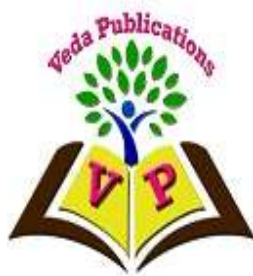**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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SPOKEN GRAMMAR : WAY TO SOUND NATURAL

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, grammars take sentence as a starting unit for analysis. This sentence with punctuation marks works as a basis for parsing and it occurs in written sentences. Moreover the concept of complete sentences is mostly concerned with written English rather than with Spoken English. Because in spoken English a complete sentence with formal order rarely occurs. So methodology and materials for teaching Spoken Language should be different from that of Written Language. In this respect specific findings of Spoken Corpora are there to help us offer deep insights as to the interesting features of Spoken Language and Grammar. In order to define these features many new descriptions have also been invented by the researchers working in the area of Corpus Linguistics, espetially those who are concerned with Spoken Corpora like Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse of English (CANCODE), British National Corpus (BNC), Collins Birmingham University International Language Database (COBUILD).

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Traditionally, grammars take sentence as a starting unit for analysis. This sentence with punctuation marks works as a basis for parsing and it occurs in written sentences .Moreover the concept of complete sentences is mostly concerned with written English rather than with Spoken English. Because in spoken English a complete sentence with formal order rarely occurs. Grammars like traditional grammar , Phrase Structure Grammar, Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar, Transformational-Generative Grammar all start with a sentence. Systemic Functional Grammar is different from these grammars in that it takes a clause into consideration and is rich in metalanguage as it tries to explain meaning generation as dependent upon interaction between language and context. At this juncture there arose a need for the analysis of spoken language as different from the grammatical analysis of written English. When traditional prescriptive grammars were studied, Latin grammar was the model and much of the data analysed was written documents or at least data which was in accordance with written standard of English. Modelling of English Grammar on the basis of Latin grammar has its own problems of pedantic prescriptivism. Thankfully, with the advent of corpus softwares, researchers now have a vast scope to study both spoken and written language. It is this technological advancement starting from tape recording of speech, real-time conversations and the facility to save huge amounts of data on many corpora that has enabled many linguists and researchers to have access to real-time data. It is not uncommon to find grammatical deviations from standard English in daily speech of various dialects . But then it is describing the features of real-time data as it realises in the society across several isoglosses. This gave rise to descriptive grammar which aims at describing the way language operates in the society depending on the local situational context and in a broader sense at global contextual level.

The study of grammar should go beyond invented, decontextualized and sentence-level examples and that considerable benefits can accrue to language and literacy development from such a standpoint (Carter 5).

Descriptive grammar started taking a well-formed sentence to elaborate upon its theory which is again based on written standards of English . Only recently much of the analysis has started to analyse spoken english with the availability of coropora and mini-corpus like :

- the British National Corpus (BNC), which now totals 10 million words of spoken British English;
- the five-million-word Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse of English (CANCODE) held at Nottingham University; and
- the spoken component of the 400-million-word Collins Birmingham University

International Language Database (COBUILD) corpus held at the University of Birmingham.

In Carter and McCarthy (1995: 142-143) ,McCarthy remarks "with relatively small but targeted corpora, much can be learnt about the spoken language, and small corpora can, in themselves, be directly exploited as a valuable resource in teaching". Analysis of spoken interaction presents many problems because speakers don't usually use well-formed complete sentences . Instead a simple stretch of talk includes phrases, or of incomplete clauses, or clauses with subordinate clause characteristics but which are not linked to any main clause.

In spoken language certain general phenomena can be observed:

- Punctuation is marked by turn taking and speakers in a group interrupt each other causing here and there overlapping and crosstalk.
- Speakers acknowledge through the use of back-channeling like Mmm , yeah ,really.
- There are dropped out sentences for rephrasing and change of thought.
- Often one speaker starts a main clause and any other speaker may add a subordinate clause to such main clause. At times we find subordinated clauses particularly not connected to any main clause.

Making a point on the differences between written and spoken grammar McCarthy notes:

Anyone who has looked at large amounts of informal spoken data, for example, cannot fail to be

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struck by the absence of well-formed 'sentences' with main and subordinate clauses. Instead we often find turns that are just phrases, incomplete clauses, clauses that look like subordinate clauses but which seem not to be attached to any main clause, etc McCarthy (1998:79–80).

