

Review Of iterature

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1. Introduction

The present study investigates the teachers' and pupils' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of language games in teaching grammar.

Significance of the study

The role of grammar and its incorporation into foreign language classroom are at the core of ESL and EFL learning and teaching context (Ellis 2001). Many researchers including Doughty & Williams 1998; Thornbury 1997, 1998 have commonly highlighted its importance as a component of EFL teaching and learning. According to Thornbury (1997: 108), teaching the grammar of English "is not simply a question of handing over clear, linguistic information to the learners, but it is of the utmost importance that learners should have a chance to use language in a real interaction with competent speakers". It is in this perspective that teachers make use of different ways of teaching grammar through games, songs, visual aids, realia, etc. to make it a part of meaningful communication. This implies that teachers should teach grammar in different ways to allow students to express their ideas accurately and clearly. This study is undertaken to examine the extent to which teaching grammar through activities in which learners are laughing, playing a game and having fun can help them not only learn grammar but interact and communicate in English in an effective way.

Statement of the problem

Middle school pupils learn English as a foreign language from the time they are

eleven year old. Grammar is presented to these students as something primordial that they have to master to learn the target language. However, many of them after four years of instruction still make grammatical errors when they speak or write. They cannot even write or say one single sentence without making grammatical mistakes. Although these students assumed to have learnt the use of rules of tenses, teachers often find that many of them are still unable to use the correct tenses while writing and speaking in English. Many students cannot differentiate between the use of the simple present tense and the simple past tense form. Such errors can contribute to miscommunication.

Aim of the study

The objective of this study is to find out whether using games on developing English grammar by middle school learners is effective. The study also aims at demonstrating the teachers' attitudes towards using games in teaching and learning grammar. Since learning grammar plays a significant role for having good language ability, this study also aims to investigate the pupils' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of games and what psychological and pedagogical effects language games have on pupils' understanding and use of grammatical structures.

Research questions

This work seeks to investigate the teachers' attitudes as well as pupils' attitudes towards the use of games in teaching grammar. Accordingly, the following research question informs the study :

1- What are the teachers' and learners' attitudes to the use of language games in grammar instruction?

This question implies two sub-questions:

1. How do middle school teachers teach grammar?
2. what impact do grammar games have on middle school pupils?

Structure of the Study

The present dissertation is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the review of the related literature. The second is concerned with the description of the research methodology. It explores the data collection instruments used in the experiment (i.e., the teachers' questionnaire and the pupils' interview) and describes the subjects that participated in this research. The third one is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the responses that were collected in the questionnaire and the interview. It also presents the results and findings of the research and provides some recommendations for teachers and highlights the limitations encountered in this study.

Review of Literature

1.1. Definition of grammar

Grammar is defined by Ur (1991: 4) as "the way language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning". This definition is quite close to the common

understanding of what grammar is. The main difference is that it tells us how the rules of language actually work. However, knowing what these rules do is not a very motivating factor alone. Lawrence & Lawrence (2013:125) state that "Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves". This means that the more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we use the language. Grammar can also help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in the English.

1.2. The importance of grammar in the language teaching process

Complete conscious grammar knowledge is not necessary for successful communication. Children are quite capable of communicating without having any theoretical grammar knowledge. From this point of view, grammar explanations were considered as unnecessary and superfluous. But if we consider grammar as an integral part of language and its mechanism, that can be mastered in a natural environment or learnt and practiced, then grammar becomes very important in the teaching process. The significance of grammar has considerably changed: having sometimes the central position in language teaching and being eliminated and neglected in some other periods. None of these extreme approaches is justified and acceptable. Having deep and detailed knowledge of grammar does not mean having speaking proficiency and communicative competence. Grammar gives learners a possibility to develop their cognitive capacity and stimulates the cognitive process, but it certainly cannot include all the aspects of a given language. It is just a means to achieve the goal - complete competence and knowledge of the target

language. Grammar is considered to be an important constituent since grammar structures bear meaning, express ideas etc. Second language or foreign language is not taught in a natural environment, thus there is no systematic language learning without learning grammar through good and efficient grammar exercises.

However, the big issue is how relevant grammar knowledge is in achieving communicative competence since knowing the rules does not guarantee successful communication. The age of learners and their needs should be considered in deciding how much grammar should be introduced in learning the target language. Grammar competence includes the ability to understand and produce meaningful and correct sentences, recognizing and applying the rules while producing language. It has nothing to do with mechanistic memorization and production of sets of formulas. Teaching grammar includes not only learning the rules, but learning how to manipulate the features used by English speakers, to express certain meanings and relationships.

