



TEACHING GRAMMAR AT THE HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL IN BANGLADESH: A STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

It is mandatory to have English grammar courses in all stages of Education in Bangladesh, as English is Lingua Franca. The outcome of those courses proportionately attach with effective teaching of grammar courses side by side according to the scopes of their use. The intention of this whole study is to outline the problems faced in the Higher Secondary level with their possible solution in this context. This study will try to analyze the lacks in the grammar teaching system and the syllabus in this stage. Some tentative solutions will be proposed which also need further deep examination separately with redesigning the syllabus.

Keywords: grammar teaching, grammar translation method, higher secondary grammar teaching, grammar teaching problems, solution of grammar teaching, Higher Secondary English syllabus

Introduction

As English is a common medium of world communication, it is necessary to have mandatory English courses in all educational stages. Competence in English grammar is essential for every learner. Effective performance in English Language depends on the effective use of grammar in the language. The teaching system is also very much important for getting the required competence in English grammar. The teaching should be designed according to the needs of the learners at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh. The type, context, and level of English grammatical competence require for effective performance in Higher Secondary level demand special attention in teaching curriculum design. So that students can get a smooth transition from their Higher Secondary Level to Higher level of education as well as ensures their effective performance in their educational life.

There has been no systematic analysis of the type, amount and level of English grammar teaching required for Higher Secondary level in Bangladesh. The academic teaching programs do not seem to prepare the Higher Secondary level students properly for English Grammar proficiency require for higher studies. Because the type, amount and level of grammatical competence are needed for the effective higher study is scarcely included in the formal academic English teaching system. So, a large gap is discovered between the grammar teaching system at the present time in the higher secondary level and the required level of grammar teaching level and the required level of grammar teaching for effective grammar teaching. As a result, the learners at the higher secondary level have been suffering in their educational life as well as in their future professional life.

To remove the gap we have to develop the Higher Secondary Grammar teaching system by

designing and implementing on the basis of present circumstances and the needs of our students. It has also examined what type of development is needed to provide the required level of grammar teaching. We can say that proper development of grammar teaching is the way to produce highly competent students in English language. The proposed research work seeks to design English Grammar teaching system at the higher Secondary level in a way that will help our students and teachers to meet their English oriented needs in the Higher Secondary level.

Literature Review

Grammar teaching is an important research area in English language teaching. Most of the English language teaching professionals recognize the significance of grammar teaching for educational purposes. Prevailing views of approaches to grammar teaching for educational purposes are discussed in the below.

Richards and Rodgers were talking about the grammar-translation method and the scope of that method. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the grammar-translation method has been rejected as a legitimate language teaching method by modern scholars. Though it may be true that the grammar-translation method is still practiced, it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. No literature offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology as educational theory.

Mella also talks about the grammar-translation method (GTM). Mella describes the steps of that method in the classroom. According to Mella (1998:69) briefly and sums up the use of the GTM in one classroom using steps. The teacher comments on a new text sentence by sentence. Unknown vocabulary is written on the blackboard and difficult passages are translated. The text from the previous lesson is checked for understanding and the students are required to read and translated the selected passage. The teacher will correct and comment on the pronunciation of necessary. A grammatical structure is usually explained in the L1

and written exercises are proved. Hence in the grammar teaching system, teachers are the absolute authorities. The interaction, as a rule, is directed from the teacher to the students and there is a little chance of student to student interaction.

Richards and Rodgers also celebrate the glorified history of GTM. They also talk about the spreading of that method. Richard and Rodgers (2001:06) describe that GTM dominated European and foreign language teaching for almost one hundred years from the 1840s to the 1940s and its modified form remains widely used in the ESL classrooms of the world even today.

Zhang talks about the inductive method of grammar learning. He talks and gives importance to the communicative language teaching (CLT) method. He also describes the importance of the CLT method in acquiring grammatical skills through communication. Zhang (200:25) claims that the teaching of grammar will be greatly improved in a communicative way. Paulston and Burdor (1976:1) further state that grammar permits all language skills and the objective of teaching grammar in their book is the oral use of the target language for communicative purposes.

Austad describes the inductive approach to learning grammar through speaking and reading. As Austad (2009:69) describes the relationship between grammar and speaking, reading, writing with the metaphor of building a house; the grammar is as important as the building foundation. Moreover, most of the teachers are convinced that students should know about grammar to write and to speak correctly and to read perfectly. They believe grammar is useful for understanding the structure of a language; furthermore, it is useful and hopeful for students to know how to make or combine structure. So, he establishes the connection between language and the grammar for exposing an excellent linguistic constitution.

