

## APPROACHES OF TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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### **Abstract:**

*This article elaborates the concept of English as a second language, difference between language learning and language acquisition, the concept of grammar, English grammar. It also asserts the necessity of learning grammar to be a good user of English. Then represents a chronology of the journey of English grammar teaching activity with the help of related theories of language learning; right from Skinner's S-R theory to Krashen's Five Hypothesis. The article discusses the evolving methods of grammar teaching in the foreign language teaching classroom, i.e. Grammar, instruction method : Presentation-Production-Practice Model (Deductive Method) → Transformational grammar instruction (Inductive method) → Form based Structural focus → The shift on the communicative competency (function based communicative focus) → Strategic competency. This article can be helpful to understand the historical chronology of development of the learning strategy of English grammar. This chronological record will help to all the teachers and researchers who aims at finding some more effective instructional strategy for the teaching of grammar.*



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**Keywords** : Second language, language learning and language acquisition, English grammar, S-R theory, Hypothesis, historical chronology, instructional strategy, cognitive base.

### **Introduction**

Language is primarily a speech. With the development of human civilization it has become the primary means by which human humans convey meaning both in spoken and written form. Though language is essentially an abstract phenomenon, Samuel Johnson defined it as "the dress of thought".

Currently near around 6,500 languages are used in the world; English is the language which

most widely spoken in the world, with 1.5 billion speakers. Over one billion people use English as their second language. “A second language is a language spoken in addition to one’s first language”.

The English language is a powerful force not just for trade, commerce, economics, but for mutual respect and progress among nations as well as among individuals. It also becoming the common future of human commerce, communication and culture. English language can be the best tool to provide multiple opportunities of progress to an individual, so also to any society. English is the language of instruction for higher studies in all the Universities and colleges across the world. Having command over English communication skill one can obtain a good job worldwide. In short for educational or job purposes, English communication has become foremost prerequisite. English language secured its position as the most popular and useful second language in the world map.

#### **Language learning and language acquisition:**

Human being has the ability to use as many languages as he can, but this adaptation of language is of two kinds 1. Language acquisition, 2. Language learning. There is significant difference between language acquisitions.

#### **Language Acquisition:**

Language acquisition begins at the subconscious state of mind, i.e. from the very birth of a human baby. All of us have acquired our ‘mother tongue’ or ‘the first language’ subconsciously. We are not taught about the rules and the usage of our mother tongue initially in our early childhood. Afterwards in the year of Academics we are taught the grammar of our mother tongue or of the first language. Then the conscious learning of the language happen in the case of our first language which we have already acquired.

#### **Language Learning:**

The process of language learning is done consciously in the case of our second, third or any next language. This process involves the rules of its usage and its grammar i.e. a set of rules that are based on the structural qualities of the language and its usage.

Then questions like “what is the grammar?” and “what is its importance?” - are emerged.

#### **The concept of grammar and grammar of English language:**

Grammar actually is the system of a language. Sometimes it is described as the “rules” of a language, but in fact no language has rules. The word rules suggest that: rules are created first and then the language is spoken. But languages started by people’s attempts of producing sound which evolved into words, phrases, and sentences. All languages change over time to time, so as their grammar too.

Many people in the world speak their own, native, first language without having studied its grammar. Children start to speak before they even know the words like ‘language’ and ‘grammar’. It is

their acquisition of the language as we discussed earlier. But if someone is serious about learning a foreign language, grammar can help to learn the language more quickly and more efficiently.

### **English grammar:**

English grammar is the way in which meanings are encoded into wordings in the English language. This includes the structure of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and whole texts.

### **Necessity of teaching learning of English grammar:**

In today's ultra modern age, majority have feeling that communication is the key to success; but it is not the complete truth. Proper written representation coupled with proper grammatical communication, should be the actual target for any ESL learner. For good communication of any field, one needs to have the proper set of words that can make the message clear and comprehensible to its listeners. Misuse of words in spoken communication can create doubts in the minds of the listener about its authenticity. In the case of written communication also while editing a write up, one should be careful about catering the actual essence of the matter.

Thus just learning of words is not sufficient thing for being a good user of English; but proper usage of words at proper and required places is also of immense importance. This ability can only be achieved by comprehensive grammar training. So in order to present readable, interesting, and correct content in written or spoken form, a person must possess sufficient amount of vocabulary as well as ability to utilize his or her knowledge of grammar to construct perfect, varied sentence structure to convey variety of messages.

When a student try to be a user of English language it is the process is called language learning, not acquisition of language; as he or she does conscious efforts to use the language. In such a case the focus is on reading, writing and speaking to be a complete and effective user of the language. On many platforms the students have to face assessments in both forms- oral and written. To face such assessments confidently, possession of strong grammatical knowledge proves very essential. As we know, a faulty resume cannot help candidate to secure a coveted job. In the same way, a faulty speech at an interview cannot shortlist a candidate for the job.

