

Assessing the Practice of Grammar Teaching Techniques: The Case of Kellem Wollega Preparatory Schools

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Abstract:

A crucial aspect of effective communication in any language is mastering the ability to use it without making grammatical errors. More often than not, teaching the grammar of a particular language to non-native speakers is complicated by deviations from the familiar grammatical style of their native language. As a result, it becomes necessary to design and explore techniques that allow better imprinting and appreciation of the new language. This article examined techniques for teaching English grammar in six government preparatory schools in the Kelem Wollega area of the regional state of West Oromia in Ethiopia. To collect data for the study, participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews were used. The data collection included a holistic approach involving both students and teachers. The grammar courses offered are not meaningful in allowing students to express their interests, feelings, and attitudes towards the use of the target structures. However, the inability of students to produce precise sentences in their speech points to ineffective teaching practice and a communication gap in the teaching-learning process. Mechanical exercises led to meaningful and communicative activities in daily grammar teaching in the classroom. So, it will be helpful to the student for learning the scientific and technological terms. In this work, solutions have been proposed to solve the problems and improve the teaching-learning experience more effective for understanding science and technology.

Keywords:- Integration, Communicative task, Teaching-material, Activities, Science and Technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching the grammar in foreign languages is an essential element that helps students to communicate effectively and efficiently. For this, it is essential to have a good command on the basics. Therefore, it is imaginary to make an acceptable sentence without using the grammar correctly because grammar is provided the rule for the formation of sentence¹. A sentence is a set of words with an explicit meaning and is made according to the logic of grammar. It helps to organize the messages in communication to make speech effective².

These recent research findings on the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) have shown that students often do not have an advanced level of communicative skills without using of proper grammar³. Communicative grammar education can be improved by the quality of learning and teaching a foreign/second language⁴. Thus, Grammar is considered an important part of a language and is taught through various techniques and strategies⁵. However, the traditional approach to language teaching

has mainly focused on acquiring language skills. This approach took into account the memorization of the target language word lists, written exercises and the translation of the grammar from the mother tongue to the target language 5, 6. The main concern of the structure oriented approach is to help students learn the form of the language rather than using it. It draws special attention to the formation of an appropriate sentence 6-7. The repetition of grammatical systems helps to develop this habit, which can be formed in regularity exercises. Wang et al. 8 further stated that a traditional approach to language learning breaks down the language from the smallest to the smallest pieces and knowledge. They believed that understanding the linguistic form of language is the basis for its use. The language is taught separately step by step and this acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole language learning is built up.

Most of the tools that followed the structural approach consisted of mechanical exercises, such as change and transformation exercises. This type of activity is designed to allow students to internalize and memorize solely without having to make meaningful use of their knowledge. Robet et al. reported that teaching by traditional language, methods and materials are constructed by focusing on the growth of grammatical competence⁹. It is felt that the students are developing their grammar skills in the foreign language. Therefore, the structure of the language could be understood by the students, but they are unable to use this grammatical awareness for communication purposes in everyday life.

On the other hand, the communicative approach to language teaching is replaced to the traditional methods of language teaching in the late 1970s because academics were not satisfied with the traditional method of language teaching. Thus, communicative language teaching aims is to develop communication skills by creating a safe atmosphere and feasible

tasks. So those, students can actively participate in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the new form to internalize the new language. In this approach, the basic principle of language teaching is the learning of grammar⁷⁻¹⁰. The teacher can use different teaching methods to include a new grammar section of the class. Althafi et al. reported that grammar activities includes role-playing, games, group work, pairing, problem-solving activities, and information-gap activities is used to improve students' communication and interest in English grammar¹¹. This type of activity helps students to freely express their feelings and interests. Otherwise, students will often not reach the level of advanced communicative competence^{7,12}. It is very important to make the learning process interesting and effective for the students after they know their area of interest. Some may enjoy playing, reading or writing so that, they can learn, understand and use it easily. Therefore, students can feel highly motivated with participating in communication activities. These activities will improve their performance and mastery of English grammar in realistic and enjoyable terms¹³. It is reported by Razali et al. that the principles of communicative language learning (CLT) activities implemented in the classroom contribute to improving learners' performance in English¹⁴. CLT was introduced in Ethiopia in the late 1990s. Based on the communicative approach, language teaching textbooks were created for secondary schools. However, in most schools the CLTs were not fully implemented. Indeed, the implementation of CLT lacked trained teachers, appropriate texts, students unfamiliar with CLT, problems in their local context than the theory promoted in academic literature in Ethiopia. Therefore, the main aim of this research is presented below:

Recognize the techniques used by teachers for teaching English grammar to encourage the student's communication skills.

