



Developing Grammatical Competence In EFL Teaching

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ABSTRACT

In foreign language learning and teaching, grammatical competence plays a big role within foreign language learners' language production, especially in spoken form. This article aims to present ideas of developing grammatical competence in EFL teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS

Grammatical competence, communicative competence, speaking skills, EFL teaching and learning

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is considered as one of the important elements within communication in relation to form a speech. Ur (1988:4) defines grammar as the rule of how to combine and construct words into larger units in aspect of meaning. According to Thornbury, grammar is

a study of forming possible structures used in a language (Thornbury, 1999). And Thornbury states that grammar is not always about the syntax and morphology, but it is all about linguistic chains and slots. It means that grammar will give such ability to someone

(the speaker) to be able to chain some words in particular order (based on the rule) and also to give variation or finding another words which can slot into any link in the chain. In this case, to be able to communicate with others, it is important to develop ability on how to use grammar correctly.

Based on our practices, we know that learning grammar does mean to learn about the grammar itself, but also other aspects of language. Radford defines that grammar set of rules or principles that contain how to construct, pronounce and understand phrases and sentences in the language. Learning grammar is not only the aspect of syntax is to be learned, but also the aspect of phonology and morphology as well. By mastering grammar, the language learner can speak about something in the language correctly and smoothly. Moreover, within the context of communication, the role of grammar is not merely regarded as such a device in which it regulates the rules in producing the language. Having appropriate grammatical competence will help our learners to develop such ability in producing the language.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In our EFL classrooms, our learners are not exposed to produce the language orally. However, they are exposed to explicit learning focusing on the use of language rules and as the consequences, we face some possible problems. For instance, a learner who has difficulty in saying something, but actually he knows exactly what he wants to say. In this situation, he is aware of the use of grammar or language rules. However, this awareness makes him to feel reluctant whenever he is asked to say something in the target language. It seems that he is afraid of making mistakes related to the use of grammar itself.

This particular condition leads to question whether it is still appropriate to teach grammar or not in the communicative language teaching. Meanwhile, the existence of grammar within communicative language teaching is essential.

According to Canale and Swain (2, p.27), communicative competence will be at least consisting of three components such as grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (communication strategies). In order to be able to communicate in the target language, the learners need to be able to use their grammatical competence. In other words, grammar has its own role to deliver meaning or messages within the communication. When someone is not accurate in saying something, there is possibility that people whom he/she talks to will misunderstand about what he/she actually wants to say. The way of the learners making use of their grammatical competence will determine how effective they communicate with other people. In this particular case, it has specific role to the learners' language production.

Brown (1) argues that applying certain technique and approaches in teaching grammar not only make the teaching and learning process become effective and meaningful but also improve the students' competence in understanding the grammar rules. One of the approaches that can be used is focus on form instruction which focuses on students' engagement within communicative activities while drawing their attention to the target forms. For example: we can use communicative approach to teach grammar by applying some dialogues and interactional activities. The result of using communicative approach showed that the grammar mastery

of the learners was improved and the learners could do well in the test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In current EFL teaching, communicative competence plays such an important role in daily life interaction. As we have mentioned above, Canale and Swain (2, p. 27) proposed that communicative competence consists of at least three components such as grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (communication strategies). The first component of communicative competence is the grammatical competence. Canale and Swain (2, p. 29) defines grammatical competence as the type of competence in which it focuses on the use of lexical items, morphology rules, syntax, semantics, and along with the aspect of phonology (pronunciation). Moreover, it includes the basic element of communication such as the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, as well as the lexical resources. Meanwhile, sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use the language based on socio cultural context in relation to the contextual factors such as topics, role of participants, settings and norms of interaction (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.30). It involves social and cultural aspect that are essential in relation to the ability to understand and deliver linguistic forms. The last component of communicative competence is strategic competence. Strategic competence refers to the mastery of verbal and non-verbal strategies to overcome difficulties in communication breakdowns to enhance the effectiveness of communication by paraphrasing, gestures, and varying intonation, speed or rhythm (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.30). Each competence within the communicative competence has its own

role. Grammatical competence deals with the ability of the learners to form sentences or utterances based on appropriate rules. This particular competence is mostly related to the accuracy. On the other hand, sociolinguistic competence deals with how to initiate interaction in certain society. When someone does not have sufficient knowledge about this competence or he does not have enough skill in sociolinguistic competence, it will be very difficult to him to interact with other people. For the strategic competence, the main purpose of this competence is to overcome the communication problems and difficulties. It will be related to both grammatical competence (verbal communication) and sociolinguistic competence (non-verbal communication). In other words, to be able to overcome the gap occurred within the interaction, the learners need to make use of their grammatical and sociolinguistic competence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that grammatical competence has its own role in language production both in spoken and written forms. Grammatical competence will give such ability to the learners to not only use the language properly and deliver the idea or the message accurately, but also to understand the message itself.

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