

THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

The place of grammar in the English Language Teaching courses have often kept switching over the centuries depending on the prevalent convention / practice or the dominant theories of language analysis and language learning premised on which several English Language Teaching (ELT) methods were propounded one after the other. The main aim of the teachers in teaching grammar is to teach the structure of the language systematically and make their students get good command over the language to produce the learned grammatical structures accurately when they use them in their real-life situations in either spoken or written form. As there are different methods, approaches and techniques in teaching grammar, the teachers of English have been using various techniques while teaching English grammar teaching classrooms. Even today, most of the teachers are using grammar translating method or direct method while they teach grammar in their classrooms. Moreover, in most of the classrooms, grammar has been taught deductively as teachers of English think that it reduces their burden since teaching grammar inductively consumes more time and energy. Furthermore, the teachers of English should also apply various techniques in their teaching instead of choosing a single or two methods while teaching grammar. In English language teaching, grammar plays a major role and the modern and trained teachers should apply various techniques in their teaching and they should also realize the importance of grammar in various English Language Teaching (ELT) techniques.

This paper highlights the role of grammar in English Language Teaching (ELT) Techniques in detail. First of all, this paper discusses the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method and The Oral-Situational Language Teaching. It also comprehensively discusses the role of grammar in these techniques. Later, this paper also presents the role of grammar in modern approaches like Communicative Language Teaching, Total Physical Response and Eclectic Approach. Then this paper also elaborates how the teaching of grammar has undergone major shifts in its focus/attention such as Grammar based, Situation based and Function - Notion based in detail.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), First Language (L1), Grammar Translation Method (GT), Target Language (TL), Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Introduction

Language plays a vital role in communication and grammar is the main essential element for any language since the formation of sentences which primarily depend on the structure of its sentences. Without grammar, we cannot imagine a sentence. Therefore, grammar is needed for all languages in order to frame correct sentences. When grammar is proper, the sentences of the language make sense. In this way, it is more important to realize the importance of grammar in a language. Since grammar is the structure and sound of a language, everyone concentrates mainly on it. Even the native speakers of English have also recognized the importance of grammar and are therefore in a position to speak their language, i.e. English, grammatically correct sentences. Also, grammar helps the learners understand what makes sentences, paragraphs and even long essays, short stories precise, clear and interesting.

The present situation in most of the schools and colleges is that grammar is taught as a separate entity and the learners of the English language learn it just by mugging up the rules of the language. Furthermore, grammar is taught in a prescriptive way rather than in a descriptive way. Therefore, the learners of a language are not in a position to showcase their talent in either their speech or writing. So, the teachers of English should understand the situation and try to find the right solution for the learners to master the language by applying the rules of the grammar that they have learnt in the English classrooms. Furthermore, the teachers of English should also understand the real situation of the learners and try to take the appropriate steps for the development of their English language learning skills. Also, the teachers have to give more prominence to grammar while using various methods, approaches and techniques of teaching English. Hence, some of the ELT Methods are being discussed below in order to identify the place and role of grammar in the English Language Teaching programmes.

Grammar-Translation Method

This method ruled the world for more than a century. The main concentration of this method was to help learners to acquire the knowledge of the target language. This method did not focus on spoken form of the language. O'Grady et al. (1993) suggest, "This technique emphasizes reading, writing, translation, and the conscious learning of grammatical rules. Its primary goal is to develop literary mastery of the second language. Memorization is that the main learning strategy and students pay their category time talking regarding the language rather than talking within the language. The info needs the committal to memory of

paradigms, patterns and vocabulary, with translation being employed to check the non-heritable data. Consequently, the role of L1 is quite prominent”.

The Grammar-Translation (G.T.) Method dominated in Europe for foreign language teaching/learning for almost a century ranging from 1840 to 1940. But the earliest course for language learning teaching based on G.T.method was published by J.C. Fick in South Germany in 1779.The German Scholars like John Seidenstucker, Karl Plotz, H.S. Ollendorf, and John Meidinger were the main force behind the exploration and implementation of the G.T. Method. Moreover, an American teacher, B.Sears, too used this method as Prussian Method from 1845 onwards.

