

## REUNDERSTANDING HOW TO TEACH ENGLISH GRAMMAR FOCUSING ON THE PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

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### Abstract

*The fact is among teachers, grammar and learners. The teacher gives a grammatical rule followed by a set of exercise designed to clarify the grammatical point and help the learners master the point. That is called by deductive method. Or teachers present the learners with samples of language and through a process of guided discovery, get them to solve the rule for themselves. The last is inductive procedures. These ways in the classroom do not make them able to communicate in the target language. They can give or know explanation of the grammatical rule but violate the rule when using language communicatively. For example a learner can tell me the formula of passive, when making statement in passive and why it is in passive he isn't able. Now, how we as English teachers reunderstand that the focus of teaching grammar is on the development of procedural rather than declarative knowledge. Our task is to give learners a proper context for the grammar point. It means that we teach grammar in order not only to know language rules but also to be able to use the knowledge for communication.*

**Keywords:** *Teaching English Grammar, Procedural Knowledge*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Many people hear the word grammar as a fixed set of forms and rules. They associate good grammar with the prestige forms of the language like used in writing and bad grammar with non prestige forms such as those used in everyday conversation. Including language teachers, some of them adopt this definition that focuses on grammar as a fixed set of word forms and rules of usages. They teach grammar by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students on them. This results in uninterested, fed up and bored students, who can produce correct forms on exercises and tests, but make errors when they use the language in context.

Other language teachers, influenced by recent theoretical work on the difference between language learning and language acquisition, tend not to teach grammar at all. Believing that children acquire their first language without overt grammar instruction, they expect learners to learn their second language the same way. They assume that learners will absorb grammar rules as they hear, read, and use the language in communication activities (Ellis, 1997). This approach does not allow learners to use one of the major tools they have as learners: their active understanding of what grammar is and how it works in the language they already know.

Furthermore, language teachers and language learners are often frustrated by the disconnect between knowing the rules of grammar and being able to apply those rules automatically in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This disconnect reflects a separation between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is knowledge *about* something. Declarative knowledge enables learners to describe a rule of grammar and apply it in pattern practice drills. Meanwhile procedural knowledge is knowledge of how to do something and to enable learners to apply a rule of grammar in communication (Nunan, 2003). For example, declarative knowledge is what we have when

we read and understand the instructions for programming the DVD player. Procedural knowledge is what we demonstrate when we program the DVD player. Procedural knowledge does not translate automatically into declarative knowledge; many native speakers can use their language clearly and correctly without being able to state the rules of its grammar. Likewise, declarative knowledge does not translate automatically into procedural knowledge; learners may be able to state a grammar rule, but consistently fail to apply the rule when speaking or writing.

This article is based on the research that was conducted by the writer at her grammar class at the fourth semester of English Section of STAIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi 2012/ 2013 academic year. She noted some problems associated with grammar teaching. The first, grammar instruction is not integrated into the four skills but given in isolation. The second, it is teachers that formulate the grammar rules. Grammar rules will be clearer and be remembered better when students formulate them themselves (inductive learning) than when teachers formulate them (deductive learning). The third, learners need repeated input of a grammar item. Just one grammar presentation is not enough. The fourth, learners should not be overwhelmed with linguistic terminology (Brown, 2001). The fifth, contextual instructional techniques are not readily accessible to practitioners.

Related to five problems above, it may be caused a traditional way that the writer applied. Traditional grammar teaching tends to cover the following points in the same lesson. For example the passive voice with all the tenses, all the uses of indirect speech (i.e. reporting statements, negative statements, question forms, imperatives, requests, time expressions, etc.) and all the forms of a structure (i.e. statements, negative statements, questions, exceptions, etc). So that the learners were frustrated in grammar class and also their achievement on final exam was not satisfying.

Next section, the writer changes way of her teaching after understanding the problems faced by learners. She tries to reunderstand that the focus of teaching grammar is communication, or knowing how to use that grammar knowledge in context. Here, the writer limits her article on topics of the grammar lessons on *used to* and *passive*.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

Grammar teaching, like teaching the four skills, should involve pre-, while- and post-stages in an attempt to provide integrated learning environments. That is what we call as procedural knowledge. In the pre-grammar stage, the teacher should bring grammar instruction to life, stimulate interest in the topic, and raise awareness by providing a reason for learning. The while-grammar stage should facilitate noticing of the new grammar point, and provide meaningful input through contextual examples, pictures, and texts. Finally, the post-grammar stage should provide an opportunity to put grammar to use, and relate grammar instruction to real life situations. The main distinction between the while- and post-stages is that the while-stage involves the clarification of the meaning, whereas the post-stage focuses on the productive aspects of the new structure.

