Challenges in Teaching Grammar Online in Tertiary Level ESL Context: Problems, Factors and Suggestions

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Abstract – Grammar teaching methods have been changing from grammar translation to guided discovery. Due to the pandemic, the physical classroom has been changed to an online platform which has caused more new challenges in teaching grammar. The present research deals with teacher perceptions on online grammar teaching. The sample consists of fifteen in-service English lecturers at the University of Kelaniya. The rationale is the sample group have been teaching online for over a year and able to share their experience. Purposive sampling technique is incorporated. Semi-structured interviews are conducted online to gather data which are later transcribed verbatim. The research questions deal with three areas; perception on teaching grammar online, types of feedback on activities and the challenges in teaching and giving feedback. The study attempts to address the challenges and how they could be overcome. The data are thematically analysed. The results indicate that the lecturers have positive attitude teaching online overall, although they find it difficult to comment on grammar expect for written assignments. Omission of feedback is yet another concern. The challenges and reasons are investigated as lack of time, non-completion of tasks and homework by students, lack of in-class participation and enthusiasm on written tasks. It is found that the larger classrooms are more challenging and hence feedback on grammar is often omitted. It can be concluded that although online platforms occupy larger numbers small group classes are more effective and interactional strategies and new methods need to be incorporated to overcome the challenges of providing feedback online.

Keywords: challenges in teaching grammar online, ESL grammar teaching, online teaching

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