

# Teachers' Assumptions on Teaching English Grammar for Lower-secondary Level Students

## (A Case Study of Nepal)

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### **Abstract**

*Teaching grammar is one of the aspects of language teaching. From the past, different methods, like teaching from rules, teaching from examples, teaching through texts have been used to teach grammar in Nepal. So, this research was prepared to study the teachers' assumption for teaching English grammar at lower secondary level in Nepal. The issue of teaching prepositions, articles, tense, tags, causative verbs and subject verb agreement are raised in this research. In this research, both the primary and secondary sources of data were used. Questionnaires were used to collect the data for the research. The result shows that most of the teachers use inductive ways to teach grammar lessons or they used student-centered techniques. It also concludes that the level of the learners, context and nature of the text also make the teachers to select the method for teaching.*

**Key Words:** Grammar, inductive teaching, deductive teaching, GT method, CLT

### **1. Introduction**

There are many languages in the world. Among them, English is a language which is widely used all over the world as a means of communication. In the context of our country, English has been given more priority than other international languages such as Chinese, French and Germany. In recent years, it is taught as a compulsory subject from grade one to bachelor's degree as a foreign language (EFL) in Nepal. The introduction of ELT in Nepal was started only in 1971 AD with the implementation of National Education system plan 1971. The High Level National Education Commission (2002 AD) recommended that ELT should be started from grade one of school.

Language is the means of communication as we use it to express our inner feelings, desires, and exchange ideas. The main purpose of language teaching is to make the learner able to communicate appropriately in a given context meaningfully. For that, language should be appropriate in its structure too. The structure of language is called grammar. Thornbury (1999, p. 1) says "A grammar is a description of rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed". It is a connection of words to make an acceptable sentence. Grammar is the rules of language which helps to produce structurally and contextually meaningful

sentences. Without teaching grammar; language teaching cannot be completed. Grammar teaching is necessary to develop linguistic competence.

Celce-Murcia (2001 as cited in Nassaji & Fotos 2011, p. 13) explains “Language teaching was equated with grammar teaching and grammar was used as content as well as organizing principles for developing curriculum and language teaching materials”. For many decades, grammar teaching was the center of language pedagogy and curriculum development. Thornbury (1999, pp. 29-90) posits the 3 ways of teaching grammar as deductive, inductive and text-based method. Every method has advantages and disadvantages in the field of teaching.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

To achieve the pedagogical goal, a successful teacher uses various ways of teaching grammar on the basis of nature of grammar lesson and level of the learner. There are different ways of teaching grammar such as deductive, inductive and text-based which the teachers are practicing inside the language classroom. In Nepal, teaching grammar is really a challenging task for teachers and it is difficult for learners due to the lack of effective teaching method. To know the appropriate ways is the main problem in the grammar classes at secondary level. This study tries to explore how the teachers of lower secondary school of Nepal teach English Grammar and which technique is fruitful in teaching for students.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Research

The major objectives of the research was to explore how the lower-secondary level teachers of Nepal teach grammar in terms of; teaching prepositions, tense, articles, tags, causative verbs and subject verb agreement. It also suggests which teaching method could be effective to teach grammar.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this research:

- a. What are the methods of teaching English grammar at lower secondary level of Nepal are prescribed in the textbook?
- b. How the lower secondary level English teachers are teaching grammar such as article, prepositions, tense, tags, causative verb and subject verb agreement prescribed in the course?

### 1.4 Significance of the Research

This research is beneficial for those who are involved in English language teaching at lower secondary level. This research will be helpful for the educationist and course designer to design the grammar courses for the EFL learners.

### 1.5 Delimitations of the Research

This study had following limitations:

- a. The sample size of the research was 20 teachers for responding questionnaire from the five lower secondary schools of Nepalgunj Sub-metropolitan, Banke district of Nepal.

- b. The main focus of this research was to find out the practice and possible ways of grammar teaching.
- c. The research was limited to survey design.
- d. The tools for data collection were questionnaire consisting of both close-ended and open-ended questions.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Thornbury (1999, pp. 29-69) posits three ways of teaching grammar which are popularly known as, teaching grammar through rules (deductive method), teaching grammar through examples (inductive method) and teaching grammar through text (text –based method).

