

12.2 GRAMMAR : MEANING AND DEFINITION

Language is a mark of dignity in the evolution of man. The communication is switched over to listening and speaking with emergence of language. Before it, human beings communicated with signs and cries. The man started reading and writing, then printing and today... with hi- tech computers, language has become a tool which is essential for every human activity.

Now what is the place of grammar in a language? In fact, grammar is the 'theory of language. It's the study of the organisation of words into sentences. Plato and his disciple Aristotle, enjoyed the credit of analyzing this aspect of the language. The first Latin grammar was written on the model of the Greek grammar. This grammar inspired and motivated the scholars all over the world and became the basis of 'English' grammar.

Every language has a unique set of rules i.e. grammar of its own.

Although its study is important in both cases, whether first language or second language but for those who learn a language as second, it is a must. This is because in the process of acquiring the language the native speaker has intuitively internalized. The second language learner thus has to make conscious

effort to master those aspects of the language which account grammatically aspect.

There are various approaches to study grammar but before discussing them, let us have a look at what does grammar actually mean and how can it be defined. Grammar is the science of language. It is the study of sentences analytically and terminologically. Experts have tried to define it in various ways. There are as follows:

According to **Thompson and Wyatt**, "Grammar presents the facts of language, arranged under certain categories and deals only with what can be brought under general laws and stated in the form of general rules

In the words of **Dr. Sweet**, Grammar is the practical analysis of a language, its anatomy."

So, it deals with the function of words in a sentence and explains its Structural details. It clarifies general rules of syntax or sentence- Constructions... i.e. the word-order, agreement of the subject and the Verb, sequence of tenses, etc. It throws light on the language structure And facilitate correct language learning.

Dr. West has unique approach to it. He says, “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.”

L.R.H. Chapman says, “Grammar is the study of language by specialists, made in order to establish the rules and principles which are followed more or less unconsciously or instinctively by the native speakers.”

W.N. Francis on the other hand, gives more detail: “Grammar has three different meanings. The first meaning of grammar—call it grammar I—is the set of formal patterns in which the words of a language are arranged in order to convey larger meanings. The second meaning of grammar, —call it grammar II—is the branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description, analysis and formalization of formal language patterns. The third meaning of grammar—call it grammar III—is linguistic etiquette.”

SALIENT FEATURES OF GRAMMAR

Some peculiar features are enlisted below on the basis of above definitions :-

- Every language has its own set of rules called grammar.
- It is the ‘theory’ of the language.
- A language is comprised of meaning, arrangement of words and sentences through grammar.
- English language is constructed having Latin grammar at its base.
- Grammar involves the study of organization of words into sentences based on certain rules.
- Grammar is the exploration of characteristics and peculiarities of a language to establish rules and principles.
- Grammar is not merely a set of rules, it is, like etiquette and Table manners of speaking and writing a language.
- Grammar gives an account of the code rules, facts and peculiarities, arranged in certain categories and stated in the form of general rules.

• **Grammar involves three areas:**

- 1) The set of formal pattern for arranging words of a language.
 - 2) A branch of linguistic science and analytical aspect of a Language.
 - 3) A linguistic etiquette or norm.
- Grammar is a major component of language which establishes the relationship between words.

AIMS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR

- To provide pupils the logic about scientific and theoretical Aspect of language.
- To impart knowledge about the semantics i.e. the types of meaning.
- To clarify the concepts related to syntax, i.e., structures or English language.
- To develop reasoning and habit of correct observation among The pupils.
- To teach grammar in a rule-governed behaviour and not as Mere rote learning.
- To develop pupils understanding about the rules of English grammar through use and practice of its structure. To make them aware about correct patterns of sentences Through reason and logic.
- To enable the students to actualize their ideas in written or spoken form logically and correctly.

STATUS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN CURRICULUM

In most of the English medium as well as convent schools, 'Direct method is in trend now a days. There is no place for old methods like Grammar Translation method and Bilingual method. Consequently grammar is disappearing rapidly from curriculum. But in Govt. Schools it still enjoys a central place. Both the extremes are harmful. Grammar should be taught but in a pragmatic manner. It should result in utility in daily life. Following are the things that a teacher should keep it in mind while teaching grammar.

- Grammar should never be over-emphasised only for the sake of teaching. But its functional part should be taught carefully.
- Grammar should follow the language, not language following it. Language should not at all be taught giving rules of grammar importance.

