

# DEVELOPING A PROGRAMME OF USING HANDOUTS FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR IN MIDDLE-SCHOOL AND STUDYING THE EFFECTIVENESS

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## ABSTRACT

*Various methods have been used for teaching grammar at all levels. Teaching grammar to students who study English as a second language has always been a trying experience for teachers in spite of implementing innovative methods and techniques. The researcher realized the special attraction of students for any kind of material that is distributed in the classroom. Students showed special interest and engagement in the printed hand-outs rather than in books. The researcher decided to try using hand-outs for teaching grammar in ESL classrooms.*

## INTRODUCTION

Whatever method is used for teaching English as a second language in classroom situations, it is necessary to teach some basic grammar. Grammar is complicated and the nature of grammar appears to be meaningless, mechanical, uninteresting and dull. Many concepts in grammar are complicated. The subject requires practice and drilling. Grammar is taught in SL classrooms either deductively or inductively. Yet, the methods fail to sustain the interest of learners for long. Better results are obtained from grammar based activities. However, activities need a lot of preparation, materials and competent teachers. Activities are also time-consuming.

The researcher observed that young children are highly interested when something is distributed in the class. Sometimes, they are so anxious that if a paper is being distributed to student row by row, they wait impatiently for their turn. The moment it falls into their hands, they start examining it, going through details and show tremendous interest in it. There is psychological pleasure in something that is

given to them, individually, to keep for themselves. It has a kind of special value attached to it.

The researcher decided to take advantage of this tendency on the part of students to use hand-outs for teaching grammar in ESL classrooms. The hand-outs can contain formulas, examples, exercises or all these. To sustain the interest and keep the key ideas in the bag until the opportune moment, planned a series of hand-outs that are to be distributed one after another, at critical junctures during the course of the session. The researcher prepared a programme for teaching adjectives and their kinds to middle school students.

## BACKGROUND

Teaching and learning of grammar pose various challenges for both teachers and learners in general and second language learners in particular. Teachers and researchers have experimented with a large number of innovative techniques for teaching grammar in ESL classrooms. Some have met with a great degree of success. Yet, no definite and specific method has yet been discovered that not only succeeds in enabling learners to acquire all the rules

of English grammar and yet keep them engaged with retained interest. Different methods are successful with different age groups and the success depends largely on learner involvement, motivation and teaching techniques. The researcher realized the keen interest that middle-school children have in hand-outs that are distributed in the classroom. The researcher observed the following behaviour patterns in several middle school children in a pilot study conducted in order to confirm the notion.

- Students are curious to know what the hand-outs might contain.
- Students get a special satisfaction when they get something from the teacher in printed form.
- Middle school children attach special value to what teachers give them and they cherish the hand-outs carefully, keep them safely and neatly for long periods.
- Students carry a notion that what the teacher gives them in printed form is the best, correct, standard and most valuable.
- Students read the content in hand-outs carefully, without missing any details. If the same content exists in the text-book, they most likely ignore it.
- Students seem to have a fear about so much matter contained in a text-book. They feel that they will not be able to manage it. If content is presented to them in small amounts in the form of hand-outs, like small doses, they are more receptive.
- Middle-school students enjoy solving assignments, especially home assignments printed on hand-outs, however, they are reluctant to part with the hand-outs and submit them for correction.
- If hand-outs are distributed regularly, many students file them and preserve them systematically.
- If hand-outs are given too frequently, students lose interest in them. There has to be sufficient gap between grammar lessons using hand-outs.
- The results of the pilot study that included interaction with teachers and students and minute observations assured the researcher that there was a possibility of taking advantage of this tendency of learners of

English as a second language to teach grammar by using hand-outs.

### HAND-OUTS

- Hand-outs are printed papers used as teaching material in classrooms. Hand-outs are used by teachers for several purposes:
- Some hand-outs contain a brief outline or points to be covered during a teaching session so that learners can be mentally prepared and aware about what they are going to be taught.
- Some hand-outs contain instructions for following a step-by step- procedure that each student has to follow.
- Hand-outs contain brief notes of topics covered in the classroom, so that there is no need for students to take down notes.
- Hand-outs that contain questions or exercises are used for the purpose of evaluation.
- Hand-outs can contain a judicious combination of all things mentioned above and suited and adapted for teaching or testing.
- The hand-outs can contain different kinds of tasks identified by Willis (1996) like listing, fact-finding, comparing, matching, finding differences and similarities and creative tasks.

