

The Role of Sculptures of Activities on Deductive Grammar Learning and Retention among Iranian Adult EFL Learners

Alireza Karbalaee¹, Yaser Kheyrikhahnia², Hamidreza Kheyabani², Hamid Narmani²

¹ Department of English, Farhangian University, Nasibe Branch, Tehran, Iran; ² Department of English, Qeshm International Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

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Abstract

This paper proposes an effective deductive method of teaching grammar based on sculptures of activities for learning and practicing specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continuous and simple past deductively. The homogenous adult males and females were randomly selected as experimental and control groups. An English grammar test was designed from American English File Student Book 1, learning English text book by Clive Oxenden with Christina Latham-Koeing and Paul Seligson. Pre-, post-, and delay post- test were used for data collection. However, before using the test for the purpose of data collection, it was piloted on a small group of subjects to estimate its reliability. The purpose of the second delayed test was to see which method of instruction has more impact on the students' grammar retentions and can sustain their grammar learning for longer period of time. The results of the study confirmed the significance of the deductive instructional method of English grammar teaching and foremost it supported the use of sculptures of activities in learning English grammar and retentions among Iranian adult EFL learners.

Keywords: sculptures of activities, grammar learning, deductive learning

Introduction

People give information or ideas in return for another with each other by way of a language, and

English is the existing or occurring between nations which persons acquire knowledge to declare their thoughts and ideas.

A comparison between the accuracy of young children and adults states that children have lower accuracy than adults. "Teachers who concentrate on accuracy help their students to produce grammatically correct written and spoken English, ideally aiming towards the accuracy of a native speaker of similar age and background" (ICAL, 2012, p.1).

According to Council (2012), the accurate function of language system involving grammars, pronunciations, and vocabularies is accuracy. When learners' speaking and learner are judged the worth, accuracy and fluency are two significant facts in classrooms. Some condition in which things are happening or being done can improve learners' accuracy such as "controlled practice, drills, the study and application of grammar rules, and activities that help students to notice their own mistakes" (p.1).

Therefore, teachers require designing an adequate system of methods and rules for teaching the particular subject to master their students in learning grammar. The present study investigated an effective deductive teaching grammar method based on a significant treatment that can be done in classrooms.

Grammar instruction

Adults desire to learn structures and take advantage of them appropriately in their speaking or writing, but children desire to acquire knowledge of structures and carry out them less than adults. Learners

Corresponding author: Alireza Karbalaee, Department of English, Farhangian University, Nasibe Branch, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: alireza_karbalaee_2007@yahoo.com.

would like to learn grammars for enhancing their writing and speaking more than listening and reading. In conventional classroom language teaching, grammar learning and teaching are practiced more than other classrooms.

According to Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), when teachers believe in teaching grammar to their learners, they should think carefully about three points of view and domains: “grammar as rules, grammar as forms, and grammar as resources” (p.70). EFL learners have a particular opinion, belief, or idea about learning grammar state studying some regulations or principles governing conducts or procedures within a particular area of activity and knowledge of grammar briefly or indirectly. “We should see how grammar relates to what we want to say or write, and how we expect others to interpret what our language use and its focus” (Al-Mekhlafi, & Nagaratnam, *ibid*, p.71).

Zain (2007) believed that, ESL teaching and its uninterrupted argues about explanations which gives a reason for observed phenomena about teaching grammar is not being able to disappear from memories of aspects. “The inconclusive debate about the best way to teach grammar has significant influence on the development of language teaching practice” (p.1). Therefore, various opinion, means or opportunities to approach uncommon and methods of the specific part of knowledge of teaching grammar have announced for ESL teachers for helping learners.

However, Corder (1988) believed that “the methodological proposals in pedagogic grammar for teachers are often implicit rather than explicit” (Zain, 2007, p.1). Nespór (1987, as cited in Zain, 2007, p.1) believed that the state of being unable to do something to achieve in coming the ability to see something or to be seen from a particular place which is obvious suggestion of appropriate conducts about grammar teaching in different conditions when “the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled” which are organized and carried out to create different hypothesis and theories in teaching grammar. “These personal theories are derived from their belief system” (Zain, 2007, p.1).

Thus, investigators contemplated again the existing conditions of grammar in pedagogy and knowledge gained through study and exists into grammar consideration for illustrating its goals in language learning. According to Zain (*ibid*), this affected the understanding of how second languages should be taught or learned.

