

Grammar Instruction in English Language Teaching

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Introduction

The present module has been written to support full- and part-time students of English studies and Applied linguistics who have opted for receiving a teaching qualification. The content of the module is part of the theoretical course in Methods in Teaching English.

The module is focused on one of the most important aspects of foreign language teaching - the role of grammar in the contemporary communication dominated instructional paradigm. Grammar instruction has always been one of the most debatable and controversial issues in English language teaching pedagogy. Foreign and second language theorists and practitioners have alternately advocated approaches grounded on explicit grammar instruction and approaches favouring communication with little attention to target language grammar. Recently, the role of grammar has become more prominent within the communicative paradigm. Grammatical, or organizational competence is seen as a major component of communicative competence, which is essential for successful meaningful communication. That is why it is important to raise future teachers' awareness of the main principles and approaches in teaching grammar, of the existing good practises, and the need to introduce new approaches and techniques, which are in line with recernt research findings.

The module is comprised of seven chapters.

The first chapter explains the nature of grammar and distinguishes among main types of grammar and grammar rules. It introduces the three basic dimentions of form, meaning and use, and establishes the interrelations between grammar and communication.

The second chapter focuses on the process of learning grammar and its dependence on learner variables such as age, proficiency level, educational background, need and goals, etc.

The third chapter introduces arguments for and against teaching grammar, and discusses the decision making processes of how, when and what grammar to teach. It distinguishes between implicit and explicit, deductive and inductive approaches to teaching grammar.

The fourth chapter describes attitudes to grammar in the approaches and methods of language teaching. It discusses both traditional and relatively innovative teaching paradigms, such as task-based and focus-on-form approaches.

The fifth chapter presents some contemporary input-based approaches, such as processing instruction, textual enhancement, and teaching grammar through discourse, and illustrates them with practical activities for students.

The sixth chapter focuses on interaction and output-based options for teaching grammar, such as interactional feedback, structured grammar-focused tasks and collaborative output tasks.

Finally, the seventh chapter summarizes the options for practical application of theory and research findings in different contexts of instruction. It outlines the nature of product and process approaches to teaching grammar and gives advice on designing the grammar componet of a course in the syllabus.

At the end of each chapter there are comprehension questions, discussion topics and tasks for the students. They are aimed at facilitating students' understanding of the material, and helping them to bridge the gap between theory and its practical application.

Chapter 1. What is grammar

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- compare different definitions of grammar;
- distinguish among different types of grammar and grammar rules;
- understand the three dimensions of grammar: form, meaning and use;
- observe the interrelations between grammar and communication;
- outline the features of spoken and written grammar.

1.1. Definitions of grammar

The role of grammar and grammar instruction has always been one of the most debatable and controversial issues in English language teaching pedagogy. Foreign and second language theorists and practitioners have alternately advocated approaches grounded on explicit grammar instruction and approaches favouring communication with little attention to target language grammar. Recently, the role of grammar instruction has become more prominent within the communicative paradigm. Grammatical, or organizational competence is now seen as a major component of communicative competence, which is essential for successful meaningful communication.

Before discussing these attitudes to grammar and the arguments for and against its teaching, it is necessary to give an answer to the question what grammar is and what aspects of language it studies.

Here is a list of definitions of grammar taken from different sources:

1. "I will be using the word grammar in this book to refer to the set of rules that allow us to combine words in our language into larger units....Grammar is the central component of language. It mediates between the system of sounds or of written symbols, on the one hand, and the system of meaning, on the other". (From: S. Greenbaum and G. Nelson. An Introduction to English grammar., Longman, 2002:1)

2. "Grammar, like death and taxes, is one of the few certainties in the life of a language teacher. It is the subject we love to hate. Many teachers feel uncomfortable with having to live with it, yet instinctively know they cannot live without it. For other teachers, grammar is the only secure point in the seeming chaos of communicative uncertainty, and they cling to it for safety. Whatever our feelings about grammar, it is clear that it is one (but only one) of the pillars which support a language. Without it, we are reduced to a kind of phrase-book pidgin". (From: S. Thornbury. Grammar, OUP, 2006:3)

3. "All languages in use can be analysed at each of these four levels: text, sentence, word and sound. These are the forms that language takes. The study of grammar consists, in part, of looking at the way these forms are arranged and patterned....Grammar is partly the study of what forms (or structures) are possible in a language. Traditionally, grammar has been concerned almost exclusively with analysis at the level of the sentence. Thus a grammar is a

description of the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed". (From: S. Thornbury. How to teach grammar. Longman, 1999:1)

4. "Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English. And it can help everyone - not only teachers of English, but teachers of anything, for all teaching is ultimately a matter of getting to grips with meaning". (David Crystal, "In Word and Deed," TES Teacher, April 30, 2004)

5. grammar *n*

1. A description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language. It usually takes into account the meanings and functions these sentences have in the overall system of the language. It may or may not include the description of the sounds of a language.

2. A grammar which describes the speaker's knowledge of the language. It looks at language in relation to how it may be structured in the speaker's mind, and which principles and parameters are available to the speaker when producing the language. (Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics. Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt, Longman 2002: 230-231)

6. Grammar is a dynamic process in which forms have meanings and uses in a rational, discursive, flexible, interconnected, and open system. (D. Larsen- Freeman. Teaching Language: From Grammar to Gramaring, 2003:142)

If we look at these definitions in turn, there are several important ideas or features of grammar that arise:

- Grammar is a set of rules; it is a mediator between form and meaning;
- Grammar provokes controversial attitudes, yet it is essential for understanding and using a language;
- Grammar is the study of the possible forms and sentences in a language;
- Grammar enables us to express ourselves;
- Grammar links the form of the linguistic units with their meaning and use. Grammar is a dynamic process which belongs to the speaker of a language.

These ideas can be summarized as follows: Grammar is a branch of linguistics which deals mainly with syntax and morphology, but could also be extended to phonology and semantics. It is an abstract system of rules that govern the native speakers' use of his/her mother tongue. It provides a systematic description and/or prescriptive rules for the proper use of a language.

1.2. Types of grammar and grammar rules

D. Crystal (2008: 217-218) differentiates between several types of grammars:

1. A **descriptive grammar**, which is a systematic description of a language as found in a sample of speech or writing (e.g. in a corpus of material, or as elicited from native-speakers). In the older tradition, 'descriptive' is in contrast to the prescriptive or normative approach of grammarians who attempted to establish rules for the socially or stylistically correct use of language. Comprehensive descriptions of the syntax and morphology of a language are known

as reference grammars or grammatical handbooks (such as those produced in the twentieth century by Otto Jespersen, and more recently by Randolph Quirk et al.)

2. A **theoretical grammar** goes beyond the study of individual languages, using linguistic data as a means of developing theoretical insights into the nature of language as such, and into the categories and processes needed for successful linguistic analysis. Such insights include the distinction between ‘deep grammar’ and ‘surface grammar’, the notion of ‘grammatical categories’ and ‘grammatical meaning’, and the study of ‘grammatical relations’ (the relationship between a verb and its dependents, such as ‘subject of’, ‘direct object of’).

3. The distinction between **diachronic** and **synchronic grammar** is based on whether or not these grammars introduce a historical dimension into their analysis.

4. **Comparative grammar** compares the forms of languages (or states of a language), and relies on a combination of theoretical and descriptive methods.

5. A **pedagogical** or **teaching grammar** is a grammar designed specifically for the purposes of teaching or learning a (foreign) language, or for developing one’s awareness of the mother-tongue.

6. The phrase **traditional grammar** is an attempt to summarize the range of attitudes and methods found in the prelinguistic era of grammatical study, characterized by prescriptive and proscriptive recommendations of authors, as opposed to the descriptive emphasis of linguistic studies.

7. In a restricted sense, **grammar** refers to the branches of syntax and morphology, and is the study of the way words, and their component parts, combine to form sentences. In a general sense grammar is seen as the entire system of structural relationships in a language, as in **stratificational grammar**, **systemic grammar** and (especially) **generative grammar**. In this sense ‘grammar’ subsumes phonology and semantics as well as syntax, traditionally regarded as separate linguistic levels. In so far as a grammar defines the total set of rules possessed by a speaker, it is the speaker’s **competence grammar**. If a grammar is capable of accounting for only the sentences a speaker has actually used, it is a **performance grammar**.

8. Investigations which go beyond the study of an individual language, attempting to establish the defining (universal) characteristics of human language in general, have as their goal a **universal grammar** (From A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics. D. Crystal, Blackwell publishing 2008: 217-218).

Closely linked with the different types of grammar are so-called **grammar rules**, which are acquired by learners of English as a second or foreign language. Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1988) distinguish four types of grammar rules: The first type is exemplified by the rules derived from generative linguistic theory. The **linguists rules** can be seen as the constraints and principles that linguists propose as a description of native-speaker competence. They are not to be confused with the actual rules which constitute the native speaker's competence and which can be demonstrated by their judgements about correct or incorrect/ ungrammatical sentences. These rules, which form part of the native speakers' mental representation of the language, are known as **native-speaker competence rules**. Thus the rules formulated within a linguistic theory are a hypothetical model of what a native speaker knows about the native language. It is important to point out that in the context of second/foreign language learning this type of native-speaker knowledge corresponds to the **non-native speaker's interlanguage competence rules** resulting from linguistic input. This type of knowledge, referred to by Krashen as **acquired knowledge** is differentiated from linguistic knowledge that comes from learning explicit information about the structure of the language, and is known as **learned knowledge**.

Pedagogical rules are formulated by linguists, applied linguists, textbook writers, or teachers and are explicitly taught to learners to become either learned linguistic knowledge or,

eventually, part of **learner's constructed interlanguage competence rules** (see Braidi 1999: 3-4).

1.3. Dimensions of grammar: form, meaning and use

Nowadays, most approaches to grammar teaching subscribe to the idea that the goal of grammar teaching must be to enable learners to produce grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. In order to do this teachers need to be aware of the three dimensions of grammar structures present in all languages, namely their form, meaning and use.

The **form** of a structure is described in terms of its constituents: the morphemes and words which comprise it. For example, it can be said that the English present continuous (progressive) tense consists of some present tense form of the verb *be* and the present participle, the bound morpheme *-ing*. Next, the description of the form is extended to its syntax or where it fits in the sentence. Thus, in English, as an SVO language, the verb follows the subject but precedes the object. In interrogative sentences the auxiliary and the subject are inverted, and in negative sentences *not* is after the auxiliary *be*, often in contracted form. The final fact relevant to the form of a grammatical structure is connected with its distribution, or the contexts in which it can occur. For example, present continuous can generally only be used with dynamic, not stative verbs.

The **meaning** of a structure in a pedagogical grammar may be of two types: **lexical** or **grammatical**. Lexical meanings are found in dictionary definitions for members of certain grammatical categories such as prepositions, phrasal or modal verbs. Single grammar structures do not have lexical meanings as such, but instead have grammatical meaning: a conditional states a condition and a result, for example. In the case of a present participle, it may be said that it ascribes to an action the meaning that it is in process and therefore incomplete. It depends on the semantic category of the verb to which it is attached; for example with punctual verbs it signals iteration, with durative - duration, or it can signal a temporary, as opposed to an enduring, state of affairs (see Asher 1994:3753). There are two kinds of grammatical meaning, corresponding to the two main purposes of language: representational and interpersonal. According to S. Thornbury in realising representational meaning, "grammar enables us to use language to describe the world in terms of how, when and where things happen", and in realising interpersonal meaning "grammar facilitates the way we interact with other people when, for example, we need to get things done using language" (Thornbury 1999:13).

The **use** of a structure refers to its **appropriateness** either to a social context or to a linguistic discourse context. Often a number of grammatical structures convey roughly the same meaning but will not all be equally appropriate to the context. For example, it is more polite to make an offer using the past tense of the verb and *something* rather than *anything* (*Did you want something to eat?*). Phrasal verbs are considered more appropriate in an informal context than their single-word counterparts. The fronting of a preposition in a relative clause is considered more appropriate in a formal context. The same applies when choosing grammar structures to use in linguistic discourse. The passive voice is preferred over the active in a particular discourse framework when the theme, as opposed to an agent, is in focus.

In planning grammar-focused lessons it is important for the teacher to determine which of these three dimensions - form, meaning or use, poses the greatest challenges for students.

1.4. Grammar and communication

In the global world and economy, **communicative competence** in foreign languages is regarded as essential, and learners are expected to graduate from school or university with good spoken and written fluency in the language they have been studying. Teachers, teacher educators, and researchers now recognize the importance of grammar instruction for accuracy in the target language and emphasize the need to incorporate grammar instruction in communicative language teaching.

Grammatical competence is part of **communicative competence** which encompasses "knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology"(Canale and Swain 1980:29). It is associated with mastering the linguistic code of the language, and together with discourse competence, sociolinguistic and strategic competence they make up the construct of communicative competence. The mastery of grammatical forms is seen as essential for accomplishing the communicative functions of the language. The pragmatic purpose of language - its use for communication, is the ultimate objective of second or foreign language learning. And since there is no one-to-one match between grammatical form and communicative function, it is important to take into account contextual information in order to be able to interpret correctly what a speaker means. Language learners have to understand the purpose of communication, and how to achieve that purpose through linguistic forms.

1.5. Spoken and written grammar

Traditionally written language has been used as a benchmark for proper language use, and spoken language was regarded inferior and rarely found its way into pedagogical grammars, dictionaries and course books. Relatively recently spoken language has become the target of research, and it became possible thanks to advanced audio-recording technology which provided researchers with samples of spontaneous conversational usage. Corpus linguistics has played an especially important role in outlining characteristics of spoken language. The analysis of spoken texts has revealed a number of distinctive features of the grammar of everyday conversation. Leech (2000:676), for example, outlined the following characteristics of spoken grammar:

- loose, relatively unintegrated structure with a very wideranging use of independent non-clausal ('fragmentary') units;
- the inappropriateness of the *sentence* to the analysis of spoken grammar;
- simplicity of phrase structure (particularly of noun phrases);
- repetitive use of a restricted lexicogrammatical repertoire;
- grammatical features reflecting interactiveness and on-line processing constraints.

