Designing Effective Pedagogical Activities to Enhance Grammar Understanding and Communicative Competence in Intermediate-Level Adult SL Learners

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Abstract: This article explores strategies to enhance the grammatical understanding and communicative competence of intermediate-level adult second language learners by designing targeted pedagogical activities. It focuses on how pre-task, while-task, and post-task activities can effectively support learners in grasping complex grammatical concepts and applying them in real-world communicative scenarios. The study emphasizes that using grammar in authentic contexts significantly improves learners' ability to communicate fluently in English, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.By integrating theory with practice, the article underlines the importance of designing teaching activities that are not only engaging but also aligned with the specific learning needs of adult students. The pre-task phase activates prior knowledge and introduces essential terms, while the while-task phase deepens understanding through critical discussion and note-taking. The post-task phase reinforces the application of learned grammar through role-plays and reflective writing, ensuring that learners can transfer their grammatical knowledge to everyday communication situations.Furthermore, the article provides practical insights into teaching strategies that foster active learning and critical thinking, encouraging learners to not only memorize grammar rules but also use them creatively in meaningful interactions. These strategies offer valuable guidance for educators in creating more effective grammar instruction plans tailored to adult learners' unique needs, ultimately enhancing both their linguistic proficiency and problem-solving skills.

Keywords: grammatical teaching, communication skills, English in real-life situations, practical teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

The acquisition of a second language (S.L.) is vital, especially in modern society, as it facilitates interaction with other persons in different cultures and employment. This assignment focuses on designing activities to improve the English language proficiency of intermediate-level adult learners. The tasks are derived from a selected text from Bourke's [1] 2005 article, "The Grammar We Teach", which focuses on the various perspectives on grammar in second-language teaching. The rationale for these tasks is to aid the learners in comprehending the text and, at the same time, practicing their communicative English. The target group comprises adults learning at an intermediate level of

English. Such learners have basic English grammar and vocabulary knowledge and need improvement in reading and writing skills. The selected text, which discusses the correlation between theoretical linguistics and pedagogical grammar, will pose sufficient difficulty. However, it is relevant to the needs of these learners to develop their linguistic and analytical skills. This paper first analyzes the target group, the selected text, a discussion of the activities designed to facilitate learners' comprehension of the text, the meaningful and real-life use of English, the rationale for activity design, engagement strategies, and the expected outcomes. The expected outcomes highlight the anticipated learning experiences and evaluate the efficiency of the proposed.

2.   Target Group Analysis

The selected S.L. learners' target group for this assignment is the adult learners at the intermediate level of English. This target group typically has minimal basic English grammar and vocabulary, which they can use to communicate at a basic level and comprehend essential texts. Cultural values, past learning experiences, and attitudes toward acquiring English significantly affect their learning [2]. However, such students must develop business or academic English, improve their speaking and writing skills, and broaden their knowledge of definite grammar patterns. The challenges that the identified group faces are more than just simple ones. Many need help transitioning from simple words to the intermediate level and complex English, which also involves grammar and idioms. Intermediate learners still need help with using the knowledge of distinct language skills in a meaningful context, according to Hinkel [3]. Other influences originate from their prior and current experiences regarding language learning and their beliefs about language learning, which may act as a barrier to changing their learning styles or ways of learning grammar [4].

3.   Text Selection and Rationale

The selected text, "The Grammar We Teach", authored by J.M. Bourke, addresses the issue of the relationship between pedagogical grammar and theoretical grammar. According to Bourke [1], second language teachers major in pedagogical grammar and need more time to read what theoretical linguists such as Chomsky and Halliday say. Chomsky's ideas are too academic to be integrated into teaching practice, while Halliday's approach has practical teaching applications. In her work, Bourke describes five various schools of grammar and assesses their applicability to second language teaching. The selected text stresses that different grammatical theories should be understood to make correct decisions concerning what grammar should be taught and how to teach it.

This text is particularly suitable for intermediate-level adult learners for several reasons. First, it is an intermediary between elementary grammatical information and complex language concepts at the student's developmental level [5]. The text also provides an analysis of various grammatical processes that can enhance learners' outlook on English grammar rather than mere memorization because it allows authoring a critical analysis of the topic [3]. Furthermore, the text content enables critical thinking and reflection, essential skills for adult learners, to motivate them through practical and intellectual engagement with the material [6].

The objectives of learning this text include improving the learners' understanding of various theories of grammar and their roles in language instruction. Through reading Bourke's [1] text, learners will gain more profound grammar knowledge, which will help them apply English more effectively and adequately. Another learning outcome is to enhance critical thinking among learners by having them contrast between and evaluate different grammatical styles. Moreover, the text develops the learners' academic word list and linguistic and communicative proficiency in relevant contexts in English as a foreign language. By accomplishing these objectives, the activities developed

around this text will enable intermediate-level adult learners to enhance their English language proficiency and apply what they have learned in their everyday interactions.

