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CONTRIBUTION OF TEACHING GRAMMAR COMMUNICATIVELY IN BASIC LEVEL

KONTRIBUSI PENGAJARAN TATA BAHASA INGGRIS YANG KOMUNIKATIF PADA PEMBELAJARAN TINGKAT DASAR

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Abstract

Grammar is one of the most components in learning foreign language. Especially in learning English, grammar helps the learners to develop the language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. This article is a study of literature review about teaching grammar in effective way. teaching grammar contributes to the success of learners in mastering English and the teachers is better to know the best approaches and methods for teaching grammar effectively. Teaching grammar is not only about teaching the rules and construct the sentences. More than it, teaching grammar must be emphasizes on how to use grammar for communication. Dealing with this fact, the writer agrees with the approach of teaching grammar proposed by Harmer that the idea of teaching grammar is started from introducing, discovering, and practicing grammar as well as involving students in grammar games. The models of activities he presents in this book support the effective teaching approach since in practices, they involve other language skills too so that learning grammar is no more learning a set of language rules, instead, it encourages students to use the language meaningfully, appropriately as well as fluently, in either productive and receptive skills.

Keyword: Teaching, grammar, communicatively

Abstrak

Tata Bahasa adalah salah satu komponen penting dalam mempelajari Bahasa asing. Khusus dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggris, tata bahasa dapat membantu siswa dalam mengembangkan empat keterampilan bahasa, yakni; menyimak, berbicara, membaca dan menulis. Tulisan ini adalah studi kepustakaan mengenai pengajaran tata Bahasa secara efektif. Pengajaran tata bahasa memberikan kontribusi terhadap kesuksesan peserta didik dalam menguasai Bahasa Inggris dan guru-guru sebaiknya mengetahui pendekatan dan metode yang tepat untuk mengajar tata bahasa yang efektif. Pengajaran tata bahasa tidak hanya mengajarkan rumus dan konstruksi kalimat. Lebih dari pada itu, pengajaran tata bahasa juga harus mengajarkan bagaimana tata bahasa itu digunakan dalam komunikasi. Selaras dengan fakta ini, penulis sependapat dengan konsep pengajaran tata bahasa menurut Harmer yang mana memulai pengajaran tata bahasa dari memperkenalkan, menemukan, dan mempraktekan tata bahasa dan juga melibatkan siswa dalam permainan tata bahasa. Model kegiatan yang ditampilkan dalam buku ini mendukung pendekatan pengajaran tata bahasa yang efektif karena didalam prakteknya, kegiatan yang ditampilkan mencakup keterampilan bahasa, sehingga pengajaran tata bahasa tidak hanya terkait rumus saja, namun juga mengajak siswa untuk menggunakan bahasa secara lebih bermakna, dan lancar baik itu pada keterampilan bahasa yang bersifat produktif dan reseptif.

Kata kunci: Pengajaran tata bahasa, komunikatif

1. INTRODUCTION

English teachers, especially those who teach EFL, commonly agree that teaching grammar is very important with the simplest reason that grammar cannot be separated from language learning. How can someone express his or her idea if he or she does not know the rules of the language or how to arrange words in such an order that other people understand what he or she means? However, along with the issue of communicative approach in ELT, teaching grammar is then questioned. Why teachers should teach grammar? Is it still relevant with the issue of communicative approach which emphasizes on fluency rather than accuracy? If the answer to the second question is “Yes!”, then what should teachers do with grammar in order that their teaching can cover both fluency and accuracy as what is expected by either students or teachers? To answer the questions, the topic of teaching grammar seems worthy to discuss. This chapter report will particularly discuss the aspects of teaching grammar that English teachers should be concerned with. First is the importance of teaching grammar. Second is teaching grammar communicatively, and third is the use of grammar books in the language class.

2. METHODS

This is a theoretical study that particularly discusses the aspects of teaching grammar that English teachers should be concerned with. The concern of this article is to discuss, first the importance of teaching grammar, second teaching grammar communicatively, and thirdly, the use of grammar books in the language class.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Importance of Teaching Grammar

“So, should we teach grammar?” That is the question which is often asked by English teachers today because there are different arguments as to whether grammar should be taught or ignored in language teaching. The confusion has arisen since communicative approach became a trend in teaching English. In its implementation it seems that teachers are still confused with the term communicative which refers more to speaking skill rather than the ability to use the language communicatively. To come to a better understanding, I would start the discussion with some views of grammar according to some experts.

