

Teaching Grammar and Phonetics in English: Challenges, Methods and Classroom Practices

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Abstract—The skill of grammar and phonetics are two essential skills needed for good English language learning. Grammar imparts to learners the use of sentences and structures; phonetics equips them properly with the sound patterns for accurate sound production. Teaching these areas can be a challenge however, as learners may be from a different first language, may have prior language experience, may have issues with their pronunciation abilities or may not have got an opportunity to communicate with authentic English. This paper provides the review of the key problems encountered in English grammar and phonetics instruction, then suggests some feasible approaches in terms of classroom instruction. It is based on communicative teaching, contextual grammar teaching, pronunciation exercises, minimal pairs exercises, listening and speaking exercises, role play, images and video materials and the learning through technology. It also emphasizes grammar-phonetics when moving them into one context instead of teaching them as two-part systems. Teachers can build learners' communicative competence through grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, listening and speaking confidence by applying effective classroom practices.

Index Terms—English language teaching, grammar, phonetics, pronunciation, language learning, communicative competence, classroom practices, teaching methods

I. INTRODUCTION

English is now a valued language of learning, work, study, communication and professional growth. More than vocabulary is required to enable learners to use English with speakers from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They need to be grammatically correct, clearly articulate, a good listener and a confident talks man. Grammar and phonetics play a very important role in the teaching of English among the various elements in English language teaching.

Though grammar can help students appreciate the structure and organisation of words into meaningful sentences, phonetics can help them recognize and make sounds of the English language properly.

Traditionally grammar instruction has been linked to the memorisation of rules, definitions and sentence structures. Enough and sufficient knowledge of grammatical rules is essential, but a heavy reliance on the rules may lead to mechanical and uninteresting language learning. In paid work learners may recognise grammatical structures in writing, but might not have confidence in their ability to apply them to natural writing. As a result, classroom English teaching in current times has attached increasing significance to contextual and communicative approach to teaching in which grammar is shown in practical contexts, dialogues, texts and communication.

In addition, phonetics plays an important part, as learning the pronunciation of English can be an issue for students whose native language does not share the sound system of English. The problem of pronunciation may arise if some of the English sounds are not present in the mother tongue. Oral communication can also be influenced by stress, rhythm, intonation, length of words, and the production of consonants. Students might have grasped the meanings of words and phrases in English grammars, and know the spelling and pronunciation of particular words, but they might still struggle with communication due to unclear pronunciation. Because of this reason, it is valuable not to teach the phonetic only as an isolated subject, but as part of the language classes.

The challenge in the classroom with teaching grammar and phonetics, however, is not limited to the above. The learner is likely to have varying abilities, learning styles, first language influences, and

attitudes towards the English language. Some teachers may suffer from limited class periods, big class sizes, shortages of teaching materials and support for their students to practice their pronunciation. Another reason that some students might be reluctant to respond is that they might not be sure how to structure their responses or they may be afraid not to get them right, fearing they make grammatical or pronunciation mistakes. These may lead to poor participation and impact development of the language.

There are various solutions to the above challenges that can be drawn from modern teaching methods: Grammar and phonetics can be made more interesting by using communicative activities, pair work, group discussion, role play, pronunciation activities, minimal-pair exercises, listening activities, language game, using multimedia and digital learning resources. Teachers should not "right the errors" but help students see patterns, engage in language using relevance, and slowly build accuracy and confidence. Thus, the following paper concentrates on the difficulties of English grammar and phonetics teaching, the approaches and in-class activities of teaching English grammar and phonetics. It views that therefore, learning grammar should be accompanied by practical communication and pronunciation. This integrated approach has the potential to involve the learning of language in terms of accuracy and confidence as well as competence in real-life English communication.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

English grammar and phonetics have been one of the most discussed topics in the English language teaching field, as grammar is of paramount importance to acquire the accuracy, pronunciation, fluency and communicative competence of the learner. Aslam and Kak (2007) give adequate introduction into English Phonetics and Phonology subjects. The vowel qualities, the manner and mode of production of English speech sounds and the significance of their patterns for improving their pronunciation are described in their work. From an understanding of this perspective, the language teacher can better appreciate that the sounds that students struggle with in the L2 are not necessarily and wisely the same sounds that the students find

hard in the L1, and can assist the language learner in words that match their L1 by giving extra practice on the corresponding sounds.