C.E. Eckersley admits, "The rules of grammar are like the laws of nature. The laws were not made for nature to obey, but simply a few facts which wise men have observed as to the way

nature acts. The grammarian merely examines the language of the best speakers and writers and deduces rules from their use of it.”

- **Ballard says**, “Formal grammar fails to provide a general mental training, does not enable teachers to

eradicate solecism, does not aid in compositions and takes up time which could much more profitably be devoted to the study of literature.”

- Incidental and informal approach of teaching should be adopted for early years. While for middle stage, inductive approach is useful. Afterwards there is no problem in adopting traditional approach.

- Initially only function of various words should be taught while at later stage more complex analytical studies should be emphasised.

- First, pupils should only listen and speak the language to have command on it. Afterwards they should be taught grammar.

- Much practice should be given, especially in case of functional grammar. Only practice would help them to gain fluency in English.

TYPES OF GRAMMAR

- **Perspective Grammar** : The traditional old grammar which is highly theoretical and formal one is perspective grammar. Only rules and forms for their own sake are taught emphatically without taking into account their utility in students' life. As we know, language is related to human beings so it is of dynamic nature but rules taught here are age old and static and in this type of grammar, there is no scope of any flexibility in the rules.

- **Descriptive or Functional Grammar** : This is just the opposite of perspective grammar. Its concept is new and up to date as it is dynamic and changes according to the needs of environment. So, it does not only describe the rules or forms but the functional aspect of grammar also. It may be stated that if perspective grammar describes everything physically, descriptive grammar describes the behaviour of language.

- **Scholarly Traditional Grammar** : The scholars of universities faced this grammar after extensive research. Various bibliographic references, critical evaluation of ancient works and thorough documentation by citation from English literature are some of its peculiarities. But this grammar lacks regularity due to much diversity of information. This

is least beneficial to pupils as historical account dominates here.

• **Transformation-Generative Grammar** : This is new and developing type of grammar. This type suggeststwo types of sentences:

1. Basic Sentences .

2. Transformed Sentences.

Transformed sentences are derived from the basic sentences whereas the basic ones can't be derived from the transformed. E.g.

I am a boy (Basic

Sentence) Am I a boy? Or

I am not a boy. (Transformed Sentences)

• **Structural Grammar** : CC. Fries proposed this type of Grammar. He was an American linguist and we know that America approach to language is utilitarian, not conventional. So, this grammar emphasizes sentence structures. In fact descriptive grammar ge motivation from this type. But being new and developing type of gram this is not a complete system.

Out of these five types, the most popular now a days are: the formal grammar and functional grammar, All old and Govt. schools with mode tongue as their medium prefer formal one while the public and English medium schools emphasise functional grammar. Now what is the difference between the two? Let us have a look at it.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORMAL AND FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Formal Grammar

- The students are taught each other and every rule related to grammar whether useful or not.
- It is also known as traditional grammar or theoretical grammar.
- It doesn't take into account the functional unity.
- Rules and forms of grammar are overemphasized.
- As it emphasizes rule and theoretical aspect only, so it follows deductive approach, I. e. teaching rules and definitions first followed by examples.
- This is just a mental exercise in which most of the things are abstract.

- Being taught formally, it proves to be difficult and monotonous.
- Rules of grammar are consciously memorized by pupils.
- It is less useful for pupils, being theoretical.
- It encourage rote memorization of theory of language.
- Every teacher can teach it by cramming rules.
- As most of the things are just dictated without any utility, it results in passive learning by pupils.
- Being a part of rote memory most of the rules are forgotten by pupils in the long run.
- It places high burden on pupils s mind due to excessive use of memory.
- The practice is ignored due to bulky rules and peculiarities.

Functional grammar

- Here students are taught only useful sentence patterns, nothing more than that.
- It is known as descriptive grammar.
- Here only functional utility in daily life is taken into account.
- Only practical and useful aspects are taught.
- Being functional in nature this follows inductive approach, first giving examples and then inducing rules or generalisations from them.
- Functional grammar is of concrete nature due to it's immediate applicability in speech, reading and writing.
- Being taught incidentally in an informal way, so it proves to be interesting resulting in automatic learning.
- Grammar rules are not memorized but acquired through imitation and practice.
- It is highly useful, being practical.
- It results in natural acquisition of correct patterns of language without the help of rote memory.