Carter and McCarthy (2006), discussing certain specific features of spoken grammar, argue that for some there is no appropriate metalanguage. For instance, they point to the role in spoken language of what they label '**headers**' and '**tails**': 'headers' referring to the fronting of a clause element in order to highlight or thematise it (*The white house on the corner, is that where she lives?*), and 'tails' referring to an element following the clause, often a full noun phrase clarifying the reference of a pronoun in the preceding clause (*He's amazingly clever, that dog of theirs*). Existing labels for such grammatical phenomena, which also occur in written English, are inappropriate for spoken grammar, because they use terms like 'left-' and 'right-dislocation': such terms 'are metaphors of the space on a typically western, written page. Spoken language exists in time, not space' (Carter and McCarthy 2006:193).

The findings of the corpus linguistics are important in that they allow teachers and learners make their own informed choices. Grammar books, such as *Cambridge Grammar of English 2006* are informed by the evidence from the corpus data and offer insights based on several types of information from the corpus:

1. Information about the frequency of occurrence. In spoken language *I* and *You* are much frequently used, indicating the high interactivity of face-to-face communication. The high frequency of discourse markers *I know*, *mm*, and *er* are connected with listeners vocalizing their acknowledgement of what the speaker is saying, or with filling silences to gain time and plan their speech.
 2. Information about concordances, which shows how words are actually used in context. The concordance also indicates what type of conversation each line occurs in, and leads to the corpus database with information about speakers' age, gender, social profile, etc.
 3. Information about the distribution of items between speaking and writing. For example, in spoken language *nobody* is greatly preferred to *no one*, although they are considered synonymous.
 4. Information about the communicative acts most typically performed by particular items. Thus, for example *what about* is preferred to *how about* to change the topic of in conversation (*What about this new airport plan; What do you think of that?*), whereas *how about* is preferred in selecting the next speaker in turn taking (*How about you Jean; What do you think?*). In making suggestions, though, both forms are more or less equally preferred (*How/What about a walk before lunch?*).
 5. Information about frequent, common and preferred patterns when speakers have choices which are more typical in some contexts than in other.
- Other books which address the differences between spoken and written grammar are *The Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 1999), which provides an extensive analysis of the grammar of spoken English, and the third edition (2003) of Leech and Svartvik's classic *A Communicative Grammar of English*, which features a strong emphasis on the grammar of the spoken language and the treatment of grammar functions in extended discourse.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. How would you define grammar?
2. What is the difference between descriptive and theoretical grammar?
3. What is the nature of pedagogical rules?
4. Discuss the form, meaning and use interrelation in teaching Present continuous tense.
5. Explain the difference between representational and interpersonal grammatical meaning.
6. Define grammatical competence as part of communicative competence.
7. Discuss some distinctive features of spoken grammar.
8. Decide whether these grammar rules come from:
 - a) a style guide for writers (prescriptive)
 - b) a Grammar of English for linguists (descriptive)
 - c) an EFL students' grammar (pedagogic)
1. If you are talking about something that is happening now, you normally use the present continuous: *They are watching TV*.
2. The subjunctive *were* is hypothetical in meaning and is used in conditional and concessive clauses and in subordinate clauses after operative verbs like *wish*.
3. *None* is singular and is therefore followed by the singular form of the verb: *None of us is hungry*.
4. Use a possessive adjective before a gerund: *I was embarrassed by their arriving so late*.
Not *I was embarrassed by them arriving so late*.
5. Here are two rules for the order of adjectives before a noun:
 - opinion adjectives usually go before fact adjectives: *this nice old pub*

- general qualities usually go before particular qualities: traditional Chinese medicine
(adapted from Thornbury 1999: 159)

Chapter 2. Learning grammar

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- discuss the difference between acquisition and learning of grammar;
- understand the complex nature of grammatical knowledge and the obstacles to its learning;
- gain awareness of how the learning of grammar depends on learner variables, such as age, proficiency level, educational background and length of exposure, language skills, style (register), needs and goals.

2.1. Acquisition and/or learning of grammar

Acquisition and learning are sometimes contrasted as different processes (see Krashen 1981). The term acquisition refers to the subconscious process of picking up a second language through exposure, whereas learning is defined as the conscious study of a second language. Another position is that these processes are not very different, and the term second language acquisition is used for both of them, to mean "the subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or a tutored setting. It covers the development of phonology, lexis, grammar, and pragmatic knowledge, but has been largely confined to morphosyntax" (R. Ellis 1985:6).

It is generally accepted that the mechanisms behind the acquisition/ learning of grammar are not studied sufficiently. Due to various reasons, learning or acquiring grammar is inherently complex to define. The difficulty is compounded if the grammar of the students' native language is likely to interfere with the learning of the target language structure. For example, there is no one-to-one functional correspondence between English tenses and those of other languages. How the target language and native language conceptualize reality can be fundamentally different and the grammatical devices used to instantiate the conceptualizations can be divergent as well. Thus, the learning challenge of the tense-aspect system lies in its overlaps and inconsistencies, whereas the learning challenge of phrasal verbs resides in the fact that little generalizing is possible and prior knowledge (of the meaning of the verb and particle when they are not used in combination) is often misleading. It is important for the teachers to be sensitive to the areas of a grammar structure which create obstacles to learning. It is also important to recognize that form, meaning and use are not learned in the same way, and should, therefore, not be taught in the same way. While producing correct form requires meaningful repetition, for teaching the meaning dimension it is crucial for the students to have the opportunity to forge a bond between a particular structure and its real-world representation or a native language equivalent. To understand the use, the students should work with the language at discourse level, with oral or written text. They should be presented with a choice between two structures for a given context, where they can receive feedback on the appropriateness of their choice (Asher 1994: 3754).

Psycholinguistic evidence suggests that learners must learn to perform certain grammatical

operations before they can be expected to acquire others. In other words, natural processing constrains what is learnable at any one time, and hence efforts to teach structures beyond which learners are capable of processing will prove futile. It can be said that the learning of grammar structures does not take place by aggregation. Rather, the process can be characterized as a gradual one, involving the mapping of form, meaning and use.

The implication for teaching is that a grammatical syllabus must follow a cyclic, rather than linear, sequence. The teachers should not stick rigidly to the sequence of grammar structures in a syllabus, but rather be sensitive to students' needs at the time and attempt to meet them by providing instruction on structures which students appear ready to learn.

2.2. Grammar and learner variables

The approaches to teaching grammar depend on a number of variables, outlined in the work of Celce-Murcia (1991), Larsen-Freeman (2003), Nassaji and Fotos (2004), Nunan (2005), Douglas Brown (2007). The most important among these variables are:

2.2.1. Age

Traditionally L2 learning has been considered to be constrained by maturational factors, making it hard for older learners to reach a native-like mastery of the language. This view relates to Chomsky's theory of the language acquisition device (LAD) within the human brain (Chomsky 1965). Conceiving of language as an innate capacity of the human mind, Chomsky held that there is a basic grammar system wired into the brain, the parameters of which are set according to what language the child is exposed to. This is a nativist theory of language acquisition and is not universally accepted, but is supported by the fact that children who learn the L2 in childhood often achieve a higher proficiency than those who learn it afterwards, especially in the area of pronunciation. It has also been proposed that, as in L1 acquisition, there may be a critical period for second language development. This L2 critical period hypothesis suggests that there is a time in childhood when the brain is especially capable of success in L2 learning. It has been suggested (Baker 2006) that the critical period ends somewhere around puberty so that L2 learning which occurs after the critical period is not based on innate biological structures but more on cognitive learning abilities. It is generally thought that younger learners - those who have not reached puberty - are superior to older learners in their ultimate levels of L2 attainment. On the other hand, older children and young adults might learn a language more effectively and quickly than younger children because of their superior cognitive ability and their ability to process metalinguistic instruction (Nassaji & Fotos 2004). It has been found out that due to developmental variables, it is better for young children to be offered simple structured input when necessary, with incidental, indirect error treatment. Older children can benefit from very simple generalizations (such as "This is the way we say it when we're talking about yesterday") and concrete illustrations. With adults, having in mind their abstract intellectual capabilities, the teacher can use explicit instruction to save time and enhance students' communicative abilities.

2.2.2. Proficiency level

It is considered that too much grammar can block the acquisition of fluency skills in beginner learners. At the intermediate and advanced levels explicit focus on form is less likely to disturb fluency which has already been achieved to some extent, and more likely to help learners develop accuracy. Another consideration to make when evaluating learner proficiency is evidence that learners tend to pass through fixed developmental sequences.

Based on his studies of German learners of English, Pienemann (1989) developed a teachability hypothesis, suggesting that, while certain developmental sequences are fixed and cannot be altered by grammar teaching, other structures may respond to instruction. According to Pienemann, it is possible to influence development if grammar teaching coincides with the learner's readiness to move to the next developmental stage. Recent suggestions on the place of grammar in the L2 curriculum, particularly in classrooms with a communicative focus (e.g., R. Ellis 2005), take these considerations into account. It has been noted that more proficient learners are more responsive to grammar instruction because they notice the structures and are more able to be aware of feedback and make the necessary corrections in response (Baker 2006). As learners become more proficient, their automaticity in language use will also develop. Due to higher levels of automaticity, advanced level learners can devote more attentional resources to grammar. Thus, they may be better able to notice targeted form than less advanced learners.

2.2.3. Educational background and length of exposure

It is important to have in mind the educational background of the learners, especially when teaching adult courses. Highly educated learners, especially re-trainees with a degree in the field of philology might benefit from explicit grammar focus and error correction, with explicit attention to options for transfer of language forms and communication strategies.

The length of exposure is also a critical factor to consider. Learners who start studying an L2 in elementary school and continue to study it through high school achieve higher proficiency than those who start their study later and end their study sooner. For example, it has been widely observed that young children from immigrant families eventually learn to speak the language of their new community with near native-like fluency, but their parents rarely achieve high levels of mastery.

2.2.4. Language skills and style (register)

The importance of grammar instruction varies in the teaching of the four skills. Its role is more evident in the productive skills, especially writing with the requirement for correctness. With speaking it is mainly addressed in the form of incidental feedback, and in teaching receptive skills its relevance is in the treatment of perceived sources of error. In the informal style, e.g. casual conversation between friends, minor errors are acceptable, whereas in more formal contexts grammatical accuracy is of greater importance. Different genres of written language too are characterized by different levels of formality and, respectively, grammatical accuracy.

2.2.5. Needs and goals

Learners' needs and the goals of instruction will also determine the nature and the focus of grammar teaching.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. Explain the difference between acquisition and learning.
2. Why acquisition of grammar difficult to define?
3. How would you describe the gradual learning of grammar?
4. What does the critical period hypothesis state?
5. How does learners' proficiency level affect their responsiveness to grammar instruction?
6. How does grammar instruction vary in developing receptive and productive skills?

7. Give examples of the interrelation between learners' needs and grammar teaching.

Chapter 3. Teaching grammar

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- better understand the nature of grammar teaching;
- discuss arguments for and against teaching grammar;
- selecting what grammar to teach and when to teach it;
- understand the differences between massed and distributed, intensive and extensive grammar instruction;
- differentiate between explicit and implicit instruction and their parameters;
- decide whether to teach separate grammar lessons or integrate grammar into communicative activities.

The traditional view of grammar teaching includes two stages - the presentation and the practice of discrete grammatical structures (see Ur 1996, Hedge 2000). Other scholars think that this constitutes an overly narrow definition of grammar teaching, and while it is true that grammar teaching *can* consist of the presentation and practice of grammatical items, there are other types of grammar lessons too. Ellis (2006: 84) gives the following examples: "First, some grammar lessons might consist of presentation by itself (i.e., without any practice), while others might entail only practice (i.e., no presentation). Second, grammar teaching can involve learners in discovering grammatical rules for themselves (i.e., no presentation and no practice). Third, grammar teaching can be conducted simply by exposing learners to input contrived to provide multiple exemplars of the target structure. Here, too, there is no presentation and no practice, at least in the sense of eliciting production of the structure. Finally, grammar teaching can be conducted by means of corrective feedback on learner errors when these arise in the context of performing some communicative task". This is how Ellis summarises the nature of grammar teaching: "Grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it" (Ellis 2006:84).

3.1. For and against teaching grammar

The question of whether to teach grammar or not has always been one of the most important dividing lines among both theorists and practitioners in the field of foreign language teaching. As Ellis (2006:85) points out, "The question was motivated by early research into naturalistic L2 acquisition, which showed that learners appeared to follow a natural order and sequence of acquisition (i.e., they mastered different grammatical structures in a relatively fixed and universal order)". This led researchers to suggest that learners had their own built-in syllabus for learning grammar. Krashen (1981) argued that grammar instruction played no role in acquisition, and the learners would automatically proceed along their built-in syllabus as long

as they had access to *comprehensible input* and were sufficiently motivated. A number of empirical studies on the differences between instructed and uninstructed learners showed that, by and large, the order of acquisition was the same for both types of learners, but that instructed learners generally achieved higher levels of grammatical competence than naturalistic learners and that instruction was no guarantee that learners would acquire what they had been taught. These results were interpreted as showing that the acquisitional processes of instructed and naturalistic learning were the same but that instructed learners progressed more rapidly and achieved higher levels of proficiency. Thus, some researchers concluded (e.g., Long, 1988) that teaching grammar was beneficial but that to be effective grammar had to be taught in a way that was compatible with the natural processes of acquisition. Subsequent research, such as Norris and Ortega's (2000) and Ellis (2002), confirmed the overall effectiveness of grammar teaching and the fact that instruction contributes to both acquired and learnt knowledge. According to Ellis (2006), there is now convincing indirect and direct evidence to support the teaching of grammar. Nevertheless, doubts remain regarding interlanguage development of learners and how grammar instruction can facilitate it.

