

# **Effective Grammar Teaching in ESL Classroom**

Rabeya Nasrin Khan

Student ID: 03203004

Department of English and Humanities  
August 2007



BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

# **Effective Grammar Teaching in ESL Classroom**

An Internship Report

Submitted to the Department of English and Humanities

Of

BRAC University

By

Rabeya Nasrin Khan

Student ID: 03203004

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Bachelor of Arts in English

August 2007

## Acknowledgement

This work would be imperfect without acknowledging the support that I received from many faculty members of my department. I am greatly thankful to my supervisor, Asma Anis Khan, for her immense patience, guidance and support throughout all the stages of this report. I would also like to thank Shaheena Choudhury, Mahmudul Haque for guiding me while I was doing my internship. I would also like to thank Ferdous Azim, Najmeen Haque for encouraging me throughout these four years of my course. Finally, my warmest gratitude goes to my family for being there for me and supporting me all the time.

## **Table of Content**

1. Introduction	1
2. Literature Review	2
3. My Experience of Grammar Teaching	4
4. Recommendations	7
5. Conclusion	9
6. Bibliography	11

## 1. Introduction

Grammar is very helpful for effective language learning. It can be taught through different methods of second language teaching. Although the principles of the methods are different from one another, there is always a focus on grammar, whether explicit or implicit. Language teachers and educators, however, seem to disagree on this point as the following quotations illustrate:

“The important point is that the study of grammar as such is neither necessary nor sufficient for learning to use a language.” (Newmark 1976, pg-165)

“The language teacher’s view of what constitutes knowledge of a language is...a knowledge of the syntactic structure of sentences...The assumption that the language teacher appears to make is that once this basis is provided, then the learner will have no difficulty in dealing with the actual use of language.” (Widdoson 1979, pg 49-60)

“The evidence seems to show beyond that though it is by communicative use in real ‘speech acts’ that the new language ‘sticks’ in the learner’s mind, insight into pattern is an equal partner with communicative use in what language teachers now see as the dual process of acquisition/learning. Grammar, approached as a voyage of discovery into the patterns of language rather than the learning of perspective rules, is no longer a bogey word.” (Hawkins 1984, pg-150)

According to the first extract, there is no need to learn grammar in order to learn a language. But it is perhaps, a little misleading, and misses the point. The important question is not whether teaching and learning grammar is necessary or sufficient for language learning, but whether it helps or not. According to the second extract, learners do not need the knowledge of grammar in real-life discourse. The implication is that the learners need to learn how to make meaning within real context, and how to create longer



unit of language than single sentences. In the third extract, the writer is affirming the usefulness of grammar for effective language learning.

My experience as an English language teacher during my internship also confirms the view expressed in the last extract. I realized that grammar teaching can actually help learners to learn a second language effectively. From my point of view, if we avoid the traditional perspective of grammar rule teaching and rather teach learners how to use grammar in real life discourse it will be helpful for them. This realization motivated me to write this report.

## **2. Literature Review**

A look at the history of English Language Teaching shows that grammar teaching can be done either inductively or deductively. Grammar Translation is the first method that was used for teaching language. It approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of target language. In this method Grammar is taught deductively. It is taught by the presentation and study of grammar rules, which are then practiced through translation exercises. In Grammar Translation method, a syllabus is followed for the sequencing of grammar points and there is an attempt to teach grammar in an organized and systematic way.

In the method following GTM grammar was, however, taught inductively. In this method, called the Direct Method, direct association is made between the forms and

meanings in the target language. Correct pronunciation and grammar both are emphasized here. Grammar structures are taught through examples. New vocabulary and grammar items are taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures.

This set a trend where all the methods following the Direct Method, namely, Audio-lingual Method, which approached grammar teaching inductively. This requires initial attention to meaning rather than to the form of items. In this method analogy is the foundation for language learning. "Analogy is both the cognitive process of transferring information from a particular subject (the analogue or source) to another particular subject (the target), and a linguistic expression corresponding to such a process". A technique in eliciting correct analogy is drilling. Infact the use of drills is a distinctive feature of the audio-lingual method. "The students repeat an utterance aloud as soon as they have heard it. They will do it without looking at a printed text" (Richards and Rodgers 1986, Pg - 60). The most important thing about inductive grammar teaching is that explanations of the rules are not given until students have practiced a grammar item in a variety of context and have acquired a perception of the analogies involved. Another technique used in Audio-lingual grammar teaching is memorizing dialogues. This provides the means of contextualizing key structures and illustrate situation in which structures might be used.

