

G.IJUMSHUDOVA

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Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University

[GulshanCumshudova@gmail.com](mailto:GulshanCumshudova@gmail.com)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

### Summary

Grammar is often misunderstood in the language teaching field. The misconception lies in the view that grammar is a collection of arbitrary rules about static structures in the language. Further questionable claims are that the structures do not have to be thought, learners will acquire them on their own, or if the structures are taught, the lessons that ensue will be boring. This article on comparative approach tries to make a brief analysis of necessity of grammar teaching before it gives a relatively objective description of its function and significance in language teaching. It argues that, grammar teaching is necessary in language teaching.

It is exact that putting grammar in the foreground in second language teaching, because language knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is the base of English language. Grammatical competence is one of communicative competence. Communicative competence involves knowing how to use the grammar and vocabulary of the language to achieve communicative goals, and knowing how to do this in a socially appropriate way. Communicative goals are the goals of learners' studying English language. So grammar teaching is necessary to achieve the goals.

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**Key words:** communication, language teaching, grammar, approach, linguistic

Knowledge of grammar helps the student in the correction of mistakes and improvement of written work. A person can't learn a foreign language accurately only through a process of unconscious assimilation. Grammar is a sure ground of reference when linguistic habits fail us. So grammar is indispensable for the student. In this paper my aim is to bring the attention of the language teacher as well as the learner about the real utility of grammar in teaching English language. Now-a-days communication has become the heart and soul of the human life. The process of communication chiefly deals with speaking, listening, reading and writing. No one really learns grammar. It has become natural phenomenon that we start speaking what everybody speaks around us. We gradually develop a better sense of understanding with the passage of time. We don't study grammar of our own mother tongue to use it for daily speaking, but when we need to polish our own mother tongue or we want to learn a foreign dialect, we have to study its grammar and we usually do that. When we come to learn a new language like English language, we need to study its grammar; the importance of grammar cannot be ignored or neglected, and before we do that we need to understand what grammar is. Grammar is the study of words and the ways words work together; an invisible force that guides us as we put words together into sentences. Any person who communicates using a particular language, consciously or unconsciously becomes aware of the grammar of that language. But in this context I would like cite a wonderful example as described "A writer has given a beautiful analogy to illustrate the use of knowledge of Grammar. Imagine two car drivers. The first driver knows only driving and nothing about the working of the engine. He feels helpless whenever there is some trouble with the machinery. The second driver knows driving and also understands the working of the machinery. The person who knows grammar is like this second

driver. In case he doubtful about the correctness of a particular thing, his knowledge of grammar comes to his rescue”. Therefore, to speak in a clearer and more effective manner we have to study grammar. For the person who has unconscious knowledge of grammar, it may be sufficient for simple language use. But the persons who wish to communicate in the artistic manner with well-defined structures must go for the greater depth of understanding and proficiency what the study of grammar offers.

A strong contradiction arises when we think of the grammatical approaches made by Chomsky against the traditional notion of grammar. Though we are concerned with the fundamental theories of conforming to study language, the understanding of the use of the word “grammar” does not merely require that we comprehend the nature of the relation between a theory and the material it needs to express. It means one requires a fair amount of knowledge of a specific theory. We also find teachers eager to reject Traditional Grammar and try to replace it by the new grammar. There is not one new grammar but many different aims. In my view, there is no new one but the reproach to the traditional one by a new style.

Grammar challenges but brings more benefit:

- For teaching concepts on subject, verb, clause and phrases.
- For teaching the translation method.
- For teaching bilingual method.

• For teaching structural approach and traditional Methods. Hence, I would like to state my opinion that knowing a language is not the same thing as knowing about it. Knowing a language means mastering over its four basic skills, like, “(a) Listening, (b) Speaking, (c) Reading and (d) Writing”. Here, the listening and the reading are passive skills whereas the speaking and the writing are active skills. The Knowledge of the language makes us to know the meaning of isolated words or sentences or the rules of grammar. Talking about the language does not mean knowing language and using it. If we consider language as speech, as the linguists do, then knowing a language means to use its grammatical patterns as well as proper usage. According to Azar (<sup>1</sup>Azar, Grammar-based teaching, 2007, p.3), the role of grammar is to “help students discover the nature of language, i.e., that language consists of predictable patterns that make what we say, read, hear, and write intelligible”. As Azar stated, without grammar, people would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body language to communicate meaning. Moreover, effective grammar instruction can help students use this knowledge as they write. Through the connection from oral language into written language, teachers can explain abstract grammatical terminology to help students write and read with better proficiency and confidence. The most helpful way to improve students’ command of grammar in writing is to use students’ writing as the base for teaching grammatical concepts.