3.2. Selecting what grammar to teach and when to teach it

The question of how to select the grammar material for a course has always been of major importance to language teachers and syllabus developers. There are various grammatical models which can serve as a basis for grammar instruction to choose, such as structural grammars, generative grammars, and functional grammars. As for the choice of which grammatical structures to teach, two polar positions can be identified and various positions in between. At one end of the continuum is Krashen's minimalist position that grammar teaching should be limited to a few simple rules such as 3rd person-*s* and past tense-*ed* that can be used to monitor output from the acquired system. He claims that more complex rules are generally not learnable or, if they are, are beyond students' ability to apply through monitoring. However, there is ample evidence that many learners are capable of mastering a wide range of explicit grammar rules (see Ellis 2006). At the other end of the continuum is the comprehensive position - to teach the whole of the grammar of the target language. This is the position adopted by many course book writers or authors of grammar practice materials (e.g., Murphy, 1994). Such a position is also unwarranted because of the substantial amount of the L2 grammar learnt without instruction, and the limited time available for teaching grammar. It is obvious that some selection of what to teach is needed and the question is what it should be based on. One possible answer is the learning difficulty of the grammatical structures. Defining learning difficulty, however is not straightforward. As Ellis (2006: 88) says, "this can refer to (a) the difficulty learners have in understanding a grammatical feature and (b) to the difficulty they have in internalising a grammatical feature so that they are able to use it accurately in communication. These two senses relate to the distinction between learning grammar as explicit knowledge and as implicit knowledge. Third person-*s*, for example, is typically taught very early in a course, and most learners have no difficulty in grasping the rule for its use, but they have enormous difficulty in internalising this structure so they can use it accurately. Rod Ellis outlines two approaches that have figured in attempts to delineate cognitive difficulty: 1. Teach those forms that differ from the learners' first language (L1); 2. Teach marked rather than unmarked forms. The first approach, based on a contrastive analysis of the learner's L1 and the target language, does not constitute a sound basis for selecting grammatical structures because often the learners in a group might come from mixed language backgrounds. Also, it is not clear when difference between languages does and does not translate into learning difficulty, and in some cases, learning difficulty arises even where there is no difference. The second approach - to teach the marked forms - is also problematic.

Marked forms are defined as infrequent, unnatural, and deviant from a regular pattern. Thus, the use of an infinitive without *to* following *make*, as in *He made me follow him* can be considered marked because *make* is one of the few verbs in English that takes this kind of complement and because this pattern occurs only infrequently. The general idea is that we should teach the marked features and leave the learners to learn the unmarked forms naturally by themselves. The problem is that markedness remains a somewhat opaque concept, so that it is often difficult to apply with the precision needed to determine which structures to teach. The selection of grammatical content, then, remains very problematic. One solution to the kinds of problems R. Ellis (2006) has mentioned is to base selection on the known errors produced by learners. In this respect, lists of common learner errors such as those available in Turton and Heaton's (1996) *Longman Dictionary of Common Errors* and Swan and Smith's (2001) *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems* are helpful.

Another important question for the foreign language teachers is when to start grammar instruction - whether it is best to start in the early stages of L2 acquisition, or to emphasise meaning focused instruction first and introduce grammar teaching later, when learners have already begun to form their interlanguages. The arguments for early grammar instruction are grounded in the behaviourist theory of language learning which emphasize correct language from the start, avoidance and eradication of errors. Form-focused instruction was considered important for learners in order to construct a basis of knowledge that can be used and extended in a meaning-focused approach. The idea is that a conscious understanding of how grammatical features work facilitates the kind of processing (e.g., attention to linguistic form) required for developing true competence.

The argument against teaching grammar early derives from research on immersion programmes, which shows that learners in such programmes are able to develop the proficiency needed for fluent communication without any formal instruction in the L2. A second reason for delaying grammar teaching to later stages of development is that early interlanguage is typically agrammatical, i.e. learners rely on a memory-based system of lexical sequences, constructing utterances either by accessing ready-made chunks or by simply concatenating lexical items into simple strings. Such pidginised utterances rely heavily on context and the use of communication strategies. Arguably, it is this lexicalised knowledge that provides the basis for the subsequent development of the grammatical competence needed for context-free communication (see R. Ellis 2006:90).

3.3. The nature of grammar instruction: massed vs. distributed and intensive vs. extensive

The question whether grammar instruction should be massed, i.e. concentrated into a short period of time, or spread over a longer period has not yet received a conclusive answer. Collins, Halter, Lightbown, & Spada (1999: 659) summarise the available research as follows: "None of the language program evaluation research has found an advantage for distributed language instruction. Although the findings thus far lead to the hypothesis that more concentrated exposure to English may lead to better student outcomes, the evidence is not conclusive". In general, a cyclical approach to grammar teaching (see Howatt 1974) is to be preferred because it allows for the kind of gradual acquisition of grammar that is compatible with what is known about interlanguage development.

Whereas massed-distributed distinction refers to how a grammar course is staged, the intensive-extensive dimension refers to whether each single lesson addresses a single feature (intensive) or multiple grammatical features (extensive).

In intensive teaching a single grammatical structure or, a pair of contrasted structures (e.g., English past continuous vs. past simple) are taught in a single lesson or a series of lessons covering days or weeks. In extensive grammar teaching a whole range of structures are targeted within a short period of time (e.g., a lesson) so that each structure receives only minimal attention in any one lesson. Instruction can be intensive or extensive irrespective of whether it is massed or distributed.

Grammar teaching is typically viewed as entailing intensive instruction. The present-practise-produce (PPP) model of grammar teaching assumes an intensive focus on specific grammatical structures and sufficient opportunities for practice so that learners can automatise the structures they are taught. Practise must involve both drills and tasks, which give learners' opportunities to practice the target structure in a communicative context.

Extensive instruction in the context of taskbased teaching can be implemented through a discussion of learners' errors when the task is over, or within the learning activity itself. Teachers can provide corrective feedback in the context of both form-focused and meaning-focused lessons. It can be directed primarily at the structure targeted by the lesson, or at whatever errors learners happen to make.

There are pros and cons for both intensive and extensive grammar instruction. Intensive instruction is time consuming, and thus, time will constrain how many structures can be addressed. Extensive grammar instruction, on the other hand, affords the opportunity to attend to large numbers of grammatical structures, many of which will be addressed repeatedly over a period of time. On the other hand, although extensive instruction involves a response to the errors each learner makes, it is not possible to attend to those structures that learners do not attempt to use (i.e., it cannot deal effectively with avoidance). For all these reasons, grammar teaching needs to be conceived of in terms of both approaches.

3.4. Explicit vs. implicit instruction

The question about the value of explicit and implicit grammar instruction is closely related to the types of knowledge they are aimed to facilitate. Explicit knowledge consists of the facts, often not clearly understood and in conflict with each other, that speakers of a language have learned. As Ellis (2006: 95) points out, "explicit knowledge is held consciously, is learnable and verbalisable, and is typically accessed through controlled processing when learners experience some kind of linguistic difficulty in using the L2". He further differentiates between explicit knowledge as analysed knowledge and as metalinguistic explanation. Analysed knowledge entails a conscious awareness of how a structural feature works, while metalinguistic explanation consists of knowledge of grammatical metalanguage and the ability to understand explanations of rules. In contrast, implicit knowledge is procedural, is held unconsciously, and can only be verbalized if it is made explicit. It is accessed rapidly and easily and thus is available for use in rapid, fluent communication. Most SLA researchers agree that competence in an L2 is primarily a matter of implicit knowledge. Whether there is any value in having explicit knowledge of grammar has been and remains one of the most controversial issues in language teaching.

3.4.1. Explicit instruction: deductive and inductive approach

There are three contrasting positions regarding the value of explicit instruction: the first one rejects such value; the second assumes it might facilitate implicit knowledge; and the third one assigns value to explicit instruction. The proponent of the first position, Krashen argues that learners can only use explicit knowledge when they *monitor*, which requires that they are focused on form (as opposed to meaning) and have sufficient time to access the knowledge.

As for the second position, there are two contrasting hypotheses, known as interface and non-interface respectively. According to the *noninterface position* (Krashen, 1981), explicit and implicit knowledge are entirely distinct with the result that explicit knowledge cannot be converted into implicit knowledge, since explicit and implicit memories are neurologically separate. The *interface position* argues that explicit knowledge becomes implicit, if learners have the opportunity for plentiful communicative practice. There is also a *weak interface position*, which claims that explicit knowledge can convert into implicit knowledge if the learner is ready to acquire the targeted feature, and that this conversion occurs by priming a number of key acquisitional processes, in particular *noticing* and *noticing the gap* between what they observe in the input and their own output.

These three options support very different approaches to language teaching. The noninterface position leads to a zero grammar approach, that is, it prioritizes meaning-centred approaches such as immersion and task-based teaching. The interface position supports PPP - the idea that a grammatical structure should be first presented explicitly and then practised until it is fully proceduralised. The weak interface position also lends support to techniques that induce learners to attend to grammatical features. It has been used to provide a basis for consciousness-raising tasks that require learners to derive their own explicit grammar rules from data they are provided with (see Ellis, 1993; Fotos, 1994).

The third position assumes there is value in explicit knowledge and addresses how best to teach it. In **deductive teaching**, a grammatical structure is presented initially and then practised in one way or another. In **inductive teaching**, learners are first exposed to exemplars of the grammatical structure and are asked to arrive at a metalinguistic generalisation on their own; there may or may not be a final explicit statement of the rule. A number of studies have examined the relative effectiveness of these two approaches to teaching explicit knowledge. The results have been mixed and showed that it is likely that many variables affect which approach learners benefit most from. Thus, simple rules may best be taught deductively, while more complex rules may best be taught inductively. Learners skilled in grammatical analysis are likely to do better with an inductive approach than those less skilled.

3.4.2. Implicit instruction: input, output and corrective feedback

There are three main instructional options in implicit grammar teaching: input-based, production-based (output-based) instruction and different types of corrective feedback (discussed further on in Chapter 5). The input-based option is based on a computational model of L2 acquisition, according to which acquisition takes place as a product of learners comprehending and processing input. Such approaches, when directed at grammar, seek to draw learners' attention to the targeted structure(s) in one or more ways: simply by contriving for numerous exemplars of the structure(s) to be present in the input materials, by highlighting the target structure(s) in some way (e.g., by using bold or italics in written texts), or by means of interpretation tasks directed at drawing learners' attention to form-meaning mappings.

A case for the output-based option can be found in both skill-building theory or in a sociocultural theory of L2 learning, according to which learning arises out of social interaction which scaffolds learners' attempts to produce new grammatical structures (Ohta, 2001). A number of studies have compared the relative effectiveness of input-based and production-based instruction, with mixed results, resulting in ongoing debate about the relative merits of these two options (VanPatten, 2002; DeKeyser, Salaberry, Robinson, & Harrington, 2002). As Ellis (2006: 99) points out, "It may be that, in classrooms, this comparison is ultimately meaningless because, in practice, both options are likely to involve

input-processing and production. For example, it is quite conceivable that in an input-based approach, individual students silently produce the target structure, while in a production-based approach, an utterance produced by one student serves as input for another. It is, therefore, not surprising that both options have been shown to result in acquisition".

The third instructional option is corrective feedback - when the teacher responds to learner errors. According to Ellis (2006) the key options are (a) whether the feedback is implicit or explicit and (b) whether the feedback is input or output based.

Implicit feedback occurs when the corrective force of the response to learner error is masked, as in a *recast*, which reformulates a deviant utterance correcting it while keeping the same meaning, or in a request for clarification. *Explicit feedback* takes a number of forms, such as direct correction or metalinguistic explanation. There is some evidence that explicit feedback is more effective in both eliciting the learner's immediate correct use of the structure and in eliciting subsequent correct use, for example, in a post-test. *Input-based feedback* models the correct form for the learner (e.g., by means of a recast). *Output-based feedback* elicits production of the correct form from the learner (e.g., by means of a request for clarification). Ellis (2006: 100) summarizes that: "although considerable progress has been made toward identifying those instructional options that are likely to be of psycholinguistic significance, as yet, few conclusions can be drawn about which ones are the most effective for acquisition".

3.5. Separate grammar lessons vs. grammar integrated into communicative activities

Ellis (2001:17) considered three broad types of grammar or form-focused instruction: *focus of forms*, *planned focus on form* and *incidental focus on form*. *Focus on forms* refers to instruction involving a structure-of-the-day approach, where the students' primary focus is on form (i.e., accuracy) and where the activities are directed intensively at a single grammatical structure. This approach involves teaching grammar in a series of separate lessons. *Focus on form* entails a focus on meaning with attention to form arising out of the communicative activity. This focus can be *planned*, where a focused task is required to elicit occasions for using a predetermined grammatical structure. In this approach, attention to the predetermined grammatical structures will also be intensive. Alternatively, focus on form can be *incidental*, where attention to form in the context of a communicative activity is not predetermined but rather occurs in accordance with the participants' linguistic needs as the activity proceeds. In this approach, it is likely that attention will be given to a wide variety of grammatical structures during any one task and thus will be extensive. Focus on form implies no separate grammar lessons but rather grammar teaching integrated into a curriculum consisting of communicative tasks.

There is considerable theoretical disagreement regarding which of these types of instruction is most effective in developing implicit knowledge. However, there is one point of agreement in these different positions: instruction needs to ensure that learners are able to connect grammatical forms to the meanings they realise in communication.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. List some arguments for and against grammar teaching.
2. Discuss the minimalist and the comprehensive position in grammar teaching.
3. How can you justify early grammar instruction?
4. Define the nature of intensive versus extensive grammar instruction.
5. What is the difference between deductive and inductive explicit instruction?
6. Give arguments in support of implicit input and output-based instruction.
7. Is it better to teach separate grammar lessons or to integrate grammar into communicative activities?

8. Plan a presentation to teach one of these structures:
- a) The active - passive distinction;
 - b) The difference between direct and reported speech;
 - c) The difference between two aspects of the same tense - simple and continuous.

Chapter 4. The role of grammar in the approaches and methods in teaching English

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the way grammar and grammar teaching developed in time;
- discuss the role of grammar in both traditional and contemporary approaches and methods, such as Grammar-translation method, Direct method, Oral approach and situational language teaching, Audiolingualism, Natural approach, Communicative language teaching, Task-based learning, Form-focussed instruction, etc.;
- develop a historical understanding of language teaching;
- understand the changing role of grammar in foreign language teaching;
- compare attitudes to grammar in different approaches and methods to teaching English.

4.1. The origin of grammar and grammar teaching

The systematic teaching of grammar has begun about 4000 years ago as a result of the expansion of the Greek culture and sphere of influence. The Greek philosopher Plato is considered to be the first to have examined the relationship between the form and meaning of words and to have distinguished between the grammatical categories of nouns and verbs. During Plato's time term 'grammatikos' referred to someone who could read and write. Greek grammar system was derived from literature, not from colloquial speech. Thus, no distinction was made between descriptive grammar and normative or prescriptive grammar (see Fotos 2005: 654).

