

## *Original Paper*

# What is Grammar and How Best Can It Be Taught in The Second Language Classroom?

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### ***Abstract***

*Of the four components of the English curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools, grammar attracts the greatest attention because it is generally regarded as the “core”. Yet there are doubts about whether teachers and curriculum designers know exactly what grammar is and why and how it should be taught. This paper examined the concept grammar and the approaches to its teaching with a view to determining how best it can be presented to achieve L2 grammar teaching goals. It critically evaluated different conceptualisations of grammar and the theoretical dualisms of explicit/implicit and deductive/inductive grammar teaching, surveyed grammar-based, communication-based, and Focus-on-Form approaches to grammar teaching, and evaluated empirical studies on the subject. The outcome revealed confusion, the imperativeness of grammar teaching, and the existence of approaches that emphasise knowledge of grammatical form alone and those that advocate the teaching of communication to the total exclusion of grammatical form. Although there appears to be a consensus that marrying both extreme positions would solve the major problems plaguing L2 grammar teaching, no existing approach addressed this theoretically. Consequently, the paper proposed contextualisation, which advocates teaching grammar in linguistic and situational contexts, as both principle and technique of modern grammar teaching.*

### ***Keywords***

*Grammar, Approaches to Grammar Teaching, Explicit & Implicit Approaches, Deductive & Inductive Approaches, Contextualisation*

## **1. Introduction**

English is technically and functionally a second language in Nigeria by virtue of its status as the country’s official language. For this same reason, it is the medium of instruction and a compulsory

subject of study at the secondary level of education. The secondary school English curriculum comprises four main components, namely grammar, lexis, phonology, and the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Only at the Junior Secondary School level is Literature an integral part of the English curriculum). Of the four main components of the secondary school English curriculum, grammar attracts the greatest attention because it is generally regarded as the “core” component. Yet there are doubts about whether teachers and learners of English, or even designers of the curriculum themselves, know exactly what grammar is. There are even stronger doubts expressed in some circles as to whether grammar should be taught at all and what should be the most effective way to teach it. Yet grammar must be taught and it must be effectively taught if the overall goal of English language teaching at the secondary level is to be achieved. In this paper, therefore, I shall critically examine the concept of grammar as a level of linguistic form in order to properly situate it within the context of the English curriculum. I shall also appraise notable approaches to grammar teaching with a view to determining their suitability or otherwise for L2 English grammar teaching as typified by the Nigerian situation. Finally, I shall expound an approach to grammar teaching that has the capacity to address the major issues associated with the subject. Decades of grammatical research, grammar teaching at different levels of education, and training would-be English teachers for the secondary school system put me at a vantage point to understand and appreciate the problems beleaguering the teaching of grammar and proffer useful solutions. The rest of the paper consists of an examination of the concept grammar, a critique of existing approaches to the teaching of grammar, a review of empirical studies on grammar teaching, the presentation of contextualisation as principle and technique of modern grammar teaching, and conclusion in that order.

## **2. The Concept Grammar**

The title of this paper is deliberately couched in clauses marked for interrogative mood. So, this section attempts to answer the first question raised in the paper’s title, which is “what is grammar?” Because this paper is fundamentally on grammar teaching, the section also examines the aims and relevance of teaching grammar particularly in an L2 situation.

### *2.1 What is Grammar?*

It was pointed out earlier that there are doubts about what grammar really is. It is therefore important to begin by declaring that the senses in which the term grammar is used in general discourse, language teaching, and even linguistics are variegated. Grammar is variously seen as rule, inflection, theory, description, school, book, exercises, subject matter, correct usage etc. For instance, Boadi, Grieve and Nwankwo (1968) see grammar as a branch of language in general (an abstract and theoretical field of study), the subject matter of that field of study (structure /grammatical structure), rules, and correct usage (“linguistic etiquette”). They add that grammar is sometimes confused with knowledge of technical terms and seen as the “essential of the teaching of English or any other language” (pp. 8-11). Grammar is both “the set of rules that allow us to combine words in our language into larger units” and

technically “a theory of language description”, states Greenbaum (1991, p. 1, p. 11; 1996, p. 25). Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) explain that “the term grammar school (used in several English-speaking countries, though not always with reference to the same type of school) reflects the historical fact that certain schools concentrated at one time on the teaching of Latin and Greek” (p. 12). The fact that grammar is viewed in these various senses is a veritable source of confusion, if not chaos. To illustrate how deeply ingrained this confusion is and how far back in time it has existed, it is necessary to closely examine some more references.

Bright (1967, p. 21) attributes the problems associated with grammar to the fact that language teaching professionals do not even understand what grammar means. He writes:

English teachers are concerned with clarity and precision of speech. It is therefore rather remarkable that we should ourselves be so muddled about the meaning of the term ‘grammar’. This unfortunate confusion leads to a great many misunderstandings, and many arguments about whether grammar should or should not be taught are pointless because the disputants are not talking about the same thing.

So, what does grammar mean for Bright? Having made those opening remarks, Bright goes on to identify three views of grammar: (a) “the body of rules that established what is right and wrong in English”, (b) “a systematic description in technical terms of the make-up of a language”, and (c) “a working knowledge of the part various inflections, words, and structures (including sentence patterns) play in the communication of meaning”. Writing further, he notes that views (a) and (b) employ explicit or implicit approaches, based on the incorrect assumptions “that there exists a complete, fixed, final, logical, systematic body of knowledge called the rules of grammar” and “that we speak according to the rules of grammar”. According to him, the fallacy of the “rules of grammar” had long been “exploded” by Otto Jespersen “nearly fifty years ago”. View (c) is regarded as a “more fruitful view” from teachers’ point of view because grammatical knowledge is the kind of knowledge that every native speaker of English possesses and every foreign learner needs. Concluding, he states that “if this is what we mean by grammar, there can be no question of not teaching it: the only question is the best way of doing it”. So, grammar for Bright is a knowledge of the syntax and morphology of a language and how these are combined to make meaning in a given language. It is neither rule nor inflection even though these are embedded in its conceptualisation. The question that remains is how best to teach “a working knowledge of the part various inflections, words, and structures (including sentence patterns) play in the communication of meaning” which the L2 learner requires to operate in the language. This is an onerous task that this paper is set to tackle.