However, a major shift occurred in the emphasis of skill i.e. from reading and writing to speaking, and a new approach evolved called the Communicative Language Teaching Approach . This focuses on the notions and functions rather than the grammar structure.

The goal of communicative language approaches is to create a realistic context for language acquisition in the classroom. Some techniques through which CLT methods focus on the communication skill are through group and pair activities, language games, role-plays etc. However, it is the responsibility of the teacher to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities. For example, during a group activity “the teacher monitors, encourages, and suppresses the inclination to supply gaps in lexis, grammar, and strategy... At the conclusion of group activities, the teacher leads ...assisting groups in self-correction discussion”. (Richards and Rodgers 1986, Pg- 168)

### **3. My Experience of Grammar Teaching**

I taught English at the elementary level. In my teaching I have tried to avoid the traditional perspective rule-teaching of grammar. I did not give them the meaning and rules at the beginning. I have tried to teach them through text, pictures, physical objects, role-play etc. I have also chosen different techniques for teaching different grammatical aspect. I did not depend on techniques from one particular method. As a result I used an eclectic method of teaching.

At first I covered classification of noun. While teaching noun I followed the Direct Method. At first I gave examples through pictures, physical objects then I told them the meaning of the noun. When I started discussing the classification of nouns I described the proper and common noun through pictures. I showed them a picture of a boy and girl and asked them to give them names. They said, “The boy’s name is ‘John’ and the girl’s name is ‘Tina’.” I asked them to make two sentences with these two words. In order to



explain further, I asked about their birthdays and where they lived in. One of the student said that her birthday was on March and the other said that he lived in *Banani*. I explained that as these words express the name of specific day and place, they are proper nouns. I also explained common noun, collective noun and material noun with the aid of pictures (horse, dog, cricket team etc) and physical objects (books, pens, pencils, table made of wood, bottle of water etc). But when I taught abstract noun I used another technique of Direct Method, which involves making associations of ideas. I asked a student, "If you borrow a pen from your friends what will you do? Will you give it back?" Then the student said, "Yes, I will give it back." Then I asked, "Why?" He said, "This is not my pen. I have borrowed this pen from him. So I should give it back to him." Then I explained that this is called honesty, an abstract noun. Then I said, "If we use a word not to name the person, place or thing but to name the ideas or qualities of a person then it will be an abstract noun."

I also followed Direct Method while teaching Countable and Uncountable noun. I focused on the physical objects and pictures while teaching countable and uncountable nouns. I came to the class with a box of candies and told one of the students to count the candies. She counted and said that there are forty candies in the box. Then I said that as we can count candies, so we can call it countable noun. I also told them, "Last night I was trying to count the stars. What do you think? Could I count the stars?" My students replied that we cannot count the stars. I asked them, "What is star?" They replied, "Star is an uncountable noun." Direct method was also helpful in explaining to the students which kind of nouns are countable and which are uncountable.

When it came to teaching numbers I intended to use the Direct Method again but ended up using techniques from Grammar Translation Method as well. Thus it became an eclectic method. I took a pencil from a student and asked, "How many pencils are in my hand now?" They replied, "Only one pencil". I said, "We use a word to determine only one thing, place or person than it will be a singular number." Then I took three pencils from the students and asked, "How many pencils are in my hand now?" They replied, "Three pencils." I said, "We use a word to determine more than one thing, places or persons than it will be the plural number of noun. I also said, "Here we add an "s" to make the word 'pencil' plural." I gave the examples the plural form of noun in this way: Pen-Pen(s)-Pens. I drew a glass in one side of the board and three glasses on the other side. I asked them, "What is this and what are those?" They replied, "This is a glass and these are three glasses. Then I wrote down the examples in this way: glass-glass (es)-glasses and said, "Here we have added "es" to write down the plural form." I told them to come up with more examples and I wrote those examples on the board. I showed them a "leaf" and asked them, "What is this?" They replied, "This is a leaf". Then I showed them four leaves and asked, "What are these?" They replied, "There are four leaves". I wrote down on the board: leaf-le (ves)-leaves. That is, even though I used Direct Method in giving examples, I later gave out the rules of the number system of English (a technique of Grammar Translation Method) to clarify their concept.