Again Austad and Farrell talk about the ways to improve the grammatical understanding. That means that understanding may come through inductive learning for maximum result but side of side deductive learning can be also workout in this case. According to Austad (2009) and Farrel (2005)

exercises are a useful way to improve student's grammatical understanding. Students who did more exercise have better academic results in English language.

Ahmed, a Bangladeshi scholar, talks about the inductive approach of grammatical learning. He is a supporter of the CLT method and against the sole deductive learning through GTM method. According to Ahmed (2012), as the students say, teachers should remain busy in the CLT class as they are now in the GMT method in the classroom and the class mainly teacher-oriented; where students are silent listener, hence students have more option to live practice the grammar rules in the classroom through interaction with learning fellows. So, it is clear that he is totally against the teacher-centered classroom and goes up with the modern way of learning grammar through communication.

Debata also said about inductive grammar learning through communication. Debata (2013) said that at the time of communication we consciously or unconsciously use grammar in our language (p.483). Besides, whenever we want to learn or touch a foreign language at the moment we are conscious about the process of grammar learning. So, he wants that learners should learn a foreign language in a way that they learn the mother language.

Kalivoda said about the complexity of language learning and he is on the side of traditional grammar learning. According to Kalivoda (1990), the process of learning grammar is not easy but it is very helpful for effective language learning and there is no shortcut way to learn English grammar. All languages have their grammar and for this reason, all languages share a few basic patterns. Uniquely the nature of grammar teaching is a complex phenomenon. No one can ensure how much a learner needs to know or practice for acquiring proper knowledge of grammar (p.267). So, it is clear that he is on the side of the deductive approach to learning grammar.

Brumfit (2000) was talking about the relationship of grammar with language. He talked about how grammar helped with learning language. Brumfit (2000) said that grammar is a framework to

describe the nature of language. He also includes that any person can know thousands of English words but if he or she does not know how to use them properly, then he or she will not able to use them properly. (as cited in Chang, 2011, p.14)

Zainuddin, also a Bangladeshi scholar, talks about deductive traditional approach of grammar study. According to Zainuddin (2011), grammar study is based on the memorization of the teachers to teach English using native language and give no importance to the importance. (p.64)

Aqel states on the side of the GTM and deductive approach of grammar learning. According to Aqel (2013), GTM is one of the most important methods in grammar teaching, its main focus is on reading and translation. Through these two items, students can easily learn grammar. (p.2470)

Brckals talks about the deductive approach to learning grammar. According to Brckals, deductive class students have to memorize the grammar rules as well as definitions, rules, etc. and in Brackle's study he emphasized on inductive approach, he mentioned it as a problem bases teaching. Hence the learners discovered the rules through examples. (p.106-107)

Ellis gives importance to grammar teaching all over the world for learning English language. Ellis (2006) says that grammar teaching is considered as a world's most important part of language teaching and without knowing the pure grammar no one can be perfect in case of accuracy and fluency (p.56).

Objective of the Study

The present study seeks to measure what are the problems of grammar teaching at the higher secondary level and what could be the possible solutions to those problems. I have also examined how well the present teaching system has been helping the learners to get their required level of grammatical competence. Thus the study has tried to examine the present level of grammar teaching proficiency of the teacher as well as the system and the amount type and level of proficiency has been required for effective grammar teaching at the higher secondary. The lack also had been examined. Finally, based on the current situation a simple

curriculum has been developed that could make an impact on proper grammar teaching for our higher secondary level students.

So easily, the objective of this study is to find out the problems that teachers and students face in grammar learning at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh. Not only that the aim of my study to state possible solutions to grammar learning problems in the Higher secondary level.

Hypothesis of the research

Development of the grammar teaching system can be the way of increasing the grammatical competence of the students.

Research Methodology

Sampling:

1. Questionnaire Survey

- Teachers' → open ended and closed questions
- Students' → open ended and closed questions

Name of Institution	Number of teachers' for QS	Number of students' for QS
Naohata Degree college	4	5
New Govt. Degree College	4	5
Rajshahi City college	4	5

2. Semi structured Interview:

- Teachers'
- Students'

Name of Institution	Number of teachers' for interview	Number of students' for interview
Naohata Degree college	4	2
New Govt. Degree College	4	2

3. Class Observation

Name of Institution	Number of Class observed
Naohata Degree college	4
New Govt. Degree College	4
Rajshahi City College	4

The study demanded an empirical investigation of the present English teaching at the Higher Secondary level in Bangladesh. For this purpose, empirical investigation of the preferences, beliefs, experiences, and achievements of the students and the preferences, teaching techniques skills and experiences of the teachers and classroom observation were considered necessary. Four major techniques of data collection questionnaire surveys, interviews, and observation have been used for the study. Thus, data has been collected from various sources through the use of different methods to corroborate the findings. Rajshahi district has been chosen for the empirical investigation considering the convenience in conducting the investigation.

