

IMPROVING GRAMMAR SKILLS AND OVERCOMING THROUGH DIFFICULTIES

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Abstract: *English plays a pivotal role in shaping educational systems worldwide, with grammar serving as a core element of learning the language. Without a proper understanding of grammar, it is difficult to use English effectively. Writing in English is particularly crucial during students' academic years. Many students face challenges with grammatical errors when learning English due to their limited knowledge and experience with vocabulary and grammar in everyday life. This study seeks to explore the challenges associated with learning English grammar and proposes solutions to overcome them. Employing a descriptive methodology, the research is based on a review of existing literature.*

Key words: *educational system, grammatical errors, solutions, language learning.*

Introduction

In contemporary times, English has become a widely studied language, as many individuals recognize its global significance. Mastery of the language involves developing proficiency in four fundamental skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Achieving high performance in examinations requires competence in all these areas. However, a solid understanding of grammar is essential to succeed across these domains.

Grammar forms the foundation of the English language. For those aspiring to study or work in prestigious institutions, studying grammar is indispensable. Despite its importance, many learners find grammar tedious. It is a well-known fact that some students excel in learning English grammar, while others face significant challenges. Nevertheless, grammar plays a critical role in helping learners achieve fluency in communication.

Unfortunately, some educators fail to make grammar lessons engaging, which discourages students from learning. Additionally, certain English teachers lack a methodical understanding and professional expertise in grammar instruction. Recognizing these issues, many educators strive to develop innovative and engaging methods to integrate grammar instruction effectively into English language curricula. Among the various challenges, mastering grammar-particularly the correct use of punctuation marks-remains one of the most difficult tasks for students. This is corroborated by international comparative studies and the outcomes of national academic

placement tests conducted in the native language. To enhance students' handwriting skills, a range of language teaching methods and strategies must be employed. Depending on the subject matter and instructional objectives, various approaches, including individualized work or cooperative learning, should be utilized. The prevailing trend in language teaching emphasizes analysis and creativity. When researchers conducted observations and interviews with students and lecturers, they found that many students exhibited significant weaknesses in grammar. The students struggled to differentiate between nouns, adjectives, and verbs, and they faced difficulties in constructing sentences using the simple present tense, past tense, and future tense. While previous studies on grammar instruction primarily focused on analyzing students' challenges in learning grammar, controversies surrounding grammar teaching, strategies to prevent grammatical errors, and teachers' perceptions of grammar instruction, these studies predominantly relied on inductive and deductive teaching methods. These approaches, which emphasize rules and examples, often resulted in student disengagement in the classroom.

To address these issues, the current study aims to implement a visual illustration technique for teaching grammar, with the dual objectives of identifying the challenges students face and understanding the underlying reasons for these difficulties.

UIBU employed the inductive learning method, which facilitated an understanding of grammar by presenting examples of its practical usage. Shen conducted an evaluation of grammar teaching practices, exploring the integration of grammar instruction in English writing and offering recommendations for effective teaching methods.

Puengpipattrakul investigated the learning process through the use of journal writing as a pedagogical approach. Similarly, EUN emphasized the use of audiovisual aids and authentic materials in grammar teaching, concluding that these methods make grammar instruction more engaging, dynamic, and less monotonous. Classroom activities incorporating authentic materials, combined with specific tasks for learners to complete, provide meaningful learning experiences. These approaches not only enhance students' confidence in using English but also make the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. Additionally, the integration of technology, particularly the use of portable devices such as smartphones, enables students to learn grammar anytime and anywhere. By leveraging technology, educators can offer students richer, contextually engaging, and easily accessible learning experiences.

Furthermore, focusing on specific elements of grammar learning-such as sentence structures, verb tenses, and word order-provides valuable insights into the areas where students benefit most, as evidenced by the use of platforms like Duolingo.

