

**STRATEGIES FOR THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR IN
ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE**

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Summary

Key words: Strategies, grammar teaching, English Second Language (ESL), learning, metacognitive, cognitive, socioaffective.

This mini-dissertation attempts to identify various language learning strategies a teacher can use to teach grammar in the English Second Language classroom. The purpose of this identification is to allay the problems that the teacher encounters during the course of teaching grammar. The central argument in this study is that the teacher's use of language learning strategies can help to improve grammar teaching as well as the grammatical competence of ESL learners. It is stated that if the selected strategies are taught effectively, both the teacher and his/her learners can find it easy to teach and learn grammar.

The learning and teaching of grammar is discussed with specific reference to Outcomes-Based Education in relation to language learning strategies. The problems experienced by ESL teachers in grammar teaching are discussed. The definitions of language learning strategies focus on the helpful nature of the strategies towards the learning and teaching of grammar. The classification of language learning strategies shows how they have been differentiated into three categories depending on the processing level involved. In addition, the discussion focuses on the methods used to determine language learning strategies, factors that influence strategy choice, learning strategies and grammatical development, learning strategies and grammar teaching as well as language learning strategy training. Guidelines for teaching grammar are presented on the bases of the proposals made by various researchers. Research clearly indicates that teachers should take cognizance of the main language learning strategies (e.g. metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective) if they want the teaching of ESL grammar to be as effective as possible.

Opsomming

Sleutelwoorde: Strategieë, grammatika-onderrig, Engels as Tweede Taal (EATT), leer, metakognitief, kognitief, sosio-afektief.

Hierdie kort verhandeling poog om verskeie taalleerstrategieë te identifiseer wat 'n onderwyser kan gebruik om grammatika in die Engels as Tweede Taal (EATT)-klaskamer te onderrig. Die doel van hierdie identifisering is om die probleme te verlig wat die onderwyser tydens die onderrig van grammatika teëkom. Die sentrale argument in hierdie studie is dat die onderwyser se gebruik van taalleerstrategieë kan help om grammatika-onderrig sowel as die grammatikale bevoegdheid van EATT-leering te verbeter. Daar word gekonstateer dat indien die geselekteerde strategieë doeltreffend oorgedra word, sal beide die onderwyser en sy leerlinge dit maklik vind om grammatika te onderrig en te leer.

Die leer en onderrig van grammatika word bespreek met spesifieke verwysing na Uitkomsgebaseerde Onderwys met betrekking tot taalleerstrategieë. Die probleme wat EATT-onderwysers met grammatika-onderrig ervaar, word bespreek. Die definisies van taalleerstrategieë fokus op die strategieë as hulpmiddel by die leer en onderrig van grammatika. Die klassikasie van taalleerstrategieë toon hoe hulle in drie kategorieë opgedeel is afhangende van die betrokke vlak van prosessering. Die bespreking fokus ook op die metodes wat gebruik word om taalleerstrategieë te bepaal; faktore wat die strategieëuse beïnvloed; leerstrategieë en grammatika-ontwikkeling; leerstrategieë en grammatika-onderrig, sowel as opleiding in taalleerstrategieë. Riglyne vir grammatika-onderrig word aangebied op grond van die voorstelle wat deur verskeie navorsers gemaak word. Navorsing toon duidelik dat onderwysers kennis moet neem van die hoof-taalleerstrategieë (bv. metakognitief, kognitief, sosiaal/afektief) indien hulle die onderrig van EATT grammatika so doeltreffend moontlik kan maak.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

The teaching of grammar has always been controversial, especially under the influence of the communicative approach (Chaudron, 1988; Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989). Some researchers (e.g. Harmer, 1987; Willis, 1988) feel that the grammar of the language does not necessarily help learners to use the language. However, Tarone (1990) and Rutherford (1987) argue that grammar should be taught, because without some understanding of grammar students would not be able to communicate efficiently in English. The suggestion being made, then, is that teachers must somehow teach the grammar of the language, for this is central to language use.

According to Prokop (1989:121), grammar teaching has been a problem for many ESL teachers who do not take into consideration the importance of strategies for grammar teaching. Researchers (e.g. Anderson, 1990; Hughes, 1996; Oxford, 1990) state that the use of various language learning strategies can be helpful in teaching grammar more effectively. According to Oxford (1989;1990:38), strategies are behaviours or actions which learners use to make the language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. Research indicates that by adapting their strategies teachers can help make grammar more accessible to students (Richards, 1991:27). Strategy research (cf. O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) suggests that potential problems occurring during the teaching of grammar can be allayed by making use of a variety of strategies (e.g. metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective). Van der Walt (1993) and Odlin (1994) indicate that the teaching of grammar is a complex task, and, therefore, teachers need to focus on various types of strategies which can help improve the grammatical understanding of the students. The grammar to be taught is so varied in its nature and usage that different strategies have to be selected and taught to the learners; each strategy suitable for the grammar item that has to be presented (Givon, 1995:23).

Research on grammar teaching indicates that the following strategies can be taught: Metacognitive Strategies (Selected Attention, Planning, Self-management, Monitoring and Evaluation), Cognitive Strategies (Organisation, Inferencing, Summarising, Deduction, Transfer and Elaboration) and Socioaffective Strategies (Cooperation, Question for Clarification and Self-talk (cf. Weinstein, 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). According to Prokop (1989:16), if such strategies are taught effectively to students, the frustration often associated with grammar teaching can be reduced.

A review of the literature (cf. Harmer, 1987, Willis, 1988) indicates that teachers are not aware of the types of strategies that can be used to teach grammar. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address the following questions:

- Which strategies can the teacher in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom use to make the teaching of grammar more effective?
- How can the selected strategies be taught by the teacher in the ESL classroom in order to make grammar teaching as effective as possible?

1.2 Purpose of this study

The aim or purpose of this study is to determine:

- which strategies the teacher in the ESL classroom can use to make the teaching of grammar more effective;
- how the selected strategies can be taught by the teacher in the ESL classroom in order to make grammar teaching as effective as possible (i.e. guidelines).

1.3 Central theoretical statement

The use of a variety of strategies (e.g. metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective) by teachers in the English Second Language classroom can help to make grammar teaching more effective.

1.4 Method of research

A thorough review and analysis of the literature on language learning strategies that can be used to facilitate grammar teaching in the ESL classroom was conducted. Guidelines for how language learning strategies can be used to teach grammar are provided.

1.5 Chapter division

Chapter 2 focuses on a discussion about grammar teaching in the ESL classroom. The term 'grammar' is defined and issues with regard to the learning and teaching of grammar are discussed.

In chapter 3 language learning strategies are discussed. The following aspects are critically reviewed: classification of language learning strategies, language learning strategies and grammar teaching, factors influencing strategy choice, and strategy training.

In chapter 4 guidelines for teaching grammar are presented.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

GRAMMAR TEACHING IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review the literature on grammar. Firstly, the term 'grammar' is defined, secondly, the learning of grammar is reviewed, and lastly, grammar teaching is reviewed.

2.2 Defining grammar

The word 'grammar' is used in a variety of senses to identify different types of grammar, ranging from linguistic topics to linguistic competence. Hornby (1994:1) defines grammar as the study and practice of the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences. There are two basic elements in this definition: the rules of grammar, and the study and practice of the rules. According to Hornby (1994:2), the rules of grammar concern how words change and how they are put together into sentences. For example, our knowledge of grammar tells us that the word 'walk' changes to 'walked' in the past tense. This is an example of a word changing its form. Our knowledge of grammar also tells us what to do if we want to put the phrase 'not many' into a sentence: 'There are oranges on the shelf' - 'There are not many oranges on the shelf.' This is an example of how words are combined into sentences. Grammar, then, is the way in which words change themselves and group together to make sentences (Harmer, 1987:1).

Watkins and Davids (1991:3) argue that the term 'grammar' comprises the knowledge of language possessed by the speakers which enables them to communicate. The idea of 'grammar' being a 'linguistic knowledge' is embraced by Van der Walt (1993:5) who asserts that this knowledge of language is generally regarded as linguistic or grammatical competence, and that the notion of grammar as knowledge suggests that it is unconsciously stored in the mind. Bald et al. (1990:21) contend that the grammar of a language refers to what happens to words when they become a plural

or negative, or what word order is used when questions are made or two clauses joined to make one sentence. Graver (1989:40) states that the term 'grammar' means the scientific study of grammatical structures, forms, and functions of a language. Cook (1991:32) defines grammar as the most distinctive aspect of a language without which communication would be difficult or impossible.

This study regards the term 'grammar' as the basic foundation through which language works when it is used for communicative purposes among people. It is, therefore, of cardinal importance that while teaching grammar, the teacher should not only teach learners just how to do grammar exercises, but also teach them how to communicate in English. To do this, the teacher should aim not only to teach grammatical forms and patterns, but to exploit the genuine communicative situations that arise in the classroom for meaningful language practice, and to allow plenty of time for oral production activities after the practise stage of the lesson (Willis, 1988:7).

2.3 Learning grammar

Learning grammar involves many interrelated factors which make it a complex process (Van der Walt, 1993:7). Rutherford (1987:4) contends that the progress that the second language learner makes can be considered from a number of different perspectives. Rutherford (1987:4) points out that a learner begins the second language learning task from point zero and, through the steady accumulation of the mastered entities of the target language (*e.g. sounds, morphemes, vocabulary, grammatical constructions, discourse units etc.*), eventually amasses them in quantities sufficient to constitute a particular level of proficiency. The task of language teaching is to bring these entities to the learner's attention.

Rutherford (1987:4) argues that the conception of increasing language proficiency as a development reflected in the steady accumulation of more and more complex language entities is a difficult one to maintain, once we look a little more closely at what language learners actually do in the course of their learning. Rutherford (1987:4) examines this view by posing the following question: "If language knowledge develops primarily in terms of accumulated structural entities, then what kinds of learner production would we expect to see along the way?" He purports that we would expect that

the well-formed target-language structures would, one after another, emerge ‘full-blown’ on the learner’s path towards eventual mastery of the language.

Another expectation would be that two structures fulfilling similar semantic roles would, for the purpose of learning, be in ‘competition’ with each other. Willis (1988:10) contends that since in the early stages the learner does not really need two forms for the same semantic role, the more ‘complex’ of these two structures would temporarily be ‘avoided’ and the less ‘complex’ of the two would serve the semantic function of both. After more learning had occurred, the more complex (avoided) structure would finally emerge to take its rightful place in the learner’s pantheon of already mastered entities. Two such structures might, for example, be the relative clause (*people who drink*) and the noun complement (*the need to drink*), both of which serve in a general sense as modifiers of their head nouns (*namely, people and need*). Since some learners produce, along with *the need to drink*, and also *people to drink* (*meaning, presumably, ‘people who drink’*), it would appear that for the purposes of noun-phrase modification they are letting the ‘less complex’ noun complement construction temporarily ‘stand in’ for the ‘more complex’ relative clause. Rutherford (1987:6) points out that two otherwise semantically equivalent structures have thus ‘vied’ for supremacy at one point in the learner’s developing grammar, and the easier of the two would “appear for the moment to have ‘won out’, or so the reasoning would go”.

If language knowledge develops structure by structure, learner production would meet still another expectation for the teacher (Wittrock, 1993:18). Wittrock asserts that emerging full-blown structures would then carry the range of semantic interpretation in native-speaker competence. For instance, at a point when the English ‘*present perfect*’ verb construction appeared, the expectation would be to see, in addition to its core meaning of ‘present relevance of a prior event’, the peripheral senses of ‘result/state’ (*The regime has changed policies*), ‘recentness’ (*The regime has just fallen*), ‘persistent situation’ (*The regime has been about to fall for three years*) and ‘experimental’ (*The regime has never changed policies*). Harmer (1987:11) points out that language structures, in other words, do not exist independent of the ‘meanings’ they are meant to carry. He argues that when well-formed grammatical constructions surface in learner language, teachers would, therefore, expect that the same array of meanings is in principle attributable to the forms in question.

Lightbown (1985:177) argues that a structure-by-structure concept of language-learning progress would presuppose final mastery of a given target structure once it had surfaced ‘error-free’ in learner language - with no subsequent fluctuation in well-formedness through ‘reanalysis’ and reworking with other features of the target language. It would also presuppose that “what amounts for only partial attainment of target-language criteria for the overwhelming majority of L2 learners can be assessed in terms of a finite quantity of still missing (i.e. unlearned) items.”