### ADVANTAGES OF USING HAND-OUTS

- Students get time to concentrate on the lecture when they are not required to write down anything.
- All students share the same content.
- The information in hand-outs is brief.
- They are not very expensive and can be prepared easily by teachers.
- Any number of copies can be obtained.
- Once hand-outs are prepared for a particular topic, they can be used repeatedly.
- They are time-saving.
- Students can work independently.
- They are especially useful when the teacher does not want to reveal all details at a time.

A new hand-out can be presented after the first step is completed.

- Hand-outs can be tailor-made to suit the purpose.

### TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN ESL CLASSROOMS

Researchers and language experts are not yet sure whether grammar for its own sake should be taught in ESL classrooms. Students look upon “grammar instruction as a necessary evil at best, and an avoidable burden at worst.” (Al-Mekhlafi et al). The Communicative and humanistic approaches do not believe in teaching rules of grammar. They focus on form and meaning. Krashen (1983) argues that grammar teaches us about language and not the language. Generally, the inductive or deductive method is used to teach grammar. In the inductive method, the rule is provided followed by examples. In the deductive method, it is the other way round. Examples are given and rules are deduced from the examples. The researcher observed that these methods involve learners in the rules to such an extent that they fail to keep track of the meaning being conveyed through a particular sentence structure. Grammar can be taught by combining the deductive and inductive methods in addition to presenting grammar items through literary pieces and drawing the attention of learners towards them. This can be done with the help of hand-outs.

Attempts have been made to teach grammar through games, simulations and activities. These methods have proved to be more successful than teaching grammar rules or focussing only on examples.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Janis Milkits, hand-outs are a very useful tool that enhance the learning process. He differentiates between hand-outs and lecture notes and states that “This variance allows a professor to adjust the hand-outs to fit the need of the class and the expected student effort. The professor must evaluate the costs and benefits to student development before deciding whether to provide hand-outs and, if so, the form of hand-outs to be used.” In their article related to the effect of varying the detail in classroom hand-outs, written as a response to previous research by Boreham, N.,

Lilley, J., & Morgan, C., showed an increase in performance by students who received outlines for a class rather than no hand-outs at all. The researchers concluded that a moderate amount of material in the hand-outs is optimal.

Caris, T., Harris, G., Hendricson, W., & Russell, describe the results of an experiment conducted with medical students. The experiment contained three randomly assigned groups of students differentiated by the types of classroom hand-outs. The three types of hand-outs included full lecture notes, detailed notes with diagrams, and a class outline. The findings showed that students preferred the full lecture notes but actually performed better when given an outline format.

Fjortoft N. studied the factors that contributed to student class attendance. Among other factors, the study found that partial hand-outs motivated students to attend class. Additionally, full lecture notes were a major factor that contributed to student absences.

Titsworth B evaluated the quality of student notes in a variety of situations. The results show that students who are given organizational cues participate in classes that develop ideas rather than rushing through several topics generally prepared notes that were more thorough and accurate than their counterparts. The study emphasized how instructor classroom techniques can impact student note-taking.

In an article titled “Why Hand-outs?” by an unknown writer, the reasons for using hand-outs are exhaustively listed. The writer mentions the following important benefits of hand-outs that are useful in the current study:

**According to the writer, Hand-outs can accomplish three purposes:**

- All students share the same basic background on which you intended to build new, related, or more complex content.
- Hand-outs can be used to save time, containing content you don’t have to present, and that leaves time for students to ask questions or for you to explore how well they understand.
- Hand-outs can relieve some of the tension students often feel when presented with large amounts of new information. With

some of the key ideas, terms, equations, graphs, whatever on the hand-out, students don't have to get everything in their notes.

