

A Quest for an Effective Method of Teaching English Grammar to the SSC Level

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Abstract

From the experience of teaching English for a quite long time, the researcher felt the urge to search for an effective method of teaching English grammar at the SSC level in Bangladesh. The researcher had interaction with other practicing English teachers indicating that the method of teaching English grammar at the SSC level needs research which encouraged the researcher for the study. Hence, the study has been designed to search for an effective method of teaching English grammar at this level. A mixed method paradigm has been followed for the study. The participants of the study have been Bangladeshi secondary level 200 students and 16 English teachers. For collecting information on the latest theoretical development in this field, the secondary sources of data have been used. A test for evaluating students' grammar skill, questionnaire survey and interview with teachers and students, classroom observation and textbook evaluation are the methods of collecting primary data. The study has revealed that maximum Bangladeshi SSC level students are not oriented with the grammatical structures by heart rather than simply being introduced with some grammatical terms when the English teachers at this level are confused regarding an effective method of teaching English grammar. Therefore, a mixed method of inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches and Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) model should be followed for teaching grammar. Recommendations have been made for evaluation of teaching materials, providing adequate teaching aids, teachers' training and further studies.

Keywords: Inductive Approach, Deductive Approach, Contextualized Approach, PPP Model, SSC Level.

1. Introduction

With the evolution of communicative language teaching, explicit grammar teaching was excluded from the curriculum but there being a persistent suggestion from various corners to include it again in the curriculum. The method of teaching English grammar before the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) put grammar at the heart of pedagogical activities. Before 1970s, Grammar Translation Method was used in teaching English grammar (Rahman, 2012, p.3). The present study has found that the existing method of teaching English grammar does not fulfill the objectives of English grammar teaching by attaining accuracy in four skills of language- listening, speaking, reading and writing. At present, according to the empirical study, most of the English teachers at the SSC level in Bangladesh are confused regarding an effective method of teaching English grammar.

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English grammar teaching has direct significant aspect of the academic curriculum of Bangladesh. The study deals with the much-debated issue of the approach of teaching grammar which deserves continuous study and survey for adapting the grammar teaching method reflecting the teachers and students' perceptions. The study tries to explore the effective techniques of grammar teaching including the latest development in the teaching-learning environments. Therefore, "A Quest for an Effective Method of Teaching English Grammar to the SSC Level Students" has been a worth study area. The findings of the study will be beneficial to the SSC level teachers and students in teaching-learning English grammar effectively.

The general objective of the study is to search for an effective method of teaching English grammar at the SSC level in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study are (i) to explore the teachers' and students' perceptions about the techniques of teaching-learning grammar, (ii) to evaluate the textbook in use for teaching-learning English grammar, (iii) to assess the SSC level students' grammar skill and (iv) to find out the effective method of English grammar teaching in the context of Bangladesh.

There are some limitations in conducting the study as some teachers and students could not provide real information out of shyness in admitting their weakness. Moreover, most of the teachers and students of secondary level are unfamiliar with research activities. In this study introduction, literature review, conceptual framework, methodology, data analysis, findings, recommendation and conclusion have been organized chronologically.

2. Literature Review

The researcher has reviewed the previous studies on the different methods of teaching English grammar at the SSC level to set the context of the study, to keep the present study on the shoulders of the previous studies in this field, to find research gaps, to design the methodology of the study and to explore the gist of the theoretical development in this area keeping in mind that the students' grammatical knowledge is not in a satisfactory level and the secondary level English teachers are confused of an effective method of teaching English grammar.

Pajunen (2007), Takimoto (2008), Yan-ping (1989), and others have given priority to the inductive and deductive approaches of teaching English grammar on the achievement of students. Yan-ping (1989) found the special effects of proper instruction on the achievement of grammatical constructions by Chinese adolescent English learners. Explicit and implicit methods of teaching grammar have been focused by the researcher in the study. The present investigator believes that inductive and deductive approaches and explicit and implicit methods of teaching grammar have the similarity in the practical exercise of teaching English grammar.