Ellis (1992:185) stresses the complexity of language and of the task of the learner. Obviously, a learner of English as a second language approaches the task of learning with a prior knowledge without which language learning would be impossible. Ellis (1992:185) contends that the knowledge of the target language is of two different sorts. First, the learner has an unconscious ‘foreknowledge’ of what shapes the organisation of the target language can assume (universal principles). Second, he has the temporary ability to bend the new language into forms that will, with maximal efficiency, serve the initial desire for rudimentary communication, an ability that the learner retains from the similar experience of having acquired his mother tongue (universal processes). Rutherford (1987:4) states that both of these cognitive capacities are crucial, for without them no language learning would be possible at all. He asserts that the task of learning another language may be a formidable one, but what the learner already ‘knows’ about language in general, “and also about how to use a language for any of its various social and cognitive functions, renders it an eminently possible one”.

According to Rutherford (1987:4), everyone who has acquired a native language, then, possesses an unconscious knowledge of something about how to acquire any other language. This prior knowledge will then manifest itself in some way through what the learner attempts to produce in terms of saying or writing in his new language at the earliest stages of learning. Not surprisingly, there will be evidence in learner production of regularity which suggests that certain general ‘processes’ are at work.

Murphy (1988:45) points out that there is one pervasive characteristic of early interlanguage that is designed to render the target language optimally learnable. The early characteristic is “the tendency to let the relationship between form and meaning be as direct as possible”. This tendency translates

to learner production wherein, contrary to normal language expression, all meaning finds direct and unambiguous grammatical realisation. Murphy (1988:46) cites the immediate reflexes of grammatical realisation in the production itself as follows:

- the target-language syntax is made to serve a need for keeping pieces of propositional content separate from each other;
- elements that bear a close semantic/syntactic relationship to each other occur adjacent to each other;
- structural redundancy persists.

All this is the result of efforts on the part of the learner to make the links between syntax and semantics as tight as possible. Higgins (1988:18) contends that this ‘effort’ is, in reality, nothing more than the simple consequence of the learner’s need to make early communication in the new language intelligible to him, and perhaps to mould the target language into a form that is amenable to some kind of rudimentary parsing.

2.4 Teaching grammar

2.4.1 Views of teaching

Research on the teaching of grammar (e.g. Ellis, 1992; 1994:611) distinguishes two views in which a second language can be taught. Ellis (1994:611) points out that formal language teaching is included in the term ‘instruction’ as the term refers to what takes place inside the classroom. On the other hand, Ellis (1994:243) contends that the term ‘interaction’ alludes to “the complex interaction of the linguistic environment and the learner’s internal mechanisms with neither viewed as primary”. Van der Walt (1993:10) states that it is “one of the aims of communicative language teaching to engage the learner in as much interaction as possible in the classroom”. He points out that formal instruction aims at the unconscious acquisition of the English grammar.

Research investigating the effects of formal instruction on second language acquisition (e.g. Long,

1988; Ellis, 1990; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) states that the term ‘formal instruction’ has been understood to refer to grammar teaching. Formal instruction is the traditional view of language teaching (Van der Walt, 1993:10). This reflects both the importance which has been traditionally attached to grammar teaching in language pedagogy, and also the centrality of grammar in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research (e.g. Ellis, 1994:621). Instruction focuses on both theoretical and practical grammar learning. It is form-focused where the aim is to develop linguistic or communicative competence. Ellis (1994:612) points out that teachers use formal instruction because they want to develop learners’ general proficiency to improve the accuracy with which they use specific features, and to help to acquire new linguistic features (grammar).

2.4.2 Grammatical competence

Murphy (1988:49) argues that the teaching of every second language is intended to increase the learner’s linguistic competence. In other words, grammar teaching aims to improve the learners’ communicative competence made up of grammatical competence. Elsworth and Walker (1989:16) define communicative competence as a skill which is made up of four major strands, namely grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

According to Van der Walt (1993:10), grammatical competence is the mastery of the language code which involves knowledge of the lexicon, morphology, semantics and phonology. Van der Walt (1993:10) states that competence of this nature focuses directly on “the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances”.

Sociolinguistic competence has to do with the learner’s ability to produce with understanding the utterances which are appropriate in terms of the context within which they are uttered (Wardhaugh, 1992:217). Wardhaugh contends that this involves a sensitivity to factors that include status, role, attitude, purpose, degree of formality, and social convention.

Discourse competence concerns itself with the ability to combine meanings with spoken and written

texts which are unified and acceptable. This has to take place in different genres. Van der Walt (1993:10) states that discourse competence has to do with the involvement of a knowledge of cohesion and coherence.

The other major strand making up communicative competence is the strategic competence which relates to “the verbal and non-verbal strategies which learners need to use to compensate for breakdowns in communication or to enhance the effectiveness of communication” (Van der Walt, 1993:11).

This definition is suggestive of the fact that knowledge of a language is not limited to linguistic competence or textual knowledge at the level of the sentence. Van der Walt (1993:11) argues that discourse, or structure above the sentence, is also essential to a knowledge of a target-language. It is, therefore, clear that grammatical ability is an essential element of communicative competence. Harmer (1987:11) also contends that there is no communicative competence if there is no grammatical competence. Willis (1988:3) asserts that grammatical competence enables students to use English for communication and gain confidence in speaking English.

2.4.3 Problems in grammar teaching

Harmer (1987:9) points out that the teacher of English as a second language experiences difficulties during the course of teaching grammar in the classroom. Harmer states that the teacher faces three important problems in the teaching of grammar. These problems are: the clash between function and form, the similarities and differences between the students’ own language and the second language, and various exceptions and complications that all languages seem to suffer from (Wilson, 1988:116).

2.4.3.1 Function and form

Most English second language teachers, if not all, do not realise that there is a clash between function and form, such that to them, for example, all sentences in the present progressive tense appear to refer to the action taking place now, in the present moment. In this case, Beaumont and

Granger (1992:11) point out that there are different ways in which the present progressive can be used; for example, it can be used to talk about something which is in progress at the moment of speaking: *“Where are the children?”*; *“They are playing in the garden.”*; *“What are you doing at the moment?”*; *“I am writing a letter”*. The progressive tense can also be used to talk about something which is in progress around the present, but not necessarily exactly at the moment of speaking: *“You are spending a lot of money these days”*; *“Sue is looking for a job at the moment”*. The present progressive can be used as well to talk about situations which are changing or developing around the present time: *“Your children are growing up very quickly.”* We also use the present progressive tense to talk about the future: *“I am meeting Yvonne on Saturday evening”*; *“I am going to meet Yvonne on Saturday evening”*.

All the sentences above use the present progressive tense, but not all of them refer to the present. With the exceptions of the first example, which refers to the action which is in progress at the moment of speaking, the second example alludes to a repeated habit. The third one refers to a future arrangement. The teacher should understand, though, that the same form (the present progressive) can be used to mean many different things: the form functions in more ways than one (Beaumont & Granger, 1992:13).

Harmer (1987:10) argues that in conversation, it is possible that the same function can have more than one form. This is illustrated by a situation in the future which expresses it in many different ways. For example, *“I’ll drive into town later on”*; *“I’ll be driving into town later on”*; *“I’m driving into town later on”*; *“I’m going to drive into town later on”*, *“I’m to drive into town later on”*; *“I drive into town later on”*. All these grammatical constructions are different in meaning, denoting the forms of the future which are already planned, or which are part of a regular routine (Harmer, 1987:10).

Since there are so many other examples like the ones given above, which the teacher uses in the classroom, it is important to be aware of similar problems. It is suggested that ESL teachers have to try to create suitable teaching situations for themselves in order to meet the grammatical requirements of the students: they have to make decisions about what structure (form) to teach, and

what use (function) the structure is to be put to (Higgins, 1988:28).

Another verb problem almost certainly comes from the confusion between English and the students' mother tongue. A sentence like: '*I am living here since two years*' has two problems: the use of the present continuous verb form and the misuse of '*since*'. So the teacher must be well prepared in order to be able to identify such problems and correct them. Harmer (1987:14) points out that a teacher who anticipates the problems that students are going to have, then, is in a better position to deal with these problems when they occur.

Higgins (1988:28) suggests that the following language learning strategies can be used for the recognition of these grammatical forms:

- i) Metacognitive strategies: 'self-monitoring' (learner corrects errors in own/others' pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, style) and 'selective attention' (learners pay attention to special aspects of a learning task, as in planning to listen to key words or phrases).
- ii) Cognitive strategies: 'elaboration of prior knowledge' (learners link ideas contained in new information or integrate new ideas with known information), 'inferencing and linguistic transfer' (e.g. learners use information in oral text to guess meanings of new linguistic items, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts), 'deductive strategies' (applying rules to the understanding of language).

According to Beaumont and Granger (1992:16), English second language teachers should also differentiate between meaning and use. This is important since it is linked to the idea of improving students' grammatical understanding when new lessons are introduced (cf. Tarone & Yule, 1989). By way of returning to the example of the present progressive that was dealt with earlier, Harmer (1987:10) suggests that teachers could present it by performing actions such as "*opening the door or closing the window*". As they do these things, teachers could say to their students "*I am opening the door*" or "*I am closing the window*". Harmer (1987:11) points out that this would certainly be

an adequate demonstration of the meaning of the present progressive, but it would not tell students how it is actually used because people do not usually go around describing their own actions to others. Anderson (1990:44) argues that while demonstrating the meaning of the present progressive, teachers need to apply strategies such as cooperation (e.g. learners work together in problem solving (cf. Appendix: Examples 1 & 2), explanation, deduction (learners apply the rules of grammar in order to understand the target language), rephrasing and social strategies (e.g. working with peers to solve a problem).

Harmer (1987:11) points out that there are, however, situations where commentary such as the one cited in the previous paragraph could be acceptable: people giving cookery demonstrations might well say what they are doing; so might radio commentators. Harmer (1987:11) points out that this would be a better demonstration of meaning and use if it is shown to someone doing a cookery demonstration where the person used a present progressive in an appropriate way.

Harmer (1987:12) stipulates that the teacher of English as a second language does not seem to be clear about the grammatical form of a new structural item. Harmer (1987:12) contends that in order to present a meaningful lesson, the teacher must first know how the item is formed and which rules are applied: the correct formation of the '*If-clauses*', for example, or which verbs take '*to*' followed by the infinitive (e.g. "*he agreed to wait*"), which take *-ing* (e.g. "*she enjoys cooking*") and which can take both (e.g. "*he likes driving/he likes to drive*").

Teachers who are clear about the function and form of the target language usually decide what pattern it is going to be taught in (Beaumont & Granger, 1992; Harmer, 1987). In other words, if teachers are going to introduce a grammatical item, they need to decide what structural patterns they are going to use to present or revise this grammar point. Harmer (1987:11) suggests a number of different patterns teachers could use to introduce a grammar point: *He's never eaten tinned fish; I've lived in this township for thirty-five years; Since 1994 she has studied all on her own at the University of Potchefstroom*. Van der Walt (1993:60) contends that "in a first lesson on the present perfect, for example, we would not bring all these constructions into the lesson". He points out that to do so tends to make the student's task more difficult than it needs to be. Van der Walt (1993:60)

purports that a more sensible approach is to select the new pattern, and then look for examples of use which fit this pattern. Thus, in the present perfect example the teacher might choose the pattern: '*John has never/always + past participle*' to produce sentences such as '*John has never acted in films before, he's always acted in the theatre*'. Harmer (1987:11) asserts that this amounts to teaching a particular use of the tense.

2.4.3.2 Contrasts with other languages

Teachers must bear in mind that another cause of the difficulties that students of English as a second language experience in grammar is the differences between English and the vernacular, e.g. *Xitsonga* and *isiZulu*. For example, Rutherford (1987:69) states that English adjectives usually come before nouns, e.g. '*A fabulous monster*', but in all South African black languages, on the contrary, adjectives usually come after nouns.

Beaumont and Granger (1992:97) list a number of English nouns which are in the plural form, for example '*doors*', '*leopards*', '*rooms*', '*houses*', etc. Each noun in the above examples ends with an 's' that marks the plural form of the word. Contrary to this, all words in the black South African languages create the plural form by taking a prefix (Dube et al., 2000:17). Most African languages, if not all, differ vastly from English in the way in which their adverbs behave. For example, the African language adverbs come after the noun, whereas the English adverbs usually come before the noun: *A fully packed theatre; A rarely experienced problem; A relatively inexperienced boxer* (cf. Willis, 1988).

2.4.3.3 Exceptions and complications

English is also a difficult language for speakers of other languages to learn because it is full of exceptions to grammar rules (Harmer, 1987:13). It is due to this reason that the teaching of grammar to pupils whose mother tongue is not English is often difficult. Van der Walt (1993:61) points out that teachers of English as a second language should make themselves aware of the kind of grammar they are teaching in order to be familiar with what is in the material. Van der Walt (1993:61) states

that teacher training programmes should include a component of English grammar for their students. Rutherford (1987:176) warns teachers to make sure that the materials and books they use do not actively encourage students' confusion. He points out that from the point of view of grammar, clarity is a characteristic that teachers should expect from their textbooks.

