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TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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This paper deals with English grammar and its position in the language teaching process. Grammar was for long taught for its own sake and this approach has done more harm than good because such knowledge of an algebraic kind of accuracy does not give learners the ability to communicate in real life situations. Fluency and accuracy are complementary and interdependent phenomena. Grammar does not work in isolation, but it should be used to preserve semantic relationships and to consider the discursal factors. A new departure should be seen in which pedagogical grammar with consciousness raising will play an active role in the acquisition of the language. Teaching grammar at primary school begins with mechanistic drill exercises in the first phase and is gradually transformed into cognitive in the third phase. The teaching process should proceed in concentric circles spreading progressively the knowledge of the precedent phases.

Key words: English language, primary school, teaching grammar, techniques and activities

1. Introduction

Language is a tool that helps people communicate, it enables them to express their thoughts, opinions, feelings and points of view, in order to exchange information, talk about experiences, likes and dislikes, to explore similarities and differences. There is no efficient and successful language learning without having good knowledge of grammar structures and their functions in language.

The word grammar in the usual narrow sense of the term evokes rather negative images such as rules, drills, exams and red marks on paper. In its broadest sense grammar is viewed as dependent upon the meanings a structure is carrying, not just the rules. Grammar is a part of a larger interrelated whole, which includes discourse, semantics, and "grammatization" (the process of achieving linguistic expression through grammatical rules).

Grammar is an integral part of any language teaching process. Some consider grammar as a science of language system while others consider it just a list of rules to learn and memorize in order to be able to speak and write correctly. McArthur stresses the difference between:

1. primary or natural grammar, merely unconscious, close to Chomskyan term competence;
1. secondary or analytic grammar, as conscious study of a language and its usage.

In language teaching grammar can be distinguished as:

1. grammar as language study using metalanguage in describing language;
1. grammar as an integral part of language mechanism important for its existence and function (Petrović 1988).

More and more is heard about grammatical consciousness development, which is defined as drawing the learner's attention to the features of the target language. Language learning is believed to be a problem-solving activity, and it is a valuable strategy for "discovering" L2 or foreign language grammar. It is essentially a discovery procedure involving hypothesis formation leading to formation of rules. The teacher can easily highlight any grammatical problems that are impeding the learners' progress and help them to plan a solution, carry it out, and check the results.

According to Halliday (see in Keh, 1991), systemic-functional grammar is concerned with meaning, function and language in use. Being based on a systemic theory, it starts with more general features and then proceeds step by step as to become even more specific. The general orientation is "from general to specific". It is concerned with the way language is organized to fulfill communicative functions and satisfy human needs. Each element in the given language is explained by reference to its function in the total linguistic system.

As Lindgren (see in Gojmerac, 1989) says, none of the linguistic theories can be used as the only adequate basis for practical grammar in the language teaching process. The only possible solution is an eclectic approach. All the good and bad points of the different models should be analysed before deciding which elements to take as useful and adequate in applying grammar within the language teaching process.

2. The position of grammar in the language teaching process

Complete conscious grammar knowledge is not necessary for successful communication. Children are quite capable of communicating without having any theoretical grammar knowledge. From this point of view, grammar explanations were considered as unnecessary and superfluous. But if we consider grammar as an integral part of language and its mechanism, that can be mastered in a natural environment or learnt and practised, then grammar becomes very important in the teaching process.

Different interpretations of the term *grammar* have led to different treatments of grammar and its role in language teaching. The position of grammar has changed significantly, having sometimes the central position in language teaching and being eliminated and neglected in some other period. None of these extreme approaches is justified and acceptable. Having deep and detailed knowledge of grammar does not mean having speaking proficiency and communicative competence. Grammar gives learners a possibility to develop their cognitive capacity and stimulates the cognitive process, but it certainly cannot include all the aspects of a given language. It is just a means to achieve the goal - complete competence and knowledge of the target language.

Grammar is considered to be an important constituent since grammar structures bear meaning, express ideas etc. Second language or foreign language is not taught in a natural environment, thus there is no systematic language learning without learning grammar through good and efficient grammar exercises.