With the rise of the Roman Empire, Latin became the major language of the western world, with a concomitant spread of Latin grammars based on the eight Greek grammatical categories. Correctness was the core of the classical view, and Latin was the only medium of instruction in schools. The rise of Christianity during the late Latin period resulted in the spread of Latin, necessitating the development of methodology for the teaching of Latin as a second language.

During the Middle Ages Latin was the only language studied at schools and thus, learning to read meant learning to read a foreign language. The greatest achievement of the early Middle Ages was the descriptive grammars - the transformation of language-centered grammars of Antiquity into the Latin-centered textbooks of the Insular grammarians. These were the first comprehensive, formally based descriptions of Latin - the first Western foreign language grammars (Law 1997: 85). During this period philosophers speculated on the nature of grammar and its relationship to language and philosophy. They believed that grammar rules

existed outside of language, and this concept of universal grammar has emerged several times, most recently in the 20th century work of Chomsky (1957) and his successors.

By the 18th century, visual aids such as column layout, diagrams, pictures and charts become common (Law 1997), resulting in 'double translation' books that presented the target language in one column and a vernacular translation in the other. Such bilingual texts contained no grammatical explanation and were usually organized according to situation and function, for example greetings, household conversations, shopping, and so forth (Kelly 1969).

The invention of the printing press during the Renaissance resulted in production and distribution of Greek and Latin classics throughout Europe, which in turn led to the separation of grammar teaching from the study of literature. The first alternative approaches to traditional translation and rule memorization methods appeared in the 16th and 17th century - the humanist tradition derived from Erasmus, and the anti-grammar tradition, represented by the works of Francis Bacon and Jan Comenius. They stressed the inductive rule learning rather than formal grammatical instruction on rules followed by practice.

17th and 18th centuries were the time when pedagogical grammars and dictionaries appeared and spread. According to Corder (1988:127) pedagogical grammars are "textbooks in the methodology of grammatical presentation" and are distinct from expositions of grammatical theory. He identified four parts of grammar instruction: 1. data on and examples of the target language; 2. descriptions and explanations; 3. induction exercises, and 4. hypothesis testing exercises (Corder 1988: 134). These sections are clearly present in Johnson's 1640 pedagogical grammar. The second pedagogical grammar of this period, written by J. Wallis (1616 - 1713) used a contrastive approach, much resembling the Contrastive Analysis of the early and mid 20th century, used to predict where learners might experience difficulties. Latin was gradually replaced by the use of English and French as mediums of instruction and English orthography, pronunciation and usage were standardized in the dictionaries written by Johnson, Walker and Webster.

The debate about the importance of grammar in language teaching and the role of grammar instruction has continued ever since, with the different viewpoints often paralleling those of earlier times.

The debate about the importance of grammar in language teaching can be traced in the history of language teaching methods. In fact, it is the way each method treats grammar that turns out to be one of its most distinctive features. The discussion below touches mainly upon the methods that paid special attention to grammar.

4.2. The Grammar-Translation method

As its name suggests, this method puts grammar at the heart of language teaching. The method dominated most of the 19th century textbooks, emphasizing grammatical syllabuses and explicit language instruction. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979:3) summarise the essence of this method in the following way:

- Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
- Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
- Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
- Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.

- Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
- Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
- Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

Although Grammar-translation method is still widely practised, it doesn't seem to have advocates. As Richards and Rogers (2001:7) point out, "it is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory".

4.3. The Direct Method

The method was popular at about the same time as the Grammar-translation method, but it challenged the importance of grammar and emphasized the naturalistic principles of language learning instead. It prioritized oral skills at the expense of written practice, and rejected explicit grammar teaching, although it still followed a grammatical syllabus. The target language was taught without translation or the use of students' mother tongue, and the meaning was conveyed through demonstration and action.

In the twentieth century too, the debate has gone on, against a background of increased interest in research and the scientific study of language. In Britain the first divisions between ELT and EFL (English language teaching and English as a foreign language) became apparent, with the monolingual approach of the Direct Method becoming the consensus in ELT, while Grammar-Translation continued to be used in the teaching of most other languages. The role of grammar was still seen as central to foreign language teaching, and as late as the 1950s and 1960s, the arguments were more about *how* it should be taught than *whether* it should be taught. Thus, for example, while Situational Language teaching and the Audiolingual approach differed as to whether rules should be taught inductively or deductively, neither of them denied the importance of grammar instruction.

4.4. The Oral Approach and the Situational Language Teaching

These approaches emerged from the work of British applied linguists in 1920s and 1930s focused on the problems of the grammar content of a language course and the classroom procedures for teaching grammatical patterns through an oral approach. Unlike the abstract model of grammar in the Grammar-translation method, the Oral approach viewed grammar as the underlying sentence patterns of the spoken language. The new grammatical points were introduced and practiced situationally. Items of grammar were graded following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones. The strong emphasis on oral practice, grammar, and sentence patterns, conformed to the intuitions of many teachers, which explains why the Oral Approach and the Situational Language Teaching were widely used in the 1980s.

4.5. Audiolingualism

Audiolingualism, or the American army method of the 1950s, was even more strict than the Direct Method in its rejection of explicit grammar teaching, although it has all the characteristic features of a grammar-teaching method. Its theoretical base was the behaviourist psychology, which considered language as a form of behaviour, learnt through the formation of correct habits. Language was viewed as as a system of structurally related

elements, such as phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentence types. Learning a language was seen as mastering the building blocks of that language and the rules by which these elements are combined. The audiolingual syllabus consisted of a graded list of sentence patterns, which were grammatical in origin. These patterns formed the basis of pattern-practice drills, the distinguishing feature of the audiolingual classroom. Various kinds of drills were used, such as: repetition, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, transposition, expansion, contraction, transformation, integration, rejoinder and restoration (for examples of these drills see Richards and Rogers 2001).

The decline of audiolingualism and its view of language as learnt behaviour was caused by Noam Chomsky's claim in the late 1950s that language ability is an innate human capacity. Moreover, Chomsky maintained that the structural theories of language were incapable of explaining the fundamental characteristic of language - the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. On the other hand, British applied linguists emphasized the functional and communicative potential of language which were underestimated by the proponents of audiolingualism. They saw communicative proficiency rather than mere mastery of structures as a major focus of language teaching.

4.6. The Natural approach

It is probably the best example of approaches subscribing to the strong version of CLT. Described as a traditional approach by its proponents, S. Krashen and T. Terrell (1983), the natural approach is defined as based on the use of language in communicative situations without recourse to the native language and without reference to grammatical analysis, grammatical drilling and to a particular theory of grammar. Unlike the Direct method and Audiolingualism, it places less emphasis on direct repetition and accurate production of the target language sentences, and gives more attention to exposure to language, or language input, at the expense of practice and output. The Natural approach aims to replicate the conditions of mother tongue acquisition and thus sees grammar and grammatical instruction as irrelevant and unnecessary.

4.7. Communicative language teaching (CLT)

This approach of 1970s was influenced by the developments in the new field of study - sociolinguistics, which maintained that communicative competence stretches beyond the knowledge of the rules of grammar. The two versions of CLT, called strong and weak respectively, see the role of grammar in language teaching differently. The weak version did not reject grammar teaching completely. Grammar was seen as a main component of the syllabus in CLT courses, even if it was subsumed under functional categories, such as asking the way, talking about yourself, making suggestions, making future plans, etc. Explicit attention to grammar rules was not seen as incompatible with communicative practice. Under the weak CLT version grammar rules and grammar teaching had their place in the coursebooks, often at the expense of communicative activities and tasks. The strong version on CLT, on the other hand, rejected grammar instruction and grammatical syllabuses, and claimed that language is acquired only through communication and tasks for which no formal instruction of grammar was needed. That is why this approach is known as non-interventionist and holistic.

More recently, within the range of other approaches emerging in the era of the Communicative 'movement', grammar has passed through a period in which its importance as the central focus for instruction has been challenged more fundamentally than at any time before. This has been partly caused by the switch of attention from teaching the language

system to teaching the language as communication, and also, as Ellis (1992:37) points out, "by the shift in our approach to language teaching pedagogy from teaching to learning and acquisition of language. The question which was once "What does the target language consist of and how do I teach it?" has become "How do learners acquire a second language and what do I have to do to facilitate it?". This change of focus encourages a great deal of thinking about and research into the role of the classroom as a setting within which opportunities for learning are provided rather than as a place where language (grammar) is formally taught. In many classrooms (probably the majority in EFL contexts), the prevailing approach corresponds to what Thornbury describes as a very weak form of CLT (Thornbury 1998:110). In such classrooms, a communicative element has been absorbed into the conventional **P-P-P (Presentation-Practice-Production) model** of teaching, so that new language is presented to learners in order to make the form and meaning clear and memorable. The presentation stage is followed by some form of grammar practice. In general it proceeds from more teacher control to more freedom in the process of communication. Vocabulary diversity and situational complexity are limited in controlled exercises so that the students can focus on the grammatical challenge. Controlled exercises such as grammar drills are used for working on the form. Grammar games are useful for freer practice. A common controlled exercise designed to work on the dimension of use is one in which students are asked to make a choice which depends on contextual factors. An example of this is a role play. The aim of the freer practice stage is to have students use the structures in as natural and fluent manner as possible. However, a possible drawback is that due to the freedom they are given, the students might not choose to use the target structures. The feedback students receive during the practice and production stages is concerned with the nature and treatment of students' errors. It is recognized that error correction by the teacher is most helpful when the error is systematic and when the correction is judicious.

Although the underlying theory for a P-P-P approach has now been discredited, it remains very popular with many teachers, and pedagogical texts such as Thornbury (1999) continue to advocate its inclusion among the range of grammar teaching strategies available to the L2 teacher, and some major textbooks are still based to some extent on P-P-P.

4.8. Task-based learning

The main alternative to the P-P-P paradigm is the **Task-based learning**. Second language acquisition research suggested a reassessment of the role of formal instruction in language teaching, since there is no evidence that it reflects the cognitive learning processes employed in naturalistic language learning situations outside the classroom. Engaging learners in task work is proposed to provide a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities, and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place (see Richards and Rogers 2001:223). In task-based learning the focus is on process rather than product, and its basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning. Learners learn the language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in activities and tasks which are sequenced according to difficulty. The difficulty of a task depends on a range of factors including the previous experience of the learner, the complexity of the task, the language required to undertake the task, and the degree of support available (Richards and Rogers 2001: 25). In this strong version communicative approach successful completion of the task is seen as more important than successful application of a rule of grammar. Recently, though, as Thornbury (1999:21) points out, task-based learning relaxed its approach to grammar, largely through recognition of the value of a focus on form.

4.9. Form-focussed instruction

One of the contemporary approaches called **focus on form** (FonF) was proposed by Long (1991) in response to the problems presented by traditional approaches to the teaching of grammar, on the one hand, and dissatisfaction with purely communicative approaches on the other. He distinguished a focus on form from a **focus on forms** (FonFs) and a focus on meaning. FonFs is the traditional approach, based on the assumption that language consists of a series of grammatical forms that can be acquired sequentially and additively. Focus on meaning is based on the assumption that learners are able to analyze language inductively and arrive at its underlying grammar. It emphasizes pure meaning-based activities with no attention to form.

FonF is as a kind of instruction that draws the learner's attention to linguistic forms in the context of meaningful communication. Long claimed that a FonF approach is more effective than both FonFs and focus on meaning and captures "the strength of an analytic approach while dealing with its limitations" (Long & Robinson 1998:22). Long (2000) argued that FonFs is problematic because it leads to lessons which are dry and consist of teaching linguistic forms with little concern with communicative use. Focus on meaning is problematic because it does not lead to desired levels of grammatical development, is not based on learner needs, and has been found inadequate by studies on meaning-based programs. FonF, on the other hand, is learner-centered, represents the learner's internal syllabus, and happens when the learner is attending to meaning and has a communication problem. R. Ellis (2006:102-103) outlines the characteristic features of form-focused instruction in the following way:

- Both form and meaning should be emphasized; learners need to have the opportunity to practice forms in communicative tasks;
- Focus more strongly on forms that are problematic for learners;
- Explicit grammar teaching is more effective at the intermediate to advanced levels than beginning levels;
- Attend to both input-based (comprehension) and output-based (production) grammar;
- Both deductive and inductive approaches can be useful, depending on the context and purpose of instruction;
- Incidental focus on form is valuable in that it treats errors that occur while learners are engaged in meaningful communication;
- Corrective feedback can facilitate acquisition if it involves a mixture of implicit and explicit feedback;
- Separate grammar lessons ("focus on forms") and grammar integrated into communicative activities ("focus on form") are both viable, depending on the context.

In a recent review Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 14) state that "FonF must be a component of a broader L2 instructed learning that provides ample opportunities for meaningful and form-focused instruction including a range of opportunities for L2 input, output, interaction, and practice. It should be approached in ways that are responsive to the needs of the learners, takes into account the various context-related variables, and considers learner characteristics including, their age, developmental readiness, and other individual differences".