In Ellis (2008), second language acquisition is discussed in a more general context and how knowledge and skills can be acquired by exposure, practice, interaction, and instruction. His work is of significance in language teaching because it demonstrates that language learning as a process is a gradual one, shaped by the process of classroom language teaching and the language learning opportunities for learners. From the grammar and phonetics aspect, this implies that the learners must be in continuous practice and not just be memorising rules or patterns of speech.

Lewin, 2009, is specifically about the teaching of English pronunciation, and about model accents. His work brings to light the complexity of making a choice between the pronunciation models in teaching English. The study is pertinent to the current research because pronunciation should not be regarded as an issue where the learners are only to practise an accent as a model for imitation, intelligibility and effective communication are more relevant issues especially in the study of pronunciation. This can assist teachers in better responding to students with diverse language backgrounds.

Goodwin, Brinton, Celce-Murcia and Griner (2010) offer a systematic teaching of pronunciation. They indicate that it is important to teach pronunciation in conjunction with listening & speaking. They have illustrated the effective teaching of pronunciation via controlled-practice and meaningful communication activities. This lends to the notion that phonetics and pronunciation should be a real aspect of the standard English lessons, rather than making it a separate part. Shin (2011) is interested in learners' perception of grammar teaching and also focuses on the ongoing demand for grammar teaching in English language programmes. The findings show that learners are aware of the important relationship between Grammar and their English Language Proficiency. But instruction of grammar can be more meaningful when learners have an understanding of the way in which grammatical structures are used in real communicative activity. The observation reaffirms the need for classroom use of meaningful examples and language use to be connected with grammatical rules.

Ellis (2012) highlights the importance of grammar to teaching and elaborates on the evolution of grammar pedagogy. From his work, it can be seen that grammar is not all about rules that are to be memorised. Rather, they should be provided with the opportunity to observe and practice grammatical features where applicable to the context of the language. This is significant for the present study, since it contributes to the balanced perspective that both grammatical accuracy and communicative competence are strived for at the same time.

In this study, Tergujeff (2013) explores some of the learners' views about the pronunciation teaching in EFL context. Overall, the study shows the value of taking into account learners' experience and expectation when teaching pronunciation. Students' previous language learning experiences may lead to various problems and tastes among learners. Thus, pronunciation teaching should be flexible and have sensitivity to student needs rather than be a rigid approach.

In an isolated contrast to integrated form-focused instruction, Spada et al. (2014) explore this approach and its effects on various kinds of S.L. knowledge. The results of their work can be shared in the grammar pedagogical discussion. For the study indicates that there is a room to attend grammatical form but there is a problem as to how grammatical form can be integrated into language learning. Grammar instruction can be linked with meaningful language use to help the learner gain a real understanding of grammar and language use.

Deepa (2015) identifies some techniques to be used in teaching the pronunciation of pre-service teachers. The study emphasizes practical pronunciation activities and training of teachers. This is especially relevant as it is teachers who should possess sufficient knowledge and classroom devices to assist students in alleviating pronunciation problems. The pronunciation instruction can be more effective, if teachers present repetition, listening tasks, sound discrimination and guided speaking tasks.

The study conducted by Moedjito, 2016, discussed the perceptions of English pronunciation teaching of Indonesian school teachers and university students. The study emphasizes that reinforcement of pronunciation is crucial, but also demonstrates that the teachers' and learners' perspectives on what is

appropriate in pronunciation teaching may differ. The above findings suggest that to achieve success in pronunciation instruction one must be conscious of learners' needs, teachers' knowledge, and classroom environment.