Quirk et al. (1985) define grammar as “a linguistic ‘core’ round which other aspects of linguistic organization and usage are integrated (p. 47), and it includes both syntax (word order) and morphology (word structure). They note that the term grammar is used in several other senses to refer to inflections (following the teaching of paradigms of inflection in Greek and Latin) and “loosely so as to include both spelling and lexicology” in the education system. Grammar is also used in the sense of rules: (a)

“as a virtual synonym of ‘syntax’”, (b) codification of rules (e.g., the Academy Grammar for French), and (c) theory (which may be identified with specific authors according to the linguistic theory embraced). This last sense is often referred to as “the grammar”, and embraces rules “not only for syntax but for phonological, lexical, and semantic specifications as well” (e.g., Chomsky’s Grammar /Halliday’s Grammar). Lastly, there is grammar as prescription, which is a “set of regulations that are based on what is evaluated as correct or incorrect in the standard varieties”, exemplified by the prescriptive statement “It’s bad to end a sentence with a preposition”. They add that “school textbooks” and “student reference handbooks” are an embodiment of the prescriptive tradition for formal writing (pp. 11-14). The term grammar is also used as a virtual synonym for linguistics, where it covers all the branches of linguistics--phonology, graphology, lexis-- including grammar itself (Berry, 1975, p. 46). Radford (2004) similarly identifies morphology and syntax as the areas into which grammar is traditionally subdivided, adding that morphology studies “how words are formed out of smaller units (called morphemes)” while “syntax is the study of the way in which phrases and sentences are structured” (p. 1).

Scrivener (2011) identifies four possible ways of defining grammar as follows: (a) rules about sentence formation, tenses, verb patterns etc., (b) the moment-by-moment structuring of what we say as it is being spoken, (c) exercises (e.g., fill-in-the-gap) about tenses etc., and (d) our internal “database” as to what are possible or impossible sentences. He adds that while all four possible definitions are arguably valid descriptions of something ‘grammar-like’, their usefulness lies only in learners’ capacity to “transfer the studied knowledge into a living ability to use the language” (pp. 156-157). He cites Scott Thornbury (*Uncovering Grammar*), who makes a rather unconventional distinction between grammar as noun (which means information) and grammar as verb (which refers to the active skills of using language), and concludes that “it’s probably this ‘verby’ kind of grammar that we most need to help our learners work with in class” (p. 157). In essence, grammar for Scrivener is language in use.

Puchta (2018) distinguishes three types of grammar: word grammar, sentence grammar, and text grammar. These respectively mean, from the perspective of grammar learning, developing knowledge of “how words in their correct form” “are put together to create meaningful sentences” and “how sentences are organised to form texts” (pp. 203-204). He also cites Cameron (2001, p. 100) who distinguishes between external and internal grammars in relation to second language acquisition. External grammars refer to the type of grammars found in grammar books and teaching materials while internal grammars are associated with the ways in which grammar is organised in the minds of the learner. Internal grammars involve a process that is in opposition with what the teacher teaches and what is contained in the grammar books, syllabuses, and teaching materials. This means that the way learners acquire grammar differ from what is taught in grammar lessons and how it is taught. It is not surprising therefore that L2 learners fail to do as well as they ought to, which brings into the fore the need for teachers to acquaint themselves with a knowledge of how people learn languages and allow this knowledge to reflect in all their activities to achieve effective teaching (Scrivener, 2011, p. 129).

There are other accounts of grammar and its subtypes. Ly (2020, p. 187), for instance, quotes Harmer's (2015) definition of grammar as "a knowledge of what words can go where and what form these words take" (p. 22) and Ur's (2012) as "the way words are put together to make sentences" (p. 76). Fakazi (2021, p. 224) similarly cites two definitions of grammar. The first is by Widdowson (1988, p. 152) and it states that grammar is "a device for indicating the most common and recurrent aspects of meaning, which formalizes the most applicable concepts, the input factors of experience: it provides for communicative economy" (p. 152). The second and more elaborate definition is that of Nunan (1991) and it goes thus: Grammar is (1) "an analysis of the structure of a language, either as encountered in a corpus of speech or writing or as predictions of a speaker's knowledge, (2) an analysis of the structural properties which define human language, (3) a level of structural organization which can be studied independently of phonology and semantics" (p. 97). Burner (2005, pp. 17-18) distinguishes types of grammar as follows: "mental grammar" (which refers to a person's subconscious grammatical system and which is similar to Cameron's "internal grammar"), reference grammar (e.g., Quirk et al.'s *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*), "grammar of German" (This is the usual denotation of the term which, in its narrow, formal sense, refers to rules of syntax and morphology only. In contrast, its wide sense refers to functional grammar in which meaning, context, and use are taken into account.), and descriptive versus pedagogical grammar. He credits Widdowson (1975) with identifying several types of grammar and their possible implications for language teaching. These are basically theoretical grammar and pedagogical grammar. Theoretical grammar covers taxonomic grammar (European and American structuralism), phrase structure grammar, case grammar, and functional grammar while pedagogical grammar comprises applied linguistics (putting grammar to use for practical purpose) and pedagogical grammar proper (the adoption of grammar for the purpose of teaching, i.e., didactics).

To further explicate the term grammar and properly situate it in the context of description and use, it is useful to examine Systemic Grammar's perspective. Here, there are three primary categories of linguistic description called substance, form and situation (context). Substance deals with the tangible materials of language and these could be phonic or graphic. Situation, which has been likened to "the cell-wall which provides the envelope that holds the molecules of linguistic form together" (Adejare & Adejare, 2006, p. 14), refers to where "a given bit of language is used" or the place at which it operates. Form organises the substance or recurring internal patterns of a language into meaningful units. It is concerned with "the way in which a language is internally structured to carry contrasts in meaning", and has two levels of description termed grammar and lexis. Both are distinguished by the fact that whereas grammar deals with "closed systems" lexis is concerned with "open set" items. Moreover, whereas lexis is "concerned with individual items of language and the patterns in which individual items occur", grammar is "concerned with the patterns in which classes of linguistic items occur". There are five hierarchically ordered units of grammatical description named the sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme. From the perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar, "grammar is seen

as a resource for making meaning” (Halliday, 1961, pp. 243-247; Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens, 1964, p. 21; Berry, 1975, pp. 37-39; Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 31; Adejare & Adejare, 2006, pp. 12-14).

I espouse the systemic explanation of grammar because it aligns more with natural language. I therefore take grammar as the level of linguistic form that accounts for how closed system items are internally organised or patterned to carry contrasts in meaning in a given language. I also uphold the fact that the grammatical system of a language consists of two components known as syntax and morphology and that both must be duly recognised and properly accounted for in an accurate description of a language’s grammar. It also follows that the grammar component of an English curriculum must incorporate both the morphological and syntactical aspects of the language in proportions that are appropriate for the level and goal of teaching.