Basak (n.d., p.2) observed that the grammatical rules are taught deductively. There is no contextual understanding of grammatical rules. And the learners commit to memory the rules of grammar essential to encounter the examination items. No interesting real life practice is done. Moreover, awareness concerning teaching English grammar in a

successful lively method is not visible. Weatherford (1997) and Victoria (1997) advocated on using contextualized approach for students' success. Some other studies recommended English grammar teaching contextually as Willoughby (1993), Weatherford (1997) and Victoria (1997) suggested. In these studies, the researchers emphasized English grammar teaching, considering about approaches. The researchers were in support of the contextual approach as a superior approach for better success to the SSC level students in teaching English grammar. The researcher observes that the present testing system is designed following contextualized approach which is helpful in digesting the rules of grammar.

Rahman (2012, pp.185-193) stated that he had examined the relevant theoretical development in the methods of teaching grammar at the SSC level and found that numerous approaches to teaching grammar exist in the literature. But all these approaches can be brought under the four headings: presentation, practice, production and feedback. All these steps in a typical grammar class may accommodate input, intake, and output of newer language items. However, a teacher can enter into any point of these procedures considering the actual situation.

Maftoon and Sarem (2012, p.34) told that Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) model was a popular approach to teaching English grammar during 1950s and 1960s as were audio-lingual, grammar-translation and situational teaching methods. The purpose of these methods was to make learners competent in grammar with acute practice and repeated drills of communication through language. Byrne (1996, p.32) reveals a three-phase framework of presentation, practice and production for English grammar teaching. In the presentation phase, the rules of English grammar is presented with situations and texts. During the practice phase, repeated exercise of the rules of English grammar is done with communication game and by drill of practicing the rules. In the third stage of production, the uses of grammar rule is constructed in the communication of learners utterances using grammatical sets of rules. The researcher believes that PPP model can be followed with the inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches of teaching English grammar.

Ivan (2016, p.94) recommended that the teachers' views should be affirmative to CLT. Students should be competent enough in the language in daily life use of communication, rather than the better result in the public examination. As a practicing teacher of English, the researcher has found that the present CLT method is not adequately effective in teaching English grammar.

A number of preceding studies employed the experimental approach as Willoughby (1993), Yan-ping (1989), Victoria (1997), El Banna (1994) and Pajunen (2007) proposed, though others believed in the descriptive method as Weatherford (1997) and El Koumy (2002) suggested.

Batti (2017) recommended that the students of grade nine and ten should be motivated by the English teachers to use reliable materials and practice pair work and group work activities. Language lab, library, audio-visual materials like multi-media, overhead projector, video-player, tape recorder and such other facilities should be adequately used in the schools to improve and upgrade the process of teaching English grammar.

Leao (2012, p.258) suggested invoking teachers' curiosity to increase students' practice and ability for alternating their attempts in line with the background and circumstances instead of any ideal method of teaching grammar. Hossen (2008, p.48) recommended that English language teachers must have enough knowledge of teaching communication skills to generate confidence to the students. Motivation is also a vital issue. Teacher must be enthusiastic to promote students to see the learning culture and practice optimistically. Teacher's liability is to inspire students and to form hopeful feelings with the English language and be helpful and cheering to the learners.

Ghazali (2006, p.18) told that teachers ought not to be dedicated to a single approach and deny the others, as some grammar rules are not so trouble-free to be learned by the students. It should be submissive to the teacher's contemplation and direction to make a decision what substance to be commenced, to whom it supposed to be given, and the way it should be contract with. It requires not only preparation, but also an absolute and thoughtful aims of the learners.

From the above studies the researcher has apprehended that all suggested approaches and methods can be brought under a mixed method of inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches and Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) model might be followed for teaching English grammar effectively.

The previous studies have been reviewed by the researcher and some knowledge gaps have been found. It can be recommended that the researcher has searched previous studies related to the topic "A Quest for an Effective Method of Teaching English Grammar to the SSC Level Students" in public and private universities of Bangladesh and data available in the internet; it shows that no study has been conducted on the same topic and there are some research gaps in this area in the light of content, contribution and methodology. Then the researcher has selected the topic and has studied in this area to find out the latest theoretical development in English grammar teaching methods.

