

ANDROID APP: AN INSTRUMENT IN CLEARING LACUNA OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR THROUGH TEACHING 500 SENTENCE STRUCTURES WITH REFERENCE TO THE VERB *EAT*

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Learning grammar is very important for the L₂ learner of English and it is very much needed for the students in India at the college and university level because of necessity. In the present context, English is a compulsory subject at primary, secondary, senior secondary and tertiary levels. In the 21st century, technology has developed tremendously especially the smart phone has been deeply rooted in society within three decades of its advent in a very short time. Mobile phones can be a powerful weapon in the field of learning including language learning owing to the evolution of technology. In addition, it tends to revolutionize the teaching learning process. Smart phones are easy to carry and learn anywhere and anytime. The tertiary level students use smart phones which are in-built with many dictionaries to refer, grammar apps to learn and games for vocabulary learning but there is no sufficient App for learning the sentence structures of English. This factor led me to make an attempt to enable the tertiary level students to improve English learning through sentence structures. This paper enables the learners to frame as many acceptable sentences as possible the practice of which can enrich their knowledge such grammatical categories as tenses, voices, infinitives and modals.

Keywords: Tertiary, grammar, tenses, passives, infinitives and modals.

INTRODUCTION

Technology and education are highly interdependent and interrelated these days. Technology empowers students with responsibility in their learning and it makes them think independently. Moreover, it helps them to learn at any time and any place. The need for English is rapidly growing and it has become a mandatory language for study in many countries. As a result speaking and writing in the language has become necessary for the second language learners of English. This paper attempts to reduce the wrong usage by the learners because many of them are using a vernacular coloured affirmative for an interrogative sentence. As an example, consider the following case: instead of asking “did the students come?” they ask, “The students came ah.” The students will be able to use correct active voice and passive structures both in affirmative and negative forms in all kinds of sentences such as assertive, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory if they master the forms and functions of sentence structures in English. It also leads them from

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accuracy to fluency. The intention of the paper is to avoid such a kind of errors and enrichment of the learner's understanding and use of sentence structure.

In order for mobile technologies to be beneficial to (language) learning, the activities learners are engaging in must be pedagogically sound. A great deal of the studies that have been carried out have attempted to reach this goal through a great deal of teacher control – by sending out SMS texts to students at a time dictated by the instructor, for example Stockwell (2007, 2008). Far fewer, (see Conole *et al.*, 2008; Rosi Sole *et al.*, 2010; Song & Fox, 2008; for notable exceptions) have explored the ways learners themselves have utilized smart phones as one component of their language study.

Research suggests that on an average, 76.6% of students spend more than 30 minutes a day reading or sending messages on their mobile phones; and 79.5% spend more than 30 minutes browsing the Internet on their mobile phones. Students may recognize more words when different tools of technologies are used. This was proved in the first test conducted by us. As many as 100 words were shown to the students using a PC, a smart phone and a PPT presentation. They showed about 50% improvement in the recognition of words in the test conducted. Students were not familiar with the words in the beginning. Towards the end of the learning process, they learned to identify more words. After exposure to the students, different passages were given to the students. Nearly 60% of the students showed progress. The ready-made materials saved teachers much preparation time. At the same time, assignments of various kinds were also designed to tell students clearly about their achievements. This is a very cost-effective way to improve their reading. The students demonstrated improvements in their scanning, referencing and predicting skills, so their reading comprehension improved better. It is found that the tools enhanced their comprehension of texts. The students utilized the tools to understand connections between ideas and to guess the meanings of words and used contextual clues to gain a deeper understanding of the text. (Amutha 11)

Through the following table, one can understand how mobile phones and android applications can be used as a tool in teaching grammar to the college students and how technology creates a positive environment and climate in English language teaching, especially grammar teaching. Mobile devices have become pervasive objects as soon as people started using smart phones on move “anywhere, anytime”.

It is seen from Figures 1, 2 and 3, the number of mobile users in India, what the mobile phone users searched online in the past, and the percentage of surveyed users who use various apps respectively.