Nunan (1988:148) argues that one of the most important stages of lesson preparation is where a teacher makes an attempt to predict problems which might arise in the classroom, and plans how to overcome them. According to Van der Walt (1993:61), this can be done partly from a knowledge of the student's mother tongue and the problems this will cause, and partly from previous experiences. This prediction of problems means that the teacher will have some idea of what to do when typical mistakes occur, and will have suitable techniques to use.

Harmer (1987:14) says that one of the common mistakes that students make, often not due to interference from the mother tongue, but from confusion with the English grammatical system is: *He must to come tomorrow. We say 'has to come/ought to come/wants to come/would like to come'*. Harmer (1987:14) argues that a teacher who anticipates this problem can explain - if the problem arises - that verbs like 'can', 'must', 'will', and 'should' are not followed by 'to' whereas 'have', 'ought', 'want', 'would like', are.

2.5 Conclusion

Most issues discussed in this chapter show that there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the suggestion that learning and teaching of grammar is an extremely complex task which is still the focus of various researchers today.

This chapter shows that it is natural in second language learning and teaching research not to lose sight of the learner's goal in the task at hand, namely, the mastery of the target-language. Pertaining to grammar teaching, this chapter has focused mainly on views of teaching (e.g. interaction and formal instruction). It is stated that both views are important for the mastery of grammar (grammatical competence) which is the driving force for communicative competence. The teaching

of grammar today makes the teacher face three important problems (cf. section 2.4.3). The grammar of the language tends to be more complicated and confusing to people who learn English as a second language. These problems have been discussed and consideration has been given to the implications for language teaching.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the language learning strategies teachers can use to teach grammar in the ESL classroom. Grammar teaching has always been a problem to many ESL teachers who overlook the importance of strategies for the teaching of grammar. Language learning strategies are the most helpful tools for grammar teaching if they are carefully selected and effectively taught to learners. If teachers focus on a variety of strategies (e.g. metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective), they can help to make the teaching of grammar more effective and more understandable to their learners (Skehan, 1991:285).

The study of language learning strategies has seen an explosion of activity in recent years (Ellis, 1994:529). This chapter aims at determining which strategies the teacher in the ESL classroom can use to make the teaching and learning of grammar more effective. It begins by considering a number of definitions of language learning strategies. This is followed by a discussion of various frameworks that have been used to classify language learning strategies, the methods used to determine language learning strategies, factors that influence strategy choice, a discussion of language learning strategies in relation to grammatical development, and the relationship between language learning strategies and grammar teaching. Finally, the focus is on how learners can be trained to use language learning strategies.

3.2 Defining language learning strategies

The concept of ‘strategy’ is a somewhat fuzzy one, and as such it is defined in various ways by different researchers. For example, Tarone (1990:420) defines language learning strategies as an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language. Stern (1990:15) views the term ‘strategy’ as best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the

approach employed by the language learner to influence his learning directly. According to Rubin (1987:208), language learning strategies are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and which affects learning directly. Weinstein and Mayer (1986:106) define learning strategies as the behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning which are intended to influence the learner's encoding process. Chamot (1987:16) defines learning strategies as techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area formation. Oxford (1989:236), on the other hand, views language learning strategies as behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. A general definition is that a strategy consists of a mental or behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use (cf. Ellis, 1994:529).

The sample of definitions of language learning strategies cited above reveal a number of problems, since, it is not clear whether strategies are to be perceived of as behavioural (and, therefore, observable) or as thoughtful, or as influential, or as mental, or as inclusive of all these. Weinstein and Mayer (1986:130) see learning strategies as behavioural, mental and influential.

The second problem concerns the precise nature of the behaviours that are to count as learning strategies. Stern's (1990:17) definition distinguishes between 'strategies' and 'techniques'. It suggests that 'strategies' are general and more or less deliberate 'approaches' to learning (for example, *'an active task approach'*), whereas 'techniques' are said to constitute particular forms of observable learning behaviour (for example, *'inferring grammar rules from texts'*).

Another problem pertaining to the definitions of 'learning strategies' is whether learning strategies are to be seen as conscious and intentional or as subconscious (Ellis, 1990:56). This issue has not been dealt with in many of the definitions above, but Chamot's (1987:176) definition refers to 'learning strategies' as 'deliberate actions'. Seliger (1989:4) emerges with a sound argument by distinguishing 'strategies' and 'tactics'. He defines the former as basic abstract categories of processing by which information perceived in "the outside world is organized and categorized into cognitive structures as part of a conceptual network". In contrast, 'tactics' are "variables and

idiosyncratic learning activities, which learners use to organise a learning situation, respond to a learning environment or cope with input and output demands”. This distinction is helpful. It is clear that Seliger’s (1989) distinction of ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’ is on the basis of consciousness. Also, useful as it might be to make a terminological distinction along the lines proposed by Seliger, second language acquisition researchers (e.g. Oxford, 1990; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990) have not done so, using the term ‘strategy’ to refer to both conscious and subconscious activities. Ellis (1990:240) regards learning strategies as conscious actions which learners employ (i.e. Seliger’s ‘tactics’).

Another problem is whether language learning strategies are seen as having a direct or an indirect effect on second language development (Ellis, 1994:532). Rubin (1987:10) asserts that the effect is a direct one, as students are informed about the value and purpose of learning strategies, and made to attend to a learning task for grammatical understanding. But other researchers, such as Cohen (1990:115), consider the effect of learning strategies to be more indirect - strategy use provides learners with data, upon which the ‘deep’ subconsciousness process can work.

Finally, there are differences in opinions about what motivates the use of learning strategies. All the definitions in this section recognise that learning strategies are used in an effort to learn something about the second language, but Oxford (1989:90) also suggests that their use can have an affective purpose (i.e. to increase enjoyment). Ellis (1994:532) contends that one of the best approaches to defining learning strategies is to try to list their main characteristics. The following list characterises how the term ‘strategies’ can be used in second language teaching and learning:

- i) Strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn an L2.
- ii) Strategies are problem-orientated - the learner deploys a strategy to overcome some particular learning problem.
- iii) Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can identify what they consist of if they are asked to pay attention to what they are doing/thinking.

- iv) Strategies involve linguistic behaviour (such as requesting the name of an object) and non-linguistic behaviour (such as pointing at an object so as to be told its name).
- v) Linguistic strategies can be used in the L1 and in the L2.
- vi) Some strategies are behavioural while others are mental. Thus, some strategies are directly observable, while others are not.
- vii) In the main, strategies contribute indirectly to learning by providing learners with data about the L2 which they can then process. However, some strategies may also contribute directly (*for example, memorisation strategies directed at specific lexical items or grammatical rules*).
- viii) Strategy use varies considerably as a result of both the kind of task the learner is engaged in and individual learner preferences.

Definitions of learning strategies have tended to be ‘ad hoc’ and atheoretical (Cohen, 1990:15). However, O’Malley and Chamot (1990:47) have attempted to ground the study of learning strategies within the information-processing model of learning developed by Anderson (1983:42). Anderson (1983:42) distinguishes between three stages of skill-learning:

- i) the cognitive stage, where the learner is involved in conscious activity resulting in declarative knowledge,
- ii) the associative stage, where the learner strengthens the connections among the various elements or components of the skill and constructs more efficient production sets, and
- iii) the automatic stage, where execution becomes more or less autonomous and subconscious.

Anderson’s (1983:42) theory provides for two interpretations of the term ‘strategy’. One, favoured by O’Malley and Chamot (1990:51), is that strategies only occur in the early cognitive stage when

they are conscious; they cease to be ‘strategic’ when they are performed automatically. The other view is that strategies occur in all three stages of development. They take the form of productive sets (i.e. ‘if . . . then’ statements).

For example, the strategy of inferencing has this form:

If the goal is to comprehend an oral or written text, and I am unable to identify a word’s meaning, *then* I will try to infer the meaning from context.

Cohen (1990:15) points out that initially, such sets exist only in declarative form; they are conscious and can only be accessed through controlled processing. Gradually, they are proceduralised, until a point is reached where the learner is no longer conscious of employing them. This is the view that O’Malley and Chamot (1990:73) seem to hold. However, this difference in view may not be of much significance as strategies can only be effectively studied in the declarative stage of learning, when learners are able to verbalise them (Chamot, 1987:104).

For the purpose of this research, therefore, strategies can be defined as production sets that exist as declarative knowledge and are used to solve some L2 learning problems (cf. Ellis, 1992; 1994).

3.3 Classifying learning strategies

Language learning strategies have been classified into three categories depending on the level or type of processing involved (O’Malley et al., 1985:27). Skehan (1989:40) argues that the strategies identified tend to reflect the type of learners under study, the setting, and the particular interests of the researchers.

3.3.1 Models of classification

3.3.1.1 O’Malley and Chamot (1990)

O’Malley and Chamot (1990:44) have developed a framework for classifying language learning strategies (cf. Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Classification of learning strategies

Generic strategy classification	Representative strategies
Metacognitive strategies	Selective attention Planning Monitoring Evaluation
Cognitive strategies	Rehearsal Organisation Elaboration Summarising Deducing Imagery Transfer Inferencing
Social/Affective strategies	Cooperation Question for clarification Self-talk

(O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:46).

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990:43) classification is in accordance with the information-processing model, on which their research is based. 'Metacognitive strategies' are higher order executive skills that may entail planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity. Teachers of English as a second language can apply metacognitive strategies to a variety of tasks they ask their learners to carry out (Nisbet & Shucksmith, 1986:7). Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:7) point out that among the processes that would be included as metacognitive strategies for receptive or productive tasks are:

- i) Selective attention for special aspects of a learning task, as in planning to listen to key words or phrases;
- ii) Planning the organisation of either written or spoken discourse;
- iii) Monitoring or reviewing attention to task, monitoring comprehension for information that should be remembered, or monitoring production while it is occurring; and
- iv) Evaluating or checking comprehension after completion of a receptive language activity.

Examples given by Chamot (1987:33) of metacognitive strategies are 'directed attention' (deciding in advance to pay attention to specific aspects of the language input), and 'self-management' (displaying understanding of the conditions which help learning and trying to bring these about).

'Cognitive strategies' refer to the "the steps or operations used in problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of teaching materials" (Rubin, 1987:119). Rubin asserts that these strategies have an operative or cognitive-processing function. Oxford (1990:95) argues that cognitive strategies operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning. These strategies can be subsumed under three broad groupings: rehearsal, organisational, and elaboration processes (which may include other strategies that rely at least in part upon knowledge in long term memory such as inferencing, summarising, deduction, imagery and transfer) (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:49).

Oxford (1990:96) contends that cognitive strategies may be limited in application to the specific type of task in the learning activity. Among the cognitive strategies listed by Oxford are 'repetition' (initiating a language model, either covertly or overtly), 'note-taking' (writing down information presented orally), and 'elaboration' (relating new concepts to other information in memory). Like Chamot (1987:35), Oxford (1990:97) argues that cognitive strategies such as these appear to be directly linked to the performance of particular tasks at hand. She points out that typical strategies

that fall in the cognitive category for learning are as follows:

- i) Rehearsal, or repeating the names or items or objects that have been heard;
- ii) Organisation, or grouping and classifying words, terminology, or concepts;
- iii) Inferencing, or using information in oral text to guess meanings of new linguistic items, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts;
- iv) Deduction, or applying grammatical rules to understand the target language, or inferring grammar rules from text; and memorising grammatical structures and using them often;
- v) Transfer, or using known linguistic information to facilitate a new learning task;
- vi) Imagery, or using visual images (either generated or actual) to understand and remember new verbal information; and
- vii) Elaboration - linking ideas contained in new information or integrating new ideas with known information (elaboration may be a general category for other strategies, such as imagery, summarisation, transfer, and deduction).

Social/Affective strategies represent a broad grouping that involves either interaction with other persons or ideational control over affect (cf. O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:45). Generally, socioaffective strategies are considered applicable to a variety of tasks. O'Malley and Chamot (1990:45) give as examples '*cooperation*' (working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pool information or model a language activity')(cf. Appendix: Examples 1 and 2); '*question for clarification*' (asking a teacher or a native speaker for repetition, paraphrase, explanation and/or examples'), and '*self-talk*' (using mental redirection of thinking to ensure a successful learning activity). Weinstein and Mayer (1986:315) point out that the strategies that would be useful in grammar are:

- i) Cooperation, or working with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check notes, or get feedback on a grammatical activity (cf. Appendix: Example 1).
- ii) Question for clarification, or eliciting from a teacher or peer additional explanation, rephrasing, or examples; and
- iii) Self-talk, or using mental control to assure oneself that a grammatical activity will be successful or to reduce anxiety about a grammar task.

