

Language Skills and Teaching of Grammar

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Abstract

Teaching grammar has been regarded, as crucial to the ability to use language. This process involves activities, which bring together the four language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. The language teacher's task is the presenting of these skills i.e. receptive and productive. This paper aims at discussing language skills and the teaching of grammar in second language. The inductive and deductive methods of teaching grammatical items are critically examined via their advantages and disadvantages in teaching grammar. The ideas of the two approaches are later linked with Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. The educational implications of the two methods are highlighted. Recommendations as well as conclusion are drawn.

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Different learning processes are responsible for different aspects of language. Indeed, given that language is as complicated as it is, one would not expect the learning process to be any simpler. It is clearly an oversimplification to treat all grammar learning as resulting from habit formation or from rule formation. Being aware that different learning processes contribute to Second Language Acquisition SL Asuggests a need for the teaching process to respect the differences. How the nature of the language challenge and the learning process affect teaching of grammar? In this paper, the deductive and inductive method will be discussed. Similarly, the motive behind these approaches will be linked with Krashen's Theory of language acquisition and look at their practical similarities, all with view to providing simple ways of teaching grammar

Language Skills

The ability to use a language in a communicative way, however, is not just a single unified skill. Most recent thinking has divided language ability into four separate skill areas; *listening, reading, speaking, and writing*. Listening and reading are known as the *receptive skills*; while speaking and writing are known as the *productive skills*. According to Summer Institute of Linguistics, International (1999). The four basic skills are related to each other by two parameters: the mode of communication: oral or written the direction of communication: receiving or producing the message.

Most teachers try to incorporate all four skills areas into their planning, though some classes may focus more on one set of skills or the other, due to the course and learner objectives (Oxford, 2001). When learning new language material, the order of acquisition is generally this, for both second language learners and children learning their first language: Listening: The learner hears a new item (sound, word, grammar feature, etc.) Speaking: The learner tries to repeat the new item. Reading: The learner sees the new item in written form. Writing: The learner reproduces the written form of the item.

When one is planning to present a new teaching item (sound, grammar point, vocabulary word, etc.) keep the order of acquisition in mind. It is best to expose the learners to the item in that same order, so that they are exposed to it as a listener before they are called on to use it as a speaker, and that they hear it before they see it in text. In this way, the order of learning a second language is similar to the way a child learns his or her first language. He/she will be able to understand the new item for quite a while before he/she is able to produce it and use it in communication (Laubach Literacy Action, 1996).

Teaching of Grammar

Grammar gains its prominence in language teaching, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL), inasmuch as without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' language development will be severely constrained. Practically, in the teaching of grammar, learners are taught rules of language commonly known as sentence patterns. According to Ur (1999), in the case of the learners, grammatical rules enable them to know and apply how such sentence patterns should be put together. The teaching of grammar should also ultimately centre attention on the way

grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly used. In other words, teaching grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns, meaning and use.

Further, grammar is thought to furnish the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In listening and speaking, grammar plays a crucial part in grasping and expressing spoken language (e.g. expressions) since learning the grammar of a language is considered necessary to acquire the capability of producing grammatically acceptable utterances in the language (Corder, 1988; Widodo, 2004). In reading, grammar enables learners to comprehend sentence interrelationship in a paragraph, a passage and a text. In the context of writing, grammar allows the learners to put their ideas into intelligible sentences so that they can successfully communicate in a written form. Lastly, in the case of vocabulary, grammar provides a pathway to learners how some lexical items should be combined into a good sentence so that meaningful and communicative statements or expressions can be formed. In other words, Doff (2000) says that by learning grammar students can express meanings in the form of phrases, clauses and sentences. Long and Richards (1987) add that it cannot be ignored that grammar plays a central role in the four language skills and vocabulary to establish communicative tasks.

The Philosophers' views on Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

Deductive Reasoning

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, started documenting deductive reasoning in the 4th century BC. Rene Descartes, in his book *Discourse on Method*, refined the idea for Scientific Revolution. Developing four rules to follow for proving an idea of deductively, Descartes lay the foundation for the deductive portion of the scientific method. Descartes' background on geometry and mathematics influenced his ideas on the truth and reasoning alone must prove that observations are reliable. These ideas lay the foundation for the idea of rationalism. Deductive reasoning also deductive logic is the process of reasoning one or more statements (premises) to reach a logically certain conclusion

Inductive Reasoning

Sir Francis Bacon was credited with introducing inductive reasoning into scientific inquiry in the 17th century. Bacon was a philosopher Bacon was a philosopher, and he sought to resolve the problems that Aristotle's deductive approach to creation presented, such as the fact that Aristotle decreed that the world conformed to his construction of it, rather than vice versa.

