

The Role of Grammar in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Nowadays, students are not giving priority to learning grammar. For improving English language both in and out of the class room, grammar is a must. Grammar is concerned with how sentences and utterance are formed. In typical English sentences, we can see the two most basic principles of grammar, the arrangements of items (syntax) and the structure of items (morphology). This paper deals with the value and position of grammar in English language teaching and the significance of grammar in speech and writing process in the English language.

Keywords: Learning grammar, English language teaching

Introduction

Grammar is concerned with how sentences and utterance are formed. In typical English sentences, we can see the two most basic principles of grammar, the arrangements of items (syntax) and the structure of items (morphology). In the area of grammar teaching, there are believers, non-believers and the confused; many people with unyielding faith in the value of grammar as the basis of good writing, advocate the teaching of grammar.

The Value of Studying Grammar in English Language Teaching

It plays a vital role in English language teaching. If a student wants to learn the English language, he / she has to study the English grammar properly. For example: read the following sentences,

1. The book is on the table.
2. The book is the table.

In the above mentioned sentences, the first sentence is correct. The second one is wrong because the preposition “on” is not available. If we want to frame meaningful sentences, we have to learn the grammar rules and usages correctly. Grammar is the need of the hour in English language teaching.

Position of Grammar in ELT

Gordon has defined grammar as “a body of empirical rules which explain and regulate the structure of the sentences”. Grammar is not a separate subject nor is it even a separate division of English work. If it is so marked in our syllabus or time-table, this is done only for convenience. It is a small part of the English course; that study of the nature of the language which helps us to get the “feel” of the language. It is the study of the behaviour of words which are the reflection of changes in the experiences and sounds of words.

As a teacher, I believe tenses, idioms and phrases and vocabulary learning are a must for English language teaching. A student wants to get fluency in second language; he has to study the three tenses of English, its rules and to know how to apply it in sentences. Later he has to learn idioms and phrases to form sentences. If we use idiomatic expressions in our sentences while speaking and writing, it shows that we learned the language well. A formal classroom situation is a prerequisite to teach language through grammar and this is mandatory. If a student masters the basic rules of grammar and some of its idiom, then she or he can build on this to master the language. Likewise, to get mastery over language, vocabulary is a must for all the second language learners. We couldn't communicate properly with others, if we don't acquire vocabulary knowledge.

Role of Grammar in Speech and Writing

Speech and writing are the two basic manifestations of language. Each has its own function. In some areas there is one-to-one correspondence between speech and writing, but in a number of areas there is no neat correspondence between units of speech and writing. As far as grammar is concerned, these two areas play an important role in English language teaching. Knowing grammar rules particularly the above said tenses, idioms and phrases and vocabulary helps one to gain mastery over speaking and writing the English language.

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Many students equate being able to speak a language as knowing the language and therefore view learning the language as learning how to speak the language, or as Nunan (1991) writes, "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language." Therefore, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom, they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be. Practicing speaking skill in the right way is not possible without grammar. A student has to rehearse speech after learning the basic rules of grammar. Without grammar rules he cannot speak perfectly. To attain fine fluency in speaking one has to learn the grammar accurately.

Writing is an essential and indispensable skill when learning a second language, since communication is not only done orally. Writing is necessary if someone is looking to study or work in a particular country. Writing also results in increased practice using the language. Connections can be made between the four key skills in learning a language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. These skills do not exist independently, they are interrelated; improving one will result in improvement in the others. Writing is a manner for students to practice their language skills in a way that promotes noticing; as they write their texts, they are forced to notice certain grammar, idiomatic expressions and vocabulary structures and reflect on why those are used and not others.

Writing occurs in three phases. Teachers should be aware of these phases, and inform the students of them. Activities can be structured around these phases to show students just how different the process of each phase is.

Prewriting: generation of ideas, discussion of purpose/format etc., use of organizational skills, emphasis placed not on structure rather content - ideas Composing: creation of outline, writing, selection of specifics (tense, style, etc.), restructuring

Revision: revision of style/grammar/structure, check for consistency/errors/clarity/support of arguments

Conclusion

In this modern era, even teachers are giving much importance to communicative language teaching rather than grammar translation method. So, it comes back to the old story for every one of us. But we all know that without learning the basic rules of grammar, we cannot write even one sentence in English. Thus, many English teachers realize the potential of teaching and learning English grammar.

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