3.3.1.2 Rubin (1987)

Rubin (1987:4) classifies learning strategies in the following way (cf. Table 3.2):

Table 3.2: Classification of learning strategies in L2 acquisition

Primary strategy classification	Representative secondary strategy	Representative examples
Strategies that directly affect learning	Clarification/Verification	Asks for an example of how to use a word or expression, repeats word to confirm understanding
	Monitoring	Corrects errors in own/other's pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, style
	Guessing/inductive reasoning	Guesses meaning from key words, structures, pictures, context, etc.

	Memorisation	Takes note of new items, pronounces out loud, finds a mnemonic, writes items repeatedly
	Deductive reasoning	Compares native language to target language
	Practice	Experiments with new sounds Repeats sentences until pronounced easily Listens carefully and tries to imitate
Strategies that contribute indirectly to learning	Creates opportunities for practice Production tricks	Creates situation with native speaker Initiates conversation with fellow students Spends time in language lab, listens to TV, etc. Uses circumlocutions, synonyms, or cognates Uses formulaic interaction Contextualises to clarify meaning

(Rubin, 1987:4).

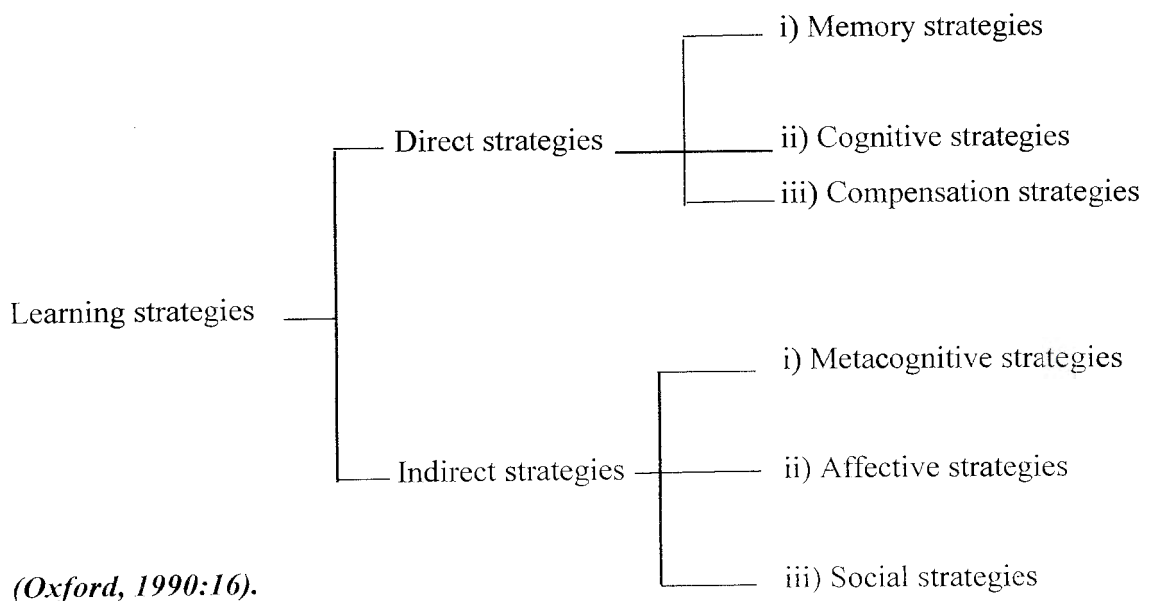
Rubin (1987:4) proposes a classification scheme that subsumes learning strategies under two primary groupings and a number of subgroups, as illustrated in Table 3.2 above. Rubin's first primary category, consisting of strategies that directly affect learning, include: clarification/verification, monitoring, memorisation, guessing/inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, and practice. The

second primary category, consisting of strategies that contribute indirectly to learning, includes: ‘creating practice opportunities’ and ‘using production tricks’ such as communication strategies.

3.3.1.3 Oxford (1990)

Oxford’s (1990:16-18) classification of learning strategies is regarded by many researchers (e.g. Ellis, 1990; 1994) as the most comprehensive effort to date. Oxford’s classification is aimed at subsuming within her taxonomy virtually every strategy mentioned in her earlier work. The classification scheme she first came up with (Oxford, 1985:58) was designed as a basis for constructing a questionnaire on learning strategies. Her subcategory of direct and indirect strategies are illustrated in Diagram 3.1.

Diagram 3.1: Diagram of a strategy system: Overview



Oxford (1990:37) presents a new taxonomy in which a general distinction is drawn between direct and indirect strategies (cf. Diagram 3.1). The former consist of strategies that directly involve the target language in that they require mental processing of the language, while the latter provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy, and other means.

Each subcategory is broken down into two further levels. Oxford (1990:151) gives an example of one type of cognitive strategy as ‘practising’, which consists of five different kinds of behaviour (repeating, formally practising, recognising and using formulas, recombining, and practising naturalistically). However, the scheme is weakened by a failure to make a clear distinction between strategies directed at learning the target language and those directed at using it. Ellis (1992:145) contends that it is somewhat confusing to realise that ‘compensation strategies’ are classified as a direct type of ‘learning strategy’. In this case, Oxford (1990) departs from other researchers (e.g. Rubin, 1987:137), who treat compensation strategies as distinct from learning strategies. Ellis (1994:539) states that the categories that have been established are ‘high-inference’ in nature; their identification often requiring considerable interpretation on the part of the researcher.

Ellis (1994:540) contends that the learning strategies listed as belonging to a single type frequently vary on a number of dimensions such as specificity (e.g. ‘*repetition*’ is much more specific than ‘*self-management*’), and the extent to which they are observable (for example, ‘*question for clarification*’ constitutes an overt behaviour, while ‘*elaboration*’ does not). It is not yet clear whether the range of strategies available to the learner is finite or infinite in number (Ellis, 1992;1994).

3.4 Methods used to determine language learning strategies

Many ESL teachers identify different learning strategies by observing their learners’ performance in a variety of tasks in classroom settings (Rubin, 1987:95). Rubin argues that this approach is not very productive, since it reveals nothing about the mental operations learners use and, frequently, classrooms afford little opportunity for learners to exercise behavioural strategies. Cohen (1990:119) comments on the non-productivity of classroom observation to provide such information about

learning strategies. However, Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1984:48) were able to report on a number of strategies that young learners use in the second language classroom. Their point of argument is that observation works with young children, whose behaviour may serve as a good indicator of their mental activity, but not with adult learners, who often engage in internal processing not linked to actual behaviour.

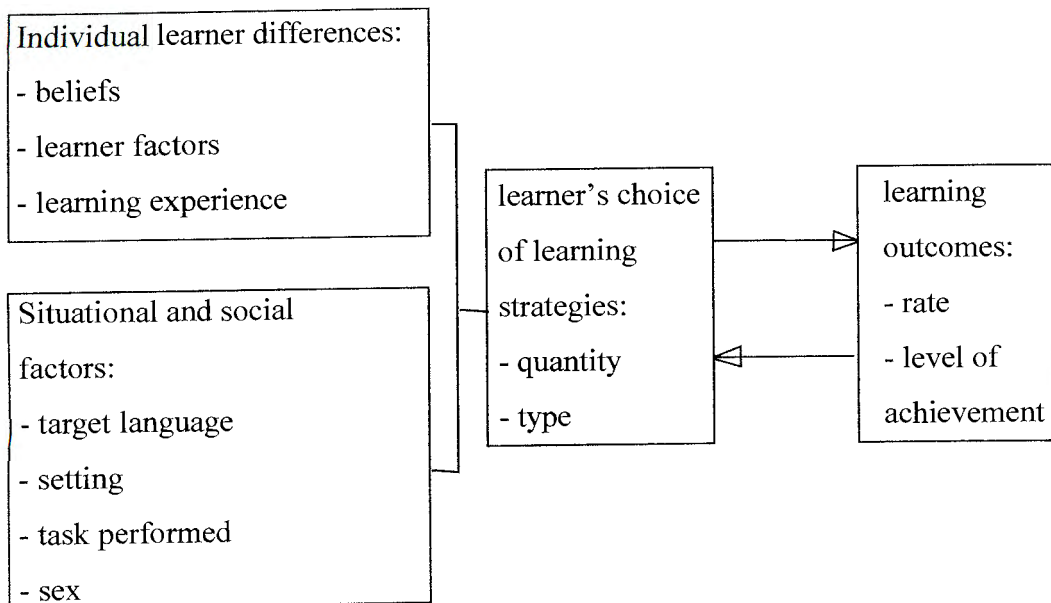
A method that has been found to be more successful is the one involving the use of structural interviews and questionnaires, both of which call for retrospective accounts of the strategies learners employ (Harley et al., 1990:202). There are many studies that have used these methods (e.g. Oxford, 1985; Wenden, 1991; Chamot, 1987). These researchers assert that the success of interviews and questionnaires rests on the fact that they can require that learners report on the learning strategies they use in general, or in relation to a specific activity. Wenden and Rubin (1987:108) purport that in conducting interviews, the teacher can ask learners to comment on specific learning activities. They point out that the teacher can also ask the learners more specific questions relating to the strategies they use to express themselves, to understand what was said to them, and to think in the target language. Methods such as these provide the most detailed information about learning strategies, although Rubin (1987:56) notes that teachers might experience some problems since learners vary greatly in their ability to describe their strategies such that they may need to be tutored in self-reporting.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990:95) point out that the procedures followed by many researchers in the investigation of learning strategies often vary considerably, but they are helpful in revealing the kinds of learning strategies teachers can employ in the English Second Language classroom.

3.5 Factors influencing strategy choice

ESL learners vary considerably in both the overall frequency with which they employ strategies and also the particular types of strategies they use (Chamot, 1987; Chamot et al., 1988, Oxford, 1990). Factors that have been found to affect strategy choice are individual learner differences: beliefs about language learning, learner's personal background, and situational and social factors. Diagram 3.2 illustrates the relationship between individual learner differences, situational and social factors, learning strategies, and learning outcomes.

Diagram 3.2: The relationship between individual learner differences, situational factors, learning strategies, and learning outcomes.



(Ellis, 1994:530).

3.5.1 Individual learner differences

3.5.1.1 Beliefs about language learning

Ellis (1994:540) discovered that second language learners in the higher grades vary in the extent to which they believe that language learning involves formal as opposed to functional practice, and that this influences their choice of strategies. Wenden (1991:141) also found that learners who emphasised the importance of learning tended to use cognitive strategies that helped them to understand and remember specific items of language, while learners who emphasised the importance of using language employed few learning strategies, relying instead on communication strategies. Learners who stressed personal factors did not manifest any distinct pattern of strategy use.

3.5.1.2 Learner factors

3.5.1.2.1 Age

Brown (1989:91) contends that age emerges as a clear factor that affects the way strategies are used. Brown (1989:91) observed that young children employ strategies in a task-specific manner, while older children and adults make use of generalised strategies, which they employ more flexibly. O'Malley and Chamot (1990:172) also argue that young children's strategies are often simple, while maturer learners' strategies are more complex and sophisticated. For example, Brown and Carter (1986:104) found that 'rehearsal' for children consisted of rote repetition, while for adults it involved 'active, systematic, and elaborative procedures'. Ehrman and Oxford (1989:485) also report adults using more sophisticated strategies. They point out that these differences may help to explain why older children and adults generally learn faster initially than young children and also why this advantage is more evident in grammar, for which there are many learning strategies. However, there are other explanations for age differences in rate of learning. For example, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:294) state that adults are superior to children in rates of acquisition. There are no vast differences in grammar learning for different age groups. However, experimental studies (e.g. Chamot et al. 1985:144) have shown that adults outperformed children in grammar in the short term.

3.5.1.2.2 Learning styles

Cook (1991:132) claims that there is a strong relationship between the individual's use of learning strategies and the individual's learning style. Willing (1987:115) identifies four learning styles, and asserts that they are suggestive of the different learning strategies that might be associated with each style. Research suggests that the teachers should use a variety of strategies in order to accommodate learners with diverse learning style preferences (cf. Oxford, 1989).

3.5.1.2.3 Learners' motivation

The strength of learners' motivation does have an effect on the quantity of learning strategies they employ. Oxford (1989:294), for example, found that the degree of expressed motivation was the

single most powerful influence on the choice of language learning strategies. She argues that highly motivated learners use more strategies relating to formal practice, functional practice, general study, and conversation than poorly motivated learners. Oxford (1989:294) points out that the type of motivation may also influence the choice of strategies.

