

## The Effect of Grammar Practice in Oral English Class

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This study examined the effect of grammar practice in oral English class. It aimed at improving the speaking ability of college students and raising the grammatical awareness of students while speaking in English.

Many college students who learn English as a second language speak poorly in accurate and appropriate English. They have learned some rules of grammar in junior and senior high school. And while they remember well the rules of English grammar, they still speak poorly. When they are asked to answer some questions or to give a presentation in English, they can only use some English words to express themselves, or even if they speak in sentences, they often make mistakes; for example, they often use the verbs in original form to express things in the past.

In order to improve this condition, in other words, to improve the speaking ability of college students and raise the grammatical awareness while speaking in English to put the grammar knowledge to use, the researcher implemented the experimental course while teaching the college oral English class. In this course, the applicable grammar practice basing on the contents of the oral textbook was done by the students, and according to the characteristics of the grammatical items chosen, different methods were adopted to ask the students to do the grammar practice in group activities. As a result of the study, the methods of the grammar

practice done in the experimental course were expected to improve the students' spoken English.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2003), grammar is a skill. It is very important for an English teacher to teach students grammar as a skill. Skill acquisition of grammar takes practice. The practice does not only mean writing practice, it contains oral practice, too. It is clear that there is an overlap between grammar of written sentences and grammar of speech. Grammar is able to account for spoken discourse. In this study, the researcher emphasized more the skill acquisition of discourse grammar and focused on practice in speaking.

How does a teacher make the output practice effect on students? In other words, how does a teacher make the practice in speaking meaningful? To answer these questions, the researcher organized four activities in the experimental course to validate the effect of the grammar practice planned in the activities. Eighteen college students took this experimental course during their regular school days. It contained the following steps. First, four topics in the textbook were chosen and for every topic, the applicable grammar items were decided based on the contents of the textbook. As known, the contents of an oral textbook is well considered in grammatical form and the textbooks contain exercises to practice grammar, but it seems insufficient to make students have grammatical awareness while speaking in English. And in a usual

oral English class, there is almost no explanation of grammar rules to the students, nor any exercises focused on practicing grammar. As a new challenge in oral English class, in this experimental course, while doing the exercises in the textbook, particular grammatical explanations and special grammar practice were added. Then, with an emphasis on making the grammar practice meaningful, according to the characteristics of the grammar items chosen in the four topics, four methods were adopted and according to every method, the students were asked to do the grammar practice in pair work, group work, etc, to practice verb tenses, direct questions and indirect statements. It took about three months to be completed in class. In order to validate the effect of the grammar practice in every method, the students were asked to give a presentation on the same topic decided before and after the grammar practice, without any writing preparation. All the presentations by the students were recorded and the data were collected and scored by the researcher.

In this study, the data were collected through the students' presentations, speaking tests and the students' assessment. Besides the data collection of the presentations in the activities mentioned above, the data of the oral integrative tests and the students' assessment were collected as well to match to the answers of the research questions. Before and after the experimental course of grammar practice without any previous informing, the students were asked to take the same oral integrative test which contained three parts. The students' assessment was completed at the conclusion of

the experimental course.

By comparing the content of the two presentations, and comparing the answers of each to the integrative test, it showed that the number of the correct, grammatical sentences, especially of the grammar items trained during the experimental process, increased after the grammar practice. The data results of the students' assessment indicated that most students (88%) responded they had undoubtedly cared more about speaking grammatically, especially in the correct tenses more than previously over the experimental course. All the data results showed that the grammar practice in speaking done in this study had an effect on the students and the students had reduced the number of errors made in speaking, although there were still several limitations to this study. Nonetheless it suggests that the students can improve their speaking in English throughout the grammar practice in oral English class.

Based on the data results, several conclusions can be made from this study. One major conclusion is that the speaking level of the students can be improved by continuing to do grammar practice in oral English class, even for those who lack grammar in spoken English. Another conclusion is that grammar practice in oral English class is an effective method for raising the grammar awareness of students while speaking. A third conclusion is that it is necessary and important to train college students to do more specialized grammar practice in oral English class.

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