

## REVIEW ON TEACHING GRAMMAR USING FOCUS ON FORM FOR SPEAKING SKILL

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Unlike the English language learning in the past, the revolution of a variety of English learning apps has changed the way individuals acquire language skills. These applications have offered a great variety of interactive features such as gamified lessons and personalized learning path, which can satisfy almost all of learning styles at any time anywhere. Fan (2023) and his colleagues assert that because most of the apps focus on “vocabulary learning enhancement” (p.4), learners can improve their vocabulary knowledge. Besides, Wang and Han (2021) discover that apps have positive influence on individual speaking performance.

Additionally, due to the advancement of technology, language barriers seem to break, especially in speaking and listening because learners can easily practise speaking through different sources such as video calls or language exchange platforms for a reasonable cost or even free of charge. When learners participate in communicative task like “making an airline reservation”, “borrowing books from library” or “finding street destination”, form has become less important than meaning and learners can achieve their realistic purposes of second language learning (Nunan, 2012).

Since the Communicative Language Teaching Approach was introduced, its goal has been intended to attain communicative competence (Rodgers, 1986). Therefore, this approach has been widely applied in teaching English. Harmer (2001) also points out that Communicative Language Teaching Approach

emphasizes the meaning instead of the linguistic form. That is the reason why when L2 learners are given ample opportunities, their fluency is believed to be improved despite learners’ language competence.

This questions teachers and educators as well as second language (L2) learners whether in this era, grammatical rules and actual words of language are considered as core materials for conversation (Sikorski, 2017) and what grammar can make contribution to English speaking skill.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In fact, Hammerly (1991) explains that grammar still plays an important role in improving L2 learners’ accuracy so the necessity to learn grammar is inevitable. In addition, learning grammar has also offered significant advantages. First, according to Hinkel and Fotos (2002) , L2 learners who study grammar can self-correct their current speech and use structures in communication automatically. Additionally, Celce-Muricia and Hills (1998) suggest grammatical competence prove to be a good solution to fossilization. This is understood as “a broken, ungrammatical, and pidginized form of a language” (p.2). Last but not least, for some people, grammar may remind them of the rules which are rigid and inflexible. However, Littelwood (1981) asserts that not only can L2 learners give the right answers to fixed patterns or structures, they can also learn grammar in the very creative way. In other words, they “make choices within the grammatical system itself” (p.172).

Although some scholars have defined the term of grammar, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1998) seem to give the most general view that “grammar is not merely a collection of forms but rather involves the three dimensions of what linguists refer to as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics” (p.4). Accordingly, learners learn not only “a system of rules” (Brown, 1997, p.347) but also “the structure, the rule and usage of the form in communication” (Yu, 2013, p.13).

As Lightbrown and Spada (1993) and Ellis (1997) suggest that when communication be taken into consideration, grammar be the central focus. In addition, and Brown (1997) shares the same idea that the integration of grammar into meaningful and communicative context is advisable. Thus, the study was guided by the following questions:

1. What current approach is the best for teaching grammar so that it can help L2 learners develop their accuracy?
2. What advantages and disadvantages of this approach are in the TLU language learning setting?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study is secondary research in which secondary data including books and research papers is employed with a view to evaluating the importance of grammar in teaching and learning speaking skill. Furthermore, the study aims to identify the best approach to help students learn and use grammar in communication effectively and creatively.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Research question 1

PPP model was first introduced by Byrne and gained great popularity in the 1980s (Willis, 2012). Nonetheless, some scholars have pointed out some drawbacks. Izumi (2012), Sato (2012) and Skehan (1996) all agree that PPP does not work effectively in teaching grammar and communication.

Therefore, some other approaches emerged so that L2 learners are able to improve accuracy in communication. These include Focus on Forms, Focus on Meaning and Focus on Form. Of these three methods, Focus on Form is the approach which takes advantage of the strength of traditional Focus on Forms and Focus on Meaning. This approach first introduced by Long and then Ellis (2016) states that the term then has been employed and extended by a great number of scholars and researchers. Particularly, Long (1991) asserts that Focus on Form “overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (p.45-46). In fact, Focus on Form is taken into consideration in both two sides by Long (1991) and other scholars such as Doughty and William (1998). Long (1991) believes that if L2 learners’ linguistic problems occurring in their communication are “repetitive” and “pervasive”, then Focus on Form should be applied. (p.45-46). On the other hand, Doughty and William (1998) suggest that Focus on Form be the best choice to assist L2 learners to improve their accuracy in oral activities because teachers will anticipate potential language difficulties in order to create or design suitable pedagogical materials.

### 4.2. Research question 2

#### 4.2.1. Advantages

Thuyloi University (TLU) students including English-majored, non English-majored and students from advanced programme can improve their accuracy in speaking. According to Lightbown (1983) and Pica (1983), Focus on Form can positively influence the long-term accuracy of linguistic form, which is really beneficial to TLU students. To her 17-year experience of teaching TLU students speaking skill and grammar, a large proportion of students in all the researcher’s groups make many grammatical errors in their utterances despite their correct

grammar exercises or tests. Doughty and Williams (1998) mention that if teachers follow Focus on Form, they can help their students correct their errors accurately. More importantly, many scholars share the same opinion that the more focus-on-form techniques are applied, the more accurate use of target structures is achieved (Camhi & Ebsworth, 2008; Doughty & verela, 1998; Jourdenias, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, & Doughty 1995; Loewen, 2005; Williams & Evans, 1998). Besides, Poole (2012) claims that teacher's English proficiency is another key element in enhancing learners' accuracy. All TLU English teachers prove themselves to be qualified as they all have had TESOL certificates, some of whom are Phd and some of whom are doing their Phd courses. Apparently, they are able to apply Focus on Form in order to enable TLU students to achieve progress.

#### **4.2.2. Disadvantages**

Poole (2012) raises question of the effectiveness of Focus on Form for big class size. He argues that there is no evidence that Focus on Form works effectively in overcrowded classes. Meanwhile, non-major English classes usually consist of 35-40 students.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

A student who possesses a rich vocabulary and grammar competence separately is not able to communicate successfully in terms of meaning and linguistic accuracy. As Long (1991) states, grammatical structures should be used in a meaningful way to achieve communication goals.

Apparently, Focus on Form with various techniques has positive influence on students' speaking skill when they have opportunities to take part in communicative focus on form activities. As a result, Ellis, Basturkmen and Lowen (2001) assert that accuracy as well as creativity of using new forms is improved. inspite of its limitations.

In short, form-focused activities supported by other suitable approaches, flexible curriculum, qualified teachers and small class size should be taken into consideration in the context of learning and teaching English at TLU.

### **6. REFERENCES**

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