What is grammar? Richard Nordquist, in About.com.Guide, explains two definitions of grammar. The first, grammar is defined as a systematic study and description of a language. This

is called descriptive grammar. In this case, grammar refers to the structures of language as it is actually used by speakers and writer. Secondly, grammar means a set of rules and examples dealing with the syntax and word structures. This one is called perspective grammar. In this case, grammar is usually intended as an aid to the learning of the language and it refers to the structure of a language that *should* be used. *Both kinds of grammar are concerned with rules –but in different ways.* The definition goes well with Savage’s explanation that during the long history of second language instruction, grammar has been regarded as a set of rules to be memorized (Savage, 2010).

Either Nordquist or Savage talks about the presence of rules in grammar that I believe have led to strong arguments of teaching grammar like what is written by Richard Norquist in his article about grammar and composition. Grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible for us to talk about language. Grammar names the types of words and word groups that make up sentences not only in English but in any language. He also says that grammar is often associated with errors and correctness. As grammar can be part of literature discussions, so when we and our students are discussing a literature works we can understand what makes sentences and paragraph clear, interesting, and precise closely to the sentences in poetry and stories. And *knowing about* grammar means finding out that all languages and all dialects follow grammatical patterns. (Nordquist, About.com Guide, accessed on September 24, 2012). Another idea that supports the teaching of grammar is taken from an article in *The English Teacher* Vol. XXXIV, 33-50 which says that the understanding of grammar as part of knowledge of language can help students to achieve communicative proficiency. Students whose first (and second) language is not English, still need structural practices so that the foundation of linguistic knowledge can be built up before further communicative tasks are given. (Siaw-Fong Chung, 2005).

Teaching grammar is sometimes unavoidable. It happens as the result of other work that the students are doing – for example, when they are reading a text, a grammatical problem presents by itself unexpectedly in it so teachers have to deal with it since its presence may lead to students’ misunderstanding . (Harmer, 2007a).

2. Teaching Grammar Communicatively

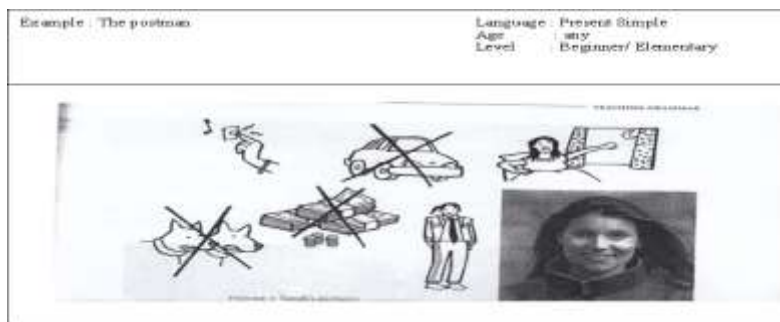
Good understanding of the importance of teaching grammar will motivate teachers to select and adapt various teaching methods with the students’ age, learning experiences, and needs, so that teaching grammar meets the expected results as stated in learning objectives. This subtopic will present some communicative activities in teaching grammar which try to emphasize on students or student-centered.

Harmer (2007) explains that Teaching grammar can be in the forms of introducing grammar, discovering grammar, and then practicing grammar as well as grammar games. The materials or language forms for each phase can be adjusted with the students’ knowledge, age, and levels such as elementary, intermediate, or advance.

a. Introducing grammar.

The following is an example of introducing grammar activity to the beginners taken from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (Harmer, 2007a)

Figure 1 and 2: Sarah’s pictures from *The Practice of English*



In this grammar presentation, students learn how to make sentences using the present simple using the third person singular. They have already learnt how to say affirmative and negative sentences in the first and second person (e.g. *I like coffee, you don't like bananas*).

The teacher holds up a number of flashcards (see Figure 1) and elicits the words *dogs, get up, doorbell, car, uniform, a lot of money*. The students say them chorally and individually before doing a quick cue-response drill using the different pictures as prompts.

Students now see the picture of Sarah (Figure 2). The teacher asks the students what they think Sarah's job is but does not confirm or deny their suggestions. The teacher explains she is going to tell them what Sarah does every day. She says the following sentences and the students have to choose which flashcards or picture is being talked about. The students guess.

- She doesn't like dogs.*
- She gets up early.*
- She doesn't drive a car.*
- She rings doorbells.*
- She doesn't earn much money.*
- She wears a uniform.*

When the students have guessed (confirm their guesses) that Sara is a post woman, the teacher holds up the card individually and try to elicit the sentences about each one. She models the sentences and probably gets choral or individual repetition before moving on. In the accurate reproduction stage, to conduct a cue-response drill by holding up, say, card C so that the students have to say *She rings doorbells*. Once students are confident with these sentences, the teacher asks them to think of a real person, or invent their own, and what their job is. They are asked to come up with three affirmative and three negative sentences about what that person does or doesn't do every day. While they are doing this, the teacher goes round monitoring their work while offering help or correcting where necessary. The pairs now read out their sentences and the rest of the class have to guess what profession is being described.

