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GRAMMAR – INTRINSIC OR EXTRINSIC – THE CRUX OF LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

English is an elite language and elite languages have inbuilt limits to their growth. One limiting factor is an absence of 'Grammar Rule Awareness' which can be an inhibiting factor to productive language usage both in academic as well as in workplace situations. The divide between the traditional and the communicative aspects of language, as either any one is best effective to language acquisition, ever remains a moot point that continues to dominate all forums, such as this Congress. Nevertheless, a knowledge of grammar be it Intrinsic or Extrinsic, is by all norms of standardisation, the one that best determines the richness, the depth and diversity of a language. It is 'Intrinsic' when a learner has an inbuilt awareness of structures, approaches, rules and appropriacy of usage that is partially acquired especially in the formative years of one's life – a language environment being mandatory. An Extrinsic knowledge on the other hand has multiple sources especially in the context of today's world of science and technology. To acculturate oneself to grammar slowly with no shortcuts such as in proving oneself to be a highly motivated language speaker is a privileged stance. To such a seeker, grammar learning can be described as Extrinsic in a continual process such as subjecting oneself to a 'total culture absorbing'. This arises from a need to enjoy the benefits of that culture and intensive interaction with people from that culture in many kinds of natural activity. For example through situational learning and similar activity based tasks. Further, the number of self learning portals on the Internet is other ways of the beneficiary learning through the extrinsic mode or rather setting right the deficiencies that exist. Either way, Intrinsic or Extrinsic, grammar rule awareness is best internalised to insulate one against the creeping errors that renders one's language use, non-standard. Hence the authors conclude that the crux of a language study lies in a systematised study of the rules of grammar be it Intrinsic or Extrinsic.

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Why study the grammar of a language – of language, make provision for a 'mental deemphasize the 'rule' as a route to the creative use scaffolding' by an introduction to grammar rules –

these recommendations as varied as they are significant have riddled linguists, theorists and scholars over the centuries. The maxim- rules are best learned in conjunction with practice, supports the theory that grammar rule awareness is psychologically real. A learner, who involves in a direct and functional practice of the grammar of a language, preferably at the child - learner stage, progresses to be more confident and fluent in his speech. The Chomskian rider of habit formation in language learning skills presupposes the fact, that all humans have an inbuilt propensity for language learning and that human language is species – specific. This highlights the fact that learners, child and adult could possibly be oriented to a regime of grammar rules that becomes internalized in the process of maturation.

A striking aspect of language is that it is a universal phenomenon and that all languages share common underlying universals. As such, the mother tongue could be used as a suitable prototype in parallel contexts in teaching a grammar and applied successfully to the target language as well. Also a knowledge of grammar at the comfort level for a learner could be taught by the deductive method using the mother tongue for purposes of explanation and cross – linguistic contrasts. Rule presentation in the functional mode helps step-up the communicative aim as secondary motive in providing the learner with interesting contemporary reading material be it designed as situational tasks, newspaper episodes that simultaneously help develop the four language skills in a balanced way. However, morphosyntactic accuracy should not be sacrificed to communicative effectiveness. Primary importance should be given to explicit teaching of grammar and error correction. It goes a long way to preserve the essential nature of language as a system of signs. Proper text input as well as form – focused activities help the learner in language use in contextual situations.

It is common knowledge that speech is primary and that writing skills were gained at a fairly later stage in civilization by way of the education system. Once a mastery of oral skills is obtained the transfer to the written and reading skills by choosing texts that consolidate and incorporate grammatical

material, initiates the learner into a habit formation in mastering a language. All language learning begins with habit formation and learning tasks such as grammar drills, pronunciation and spelling drills, loud readings are effective routes to language learning. Habit formation in teaching grammar be it intrinsic or explicit can be successfully introduced in a process of over learning, memorization, pattern practice and repetition till the point of mastery. A teacher provides explains or demonstrates the source material, which conveys an explicit grammar rule by way of pattern practice or practice drill. A grammatical rule is thus inferred the inductive way.

With a living language ever evolving, a consciousness of grammar rules internalized, as in the formative years of one's life, helps keep abreast with language changes as new words enter and linguistic norms and conventions change and develop in response to technological and cultural innovation. A living language is further characterized by 'rule governed' activity. Language use is innovative, and accepted within the bounds of grammaticality which rules out a large number of combinations. Spectacular coinages as in advertisements and the media are examples - 'Chocolicious', 'frenemies' to name a few. The number of possible sentences that can be constructed are infinite as well. A study of grammar rules helps identify them. A basic example is the use of the passive form in newspaper headlines.

Language learning material using grammar rules as a tool helps organize the material which further helps in better learning and retention. Another advantage of applying grammar studies to language learning is a quicker ability at error detection. The occurrence of error, its analysis and remedial teaching helps in the developmental process essential to target language learning. Grammar exercises with rationalization of choices often used in the teaching of tenses, transformation exercises as in active to passive, affirmative to negative, singular to plural, agreement forms and reported to direct speech, vocabulary and pronunciation linked exercises all help in confidence building in language acquisition. As such, a potential grammar learning situation can be realized where the learner is predisposed to learn in a meaningful

way seeking logical links and organization in the material to be learned. An explicit knowledge of grammar thus finds substantive way to a learner's knowledge store where it can be retrieved and made available for use in subsequent learning tasks. Each meaningful learning episode enhances the development of a learner's cognitive structure and his or her skills in the acquisition of language.

To quote Mani's, 1971, 'Cognitive process referred to man's deliberate, planned, intellectual processes which guide behavior and embrace learning, reasoning, symbolic processes that include language, problem solving and individual strategies. This is to say that human cognition is goal – oriented'. It is acknowledged that the greatest changes in the history of language learning are taking place. Earlier to know a language was the mark of an educated person. Today, a language is studied by people from all walks of life. Consequently the methodology of learning is also changing radically. The transition from literature based items of learning to include spoken communication with an understanding and interacting with native speakers on the widest range of human interests, is gaining momentum. Considering the complexity of language with the multiple lines of approach in its teaching and the fact that man is equipped with a highly organized brain, the only one who can learn a human language, his fears of the monstrosity of rules that illustrate points of grammar should be dispelled. Language use is stimulus – free, intuitive and innovative making infinite use of finite means. The infinite means of learning is the favored camp of CLT enthusiasts, who claim that language learning does not rest alone in the study of sentence level syntax. The de-emphasis on grammar in the process entails a drift from accuracy to communicative effectiveness, from sentence grammar to communicative interaction which is in contrast to grammar based strategies that strive to provide the learner with qualitative material for language learning in a condensed form.

To say that grammaticalism is boring, dry, obsolete and far removed from reality is to miss the wood for the trees. Explicit rule presentation is no total substitute for communicative learning practice,

but can yet provide useful guidance to render communicative language practice more effective.

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