While Chomsky's term *grammar competence* presumes the inborn ability that humans have to acquire and use language and then generate an unlimited number of new sentences in their mother tongue, communicative competence includes knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and sociolinguistic behaviour. But the issue is how relevant grammar knowledge is in achieving communicative competence since knowing the rules does not guarantee successful communication. The age of learners and their needs should be considered in deciding how much grammar should be introduced in learning the target language. Grammar competence includes the ability to understand and produce meaningful and correct sentences, recognizing and applying the rules while producing language. It has nothing to do with mechanistic memorization and production of sets of formulas.

The concept of learning as it is understood today has been greatly influenced by the psychological study of the learning process. The psychological concept of learning includes acquisition of knowledge and learning skills in general, and refers also to learning to learn and think. It also includes modification of attitudes, acquisition of interests, social values or social rules.

"Language teaching can be defined as the activities which are intended to bring about language learning" (Stern 1983:21).

Teaching grammar includes not only learning the rules, but learning how to manipulate the features used by English speakers, to express certain meanings and relationships. If we want to communicate, we have to be able to produce the language in the way to be understood. Grammar should not be taught separately from the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Teaching grammar communicatively means that the teacher should present the language in situations in which it is used, and he/she must control the activities that follow, allowing learners to practise it in a controlled situation, then in more communicative activities, and finally in fluency activities.

Learning strategies are a special way of processing the information to help and improve understanding, learning and retaining the information. The age factor is to be considered when discussing and analysing learning strategies as some are typical for young learners, while others are employed by older learners or adults, due to their different cognitive abilities.

Learning a foreign language is viewed as a complex process of implicit, mainly unconscious acquisition by the exposure to the target language, and explicit, conscious learning in formal conditions. While learning by the exposure to the language the attention is drawn primarily to the practical use of the acquired structures and not to the study of the language as a system. Experience has shown that there is a negative correlation between the acquired knowledge and the strategies of formal learning, because the structures learnt by heart, to be evaluated, just to satisfy the teachers' demands and expectations, are easily forgotten.

Various types of learning strategies have been discussed so far, but three types seem to be most frequently distinguished: metacognitive, cognitive and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies include reflection about the learning process, planning and organizing activities, understanding the learning conditions, selfevaluation and selfcorrection, selection etc. In the area of these abilities successful learners could be distinguished from the beginner and not so successful ones. Cognitive strategies require interaction with the teaching material, mental and psychic manipulation like: repetition, deduction, resourcing, note taking, translation, recombination etc. Social strategies consider the influence social and affective processes have on learning the foreign language.

According to cognitive psychologist J.R. Anderson (1981) language acquisition is a complex cognitive ability and within his theory of *production systems*, he explains the difference between declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge refers to what we know *about* something, while procedural knowledge refers to when we know *how* to do something. This has led to analysing and discussing the learning strategies considering metacognitive strategies mainly executive and cognitive strategies mainly operative (Kovačević 1999).

3. Three Phases of Learning the English Language in Primary School

Children starting to learn English in the first grade improve their listening, comprehension and pronunciation very well. It enables them to become communicatively competent regardless of some inaccuracy in grammar structures. An early start in learning foreign languages, particularly English, could mean, in the long run, bilingualism for the entire population.

The language teaching process is divided into three phases over eight years of learning English. At early age, the unconscious acquisition process is superior to the learning one due to

the child's cognitive development, so especially in the beginning mechanistic approach prevails, while cognitive approach is introduced around puberty (Vilke 1977).

The intellectual and linguistic development of the child requires different approaches at different ages. Pre-puberty groups are far superior in mastering the phonetic system. Younger groups can reach a considerably higher standard of pronunciation using authentic English phonemes and intonation patterns because "language learning blocks" are frequent at and after puberty. Only later will they be prepared to continue with more complex and abstract structures. Mastering the phonetic system at an early age is crucial because this factor is hard to be achieved satisfactorily at an older age, when the language mastering process requires a great conscious effort since the imitative capacity is lost and language cannot be acquired by mere exposure to it. Natural acquisition by exposure to the foreign language disappears because of the biological process of maturation of the brain and it becomes fixed around puberty. This is why foreign accent cannot be overcome after this time.

