

Methods and Techniques of Teaching Grammar in ELT

Supriusman

FKIP Universitas Riau

supri62@yahoo.co.id/HP +62 8127515039

Abstract

One of several factors that makes students successful in learning English as a foreign language is determined by the methods and techniques used by the English teachers in English language teaching. Of course, the methods and the techniques applied by the teachers in the classroom vary from one teacher to another teacher. In addition, the methods and techniques used rely on the language skills and language components, the objective of teaching and learning designed, students' English proficiency levels as well as the teachers' knowledge and experience in implementing the methods and techniques used when teaching and learning takes place in the classroom. Grammar as one of the language components has an important role to play to support the students to be able to learn and use productive skills (speaking and writing), and receptive skills (listening, and reading). Therefore, this paper limits its discussions on methods and techniques used in teaching Grammar in ELT. In this paper, the writer will discuss the definitions of methods, techniques, teaching and how the teachers apply them practically in the classroom. It is expected that this paper is useful not only to increase the quality of English teachers but also the quality of students or graduates from the schools.

Keywords: method, technique and teaching

Introduction

In this section, it is important to describe the term of the keywords from this topic namely *method, technique, teaching, and grammar* to have the same understanding about them. The definitions of the terms used in this paper are described by some experts in education field.

In general, method can be described as a way of doing something, so method of teaching means a way of teaching the materials to the students in the classroom. Brown (2001) defines method as an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based upon a selected approach. Then, an approach as stated by Anthony is described a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. The method used by English teachers, of course, varies from one teacher to another teacher. Edge (2001) suggests two ways of teaching English language: by teaching students from the form to the meaning, and by teaching them from the meaning to the form. She also states that the main goal of teaching language is for communication, and communication is part of the learning process. In communication using language, students are expected to use it accurately, fluently and appropriately. In order to reach the objective, English teachers are expected be able to apply the appropriate technique in the classroom when teaching and learning process takes place.

As defined by Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) technique means different methods that make use of different kinds of classroom activity. It can be inferred from this definition that technique in teaching English refers to method of teaching English by using classroom activities, exercises, and tasks such as *drills, role plays, dialogues, sentence completions*, etc.

In relation to the term 'teaching', Brown (1987) defines this word as guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the condition for learning. He also mentions that how students learn is determined by the teacher's teaching styles, approaches, methods, and classroom techniques.

Furthermore, grammar is described as follows: Brown (2001:362) points out grammar as the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentences.

Richards, Platt and Platt (1992:161) describe grammar as ‘description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language’. Hornby (1996:517) states grammar as ‘the rules in a language for changing the form of words and combining them into sentences’. Knight (1992:329) defines ‘grammar as science of structure and usage of language’. Then, Fromkin *et al* (1990) categorize grammar into two kinds: *descriptive grammar* and *prescriptive grammar*. The descriptive grammar represents the unconscious linguistic knowledge or capacity of its speaker. In the first kind of grammar, it does not teach the rules of the language, it describes the rules that are already known. The later term refers to an attempt to legislate what your grammar should be. It prescribes; it does describe, except incidentally.

Discussion

In order to be successful in teaching and learning English which includes listening, speaking, reading and writing known as language skills, and vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, and grammar known as language aspects or language components, it takes a long time to learn it. As compulsory subject, English as a foreign language is taught beginning from junior high school to tertiary levels (at university, academy and institute) in Indonesia. Of course, Indonesian learners have problems and difficulties to learn it. This might take place for at least three factors as follows:

Firstly, the structure of the English language is different from Indonesian language. All verbs in Indonesian language can be used in any time (in the past, the present and in the present perfect). For example, *pergi* (go), *pergi* (went), *pergi* (gone) as *they go to the office every day*, *they went to the office yesterday*, and *they have gone to the office since five minutes ago*. All nouns in Indonesian language have the same form such as *satu butir telur* (an egg) in singular, and *tiga butir telur* (three eggs). Indonesian language does not have regular and irregular verbs, regular and irregular plural nouns, for example, wash-washed-washed (regular verb), write-wrote-written Irregular verb), book-books (regular plural noun), child-children (irregular plural noun) and others such as countable noun and uncountable noun.

