TEACHING OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR
By: Ani Setyaningsih*

A. INTRODUCTION

In a language teaching learning process, there is still a debate whether it is important to teach grammar or not. There is still a big question of the importance of grammar in language teaching learning. Some people believe that grammar is not really necessary since we learn a language to be able to communicate with others. As long as we can understand each other and we get the point, grammar can be neglected then. Other people have their own belief that we need grammar as the basic of the language itself. In the early of the twentieth century, grammar teaching formed an essential part of language instruction with an argument that if you knew the grammatical rules of a language, you would be able to use it for communication. In early 1970s, grammar teaching was less prominent since there was a challenge on this concept. Knowledge of grammar was not the one and only element that underlay the notion of communicative competence. To be able to communicate, one needs to know not only the rules, but also how the rules are implemented in the real communication. In recent years, that concept has changed. People agree that without a good knowledge on grammar, learners’ language development will be severely constrained. The recent issue is not whether grammar is important or not but rather on how grammar is taught effectively.

B. DISCUSSION

1. What Is Grammar?

The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics defines grammar as “a description of the structure of a language and the way in which units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language” (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985). Matthews (2007) in Concise Dictionary of Linguistics says that grammar is any systematic account of structure of a language; the patterns that it describes; the branch of linguistics concerned with such patterns. Chitavelu, Shitamparam & Choon (2002: 196) define grammar as the rules of a language, governing the way in which words are put together to convey meaning in different contexts. A sentence is acceptable if it is grammatically correct. For example, in English, every single sentence must have a verb. Thus, the sequence of words “My mother beautiful” is considered to be ungrammatical since it is against the rule; no verb in that

* Disajikan pada Diklat Guru Bahasa Inggris SMP Pemda Sleman
Email: anisetyaningsih@uny.ac.id
sentence. Knowledge of grammar enables language users to put words together in the correct pattern to communicate ideas efficiently.

2. **Problems in Learning English Grammar**


a. Mismatch between form and function

When teaching a new structure, the teacher has to select a function (meaning) that the form is used. Conversely, when teaching a particular language function, the teacher needs to decide on the sentence or form to present.

b. Exceptions to the rule

English grammar has many exceptions. Take an example of plural form which can be regular and irregular. It is not always adding -s or -es to form plural nouns. We must say children instead of childs referring the plural form of child.

c. Interference from the learner’s own language

Learners’ first language may interfere their learning English grammar. For example, in Indonesian, a verb is not a must in forming a sentence. “Ayah saya petani” in Indonesian is grammatical. On the other hand, in English, every single sentence must have a verb. Thus, “My father farmer” is considered to be ungrammatical since the sentence does not have a verb.

d. Lack of motivation to learn grammar

Language learners usually find it difficult and boring to learn grammar since it requires multiple repetition and the perception of rules. It is teacher’s job to make grammar more interesting and meaningful for students to learn.

3. **Approaches to Grammar**

Two approaches are known in teaching grammar to language learners (Nunan: 2003). The first is deductive approach where the teacher gives explanation on the rules explicitly and the examples follow to clarify the grammatical point and help the learners master it. The second is inductive approach where samples of language provided first, and through the process of guided discovery, the learners will work out the rules by themselves. The best approach depends on the grammar point

---

*Disajikan pada Diklat Guru Bahasa Inggris SMP Pemda Sleman

Email: anisetyaningsih@uny.ac.id*
being taught and the learning style of the learners. However it is to be admitted that inductive approach seems to result learners retaining more of the language in the long term.

4. Appropriate Grammar-focusing Techniques

According to Fotos and Doughty & Williams in Brown (2001), there are some appropriate grammar-focusing techniques. They are embedded in meaningful, communicative contexts, contribute positively to communicative goals, promote accuracy within fluent, communicative language, do not overwhelm students with linguistic terminology, and are as lively and intrinsically motivating as possible. So, grammar learning must be meaningful and cannot be separated from a context and should be presented as interesting as possible.

5. Materials and Activities in Teaching Grammar

As a teacher, we need to think about what material we will give to students and what suitable activities needed to make the students master the material.

a. Problem-solving

This activity engages the learners intellectually and therefore gives more interest to the lesson.

