TEACHING PARTICIPLE IN A COMMUNICATIVE WAY IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages. It is also one of the more difficult aspects of language to teach well. In the communicative competence model, the purpose of learning grammar is to learn the language of which the grammar is a part. Instructors therefore teach grammar forms and structures in relation to meaning and use for the specific communication tasks that students need to complete. The present article focuses on the main linguistic characteristics of the English participles. The author of the article also discusses some methods of teaching participle in EFL classrooms.

Key words: a participle, non-finite forms, verbals, teaching grammar, grammar instruction, communication tasks, communicative competence, language acquisition.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Грамматика занимает центральное место в преподавании и изучении языков. Это также один из наиболее сложных аспектов языка для хорошего преподавания. В модели коммуникативной компетентности целью изучения грамматики является изучение языка, частью которого является грамматика. Поэтому преподаватели обучают грамматическим формам и структурам в зависимости от значения и использования для конкретных коммуникативных задач, которые необходимо выполнить учащимся. В настоящей статье основное внимание уделяется основным лингвистическим характеристикам английских причастий. Автор статьи также рассматривает некоторые методы обучения причастию в классах EFL.

Ключевые слова: причастие, неличные формы, глаголы, обучение грамматике, обучение грамматике, коммуникативные задачи, коммуникативная компетентность, овладение языком.

INTRODUCTION

Participle is one of the most important non-finite forms of the verb, which include a variety of semantic and morphological means of expressing the speaker's attitude to reality and syntactic means of organizing his thoughts. The verb has finite and non-finite forms, the latter being also called verbals. The verbals, unlike the finite

forms of the verb, do not express person, number or mood. Therefore, they cannot be used as the predicate of a sentence. Like the finite forms of the verb the verbals have tense and voice distinctions, but their tense distinctions differ greatly from those of the finite verb. There are three verbals in English: *the participle, the gerund and the infinitive*.

Participle is a form of a verb that is used in a sentence to modify a noun or noun phrase, and thus plays a role similar to that of an adjective or adverb (some languages have distinct forms for adverbial participles and adjectival participles). It is one of the types of non-finite verb forms. Its name comes from the Latin *participium*, a calque of Greek *metochḗ* "partaking" or "sharing"; it is so named because the Ancient Greek and Latin participles "share" some of the categories of the adjective or noun (gender, number, case) and some of those of the verb (tense and voice).

Participles may correspond to the active voice (active participles), where the modified noun is taken to represent the agent of the action denoted by the verb; or to the passive voice (passive participles), where the modified noun represents the patient (undergoer) of that action. Participles in particular languages are also often associated with certain verbal aspects or tenses. However, this is often a matter of convention; present participles are not necessarily associated with the expression of present time, or past participles necessarily with past time.

Participles may also be identified with a particular voice: active or passive. Some languages (such as Latin and Russian) have distinct participles for active and passive uses. In English the present participle is essentially an active participle, while the past participle has both active and passive uses. The following examples illustrate this:

- I saw John eating his dinner. (*eating* is an active participle; the modified noun *John* is understood as the agent)
- I have eaten my dinner. (perfect construction; *eaten* is an active participle here)
- The fish was eaten by lions. (here *eaten* is a passive participle; *the fish* is understood as the patient, i.e. to undergo the action)
- The characteristic traits of the verbals are as follows:
- 1. They have a double nature, nominal and verbal. The participle combines the characteristics of a verb with those of an adjective; the gerund and the infinitive combine the characteristics of a verb with those of a noun.
- 2. The tense distinctions of the verbals are not absolute (like those of the finite verb), but relative; the form of the verbal does not show whether the action it denotes

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refers to the present, past or future; it shows only whether the action expressed by the verbal is simultaneous with the action expressed by the finite verb or prior to it.

- 3. The verbals can form predicative constructions, for instance, constructions consisting of two elements, a nominal (noun or pronoun) and a verbal (participle, gerund or infinitive); the verbal element stands in predicate relation to the nominal element, for instance, in a relation similar to that between the subject and the predicate of the sentence. In most cases predicative constructions form syntactic units, serving as one part of the sentence.

METHODS USED

Many people, including language teachers, hear the word "grammar" and think of a fixed set of word forms and rules of usage. They associate "good" grammar with the prestige forms of the language, such as those used in writing and in formal oral presentations, and "bad" or "no" grammar with the language used in everyday conversation or used by speakers of non-prestige forms.