There is a in fact a certain degree of relation between written and spoken language the functions they both perform are different as Halliday (1985:45) notes "… the kinds of meanings that are transmitted in writing tend to be somewhat different from the kinds of meanings transmitted through speech"

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF SPOKEN GRAMMAR

Considering the scope of this seminar paper, discussion of various features is relatively to-the-point to offer basic informations about common features .Though features discussed here are frequent and not absolute by any means because research in the area of spoken language is very nascent comparatively. It is to be remembered here that numbers provided for features are given for ease of reference.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURE 1 : ELLIPSIS

Omission of some elements in an utterance is more common in spoken language than in written language. Even though there are a variety of ellipses , 'Situational Ellipsis' occurs more frequently and is useful to put into practice to speak effectively. For example:

Speaker 1: [What is] Your name ?

Speaker 2 : [My name is] Smith.

Speaker 1: Where did John go?

Speaker 2: [He went to the] Market.

Example 2:

Speaker A: [Are you]coming? (No Ellipsiis)

Speaker A: coming? (Ellipsis)

SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURE 2 : Left dislocation is a process where items semantically co-referential to the subject or object is fronted to appear before the subject.This phenomenon is quite natural in conversation and the speaker uses it to direct the listener to the topic of the sentence.

As Hughes and McCarthy (1998, 273) note, heads are both " an act of sensitivity to the listener" and a "a reflection of the exigencies of face-to-face interaction and real-time nature of talk." Heads allow speakers to highlight the topic they want to talk

about before commenting on it, giving both the speaker and the listener more processing time in real-time communication(Cullen and Kuo 2007).

Example: That girl up there , she is my sister.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURE3: TAILS OR RIGHT DISLOCATION

Just as there is a slot to be filled up by a topic through left dislocation, there is also a place at the end after the constituents of the clause have been uttered. Any phrases added at the end in this way are used to reinforce.

Tails can be whole phrases, as this example shows

Example :

Speaker 1 : it's very nice, the road up through Skipton to the Dales (McCarthy and Carter 1995, 211).

 Or they can be just a single word

Example:

Speaker1: It's lovely

Speaker 2: Good winter wine that.

Tails have a range of functions, including clarifying a comment, expressing a personal attitude or judgment of an item, or serving an interpersonal function(Timmis 2010). Tails enable speakers to deal with the real-time processing and interactive quality of speech by allowing speakers to both edit their comments and give evaluative statements of topics (Rhulemann 2006).

SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURE 4: FILLERS AND BACK-CHANNELS

Back-channels have been called by many reserachers with many names. Fillers are words and utterances like "er," "well," "hmm," ""um," that do not have specific meaning but rather fill time and allow to collect the speakers thoughts (Willis 2003). Back-channels are words and utterances like "uh-huh," "oh," "yeah," and "I see" which are used to acknowedge what the speaker is saying and encourage the speaker to continue (Stenstrom 2004). Without fillers and back-channels conversation in English , the interaction sounds awkward because they serve the very purpose of communicative and interpersonal functions.(Willis 2003).

Example:

Speaker1: I saw this man there.

Speaker2 : yeah

Speaker1 : And he was staring at me as if… we met before.

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Speaker 2: yeah.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURE 5: CHUNKS

Chunks are fixed patterns of words or phrases which are flexible to get stuck to other elements in an utterance and are useful as ready-made lexical units of a language(Cullen and Kuo 2007).According to Leech (2000) speakers readily depend on relatively fixed words and phrases to fill particular grammatical function under real-time pressures of actual speech performance. Cullen and Kuo (2007 ,370) cite different functions for different phrasal chunks, including terms to (1) create vagueness (e.g.," sort of," "kind of," and "stuff like that"), (2)modify and show politeness (e.g., "a bit " and "a little bit"), and (3) act as discourse markers (e.g., "you know" and "I mean"). Cullen and Kuo (2007) also note it is the phrases like these which allow the speaker to fill pause during rethinking or reorientation of the discourse under the constraints of real-time conversation.