- Its teacher should be an expert having full insight into the grammar.
- Being inductive in approach, pupils play major role in drawing generalizations, so it results in active learning by them.
- Its effect is long lasting due to its frequent use in daily life.
- As incidental teaching is there, even pupils don't know how quickly it becomes a part of their own language. There is no burden at all on them.
- Much practice is provided to pupils and only practice makes a man perfect.

This comparison is an evidence why modern experts support teaching of 'Functional Grammar'. It has high practical value the reason being,

"It is the grammar learnt in speech or in the study of the reader, and of the formal text. A good deal of grammar is absorbed in this way unconsciously by imitation by the pupil. He begins to speak correct sentences without having been told the rules of grammar."

But some scholars strongly oppose the use of this approach in Indian classes particularly.

In the words of Dev Singh, "In the mother tongue which we daily speak, and hear, a great deal of grammar is functionally absorbed; but in a foreign language in which there is a limited scope to speak and hear, no functional or incidental learning of grammar will do for long. It becomes essential to study the grammar theoretically."

ADVANTAGES OF TEACHING GRAMMAR:

According to I.A. Gordon Adnuts, "Language is the vehicle of our thoughts and feelings and of our stories, whether true or not and grammar is the machinery by which that vehicle is set in motion."

Following are some advantages of teaching grammar:

- Grammar is essential for thorough knowledge and theory of a language.
- It gives systematic knowledge of language.

- Language is a logical and complex system in an orderly Manner Only due to grammar.
- Through grammar to language, we proceed from concrete to Concrete abstract.
- Grammar helps in correct language learning.
- It provides a criteria to evaluate the correctness of a language.
- It explains the various structures and basic sentence patterns of English in detail.
- Knowledge of grammar gives logic and reason to clear any Doubt or confusion.
- It is essential for correct expression in a language.
 - Guessing, on the part of the students, is controlled by the Knowledge of grammar.
 - It provides scientific base to the language.
 - The knowledge of grammar checks entry of vagueness in the language learning.
 - All grammatical items must be taught to pupils for complete knowledge of a language because a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
- Grammar is like a skeleton to the body of a language. A body can't stand in the absence of skeleton.

LIMITATIONS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR

The scholars today prefer the natural learning of a language through the use and practice rather than memorizing the grammatical items and rules merely. The teaching of grammar is criticized due to the following reasons:

- **Palmer** says, "It actually hinders the spontaneous a foreign language."
- It teaches language in a concrete manner while actually language is abstract as emotions, expressions are involved.
- Thought and expression have no place in grammar and these are the fundamental things to acquire fluency in a language.
- It does not facilitate the fluent speech and the writing ability of the pupils.
- The common errors are not necessarily related to grammar. **Kittson** says, "The notion of the grammatical mistake made by the learner are due to the lack of grammatical knowledge, is wholly false; this is often curiously illustrated in examinations where a candidate will frequently

gain marks in one

section of the paper by stating a grammatical rule correctly and a little later he breaks the same rule in his composition.”

- It gives only partial knowledge about the language. Grammar Has nothing to do with proverbs, idioms, phrases, fluency, phonetics, vocabulary, dialogue and speech.

- It places extra burden on pupil's memory and it results in passive mastery over language.

- An expert is required to teach grammar effectively. An Incompetent teacher rather spoils pupil's basic knowledge by Teaching grammar ineffectively.

Following scholars have criticized the teaching of grammar.

Jespersion's views are, “Grammar is a set of stiff dogmatic percepts, according to which some things are correct and others absolutely wrong.

While P. Gurrey criticizes as, “In secondary schools, the use of parsing (religious teaching) and full analysis is a waste of time compared to the effectiveness of many other exercises.”

And Halliday admits, “Much of English grammar taught within the Old method was t But whatever we say about teaching grammar, one thing is sure, it s pedantic, or archaic even erroneous.”

But whatever we say about teaching grammar, one thing is sure, it Is a necessary evil to learn a language.

METHODS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR :

Following are the popular methods for teaching grammar:

1. The Traditional method

2. The Informal Method

- 3 The Correlational or Incidental Method

4. The Inductive-Deductive Method

- The Traditional Method :** This method aims at giving everything related to grammar in detailed

form,

i.e. definitions, rules, examples and exercises. The approach followed is deductive and the method, traditional. A text book is used for it.

First of all, the teacher chooses the topic and tells rules and definitions to the students. Then they are given an exercise which is to be solved on the basis of that topic's contents. Same procedure is adopted for every topic related to grammar. The pupils have to memorize all these rules taught to them and practise it in exercises of the text book.