The table below summarizes the status and treatment of grammar in the approaches and methods which have had the strongest influence in the history of language teaching:

The Grammar- Translation Method	deductive teaching; explicit instruction of grammar
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	rules; memorization of rules; comparison between target language and L1 grammar; translation for clarifying meaning.
The Direct Method	inductive teaching; discovering and acquiring the rules; drills helping students to induce the rules
The Oral Approach and the Situational Language Teaching	new grammatical points introduced and practiced situationally; grammar forms graded and taught from simple to complex; strong emphasis on oral practice and sentence patterns
Audiolingualism	inducing the rules through examples and drills; acquiring grammar through exposure to patterns through mechanical drills
Communicative language teaching	various grammatical structures subsumed under communicative functions; strong version rejecting grammar instruction and syllabuses, and weak version accepting grammar teaching if useful for acquiring structures and functions.
The Natural approach	language for communication without reference to grammatical analysis; exposure and input rather than practice.
The Silent Way	discovery learning; focus on structures without explicit grammar rule teaching.
The Total Physical Response	responding to instruction physically; introducing grammatical patterns and multi-word chunks through imperatives.
Community Language Learning (Counseling Learning)	holistic approach; language for communication and creative thinking; large chunks of language analyzed explicitly by means of equivanets in L1.
Suggestopedia	optimizing learning and recall by making the learner more suggestible; grammar taught explicitly and minimally through rules in L1.
Whole Language	focus on communication, language functions and authenticity in collaborative learning; no particular attention to grammar.
Multiple Intelligences	enabling learners to benefit from instructional approaches by reflecting on their own learning; no particular attention to grammar.
Neurolinguistic Programming	learning effective behaviours; helping learners become aware at a feeling level of the conceptual meaning of grammatical structures; no particular attention to grammar.
The Lexical Approach	grammar/vocabulary dichotomy seen as invalid; much language consists of multi-word chunks; grammar is subordinate to lexis; grammar is a receptive skill.
Competency-Based Language Teaching	focus on outputs/outcomes and standards of learning; developing functional communication skills and competencies - skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours for effective performance of a real-world task.
Cooperative Language Learning	naturalistic second language learning; focused

	attention to language structures and functions through the use of interactive tasks.
Content- Based Instruction/Content and Language Integrated Learning - CLIL	focus on meaningful content in language teaching; learning the language as a by-product of learning about real-world content.
Task-based learning	successful completion of the task is seen as more important than successful application of a rule of grammar; no explicit focus on grammar forms.
Form-focussed instruction	attention to linguistic forms in the context of meaningful communication; strong focus on problematic forms; learner-centered.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. What were the major factors that led to the changes in grammar teaching over the years?
2. Outline the main differences in the treatment of grammar between Grammar-translation method and the Direct method.
3. Discuss the status of grammar teaching in Audiolingualism and give examples of pattern drills.
4. How do Audiolingualism and Communicative language teaching differ in teaching meaning and form?
5. How do the strong and the weak versions of Communicative language teaching treat grammar?
6. Do you see any value in the traditional PPP paradigm?
7. Discuss the role of grammar in Task-based learning.
8. What is the difference between focus on form (FonF), focus on forms (FonFs) and focus on meaning?
9. Try to identify the method (direct, grammar-translation, audiolingualism or communicative) in these extracts from introductions to EFL courses:
 - a) The forms of English are taught, but more important, the rules for their use are also taught - there is little value in learning language forms unless we know when it is appropriate to use them...Students are encouraged to communicate effectively rather than to produce grammatically correct forms of English.
 - b) As soon as the pupil has mastered the rules of each lesson, he should learn the corresponding vocabulary, paying great attention to the spelling of each word. The dialogues, which are based on the earlier lessons, will enable him, with the aid of translation, to learn a variety of idiomatic phrases and sentences, which would otherwise be difficult to acquire.
 - c) In order to make himself understood the teacher resorts at first to object lessons. The expressions of the foreign language are taught in direct association with perception... The value of the various words and constructions is understood much more easily by means of the practical and striking examples of object lessons, than by the abstract rules of theoretical grammar.
 - d) The method of presentation rests on the concept that the sentence is the unit of instruction. The framework of the sentence is the structure, a basic pattern constantly expanded by a growing vocabulary... Drill and review exercises have as their primary aim the establishment of habits of automatic language control. It is important that the teacher limit instruction in each lesson to many variations of the same pattern until mastery of that pattern is attained.

(adapted from Thornbury 1999:161)

Chapter 5. Contemporary input-based options for teaching grammar

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- learn about some contemporary input-based approaches to teaching grammar;
- see the value and the rationale for using input-based instruction in communicative context;
- explain the main features of some Input-based options for teaching grammar, such as processing instruction, textual enhancement and teaching grammar through discourse;
- explore the options for textual enhancement in written and oral texts;
- devise some discourse-based input activities for the classroom.

Over the past few decades there has been a fundamental shift in the teaching of grammar from one in which grammar instruction was central, to one in which grammar instruction was absent, and to the recent reconsideration of the significance of the role of grammar instruction. Many researchers and teachers now believe that grammar teaching should not be ignored in second language classrooms. The idea that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness has been found to be theoretically problematic. There is ample empirical evidence that teaching approaches that focus primarily on meaning with no focus on grammar are inadequate (Harley & Swain, 1984; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991; Swain, 1985). Recent SLA research has demonstrated that grammatical or form-focused instruction is especially effective when it is incorporated into a meaningful communicative context. However, there are still many questions about how to teach grammar effectively, and in particular, how to integrate most effectively a focus on grammatical forms and a focus on meaningful communication in L2 classrooms. Richards (2002) has referred to this question as “the central dilemma,” in language teaching. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011: vii) some of the the key questions from the perspective of teachers are:

1. How can grammar be brought back to L2 classrooms without returning to the traditional models of grammar teaching that have often been found to be ineffective?
2. How can a focus on grammar be combined with a focus on communication?
3. What are the different ways of integrating grammar instruction and communicative interaction?
4. How can the opportunity for focus on grammar be maximized without sacrificing opportunities for a focus on meaning and communication?

Current SLA theory and research have begun to examine these questions, and one of the options proposed in this respect is the input-based instruction.

Input can be defined as the language “that learners hear or see to which they attend for its propositional content (message)” (VanPatten, 1996:10). It is the sample of language - oral or

written - that the learners are exposed to and attempt to process for meaning. There are several input-based options for teaching grammar: processing instruction, textual enhancement and a discourse-based option.

5.1. Processing instruction

Processing instruction is an approach which emphasizes the central role of input in language acquisition and maintains that grammar can best be learned when learners attend to it in input-rich environments (see Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In it an initial exposure to explicit instruction should be combined with a series of input-processing activities that aim to help learners create form-meaning connections. VanPatten has defined input processing as strategies that learners use to link grammatical forms to their meanings or functions. He has made a distinction between processing and other related concepts, such as perception, noticing, and intake. Both perception and noticing can take place prior to or without assigning any meaning to a particular form. However, processing involves both perception and noticing and also assigning meaning to the form. Intake refers to that part of the input that the learner has noticed and has stored in his or her working memory for further processing. Thus, intake becomes the basis of language learning.

5.1.1. VanPatten's input processing model

VanPatten (1996) has argued that one problem L2 learners have in processing input is the difficulty in attending to form and meaning at the same time. He has outlined an input processing model that has tried to show how learners process input in their memory and how they derive intake from input while their focus is on meaning. VanPatten's model contains the following four main principles:

1. Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form. Thus, they pay more attention to forms that express more meaning than those that express less meaning. For example, in the sentence *He works in a factory*. *He* and *-s* express the same grammatical information, and the learner might focus on the main lexical item (*he*) to get that information and so may not notice the inflection *-s*, or may not process it adequately.
2. For learners to process form that is not meaningful, they must be able to process information at no or little cost to attention. In other words, forms that do not have much communicative value will be attended to only when attentional resources required for processing meaning have not been used up. Such items are usually acquired later. An example for this might be the order in which learners first acquire the verb morpheme *-ing* and then the third person *-s*. The reason for this, VanPatten argues, could be that *-ing* has a higher communicative value than the third person singular *-s*.
3. Learners possess a default strategy that assigns the role of agent (or subject) to the first noun (phrase) they encounter in a sentence/utterance. Principle 3 concerns the order of words in a sentence and how learners process them. According to VanPatten (1996), the first-noun strategy works successfully in languages where the subject of the sentence is usually the first word, such as in English with its subject-verb-object (SVO) word order, but not in languages that do not have such a word order.
4. Learners first process elements in sentence/utterance initial position. Thus, they process and learn these words more quickly than those which appear in other positions.

Processing instruction as a pedagogical technique is based on the principles of the input processing model described above. It rests on the assumption that by understanding how learners process input, the teachers will be able to devise effective instructional activities to aid input processing and, at the same time, learn the forms that are contained in the input. The key components of processing instruction as a pedagogical intervention are as follows:

1. Learners are provided with information about the target linguistic form or structure.
2. They are informed of the input processing strategies that may negatively affect their processing of the target structure.
3. They carry out input-based activities that help them understand and process the form during comprehension.

5.1.2. Structured input activities

Oral and written classroom activities that are used in input-processing instruction are called structured input and are designed to force students to focus on the target structure and to process it for meaning. Structured input activities are of two main types: **referential** and **affective** (VanPatten, 1996). Referential activities are activities for which there is always a right or wrong answer, whereas affective activities require learners to provide a response by indicating their agreements or opinions about a set of events.

Here are two referential activities given in Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 32), which illustrate the potential of processing instruction:

Activity 1 can be used for students in upper-beginner or lower-intermediate level classes. According to the input-processing model, learners prefer processing lexical items to morphological items. The goal of the activity is to push learners to process the morphological marker -ed, which they may not otherwise notice if the past adverbial is provided. The instruction for the learners is to listen to the following sentences and decide whether they describe an action that was done before or is usually done.

1. *The teacher corrected the essays.*
2. *The man cleaned the table.*
3. *I wake up at 5 in the morning.*
4. *The train leaves the station at 8 am.*
5. *The writer finished writing the book.*
6. *The trees go green in the spring.*

Activity 2 focuses on the causative constructions of the type "have someone do something" which can be difficult for the learners, since they include two agents and, according to the input processing model, students may always assign the role of the doer to the first noun. Therefore, they may have problems interpreting the statements accurately. The instruction for the students is to listen to each of the following sentences and decide who is performing the action.

- 1 *The girl made the man check the house for mice.*
- 2 *My dad made my brother babysit the children all night.*
- 3 *Mom let the boys go to three different circuses in one week.*
- 4 *The boss had the chef prepare several roast geese for the wedding dinner.*
- 5 *Jack let Joe collect some of the data required for our project.*
- 6 *The professor had the students create hypotheses for their science experiment.*

Comprehension is checked by asking the following questions:

1. *Who checked the house for mice? The girl or the man?*
2. *Who babysat the children all night? My dad or my brother?*
3. *Who went to three different circuses in one week? Mom or the boys?*
4. *Who prepared several roast geese for the wedding dinner? The boss or the chef?*
5. *Who collected some of the data required for our project? Jack or Joe?*
6. *Who had the students create hypotheses for their science experiment? The professor or the students?*

Affective Activities require learners to express their opinion and do not have right or wrong answers. They can be used with students in a lower-intermediate level class.

The aim of activity 1 is to push students to process the present and past participle adjectives. The students have to read the following sentences and decide whether they agree or disagree with them.

1. *The book was boring.*
2. *I am bored when someone tells a joke.*
3. *People who gossip a lot are very irritating.*
4. *I get irritated with small talk.*
5. *It is interesting to talk about yourself.*
6. *The book was interesting.*

Activity 2 helps learners process past simple tense. The instruction involves two steps:

Step 1: Read the following activities and indicate whether you did the same things over the weekend. Step 2: Form pairs and compare your responses with your classmate to see whether he or she did the same activities.

1. *I did my homework.*
2. *I watched TV.*
3. *I wrote a letter to my friend.*
4. *I had a birthday party.*
5. *I walked to the beach.*
6. *I cleaned my room.*

Nassaji and Fotos (2011) point out that processing instruction as an option in teaching has its own shortcomings and limitations. One of the limitations is that processing instruction can address only certain linguistic forms or constructions that have transparent form-meaning relationships. Another limitation is that it does not require learners to produce output and, it is widely accepted that to be fully effective, teaching grammar should involve learners with opportunities for both input and output. In order to increase its effectiveness, teachers should combine structured input activities with output and interactive tasks and corrective feedback on learner errors. Teachers should also feel free to adapt or change structured input activities based on the contexts of their teaching and their learners' goals and objectives.

5.2. Textual enhancement

Textual enhancement aims to raise learners' attention to linguistic forms by making input more salient. This can be achieved through highlighting certain aspects of input by means of bolding, underlining, and italicizing in written input, or acoustic devices such as added stress or repetition in oral input. Such visual or phonological modifications of input make grammatical forms more noticeable and subsequently learnable, so that input can successfully turn into intake. The process through which the salience of input is enhanced is called input enhancement, a term introduced by Sharwood Smith (1991) to substitute for the original term consciousness-raising.

Input enhancement can vary along at least two basic dimensions - explicitness and elaboration. Explicitness is the degree of directness in how attention is drawn to form. Elaboration has to do with the duration or intensity of the enhancement procedures. In explicit enhancement the teacher explicitly directs learners' attention to particular linguistic features through various forms of metalinguistic explanation and rule presentation. Implicit enhancement occurs when learners' attention is drawn to grammatical forms while their main focus is on meaning. This may take the form of a teacher's gesture to indicate an error in

learners' production. Similarly, enhancement may vary in terms of intensity or elaboration. It may take the form of repeated explanation or correction of an error over an extended period of time, or it could be done through a brief or single explanation of correction. Another distinction is between positive and negative enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1991). Positive input enhancement refers to those strategies that make a correct form salient, whereas negative input enhancement highlights incorrect forms, thus signaling to the learner that they have violated the target norms. Input enhancement can also be achieved internally or externally (Sharwood Smith, 1991). Internal enhancement occurs when the learner notices the form himself or herself, and external enhancement occurs when the form is noticed through external agents, such as the teacher.

5.2.1. Textual enhancement in written and oral texts

Textual enhancement can be used with both written and oral texts. In written text, this can be accomplished by means of underlining, boldfacing, italicizing, capitalizing, color coding or a combination of these. The text can either be an authentic text, if it contains enough examples of the targeted form, or it can be modified for that purpose. In textual enhancement, learners should read the text for meaning. This can be achieved by using various forms of post-reading activities. The teacher should not explain why certain forms are highlighted in the input and should not provide any additional metalinguistic information either. For example, in the following enhanced text the target form is the third person singular verbs in English. Each instance of the target form has been highlighted using the bold type:

*The man **goes** with his dog to the park. He **brings** a ball with him to throw for the dog. When he **arrives** at the park, he **throws** the ball very far, and the dog **chases** after it. The dog **comes** back with the ball in his mouth. The man **is** very happy to see the dog come back with the ball. He **spends** the rest of the day throwing the ball for his dog to chase.*

In oral enhanced texts input can be made more noticeable through various intonational and phonological manipulations, such as added stress, intonation, or repetitions of the targeted form, or even through gestures, body movement, or facial expressions. In the following example from Nassaji (2007b: 59) the learner has made an error in the use of the past tense of catch during his conversation with the teacher. The teacher has reformulated the learner's error and has enhanced it with an added stress and rising intonation:

Student: And she caught her.

Teacher: She CAUGHT her? [Enhanced with added stress]

Student: Yeah, caught her.