- To implement the plan and study its effectiveness.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY (VALUE)

There is a need to develop several methods and techniques for teaching grammar that forms an important part of the syllabus in ESL classrooms. Techniques have been developed that include activities to retain the interest of learners and ensure their active participation. The ABL (Activity Based Learning) method is interesting but expensive and time consuming. Competent teachers are necessary to manage ABL programmes. A similar difficulty is involved in teaching with the help of technology.

Using hand-outs is different from the traditional method. It captures the interest of students, sustains their motivation and keeps them engaged and involved actively. A vast and complicated subject like grammar can be delivered in small and digestible doses that do not hamper the spirit of learners who already have a fear regarding the English language. Previous studies in using hand-outs in the classroom show that most hand-outs contain notes or instructions.

Hand-outs in English classes are chiefly used as work sheets contain exercises for practice. The researcher did not come across any instance of hand-outs used in classrooms for teaching grammatical concepts in middle-school. Hence, this study has a valuable place in the pedagogy of English.

### Research problem

To develop a teaching programme for teaching types of adjectives in middle school by using hand-outs.

### Aims and objectives

- To prepare sufficient number of hand-outs for teaching types of adjectives.
- To prepare practice sheets for types of adjectives.
- To plan a lesson for teaching types of adjectives to ESL learners.

### Limitations

- The study is limited to middle school students.
- The plan is meant only for a selected unit of grammar.
- The study includes only ESL learners.

### Hypothesis

There is significant difference between means of scores of Group-A and Group-B.

### Null- Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean of scores of Group-A and Group-B.

### RESEARCH METHOD

The first part of the study consisted of an informal pilot study conducted in order to understand the attitude of teachers and students towards hand-outs, the extent to which teachers used hand-outs in the classrooms and the purposes for which they were used. The researcher also inquired about what methods were used by teachers of middle school to teach grammar. A couple of visits to the school were enough for the researcher to gather the necessary information that served as a basis for proceeding with the research and formed the basis of the programme.

The researcher used the experimental method to ensure reliable results of implementation of the new method for teaching grammatical concepts to middle-school students of ESL.

### Population

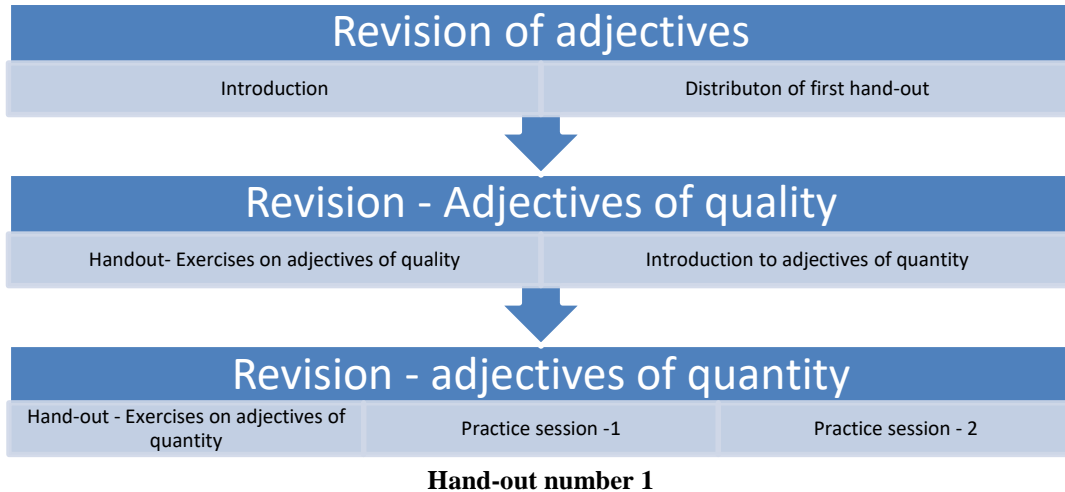
Middle school students studying English as a second language.

**Sample**

The sample consisted of 16 students from Vidyanchal English School studying in

class VI. The learners had started the study of English in Class –I. They all had knowledge of nouns and adjectives. They were able to identify adjectives or supply appropriate adjectives in sentences.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME**



Name of the student.....Roll no.....  
 Date:

Look at the following examples:

1. Happy girls – State of mind
2. Wooden furniture - material
3. Loud voice – sound quality
4. Big house - Size
5. Red balloon - .....
6. Old woman - age
7. Beautiful garden - quality
8. Long way - distance
9. Tall mountains - .....
10. Complex problem – nature of problem
  - a. What kind of information does the word ‘red’ give you about the balloon?
  - b. What kind of information does the word ‘tall’ give you about the balloon?

