Teaching Grammar at University: Integrating Pragmatic, Discourse, and Linguistic Aspects

Mouna FETHIZA TEDJANI

University of El oued, (Algeria), **fethizat-mouna@univ-eloued.dz**

Abstract: The present study aims to offer a context bounded model of grammar teaching that integrates insights from discourse analysis and pragmatics without neglecting or prioritising the role of formal knowledge of rules. The suggested pedagogical framework aims to raise the awareness of students of English as a foreign language in Algeria to interpret and produce grammar rules_ articles in this respect as a teaching situation _ to ultimately develop students' abilities to cope with communicative needs. The selected grammatical items will be taught through discourse and analysed in terms of form function relationship, the cohesive role of grammatical elements under scrutiny in discourse, and the acts the utterances fulfill. A definite comprehensible teaching framework is suggested to teach grammar from an eclectic angle. Once the students are acquainted with sufficient discourse-based content, they are expected to promote their production and interpretation abilities in communicative situations efficiently and appropriately.

Keywords: Grammar1; Pragmatics2; Discourse Analysis3; Teaching4; Communicative abilities5.

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* **Mouna FETHIZA TEDJANI**.

I- Introduction :

Foreign language teaching had been for a long time synonymous with grammar teaching. The spread of Hymes' communicative competence; the concept that should, for the sake of its realization, comprise 'knowledge' and 'abilities for use' according to Widdowson (1989). Canale and Swain's (1980) categorization of such abilities and language knowledge in terms of competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic competence. Grammar, in this respect, has been viewed as part of linguistic competence. A corollary of such changes in SLT, has been a considerable large number of methodologies that have been suggested, such as Rivers (1972) and Stern (1981). Such attempts aim at developing communicative abilities from various perspectives in terms of the role of grammar, the type of language knowledge dealt with in SL teaching, parallel with a natural learning process, or integrated with other skills, or taught explicitly.

1.Teaching grammar in SL context

As to SLA research, TL mastery is not necessarily guaranteed by the mastery of grammar. Krashen (1981) advocates a grammarless approach. He argues the limited value of grammar; his conviction is that learners can automatically acquire grammar rules and communicative abilities as they receive comprehensible input from their built-in syllabus. He hypothesises that learners can produce and store language elements using a mental language acquisition device if the learner is in relaxing conditions. This results in a low affective filter, the learner's attitude that affects SL acquisition progression. Explicit instruction of grammar, in this respect, is used only to monitor self-correction.

In the same line of thought, research in SL pedagogy has disfavoured explicit grammar instruction for its usefulness in developing learners' communicative abilities (Allwright 1976, Garrett 1986). The rationale behind this is that "… the ability to recite and apply grammar rules is no longer our goal " (p.133). Therefore, the decision is to be definite whether language should be taught 'for communication teaching or communication via language'.

There are applications to such prompts in CLT pedagogy. Components of the 'process' of the TL, such as in English Teaching Information Centre by Allwright (1976) are given more priority in material or syllabus design than the product. Prabhu's Communicational Teaching Project (1982) problem-solving strategies are adopted to draw learners' attention to meaning. In such illustrations, grammar and communicative competence are part of a whole relationship.

However, many comparative studies show grammar, such as Long (1983) and White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta (1991) compared naturalistic instruction learners with instructed ones. Results show a high-level proficiency and rapid acquisition progression with learners who received explicit grammar instruction. As cited in Ellis (2006), Other studies such as Terrell (1991) examined how explicit knowledge and grammar rules can be helpful in the acquisition process.

There is no firm contingent decision on the role grammar plays in acquiring the TL communicative abilities. Some researchers, such as (CELCE-MURCIA 1991, Ellis 2006), tried to reformulate the role of grammar examining related issues to determine the extent to which it should be taught to SL learners regarding several instructional variables[1] From a pedagogical perspective, Ellis (2006) discussed eight questions that help practitioners decide about grammar instructions based on SLA theory and research.