In addition, Murrow (2005) believed that students have to achieve ideas or skills in an activity that is existing in or derived from nature to each main component of sentences and “the suitable orders for these components” by study, experience or by being taught. “This, then, is the basis of grammatical instruction while explicit grammatical instruction has fallen somewhat out of favor” (p.19). On the other hand, some claimed that teachers may not instruct grammar as a part of apart (Hillocks, & Smith, 1991; Elley, 1991; Krachen, 1993; Weaver, 1995); Özbek, 1995; Celce-Murcia, 1996, as cited in Murrow, 2005).

Widdowson (1990) believed, “...grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and a purely lexical categorization of reality” (as cited in Al-Mekhlafi, & Nagaratnam, 2011, p.71). “Given that many learners – and teachers – tend to view grammar as a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use – ‘a linguistic straitjacket’ in Larsen-Freeman’s words (2002) – the conception of grammar as something that liberates rather than represses is one that is worth investigating.

Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) believed that students had the idea that a better predisposition to make confidential objects and occurrences and to respond to them with some units of measurement of evaluative consistency towards grammar teaching in paragraphs surrounding a word or sentence, “while performing slightly better after having experienced the traditional grammar instruction” (p.71). Elkilic and Akca (2008, as cited in Al-Mekhlafi, & Nagaratnam, 2011) believed an itemized statement about a fact or frequency of optimism occurring of learners who were learning English grammar at an intimate basic EFL courses for learning grammar. “In particular, however, a little over 50% of their subjects claimed to enjoy grammar very much and only about 10% reported finding some difficulty in learning and remembering grammar”.

Even though many important subject of discussion or controversy in relation to form-focused approach in teaching second language research has not answered definitively, “studies have provided promising evidence that focus on form is correlated with more acquisition of new grammar and vocabulary than non-form-focused approaches” (Rodríguez, 2009, p.2). Loewen (2002) found information deliberately which “short episodes of corrective feedback correlated with higher rates of correctness on subse-

quenttests” (as cited in Rodríguez, 2009, p.2). Rodríguez (2009) found the following:

Instructors encourage learners to focus on form in several ways. Focus on form may be planned and focused on preselected structures, or it may be incidental, arising spontaneously at any point in a communicative activity. Teachers might design a task to encourage learners to notice forms in the input (e.g., prepositions of location such as in, on, under), or they might explicitly teach these forms and provide opportunities for meaningful practice. Focus on form may be reactive, including explicit corrections to student language, recasts (saying what students have said, but differently), clarification requests, and other types of feedback (p.2).

Games in English learning

As Topkaya and Küçük (2010, as cited in Yolageldili, & Arikan, 2011) articulate, primary school curriculum for young learners’ English lessons should incorporate more games for children”. Similarly, Sunurtekin *et al.* (2009) describe that by playing games, a child makes acquaintance with his environment, learns life and gains new instructions.

McCallum (1980, as cited in Yolageldili, & Arikan, 2011) believed in an opinion by proposing this view which “games automatically stimulate student’s interest, a properly introduced game can be one of the highest motivating techniques”.

Yolageldili and Arikan (*ibid*) claimed “what teachers should consider while choosing a game is the fact that children learn best with games which require physical action, interaction, competition and participation”(p.4). Also, they stated that, many other influencing factors like the size and the environment of the classroom are important for teachers. Teachers concern “the equipment, materials and the time available for a game” (McCallum, 1980, p. 6). Finally, teachers should take all these factors into account while choosing a game because a game which seems to be most appropriate may turn into a complete failure in the end (p.4).

Agostyowati (2007, as cited in Meizaliana, 2009) found the following:

Games allow students to work co-operatively, to compete with each other, to strategize, to think in a different way, to compare and to share knowledge, to learn from others and from mistakes, to work in a less stressful and more productive environment, and to allow

the students to have fun, and to be able to help students use and practice the language in relaxed way (p.21).

According to Meizaliana (2009), the activities and exercises which are provided by experts to facilitate teaching and learning more exciting are games. Learners also desire to learn through playing games.

According to Chirandon, Laohawiryanon, and Rakthong (2005), using games in classroom is one of the recommended techniques (p.2). Lee (1995) believed that games in classrooms support English teaching in different perspectives. Using games in classrooms provide opportunities for repeating an activity several times in order to improve performance in foreign languages more quickly or frequently than is usual. It gives assistance, encouragement, or approval to EFL learners to convey a thought or feeling in words or conduct their thoughts and ideas by utilizing “all fourskills, and creates a real life situation for using language”.

