TEACHING GRAMMAR CREATIVELY

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The teaching of grammar has been a central focus in language education for centuries, and at the same time "one of the most controversial and least understood aspects of language teaching" [1, p.9]. As the traditional, rote memorization-based approaches have faced criticism raised by many teachers and scholars, there has been a growing interest in exploring alternative, more creative approaches to teaching grammar, which represents a shift fuelled by advancements in technology and changes in educational pedagogy that prioritise learners' creative thinking as one of the major life competencies, especially in the 21 century.

According to Maley and Peachey, "Using creative techniques for grammar practice can motivate students by making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging. This approach boosts self-esteem, helps with retention of grammar rules, and fosters a sense of ownership over the new language" [2, p.51]. Furthermore, creative grammar teaching methods can cater to diverse learning styles and abilities, so in Gerngross and colleagues' view, "teachers need to know how to balance their reliance on visual, auditory and kinaesthetic input modes if they are to cater successfully for individual learning styles within a group" [3, p.7].

The aim of the study is to conduct quantitative and qualitative research with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the creative approach to grammar acquisition. The research hypothesises that incorporating creative and interactive approaches into grammar instruction can lead to improved learning outcomes for students. To accomplish the above-mentioned targets, the following objectives should be fulfilled: to determine the relevance of the creative approach to teaching grammar; to detail the most efficient creative skills in studying English grammar; to develop a range of methods for practising grammar in a creative and motivating way.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted related to creative teaching methods in grammar instruction. Various theories of language acquisition, pedagogical approaches, and case studies highlighting the effectiveness of creative techniques were explored by several applied linguists, including Scott Thornbury, the author of the books *How to Teach Grammar* and *Teaching Grammar Creatively*. His main theoretical insights and the critical thinking component skills can be correlated with the stages of grammar instruction in a creative grammar practice lesson, which are:

- *Restricted Exposure,* which triggers the interest by contextualising the grammar items;
- *Guided Discovery*, which consists of activities focusing on accuracy, guided practice exercises, and interactive games;

– *Restricted Output,* which transitions to fluency-focused activities and encourages the use of grammar in communicative tasks;
– *Authentic Output*, which encourages creation, fostering fluency and confidence in language use through a balanced approach that integrates accuracy and fluency effectively.

Incorporating creative skills throughout each stage of grammar instruction can enhance student learning and understanding of grammar topics related to form, meaning, and use. First, imaginative thinking allows learners to visualise grammar rules in different contexts. Secondly, creative problem-solving skills enable learners to approach grammar challenges from different angles. Original thinking encourages learners to explore grammar rules in innovative ways and come up with unique mnemonic devices, analogies, or metaphors. Finally, yet importantly, critical thinking skills are essential for analysing and evaluating grammar ruleDuring six weeks of the pedagogical practice led in an international Cambridge school from Moldova, a quasi-experimental design was conducted in two parallel classes of the 7th grade. The control group was exposed to traditional grammar teaching methods, and the experiment group was exposed to creative teaching activities, among which role-playing, multimedia presentations, and collaborative projects. The experimental results indicated that the creative teaching methods led to higher levels of engagement, motivation, and retention of grammatical concepts. The standardised grammar assessments, administered to students before and after implementing creative teaching methods to measure students' proficiency levels and track their learning progress, revealed a significant improvement in grammar scores after exposure to creative teaching methods.

To conclude, the results of the study highlight the importance of incorporating creative teaching methods to make grammar instruction more engaging and effective. By applying interactive activities, real-life examples, visual aids, role-playing, multimedia presentations, and collaborative projects, students are more likely to retain grammar concepts and skillfully apply them in effective communication.

Bibliography:

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3. GERNGROSS, G., PUCHTA, H., THORNBURY, S. *Teaching Grammar Creatively.* First Edition. Helbling Languages, 2006. 267 p.

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