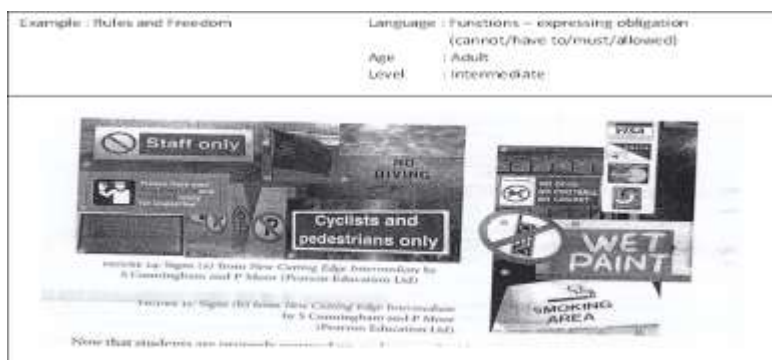
b. Discovering grammar

Another teaching grammar activity is discovering grammar. In this activity, students are encouraged to work out for themselves how language forms are constructed and used. Then they go on to do exercises using the language they have uncovered. It is highly possible that they have seen the language before but this may be the first time they study it properly. Harmer elaborates his idea that discovery activities give different impact to the students. Discovery activities may suit some students very well since they enjoy working things out.

Besides, many people thinks that the language the students understand this way is more powerfully learnt since they made some cognitive effort as they uncovered the language pattern. The result would not be so if they were told the grammar rules first and did not have to make such an effort. However, to students who still prefer to be 'spoon-fed', discovery activities may

make them feel uncomfortable. It will depend on their level. Analyzing language using this approach is generally easier and suitable for more advanced students than for complete beginners (Harmer, 2007b). The following is an example of discovering grammar activity for intermediate level students.

Figure 3 and 4. from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson Education Ltd)



Teaching sequence starts when students discuss what rules they would expect to find in places such as beaches, hospitals, library, airports, etc. They then look at a number of different signs (Figures 3 and 4) and say what they would expect to see them and what they mean.

Now that students are properly warmed up and engaged with the topic, they are asked to look again at Figure 3. They have to say which signs sentence a-e (see Figure 5) apply to – and cross out those that are not true. Finally, they have to put the underlined words from Exercise 3 (Figure 5) in the correct category (see Figure 6). Once the teacher has checked that students have been able to complete the analysis chart, she can get them to do a fill-in exercise where they have to discriminate between *have to*, *don't have to*, *should*, *shouldn't* and *are/aren't allowed*. They then make sentences about what the rules are in places from the first exercise (airport, bars and pubs, etc) and read them out to their colleagues who have to guess where they are talking about.

Figure 5 : from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson Education Ltd)

3. Which signs on page 112 do the following relate to? Cross out the sentence(s) that are not true about each sign.

- You can use your credit card here.
You must use your credit card here.
You've got to use your credit card here.
- You mustn't smoke in the smoking area.
You're allowed to smoke in the smoking area.
You can smoke in the smoking area if you want
- You mustn't leave your mobile on.
You cannot use your mobile
You shouldn't leave your mobile on.
- Dogs are allowed.
Dogs are not allowed.
- You have to be careful of the wet paint.
You don't have to be careful of the wet paint.
You ought to be careful of the wet paint.

Figure 6: from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson Education Ltd)

<p style="text-align: center;">ANALYSIS</p> <p>Put the underlined verbs from exercise 3 in the correct category.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It is necessary <u>have</u> (got) to2. It is not necessary3. It is OK/permitted <u>can</u>4. It is not OK/permitted5. It is a good idea/the correct thing6. It is not a good idea/not the correct thing

c. Practicing grammar

Practicing grammar is conducted by teachers to provide opportunities for students to practice different grammar points. Like introducing and discovering, practicing grammar activities may vary in level.

The following example (figure 6) is a practicing grammar activity intended for upper intermediate students. In this activity students are encouraged to think of sentence construction and sentence meaning by matching sentence halves. Students are given two list that have to be matched up (see Figure 7). This can be done in pair or by working on their own.

This activity can be more enjoyable and interactive if the teacher puts the sentences on cards. Each student will get one card and has to walk around the class to find their pair, so they have to read the sentences aloud and then discuss which pairings are or are not possible. (Harmer, 2007a).

d. Grammar games

Commonly games are usually given to create a fun learning activity, to create a more relaxing class atmosphere, or just to make use of the rest of time teaching. In fact, games can be intentionally included into the lesson plan of teaching grammar to engage the students in the learning activity and to motivate them to use the target structures enthusiastically. (Harmer, 2007a).