Language teachers who adopt this definition focus on grammar as a set of forms and rules. They teach grammar by explaining the forms and rules and then drilling students on them. This results in bored, disaffected students who can produce correct forms on exercises and tests, but consistently make errors when they try to use the language in context.

Other language teachers, influenced by recent theoretical work on the difference between language learning and language acquisition, tend not to teach grammar at all. Believing that children acquire their first language without overt grammar instruction, they expect students to learn their second language the same way. They assume that students will absorb grammar rules as they hear, read, and use the language in communication activities. This approach does not allow students to use one of the major tools they have as learners: their active understanding of what grammar is and how it works in the language they already know.

The communicative competence model balances these extremes. The model recognizes that overt grammar instruction helps students acquire the language more efficiently, but it incorporates grammar teaching and learning into the larger context of teaching students to use the language. Instructors using this model teach students the grammar they need to know to accomplish defined communication tasks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The goal of grammar instruction is to enable students to carry out their communication purposes. This goal has three implications:

• Students need overt instruction that connects grammar points with larger communication contexts.

• Students do not need to master every aspect of each grammar point, only those that are relevant to the immediate communication task.

• Error correction is not always the instructor's first responsibility.

Overt Grammar Instruction

Adult students appreciate and benefit from direct instruction that allows them to apply critical thinking skills to language learning. Instructors can take advantage of this by providing explanations that give students a descriptive understanding (declarative knowledge) of each point of grammar.

• Teach the grammar point in the target language or the students' first language or both. The goal is to facilitate understanding;

• Limit the time you devote to grammar explanations to 10 minutes, especially for lower level students whose ability to sustain attention can be limited;

• Present grammar points in written and oral ways to address the needs of students with different learning styles;

An important part of grammar instruction is providing examples. Teachers need to plan their examples carefully around two basic principles:

• Be sure the examples are accurate and appropriate. They must present the language appropriately, be culturally appropriate for the setting in which they are used, and be to the point of the lesson;

• Use the examples as teaching tools. Focus examples on a particular theme or topic so that students have more contact with specific information and vocabulary.

Relevance of Grammar Instruction

The two kinds of participles, past and present, can combine with other words to form participial phrases. Present participles are formed by adding "ing" to the ends of verbs. Past participles often, but not always, look the same as a past tense verb. Exceptions to this rule include the word eaten, which is the past participle of eat while the past tense is ate. Phrases formed with participles act as adjectives within a sentence and are a type of adjective phrase.

• Ask students what they already know about participles and parts of speech. If necessary, review these fundamental concepts. See if they can recall past participles and present participles. They will also need to know about nouns, pronouns and adjectives at the very least to understand the function of a participial phrase.

• Write the following sentence out for students to see: I saw the boy running to school. Ask a student to identify the participle, which is the word running. Point out the word school and identify it as the object of the preposition. Now write out several

sentences, some with participial phrases and some without. Ask students to determine where the participial phrases are located.

• Write the following sentence out for students to see: The class was getting out of control. After a student identifies the word "getting" as the participle, point out that there is no object. In this case the prepositional phrase "out of control" completes the participial phrase. Ask students to come up with other such examples.

• Demonstrate other ways to create participial phrases with phrases such as "broken dishwasher," "repeating video" and more complicated examples such as "sought yesterday for questioning." Help students invent their own phrases in writing.

• Finish the lesson by asking each student a question about participle phrases. Ask about the principles involved. If a student does not know the answer, tell him that you will come back to him with another question after you have finished with the other students. If you exhaust those possibilities before all students have answered a question, ask students to either identify participial phrases verbally or say one of their own to demonstrate understanding.

CONCLUSION

In summation, all education depends on a foundation of good grammar. If students cannot understand grammar, they will struggle to read, write or speak clearly in any other area of education, from math and science to history or geography. Good language is the base on which all other education has to stand. Teachers can use a variety of ways to make their grammar lessons memorable and enjoyable for students. Students who enjoy their lessons will pay closer attention, and you will then have an easier time while teaching. This is why great lessons are important for everyone involved, and why you should take the time to ensure you are teaching grammar in the best and most engaging way for the skill level and requirements of your individual students.

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