

Implicit Grammar Teaching Activities

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Abstract

As teaching of English as a Second language is concerned, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is currently popular and in practice in most of the educational institutions. Though CLT emphasizes meaning than form, it never fails to recognize both aspects of accuracy and fluency to the same extent. It's a well known fact that so far no method or approach has suggested that the rules governing the structure of the language can be deviated or violated. In fact, perfection of meaning inevitably depends on the perfection of meaning. There have been instances in the day-to-day social interactions where meaning gets distorted because of the flaw in structuring the language. This article focuses on how suitable language activities can be taught to enable students to recognize grammar patterns within the sphere of language use in real life situations. The activities introduced in the article are expected to help students to use the language in authentic circumstances in the proper form.

Key Words: Implicit Grammar Teaching, Explicit Grammar Teaching, Motivation, Real Life Situation

Introduction

Teaching of any language neglecting to focus on its grammar patterns may be unsuccessful, as grammar is well recognized as the set of rules governing the proper functioning of language. But what passes under criticism is the notion that students master the grammar rules without achieving the ability to function in the language using such grammar knowledge. In other words students learn about the language but not to use the language to fulfill their needs.

The very question whether one should learn the grammar of language in order to be proficient in that language is commonly asked often. There have been various responses to this question. So far no consensus has been reached between those who advocate the necessity of learning grammar in isolation and those who contradict the idea of mastering the grammar rules. Anyhow one ought to bear in mind that grammar is the byproduct of the invention of language. In other words, the fixed, definite form (rules governing the structure of language) is derived from the language. It is true that it is the structural rules that provide regular features and shape to a language. But it doesn't imply that form is primary and meaning secondary. While recognizing these facts, one should not ignore the phenomenon that a child gradually acquires its mother tongue unconsciously with no focus on grammar.

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Nevertheless, in case of second language learning, a good extent of grammar knowledge will be beneficial for the learner. In the initial stage, through repeated practices such as drills and language activities grammar rules can be instilled in the mind of learners. In compliance with grammar rules the learner may attempt to make short utterances in the beginning and long utterances later. Once the learner has familiarized with the language patterns with grammatical clues, in course of time the learner will be able to make utterances spontaneously with no reliance on grammar rules.

Bright (1970:p.236) commented, “Nobody disputes that the foreign student must learn the grammar of English in the sense that the sentences he produces must conform to English patterns in the accepted model. We cannot be content with communication, however clear the plain sense, if it carries also such depressing messages to the reader about the writer’s level of literacy. The learner has got to master the conventional use of the grammatical signals of the language.”

Bright (1970:p.237) further went on commenting, “We would all accept that an accurate description of the grammar of the model we wish to present is a necessary and useful piece of equipment. Most people would be prepared to agree that a comparative grammar of the first and second languages would also be useful although few such studies have so far been made.”

Bezrukuva (1996:p.89) remarked, “Grammar is always looked upon as a necessary but a very boring part of any foreign language study and it is especially challenging”.

Two Distinct Approaches to Second Language Learning

Grammar teaching can be conducted in two distinct ways, i.e. 1.Implicit Grammar Teaching and 2. Explicit Grammar Teaching.

Implicit Grammar Teaching

In this type of approach, activities enabling students to recognize and acquire grammar patterns in real life situations simulated in the classroom are introduced. The following benefits have been realized in this approach.

- There is high level of motivation among students.
- The sessions are more enjoyable and students show greater keenness on lessons.
- Students are prompted to focus more on meaning than on form, in an implicit manner.
- There is restriction on the use of grammatical terms of which students are generally “allergic”.
- The approach appropriately guides students to correct errors.

- It eliminates boredom which is usually associated with explicit grammar teaching approach and builds up confidence in students to use the language for communicative purposes.
- Students unconsciously imbibe the inherent grammar rules for using the language authentically.

Steps to be followed in Implicit Grammar Teaching Approach

Teachers are expected to follow the steps outlined below when adopting the implicit grammar teaching approach.

1. The teacher should be thoroughly conscious of the grammar point with the knowledge of where and when such grammar point is used in day-to-day life. In plain terms, context in which the grammar point applies is to be given more importance.

For example, when teaching Present Simple Tense, real examples of when it is used like an Officer's daily routine duties can be dealt with. Or else each student in the class may be asked to narrate his/her usual daily activities.

2. Particular grammar point in authentic use should be made to be grasped by students. For example, when dealing with Present Simple, questions like, "When do you get up in the morning?", "What do you have for your breakfast usually?", "What is your favourite subject?" etc. can be asked and answers elicited from students can be written on the board.
3. First give adequate oral practices and then written practices. For example, Rajan usually speaks fast, Mohan speaks slowly, Mala speaks distinctively, etc.
4. Give practice in all forms at syntax level.

Present Simple Tense

(a) Question – Affirmative - Negative

Gopal learns English hard

Does he learn English hard?

Yes, he learns English hard.

Yes, he does.

Does he learn French hard?

No, he does not learn French hard.

No, he doesn't

The children play cricket in the evening.
Do the children play cricket in the evening?
Yes, they play cricket in the evening.
Yes, they do.