The following is an example of grammar game activity taken from Jill Hadfield's *Intermediate Communication Games*.

24. School Reunion

Type of Activity: Large group/whole class Information search role play

Function practiced : describing past habits

Exponent : Used to, present tense
 Lexical area : habits, jobs, school life

Essential vocabulary:

Chewing gum, bike sheds, paper darts, share, fantastic, practical jokes, detention, chatting, tell tales, actor, businessman, dentist, model, politician, taxi driver, soldier, undertaker, vicar, dustman, TV interviewer, spy, pilot, accident prone

How to play the game:

- Play the game with 8-16 players. If you have more than 16 in the class, divide the class into groups.
- Copy one role card for everyone in the class/group.
- It is important to copy the cards in order. So, if you have 9 people in a group, use the first 9 cards, if you have 10, use the first 10, and so on.
- Give out the role cards and ask each student to make themselves a badge with their name on. Give them a few minutes to read and to absorb the information on the card, then tell them that they are going to a school reunion – twenty-five years on.
- The students are very curious about what happened to their old school mates. They should try and mingle and find out as much as possible about what people are doing now.
- When the students have finished gossiping, regroup them into threes or fours and give each group a questionnaire to fill in (see Figure 8).
- The object of the game is to complete as many statements as possible. The group that can answer the most is the winner.

Figure 7 from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson Education Ltd)

Example 3: Matching sentence halves		Language	: third conditional
		Age	: adult
		Level	: upper intermediate
If Andrew hadn't got stuck in the traffic jam	i. he would have been able to answer the		
If Beatrice had written down the name of	ii. they wouldn't have been late		
his company	iii. he wouldn't have missed the flight.		
If Jed hadn't lost his mobile phone	iv. she would have been able to call him		
If Mrs. Wickstead hadn't overslept			
If Peter and Clare hadn't missed the bus	at work		

Figure 8 from *Intermediate Communication Games* by Jill Hadfield (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd)



The examples of communicative activities in teaching grammar, as stated before, certainly should be adapted with the students' need as well as the teaching objectives, students' age, learning experiences, and classroom condition also need consideration. During the process, it is very likely that the activity planned does not run well. Therefore, teacher should predict and be prepared with any unexpected situation that occurs during the class activity.

The use of grammar books is covered as one of the topic of discussion in teaching grammar since to some extent, their presence is still of great help for teachers either as a teaching material or to check grammar concepts. Even for students grammar books can be a reference for their further understanding and knowledge of the language or their self-study. (Harmer.2007a)

Grammar books have many shapes and sizes, ranging from ones designed for students at lower level to ones designed specifically for their particular reader or users such as researchers, teachers, or advanced students. Grammars in grammar books can be classified into descriptive grammars and pedagogic grammars. Descriptive grammars describe everything there is, the whole language, and its working, while pedagogic grammar are those designed specifically to help teachers and students with the language. Which grammar book then can be suggested for teaching grammar? According to Michael Swan, in Jeremy Harmer, 2007b, good grammar rules (for a pedagogic grammar) should show simplicity, truth, clarity, and relevance. Those terms are adjusted with the mastery level of the students who use that book.

To help fellow teachers with grammar books, especially for senior secondary students, I would like to suggest Betty Azar with her grammar book *Understanding and Using English Grammar* and Raymond Murphy for his graded grammar book series such as *English Grammar in Use*. Based on researcher experience, the grammar activities presented in the book are designed for communicative purposes so that students can apply the rules they learn in using the language meaningfully, appropriately, and fluently.

Syntesis/Comments – Criticism & Position

Teaching grammar cannot be ignored in language teaching. The correct understanding towards some teaching issues is badly needed so that teachers can select appropriate methods for their students. Responding to the approach of teaching grammar proposed by Harmer, I agree with idea of introducing, discovering, and practicing grammar as well as involving students in grammar games. The models of activities he presents in this book support the effective teaching approach since in practices, they involve other language skills too so that

learning grammar is no more learning a set of language rules, instead, it encourages students to use the language meaningfully, appropriately as well as fluently, in either productive and receptive skills.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the description of teaching writing in this chapter report, I come to some conclusions. That teaching grammar is important as grammar is a part of language system. A good mastery of grammar will be of great help in learning and developing other language skills, listening, reading, and speaking. However, in practical teaching teachers should have good understanding and ability to use appropriate approaches and methods, so that the teaching and learning process will meet the expectation of both teacher and student. In order that teaching grammar is not merely teaching the rules of the target language, teachers should be concerned with both grammar itself as form of language and communicative. Combining both to become grammar-based-communicative, or eclectic approach, as explained by Savage (2010) results in effective teaching grammar that will benefit students in developing their language skills.

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