The present paper is based on some comparative analysis of explicit and implicit teaching of grammar in higher learning institutions carried out by Rahman and Rashid, 2017. They play a part in the ongoing debate over the teaching of grammar, whether by explicit explanation or by means of significant language input. The research indicates that both options may be of use in the context of learning. Explicit explanation combined with communicative uses can be very helpful for classroom practice as it helps learners gain knowledge of grammar.

Pronunciation is best integrated as part of the English language curriculum, as suggested by McGregor and Reed (2018). Their work is especially apt as pronunciation is often neglected in favor of grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing. They call attention to a need for more systematic integration of pronunciation into the language program in general. This is in keeping with the notion that regular listening and speaking practice is effective in pronunciation development instead of sporadic pronunciation classes.

Su (2019) introduces the patterns and local grammars and English teaching materials design. This study shows the importance of employing real language forms in designing instructional resources. Such strategies can inform students of the function of the actual structures of grammar in English. It also enables exciting use of 'contextual examples' rather than focusing on grammar taught in isolation from examples.

The book explores Burton's 2020 investigation into the role of grammar in English language teaching as well as its ongoing significance in language learning. Although grammar is mentioned as being of importance in language learning it is clear that the method in which grammar is being taught is different. The best way to use grammar is to provide knowledge to students that helps them make grammatical points and that is related to meaningful language. This serves as support to the current

research which is connected to grammatical aspects and practical aspects of communication in the classroom.

This article by Pennington (2021) offers a general overview of the current state of pronunciation teaching and identifies some trends in pronunciation pedagogy. It reveals a series not only of growing awareness of the intelligibility of the language but, also, of learner needs and communicative pronunciation in addition to a native-like accent. It also provides good evidence for how well pronunciation can be linked to other language skills. This point of view is significant in classrooms with multi-literacy backgrounds.

Liu, Jones & Reed (2022) discuss the link between phonetics and language education and practical suggestions as to what phonetic knowledge can mean to language learners. Their work shows that knowledge of the speech sounds can assist teachers in explaining pronunciation problems and designing appropriate classroom lessons. It also advocates the embedding of phonetics in the learning of language instead of regarding it as a theoretical domain of knowledge.

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that grammar and phonetics is a piece that is not only vital but interwoven in English language teaching. Studies that have been carried out so far provide us with solid basis for grammatical structures, speech sounds and pronunciation while later ones are focused more on approaches centred on the learner, communicative, contextual and integrated approaches. We also read that students are better served if there is a relation between grammar and pronunciation, and students learn while listening, speaking, interacting and using language meaningfully. Concurrently, there are still demands for classroom activities that can ensure grammatical accuracy but equipped with pronunciation competence, fluency, confidence and communicative language competence. The present study, therefore, adds to these earlier contributions by examining problems encountered in the classroom when teaching grammar and phonetics and by paying particular emphasis on practical approaches that can be implemented in an up-to-date classroom in an English language context.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

According to the present study, the main point about effective English communication skills is that the role of the English language teaching, grammar, phonetics, pronunciation, in the development of good English language communication as well as the role of language learning, communicative competence, classroom practices and teaching approach. Analysis reveals a close relationship between these areas and a learner-centred, integrated approach in teaching these should be used.

1. English Language Teaching

English language teaching is nothing that only grammar rules and vocabulary should be taught. It focuses on the four language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. The research findings show that pupils' learning is more successful when opportunities are afforded which allow them to relate to the English language in terms of meaningful communication. Language development is important, and occurs more successfully in a classroom environment with the appropriate learning materials, student/teacher interaction, and teacher guidance.

2. Grammar

In the structure of English, grammar is the basic foundation. The analysis indicated that the students experience difficulties in verbs tenses, articles, prepositions, subject verb agreement, forming sentences and the use of auxiliary verbs. For the learning of grammatical concepts, rule-based teaching may be helpful, but in order to become proficient in the use of grammar, it may not always be suitable to use traditional rule-based teaching. Thus, grammar should be taught using examples, situations, speaking or listening tasks, writing tasks, and/or communication tasks.