Result of the Empirical Investigation

Table 1: Results of Students' Questionnaire Survey and interview

Statements	Results		Overall Results
	Questionnaire survey	Interview	
	Mean	Mean	

1. You use correct English which interacting with your teachers in the class.	3.5	3.65	3.57
2. You use correct grammatical English while you interact other students in the class.	4.5	4.37	4.43
3. You learn English grammar through skill practice in the classroom	3.0	2.97	2.98
4. You learn English grammar by memorizing the rules and the vocabulary of the English.	1.35	1.50	1.42
5. You depend only on your teacher for learning English grammar.	1.3	1.5	1.4
6. You learn English grammar by doing various language exercises and tasks in the classroom.	2.3	2.23	2.26
7. You teachers correct the grammatical errors you make immediately	1.15	1.23	1.19
8. You teachers are friendly sympathetic and cooperative.	2.85	2.75	2.8
9. You teachers explain the rules of grammar before teaching their uses.	1.25	1.33	1.29
10. You receive negative feedback from your teacher.	3.85	3.75	3.8
11. You teachers correct grammatical errors you make later in feedback session.	3.85	3.90	3.87
12. You freely ask your teachers questions about your grammar lessons and discuss your problems with them in the classroom	1.65	1.72	1.68
13. Your teachers are unfriendly, strict and uncooperative.	3.7	3.57	3.63
14. You learn English grammar only to meet the requirements of the examinations.	1	1.16	1.08

15. You receive negative feedback from your teacher.	4.45	4.20	4.32
16. You learn English grammar to able communicate with other people in English in real life situation	3.9	3.7	3.8
17. You can communicate competently in English.	4.5	4.6	4.55
18. You can read efficiently in English.	1.9	1.8	1.85
19. You can write efficiently in English.	1.95	2.11	2.03
20. You can listen efficiently in English.	4.1	3.9	4.00
21. You can speak correctly in English freely and fluently.	3.95	4.00	3.975

Table 2: Results of Teachers' Questionnaire Survey and Interview

Statements	Results of Teachers' Questionnaire Survey and Interview		
	mean	mean	Overall result
(i)What is your medium of instruction in the class?	2.75	2.83	2.79
(ii)What is your medium of interaction with your students in the classroom?	2.75	2.66	2.70
(iii)You teach your students grammar adequately for their educational and professional purposes.	2.00	2.03	2.01
(iv)More time should be given to English grammar instruction in the classroom.	1.00	1.07	1.03
(v)What type of feedback you give when your students face any problem and ask you about that grammatical problem again and again?	1.00	1.11	1.05
(vi)What types of method you use at the time of your teaching?	2.25	2.13	2.19
(vii)Do you think that having good competence in English Grammar is important for your student's future educational purposes as well as for their studies at the Higher secondary level?	1.00	1.07	1.03
(viii)Your students competence in speaking English	3.75	3.60	3.67
(ix)Your students competence in Reading English	3.00	3.08	3.04
(x)Your students writing English	2.00	2.10	2.05
(xi)The content of the English grammar courses you teach are relevant and interesting	2.5	2.43	2.46
(Xii) Your students problem			
(a)Listening speaking difficulties			
1.Fluency	3.75	3.52	3.63

2.Techniques of conversation	3.75	3.61	3.68
3.Vocabulary	4	3.95	3.97
4.Grammar	4	4.01	4.005
5.Pronunciation	3.75	3.5	3.62
6.Strem and intonation	4	4.05	4.025
(b)Reading difficulties			
1.Grammar	1.75	2.00	1.875
2.Vocabulary	1.25	1.50	1.37
3.strategies	2.00	1.95	1.97
4.Organigation	2.00	1.85	1.92
5.Style	1.75	1.95	1.85
(c) Writing difficulties			
1.Grammar	1.75	2.00	1.875
2.Vocabulary	2.25	2.50	2.37
3.Spelling	4.00	4.02	4.01
4.Organigation	1.75	1.57	1.66
5.Panctuation	2.00	1.93	1.96
6.Style	1.75	1.62	1.685

Summary of open-ended questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire summarizes that most of the teacher's objectives in teaching English grammar to his students' were for their preparation for the examination. Maximum teachers followed the deductive method in their teaching grammar. Some of them used both deductive and inductive methods. But the inductive method was used rarely. Some traditional tasks were generally given to the students for learning grammar in the classroom. They corrected the grammatical errors generally just correcting it in their writing scripts. But interestingly most of the teachers thought that the present courses were not adequate for proper learning for grammar in the higher secondary level. They also thought that the design of courses of grammar in this stage is not appropriate. They were not satisfied mostly what books were recommended for the Higher Secondary Students are not satisfactory. Most of them thought that the recommended books not standard and were not contextually appropriate. Most of the teachers thought that the Higher Secondary level grammar courses should have to focus on the professional purposes of the students' professional life.