Do they play volleyball in the evening?
No, they do not play volleyball in the evening.
No, they don't.

(b) Active – Passive

Mother cooks rice.
Rice is cooked by mother.

Ranjan collects old coins.
Old coins are collected by Ranjan.

Mohan eats an apple daily.
An apple is eaten by Mohan daily.

Rany draws nice pictures.
Nice pictures are drawn by Rany.

Further Advice on Implicit Grammar Teaching Activities

See to it that the examples you select to be taught in the class are real and context – based. Deal with the real life experiences of students so that their experience within the classroom will be similar to their experience outside the classroom. Students' real food habits, real hobbies, real entertainment activities, real likes and dislikes, real sports involvements etc. can be discussed.

Avoid explaining grammar rules specifically and laying greater emphasis on grammar terms like adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions etc. in isolation of the context in which they occur.

Acknowledge what is communicated by them is more important than the form being discussed. At the same time, let them realize that grammar is an effective device for real communication.

In case of errors, in order to avoid individual embarrassment gather the entire errors at a final stage and allow the class as a whole to correct them.

Allow students ample opportunities for interactive practices.

Some Implicit Grammar Teaching Activities

Teaching Adjectives

In this type of activity, incomplete sentences are given and students are asked to complete the sentences by finding a suitable adjective from the clue within brackets. The first letter of the adjective is given to induce the process of thinking. This kind of activity creates thrill, eagerness, curiosity and a sense of discovery among students and prompts them to work out with greater interest.

1. Owls are n----- birds. (Active in the night)
2. Elephants are h----- (Food habit)
3. Lions are c----- (Food habit)
4. Frogs are a----- (Living medium)
5. Men are m----- (Can not live forever)
6. Foxes are c----- (Characteristic)
7. He is an i----- liar (Can't be corrected)
8. Some types of cancer are i----- (Can't be healed)
9. The e----- part inside a nut is called kernel. (Fit to be eaten)
10. Some stars in the sky are not v----- to the naked eye. (Can't be seen)
11. His handwriting is quite i----- (Can't be read)
12. The man spoke in an i----- voice. (Can't be heard)
13. Her articles are v----- (Using more words)
14. Mohan is the l----- heir to the property. (In accordance with law)
15. Citizens hate a----- rulers. (Haughty)

Teaching Present Simple Tense

- A) The teacher may ask the following questions and guide the students to answer them properly. Then the teacher may explain the context\situation when such actions represented by the answers take place. The action to be discussed should relate to students' own experience.

How do you come to school?

I come to school by bus.

What does Rany bring for lunch?
She brings rice and curry for lunch.

Does Balan score the highest marks for Maths at the term test usually?

No, Balan does not score the highest marks for Maths at the term test usually.
No, he doesn't.

Then who scores the highest marks for Maths at the term test usually?
Thuva scores the highest marks for Maths at the term test usually.

Do you watch films often?
No, we do not watch films often.
No, we don't.

After this activity, the teacher may point out to the students that these actions discussed here are regular actions.

B) Next the teacher may introduce a set of some other examples as found below.

Water freezes at 0C or 32F .
Cats love warmth.
Mosquitoes breed fast in winter.
Mr. Ramesh works in a Government Department.

Now the teacher makes the students understand that the above expressions speak about facts.

C) Here the teacher provides a different set of examples.

Lal leaves for England next month.
The New Year Day falls on a Sunday this year.
Our Geography teacher does not take the class this week.
We go on a tour next month.

Once the students finish going through these sentences, the teacher may enable them to realize that these expressions denote fixed events in the future.

D) As for the Present Simple tense, the teacher can say and write examples which are real experiences within the class itself.

I think Uma writes legibly.
I want you to write down what I dictate now.
Do you understand what Raja says?

With similar examples, students can be made to deduct that the above expressions represent our thoughts and feelings at the time of speaking and such feelings last for a short span of time.

Teaching Adverbs

The teacher can appropriately arrange for creating real examples within the class itself by involving students in some meaningful activities, to teach the function of adverbs.

For example, after allowing some students to read a piece of text, following expressions can be made, according to the observation.

Ramesh reads slowly.
Ratha reads fast.

After letting some students write a few sentences on the board, following expressions can be made.

Rany writes legibly.
Raja writes illegibly.

Similarly the following examples can be constructed.

Mano speaks audibly.
Mala speaks inaudibly.

Sita pronounces the word correctly.
Sirani pronounces the word incorrectly.

After dealing with classroom examples, home front experiences, leisure time activities may be included to make the students familiarize with the use of adverbs.

Rathees receives friends charmingly who visit him.
Mother cooks meals tastefully.
The cat slyly got into the kitchen.
Manon bowled very fast.

Conclusion

Through implicit grammar teaching activities, boredom and a feeling of hatred which students generally experience when they are taught grammar explicitly can be eliminated. The implicit grammar teaching approach motivates students and they instantly find applicability. This approach tactfully leads them to identify errors and self correct them. Also students are able to acquire the patterns unconsciously and relate them meaningfully to their real life experiences. Unlike the monotony caused when the abstract

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rules are merely explained in isolation of context, students are keener to use them for communicative purposes. Further, students are guided to focus more on meaning than on form.

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