Investigate how students interact with each other while learning grammar in their classroom.

Evaluate the integration of language skills in grammar education. Find out the area of student's interests in grammar learning.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to examine the implementation of grammatical teaching techniques used in real classrooms in preparatory schools in the Kelem Wollega area, Oromo region, Ethiopia. Observation instruments, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews are used to collect the data for the study. In addition, a descriptive data analysis is used in the study. The researchers collected data from six words; namely Dalle Sadi, Amfillo, Hawa Gelan, Sadi Chanka, Kake and Dambi Dollo town. There are six preparatory schools in this focused research. The target groups for this study are both (teachers and students). To select the target students from each school, the researchers used random samples. The sample size of students participating in the study was sixty (60) randomly selected students from each school. As for the selection of English teachers, the English teachers available in these selected schools participated in this activity because they are in limited numbers. There are only forty (40) English teachers in the selected

preparatory schools. Various methods have been used to obtain information about techniques for teaching communicative grammar. The first classroom observation is conducted to examine classroom teaching style, student participation in the process of teaching, and grammar learning. Then, Questionnaires are collected from English teachers and finally an interview is conducted with students selected from schools. The data collected through classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews are treated separately. Data collected through the questionnaire are tabulated and interpreted using percentages. However, the data collected through observation and interviews have been analyzed qualitatively.

3. DISCUSSION, UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSIS

This specific section deals with the discussion, understanding and analysis of the data obtained from the responses of students and teachers of different schools through classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires. The table is made up of questionnaires and observations from teachers. Interviews with students are incorporated into the discussion under each table.

Table 1: Teacher responses to Grammar learning techniques.

Teacher responses are scored on different scales; strongly agree (SA), strongly disagree (SD), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Not sure (UN), Frequency (F) and Percentage (%).

No	Items	Rating scale						Total
1	According to you in which way students can learn grammar better?		SA	A	UN	DA	SD	
1.1	Consciously understanding grammar rules	F	13	14	6	4	3	40
		%	32.5	35	15	10	7.5	100 %
1.2	Engaging in activities which they practice	F	3	13		20	4	40
		%	7.5	32.5		50	10	100 %

Table 2: Teacher's response to the grammar presentation (integration).

Here the answers are given per rating level; Strongly agree (SA), Strongly disagree (SD), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Not sure (UN), Frequency (F) and Percentage (%).

No	Item	Rating						Total
2	During teaching process of grammar, it is chiefly presented at:		SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	
2.1	Sentence level	F	18	5	5	8	4	40
		%	45	12.5	12.5	20	10	100 %
2.2	Discourse level	F	6	2		11	21	40
		%	15	5		27.5	52.5	100
2.3	Inductively	F	5	9	3	19	4	40
		%	12.5	22.5	7.5	47.5	10	100 %

Table 3: Teacher responses to how often they use different techniques and strategies to teach grammar.

No	Items	Rating scales					Total
3	How repeatedly do you use the successive techniques and strategies For presenting grammar?	A	S	UN	R	N	
3.1	Detailed explanation	F	25	11		4	40
		%	62.5	27.5		10	100
3.2	Offering students grammar rule first with example	F	14	19	7		40
		%	47.5	34.1	17.5		100
3.3	Make students discover grammar rules by themselves	F			6	15	40
		%			15	37.5	100
3.4	Use contexts and situations for learning like objects, pictures, actions to express the meaning of structure	F		11	3	25	40
		%		27.5	7.5	62.5	100

Table 4: Teacher's response to the use of participatory activities in the teaching of grammar.

The teacher's answers are given in different rating scales: always (A), rarely (R), sometimes (S), Not sure (UN), never (N), frequency (F), percentage (P).

