

# Asian Resonance

## The Complexity of Problems of Teaching English Grammar in Fatehpur District



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### Abstract

English language is an easy means of communication in the international sphere of life. We Indians cannot give up the use of English for more than one reason. The condition under which English is taught in Fatehpur district differs from one type of school/college to another. For instance, English is taught under favorable circumstances in public schools whereas the conditions under which it is taught in a majority of other schools leave much to be desired. The same stands valid for grammar teaching. Inability to understand the true function of grammar has been disastrous. The controversy regarding its place has contributed in its poor standards. A good teacher of English grammar must be eclectic in his mental attitude, he need not accept one approach in toto, and he should choose what is best adapted to his goal in classroom. The method of teaching grammar in backward places like Fatehpur should advance conjointly with the linguistic and psychological growth of the child.

**Keywords** Respondents, Questionnaire, Colloquial expression, Cramming Rules, Parsing, , Archaic, Formal Grammar, Functional Grammar, Nomenclature Knowledge, Inductive-Deductive Method .

### Introduction

Every language has its grammar. Whether it is one's own mother-tongue or a second language that one is learning, grammar of the language is significant. Grammar is the science of a language. It is the practical analysis of a language. It deals with the function of words in a sentence. The term 'grammar' implies numerous things at different time and often numerous things at the same time.

Grammar explains the pattern or general structure of expression. Dr. West points out, "Grammar is not a code of rules it is, like etiquette and table manners, a statement of convention; it summarizes what is done by cultured people; and like etiquette, it is in a state of constant change."<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge of grammar is probably more valuable to a second language learner than to a native speaker. This is because in the process of language acquisition the native speaker has internalized the grammar of the language in an intuitive manner. But on the contrary the second language learner has to endeavor consciously to master those aspects of the language which recon grammaticality. But in India, where English is taught as a second language teaching of grammar has been a disputed matter with the educationists in this field. Fatehpur being a backward district offers multiple problems in English grammar teaching as a result of poor standard of colleges and schools particularly in rural areas.

**Aims of Study-** During last six years stay at Fatehpur and getting involved in teaching English at the graduate and post-graduate level, I have been trying to get acquainted with grammatical problems of students that they acquire at the school level and carry on at the college level. The objectives of the present study are altogether different from those that are considered necessary for metro cities and districts having good English background. In the long practiced system of teaching English in Fatehpur district as any other place in India grammar held a very significant place in the curriculum. But it has failed to yield expected result. The study aims to review the causes and present a possible solution so as to help in enhancing English teaching and learning.

### Tools

#### (i) Questionnaire

#### Part- 1 (General Background)

- 1- Name :
- 2- Age :

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- 3- Teaching in (Please tick whichever is applicable):
- (a) Degree College (Post Graduate or Graduate) [ ]  
 (b) Inter College [ ]  
 (c) Junior High School [ ]  
 (d) Primary School [ ]  
 (e) Any other school or Institution (Please Mention the name) [ ]
- 4- What is the medium of instruction of your school/college:  
 Hindi [ ] English [ ]
- 5- Location:  
 Rural Area [ ] Town Area [ ]  
 Urban Area [ ]
- 6- What is the level of your education? (Please Tick):  
 Graduate [ ] Post Graduate [ ]  
 M.Phil [ ] Ph.D. [ ]  
 Any Other (Please Mention) [ ]
- 7- Which language do you use most of the time with your students:  
 Hindi [ ] English [ ]

## Part- 2 Views on English grammar Teaching.

### Do you think that grammar should:

- (a) occupy an important place in teaching and learning English in Fatehpur District.  
 (b) not occupy an important place in teaching and learning English in Fatehpur District.

### If (a), tick the reason/reasons

- [ ] It helps to learn the language correctly and efficiently.  
 [ ] It gives the students confidence in the active use of the structural patterns of the language.  
 [ ] Its value is unsurpassed for the purpose of correct writing  
 [ ] Any other.

