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USING EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT WAYS TO TEACHING GRAMMAR

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: In the case of teaching grammar to EFL learners, a teacher may feel frustrated when learners are taught grammatical items separately. Students may become good at grammar; however, when told to write and speak, they often make grammatical mistakes. This case is very challenging to solve. When facing this problem, particularly with adult learners, it is useful to be aware that there are two kinds of knowledge necessary to gain proficiency in a second language. These are known as explicit (conscious learning) and implicit (subconscious acquisition) knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

According to Ellis (2004), in a practical definition, explicit knowledge deals with language and the uses to which language can be put. This knowledge facilitates the intake and development of implicit language, and it is useful to monitor language output. Explicit knowledge is generally accessible through controlled processing. In short, it is conscious knowledge of grammatical rules learned through formal classroom instruction. In this respect, a person with explicit knowledge knows about language and the ability to articulate those facts in some way (Brown, 2000). For instance, Akmal knows every rule about present tense, but he frequently makes mistakes in speaking and writing. However, such knowledge is easy for him while having time to think of the rule and apply it (that is, in the context of a grammar exercise or a writing assignment). Thus, on the basis of Akmal's

case, explicit knowledge is learnable; for example, when grammatical items are given to learners, they learn the items first in a controlled learning process. Explicit knowledge is also obtained through the practice of error correction, which is thought to help learners come to the correct mental representation of a rule. This works if there is enough time to operate it; the speaker is concerned with the correctness of her/his speech/written production; and s/he knows the correct rules.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Implicit knowledge is automatic and easily accessed and provides a great contribution to building communicative skills. Implicit knowledge is unconscious, internalized knowledge of language that is easily accessed during spontaneous language tasks, written or spoken. Implicit knowledge is gained in the natural language learning process. It means that a person applies a certain grammatical rule in the same way as a child who acquires her/his first language (for example, mother tongue). According to Brown (2000), the child implicitly learns aspects of language (for example, phonological, syntactical, semantic, pragmatic rules for language), but does not have access to an explanation of those rules explicitly. As an example, Jack speaks and writes English with good use of present tense, although he has no idea about the grammatical rule behind it. To sum up, implicit knowledge is gained through a sub-conscious learning process. This is illustrated by the fact that native speakers of a certain language do not always “know” (consciously) the rules of their language.

In comparing the two terms: explicit and implicit knowledge, Noonan (2004) proposes a challenging question: “May explicit grammar knowledge become implicit knowledge in the context of EFL learners?” In response to this, there are two answers.

First, in Krashen’s view, explicit knowledge can never be implicit knowledge inasmuch as the two are located in dissimilar parts of the brain. In contrast, the interface position claims that explicit knowledge can have some impact on implicit knowledge. This position has two views. The first maintains that explicit knowledge becomes internalized through practice or frequent exposure to target language similar to the acquisition of other skills. The second goes along with the Krashen’s view.

For most teachers of English, the priority of teaching grammar is to assist learners to internalize the structures/rules of language, taught in such a way that they can be used for communication both written and spoken. For this reason, the two terms practice and consciousness-raising are important to define in this paper since they play an important play in successful grammar teaching, especially in the case of EFL.

To begin with, it is claimed that practice is one of the keys to learning incorporated into a methodology with the following features:

1. a specific grammatical feature is isolated for focused attention;
2. the learners are required to produce sentences or statements comprising the targeted feature;

3. the learners will be provided with opportunities for repetition of the targeted feature;
4. there is expectation that the learners will perform the grammatical feature correctly;
5. the learners receive feedback (immediate or delayed) on whether their performance of the grammatical structure is correct or incorrect.

It is generally accepted that practice can facilitate accuracy and fluency. In this regard, accuracy focuses on correct use of language (for example, rules of language).

This can be achieved through controlled and semi-controlled activities or practice of grammar, for example. In fluency, after learners master the rules of language, they are required to apply the rules of language in the form of spoken or written language. A number of linguists recommend that at this stage errors or mistakes be tolerated since making mistakes or errors is not disgraceful, but natural and common practice. During fluency-oriented activities, a teacher is required to help learners to self-notice or self correct. It is important to keep in mind that both accuracy and fluency are interdependent.