### 2.2 Goals of Teaching Grammar

Defining the goals of grammar teaching requires having a profound knowledge of what grammar is and its place in the secondary school English language curriculum. The foregoing section has done well by providing the needed significant insight into the subject of grammar, which means that the goals of teaching grammar to L2 learners can now be stated with greater confidence and explicitness. They are defined as follows:

- (a) To impart a knowledge of the underlying structures of the language and how they are patterned to make meaning in different naturally occurring situations
- (b) To give pupils the foundational knowledge that would enable them effectively perform the communicative language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- (c) To prepare learners to participate meaningfully in, and benefit maximally from, instruction provided in the medium of English at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education
- (d) To eliminate cultural and linguistic impediments to correct usage and generally enhance proficiency in English
- (e) To provide pupils with the grammatical skills and experience necessary to participate fully and effectively as citizens of their countries and members of the English speaking world

These goals contrast sharply with Newby’s (1998), which appear to be more of an expression of personal goals than those of teaching grammar itself. It goes thus: “[that] my students should be able to express their *own ideas in real situations* in language that is correct, *meaningful* and *appropriate as possible*”. Newby add that his task as a language teacher is to “facilitate this grammatical skill with maximum effectiveness” (p. 9).

### 2.3 Relevance of Teaching Grammar

The question “why teach grammar” can be answered together with the related but unasked question “why study grammar”? To begin with, grammar should be studied and taught for many reasons, not the least of which is Smith and Wilson’s (1979) uncontroverted statement: “[Learning] a language is...equated with learning a grammar; knowing a language is equated with knowing a grammar” (p. 21).

Nassaji and Fotos' (2011) opening statements, "Grammar is fundamental to language. Without grammar, language does not exist" (p. 1), similarly underscore the importance of grammar and why it should be taught. In the sense of 'syntax', grammar "is generally regarded as central to linguistics, and it should therefore be included in a linguistics curriculum in its own terms" (Greenbaum, 1996, pp. 36-37). Greenbaum particularly notes that despite many educationists' denial of the role grammar can play in improving students' ability to write English correctly and effectively, the fact remains that grammatical knowledge is required for such tasks. So, grammar should be taught because it is the core or bedrock of a language and because its knowledge is a prerequisite for the performance of language skills. Moreover, unlike pronunciation, spelling, or meanings of words which can easily be learned by using dictionaries, "it is difficult to consult grammar books without a considerable knowledge of grammar" (Greenbaum, 1991, p. 7).

In an L2 learning situation such as Nigeria, grammar teaching is imperative for the following reasons: (1) Pupils lack native-speaker intuition. (2) Their exposure to English language is not total (though much higher than that of learners of English as a foreign language). (3) Pupils rely almost entirely on their teachers, some of whom are inadequate as models. The reality is that even in a mother-tongue situation, grammar teaching is necessary because no native speaker knows everything about the grammar of their native language, and native speaker's intuitive knowledge cannot be totally relied upon. Besides, the grammar that is taught in schools is that of the standard variety and this can only be taught formally. In this connection, it is useful to refer to Nassaji and Fotos (2011) who, citing different sources including Krashen (1981, 1985, 1993), note how the rise of communicative teaching approaches in the 1970s brought about the feeling that the teaching of grammar was "undesirable" and that "teachers were encouraged to believe that grammar instruction was old-fashioned, uninteresting and best avoided" (p. vi). Nassaji and Fotos however add that these views have changed due to second language acquisition research, the outcomes of some of which show that conscious learning of grammar cannot be divorced from language learning. They end by posing some outstanding questions, the first of which is "how can grammar be brought back to L2 classrooms without returning to the traditional models of teaching grammar that have often been found to be ineffective?" (p. vii). This question further underlines the importance of grammar and grammar teaching and pertains to a central aim of the current study.

When the traditional approaches to the teaching of grammar was criticised and later jettisoned because it was prescriptive and because it emphasised only knowledge of grammatical form without a corresponding ability to use the language (cf. Greenbaum, 1996, p. 37), the consequences were disastrous. The new approach emphasised usage whereas learners require an overt knowledge of the grammar of the language in order to perform the communicative functions advocated. So, learners *knew* neither the *grammar* nor *how to communicate* in the language. Greenbaum (1996, p. 36) captures the situation and the subsequent call for the return of grammar to the classrooms more succinctly thus:

From time to time there have been public debates about the teaching of grammar in schools.

Educational fashions change, and after a period of twenty-five years since the formal teaching of grammar was abandoned in most public schools there have been recent calls in both Britain and the United States for the reintroduction of grammar teaching as part of the ‘return to basics’.

About two decades earlier, Boadi et al. (1968, pp. 2-3) had lamented the low standard of English in “our schools” and had identified “the progressive elimination from post-primary English teaching of anything that will pass as the ‘grammar’ of English” as a contributory factor. They blamed the situation on the teachers of English themselves, who neither learnt nor taught the grammar of modern English, and who “misinterpreted professional attacks on confused grammatical terminology and mistaken ideas of what grammar is as being attacks on the substance of grammar itself” (p. 4). They also added that the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) solved the problem by deciding to test grammatical structure as an integral part of the GCE O’L and SCE English language examinations. It is gratifying to note that the regional examination body has consistently been testing grammar since then, which attests to the place grammar teaching occupies in L2 acquisition. There are additional reasons why grammar should be taught.

As the central component of language, grammar “mediates between the system of sounds or of written symbols, on the one hand, and the system of meaning, on the other” (Greenbaum, 1991, pp. 1-2), which makes the acquisition of grammatical knowledge a condition for communicative effectiveness. However, the entrenchment of the communicative approach to language teaching resulted in what Newby (1998) describes as a “complete swing away from overtly grammar teaching” in the United Kingdom (p. 1). This did not go without consequences as already seen. In their criticism against the communicative approach which erroneously believes that grammar is unnecessary, Bright and McGregor (1970) emphasise the fact that, in order to be reasonably literate, “the learner has got to master the conventional use of the grammatical signal of the language” (p. 236). In a similar criticism of the structural approach, Wingard (1981) remarks that “despite widespread disillusion with excessive pattern practice, the fact remains that command of the grammatical structure is quite essential to mastery of the language” (p. 281). These point to the fact that grammatical knowledge makes communication possible. In fact, reports on recent studies cited by Ly (2020, p. 188) show that grammar teaching fosters second language acquisition (Scheftler & Cinciala, 2011, p. 22) and even has positive effects on students’ writing (Jones, Myhill, & Binly, 2013).

### *3.4 Summary*

It is desirable to end this discussion on what grammar is and why it should be taught with a brief remark on the question of model. The suggestion by Quirk et al. (1985) that in countries such as “India and Nigeria indigenous educated varieties are becoming institutionalized and are acquiring social acceptability” (p. 7) is not straightforwardly so. Because of the historical fact of colonialism the English used in Nigeria is patterned after Standard British English, and this has remained so in formal usage despite the incursion of Americanisms. Also because of the globalisation of English, the target model is World Standard English (i.e., the type of English that is intelligible to educated users all over



the world), and the ultimate goal of English language teaching and learning at the secondary school level is the attainment of international intelligibility. Interlanguage variety is neither acceptable nor taught at any level of formal education in Nigeria. It must however be admitted that it exists at the individual and group levels among learners and users of English for whom an interlanguage grammar is an inevitable target model.