3.5.1.3 The learner's personal background

There is considerable evidence to support a relationship between learners' personal background and strategy use. Widdowson (1990:190) found that students who are trained use more strategies more frequently than untrained students. Furthermore, students with at least five years of study reported using more functional practice strategies than students with fewer years of training. Chamot (1987:158) also found that higher-level high school students reported using more strategies than beginning-level students. However, O'Malley et al. (1985:47), in a study of ESL high school students, found the opposite, although this may have been due to the fact that the interviews with the beginners were conducted in their mother tongues while those with the more advanced learners were carried out in the L2. The general superiority of more experienced language learners over less experienced is again evident in one of the few longitudinal studies of learning strategies.

Chamot et al. (1988:201) found that novice high school learners of a foreign language (FL) were likely to panic when they realised they lacked procedural skills for solving a language problem, whereas expert learners (defined as those who had studied another FL previously) approached tasks calmly and were able to employ the strategies they had developed elsewhere. Nation and McLaughlin (1986:125) also provide evidence of the superiority of experienced language learners over inexperienced. They taught groups of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual subjects an artificial language and found that the multilinguals did better on an implicit learning task, a result Nation and McLaughlin (1986:44) explained by suggesting that multilinguals were more able to utilise learning strategies automatically.

3.5.1.4 Situational and social factors

Ellis (1994:543) contends that individual learner differences constitute one source of variation in the use of learning strategies. Another source is situational factors: the language being learnt, the setting in which learning takes place, and the tasks that the learner is asked to perform. Factors of a social nature, such as gender, have also been shown to influence strategy use.

A number of differences between the learning strategies used by learners in a classroom as opposed to those used in a more natural setting have been found. Prabhu (1987:110) purports that studies of classroom learners suggest that social strategies are rare. For example, Chamot et al. (1988:29) noted that their classroom learners mentioned social strategies infrequently, the only exception being 'question for clarification'. They suggest that the adult-student interview situation may have inhibited the occurrence of strategies such as 'cooperation' and 'self-talk'. It is likely, however, that in many classrooms the kind of interaction that takes place affords little opportunity for the use of social strategies.

3.6 Language learning strategies and grammatical development

Research on the teaching of grammar (e.g. Nation, 1990:125) presents a convincing argument about the link between learning strategies and grammatical development. According to Nation (1990:127), grammatical development is the result of the use of as many learning strategies as possible.

Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985:50) point out that the strategies that teachers elect reflect the learners' general stage of grammatical development. There is some evidence to suggest that learning strategies that relate to grammatical knowledge and functional use precede those that involve close attention to form and single words. In this case, metacognitive strategies are more evident in teaching advanced learners (Ellis, 1994:555).

Ellis (1994:555) states that successful grammar teaching appears to involve learning strategies more frequently and in qualitatively different ways. It is clear, then, that learning strategies are helpful

tools for teaching and learning grammar. Ellis (1994) concurs with Chamot (1987:56) in saying that strategies that involve formal practice may contribute to the understanding and development of grammar and linguistic competence, while strategies that involve functional practice contribute to the development of communicative competence. It is, therefore, the careful selection and the effective teaching of learning strategies which help to develop the learners' grammatical competence and their communicative competence (cf. section 1.1).

Cohen (1990:125) stipulates that teachers of English as a second language need to employ strategies flexibly by selecting those strategies that are appropriate for their learners to perform a particular grammar task. He cites metacognitive strategies that involve goal identifications, planning, monitoring, and evaluation as strategies that appear considerably important for grammatical development. According to Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985:51), these strategies can help to make the teaching of grammar more effective as well as improve the learners' understanding of grammar. However, many teachers and learners of English as a second language appear to under-utilise learning strategies when they teach and learn grammar, and this makes it difficult for them to achieve their goals in the classroom (Ellis, 1994:556).

3.7 Language learning strategies and grammar teaching

It has been pointed out in the previous section that successful teaching of grammar comes as a result of using language learning strategies more frequently and in qualitatively different ways, and that this can help in the grammatical development of the learners. Learning strategies vary vastly in their application to second language teaching (Cohen, 1990:18). There are specific strategies teachers can use for successful grammar teaching, for example, Metacognitive strategies: self-management, planning, monitoring; Cognitive strategies: deduction/induction, elaboration, transfer strategies; Social/Affective strategies: cooperation, question for clarification, and self-talk. These strategies have been highly recommended by various researchers like O'Malley and Chamot (1990:206) as the most helpful strategies ESL teachers can use to improve their learners grammatical ability and communicative competence.

The language learning strategies cited in the above paragraph are specifically suggested because of their effectiveness on a variety of language tasks (e.g. grammar) learners perform. For example, O'Malley and Chamot (1990:142) point out that the metacognitive and cognitive strategies that students use most frequently for different language tasks are interesting for two major reasons: First, the matching of a strategy to a task by students provides a rationale for teachers to show students how to use that strategy for the same type of task. Second, strategies that are used for many different language tasks appear to be of primary importance and should become the instructional focus of strategy teaching. For example, 'self-monitoring' and 'elaboration' are important strategies for most language tasks. In using the 'self-monitoring strategy', teachers can succeed if they check learners' comprehension during listening or reading. They should also check the accuracy and/or appropriateness of the learners' oral or written production while it is taking place. In applying the 'elaboration strategy', teachers should relate new grammatical information to prior knowledge, relate different parts of new information to each other, or make meaningful personal associations with the new grammatical information.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990:143) suggest that when teachers use 'self-evaluation', they should check the outcomes of the learner's own L2 learning against a standard after it has been completed. In this case, different tasks should be given to the learners in order to evaluate their grammatical performance. Strategies such as resourcing, inferencing, summarising, and deduction should be used for at least two different tasks each (cf. Prokop, 1989:144). These tasks must then be analysed so as to identify learners' weaknesses and strengths in grammar learning. Oxford (1990:95) asserts that metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies such as 'elaboration' should be used in a variety of ways, suggesting that task demands and student proficiency level affect the level of complexity with which a given strategy can be employed.

Wenden (1991:94) discovered that teachers of English as a second language feel at best when they use cognitive strategies such as 'deductive/inductive' reasoning to emphasise the importance of learning and to help learners understand and remember specific grammatical structures. She suggests that teachers can use charts, dialogues, texts for grammar explanation, etc., to teach such learners. Wenden (1991:116) argues that teachers rely solely on strategies such as 'clarification/verification',

and ‘monitoring’ to teach grammar for communicative purposes.

3.8 Language learning strategy training

There is now an abundance of material that has been developed to train learners to use effective language learning strategies (e.g. Rubin & Thompson, 1982; Ellis & Sinclair, 1986; Brown, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991). Wenden (1991:115) points out that there have been, however, few empirical studies that have attempted to evaluate the success of strategy training on second language learners.

Brown (1989) and Wenden (1991) have developed a set of guidelines, suggestions, and explanations of the language learning strategy training designed to assist L2 students in becoming more successful language learners. Their objectives are to provide students with nontechnical explanations of the language learning process and to encourage them to use new language learning strategies. Wenden (1991:171) provides practical suggestions for becoming a more successful language learner through strategy training, recommending specific learning strategies, and suggesting how they should be taught to students. Some examples of how to teach learners to use strategies are as follows:

3.8.1 Metacognitive strategies

Self-management is a key strategy recommended by Rubin (1987:205). Examples of training of this strategy include identifying one’s own successful learning experiences, organising one’s study approach, taking advantage of diverse learning opportunities, and interacting with native speakers of the language in order to improve one’s grammatical understanding.

In training the planning strategies the teacher provides students with suggestions to rehearse expected conversational exchanges, look at the major points of a story or conversational exchanges, look at the major points of a story or conversation to get a general idea of the content, and plan to pay attention to major grammatical points explained by the teacher.

According to Brown (1989) and Wenden (1991), monitoring strategies are taught by advising students to use their own errors in the target language to identify their areas of weakness, to understand why they are making certain types of errors. Students are also trained to make use of the teacher's corrections. In this case, they evaluate the effectiveness of different kinds of practise on their learning. Thus, self-evaluation is not only the evaluation of students' language production but includes evaluation of the learning strategies employed.

3.8.2 Cognitive strategies

When training a variety of cognitive strategies, learners are given different activities in the target language. Rubin and Thompson (1982:105) suggest that when these strategies are taught, rehearsal and learning formulaic and idiomatic language such as special conversational routines should be done silently. They also suggest that learners must be told to practise, or rehearse tasks repeatedly.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990:226), deduction/induction and transfer strategies are illustrated by suggestions for applying grammar rules in language production and inducing rules from language input, using linguistic transfer to aid language learning,. The strategies they identified as mnemonics include: practical techniques for memorising language items, such as grouping words in various ways, using mental images, and using context to assist recall of specific words.

Elaboration, inferencing, and substitution are trained by reminding students to use what they already know to understand and produce the new language, to guess at unfamiliar items from the context (instead of overusing the dictionary), and to seek relationships and structure in language input in order to infer meaning (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989:64). Wenden (1991:117) asserts that these strategies are trainable when students are told to paraphrase and use synonyms as substitutes for language items that they do not know or cannot recall.

3.8.3 Social/affective strategies

Social/affective strategies can be trained in many ways. For example, students are reminded to ask ‘questions for clarification’ not only in the classroom but also when interacting with native students so as to keep the conversation going (cf. Rubin & Thompson, 1982:116). Teachers also encourage students to use ‘cooperation’ in various ways, such as practising with other students to communicate in the target language, playing games in the language, and sharing effective strategies with each other (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990:206). Teachers tell students not to be afraid to make errors, not to panic if they do not understand everything, and not to be discouraged if they make incorrect guesses (cf. Chamot, 1987).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter shows that the study of language learning strategies holds considerable promise for grammar teaching in the ESL classroom. The discussion above shows that language learning strategies are defined in different ways by different researchers.

Another section of importance that this chapter focuses on is the discussion of various frameworks that have been used to classify language learning strategies. The various methods used in the investigation of learning strategies shown in this chapter suggest that language learning strategies are useful in ESL grammar teaching. In this case, it has been indicated that the identification of language learning strategies is based on the teacher’s observation of learners’ performance in a variety of tasks (cf. section 3.4). This chapter also shows how various factors (e.g. individual learner differences, social and situational factors) influence the choice of strategies. It also shows how language learning strategies help to develop grammatical knowledge, which is the motivating factor for communicative competence. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how learners can be trained in the use of learning strategies with a focus on grammar.

CHAPTER 4

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter guidelines are given for how grammar should be taught by means of language learning strategy use. A discussion on how grammar should be taught is first given, followed by a discussion of selected language learning strategies teachers can use to make the teaching of grammar as effective as possible, and the grammar teaching proposals made by various researchers.

4.2 The teaching of grammar

4.2.1 How should grammar be taught within an OBE approach?

Outcomes-Based Education and its implications for teaching and learning languages have been warmly welcomed by both teachers and students in various schools in South Africa where OBE has already been implemented (Betram et al., 1997:1).

Betram et al. (1997:1) point out that the best teaching and learning occurs when the teacher chooses a range of assessment tasks and activities that will give learners opportunities to learn and demonstrate their skills, knowledge, values and attitudes (SKVAs). In this case, Betram et al. (1997:1) suggest that for successful teaching of a language aspect (e.g. grammar) in an OBE classroom the teacher should take into consideration a range of language learning strategies. In addition to the main strategies cited in the previous chapter, Betram et al. (1997:17) also advocate the following language learning strategies which are helpful in understanding grammar: *synthesising, summarising, note-taking, inventing and using mnemonics, skimming and scanning*. Betram et al. (1997:33) and Dyer et al. (2001:14) argue that the above-mentioned strategies could be used only after selecting the appropriate specific outcome (SO) (e.g. learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context). This specific outcome aims to develop a language user's understanding of grammar. The development of this grammatical competence empowers the

learner to communicate clearly and confidently by using grammatical structures (e.g. word order) correctly (Betram et al., 1997:33). Dyer et al. (2001:14) state that the clarity of communication is improved through the development of a learner's editing skills which includes a conscious awareness of the learner's own language usage.

Dyer et al. (2001:16) point out that it is the duty of the teacher to see to it that learners are always engaged in maximum participation, in pairs or groups whereby the teacher's task is mainly to monitor the work done by the learners. In this case, the teacher's task is integral to learning, it is ongoing, it tests knowledge, skills and attitudes, and it helps learners to succeed in gaining the knowledge of grammar (Betram et al. 1997:34). Betram et al. (1997:34) list some of the aims of Outcomes-Based teaching as follows:

- active learners whose maximum participation makes them understand the use of the rules and patterns of grammar in different situations;
- students show critical awareness of language use. In this case, students' knowledge of grammar rules enables them to understand how language can be used in different ways to express different intentions;
- an integration of knowledge; learning relevant and connected to real-life situations. The knowledge of grammatical structures acquired by learners is applied in communicative situations;
- learner-centred, teacher is facilitator, teacher uses group-work and a variety of resources relevant to grammar. Group work is aimed at making all learners participate in practising grammar;
- learners take responsibility for their learning by seeking ways of solving problems that relate to grammar. In this case, learners are motivated by constant feedback; and affirmation.