Ellis (2002) defines consciousness-raising as an attempt to equip learners with an understanding of a specific grammatical feature, to develop declarative (describing a rule of grammar and applying it in pattern practice drills) rather than procedural (applying a rule of grammar in communication) knowledge of it. Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992) define consciousness-raising as follows:

It is an approach to the teaching of grammar in which instruction in grammar (through drills, grammar explanation, and other form-focused activities) is viewed as a way of raising learner's awareness of grammatical features of the language. This is thought to indirectly facilitate second language acquisition. A consciousness-raising approach is contrasted with traditional approaches to the teaching of grammar in which the goal is to instill correct grammatical patterns and habits directly (p. 78).

The main characteristics of consciousness-raising activities proposed by Ellis (2002) involve:

1. there should be an effort to isolate a specific linguistic feature for focused attention;
2. the learners are provided with data which illustrate the targeted feature and an explicit rule description or explanation;
3. the learners are expected to utilize intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature;
4. misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to clarification in the form of further data and description or explanation;
5. learners are required (though not crucial) to articulate the rule describing the grammatical feature.

In short, in consciousness-raising, learners are required to notice a certain feature of language (that is, sentence patterns), but there is no requirement to produce or communicate the certain sentence patterns taught.

To summarize, practice is directed at the acquisition of implicit knowledge of a grammatical structure. That is the sort of tacit knowledge required for applying the structure effortlessly for communication. Consciousness-raising is geared for the formation of explicit knowledge: the kind of intellectual knowledge which we are able to gather about any subject (Ellis, 2002). Broadly speaking, in teaching grammar, there are two approaches that can be applied: deductive and inductive. In this section, I would like to briefly highlight the two, and implement both of them into my classes of Grammar at school and analyze the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Deductive approach

A deductive approach is derived from the notion that deductive reasoning works from the general to the specific. In this case, rules, principles, concepts, or theories are presented first, and then their applications are treated. In conclusion, when we use deduction, we reason from general to specific principles.

Dealing with the teaching of grammar, the deductive approach can also be called rule driven learning. In such an approach, a grammar rule is explicitly presented to students and followed by practice applying the rule. This approach has been the bread and butter of language teaching around the world and still enjoys a monopoly in many course books and self-study grammar books (Fortune, 1992). The deductive approach maintains that a teacher teaches grammar by presenting grammatical rules, and then examples of sentences are presented. Once learners understand rules, they are told to apply the rules given to various examples of sentences. Giving the grammatical rules means no more than directing learners' attention to the problem discussed. Eisenstein (1987) suggests that with the deductive approach, learners be in control during practice and have less fear of drawing an incorrect conclusion related to how the target language is functioning. To sum up, the deductive approach commences with the presentation of a rule taught and then is followed by examples in which the rule is applied. In this regard, learners are expected to engage with it through the study and manipulation of examples.

In the case of the application of the deductive approach, therefore, Michael Swan (cited in Thornbury, 1999, p. 32) outlines some guidelines for when the rule is presented.

Among them are:

1. the rules should be true;
2. the rules should show clearly what limits are on the use of a given form;
3. the rules need to be clear;

4. the rules ought to be simple;
5. the rules needs to make use of concepts already familiar to the learners; and
6. the rules ought to be relevant.

Most importantly, when the rules are presented in the deductive approach, the presentation should be illustrated with examples, be short, involve students' comprehension and allow learners to have a chance to personalize the rule.

Nonetheless, the deductive approach has its own advantages and disadvantages as shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1. Advantages and disadvantages of the deductive approach to teaching grammar

Advantages	1.The deductive approach goes straightforwardly to the point and can, therefore, be time-saving.
	2. A number of rule aspects (for example, form) can be more simply and clearly explained than elicited from examples
	3. A number of direct practice/application examples are immediately given
	4. The deductive approach respects the intelligence and maturity of many adult learners in particular and acknowledges the role of cognitive processes in language acquisition.
	5. It confirms many learners' expectations about classroom learning particularly for those who have an analytical style.
Disadvantages	1. Beginning the lesson with a grammar presentation may be off-putting for some learners, especially younger ones.
	2. Younger learners may not able to understand the concepts or encounter grammar terminology given.
	3. Grammar explanation encourages a teacher-fronted, transmission-style classroom, so it will hinder learner involvement and interaction immediately.
	4. The explanation is seldom as memorable as other forms of presentation (for example, demonstration).
	5. The deductive approach encourages the belief that learning a language is simply a case of knowing the rule.