4. Activity Design

The pedagogical activities are structured into pre-task, while-task, and post-task phases to ensure comprehensive engagement with the text and enhance learners' understanding and use of English in communicative and authentic ways.

4.1. Pre-task Activities

The objectives of the pre-task activities are to engage the students' prior knowledge, familiarize them with the terms used in the text, and explain the topic of the text. These activities aim to introduce the learners to what is expected of them in terms of learning content and to help build their interest in the topic being taught. The pre-task activities involve a short oral question-and-answer session to understand the learners' past experiences with grammar and how it relates to language learning. This discussion allows them to relate to what they have experienced and what they are likely to come across in the text [5]. This is followed by matching the new terms and their definitions using essential vocabulary derived from the text. Besides, this activity enables learners to not only learn basic terms but also to develop the capability to understand and apply them in context [4].

Next is the presentation of an outline of the main ideas in the text to give the learners a head start on what is in store for them. This brief review identifies the different grammatical theories detailed in the text and how they apply to second language teaching. Contextualizing, in this case, refers to the ability of the learners to understand the context within which the content is presented and to decode its significance to their learning of the second language [7]. In the last stage of the pre-task phase, learners are asked to predict the main areas covered in a given text to instigate curiosity.

4.2. While-task Activities

The while-task activities incorporated here are intended to enhance understanding and critical analysis of the text. The objectives include enhancing the learner's understanding of the main ideas, note-taking, and meaningful discussion on the content. The learners first review the text in parts, each accompanied by a set of true or false questions. These questions involve finding the main ideas and details, which assists the learners in building an integrated comprehension of the text arguments [6]. While reading, learners are expected to handwrite, underline key ideas, and write comments or queries. Such note-taking helps consolidate understanding and memory of the content [3].

After the reading and comprehension questions, learners are grouped and discuss their notes and ideas with other group members. These discussions enable learners to elaborate their thoughts and listen to other people as, in this way, they can comprehend a particular text more richly [8]. To encourage the discussions, a set of questions is used that makes the learners reflect on the content of the text and its implication for second language education. As part of the while-task phase, a writing activity involves evaluating the information being processed upon the completion of notes. Learners write down what they understood from the text and why they think so, and they perform the task in groups. This activity reviews learners' comprehension, and they are probed to condense the knowledge gained into simple and coherent arguments [9].

4.3. Post-task Activities

The post-task activities are designed to promote further learning and help extend the new knowledge's use in more practical and real-life activities. The objectives aim to increase the learners' capacity to

deliberate on the meanings of the text, understand grammar within realism contexts, and practice reflective learning. The final phase of the part-task involves the class discussion on the implications of the text for second-language teaching. In writing the text, the author makes sure that learners will be able to know how they can apply different grammatical theories they come across during their learning and teaching process [2]. It assists in eliminating the gap between the conceptual framework and the everyday experience, which is enhanced to make the content comprehensible and valuable for the learners.

After that, learners engage in role-play that entails acting out a classroom scene that involves teaching grammar. In groups, they organize and teach a mini-lesson related to one of the grammatical theories described in the text. Besides reviewing the theoretical knowledge, this activity also allows them to practice how these theories will be implemented in a teaching context [10]. Opinions from fellow students and the teacher assist them in fine-tuning their teaching methods and identifying weaknesses. The post-task phase also involves a reflective writing task. At the end of the text and activities, learners are encouraged to complete a short reflection whereby they explain what they have learned from the text and the various learning activities completed, how their knowledge of grammar has changed, and how they can use the knowledge gained in future language learning and teaching. This type of reflection helps learners analyze their learning processes and plan for improved learning in the future [11].

5. Rationale for Activity Design

5.1. How each task addresses the text comprehension

The designed activities are complex enough to foster improvements in text understanding while being relevant to the intermediate level of learning for adult learners. The pre-task, while-task, and post-task phases are designed to address text comprehension in different ways. The pre-text activities, such as the oral question and answer session and the vocabulary match, also engage prior knowledge and develop terms relevant to the text [5]. This approach resonates with the study done by Gao and Ma [4] on contextual vocabulary learning. The while-task activities, such as the actual/false questions and the group discussions, help engage the reader with the text's ideas and arguments at a deeper level due to Kumaravadivelu's [6] argument that critical analysis is critical in language learning. Implications discussion and the writing task are post-task activities that reinforce understanding and cause learners to apply the newly acquired knowledge, which aligns with Schleppegrell [9] for condensing and articulating the learned information.

5.2. How the activities promote communicative and authentic use of English

These activities facilitate English's communicative and real-world use since the different language skills are used in real-life scenarios. In the while-task and post-task phases, group discussions and role-play activities allow the learners to use English for honest communication, thus supporting Richards and Burns' [8] call for interactive learning. In the while-task and the post-written tasks, there are situations where the learners get to produce the language by making actual use of the understood concepts due to the expression of their opinions or comments on the content. Therefore, this approach supports Hinkel [3] on how multiple language skills are applied when teaching a second language. In addition, the mini-lesson in the post-task phase where the learners teach enhances the learners' contextual use of the language, as Chun [10] highlighted in the use of critical literacy.