From another point of view, learners express dissatisfaction or annoyance about their subjects and they have situation that requires a solution with their lessons because of lack of interest (Chirandon, Laohawiryanon, & Rakthong, 2005). Thus, Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2005) suggested that games were the effective means sustaining students’interest and getting rid of anxiety in class.

Inductive and deductive grammar methods

Childs (1998) mentioned that “Studying grammar is really just learning a new vocabulary so that you can talk about and learn how to correct these mistakes” (p.2). Receiving proper information and skills acquired through experience or education of grammar in a language improve people to speak and write in more productive way. People are usually appraised by their speaking and writing.

Savage, Bitterlin, and Price (2010) found the following:

As a result of this gap between knowledge of grammar and its successful application, there has been a shift in our view of grammar instruction over the last 20 or 30 years. Nowadays, many ESL practitioners view grammar less as a body of knowledge to be studied than as a skill to be practiced and developed. Grammar knowledge is important, but only insofar as it enables students to communicate accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately (p.2).

According to Berendse (2012), teachers and scholars have a wide range of views on whether the inductive

or deductive approach is most effective (pp. 12-13). Furthermore, Hammerly (1975) found that it has been stepped on the fact that is taken into account when making a decision which some structures “are most amenable to a deductive approach while others ... can be learned very well by an inductive approach” (as cited in Berendse, *ibid*, p.13). Berendse (2012) also believed that this point of view has been mentioned by Brown (2007), who knew “both inductively and deductively oriented teaching methods can be effective, depending on the goals and contexts of a particular language teaching situation” (p.13).

As an illustration, Staatsen (2009, as cited in Berendse, 2012) claimed that learners and teachers should present their disagreement of the deductive approach because the inductive approach prevalently has requested learning after-effect.

Berendse (2012) cited that “on the other hand, in her study comparing the deductive and inductive approach to teaching foreign languages, Shaffer concludes that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of both approaches” (p.13); “this offers strong evidence against the notion that an inductive approach should not be used for difficult structures” (p.13). After much investigating, she also found the “correlation between ability and approach was not significant” (p.13).

Sculptures of Activities

According to Richards, Hull, and Proctor (2005), sculptures is a game. It uses to review vocabulary and grammar in an active way. “An instructor should divide the class into teams of three. The instructor whispers an activity to one student (e.g., play soccer). The students whisper the activity to their teammates. The team has one minute to form a sculpture that illustrates the activity (e.g. one student pretends to kick a ball, other teammates pretends to be a goalkeepers and players). The other teams guess the activity. The first team to guess correctly gets a point”. Meanwhile the instructor should ask the students to use the specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continues, and simple past, when guessing the activity. At the end, the Instructor should make sure that all the students practice the structures through the games.

Research question

Having described the background in terms of deductive and inductive approach in teaching grammar, and the use of sculptures as a game, the following research question raised for further research by this study:

1. Can deductive method of teaching grammar based on sculptures increase Iranian EFL learners’ grammatical knowledge?

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 60 Iranian adult EFL learners who studying English in Adine Higher Educational College. The participants, males and females, were selected randomly from 100 homogenous learners. The 30 adult participants were in control group. The 30 adult participants were in experimental group. Participants, males and females, are assigned randomly to their control and experimental groups. All of the participants were homogenous. Their levels were intermediate. Participants were not informed about the research study, serial tests, the treatment and so forth. They supposed they participated in a natural College’s semester.

Instruments

TOEFL Proficiency Test

The study interrogated the homogeneity of the participants with a sample TOEFL test to select the participants who have a same knowledge and proficiency level before the pre-test.

The Pre-Test, Post-Test and Delay Post-Test

From American English File Student Book first, learning English text book by Clive Oxenden with Christina Latham-Koeing and Paul Seligson, a grammar test was designed to test the participants’ grammar learning and retention. The grammar test was adapted from unit 2, 5, and 6 of the book. The reliability of the test was trusted by the SPSS 19 software. Regarding the validity of the test, the researchers asked three EFL teachers holding PhD in TOEFL to express their comments on the self-made test. It has 40 multiple-choice items. The test was the same for pre-test, post-test and delay post-test. Delay post-test was required for evaluating the participants’ retentions. The participants were not allowed to use dictionaries or cheat during the each exam. However, before using the test for the purpose of data collection, it was piloted on a small group of subjects to estimate its reliability. By using Cronbach’s Alpha, the reliability of the test was .75.

