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Approaches in Teaching Grammar to Young Learners: A Scoping Review

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT

This review elucidates the approaches in teaching grammar. Specifically, it aims to identify the one most suitable for young learners of grammar. For that purpose, this paper collected and analyzed papers and literature relevant to the aim, considering their recency and nature. The approaches include deductive or traditional, inductive or conversational, and eclectic. The advantage of the inductive approach is that students can focus on the language because they set the rules for themselves even before practicing. Nonetheless, the deductive approach is time-saving due to its straight-to-the-point methodology. Finally, the eclectic approach allows the teacher to use combined activities from a range of language methodologies and approaches, but the freedom of using different activities discourages the teachers from using their teaching approach. It is clear that since children are in their prime, they still need constant guidance from their teachers. Thus, this paper shows that the deductive approach in teaching, not only grammar, is still the best for them.

1. Introduction

Second language acquisition is one of the most difficult tasks of a language learner. With the fast-growing number of language learners comes the great need for language teachers and language learning strategies. One integral part of second language acquisition is grammar acquisition.

Every language has its grammar. The grammar of the language is important. Whether it is one's own mother tongue or second language that one is learning. Rahman and Ahmed (2017) stated that grammar is perhaps more important to a second language learner than to a native speaker who has intuitively internalized the grammar of the language, whereas the second language learner has to make a conscious effect to master those aspects of the language which account for grammaticality. Thus, it is necessary to learn the grammar of the language. So, without knowledge of the grammar of a particular language, one cannot properly use the language in communication.

Language without grammar, according to Fischer (2015), would be chaotic. It is impossible to describe language without seeking its underlying framework, and since grammar is the structure of a language, it would be impossible to really learn a language without drawing on grammar in some way.

One persistent debate in the field of second language grammar acquisition is whether grammar should be learned explicitly through conscious learning of grammatical rules or it should be acquired implicitly in the context of meaningful language rules. While it is clear that not all types of instruction are equally effective, what's unclear is the type of instruction that is most effective. Another integral part of language acquisition is the learner of the language. The learners' readiness to acquire language and their differences can affect the success of grammar teaching and learning. Hulin and Na (2014) pointed out that explicit instruction is helpful only if learners are developmentally ready to acquire the target structure. This is because the learner's existing or prior knowledge acts as a kind of filter that sifts knowledge and lets through only that which the learner is ready to incorporate into the interlanguage system.

This suggests that teachers should consider learners' developmental readiness and try to teach per their levels. The effect of instruction can be greatly affected by various individual learner differences, such as age, personality, language proficiency,

motivation, culture, and even their L1. Teaching grammar to adults is already hard, but teaching grammar to young learners would be even difficult. According to Podavets and Gerok-Yerzhanova (2021), another challenge for grammar teachers would be to consider the best ways of teaching grammar to young learners.

In line with this, the paper aims to expound on the three main approaches in grammar teaching, the nature of young learners of grammar, the advantages and disadvantages of each approach to young learners, and the approach in learning that is most suitable for them.

2. Approaches in Teaching Grammar

This section shows the related literature and studies deemed relevant to the objective of the scoping review. This includes a brief overview of the concepts of the approaches in grammar teaching and the review of related studies with which the current study is closely related or shares similarities.

According to Schwarz (2014), grammar teaching should be done as efficiently as possible due to the time constraints and the fact that it should be done by teachers. Prolonged attention to grammar is difficult to justify. Abdullah and Shah (2014) also stated that the study of grammar allows language users to analyze patterns and avoid making mistakes. In this way, it can lead to more accurate writing and speaking skills among the students. While there are teachers who prefer to use the structural method in teaching their students thinking that this method is the best to enhance the proficiency in the language, there are also some teachers who prefer to use the communicative method in teaching grammar to their students. Their belief is teaching grammar should be done in a communicative manner whereby the students will grasp the parts of speech without going through the tiring and boring way of learning the language. Moreover, according to Bebeniec (2015), these approaches are obviously represented in the construction and delivery, as for example evidenced by language users' ability to comprehend.

