The 3 Most Widely Used Grammar Teaching Methods And Approaches

There’s no single way to teach English language grammar but there have been many popular methods and approaches over the years to teach it.

This article compares the three most widely used methods and approaches to teaching English language grammar; Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingual, and Communicative approaches.

For the comparison, I considered two main features; how does each approach works well and its main principles.

Learn more about them and then leave a comment below to let me know which one you use mainly in your EFL classes.

The first method is:

1. Grammar-Translation Method

It was the most common way of learning and teaching grammar for hundreds of years and it still works well with some kinds of students.

How does it work?

In Grammar–Translation Method:

- The teacher teaches grammar deductively and he uses the students’ mother tongue most of the time to teach the grammar rules.
- The teacher uses English sentences and translates them into students’ own language.

Principles of Grammar-Translation Method:

- The teacher presents the grammar rules, providing long and detailed explanations and gives examples (usually a list of isolated sentences).
- Students study the rules and practice grammar through translation exercises.
- A lot of attention is paid to reading and writing and little attention is paid to speaking and listening.
- Most of the interaction is from the teacher to the students; there is very little student-student interaction.
- The ultimate goal is to achieve accuracy, that is, to produce grammatically correct sentences.

Advantages of Grammar-Translation Method:

- Students knew well how to translate written sentences.
- Students knew grammar rules perfectly.
- Translation into and out of their mother language and English makes students well aware of similarities and differences between their mother tongue and English language.

Disadvantages of Grammar-Translation Method:

- Students may learn grammar, but they will not able to speak or write in English fluently.
- Students may be able to translate written sentences perfectly but they will not be able to communicate in English well.
The second grammar teaching method is:

2. Audio-Lingual Method

How does it work?

It applies the theory of behaviorism (The stimulus-response reinforcement approach) to language and grammar learning.

When a stimulus (a teacher’s prompt) provokes a student response (a sentence), and this response is reinforced by a reward (teacher praise and student satisfaction), the language and grammar learning occurs especially when this procedure is repeated often enough.

Principles of Audio-Lingual Method:

- The Audio-Lingual method gives students a lot of speaking practice by using habit-formation drills.
- Students repeat sentences again and again until they memorize them.
- Language drilling and frequent repetition is the key to grammar learning.

The third and currently used grammar teaching method is:

3. Communicative Approach

Historically, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a response to the Audio-Lingual Method.

How does it work?

CLT focuses on the idea that students will learn language grammar structures if they have the opportunities to use them in real-life communications.

Principles of CLT:

- Students should do many speaking and writing tasks in which they use any and all of the language that they have learned.
- The focus should be more on content and successful communications than on forms.
- Using the language in context rather than on isolated grammatically correct sentences.
- Error correction should only take place after the students have tried to communicate well in speaking or in writing.
- Creating opportunities to practice using the language outside the classroom.
- Teaching should depend on active learning techniques.

Communicative Grammar Teaching will be more effective when:

- Students are exposed to authentic language structures used in real-life contexts.
- Drilling is used as only a first step towards eventual mastery.
- Language forms are recycled in meaningful tasks in which students should engage to see clearly the links between form, meaning, and use.
- Encouraging students to explore the grammar rule and its use in meaningful context.

Grammar Teaching Out Of Context

If the teacher presents grammar rules out of context by giving learners isolated sentences to learn them through repetition and guided practice activities, they may learn them, but they will not be able to speak or write in English fluently.
So, learners should have the opportunity to explore the grammatical structures and use them in context to achieve certain communicative objectives so that they will learn these structures effectively.

**Final Word**

**The ultimate goal of teaching grammar should be:**

Creating a kind of balance between language drilling that helps students be aware of the grammatical forms and language tasks for students to explore the use of those forms in real-life situations.