

## THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN THE ACQUISITION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE

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**Annotation:** Grammar has always been an important issue in second and foreign language learning and teaching. It is also an area of some controversy as there is much debate regarding its role in language learning and teaching. Some hold the view that grammar is not essential for second/foreign language learning and therefore have a ‘zero position’ regarding grammar teaching. On the other hand, some view that grammar is necessary for second/foreign language learning.

**Key words:** Grammar, different theories, traditional methods, new approaches, advanced learners, various methodologies, language teachers and practitioners, courses.

**Аннотация:** Грамматика всегда была важным вопросом в изучении и преподавании второго и иностранного языка. Это также является областью некоторых разногласий, поскольку существует много споров относительно его роли в изучении и преподавании языка. Некоторые придерживаются мнения, что грамматика не является существенной для изучения второго/иностранного языка, и поэтому занимают «нулевую позицию» в отношении преподавания грамматики. С другой стороны, некоторые считают, что грамматика необходима для изучения второго/иностранного языка.

**Ключевые слова:** Грамматика, разные теории, традиционные методы, новые подходы, продвинутые ученики, различные методологии, преподаватели языка и практики, курсы.

The history of grammar analysis goes back to the ancient Greeks, who transformed it from the art of writing and recognizing letters into a science of rules that govern the production of texts. Both the Greeks and Romans, who adopted the Greek analysis for Latin, used grammar to teach people how to use languages, which were then employed in many fields, such as politics, philosophy and religion [2]. Then, during the Renaissance, the study of Greek and Latin grammars spread thanks to the invention of printing, and many formal studies on language developed.

The role of grammar in the acquisition of a second or foreign language has been the focus of a lively debate for ‘thousands years’ (Giunchi, 1990), during which it has followed the changes in the different theories about language acquisition. In fact, various methodologies and approaches to language teaching have followed one another according to the different weight that grammar assumed in language teaching. In particular, hostility towards grammar arose in the 1960s-1970s, when the traditional methods based on the exclusive teaching of grammar were criticized and new approaches that proposed full linguistic immersion spread (Fiorentino, 2009). Subsequently, positions that focused only on communication in teaching a foreign language were challenged in turn and grammar regained an important role in language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman, 1991). The negation of the importance of grammar in language acquisition was supported first of all by Krashen. A fundamental premise to Krashen’s view of formal instruction is his theory on language acquisition, which has been already described in the first chapter: in Krashen’s opinion, acquisition and learning are completely separate, and thus learning does not need to precede acquisition in the teaching of a foreign language. As regards grammar, Krashen recognizes that it can be useful in language learning as monitor, which can be activated only when the learner has enough time, when he/she has the possibility to focus on the form of the message and has already acquired the knowledge of the rules involved in the production. Krashen underlines the fact that only a small set of rules is learnable and thus usable as monitor, and that the ideal use of monitor occurs only when the learner uses conscious rules without interfering with

communication and thus improving L2 accuracy. Furthermore, Krashen admits the usefulness of grammar for ‘language appreciation’, that is to say as a demonstration to students that acquisition of structures has taken place, or to allow advanced learners to render their speeches and writing more polished. However, Krashen states that the theoretical study of grammar as a subject is not useful at all, and that teaching grammar can be valuable only if the foreign language is used as means of communication; in this case, it is the input provided that leads to acquisition, and not grammar as the object of instruction, which can be seen as partly useful, but certainly not as essential in foreign language teaching.

After much debate, grammar is now reestablished in language teaching and there is now consensus among the theorists, language teachers and practitioners that some formal instruction on grammar is necessary in L2 classrooms. Teachers are also provided a number of approaches and strategies to choose in teaching grammar effectively in their classrooms.

In this situation, the present study aims at finding out Uzbek university teachers’ attitudes towards grammar and its teaching and learning in EFL classrooms relating to those options advocated by the researchers. It shows that this group of teachers views grammar as an essential component of language learning and believes that formal grammar instruction has a facilitative role in language learning. They regard explicit grammar instruction helpful for their students considering the reality of EFL situation.

They prefer to teach grammar in context and within communicative activities, which indicates that they are aware of the limitations of both “focus on meaning” and “focus on forms” approaches in language teaching. As they are teaching English courses to undergraduate students, form-focused correction is found to be an important technique among others in teaching grammar to their students. Small class size, use of audio-visual materials and flexible approaches are suggested by them for better results in grammar teaching. Before analyzing the debate on the role of grammar in greater detail, describing the methods that have followed one another during the past decades and the two main underlying tendencies, an explanation of what is generally meant by grammar will follow.

#### Literatures

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