No	Items	Rating scale					Total
4	How regularly do you apply the following drills for practice grammar?	A	S	UN	R	N	
4.1	Substitution table	F	11		5	24	40
		%	27.5		12.5	60	100
4.2	Transformation drills	F	4		36		40
		%	10		90		100

4.3	Conversation drills	F	4	25	4		7	40
		%	10	62.5	10		17.5	100
4.4	Information gap activities	F		8	6		26	40
		%	-	20	15		65	100
4.5	Problem-solving activities	F		13	4		23	40
		%		22.5	10		57.5	100
4.6	Role-plays	F	2	3	19		13	40
		%	5	7.5	47.5		32.5	100
4.7	Games	F	-	-	7		33	40
		%	-	-	17.5		82.5	100
4.8	Offer students individual work	-	-	16			24	40
		-	-	40			60	100
4.9	Offer students pair work	F	10	23	7			40
		%	25	57.5	17.5			100
4.10	Offer student small group work	F	20	14	6			40
		%	50	35.5	14.5			100

Table 5: Teacher's response to how often they allow their students to express their ideas using a new arrangement.

The answers are categorized as follows: Always (A), Sometimes (S), Not sure (UN), Rarely

No	Items		Rating scales					Total
			A	S	U n	R	N	
5	How frequently do you:							
5.1	Let students write and speak on the grammar objects which they have introduced?	F	3	4	4	17	12	40
		%	7.5	10	10	42.5	30	100
5.2	Encourage students to use grammar items for talking about their feeling?	F	5	7		14	14	40
		%	12.5	17.5		35	35	100
5.3	Motivate students to fabricate their understanding of the objective structure?	F	4	5		18	13	40
			10	12.5		45	32.5	100

(R), Never (N), Frequency (F), Percent (P).

Table 6: Teachers' response to the integration of language skills in grammar education.

No	Items	Rating scales					Total
			A	S	Un	R	N
6	How frequently you apply the following language skills in grammar teaching ?						
6.1	Present it through reading text	F	13	20	7		40
		%	32.5	50.0	17.5		100
6.2	Present it through listening text	F				33	7
		%				78.5	17.
6.3	Present it through short guided dialogue	F	25	15			40
		%	58.5	36.5			100
6.4	Present it through writing activities	F					
		%					

Here at the table 1, 67.5% of the teachers reported that their students learn better grammar when they learn consciously. The researcher also found that teachers teach grammar separately and in detail by providing grammatical notes. They tried to force students to memorize language forms instead of giving practical activities. But the CLT principles state that it is best to give students sufficient opportunities to practice meaningfully in order to acquire knowledge of the language¹⁵. In section 1.2 of table 1, 60% of the respondents said that the teachers do not offer enough activities in the given language form for their students. However, several activities should be involved in the teaching of communicative grammar¹⁶. In addition, the students are asked to give their opinion. Their answer is that they can learn new training better when they discover the rule for themselves. From the table, it can be said that students understood grammar better by using of different activities. It is meaningful to them and in their context. 57.5% of the teachers indicated that grammar is mainly presented at sentence level, while 20% of respondents indicated that they teach in the discussion phase. The same element of the table 2, section 2.4 is shown that 67.5% of the subjects has a grammatical deductive presence. Therefore, these teachers are preferred to

use traditional methods of teaching grammar. This implied that maximum participants believed that the grammar of the language is taught at the sentence point with the construction of the basic form. Nevertheless, the researchers mentioned that grammar lessons in the classroom should be presented in a discussion of dominant manner in an inductive manner. In this case the learners are engaged to practice the language in a meaningful way. It is observed that during the teachers taught grammar classrooms, students are listened silently to the teacher. The students did not have a chance to see the form in their group or pair. There are no interaction between teacher and student or student to student. Teacher responses for using different techniques and strategies to teach grammar are shown in table 3. These indicated that the explanation of the grammar is more important but it is very important to spend a lot of time speaking with the practice of writing. Besides this building activity for students to internalize with the rule in communication. For more effective and useful lessons, ELT teachers need to apply well-developed and intelligent teaching methods in the classroom¹⁷. Students should discover the grammar rules on their own, the majority of teachers are not offered their students to see the language patterns in speech. They are

also not helping them to earn and practice the language by themselves. However, the literature passed on to teachers does not illustrate the awareness of any of the grammatical facts Azizah et al. 18. While the above table showed that the majority of respondents forced students to draw the grammatical structure of the language. Moreover, there are plenty of opportunities for learners to recognize how language structure is used. These activities include text duplication, text generation, text conclusion, text editing, word processing, and grammar rules¹⁹.