Secondly, English words are pronounced differently. The word ‘*read*’ is pronounced differently in present and in past or in perfect tense. Thirdly, the meaning of the English words are also determined by the context such as the word ‘*hot*’ as in the sentence: *this water is hot* (*panas*), and *this curry is hot* (*pedas*). In addition, intonation can make different meaning of the English sentence as shown in the following English sentences:

1. John teaches English at Senior High School (not Fajrin)
2. John teaches English at Senior High School (not learn)
3. John teaches English at Senior High School (not Indonesian)
4. John teaches English at Senior High School (not Junior high school)

This paper is intended to describe about grammar, some variables that determine the importance of grammar, parts of speech and how English teachers teach their students in English language teaching. In particular the purposes of presenting the paper are to answer the following questions.

1. Why is grammar taught in ELT?
2. What are parts of speech?
3. How is grammar taught in ELT?

In addition, what students should know in order that they are successful in learning English, this paper describes parts of speech. Based on the above questions, this paper limits its discussion into: the importance of grammar, parts of speech, and techniques in teaching grammar in ELT.

The Importance of Grammar

According to Thornbury (2006), there are seven reasons why grammar is taught in English language teaching as presented in the following:

1. The sentence-machine argument-The teaching of grammar offers students the means for potentially limitless linguistic creativity.
2. The fine-tuning argument- The teaching of grammar serves as a corrective against the kind of ambiguity
3. The fossilization argument- the teaching of grammar helps learners reduce their incorrect grammatical structure.
4. The advance-organizer argument-The teaching of grammar acts as a kind of advance organizer for language acquisition.
5. The discrete-item argument- The teaching of grammar can help reduce the apparent enormity of the language learning task for both teachers and students.
6. The rule-law argument-The teaching of grammar offers teachers a structured system that can be taught and tested in methodical steps. It allows learners to experience the language through communication.
7. The learner-expectation argument- the teaching of grammar provides students with learning experience more efficient and systematic.

Parts of Speech

English grammar divides words into eight categories as known as parts of speech. The parts of speech that are traditionally described in grammar books for students are noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction and interjection. In modern English grammar, the words are classified into function words and content words. *Function words* refer to words that have little meaning in themselves but merely have a function in a sentence. This category includes pronouns, determiners, auxiliaries, qualifiers, quantifiers, prepositions, and conjunctions. *Content words*, in the other hand, have meaning even they stand alone. Four parts of speech such as noun, verb, adjective and adverb are included in this category.

1. Noun

A noun names a person, place, thing, quality, state or action. Nouns can be sub-classified into

- (a). Common nouns name one or more of a class or a group (such as *learner, politician, teachers*), or proper nouns name particular people, places, or things (such as *Thomas Jefferson, Edinburgh, the Thames*).
- (b). Count nouns can occur with numerals (such as *a boy, three tables, some meetings*) or mass nouns (such as *milk, money*)
 - I. Unit nouns (such as a piece of butter, a lump of sugar), or measure nouns (such as a foot of rope, a yard of cloth), or species nouns (such as *a make of car, a species of mammal, a type of cloth*)
- (c). **Abstract** nouns name concepts, beliefs, or qualities (such as *courage, horror, enthusiasm*) or concrete nouns name tangible things perceived through senses (such as *rain, bookcase, heat*).
 - I. Collective nouns name a whole group though they are singular in form (such as *navy, team, pair*)

2. Pronoun

A pronoun is used to place of a noun in a sentence. Pronoun can be grouped into personal pronouns (which include subjective pronouns, objective pronouns, possessive pronouns), reflexive pronouns, indefinite pronouns, intensive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, and relative pronouns. Each of them is described as follows:

- (a). Personal pronouns usually refer to a person, sometimes to a thing.