3. Phonetics

In phonetics, students learn to grasp the sounds made by the English language and how these sounds are organised. Difficulties noted in the study include unfamiliar consonant and vowel sounds, combinations of consonant sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation. A student's L1 can have a significant impact on the way the student-pronounces their English. Practice of the phonetics system can

facilitate learners' expression of pronunciation differences and enhance their English pronunciation.

4. Pronunciation

Successful oral communication is directly related to the correct pronunciation of the language. Correct grammar does not guarantee that the ideas can be readily understood if they're not pronounced correctly. According to the analysis, minimal-pair exercises, repetition, listening activity, reading aloud, dialogue activity and pronunciation exercises can enhance accuracy of learners. A primary objective of teaching should be to encourage learners to be intelligible and confident instead of adopting a specific native accent.

5. Language Learning

Learning is more effective when learners are actively involved in learning. The study suggests that opportunities for students to practise English through pair work, group activity, discussion, role play, presentation and real-life communication are beneficial to students. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of Repetition and Practice for Development of Grammar and Pronunciation.

6. Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in English in the various contexts in which it is used. The analysis results indicate that it is inadequate only based on grammatical knowledge. Grammar then can contribute directly to the development of communicative competence in the context of phonetics.

7. Classroom Practices

Good classrooms activities are interactive grammar activities, phonics training, listening activities, role playing, group discussion, language game, reading out loud, presentation, and peer activities. The research results suggest that with this form of teaching, there is a positive effect on participation and the avoidance of errors. Audio recordings, videos, pronunciation programs, digital language and tools, and interactive exercises can also be used to offer more practice opportunities for teachers.

8. Teaching Methods

Depending on the learners' needs and conditions in the classroom, different teaching methods could be used. The Direct Method will foster the use of English in classroom interaction while Grammar-Translation Method will give grammatical knowledge. The two methods differ in their approach; in the Audio-Lingual Method, emphasis is placed on repetition and pronunciation, while the Communicative Language Teaching approach emphasizes meaningful communication. The analysis implies that there is no one best practice for all classrooms. There are some techniques that can be used in a combined form to achieve better outcomes of learning.

IV. OVERALL ANALYSIS

The analysis presented overall shows that grammatical and phonetic instruction can not be treated as totally different fields. Grammar helps to build competent sentences and phonetics and pronunciation help to achieve the clearness of oral communication.

If these components are combined with the listening, speaking, reading and writing activities, (figure 1) students will be able to build up a better communicative competence. Based on the study, the following conclusions are made: it is recommended to adopt an interactive, contextual, activity-based and learner-centred approach to teaching English.

V. FINAL CONCLUSION

The findings of the study point out that integrated, practical and learner-centred approach must be adopted in teaching of English grammar and phonetics is effective. Grammar gives the learners the structural basis to help them form sentences correctly; Phonetics & Pronunciation has been introduced to ensure that they can clearly communicate with understandable pronunciation. Instruction to these components could be delivered by rules and repetition, but the learners need opportunities to use what they've learned in meaningful contexts regularly.

The analysis demonstrates that various active teaching and learning techniques (pair work, group discussion, role play, pronunciation drill, minimal

pairs work, listening exercise, reading aloud, presentation, and language game) can enhance the participation and confidence of learners in the classroom. Likewise, audio-visuals or digital materials and resources can be utilized to enhance pronunciation and communication activities. A conducive classroom atmosphere, where learners can communicate in English without fear of making errors, is essential, and this is the responsibility of the teachers.

The other main findings of the study are that the components of grammar, phonetics, pronunciation, and communicative competence are closely related to

each other. A combination of some suitable teaching techniques with the appropriate input in placement of words and phrases can lead to grammatical accuracy, improved pronunciation, improved listening and oral skills, and increased confidence in using English. Thus, English language learning should not be meromictic learning, but it should be active, communicative, practice-oriented and real-life language use. The use of such kinds of classroom practices may make a great contribution in making English language learning effective and meaningful.