Apart from these features mentioned here there are some more features like the flexibility in the placement of adverbials like

Example: I was worried I was going to lose it and I did almost.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE FEATURE 6: VAGUE LANGUAGE-

Vague words form the part of the spoken language; words and phrases such as 'thing', 'stuff', 'or so', 'or something', 'or anything', 'or whatever' and 'sort of'. Vague language is useful to avoid being precise and non-committal at times during conversations.

Deixis is the process of referring to time , place and person using words like this', 'these', 'that', 'those', 'here' and 'there'.

Modality too varies in function from standard English to spoken English in terms of modifying the speaker listener relations in the speech as Carter puts it :In most standard written grammars modality is described mainly in terms of modal verbs (for example, 'may', 'might', 'can', 'could', 'must', 'should' and 'ought to').In spoken English, however, the picture is more varied and 'modal expressions' play a part in making sure, in particular, that utterances don't sound too assertive or definite. Like 'vague language', these modal expressions help to soften what is said. They include words and phrases such as 'possibly', 'probably', 'I don't know', 'I don't think', 'I think', 'I suppose' and 'perhaps'(Carter , 10).

Spoken language Feature 7: Frequency of Negation in Speech and Writing- Speakers use negation in speech as a sort of taking time to process the speech in their minds . But along with questions , answers , positive responses there are also frequent use of negation as a device to sustain the conversation . Moroover as Gunnel Tottie(1991, 43) remarks : "Perhaps the most interesting group of factors contributing to the high incidence of negative expressions in conversation is that consisting of collocations of negatives with mental verbs, and of negative expressions in questions and as supports. All of those uses of negation testify to te cooperative effort that goes into conversation."

Speakers unconsciously use negations as process of hoding on to the on-goiing conversations "by means of negative questions, especially tag questions, speakers seek corroboration from listeners, and by means of supports , listeners provide such corroboration, making it easier for speakers to continue.

Example: (British National Corpus -BNC)

1. Don't forget that clock's gone about five minutes slow.(BNC:KB7)
2. A: I don't like the downstairs one so much.
   B: No, I like tis much more. (BNC:KB7)
3. Mm, pretty quick aren't they ? (BNC:KB5)

PEDAGOGY

Among several researchers who advocate the incorporation of spoken features in the instructional materials and methods there is no consensus on the approaches and the extent of teaching spoken features to ESL learners. This article focuses on three pedagogical issues for teaching spoken grammar:

1. The necessity of providing authentic materials
2. The need for a paradigm for teaching spoken grammar to develop ESL learners communicative competence in several real-time contexts.
3. The question whether to teach production or to focus on the recognition of spoken grammar characteristics.

Teachers who want to incorporate spoken features in their teaching must reconsider these issues to suit their context.

1. INTRODUCING AUTHENTIC SPOKEN MATERIALS

Many researchers highlight the artificiality of the textbook dialogues and reiterate the need for utilizing the larger corpora of spoken data in the classroom teaching situations.(Leech 2000; Rhuhlemann 2008). In fact , Cullen and Kuo 2007 survey reveals that 24 mainstream ELT text books have partial or incomplete of spoken grammar and the emphasis has been on phrasal chunks rather on syntactic structures common to conversation. This trend in the texts books echoes the sentiment that "the type of 'conversation' most textbooks present cannot serve as a reliable model for the teaching of conversation."(Ruhlemannn 2008, 683-684). Now , it will be clear that the learners should be given sufficient exposure to spoken features of grammar. The ELT teachers who are assigned to teacher inauthentic materials should improvise their materials by including authentic audios and videos and other instructional materials like the spoken data collected from various corpora including constructed examples to serve the purpose. This is to say some judicious combination of authentic materials and intuitions based materials will certainly go long way in desiging context-sensitive materials. And this will surely retain the interest of the leaerners as they will readily relate the topic that is taught them.

2. IDENTIFYING THE BEST TIME TO TEACH SPOKEN GRAMMAR

Because of the function of spoken grammar in conversation and frequency in corpus data numerous researchers in the field recommend using it in all language classes (Cullen and Kuo 2007; McCarthy2006;Goh2009;Timmis2002; Mumford2009; Ruhlemann 2008).

