

Classroom Observation on Inductive and Deductive Approaches in English Grammar

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Abstract: When and how to present grammatical rules in English class seems always a hot topic. Whether rules should be taught explicitly before a practice activity (the deductive approach) or whether a contextualized practice activity should precede a focus on the rule (the inductive approach)? The purpose of this project was to find out whether non-English major students in Jingde Zhen Ceramic Institute prefer to the deductive approach or the inductive approach when learning grammar.

Keywords: Inductive approach; Deductive approach; English grammar; Classroom observation

1. Introduction

Scott (1999: 29) mentioned the definition of deductive approach, it means it starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rule is applied. While the inductive approach starts with some examples from which a rule is inferred (Scott, 1999: 29). Without having met the rules, learners studies examples and derive understandings of the rule from examples. So it requires students to formulate for themselves and then verbalize the underlying pattern (Shaffer. 1989).

In this project, two non-English major classes has been chosen to compare these two approaches between two lessons. What's more, a mixed-method was adopted to investigate students' preference of these two approaches.

2. Methods and Procedure Used to Investigate

2.1. Methods

The research adopted a mixed-methods design in order both to compare the effectiveness of two instructional approaches to teach grammar, and to provide better insight into students' personal preference for a given teaching approach. The methods contain questioning, video-recording and observation. Overall, the whole section included two lessons. The information which were used to analysis collected from two non-English major classes by my colleagues. The reason for using two lessons to evaluate instead of applying the two approaches within one lesson was in order to not confusing students. In addition, time was limited in a single lesson, and the evidence may not so obvious within one lesson. The different methods which have been used were to make the data more valid, as the questions are used to show students'

opinions while the observation and record represent my point of view.

2.2. Procedure

In the first lesson, about 30 students were involved and the grammar section was focus on tense while the grammar rules have been presented on the PPT directly. Then, some exercises based on these rules have been practiced. In this part, observation and peer notes were used to find out students' reflection on the deductive teaching approach, such as their behavior, facial expressions. In the second lesson, the grammar part was carried out by one of my colleagues, it was concentrated on modal verbs like 'may/might' and it mixed in the listening material, so the listening exercises was designed to be done at first, then the students were guided to find out the meaning and usage of 'may/might' based on the listening material and exercises. Video-recording was used to record the whole process during the section which can be used to analysis students reflection and questions were used to ask students' feelings about the lesson, specifically on 'how well they understand the grammar?' 'What kind of approach they prefer to learn grammar (inductive/deductive)?' etc.

3. Findings of the Two Lessons

In the first lesson, grammatical rules came first then followed by exercises and examples which can be considered as a deductive approach. Based on the observation and peer notes, students were taking notes most of the time. As time was limited, the teacher was paging the PPT quickly without waiting students finishing taking notes, so the rest of time in this stage, students just staring at the PPT without showing any reflection and have no interaction with the teacher. The atmosphere in the

class was too quite. In addition, the PPT contains so much grammar rules that even other peers in the teaching group cannot have enough time to look at it carefully. When came to the practicing part, even examples were adequate, students seemed cannot totally understand the tasks so they asked the teacher many times about what the example means and how to do the tasks. What's more, instead of being asked by one student, almost everyone got questions about the tasks even clear instruction has been provided by the teacher before hand.

While in the last lesson, the examples and exercises were provided first in a listening material, so an inductive approach was used in this part. Depending on the record and feedback after class, students felt quite involved during that session as there were lots of interaction between the teacher and students, moreover, students sometimes showed their agreements and disagreements by nodding and smiling. What can be learned from the questions were almost all the students felt they have understood the grammar rules and showed their preference to inductive approach, furthermore, some thought that it is easier to understand and more interesting when using inductive approach, also they enjoyed the process of finding grammar rules through examples and exercises. When mentioned the disadvantage of the deductive approach, variety results have been collected. Some felt it is hard to understand, others felt it is boring to learn rules directly.

4. Discussion based on Findings

It is obviously in the results that students are more preferable to the inductive approach when learning grammar. The inductive approach actively involves students in their grammar learning process, because they have to formulate grammatical rules by themselves and to check, test and revise these rules with partner or teacher instead of receiving them passively from their teachers without understanding the reasons behind them (Haight & Cole, 2007). With a greater self-reliance, students are more motivated, attentive and autonomous. Moreover, rules discovered by themselves are more memorable and meaningful, as Scott (1999) mentioned, during this process, a

greater degree of cognitive depth will be stimulated, which, again, ensures greater memorability. Although, finding a rule is difficult sometimes, with the guidance of the teacher and the collaboration from other students will make it less challenging. What's more, as the process is done collaboratively by using target language, learner gets the opportunity for extra language practice.

5. Conclusion

In this project, based on collecting answers and observations, students showed their preference to the inductive approach when learning grammatical rules. Even though, the inductive approach has lots of advantages, but, it does not mean the deductive way has no use then. There is some evidence to suggest that some kinds of language items are better 'given' than 'discovered' (Scott, 1999: 55). So when choosing the two different approaches, students' level, classroom time, the context and the difficulty of the grammar rules. Teachers need to ensure that the learners have sufficient information and experience to be able to work out their own rules and explanations (Scrivener, 2002: 129). To sum up, this study does not propose that teachers use only an inductive approach in the class; instead, teachers need to be flexible enough to incorporate various approaches into the lesson depending on the particular situation.

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