In table 4, teachers response about how often they used the above activities and grammar instruction. In the table, the element of the first three rows is mechanical, after those eight activities are meaningful and unlimited. In the table, the data from the last three rows were needed to assess how often teachers have their students work independently, in groups and in pairs during teaching grammar. The responses observed that most teachers are used mechanical exercises more often than meaningful and communicative tasks. Here, 72% of teachers said that they are not used the mechanical drills. Similarly, a substitution drill is rarely used. However, 72.5% of the teachers are used conversation drills to teach grammar. In addition, the classroom observation indicated that teachers are used the lecture method of grammar teaching in which teachers are the bearer of the language to the classroom. No drills are observed during the teaching-learning process. Also in the literature, it revealed that these mechanical drills are the least constructive because they accepted a slight resemblance to real communication. Teachers are not forced students to learn about anything. They just need to repeat a pattern or lines. As a result, students are unable to develop the ability to use proper grammar for writing and communicating using mechanical drills²⁰. On the other hand, the respondents are asked whether they used communication activities in the real classroom during grammar lessons and

conveyed the following facts. 65% of the teachers explained that they did not use lack of information activity during the teaching grammar and 15% of teachers rarely used these techniques. The rest of the 20% of the respondents indicated that they are sometimes used lack of informational activities during teaching grammar. Similarly, the majority of teachers rarely or never used problem-solving actions to teach English grammar in the classroom²¹. There are many types of activities involved in teaching grammar. These activities mainly include drills, picture descriptions, interaction activities, structured role-playing, answers to structured questions, game interviews, pair work, group work, etc. But the observation in the classroom clearly showed that all communicative grammatical activities are not applied in the classroom. At the same time, 82.5% of teachers stated that they have never used play activities in grammar lessons and 32.5% of teachers have never used a role-playing activity for grammar practice. Therefore, it can be inferred from the answers that classroom grammar teaching is guided by teacher-centered techniques that link learners to interact with the teacher's language. This showed that communicative teaching of grammar is not successful in language classes. Communication-related exercises are helped the students to identify forms, meanings, and customs as possibilities for multiple correct responses²²

From the above table 5, 17.5% of the participants suggested that they always and sometimes respectively made their students speak and write about the sentence. In contrast, 42.5% and 30% of teachers said they had never prepared their students to converse and write using the grammar of the language. Similarly, 70% of respondents said they rarely or never encourage students to explain or say anything about using grammatical elements. In addition, a large number of teachers (77.5%) also indicated that they did not motivate students to express their

feelings for construction the English language. This result provided the information that most grammar activities are not beyond the practice level, but it is also very important to create the activities personally to give confidence to the students. This allows them to express their feelings both in writing and orally. This can be very useful to make the grammar part more engaging and attractive compared to forced learning. So, It can be concluded that the students did not have the opportunity to practice the new language in the classroom where the teacher can help them to cope with the difficulties.

In addition, students are not got the opportunity to practice and produce structurally correct language. So, teachers need to be reminded of the importance of allowing students to innovate themselves through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Learning and using grammar in a language can take a long time. Frequent exposure to structures and language are required with the everyday practice opportunities. On the other hand, the researcher analyzed the student textbook, which is composed of many grammatical sections presented to discover grammar rules. In addition, the classroom observation showed that the teachers strictly followed the traditional teaching methods and thus in most cases there is no chance for the students to discover the grammar rules. Language is also the fundamental tool for the development of thought and scientific research. English language is currently one of the best way to share thier research and technological outcome with scientists of the other parts of world. Therefore, English langugae is essential for all the inquiry aspects in the sciences and the interpretation of information to theory. English improving learning is helpful to undestand the science and technological term, which is developing in the worldwise. Therefore, improvement in the English grammer reading and writing is the pillar of

development and understanding of sciecnce and technology in a society.

4. SUMMARY CONCLUSION

AND

This study aimed to explore the practice of grammar teaching techniques in government's schools in Kellem Wollega area, Oromia, Ethiopia. Various data collection tools are used to collect information. The questionnaires provided data regarding the method used by students and teachers for grammar education in the language classroom. This research also conducts classroom research to gather information about the purpose of grammatical learning strategies and techniques. Along with this, the 11th and 12th grade student's textbooks are analyzed to get further information about grammar lessons presented and to determine the extent, which each activity, such as mechanical, meaningful, and communicative is involved.

