



## **HOW TO TEACH GRAMMAR TO ESL STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this article we intend to demonstrate the sources and results of the appearing of the intersected areas in grammatical and lexical word formation. How to teach English as a second or foreign language has been heatedly debated as long as the subject has been taught. One of the many issues regarding the teaching of English as a second or foreign language is the issue of whether or not to teach grammar, and if we teach it, how should we go about it?

### **KEYWORDS**

Approach, L2 acquisition, explicit knowledge, skill, EFL teaching, FL/SL, ppp approach.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The role and type of grammar teaching in foreign language learning, with a particular focus on ESL, has been the subject of SLA research and discussion for decades. Recently, it should be said, grammar learning has been recognized as an important and inevitable component of language learning and us [Doughty, C., & Williams., 1998]. It is considered valuable, if not indispensable, in the context of ESL teaching and learning. Previous research on student-teacher attitudes and perceptions of grammar in the context of language learning suggests a mismatch between students and teachers. While students prefer formal and detailed grammar instruction and error correction, teachers prefer communicative activities with a less conscious emphasis on grammar.

The term "grammar" has been defined differently by language teachers and grammarians who have been influenced and influenced by different approaches to teaching grammar [Doughty, C., & Williams., 1998]. Different approaches to language learning, from syntactical descriptions to attempts to show the semantic and pragmatic aspects of grammar, are reflected in different ways of teaching grammar. In EFL/ESL teaching, grammar is viewed from three different perspectives: grammar as rules, grammar as form, and grammar as resource. In some cases, learning grammar meant learning the rules; in other practicing form; in others, an understanding of how grammar helps convey the meaning and intent of a message. The best approach is perhaps to consider grammar as one of the many resources we have in a language that helps us all communicate. We need to see how grammar relates to what we want to say or write, and how we expect others to interpret our language use and direction. The teaching of second language grammar in higher education is a subject of widespread concern for both teachers and students. From time to time, very strong positions are expressed, for example, "At any time, at any stage and under any circumstances, one should not dilute the teaching of grammar. This should be an important part of teaching foreign languages in China."

Many students and teachers tend to view grammar like a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use – „a linguistic straitjacket“ in Larsen-Freeman’s words , but some may consider grammar as something that liberates rather than represses: " ... grammar isn’t a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and the purely lexical categorization of reality"[Widdowson, 1990:86.]. The implications of that statement for our understanding of the nature of grammar and the role it plays in communication are explored, and how this understanding might inform approaches to teaching grammar in 2 language classrooms is discussed. Besides the place/role of grammar in language teaching, the factors involved in the teaching and learning of grammar and specific practices in the grammar classroom and several current research on grammar structures have added to the discussion on how best to teach grammar in ESL/EFL contexts. A lot of the books claim that they carry/include cognitive, affective and drama activities and games for ESL students which are directed towards stimulating their imagination and creativity.

The hard fact that most teachers face is that learners often find it difficult to make flexible use of the rules of grammar taught in the classroom. They can know the rules perfectly but are incapable of applying them during language use. The importance of grammar within the FL/SL syllabus has been under discussion for a lot of years. Until the Communicative Approach in the 1970s, it was at the core of learning and teaching. The syllabus, a structural syllabus, was organized around the grammar to be taught. “The theoretical model that underlies the (cognitive) approach is that a language consists of a “set of rules” with an associated lexicon. It follows logically from the model that foreign language students must learn rules of grammar. The suggested sequence is: study the rule (usually with instructor explanation), practice the rule (in grammar exercises), and then apply a rule in meaningful interactions in the target language”.

Since the 1970s, however, attention has shifted from ways of teaching grammar to ways of getting learners to communicate, and grammar has been seen to be the powerful undermining and demotivating force among L2 learners. In terms of motivation and students success with languages, grammar has been seen to be the problem and to stand in the way of helping learners to communicate fluently. As a result, teaching grammar has become unfashionable. Statements such as “. . . the study of grammar as such is neither necessary nor sufficient for learning to use a language”[ Scheffler, P., & Cinciala, 2011] and definitions of communicative competence became widely quoted and accepted. The need for the shift in focus in teaching from language form to language in use was expressed, placing grammar within context and with content. It was felt that by concentrating on communication and communicative language practice, students would naturally “acquire” the language.

Grammatical knowledge is viewed by many researchers like a significant component in second language acquisition. Most agree that the certain degree of grammar instruction is necessary to develop learners’ language proficiency. No current research or theory, though, seems to advocate a return to traditional methods of teaching grammar or to a focus on grammatical features for their own sake. Based on the results of the empirical study focusing on the ways in which explicit grammar teaching can facilitate L2 acquisition, Scheffler and Cinciata (2011) recommend that EFL/ESL teachers “should invest some classroom time in explicit grammar instruction”, as “at least some grammatical phenomena may be successfully taught as simple rules” [Scheffler, P., & Cinciala, 1983]. They refer to two kinds of benefit. First, simple descriptions of rules may lead to learners noticing the input structures exemplified by the rules, which can in turn lead to increased

comprehension. So conscious noticing of L2 features is necessary for implicit language development, according to many SLA researchers. Simple grammar forms help learners understand their own output and contribute to a learning process in general by increasing the learners' sense of confidence, security and achievement.

Thus the implicit-versus-explicit debate has been raging for over a century, the positions varying from an outright rejection of grammar instruction in a strongly communicative approach to a return to explicit, discrete-point grammar along a continuum. A lot of materials meant for classroom use encourage the inductive approach, probably because teachers are there to guide the learning process, while those meant for self-study usually adopt the deductive approach. Though there are a lot of approaches to teaching methodology, 2 teaching methods are most commonly taught. Methodology taught in certification and training programs is generally either "PPP" (present, practice and production) or "ESA" (engage, study and activate). That doesn't mean they are the best approaches. They are just the most well-known approaches and more likely to be requested by employers or Directors of Studies (DOS).

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