3. Conceptual Framework

There are various methods in teaching English grammar. These methods are considered to be the main pillars and basic measures that the teachers require in the teaching procedure. These allocate the teachers to apprehend the aim in an ideal approach. This conceptual framework includes the terms and theories related to the study have been presented through the following model:

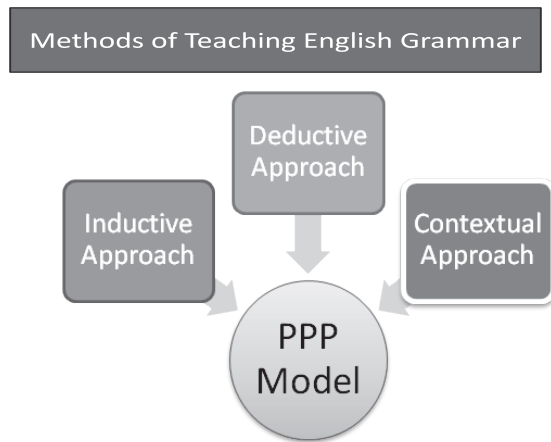


Figure-1: Methods of Teaching English Grammar

This model is the basis for the study. The conceptual framework of the terms connects the present study to the existing body of knowledge. These presented theories provide guidance for the entire process of the study.

Inductive Approach: At the opposite end of deductive approach to teaching English grammar, there is an inductive one which is also called “consciousness-raising” approach. This approach has come from the inductive way of thinking, affirming and analyzing a progression from details to simplifications. Briefly, while induction is used, numerous detailed examples are observed and from them a universal code or idea is inferred (Gollin, n.d., p.88).

Deductive Approach: Deductive approach has been the fundamental aspect of teaching English grammar all over the world and yet takes pleasure in a control manner in numerous course books and self-study grammar books (Widodo, n.d., p.126). It is theoretically motivated by the deductive way of thinking which works from universal to the particular. Here rules, beliefs, ideas, or assumptions are applied first, and then their purposes are treated. In short, in deductive approach, a general rule is applied to specific instances (Gollin, n.d, p.88).

Contextual Approach: Thornbury (1999, p.69) stated that without context it is not easy to discover the anticipated meaning of a word or phrase. It is also factual of sentences received outside the context of texts. Thornbury (1999, p.90) mentioned the main characteristics of the contextual approach and it was said that language is context-sensitive; that means a statement becomes fully comprehensible if it is placed in the context. In the contextual approach, there are at least three layers of context: the co-text; the context of circumstances; and the context of culture. All of the context can supply the meaning of the text. Grammar is taught best and trained in context.

PPP Model: PPP model is a three-phase teaching model: Presentation, Practice and Production; it is derived from behaviorist assumption which affirms that teaching a language is the image of teaching any other skill. The high degree of teacher control which distinguishes the first and second steps of this approach diminishes as the class continues, permitting the learner to deviate progressively from the teacher's control towards habitual production and comprehension (Ur, 1999, p.19).

Willis (1999, p.2) affirmed that PPP model has three steps as follow:

Presentation stage: The teacher starts the lesson with a situation, either bringing out or modeling some language that the circumstance calls for. At the presentation stage, the teacher will either read from the textbook or will act out the short dialogue and model sentences. The teacher will also manage the students to hear on the tape illustrating the target items.

Practice stage: At this stage the students under the direct control of the teacher, practice the target language. Here the students drill dialogues or model sentences repeatedly after the teacher or the playing tape till they can pronounce them correctly either in chorus or individually. Completing incomplete sentences, matching parts of sentences, asking questions or answering the questions and practicing dialogues, are other activities of this stage.

Production stage: At this stage, the students are given scope to enjoy the use of target language freely and out of fear for their own purposes to open the door of communication playing any role, recreation activities or communication tasks given by the teacher.

McCarthy and Carter (1995, p.44) recommended an outline for teaching grammar that is at every phase, the attempt is planned in three steps. Presentation stage is rule oriented. Willis (1999, p.24) mentions that practice stage as pre-task, task cycle and language focus. Millrood (2001, p.55) says that a substitute construction is accomplishment of the task, focusing on the target grammar and facilitation of superfluous knowledge in record activities. Three phases: pre-activity, while-activity and post-activity.