### 3. Theoretical Approaches to the Teaching of Grammar

Because this section deals with theoretical approaches to grammar teaching, it is considered useful to begin with an explication of the keywords therein in order for the review to be meaningful and purposeful. These are language teaching, grammar teaching, approach, and method. Beginning with language teaching, Burner (2005, p. 31) asserts that teaching and learning are inextricably bound together and goes on to quote Stern (1983) who defines it as “the *activities which are intended to bring about language learning*” (p. 21). Fakazi (2021) refers to grammar teaching simply as “the presentation and practice of grammatical structure” (p. 224). Citing Ellis (2006), he adds that grammar teaching “involves any instructional technique that draws attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and /or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalise it” (p. 84) (Also cited in Ly, 2020, p. 187). Burner (2005, p. 31) notes that Richard and Rodger (1986, p. 15) offer the following definitions of “approach” and “method” based on Anthony (1963):

...an approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language [i.e., linguistics] and language learning [i.e., psychology] are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented.

Since the definitions are sufficiently clear and require no further elaboration, the main task can now commence.

In the literature on grammar teaching abound different theoretical approaches, some of which have been around for centuries while others are probably not more than a decade or two old. Many of the theoretical approaches have been so thoroughly critiqued that it would seem rather unnecessary to attempt to go through the motions again. For the purpose of the present work, therefore, it is considered sufficient to present what there are as a step towards providing an answer to the second question raised in this paper’s title: “how best can grammar be taught?” This critique of the theoretical approaches to the teaching of grammar is in three parts. The first is on explicit and implicit knowledge while the second covers deductive and inductive approaches. These are the fundamental approaches from where the modern and indeed all grammar teaching approaches that form the third part sprung. To determine how the approaches actually fair in the L2 grammar classroom, a brief review of empirical studies is also undertaken.

### *3.1 Explicit and Implicit Grammar Teaching*

Rahman and Ahmed (2017), quoted in Cortez and Genisan (2021), note that “one persistent debate in second language grammar acquisition is whether grammar should be learned explicitly through conscious learning of grammatical rules or implicitly in the context of meaningful language rules” (p. 29). Explicit knowledge is conscious knowledge of grammatical rules learned through classroom instruction. A person who possesses explicit knowledge knows about language and the ability to articulate those facts in some way. Explicit knowledge is learnable in that grammatical items are first learned in a controlled learning process or through the practice of errors (Widodo, 2006, pp. 125-126). Following his review of current issues in grammar instruction, Fakazi (2021), who also identifies explicit grammar teaching as one of the heavily discussed issues in grammar instruction, concludes that “there exists evidence that favours grammar instruction but research to date has not demonstrated that explicit grammar instruction is a key factor in second language acquisition”, adding that “its effects on second language acquisition has not been explained sufficiently” (p. 228). In contrast to explicit knowledge, implicit knowledge is unconscious, internalised knowledge of language that is easily accessed during spontaneous language tasks, which can be spoken or written. It is gained in the natural language learning process, and this is subconscious because the native speaker of a language does not always “know” (consciously) the rules of their language. Implicit knowledge means that a person applies a certain grammatical rule in the same manner as children who acquire their mother tongue (Widodo, 2006, citing Brown, 2000; and Krashen, 1987).

### *3.2 Deductive and Inductive Approaches*

The deductive approach to the teaching of grammar has its roots in Greek and Latin grammar teaching, which makes it the traditional approach to grammar teaching. Also known as the explicit or overt approach, the deductive approach is an academic, cognitive, rule-driven approach that presents grammar in the form of the underlying rules. Thus the presentation and explanation of rules take precedence. It presents grammar explicitly, starting from rules to examples (which makes it easier for learners to understand) and moving from general to specific. So, the whole-to-part or top-bottom theory prevails, as the teacher begins with the whole before expanding to the parts and demonstrates the meaning of the grammar point to the learners. The deductive approach has the advantage of going straightforwardly to the point, and has been metaphorically described as the “bread and butter of language teaching around the world”. Although it “still enjoys a monopoly in many course books and self-study grammar books”, it has the disadvantage of confusing the learner with its emphasis on terminology. Moreover, it pays little attention to meaning and learners are passive as teachers’ authority reigns supreme (Widodo, 2006, pp. 126-127; Lugolobi-Nalunga, 2017, p. 3, citing Crystal, 2003, p. 191ff; Student Number 1277536, 2012).

The inductive approach derives from inductive reasoning which proceeds from particulars (i.e., observation) to generalities (i.e., rules, laws or theories). Also called rule-discovery learning in pedagogical grammar, the inductive approach involves active learner participation and “encourages

them to develop their own mental set of strategies for dealing with tasks”. This is a rule-developing and experience-oriented approach in which learners are induced to realise grammar rules without prior explanation. It is interactive, covert, implicit, and moves from examples to rules, which makes it the natural way to learn. The inductive approach allows learners to actively explore and discover grammar rules themselves (as it is based on the “bottom-top theory”), and focuses on the part rather than the whole. So, the learning process is experiential and cognitive. Grammar is learned subconsciously; it is therefore more natural and resembles language acquisition processes. Citing Crystal (2003, p. 191ff), Lugoloobi-Nalunga (2017) adds that in inductive grammar teaching, learners generalise grammar rules themselves through “scaffolding”, where they cooperate and collaborate to co-construct knowledge and receive/give formative feedback to each other. The constructivist approach (which is interactive because it is based on what the learners already know and which proceeds from whole to part), the Communicative Language Teaching or covert approach (which focuses on activity and nudges learners to use the structure without paying attention to grammatical rules), and the Focus-on-Form approach (which pays incidental or planned attention to grammatical forms during communicative tasks) exhibit different shades of inductive grammar teaching (Widodo, 2006, p. 127; Lugoloobi-Nalunga, 2017, p. 4, citing Crystal, 2003, p.191ff; Cortez & Ganisan, 2021, citing Schwarz, 2014; Abdulahlah & Shah, 2014; and Umido, Dilor, & Umar, 2020).