Hence in order to achieve the goals of life one needs to be a good user of English language. And to be a good user of English one must go through the language learning process. In language learning process the study of grammar is inevitable.

### **Various approaches: a chronology :**

Historically, grammar plays the central role in second language teaching; often grammar was the only practiced activity in these classrooms. But the role of grammar teaching in the foreign language classroom can be compared to a pendulum that swings back and forth conversely saying between extremes. On one extreme researcher's hypothesize that grammar teaching and language pedagogy are virtually synonymous. On the other hand there are those who advocate for the total



communicative approach.

To understand the current scenario of the role of grammar in the second language classroom, it is must to go through the course of development of the language learning theories.

The first systematic theory of language learning is related with the idea of B.F. Skinner i.e. Stimulus Response theory of psychology. According to him, “a sophisticated response system that humans acquire through automatic conditioning processes.” The researches done by Chastain (1976) and Bloomfield (1949) advocated this ‘behaviouristic theory’ of language learning. Then Noam Chomsky and McLaughlin argue against this behaviouristic theory and insisted that language is far more complex system than mere SR connection. This SR theory fails to explain how children are able to create a variety of language combinations of their own. Chomsky expressed the innatist view of language learning. His ideas of language acquisition as a cognitive process theorised that humans are born with the innate ability to process the system of language. (1960)

The innatist ideas set the ground work for Krashen’s five hypotheses, which consist of his Acquisition, Natural order, Monitor, Input and Affective filter Hypotheses. This five hypotheses of Krashen dominated the world of foreign language education in the latter half of the 20th century and continue to have a great influence today also.

On the other extreme, the pendulum of grammar teaching focuses on its instructional method. Historically, the grammar instruction method implied in the foreign language classrooms. The traditional idea of grammar instruction is the presentation-production-practice model; in which teachers present the grammar rules explicitly to their classes. The students from these classes are expected to drill and practice the topics belong to grammar i.e. parts of speech, phrases, objects, inflection, subjects, clauses, etc. It is known as the deductive method of teaching grammar.

Another common form of grammar instruction is transformational grammar instruction, in which student analyse sentences to be able to unfold and apply the rules of grammar. This type of instruction is popularly known as the Inductive method of teaching grammar.

A newer perspective of grammar instruction is form focused instruction Nassaji and Fotos (2004) states that grammar instruction must provide learners with the “opportunities to encounter, process and use instructed form of their various form-meaning relationships; so the form can become part of the inter language behaviour.” The newer methods advocate for instruction to occur in meaningful and communicative context.

Thus the pendulum of second language instruction and acquisition began to swing towards the communicative approach. Initially New mark and Reibel described language education as “mastery of language used to the mastery of language structures”. But communicative approach arouse as a remedy to this structural approach of language learning. Hymes argue that communicative competency is crucial because the function of languages is communication.

The communicative language approach has been widely used since it first appeared in

Europe in the early 1970's. Because of its wide scope and use, it has also been implemented in a variety of different ways. The core of the communicative approach is to develop the learner's communicative competency. In 1980 Canal and Swain includes grammatical discourse socio-linguistic and strategic competency to it. In 1990 Bachman presented his idea of language competency which he distinguishes from strategic competence.

In recent scenario, there is no question remained unanswered about the importance of teaching learning of grammar in foreign language or second language classrooms. But how to deal with it in a more and more effective manner is the focused issue. There is not any perfect model for teaching and learning of English grammar is evolved yet. Teachers efforts and learners commitment towards teaching learning of the second language is providing the required insight about the use of the language; and we can observe the remarkable increase in number of successful English language users in all over the world. But researches on various levels are going on to find out the best possible techniques or strategies to teach and learn the language effectively.

#### **Discussion:**

The paper elaborates various terms and concepts related to the teaching of English to second language learners, for example the exact difference between the two terms i.e. language learning and language acquisition, the concept of grammar as well as of English grammar. The paper insists the necessity of teaching learning of English grammar to be a successful user of the language. The paper goes through the historical chronology happened in the field of the second language teaching and learning. The psychological perspective is discussed along with the changing Matrix about the classroom methods and techniques in relation with the second language teaching and learning.

#### **Conclusion:**

The paper represents the various studies done in the field of language teaching and learning. It provides a philosophical and historical base for further studies in this field. It clarifies the conceptual background to the researchers and the teachers related to the field of language teaching, which can lead to find out some effective strategies to study the English grammar as well as English as a second language.

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