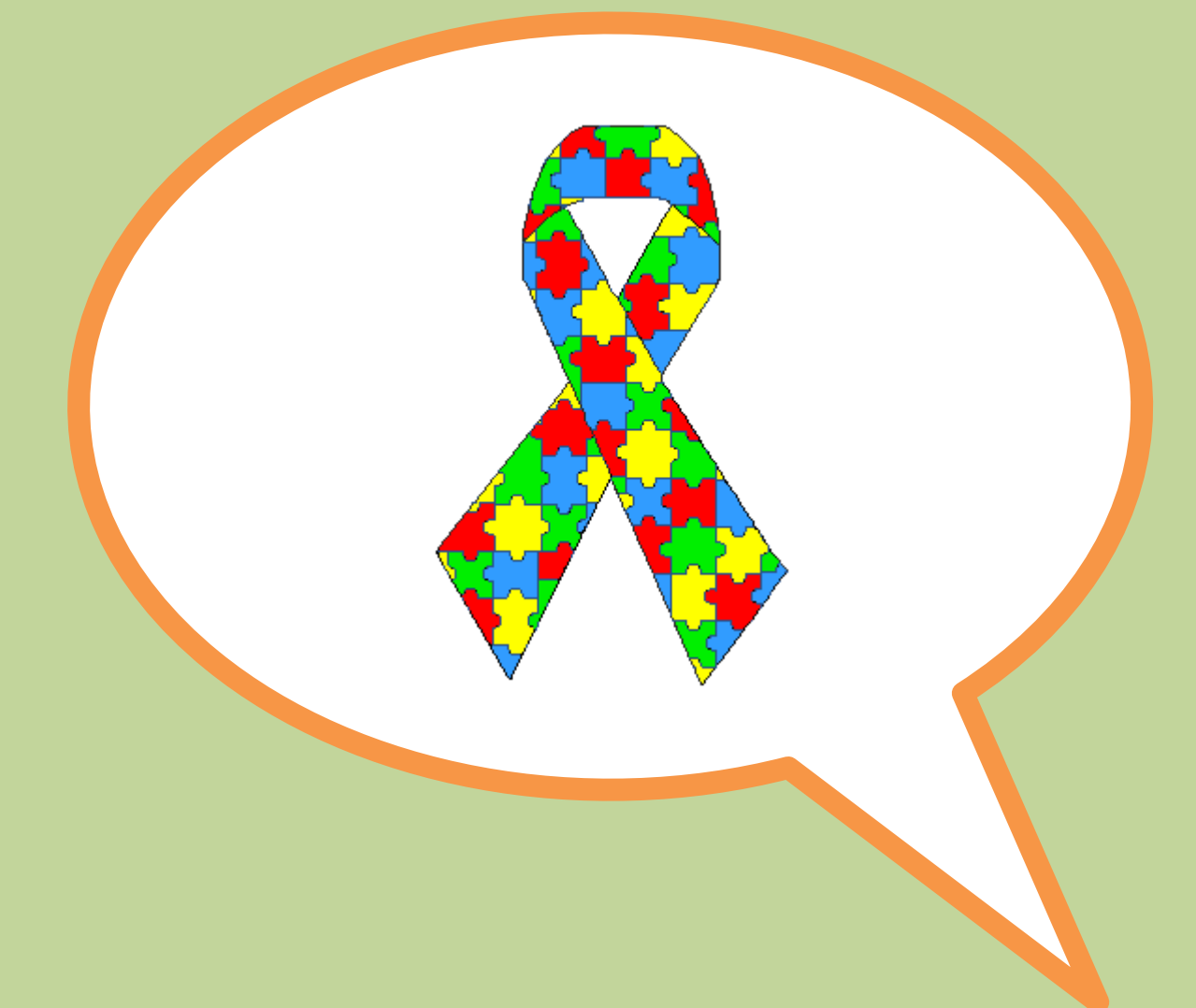


Autism Speaks: Extending Grammar in the Classroom to Students with Autism

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Abstract

Developing sentence variety and elaboration are important skills for all students, so we wanted to create grammar lessons to help children with autism. After assessing a group of lesson plans found in Amy Benjamin and Joan Berger's (2014) book, *Teaching Grammar: What Really Works*, we adapted lesson plans to cater to the needs of students with autism. We used strategies such as modeling, think-alouds, Applied Behavior Analysis, and the Discrete Trial Teaching Method. We created our lesson plan revisions in order to provide teachers with the best resources to create an inclusive environment within their classrooms.