- a. Deductive method is a way of teaching grammar where grammatical items are taught through the presentation of rules. Rules are explained before presenting examples. For him the deductive method includes the following steps:
  - i. Presentation of rules
  - ii. Description and explanation of rules
  - iii. Providing some examples
  - iv. Explaining underlying rules mostly by using mother tongue
  - v. Asking students to practice the rules orally or written
  - vi. Contrasting the areas of differences between mother tongue and target language

Inductive method is to teach grammar through examples. Therefore, it is known as rule discovery method of teaching grammar. It is known as modern and scientific method. In this method learners, will be played with sufficient examples where the rule which is expected to teach is practiced. It is a method which emphasizes the use of language rather than presentation of information about the language. The Inductive method to grammar teaching will have the following steps:

- i. Presentation of examples
  - ii. Analysis of examples
  - iii. Rule formulation
  - iv. Generalization of the rules that grow out of the previous activity
  - v. Written or oral practice
- b. Text- based method to teaching grammar is different than previous two types of method as it is solely depending around the text or content rather simply on the rules and examples. The subject matter of language teaching is no grammar or functions or some other language-based unit of organization, but that is content. Without understanding the context, we cannot understand the meaning of the sentences. This method believes that language learning is motivating when students are focusing on something other than language, such as ideas, issues and opinions.

On the basis of degree of activation, we can classify classroom techniques into two categories such as teacher- centered techniques and learner- centered techniques.

- a. Teacher- centered techniques require the teachers to adopt different strategies to deliver and clarify the content and motivate the students. Teacher-centered techniques play dominant role in teaching and learning activities in the context of Nepal. Most commonly, teacher centered techniques include: lecture, explanation, illustration, demonstration, etc.
- b. Learner- centered techniques keep the role of learners at the center of teaching and learning activities. The students may get sufficient opportunities to work and progress in language learning. Learner- centered techniques include: pair work, group work, role play, task performance, project work, discovery techniques, etc.

Several studies have been carried out on the topic grammar and grammar teaching. Shah (2010) carried out a research entitled “Effectiveness of Teaching Grammar through Inductive Method”. The main objective of his research study was to find out the effectiveness of teaching grammar through inductive method. Gautam (2011) carried out a research entitled “Effectiveness of Pair Work in Teaching Grammar.” His main objective was to find out the effectiveness of pair work technique in teaching grammar. Similarly, Sharma (2014) carried out a research on “Techniques Used in Teaching Grammar”. The main objective of his study was to find out the techniques used by secondary level English teacher in teaching grammar.

The Afro-mentioned works are carried on the topic of grammar teaching, but no research studies are carried out on the ways of grammar teaching so this study is needed to carry out.

### **3. Methods and Procedures of the Study**

This study is survey research as I have explored the ways of teaching grammar at secondary level. This study has represented the teachers of Banke district of Nepal and the population sample has been carried out from them

#### **3.1 Population, Sample and Sampling Strategy**

To accomplish the targeted objectives of my research, I selected English teachers, teaching in Lower Secondary level of Nepalgunj Sub-metropolitan of Banke district (Nepal) as the population of this study. As the sample of my study I selected 20 teachers to respond the questionnaire.

#### **3.2 Study Area/ Field**

The Lower Secondary schools teachers of Banke district were the study area. For the convenience of this study, the researchers selected the schools which are in Nepalgunj Sub-metropolitan area.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Tools**

As the tools for data collection I used questionnaires which were prepared for English teachers.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

I collected the data through questionnaire from Secondary level English teachers. For that, first of all, I prepared questionnaire for teachers. Then, I visited with the head teacher and established rapport with him. I got permission with the concerned teacher. I provided about an hour to respond the questionnaire. When they responded the questionnaire, I took back the responded questionnaire.

### 3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedures

Quantitative data are analyzed and interpreted with the help of simple statistical tools like tables and charts.

## 4. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The questionnaire was prepared to explore out the ways of teaching grammar. Some specific questions were asked to the informants to attract their attention on the ways of teaching grammar. The relevant data from this phase were found as below:

### 4.1 Most Effective Methods of Teaching Grammar at Secondary Level

The informants were asked to select the most effective ways for English teachers to teach grammar at secondary level in order to find out the effective teaching method of grammar to be implemented in English classroom. The responses got from the respondents have been exhibited in table no. 1

Table No. 1

Most Effective Method of Teaching Grammar at Lower Secondary Level

S.N.	Focused Teaching Methods	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Teaching Grammar from Rules	2	10%
2	Teaching Grammar from Example	12	60%
3	Teaching Grammar through Text	2	10%
4	Teaching Grammar mixing rules and examples	4	20%

From the table above it can be analyzed that out of ten teachers, 10 percent teachers teach grammar from rules. Similarly, 60 percentage of the teacher teach grammar from examples. Likewise, 10 percentage use teaching grammar through texts and 20 percentage of the teacher sometimes teach grammar from rules and sometimes from examples. This data shows that majority of the teachers (i.e. 60%) use inductive method to teach grammar in secondary level.

### 4.2 Most Effective ways to Teach Articles

The respondents were asked to mention the most effective ways for EFL teachers to teach articles. This question was asked in order to know the most effective ways of teaching articles in secondary level. The result has been presented in table no. 2 below.

