



The Various Approaches And Nuances Involved In Teaching Grammar In An ESL Classroom

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APA Citation:

Cynthia. B, C.P., Jebastine, C.I., (2021)., The Various Approaches And Nuances Involved In Teaching Grammar In An ESL Classroom, *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(3), 2195-2198; 2021.

Submission Date: 30-10-2021

Acceptance Date: 30-12-2021

Abstract: Grammar teaching is considered as a vital source in an ESL classroom. It plays a prominent role in all the language classrooms. This article showcases the various steps involved in teaching grammar. Grammar can be taught using several approaches. But in many schools and colleges, the students are introduced to grammar without proper explanation and practice. This paper describes in detail the various approaches that are linked to teaching English grammar.

Keywords: vital source, prominent role, various approaches, explanation, practice.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is used as a tool to communicate, comprehend and create oral and aural materials effectively and efficiently to suit the needs. Without grammar, effective communication cannot take place as grammar is considered to be the main source of a language. To make the students understand the grammar theory better and use it more frequently and practically, various methods have been discovered.

Why is grammar so difficult?

Grammar is often being looked at as a boring, monotonous set of rules. It is because, in many ESL classrooms, the students are made to memorize the rules of grammar blindly without being able to understand the concept. As a result of which, the learners develop a fear towards the language. This fear may sometimes turn into an aversion thereby putting the learner at a higher risk. This way of learning grammar will not help the students in the long run and result in poor communication skills. According to Diane Larsen- Freeman, grammar should be considered as the fifth skill of the language. She calls this skill “Grammaring.” She defines “grammaring” as the ability to use grammar structures accurately and appropriately.

How can it be learnt easily?

Today various methods have been discovered to help the students learn grammar easily. Grammar should be taught in a way that helps the students to involve their cognitive thinking skills and it should include consciousness raising activities. Teaching grammar should include language structure, sentence patterns, the meaning of the grammar element and how it is being used. Grammar can be introduced to the students in many interesting ways such as the play way method: by including grammar in games which involves the students to apply their intelligence and use the grammar learnt in the classroom in a practical way. Today, grammar is being introduced to the students in the form of activities to promote their communicational skills.

Two methods used to teach grammar

Grammar is generally taught using two main methods such as the deductive method and the inductive method. In the deductive method, the students are introduced to the rules first followed by examples and exercises. This is the oldest and traditional way of teaching grammar. In most of the schools and colleges, this method is prominent and is adopted by many ESL teachers. In inductive method, the learners are exposed to the grammar elements, examples and exercises. The students themselves discover the rules of the grammar element making it as learning through discovery. There are certain advantages and disadvantages for both the approaches and they are:

Advantages of deductive approach

- This is the oldest way of learning grammar. The students are directly exposed to the grammar element which saves time and energy for both the learner and the instructor.
- The rules of the grammar element are taken from grammar books and are well fed to the students.
- The students become aware of the rules of grammar before they move on to the practical application of the particular grammar element.

Disadvantages of deductive approach

- There are few disadvantages of deductive approach. Here, since the students are exposed directly to the grammar presentation, there is a lack of understanding of the grammar lesson especially among the students of lower classes.
- The teachers rely on grammar books to teach the grammar rules so if the grammar books are not structured properly, the learners might end up learning the wrong rules of grammar.
- When the teachers are not well equipped with the grammar lessons, the grammar lessons may not be taught in the best way.

Advantages of Inductive approach

- Students learn the rules independently. They involve in a self- discovery of grammar rules. They discover the grammar rules themselves by practice.
- The self-discovery of grammar rules creates a deep understanding and long lasting impact of the rules.
- Students' participation is very high and they are very active throughout the learning process rather than being a passive recipient.
- It promotes critical and cognitive thinking among the learners as the students actively participate in the learning process.

Disadvantages of Inductive method

- As it is a discovery method, a lot of time and energy are spent while working on the rules of grammar.
- The authenticity of the rules of grammar may vary as it is a self learning process.
- This approach may not be applicable to a large group of students as the calibre of the student may vary between each student and the instructor cannot expect the ESL group to discover the rules at the same time.
- It is not as simple as the deductive method and involves conscious participation of the students.

Four main skills of a language

Grammar is set to include and elevate the basis of the four main skills such as, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Whether the grammatical rules are taught using the deductive approach or the inductive approach, it is a consciousness raising process. The language instructor should begin with a clear explanation of language rules in the case of deductive learning which will help the students to understand the rules and use it for communication. It is an economical and straightforward method of learning grammar. This promotes the development of the cognitive skills. These skills are called as the pinnacles of language learning.

Listening

This skill involves the process of hearing and comprehending. To listen well is to be able to comprehend, to question and to answer well. This skill is applied almost extensively in the everyday life of the people. By being exposed to and practicing various listening exercises, the learner can easily contemplate and increase the level of concentration.

Speaking

Speaking is described as the “productive skill of the oral phraseology”. It involves the learner to talk, recite or do presentations in oral method bringing out words and phrases which are retained in the memory of the learner. This skill is a little difficult as it requires the proper structuring of words to convey the correct meaning. In circumstances such as phone call or group meetings, a reciprocal speaking happens. The learner involves in both listening and speaking. To speak, the learner needs to pay attention to what is being spoken over the phone or in meetings. So this skill “necessitates more than just articulating a term.”

Listening and Speaking

These two skills are interrelated and are often looked upon as the main skills among the four. These two skills foster effective oral communication of a language. This integration of the two skills promotes the development of purposeful communication. It is called as a double way transmission. Listening and speaking often go hand-in-hand.

Reading

Reading is called as the “receptive skill in written mode”. Reading develops good articulation of sounds and increases the learner’s vocabulary. Reading introduces the learner to new words and phrases thereby building their word power. “Reading is a process that negotiates the meaning between the text and its reader.” It also requires the right pronunciation and articulation of words and vowels. It is seen as a common activity in an examination.

Writing

This is called as the most productive and important skill among the four skills. The more important it is, the more complicated it is considered to be. The writing process involves the representation of the thoughts that are learned or retained in the memory. The learner is expected to have a strong knowledge of the grammar rules and a good vocabulary to frame meaningful sentence patterns. The learner should be able to create new passages, translate, restructure, punctuate and even rewrite sentences or passages on his/her own. This skill helps the learner to use the language constructively and extensively.

Reading and Writing

These two skills are called as “tools for achieving an effective written communication. Learners should be constantly exposed to opportunities to enhance their reading and writing skills. When a learner reads a lot of articles or books, they develop good vocabulary and their grammatical competency increases which help the learner to create new passages on his/her own.

Conclusion

The four language skills form the foundation or basis of any language. They holistically describe the importance of language being learnt as a discipline. Reading and writing are called as the production skills whereas listening and speaking are called as the comprehension skills. To master a language, one needs to possess a strong foundation on all the four skills which appear as independent zones. The main goal of teaching grammar is to help the students gain knowledge of how grammar is used and language is constructed so that when they listen, speak, read and write the students can do it without any hesitation or confusion. It is therefore necessary to introduce the ESL learners to more creative and innovative language tasks which will promote their creative and cognitive thinking abilities.

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