TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH GRAMMAR: THE ALBANIAN STUDENTS’ VIEWS
• **Aim:**
  To investigate the students’ perceptions on grammar instruction at the English Department of the Faculty of Philology and Education of “Fan S. Noli” University in Albania with the purpose of considering them in teaching the English grammar.

• **Considering:**
  - the general organization of the grammar courses of English department of ‘Fan S. Noli’ University
  - students’ views on the importance of grammar for an accurate written and spoken use of language, and on the pedagogy of grammar.
The general organization of the grammar courses at English Department:

- The grammar courses include morphology and syntax course (75 classes each).
- The study of basic concepts in grammar, the standard grammatical description of the language including the structure of words, phrases, clauses and sentences.
- The students’ progress is evaluated through written tests, observation and self-assessment of their essays.
General approaches to grammar teaching

• **Focus on forms** emphasized the role of grammar in learning a foreign language. The classes were based on the study of grammatical rules & structures, and the analysis of language forms, with little focus on language functions. The assumption: language consists of grammatical forms that can be acquired sequentially and additively.

• **Focus on meaning**, assuming learners are able to analyze language inductively, emphasized learners’ exposure to meaningful communication. The syllabi based on functional use of the language.

• **A focus on both form and meaning**: focus on grammatical forms is necessary to develop high levels of accuracy in the target language. Several proposals have recently been made on ways to combine grammar instruction with the opportunities for communicative input and output. The challenge: to identify the best ways of doing it.
The study

- **Objective:** To find out our students’ attitude and preferences for grammar teaching and learning in order to involve them in grammar teaching.

- **Methodology:**
  - 32 students of the 3rd course of English Teaching Study Program, at “F. Noli” University. They were purposively selected as a) they have finished all grammar classes and language skill classes; b) they have finished the methodology class.
  - A questionnaire, adapted from Palacios (2007), was used to obtain the data. It was collected at the end of the last academic year (June 2012).
    - 6 open questions on: students’ definition of grammar
      - the most interesting & most difficult grammatical areas,
      - the general organization of the English grammar courses
    - 14 statements (rated on a scale from 1 to 5 according to the degree of agreement or disagreement):
      - on students’ views on the importance of grammar in learning English
      - on the pedagogy of grammar: the approach to grammar, usefulness of teachers’ explanations & contrastive analysis, importance of rules, practical exercises & discovery learning tasks, relevance of contextualized practice & grammatical terminology, the role of bibliographical references & sentence parsing.
Analysis and discussion of results

Views on grammar definition, the most interesting & most difficult grammatical areas, the organization of grammar courses:

- Some students have a prescriptive viewpoint of grammar defining it as a set of rules of a language important to construct a correct sentence
- Most of the students consider grammar as a set of rules that helps them to communicate
- The most interesting: morphology
- The most difficult: syntax
- Students’ evaluation of the grammar courses:
  
  Generally all the students gave a positive evaluation (well organized courses, clear explanation, a variety of activities and adequate contents).

  A small number of students: more activities, make lessons simpler because of the differences in students’ level of language proficiency.
## Analysis and discussion of results

### Views on the Importance of Grammar Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>S. disagree</th>
<th>The result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar plays an important role in the study of English</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The knowledge of English grammar is indispensable for using the language to communicate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible to speak English well without any grammatical knowledge.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is possible to write English well without any grammatical knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Views on the Importance of Grammar Teaching

• Grammar plays an important role in speaking and writing well.

• The lower results referring to ‘speaking and writing well without any grammatical knowledge’, the students may mean ‘being able to communicate effectively rather than expressing themselves with accuracy in writing and speech’.
## Views on the techniques and activities for the teaching and learning of grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>S.Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Dis</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>S.Disagree</th>
<th>Scaled result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture's explanations are useful for the study of Grammar</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teaching of grammar must be done implicitly rather than explicitly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrastive analysis of English with Albanian is useful in the study of grammar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualized grammar practice is relevant in the learning of English grammar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying the rules is important in learning English grammar</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Views on the techniques and activities for the teaching and learning of grammar

<table>
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<th>S.Disagree</th>
<th>Scaled result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities for discovering grammatical phenomena are truly effective</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical exercises are important in the study of English grammar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Study of terminology is important in the learning of English grammar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic analysis of phrases &amp; sentences helps immensely to better understand English grammar</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading bibliography about English grammar helps in understanding it.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
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Views on the techniques and activities for the teaching and learning of grammar

- Very important (rated higher than 4):
  - Studying the rules of grammar (4.37)
  - Syntactic analysis of phrases and sentences (4.28)
  - Lecture's explanations (4.25)
  - Practical exercises (4.12)
  - Self-discovering activities (4.09)

- Important (quite high values - closer to the positive end than to the negative):
  - Contextualized grammar practice (3.81)
  - Implicit teaching rather than explicit teaching (3.53)
  - Studying terminology (3.34)
  - Contrastive analysis of English with Albanian (3.25)
  - Reading bibliography about English (3.25)

- These figures evidently denote that the students are interested in both grammatical theory and practical use of grammar.
Conclusion

• The third-year students of English Teaching Study Program of “Fan S.Noli” University viewed grammar very important in their study of English.

• Students are interested in the general approach ‘A focus on both form and meaning’ as they consider useful:
  
  - theory & practice
  - prescriptive and descriptive perspectives
  - formal and functional approaches

• But a number of popular grammar practice books are characterized methodologically by the provision of descriptions of grammatical points and controlled production exercises (Ellis 2002).

• It is our responsibility to find and apply alternative methods to the teaching of grammar combining grammar instruction with the opportunities for communicative input and output.