Widodo (2006) sums up the main distinguishing features of these two core approaches to grammar teaching in the following way. In the deductive approach the learner learns the rules consciously and explicitly in the context of formal instruction whereas in the inductive approach, the learner does so subconsciously and implicitly in the manner of L1 or L2 acquisition. Thus, while learners know about the rule in the former, they simply “pick-up the rule” in the latter. The question of which approach is better does not seem to arise as each has “its own significances for particular learner progress”. Besides, some structures are more suitably handled by the deductive approach than the inductive approach and vice versa. So, a choice between the two should be guided by the language structure concerned and the learners’ cognitive style, needs, background, and age. It has however been reported that deductive teaching is more appropriate for adult learners because it meets their expectations. In contrast, young learners are more successful at learning language inductively from the examples given (pp. 129-130).

### *3.3 A Survey of more Specific Approaches to Grammar Teaching*

Newby (1998) observes the absence of “any coherent theoretical basis in much of modern grammar teaching” (p. 1), and blames the situation on methodologists and applied linguists who have not extensively treated communication-based, pedagogic grammar. He goes on to review what he describes as influences on modern grammar teaching (traditional grammar, communicative approach, learner-centred approach, and second language acquisition), and concludes that most modern grammar teaching is a mosaic of these approaches. With particular reference to the communicative approach which sees language as a set of skills (not a formal system) and grammar as “a way of expressing certain types of meanings through grammatical forms” (p. 1), he notes that it gives less prominence to

formal correctness and that there was even a period of abandonment of “overt grammar teaching” (p. 1) (See Greenbaum, 1996; Boadi et al., 1970 above). While highlighting the implications emerging from his aims of grammar teaching quoted earlier, Newby (1998) admits that “absolute correctness is not an attainable goal” (p. 9). Consequently, he advocates discovery technique and language awareness activities as additional activities in the classroom based on the premise that grammar is an active and creative activity.

The teaching of grammar has been approached from different theoretical perspectives. For instance, Nassaji and Fotos (2011) distinguish among three approaches to grammar instruction, namely grammar-based approaches, communication-based approaches, and what they term recent approaches, which is basically the Focus-on-Form (FonF) approach. Grammar-based approaches are the traditional approaches that organise classroom contents on the basis of the analysis of language form. Methods and techniques of grammar teaching that fall under this category are the good, old Grammar-Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, Direct Method, Oral and Situational Method, Reading Approach, Silent Way, Total Physical Response, and Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) models. Its major assumptions, namely that “language consists of a series of grammatical forms and structures that can be acquired successively” (p. 5) and that grammar teaching entails deductively and linearly presenting grammar rules and forms, are also its major weaknesses. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011), this discrete presentation of grammar has no bearing with research outcomes on second language acquisition. The communication-based approaches focus on meaning and language use in communicative contexts, with the ability to interpret meaning in real-life communications as aim. They are influenced by a number of developments in linguistics and sociolinguistics, including Hymes theory of communicative competence, the works of Firth, Halliday, and Searle (applied linguists), Gumperz and Labov (sociolinguists), and second language acquisition theories (particularly Krashen’s). Unlike the grammar-based approaches, the communicative approaches lack any established instructional procedure outside the dichotomous distinction between a strong version (which insists that language should be taught through meaning-focused activities and which underlies the so-called functional-notional approach and immersion models of L2 learning) and a weak version (in which language is learned in a more controlled manner). Teaching meaning exclusively without form has however been found to be grossly inadequate.

The third and most recent development in approaches to grammar teaching is called Focus on Form. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011), it was proposed by Long (1991), who distinguish among Focus on Form (FonF), Focus on Forms (FonFs), and focus on meaning. Focus on Forms (FonFs) is the traditional approach that represents the analytic syllabus while focus on meaning is “synthetic and is based on the assumption that learners are able to analyse language inductively and arrive at an underlying grammar”. On its own part, Focus on Form (FonF) is “a kind of instruction that draws learners’ attention to linguistic forms in the context of meaningful communication” (p. 10). Citing Long (1998, p. 22), Nassaji and Fotos (2011) further state that Focus on Form is more effective than Focus

on Forms because it combines all the advantages by capturing “the strength of an analytic approach while dealing with its limitations” (p. 10). Ellis (2001), cited in Fakazi (2021, p. 233), defines Focus on Form as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (pp. 1-2). Focus on Form emerged as a new approach in second and foreign language grammar teaching based on the shortcomings of Focus on Forms and focus on meaning. It is learner-centred, represents learners’ internal syllabus, pays attention to form, and integrates explicit and implicit learning. Cortez and Ganisan (2021, p. 30) add that it involves drawing learners’ attention to grammatical forms by giving the learner grammatical rules. According to Eldoumi (2012), Focus on Form, also known as grammar-in-context approach, believes that students need to construct knowledge of grammar by practising it as part of what it means to write. Furthermore, it assumes that students tend to learn and apply language structure through practice and that manipulating sentences will help them to improve their proficiency level.

Scrivener (2011) raises six fundamental questions, the first and most pertinent of which is “But, how can our students ‘grammar’ better?” He expounds three main ways of grammar teaching, which are present-practice (including situational presentation), clarification (comprising teacher explanation, guided discovery, and self-directed discovery), and restricted output (which entails drills, dialogue, and exercises). A fourth way, classified as others, comprises test-teach-test, and Total Physical Response. With particular reference to present-practice-produce (PPP), which appears to be the most popular of the lot, Scrivener (2011) sees it as “[An] approach to grammar lessons based on the idea of giving small items of language to students (presentation), providing them with opportunities to use it in controlled ways (practice) and finally integrating it with other known language in order to communicate (production)” (p. 402). Richards and Rodgers (2014), as cited in Cortez and Ganisan (2021), note that although PPP lessons provide skills, most learners end up being unable to “communicate effectively in English” (p. 30).

Widodo (2006, p. 131ff) proposes a five-step procedure for teaching grammar that serves as alternatives to the existing ones. These are (a) rule initiation (building up students’ knowledge of rule), (b) rule elicitation or eliciting functions of the rule, (c) rule practice (familiarising students with rule in use through exercises), (d) rule activation (checking students’ comprehension), and (e) rule application extension (expanding students’ knowledge of rule environment). His procedures incorporate the notions of practice and consciousness-raising, explicit and implicit knowledge, and deductive and inductive approaches to grammar teaching, and were described in detail and exemplified with the present perfect tense. Citing Ellis (2002) and Richards (2002), Widodo further lists features of practice that can be incorporated into methodology thus: isolation of the given grammatical feature, using it in sentences by learners, provision of opportunities for repetition, expectations that learners would perform the grammatical feature correctly, and receiving of feedback by learners. On consciousness-raising, he quotes Richards, Plat and Plat (1992) who define it as “an approach to the teaching of grammar in which instruction in grammar (through drills, grammar explanations and other form-focused activities)

is viewed as a way of raising learners' awareness of grammatical features of the language" (p. 178). It is believed that the consciousness-raising approach directly facilitates second language acquisition and that it contrasts sharply with the traditional approaches which instil correct grammatical patterns and habits. Although learners are required to notice a certain feature of language (such as sentence) and even articulate the rule underlying its use, they are not required to produce or communicate the pattern taught. The question that arises is this: What is the essence of consciousness-raising if learners are not required to communicate the form they have been made to recognise?