3.1. First phase (I - IV grade)

The primary task in this phase is to teach the learners the phonological system by imitation, since this is the most favourable period for imitating pronunciation. It is practised using the most frequent grammar drill to practise a pattern or a group of patterns which occur in the context of dialogue presentation. Grammatical features are practised, but without any linguistic explanation.

Some problems and performance difficulties in learning English can be expected in pronunciation, the command of structures and the use of vocabulary. Young learners can master the phonetic system provided they have good models to imitate. This is why complete accuracy in pronunciation, rhythm and intonation should be insisted upon, but as far as grammar accuracy is concerned we should not insist. In songs, riddles or nursery rhymes they will, in a parrot-like way, correctly memorize and repeat the lines, while in producing their own sentences they will leave out whatever they feel redundant (*Mum cooking in the kitchen*) since their primary communicative intention is to convey meaning (Vrhovac et al. 1999).

Grammar is taught following contrastive analysis, using positive transfer from the mother tongue. At this age, structures are incorporated into everyday situations close to the learners, and in other cases mechanical drills are used, sometimes in the form of games including the learners' activity as much as possible. At a young age children need to be active and methodology should use it during the teaching process, allowing them to participate orally and physically as much as possible in dialogues, role playing, dramatizing. As a basis for further language learning is being laid in this phase, it is very important to stimulate the learners' interest applying attractive methodology, to make them feel happy and conscious of their progress.

Unlike adults, children are not self-motivated to learn English, their world is their daily games, events of interest to them, and teachers should capitalize their curiosity, the desire to play and explore. Teaching must be planned in such a way that learning becomes an interesting, at times even entertaining process. Developing such interest will lead children to a spontaneous use of language forms. The teacher's participation in games and activities helps children to overcome any inhibitions they may have. If we want teaching to be successful we should consider the learners' interests and motivations, because they will pay more attention if they are motivated.

Young learners can be aware of some rules about language as a system and draw conclusions about rules in the English language. For example, awareness of *He played football yesterday* expressing a past action may bring to deductions like *He goed to school by bus*. They may notice the *-ed* being added to express the past, but since young learners do not know about verbs as a word category, about auxiliaries, endings, etc., any metalinguistic explanations must be avoided.

The acquisition of the imperative is not a problem since they give orders and respond to them in different games and other activities.

Children at this age are very much interested in their belongings (their toys, clothes...), so expressing their possession should not be a problem (*my ball, my daddy, my bike...*), but they are not that interested in or close to other people's properties, so we should not insist upon other forms of possessive adjectives or pronouns.

In introducing pronominalization we can notice the learners' preference in using nouns instead of *he* or *she*. They understand the question *Where is your sister?* but instead of answering *She is...*, they would rather give full answers using nouns: *My sister is...* They seem not to have problems in using the personal pronoun *I (I'm hungry)*. It probably looks less abstract (Vilke 1988).

Different dynamic exercises should be introduced to practise grammar in a very spontaneous way, in order to give the learners enough input to memorize structures. Nursery rhymes, riddles, songs, story-telling, role-plays, games, crossword puzzles could be very helpful and efficient in introducing and practising any grammar structures. It is an amusing way to learn just about everything (articles, plural nouns, adjectives, pronouns, tenses, irregular verbs...), as metalanguage is not to be used in this phase. Putting toys around the classroom could be an interesting and funny way to practise prepositions (*Timmy is on the floor, behind the door, on the shelf, under the desk...*). Physical activity combined with oral performance is an ideal solution as young learners enjoy being physically active. *Total physical response* - or as Vilke (see in Andracka & Bogdanić, 2004) says, *total emotional response* - is very important in teaching young learners because they learn spontaneously, with all their senses included, so saying and at the same time doing it is far more effective than just producing something orally. Since young learners may easily get bored or tired, making them physically active can help to keep their concentration and energy (Andracka and Bogdanić 2004).