Studies from discourse analysis (DA) offer valuable insights into broadening grammar teaching from sentence level to beyond. For example, McCarthy (1991) and Cook (1989) _with a great deal of practical DA adaptability to the language teaching context _ consider grammar as "a basic premise that without a command of the rich and variable resources of the grammar offered by English, the construction of natural and sophisticated discourse is impossible". His analysis is based on Halliday's functional approach of language as social action. DA offered grammar accounts of how non-linguistic factors affect communication.

Such works investigated teaching grammar in terms of cohesion. Certain linguistic elements, such as conjunctions, articles, vocabulary realise such a standard of textuality[2] That concerned with "the surface marking of semantic links between clauses and sentences" in written discourse and between utterances and turns in speech" (McCarthy, 1991 p.34).

Pragmatics insight to teaching grammar has provided analysis of acts of linguistic elements. The formal meaning is not always the realisation of the speakers' intention. To interpret it, this requires describing the context related to the participants' interaction, social background, physical environment (Searle 1969, Yule 1996).

2.Teaching Grammar in Algeria: The Current Pedagogical Classroom Practices

To contextualise the current teaching practices, textbooks at secondary school level adopted a Competency-Based Approach (CBA) . The approach advocates the view of "discovery learning" which is a cognitive and socio-constructivist version of the communicative approach (Freeman & Anderson, 2000). The CBA aims to promote the students' production, intellectual abilities, and processing of English. Tasks have modularised instruction that purpose to notice, reflect and

analyse how English is used in meaningful contexts, to ultimately enable students to use more complex, fluent, and accurate utterances (the crossroads)

To illustrate, student teacher interaction is an extract from the researcher's professional archive materials. The teachers' plan on reflexive pronouns lesson would involve the following:

T: what do you do before you come to school?

S: I get up early, I brash my teeth…

T why you do so?

S: to prepare myself to be on time.

T: what is the last thing you do before you go?

S: I take my jacket, my bag

T: what do you do to check out your appearance?

S: I look at myself in the mirror

T: Who is the doer of the action?

S: I

T: what is the function of I in this sentence?

S: subject

T: Who received the action?

S: I, myself

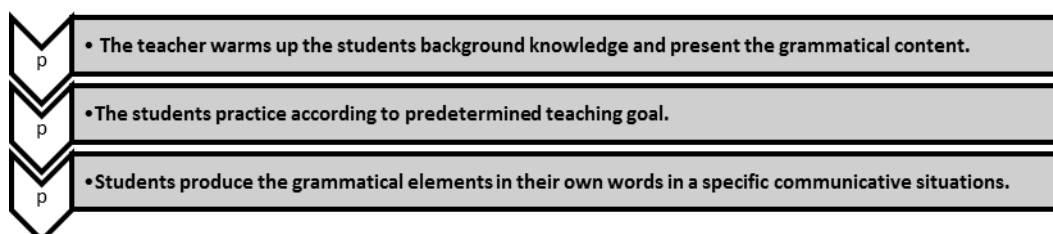T: what is the function of myself?

S: object

T: Are they the same person? Do the pronouns refer to the same person?

S: Yes

T: When a reflexive pronoun must be used?

S: we use a reflexive pronoun when the subject and the object refer to the same person or thing.

Figure1 : An Example of Current Classroom Practices of Teaching Grammar in Algeria

- • The teacher warms up the students background knowledge and present the grammatical content.
- • The students practice according to predetermined teaching goal.
- • Students produce the grammatical elements in their own words in a specific communicative situations.

(The teachers' professional experience)

The teacher writes students' answers to present the grammatical items on the board, underline the reflexive pronoun, then writes the rule that the students inferred. Then he moves to the second and the third steps, practice and production, as presented in figure (1).

