

IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

S.Saraswathy Ph.D Scholar (English)

Department of Linguistics,
Tamil University, Thanjavur.
Dr.P.Mangaiyarkarasi,
Associate Professor & Head,
Department of Linguistics,
Tamil University, Thanjavur.

Abstract

Language is a key tool for communication and the people of a specific society. It place an important role in any social group irrespective of its nature. The significant role of a language is that it unites all the members of a particular community. A part from this, language is a sign of recognitions for a particular social group, and it is a badge of their brotherhood (Vendryes 1925-240). Moreover language is a mirror of the people's mind. As and when their believes or traits change the language also changes with them.

Language is a system of communication in speech and writing, that is used by the people of particular society or country. It is also a system of sound and writing that human beings use to their thoughts,ideas and feeling.

For a linguistics, a language is only a simple form of human communication, which includes phonetics and phonology, morphology, Syntax, the semantics and discourse context, as given by a speech community. Language is also a living form of communication with changes across specific communities over a period of time.

Key words

Language, communication, speech, writing, Grammar, English, Sentences.

Introduction

Grammar is the theory of the language , the science of language , the code of language and study of words and sentences in language . Plato and his disciple Aristotle were the first to take up this subject seriously.

Gordon (1960-72) observed that grammar has been defined as the science of language, and that it deals with the relationship between words as they are used in speech and writing. So grammar is considered as the essence and life -blood of language.

Sweet defines grammar as, "the practical analysis of a language, anatomy of a language." **Chapman** describes, "Grammar is a study of language by specialists, made in order to establish the rule and principles followed unconsciously by the native speakers". Since our approach t grammar was through language, there was no place for teaching grammar in specific period at the primary stage. As we have to concentration the acquisition and development the four language

skills -Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing and also the basic structures, in the first few years of English learning. But at the high school level there is an important place for teaching of grammar based on the knowledge of language already attained.

The teacher should have a considerable knowledge of English grammar, since he has to teach the 200 odd structures in English and various sentence patterns. Unless the teacher has a thorough knowledge of grammar, he will not be in a position to supply a correction for the pupils' mistakes, in the first language of the pupils.

Keywords

Words, Sentences, Subject, Language, Grammar, Teaching, Learning

Introduction

*"Language without grammar has no fruit;
And grammar without language has no root".*

Grammar is not only the code of language that contains the rules and definitions framed by grammarians, but also the record of how words behave when they are put together to make sentences. And it is called a system of linguistic traffic rules, a signaling system obeyed subconsciously by all the members of a social group (Kadler 1970:85). So, grammar is a set of linguistic patterns available to the speakers for the formation and arrangements of the words into meaning sentences. Gordon (1960 1965:72) observes that grammar has been defined as the science of language and that it deals with the relationship between words as they are used in speech and writing. So grammar is the essence and life blood of language.

Grammar deals with forms of words, usage of words and construction of words in sentences. A child acquires its mother tongue in the family situation and social atmosphere. It is exposed to mother tongue, and so the child can learn a considerable number of words and sentence pattern, and there by the employs the imitating power and speaks the mother tongue without mistake.

But in the case of second language, the child has to learn the words, usage of words and construction of words in sentences only in the class room. The teacher teaches the lessons given in the English Reader; and he/she is very particular in covering the portion and preparing the children for the test. So, the lessons are taught to the children, but not the language and grammar. Moreover, the aim of teaching the second language i.e., the development of four language skills is conveniently ignored by the teacher. The children are not at all exposed to the second language in the class room, as they are to the first language in the family and society; and thereby they miss to learn the usage of words and sentence patterns both in the oral form and written form of the language.

Importance of English and English Grammar

We cannot think of education without English, an educated person without English knowledge and also the academic syllabus without English as a language subject at the school education level, as well as, at the higher education level. English is not the language of

westernization but of modernization. English is taught as a second language in our state with an aim of developing the four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing.

