

AWEJ Volume.5 Number.2, 2014

Pp.221 -235

Inductive and Deductive Approaches to Teaching English Grammar

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Abstract

Adult learners' perceptions on inductive and deductive teaching approaches for English grammar were examined. The written performance of two student groups taught via an inductive and deductive approach, respectively, and created by random allocation was also contrasted. Specifically, the form, meaning and use of the past perfect were assessed on the day of explanation, and ten days later, using a reading text and practice and production exercises. Learners overwhelmingly preferred the deductive approach, but minimal differences between the inductive and deductive groups' performance were found, probably related to the underpinning use of local cultural contextualization while language teaching both groups. The study shows a deductive approach with terse explanations, and aided by the systematic use of concrete, meaningful examples during the procedure, particularly when drawn from a familiar local cultural context, is both successful and relates to learners' expectations. Teachers can therefore bring grammar 'to their notice' deductively, through rules and socially-relevant examples. However, tasks that promote grammar-noticing and consciousness-raising 'inductively' were generally shown to be as effective, and the inductive approach was used successfully if local contextualization was adopted. Importantly, teachers therefore need not feel constrained to predominantly use a deductive approach, assumed to be more suitable for non-BANA countries.

Keywords: British-Australasian-North American countries (BANA), contextualization, deductive and inductive approach, noticing and consciousness-raising, tertiary, secondary and primary educational sectors (TESEP)