

How to Teach English Grammar Effectively

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All languages made use of by human beings in order that they can communicate either in speech or in black and white possess their own grammars. Whether it be one's native language or second language (hereinafter referred to as the English Language), it must be having its grammar. It is like a flit-gun and its grammar is its plunger, and it is the plunger that does set and keep the flit-gun in operation. Wherefore the grammar of a language cannot be thought of as autonomous of the language. Rather it should be said that a language and its grammar are integrated and of it there is no doubt at all. This research article shall wherefore be focusing on how to effectively teach the grammar of the English language.

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It is being found that the most controversial phenomenon in the teaching of English which is being learnt as a second language is the teaching of its grammar. While some opine that the grammar should be taught and its teaching is fruitful, others consider the teaching of the same to be of no use. Those who support the teaching of the grammar of the English language at the time of the teaching of the said language as a second language hold that if the learner of English as a second language knows its grammar perfectly well, he can speak in English appropriately and also he can write in the language correctly. On the other hand, those who support the teaching of the grammar of the English language at the time of the teaching of the said language as a second language hold that it may so happen that the learner of English as a second language who knows its grammar perfectly well will fail to speak in English appropriately and also, he

will fail to write in the language correctly. The former also say that it can be found that people who do not know much of the grammar of English can speak and write correctly and appropriately. But the teaching of the grammar of a language becoming learnt cannot be neglected because of its myriad pivotal. Knowledge of rules helps one monitor language production, oral and written. Of two users with very similar competence in language it is the careful user who generally succeeds better. This is mainly because he uses his knowledge of rules to i) stay away from incorrect use and ii) avoid using aspects/elements of language that he is unsure of. Grammar thus serves as a self-correcting mechanism, although it may also go against the kind of risk-taking which promotes fluency. Knowledge of essential grammar is necessary for the good use of a dictionary. Such knowledge has become indispensable for users of learner's dictionaries . . . which now offer much fuller and more reliable information not only on word meanings but on the grammatical and pragmatic behaviour of words. Especially for grown-up learners, knowledge of grammar builds confidence in their use of language. It also helps them spot, explain and root out errors. For teachers who seek support in the findings of empirical research, studies of bilingual classrooms have shown that even pupils who learn in immersion-type situations (where the foreign language is the medium of instruction), essential grammar does not get learnt until it is taught consciously. Based on a number of such studies done over more than a quarter century in Canada, Merrill Swain (1995), for example, concludes that 'immersion weaknesses clearly relate to deficit in their (the learners') grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge rather than to discourse aspects of performance. Even rich and prolonged exposure without specific attention to grammar thus fails to guarantee correct use of language. Support for the view that focus on form (that is, on aspects/elements of grammar) pays rich dividends also comes from a number of empirical studies done (e.g. Long and Robinson 1998, Spada 1997, Doughty and William 1998) on the impact of intentional as opposed to incidental learning. (Tickoo 165-66). So, now, it is crystal clear that the teaching of the grammar of English during the teaching of it as a second language is a must. If the learner of English as a second language wishes to have mastery over the language, he has no other alternative but to aptly learn its grammar consciously.

The Effective Ways

It is very important to note that if English grammar is not appropriately taught, learners will fail to learn it, thereby failing to master the English language. It is really a surprise to find that

after having been taught English grammar for a very long time, the majority of the learners are not able to produce their English without innumerable grammatical error. The reason lying behind their being unable thus is they're not being taught the grammar communicatively. They have simply learnt by rote a lot of grammatical rules without using them practically. It indicates that it is not that English grammar is not necessary for learning English as a second language. Rather, it is definitely necessary, though functionally of course. To illustrate this point, if the learner is taught all the English Tense Rules not contextually but theoretically, he cannot practically make use of English adeptly. But it does not at all mean that the teaching of these rules is not necessary. Rather it needs to be taught obviously but contextually. As not teaching something and teaching something contextually are not certainly one and the same phenomenon, not teaching English grammar and teaching English grammar are not one and the same. Irrespective of its being one's first or second language, a language cannot be accepted if it greatly violates its grammar completely. Nor can the same become intelligible if it extensively violates its grammatical rules. Hence, one's speech or writing is bound to necessarily follow the grammar of the language which his speech or writing is in. When one acquires one's native language, he does subconsciously acquire its grammar. It happens so automatically that one need not put extra efforts into action in this matter. But when one learns a language as a second language, one has to learn its grammar. It can hence be safely stated that whenever English as a second language is taught and learnt, its grammar must be taught and learned. It is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, quite essential in this case. In other words, the teaching of the grammar of the language to one whose native language is that language is less important than the teaching of the grammar of the language to one that is learning the language as a second language. Of the many effective ways meant for the purpose of teaching English grammar effectively, those, that are five in total, to be discussed in brief in this paper are contextual teaching of English grammar, inductive method of teaching grammar, meaning-focused instruction, priority-of-fluency-over-accuracy-based teaching of English grammar, and contrastive way of teaching English grammar. It is often found that if English grammar be aptly taught via these ways, it does result in enabling the learner to effectively make use of the grammar to a great extent whenever and wherever he needs to apply it, which he is not able to do if not taught thus. The following is the delineation of the said effective principles, which are most commonly made use of:

English grammar should contextually be taught. While teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing, the grammar needs to get taught. The teaching of these four skills can very easily invite contexts which can help the learner learn various grammatical rules practically, which is the need of the hour. Teaching the grammar in isolation deprives the learner from observing how it works in the language. It should also get taken care of that the target grammar rule must be frequently used in the material which he is going to contextually learn the same through.

1. To illustrate, a student is told to read a passage having a number of sentences in the Present Indefinite Tense from his English textbook. After he has read this, he is, after becoming informed of the Simple Present Tense, asked to find out those sentences written in the tense. Then he can be asked to write some sentences using this tense.
2. English grammar should inductively be taught. To teach it inductively, the teacher will provide the learner with contextualized examples consisting of the grammatical rule which he wants to teach him and the learner is expected to learn that rule with the help of those examples. In other words, teaching English grammar inductively means teaching it by rendering the learner a number of examples which shall be consisting of the form or structure or pattern he is supposed to learn, thereby leading him through guided instruction to deduce the said form or structure or pattern on his own. The teacher shan't in such case tell the learner straightforwardly at the beginning about the same. For instance, suppose that the teacher wants to teach the learner the present progressive aspect. Now the learner will be first given a contextualized paragraph which contains a lot of sentences in the present progressive aspect. Next the learner will be told that the sentences are in the present progressive aspect and thus he is expected to find out the pattern exclusively meant for the present progressive aspect.
3. The focus must be not on forms at the cost of meanings but on forms through meanings. Because interesting meaningful activities can enable the learner not only to learn but also to acquire the grammar of the target language, i.e., the English language. In this way, the grammar can be learnt both joyfully and fruitfully. It is observed that the learner can learn a great amount of it if he is to learn it through activities related to his real life. The activities need to be meaningful because if they are not meaningful, the learner will fail to find any reason lying behind accomplishing them. Also, if the

activities are meaningful, the learner will find their being related to his real-life situations. It will encourage him to do the activities, thus enabling him to learn the targeted language grammar via using it. In other words, it is using in order to learn and not to learn for using. To illustrate, a student is given and asked to complete a task to complete which he needs to make use of English grammar rules. The task is complaining to the competent authority because of too frequent load-shedding. Thus, the very task related to his real-life situation, for such a situation may arise anytime in his real life. Thereby, this meaningful task can teach him English grammar rules.

4. Fluency should be followed by accuracy. If the vice-versa takes place, it can extensively mar the desire of the learner to learn English grammar. Errors need to be considered a positive sign in the course of learning the grammar, natural, and indispensable. Also, when errors ought to get corrected, it should be done gently and in a nonthreatening way. For example, if the student says, 'I have done the work,' then the teacher may correct this error by having the student to self-correct it or by recasting this error, i.e., by correctly repeating what has incorrectly been said by the former.
5. The teacher should make attempts to compare and contrast the grammar of the native language of the learner with the grammar of the target language. Because if it is done, it stands against the notion that the learner's native language negatively affects his learning the grammar of the target language. There can be many grammatical rules of the target language which can be correlated with many grammatical rules of the native language of the learner. It will motivate the learner to a great extent to easily learn many grammatical rules of the language which he is learning as a second language.

Conclusion

In fine, grammar is not the destination. It is the vehicle which will help us to reach the destination. English grammar will thus surely help us in gaining mastery over English as a second language and therefore it should not be neglected at any cost. But it should definitely be kept on the tablet of the memory that it is meanings and not forms which should be emphasized. Mere knowledge of grammatical rules cannot work. It has been observed many a time that the majority of those that are taught English grammar through the ways mentioned above are capable of applying it in their day-to-day activities when needed.

REFERENCES

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