However, no study denied the efficiency of inductive, deductive and contextual approaches in English grammar teaching. All these approaches can be brought under four headings: presentation, practice, production and feedback. These four stages form a kind of cycle and a teacher can enter into any point of these procedures depending on the actual learning situation.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted in the year of 2017. Bangladesh is the area of this study. Research design, sample, instruments and data collection procedure of the study are as follows:

Research Design: The study has been accomplished by assessing students' grammatical competence with a test, examining SSC level students' and teachers' perceptions in

teaching-learning English grammar by a questionnaire survey and interview, observing the classrooms while teaching English grammar and evaluating the textbook for teaching grammar with a checklist.

Sample: The sample of the study has included 200 students and 16 teachers. In Bangladesh SSC level stands for secondary school certificate level and it includes classes 9-10. The sample has represented secondary level students and English teachers in Bangladesh. As the study concerns only with the secondary level, schools have been chosen for the study and the sample has represented all schools in Bangladesh. Purposive sampling method has been followed. The categories of schools are: government schools in the district headquarters and non-government schools in the district headquarters under the category of urban schools and semi-urban non-government schools in the Upazilla headquarters and rural non-government schools under the category of rural schools. The next step was to select school under each category. From the four categories of schools, fourteen schools have been selected for the student's questionnaire survey and interview. Eighteen classes have been observed. Two classes from the government schools, ten classes from the urban non-government schools, two of those from the semi-urban schools and the remaining four classes have been selected from the rural schools. For the grammar test, only three schools, one from the urban area and the other two from the rural area have been selected.

Instruments: The instruments of the study areas follow:

1. A question of grammar test
2. The student questionnaire
3. The teacher questionnaire
4. The classroom observation checklist and
5. The textbook evaluation checklist

The same questionnaire has been used for the structured interview. A pilot study has been administered to check the appropriateness and intelligibility of the instruments to find out the weakness, if any, and the items have been improved to make them comprehensible.

Data Collection Procedure: The activities for the study were conducted from July-2017 to September-2017. For the grammar test, securing permission from the head teachers of the respective schools, the students present in the class have been invited. The question papers have been distributed to them with a request for answering the questions within half an hour. The answer scripts have been collected after finishing the allotted time and results have been analyzed.

Securing permission from the head of the institutions, the student questionnaire survey has been administered after an introductory talk with the students. For the interview, the items of the questionnaire have been presented orally to the selected students and the difficult aspects of the questionnaire have been explained. Then their responses have been noted down in the boxes against each statement.

The teacher questionnaires have been handed over to the English teachers and have been collected from them later on. The same teachers have also been interviewed at

their convenient time. The statements in the questionnaire have been presented to them orally and their responses have been recorded by ticking the right box against each statement in the questionnaire.

Classroom observation has been conducted while teaching grammar, following observation method and taking seat with the students at the back of the classroom. The features of the grammar teaching practices have been observed and the right options of the classroom observation scheme have been ticked.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data from the grammar test, questionnaire survey, interview and classroom observation have been analyzed and subsequently interpreted using statistical measures and standard deviation. The results of the grammar test have been presented below:

The ‘grading system’ prevalent in the SSC level in Bangladesh has been adopted as the model for interpreting the results of the grammar test. The grading system is as follows:

Table -1: Standard of Measurement in the Grammar Test

Sl. No	Name of the Grade	Percentage of the Marks
1	A+	80% marks and above it
2	A	70 to 79
3	A-	60 to 69
4	B	50 to 59
5	C	40 to 49
6	D	33 to 39
7	F (Failed)	Below 33%

Using the above grading system, the following table presents the results of the grammar test:

Table-2: Results of the Grammar Test

Sl. No	Grade scores obtained	The Number of the Students	%
1	A+	02	03.50
2	A	06	10.52
3	A-	25	43.85
4	B	06	10.52
5	C	06	10.52
6	D	03	05.26
7	F (Failed)	09	15.78
Total		57	100

The results of the grammar test present a miserable picture of the students’ grammatical competence. A few students performed excellently in the grammar test while majority of them proved to be grammatically inefficient.

