

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN OF LANGUAGE: GRAMMAR

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on teaching of grammar in foreign language teaching. It is a widely accepted fact that teaching grammar is one of the problematic areas in foreign language teaching. How it should be taught affectively in the classroom is discussed throughout this article. Therefore, the function of scientific grammar and pedagogical grammar; teaching terminology or teaching communication are discussed as well as the presentation of grammar in classroom

Keywords: Grammar, scientific grammar, pedagogical grammar, communication, teaching terminology.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğretiminde dilbilgisinin önemi üzerine dikkat çekmek üzere hazırlanmıştır. Dil öğretimindeki en önemli sorunlardan birisi de dilbilgisinin yeterince öğretilmemesidir. Dilbilgisinin nasıl etkili bir şekilde öğretilmesi gerektiği bu makalede ele alınmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bilimsel dilbilgisi, eğitimsel dilbilgisi, terminoloji öğretimi ve iletişimin öğretilmesi gibi konular üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dilbilgisi, bilimsel dilbilgisi, eğitimsel dilbilgisi, iletişim, terminoloji öğretimi.

I. Introduction

When asked why he climbed Everest, Edmund Hilary famously replied "because it was there". Similarly, when asked why they teach grammar, most teachers reply because it is there (Swan, 1998:7). As it is a fact of a language, grammar is inevitably handled in foreign language teaching believing that without which language teaching would be inappropriate. This view is also supported by most language learners who spend a great amount of time to fight against it. So, what is it that people can't keep themselves away from? According to Crystal it is a systematic analysis of the structure of a language (1992:158). In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* it is defined as "the study and practice of the rules by which words change their forms and combine into sentences." To Radford (1998:2) grammar can be characterized as the study of the principles which govern the formation and interpretation of words, phrases and sentences. As is seen clearly, grammar is directly related to language itself which is composed of words, phrases and sentences etc. and all of which constitute the bone of the body. As in mother tongue, in foreign language teaching the ways to introduce these parts to learners in classroom has been discussed for a long time. One of the widely accepted ideas is that it should not be presented directly, but implicitly through the use of language in the realistic situation. On the other hand, teaching a foreign language should be based on teaching grammar. In this issue, it seems that it is not easy to state that we don't need to teach grammar as Rivers states below.

"...Many specialists have been saying that we don't need to teach grammar. But grammar is there. It is the framework within which the language is operating. It is like saying that you can have a chicken walking around without bones. When you say you don't teach grammar, you mean you don't stand there and give a didactic explanations of grammatical rules. But teaching grammar doesn't have to be like this." (Rivers, 1991)

It is true that grammar exists in languages and will be learned or acquired in a way. For the native speakers, according to Chomsky (1959), grammar is somewhere in their brains and they can use it to make sentences. The hypothesis that the course of language acquisition is determined by an innate faculty is known popularly. Chomsky maintains that language activity is unique to human beings and different in kind from any other type of learning which human beings experience, so that learning a language involves mental processes.

So if a learner would like to approximate the competence of a native speaker, he should have some capacities such as the ability to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical ones. He should also be able to produce and understand an infinite number of grammatical sentences, and identify syntactically ambiguous sentences. However, it can be said that it would not always be possible to approximate to the native speaker in foreign language teaching as they may have slips, mistakes, false starts and a number of ungrammatical behaviors. To enable learners produce target language efficiently, which grammar needs to be

presented in classroom has always been a hot debate among foreign language teachers.

II. Scientific Grammar versus Pedagogical Grammar

In the middle of the twentieth century, descriptive linguistics gave more importance to the form than the content of pedagogical grammar in language teaching. Considering the fact that scientific grammar gives a list of grammatical structures of a language together with a structural description and a semantic interpretation. On the other hand, pedagogical grammar ideally tries to increase the native speaker's ability to recognise and produce meaningful sentences. The commonly accepted view used to be that linguistic studies cannot be applied to language pedagogy without modification and interpretation. Stern proposes that

...a pedagogical grammar is a formulation of the grammar of a foreign language with the objective of the acquisition of that language; it embodies those considerations which are relevant as the learner is to be learned. A language curriculum cannot be founded on linguistic considerations alone and other factors have to be borne in mind in composing a pedagogical grammar in which conditions of teaching and learning need to be taken into account. Linguistics alone cannot say what should go into a pedagogical grammar. (1991:175)

As is seen, it is not adequate to present the scientific grammar to the language learner directly without any modifications. The thing that needs to be done is the selection of linguistic data derived from the scientific grammar modified in accordance with the purposes and conditions of language learning.