2.1 The Deductive Approach in Teaching Grammar

The first approach in teaching grammar is the deductive approach. This is also called 'rule-driven learning'. Schwarz (2014) stated that this approach is the academic and scholarly one that was devised in order to teach Latin and Greek. The approach is very simple, starting from rules to examples. First, the teacher writes an example on the board or draws attention to the example in the textbook. The underlying rule is explained, nearly always in the mother tongue and using the meta-language of grammar. Finally, the students practice applying the rule, orally and in writing. Special attention is paid to areas of conflict between the grammar of the mother tongue and that of the target language. The whole approach is cognitive, with learners considering the rules and weighing their words before they speak or write. Little attention is paid to the value of the message.

Umida, Dilora, and Umar (2020) added that the deductive approach is the traditional or explicit approach in teaching grammar. In this approach, the emphasis is on basic skills. The curriculum starts from the parts, where learning is based on repetition. The teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority because the belief is that teachers disseminate information to students, while students receive knowledge, and they work alone using their textbooks or workbooks. Finally, the assessment is through declarative knowledge testing, wherein there is a specific and correct answer for every question.

In the present times, however, the aforementioned approaches are called the 'overt' approach. According to Abdullah and Shah (2014), the overt approach is teaching the rules of grammar to the students as it is. It is a process of dividing the whole parts of speech into manageable bite-size chunks and then introducing these to the students, one chunk per lesson so that they gradually and systematically accumulate a complete picture of the language. The grammar rules are explained explicitly by the teacher when presenting them. The teacher presents the rule/pattern/generalization and then goes to provide practice in the application of those rules. Fischer (2015) added that Overt instruction with regard to academic literacy on the part of the teachers included the formulation and sharing of these explicit assessment criteria and giving oral feedback on reports at different stages of drafting. Moreover, overt instruction had been given in different ways: the students had received assessment criteria and oral feedback (based on the assessment criteria) from the teachers on student presentations. Giving oral (rather than written) feedback on this program is in line with feedback practices in higher education.

Furthermore, Christensson and Seiberling (2021) studied about Focus on Forms approach in teaching grammar. This approach involves drawing learners' attention to grammatical forms by giving the learner's grammar rules. They added that the planned Focus on Form approach makes a communicative-based task that brings out the use of a specific grammatical form by the learners. This approach uses the Presentation-Practice-Production PPP technique. It is a framework for teaching grammar. Although PPP lessons provide skills, most students, according to Richards and Rodgers (2014, as cited by Pham and Do 2021), are unable to communicate effectively in English. In addition, a number of students have shown that they felt difficult to study grammar and that it is a kind of demotivating factor in their studies.

2.2 The Inductive Approach in Teaching Grammar
The next approach is the inductive approach. This approach is also called the 'rule developing' approach. Schwarz (2014) stated that this approach induces the learners to realize grammar rules without any form of prior explanation. The path is from examples to rules. Induction, or learning through experience, is seen as the natural route to learning. Teachers who use this approach believe that the rules will become evident if learners are given or exposed to enough appropriate examples. When teaching a grammar point, their first step is to demonstrate the meaning to the class. The teacher keeps silent through this stage except to correct if necessary. The grammar point is shown on the board only after extensive practice. Explanations are not always made, though they may be elicited from the students themselves. In such cases, the mother tongue might well be used. The model is copied and the class may be required to write sample sentences from the model.

Umida, Dilora, and Umar (2020) added that the inductive approach is also called the 'constructivist' approach. This approach emphasizes big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts. The students' learning is interactive, wherein knowledge is built based on what the students already know. The teacher's role is interactive as well. The teacher creates a dialogue with the students while helping them construct their own knowledge. Students work in groups, so every learner's questions and interests are valued. There is also a varied assessment which includes students' works, observation, point of view, and even tests. However, the process of learning is deemed equally important as the product.