The national curriculum gives a frame of the fourth graders' abilities in language performance. At the end of the first phase learners are supposed to have acquired and be able to use spontaneously:

- the present of the verbs *to be* and *to have / have got*
- the present simple / present continuous
- understanding and expressing requests and orders using the imperative
- using *can* to express ability
- personal pronouns
- asking questions with the question words *who, whose, what, which, where, how many*
- correctly using *there is / there are*
- demonstrative pronouns/adjectives *this/that*
- distinguishing singular and plural nouns and the irregular plural
- expressing possession using the Saxon genitive
- nouns with indefinite and definite articles
- possessive adjectives
- prepositions and adverbs of place and time (*on, in, into, under, behind, in front of, at, to, between, here, there, always, every...*)
- cardinal numbers 1-100

Learners should be able to just recognize:

- the simple past tense
- the use of the verb *must* to express orders

- the present perfect simple to express the results of a completed action (*Have you written/bought...?*)
- phrasal verbs
- comparison of adjectives
- the indefinite articles *a/an* and the definite article at a global level

(*Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu - engleski jezik, 2006*)

3.2. Second phase (V, VI grade)

Any grammar course should begin with tenses to be introduced one by one, taking into account that children have not yet learnt the grammar of their own native language quite well. Introducing grammar should be concentrated on the very basic and elementary structures, with concrete, simple and clear explanations, with definitions in the mother tongue, using formulas when necessary.

Some difficulties appear especially in this phase because learners still have difficulties in mastering grammar terminology in their mother tongue. Very often, before being introduced, some grammar subjects should be explained in Croatian first and then the application continued in English. In the present simple they always have problems with the third person singular, because it is impossible to deal with specific grammar terminology when they are not sure about it in Croatian.

Although verbs and tenses are introduced from the very beginning of teaching English, some problems seem to "survive" through years of learning. A typical example is the *-s/-es* added in the third person singular of the present simple. Teachers can introduce, as a kind of reminder, some funny and stimulative techniques and activities whenever their learners forget about it. Very often the difference between the present simple and the present continuous causes lots of trouble and mistakes. It represents a real difficulty, but being very frequent, it is taught at the beginning of the second phase. Drill exercises can help a lot in the acquisition of these structures, because frequency and correct usage in speaking is done by repetition of a given structure. The teacher must decide which structures are to be taught first, to achieve progression in later phases.

In this phase teachers should, little by little, start insisting on the accuracy of grammar structures and metalanguage is used to explain, for example, the rules and the use of the present simple and the present continuous. Croatian learners face problems because there is just one present tense in the Croatian language. Anyway, we should not insist on learning rules and definitions, as it may turn out to be demotivating, so effective learning should be done in a child-friendly approach because the main goal is to help children to be able to speak and write English with a reasonable degree of accuracy and fluency (Andraka & Bogdanić 2004).

Articles are spontaneously introduced in the first phase, but since there is no equivalent to this category in the Croatian language, our learners continue being insecure about it. We should keep turning their attention to articles in a variety of exercises to give them enough input to overcome this problem.

Questions tags, those little questions stuck at the end of a sentence usually asking for confirmation of what has just been said, require some time to be mastered because of transfer from the mother tongue (*It's an interesting movie, isn't it? Zanimljiv film, zar ne?*).

Children, by a series of exercises, are exposed to sentence structures and they learn them by analogy, thus becoming able to make hundreds of sentences similar to those produced by the teacher. Children learn by analogy, they listen to adults and try to produce their own sentences. Only much later do they begin to learn language consciously acquiring grammar rules.

Teachers can use different exercises to integrate language skills and give children the op-

portunity to work individually, in small groups, or with the class as a whole. Workbooks give a variety of exercises. Language and grammar acquisition, at this level, starts with oral and written mechanical techniques. Fill-in-the-blank and various completing exercises are very useful at this level in practising pronouns, the verb *to be*, the present simple, the present continuous, etc. Replacement exercises are used to avoid monotony. Substitution tables and substitution drills are good for familiarizing learners with the correct tense forms, plural forms, possessives. Many situations for asking questions can be created in the classroom. Describing pictures is very useful in individual work.

At this level, the most important and elementary grammar requiring the use of metalanguage should be introduced slowly and structures avoided. Lots of practising and continuous repetition of grammar structures in a variety of different exercises is necessary.

Rivers and Temperly (see in Petrović, 1988) give a list of six types of exercises for learning grammar structures in the beginning phases of language learning.