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person	I, me, my, mine	We, us, our, ours
Second person	You, you your, yours	You, you, your, yours
Third person	He, him, his, his She, her, her, hers	They, them, their, theirs

It, it, its, its

(b). Reflexive pronouns refer back to the subject of the clause or sentence. They also act as pronoun intensifiers:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person	myself	ourselves
Second person	yourself	yourselves
Third person	himself, herself, itself	themselves
	REFLEXIVE	INTENSIFIER
	I satisfied myself	I myself was satisfied.
	He injured himself	He himself was injured.

I. Indefinite pronouns are used to refer to nouns whose number or quantity is not exactly defined. The examples of this subcategory are some, many, few, something, somebody, someone, nobody, no-one, none, anyone, each, both, either, neither, each, anything, both, all.

(d). Intensive pronouns are used to emphasize a word that precedes it in the sentence, for example, *I myself sent the short message to him yesterday.*

I. Demonstrative pronouns are used to point something. They can be singular (*this, that*) or plural (*these, those*). For example, those speakers come from Padang, west Sumatra province.

(f). Interrogative pronouns are used for asking questions: *who, whom, whose, and which*, for example, *Who said that? Whom do you stay here with? Whose hand-phone is on the table?*

(g). Relative pronouns are used to introduce dependent adjective or noun clause: *who, which, that, whom, whose*, for example, *The man who presents his paper in this seminar comes from overseas.*

3. Verb

A verb is a word which is used to do action performed by nouns or pronouns, or the state of being of a noun or pronoun. In other words, the verb means what people or things do. The (main) verb can be classified into four groups namely the verb 'be', intransitive verb, transitive verb, and copulative verb.

(a). The verb 'be' is also known as 'to be auxiliary', and is always used with adjective, noun, adverb, etc. for example, *She is beautiful.*

(b). Intransitive verb cannot follow by a noun, for example, *Her baby slept.* Some examples of intransitive verbs are come, stand, stop, cry, etc.

I. Transitive verbs are the verbs that are always followed by nouns, for example, the students read the books in the library. Some examples of transitive verbs are buy, teach, learn, ask, etc.

(c). Copulative verbs are also known as linking verbs, are used to link the subject with the rest of the sentence, and are followed by adjectives or nouns. The words which are included in this category are *taste, appear, feel, seem, look, smell, become*. These linking verbs function to replace 'to be' auxiliary. Let's have a look the examples, *We feel happy today. He becomes a member of House Representative.*

The verbs can be categorized into regular verbs and Irregular verbs as shown in the following:

Regular Verbs	Present	Past	Past Participle
	study		studied
	wash		washed
	play		played
	love		loved
	agree		agreed
Irregular Verbs	eat		ate
	speak		spoke
	know		knew
	understand		understood
	write		wrote

4. Adjective

An adjective describes a noun or pronoun. Adjectives can be classified into two types namely descriptive adjectives and limiting adjectives known as determiners.

- (a). The first type points out a quality of a person, thing or idea it describes, let's have a look the examples, an angry person (what kind of person), a rusty handle (what kind of handle), a silly argument (what kind of argument).
- (b). The second type of adjective limits the reference of the noun or pronoun. It tells us which person, thing, or idea is referred to, or how many persons, things, or ideas there are as shown in the following examples:
This person (which person? This person)
Only two handles (how many handles? Two handles)
The first argument (which argument? The first argument)

Limiting adjectives (or determiners) include the following categories:

- Articles (a, an, the)
- Demonstrative adjectives (this, that, there, these, those, such, yonder)
- Possessive adjectives (my, your, her, his, our, their, its)
- Interrogative adjectives (whose, which, what)
- Quantifiers (two, much, several, all, some, most, each, every, etc)
- Relative adjectives (whose, which, what), for example, *The teacher didn't say whose work was well done*. Relative adjectives link the clauses by modifying nouns, while relative pronouns by taking the place of nouns.