The only merit of this method is that the detail of everything related to grammar is available to them in their books.

Demerits:

- This method proceeds through deductive approach, i.e., from rule to example. While inductive approach is the favourite of the scholars now a days.
- The rote memory plays the main role.
- For teaching-learning process three main psychological maxims, i.e. proceed from particular to general, from known to unknown and from easy to difficult are followed but this method violates all these maxims.
- Everything taught to the pupils has to be memorized by them. It makes this method dull, monotonous and less interesting.
- Practice is also not up to the mark. This is confined to text book exercises only. So, there is no scope for incidental teaching.

Although this method was highly popular in India a few decades ago but these days no sensible and dedicated teacher prefers it due to all the above limitations. All these things lead to the passive mastery over the language and the things learnt are least beneficial in daily life.

• **The Informal Method :** The traditional method recommends that grammar should be taught by rules. This method promotes that grammar should be taught by usage. A continuous practice is recommended in this method in all basic skills involved in learning of a language and it is very Useful at the early stage. **Suri and Bhardwaj say,** "The informal method connotes teaching of no grammatical rules, but Explaining correct usage informally during correction work. The method is a necessity in the early stages when the of no gram pupils have not mastered enough

of vocabulary and are yet battling with speech,”

The positivity In this method lies in the incidental and informal mode of teaching. The children learn by doing. They have no need to cram the rules and generalisations.

Demerits:

- This method is time-consuming and demands hard labour of students as well as teachers.

- This is unsystematic.

- This is not fit for teaching all rules.

- **The Incidental or Correlation Method :** This method discards rules and formal teaching of grammar. It supports the belief that grammar should be taught incidentally. It means that when pupils are reading text book or translating something or writing a composition, the teacher should give references of grammar here and there. We can't deny the fact that during such incidental teaching, the normal courses of teaching a particular topic is disturbed. This haphazardness creates unnecessary divergence. So, this method is not complete in itself but it is a good supplement for inductive – deductive method.

After the rules of grammar have been taught, in the grammar period, reference at the proper occasion may be made in the intensive reading or composition period for purposes of further drill and application.

The advantage of this method is that natural type of learning is done by correlation and practical use of grammatical laws while doing activities.

Demerits:

This method is criticized on following basis:

- Being in developing stage, this method is not complete in itself. It can only supplement other methods.

- It disturbs normal course of teaching and creates much distraction.

- It is highly unsystematic and haphazard.

- So many grammatical items and bulky text make this method too tough and vague to be followed by tiny tots.

- Due to the dearth of language experts, this method can't enjoy complete success.
- It is time consuming.

No doubt many limitations are there, but this method proves to be a boon when used as a supplement to the inductive – deductive method. When taught through inductive-deductive method, the pupils should be taught using the incidental method.

• **The Inductive-Deductive Method** : This method is the most popular And it is also thought to be the best method by majority of educationists, Normally this method is used to teach science. As grammar is a science of language, so it is popularly used for teaching grammar, But Thompson and Wyatt say, “Even when the facts are discovered inductively, the knowledge acquired has to be applied deductively, or it is apt to be forgotten for lack of use.”

Lets discuss the two different approaches involved in this method :

i) The Deductive Approach

(ii) The Inductive Approach

• **The Deductive Approach** : A teacher is to teach ‘Change the Voice’ to the pupils. He starts telling them about the difference between active and passive voice. Then the rules are followed regarding the change of voice and at last it is illustrated with example. This is the normal adopted approach in traditional grammar and grammar translation method which is called deductive approach i.e. telling the rules first then the examples.

So, deductive’ means from generalization to application, i.e. from law to observation. It states the rules which are illustrated by examples, as in prescriptive grammar. An example of deductive grammar is seen in the old editions of grammar books by Wren and Martin or written by Nesfield, in which rules with examples and exceptions are given. Lets have a look at its procedure in detail.

Procedure:

Step-I: Explaining Rules : The teacher introduces the topic. Then he defines all the factors involved in that very topic. This is followed by introduction and explanation of the rules or generalizations e.g., while teaching parts of speech, the teacher explains and defines communication and speech. Then gives classification of various parts of speech. Then explains the first part of speech, , noun and defines it, as “it is the name of a person, place or a thing.