Chung (2005, as cited by Abdullah and Shah, 2015) mentioned that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or the covert approach has become the basis of the English Language Syllabus for many countries including Malaysia. In the covert approach, the teacher gets the people involved in using the structure without drawing attention to grammatical rules. The student's attention is focused on the activity and not the grammar rules but they have ample opportunity to practice the question forms because, in a covert approach, communicative learning is given priority. The approach creates an environment where a lot of languages, known and unknown are met, mainly when doing speaking and listening tasks and where the students are helped with a new language only when they already have some awareness of it and have curiosity or questions about it.

Furthermore, Christensson and Seiberling (2021) stated that focusing on Form, which can be incidental or planned, involves drawing attention to the grammatical forms during communicative-based activities. Incidental Focus on Form is when the teacher marks grammatical forms when errors occur in learners' communication, whereas planned Focus on Form is when the teacher makes a communicative-based task that brings out the use of a specific grammatical form by the learners.

2.3 The Eclectic Approach in Teaching Grammar
The last one is the eclectic approach. This approach is the combination of all advantages of the two aforementioned approaches. While it is true that language is used for communicative purposes, an explanation of grammar concepts is still necessary from time to time. There will be no formal language teaching because students can pick up the rules over time. This approach will not only benefit the learners. It will also enable the teacher to address the different needs and learning styles of the students. Schwarz (2014) added that the middle path is the best when it comes to teaching grammar, as in all choices of pedagogy.

3. Teaching Young Learners
Podavets O. & Gerok-Yerzhanova O. (2021) reviewed the methodology of the English teaching and learning process, to arise the problems that the young learners meet while learning, to consider the best ways of teaching grammar to young learners from the authors` point of view. There are many methods of teaching grammar to young learners. The principal methods of teaching grammar are as follows: Grammar-Translation, Direct, Audio-lingual, and Communicative Language Teaching. The methodology used was eclectic, because it used combined several approaches.

3.1 Teaching Grammar to Young Learners
Young language learners are those learning a foreign language and who are doing so during the first 6 or 7 years of formal schooling. Lynne Cameron defines young learners as "those between five and twelve years of age." Scott and Ytreberg understand young learners as "pupils between five and ten or eleven years old."

Cambridge University Press (2021) is interested in the errors produced by young learners. As there was considerable variation within and across groups as to whether participants produced incorrect articles, adjectives, or both, they compared between-group effect sizes and confidence intervals instead of using mixed-effects logistic regression models (Cumming, Reference Cumming2014). They calculated the proportion of erroneous articles, adjectives, and both to the total number of errors for each participant and then generated bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals and effect sizes with a standardized scale. The methodology used was deductive, because of the high confidence interval due to repetition.

3.2 Teaching Grammar Development to Young Learners

Slobin (2021) said that the speech of very young children has a peculiar force in eliciting these sorts of expanded imitations from adults. Changes with age in the use of imitations and expansions are also suggestive. As suggestive as the entire preceding train of argument may be, however, we have virtually no evidence that adult expansions of child speech play an essential or even facilitative role in normal grammatical development. The issue here, of course, is to determine which aspects of the adult-child dialogue are especially facilitative to grammatical development. Courtney B. Cazden expected to find that both expansion and modeling would result in greater grammatical development in comparison with the control group, but that expansion would be the superior technique. Individual children in the groups had daily sessions of 30-40 minutes with an adult. The methodology used was inductive, because the learners observed their surroundings then imitate them.