5. Adverb

An adverb gives information about a verb, or an adverb. It may also modify a conjunction, a preposition and an entire sentence. Adverbs can be distinguished into five types namely adverbs of place or direction, adverbs of time, adverbs of frequency, adverbs of manner, and adverbs of degree.

- (a). Adverbs of place or direction, for example, *away, in, out, upstairs, down*, etc, as in *He went upstairs/down/in/out*.
- (b). Adverbs of time, for example, *he will come tomorrow/soon*.
 - I. Adverbs of frequency, for example, *Discipline students always come on time*. Other adverbs of frequency are *usually, often, sometimes, seldom, never, frequently, occasionally*, etc.
- (c). Adverbs of manner, for example, *He drives the car carefully*. Most of adverbs of manner are formed from 'adjective' +suffix- *ly* such as *slowly, professionally, correctly, politely*, etc.
 - I. Adverbs of degree, for example, *we really misunderstand what you mean*. Some examples of adverbs of degree are *entirely, fully, wholly, partially, thoroughly, absolutely, etc*.

6. Preposition

A preposition is used before a noun or pronoun to indicate location, direction, time etc. Prepositions have four main functions as follows:

- (a). They precede a noun, pronoun, etc, to indicate a connection, for example, *The students are in the classroom*.
- (b). They form a prepositional phrase which can modify a headword, for example, *The woman in the class room is our lecturer*.
 - I. They modify preceding verbs, for example, *He ran round the field*.
- (d). They combine with the verbs to form idiomatic expression, for example, *She walks on air* (meaning *she feels very happy*).

Prepositions may consist of one, two, or three words such as *in, above, after, along with, apart from, up to, in front of, on behalf of, in addition to, etc.*

7. Conjunction

A conjunction joins two words or two groups of words. There are two kinds of conjunctions, they are coordinating conjunctions which connect words, phrases, and sentences (*and, but, or, nor*), and subordinating conjunctions which connect subordinate clauses to main clauses (*although, because, before, if, since, while, until*). The following are examples of the use of conjunctions in English sentences:

Each Student brings an English text book and English dictionary.

My father drinks coffee or tea in the morning.

Although he is still sick, he goes to school.

Wash your hands before you have breakfast.

8. Interjection

An interjection expresses a strong feeling such as surprise, happiness, horror, pain and is usually said loudly and forcefully, for example, *Hurrah! Big Deal! (Hurrah! I'm first and Big Deal!)* Some other examples: *Ouch!, Oh!, Oh, my!, Whew!, Psst! What gracious!*

Technique in Teaching Grammar

Teachers can use various techniques of teaching grammar in the classroom. They can teach grammar by explanation of grammar rules, providing grammar with practice in mastering grammatical pattern through process of analogy than explanation, and giving students opportunities to use English in variety of realistic situation. This technique emphasizes the process of communication in which students are exposed to use the language forms communicatively. The other techniques that can be applied by English teachers in teaching grammar as suggested by Harmer (2007) are deductive and inductive approach. The former teaches grammar by giving examples, practice, and then rules respectively while the latter, starting from the rules, practice, and examples respectively. Then Hedge (2008) proposes the Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) model in teaching grammar as shown in the following Table 1.

