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USEFUL STRATEGIES IN TEACHING GRAMMAR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

Summary. *The article discusses the effective ways of teaching grammar in English language classes and useful strategies that can help teachers to make lessons more effective.*
Key words: *strategy, system, language, communication, method, approach, grammar-translation, text, context.*

Teaching the language system means that a teacher presents students with clear information about the language they are learning. It is a complex task, because teacher must show students what the language means and how it is used, what the grammatical form of the new language is, and how it is said and written. The best way to present language is in context. For example, when to teach grammar, let say comparative sentence, provide them a reading text taken from the Internet on recent topics that contains many sample usages of comparatives in a passage. The activities will be suited to the objective in the lesson plan. A good context can be motivating for students to learn new language. In short, a teacher should show students not only what language means but also how it is used, and the activity can vary depending on the topic and the context that the teacher planned before.

In the last century the architects of language teaching methods have been preoccupied with two basic design decisions concerning grammar: should the method adhere to a grammar syllabus? Should the rules of grammar be made explicit?

The various ways they answered these questions help distinguish the different methods from each other. What follows is a potted history of methods in the light of their approach to these issues.

Grammar-Translation. As its name suggests, it took grammar as the starting point for instruction. Grammar-Translation courses followed a grammar syllabus and lessons typically began with an explicit statement of the rule, followed by exercises involving translation into and out of the mother tongue. [4, p. 21]

The Direct Method. The method emerged in the mid-to late-nineteenth century, challenged the way that Grammar-Translation focused exclusively on the written language. By claiming to be a 'natural' method, the Direct Method prioritised oral skills, and, while following a syllabus of grammar structures, rejected explicit grammar teaching. The learners, it was supposed, picked up the grammar in much the same way as children pick up the grammar of their mother tongue, simply by being immersed in language.

Audiolingualism. This method is a largely North American invention, stayed faithful to the Direct Method belief in the primacy of speech, but was even stricter in its rejection of grammar teaching. Audiolingualism derived its theoretical base from behaviourist psychology, which considered language as simply a form of behaviour, to be learned through the formation of correct habits. Habit formation was a process in which the application of rules played no part. The Audiolingual syllabus consisted of a graded list of sentence patterns, which, although not necessarily labelled as such, were grammatical in origin. These patterns formed the basis of pattern-practice drills, the distinguishing feature of Audiolingual classroom practice.

First of all, here are two important definitions [1, p. 39]:
– a deductive approach starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rule is applied;
– an inductive approach starts with some examples from which a rule is inferred.

The reasons why Grammar-Translation has fallen from favour are worth briefly reviewing. Typically, a grammar-translation lesson started with an explanation (usually in the learner's mother tongue) of a grammar point. Practice activities followed which involved translating sentences out of and into the target language.

Texts and contexts. We are all familiar with the experience of being asked the meaning of a word and having to reply *But what's the context?* The very word can mean different things in different contexts, as these examples show: *What does this word mean? Can I have word with you? I give you my word.*

A text-based approach involves looking at language when it is 'doing work' [3, p. 49].

Sources of texts. There are at least two implications to this text-level view of language. The first is that if learners are going to be able to make sense of grammar, they will need to be exposed to it in its contexts of use, and, at the very least, this means in texts. Secondly, if learners are to achieve a functional command of a second language, they will need to be able to understand and produce not just isolated sentences, but whole texts in that language. But a text-based approach to grammar is not without its problems. These problems relate principally to the choice of texts. There are at least four possible sources of texts: the course book; authentic sources, such as newspapers, songs, literary texts, the Internet, etc; the teacher; and the students themselves.

One kind of authentic text — and one that has been largely under-exploited in conventional classroom practice — is the teacher's text. And, finally, the students themselves are capable of producing text. The students' texts may be the most effective, since there is evidence to support the view that the topics that learners raise in the classroom are more likely to be remembered than those introduced by either teachers or course books.

Accuracy. To achieve accuracy the learner needs to devote some attention to form, i.e.to 'getting it right'. Attention is a limited commodity, and speaking in a second language is a very demanding skill. As we said, accuracy requires attention. Attention needs time. Research suggests that learners are more accurate the more time they have available. They can use this time to plan, monitor and fine-tune their output. Therefore rushing students through accuracy practice activities may be counter-productive. Classroom activities traditionally associated with accuracy, such as drilling, may not in fact help accuracy that much, especially where learners are being drilled in newly presented material [2, p. 67].

To summarise, then, a practice activity which is good for improving accuracy will have these characteristics: Attention to form: the practice activity should motivate learners to want to be accurate, and they should not be so focused on what they are saying that they have no left-over: learners need to be attention to assign to how they are saying it; Familiarity familiar with the language that they are trying to get right; Thinking time: monitoring for accuracy is easier and therefore more successful if there is sufficient time available to think and reflect; Feedback: learners need definite messages as to how accurate they are — this traditionally takes the form of correction.

To summarise: where fluency is the goal, practice activities should have these characteristics: Attention to meaning: the practice activity should encourage learners to pay attention less to the form of what they are saying (which may slow them down) and more to the meaning; Authenticity: the activity should attempt to simulate the psychological conditions of real-life language use. That is, the learner should be producing and interpreting language under real-time constraints, and with a measure of unpredictability; Communicative purpose: to help meet these last two conditions, the activity should have a communicative purpose. That is, there should be a built-in need to interact; Chunking: at least some of the language the learners are practising should be in the form of short memorisable chunks which can be automised; Repetition: for automisation to occur, the practice activity should have an element of built-in repetition, so that learners produce a high volume of the targeted forms [4, p. 128].

Restructuring is sometimes experienced by learners as a kind of flash of understanding, but more often, and less dramatically, it is the dawning realisation that they have moved up another notch in terms of their command of the language.

Practice activities designed to aid restructuring might have these characteristics: Problematising: having to deal with a problem often seems to trigger restructuring. For example, when learners are put in a situation where the message they are trying to convey is misinterpreted, they may be forced to reassess their grasp of a rule. Moreover, the input they get as they negotiate the meaning of what they are trying to express may also help reorganise the state of their mental grammar; Push: the activity should push learners to 'out-perform their competence' — that is, to produce or understand language that is a notch more complex than they would normally produce or understand; Scaffolding: there should be sufficient support (or scaffolding) to provide the security to take risks with the language. This means the practice activity should try to balance the new with the familiar. Scaffolding could, for example, take the form of telling a familiar story but from a different perspective. Teachers often provide students with scaffolding in the way they interact with them, repeating, rephrasing or expanding what they are saying in order to carry on a conversation. [4, p. 115]

Few practice tasks, whether their objective is accuracy, fluency, or restructuring, are likely to meet all of the criteria listed above. On the other hand, some tasks may incorporate features that suit them to more than one

It should be apparent by now that there are many complex decisions that teachers have to make when monitoring learner production. It is not surprising that the way they respond to error tends to be more often intuitive than consciously considered.

As we have seen, grammar is the first means of learning new language. Grammar is essential to the teaching and learning of languages. Grammar is often named as a subject difficult to teach. Its technical language and complex rules can be intimidating. There are several methods of teaching grammar. We cannot tell that all of them is

effective and shows good results. Grammar- Translation method is one of the old methods. There are some teachers who still use this method. Speaking and listening are rarely integrated in this method. That's why we consider that Grammar-Translation is not effective method to learn the language. There are also several activities and tasks to teach grammar. Mostly teachers use matching, filling in the gaps and finding correct version of the verb. The language system consists of three areas: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation and they are the most significant system in language teaching and learning. They can help to learn the language easily.

References

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