Contribution of Grammar to Improve Writing Skills in Russian as a Second Language

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Annotation. Grammar is the system of sound, structure and meaning of a language. All languages have grammar and every language has its own grammar. People who speak the same language can communicate because they intuitively know the grammatical system of that language's rules of meaning formation. Students who speak English as their first language already know English grammar well. You will learn the sounds of English words, the meaning of these words, and the different ways to combine words into meaningful sentences.

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Even if students can speak English well, they need guidance to become successful writers. They must transfer their knowledge of grammatical concepts from spoken to written.

Effective grammar instruction begins with what students already know about grammar and helps them apply that knowledge to writing. By combining their spoken and written language knowledge, teachers can eliminate abstract grammar concepts and enable students to write and read with greater competence and confidence.

As teachers, we've likely all been given grammar to teach students and have asked ourselves how we could possibly communicate the rules to our students. True, it is difficult to convey the complicated rules of grammar to students learning a language, and, as I've expressed countless times in this blog, simply explaining the rules is not enough. When it comes to teaching, there are traditionally three different approaches to teaching grammar.

Before moving on, it's important for me to point out that the three strategies it is discussed are meant to only take up the presentation phase of the lesson; the teacher should not make this the focus of the lesson. Teach the grammar, then make sure you have plenty of activities planned for the students to practice the grammar. That said, if the presentation phase of the lesson doesn't go well, the students won't be capable of practicing the new grammar. Read on for my explanation of the three approaches, and a discussion of the pros and cons of each of them.

Or, if know all this already and you'd like several examples of ways to use the inductive approach, you can gain access to the resource by clicking on the button below [3, 55-57].

Using the Inductive Approach. Non-explicit Approach. When using the non-explicit approach, the students are not given grammatical rules. The presentation of the grammar is mostly visual: through actions and pictures. The students then discover how to put together a sentence by copying the teacher. While the

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teacher may put up a sample sentence on the board, there is no direct discussion about how the grammar works.

For example, if a teacher were to teach about prepositions, the teacher could use their hands or a block to express some prepositions (in, on, under, next to, etc.) and then teach, using visuals, chairs and tables. After that the teacher could start speaking in full sentences, "The block is under the table" and having students do activities (e.g., moving the blocks) so that they discover what is being conveyed in the sentence. The students now have an idea of the form and are able to move on to the controlled practice of the language.

The advantage of this approach is that it completely engages the learner. The learner needs to stay focused, or they might miss out when called upon for an activity. Also, as the non-explicit approach uses only the language being taught, students are immersed in the language throughout the experience. Additionally, it's fun and exciting, which keeps students focused.

It is said that this is the best method for young learners, but that it isn't as effective with adults. True, adults aren't as ready to be taken out of their comfort zones as children, but it is my opinion that using this approach with low-level adults can still be effective as long as the students are shown respect and are aware of why you are doing different things. For example, it may be fun for a child to put a stuffed animal on a chair, but an adult who has just finished a long day may not be as open to this.

Another disadvantage to this approach is that it can be frustrating for some students not to know the rule precisely. It can lead to confusion for some students, and it is harder to gauge whether the concept has been mastered. Due to this, regular concept checks are important during a presentation of new grammar when using this method.

Deductive Approach. The deductive approach is the most traditional method of grammar teaching. Basically, the teacher explains the rule, usually in L1, and then has the students practice some examples. If a teacher was teaching comparatives using this method, adjectives would be given and translated into the student's first language. When comparing, the teacher would explain how the adjectives change and show a few examples. The teacher would then have the students practice in pairs while checking that they understand.

The advantage, and disadvantage, of this, is that it is easy and familiar. Many students are used to learning passively in this way. Also, students can be sure that they understand the rule as they were told in their own language.

This can also be disadvantageous because students aren't as focused on remembering what words mean or what the rule is because it is explicitly laid out for them. It's easier to forget because the student didn't need to put mental energy into memorizing it initially. Also, as it's not as engaging, it's easy for the students to lose focus and mentally drift off.

The most obvious disadvantage is that if the teacher doesn't speak the students' L1 fluently, they won't be able to explain the grammar. If the teacher does a long grammatical explanation that isn't in the students' L1, there is a good chance that the students will get confused. Either way, this makes lengthy grammatical explanations a chancy enterprise.

