

Re-conceptualizing Grammar Instruction: Story-based Approach to Replace Deductive Grammar Instruction Approach in ESL Classroom

Nilakshi Herath¹

The purpose of instructing grammar is to provide students with the tools for both oral and written communication. Traditional approaches to grammar instruction such as Deductive Grammar Instruction Approach (DGIA) often involve planning lessons based on the “grammar point of the day” and teaching grammar largely through teacher explanation of grammatical use. However, the Deductive Grammar Instruction Approach has failed to empower learners’ four skills and creativity because of teaching grammar separately from the context. In such a context a story-based grammar instruction approach which used PACE model (Presentation, attention, co-construction, Extension) was experimented to examine its ability to address the above requirements. This model is based on the concept that guiding learners to reflect on meaningful language form helps them develop grammatical concepts in the target language. It views grammar teaching as a focus on a well-chosen form of language after the meaning of this form has been established in interesting and compelling contexts, such as stories, folktales, and legends. It provides framework for a unit of study that is carried out in multiple lessons over several days. In addition to the opportunities for developing cultural understandings, rich vocabulary, and modes of communication, the PACE model also allows for learners to construct understandings of relevant and meaningful form in collaboration with the teacher and each other. This approach, contrasts sharply with deductive teacher explanation of grammar. The study involved two groups of beginner-level Adult ESL learners. A selected set of grammar units were taught to the two groups employing Deductive Grammar Instruction Approach for Group 1, and Story -based approach for Group 2 for four consecutive weeks. For group 1, grammar was taught as a separate component commencing the lesson with structures and providing example sentences. For group 2, the instructor delivered a short story which was expected to allow learners to acquire the relevant grammatical component. Then, the instructor displayed sentences extracted from the text and pointed out the structure. Later, the learners were instructed to create their own sentences based on the fiction and express opinions, ideas and feelings about the text. Learner performance was evaluated through a post-test common for both groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted with randomly selected students to get their opinion. According to the results, group 2 demonstrated better performance in productive skills and creativity than group 1 with development in vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, etc. Also, commencing the lesson with a fiction had increased motivation and decreased anxiety of group 2 while group 1 had experienced the opposite. Hence, Story-based approach could be recommended as an effective pedagogical approach that improves learners’ four skills, motivation, creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: grammar; Story-based approach; ESL Teaching/Learning

¹ Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education, Sri Lanka
nilakshi@sliate.ac.lk