LEARNERS' LACUNA IN GRAMMAR LEARNING

Lacuna is defined as an empty space or a missing part; a gap. Here, in grammar, learners are unaware of many sentence structures. As a result even normal sentence structures have become complex and exceptional in usage. In this study, lacuna

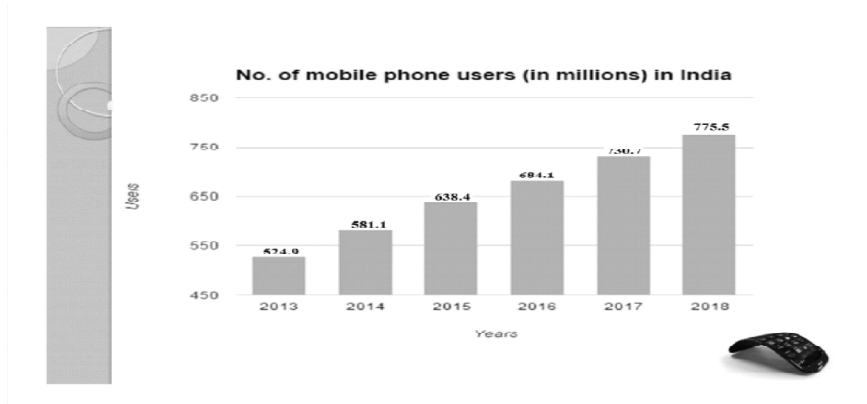


Figure 1

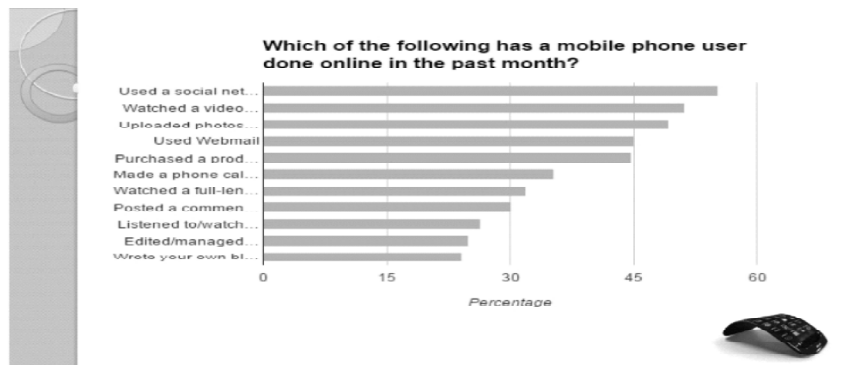


Figure 2

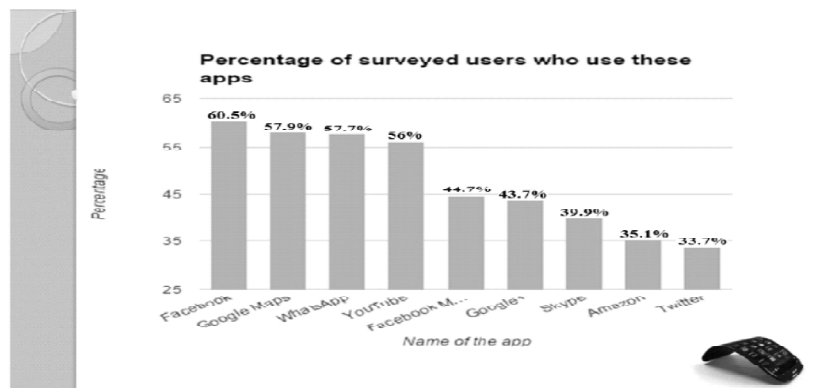


Figure 3

talks about the lack or gap of the students learning grammar. The present study makes an attempt to bridge that gap of the learners in the field of grammar and it facilitates the learner to become an independent thinker. An attempt is made so that they are enabled to use appropriate sentence structure without errors.

AN OVERVIEW OF GRAMMAR

Dakowska has given “five slogans of the cognitive approach and the implications for the cognitive method of foreign language teaching” (57) and they are as follows:

1. A living language is characterized by rule-governed creativity.
2. The rules of grammar are psychologically real.
3. Man is especially equipped to learn languages.
4. A living language is a language in which we can think.
5. Languages share underlying similarities.