Another form of input enhancement is an input flood. In this technique, learners are provided with numerous examples of a certain target form in the input (either oral or written). Input flood makes the target form perceptually salient and provides the learner with ample exposure to the target form. Since this technique does not involve any direct intervention, it also provides an implicit method of focus on form.

In the following example the target forms are the definite and indefinite articles. The text has been designed to include numerous instances of those forms without typographically highlighting them:

A chipmunk sat on some branches in a great big tree. It was very hungry, so it decided to leave the tree and look for food. It climbed off the branches and reached the trunk of the tree, and went down the trunk to the ground below. The chipmunk saw lots of grass, and in the grass lay many acorns! The chipmunk, in its delight, took as many acorns as it could, put

them in its mouth, and ran back up the tree trunk to its nest. There, the chipmunk had a very good meal.

The studies of the effectiveness of textual enhancement and input flood have shown varying results, from positive and facilitative effects to limited and even no effects. This is not surprising as textual enhancement simply provides learners with correct models of the language, not information with what is incorrect in the input. Although textual enhancement may promote noticing, it alone may not be able to bring about learning. Thus, to be most effective, textual enhancement needs to include more explicit forms of enhancement, various forms of input and output-based practices and corrective feedback. This may not happen unless learners are exposed to ample opportunities for noticing as well as producing the target form.

5.3. Teaching grammar through discourse

A discourse-based language teaching differs from other approaches in that it not only focuses on grammar forms, but it also considers the meaning and use of those forms within the larger discourse context. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2001:4) define discourse as "an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning (e.g., words, structures, cohesion) that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience/interlocutor". This approach deals with the possible grammatical realizations of speech acts such as requesting and suggesting, the way grammatical categories such as tense, aspect and modality pattern across texts, and the role of grammar in creating textual cohesion (reference, substitution, conjunction, etc.) and information structure (through devices of thematization such as adverbial placement, the use of the passive and clefting) (see Trappes-Lomax, 2004:154). Thus, an essential function of grammar is its pragmatic meaning in context. As Widdowson (1978) suggested, the parts of a text or speech that learners must understand are discourse-based, consisting of: (1) the form of the text/speech; (2) the proposition, or what is being written/said; and (3) the illocutionary force, or the actual functional/ pragmatic intent of the speaker/writer within a particular context. A fourth component, the act, is the function which is actually performed by the speech or text.

A discourse-based approach treats grammar functionally and holds a meaning-based view of grammar. One of the major researchers within this meaning-based discourse view of grammar is Halliday (Halliday, 1978, 1984, 2004), who developed the theory of systematic functional grammar (SFG). From this perspective, grammar is regarded as a complex process of making context-based choices, not only of syntax or vocabulary, but also considering social and psychological factors determined by the grammatical links between discourse and meaning. Halliday's systemic linguistic approach states that teachers need to consider language in its entirety "so that whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood always with reference to the total picture" (Halliday & Matthiesson, 2004:19). This is especially essential for today's language learners since most institutional tests now present listening, speaking and writing skills at the discourse level, often requiring learners to synthesize both written and spoken items when producing their answers. The discourse-based view of language teaching emphasizes the communicative use of grammar, suggesting that learners must comprehend what is actually being communicated, regardless of the apparent meaning of the syntax. For example, when someone in a room tells another person in the same room "It's hot here, isn't it?" the speaker is probably requesting that a window be opened, and does not expect the answer "Yes, it is" or "No, it isn't" although it would be syntactically correct.

Research findings (Biber & Reppen, 2002; N. Ellis, 2002, 2007) indicate that learners must encounter target structures repeatedly in discourse-level contexts until a certain threshold of

encounters is reached, at which point the form often becomes incorporated into learners' interlanguage system. Many pedagogical grammars now provide functional introductions to the structural presentation of grammar points, emphasizing use of the target forms in communication. Corpus linguistics also has important implications for a discourse-based approach to L2 instruction in the areas of syllabus design, materials development and classroom activities. It provides an approach to language teaching that is supposed to facilitate so-called data-driven learning (DDL). DDL has been defined as "the use in the classroom of computer-generated concordances to get students to explore regularities of patterning in the target language, and the development of activities and exercises based on concordance output" (Johns & King, 1991, p. iii). DDL learning is also seen as an important resource for remedying the current mismatch between authentic target language usages, patterns, and frequencies of grammar structures and what is presented in most L2 textbooks. For example, many texts suggest that the most common use of the simple present tense is habitual and re-occurring ("I go to school every day"). However, corpus analysis indicates that this usage occurs only 5.5% of the time, whereas 57.7% of the usages is the actual present ("I see what you mean") or neutral time ("My name is Ann") (Tsui 2004:41). Since many textbook presentations of grammar structures do not reflect real-life usages, it has been strongly suggested (Biber & Reppen 2002) that material developers should use corpus analysis to determine the frequencies of grammatical structures in authentic language and be careful to reflect these frequencies in the materials they design. A different approach to corpus-based L2 grammar teaching made use of learner corpora to identify areas of difficulty (Nesselhauf, 2004). For example, the Longman Learner Corpus was used to identify common learner errors, and these were incorporated into the Longman Essential Activator (1997) with the correct forms placed in special "alert boxes." The same corpus was also used in the creation of the Longman Dictionary of Common Errors (Heaton & Turton 1987). Another approach has used corpus analysis of clusters, defined as words which follow each other in a text (Scott & Tribble 2006:131), such as "as a result of" or "the way in which," in the instruction of English for Academic Purposes to create word cluster lists of academic phrases for L2 writing.

5.3.1. Discourse-based input activities

In accordance with research findings, form-focused discourse is becoming increasingly used in newer ESL/EFL textbooks to teach the four L2 skills. The following example by Nunan (1998:105) demonstrates the provision of learners with opportunities to explore grammatical relationships in both authentic and non-authentic texts, emphasizing that learners need a "balanced diet" of both types of text. The students have to study the two extracts given below, one of which is a piece of genuine conversation, and the other is taken from a language teaching textbook. They have to decide which is which, to list the differences between the two extracts, to guess what language the nonauthentic conversation is trying to teach, and also what grammar they would need in order to take part in the authentic conversation.

<p><i>Text A</i> A: Excuse me, please. Do you know where the nearest bank is? B: Well, the City Bank isn't far from here. Do you know where the main post office is? A: No, not really. I'm just passing through.</p>	<p><i>Text B</i> A: How do I get to Kensington Road? B: Well you go down Fullarton Road... A: ... what, down Old Belair, and around...? B: Yeah. And then you go straight... A: ... past the hospital? B: Yeah, keep going straight, past the racecourse to the roundabout. You know the big roundabout?</p>
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<p><i>B: Well, first go down this street to the traffic light.</i></p> <p><i>A: OK.</i></p> <p><i>B: Then turn left and go west on Sunset Boulevard for about two blocks. The bank is on your right, just past the post office.</i></p> <p><i>A: All right. Thanks!</i></p> <p><i>B: You're welcome.</i></p>	<p><i>A: Yeah.</i></p> <p><i>B: And Kensington Road's off to the right.</i></p> <p><i>A: What, off the roundabout?</i></p> <p><i>B: Yeah.</i></p> <p><i>A: Right.</i></p>
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Discourse-based activities can be productive as well, like the following one in which the teacher has students write discourse for authentic purposes. In it intermediate to advanced level students can be requested to exchange weekly L2 e-mail with their classmates on their daily activities or similar themes. Over the course of a semester of regular e-mail exchange, it has been found that the number of words produced by L2 students greatly increases (Fotos & Hinkel 2007) due to such regular communicative output opportunities. Composition teachers can request students to submit a weekly journal consisting of several pages describing their general activities. These are read and commented on by the teacher, but not corrected since the focus is on content and the aim is to promote extensive writing.

Discourse-based input activities can be used to build a sense of cohesion and coherence in written and spoken text. For example, to work for cohesion, teachers can choose an authentic piece of text and request the students to examine how target grammar items create links across sentence boundaries. Students should focus on how words are related to create different patterns of usage. To build a sense of coherence, the teacher can select a piece of text containing multiple uses of a target form, such as the definite article. Students are requested to examine the function of each use of the in the discourse, and then to analyze the context of its use, making generalizations about its occurrence, its meaning, and the circumstances of its use and non-use.

Research findings suggest that the provision of discourse-level input based on authentic or simplified target language discourse, the study of discourse-level communicative contexts in which L2 forms are used, and the provision of opportunities for form-focused discourse-level output can greatly support implicit and explicit grammar instruction and can promote increased learner awareness of grammar forms, this leading to successful SLA.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. What are the main principles of Van Patten's input processing model?
2. Discuss the key components of input processing instruction.
3. What are the main features of structured input activities?
4. Define the role of explicitness and elaboration in textual enhancement.
5. Design an activity exemplifying textual enhancement in written text.
6. What are the main features of the discourse-based approach?
7. Give examples of receptive and productive discourse-based activities.
8. Which is the structure targeted in this input enhancement exercise:

Jessica was out walking with her husband when she was attacked by an unsupervised Alsatian dog. Jessica's leg was bitten, and she had to have stitches in two wounds. Two days later, because the wounds had become infected, Jessica was admitted to hospital. Even after

she was discharged, she needed further treatment from her GP - and she was told to rest for two weeks.

9. Where can you find authentic texts that have a high frequency of the following grammatical forms:
- imperatives
 - past simple
 - present simple with future reference
 - reported speech.

Chapter 6. Interaction- and output-based options for teaching grammar

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- learn about some contemporary interaction-based approaches to teaching grammar;
- explore the role of different types of interactional feedback, such as recasts, clarification requests, repetition, etc.;
- differentiate between explicit and implicit grammar-focused tasks;
- see the value and the rationale for using output-based instruction in communicative context;
- explain the main features of collaborative output tasks, such as dictogloss, reconstruction cloze tasks, text-editing tasks and jigsaw tasks.

6.1. The role of interactional feedback

This approach is based on the assumption that negotiated interaction (i.e., interactional modifications made in the course of conversation) is essential for language acquisition. It has been proposed that, through negotiation, learners not only communicate their meaning, but can also receive corrective feedback on their ill-formed utterances through the use of conversational strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, recasts, etc., that take place during interaction. Corrective feedback refers to utterances that indicate to the learner that his or her output is erroneous in some way (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). In the SLA literature, such feedback has also been called negative evidence, defined as information that tells the learner what is not possible in a given language, and has been contrasted with positive evidence, defined as information that tells the learner what is possible in a given language. Negative evidence is obtained in different ways such as grammatical explanations or various forms of explicit and implicit corrective feedback on learners' non-targetlike utterances (Long, 1996). Positive evidence is received mainly through exposure to correct models of language in the input. Empirical evidence shows that learners need both negative and positive feedback in order to acquire an L2 successfully.

The argument for the role of interactional feedback is closely connected with the importance attributed to Focus on Form (FonF), an approach in which attention to form occurs incidentally and in the context of communication and meaningful interaction. FonF occurs either reactively in response to learners' errors or proactively in a pre-planned manner. Interactional feedback constitutes a kind of reactive FonF as it occurs in reaction to learners' non-target-like utterances.

Interactional feedback can be given to the learner by reformulations and elicitations (Nassaji, 2007a). Reformulations are those feedback strategies that rephrase a learner's erroneous production, providing the learner with the correct form. Elicitations, on the other hand, do not provide learners with the correct form, but push or prompt the learner directly or indirectly to self-correct. Interactional feedback can be provided either extensively or intensively (R. Ellis: 2001a). Extensive feedback is provided on a wide range of forms, whereas intensive feedback is provided on certain preselected forms.

There are different types of interactional feedback provided with pedagogical aims. The most important of them are:

6.1.1. Recasts, clarification requests and repetition

Recasts refer to utterances that reformulate the whole or part of the learner's erroneous utterance into a correct form while maintaining the overall focus on meaning (see Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada 2001). The reformulation not only provides the learner with the correct form but may also signal to the learner that his or her utterance is deviant in some way. In the SLA literature, the immediate response of the learner to the feedback has been called uptake - an optional move in that learners may or may not respond to the feedback (R. Ellis et al. 2001). It has been used extensively in SLA research as a measure of feedback effectiveness. Recasts are generally considered as implicit feedback because they imply rather than overtly correct the error. In some cases, added stress may make the feedback more noticeable, drawing the learners' attention to the correct form more effectively. For example:

Student: And she caught her.

Teacher: She CAUGHT [added stress] her?

Student: Yeah, caught her. (Nassaji 2007b: 59)

Clarification requests occur when the teacher or an interlocutor does not fully understand a learner's utterance and asks the learner to rephrase the utterance so that it can be clearer. The request may be motivated by either an error in the learner's utterance or it may be because the utterance is not comprehensible in some other way. The feedback does not provide the learner with the correct form. However, it may indicate to the learner that his or her utterance contains an error. Since the feedback is interrogative, it provides the learner with an opportunity to self-repair. Clarification requests can be achieved by using phrases such as "pardon me?", "sorry?" or "excuse me?" etc. For example:

Student: I want practice today, today.

Teacher: I'm sorry? (Panova & Lyster 2002: 583)

Interactional feedback can also occur in the form of **repetition** of all or part of the learner's erroneous utterances with a rising intonation. It indicates that the learner's utterance is erroneous, thus, providing the learner with an opportunity to self-repair. For example:

Student: Oh my God, it is too expensive, I pay only 10 dollars.

Teacher: I pay? [Repetition with rising intonation] (Y. Sheen 2004:279)

6.1.2. Metalinguistic feedback, direct elicitation and correction

Metalinguistic feedback refers to feedback that provides the learner with comments about language in the form of a statement or a question about the correctness of an utterance. It may either involve metalinguistic hints or clues about the location or the nature of the error (e.g., "Can you correct the verb?" or "You need an adverb." or it may include both metalinguistic explanation and correction. For example:

Student: I see him in the office yesterday.

Teacher: You need a past tense. [Metalinguistic clue]

Or:

Student: He catch the fish.

Teacher: Caught is the past tense. [Metalinguistic feedback with correction] (Nassaji and Fotos 2011:77)

Direct elicitation attempts to elicit the correct form from the learner. It can be done by repeating the learner's utterance up to the point where the error has occurred and waiting for the him/her to complete the utterance, or by asking the learner more directly to repeat his or her utterance. For example:

Student: And when the young girl arrive, ah, beside the old woman.

Teacher: When the young girl ... ?