English grammar is an integral part of English language teaching. Yet, the method of teaching grammar in schools has been subject to much controversy in recent years. According to the traditional view, a language was to be learned by learning its rules. A revolt took place against this view and it was argued that a language is learnt by actually using it, but not by learning and mastering the rules of it. There are two extreme views- one giving too much importance to grammar, and the other condemning it as altogether useless. Anyhow, the educated public believes that a certain kind of grammar, taught in certain way, may be beneficial in the learning of a language.

Many educationists are of the opinion that it is not desirable to eschew grammar altogether, but that it is necessary to teach some of it, from a certain stage in schools and in a certain manner.

So, knowledge of English grammar is absolutely indispensable for a student to learn the English language. Still the rules of grammar are needed, because they help everyone avoid, in his written English, the glaring mistakes and grave blunders which would result in absurd and cumbersome language.

Study of grammar can improve ability to write correctly and effectively, but (as with all subjects) it depends on what is taught and how it is taught. Written style can be improved through learning about the resources of grammatical structures, word order and devices for paragraphing and connecting the sentences.

Grammar has a different meaning

- It is the set of formal patterns in which the words of a language are arranged in order to convey larger meaning.
- It is the branch of linguistic science which is concerned with descriptions, analysis and formalization of formal language patterns. It is linguistics etiquette.
- A part from this, grammar engages the learner's mind in correct language habit; and guides the students to attain the power of speech. After being exposed to some formal grammar, a learner can find wrong utterances and better his own output.

Characteristics of Grammar

- Study of organization of words into sentences which is based on such and rules.
- Every language has its own grammatical norms.
- It is a major component of language which established relationship between words.
- English grammar was developed and written on the basis of Latin grammar.

Use of Grammar

It is very common for the students make mistakes when they write English. In such a context, the teacher brings into focus the items that are confusion. Such a supply of correction would

definitely enhance the students' interest to get into the correct habit. Therefore, to reading and writing composition.

Reason for Teaching Grammar

Some grammar teaching becomes inevitable in the higher classes in the secondary schools. But at no times is it necessary to let the children pore over detailed analysis of sentences and long parsing exercises. Such exercises are a relic of old Latin teaching, and do not have much value in teaching language in the modern times. In fact it is such vague and complicated exercises as are responsible for the horror and hatred that most children feel towards grammar.

The true nature of grammar and its place in the teaching of any language is not clearly understood very often by teachers. One must not forget that grammar is taught for the sake of language, and is not an end in itself.

Present Position of Grammar In Language Teaching

Why do we teach grammar at all? What is its place in the syllabus?

First and foremost, it must be remembered that grammar is not a separate subject, nor it a separate division of English work. If it is so marked in the syllabus or timetable, it is for our convenience. It is an essential part of the English course, but not separate subject. It helps us to get the "feel" of the language. Many of us try and dispense with it altogether. But it must be taught mainly for the sake of composition and reading. Grammar is a study of the language as we hear it; the study of the behavior of words, word-groups and changes in meaning of words. Thus, Grammar is not a subject itself, but a very useful handmade to composition and reading. It is no longer an abstract subject but a useful means of correcting faulty speech or composition.

Formal Grammar

Dr. Michael West remarks (in his 'Language in Education' p136) "Grammar in the past was treated as a form of diet. Teacher have prescribed the study of the whole book of grammar as a part of the routine".

When a grammar book was prescribed as remarked by Michael West, the simple grammatical categories such as apart of speech, person, number, gender, sentences, tense and voice of verbs, degrees of comparison of adjectives, synthesis and analysis of sentences etc, were all introduced in detail and relevant exercises were also given to the pupils so that they would feel easy to answer the questions related to grammar which would carry 30 to 35 marks out of hundred. This type of teaching grammar is called formal grammar.

Some fifty years ago, it was an educational fad to maintain that the formal study of English grammar had little or no place in school curricula. To-day, the people have to see the error of some bad practices of teaching of grammar. The result of this folly is that there is a large group of young people who have-not even the slightest action of any systematic understanding of the workings of English language.