Procedure

This study was conducted within six months. The participants became homogenous with a sample TOEFL test. Then, the participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control group. Sex was con-

trolled randomly for assigning participants in their groups. Participants were not informed about the research study, serial tests, the treatment and so forth. Each group studied English with American English File Student Book 1, learning English text book by Clive Oxenden with Christina Latham-Koeing and Paul Seligson. Participants studied the grammars from unit 2, 5, and 6. After completing the instruction, participants in both groups received the pre-test. Then the researcher began to use the sculptures of activities in deductive way for experimental group by showing some pictures about working and doing activities of people in different situations and places. The teachers tried to play different roles and simulate each character and use the structures, simple present, simple past, present continuous in their speech simultaneously. Then, they provided many sentences by using the three structures for students and using pictures and making examples about anything within the normal daily life of the participants to create an understanding of the use of the three structures. After three examples, the students repeated after the teachers. Their role was to provide meaningful contexts to encourage demonstration of the rule, and then they divided the class into teams of three. The researcher whispered an activity to one student (e.g., play soccer). The students whispered the activity to

their teammates. The team had one minute to form a sculpture that illustrated the activity (e.g. one student pretended to kick a ball, other teammates pretended to be a goalkeepers and players). The other teams guessed the activity. The first team to guess correctly got a point". Meanwhile instructor asked the students to use the specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continues, and simple past, when they were guessing the activity. At the end, the teachers made sure that all the students practiced the structures through the games deductively. The control group received no treatment. Grammar was taught deductively in control group but without using sculptures as a game. In the next stage, the participants in experimental and control groups received post-test one week after the treatment. After 3 weeks, the participants received delay post-test for evaluating their retentions. Finally, the results of pre-, post-, and delayed-posttest were analyzed to answer the research question delineated before.

Results and Discussion

In order to see whether there is any significant difference in learning grammar among learners in control and experimental group, the data were analyzed as follow (see Table 1).

Table 1. Mean pre- and posttest gain scores of samples in experimental and control group.

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | Minimum | Maximum |
|--------------|----|------|----------------|------------|---------|---------|
| Experimental | 30 | 8.13 | 2.662 | .486 | 4 | 13 |
| Control | 25 | .24 | 2.026 | .405 | -3 | 4 |
| Total | 55 | 4.55 | 4.622 | .623 | -3 | 13 |

Table 2. Results of ANOVA for pre- and posttest gain scores of samples in experimental and control group.

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|---------|------|
| Between Groups | 849.610 | 1 | 849.610 | 148.110 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 304.027 | 53 | 5.736 | | |
| Total | 1153.636 | 54 | | | |

The results of data analysis (ANOVA) in table 2 indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between control and experimental group

because obtained F value of 148.110, was found to be significant at .001 level ($P=.000$). In other words, the participants had better performance when they

were taught by deductive method of teaching grammar based on sculptures in comparison to those learners taught by deductive method without using sculptures as a game. This confirms that use of Sculptures of Activities improved the grammatical knowledge of Iranian adult EFL learners.

According to ICAL (2012), “accuracy and fluency are two factors which can determine the success of English language students in the future. Essentially accuracy is the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, fluency is the ability to produce language easily and smoothly” (p.1). In any event, according to Brumfit (2011), over amendment and regular monitoring of accuracy can result in less positive feeling arising from an appreciation of one’s own abilities and less progression in learning language. Also, teachers require designing an adequate system of methods and rules for teaching the particular subject to master their students in learning grammar. The present study investigated an effective deductive teaching grammar method based on a significant treatment that can be done in classrooms.

As discussed earlier, the learners in experimental group with the specific grammar teaching outperformed those in control group. This confirms that use of Sculptures of Activities enhanced learning grammar among Iranian adult EFL learners.

Conclusion

Zain (2007) believed that, ESL teaching and its existing ongoing exchange of views and hypothesis about teaching grammar is not an outstanding point of view. The inconclusive debate about the best way to teach grammar can have significant influence on the development of language teaching practice (p.1). Therefore, different opinions, accesses and principles and methods of the particular branch of knowledge of teaching grammar have been introduced for ESL teachers for enhancing learners.

In conclusion, the results of the present study confirmed the significance of the deductive instructional method of English grammar teaching and foremost it supported the use of sculptures of activities in learning English grammar and retentions of Iranian adult EFL learners.

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