### **Steps of an Integrated Grammar Lesson, the Procedural Knowledge**

Traditional grammar teaching starts with the teacher's statement of the grammatical point on the board. Integrated grammar teaching is a unique and an authentic approach because it implements the pre-, while- and post-stages. The application of pre-, while- and post-stages into teaching grammar are shown below in two sample grammar lessons.

**Grammar lesson: used to**

**1. Pre-grammar**

- a) The teacher discusses the topic "changes in people over the years"
- b) The teacher shows two pictures of a woman. One picture was taken 20 years ago and the other one is new. The old picture shows her playing the guitar while the new one displays her painting pictures. The teacher then asks them to compare the two pictures.

**While-grammar**

- a) This stage provides a context for input generation and an opportunity to notice the new grammatical structure. The teacher tells them they are going to learn a new structure (for the purpose of noticing) but does not mention the name of structure.
- b) The teacher makes a transition from the context created in 1b to the grammatical point by showing the same pictures and telling the picture differences with "used to" and "simple present tense" (i.e. "She used to play the guitar as a hobby, but now she doesn't, she paints pictures as a hobby now", etc).
- c) The teacher creates other contexts for the teaching of grammatical point through some other picture comparisons, discussions, stories, or reading/listening texts.
- d) The teacher asks some clarification check questions to ensure that the meaning is clear. Some examples:

Did she often play the guitar in the past?/Does she play the guitar now?  
Did she often paint pictures in the past?/Does she paint pictures now?  
Did she have long hair in the past?/Does she have long hair now?

- e) The teacher asks the learners to formulate the rule on the board for the given sentence providing help if needed.

She used to play the guitar.  
S + Used to + V 1 ...

**Post-grammar**

The teacher asks learners to think back to when they were a child and asks the following questions: "What are the differences and similarities between your life then and now? Think about where you lived, your likes/dislikes, your holidays and your family, and fill in the following lines with appropriate sentences".

Your life as a child...

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Your present life...

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**Role-play**

The teacher forms pairs of learners and gives a role play to each learner. The role playing learners are supposed to be old friends meeting after a long time. They are supposed

to communicate and note the differences in each using either their imagination or the role play cues.

### **Writing**

The teacher asks learners to write a story about the following topic for the school magazine. *Imagine that you have been asleep from 2007 till 2050 like the story of young men in Al-Kahfi the Holy Al-Qur'an. You have just woken up to be shocked about everything around you. Compare your old and new lives and write your story using "used to".*

### **Grammar Lesson: Passive Voice of the Present Perfect**

Traditional grammar teaching of passive voice tends to cover the passive voice with all the tenses. Learners can memorize all patterns of passive tenses but they find difficulties in using them in the context. Here the teacher reunderstands how to teach the passive focusing procedural knowledge.

#### **Pre-grammar Stage**

First, the teacher has a discussion on burglaries. Following this discussion, the teacher shows a picture of a living room and says: "Today, a burglar has broken into this room. What do you think he has taken?" (The teacher tries to elicit responses such as he has taken the lap-top computer, he has stolen the jewellery, etc ).

#### **While-grammar Stage**

The teacher shows a different picture of the same living room and turns attention to the missing items and says the following:

"The lap-top has been taken from the room.  
The jewellery has been stolen.  
The small TV has been taken as well.  
The picture on the wall has been taken, too".

The teacher asks questions to elicit the passive voice structure. Following this, the teacher asks clarification check questions such as:

What is the difference between "the burglar has stolen the jewellery", and "the jewellery has been stolen"?; when do you think we need the second structure?, etc.

The teacher asks the learners to formulate the rule on the board. Alternatively, or additionally, the context can be created through a reading text written in the present perfect passive voice.

#### **Post-grammar Stage**

The teacher gives the following hand-out to be filled out and asks learners to walk around and ask questions to the class members.

### **Find someone Class members' name**

who has been blamed for something he/she hasn't done.  
who has been disappointed by a close friend.  
who has been told some good news today.  
who has been told some bad news today.  
who has been abandoned by his/her girlfriend/boyfriend.  
who has been misunderstood today.  
who has been forgiven by an old friend recently.  
who has been given a present today.

### **Role-play**

The teacher forms pairs of learners and gives a role play to each learner. One of the pairs holds the names of the cities and their weather reports, the other holds information about some football matches and the name of the cities where they are being held. They will exchange the information and find out which football matches have been cancelled.

By conducting these steps in the grammar class, the writer found that the learners are enthusiastic and get good achievement. But, limited time provided in the class becomes obstacle to conduct these steps in every her teaching.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

During grammar instruction, teachers should provide meaningful input through context and provide an opportunity to put grammar to use, and relate grammar instruction to real life situations.. This is best achieved if grammar instruction is treated procedurally in the same way as the teaching of the four skills which involves smooth and organized transitions of pre-, while and post grammar stages. That is how to reunderstand the principle of teaching grammar that we ever understand and forget before.

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