1.3. Approaches to grammar instruction

The main problem in language teaching is not in finding a procedure but in finding a good procedure or method to teach the language. To this aim, a number of methods in language teaching have been proposed by applied linguists. In what follows, we will briefly deal with how grammar is presented and taught in the following methods: a) Grammar Translation Method, b) The Direct Method, c) The audio lingual Approach, d) Communicative Language teaching and e) Competence Based Approach.

1.3.1. Grammar Translation Method

The purpose of this method was to help students read and understand foreign language literature (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). It was an efficient way of learning vocabulary and grammatical structures. Through focusing on the rules of the grammar of the target language students would recognize the features of two languages that would make language learning easier. A significant role of this method is translating one language into the other. In this method mastery of the grammatical rules and vocabulary knowledge are emphasized; therefore. It has been hoped that learning is facilitated. In order to communicate accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately skills and practice students need are provided using the grammar translation method.

1.3.2. Direct Method

The Direct method of teaching was developed as a response to the Grammar-Translation method. It sought to immerse the learner in the same way as when a first language is learnt. All teaching is done in the target language. Grammar is taught inductively. There is a focus on speaking and listening, and only useful 'everyday' language is taught. Larsen-Freeman indicates that one of the principles of the Direct Method in teaching grammar is that the rules of grammar should not be given explicitly.

1.3.3. The Audio-Lingual Method

This method is as a direct result of the need for foreign language proficiency in listening and speaking skills by drilling repetition, and habit-formation. When this method was developed it was thought that

the way to acquire the sentence patterns of the second language was through conditioning or helping learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement to encourage the repetition. The Audio-lingual Method is based on the following principles (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:121):

1. Structure is important and memorization and repetition help learners internalize the different rules
2. Grammatical structures are used in sentences that do not have to be contextualized
3. Language leaning is learning structure, sounds or words
4. Drilling is central technique

Larsen-Freeman (2000:21) claims that the major objective of language teaching in the Audio-lingual Method is to help learners to acquire the structural patterns using different drills such as mechanisms drills and substitution drills. The grammatical structures should be practiced over and over again through these drills preferably in language laboratories to enable learners observe the grammatical functions of words after oral practice of the sentences

1.3.4. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT requires teachers to move significantly beyond the teaching of grammatical rules, patterns, and other knowledge about language to the point that they are able to teach students the knowledge of using language “to

communicate genuinely, spontaneously, and meaningfully” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:53). This communication includes finding out about what people did on the weekend, as in experience or on their past vacation, it may include daily routine to others, written messages, etc. The main principles of the CLT are provides by Rinvolucris (1990:104):

1. Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication. That is, language is seen as social tool that speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to someone for some purposes, either orally or in written.
2. Learners’ communicative competence consists more than simply the knowledge of the rules of grammar
3. It also should include socio-cultural norms, communication strategies and discursive abilities.
4. Therefore, culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers’ communicative competence in both their first and subsequent language
5. It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language. That is, they are always required to produce the target grammatical structures in their own words.

1.3.5. Competency Based Approach

The Competency Based Approach (CBA) is one of the modern approaches of 21st century. It is based on the competency, the ability to perform the tasks and roles

expected of a professional learning. This means that CBA relies on specific factors:

1. Grammar should be learned for its usage like teaching learners how to request or how to apologies.

2. It is very important to focus on all the four skills to make learners develop there competencies because the previous approaches have focused on limited ones, either productive or receptive, which made the gap in the process of learning.

3. Teachers should foster the learners' ability or competency of the to grammatical structures in real life context.

1.4. Teaching Grammar to Young Pupils

The advantage of an early start is that adolescents are really enthusiastic about learning new things – especially languages. Therefore, pupils start to learn grammar rules first about the age of eleven. And how do they learn it? Celce-Murcia et al (1988:210) divided the process of learning grammar into three stages – verbalization, automatization and autonomy. Verbalization means that the teacher should explain the grammatical structure and use it in context, as well. Second, automatization means that pupils use the grammatical structure again and again and to internalize the correct form. Lastly, autonomy means that they start to use the structure on their own, in new sentences, combinations, until they are autonomous. Scrivener (2004: 20) holds that learning grammar includes five stages, do, recall, reflect, conclude and produce. first pupils should do something. After this, they should recall what they have done. Then they should reflect on what they have learnt, After that, they

should make any conclusions and lastly they should use what they have concluded in sentences of their own. Usually, researchers distinguish between deductive and inductive approach of how grammar rules are given to pupils. In the deductive approach, grammar rules are explained first and then they are used in sentences, situations. While, the inductive approach shows examples, situation or sentences first and then the rules are explained.