Grammar learning/teaching was totally based on the goal of helping students to read and appreciate foreign language and literature. Interacting grammar learning/teaching as second language was used as it was believed, to translate in and out of the target language. The grammar learning/teaching was consisted of the memorization of the rules of the various sentence patterns and various grammar was taught prescriptively and guided by the rules of the target language as well as greater emphasis was paid on accuracy.Mostly, the experts of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) believe that G.T. Method is the invention of eighteenth century and in 19th century. They adopted the strategy of linking grammatical rules with translation. G.T. Method hasbeen accepted by the experts as a role model and became the ideal method to teach modern languages in the curriculum.

The Direct Method

The Direct Method was based on the assumption that a second language can be learnt in the same manner as a child learns the first language. The direct method facilitated a learning classroom which seems natural and contextual. There was no emphasis on the explicit instruction of grammatical aspect but one-to –one communication got motivated.

The Direct Method emerged as a reaction against the G.T. Method. It was developed in the later nineteenth century when the entire world needed a language for the communication in different fields like business, traveling, International exchanges, political and economic reasons.There were many languages spoken in various countries, but this was the main hurdle for the people to increase opportunities in different fields. Hence, they were looking for a language used in Europe for communication. Hence nineteenth century Direct Method was innovated.

The main objective of the Direct Method is the ability to communicate in the target language(T.L.). The main focus of this method is to develop their (students’) thinking (LSRW), but emphasizes for the correct pronunciation and vocabulary also has been given a great importance than the grammar.

According to Diller, (1978: 23), “The Direct Method has one very basic rule: No translation is allowed”. It emphasized learning of language in a contextual manner and the avoidance of mother tongue was preferred while the meanings were taught through action and demonstration. More emphatically, it was a monolingual approach. The major contributors for this method were Pendergast and Sanver (1826-1907). They devised a Natural Method which was advice from the G.T. Method. The same method later came to be known as Direct Method. German Scholar I. Frank too deals with the psychological aspect of language learning where they discussed the principle of direct association before the form and meanings in target language learning.

The role of grammar in the Direct Method was quite in contrast with that of G.T. Method. In this context, Richard and Rodgers (1968 quoted in Geeta Nagraj, p. 78) state, “Grammar was not taught explicitly and deductively as in the G.T. class, but was learned largely through practice. Students were encouraged to draw their own structural generalization from what they had been learning by an inductive process. In this way, the study of grammar was kept at a functional level, being confined to those areas which were continually being used in speech. When grammar was taught more systematically at a later stage, it was taught in the foreign language with the use of foreign language’s terminology”. The presentation of categorized sentence in the form of short discourses was meant to improve only communicative ability with greater emphasis on clarity, stress, and pronunciation. Students were encouraged to deduce grammatical rules through the structure presented in the classroom on their own.

Audio-Lingual Method

This is an extension and modification of the Direct Method. The main goal lies in the development of oral fluency as translation and use of native language which is not permitted in language classroom. It worked on the notion of the mechanistic process of habit formation comprising dialogue memorization and pattern drills. It deals with the vocabulary acquisition as well as the drills of grammatical sentence patterns. This method was focused (Nagraj, Geeta, 1996: 79) refers to demonstrate the fact that a language teaching method can be based on rigorous scientific disciplines like linguistics and psychology. The Audio-Lingual Method treated all the form skills separately. The main tool to learn language through this method was dialogue-presentation in the language laboratory.

The emergence of Audio-Lingual Method can be traced back to language teaching programme devised in America during the 2nd world war. The involvement in the Second World War of America needed a great supply of war personnel fluent in languages like German, Italian, Chinese, French, and Japanese etc. who can various actions of language. Charles Fries (1945) of the University of Michigan developed this method using structuralist theory which was later added by the behavioural psychological theories of

conditioning by Skinner (1957). The learning of grammar was not emphasized directly, but was learned through the acquisition of various grammatical sentence patterns. All the grammatical points like Direct Method were deduced after the presentation of sentences pattern in the contextualized discourse.