All the above adjectives tell you about some kind of QUALITY of the noun.  
 They are called Adjectives of Quality.

- c. Write any 10 adjectives of quality.

**Hand-out number -2**

Name of the student.....Roll no.....  
 Date:

Look at the following examples:

1. Ten students
2. Many children
3. Little water
4. Few people
5. Some ideas

All the above adjectives tell you about the quantity or number of nouns. They are called Adjectives of Quantity.

Adjectives of quality	Adjectives of quantity
Big mistake	Much commotion
Precious stones	Many books
Attractive face	Few things
Beautiful garden	All children

The two-group post-test design was used in the study. The students were divided into 2 groups, consisting of 8 students each. The first group was

taught adjectives of quality and quantity by using traditional method. The second group was taught by using hand-outs.

Group-A	Group-B	Post -test
Conventional method	Method using hand-outs	Post-test

**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

After the teaching sessions, two practice sessions were conducted in both the groups. A short test was administered to both groups and the scores of performance of students in both the groups were compared using ANOVA test.

**Analysis of data**

**Group-A** was taught types of adjectives by using conventional method. A test was conducted after two practice sessions and the scores of the test were tabulated as follows:

Sr. No.	Scores
1	3
2	4
3	5
4	5
5	6
6	6
7	7
8	8

**Group – B** was taught by using hand-outs for teaching types of adjectives. The scores of the students in the test were as follows:

Sr. No.	Scores
1	9
2	6
3	7
4	7
5	6
6	8
7	8
8	9

$$\sum X1 = 44$$

$$\sum X12 = 260$$

$$\sum X2 = 60$$

$$\sum X22 = 460$$

Where X1 are the scores of Group-A and X2 are the scores of Group – B.

Mean of Group-A is 5.5

Mean of Group-B is 7.5

Grand Mean = 6.5

Grand total of all 16 scores = 104

F = 8

The value of F at 0.05 level of significance is 4.60

F > 4.60

Hence, the mean difference is significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

The research hypothesis is accepted.

## OBSERVATIONS

Significant difference is observed in the scores of students in experimental group and control group. This shows that using hand-outs for teaching selected units of grammar and making concepts clear. There is improvement in the performance level of the two groups A and B.

## CONCLUSIONS

The students showed great enthusiasm during the sessions. They treasured the hand-outs given to them and arranged them carefully date-wise. The test-scores of the experimental group were much higher than those of the control group. This shows that grammatical concepts can be taught in an interesting way by using hand-outs in the classroom for ESL students.

However, all grammatical units cannot be taught by using hand-outs. Hand-outs are more useful for providing exercises for practice.

The teachers were in favour of the programme particularly because they could adapt the printed material to suit the level of the students. Printed content in text books is the same for all students studying for the same board examination. However, some ESL students are very weak in English grammar and far behind their class. At such times, teachers are required to design their own content starting from scratch and bringing the students up to the standard level gradually. For this kind of project, hand-outs prepared by teachers are very handy.

Hand-outs cannot be used in lower classes as small children fail to realize their importance and are likely to tear them, crumple them or misplace them. Hand-outs can be used in higher classes but in a limited way. The use of hand-outs is most successful in case of middle-school students.

## SUGGESTIONS

There is a need to identify those units of English grammar that can be taught by using hand-outs in ESL classrooms. Pair activities can also be prepared by using specially prepared hand-outs. Once in a while, teachers can ask students to prepare hand-outs. This can be a group activity. In order to prepare hand-outs, students will try to understand the concepts in a better way. The class can be divided into groups and each group can be assigned the task of preparing hand-outs for a particular unit of grammar. The hand-outs prepared by each group can be shared by the whole class.

## Recommendations

- Similar experiment can be carried out for other units of grammar.
- Besides grammar, one can teach literary concepts like figures of speech by using hand-outs.

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