Five grammatical concepts enable students to show progress in sentence revision, style, and editing. The five grammatical concepts will be described as follows: (<sup>2</sup>Beverly, the role of grammar in improving student’s writing, 2007, p.2).

1. Teaching concepts on subject, verb, sentence, clause, phrase, and related concepts for editing.

2. Teaching style through sentence combining and sentence generating.

3. Teaching sentence sense through the manipulation of syntactic elements.

4. Teaching both the power of dialects and the dialects of power.

5. Teaching punctuation and mechanics for convention, clarity, and style. Rather than teach all grammatical instruction to all students, teachers should focus on the grammatical concepts that are more effective and essential for meaningful communication, and teachers should also be more sensitive to provide meaningful activities to help each individual student. In short, grammar plays a very significant role in second language instruction, especially in improving student’s writing.

According to Noguchi, R. R. (<sup>3</sup>Noguchi, R. R. Grammar and the teaching of writing 1991, p.4) there are two probable reasons which cause the failure of grammar instruction. 1. Formal grammar, being uninteresting or too difficult, is not adequately learned by students. 2. Formal grammar, even if adequately learned, is not transferred to writing situation. 3. Formal grammar, even if adequately learned, is not transferable to writing situation. As Noguchi stated, teachers who have strived to present traditional grammar as a means of improving writing, will agree that three causes are highly reasonable. The first cause assumes that “because of a lack of interest or because of the difficulty of the subject matter itself, students simply fail to learn formal grammar” (p.4). The second cause assumes that “students fail to apply that knowledge to relevant writing situations because they are neglectful” (p.4). The third cause assumes that “students fail to apply the knowledge because that knowledge is irrelevant to writing situations” (p.4). Although there may be other contributing factors, these three probable causes seem to be the most important limitations in the failure of formal grammar instruction to improve writing skills.

On the other hand, Generativism considered that language should not be based on the classification of ‘surface/individual’ structures but rather, on the development of a system of innate and mental rules which would account for the structural possibilities of a language; however, it still considered syntax central. The set of practices associated to this approach have to do with the presentation-practice-production cycle, where the teacher presented the new grammatical item with the rule and the explanation of form and meaning. Then some controlled exercises were done, to consolidate the rule, and this intensive practice –or drilling- would eventually lead to production. Grammatical competence was viewed as conscious, explicit knowledge of rules (declarative knowledge, in psychological terms). Communicative language teaching was initially influenced by linguists with a notional-functional view of language. Grammar was considered as both semantic and functional (<sup>4</sup>Bloor T. The Functional Analysis of English, 2004, p.2), or as the study of linguistic forms realizing meanings, the so-called Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG). According to this new concept of grammar, which appeared in Halliday’s writings in the 70s and which was consolidated in the 80s with his Introduction to Functional Grammar, the dichotomies previously mentioned would be irrelevant, since the concepts of function, meaning and communication would be included within the study of grammar and linguists should focus on the use of language rather than on its form itself. Thus, grammatical knowledge was performance, rather than competence, and grammar was considered as a sub-skill to be learned as procedural knowledge (doing rather than just knowing).

Within communicative approaches a distinction can be made between the general, nonprescriptive approach called Communicative Language Teaching, which appeared in the 80’s and which transformed the world of foreign languages teaching, and other more precise communicative methods which emerged from the appearance of CLT, but which went beyond linguistic theories including a more encompassing view of the learning processes, such as Task-Based Language Teaching, Focus-on-Form, Cooperative Language Teaching and Content-Based Instruction, which have been considered post-communicative approaches. Grammatical knowledge within these approaches still maintains a functional-communication based view of language, but supports linguistic views with cognitive or constructivist theories. This performance-based account of language learning can also be ascribed to the CEF, as its descriptors are, (<sup>5</sup>Newby, Cognitive + Communicative Theory of Pedagogical Grammar, 2006, p.3), “action-oriented”: they focus on what a learner can do with the language. However, because of its relevance, the CEF will be considered in a separate section.

There is a widespread belief that Communicative Language Teaching does not include any grammar. However, “Communicative Language Teaching means an exclusive focus on meaning” is a myth or a misconception (<sup>6</sup>Spada, Communicative language teaching, 2007, p.275). In fact, that widespread belief that CLT eclipsed attention to grammar is only partly true, since although CLT syllabuses are organized according to categories of meaning or