The following chart shows the result more clearly:

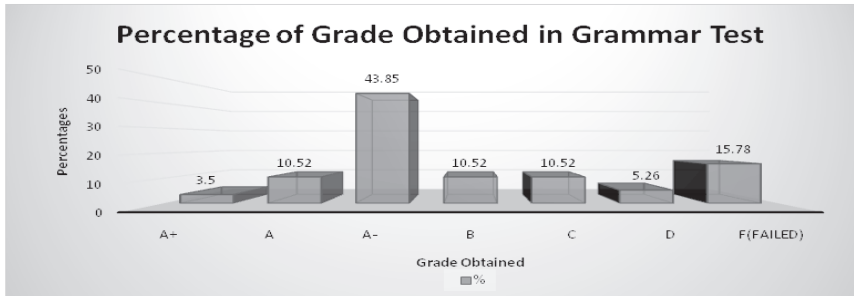


Chart-I

For the results of questionnaire survey and interview the mean scores have been classified into four keys presented in the table below:

Table-3 : Interpretation Key for Questionnaire Survey and Interview

Mean Scores	Interpretation Key
1.00 - 1.99	Very Low
2.00 - 2.99	Considerably Low
3.00 - 3.99	Considerably High
4.00 - 5.00	Very High

The table below shows the summary of the results of the students' questionnaire survey and interview:

Table-4: Summary of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire Survey and Interview

Interpretation Key	Mean Scores	Number of Answer	% of the Answer
Very Low	1.00 - 1.99	08	04
Considerably Low	2.00 - 2.99	46	23
Considerably High	3.00 - 3.99	80	40
Very High	4.00 - 5.00	66	33
Total	-	200	100

We can find a clearer overview of the result by the following chart:

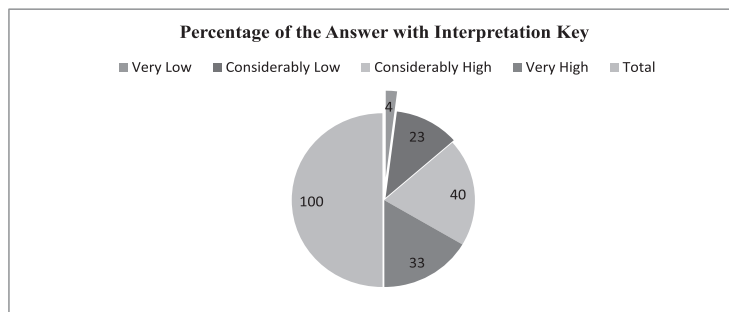


Chart-II

Summary of the results of the teachers' questionnaire survey and interview is presented in the table below:

Table-5: Summary of the Results of the Teachers' Questionnaire Survey and Interview

Interpretation Key	Mean Scores	Number of Answer	% of the Answer
Very Low	1.00-1.99	-	-
Considerably Low	2.00-2.99	05	33
Considerably High	3.00-3.99	07	43
Very High	4.00-5.00	04	24
Total	-	16	100

The following chart shows it more clearly.

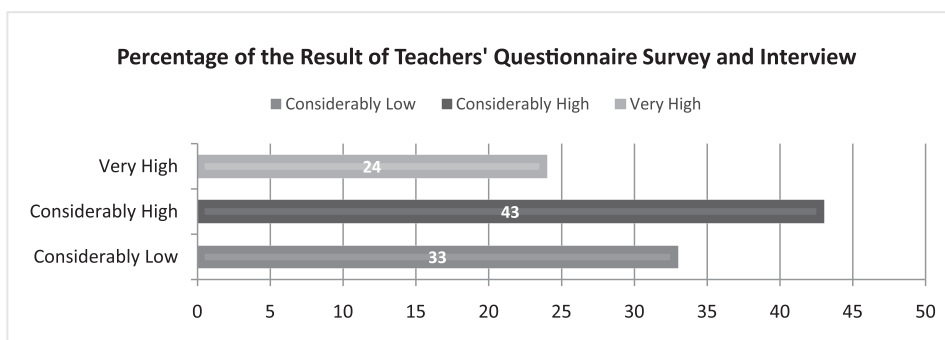


Chart-III

Classroom observation reveals that the classrooms for teaching English grammar are not equipped with the adequate teaching-learning materials, especially in the rural areas.