### If (b), tick the reason/reasons

- [ ] The knowledge of grammar is not a condition for the learner to use language and respond to it.  
 [ ] It exalts the importance of cramming the rules which does no good to students.  
 [ ] It deals with only a part of language because it does not deals with idioms, phrases, proverbs, fluency, articulation, colloquial expression, and power of speech.  
 [ ] It hinders the spontaneous learning of a foreign language.  
 [ ] Any other.

### What is/are your suggestion/suggestions to improve the teaching of English grammar in India:

- [ ] It should always follow the language, not precede it.  
 [ ] It should be taught as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself.  
 [ ] It should be taught through inductive- deductive method.  
 [ ] Any other.

### (ii) Personal interview.

### (iii) Workshop organized in the college.

### Discussion

As has been previously mentioned grammar had been given an excessively significant place in teaching English as a second language. It was

supposed that strength to speak and write English is impossible without a prior mastery of grammatical rules. That is to say, it was believed that the only way to acquire a full mastery of English was to learn the rules of its grammar. Naturally grammar began to be presumed as an end in itself. As a result, grammar was given an excessive and undue importance in the curriculum in the past. But times changed. With the introduction of the direct method, grammar started to be deprived of its place of importance in the curriculum. The view became prevalent that grammatical knowledge could not yield the power to speak or write English. Advocate of the Direct Method proclaimed that a living language like English could be learnt only by practice of speaking not by knowing the rules of grammar. Consequently, it was inevitable that grammar began to be considered, not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Grammar, thus, lost its significance. However, the controversy regarding its place continued and it still continues. This controversy is evident in survey report conducted in various schools and colleges of Fatehpur district.

Table- 01\*

Respondents on what should be the place of grammar in teaching and learning English

Inst.	It should occupy an important place No. (%)	It should not occupy an important place No. (%)	Total No. (%)
Degree College	05 (35.72%)	09 (64.28%)	14 (100%)
Inter College	20 (55.56%)	16 (44.44%)	36 (100%)
Jr. High School	16 (48.48%)	17 (51.52%)	33 (100%)
Primary School	12 (46.15%)	14 (53.85%)	26 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>53 (48.62%)</b>	<b>56 (51.38%)</b>	<b>109 (100.00)</b>

\*A survey was made of a cross section of teachers from Degree College, Inter College, Junior High Schools and Primary Schools situated both in urban and rural areas of Fatehpur district. 109 teachers responded to the questionnaire provided by me.

### Chief Findings

A number of English teachers are very incredulous about the utility of grammar teaching. They have indicated several problems with grammar teaching. These arguments can be gathered up thus:

- (i) Simply learning rules are not sufficient for language learning; language learning totally depends upon practice and habit formation.  
 (ii) What is studied in a grammar class is not employed with enough point and frequency; rules of grammar may be completely learnt by a pupil and yet not employed in practice.  
 (iii) It deals with only a part of language, for it does not deal with fluency, articulation, idioms, phrases, vocabulary, proverbs, colloquial expression and skill of speaking.

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- (iv) Mistakes in a language are not connected with the knowledge of grammar, the concept that the grammatical errors made by the learner are due to the lack of grammatical knowledge is completely wrong.
- (v) It does not give ideas, and language without ideas is lifeless.
- (vi) It actually retards the instinctive acquisition of a foreign language

grammar taught to them should, in no case, be formal grammar as it lays stress on form rather than function, on definitions rather than their application. Grammar should not be taught for the sake of grammar.

The worn out, unreasonable custom of nomenclature knowledge and the idle march of the parsing class are of no practical use. What is more significant for learning a language is sentence pattern. The goal of teaching English throughout the first two years should be to give the students a mastery over the basic structures of the language. Functional

Table – 2

Respondents by reason/reasons for denying and important place to grammar.