The aims cited above show that Outcomes-Based teaching is more helpful than traditional teaching in the sense that it makes learners more competent in the target language by engaging them in maximum participation during the lesson. Unlike the traditional way of teaching, Outcomes-Based teaching integrates knowledge and makes learning relevant by connecting it to the learner's real life situations (Betram et al., 1997:11). In this case, the activities within the classroom are learner-centred and the teacher's task is to facilitate the process. Unlike traditional teaching, where the teacher is held responsible for the learner's progress, Outcomes-Based teaching shifts all the learning responsibility to the learner her/himself (cf. Betram et al., 1997).

4.2.1.1 How to facilitate group work

Many teachers of English as a second language in South Africa work in overcrowded classrooms. When there are large numbers of learners in a classroom, teaching, especially of grammar, can become difficult. Often, teachers do not notice that some learners are not developing any skills, or are absent. Large classes also mean that noisy learners are paid a lot more attention, while the quieter ones are ignored. (cf. Betram et al., 1997).

Group work is one of the important methods teachers should follow in ESL grammar teaching. For example, Dyer et al. (2000:76) point out that group work encourages learners to participate maximally in discussions and explanations of grammatical structures. Dyer et al. (2000:76) also argue that by engaging themselves in group work learners become motivated to negotiate and critically evaluate the work given to them by the teacher. In this case, they learn to create, read and write grammatical items in dialogues and descriptions; participating in debates; using nouns and verbs and prefixes - as these are some of the outcomes within an OBE approach.

Betram et al. (1997:22) point out that by getting a class to work in groups while performing grammar activities such as 'interaction' and 'games', a teacher could start to overcome some of these problems. Smaller groups are easier to handle, and learners will also start to feel more positive about themselves. But first, the teacher needs to set up these smaller groups by giving them suitable activities, for example, 'involving personality' (cf. Appendix: Example 3). Betram et al. (1997:22)

give some suggestions for ESL teachers:

A. Grouping younger learners (grades 1 and 2)

- i) The class could be divided into small groups and each group given a different name. Let the learners help the teacher choose the name of their group. The groups could be named after different flowers, animals or birds.
- ii) Each group could have a wall chart that can be put up in the classroom. The wall chart should act as a profile for the group - recording their achievements and developments according to the answers over a specified time (cf. Appendix, Example 2:66).
- iii) Each group should be allowed to have one day in the week that they know as their 'special day'. On that day, the members of the group can wear a ribbon tied around their arms, to show that they are the group of the day. During that day, the teacher should pay special attention to this group.
- iv) At the beginning of each day, the group whose 'special day' it is could report on the activities they will be doing for the day. At the end of the day, they could record their achievements.
- v) By working in groups, teachers give different learners at least one day when they will spend a little more time talking or working with them. This is what makes group work a success! It should be remembered though, that the other groups are also important for consideration.

B. Grouping older learners (grades 6 and 7)

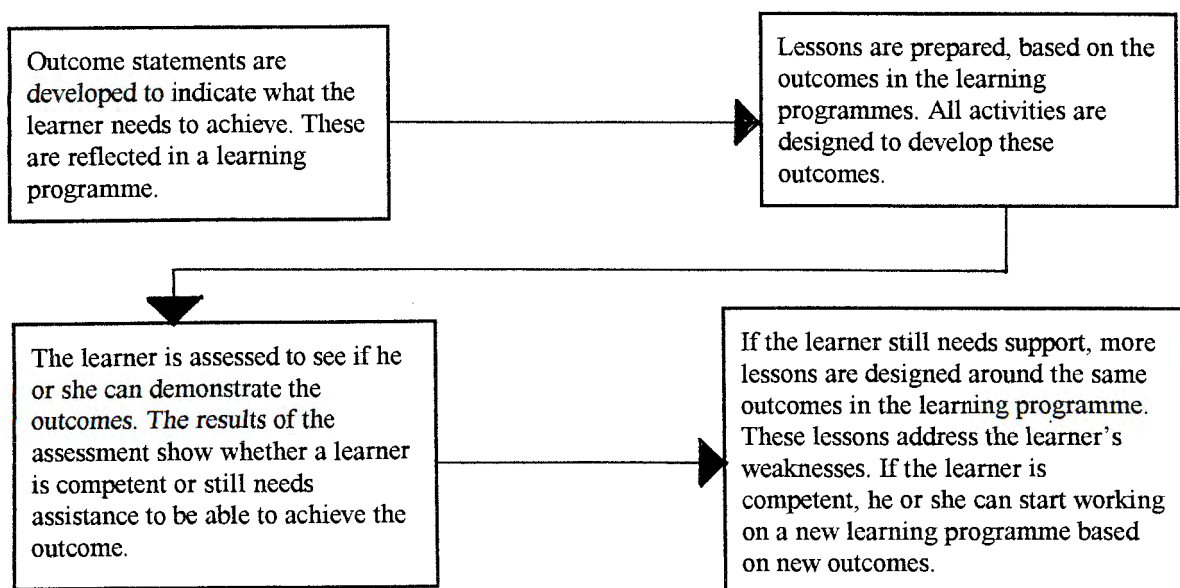
- i) There are many ways to work in groups with older learners. The teacher can get the learners to turn their desks around so that four learners work on an activity together or let learners turn to face each other without moving their desks at all.

- ii) When learners work in groups, there will be some noise as they talk and discuss what they are doing. The teacher just asks them to keep their voices down so that they do not disturb others in school.
- iii) While learners are working in groups, the teachers can move between the different groups, giving them encouragement and asking questions or listening to their plans.

4.2.1.2 Outcomes that relate to grammar teaching

It is generally agreed that when learning takes place within an OBE classroom, learners acquire skills, attitudes and knowledge of concepts or processes that they did not have previously (Chamont, 2000:4). These end products (outcomes) of the learning are acquired when learners work in groups in doing grammar activities (cf. Appendix: Example 1). Chamont (2000:4) points out that the ESL teacher has to decide before learning and teaching takes place what these end products must be, and then write them down as statements to develop learning programmes. In this case, the system is 'outcomes-based'. Such statements are illustrated in Diagram 4.2.

Diagram 4.2: Diagram of outcome statements



(Chamont, 2000:4)

Betram et al. (1997) and Chamont (2000) state that in order to understand what ought to be done, it is important for the ESL teacher to know that there are different levels of outcomes. Outcome statements can be specific or general. Obviously, the more specific an outcome statement, the easier it is to determine if a learner has attained it or not (Chamont, 2000:5). However, if all the outcome statements were defined in detail, a holistic sense of capability would be lost (cf. Chamont, 2000). Here are some outcome statements that relate to grammar:

- i) Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding. Since meaning is central to communication, this specific outcome aims at the development of the learner's ability to understand and negotiate meaning by using relevant communication strategies and by using listening, speaking, reading and writing skills
- ii) Learners show critical awareness of language usage.
- iii) Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context. In this case, knowledge of grammatical structures and conventions is applied to structure text.
- iv) Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations. Learners are able to understand grammatical structures and vocabulary development.

Obviously the fourth outcome is the easiest to assess if the appropriate strategies have been identified. It will be quite straightforward to identify which learners are able to communicate for specific purposes and situations. Betram et al. (1997:15) argue that if all outcomes were written to this detail, the bigger picture as represented in outcomes (i), (ii) and (iii) might become lost.

Betram et al. (1997) and Chamont (2000) cite other specific outcomes for language learning. They point out that these specific outcomes express the intended results of education and training as a whole and are, therefore, also important. These specific outcomes are also expected of the learners in grammar learning:

- i) Correct usage of words during the course of communication.
- ii) Identify and solve problems to which responses display responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- iii) Communicate effectively using acquired language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
- iv) Demonstrate an understanding of grammar in order to communicate clearly and confidently by using grammatical structures (e.g. word order) correctly.

4.2.1.3 Proposals for teaching grammar

(i) Harmer (1987)

According to Harmer (1987:11), both overt and covert grammar teaching has a real and important place in the classroom. He proposes that at grades 6 and 7, teachers are expected to do quite a lot of structure (and function) teaching and practice and less really free communicative activity, but placing heavy emphasis on reading and listening. At that stage, grammar teaching should be fairly covert since the main aim to get students to practise and use the language as much as possible.

Harmer (1987:11) asserts that the strategies that are most helpful for teaching grammar are:

- i) *Selective attention* in which the teacher tells students to focus on specific items, such as nouns, verbs, unknown words that they can ask for clarification about, numbers, important words that carry meaning, language function of the word or phrases, while learning. In this case, learners work in pairs or groups and are told to identify nouns and verbs in specific sentences that relate to active and passive voice (cf. Appendix: Example 4).
- ii) *Elaboration*: The teacher points out what students already know and suggests how they can use this academic or world knowledge to make an inference about the meaning of an unknown word.

- iii) *Inferencing*: The teacher first focuses on strategies such as selective attention, elaboration, transfer, or deduction, and then suggest that students make inferences based on information elicited from these strategies.
- iv) *Transfer*: The teacher calls attention to similar English words and cognates to suggest meanings of new words.

As students learn to use these strategies, the balance changes, and at grades 6 and 7 the students would be involved in more communicative activities about themselves and would have less grammar teaching (cf. Appendix: Example 3). Harmer (1987:11) argues that the teaching of grammar using the above-mentioned strategies at this stage, however, would probably be more appropriate, and as the students get more advanced they can actively study grammar in more overt ways. Harmer (1987:11) stresses the essential nature of input at any level, including input that is above the language ability of the students. He argues that this would not only help students to acquire language subconsciously, but could also preview language that will later form the basis for grammar teaching.

Harmer (1987:12) also proposes the presentation, discovery and practice of grammatical items. In this case, the teacher has to decide on which structures he/she will focus. He advocates a presentation stage consisting of lead-in, elicitation, accurate reproduction and immediate creativity, followed by practice and then communicative activities.

Presentation is the stage at which students are taught how to put the new syntax, words and sounds together. At the presentation stage, students learn the grammar that they will need for their most important experience of the target language. Harmer (1987:12) contends that a good presentation should be clear, efficient, lively and interesting, appropriate and productive, but points out that this can only be possible if “learners concentrate on the suggested strategies and make sure that they focus on the grammatical items being presented to them”. Harmer (1987:12) also advocates explanation of grammatical items which ranges from the overt to the covert. He points out that isolation is a covert way of explanation, for example, teachers might model a sentence like this when they present the first conditional: “*If there is a drought, animals will starve . . . listen, they’ll . . . they’ll starve*”. Students are given grammatical information without any rules being specifically

stated.

Harmer (1987:12) also suggests that teachers should apply 'questioning for clarification' strategies where they explain and give examples of the grammatical items to students. In this case, students are told to find out how they work - to discover the grammar rather than be told it. He asserts that at the most covert level, this simply means that the students are exposed to the target language. In this situation, students can be asked to look at some sentences and say how the meaning is expressed and what the differences are between the sentences. Harmer (1987:12) states that as the students puzzle through the information and solve the problem in front of them, they find out how grammar is used in a text and are acquiring a grammar rule. He further argues that by involving the students' reasoning processes in the task of grammar acquisition, teachers make sure that students are concentrating fully, using their cognitive powers. In this way, teachers are also ensuring that their approach is more student-centred in the sense that it is not just the teacher telling the students what the grammar is, but the students are actually discovering information for themselves. Student-centredness in grammar learning and teaching is actually what is required within an Outcomes-Based Education approach.

Another strategy which Harmer (1987:14) advocates for teaching grammar is one of a cognitive kind. Harmer believes that the 'deduction/induction' strategy is worthwhile since it enables students to consciously apply learned or self-developed rules to produce or understand the target language. Harmer (1987:13) contends that the 'deductive/inductive strategy' is one of the best in grammar teaching as it makes students produce the second language or make up rules based on language analysis. Since this is done not with the whole class but rather with students in pairs, the teacher is able to get students to ask and answer questions quickly and efficiently. Harmer (1987:13) points out that the chief advantage of this kind of strategy is that the teacher can correct any mistakes that the students make about the rules of grammar and can encourage them to concentrate on difficulties at the same time.

