



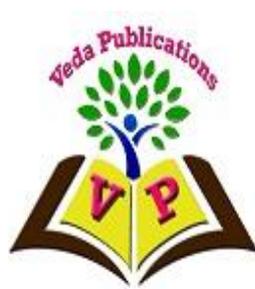
THE EFFICACY OF INTEGRATING GRAMMAR AND CONTENT: IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT



Proficiency in a language depends on the accuracy of usage. Students need to learn appropriate usage of language with due emphasis on its forms and structures. Often, the exam-focused pedagogical styles in schools leave the students devoid of the essential basic language knowledge. The present paper attempts to highlight the extent to which the present teaching techniques are helping students to construct, produce and retain basic language structures. It focuses upon both teachers' attitude towards the effectiveness of pedagogical styles adopted for grammar teaching and students' perception of difficulties in learning English grammar when taught through the existing method of teaching grammar.

Further, the paper discusses the scope of using authentic teaching activities like explicit grammar instruction, contextualised teaching of grammar, flipped learning and blended learning in facilitating grammar teaching. Data is collected from 30 secondary school English language teachers and 50 secondary school students using a self-designed attitude scale. The sample is selected through the convenient sampling technique, and the data is analysed through Percentage analysis. Results tend to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the present methodology of teaching grammar, which further helps in revising and reshaping pedagogical techniques for better achievement in the acquisition of grammatical structures by the students.

Keywords: *Grammar Teaching, Attitude, Students and Teachers*



INTRODUCTION

Grammar is one of the most stressed points teachers cannot disregard in teaching English as a second language. Grammar can be defined as a rational and dynamic system comprising structures characterised by three dimensions of form, meaning and use (Anisimova and Koshova 72). Among the various goals of language instruction, teaching students to use grammar accurately, meaningfully and appropriately is very prominent. Empirically, it has been observed that the grammar of the English language has been regarded as a highly structure-based and formal domain and often taught exclusively for its own sake. However, for active learning, teachers' theory of teaching, their understanding of the students' learning mindset, and suitable pedagogical styles are the interventions that should be adopted for a better outcome.

Çakır points towards the fact that the general pattern for teaching grammar in language classrooms is to give some rules using many technical terminologies, asking students to solve some exercises that are often mechanical and monotonous, and this is the end of the teaching of grammar. In such situations, even if the students' performance in a grammar test is reasonably good, there is no guarantee that they would be speaking and writing in English correctly in future [2]. Therefore, the time and effort devoted to language teaching in schools cannot justify producing such language with errors. The burden of the syllabus in the school curriculum makes language teachers believe that grammar should not be a part of regular language instruction, and the grammar is minimised as a part of the home study material (123).

With the recent movements in applied linguistics to focus on forms and structures of the language, teaching grammar has again become the core of the hot debate. Also, the thinkers and philosophers of language pedagogy now unanimously agree to the importance of grammar teaching in language classrooms. In this context, Gokhale discusses the problems of English language teaching in India. The author contemplates that "one of the major drawbacks in teaching grammar seems to be that it is

taught and examined in isolation. It is not taught with reference to a particular context and in relation to the language skills". Which often results in dull, boring classes and unmotivated learners. For better results, the researcher further stresses the need for English language teachers in India to contextualise various language inputs, including grammar instructions and communicative competence.

Ideally, grammar teaching aims to help students produce communication free of error. However, in reality, it is observed that grammar is taught for its own sake with a teacher-centred approach in most cases. In the world of pedagogy, it is the least desirable teaching style. In the teaching process, attention should be paid to contextualising the grammar instruction so that students learn to integrate its knowledge into their speech and writing. A second language teacher has an additional responsibility to motivate and encourage students to learn the language with curiosity and interest by creating a favourable approach in and outside a classroom.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Some fundamental issues that need to be addressed when discussing second language learning are: Do the students know the basics of the language? Is the present teaching system helping students internalise various language components? Are the students able to reproduce it easily in day-to-day usage?

In the context of these questions, a teacher's understanding of the specific language they teach and their beliefs and awareness about teaching methodologies, in general, potentially impacts their teachings. In the Indian education system, a great deal of time is devoted to discussing the pros and cons of various pedagogical techniques; the fact remains that very little consideration is given to reconsidering the existing teaching methodologies. Different teaching methodologies that teachers adopt in the classrooms and their attitude towards the efficacy of the prevalent method of teaching language is an important issue that needs to be investigated.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To find out English language teachers' attitude towards the effectiveness of the present method of teaching English grammar.
- To find out different teaching methods that teachers' use for teaching grammar in the classrooms.
- To find out the students' opinion towards the effectiveness of the present method of teaching English grammar.
- To find out the extent to which the present teaching techniques are helping students to construct basic language structures.
- To find out the extent to which the present teaching techniques are helping students to produce and retain the knowledge of the language structures
- To find out how far the present teaching techniques are helping students to retain the knowledge of basic language structures
- To discuss the scope of using authentic teaching activities like explicit grammar instruction, contextualised grammar teaching, flipped learning, and blended learning to facilitate grammar teaching.