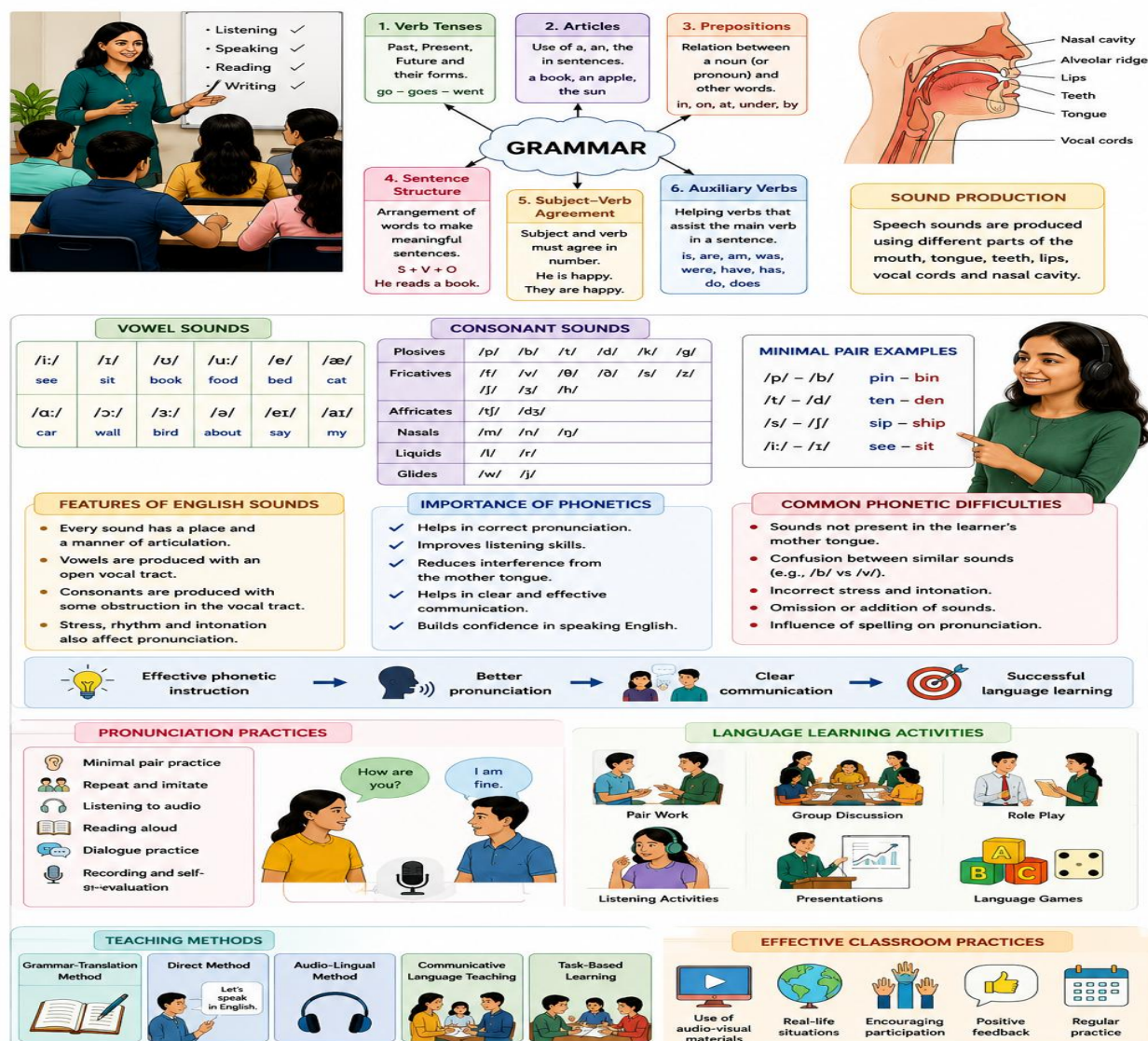


Figure 1: integrated, practical and learner-centred approach

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