Current classroom practices overshadow the functional aspect of grammar, as noticed in the teacher-student interaction. The teacher must engage the students in a discovery learning experience, eliciting questions so the learner can ultimately discover the rule.

The students at the university level come with considerable knowledge of rules acquired as an outcome of the stated teaching methodology. They can distinguish between definite, indefinite articles. For example, they know that a is used with a singular noun. They can use sentences like beautiful weather, a blue jacket; I am a student, and the like.

SL students can grasp or even interpret grammatical rules; however, they face difficulties in communication uses. Many limitations occur if the teacher asks them to go beyond the sentence, interact with someone in a particular context, and exploit specific grammar points. In other words, students at the university level lack communicative abilities that allow them to create sensitive context-bounded productions and maintain a cohesive flow of discourse.

The Current teaching methods have shown remarkable inadequacies in creating a consistent grammar teaching framework. This is due to two main factors. The structural approach had been adopted in Algeria for more than 20 years[3]. Nevertheless, it is still present in SL classrooms. As a result, many teachers unconsciously adopt their old teachers' methodologies that accentuate language rules.

The second factor, novice teachers' or even well-experienced ones, need to update their theoretical knowledge practical skills. They need to refine their teaching skills through self-reflection and action research. However, there is a lack of pedagogical application from other disciplines such as DA and pragmatic analysis of acts in SL classrooms, and how to be exploited in realife teaching situations.

On the other hand, formal knowledge in grammar teaching is either prioritised or neglected, some examples are stated earlier in section 1.It has been noted that current teaching practices are not holistic. Different constraints of communicative situation, starting the semantic functional meaning to the interlocutors' shared knowledge, the language user' implications, how articles are as 'reference', hence as cohesive devices, and how to figure out all of these as interactive parts of a whole.

2.Rationale

The main factors that motivated this study were the students' ineffective communicative abilities and the need for a sensitive context framework to teach grammar. The suggested teaching model exploits linguistic knowledge (rules of grammar), insights from discourse analysis (knowledge mainly cohesion), and Pragmatics meaning (illocutionary meaning).

The three language levels are integrated with teaching grammar for intermediate students. The lack of pedagogical works that bring these findings into a symbiotic relationship stimulated the suggested pedagogical perspective. Despite the growing body of literature on the effectiveness of pragmatics in SL (Bardovi-Harlig 1996, Kasper & Rose 2001) and the evolving role of discourse analysis recently, There is a lack of accounts on how to integrate pragmatics and discourse analysis

insights and transfer theoretical analysis in terms of practical classroom activities and teaching materials.

In our perspective, teaching grammar is not only defined as presentation, explanation, and practice as in Ur (1996) or presentation practice as in Hedge (2000). The teaching input aims to raise awareness to draw learners' attention to specific grammatical forms, as they are not isolated communication elements. Instead, these work together with elements of the context of the situation to help them either understand or process it in comprehension or production.

The primary purpose is to make students aware of features other than forms or grammar rules: Interpretation of the functional meanings articles used in combination with nouns of different types; articles as cohesive elements in discourse that help create different reference types; and Considering acts language user implies, are dealt with as crucial components in a grammar lesson.

Thus, with regard to language teaching in general, at least two types of meaning are to be considered in teaching grammar: locutionary is the semantic meaning of the linguistic expression, illocutionary force is the intended meaning (Widdowson, 1978).

whole is not effectively considered in the teaching process.

II– Methods and Materials:

The role of the teacher is no longer an information provider. Instead, learners share knowledge about their course due to the high technological accessibility. The learner is regarded as a partner, the teacher is a mentor, a guide, and a facilitator, developing students' awareness and sensitivity towards language uses in context and self-evaluation through questions and purposeful discussion.

The learners have, also an active role in such a process. He/she is directed to negotiate meanings, analyse grammatical elements, use a specific grammatical element, and provide form-meaning correspondences in context.