Inductive approach

An inductive approach comes from inductive reasoning stating that a reasoning progression proceeds from particulars (that is, observations, measurements, or data) to generalities (for example, rules, laws, concepts or theories. In short, when we use induction, we observe a number of specific instances and from them infer a general principle or concept. In the case of pedagogical grammar, most experts argue that the inductive approach can also be called rule-discovery learning. It suggests that a teacher teach grammar starting with presenting some examples of sentences. In this sense, learners understand grammatical rules from the examples. The presentation of grammatical rules can be spoken or written. Eisenstein (cited in Long & Richards, 1987) maintains that the inductive approach tries to utilize the very strong reward value of bringing order, clarity and meaning to experiences. This approach involves learners' participating actively in their own instruction. In addition, the approach encourages a learner to develop her/his own mental set of strategies for dealing

with tasks. In other words, this approach attempts to highlight grammatical rules implicitly in which the learners are encouraged to conclude the rules given by the teacher.

Similar to the deductive approach, the inductive approach offers advantages and disadvantages as seen in the Table 2 below.

TABLE 2. Advantages and disadvantages of the inductive approach to teaching grammar

Advantages	1. Learners are trained to be familiar with the rule discovery; this could enhance learning autonomy and self-reliance.
	2. Learners' greater degree of cognitive depth is "exploited".
	3. The learners are more active in the learning process, rather than being simply passive recipients. In this activity, they will be motivated.
	4. The approach involves learners' pattern-recognition and problemsolving abilities in which particular learners are interested in this challenge.
	5. If the problem-solving activity is done collaboratively, learners get an opportunity for extra language practice.
Disadvantages	1. The approach is time and energy-consuming as it leads learners to have the appropriate concept of the rule.
	2. The concepts given implicitly may lead the learners to have the wrong concepts of the rule taught.
	3. The approach can place emphasis on teachers in planning a lesson.
	4. It encourages the teacher to design data or materials taught carefully and systematically.
	5. The approach may frustrate the learners with their personal learning style, or their past learning experience (or both) would prefer simply to be told the rule.

Relating deductive and inductive approaches to SLA theory

Deductive and inductive approaches relate to learning and acquisition in SLA theory.

Firstly, the deductive approach is related to the conscious learning process in which this approach tries to place a great emphasis on error correction and the presentation of explicit rules (Krashen, 2002). Such an approach is applied for the reason that it is an efficient and elegant way to organize and present the rule that is already understood. The deductive approach is often used with adult learners. Through the deductive approach, a teacher tries to teach the rule explicitly to the learners so that they are ready to cope with exercises given. The explicit rule presentation can enhance the learners' confidence in doing certain tasks. To be successful in applying the approach, the teacher needs to provide numerous exercises.

Secondly, the inductive approach relates to subconscious learning processes similar to the concept of language acquisition. Children acquire their first or second language. In this regard, meaningful interaction in the target language (that is, natural communication) is more important than the form of the language. For this reason, error correction and explicit teaching of the rule are de-emphasized. Most importantly, utterances are easily understood. In other words, when the inductive approach is applied, the learners learn the rule unconsciously.

Adapted from Krashen's acquisition/learning hypothesis (1987, 2002), I draw some conclusions in respect of the two approaches – deductive and inductive as listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Relationship of deductive and inductive approaches to Krashen's (1987, 2002) theory

Deductive	Inductive
Learn the rule in the context of formal instruction	Learn the rule as a child acquires her/his first or second language
Know about the rule	"Pick up" the rule
Learn the rule consciously	Learn the rule subconsciously
Learn the rule explicitly	Learn the rule implicitly

Of the two approaches above, which is best? This question relates to a long-standing debate among language teachers in the context of EFL/ESL, since the two have their own significances for particular learner progress. For example, a study of various language learners shows that some learners achieve better in deductive language classes; on the other hand, others perform better in more inductive classes.

CONCLUSION

Whether grammatical rules are taught inductively or deductively relies upon certain structures, since some are more amenable to a deductive approach, while others can be learned very well by an inductive approach. To sum up, both deductive and inductive presentations can successfully be applied depending on the cognitive style of the learner and the language structure presented. Nevertheless, whether a teacher employs a deductive or inductive approach, s/he should consider the notion that language learning, particularly in the context of EFL (for example, grammar) is a largely conscious process that involves formal exposure to rules of syntax and semantics followed by specific applications of the rule, with corrective and encouraging feedback reinforcing correct usage and discouraging incorrect usage.

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