Review of Literature

Different scholars and linguists have offered various interpretations of grammar, particularly English grammar. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, grammar encompasses the entire system of a language, including its morphology, syntax, phonology, and semantics. However, some definitions limit grammar to the structural rules of a language, excluding vocabulary, semantics, and phonology. The inclusion of semantics in defining grammar often depends on the specific perspective of linguistic experts. In the context of language studies, grammar frequently refers to either a set of rules outlined in a book or the application of those rules to form coherent sentences.

Brumfit and Johnson highlight that every language possesses its own grammar, and without it, words cannot be arranged meaningfully. They assert that understanding a language's grammar is crucial for effective communication, as words alone are insufficient without a structured framework. However, despite its importance, many students view grammar as tedious, primarily because it is often taught in uninspiring ways that fail to promote creativity.

Crystal defines grammar as the study of how words are organized to create meaningful sentences. While Brumfit and Johnson acknowledge that mastering grammar alone does not guarantee fluency, they emphasize its essential role in language learning. Consequently, grammar instruction is a cornerstone of education, as both implicit and explicit knowledge of grammar are necessary for full language acquisition. Teachers should not only teach grammar rules but also demonstrate their application in real-life communication contexts. Harmer characterizes grammar as an aspect of linguistic accuracy that focuses on sentence structures. This view is supported by Thornbury, Gleason, and Rather, who describe grammar as a set of rules governing the forms and structures of sentences used in a language. Overall, grammar remains a vital component of language education, requiring innovative teaching methods to make it both practical and engaging for learners. Brown highlights that grammar is a system of rules that governs the conventional arrangement and relationships of words within a sentence. This raises the question: what is the most effective method for teaching grammar in contemporary classrooms? Teaching grammar, such as verb tenses, provides foundational knowledge of language structure, which is essential for effective communication. Ur defines grammar as the study of how words are organized to form accurate sentences, while Radford expands on this by emphasizing that grammar focuses on the rules governing both word formation and sentence construction. Grammar, often divided into syntax and morphology, involves the systematic analysis of language to ensure accurate sentence structure, as noted by Crystal. There is a widely held view that English grammar exists as an abstract concept within the human mind, becoming concrete only when language is actively used. This notion aligns with the idea of the Language Acquisition Device, where grammar remains implicit until applied in practice.

This phenomenon is referred to as grammatical competence, which entails an inherent understanding of a language's structure, particularly in English. In this context, grammar functions as a model of linguistic competence for fluent speakers, with language proficiency often assessed in educational settings such as schools and universities. Radford further argues that grammar enables individuals to determine whether a sequence of words is grammatically correct and to interpret the meaning embedded within such structures.

Today, grammar is regarded as an essential part of meaningful communication, moving away from the outdated view of it as a collection of disconnected rules. The term Deductive Method refers to a method of reasoning that moves from rules to examples. This approach employs the use of textbooks examples to illustrate the rules. After some instruction, students are given a series of activities designed to assess their knowledge. This approach deviates from the pedagogical views of going from familiar to unfamiliar and easy to difficult strategies. In the Inductive method, examples are provided first, and then rules are deduced from those examples. This method gives students the freedom to learn independently. The issue of a better grammar teaching method is still a controversial topic. There has been some discussion about whether or not grammar rules should be presented explicitly or implicitly. Teachers of English as a second language often debate between a deductive and an inductive method when teaching students grammatical structures. Teachers who use a deductive approach believe that theory should come before practice. According to this method, teachers introduce that specific grammar rule to them in detail and offer them practice with it before students use a grammatical concept in their own writing. Students are given activities and tasks after each class to ensure they have mastered the material covered. The deductive method of teaching grammar aims to raise students' awareness of and adherence to grammar rules. The inductive method places the grammar rules under study in the context of dialogues and games. Students are encouraged to read and analyze texts or examples critically and find out the particular grammar rules. This method is also called learner-centered approach. As a result, students are better able to absorb grammatical concepts and use them correctly while expressing themselves. In an inductive learning classroom, students give close consideration to the presentation of material. However, teacher-centered is a deductive grammar teaching method that makes the learners passive participants.