Materials are selected according to teaching objectives. Fables, stories, and poems can be adopted or simplified for context-based grammar instruction. Well-selected comic strips, phone conversations scripts, and interviews are motivating and highly contextualised resources that increase opportunities for students' exposure and involvement in language use processing, hence engaging them in deeper cognition and acquisition of knowledge (different types).

Figure 2Teaching Grammar from Discourse Analysis and Pragmatic Perspective.
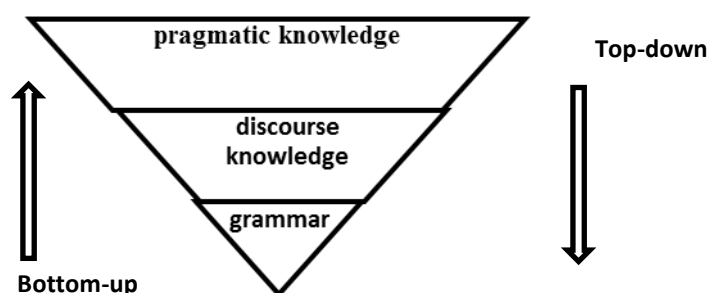
a suggested modal based on Celce-Murcia Olshtain (2000).

First, In bottom-up processing, the teacher elicits answers from the students to interpret or explain a grammatical element (language knowledge) using clues in the co-text and referring to a more macro level interpretation such as situational context knowledge. Second, the teacher activates the students` background knowledge (content and formal schemata) the pragmatic and contextual features of the discourse in hand to interpret it.

III- Results and discussion :

The teacher and the students start the discussion focusing on bottom-up choices regarding correctness use or rule-function relation. The teacher elicits answers from the students. He/she asks questions, such as why a definite or indefinite article or no article is used or not in a particular situation instead of another? Students' justifications can be at the level of rules to activate their formal knowledge. The text below contains sixteen mistakes of using articles; the students recognise the mistakes, correct them, then justify them.

I was standing near a crowd of people who were watching (1)older man with (2) a white hair performing (3) the magic tricks near the market. The man asked for (4)the volunteer to tie him up with (5) piece of (6)the rope. While all this was happening, (7) younger man wearing (8) black cap was moving through (9) crowd and it looked like he was trying to put his (10)the hand into (11)the people's pockets and (12) the open bags. Suddenly there were (13) shriek and (14) woman tried to grab (15) thief's arm, but he pushed her away and ran off down (15) alleyway and escaped.

(Yule, 2015, p16).

The students answer as follows:

- an older man
- white hair
- magic tricks
- A volunteer
- A piece of
- Rope
- A Younger man
- A black cap
- the crowd

- hand into
- people's pockets
- open bags.
- shriek
- A woman
- The thief's arm,
- An alleyway

The interactive analysis of form rule and meaning is clarified in the proceeding paragraphs:

The definite article is used in the following situations: In the noun phrase (1*) an older man,* since it is a singular noun and first mention. This does not apply to (2) *hair*, an uncountable noun. The is used with already mentioned information such as (9) *the crowd and* (13*) thief's arm.*

No article is used in the following: Before (10) *hand* as there is a possessive determiner before it, with plural nouns in general reference situations, such as (11) *people's pockets* and (12) *open bags*.

Indefinite articles uses are the following: No article with (3) *Ticks;* the plural noun is made definite by the adjective magic; (4) *a volunteer* a means one; (5*) a piece* is used with the uncountable noun (6) rope to refer to a part of it; a is used to describe as in (7) *a younger man* (8*) a black cap;* and with a non-definite thing or person or such as (13) *a shiek, ,* (14) *a woman, and (16) an alleyway.*

After correcting the text, the students analyse the same stretch of discourse from a discourse analysis perspective under the teacher's guidance. In such a step, the discussion is shifted to analysing the role articles play in hanging the text together, i. e understanding reference of different types and how articles signalling given and new information at discourse level.