METHODOLOGY**Sample**

The sample for the present study consists of teachers and students- 50 IXth grade students were randomly selected from a government school in the Aligarh district. Whereas the school was selected through the convenience sampling method. 20 English language teachers of secondary and senior secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University were randomly selected for the study.

Tools employed for data collection

The tool used for teachers- The investigator used a self-designed questionnaire of 58 items subdivided into six dimensions: construction, retention, production, interest level, authentic teaching

materials used, and activities. This questionnaire sought the opinion of teachers regarding the present method of teaching English grammar. The construction part dealt with the opinion of English teachers about how far the present method of teaching grammar is helpful for the learners to construct grammatical concepts. The production and retention section attempted to identify how the present method helps retain English grammar. Interest level dealt with the effectiveness of the present method of teaching grammar in maintaining students' interest in grammar learning. The section dealing with authentic teaching materials and activities tried to determine teachers' difficulties in using different teaching aids and implementing activities through the present teaching method.

The tool used for students- the investigator used a self-designed questionnaire of 38 items subdivided into six dimensions: construction, retention production, interest level, authentic teaching materials used, and activities.

The subjects of both questionnaires responded to each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 5 for 'strongly agree' to 1 for 'strongly disagree').

Statistical techniques used

In the present study, percentage analysis is used to analyse the data obtained.

RESULTS

Analysis of the teachers' attitude towards the present method of teaching grammar in schools

Table 1- Percentage analysis showing the attitude of teachers regarding the effectiveness of the present method of teaching English grammar

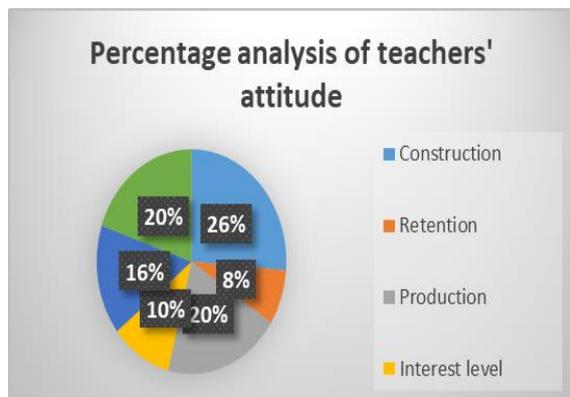


Table 1 shows the percentage of efficiency teachers' credit to the present method of teaching English an effective methodology in comprehensive language learning. Talking about the contribution of the present teaching method in the construction and production of grammatical structures, data shows that it is 26% and 20% of the total, respectively. Whereas, for retention and interest level, the present teaching method is helping the least as the results show 8% and 10% of the total. Further, the data indicate that the teachers believe that up to 16% to 20%, the present language teaching methodology includes teaching aids and activities in day-to-day learning.

Students attitude towards the effectiveness of the present method of teaching grammar in schools

Table 2- Percentage analysis showing the opinion of students regarding the effectiveness of the present method of teaching English grammar

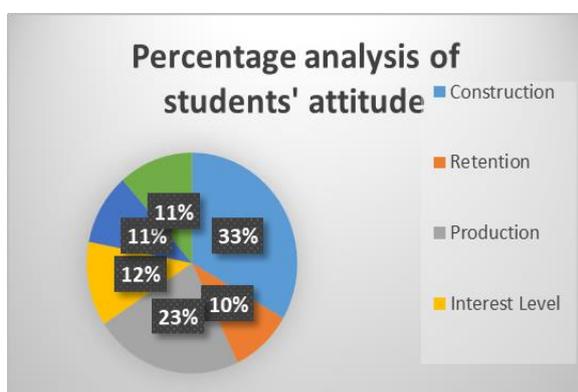


Table 2 shows the data related to students' attitude towards the present method of teaching grammar for effective language learning. Talking about the students' view on the contribution of the present teaching method in the construction and production of grammatical structures, it indicates 33% and 23%, respectively. Whereas for retention and interest level, the present teaching method is helping the least as the results show 10% and 12%. Further, the students view that there is minimum use for innovative teaching activities in the classrooms as the data reveals that only up to 11% of the total attention is paid to adding such activities in the lesson plan.