1.5. The use of games in teaching grammar

As mentioned above, grammar should be taught communicatively in order for learners not only to focus on the grammar rules but also to use the language effectively and appropriately. Activities that are provided to the learners on the basis of games can be communicative activities that are considered as the best way to reduce the stress and anxiety inside the classroom. These are “activities in which people agree to abide by a set of conditions in order to achieve a desire state or end” (Ur, 1991:21). Many writers have agreed on the importance of using games in the classroom. Lee (1979) insists that games can be used as “an enjoyable change of pace while reinforcing language” while McCallum (1980:4) argues that:

When one considers the importance of communicative competence in the target language, a major goal of all language acquisition, and the need for spontaneous and creative use of that language, one recognizes the significant role of word games in achieving these objectives. Students in the formal atmosphere of game play are less self- conscious and therefore more apt to experiment and freely participate in using the foreign

language. In addition games automatically stimulate students' interest a properly introduced game can be one of the highest motivating techniques

This means that game activities are used to learn in an enjoyable way particular forms and vocabulary and to encourage students to interact fluently with each other when they are using the TL. For examples activities such as "icebreakers" are from the best games which are played inside the classroom. Icebreakers are used to break the barriers among the students, this kind of game help students to increase confidence and corporate with each other.

1.5.1. Classification of language games

The use of games in classrooms should follow specific rules. These rules of the games should be clearly explained and well understood by the students. There should be only a few, well-explained rules. Demonstrations also can be very helpful because it can help students understand the game and help them follow the rules. In a nutshell, as mentioned by McClure (2006:29), a game is as activity that must have the following characteristics:

- fun: the activity is chosen for its light-hearted character
- separate: it is circumscribed in time and place
- uncertain: the outcome of the activity is unforeseeable
- non-productive: participation is not productive

- governed by rules: the activity has rules that are different from everyday life

- fictitious: it is accompanied by the awareness of a different reality"

In addition, many kinds of games designed for different levels as well as topics, so that students with different language proficiency levels can enjoy and gain the best results from them.

Language games

Rixon (1999: 1) states that "the most obvious way of classifying games from a language teacher's point of view is according to the language they practice." So we can talk about listening games, spelling games, games for practicing vocabulary, games concerning a structure or a function, and so on. In other words, language games are those games that help learners communicate while playing the game:

In the literature we find a collection of grammar language games and activities. They mainly focus on the grammar of past simple (affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences) and irregular verbs because they represent an important part in learning English and they are also essential for learners' progress. The most common language games are cited below (see examples of these games in Appendix C):

1. Irregular Verbs King
2. Find who...
3. Broken sentences

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 4. Irregular Verbs Crossword | time consuming than planning a traditional grammar lesson. |
| 5. Two truths and a lie | |
| 6. Sort Yourself Out! | 3. because games are fun and game play involves a lot of relaxed and informal interaction between students and teachers, some teachers and even students may view them as unproductive. |
| 7. Act it out! | |
| 8. Noughts and crosses | 4. games may create anxious feeling if it ended before finishing the tasks |

1.5.2. Advantages and disadvantages of games in teaching grammar

According to Spada (1987:154), there are many advantages of using language games in grammar: (1) games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely, (2) games are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunities to express their opinions and feelings, (3) they also enable learners to acquire new experience within the foreign language that are not always possible during a typical lesson, (4) games add variety to the regular classroom activities, break the ice and introduce the new ideas, (5) grammar games are a good way of practicing the language, for they provide a model of what learners will use the language for in real contexts.

However, games in grammar lessons can also have disadvantages. Jeremy Harmer (2001:56) states the following disadvantages:

1. not all games can work for all pedagogical purposes.
2. choosing or designing the right game for the lesson to teach can be more

However, when done strategically and skillfully, teaching through games can be more effective than teaching through traditional methods of drill and memorization.

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