

Concept Mapping – A Pedagogical Tool for Grammar Lessons

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Introduction

Grammar is the description of the regularities in a language. Knowledge of these regularities provides the learner with the means to generate potentially enormous number of original sentences. Grammar teaching can proceed in two ways: *covert grammar teaching* where the rules are taught to a communicative syllabus and *overt grammar teaching* where the rules of grammar are presented explicitly using the grammar syllabus. Looking at the prescribed textbooks and the teacher handbooks used in Indian schools, one can infer that the pedagogy of English grammar teaching in India, by and large, follows the overt method. The teaching relies heavily on explicitly stating the concept and the rules governing it. The inductive or deductive approach is then used to understand the syntax of the

language and solving examples strengthens the rules hence learnt.

Concept Mapping has proven to be an effective pedagogical tool and a metalearning strategy useful for many subjects (Ritche and Volkl, 2000; Gardgill and Jitendra, 1999; Novak, 1990). Based on assimilation theory the concept maps are rooted in the principle that the single most important factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows (Bayram, 1995). Researches have suggested that concept maps can be used to facilitate meaningful learning. (Abram, 2001). The educators can find multitude uses of concept maps in their classrooms. Few studies have been carried out using this tool in teaching grammar (Boyle & Weishaar, 1997; Clements-Davis & Ley, 1991; Dimino et al., 1990).

Grammar is famous for its numerous interlinked concepts. Teaching grammar with its interlinked concepts is a challenge to every language teacher. As a teacher educator, the researcher chose to study the effect of using concept maps in teaching various grammatical concepts to the learners and to see whether learning through concept maps is likely to be more effective as compared to other pedagogical options.

Objective

To study the effect of the use of concept maps on the teaching and learning of English grammar.

Hypothesis

The use of concept maps is effective in the teaching and learning of English grammar.

The Plan of the Study

In view of the objective it was decided to conduct the experiment on class IX students of Army Public School, Delhi Cantt. The 94 students chosen for the study belonged to the two sections of class IX. One section was chosen to be the experimental group while the other the control group. An initial test was planned and administered. This test, based on the class VIII syllabus, aimed to check whether the two groups were comparable.

Keeping in mind the school schedule, it was decided that thirty teaching periods would be utilized per group to deliver the instruction. The topics chosen for the delivery of instruction covered two areas: Grammar and English prose. The prose lessons were selected to study the feasibility of using concept maps in learning the English prose lessons. The classes conducted covered: Parts of Speech, Direct – Indirect, Active Passive Sentences and from their textbooks (*Main Course Book*,

published by the NCERT, New Delhi) Amundsen’s Journey to the South Pole and Whales.

In sync with the objective, in the experimental group the instruction was to be imparted using concept maps and in the control group using the lecture method. In the experimental group the concept maps on grammar lessons were to be developed in the classroom using the student’s previous knowledge while in the prose lessons, as the prose proceeded.

The classes to be conducted with the experimental group and control group were to use only the prescribed textbooks and the available resources: blackboard and coloured chalks.

It was planned that after thirty lessons another test was conducted on the topics covered in the class. It was also planned the types of questions in the test did not favour any one methodology.

Delimitation

This being a preliminary study (to be followed up subsequently) a single school was chosen and only selected portions of the prescribed syllabus were covered during the study.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the two groups on the test conducted on class VIII syllabus.

The means, standard deviation and the spread of scores around the mean shows that two groups were comparable on the test taken before the study began.

Once it was established that two groups were comparable, the delivery of instruction took place in the respective methodology. On covering the decided topics

Table 1: Means, SDs and Dispersion of Scores on Test 1

Groups	Means	SD	Dispersion of Scores (in %)		
			+ σ	+ 2σ	+ 3σ
Experimental	22.20	3.48	74.46	95.74	97.88
Control	19.57	3.62	70.21	95.75	97.87

Table 2: Means, SDs and Dispersion of Scores on Test 2

Groups	Means	SD	Dispersion of Scores (in %)		
			+ σ	+ 2σ	+ 3σ
Experimental	24.22	3.66	63.82	100	100
Control	20.32	3.45	70.21	97.87	100

Table 3: Means, SD and t values for experimental and control group

Group (Class)	Test	Mean	SD	t test
Experimental 9 A	Pre	22.20	3.48	2.743 Significant at 0.01
	Post	24.22	3.66	
Control 9C	Pre	19.57	3.62	1.047 Not Significant
	Post	20.32	3.45	

another test was conducted on the same groups.

Table 2 shows that the mean score of the experimental group is higher than the control group showing thereby achievement is better.

The t test conducted separately on the experimental and control group scores on Test1 and Test 2, shows that the improvement in achievement in the experimental group is significant at 0.01 level whereas the t test does not show the same for control group.

Conclusion

Students who are imparted learning experiences through concept map signal a better performance on their understanding of the concepts of English grammar as compared to the ones taught through commonly prevalent options.

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