

A Comparison of Instructional Methods in Language Teaching in Terms of Teaching Grammar

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Abstract: Grammar plays a key role in foreign language teaching since comprehension does not occur without it. Grammar allows language learners to shape the order and organization of knowledge they acquire in the learning process. Learners become aware of functions of language through grammar knowledge, thus to progress effectively in the target language, grammar is essential. When learners understand the language concepts such as adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs, etc. they stand a better chance of using the language with great capability. Grammar teaching is drawing the attention of learners through using instructional techniques to some specific grammatical structures to help them understand and process it. The better learners understand the use of grammatical structures, the more competence they have for using the language skills. This article compares five instructional methods in language teaching in terms of grammar teaching.

Keywords: Grammar Teaching, Method, Effectiveness, Language Learning

1. Introduction

Wilcox (2004) defines grammar as “a system of rules which allows the users of the language in question to create meaning, by building both meaningful words and larger constructions of sentences” (p. 23). Grammar involves a set of rules that enables language learners to understand a language and produce accurate expressions. Grammar teaching allows learners to recognize target linguistic features. Language learners need to know these features work in sentences in order to use the language accurately. It goes without saying that the effective use of a language with great capability highly depends on understanding of its grammar. It is true to say that the ability of having good grammar knowledge results in performing well in target language. Development of language skills and attainment of proficiency in the target language should be supported by grammar. Grammar is an essential element in order to enable learners to make progress in language learning. Many methods are used in the language classroom to teach grammar. This article compares five methods in language learning, particularly the paper focuses on how these methods deal with grammar teaching.

2. Grammar Teaching in Different Methods

The Grammar-Translation method was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and its major focus was on understanding literary texts. In order to enable learners to read and understand literature, the Grammar-Translation method attended to vocabulary and grammar. The Grammar-Translation method aimed at teaching grammar to learners so that they gain accuracy in the target language. Speaking and listening received almost no systematic attention because comprehension of literary texts was considered as the fundamental purpose of language learning. Grammar rules in this method were presented deductively to learners (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Besides, learners were required to memorize grammatical rules (Brown, 2000).

The Grammar-Translation Method \longrightarrow focuses on grammar teaching \longrightarrow grammar is taught deductively

The Direct method was used at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries. This method was based on the idea that second language learning should be implemented like first language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). For that reason, compared with the Grammar-Translation method grammar was presented inductively to language learners (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The Direct method emphasizes correct pronunciation and grammar. New teaching points were introduced through practice.

The Direct Method \longrightarrow focuses on grammar teaching \longrightarrow grammar is taught inductively

The Audio Lingual method arose between the 1940s and the 1960s. The major goal of the Audio lingual method is to enable learners to use the target language for communication purposes. Explicit grammar rules are not presented and structural patters are introduced by means of dialogues. In the Audio Lingual method very few grammar rules are explained to learners because they are expected to use the language subconsciously like native speakers. Teachers do not spend a great deal of time on talking directly about how target language grammar works; thereby learners induce how grammar functions from the examples provided in the dialogues. Grammar is taught inductively and grammatical structures are presented by means of drilling to promote communication skills.

The Audio Lingual Method \longrightarrow focuses on teaching grammar through drills \longrightarrow grammar is taught inductively

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