Puchta (2018) reviews the development of language teaching over the years and identifies the following four methods: (a) Grammar-Translation, (2) audiolingual methods, (3) comprehensible input (i.e., the natural approach plus a focus on meaning or Krashen's theory), and (4) communicative language teaching (CLT), developed from a multi-disciplinary perspective (including linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research). Cortex and Genisan (2021) identify deductive, inductive, and eclectic approaches as the three approaches to the teaching of grammar, and recommend the eclectic approach for young learners aged 5-11 years because eclecticism combines all the positive features of the deductive and inductive approaches. Jones (2021) reviews different methods of grammar teaching and concludes that there is no one superior or inferior method. Consequently, he makes a case for a Traditional Method and examines the benefits of sentence parsing as highlighted by Sams (2003, p. 57). These are allowing students to understand the rudiments of English language and build a strong foundation with which students can fully explore reading and writing. Citing Sams further, Jones particularly notes that "the ability to analyze sentences, to understand how the parts work together to convey desired meanings, emphasis, and effects is thus essential to the writing process" (p. 5). Urging teachers to actively choose to take sentence parsing from mere identification to analysis and evaluation, Jones provides a series of materials he created under notable headings such as "Parts of Speech", "Steps for Labelling Sentences", "Parts of Speech Practice", and "Noun Phrase Object and Direct Object Parsing Practice". Following their review of approaches to grammar teaching (which are traditional, audiolingual, cognitive-code learning, comprehension, and communicative approaches), Mahboob and Rahman (2016) propose context-focused grammar teaching (comprising form, meaning and use) as a useful technique for ESL/EFL learning.

Burner (2005) undertakes a historical survey of various approaches to grammar teaching (The Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Oral Approach, Audio-lingual Method, Mentalism, Error Analysis and Interlanguage, Communicative Competence, including Communicative Language Teaching) and comes to the conclusion that "there is no one correct or best answer to the question of how best to teach English to learners of other languages", whether deductively or inductively. Earlier, he had raised the question "Where are we now in grammar teaching?" and had admitted that the question is no longer that of whether or not to teach grammar but that of "the method(s) used to acquire the grammatical knowledge required at the learner's educational level" (pp. 50-52).

### *3.4 Empirical Studies on the Teaching of Grammar*

This review of empirical studies on the teaching of grammar is meant to provide insights into how the approaches fair in practical terms. It proceeds as follows.

Eldoumi (2012) examined the effectiveness of contextualised or functional grammar instruction in improving the writing performance of adult English language learners. He sampled five problematic grammatical areas that seemed to hinder participants' writing skill (including article use and subject-verb concord), used them to design an instructional package, and evaluated their writing sample thereafter. He reported considerable growth in participants' writing performance generally and a significant decrease in the subject-verb errors, with article errors being the most problematic. Effendi et al. (2017) undertook a descriptive study of grammar teaching in an EFL context and found that the deductive, inductive, structural, traditional, and communicative approaches were used. They also reported that whereas the material taught often dictated the particular approach chosen, students preferred the deductive approach.

Mammadova (2016) investigated the impact of grammar teaching methods on the ability of students using university students aged between 18 and 20. Based on a pre-test conducted to determine which grammar topics were unfamiliar to the students, "conditionals" and "future perfect tense" were selected. The students were grouped into two and each group was meant to be taught for six weeks using either the explicit (deductive) approach or the implicit (inductive) approach. However, the implicit group could not progress because "the students got confused" from the beginning and all the teacher's attempts to "elicit understanding of the taught material was equal to zero" (p. 61). The report added that the students were so unaccustomed to the new method that they made a lot of mistakes (This is what interests me most about the report). Moreover, they "always expected the teacher to reveal the grammar intention in order to do some kind of grammar association and visualisation" (p. 61). The mixed explicit-implicit approach was substituted and it seemed to have worked wonderfully well, which justifies the combined approach the study advocates and which also empirically confirms one of the shortcomings of the so-called communicative approaches to grammar teaching. Lugolobi-Nulunga (2017) sought from teachers of English in Swedish upper secondary schools what grammar instruction methods are used in the classroom, what their views were about the place and role of grammar instruction, and why they use certain approaches. Based on observation and interview, the study revealed contradictory discussions about grammar instruction's place and role and about ideas regarding different approaches such as behaviourism, traditional structuralism, and natural theory. It also reported that 80 percent of the five teachers sampled preferred deductive approach and that all agreed on eclectic approach.

Sopin's (2015) study of students' perception of grammar teaching revealed that grammar instruction was very important for anyone wanting to learn English, but they expressed divergent views that ranged from explicit instruction being preferred or not being necessary. On high school teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching, Souisa and Yanuarius (2020) reported that these are based on their

conceptual knowledge as experienced in their classrooms and that they are rooted in grammar theories including prescriptive grammar. There appeared to be no significant difference in the percentage of those who employed deductive, inductive, explicit, implicit, and Focus on Form approaches. AlAbri, Mirza, Bellalem and Forouzani (2020) studied teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching in Omani and found that most teachers favoured deductive grammar instruction even though they acknowledge the benefits of inductive grammar teaching. Bernard and Scampton (2008, p. 66) found that not only did most of the teachers surveyed strongly agree that students need conscious knowledge of grammar in order to improve their language because grammar plays a central role in language, they also agreed that their students expect them to present grammar points explicitly. Santos and Torres (2019) similarly reported teachers' beliefs that teaching grammar aims to achieve fluency generally through mastery of rules and that explicit teaching makes this possible.

### *3.5 Summary*

What this review shows is that the approaches to grammar teaching are numerous and varied, with each one having its merits and demerits. This is understandable. It also reveals that there are approaches that emphasise knowledge of grammatical form alone and that there are also those that advocate the teaching of communication to the total exclusion of form. Finally, there appears to be a consensus that marrying both extreme positions together would produce an approach that would solve the major problems of how to ensure that learners acquire adequate knowledge of grammatical form and apply this knowledge to communicate meaning effectively in varying and appropriate situational contexts. This is particularly true of the empirical studies reviewed. None of the existing approaches however addressed this issue theoretically. This is what this paper would explore next.