Moreover, the findings of interlanguage studies, language acquisition research, as well as the condition of teaching itself, should be considered as legitimate input in determining the content of a pedagogical grammar (Stern, 1991). Briefly, the use of a single theory and to be stick to that theory rigidly would not enable language learners learn the target language appropriately. Apart from the purely linguistic factors, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors should also take place in determining the content.

III. Teaching Terminology versus Teaching Communication

In foreign language teaching classroom most teachers are faced with the dilemma of whether or not to teach grammar explicitly or implicitly. However, it is popularly accepted that grammar teaching shouldn't be considered as only the study of terminology; teaching grammar. That is to say, the role of teachers should be to promote interaction in the target language without focusing on the terminology, which is of little consequence in communication. In practice, people do not express their intentions as "*verb*", "*adjective*" or "*present simple*", "*past simple*" etc. Contrary to this assumption, Hutchinson (1987) states that in order to talk about a language easily learners need to be familiar with the metalanguage of grammar -the names of parts of speech, tenses, ...etc. Then, at what levels or conditions terminology should be put into practice? Stern (1991) contends that decisions about

the use of terminology must be related to learners' maturity and background. Background includes learners' first language education, when this has been metalinguistically rich, the use of grammatical terminology in L2 instruction is likely to be less problematic for the teacher. However, learners at lower levels should not be exposed to terminology of any sort but that at advanced levels terminology can enable learners to identify grammatical notions and hence to grasp these more easily (Chalker, 1984).

Needless to say, knowing every bit of terminology or grammatical rule does not lead learners to be fluent in the target language. Grammatical terminology is the legacy of a grammar translation approach to L2 teaching. To the approaches opposed to grammar-translation, terminology is unnecessary baggage that interferes with learning. According to Halliwell (1993), terminology creates a level of abstraction which adds to the burden of L2 learning and makes the process of understanding grammar rules harder. Moreover, in this respect, Krashen and Terrel (1983) state that explicit knowledge about language does not improve linguistic fluency. So it can be concluded that metalinguistic complexity is a characteristic of bad grammar teaching. It is very important that the learners should be encouraged to use language for communication rather than to learn terminology on its own.

Briefly, terminology may be taught with respect to learners' maturity, knowledge, sophistication and needs. For the purpose of communication it isn't necessary to teach it explicitly as it hinders communication in the real-life situations. We have to bear in mind that our students will not use the terminology while communicating. What is important is to be able to perform the language in all situations appropriately.

IV. How to Present Grammar

Teaching or learning grammar is both the study of grammatical rules and the practice of them. According to Ur (1996) teaching and learning grammar is necessary or sufficient for language learning. It is taught consistently as a means to improving mastery of the language, not as an end in itself. However, the place of grammar in the teaching of foreign languages is controversial. To some people knowing grammar may intuitive (as it is in our native language). It is not admittedly true that grammatical structures need to be taught as such, or that formal rules need to be learned. In this respect McKay (1985) defines the role of teacher and the place of grammar in foreign language teaching as follows:

"In some ways our role as grammar teachers is similar to teaching someone how to play a sport such as baseball. In order to play baseball, a person needs to know the rules of the game even though they may never be asked to explain these rules. Likewise, our students need to know the rules of English even though they may not be able to discuss them formally. However, knowing the rules of baseball does not mean one can play the sport. ... Like the baseball coach, we can present our students with the rules of English, but more important, we can encourage them practice and use the English they know." (1985:xvi)

Considering the teaching of grammar as the formal presentation of grammatical rules of English, it, however, is not possible that the students will be able to use English effectively outside the classroom. On the other hand, if we see the teaching of grammar as the practice of common grammatical patterns, while it is likely that our students will become familiar with basic English sentence patterns, they may not know when to use these patterns. What should be taken into account is that grammar teaching should be providing opportunities for the students to use English in realistic situations.

Grammar teaching should be realised in a way that the students know how to communicate in another language. It shouldn't be so much knowledge transmission as it is skill development. In other words, teaching of grammar shouldn't be synonymous with the practice of common grammatical patterns, but providing students with opportunities to use English in a variety of realistic situations in order to learn to communicate effectively. Rivers (1991) makes the valid point that teaching grammar is also providing activities that enable to perform rules so that they are actually becoming familiar with the structures and accumulating a performance memory and integrating the material into their semantic networks. She maintains that you don't learn chemistry without learning the periodic table. Hence this is what students should be doing with language.