- repeating sentences imitating the model
- replacement exercises
- conversion or transformation of structures
- changing sentences by extension and fill-in-the-blank exercises
- response practice
- translation exercises

At this level learners have to face the problem of tenses because all the basic tenses are presented in the textbooks for the VI grade. Structures are given in situational settings and then practised in a variety of exercises. Elements of the direct method can be found in transposition, substitution, dictation and narrative, and free composition exercises. Some of the characteristics of the AL method can be very useful at this level of language learning: the use of dialogues, the emphasis on practice techniques and pattern drills (structural drills). Question-answer exercises and substitution drills are used to practise tenses, especially the past simple.

Learners should be able to make dialogues, descriptions, retell some text or event on the basis of vocabulary, grammar structures and communication patterns. Learners are expected to use the introduced structures in creative oral and written exercises.

Workbooks are used to make the learning process more efficient, to give learners the possibility to do exercises at home. Good functional drawings and pictures, crossword puzzles etc. stimulate children and intensify their motivation. The variety of exercises stimulates and develops logical and cognitive activity. Compared to any other simple or ordinary notebook, a workbook is more attractive, efficient and saves time.

Drill exercises and creativity lead to good results, none of them is to be neglected or excluded. Therefore this combination should be used more and more as learners proceed on their way towards communicative competence and performance. Approach to grammar is explicit, with gradual use of metalanguage, but mechanistic drill in memorizing rules is avoided.

At the end of this phase the learners should master the following structures:

- verbs *to have / have got / to be*
- the present simple and the present continuous (positive, interrogative and negative forms)
- phrasal verbs
- the *going to* future to express a planned future action
- the simple future to predict a future action
- *can* and *may* to ask for permission
- *must/have to* to express obligations

- the past simple of regular and irregular verbs to refer to a past action
- *would* to express requests
- possessive pronouns (*mine, yours...*)
- plural nouns, countable and uncountable nouns
- *some, any, much, many* to express indefinite quantity
- the gerund (*I like listening to music.*)
- comparison of adjectives (short/long, irregular)
- possessive adjectives (*my, your...*)
- prepositions of place and time
- frequency adverbs, adverbs of time
- cardinal and ordinal numbers (1-1000)

Learners are introduced to the present perfect simple to express the result of a completed action, but just at the level of recognition (*Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu - engleski jezik, 2006*).

3.3. Third phase (VII, VIII grade)

Teaching grammar proceeds in concentric circles spreading always more and more the knowledge of the precedent phases. At the age of puberty oral and mechanical acquisition is replaced by a cognitive learning process. A conscious activity principle is always the final goal in language teaching. Starting with mechanical imitation, it should end in conscious generalization. At this level good learners, when adequately led, are capable of generalization and they feel happy and satisfied in doing it successfully. Besides induction, deduction is to be used as these two methods are complementary. Deduction is suitable in explaining analogies and similarities since induction was applied in introducing basic notions.

Activity is very important because learners will remember those they have been actively involved in. It involves learners in grammar by making them analysts and problem solvers as they inductively discover rules and generalizations.

After a series of examples given in context, grammar rules can be practised in isolated sentences leading learners to the ability of making even sentences they have never heard before. Stimulating the learners' activity is very important as they have overcome the phase of mechanical drill. They have to be able to express their opinions, feelings, describe events and situations. Learning grammar helps them to master communicative and functional structures faster and successfully because grammar knowledge is a very important element for good understanding and successful communication.

Learners often think that their problem is grammar because they think that language is grammar, while often their problem has nothing to do with grammar. It might have more to do with the sociocultural domain than it has with the correct sequence of tenses or tenses in general. Therefore grammar should be demystified, and whenever it is possible and necessary knowledge of the mother tongue should be used to stress similarities or difficulties in language structures and to explain differences in the sociocultural background.

This is the phase of systematization, consolidation and practical application of all grammar material in different oral or written exercises in the textbook or workbook. All the material of the first two phases is repeated constantly, including, little by little, less frequent but not less important grammar units. More complicated grammar exercises are used and, in cases of interference, drill exercises are intensified. Conversion or transformation exercises are applied in changing the sentence type, in combining two sentences into one, in moving from one mood or tense to another, etc. In completion exercises, part of the sentence is given as a clue and learners have to finish it with some semantic or syntactic segment. Question-

answer exercises are useful for tense revision. Translation exercises are used as review exercises when some grammatical features have already been mastered and are well known. In grammar exercises new vocabulary is not used, in order to avoid distraction and let learners concentrate on the structures.