## **4. Contextualisation as Principle and Technique**

As a consequence of the review exercise presented in the preceding sections, I propose contextualisation as a viable alternative to existing approaches to L2 grammar teaching. Contextualisation is a sociologically-based principle and technique of modern grammar teaching that sees grammatical items as meaningful only when they are considered in the context of occurrence and context of use. This follows from the functionalists' tradition which explains human language from the point of view of the society in which it functions (without necessarily neglecting its form) and which assumes that language is a function of use in the society. In other words, it is the society in which language is used that gives linguistic forms their shape and makes them recognisable in the first instance. Grammatical items are therefore seen, not as discrete items devoid of meaning, but as meaningful items. Consequently, contextualisation advocates that grammatical items should not be taught in isolation; rather, they should be taught in relation to their context of occurrence and context of use for meaningfulness and relevance. The underlying assumptions are that language is an activity and that language activities are meaningful events. Moreover, linguistic forms become meaningful only when they are relatable to the context of occurrence and context of use. Two types of context are



recognised in this regard, and they are linguistic context and situational context.

Contextualisation combines all the positive features of the grammar-based, communication-based, and Focus-on-Form approaches to grammar teaching distinguished by Nassaji and Fotos (2011). It however differs markedly from their preferred Focus-on-Form approach in the sense that, whereas contextualisation recognises the indispensability of teaching grammatical form, it does not emphasise form alone, which is the hallmark of the Focus-on-Form approach. Instead, contextualisation advocates that equal and adequate attention be extended to the recognition and explanation of grammatical form, the context in which the form occurs, and the situational context in which it is used as appropriate. Put differently, grammatical form, its context of occurrence and context of use are considered on equal terms, and this is in line with the conceptualisation of grammar articulated earlier. It is assumed that the learner becomes ultimately able to use the language correctly and appropriately in effective communication only when grammatical form is presented as a linguistic entity that inherently owes its shape, actual existence, and recognisability to (a) the larger grammatical unit in which it functions as an element of structure and (b) the different situational contexts in which it may be used to make meaning in the language. This three-fold account of grammar teaching, which makes contextualisation a holistic approach to grammar teaching, is unfolded as follows.

#### *4.1 The Grammatical Form*

The grammatical form, which may consist of an aspect of any of the five units of grammatical description (These are the sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme in descending order of magnitude.), is taken as given. It is the subject matter or focus of a given teaching-learning encounter, and it derives its legitimacy from being a constituent of the grammar component of the English curriculum approved for a particular L2 learning situation. What is essential (if not imperative) is that the teacher possesses adequate descriptive knowledge of the grammatical form to be taught, and that this knowledge should be well above the level at which they will operate in the classroom. It is the only way the teacher can properly guide the pupils to correctly recognise grammatical forms and differentiate them one from another. This point can never be over-stated.

#### *4.2 Linguistic Context*

Teaching grammatical items in linguistic context means presenting them in the context of occurrence, which logically translates to the grammatical unit immediately above that of the item under focus on the grammatical scale of ranks (It needs to be added that the median grammatical unit *group* consists of five groups named after the word class that heads them. These are the nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, and prepositional groups). This is the minimum requirement. In fact, it has long been advocated that the sentence be used as the basic unit of language teaching. This sounds logical and apt enough because, apart from the fact that ordinarily, when we speak in our everyday communicative activities, we speak in sentences, there are three grammatically strong and valid arguments in support of the use of the sentence as the basic unit of language teaching. These arguments, credited to Wilkins (1972, pp. 103-104), are as follows.

- (a) “The structural significance of an item cannot be understood when it is viewed in isolation.”
- (b) “The sentence is the only unit which can display all the structural relations that are possible in a language.”
- (c) “As a unit of communication the sentence is more meaningful than the word or phrase and its structure is far better understood than anything larger, such as the paragraph.”

The earlier statement made to the effect that grammatical structure becomes meaningful only when it is presented in the context of the sentence can be further clarified. As the largest unit of grammatical description, the sentence provides the context that enables the learner to fully notice and appreciate the syntactic relationship that holds between the item under focus and all the co-occurring items. This can be illustrated with the Simple Present Tense (Tense is one of the seven systems of the verbal group).

It is important to begin by stating the fact that English descriptively has two forms of the verb used for present tense, which are the x+o base form and the x+s or traditional third person singular (-s) form. The choice between the two morphologically distinct present tense forms is determined by the form of the nominal realising the subject of the clause (i.e., a simple sentence comprising one alpha independent clause only). The x+o base form occurs after plural nouns (e.g., the *books cost...*), first person singular or plural pronouns (*I/We eat...*), second person singular or plural pronoun (*You/You buy...*), or third person plural pronoun (*They drive...*). In contrast, its x+s counterpart is used when the noun in the subject position is singular (e.g., this *book costs...*), or if the subject is realised by the third person singular pronoun (*He /She/It runs...*). These salient grammatical facts must be known by the teacher and must be borne in mind when presenting the Simple Present Tense because they dictate the choice of sentences for exemplification and the technique of presentation. It therefore follows that both forms must be illustrated with the appropriate nominal group in subject position as in the following examples.

#### **A: The x+o base Simple Present Tense form**

- (1a) Obi and Ojo **attend** the same school in Lagos.
- (1b) Their families **live** on the same estate.
- (1c) Goats **eat** grass.
- (1d) I **visit** their estate regularly.
- (1e) We **play** together always.
- (1f) You **have** an essay to write this weekend.
- (1g) They **study** and **play** together every day.

#### **B: The x+s Simple Present Tense form**

- (2a) Obi **attends** a big school in Lagos.
- (2b) Obi’s uncle **lives** on an estate in Enugu.
- (2c) The goat **eats** grass.
- (2d) He **watches** football matches every Saturday.
- (2e) She **plays** video games at her free-time.

(2f)It **eats** yam too.

Examples (1a-1g) and (2a-2f) clearly show why it is essential that grammatical items be presented in the larger context of the sentence in which they function as subject, predicator, complement, or adjunct within the clause structure. It is not improbable that the learner would notice (a) the specific context in which each morphological variant of the present tense form occurs, (b) the relationship it has with the co-occurring forms to the left or right of the node or both, and (c) how all these factors combine to make each variant express the meaning it does in each unique instance of occurrence because they are glaring. So, the teacher should be prepared for questions such as this: “Why is it ‘the goats eat’ and ‘the goat eats’? Questions of this nature present a great opportunity for the teacher to explain the rules and the grammatical fact of there being two distinct forms of the verb used to express present tense in English. The teacher should also guide the pupils to generate many more examples of each variant: first in two-word sentences (e.g., I/We /You/They go v He /She/It goes), and then in longer stretches of utterance as shown above. Attention should also be paid to both the orthographical and phonological realisations of the *-s* morpheme used with singular nouns and the third person singular pronouns as subject by carefully selecting verbs such as **cry** (cries) and **catch** (catches). To further ensure accurate recognition of the morphological variants quick practice exercises of the tabular or fill-in-the gap type should be employed.