Not only that, but also most medieval thinkers had swallowed Aristotle whole, and regurgitated his ideas, which were often not even close to being correct. Bacon was frustrated by the obsolete and often clearly erroneous view of the world most of his contemporaries held. He sought to bring a whole new approach to philosophy and science. And so he did. While many others built on his ideas, Bacon accomplished something truly revolutionary.

Inductive reasoning begins with specific details and observation of natural occurrences or behavior, say – and use them to arrive at a principle to explain them. Deductive reasoning moves from the general to specific. It uses logic to confirm something we already to be true.

Two Core Approaches in Grammar

Broadly speaking, in teaching grammar, there are two approaches that can be applied: deductive and inductive. In this section, the two approaches would be briefly highlighted, and then link them to the theory of second language acquisition (SLA).

Deductive Approach

A deductive approach was 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 need 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 be 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's 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) (Felder & Henriques, 1995). 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 problem-solving 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 Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory

Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition

The Krashen's theory of second language acquisition consists of five hypotheses:

1. The acquisition-learning hypothesis
2. The monitor hypothesis
3. The natural order hypothesis
4. The input hypothesis
5. And the affective filter hypothesis

The Acquisition-Learning distinction is the most fundamental of all the hypotheses in Krashen's theory and the most widely known among linguists and language practitioners.

According to Krashen there are two independent systems of second language performance: the 'acquired system', and 'the learned system'. The acquired system or acquisition is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication- in which the speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act.

The 'learned system' or 'learning' is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in knowledge 'about' the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules. According to Krashen 'learning' is less important than 'acquisition'.

Deductive and inductive approaches relate to learning and acquisition in Krashen's 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. According to this approach, learners learn the system of language (for example, grammar or sentence rules) in the same way as 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. This difference in cognitive

styles may be associated with different neurological mechanisms in learners (Eisenstein, 1987).

Whether grammatical rules are taught inductively or deductively rely 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 (Eisenstein, 1987; Brown, 2000). 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.

Educational Implications

The above-discussed approaches of teaching grammar have instructional implications as follows:

1. The deductive approach confirms many learners' expectations about classroom learning.
2. The inductive approach involves learners' pattern-recognition and problem solving ability.
3. Also, the approach enhanced motivation of students because learners are actively involved.
4. Inductive approach allows learners to be familiar with the rule discovery, and this could enhance learning autonomy and self-reliance.

Applicability of deductive and inductive approaches

The deductive and inductive approaches of teaching grammar can be examined to ascertain their practicability or otherwise on our day-to-day English language teaching.

First, it is obvious that most of English language teachers in Nigeria adapted deductive approach in the teaching and learning of English. Here, we have seen that rules of grammar are usually presented to the students and later exercises were administered. This type of approach has been reflected in most of the English Language textbooks common found in our schools. There are various topics such as Clauses, Phrases, Sentences, Concord, to mention but few which are common found in all English textbooks and are taught in our schools. Also, deductive approach has been for long in use in our schools. Some of Second language theories that supported deductive approach include Grammar Translation, cognitive theory and so on.

The inductive approach which advocates unconscious learning through practicing language as it is can only be applicable to young learners who learn through imitation. This approach seems to be difficult to adult learners like students of secondary schools and tertiary institution. The learners of level may prefer knowing the rules of grammar then later apply it in their communication to avoid errors.

Suggestions

The study takes a position on the use of either deductive or inductive approach to English language; it is rather difficult if not impossible for an adult person to learn second language in such a way that a child acquires first language. However, it is agreed generally that deductive approach has been in existence yet it has not makes strong impact on English language teaching and learning. Due to these two divergent issues, the study believed that both the methods can be applied where the need arises. That is, the language teachers may use both the approaches to meet the demand of their learners in promoting their language proficiency and performances.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of teaching grammar is to provide the students with knowledge of the way language is constructed so that when they listen, speak, read and write, they have no trouble applying the language that they are learning. Language teachers are, therefore, challenged to use creative and innovative attempts to teach grammar so that such a goal can successfully be achieved. In other words, whatever exercises are given, the most crucial thing is that the teachers provide the students with an opportunity to be able to produce the grammatical item making use of syntactically and semantically correct examples of sentences comprised of appropriate and relevant vocabulary.

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