Or:

Student: She easily catched the girl.

Teacher: She caught the girl? I'm sorry, say that again. (Nassaji 2007a: 528)

Direct Correction has the advantage of providing the learner with clear information about how to correct the error. However, since the feedback supplies the correction, it does not provide the learner with an opportunity to self-repair. Thus, the feedback may not result in any negotiation or learners' active participation in the feedback process. For example:

Student: He has catch a cold.

Teacher: Not catch, caught. [Direct correction]

Student: Oh, ok.

6.1.3. Nonverbal feedback

Nonverbal Feedback can be provided by using body movements and signals such as gestures and facial expressions. It might be useful if the teacher familiarizes students in advance with the kinds of body movements he or she might use. For example:

Student: My mom cooks always good food.

Teacher: [Crosses over arms in front of the body to indicate word order].

Feedback can be provided for students' written work as well. Teachers can address errors through interactional negotiations conducted after the task is completed in the same or subsequent lessons. For example, if students write weekly journals on topics that they liked, the teacher can review the journals, identify samples of erroneous utterances, and then conduct follow-up oral feedback in the following class, using various forms of feedback including reformulations and elicitations.

In providing feedback it is important for the teacher to decide what kinds of errors should be corrected. The distinction between errors and mistakes might be helpful when making decisions about what errors should be corrected (R. Ellis 2009). Errors occur because of a lack of knowledge, whereas mistakes are simply performance errors, which do not affect general understanding of the message. That is why, teachers should pay more attention to errors than mistakes.

Based on the literature on interactional feedback and studies that have examined its effectiveness, Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 82) make the following recommendations about using it as a teaching resource:

1. Teachers should make sure that the feedback is salient enough to be noticed.
2. Feedback may be more effective when targeting a single linguistic feature at a time rather than a wide range of forms. Thus, teachers should select specific types of errors and target them in each lesson.
3. Recasts are potentially ambiguous, as learners may perceive them as feedback on content rather than on form. Recasts may become more effective if disambiguated with additional, more explicit, verbal and phonological prompts (i.e., added stress, repetition, etc.).

4. Elicitations may be more effective than reformulations as they push learners to self-correct, and therefore, engage learners more actively in the feedback process than reformulations. Therefore, when providing feedback, it might be advisable to begin with an elicitation. But if the strategy fails to lead to self-correction, recasts can then be provided.
5. Elicitations lead to self-correction only if learners already have some knowledge of the targeted form. Therefore, elicitation may be more effective for more advanced learners who are able to recognize and correct their errors than beginner learners who are not able to do so. If the learner does not know the target form and the teacher still pushes the learner to self-correct, this might embarrass the learner.
6. Learners learn best when they are developmentally ready. Thus, the teacher should attempt to adjust the feedback to the learners' developmental level. However, since it is difficult to determine this level, one helpful strategy would be using feedback that begins with indirect hints and then gradually moves towards more direct help.
7. Feedback that encourages uptake is more effective than feedback without uptake (learners' immediate response following feedback).
8. The effectiveness of feedback depends on the social and instructional context in which it occurs. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the differences in classroom contexts and adjust the feedback strategies they use to suit the situations in which they teach.
9. Teachers should be aware of individual learner differences and use their feedback strategies accordingly.
10. No matter what kind of strategies teachers use, they should be careful not to overuse corrective feedback, as excessive corrective feedback can have negative consequences leading to learners' disappointment and discouragement. Teachers can provide interactional feedback on learners' utterances during any classroom activity that involves learners speaking with the teacher or other students by means of various kinds of interactive group work activities, discussions and presentations.

6.2. Structured grammar-focused tasks

Structured grammar-focused tasks are also called grammar consciousness-raising tasks. In these tasks it is essential to make the target language structure obvious to the learner, whether through formal instruction or through manipulation of communicative input, so that it is easier for learners to process it. Nunan (1989:10) defined a task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form". Tasks are not only instructional activities but also units for planning and organizing the curriculum or syllabus. A distinction has been made between convergent tasks, where learners agree on a task solution through information exchange, and divergent tasks, where learners take a stand on an issue and present their argument. In task-based instruction, the acquisition of the target structures is promoted through opportunities to hear meaningful input, to produce the target language in response to the input, and to receive feedback on learner production. However, a purely meaning-focused approach to task-based instruction is often problematic in the foreign language situation, where real-life needs for the target language rarely exist and learners are studying the target language mainly to pass written examinations. Addressing these problems in a book on task-based instruction, R. Ellis (2003) made a distinction between focused and unfocused communicative tasks. Unfocused tasks deal with meaning, and are not intended to elicit target structures. Focused tasks, however, are designed to have a particular linguistic focus, and are aimed at making this focus salient to learners by using the forms in such a way that learners' attention is drawn to their use in context.

R. Ellis (2003) identified three types of structure-based focused tasks: (1) structure-based production tasks; (2) comprehension (interpretation) tasks; and (3) consciousness-raising

tasks. Structure-based production tasks require the use of the target form to complete a communicative activity. Comprehension tasks are designed so that learners must notice then process the target form in carefully designed input, usually a stimulus that requires a learner response containing the target item. Consciousness-raising tasks, require learners to communicate directly about grammar structures, perhaps by generating a rule for their use. These tasks may present the structure implicitly, embedded in communicative contexts or present the grammar structure explicitly as task content. R. Ellis (2002:167) discusses the general concept of consciousness raising as follows: "Consciousness-raising ... involves an attempt to equip the learner with an understanding of a specific grammatical feature - to develop declarative rather than procedural knowledge of it". Consciousness-raising tasks that differ in the degree of explicitness.

6.2.1. Explicit and implicit grammar-focused tasks

Implicit grammar-focused tasks lend themselves to a variety of grammar structures and task contents, and can be used together with formal instruction before and summative activities after task performance. For example, using a picture of a living room and word cards learners, working in groups, have to ask questions about the location of different items, such as a book, a table or a chair. The other learners answer the questions. The target structure is the use of prepositions of location, although this is not mentioned in the task, which appears to be purely communicative.

Another implicit consciousness-raising task asks pairs or groups of learners to work together to reconstruct a past event that they have participated in, with the target structure being the past tense. They discuss and agree upon an event and create a story describing it, which they then present to the rest of the class. Again, although the target structure is L2 past tense usage, the task makes no mention of it. However, teachers may choose to follow task performance by pointing out past tense uses and presenting a minilesson (Nassaji and Fotos 2011:66-67).

Explicit grammar-focused tasks were developed for the EFL context. Learners are required to solve grammar problems through meaning-focused interaction and are often given task cards with sentences using the target structure to read to their group, or information-gap activities, where learners have to listen to their task members presenting information that they do not have and take careful note of the information given. For example, in a task targeting the rule for indirect object placement, each student in a group is given several sentences containing a target grammar structure. They read their sentences to the members of their group and, after all sentences have been read and understood, the group attempts to generate rules for indirect object placement. The rules generated by the learners after all task cards have been read and discussed are that the indirect object may come before the direct object, but may also come after the direct object, or can occur in both positions with most short verbs. Learners may note that indirect objects usually occur as a prepositional phrase following the direct object in longer verbs. Each group then reports their rules to the rest of the class. The activity may be followed by a mini-lesson expanding on the grammar rules presented.

In another explicit grammar-focused task, adapted from R. Ellis (2002), groups of learners are presented with sentences on task cards and are asked to determine when *for* and *since* are used. The groups then develop rules to explain when *for* and *since* are used and present their rules to the rest of the class. Alternatively, the learners can be presented with sentences that contain correct and incorrect instances of *since* and *for* and then be asked to determine which sentences are grammatically correct and which are not.

According to Ellis, if such tasks are followed by ample exposure to communicative activities containing the target structure, the learners will be more likely to integrate the target form into his or her implicit knowledge system.

6.3. Collaborative output tasks: dictogloss, reconstruction cloze, text-editing and jigsaw

Collaborative output tasks are designed to push learners to produce output and consciously reflect on, negotiate, and discuss the grammatical accuracy of their language use. It is believed that, during collaborative output activities, learners get collective help and guided support as a result of interacting with each other in order to solve linguistic problems and produce output accurately. According to Swain's output hypothesis, **output** forces learners to move from semantic processing involved in comprehension to syntactic processing needed for production. Swain (1993) distinguished three functions of output in L2 acquisition: (1) a noticing (or triggering) function; (2) a hypothesis testing function; and (3) a metalinguistic function. The noticing function proposes that when L2 learners are engaged in producing output, such as speaking and writing, they will become aware that they cannot say what they want to say. This in turn triggers cognitive processes implicated in L2 learning, such as searching for new information or consolidating already existing knowledge (Swain, 1995).

The second function of output is the hypothesis testing function which posits that output provides learners with opportunities for trying and testing out their hypothesis about how to express their meaning in an L2. When learners attempt to convey their message, they may try out different ways of saying the same thing or may come to recognize if their utterances are comprehensible or well-formed. The third function of output is its metalinguistic function, or encouraging learners to consciously reflect on language, thinking about what to say and how to say it. Collaborative Output Tasks are beneficial to L2 learners because when output is produced collaboratively, learners are not only pushed to use the target structure, but they also get help from their peers when trying to make their meaning precise. These tasks provide learners with opportunities to reflect on language consciously, which raises their awareness of problematic forms. There is a variety of collaborative output tasks that elicit output and also promote discussion about language forms. Among them are:

Dictogloss. This task encourages students to work together and produce language forms collaboratively by reconstructing a text presented to them orally. In a dictogloss, the teacher reads a short text at a normal pace while students jot down any words or phrases as they listen. Students then work in small groups or pairs to reproduce the text as closely as possible to the original text. According to Wajnryb (1990), a dictogloss activity involves four stages: 1. The preparatory stage: this includes informing students of the aim of the task and what they are expected to do. It also involves a warm-up discussion of the topic and presentation and explanation of unknown vocabulary in the text. At this stage, students are also organized into groups before they begin the task. 2. The dictation stage: the teacher reads the text twice at a natural speed. The first time, students listen to the text very carefully. The second time, they listen and take notes of important words or ideas related to the content. 3. The reconstruction stage: students work together in small groups and use their notes to reconstruct the text as accurately as possible. Students use the target language to discuss the accuracy of their language use. The teacher's role is to monitor students' activities and provide feedback or language input. 4. The analysis and correction stage: the reconstructed text is analyzed, compared with the original, and corrected by students and the teacher together. At this stage, students discuss the choices they have made, and the teacher helps them understand and fix their linguistic problems. The text used for a dictogloss can be an authentic text or a text that the teacher constructs or modifies. It would be helpful if the text contains several instances of a particular grammatical form, as this would facilitate learners' attention to form. A dictogloss task can be used with learners at all levels of language proficiency. Therefore, the complexity of the text varies depending on learners' level.

Reconstruction cloze tasks. In these tasks, which are similar to the dictogloss, during the reconstruction phase, learners receive a cloze version of the original text. In the cloze

version, certain linguistic forms that are the focus of the task can be removed from the text. Thus, the task involves two versions of a text: an original version, which is read to students, and a cloze version. Students are then asked to reconstruct the text and also supply the missing items in the cloze version. The advantage of a cloze reconstruction task is that it requires students to reproduce specific target structures. The procedure for completing the task is as follows: 1. The teacher reads the original version to students at a normal pace. 2. They listen carefully for meaning and also jot down notes related to the content. 3. Students receive a copy of the cloze version of the text. 4. They are asked to work in pairs to reconstruct the text and also to supply the missing words or phrases as correctly and as closely as possible to the original text. 5. Finally, students compare their reconstructed text with the original text and discuss the differences.

Text-editing tasks. Text editing requires students to correct a text in order to improve its accuracy and expression of content. This task can be used either individually or collaboratively. However, when conducted collaboratively, the task has been shown to generate more attention to form and to promote the learning of targeted items more effectively. In this task, the teacher can read a text that contains instances of certain target forms and ask students to listen for comprehension. Then the teacher gives learners a version of the text that contains errors. Learners are asked to edit the text collaboratively by making any changes they feel are needed in order to make the text as grammatically accurate as possible.

Jigsaw tasks. Jigsaw tasks are a kind of two-way information gap task in which students hold different portions of the information related to a task. Students should then share and exchange the pieces of information to complete the task. Collaborative jigsaw tasks are often designed in the form of segmented texts that students have to put together to create the original text. The task is carried out as follows: 1. The teacher reads the original passage to students. 2. Pairs of students receive the modified versions of the passage, with one student receiving version A and the other version B. 3. Students attempt to choose the correct order of individual sentences as they appear in the original version. 4. Students attempt to choose between different sentences in versions A and B and find those that are the same in terms of grammatical accuracy as those in the original text. They also attempt to justify their choices. 5. Students compare their assembled passage with the original passage and identify any possible differences. For a jigsaw task to become an output task, it could be designed to require learners to produce a certain linguistic form while completing the task. One way of doing so would be by adding a cloze component to the jigsaw task by removing some of the target forms in the students' version. Students would then attempt to complete the jigsaw by supplying the missing words. In doing this, their attention is drawn to forms more directly. It can be concluded that collaborative output tasks such as dictogloss or output jigsaw tasks enable learners to produce output and also provide opportunities for scaffolding and feedback. They are also able to promote negotiation of form and enhance students' grammar skills.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. What is the link between interactional feedback and Focus on form approach?
2. Discuss the pros and cons of metalinguistic feedback as compared with direct correction.
3. How do grammar consciousness-raising tasks contribute to developing students' communication skills?
4. Discuss and give examples of the main types of interactional feedback.
5. What is the difference between implicit and explicit grammar-focussed tasks?
6. In what way do collaborative output tasks contribute to learners' acquisition of grammar?
7. What is the grammar structure targeted in this text used for a dictogloss activity?

When I was a child we used to go camping every summer. We'd choose a different place each year, and we'd drive around until we found a beach we liked. Then we'd pitch our tent, as near as possible to the beach. We'd usually spend most of the time on the beach or exploring the country round about. we never went to the same beach twice.

8. Design a dictogloss or a reconstruction cloze activity and explain how you are going to use them. Choose between teaching *going to* to elementary level students, and *third conditional* to intermediate level students.

Chapter 7. Grammar: from theory to practice

Objectives: After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- develop an understanding of how to make a successful transition from theory to practice in teaching grammar;
- understand the role of context in choosing an approach to teaching grammar;
- discuss the main principles in teaching grammar;
- explore the options for teaching grammar as product and process;
- learn how to design the grammar component of a course.