5.3. Connection to adult learning principles and intermediate-level needs

The activity design is also closely aligned with adult learning principles and intermediate-level needs. Reflective tasks and critical discussions enable an adult learner to engage in meaningful self-directed learning, as Gee [11] postulates in his sociocognitive perspective of reading. The transition from engaging prior knowledge towards using such knowledge in new contexts is in tune with adult learners' prior experience and knowledge, known as the principle of adult learning or andragogy [6]. Furthermore, the preoccupation with grammatical theories and their implications in language teaching caters to the needs of second-level learners who are still improving their basic language competence to higher language proficiency [1]. Therefore, it fits Gao's [2]call for integrating theory with practice in teaching second languages to make the learning process meaningful and engaging yet challenging for adult intermediate learners.

6. Engagement Strategies

6.1. Engagement Techniques

The interaction strategies are essential since they make the classes lively, thus helping intermediate-level adult learners. One helpful strategy is to use activities that encompass the input of all the students enrolled in the course. This can comprise group discussions, peer teaching, and other student teamwork assignments. Harmer [5] observes that these methods not only enhance the dynamism of learning but also assist in retaining learners' interest and motivation. Also, combining modalities like video, podcasts, and web-based lessons and quizzes can reach learners with varied learning preferences and make them content with the existing courses [4]. Real-life situations also apply practicality in teaching grammar to adults, which may further boost the learners' interest [8].

6.2. Communicative and Authentic Use

Encouraging communicative and authentic use of English is especially helpful for intermediate-level adult learners because it helps the students learn to use English in actual life. This helps the learners use English in meaningful content through such sessions as role-play debates and discussions on current affairs. This makes regular activities mimic real-life situations and ensures learners practice their acquired language correctly. Drawing from Kumaravadivelu's [6] perspective on a meaning-focused approach to language learning, the teacher must develop opportunities that allow learners to use the language as a tool in real-life circumstances for effective communication. Developing such tasks can help learners focus on the practical use of the grammar learned within real-life contexts, enhancing the learner's study [3].

6.3. Addressing Learner Needs

The designed activities are appropriately aligned to adult learners' intermediate level of knowledge acquisition. It is essential to understand that adult learners do not learn English for the same purposes and motivations as children; adults may want to learn English for career purposes, traveling, or social purposes. Of course, awareness of those motivational factors enables the development of more specific and efficient lesson plans [11]. For example, pre-task activities that engage prior knowledge and familiarise learners with pertinent lexis satisfy the learner's contextual requirement for preparation. According to Gao [2], by relating new content to what learners are already familiar with, they are likely to be more confident with the knowledge they are acquiring.

In addition, the activities are made flexible to address a variety of learning styles often observed among the target population of adult learners. Group tasks and debates foster peer education that will

help a teacher with groups of learners of different English language proficiency [8]. In their implementation, these activities involve learners in sharing their experiences and ideas, creating a culture of learning where the knowledge of all the learners is paramount.

7.   Expected Learning Outcomes

The expected learning achievements of adult intermediate English learners pertain to several language competencies and content knowledge. Learners would be able to comprehend various grammatical features and their use in practical contexts, which aligns with Bourke's [1] assertion on pedagogical grammar. They will improve their higher-order thinking skills by judging, evaluating, and comprehending various forms of language use. Moreover, learners will enhance their knowledge of the specific terms in language teaching and linguistics. Through working with challenging materials and performing communicative activities, the learners will enhance both their reading and comprehension as well as their speaking and writing skills. The knowledge about the various grammatical theories acquired helps learners develop a metalanguage awareness to enhance their future language learning. Furthermore, cultivating critical thinking with language usage is also in consonance with Kumaravadivelu's [6] learner autonomy and context-bound language learning. This choice, of course, helps intermediate-level learners move towards the further stages of their mastery of the English language and also provides them with all the means necessary to advance their learning once they are out of the classroom.

8.   Conclusion

The main objective of this assignment was to develop a set of activities appropriate for a specific context of adult intermediate students who need to use English in a meaningful and functional manner. These activities stemmed from the selected text, "The Grammar We Teach," by J.M. Bourke [1], which focused on grammar schools in L2 teaching. The pre-task, during-task, and post-task activities were defined with individual objectives and exhaustive descriptions that would support learning throughout the process. The pre-task activities were about the orientation of learners by using the context and word previews to ensure they were ready for the task. The while-task activities focused more on comprehending the text and ensuring the learners engaged with the material actively. Activities after completing the task to provide for consolidation of learning through summarisation, discussion, and role-play to put into practice learned grammatical features. The designed activities and the engagement strategies are expected to enhance the learners' learning. The emphasis on language use and the use of English in communication also guarantees that candidates keep practicing the skills acquired in their day-to-day activities, improving their general English. These strategies resonate with current research in the teaching of languages, which responds to the need for a comprehensive approach to learning the grammar of a language for target learners, who are intermediate-level adults.

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