The result of class observation was also very interesting. Most of them the medium of instruction

was given by the teacher were the mixing of Bengali and English. But the interactions between students were Bangla. Even most of the time students interacted with your teachers in Bangla but sometimes in English. Most of the classes were conducted in GTM and CLT method both. All the learning activities were teacher-centered. Students did not interact with the correct grammatical structures when they interacted with teachers in English. Usually, student's grammatical mistakes were corrected by the teacher immediately but because of the time allocation, there were sometimes problems is solving. Usually, teachers were positive when they gave feedback. Most of the time teachers talked in the classroom but student's participation was not enough. Students were not very much attentive and enthusiastic to learn the grammar rules and structure because they did not find any interest in it. Teachers taught all the language skills in the traditional method. The students learned new vocabulary by translation method. The teaching environment was not so much friendly rather sometimes very much formal. The learning aids like audio, video, and projector were always available in the classes. The standard of teachers' language was satisfactory but learners' were not.

Evaluation Of the results:

At first, I am going to evaluate the questionnaire survey and interview with the students. The overall result of question /statement no(1) means that students cannot use correct English while they interact with their teachers in the class. Then the 2nd statement shows that most of the students cannot able to use correct English grammar at the time of interaction in the class. The result of statement 3rd means that most of the students practice English grammar through practice skills. It is a positive sign. The overall result of the statement 4th states that all of the students usually memorize the grammar rules which is the sign of the deductive learning system of our education system. Then the result of the 5th statement shows that all the students depend upon their teachers to learn grammar. Then the result of the 6th statement shows that sometimes students do practice bookish tasks to learn grammar which is not attached to the modern way of language learning. But the result of the 7th statement is positive and that is the teacher immediately correct all the errors of the grammatical mistakes of the students. Very often the teacher is very friendly and cooperative and sympathetic to the students which are shown through the overall result of the statement 8th. The result of the 9th statement shows all teachers explain grammar rules before teaching their rules which is also a sign of deductive learning. The result of the 10th statement shows a very positive image of our higher secondary system that students do not usually get any kind of negative feedback from their teachers. The overall result of the statement 12 means almost all students can ask teachers about their grammatical problems and discuss the problem with them in the classroom. The teachers are not uncooperative and unfriendly which is a very positive signs. But the statement 14th result shows that students learn grammar only to meet the requirements of the exams which is a negative sign for our students' future life. The main problem is expressed through question no 17th to 21 where we see that students at the higher secondary level are not so efficient in communicating, writing, listening and speaking English frequently.

Now we come to the evaluation of the teachers' questionnaire survey and interview. The overall result of the statement 1 shows that teachers use both English and Bangla in the classroom as instruction is against the inductive learning and CLT method. Teachers think that they teach English grammar properly for their educational and professional purposes. They all have agreed that more time should be given to teaching English grammar instruction in the classroom. They all give positive feedback when students come to them with their grammatical problems. They use the mixture of both inductive and deductive learning method at their teachers agrees to one fact that good grammatical competence is very important for their future educational purposes. But all also agree that the present condition of their speaking reading, writing English is not satisfactory. They also agree that the present English courses are not well designed and relevant and interesting at the higher secondary level syllabus. They expose that reading style, the grammar of the students are quite well but at the listening factor they have all lack of fluency, pronunciation, stress, intonation, etc. but they also said that they see the positive sign in writing in their students.

I hypothesized that the development of grammar teaching system can be the way of increasing the grammatical competence of the students. Through my evaluation, it is clear that our student's lack of grammatical competence is the result of our undersigned grammar teaching system and most importantly because of our cultural gap with the west. So, we should take the necessary steps to redesign our syllabus and teaching system to ensure our students' grammatical competence at the higher secondary level.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

So it is clear that my hypothesis is true or positive which has been shown through my research work. Besides that, we can say that developing a teaching system can able to change the grammatical competence of our country. But the cultural and contextual gap makes the main problem that can be solved through mutual appreciation. We should appropriate our syllabus according to our social

context. Then teaching materials like; books, audio, visual systems should have to be increased. Our grammar learning should not focus on the only examination rather should have to be more interesting for the learners. So that learners can learn those materials from their hearth to make themselves competent in fluent communication and able to adjust themselves in creative writings in English. It is the ultimate destination of our students. The present English courses should have to be redesigned our ultimate needs at this level. The training for the teachers should be more authentic and systematic according to the educational outcome that we expect from them. If we can able to take these steps, it will be highly possible to ensure our students' grammatical competence at the higher secondary level.

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