6.1. The role of context in choosing an approach to teaching grammar

An important factor to consider when choosing how to teach grammar is the context of teaching. The notion of context is multi-faceted, as it can be interpreted in many different ways. For example, it is of primary importance whether English is a second language, spoken in the country where the learner lives, or a foreign language studied in the learner's home country. There are a number of other contextual factors that have important implications for teaching grammar. Is the teacher a native speaker (NS) of the target language or a non-native speaker (NNS)? Is the learner a child, able to learn language quickly and easily, or is the learner post-puberty, or an adult, needing to learn through a more cognitive approach? **Foreign-language classroom contexts**, like the situation in Bulgaria, have been distinguished from **second language classroom contexts** in that native-like cultural and pragmatic competence is not seen as a high priority. It has been suggested that an appropriate model for L2 learners is that of a competent bilingual rather than a native-speaker model (see Baker 2006).

Most English language instruction in the world occurs in the EFL situation, usually with teachers who are not NS of English. Consequently, NNS teachers suggest that the L2 learners' major problem is the lack of opportunities for communicative language use, not the lack of instruction on grammatical features (Braine 2010). Furthermore, in many countries the educational system has a central agency that organizes the curriculum, the content of courses, and even the textbooks to be used. Unlike the ESL contexts, where learners have opportunities for exposure to meaningful language use in daily life, inside the EFL classroom, the teachers compensate by paying explicit attention to form. However, to enhance learning, they also need more communicative exposure, with implicit use of target forms.

Another complicating factor of communicative language usage in EFL is the **large class size** and **infrequent class meetings**. As a result, the strong version of form-focused instruction, where learners are exposed to a target grammatical form only through communicative input, is usually not effective. With large classes and few weekly meetings, opportunities for noticing the targeted form in communicative input, and then producing negotiated output containing the form are often lacking in the EFL situation. Research findings indicate that the integration of communicative input with form-focused strategies has led to better performance among foreign language learners. It has also been found that NNS teachers of English often use the L1 for formal instruction prior to engaging in L2 communicative activities, mainly for instructional purposes, such as explaining difficult grammatical concepts, translating lexical meanings, and providing instructions for communicative tasks and activities. These findings suggest that the L1 is an important pedagogical and social tool in the foreign language context and can enhance target language learning.

Another factor that distinguishes many EFL contexts is the language background of the teacher. In this connection, the role of the **NNS teachers versus NS teachers** has received much attention. Because of the widespread teaching of English throughout the world and its use as an international language in multilingual contexts where speakers of various languages meet and use English to communicate, the prevalence and importance of the NS teacher of English have declined. A key concept in the decline in importance of the NS is the recognition that NSs do not have a more profound access to understanding the language and are not necessarily more reliable informants or teachers than NNSs. They often lack knowledge of the local culture and select classroom materials and activities that are a poor match for learners' cultural norms and learning styles. On the other hand, NNS teachers can serve as models of successful L2 learners, they teach strategies they have used themselves, they have detailed linguistic knowledge that many NS teachers lack (Medgyes 1992), and they can use the L1 to explain difficult points. While learners may want NS teachers because of their superior knowledge of pronunciation and the target language culture, they are not necessarily seen as superior in grammatical knowledge or in the ability to teach grammar (see Braine 2010).

A final contextual consideration is **the mode of instruction** of L2 learners.

In reviewing the various contexts for target language instruction, it has been shown that both implicit and explicit form-focused instruction are recommended as effective pedagogy to promote L2 acquisition. In the ESL situation, implicit form-focused instruction should be accompanied by opportunities for learner output and feedback on this output so that they can become aware of their limitations as to production goals, thus enhancing their awareness and need of the necessary correct forms. In both ESL and EFL situations, talk in the L1 has been validated as an important method to increase awareness of problematic forms. Explicit form-focused activities may be preceded and followed by formal explanations of target forms in the L1, as may implicit form-focused activities, with target forms made conspicuous through manipulation of the presentation material. Except for very young learners, the success of both implicit and explicit form-focused instruction is strongly dependent on the provision of output opportunities and subsequent feedback on the correctness of the output, often with requirements for output modification based on the results of the feedback, this pushing the learner further along the interlanguage continuum.

6.2. Principles in teaching grammar

As Douglas Brown (2007:421) points out, in the communicative language teaching classes the use of grammatical explanation and terminology must be approached with care. He proposed some rules of thumb which can enhance grammatical explanation in any communicative context of teaching:

- Keep your explanations brief and simple. Use mother tongue if students cannot follow an explanation in English.
- Use charts and other visuals whenever possible to graphically depict grammatical relationships;
- Illustrate with clear, unambiguous examples;
- Try to account for varying cognitive styles among your students (for example, analytical learners will have an easier time picking up on grammatical explanations than will holistic learners);
- Do not yourself (and students!) tied up in knots over so-called exceptions to rules;
- If you don't know how to explain something (for instance, if a student asks you about a point of grammar and you are not sure of the rule), do not risk giving false information (that you may have to retract later, which will cause even more embarrassment). Rather, tell students you will research that point and bring an answer back the next day.

Appropriate grammar-focusing techniques:

- are embedded in meaningful, communicative contexts;
- contribute positively to communicative goals;
- promote accuracy within fluent, communicative language;
- do not overwhelm student with linguistic terminology;
- are as lively and intrinsically motivating as possible.

(H. Douglas Brown. Teaching by Principles 2007:421)

6.3. Teaching grammar as a product, process and skill

Teaching grammar as a **product** is structured round a careful specification of language forms which provide the target language for each lesson. There are two key stages in this approach. One is *noticing* new language input with the aim of making certain specified forms as noticeable as possible by carefully drawing the learners' attention to them. Secondly, product teaching can help learners to *structure* their knowledge of the language system. Learners are given opportunities to manipulate forms, changing them and recombining them in order to discover more about how grammar works (see Batstone 1994: 51). Noticing precedes structuring and in order for learners to notice, the teacher should do just that, without forcing students to manipulate the language at the same time. As Batstone points out, noticing activities "encourage a more introspective engagement with language, calling for quiet observation which is unhampered by the simultaneous need to manipulate language"(1994: 53). The teacher cannot force learners to notice new features of the grammar: noticing, like other aspects of the learning process, will only occur when the learners are ready for it. Appropriate activities can guide them to make their own discoveries about how grammar works. This approach is known as consciousness-raising. According to Sharwood Smith 1988:53) "the discovery of regularities in the target language, whether blindly intuitive or conscious, or coming in between these two extremes, will always be self-discovery. The question is to what extent that discovery is guided by the teacher". The more advanced the learners are, the more they will need to notice more subtle and less idealized features. An

example of such activity is presenting students with sample texts and asking them to analyze the use of tenses in them by linking the forms to their implied meaning. At the early stages of language acquisition, learners deal mainly with larger, fixed chunks of language, like "would you like to...?" or "It's a ...", which help them perform useful social functions. Learning grammar, however, requires more flexibility, which cannot be achieved through mere noticing. This can be done through structuring activities which involve active manipulation of language. There are two types - those structured by the teacher "for the learner" and those inviting structuring by the learner. Although some learners may achieve a great deal with activities which require little engagement, and which may consequently help the learner to feel secure and untested, it is the activities that require active thinking and decision-making are considered more useful for the learners. By giving them some responsibility for the choices they make, we aim to increase their active engagement with grammar as a functional device for signaling meaning (Batstone 1994: 66).

The product approach to teaching grammar has some major strengths. According to Batstone, among them is the fact that it provides a clear framework - an outline of the language points covered - that gives learners a strong sense of direction. Research suggests that it can promote quite rapid learning of explicit grammatical forms and thus contribute to students' ultimate achievement. Another strength is its flexibility in the options it presents for teachers and learners in noticing and structuring. There is a choice between activities promoting noticing for the learner, where learners are presented with explicitly formulated information about forms and their functions, and activities involving noticing by the learner, in which learners are guided to work this information out for themselves. The same refers to choosing between structuring for and by the learner, which gives the teacher three options. The first option is characterized by mechanical manipulation or repetition of forms, in the second the learners have to think for themselves so as to manipulate forms correctly and, in the third, they have to process or manipulate forms as choice to make meanings clear (see Batstone 1994:72).

The product approach is not without its limitations. The students are not fully exposed to the unpredictable nature of real communication - the changes of roles, topics, patterns of interaction, etc. A number of studies indicate that there is no clear evidence that this approach makes it possible for grammatical knowledge to become internalized to the point where it can be drawn on more or less automatically, and that it has noticeable effect on spontaneous language use (see Ellis 1984, 1990). Proceduralization of knowledge can only be successful when learners are negotiating their own meanings, and this becomes possible under the process approach to teaching grammar.

Process teaching engages learners directly in the procedures of language use. Instead of targeting specific features of the grammar for the learner's attention, the teacher is explicitly aiming to develop the skills and strategies of the discourse process, constructing tasks which learners can use to express themselves more effectively as discourse participants. This type of teaching is also referred to as "task-based". According to Candlin (1987), the good tasks have the following features:

- they encourage learners to attend to meaning and to purposeful language use;
- they give learners flexibility in resolving problems their own way, calling on their own choice of strategies and skills;
- they involve learners, with their own personalities and attitudes being central;
- they are challenging, yet not excessively demanding;

- they raise learners' awareness of the processes of language use, and encourage them to reflect on their own language use".

Under the process approach it is important to carefully regulate language use, since it is difficult for learners to attend simultaneously both to the quality of their language and to the meanings they are expressing. Under these conditions grammar is usually the first thing to be surrendered (Batstone 1994:78). Carefully regulated language use in process work can give learners repeated opportunities to notice and restructure their working hypotheses about language as well as to proceduralize this knowledge. The aim of this process work is for students to try and express meaning as clearly as possible. The approach is very learner-centered and conditioned by the learners' individual motivation and need to use grammar. It is also important to regulate the time pressure and give students enough planning time to reduce the pressure of time constraints for task implementation. Learners need time to activate their existing knowledge and stretch their language resources in order to produce fluent and accurate language. Another factor which may influence learners' use of language is topic familiarity. Teachers should be careful in choosing topics which are familiar and comfortable for the students, and the challenge. Working with novel and unfamiliar material can unnecessarily increase the pressure on learners, and stretch their interlanguage resources. Over a period of time though "tolerance of pressure and the capacity to handle language use in closer approximation to real-time conditions should increase" (Batstone 1994:87).

Another aspect of language use that needs careful regulation under the process approach is the shared knowledge. If there is too much shared information the learners tend to reduce the quantity and quality of their language. In order to push them to use language with greater precision, in process teaching the teachers should use the equivalents of information-gap activities. These are known as context-gap activities, and their aim is to motivate learners to make their own meanings clear. Batstone defines the context-gap as "the gap in knowledge between what is known, and known to be known, between all learners at the outset of a process task, and the knowledge which they need to clearly express to complete the activity" (1994:88). The learner's job is to complete the task by reducing or eliminating the context-gap through language use. One example of a good context-gap activity is reasoning in debates and arguments which encourages students to exploit grammar as a necessary device for their self-expression.

Larsen-Freeman (2003) has coined the term *grammaring* to highlight the **skill** dimension of grammar. She thinks that it is more helpful to think about grammar as a skill rather than as an area of knowledge, and defines grammaring as the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. It is important for students to develop an ability to do something and not simply store knowledge about language or its use. Calling it the 5-th skill, Larsen-Freeman sees grammar as dynamic, i.e. characterised by continuous movement or change in time. She differentiates between over-time (evolutionary) dynamism and real-time dynamism, which is related to the activation of static units or products such as nouns and verbs in a real-time process.

Effective grammar teaching is likely to involve a combination of process, product and skill approaches, seeing them as complementary and equally important for the process of learning a language.

6.5. Grammar and syllabus. Designing the grammar component of a course.

Traditionally, syllabuses were organized around grammatical categories which were sequenced in a progression from easier to more difficult items. However, these hierarchies of

difficulty were not convincingly verified empirically. Recently, the question of sequencing is not considered as relevant, and both researchers and practitioners agree that grammatical categories are just one of several considerations in curricular sequencing. Grammatical sequencing is more a factor of frequency and usefulness than of clearly identified degrees of linguistic difficulty. Still, following the principles of simplicity and frequency more complex tenses and clause formations come later in the course. Thus, for example, past perfect tense is introduced after past simple, and relative clauses after question formation (see Brown 2007:434).

Recent research (Nassaji & Fotos 2004, Nunan 2005) and the experience of communicative language teaching suggest the advisability of embedding grammar into general language courses rather than teaching it in a separate course, since grammatical competence is an inseparable part of learners communicative competence. The selection and grading of grammatical structures is usually guided by the principles of relative linguistic simplicity, frequency of occurrence, communicative utility and contrastive difficulty for speakers of a particular native language (see Asher 1994: 3754). Douglas Brown (2007:425) outlines the conditions for integrating grammar component into a communicative paradigm as follows:

- The grammar course is explicitly integrated into the total curriculum so that students can readily relate grammatical pointers to their other work in English;
- The rest of the curriculum controls the content of the grammar course, and not vice versa. That is, the grammar course "serves"(enhances) the curriculum. For example, a significant portion of the agenda for the grammar class should come from students' work in other courses;
- Grammar is contextualized in meaningful language use;
- The course is tailored as much as possible for specific problems students are experiencing. For example, in grammar "workshops" for intermediate and advanced students, grammatical topics come from the students' own performance in other classes, rather than being preset by a curriculum or textbook.
- Sometimes grammar modules in a standardized test preparation course serve as helpful reviews of grammatical principles that may be incorporated into the test;
- The ultimate test of the success of such courses is in the improvement of students' performance outside of the grammar class, not in their score on discrete-point grammar tests.

Questions, tasks and topics for discussion

1. What is the difference between foreign and second language classroom contexts?
2. What factors can have a negative impact on the strong version of form-focussed instruction?
3. Discuss the pros and cons of having native or nonnative speaker teachers.
4. How does the mode of instruction influence the learning of grammar?
5. Illustrate one of D. Brown's principles in teaching grammar with your own examples.
6. Outline the main differences between the process and product approach to teaching grammar.
7. What are the conditions for integrating grammar into a communicative paradigm?

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