The Oral - Situational Language Teaching

In 1920s, an approach for language teaching in a systematic way was evolved. This included the mechanized steps of selection, gradation and presentation of language items and context to be practiced in language learning classroom. This approach came to be known as oral approach to language teaching. In oral approach, the spoken language item was followed by written forms as these language items were practiced situationally after a brief introduction. Later, this principle of situationality became the key feature of oral approach and got a new name as Oral - Situational Approach.

The linguists like Hornby, Palmer were behind the exploration of this method. The linguists like Gurrey, Frisby, Billows and Fittman too contributed emphatically for the development of this method. Especially, Fittman and his colleagues developed a tremendous set of practice material. The approach got its existence in 1920s and 1930s as linguists like Hornby and Palmer worked a lot to set a launch pad of this approach. It is worth to quote here the sayings of Richards and Rogers (1968: 33) who say, "The teaching/learning of grammar followed as systematic rule of shifting learning from simple to complex items. The grammar contents were learnt through an oral approach. Grammar was received as the "underlying sentence pattern of spoken language".

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

This approach argued by O'Grady et al. (1993) is that, "Merely knowing how to produce a grammatically correct sentence is not enough. A communicatively competent person must also know how to produce and appropriate, natural, and socially acceptable utterance in all contexts of communication 'Hey', buddy, you fix my car! is grammatically correct but not as effective in most social context as 'excuse me, Sir, I was wondering whether I could have my car fixed today ... (communication competence)".

The major goal of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is to develop communicative ability in language learner by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication. Larsen - Freeman, (2004: 121) state as, "Although the earlier discussed methods were quite capable of making students utter grammatically accurate sentences in classrooms yet those methods were partially successful in helping students to produce and use sentences appropriately outside of classroom setting". So in 1970s, several linguistics and educators started thinking that the production of sentences should be combined with its

genuine communicative use as being able to communicate require more than mastery of linguist structures.

The linguists like Widdowson (1978), Wilkins (1976), and Hymes D. (1971) came with the innovations like 'Use/Usage,' 'Communicative functions,' and 'Communicative Competence' respectively. The role of grammar in communicative language Teaching (CLT) is never central. Grammar teaching/learning takes place unconsciously while using language in communicative context.

Total Physical Response

O'Grady, et al. (1993) state Total Physical Response as, "It takes into consideration the silent period deemed necessary for some L2 Learner. During the primary section of Total Physical Response, students don't seem to be needed to talk, instead, they think about obeying simple commands in the second language. These demands eventually become more complex. For example, walk to the door becomes strength you head while you walk to the door, at the back of the classroom. The objective of this approach is to correct physical activity with meaningful language use as a way of instilling concepts". Thus, this method combines both speech and action and teaches language through physical activities. More clearly, the teacher gives commands and orders the learners to perform the action according to the instruction. Richards and Rodgers (1968: 92) suggest, "The psychologist James Asher developed this method combining developmental psychology, learning theory and learning pedagogy. Grammar teaching/ learning takes place inductively when teacher presents sentence structures in contextual manner. Grammatical items are learned unconsciously as they are selected according to the situation which they can be used in the classroom and the case with which they can be learned".

Eclectic Approach

Sometimes, a single selected method cannot be sufficiently justified to teach language learners and classrooms unless it fulfills all the needs of the language curricula. If at any stage the methods provide a loophole for insufficiency, then it should be supplemented by any other method which can have strong point(s) at that stage and repair that loopholes. Such type of belief gave a rise to the idea of combining all the strong aspects of various methods and getting its compiled into one. This belief got its name as eclectic approach which is a deviance from the rigid guidelines inherent in any method and flexible enough to name a number of remedial steps to be used to run the language classroom successfully. Thus, eclectic approach is a combination of all the best approaches and methods as discussed above.

So far, we have seen that, though there have been sharp opposing views regarding the significance of teaching grammar, it has always been a part of the curriculum with its changing popularity and position with almost all the methods and approaches of English

Language Teaching. In terms of English Language Teaching, the teaching of grammar has undergone the following three major shifts in its focus / attention:

- (a) Grammarbased,
- (b) Situation based, and
- (c) Function - Notionbased

In the elaboration, the above three we will see how pedagogic grammar has always been a part of the course.