Inductive Approach. There are a lot of similarities between the inductive approach and the non-explicit approach. For the inductive approach, rules are likewise discovered and not directly discussed. Instead, students learn the rules through examples and testing them out.

If a teacher was trying to teach how to change regular verbs into the simple past, they could put six verbs on the board and show how they are changed from present to the past by writing sample sentences and

getting the students to repeat them. Once the teacher thinks the students get it, the teacher can ask students to try and change additional verbs into the past. While the student may not be 100% sure, they will probably successfully add -ed at the end of the word and other grammatical features (e.g., 'y' to an 'i', doubling the final consonant when appropriate, etc.) as long as the teacher has given enough examples.

As a learner, this approach keeps your brain active as you try to figure out how the grammar works. When using this approach, the teacher will notice students asking questions, not necessarily directly, but by giving examples to test their theories. The teacher can then correct errors when appropriate or, if students don't ask questions to solidify the rule in their mind, the teacher can give examples of incorrect sentences and make sure to show why they are wrong.

As you may have guessed, the disadvantage of this approach is that it takes more time. It takes more time to prepare for, and it takes up more class time. That said, as you get used to using this method, the amount of time will decrease. In fact, if you've taught a specific grammar point a number of times before, it will likely come to you quite naturally.

Using the Inductive Approach. There is no right or wrong approach to use when it comes to teaching language. The truth is that different situations call for different approaches. You as a teacher need to recognize these situations and use the right method. Keep your students on their toes, vary your methods, and keep things fresh.

Grammar instruction is most naturally integrated during the revising, editing, and proofreading phases of the writing process. After students have written their first drafts and feel comfortable with the ideas and organization of their writing, teachers may wish to employ various strategies to help students see grammatical concepts as language choices that can enhance their writing purpose. Students will soon grow more receptive to revising, editing, and proofreading their writing. In writing conferences, for example, teachers can help students revise for effective word choices.

As the teacher and student discuss the real audience for the writing, the teacher can ask the student to consider how formal or informal the writing should be, and remind the student that all people adjust the level of formality in oral conversation, depending on their listeners and the speaking context. The teacher can then help the student identify words in his or her writing that change the level of formality of the writing.

Teachers can help students edit from passive voice to active voice by presenting a mini-lesson. In editing groups, students can exchange papers and look for verbs that often signal the passive voice, such as was and been. When students find these verbs, they read the sentence aloud to their partners and discuss whether the voice is passive and, if so, whether an active voice verb might strengthen the sentence. The student writer can then decide which voice is most effective and appropriate for the writing purpose and audience.

Teachers can help students become better proofreaders through peer editing groups. Based on the writing abilities of their students, teachers can assign different proofreading tasks to specific individuals in each group.

For example, one person in the group might proofread for spelling errors, another person for agreement errors, another person for fragments and run-ons, and another person for punctuation errors. As students develop increasing skill in proofreading, they become responsible for more proofreading areas. Collaborating with classmates in peer editing groups helps students improve their own grammar skills as well as understand the importance of grammar as a tool for effective communication.

As teachers integrate grammar instruction with writing instruction, they should use grammar terms that make sense to the students. By incorporating grammar terms naturally into the processes of revising, editing, and proofreading, teachers help students understand and apply grammar purposefully to their own writing. Strategies such as writing conferences, partnership writing, grammar mini-lessons, and peer response groups are all valuable methods for integrating grammar into writing instruction [2, 12-15].

By teaching grammar, we not only give our students the means to express themselves, but we also fulfill their expectations of what learning a foreign language involves. Fortunately, nowadays with the emphasis on a communicative approach and a wealth of stimulating resources, teaching grammar does not necessarily mean endless conjugation of verbs or grammar translation.

There are two main approaches to teaching grammar. These are the deductive and the inductive approach.

➢ A deductive approach is when the rule is presented and the language is produced based on the rule. (The teacher gives the rule.)

➢ An inductive approach is when the rule is inferred through some form of guided discovery. (The teacher gives the students a means to discover the rule for themselves.)

In other words, the former is more teacher-centered and the latter more learner-centered. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. In my own experience, the deductive approach is undoubtedly time-saving and allows more time for practicing the language items thus making it an effective approach with lower-level students.

The inductive approach, on the other hand, is often more beneficial to students who already have a base in the language as it encourages them to work things out for themselves based on their existing knowledge.

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