Inst.	The knowledge of grammar is not a condition for the learner to use language and respond to it No. (%)	It exalts the importance of cramming rules which does no good to students No. (%)	It deals with only a part of language because it does not deal with idioms, phrases, proverbs, fluency, articulation, colloquial expression and power of speech No. (%)	Any other No. (%)
Degree College	09 (64.29%)	06 (42.85%)	11 (78.57%)	04 (28.57%)
Inter College	19 (52.77%)	24 (66.67%)	26 (72.22%)	06 (16.67%)
Jr.High School	18 (54.55%)	12 (36.36%)	17 (51.52%)	06 (18.18%)
Primary School	15 (57.69%)	11 (42.31%)	18 (69.23%)	03 (11.54%)
<b>Total*</b>	<b>61 (55.96%)</b>	<b>53 (48.62%)</b>	<b>72 (66.06%)</b>	<b>19 (17.43%)</b>

Most of the respondents gave more than one response.

Another problem that has caused a lot of difficulty in Fatehpur district, as far as the teaching grammar is concerned, is the use of the traditional method of English teaching. Grammar is taught with the help of grammar book. It embodies definitions and rules to pupils with the help of examples. The chief process in this method is 'from rule to example'. Its main objective is the cramming of rules and definitions. Both these aspects rise against the teaching aims- advance from known to unknown, simple to complex, particular to general and example to rule. Besides, cramming of rules and definitions is drowsy work. Pupils do not find any charm in it. That is why even after cramming rules and definitions, they forget them. In this method a great deal of time is wasted in the application of complex analysis and parsing. Dr. P. Gurrey once remarked, "In secondary schools, the use of parsing and full analysis is a waste of time compared to the effectiveness of many other exercises."<sup>1</sup> Much of English grammar taught within the traditional method is "pedantic, or archaic, or even erroneous."<sup>2</sup>

## Suggestions

It is a well known fact that despite the problems with the teaching of grammar, we cannot deny its importance. Once it is accepted that teaching grammar is essential the question arises: how is it to be taught in Fatehpur district? The teaching of grammar should be introduced in the first year of the English course as soon as students get some measure of command over the language. But

grammar is more useful for them because it does not place rules to be strictly followed in the use of a language. It does not lay emphasis on the form but the function of the words in a particular context.

For the students of Fatehpur district inductive- deductive method of teaching grammar may be the best one because it follows some educational axioms. This method is employed to teach science. Since grammar is also a science of language, it can effectively be employed for teaching grammar. Inductive means to advance from observation to law and deductive means to advance from law to observations. The teacher should use the combination of inductive and deductive methods. First of all, he should present the examples. Then he should clear the meaning of those examples. When the students have completely comprehended the examples, then hypothesis should be formulated. Then the theory or rules should be laid down. When the rules have been found out, the verification of rules becomes essential. It is essential to arrive at assured conclusions. At last, the teacher, with the help of students, should attempt to discover those examples, through which it may be possible to support and verify those rules. The teacher should try to teach grammar by this method. This kind of teaching is scientific, sincere, practical and effective.

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**Table- 3**

Respondents' suggestion/suggestions to improve the teaching of English grammar in Fatehpur district.

Inst.	It should always follow the language, not precede it No. (%)	It should be taught as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself No. (%)	It should be taught through inductive-deductive method No. (%)	Any other No. (%)
Degree College	11 (78.57%)	10 (71.43%)	13 (92.86%)	08 (57.14%)
Inter College	19 (52.78%)	15 (41.67%)	18 (50.00%)	09 (25.00%)
Jr. High School	19 (57.58%)	18 (54.55%)	14 (42.42%)	05 (15.15%)
Primary School	16 (61.54%)	17 (65.38%)	20 (76.92%)	02 (07.69%)
Total*	65 (59.63%)	60 (55.05%)	65 (59.63%)	24 (22.02%)

\*Most of the respondents gave more than one response.

### Let us sum up

Undoubtedly, the teaching of English grammar holds a very significant place in the teaching of English particularly in the place like Fatehpur district where majority of students come from poor English background, but the teaching of grammar should never excessively depend on theories and definitions. Every spoken language goes on changing and developing. Therefore, the teaching of grammar should be in accordance with the changes and developments that take place in a language. The teaching must not be extremely theoretical. It must have definite practical elements in it.

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