A majority of primary school learners have some problems in using tenses, especially simple and progressive, and we should keep it in mind in tense systematization. As people can either talk about their present life, make plans for the future, or talk about their past, it is evident that tense usage is one of the crucial elements of language. That is why teachers point out all the most important factors about tenses, because elements of English tenses sometimes change according to the time and the speaker's point of view.

In our teaching career we have experienced the present perfect as the most slippery area in teaching English tenses. Foreigners learning English are not so sure about using it since there is no equivalent for the present perfect in other languages. In the Croatian language *prezent* is used to express a present action while *perfekt* is used to refer to a past action. The English present perfect stays somewhere in between, connecting the present and the past in different ways. The action might start in the past and still be going on to the present moment, and this situation is expressed using *prezent* in Croatian (*I have lived in Split since 1987. - Živim u Splitu...*). The action might be completed in the past but the consequences or results are faced in the present and here problems arise as in such cases the *perfekt* is used in the Croatian language (*Oh, my God, I've lost my keys! - Izgubio sam...*). In English the present perfect is used with an incomplete period of time while in Croatian it is *perfekt* (*We have heard from him this weekend. - Čuli smo se...*). Yet again, referring to a life experience, the present perfect is used in English (*We've been to Paris*) while *perfekt* is used in Croatian (*Bili smo...*). The point is that the action in question did occur in the past, but the time is not given because it is irrelevant or unknown, and this is expressed using the present perfect. No matter the action did occur in the past we still have our memories, feelings, opinions about it. On the contrary, the past simple gives the time when the action happened (*yesterday, at Christmas, at my sister's wedding...*). When teaching about the past simple and the present perfect, this basic difference should be insisted on, to help learners use them with respectable accuracy. Quite a variety of dynamic and interesting exercises should be carried out to give learners enough input to overcome this problem. In conclusion, the present perfect remains a slightly blurred area for our learners but teachers may find useful intensive exercising using the most natural context close to learners and their interests. It works better if we try to immerse into the learners' world making exercises more interesting and funnier in order to soften the problem.

In our opinion, more time should be dedicated to teaching the gerund. This structure is typically English and some learners could find it difficult to master because very often the gerund in English usually becomes much longer when translated into another language. Special stress should be laid on memorizing the verbs followed by a gerund (verb patterns), which can be done only by repeating and practising sentences with these verbs.

Sometimes the gerund is a problem for our learners because it does not always have a direct equivalent in the Croatian language. In the example *You are right, swimming is healthy* (U pravu si, plivanje je zdravo) the translation is literal, but in *I remember my father taking me to the zoo* the gerund should be translated in a different, descriptive way (Sjećam se kako me otac vodio u zoološki vrt).

Another source of trouble for our learners when acquiring English is the acquisition of the passive because it is much more used in English than in other languages. They have to get used to it first and then practise the structure and its word order through various exercises.

Exercising the passive should not be reduced to mechanistic drills turning active sentences into passive or the other way round since there is a basic functional difference in

deciding between the active or the passive. In *Have you heard a new bridge has been built?* the focus is on the object, while in *Industrogradnja has built a new bridge* the stress is on the doer of the action. Our learners have problems in adjusting to it and using it in a natural way because English "loves" the passive while in Croatian it is not used so frequently. Some sentences sound perfect in English but when translated into Croatian they may sound weird because the Croatian language "prefers" the active (*Mr Jones was given the award by the queen herself; Oliver Twist was written by Charles Dickens*).

Grammar categories or tenses do not always correspond in all the cases (in different languages), and to avoid ambiguities we have to stress the differences and insist on practising them. A typical example is the present perfect, which, as discussed earlier, has no equivalent tense in Croatian as it is sometimes translated with the present and sometimes with the past tense.