It is obvious that teaching learners how to construct grammatical sentences does not enable them to produce real-life discourse. Grammar should be presented within real contexts and the learners should be able to learn how to make meanings and how to create longer units of language than single sentences. It doesn't mean that too much grammar teaching is useless. It is true that concentration on the grammatical accuracy on its own would be a dead end. Ur (1996) contends that grammar does not only affect how units of language are combined in order to "look right"; it also affects their meanings. The teaching of grammatical meanings tends to be neglected in many textbooks in favour of an emphasis on accuracy of form.

Teaching grammar implicitly rather than explicitly is beneficial for the learners as the former enables them to perform communication tasks. According to Chastain (1988), the only way to develop second language skills is to acquire them through communication practice in a process similar to that in which learners acquire a second language in out-of-class situation. It can be asked whether grammar should consistently be taught inductively for all levels in language teaching. To Stern (1991) in the early stages grammar should be taught inductively, complementing and generalising language facts observed during reading. A more systematic study of grammar should be postponed to the advanced stages of the course. Apart from being in the early stages of the students, their needs, ages, socio-cultural positions, educational backgrounds also affect the approaches to language teaching.

V. Conclusion

We can conclude that grammar of a language is a model of the competence of fluent speaker of the language, and competence is reflected in intuitions about grammaticality and interpretation. "As grammar model competence, a grammar of a language indicates not only what we can say in the language, but also what we can't say due to the fact that native speaker competence includes not only the ability to make the judgment that certain types of sentence are grammatical, but also ability to judge that others are ungrammatical" (Radford 1998).

It is clear that grammar is abstract in the mind and it becomes concrete in the use. That is to say, it is something that is somewhere in the brain and turns out to be concrete through using. Moreover, it is the study of grammatical competence which means tacitly knowing about the grammar of a language.

To sum up, it is obvious that most of classroom time is undoubtedly devoted to teaching grammar rules and to having students practice grammatical patterns. However, we should accept that teaching grammar should be to provide opportunities for our students to use in English in the realistic situations or how to communicate in other language, which can be fostered through various methods and techniques in which target language is presented in the realistic situations. We should also keep in mind that students will not use the grammar in their real lives, but they will try to communicate performing the language they have learned. Most important of all, it should be kept in mind that the points of grammar to be taught will of course depend on the circumstances and learners' aims.

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IDEOLOGIES REFLECTED THROUGH LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF HEADLINES

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ABSTRACT

The usual approach to study ideology is realized through studying its effects on discourse forms and meanings and how discursive structures contribute to the formation of ideologies. Ideologies are likely to influence the ways social attitudes are expressed in discourse structures. Headlines are one of the means which have a central role in the production, reproduction and dissemination of ideologies in the press. The purpose of this study is to analyze how ideologies are reflected in the headlines of three popular newspapers still published in Turkey. The results of data analysis revealed that the ideologies of the newspapers in question are created and manifested through language.

Keywords: Ideology, headlines, discourse, passivization, nominalization

İDEOLOJİLERİN DİLLE YANSITILMASI: HABER BAŞLIKLARI ÇALIŞMASI

ÖZET

İdeoloji kavramını incelemek için genellikle ideolojinin söylem biçimleri ve anlam üzerindeki etkileri ve söylem yapılarının ideoloji oluşumuna olan katkısı araştırılmaktadır. İdeolojiler, toplumsal tutumların söylem yapıları içinde ifade edilmiş biçimlerini etkileyebilirler. Gazete haber başlıkları basındaki ideolojilerin üretiminde çok önemli bir role sahiptirler. Bu çalışmada Türkiye’de yayımlanan ve farklı ideolojilere sahip üç gazetenin benimsedikleri ideolojilerin kendi haber başlıklarına ne biçimde yansıdığı araştırılmıştır. “Üniversite” konusunu ele alan haber başlıkları çalışmanın veri tabanını oluşturmuştur. Veri çözümlemesi sonunda söz konusu gazetelerin ideolojilerinin haber başlıklarına yansıdığı gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: İdeoloji, haber başlıkları, söylem, edilgenleştirme, adlaştırma