Example: Simple Present Tense

Complete this information sheet about an animal you like. Then ask your friend to say what animal you are describing.

1. It normally eats……
2. At night, it……
3. It is afraid of ……
4. When it moves, it usually ……
5. During the day, it ……
6. It normally lives for ……
7. The males are ……than the females.

Taken from Chitavelu, Shitampare & Choon (2002)

b. Stories

Stories are excellent resources for grammar teaching for some reasons:

1). All love stories and this generates a positive attitude to the lesson.
2). Stories provide a context for the generation of several grammatical structures.
3). Stories make the use of language “real”.

* Disajikan pada Diklat Guru Bahasa Inggris SMP Pemda Sleman
Email: anisetyaningsih@uny.ac.id
Example: Simple Past Tense

Write past tense verbs on the board like this:
  lived   bought   saw   met
  caught  stole    praised walked
  smiled knocked worked  liked

Check the students understand all the verbs. The verbs can be from the story students have heard or read; they can be any verbs that could suggest a story. Then ask them to write a story based on the verbs. Writing the story and listening to others’ stories will give students a lot of exposure to the past tense.

Taken from Chitavelu, Shitamparam & Choon (2002)

c. Songs and nursery rhymes

There are some reasons in using songs and nursery rhymes to teach grammar.

1). They are interesting and relaxing.
2). The beat of songs aids memory.
3). They contribute variety.
4). They have a lot of in-built repetition as structures.
5). Integration of pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm can be achieved.
6). They can involve physical activity.

Example: Past and future tenses

Fill in Blanks
Listen to the song Que sera sera and fill in the blanks in the lyric.
When I ______ just a little girl.
I ______ my mother what ______ I ______?
_______ I ______ pretty?
_______ I ______ rich?
Here’s what she ______ to me.
d. Games

Nobody doubts the magic of the use of games in language teaching. Games are competitive, rule-governed, have definite goals, have a definite point at which they finish and they engage and challenge learners.

Example: Yes/no questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twenty questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this game, ask a student to think of a famous person, write it and give it to the teacher. Let others ask using yes/no questions only to help them guess what the object is. Only twenty questions are allowed, and let the students guess.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. Quizzes, puzzles, and riddles

These are rather like games in that they often involve competition.

Example: Comparative and Superlative adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask students questions like the following to generate comparative and superlative adjectives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the longest river in the world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is the highest mountain in India?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Which is hotter: the Atacama Desert or the Sahara?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from Chitavelu, Shitamparam & Choon (2002)

f. Using visuals

Pictures, maps, graphs, tables, and charts provide the context for presenting new language. Real objects or realia can be used too to help teaching the meanings of words or to stimulate students’ activities (Harmer: 2006). Pictures arouse interest, stimulate interaction and help students see places, people, and events and bring to life situations which would otherwise be abstract and difficult to explain in words. People say that a picture is worth a thousand words. We can avoid translation to give input of new language.
Example: Using pictures
Let’s take a look at the picture of a supermarket. This is a composite picture. A picture like this can be exploited to teach:
1). Prepositions
2). Wh-questions
3). Requests
4). Present continuous tense
5). Quantifiers
6). Conjunctions

Graphs, maps and diagrams present information and content for introducing language. They will arouse students’ interest and motivation to ask and give information provided.
Example: Adverbs of Frequency

* Disajikan pada Diklat Guru Bahasa Inggris SMP Pemda Sleman

Email: anisetyaningsih@uny.ac.id
C. CONCLUSION

Grammar is a part of language that contributes to the success of communication. As time passes by, teaching of English grammar cannot be neglected in teaching a new language. It is agreed that knowing grammar will strengthen the language skills. Today, what teachers need to have a look at is effective and efficient ways in grammar teaching. Using activities which are interesting and meaningful will help students acquire the material given. There is no one best method of teaching grammar, but we need to explore many techniques in teaching in order that students are able to understand it.
REFERENCES


*Disajikan pada Diklat Guru Bahasa Inggris SMP Pemda Sleman

Email: anisetyaningsih@uny.ac.id