CHAPTER SIX

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

" We cannot teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in its own way"

Von Humboldt (in Corder, 1967)

First- year students are, according to this study, facing problems in most areas of grammar. As shown in the previous chapter, this is mainly due to either NL interference (Arabic), or to IT interference. There might be other causes , but they are not the focus of our study. Being aware of the cause or causes of the learners' idiosyncracies might dictate pedagogical practice, and determine the approach to be adopted. On these grounds, we suggest that:

- As our students encounter problems in most aspects of grammar, this does call for a re-evaluation of the ways grammar is taught and for emphasis on the role of the teacher to raise the students' awareness for producing an acceptable piece of writing in terms of accuracy and clear communication. We, educators know that motivation is a powerful tool; whether or not the best materials and texts are provided, a student will learn only if he or she is motivated enough to do so. This can be reached by designing interesting and appealing activities to incite or draw on the students' intrinsic motivation. Thus, a limited use of old fashioned techniques such as drills, grammar explanation, and correction of errors may still contribute to learning if combined with more modern communicating activities, i.e., the eclectic approach is the most appropriate as the teacher has the freedom to select activities and to adapt them to the students' needs. Therefore, a needs analysis is always necessary along the teaching operation for the selection of the appropriate remediation as well as the appropriate methods and techniques to apply.

- Another important point to raise is that most of the time, this requires teachers to introduce some systematicity into error procedures. Teachers should not only be aware of the common difficulties, but they should also evaluate these difficulties with a view to giving them appropriate emphasis in their remedial teaching in the light of error gravity, especially at this preliminary level; otherwise, the problem will persist-students will move to the second , then to the third year incapable of producing a short paragraph without numerous grammatical errors. In this case, what will be the future of teaching given the fact that most of these 'licence' graduates will be teachers, either in the middle or in the secondary school? This does not mean that we should seek perfection because we are not supposed to master the TL as well as the native speakers do, but we should, at least, prepare students with an acceptable level of accuracy without, of course, neglecting the communicative side. Hence, we should note that error correction should be given enough importance and that our students need to receive significant feedback.

Feedback relates closely to goal setting. When learners understand how they are attaining those goals, they can adjust their behaviour to learn more effectively (Martens, Hirolall, and Bradley, 1977).

According to Peter Reilly (Forum, April, 2001), for feedback to be more effective, it should be:

- **Immediate**: Teachers should give feedback as soon as they have something meaningful to say.

- **Frequent**: feedback should be given regularly because students need to know how they are doing.

- **Specific**: Specific feedback is much more effective than vague comments or encouragement to 'try harder'.

- **Realistic**: It has to be related to something the students performed or observed in the class.
- **Appropriate**: Too many comments or recommendations can overwhelm the learner.
- **Private**: It should be offered one-on-one (individually) whenever possible.

(p.36)

However, we should insist that the teacher has to find the appropriate way to deal with error correction; in other words, he needs to develop his own strategies to error correction to make of it an efficient activity.

If we refer to the results, we find that our students meet difficulties in all aspects of grammar and mainly in the use of tenses (274), prepositions (247) and articles (221) . It is for this reason that we suggest a possible method to teach prepositions because on the one hand they pose a great difficulty not only for our students, but for most EFL learners in general.

 According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983), there are nine prepositions most commonly used in English: at,, by, for, from, in, of, on, to, and with. Even these prepositions have idiomatic and less common uses, but the purpose will be on the most common uses for pedagogical purposes. We find it better to teach prepositions in groups rather than one by one. We can follow the following procedure:

In, on, and at

These prepositions seem to occur commonly as indicators of time, or location, so they can be taught together.

It is also useful to show that they range from general to specific, as shown in the diagram below:

general ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⟶ specific

in   on   at
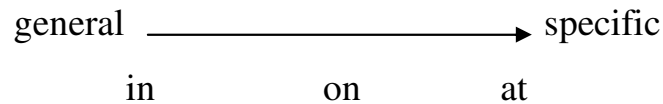
This can be illustrated by examples such as:

- **Location**: I live in Algeria, in Biskra, on Ben Mhidi Street, at 35. I am in the classroom, sitting on the table, at the front of the door. However, some common exceptions and variations have to be mentioned like: I teach at Biskra University. Although the university covers a large area, it has a specific location bounded by certain streets. In this example: the ring is in the box, here the object fills the container- one cannot be more specific.

- **Time**: My daughter was born in 1984, on June 3rd, at 6 PM in the evening; she first went to school in 1989; we have to start work on Saturday, the 11th, at 8 AM; at that time; on that day; in that month, year, decade, or century.

    Exceptions can be:
- on the hour, meaning exactly at 10 o' clock.
- in (during) the morning, afternoon, or evening

To, for, from

These prepositions are commonly used with indirect objects (IO). Students are generally confused between to and for. 'From' can be included as it is directionally the opposite of '*to*' when it introduces an IO and can be used to clarify the difference, 'to' means in a direction toward the IO, while ' from' means in a direction away.

In order to teach '*for*', we can present it with '*to*' to show that '*to*' indicates direction toward the IO as in 'I shall buy a present and give it to you' and ' ' *for*' expresses intention as in 'I shall buy a present for you'.

Nobody denies that prepositions (including directional adverbs like *away* and phrasal prepositions like *in front of*) are particularly troublesome. Another method which can be used for teaching or re-teaching prepositions is that of using a diagram like the one shown in appendix three.

To ensure consistency, as proposed by Seth Lindstromberg (Forum, April 1991, p. 47), the diagram has to be presented in family sets, rather than one by one e.g. toward, through, away (from), taking care to associate each element of every diagram with something concrete.

After presenting the diagram in family sets, the students will be divided into two groups and provided with two different gap filling texts. The students' task will be to fill each gap with the best diagram, then they will be asked to exchange their texts and try to fill the gaps with the appropriate preposition. Finally, the partners will have to check and discuss each other's work.. We have already tried this method which has proved efficient in teaching some of the prepositions in the diagram.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we do insist that our students need more practice of grammatical structures in communicative contexts, to be able to use them spontaneously in their writing. As stated in the second chapter, Van Patten and Al (1993) suggested five stages through which we could arrive at a rational grammar-focused instruction (input, intake, acquisition, access, and output). Besides, the approaches suggested to the teaching of grammar in the same chapter may provide us with better insights about the different kinds of activities available, and from which we could select the appropriate ones according to our students' needs. Besides, error correction should not be neglected.