Main body

Learning grammar is by no means always related to instruction and practice or exercise. It can be seen as having two main aspects: competence and performance. To evaluate students' grammar skills, a test is often used, with the results indicating their progress in grammar mastery. Students develop their grammar competence through repeated practice, both in spoken and written forms. This practice encourages students to

review and reflect on their grammar, engaging in meta cognitive actions. The more students repeat this cycle of practice and self-assessment, the more their performance improves on similar topics in future tests. These exercises are often objective, such as true or false, multiple-choice, or fill-in-the-blank questions, each with a single correct answer. This structure helps students easily review their answers and understand their mistakes, as each response is either correct or incorrect. When examining the causes of students' grammar mistakes, teachers believed that errors in areas such as spelling, syntax, and understanding the sentence's communicative purpose stemmed from a lack of cognitive skills. These errors often result from weaknesses in lower-level cognitive abilities like remembering and recalling information. Teachers attributed syntax errors and mistakes in identifying sentence's purpose mainly to established misconceptions. Orthographic mistakes were frequently linked to issues with comprehension and memory. Moreover, several students proposed their reasons why they faced the problems. The result showed that they were lazy to learn grammar because they think that it was difficult for them. In this case, they did not have enough knowledge about grammar, the next reason is that students sometimes were not given an opportunity to ask because the time of learning grammar was limited in the classroom. Hence, it influenced their understanding about grammar. This finding was in line with Ameliani in 2019 year who stated that some factors who can causes the student's problems in learning grammar namely negative interlanguage and intralingual transfers in the forms of adverb interference, over generalization, ignorance of rule restriction, and incomplete application of rules. Moreover, Widianingsing and Gula in 2016 year stated that the reason students had problems in learning grammar can be caused by several factors 1, such as poor knowledge, time for learning, lazy to read and less learning sources. The greatest differences in teaching practices were observed in how teachers identified sentence types based on their communicative purpose. Inductive profile teachers reported using a wider range of strategies, while those who favored deductive methods mainly used illustration. Teachers with a combined approach also considered illustration to be the most effective strategy. Inductive teachers viewed developing understanding as the most effective way to prevent various grammar errors. Previous research has shown that inductive teaching provides more opportunities for language skill development than deductive methods while deductive strategies are more suitable for specific tasks. When comparing teachers' profiles based on experience, it was found that teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience were more likely to prefer a combined teaching approach than a strictly deductive one. Teachers with over five years experience generally reached a certain level of professional competence yet they often still employed strategies that did not fully support advanced language development, focusing more on lower and mid-level cognitive skills for their students. The finding on factor dominance may align with the idea that students benefit

more from grammar drills when they have the opportunity to review their mistakes. According to Brown in 2001, providing corrective feedback on written work can be more sensitive to handle than on spoken work, but it is crucial for students' successful language learning. Since this study involves students in early adulthood, corrective feedback tends to have positive effects. As noted by Dulay in 1982, adult learners are stronger cognitively, with better abilities in abstract thinking, classification, and generalization. This means that students can understand English patterns and recognize errors. Additionally, correction can foster students' habits of monitoring and evaluating their work, promoting self-assessment, which encourages autonomous learning though it still benefits from teacher guidance for greater effectiveness. Overall, these findings align with the researcher's expectations and support the theory discussed.

Conclusion

In summary, visual illustrations can serve as an alternative method for lecturers to teach grammar skills. Additionally, students responded positively to the use of visual aids in grammar instruction. However, they also encountered challenges in learning grammar, such as incorrect use of tenses, pronouns, and modal auxiliaries, as well as having limited grammatical knowledge and other issues identified in the findings. These challenges stemmed from factors related to the students, the lecturer, and time constraints in grammar learning. The study aimed to determine whether there is significant positive relationship between students' metacognitive awareness and their grammar achievement, focusing on the predictive relationship between these variables. These findings indicate a strong positive correlation: students with higher metacognitive awareness tend to achieve better grammar scores. Specifically, evaluation within metacognitive regulation emerged as the strongest positive predictor of grammar success. Thus, students who place a high emphasis on evaluation tend to perform better in grammar.

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