Functional Grammar

In the 60's of the last century the structural approach and functional grammar were introduced at the school level. The main object of this approach is to help the students learn certain structures of English, to increase the students' command over the patterns of English language and to enable

them to use the language more effectively. Accordingly, the structural items, which are nothing but grammatical categories and sentence patterns, are incorporated in the lesson proper (in the English Reader) and those categories to be introduced and taught to the students along with teaching prose lesson. In this way, grammar is supposed to be taught through relevant situation. So functional grammar and structural approach are to go hand-in-hand.

The recent 'common syllabus 2009' implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu suggests in the preamble,

"It is universally felt among the ELT votaries that grammar should not be separately taught; and should be incorporated into the learning process itself. It is clear that grammar is essential. It is good to acquire early in the learning process. It must be made a continuous and graded process and activity based".

The functional grammar is supposed to be taught through inductive method which suggests proceeding from particular instance to the general rule. This method has been advocated by the exponents of ELT; and imparted to the teacher trainees by the methodology teachers in the teacher training institutes and in the colleges of education.

Traditional / prescriptive Grammar

Grammar is the tradition which began with the classical Greek authors. It focused on the written language. It concentrated in eliminating grammatical errors. This grammar insists on the rule of grammar strictly defined. Students were learning grammar by rules not by reason. To many, the subject seemed to be arbitrary and archaic.

There was a gulf of a difference between the rules learnt in grammar and the language actually spoken. There was a little regard for empirical facts. The rigorous rule-learning resulted in inferiority complex, because the foreign learners could understand the rule and use the language better than the native speakers. Thus the study of English grammar acquired a new importance in England, and the first grammar books were published. The earliest English grammar books copied Latin model and so brought in all rules, distinctions and classification of that grammar in to the appear, discarding the Latin influence. Sweet brought out his 'New English Grammar' in 1891. The new grammar book throws light upon the real nature and function of the grammar of the living language English.

The traditional grammar is also called as formal grammar or theoretical grammar. As this grammar prescribes and insists on the rules of the language, it is otherwise called prescriptive grammar. It never accepts changes in language, whereas change in rules is a must for any living language.

Modern / Descriptive Grammar

Modern grammar describes the actual use of the language (not rules of language) in its spoken and written forms. It does not lay down the rules of grammar derived from Greek and Latin. Modern English / Modern English Grammar have lost most of its inflexions borrowed from the dead classical language.

Modern grammar is also called Descriptive grammar as it describes the principles that actually exist in native usage. It also describes the conventions of a language. The descriptive grammar analyses and describes the distribution of words in a given sentence and all aspects of the sentence structures of a language.

Conclusion

When framed grammar was taught in schools, in the early decades of the 20th century, the students had a systematic study of how words work in sentences; and they could learn an orderly presentation that has some logical relation of its parts. One's knowledge of grammar can help him criticize and evaluate sentences already formed. Moreover the study of English grammar can have a cultural value (Pence and Emery 1967: V).

Pence and Emery (1967: iv) suggest, "Present -day students need a book that will be a so explicit that it may seem very elementary to him who chances to be well trained in grammar. They need a book so complete that it may serve as a reference book after it has filled its original function as a classroom text".

The researcher would like to suggest the following points for the implementation of teaching formal grammar and the improvement of knowledge of English language among the students.

1. The first and foremost thing is that a considerable knowledge of English grammar might be imparted to the students of English literature and those of Linguistics during their graduation course. And there should be one paper exclusive for grammar in their examination.
2. The next important point is that English literature graduates and the Linguistics graduates might be recruited as English teachers, and they might be assigned with teaching of English right from VI STD to X Std.
3. A special workshop might be conducted exclusively for common errors, so that the English teachers can brush up and refine their English.
4. Every English teacher had better study and digest modern English grammar and usage, and attain a mastery over English grammar.
5. The positive implementation of these suggestions would definitely see the teaching of English grammar be optimized. Let me conclude the presentation of this paper saying , "

"Grammar is the essence and life blood of language."

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