As a result, these questionnaires are randomly distributed among selected students in each class and among all English teachers at each school. Similarly, classes are observed to check the collected data using tools. In addition, the student's textbooks should be assessed to determine whether or not the grammar teaching corresponds to the methods of teaching communicative languages. The results of the collected data show that even teachers recognized the essential idea of communicative language teaching. Communicative grammar instruction is similarly not very useful. There are a mismatch between subject and the real purpose of teaching grammar in the classroom. As a result, more grammar lessons are not delivered in a meaningful and communicative way. This means that they contain various involuntary exercises, rather than meaningful and communicative activities. In addition, improving the English grammar lessons are helpful to understand more scientific term and technology.

The major findings:

Based on the results of the class interpretation, questionnaires and textbook analysis, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. The integration of language skills has not been taken into consideration.
2. There are not enough activities for the students to introduce the language into their context and put in their deserved effort.
3. The teachers gave full explanations of the grammar rule. The students made no effort to discover the grammar rules themselves.
4. The teaching of grammar has been both rule and mechanically based. Nevertheless, some grammar lessons in textbooks are presented in meaningful and communicative ways. The lessons are generally presented in separation.
5. Most teachers have never used oral and written contexts to create important knowledge and information. They did not use meaningful contexts and situations in grammar lessons.
6. Teachers did not use pictures, objects and illustrative tools to express the importance of training.
7. Modern grammar teaching practices require many features that are important in promoting the communicative teaching of grammar philosophy. The most commonly used grammar learning techniques is neither related nor communicative.
8. Different techniques are not used by teachers, which is very necessary for learning English grammar and strategies for teaching grammar, as well as for correctly using role-playing and group work to teach grammar
9. During classroom observations, it showed that teachers are unable to successfully establish teaching

strategies from communicative grammar to teaching grammar. As a result, teachers are unable to get the students to speak and write. They closely follow the textbook that is overly focused on exploiting grammar rules.

10. Students are unable to perform problem-solving and interval activities in succession. But they are able to give a huge amount of exercises of conclusion, replacement and renewal of behavior or activities in the classroom.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. According to the findings of the investigation, the following proposed activities are being carried out.
2. English teachers are expected to use a variety of techniques and strategies to present grammar lessons to students.
3. It is recommended that teachers are incorporated grammar content into all language methods and ensure that students see the form in their circumstance.
4. It is expected from teacher to explain the concept of grammar in a clear, short, and fruitful way. Otherwise, it may take a long time to practice and learn the activities.
5. The oral and written supports need be authentic and the structures need be easy to present.
6. Students expected to be enabled by the teacher to experience the training themselves by listening and reading texts.
7. The teachers are recommended to have a communicative language education and encourage the students to use the language in an ineffective and professional way.
8. The teachers need to identify the importance of teaching the language implicitly and inductively.
9. Even, if the textbook is not presented inductively, it is role of the teacher to

change it inductively to help the students.

10. Material developers are recommended to include the communication tasks such as role playing, sporting events, troubleshooting tips, information gap activities, group, and pairing activities in the textbooks.
11. The exercises in the manual should be presented to allow students to freely and continuously communicate their reflections. Students are expected to have the opportunity to practice and produce the language under any part of the grammar. Students should be specified with activities that encourage them to write.
12. Students should be involved in meaningful and relentless activities. These activities should enable students to express their thoughts freely and meaningfully using grammatical knowledge.
13. Teachers should encourage students to read different English books as reading is the easiest way to learn.
14. The exercises in the grammar manual should include a multitude of activities as involuntary, meaningful, and communicative.
15. Textbook grammar activities should include picture exercises, structured role-playing, and playoffs.
16. Grammar exercises should be accessible in factual contexts and situations almost provide the learners with opportunities to apply the language in these contexts
17. Learning through writing skills can persuade students to explore the language by learning to use precise grammar along the way. If, there are explicit problems with secured grammar rules, this can be accommodated in a more planned lesson.
18. These recommendations are predictable as another path way for English teachers to teach grammar.

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