Methods adopted by teachers in the classrooms for teaching grammar- In the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to select the methods they often use to teach English grammar. Four options: Grammar - Translation method, Inductive method, Deductive method, Structural approach- were mentioned. Further, they were asked to specify if they were using any other technique for teaching. The results showed that about 70% of the total teachers selected deductive, inductive, and the combination of both as the best suitable method for teaching grammar. Few teachers indicated an eclectic approach as effective and mentioned "mixed" as their teaching technique. At the same time, the rest of the teachers believed that the grammar-translation method goes well in teaching grammar. The interesting point that was observed was that few teachers did not name any specific method and opted for whatever suited the situation.

DISCUSSION

The data obtained from teachers and students reveal some interesting observations regarding the overall efficacy of the present teaching methodology as adopted in the schools for language instructions. Each sub-dimension is compared and discussed below-

Construction

Among all other dimensions, both teachers and students gave the highest rating (**Teachers 26%**



students 33%) to the construction aspect of language teaching methodology. It indicates that up to a certain level, the teachers get time to teach grammar along with the daily content teaching in classes, which helps the students get along with different grammar concepts.

Production (written and spoken)

After teaching grammatical rules, the data indicate that the teachers get little time to engage students in such tasks to evaluate their speaking and writing skills. Both teachers and students believe that the contribution of the present teaching method in integrating the knowledge in communication is up to 20-23%.

Retention

The low percentage (teachers 8%, students 10%) attributed to retention indicates the fact that the present method of teaching needs modification for better results. The deductive process of teaching grammar and rote memorisation of rules though results in on spot learning, but little retention and application later.

Interest level, authentic teaching materials used, activities

Further, the data indicate that although teachers claim that they use various teaching aids and activities for grammar instruction, but the students' data show that teaching aids and activities are less prevalent in the classroom that is only up to 11% of the total score. The findings also indicate that some teachers hesitate to introduce creative activities in the classes and instead prefer traditional techniques for teaching content and grammar. It is also noted that the significance of teaching aids and is crucial for teaching. However, often teachers do not get the expected infrastructure and aids to use supplementary materials to help learners cope with the difficulties.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Some recommendations to make the study of grammar an enriching and pleasurable activity for the students :-

- The shortcomings of the present teaching method indicate that the approach to the teaching and learning of grammar seems to be linguistically and pedagogically undesirable. In the classrooms, teachers should get the freedom to select and modify teaching methodology according to the individual needs of students and according to their socio-linguistic situations.
- Educationists should pay special attention to reform the existing pedagogical techniques, which have become dull. Students need to be taught grammar through various methodologies and approaches to cater to their individual learning styles, and educators should consider students' attitudes and perceptions when making decisions about how to teach grammar. (Abdul Kader 169)
- The ever-evolving world of technology demands the teacher to upgrade their teaching styles from traditional to more creative ones. A dynamic and interactive learning environment, where the teachers could blend instructional technology with traditional teaching and integrate online and face to face activities, would help the students engage creatively in the subject matter.
- Teachers are recommended to adopt various innovative teaching techniques to channelise the learners' minds. For example-flipped classroom techniques or self-directed learning styles while dealing with complex topics such as syntactic structures of language, tenses, active-passive voice etc.
- Teachers are recommended to incorporate grammar, add some activities, adopt a bi-lingual approach, and emphasise all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.



- When developing the syllabus for English as a second language, the educationist should pay special attention to the problematic areas that are obstacles in the efficiency building among the students.
- The curriculum developers are recommended to add more content in the coursebook, add more exercises for every lesson, localise the material, make the material student-friendly, add grammar-related activities, and provide audio-visual aids for maximum facilitation.
- Usually, the deductive approach is used for teaching grammar. While the students passively receive the knowledge, such less interactive classes create less learning outcomes with unpleasant memories. Students usually dislike grammar as a dry and complicated topic. Further extra emphasis on specific skills like-communicative or reading skills without considering the importance of grammar gives a reason for defective learning. Therefore, there is a need to adopt a learner-centred approach while teaching grammar. Gokhale observed that “the active involvement of the learners in different activities can help the students to grasp grammar in real sense.”

CONCLUSION

Honestly, it is crucial to pay more attention to the fundamental knowledge of the English language to develop native-like accuracy in the second language. The globalised nature of the English language points to the fact that students need to be accurate and proficient in the language to reach an advanced level of education. For that, it is necessary to pay attention to the weaknesses from the very grass root level, that is, school education. Therefore, some modifications and innovations in the present method of teaching grammar are inevitable.

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