Dakowska makes a very important point that ‘the key to learning the foreign language was the knowledge of its grammar, especially in the form of memorized rules learned by heart and accompanied by various declensions and conjugations’.
(19)

Talking about the relevance of error analysis in language teaching, students learn grammar by trial and error. Learning a FL is a step-by-step process, during which errors or mistakes are to be expected during this process of learning. Corder (1967) states that errors are visible proof that learning is taking place. He has emphasized that errors, if studied systematically, can provide significant insights into how a language is actually learned by a foreigner. He also agrees that studying students’ errors of usage has immediate practical application for language teachers. (Quoted Darus 487)

The use of Error Analysis (EA) and appropriate corrective techniques can aid effective learning and teaching of English. It is understood that learning a FL is a gradual process, during which mistakes are to be expected in all stages of learning. Mistakes will not disappear simply because they have been pointed out to the learner, contrary to what some language learners and teachers believe (Ferris, 2002). In fact, making mistakes is a natural process of learning and must be considered as part of cognition. As a result, errors must be viewed positively. (Quoted Darus 486) One should know the errors only then remedies can be given. Hence, there is a paramount need for error analysis in order to give appropriate and absolute recommendations to overcome the errors.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This paper aims at developing learners’ writing and speaking skills and error-free expression in their conversations and writings by means of teaching English grammar and sentence structures of English.

This study covers the following objectives:

- To enable the learners to use appropriate sentence structure for better understanding of the receiver
- To enhance their ability to speak and write the sentence patterns
- To transfer one's thoughts and ideas to others with accuracy of the language
- To protect a speaker or a writer from the violation of grammar rules

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The intention of choosing verb as the core component for study is that it is the heart of any sentence pattern. No sentence can be possible without a verb. You cannot have a sentence or even an independent clause without a verb. Verbs are the building blocks in any language. No one knows what a sentence is saying without a verb. Recognizing the verb is often the most important step in understanding the meaning of a whole sentence. The major reason for providing a set of 500 English sentence structures with the various forms of the verb 'eat' is to enable the learner to understand the grammatical aspects and semantic nuances of each structure so that he/she is able to make use of the apt structure in the appropriate situation or context.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research facilitates the learners to be comfortable with the productive skills i.e. writing and speaking skills. It assists the learners think broadly in the usage of language in the domain of grammar. It aims at developing their speaking and writing skills without errors. It helps the learners to become independent and original users of the language. It also helps the learners to hone their skills in creative writing. Once the interests are kindled by way of strengthening their confidence, they will emerge as budding poets or authors of fiction.

SELECTION OF TESTING ITEMS

For the present study, verb and its inflections have been chosen as the premium selection of testing items. A verb is often defined as a word which shows action or state of being. The different forms or inflections of a verb show different meanings related to such things as tense (past, present, and future), person (first person, second person, and third person), number (singular, plural) and voice (active, passive). Verbs are also often accompanied by verb-like words called modals (may, could, should, etc.) and auxiliaries (do, have, will, etc.) to give them different shades of meanings. Moreover, the verb is the center of grammar and it has broad link with all other parts of speech. One of the most important things about verbs is their relationship to time. Verbs tell us if something has already happened, if it will happen later, or if it is happening now.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

For the present study, the authors have brought in technological advances by way of combining the traditional teaching method along with Noam Chomsky's Cognitive Code Approach of teaching grammar and turning the materials in android app for the present century learners. By the way, the blended method of teaching learning process is needed for the present generation learners. Hence, through blended method of teaching learning, one cannot violate the grammar rules and simultaneously the learners' enthusiasm will also be increased.

RECOMMENDED PEDAGOGY TO THE LEARNERS

For the present study, it is intended to enhance the learners' productive skills in the tense with all aspects. It explores explicit use of main and auxiliary verbs in set of 500 sentence structures in passives, infinitive and modals. In order to teaching English sentence structure, the verb eat is taken throughout the examples. Learners should be in a position to know the principal part of the verb before going to learn all the possible sentence structures in English. It is one of the transitive irregular verbs.