When these kinds of strategies have been applied, the teachers should then look at how to assess the students' knowledge of grammar. Harmer (1987:57) suggests that students can be assessed on the:

(ii) Beaumont and Granger (1992)

Beaumont and Granger (1992:37) suggest the use of social and affective strategies such as 'questioning for clarification' and 'self-reinforcement' for grammar teaching. These researchers stipulate that it is the teacher's duty to give clear and understandable explanation, verification, rephrasing, or examples about the material. Beaumont and Granger (1992:37) also assert that in order to understand more about the grammar of the target language, students must be taught to ask that their understanding of the learning task in hand be clarified or verified, or to pose questions to themselves. Murphy (1988:179) contends that "elicitation from a teacher or a native speaker of additional explanations motivates mastery of a learning task by the students". Murphy (1988:180) adds, however, that rephrasing or verifying might have little effect on the student's progress if it is not coupled with examples. He argues that examples are of great importance to a second language learner since they make him/her "see what is right and what is wrong in a learning task".

Beaumont and Granger (1992:44) purport that before the lesson begins, the teacher should consult a number of grammar books, preferably those books with grammatical explanations that are made as clear and simple as possible. Beaumont and Granger (1992:44) advocate books that contain units, each one of them dealing with one area of grammar (*e.g. the present continuous, will, or the articles, a, an, and the*). The aim is to enable teachers of English as a second language to plan and stage their lessons, organise their classrooms and 'manage' their students in such a way as to promote maximum language learning and active communication among their students. Murphy (1988:181) contends that, in this situation, the teacher can involve the 'self-reinforcement' strategy which will enable learners to provide personal motivation by arranging rewards for themselves when a learning activity has been successfully completed. Beaumont and Granger (1992:44) point out that learners should be exposed to these strategies (questioning for clarification and self-reinforcement) since they are suitable for the grammatical units to be taught. Such strategies will then enable the teacher to give a good explanation which should also give a detailed list of grammatical structures, and includes headings which are concerned with the way language is used (*e.g. ability, obligation*).

Beaumont and Granger (1992:44) assert that examples should include all structures of grammar

Beaumont and Granger (1992:44) assert that examples should include all structures of grammar explained while using the social/affective strategies. These could be done orally or in written form to ensure that students have attained knowledge of the grammatical structures. Beaumont and Granger (1992:44) purport that the teacher must make sure that the examples he gives the learners are systematic, that is, it should be one example of a particular grammatical structure at a time, followed by another, and so on. According to Beaumont and Granger (1992:45), this will improve the learners' grammatical understanding, and encourage them to learn other structures.

Beaumont and Granger (1992:98) suggest that the teacher should give exercises only when the teacher is quite sure that the learners have grasped the structures that were being presented. However, they warn the teacher to guard against giving learners exercises that will confuse them due to lack of clear understanding of the grammatical structure. Beaumont and Granger (1992:98) point out that confusing exercises would discourage learners from learning. The purpose of this step is to see how well learners have learned the grammar through the use of the strategies suggested. Beaumont and Granger (1992:101) suggest that the teacher can use the exercises to diagnose particular problems because each exercise concentrates on a particular area of grammar.

(iii) Elsworth and Walker (1989)

Elsworth and Walker (1989:137) suggest that in the teaching of grammar, teachers should use strategies of the metacognitive kind which engage learners in grammatical tasks. Elsworth and Walker (1989:137) advocate 'self-monitoring' and 'delayed-production'. Elsworth and Walker (1989:137) point out that while using the 'self-monitoring' strategy the students are able to check, verify or correct their understanding or performance in the course of a grammar task. Elsworth and Walker (1989:65) suggest that the language learning strategies employed for the teaching of grammar should enable learners not only to know how to explain all the grammar rules or master all the grammatical forms and patterns, but also to exploit the healthy communicative situations that arise in the classroom for meaningful language practice, and to allow enough time for oral production activities after the practice stages of the lesson. Anderson (1990:48) also asserts that the 'self-monitoring' helps in developing students' inferencing skills which are helpful in using available

points out that inferencing skills are “clearly involved in control processes and in opportunistic planning, because a learner will analyze these demands to determine the difficulty of the task”. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:7) concur with Elsworth and Walker (1989:66) when they say that the ‘self-monitoring’ strategy helps students to be aware of what they are doing in second language items as well as to help them to find solutions about the problems of the task at hand. Weinstein and Mayer (1986:14) add that monitoring involves setting goals for learning and deploying alternative procedures when the goal is not met.

Pertaining to the ‘delayed production’ strategy, Elsworth and Walker (1989:168) argue that this strategy is used in grammar teaching to plan and monitor speech production which links to the learners’ ability to use grammatical skills. In this way, the teaching of grammar should aim at paving ways for English second language learners to use English in realistic communicative situations. Elsworth and Walker (1989:144) state that communication is the ultimate aim for teaching grammar, therefore, the teacher should bear in mind the primary purpose of teaching grammar which is “to help learners use the target language correctly and appropriately”.

Like Harmer (1987) and Beaumont and Granger (1992), Elsworth and Walker (1989:70) are also in favour of cognitive strategies such as ‘deductive/inductive’, which enable students to apply rules to understand or produce language or solve problems. They also advocate ‘socioaffective’ and ‘group work’ strategies, and argue that strategies of this kind can be applied to improve students’ communicative efficiency. Elsworth and Walker (1989:72) also state that ‘group work’ enables students of English as a Second Language to get more grammatical information from the native students.

Elsworth and Walker (1989:170) advocate a classroom which focuses on both form and function. They point out that for students to use the target language meaningfully, they need to be familiarised with basic grammatical forms and patterns which help to improve communicative competence.

Elsworth and Walker (1989:178) advocate Tarone and Yule’s (1989:5) establishment of what the needs of teachers and students are, and the involvement of language learning strategies in grammar

teaching which has contributed to a better understanding of grammar as well as the improvement of students' spoken and written proficiency. Another notion linked to this argument is the improvement of students' grammatical abilities by introducing as many tasks or activities as possible - which is the main focus of Outcomes-Based Education today (Herman et al., 1997:26). Elsworth and Walker (1989:179) point out that researchers differ on the language learning strategies which teachers can apply to grammar teaching. The fact of the matter is that language learning strategies have both advantages and disadvantages when applied in their separate teaching processes (O'Malley et al., 1985:204). Some teachers might find their grammar teaching to be effective when they apply metacognitive and cognitive strategies, whereas other teachers feel at best when they apply strategies of the socioaffective kind.

In teaching grammar, it is also of cardinal importance to take into consideration the students' aims and expectations (e.g. communicative competence made up of grammatical competence) (Henman, 1992:5). This will enable the teacher to make a good selection of the relevant language learning strategies he would like to apply in the process of teaching (Cook, 1991:84). Cook (1991:84) states that taking students' aims and expectations into consideration is important as they also determine students' attitude towards the teacher and the language learning strategies to be used in grammar teaching.

(iv) Ellis and Sinclair (1989)

Ellis and Sinclair (1989:138) describe various strategies that relate to second language teaching proposals. These language learning strategies are aimed at reducing difficulties experienced by teachers during the teaching of any L2 item (e.g. grammar) in any classroom situation. In this case, Ellis and Sinclair (1989:138) share the same idea with Nunan (1989:59) who states that the involvement of language learning strategies (e.g. metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective) in grammar teaching does not only help to reduce problems that prevail in the classroom but also reduces 'fears' that students have during the teaching-learning process. The suggested strategies for grammar teaching as summarised by Ellis and Sinclair (1989:178) include:

- i) Grouping and deduction, in which students collect real world examples of grammar patterns.
- ii) Deduction/induction, in which students are taught to invent personal rules from different examples of grammar.
- iii) Self-management and organisational planning, in which students are taught to use hesitation techniques to provide thinking time in a conversation.
- iv) Self-management and cooperation, in which students find practice opportunities to master grammar for communication purposes.

Ellis and Sinclair's (1989:172) practical suggestions for applying learning strategies in a variety of ways when teaching grammar are particularly useful for the highly motivated and mature student who is already an autonomous learner. They state that teachers could use the suggestions for learning strategy applications "to provide the scaffolding instruction needed by the less mature and motivated student." Ellis (1992:51) suggests that for grammar teaching purposes, the strategies suggested would need to be organised into an instructional sequence in which teachers ensure that students are aware of their own mental processes and existing strategies, perhaps model the strategies, "and then provide ample practice and evaluation opportunities to develop procedural competence with the strategies". Ellis (1992:52) points out that an adaptation of this nature presupposes a thorough understanding on the part of the teacher of the theoretical background and nature of learning strategies and cognitive processes in second language acquisition, as well as the ability to develop instructional materials based on the grammar activities.

Ellis and Sinclair (1989:173) have developed actual instructional materials to be used with intermediate-level ESL students when learning grammar in the language classroom. Their objectives are to help students become more effective and more responsible language learners, to provide the second language teacher with a model for learner training, and to show the teacher how to integrate learner training with language instruction. Thus, this approach calls for integrated training of strategies and language, even though the materials themselves address strategy instruction only.

materials also provide direct training in learning strategy use, as students are made aware throughout of the value and purpose of strategy training in grammar learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:207).

Ellis and Sinclair (1989:201) state that there are a number of other learning strategies that can be used to teach grammar. Ellis and Sinclair (1989:201) assert that the extensive application of the learning strategies in teaching grammar helps to improve the grammatical development of the students as well as the development of the four major language skills. Ellis and Sinclair (1989:201) point out that the first strategies to be presented for grammatical study are metacognitive ones, which provide a basis for the introduction of cognitive strategies. The metacognitive strategies used are:

- i) Self-awareness, in which students develop an understanding of themselves as learners and of their individual attitudes and motivation toward different aspects (e.g. grammar) of the target language;
- ii) Language awareness, in which students develop metalinguistic knowledge about language as an organised system. Such knowledge includes the ability to identify language register and functions, as well as strategies for different language skills, and the ability to make grammatical deduction and linguistic transfer;
- iii) Self-assessment, in which students learn to monitor and evaluate their language learning progress; and
- iv) Setting short-term aims, in which students identify goals and use self-management techniques to determine which are achievable in a realistic timetable.

Ellis and Sinclair (1989:202) contend that before using any language learning strategies in grammar teaching, it is important that the teacher of English as a second language bears in mind the educational aims he must address as well as the learner's needs and expectations. The teacher must also understand that the aim of the Specific Outcome (SO5) is to develop a language user's understanding and knowledge of grammar (Betram et al., 1997:33). At this level learners study and apply a range of grammatical structures and conventions in the range of texts (cf. section 4.2.1.2).

Ellis (1990:100) points out that formal accuracy is paramount in speaking and writing because pedagogical grammar rules are essentially rules of grammar production. In this case, Ellis (1992:110) suggests that metacognitive strategies such as 'organisation' and 'planning' are important in teaching grammar. He purports that 'organisation strategy' is in fact a reading strategy with potential applications for listening comprehension, and has definite applications in grammar tasks. O'Malley and Chamot (1990:136) also point out that production tasks like writing elicit 'organisational planning strategies', such as planning to compose something, planning the total product at the discourse level, planning particular sentences, and planning to use specific grammatical structures. The examples of these planning strategies (advance organisation and organisational planning) illustrate Anderson's (1990) model of language comprehension and production which link to grammar teaching.

Teachers can sometimes use 'directed attention' and make their students decide in advance to attend in general to a grammar task (Ellis & Sinclair 1989:203). In this case, students focus on a grammar task while they are actively engaged in completing it rather than before starting it. Similarly, 'self-monitoring' can be used in a variety of ways for both comprehension and grammar production. In grammar production, students monitor themselves at different levels, as in monitoring at the word, phrase, or sentence level, and also monitor for style, their writing plan, and for the effectiveness of their choice of strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990:139).

Ellis and Sinclair (1989:203) advocate socioaffective strategies as strategies that make ESL grammar teaching more effective. They argue that 'question for clarification' strategies always appear to be helpful to learners who ask questions of the interviewer about the task, or when they address questions to themselves as they work through a language activity. However, Ellis and Sinclair (1989:204) point out that 'cooperation' and 'self-talk' were only helpful to a certain degree in the study that they conducted, but point out that it was because of the inhibiting influence of the adult-student interview situation, which made the occurrence of these strategies not so effective.

4.3 Conclusion

The guidelines discussed in this chapter suggest that the teaching of grammar in the ESL classroom is not an easy task to carry out. This chapter has also focused on various language learning strategies advocated by different researchers in their grammar teaching proposals. It has also been implied that the focus language learning strategies receive within the OBE approach may be to the advantage of the learners, especially where “grammar” is concerned.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the conclusion and recommendations for further research. It comments on the literature survey and the theoretical and practical positions relating to the role of language learning strategies in grammar teaching in the English second language classroom. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further research in this field.

5.2 Conclusion

A review of the literature on the language learning strategies that can be used for the teaching of grammar in English as a Second Language points to the fact that the teaching of grammar is a complex and extremely challenging process which involves many interrelated factors. The teacher of English as a Second Language needs to take into consideration the different language learning strategies that exist regarding the teaching of grammar. It should be understood, though, that the language acquisition process is complicated by the fact that language is acquired both formally and interactionally. This understanding of language acquisition is important as it lies centrally to the three-way distinction of the three major learning strategies employed by the teacher in the teaching of grammar.