I was standing near a crowd of people who were watching an older man with white hair performing the magic tricks near the market. (2)The man asked for a volunteer to tie him up with a piece of rope. (3)While all this was happening, a younger man wearing a black cap was moving through the crowd and it looked like he was trying to put his hand into people's pockets and open bags. (4) Suddenly, there was a shriek and a woman tried to grab the thief's arm, but he pushed her away and ran off down an alleyway and escaped.

For the text to be coherent, the italicised three noun phrases introduce new information about The man in sentence (2). referents for Him is A volunteer (2), which can be confirmed by looking back at the text. The indefinite articles are used again to introduce a new piece of information.

The author expects us to share a world with him that exists in the reader's mind who understand the thief's intention. *A younger man*, *a black* cap was moving through the crowd are all subsequent referents for the thief. The thief is first mentioned, but it is definite since we share textual and contextual (understanding) references about him. *The crowd* is made definite, as it has already been stated at the beginning of the text. *He* and *his* refers back to the thief and *her* to the woman. *People's pockets, open bags,* and *an alleyway* refer immediately to the context. (Exophoric reference)[4].

The teacher shifts the students' attention to the acts of each sentence. They should be aware that there are two types of meaning as stated so far: inferred from the linguistic elements of the sentence interpreted according to the writer's intention and non-linguistic element of the context.

Analysis of the text pragmatically requires shifting the students' attention towards contextual elements of utterances and the illocutionary force (the act performed) of the propositions (sentences and their meaning. Proposition 1 involves representatives that have the illocutionary force of reporting the event. Proposition 2 is a report of a directive speech act of requesting, considering the conditions of the context of the situation in the immediate context. They can be interpreted as presentative, considering the co-text[5].

An expressive speech act (surprise) is realised in expressions such as suddenly. This act marks a shift in text in that proceeding acts are performative. To be, the thief's arm is an illocutionary directive force to catch the thief to confess him. His reaction was pushing up the woman and escaping, which is a perlocutionary act.

By virtue of text, the author intends to call the addressee to pay attention when standing in crowded public places, i.e. a directive that carries the illocutionary force of advising. The writer would intend to warn against action as in do not leave your bags open in public places. Both advising and warning are considered directives, as it implies action will be done.

The previous discussion is part of the presentation phase; the teacher would select different follow-up activities according to the course objectives. As a production activity, the teacher can ask the students to give a brief oral presentation to extend, such as to expect what would happen if the thief has been cached up. A written version can reinforce the grammar points discussed.

IV- Conclusion:

Such accounts also help the students figure out different uses of articles, exploit, and remember the grammar they have discovered through analytic processing, rather than introducing a set of sentence-level rules. Broadening teaching grammar to cover the different components of the communicative context of discourse constitutes a reasonable interactive input that gears the students' communicative abilities. Such interactive holistic accounts pave the way for pedologists to consider the dynamic relationship between formal language knowledge, the pragmatic aspect of communication, and discourse processing.

Notes

[1]Some other grammar teaching variables are a) The nature of grammar instruction: massed/distributed, explicit/implicit knowledge, separated/integrated into the communicative activities, intensive/ extensive grammar course B)The teaching step after the linguistic knowledge acquisition or before, and c)the content of grammar instruction Ellis (2006).

[2] in the teaching context; the focus is given to one aspect of textuality, the aspect of a text as a communicative occurrence that involves seven standards: Cohesion and coherence are text-centred standards. User-centred ones are intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality (De Beaugrande& Dressler, 1981). The teacher can focus on other aspects depending on the teaching purpose

[3] According to Hayane (1989), the main approaches used in teaching English as a Foreign Language are: Grammar Translation Method (1962-1969), the new method or the aural oral (1969-1975), communicative functional approach (1980 -2000), the competency-based approach (2000 - till the present day)

[4] Using linguistic elements to refer to something outside the text.

⁵ Co text is the linguistic context (Celce-Murcia, & Olshtain, 2000).

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