The teaching material should be motivating and stimulating so that learners find themselves involved in a variety of language learning activities. Teachers should avoid making them feel mostly passive and uninterested in what is going on. The emphasis is on a functional and communicative approach. The need to use English in various activities should be so naturally aroused that learners are constantly being challenged to listen, speak, read or write something in English. Learners become interested in their lessons and take an active part in classroom activities. They see communication in English as a pleasant experience and enjoy it. The teacher's role is minimized to that of an initiator, guide and helper.

Grammar is introduced and practised in communicative patterns, repeated and reinforced in concentric circles, metalanguage is used in explaining rules, grammar structures in English are compared with structures in Croatian. At the end of primary education learners are supposed to have acquired the following structures:

- the present simple / the present continuous / the present perfect (form, use and differences)
- the past simple / the past continuous (form and use)
- the simple future / the *going to* future / the present simple / the present continuous to express a future action
- modal verbs (*can/could, be able to, may/might, must/have to, ought to, shall/should, will/would*)
- the passive: the present simple / the future / the past simple (form and use)
- personal pronouns: subject and object forms
- relative pronouns
- indefinite pronouns
- nouns: singular/plural, countable/uncountable nouns
- articles: rules for using and not using articles
- comparison of adjectives: comparison of equality, superiority and minority
- adverbs of manner, place, time (form and use)
- question tags
- reported speech / questions with the main verb in present tenses
- indirect requests/commands
- word order (SVO)
- subject and object questions

In this phase learners are introduced to conditional clauses (the first and the second types) and temporal clauses, at a recognition level (*Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu - engleski jezik*, 2006).

4. Conclusion

Teaching English as a foreign language in primary school should include all the aspects of the language because none of them is to be neglected. Grammar was for long taught for its own sake, but it is an integral part of any language learning and modern approach to teaching grammar introduces it through concentric circles spreading progressively the learners' knowledge as they proceed from the beginning to more advanced phases. There is no satisfactory communicative competence without having mastered the grammar rules and structures of the target language.

Grammar is crucial and probably the most delicate aspect of language as a system hence the age factor should determine the most adequate learning strategies to be stimulated and developed through the teaching process. As practice has proved that explicit learning strategies in formal teaching environment have negative correlation with successful acquisition, mechanistic drill exercises that separate the form from the meaning and use, which results is boredom and losing motivation on the side of the learner, should be reduced to the necessary minimum. Different research and project assignments could stimulate the learners to rely on implicit learning strategies, which would definitely help the development of a future autonomous speaker able to use the language correctly and fluently.

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PODUČAVANJE GRAMATIKE ENGLSKOG JEZIKA U OSNOVNOJ ŠKOLI

Rad se bavi gramatikom engleskog jezika, položajem i ulogom koju ona ima u nastavnom procesu. U tradicionalnom pristupu gramatika je dugo vremena bila sama sebi svrhom i taj je pristup donio više štete nego koristi jer ovladavanje jezičnim strukturama još uvijek ne jamči i komunikacijsku kompetenciju. Tečnost u služenju jezikom i točnost u izboru jezičnih struktura komplementarne su jezične vještine koje se isprepleću i omogućavaju kvalitetnu jezičnu interakciju. Gramatika ne može biti izdvojen jezični aspekt, već mora biti u službi očuvanja semantičkih odnosa te uzimati u obzir i sve ostale komunikacijske čimbenike. Proces podučavanja gramatike u osnovnoj školi započinje karakterističnim zadacima mehaničkog ponavljanja struktura (*drill exercises*) u prvoj fazi ranog učenja, da bi se potom polako razvio u spoznajni proces svjesnog učenja o jeziku. Taj se proces treba odvijati u obliku koncentričnih krugova, proširujući postupno znanja stečena u prethodnim fazama. Budući da gramatika predstavlja ključni i možda najosjetljiviji segment jezičnog sustava, potrebno je tijekom procesa njegova učenja i usvajanja, vodeći računa o dobi učenika kao važnom čimbeniku, poticati i razvijati najučinkovitije strategije učenja, što će u konačnici omogućiti razvoj samostalnog govornika koji će se točno i tečno služiti stranim jezikom.

Ključne riječi: engleski jezik, osnovna škola, podučavanje gramatike, tehnike i aktivnosti