3.3 Teaching Grammatical Illusions to Young Learners

Toshiyuki Yamada (2021) presents a study that explores a new use of data for error analysis in the second language (L2) acquisition. The results showed that the hypothesis holds in the determiner drop, particularly indefinite determiners, but does not in the absence of number or subject-verb agreement. We discuss the experimental results related to grammatical illusions both theoretically and practically/educationally. The present study has proposed that the production data collected for error analysis can be made use of as a source of understanding L2 comprehension. Our questionnaire experiment, exploiting the data for error analysis, has shown that grammatical illusions are useful as a diagnostic test for which grammatical items are difficult to acquire. Consequently, the more difficult a grammatical item is for acquisition, the more often grammatical illusions related to the item would be observed. The current study has several limitations. The methodology used was deductive, because the grammar illusion was used in a diagnostic test, to measure the basic skills of the learners.

3.4 Teaching Grammatical Accuracy to Young Learners

Rau, A., & Johansson, C., (2021) stated that with the rise of English as the go-to language in the world, it has also become an important subject in the Swedish education system, aimed at preparing students for the English requirements expected of them in higher education and business. However, communication and content have become the main focus in the classroom, with grammar and accuracy being judged as variably important from teacher to teacher. This has led to students feeling confident in speaking, but lacking the skills needed to create accurate and coherent texts, the effects of which are detrimental to their credibility and can have serious negative effects in the workplace. They investigated the efficacy of different methods of corrective feedback aimed at improving grammatical accuracy in student writing. Eight studies were selected, looking at different methods of corrective feedback. The results showed that corrective feedback is indeed effective, but that many factors such as language proficiency, previous experience, the scope of corrective feedback, and error type influence the outcome of the corrective feedback. The implications of this are very relevant to the English classroom in Sweden as the classroom is not homogenous and teachers must take care to become aware of each student's individual needs, prior knowledge, and preferences in order to maximize the effectiveness of the corrective feedback. Future research could explore the effects of Dynamic corrective feedback and peer-reviewing, providing students with many opportunities to write and revise short texts while simultaneously actively engaging with language form. The methodology used was overt or deductive because of the teacher's guidance.

4. Implications

There are three approaches in grammar teaching: Inductive, Deductive, and Eclectic. The advantage of the inductive approach is that students can focus on using the language because they set the rule for themselves before they practice. However, it is time-consuming for the teacher, since the time taken to work out a rule can be spent by practicing. On the other hand, the deductive approach is time-saving due to its straight-to-the-point methodology. Many rules can be explained quickly and allow more time for practice. Though it was quick, some students can't understand it, especially young learners. The eclectic approach allows the teacher to use combined activities from a range of language methodologies and approaches, but the freedom of using different activities discourages the teachers from using their own teaching approach.

Furthermore, Children have special characteristics in learning— they have limited attention and concentration span, use language skills long before they are aware of them, and when working or playing, they like to be accompanied by others. Most of them do not like to work alone. Children need physical movements and real activities to stimulate their thinking. They tend to be keen and enthusiastic if they are taught using or being involved in fun activities. They love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves. They also respond to the language well through concrete things (visual things) rather than abstract things. They learn by mimics, using gestures, and body movements. The physical world is essential and dominant at all times. They sometimes have problems distinguishing the real world from the imaginary world, and of course, they can`t always understand the world of adults. The teacher needs to use the instructions and the language and phrases appropriately so that the children can easily get the message.

5. Conclusion

Teachers should consider all the peculiarities of young learners. We should not forget that there is a big difference between a five-year-old child and an eleven-year-old because of the most sensitive period, when the young learners acquire their native language, they can speak, read and write in it. Since children are in their prime, it is clear that they still need constant guidance from their teachers. Thus, the deductive approach in teaching, not only grammar, is best for them.

Despite existing and used methods in English teaching, all young learners aim at the problem of grammar acquisition. As for the teachers of English, we should mention that there is no single methodology used. A single class consists of mixed-ability learners, and their levels differ. So, how will a teacher know how to deal with them? Also, what kind of instruction is suitable for these learners? One way would be by administering pretests and needs analysis. Then based on the result, The use of a wide range of activities and instructional strategies will be beneficial for all learners. That`s why we should try to consider the advantages of the approaches of the teaching process and use them for the benefit of our learners.

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