Table 2  
Effective Ways to Teach Articles

S.N.	Focused Teaching Methods	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Teaching Articles from Rules	10	50%
2	Teaching Articles from Example	7	35%
3	Teaching Articles through Text	3	15%

It shows that out of 20 teachers 50% teach articles from rule similarly, 35% teach from examples. Only 15% teachers teach articles through texts in English language classroom. The data shows that teaching from rules, teaching from examples and teaching through texts are the methods for teaching articles. Among them majority of the teachers (i.e. 50%) were found to use rules for teaching articles.

#### 4.3 Most Effective Ways to Teach Prepositions

The informants were asked to mention the most effective ways to teach prepositions to know the effective ways for teaching prepositions. Similarly, they were also asked to specify any other methods except inductive, deductive and text-based. The obtained result has been exhibited in the table 3 below:

Table 3  
Effective Ways to Teach Prepositions

S.N.	Way of Practice	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Teaching from Rules	-	-
2	Teaching from Example	6	30 %
3	Teaching through Text	4	20%
4	Teaching using other methods (picture etc.)	7	35%
5	Using text and Examples	3	15%

This table presented above shows that out of twenty teachers nobody teaches prepositions from rules. Whereas 30 percent teach prepositions from examples and 35 percent teach prepositions through pictures and realia, similarly, 15 percent use both text and examples to teach prepositions. From the data presented in the table above it is found that teaching from examples, teaching through texts, teaching using pictures and sometimes through text and sometimes from examples are the ways for teaching prepositions.

#### 4.4 Effective Ways to Teach Tags

The respondents were asked to mention the effective ways to teach tags. This question was asked in order to know the effective ways to teach tags at secondary level. The responses elicited from the respondents have been exhibited in the table below:

Table 4  
Effective Ways to Teach Tags

S.N.	Way of Practice	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Teaching Tag from Rules	6	30%
2	Teaching Tag from Example	10	50 %
3	Teaching Tag through Text	1	5%
4	Using text and Examples	3	15%

The data presented in the table 4 shows that out of twenty teachers 30% teach tags from rules likewise, 50% follows the way of teaching grammar from examples and only 5% teacher teaches tags through texts. But only 15% teachers teach tags using both of the way of teaching grammar i.e. sometimes from examples and sometimes through texts. From the table above it is observed that teaching from rules and examples, teaching through text and teaching sometimes from examples and sometimes through texts are the practice ways of teaching grammar.

#### 4.5 Effective Ways to Teach Tense

The informants were asked to mention the effective ways of teaching tense at secondary level in order to take the data regarding the effective ways of teaching tense. The responses obtained from the respondents are exhibited in table no. 5 below.

Table 5  
Effective Ways to Teach Tense

S.N.	Way of Practice	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Teaching from Rules	5	25%
2	Teaching from Example	9	45 %
3	Teaching through Text	3	15%
4	Using Example and rules in different times	3	15%

The table 5 mentioned above shows that out of twenty teachers 25% follows teaching grammar from rules to teach tense, similarly, 45% use teaching grammar from examples, likewise, only 15% teachers teach tense through texts. Among them 15% teachers use sometimes examples and sometimes texts to teach tense at secondary level. Teaching from rules, teaching from examples, teaching from examples and through texts are the mostly practices ways of teaching grammar. According to this data majority of the teachers (i.e. 45%) teach tense from examples.

#### 4. 6 Mostly Practiced Techniques of Teaching Grammar at Secondary Level

Teacher uses and designs different techniques to teach grammar lessons within a single method and classroom. As the method and techniques are interrelated each other they both influence teaching learning activities. The informants were asked to specify the techniques that they practice mostly to teach grammar lessons such as prepositions, articles, tense, tags and causative verb at secondary level. This question was asked to the informants in order to find out the practiced techniques to teach grammar as a whole. The data elicited from the questionnaire is exhibited in table no. 6 in the next page.

Table 6  
Mostly Practiced Techniques of Teaching Grammar

S.N.	Techniques	No. of Teachers	Percentage
1	Teacher Centered Techniques	3	15%
2	Student-centered Techniques	18	90 %
3	Awareness	2	10%
4	Controlled Drill	3	15%
5	Meaningful Drill	5	25%
6	Guided Practice	7	35%
7	Free Sentence Composition	4	20%
8	Discourse Composition	4	20%
9	Free Discourse Type	3	15%

The table 6 presented above shows that the teachers use different techniques to teach grammar lessons in the classroom. Out of twenty teachers 15% practices teacher- centered techniques such as lecture, explanation, illustration, demonstration etc. Most of the teacher i.e. 90% gives priority to learner-centered techniques such as pair work, group work, role play, task performance, project work, discovery techniques etc. Only 10% use awareness technique, similarly 15% consider controlled drills; likewise, 25% follow meaningful drills and 35% practice guided practice to teach grammar lessons. In the same way, 20% of the teachers practice free sentence composition and discourse composition respectively. And 15% design free discourse activities in the grammar teaching classroom. It is seen that various techniques can be designed to teach grammar at secondary level such as teacher- centered techniques, learner- centered techniques, awareness, controlled drills, meaningful drills, guided practice, free sentence composition, discourse composition and free discourse type. However, the data shows that majority of the teachers (i.e. 90%) design learner- centered techniques to teach grammar lessons at secondary level.

