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The Importance Of Grammar Learning Strategies.

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Abstract: Although major advances have been made in research on language learning strategies (LLS), there are some areas that have been somewhat surprisingly neglected by specialists. This applies without doubt to the strategies that learners draw on to better understand and learn grammar rules but also to employ grammar structures in real-time processing, as required in spontaneous communication.

Keywords: grammar, learning strategies, neglected by specialists, statistics, English.

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Introduction

Following previous approaches of different language learning strategies (LLS), Cohen and Pinilla-Herrera (2011) introduced a new point of view with how the term "strategy" should be used. According to these authors, the frequently encountered term, "strategy", referred to more than just "study skills" and "repetition techniques". In fact, it referred to "quite sophisticated cognitive skills such as inference and deducing grammar in a generative way" (Cohen & Pinilla-Herrera, 2011, p. 14). This approach implied that LLSs should not only be considered by teachers as means to provide learners a way to promote their study skills, as "the popularity of the LLS research was the potential it held for affecting learning, both in and outside of the classroom" (Cohen & Pinilla-Herrera, 2011, p. 14). This enquiry drew the attention of researchers towards cognitive LLS use. In our context of research of GLS, it is implied that teachers should not present grammar learning strategies in the class room to facilitate their pupils' accurate reproduction of foreign language patterns. Instead of conceptualizing grammar acquisition as a set of rules that need to be learnt and accurately followed, teachers need to encourage natural acquisition of grammar as much as possible. In this case ,memorization of rules would be substituted by automatic generation of grammar structures and, in such a case, GLSs would serve as compensatory tools to help learners fill voids in their structural use of foreign language patterns. Earlier than 2005, Anderson (cited in Pawlak, 2009, p. 44) acknowledged that research in GLS up to 2009 had lacked approaches targeting the identification of learning strategies that second language learners used "to learn grammar and to understand its elements". However, unawareness of the availability of such tools as GLSs, on the behalf of the learners, did not prevent learners manipulating their approach towards the new grammar concept, by defining the knowledge they were expected to remember and to cognitively use it. Therefore, GLSs developed into tools that helped the learner draw a planned learning pathway towards reaching their learning outcomes. The teacher's duty, at this stage, would be to

not only his or her learning context, but also their approach for acquiring language patterns. Teachers could manage the class not only from a teaching perspective, but also from a learner's perspective.

Thus, it is not simply grammar teaching methods that need attention. The teacher should help the learner understand grammar rules as well as the structure of grammar patterns. Only in this way can individual learners actively approach the task and be selective in the use of strategies that work best for them. Considering the view of Oxford (2014, p. 124), that the learner is a "whole person" that manipulates various resources during the acquisition process, it is somewhat understandable why grammar teaching classes should move from a teaching idea "one size fits all" to a more personal approach. This requires teachers to allow time for the individual to learn and encourage them to use GLS, depending on the particular role and nature of requirements. Following the categorization of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), learning strategies may be metacognitive, cognitive, or social affective, which refer respectively to learners' planning, controlling, and evaluation of their learning by monitoring their own comprehension or linguistic production, and evaluating the outcomes of their own learning. In addition, the strategies relate to the learner's thinking about the learning process by transforming the material to be learned through resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, keyword association, elaboration, transfer, inference, note taking, summarizing, recombination, and translation; and finally, to the learner's involvement in communicating.

The issue of learning strategies remains a complicated matter in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Although the research has been intensive in the last twenty-five years, it is difficult to draw teaching strategies that fit learning contexts that vary greatly due to particular features of the learner. Furthermore, regarding grammar, teachers are even more convinced that it is their primary duty to lead and monitor the acquisition process in the classroom. The case of schools in Albania, where English is taught as a foreign language, shows that pupils who do well in proficiency tests, do not perform adequately in oral communication for the same grammatical knowledge. This papers aims to introduce a range of available grammar learning strategies for learners of EFL to use in the A2 and B1 levels. The material is accompanied by concrete examples of how grammar learning strategies can be included in lesson plans, based on textbook material. The aim is to render interested readers the awareness of the possible need to increase communicative grammar proficiency in learners of EFL by increasing their awareness of the range of means available to create long-lasting associations between the theory, acquisition, and correct usage of grammar. The earlier the attempts to create independent grammar learners, the sooner the opportunity exists for these learners to reach native-like grammar proficiency.

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