Introduction

After discussing participles in our college grammar course, we began to wonder how grammar lessons could be applied to students with autism. Both of us are passionate about learning and are studying to become teachers. After graduation, we plan on having inclusive classrooms, where learning is not limited to just general education students. In order to do this and gain the best skills possible, we wanted to delve into research about students with autism and how to provide them with an effective education. Since grammar is such an important topic in every grade, we decided to research and enhance a grammar lesson that teachers could easily adapt and use with their students--whatever their learning abilities.

Adapted Lesson Plans

Lesson 1

Objective: Identify participial phrases.

Opening: Read students a book with participial phrases such as *The Napping House*. Ask students to identify examples.

Demonstration: Demonstrate a conversation with another teacher that uses participial phrases. Have students identify the participial phrases used.

Guided Practice: Using "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey, find examples of participial phrases; ex. "Just a small town girl, living in a lonely world."

Individual Practice: Have students continue identifying other participial phrases on their own, using examples you provide.

Lesson 2

Objective: Identify participial phrases; write sentences with participial phrases that add elaboration to writing.

Opening: Show the video featuring real-life examples of participles in famous TV shows. Explain the basics of participles and how they will be using them in their writing.

Demonstration: Provide examples to students; ex. "Tearing open her present, Alexis grabbed the doll in her hands." Highlight the importance of the *-ing* attached to the word *tear*.

Guided Practice: Have students pick a card out of a jar with a participial phrase; ex. "tearing the paper" or "cleaning the table." Students will act out their phrases and, as a group, write complete sentences using their phrases.

Lesson 3

Objective: Discuss the positions of participial phrases in a sentence; examine the effect of various positions.

Opening: Review participles. Explain that another advantage of participial phrases is their ability to be moved in a sentence, creating sentence variety and rhythm.

Demonstration: Put two sentences on the board without participial phrases; ex. "Alice sees a pen on the ground. She bends over to pick it up." Have students suggest ways to combine them by converting one into a participial phrase.

Guided Practice: Have students rearrange cards on their desks to make sentences with participles. Have students try multiple positions to see the effects produced by moving them around.

Lesson 4

Objective: Collaborate with a group to write a paragraph using participial phrases.

Opening: Revisit the characteristics of participial phrases; pair students in groups. Tell the students they will be writing about the zoo.

Demonstration: Give examples on the board of your own and from student work, ex: "Peering through the glass, we saw a monkey eat a banana."

Guided Practice: Have the class together create sentences about the zoo, using participial phrases.

Small Group Practice: Have students collaborate in a group to write a paragraph about the zoo, using participial phrases.

Lesson 5

Objective: Write a paragraph using participial phrases independently

Opening: Have students state what a participial phrase is and how to identify one.

Demonstration: Write examples of participial phrases and other phrases and have them identify the participials; ex: "Leaning over the rail, the bear fell. After leaning over, she fell."

Individual Practice: Create a "minute to win it" type setting. Give students twenty minutes, working independently, to add as many participial phrases as possible within a paragraph about animals. Winner gets a homework pass.

Lesson 6

Objective: Use commas to punctuate nonessential and introductory participial phrases.

Opening: Explain using commas to separate nonessential and introductory participial phrases from the rest of the sentence.

Demonstration: Show examples and discuss the placement and purpose of commas: "Finishing my math test, I left for band practice. Jane, finishing her math test, left for band practice."

Guided Practice: Class identifies where commas are needed in sample sentences; explain if introductory or nonessential.

Individual Practice: Students edit their writing from Lesson 5 to assure that they have used commas with introductory and nonessential participial phrases.

Research

Modeling for General Education:

1. Provide an introduction to the topic with a teacher think-aloud.
2. Work examples as a class, providing modeling and examples from professional writing.
3. Allow students to work in small groups or individually, imitating model sentences.
4. Allow students to start creating their own sentences, individually or in small groups

Modeling for Students with Autism:

1. Use simple language that is accompanied by visual aids.
2. Give students clear choices when asking them a question.
3. Use Applied Behavior Analysis, a method where the teacher observes students and helps them with any missing skills.
4. Use the Discrete Trial Teaching Method, a method where the teacher breaks the skill being taught into several steps.

Conclusion

Amy Benjamin and Joan Berger, in *Teaching Grammar: What Really Works*, provide teachers with lessons that can be easily implemented in all classrooms. Our adapted lesson plans provide students with autism with methods that will help them succeed, enabling students to fully understand the concepts in ways that are applicable to them. These step-by-step lesson plans allow the content to be modified by any teacher for any classroom. Teaching participial phrases in the classroom is important to developing the important skills of elaboration and sentence variety, so they should be accessible to every student.

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