functions, they still have a strong grammar basis, that is to say, the functions into which CLT syllabuses are organized are connected with their correspondent grammatical points. Discussing the role of grammar within any communicative approach can be controversial, due to these misconceptions and also to the influence of Natural Approaches, which ascribed no grammar role in language learning. However, when explaining the role of grammar specifically in CLT, some of that controversy may be solved if we do not talk about one single type of CLT but about two main types, the shallow-end approach and the deep-end approach to CLT. The shallow-end approach to Communicative Language Teaching is based on the thought that in order to make the learner use language in a communicative situation it is necessary first to learn the grammatical rules and then apply them in that communicative situation; on the other hand, the deep-end approach to CLT is based on the belief that grammar is acquired unconsciously during the performance on those communicative situations, so it would be useless to teach grammar previously and explicitly. According to this, CLT does deal with grammar, at least in its shallow-end approach. First, it just dresses up the grammatical structures into communicative functions; although they are not presented explicitly, they are still there. Second, if we have a functional concept of grammar, the explicit teaching of functions would still be grammar teaching: according to Halliday, grammar is the study of linguistic forms (wordings) realizing functions or meanings; both wordings and functions are studied by grammar. However, the fact that there is grammar teaching in the shallow-end approach does not mean that this version of Communicative Language Teaching is not communicative. Grammar is considered as a means towards communication. In shallow-end syllabuses grammar is taught, but it is the way in which it is taught and its final result into the learners' communicative performance the two factors that make that grammar meaningful and communicative. For the past 50 years, Approaches to the Teaching of English Grammar have attracted the attention of second and foreign language teachers, research scholars, curriculum developers and linguists worldwide. However, the role of grammar in the learning of a language is still a controversial subject, some scholars supporting the view that grammar is essential for learning a language and other scholars supporting the view that grammar has no significant role in the learning of a language. The place of grammar in English language teaching is controversial. Many researchers believe that knowledge of grammar is needed to teach English language in ELT classrooms. They added that the formal rules of English language need to be learned. Within the perimeter of this brief article, from what has been discussed about approaches to the teaching of grammar such as inductive, deductive, focus on form, focus on meaning and even implicit and explicit knowledge can be considered as important factors in learning English language over the world.

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**Dilin tədrisində qrammatikanın rolu  
Xülasə**

Qrammatika dil tədrisi sahəsində tez-tez yanlış anlaşılır. Səhv anlama ona əsaslanır ki, qrammatika dilin statik strukturları haqqında ixtiyari qaydaların toplusudur. Daha şübhəli iddialar, strukturların düşünülməməsi, strukturların öyrənilənlərin özləri tərəfindən əldə edilməsi və ya əgər strukturlar öyrədilsə, dərslərin maraqsız olmasıdır. Müqayisəli yanaşma ilə bağlı bu məqalə qrammatik tədrisin zəruriliyini qısa bir şəkildə təhlil etməyə çalışır və onun dil tədrisində əhəmiyyətini nisbətən obyektiv təsvir edir.

Bu, dil tədrisində qrammatik tədrisin vacib olduğunu sübut edir. Qrammatika dilin əsası olduğundan, ikinci dil tədrisində ön pillədə qrammatikanın qoyulması mütləqdir. Grammatik bacarıqlıq ünsiyyət qabiliyyətlərindən biridir. Ünsiyyət bacarıqları, dilin qrammatikası və lüğətinin ünsiyyət məqsədlərinə nail olmaq üçün necə istifadə edildiyini və bunun sosial cəhətdən düzgün bir şəkildə necə olacağını bilməkdən ibarətdir. Beləliklə, məqsədlərə nail olmaq üçün qrammatik tədris vacibdir.

Qrammatikanın öyrənilməsi səhvlərin düzəldilməsində və yazının yaxşılaşdırılmasında tələbəyə kömək edir.

**Açar sözlər:** ünsiyyət, dil tədrisi, qrammatika, yanaşma, linqvistik

G.И.Джумшудова

**Важность грамматики в преподавании языка**

**Резюме**

Грамматика часто неправильно понимается в области преподавания языка. Заблуждение заключается в том, что грамматика представляет собой набор произвольных правил о статических структурах в языке. Дальнейшие сомнительные утверждения состоят в том, что не нужно думать о структурах, учащиеся приобретут их самостоятельно, или, если они будут изучены, уроки будут скучными. Этот тезис о сравнительном подходе пытается сделать краткий анализ необходимости обучения грамматике, прежде чем дать относительно объективное описание его функции и значения в преподавании языка. Он утверждает, что преподавание грамматики необходимо в преподавании языка. Это точно, что грамматика ставит на передний план в преподавании второго языка, потому что знание языка грамматики и словарного запаса является основой английского языка. Грамматическая компетентность - это одна из коммуникативных компетенций. Коммуникативная компетенция включает в себя знание того, как использовать грамматику и словарный запас языка для достижения коммуникативных целей, и умение делать это социально приемлемым способом. Коммуникативные цели - это цели изучения английского языка учащимися. Поэтому обучение грамматике необходимо для достижения целей.

Знание грамматики помогает студенту в исправлении ошибок и совершенствовании письменной работы.

**Ключевые слова:** общение, преподавание языка, грамматика, подход, лингвистика

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