Step-II : Application of Rules : Next, the teacher gives examples to show the applicability of those rules. Exceptions are also told if any, e.g. in above case, after defining noun, the teacher writes examples as :-

Bob is a generous
fellow.(Person) I love
Mumbai. (place)
I keep my table clean.(Thing etc.)

So, the teacher explains each and everything to the pupils to clarify the rule.

Step-III: Practice: At last students come in the picture. But they still remain passive however. They have just to learn and memorize the generalizations, rules, and definitions with examples. The practice is done with similar examples to strengthen the rules in the class. Again the teacher keeps giving them the examples and that's all.

Although this method enjoyed supremacy over decades but now a days it is losing its charm.

Limitations:

- Only teacher plays the active role while the students are just passive listeners for most of the time. They are active only in the end of the procedure.
- It proves to be beneficial for lower classes only.
- It results in passive mastery of grammar.
- It mainly relies upon rote memory of the pupils.
- As pupils memorize each and everything, they are tired and find this highly boring and uninteresting.
- A vague situation is created as the teacher teaches with the help of a book for he can't memorize the entire grammar with its rules and application. But such impossible task of memorizing everything is expected from the pupils.
- Total concepts are not clear to them. Moreover, exceptions Add insult to the injury. Ultimately a mess is created leaving Pupils on no man's land.
- Due to passive mastery, grammar taught by this method is least helpful in pupils daily life

speech and writing.

Due to all these limitations, the scholars of today prefer the inductive Approach.

• **The Inductive Approach :** In this approach the teacher Proceeds from observations to law, from examples to rules, from plication to generalisations. E.g. In case of teaching change of voice, board. Active sentences are written on one side and passive ones on the the teacher introduces the topic just by writing some sentences on the their side. The pupils find out the differences and this leads to the definitions of active voice and passive voice.

Procedure :

Step-1 : Presentation of Examples: The teacher introduces the Topic with the help of a few examples oriented around the factors involving that topic/e.g. for introducing active and passive voice, the teacherw following examples on chalk board.

She writes a poem. A poem is written by her. They like sports. Sports are liked by them.

Step-II : Analysing Examples: Then teacher makes the pupils Sports are liked by them. Etc. analyse those sentences and find out the differences involving all. He asks them to point out the subject, verb, object etc. Then they are asked to compare the positions of the subject and the object in these examples They have to point out the changes in verb too.

Step-III: Generalisation: During the analysis with the teacher's help, the pupil themselves become aware of certain peculiarities and conclude themselves. They easily generalize the facts and acquire active mastery over English. E.g. On the basis of examples of STEP I, following things can be generalised,

- a) the object and the subject exchange their positions.
- b) The new object is preceded by the preposition by.
- c) There is a change in the form of verb. Usually, in passive form, the form of verb is past participle.

• **Step-IV: Stating Rules:** On the basis of the detailed analysis, the teacher tells them that these changes form the rules for changing the active into the passive writing. And this is the point where inductive process ends and the deductive process begins.

• **Step-V: Verification of the Rules:** Then a few more examples Are presented by the teacher to verify the rules and clarify the concept At this point, exceptions are also told if any. After that

the generalization Forms the basis of the rules for changing the voice.

•**Step-VI: Practice:** The teacher gives ample practice to the pupils through exercises. E.g., Conversion exercises regarding change of voice are given. In this way, the grammar is taught involving the students at every step resulting in active mastery over language.

This method is highly popular these days except in few schools with mother tongue as their medium. It has following advantages:

Advantages:

- It proceeds from known to unknown, easy to difficult and particular to general. So, it is a psychological method.
- Pupils remain active throughout the teaching. Analysing and learning things of their own imparts them a sense of satisfaction pleasure and confidence.
- Pupils discover the rules themselves. So, learning is long lasting.
- It stimulates their power of thinking, reasoning, assimilation And initiative.
- Active mastery leads to better writing and speech.

Limitations:

If a beautiful moon can be criticized for the ugly marks in it, rose for thorns, the source of life, Sun, for heat then his method can also be criticised as follows:

1. This method need experts and in India there is a dearth of Such teachers.
2. This is lengthy and time consuming method.
3. Only active pupils are benefited whereas the slow learners or shy ones remain passive and learn the least. But still it remains the best method ever.

Even **PC. Wren** declared it as the best saying, “Teach grammar inductively. Teach English as you would, by actions and practice. The rules show themselves in both and need not be learnt first. Nor need a boy be able to define a football or cricket-bat before he can use one. So why should he define a noun or verb?”