



USING DIVERSE TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT:

This article reflects the information on how to teach students English grammar through a variety of methods, contextual learning and other techniques in detail.

Key words: grammar, techniques, listening and responding, comprehension, grammatical items, important aspects.

MAIN PART

There are different approaches in teaching Grammar. Teaching grammar is notably successful in some countries and in unsuccessful in others. The main purpose of the current study was to prove the advantages of using techniques in developing proficiency in teaching grammar in context. The results revealed that used various techniques in grammar lessons facilitated the process of the acquisition of the target language. From the results, it appears that using techniques in teaching grammar in context is very advantageous in teacher development.

In the Oxford Dictionary “grammar” is defined as:

- the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics
- a particular analysis of the system and structure of language or of a specific language

The role of grammar in language teaching

As Krahnke (1985, p598) defines that grammar plays a significant role in language teaching and showing them what it is. Moreover, Ur (1995) suggests that “there is no doubt that a knowledge – implicit or explicit – of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of a

language.” By supporting this idea, Nunan clarifies the crucial role of grammar in learning another language as a building a wall. He suggests a linear approach to language learning in which learner acquires one grammatical item first, then moves to digest other structures like putting a brick on foundation step-by-step in the correct order: first the “word bricks”, and then the “sentence bricks” in order not to collapse the grammatical wall. In line with, Krashen (1981) argued that being lack of limitless value, grammar instruction did not play an important role in acquisition, which learners would mechanically carry on along their “built-in” syllabus as long as they could have access to comprehensible input as well as sufficiently motivation in, owing to communicative competence dependent on acquisition.[3]

Diverse types of techniques for teaching grammar in context

Technique in teaching grammar is as Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) points out ‘just as grammar points seem to pair naturally with other aspects of language, teaching techniques should vary according to the match being emphasized. For example, in structural-social matches such as modals and requests, the degree of politeness depends on the social relationship between the speaker and his or her interlocutor. In such cases, dramatization and other dynamic, interactional techniques allow learners to make the connection between structure and social function. Such techniques facilitate a proper match between the grammar point being presented and the language factor with which its use is most often associated.[2]

Types of techniques as Thornbury (2003) stated that in teaching grammar in context, the texts may be confusing and full of ambiguous structures as well as vocabulary. As a result, the learners can lose their motivation. Thus, there are several techniques keeping the learners in high motivation plus producing an accurate and fluent language.[4]

On the top all of them are ‘listening and responding’ technique in which the ESL learners are supposed to acquire the target language well to focus on practice of grammar structures with a semantic challenge.

According to researches, children often don’t say anything or say very little when first learning a second language. They appear simply to listen; then, after a while, the new language begins to emerge naturally.’ (cited Celcia-Marcia & Hellis, 2003, p39)

Morover, Celcia-Marcia and Hellis maintain that listening based exercises are outstanding for several reasons:

‘First, they help the second language learner – even the first-day beginner – match meaning and form in context; this match is achieved by techniques that get the listener to

listen and respond physically or verbally, with the teacher using as resources the students, the classroom, and occasionally pictures or special objects. Second, such exercises in tune with the principle of delayed oral production, and we think that learners who are allowed an initial silent period will be more fluent and have better pronunciation than learners required to speak immediately. Third, even if the needs of your students make a completely silent initial learning period impractical, a careful integration of listening-based exercises with the other activities in your curriculum can significantly improve the language proficiency (and this includes the grammar) of your beginning level students.’(p49)[2]

In addition to listening and responding technique, there is another beneficial strategy which is called telling. For instance, in Unit 14 of Kids’ English book for the second forms there is a story with exercises where pupils need to listen and repeat. This method of teaching helps them to comprehend clearly and at the same time they will be able to practice the grammar by answering to the easiest questions. [5]

Book Rassias (1983) has demonstrated very graphically the value of the teacher as a good storyteller in foreign language teaching.

A well-told story is the perfect context for a structure discourse match, but the technique can also be used effectively for a structure-social factor match.

‘Storytelling is traditional in almost all cultures. We can tap into that tradition for a very portable resource and a convenient and flexible technique for teaching any phase of a grammar lesson. A story provides a realistic context for presenting grammar points and holds and focuses students’ attention in a way that no other technique can. Although some teachers are better at telling stories than others, almost any of us can tell stories with energy and interest. Students naturally like to listen to stories, and most are remembered long after the lesson is over’.(Celcia-marcia & Hellis, 1988, p59)

What is more, so as to teach second language communication skills, dramatic activities can also play a crucial role along with teaching grammar in context fruitfully.

We may observe approving the usage of dramatic activities in the classroom in the work of Stern, Schumann, and etc.

According to Stern (1980), that kind of activities is one of the practical techniques by means of motivating learners increasingly, intensifying their confidence, turning off the sensitivity to rejection.

Stern maintains that dramatic activities ‘are a curative for the frustration and lagging interest which often occur during second-language learning,’ because they provide compelling reason to learn. In effect, drama gives a ‘strong instrumental motivation’ for

learning the second language. In addition, Stern also addresses the issue of empathy. Following work done by Guiora(1972), Stern thinks of empathy as a relaxation or suspension of psychological mechanisms which separate us from each other' (p61-62).

Besides that, songs are one of the most enchanting and culturally rich resources that can easily be used in language classrooms. In other words, songs as authentic materials are also one of the best technique that can be used not only for revision new vocabulary, idioms, pronunciation but also grammatical items along with language skills: listening, reading, writing, speaking. (Anonymous)

Hulquist (1984), in an unpublished handbook of activities for adult ESL students Suggests that songs – in conjunction with other grammar presentation activities – can be effective in five different ways by:

1. adding variety as well as enjoyment to language learning (all skills)
2. presenting authentic language, as well as introducing students to various dialects spoken either in the USA (United States of America) or in the UK(United Kingdom).
3. allowing students to practice a previously studied, contrasting structure along with a new structure
4. providing an opportunity to apply language skills to real-life situations by extending the pattern in the song
5. helping to develop cultural awareness, both of the present and the past' (p117).

However, Celcia-Murcia and Hellis (1988) maintains that regardless of being more advantages of using song in the classroom, many ESL and EFL teachers are unenthusiastic to utilize them owing to having a consideration of being unproductive usage of them. Moreover, they believe that learning is an important aspect for students, not a game to have a fun with.

Last but not least effective technique is problem solving activities. Celcia-Murcia and Hellis (1988) states that the problem solving activities are task-oriented and lay a particular purpose that is production of correct speech behind them. They point out that as long as the activities can be structured to focus learner's attention on a few specific forms beforehand, problem solving activities can be perfect for communicative practice of grammar.[2]

'Problem-solving techniques in relation to grammar teaching are inductive techniques that require learners to find form-function matches by themselves'(Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam,2011, p80).[1]

Nevertheless, Celcia-Murcia and Hellis (1988) warned that ESL teacher must be certain that students need to have adequate vocabulary and structures in order to carry the task out.[2]

At the beginning of the course, the investigator set the hypothesis of using various kinds of teaching techniques in order to motivate students in learning grammar in context as well as to make them utilize learnt grammatical items accurately and unconsciously in their everyday English. From the data analysis and results of the tests, it is apparent that the usage of the teaching techniques in grammar lessons could provide a great opportunity in enhancing the students' proficiency in the target language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, no single method of grammar presentation is going to be appropriate for all grammar items, nor for all learners, nor for all learning contexts. The most ones depend on the kind of practice opportunities that the teacher provides as well.

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