#### 4.7. Teachers Suggestions Regarding the Ways of Teaching Grammar

Finally, the teachers were requested to present their suggestions on the basis of their classroom practices regarding the ways of teaching grammar. This question was designed to draw out the data that the close-ended questions were unable to include. The data obtained from the informants is concluded and presented in the points as below:



- a. The efficiency of teaching grammar depends on the way how it is delivered so a teacher should select the methods on the basis of nature of the course and level of the learners.
- b. The teacher has to create child friendly environment in the tutorial setting which respects the students' level and ability.
- c. Almost 80% informants suggested that there is no specific method which is applicable and can fit for all the grammatical lessons so, we should select and blend different methods in our classroom.
- d. Teacher should play the role of facilitator creating the environment where students can expose different things.
- e. In English as Foreign Language (EFL) context memorization of rules also can't be ignored.
- f. Teachers can invent some ways for delivering grammar lessons as to be suited to the learning environment and context.
- g. We can't teach grammar successfully isolating form and functions.

By the data and opinions given by the respondents it is concluded that, we can select and design the methods of teaching grammar on the basis of the nature of texts and level of the learners.

## **5. Findings and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Findings**

The obtained data and information was analyzed with the help of simple statistical tools and qualitative approach. The findings of this study can be synthesized as follow:

- i. Teaching grammar is one of the aspects of language. Different ways (methods) are found to be practiced while teaching grammar inside the classroom.
- ii. Different methods such as teaching from rules, teaching from examples, teaching from texts are used to teach grammar in secondary level. Among them 60% were found to use teaching from rules.
- iii. The different methods such as inductive, deductive, text-based, sometimes from examples and sometimes from rules, realia are used to teach each grammatical items such as articles, prepositions, tense, tags, causative verbs and subject verb agreement. The ways for teaching these all items are presented below:
- iv. As teaching articles, teaching from rules, from examples and through text were to be used. 50% were found practicing teaching from rules (deductive method) in the classroom.
- v. The ways to teach prepositions were to be found as teaching from rules, teaching from examples, teaching through texts and sometimes from example. The teachers were asked to specify any other ways, 35% suggested realia such as books, bags, pens, marker, charts hung on the wall, flannel board, pictures drawn by the students and downloaded from the internet as the effective ways for teaching prepositions.

- vi. Teaching from rules, teaching from examples, teaching through text and sometimes teaching from examples and sometimes from text were found as the ways of teaching tags. 50% considered teaching from examples as the effective one.
- vii. Different methods, like teaching from rules, teaching from examples, teaching through texts, and sometimes from examples and sometimes through texts were practiced to teach tense. 45% are found to be used inductive methods as the effective method in the classroom.
- viii. As the methods and techniques of teaching grammar are interrelated each other, techniques are designed on the basis of methods practiced. The teachers were asked to suggest mostly practiced techniques of teaching grammar. Some practiced techniques were; teacher- centered techniques, learner- centered techniques, awareness, controlled drills, meaningful drills, guided practice, free sentence composition, discourse composition and free discourse type. 90% of the teachers found practicing student- centered techniques in the classroom. A teacher was found designing different techniques within the single class.
- ix. The teachers were asked to provide any suggestions regarding the ways of teaching grammar. 80% suggested selecting teaching method on the basis of level of the learners, nature of the grammar items and learning contexts. They explained there is no 'hard and fast' way for teaching grammar.
- x. It was found that, teachers used different methods to teach different grammatical item as there is no specific method to teach grammar.
- xi. It was found easier to teach grammar from example for short and comprehensive grammatical items e.g. causative verbs and those grammatical which consists long lists of rules and are vague were found effective to teach from rules and texts.

## 5.2 Conclusion

From the extensive analysis and interpretation of data and drawn of the result, it is concluded that there is no specific way of teaching grammar. Teacher can select and design any methods to be suited to address the level of learners, nature of the courses and teaching context. Blending of different methods or mixing different methods, makes grammar classroom effective and meaningful. Wise selection and blend of different methods inside the classroom is fruitful to motivate the students and create interest and curiosity to study grammar. It also helps to boost up the learning outcome of students. To develop grammatical competency in the side of the learners and to get expected outcome it is better to design our own methods addressing the needs of classroom rather following the traditional ways of teaching grammar. Practice and selection of different methods makes classroom lively It also reduces monotony of students while learning second language and grammar.

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