(a) GrammarBased

The History of English Language Teaching has witnessed the maximum dominance of grammar-based English Language courses. Under the aegis of the Traditional Approach, i.e. Grammar- Translation Method, the teaching of grammar was so crucial that it almost became synonymous to language teaching. This phase of dominance of grammar in language teaching was continued for centuries, until the emergence of modern linguistics. Modern linguistics looks at language in a new perspective and hence a change was brought into the language teaching methodologies.

Hence, the traditional Latin modeled Grammar-Translation Method was replaced by Modern, Structuralism-based teaching methodologies. Such a replacement brought in obvious changes in the general outlook, approach and theorization of the methods. But, so far a quantum of the amount of grammar items available in the above mentioned methods remained the same with a slight change in the handling of the grammar items in the shape of teaching techniques and strategies in the actual classroom situation; for instance prescriptivism was replaced by the descriptivism.

Hence, grammar continued to maintain its central position from the traditional Grammar-Translation Method to the American Audio-lingualism and the British Oral-Situational Method. These methods were based on the assumption that language is a set of rules or language is a system of systems. This type of dominance of grammar was reflected in the material's tool produced at those points of time.

(b) Situation Based

By the mid to the 18th century the diction changed and linguists and teachers came to believe that language is a means of communication rather than being a major set of rules. Hence, having assured that language is used in certain situations in the real life of the researchers premised the language teaching methods of materials on the expected situations of language use. Therefore, the units and chapters of the situation based courses listed such items or titles as "In the bank", "At the Airport", "At the railway station", "In the office", etc. These chapters and units included coverage of grammar and lexical items related to the situations. The situation based courses did not include all the common place grammatical items, rather included and stressed in such items which were expected to be required by the learners after the completion of the course.

(c) Function – NotionBased

The consolidation of the communicative approach made the researchers and linguists realized that the situational approach had certain major practical limitations. For instance it is difficult to the edict the situations which the learners are expected to face after the completion of the course in their real lives. Secondly, even if the situations are listed, it will be practically impossible to teach each one of them in the classroom situations. Hence, the situation based model was replaced by the one based on function and notion. This model was premised on the assumption that language is used in the society to perform certain functions and that language is a means of communication.

Here the materials came up with such titles and as “describing persons and places,” “giving and taking instructions,” “giving directions,” “writing reports,” “writing letters of thanks, regret, condolence and greetings”, etc. Under the heads of these titles, the related grammatical vocabulary items are talked. For instance, an attempt has been made to teach simple present tense and statements or assertive sentences while teaching prescriptions, imperative sentence and sequence words while teaching instructions; and use of passive voice while teaching writing reports.

Conclusion

In this paper, the role of grammar in English Language Teaching (ELT) Techniques has been highlighted. For this purpose, first of all, this paper has discussed the Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method and The Oral-Situational Language Teaching. It has also comprehensively discussed the role of grammar in these techniques. Later, this paper has also presented the role of grammar in modern approaches like Communicative Language Teaching, Total Physical Response and Eclectic Approach. Then this paper has also elaborated how the teaching of grammar has undergone major shifts in its focus/attention such as Grammar based, Situation based and Function - Notion based in detail. Finally, this paper has also given some useful suggestions for both the teachers and students to improve their teaching and learning skills through various teaching techniques by giving more prominence to grammar.

In the above discussion, in terms of language teaching methods and even in terms of the shifts in language teaching courses, we saw that grammar has always been a cardinal part of the language teaching and learning process. Such a situation maintained the importance and the significance of the role and place of the pedagogic grammar. Therefore, the teachers of English should realize the importance of grammar in English Language Teaching techniques, methods and approaches and give more preference to grammar in their teaching since grammar plays a major role not only in sentence construction but also in oral and written communication. While following the appropriate methods in teaching, the teachers of English have to concentrate more on grammar which is the main important component in

teaching the English language. Since grammar plays a key role in teaching the English language, the teachers of English should give more priority to grammar and teach the English language systematically to their students in order to understand the subject well and prepare the learners as good communicators in their future.

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