Language pedagogy that claims to support the teaching and learning of speaking skills does itself a disservice if it ignores what we know about the spoken language. Whatever else may be the result of imaginative methodologies for eliciting classroom, there can be little hope for a natural spoken output on the part of language learners if the input is stubbornly rooted in models that owe their origin and shape to the written language. . . . Therefore, we believe it is timely to consider some of the insights a spoken corpus can offer, and to attempt to relate them more globally to theoverall problem of designing a pedagogical spoken grammar.(McCarthy 2006 , 29)

Unless one understands and acknowledges the important difference between spoken and written grammar one cannot emphasize the spoken communication and communicative language teaching. This reiterates the fact that spoken grammar should be taught in all contexts of language learning where the goal of second language teaching is enabling the understanding and producing spoken language. Nowadays there is also an academic debate that certain language tasks should be contextualized to suit the purpose.

Mumford (2009) argues that learners can benefit from the learning of some spoken features of the language and identifies forms of language which contribute to the fluency and naturalness in conversation such as fillers, heads, tails, ellipsis, and phrasal chunks. Many surveys show that teachers support teaching characteristics of spoken language though specific groups have different on what features are to be covered. Similar survey by Timmis (2002) teachers feel that learners be exposed to reasonable amount of spoken features. Again a survey by Goh (2009) on teachers from China and Singapore reveals that exposure to spoken features raises an awareness on spoken and written language. If the goal of the learners is to understand and produce spoken language then these learners should be taught and exposed to spoken grammar in the language classrooms.

3. RECOGNIZING ONLY OR RECOGNIZING AND PRODUCING SPOKEN GRAMMAR FEATURES

On the question of whether the learners are required to just notice the spoken grammar features or do they have to produce after identifying the features, McCarthy and Carter (1995) suggest a three " I's " methodology for teaching spoken grammar. The three I's stand for 'Illustration', 'Interaction', and 'Induction'. The spoken data is presented first and highlighted , and learners are then encouraged to observe and develop their capacity to notice features of spoken English (McCarthy and Carter 1995, 217).

Cullen and Kuo (2007, 382) remark that because features of spoken grammar serve important communicative functions "relative to the unplanned, interactive, and interpersonal nature of conversation," they "cannot simply be covered by more conventional structures." Most suitable and feasible approach would be to introduce a select few spoken features and adding more and more features gradually as the learners feel confident with some features.

Usual conventions of transcribing can be found in Biber et al. , Carter and McCarthy and Joan Swann (2001) and Suzanne Eggins and Diane Slade (1997). Once the learners have spent adequate time on practicing transcribing, recognizing and incorporating multiple spoken grammar features into their speech their language repertoire will have required language resources at their disposal.

Conclusion: The ultimate goal of Communicative Language Teaching is to make learners fluent communicators in all real time conversations. Because speaking competence according to Johnson (1996:155) is "combinatorial skill" that "involves doing various things at the same time"

So many communicative methodologies have prioritized the spoken aspect of the language. ESL learners should be given an opportunity to recognize the features of spoken grammar and reproduce them in their speech. Many ESL teachers may naturally find ESL textbooks or materials lacking in exercises dealing with spoken features of English language. In such a case the teachers may design some tasks or conversation practice suited for their teaching contexts and should generously use many resources available in various spoken corpora, transcribed interviews available on the Internet. Even today research available in the area of spoken grammar is little and there is more to come to provide us with some useful insights.

In a globalized context English is increasingly used and this should motivate the ESL learners and teachers to acknowledge the benefits of incorporating all the features of spoken grammar into their speech gradually. Finally after thorough practice ESL learners should be able to communicate in a natural way rather than being robotic and monotonous. Though there are some arguments that learners should not be stressed to produce spoken grammar features and atleast those learners who want to produce some grammar features of spoken English should be provided much needed support. All in all , according to recent research in the area of Spoken Language has laid emphasis on noticing .

All the findings of spoken corpora about spoken language are pedagogically uselful. Again it also depends on the context where learners will be using such features. Notwithstanding many reservations about presenting corpus attested native speakers models to teach spoken grammar features in the classroom it is suggested here that however transactional a learner's communicative needs be there is always crossover that is all communication constitutes interpersonal element and that can be achieved first by gaining "receptive competence" and moving on to individual goals of production which makes learners to speak English in a natural way.

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