#### 4.3 Situational Context

Because it is not sufficient to present grammatical form in sentence context only, contextualisation further advocates the teaching of grammar in situational context (i.e., teaching grammar in the context of use and context of meaning). Teaching grammar in situational context presents the opportunity for learners to identify the different social or situational contexts in which a given item can be most appropriately used. This is very important since the goal of grammar teaching is to achieve communicative effectiveness. Thus learners are able to identify and recognise the subtle changes that occur in the meaning of a grammatical form as there are changes in the context of use. Again, the Simple Present Tense serves to illustrate this aptly.

As a tense form, the Simple Present Tense basically expresses present time as meaning. In other words, it means the present time or “present moment”, which technically refers to the “theoretical zero point” or “now” (Lyons, 1967, p. 305; Comrie, 1985, p. 2). Sentences (3a)-(3d) below illustrate.

(3a)We **are** in the classroom. (Present time)

(3b)It’s a hot day today. (Present time)

(3c)Everybody **likes** the baby. (Present time)

(3d)They **know** her name. (Present time)

However, the Simple Present Tense form also expresses other meanings that include making reference to future time and past time depending on the purpose of speaking or writing, the meaning intended to be conveyed, and the given context of situation or circumstances surrounding the event, state, processes etc. It is important that the teacher makes explicit references to the different situations and provides

adequate examples to support the interpretation. Here are a few instances of meaning variation.

**A: Reference to future time:** An event/ action/process scheduled to take place at a time after the time of orientation of the current speech event.

(4a)The test **begins** at 10:00 am and **ends** at 11:00 am tomorrow.

(4b) The All Progressive Congress **elects** its presidential flagbearer on 6 June 2022.

(4c) Nigerians **go** to the polls in 2023.

(4d)The last flight to Abuja **departs** at 9:15 pm tonight.

**B: Reference to past time:** Discussing the content of a novel (e.g., *Things Fall Apart/ Joan of Arc*)

(5a) Okonkwo **kills** Ikemefuna.

(5b) Okonkwo **commits** suicide.

(5c) Joan **is** insecure.

(5d)She **is** psychologically insecure

**C: Reference to past time:** News reportage of past events

(6a) “Buhari **pledges** to help South Sudan” (*Saturday Punch*, 14 May 2022)

(6b) “Presidency **makes** a U-turn”

(6c) Zelensky **visits** front lines in Ukraine’s battle-scarred North-East

(*The Punch*, Monday, 31 May 2022, p. 43) (The visit preceded the publication)

**D: Universal truth** (Making reference to facts that are eternally true in, say, a maths, geography, or chemistry lesson):

(7a)Two times two **equals** four.

(7b)The earth **moves** round the sun.

(7c) Air **is** a mixture of gases.

Activities and specific techniques needed to facilitate teaching the Simple Present Tense in situational context depend on the meaning (s) focused upon in a given lesson. For instance, habitual meaning can be presented using the questionnaire technique (i.e., question and answer technique), but the specific questions will depend on whether the habit is related to the home, school, or any other familiar context. Whichever context is selected, it is necessary that the questions are able to elicit the right responses in terms of both the two morphological variants of the Simple Present Tense form and the appropriate form of the nominal used as subject. For the home context, questions such as the following may be asked (Note that appropriate instructional materials also complement and facilitate situational teaching).

(8a)What do you do every day? (I study/play/wash/read/sleep/eat/ etc.)

(8b)What does your sister or brother do after school?

(She /He studies/washes/plays/reads/sleeps/eats/cooks/draws etc.)

(8c)What do your parents do on Saturdays? (They watch/travel/attend/ host/ buy etc.)

(8d)What do your neighbours do every morning? (They fight/quarrel/ wash/play/shout etc.)

(8e)Who do you and your brother greet first in the morning?

(My brother and I/ We greet our parents.)

(8f) Do I know your name? (You know my name.)

(8g) What does your dog do to strangers? (It barks at them.)

To properly consolidate the grammatical skill and knowledge gained, appropriate reading comprehension passages should be sought and utilised for further practice in recognition and use. Oral and written composition topics may be employed to provide extended practice in text generation and application of grammatical knowledge.

#### *4.4 Suggestions*

At this point it is necessary to stress that the adoption of contextualisation does not necessarily imply outright abandonment of the Item Approach associated with the grammar-based approaches, which facilitates proper recognition of grammatical form. It is extremely important that learners are able to properly recognise grammatical form in order to use it appropriately, and jettisoning this approach would create problems capable of defeating the goal of grammar teaching. For instance, learners may get genuinely confused as to what the focus of a particular lesson is all about if they are simply presented sentences such as “This man has one child” and “These men have many children” in respect of Subject-Verb Concord. They would wonder whether the topic is tense form or plural form. And, if plural, they would further ask whether it is restricted to the subject or complement or both. To forestall situations where learners have genuine difficulty correctly recognising grammatical form, the teacher should creatively integrate the Item Approach to facilitate accurate recognition and consequently enhance the quality of usage in different naturally occurring situations. The moment it can be certified that the grammatical form in question can be correctly and properly recognised and differentiated from a similar one, immediate reversion to presentation in both linguistic and situational contexts is recommended. This way, the overall goal of grammar teaching can be achieved and sustained.

## **5. Conclusion**

What has been proposed here is a work in progress and should be taken as such. More work needs to be done (especially on the aspect of empirical validation in different L2 classroom situations) to demonstrate how contextualisation works in practical terms. Results obtained from diverse try-out situations should form the basis for possible revision and improvement. It also requires emphasising that the adoption of what may be considered a good grammar teaching approach (however the adjective “good” is defined) does not necessarily translate to successful grammar teaching and learning. There is a more significant factor which is often de-emphasised, if not ignored, when discussions and debates on grammar teaching in L2 contexts are in the front burner. This is the critical factor of teachers’ grammatical knowledge. As hinted in-text, any teacher who lacks adequate, requisite descriptive knowledge of the grammar topic at hand cannot achieve the desired pedagogic success even if armed with the most highly-rated grammar teaching approach. For contextualisation to work most effectively in the L2 classroom, therefore, it is important that the teacher has a sound descriptive knowledge of not

only the grammatical topic under consideration but indeed the grammar of English as prescribed by the curriculum. The relevance of grammar teaching in L2 acquisition and learning as seen in this paper makes the possession of such knowledge by the English teacher imperative. It is only when grammatical knowledge and knowledge of grammatical pedagogy are combined in appropriate proportions that the L2 English grammar teaching goals defined in this work can be achieved with any degree of success.

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