S. No.	<i>Present Form</i>	<i>3rd Person Singular</i>	<i>Past Form</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>	<i>Present Participle</i>	<i>Infinitive Form</i>
1. Forms	eat	eats	ate	eaten	eating	to eat
2. Phonetic Transcription	/i:t/	/i:ts/	/æt/	/i:tn/	/i:tiŋ/	-

Auxiliary Verbs

The verb forms used as auxiliary verbs in English are:

1. to be

am, is, are was, were be, been, being

2. To do

do, does, did, done, doing

3. To have

have, has had having

4. The modal verbs

can, could shall, should must

may, might

5. Semi Modals

ought to, need to, used to, dare to will, would

Sentence Structure Areas

There are 500 sentence structures given from the following areas.

- Simple Present Tense or Present Indefinite Tense (12 sentence structures)

- Present Continuous Tense or Present Progressive Tense (18 sentence structures)
- Present Perfect Tense (12 sentence structures)
- Present Perfect Continuous Tense or Present Perfect Progressive Tense (12 sentence structures)
- Past Indefinite Tense or Simple Past Tense (6 sentence structures)
- Past Continuous Tenses or Past Progressive Tense (12 sentence structures)
- Past Perfect Tense (6 sentence structures)
- Past Perfect Continuous Tense or Past Perfect progressive Tense (6 sentence structures)
- Future Indefinite Tense or Simple Future Tense (12 sentence structures)
- Future Continuous Tense or Future Progressive tense (12 sentence structures)
- Future Perfect Tense (12 sentence structures)
- Future Perfect Continuous Tense or Future Perfect Progressive Tense (12 sentence structures)
- Simple Present Tense in Passive voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Present continuous Tense in Passive Voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Present Perfect Tense in Passive Voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Simple Past Tense in Passive Voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Past Continuous Tense in Passive Voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Past Perfect Tense in Passive Voice Formation (6 sentence structures)
- Simple Future Tense in Passive Voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Future Perfect Tense in Passive Voice Formation (12 sentence structures)
- Modal Auxiliaries (138 sentence structures)
- Modal Auxiliaries in Passive Voice Formation (84 sentence structures)
- Semi Modals or Marginal Modals or Quasi Modals (24 sentence structures)
- Infinitives, gerunds, and participles (18 sentence structures)
- Infinitives in Passive Voice Formation (6 sentence structures)
- Imperatives (4 sentence structures)
- Imperatives in Passive Voice Formation (4 sentence structures)

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A set of 500 sentence structures has been only given in this paper. The verb group in each sentence structure has been underlined (e.g. could have been eaten). The

formula given alongside is the analysis of the constituents of the structure (e.g. subject + verb + object). The name of the structure is also indicated: Simple Present Affirmative, for an example, I eat an apple. (Simple present affirmative sentence), eventually, Replacing the main verb with another is the activity given and the learners make of the android application in their smart phones. For want of space, the entire set of 500 sentence structures has been given in the annexure as explained in the aforesaid manner.

CONCLUSION

Thus, by learning all the sentence structures annexed to this paper, the learners can come out with a set of 500 sentences with a vocabulary. A similar verb (instead of the given example 'eat') can be taken up for practice. Repetitive practice with a number of transitive verbs will ensure a proper comprehension and usage of affirmative and negative sentences in all tenses, modals, infinitives and voices. Interrogatives and imperatives structures can be also learned in both the voices. Proper learning of sentence structures can be developed. The usage of the structures will tend to increase in course of time. The learners need not limit themselves with particular tenses rather they should be in a position to use right tenses along with changes in voices and moods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Blending of English language learning and mobile assisted language learning is an important task in creating a positive climate which sustains and enhances the students' responses and enthusiasm in the teaching learning process. It is evident that technology as a tool for teaching English assists the learners successfully. It is obvious that mobile phones and android applications strengthen the ways and means of learning English grammar in the teaching process.

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