Table 1: the Purposes of Each Stage of Activity in the PPP Model

Stage	Purpose	Teacher's role
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to present new language in context so that meaning is clear -to present the new form in a natural spoken or written text so that students can see its use in discourse -to link the new form to what students already know -to check comprehension -to elicit the form from students where possible and exploit their existing knowledge 	Instructor Corrector
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to help students memorize the form -to help students produce the word order -to give intensive practice through repetition -to provide opportunities for feedback and error correction -to give practice in pronouncing new forms -to develop confidence 	Manager Evaluator Corrector
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to reduce control and encourage students to find out what they can do 	Monitor Resource Diagnose

	-to encourage students to use the forms in expressing their own content -to help students see the usefulness of what they have learned -to check what has been learned and diagnose problem	
--	---	--

Games can be used as the technique to teach grammar in English language teaching. Take for example, I LOVE MY LOVE GAME. This game is intended to train students with the English pattern: I love my love because s/he is so+ adjective.

How to play this game?

1. Divide students into two groups of equal size, Group A and B.
2. Explain that you will choose a letter from the alphabet, for example, the letter “S”
3. Each team member must think of an adjective beginning with this letter to fit the following line:
I love my love with a/n (letter) because s/he is so (adjective), e.g, I love my love with an –s because he is so simple.
4. You call the first person from Team A to give his/her rendition, then the first person from Team B to give his, and so on down the line.
5. If a team member repeats an adjective that someone else has used or he cannot think of an adjective at all, he is eliminated from the game.

A sample game is shown as follows:

Teacher: “s”

Team A (female group)

Student 1: I love my love with an –s, because he is so strong.

Team B (male group)

Student 1: I love my love with an –s, because she is so sweet.

Team A (female group)

Student 2: I love my love with an –s, because he is so smart.

Team B (male group)

Student 2: I love my love with an –s, because she is so soft.

Team A (female group)

Student 3: I love my love with an –s, because he is so serious.

Team B (male group)

Student 3: I love my love with an –s, because she is so smart.

Since the adjective *smart* was already used by the first member of Team A, the third team B member is eliminated. Then continue the game by selecting another letter for the teams to content with. Students are especially fond of this game since the adjectives chosen often cause much merriment.

There are several games that can be used in English language teaching such as WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF, SIMON SAYS GAME, etc, however, this paper can describe one game. It is expected that this game can be applied by English teachers in the classroom.

Conclusion

As English teachers, they must have knowledge, experience and skill on the method, and technique in English language teaching. By having these, they can use the appropriate method and technique in teaching, and the objectives designed before teaching and learning takes place can be achieved. Students are also given materials on part of speech in order that they can produce English sentences, phrases, and expressions accurately, and correctly. The other important point to be noted that teachers can use various exercises, activities, tasks and games to train and improve their English language.

Bibliography

- Aik, Kam Guan and Hui, Kam Kai. 1999. *Longman Dictionary of Grammar and Usage*. Singapore: Addison Wesley Longman Singapore Pte Ltd.
- Brown, H Douglas. 1987. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Brown, H Douglas. 2001. *Teaching by Principles: An interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Longman: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Dobson, Julia M. 1981. *Effective Techniques for English Conversation Groups*. Washington: English Teaching Devison.
- Edge, Julian. 2001. *Essentials of English Language Teaching*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Fogiel, M. 2001. *Super Review All You Need to Know: English Language*. New Jersey: Research & Education Association.
- Freema, Diane Larsen. 1986. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. England: Oxford University Press.
- Fromkin, Victoria *et al.* 1990. *An Introduction to Language* Sydney: Holt, Reiner and Winston.
- Gatherer, WA. 1986. *The Student's Handbook of Modern English*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2006. *The Practice English Language Teaching*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2007. *How to Teach English*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hedge, Tricia. 2008. *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Knight, Lorna *et al.* 1992. *Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Great Britain: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Hornby, AS. 1996. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.,
- Nandy, Milon. 1998. *Advanced English Grammar & Language*. Kuala Lumpur: Eurasia Pacific Books.
- Richards, J C., Platt, J and Platt, H. 1992. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. England: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Setiadi, Ag. Bambang dkk. 2008. *TEFL 2*. Jakarta: Penerbit Universtas Terbuka.
- Thornbury, Scott. 2006. *How to Teach Grammar*. England: Pearson Education Limited.