

Teaching Grammar in L2: Teachers' perceptions and practices in Greece and the U.S. and implications for bilingual classroom settings

In the history of language instruction, both with respect to first language teaching (henceforth L1) and to foreign/second language instruction (henceforth L2), grammar, in the sense of explicitly teaching grammatical structures, consistently providing corrective feedback to students, and using metalanguage, has been a thorny issue amongst researchers and educators for a long time (Vega, 2021). Different approaches to language teaching resulted to different practices in the classroom (Terrell, 1991), all of which aimed at improving students' fluency both in oral and in written communication, and enhancing their academic skills in a broader way. The aim of this study is (a) to explore the perceptions and practices of L1 educators in the U.S. and in Greece respectively, and (b) to investigate whether any discrepancies between the two groups have any implications in bilingual classroom settings, where students may need to adjust to different instructional methods and learning expectations. Our research hypothesis is that Greek educators will display stronger and more persistent attachment to grammar instruction for three basic reasons: (i) their traditional and—in many ways—conservative educational background, (ii) the Greek educational system, which largely focuses on academic writing as an indispensable factor for college admission, and (iii) the challenging morphology of the Greek language (rich inflectional system, variety of fossilized forms which call for explicit instruction). The first part of our qualitative research involves two study groups, one from a junior high school in Thessaloniki, Greece, and the other from a junior high school in Wilmington – DE, USA. Questionnaires with multiple choice and open-ended questions are administered to both groups, and content analysis is performed on the gathered data (for similar studies, see Schulz, 2001, & Demir et al., 2018). In the second part of our research, we attempt to associate our findings with the experiences and challenges that Greek language educators are faced with while teaching Greek as L2 in the American junior high school. Their answers are collected with the means of one-on-one interviews, and analyzed in separate categories. The ultimate goal of our study is not to determine the value of grammar instruction in language education, but to bridge any gaps between different perceptions, notions, and methods among educators for the benefit of the students and the upgrading of students' education.

References

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