Every strategy for grammar teaching is subject to criticism. It is, therefore, suggested that a combination of strategies should be adopted and taught in order to gain a multi-dimensional approach towards the teaching of grammar. The specific teaching situation and the type of students are of cardinal importance here, as these will determine the type of strategies that are to be selected by the teacher.

With the importance of ESL grammar teaching that has been elevated recently (cf. Betram et al.,

1997), that is, in the Outcomes-Based Education teaching approach, it appears that the strategy market should be prepared for more comprehensive research in this area of language teaching. Teachers and students of English as a Second Language, particularly those who did not have access to ‘quality education’ in the past years, seem to be interested in being exposed to strategy use. Teachers of English as a Second Language have realised that taking cognizance of language learning strategies can narrow the gap between the standards maintained in classrooms that overlook the importance of using strategies, and those that recognise strategies as the essential tools for grammar teaching (cf. Graver, 1989). The implementation of language learning strategies suggests that many teachers want to allay problems that they experience with regard to the teaching of ESL grammar within their classrooms.

Problems pertaining to grammar teaching in the ESL classroom are limitless. For this reason, the implementation of a number of approaches to the training of language learning strategies have been proposed to maximise changes in students’ grammatical performance as well as their linguistic competence. The first suggestion for strategy application is to analyse the results of training ESL learners in relation to all four major language skills (*e.g. listening, reading, speaking and writing*). This analysis is particularly important given that at some point in teaching language processes that occur with difficulty become automatic.

This study has cited another direction in combining strategies, as in the combination of metacognitive and cognitive, or cognitive and social/affective strategies, with a single task (cf. section 3.7). Combined strategy use is likely to result in effective grammar teaching, since metacognitive strategies give students more insight into the nature of the task demands.

The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education in schools has improved the learning and teaching of English as a Second Language as shown in the Specific Outcomes (e.g. SO5) that relate to grammar. For example, section 4.2.1 of this study has shown that Outcomes-Based Education aims to develop language users’ understanding and knowledge of grammar, which is the major step towards communicative competence.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations are made for further research:

- a) Although a number of language learning strategies have been cited in this study, not enough is known about what combination is most effective for ESL grammar teaching.
- b) Some learners may be doubtful of the essence and the effect of the strategies on grammar learning, such that they may also need convincing that strategy training is worthwhile. It is recommended, therefore, that the teacher introduces his learners to language learning strategies so as to find out if they are willing to be trained; makes the conditions of the classroom conducive to strategy teaching; and takes into consideration the needs and the expectations of the learners as it is possible that the very learners that need strategy training are most likely to be the ones that reject it.
- c) It is not clear whether learner training will work best when it exists as a separate strand in the language programme (cf. Wenden, 1991), or when it is fully integrated into the language teaching materials, as proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) in their Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALL). The suggestion made by O'Malley and Chamot (1990:205), then, is that strategy training has to be conducted using the staff who designed the training module. While there are advantages to this, regular classroom teachers must also be willing to implement the training.
- d) Another issue is whether learners should be made conscious of the strategies they are taught or whether just providing practice opportunities is sufficient.
- e) It is not all schools in South Africa where Outcomes-Based Education has been implemented so far. Outcomes-Based Education, therefore, needs to take place in every classroom in order to consolidate the claim that it is a helpful approach towards the teaching of grammar. This study also recommends that teachers of English as a Second Language ought to undergo an

intensive course on OBE in order to understand all the requirements underlying it, and to know how it is applied to language teaching, particularly grammar.

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APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF GRAMMAR LESSONS

EXAMPLE 1: Present perfect continuous tense

Strategy used: *Cooperation* (working with others in problem solving): Working together with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity or get feedback on oral or written performance.

8.6 RECENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS		Practice
Work in pairs.		
<i>Example</i> A: You look tired. What have you been doing?		
B: I've been redecorating my flat.		
A: How much have you done?		
A: How far have you got with it?		
B: Well, so far I've done the ceiling and I've papered the walls, but I haven't painted the woodwork yet.		
Have conversations like this about:		
1 cleaning the living room	5 making the supper	
2 typing letters	6 getting the flat ready for a party	
3 revising for the exam	7 organising your brother's wedding	
4 building a house		
Work in groups. Tell each other what you have really been doing recently, and what particular things you have done.		

In this example in grades six and seven students are practising the present perfect continuous and they are given more freedom to use their own ideas. Here students are encouraged to practise with other students, play games in the language, and share effective strategies with each other. During the course of the conversation students are told not to be afraid to make errors, not to panic if they do not understand everything asked by their peers, and not to be discouraged if they make incorrect guesses.

Although the instruction is for the students to work in pairs or groups, here the teacher would first conduct the lesson working with the whole class. With the first prompt '*cleaning the living room*'

the teacher holds up cards with words ‘*dust the furniture vacuum the carpet shake out the rugs*’ as prompts for the students to say, ‘*Well, so far I’ve dusted the furniture and hoovered the carpets, but I haven’t shaken out the rugs yet*’. The teacher would then continue to give prompts where necessary (using ‘*self-talk*’ strategy to reduce anxiety by using mental techniques that make the student feel competent to do the learning task) until the students showed that they understood and could ‘reinforce’ themselves and provide personal motivation when the learning activity had been successfully completed. At this moment the teacher would put learners either into pairs or groups to continue the task. In this way, the learners are more ‘cooperative’, and become masters of the target-language grammar rules.

Source: Meanings into Words: Doff et al. (1993:54)

EXAMPLE 2: Another example of a grammar lesson which involves ‘*Socioaffective*’ strategies (e.g. *cooperation*) is where the students are engaged in *interactional activities*. A lesson of this nature is designed so that students work together, exchanging information in a purposeful and interesting way. The following two examples show exercises which get students to practise grammatical items using ‘*cooperation strategies*’ (interacting with other students in order to find a solution to a problem).

1) The present simple

In this example for grades six and seven, students are practising with questions with the present simple, making a difference between third person singular and plural verb endings. Students are put in pairs. Student A looks at the following material:

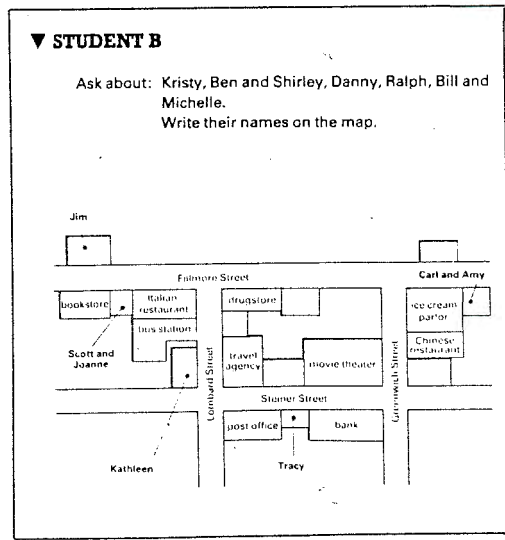
Ask about: Jim, Kathleen, Carl and Amy, Tracy, Scott and Joanne.
Write their names on the map.

▲ STUDENT A

Ask and answer questions to find where the people live. Do not look at your partner's map!
For example:

A: Where does Jim live?
B: Across the street from the bookstore.

Student B looks at a slightly different map:



It is noticed that *A* and *B*'s information is slightly different. For example, *A* does not know where Tracy lives and has to ask *B*, who does know. *B* does not know where Ben and Shirley live and has to ask *A*. The whole point is that *A* and *B* must not look at each other's maps until they have finished. So the only way they have of completing the task is by asking each other questions like (*A*) 'Where does Tracy live?' to which *B* will reply, 'Between the post office and the bank'

The previous example is of a lesson called 'information gap' activity. In this case, students have to ask each other for information to 'close the gap' in the information which they both have.

2) Charts - past and present tenses

Charts are very useful to promote 'coöperation' among students; in order to complete them the students have to question each other and note down the replies.

In this example students have to write down another student's name. Then they ask that student these questions:

What is your favourite leisure activity?

When did you last (do your favourite leisure activity)?

How often do you (do your favourite leisure activity)?

They fill in this chart according to the answers:

They fill in this chart according to the answers:

Name	Favourite leisure activity	When?	How often?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

The best way of doing this activity is to ask all the students to stand up. They can then move round the class questioning various classmates. When the students have finished they can compare results.

What is the most popular leisure activity in the class?

Source: Coast to Coast Student's Book 1, Harmer and Surguine (1987: 74)

EXAMPLE 3: Involving personality

Recently some teachers and materials writers have designed lessons which teach students to practise grammar while at the same time requiring students to talk about themselves in a more involved way than the examples above. Students are asked to discuss things that affect their personality and to use this subject matter as a focus for grammar learning. These two examples show how some of the metacognitive strategies could be used to teach grammar.

a) The teacher can use the '*self-evaluation*' strategy (evaluating oneself by deeply involved in an activity at hand) where they can ask students to discuss the 'crimes' they have committed. One way of making 'self-evaluation' or 'self-monitoring' strategies work is to get students to contribute something of their own to the lesson at hand; in this way they will be more involved in the lesson (even though it is fairly mechanical).

In this example, students are practising the present perfect. Here students are advised to use their own errors in the second language (e.g. saying a sentence) to identify their areas of weakness, to understand why they are making certain types of errors, to make use of the teacher's corrections, and to evaluate the effectiveness of different kinds of practice on their learning. They sit in circles and one after the other has to say

I am (name) and I've never (crime)

for example:

Student's mistake: 'I am doing crime and I've never done crime.'

Teacher's correction: 'I am John and I've never robbed a bank.'

'I am Maria and I've never hijacked a car.'

This activity is great fun, although if the circle is too large the students soon run out of 'crimes' and

have to think fairly hard. Some teachers also worry that students might reveal a bit too much of themselves when they choose a crime that they have not committed!

b) Your favourite food

In this example, students learn how to use 'was' and 'were' in the context of talking about their childhood in a positive and happy light. In a lesson like this teachers may find that even at a very basic level students start discussion rather than practising the language.

Procedures: begin the activity by talking about childhood memories:

"We all have a number of childhood memories that made us happy in some way. As we get older, we tend not to think about them very much. Yet to do so helps us relive the good feelings we had at the time.

"Today we're going to recall some of our favorite things from childhood. Each of you will have a handout listing some categories. In your groups take one category at a time. The first person will ask the second person a question, such as 'What was your favorite candy?' The second person answers and then asks the first person the same question. It will now be time to start a new round of questions. Rotate who asks the questions first each time so the same person does not do so always.

"In some cases, your answers will be brief. For other questions, they will be longer. You can ask one another additional questions or add comments, if you wish. You will find as your partner answers that other memories will come back to you. When you finish all of the questions on the handout, add some of your own categories to the list and take some extra turns using them."

Pass out the dittos. Here are some possible categories that can be used:

WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, WHAT (OR WHO) WAS YOUR FAVORITE:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Toy? Why? | 11. Friend? Why? |
| 2. Holiday? Why? | 12. Grownup (other than family)? Why? |
| 3. Food? Candy? Why? | 13. Teacher? Why? |
| 4. Play activity? | 14. Relative (not a parent or guardian)? Why? |
| 5. Book or story? Why? | 15. Memory of snow? |
| 6. Place to go? Why? | 16. Memory at a beach or pool? |
| 7. Song? | 17. Thing to do that was scary? |
| 8. Outfit? | 18. Birthday? Why? |
| 9. TV programs? Radio programs? Why? | 19. Comic strip? |
| 10. Hobby? | 20. Ride at the amusement park? |

The maximum participation of the students in what they are talking about makes the lesson more meaningful. However, teachers have to be sure that their students are mature enough to handle such activities and they need to be sensitive to the students' reactions to such exercises.

Source: Grammar Practice for Intermediate Students: Elsworth and Walker (1988:79)

EXAMPLE 4: Nouns and verbs

In most classrooms where grammar is taught, teachers use metacognitive strategies (e.g. selective attention) and cognitive strategies (e.g. deduction and inferencing) in teaching nouns and verbs. In this case, students are told to identify nouns and verbs in sentences that are in the 'active and passive voice'. The primary aim here is to develop students' understanding of how intransitive verbs change their forms when sentences are converted from active to passive voice. Students are given sentences such as these:

Active voice	Passive voice
i) John kicks the ball. ii) The dog eats the meat. iii) The girl washes the dress.	

In this example, students are practising changing sentences from active to passive voice in the present tense. Students are advised to correct their errors in each group. This is intended to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the activity.

Source: Meanings into Words: Doff et al. (1993:61)