Though grammar is not the main focus of CLT method, I tried to use some techniques of this method to make revision of pronoun more interesting. I divided the class into two

groups, ‘Tom’ and ‘Jerry’. I told them that I would call two students from each group and give them a situation. They had to prepare conversations by using the four types of pronoun that they had covered in class so far. They also had to do role-play with those dialogues. For example, I gave “cricket match” as a situation to *Tom* and “Doctor’s Chamber” as a situation to *Jerry*.

Two of the students from *Tom* came and played the role of Bangladeshi and Indian cricketers.

Bangladeshi Cricketer: We want to play well in this match.

Indian Cricketer: Anyone can score century against your bowling line up.

Bangladeshi Cricketer: Who will score?

Indian Cricketer: Everyone of our team will score.

Then two students from *Jerry* group played the role of doctor and patient in a doctor’s chamber:

Doctor: What is your problem?

Patient: I am suffering from fever.

Doctor: Everyone is suffering from fever in this season. I will give you name of some medicines.

I called other two students from each group and told them to identify the pronouns in those dialogues and also wrote the names of those pronouns on the board. When some of them made mistakes and I asked others to correct those mistakes. They themselves made



the corrections. So, game, role-play and self-correction, which are all techniques of CLT method, were used in my class.

#### **4. Recommendations**

As my report focuses on effective grammar teaching, I have the following recommendations for conducting a successful grammar class

- **Avoid rule-giving teaching:** In many ESL classes, particularly in Bengali medium schools in Bangladesh, grammar is taught deductively. The teacher gives some grammar rules and the students memorize those rules. Although this may ensure good grades in exam, when they are asked to apply the grammar items in real life context, they are sure to face great problems. If the teachers avoid the traditional rule-giving of teaching and teach grammar inductively it will make the grammar teaching effective.
- **Engage the learner:** In ESL classes while teaching grammar, teachers directly go straight into the lesson. It is necessary to prepare the learner prepared for the lesson. Teachers need to engage the students first. They need to give students idea about their lesson by asking them some guiding questions that will lead them into the lesson.
- **Teaching through pictures and physical objects:** Teachers can give examples in the form of pictures, drawings or objects and then explain the grammar structure through those examples. If teachers show them pictures and physical objects, students can not only listen but also visualize the examples. This



visualization will reinforce what they listen and therefore will grammar teaching more meaningful and consequently effective.

- **Teaching through texts:** As I have said in the first recommendation that students know the grammar structure but cannot apply it in real life context. Teachers can teach grammar through text. It will help the students to use grammar structure in real life context.
- **Teaching through role-play:** once students know any grammar structure they need to practice it in different situation. Role-play can serve this purpose of practice and revision. If the teacher teaches through role-play, students will be able to use the structures in different situations.

In other words, by avoiding traditional grammar teaching and incorporating teaching techniques used in the CLT method (which although, focuses on the communication skill rather than grammar structure), grammar teaching can be made more interesting, meaning and effective.

## **5. Conclusion**

All over the world, grammar is taught inductively. In Europe and United States there is not existence of deductive teaching of grammar. In our country, mainly in Bengali medium schools grammar is taught deductively. Most of the teachers use GTM for grammar teaching. As a result, students learn the grammar structure but cannot apply it in real life discourse. We are claiming to be using CLT approaches in our elementary and secondary English language classrooms, but in reality, we are not implementing it.

This internship gave me an excellent opportunity to put in practice whatever I have learned in my theory courses, namely, *ELT Methodology*, *Teaching Technique*, *Teaching Practicum* and *Second Language Acquisition*. I learned what works and what does not work in a real classroom. Although, I intended to apply many teaching techniques from different methods in my class, it was not completely possible because of some constraints like short class duration and large class size. However, whatever techniques I applied to teach grammar, resulted in an eclectic method which drew in techniques from different methods as varied as the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method and Communicative Language Teaching Methods. The internship provided me with a platform where I could apply my learning.

## **Bibliography**

1. Harmer, J. *How to teach English*. Logman, 1998.
2. Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Logman, 2003
3. Nunan, David. *Designing Tasks of the Communicative Classroom*. Oxford University Press, 1989
4. Ur, Penny. *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 1996
5. Richard, J.C and Theodore.S Rodgers. *Approach and Method in Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press, 1986
6. Carter, Ronald and David, Nunan. *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge University Press, 2001