The textbook evaluation shows that no explicit focus has been depicted on grammar in the book and so the grammatical structures have been presented implicitly with no definite explanation of the meanings and communicative uses of the presented structures.

6. Findings and Discussion

The results of the study have been discussed item wise. Grammar test shows that the first item is right form of verbs and the second one is filling in the blanks with suitable words. The third question is on correction. The fourth item is changing narrative style. Completing incomplete sentences is the fifth item. Writing ten grammatically correct sentences is given as the last item. But the grammar test shows that maximum students are not oriented with the grammatical structures by heart rather than simply being introduced with some grammatical terms.

Students' questionnaire survey and interview have portrayed that students' performance is not in a satisfactory level. Correcting students' grammatical mistakes during the spoken and written activities is not visible in practice. Allowing students to be corrected their mistakes by their classmates is also an imagination. Teachers make students memorize particular structures without their use in passage. Teachers are teaching grammar not for making students communicate in English but for overcoming the final examination. They are also not in the habit of making grammatical examples relevant to students' personal life.

Teachers' questionnaire survey and interview show that most of the teachers are not oriented with inductive and contextualized approaches to teaching grammar and so a meaningful paragraph is rarely provided to the students to discover the rules of grammar. Teachers do not offer students with words and situations to make sentences using a structure. Different grammatical structures available in a paragraph are not taught in the class.

From the classroom observation it was found that in the rural areas multimedia classroom facilities and adequate teaching aids are not available to make the class interesting in grammar practices.

The textbook evaluation shows that the underlying rationale of the textbook is to practice four basic language skills. Grammar items have been incorporated with foreign language skills so that the lessons can easily be related to real life situation, not just to be memorized as separate items. Some grammar points have been recycled several times and have always been presented in an inductive manner. No uses of students' mother tongue have been made in explaining the target grammar points.

Thus, the study has achieved its general objective after (i) exploring the teachers' and students' perceptions about the techniques of teaching-learning English grammar, (ii) evaluating the textbook in use for teaching-learning English grammar, (iii) assessing the SSC level students' grammar skill and (iv) finding out an effective mixed method of inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches following PPP model in teaching English grammar at the SSC level in Bangladesh.

7. Recommendations

Recommendations for evaluation of the teaching materials, providing adequate teaching-learning aids and teachers' training have been made. Some of the recommendations are made separately. Decision makers and curriculum designers are recommended to improve the English curriculum with inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches. Teachers' guide may also be improved for the betterment of enhancing the grammar teaching scenario at this level.

The heads of the institutions are recommended to provide the English teachers with instructional materials for English grammar teaching following inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches. English teachers' training and workshop should also be arranged to make them familiarize with the approaches.

The English language teachers are recommended to follow the inductive, deductive and contextualized approaches creating real life environment for the students and being shifted from the traditional teaching methods. They are also suggested to minimize the grammar difficulties providing the students with familiar topics of everyday life and to consider the individual differences of the students' learning attitudes and mixed-ability classes while teaching grammar. Website visiting is beneficial and helpful for the teachers to be familiar with the teaching techniques.

Further studies in a comprehensive scale in this area are recommended to get a deeper understanding on "Usefulness of the Inductive, Deductive and Contextualized Approaches" and "Effectiveness of the Inductive, Deductive and Contextualized Approaches for Teaching English Grammar at the SSC Level".

8. Conclusion

The present grammar teaching and learning culture does not prove to be much effective in contributing most of the students develop their grammatical competence. Uninteresting and one-way grammar presentations hamper the grammar teaching practices. So, most of the students often succeed in manipulating some sentences, filling in close passages, but fail to write accurate and meaningful sentences on their own. The superiority of contextualized approach has been found over the inductive and deductive approaches for English grammar teaching. The inductive approach has precedence over the deductive approach for grammar teaching. The suggested PPP model has superiority over the conventional approaches in English grammar teaching at the SSC level in Bangladesh.

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