

# Three Dichotomies in Grammar Teaching of Second Language in the Period of “Post-Method”

Jing Wang

School of International Cultural Exchange, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, China

**ABSTRACT.** The paradigm shift from rules-based to usage-based in the post-method era reconstructs our traditional view of language and language teaching. In the post-method era, grammar is no longer a “golden rule-like” rule system, but the tools or resources used in the speech. It provides a new perspective for us to re-examine some important relationships in grammar teaching, the boundaries between explicit and implicit teaching of language, induction and deduction, input and output, which traditionally seem to be well-defined categories, also need to be clarified. Post-method transformation period emphasizes more on “implicit teaching obtained in the process”, “bottom-up inductive teaching” and “output-driven teaching”. These language ideas are overturning our traditional grammar and language teaching views.

**KEYWORDS:** Post-method transformation period, Grammar teaching, Explicit and implicit teaching, Inductive and deduction, Input and output

## 1. Introduction

The history of the development of foreign language teaching for thousands of years can be roughly divided into two stages: the “method” era and the “post-method” era. The “method” paradigm once occupied the core of foreign language teaching thoughts. The pursuit of the best teaching methods became the main theme leading the development of foreign language education. In the second half of the last century, after witnessing the cycle of birth, demise, and rebirth of various methods, more and more researchers re-examined the method-centric research paradigm. In 1994, the Indian-American scholar Kumaravadivelu proposed the concept of “post-method”, which subverted the paradigm and discourse system of foreign language teaching research with methods as the core [1]. This concept has become one of the key points for understanding the “spirit of the times” in contemporary language teaching. At present, the “method” era is transforming into the “post-method” era.

Under the background of the transition period, both the grammar concept and the grammar teaching concept in foreign language teaching have changed in understanding construction. In the era of methods, grammar is centered on “rules” and the teacher's explanation, with linear and layered features. From the perspective of methodology, grammar is “usage-centered”, a structure system formed based on the interaction of language systems and language usage, with non-linear, cyclic and holistic characteristics. After the 1990s, task-based teaching methods and method groups began to gradually change from “rules-based” to “usage-based”. In the process of transformation, these three important relationships in second language grammar teaching: implicit teaching and explicit teaching, inductive teaching and deductive teaching, input teaching and output teaching also need to be clarified.

## 2. The Explicit Teaching and Implicit Teaching

The explicit teaching is to clearly teach the grammatical rules, so that students can learn to apply the rules based on understanding the rules; while implicit teaching is to strengthen the practice and language use, so that students through language examples and use internal rules. The core difference between the two is whether the focus of instruction is on the interpretation of language rules.

It is generally believed that human's free use of language stems from tacit knowledge, so the ultimate goal of language teaching is to train learners' tacit knowledge of language. Explicit teaching utilizes explicit knowledge to form tacit knowledge, while implicit teaching directly forms tacit knowledge. In terms of whether explicit knowledge can be transformed into tacit knowledge, there are currently three influential interface theories. Krashen insists on the theory of no interface, and believes that two kinds of knowledge cannot be converted, and explicit teaching cannot form tacit

knowledge. Dekeyser is the representative of the “strong interface theory” [2]. He believes that explicit knowledge will be transformed into tacit knowledge through repeated practice. He advocates that the most important link in grammar teaching is the explanation and practice of grammar rules. Ellis advocates the “weak interface theory” and believes that there is no major conversion between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge, but explicit knowledge can gradually contribute to the formation of tacit knowledge [3]. In teaching, tasks such as input enhancement and awareness raising can be used to promote the conversion of explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge.

Method-The post-method transformation period focuses on usage and enhances the status of implicit teaching, such as task-based grammar teaching. It is believed that the ultimate goal of grammar teaching is to enhance the awareness of grammar and enable learners to achieve the coordination of explicit and implicit processes in the self-construction of second language grammar.

### **3. The Inductive Teaching and Deductive Teaching**

In grammar teaching of second language, inductive teaching is driven by usage, from example learning to the self-induction of learners under the guidance of teachers; while deductive teaching is driven by rules, from grammatical rule learning to practical application of learners under the guidance of teachers. In the development process of language teaching, two teaching methods exist at the same time, but they have never been treated equally.

In the age of methods, grammar is regarded as a rule, and language users follow language rules. For example, the PPP teaching method (rule presentation-exercise-output), which is a common teaching method in second language teaching, is a typical top-down rule followed by application. In the deductive teaching method, teachers attach importance to the explanation and illustration of rules, but once the rules are clearly expressed, students will naturally not think about the underlying language rules, resulting in a shallow understanding of grammatical rules, which cannot really realize the learner's internalization. In transformation period, the essence of grammar teaching changes to help learners discover rules by themselves. Teaching is a bottom-up process of first instance and then rule. Teaching starts with examples, and under the guidance of teachers and the setting of contexts, students can discover language rules independently through a large number of typical language examples, which also highlights the concept of post-method teaching concepts such as “use”, “frequency” and “emergence”. In practical teaching, grammatical teaching activities such as “consciousness enhancement” and “input enhancement” emphasize the learning of grammar in language use, and emphasize the learner's active construction of grammar.

### **4. The Input Teaching and Output Teaching**

Language input is a one-way language information provided for learners, such as teacher's words, is the starting point of language learning. The output of language is the result of language learning. From input to output, it is the development process of language's receptive skills to productive skills.

The method era is based on rules, and language learning is driven by input. Therefore, the input quantity, quality, method, type and ways have become research hotspots. “Heavy input, light output” became a common phenomenon. However, the reinforcement of the input cannot be directly converted into an effective output, which causes the learner to “I understand it when I hear it, and I use it wrong”.

Method-The post-method transition period is based on usage, emphasizing that the learner's output is driven. The teaching goal is to provide students with more output opportunities so that students can learn a second language through output. For example, at the beginning of teaching, the students are informed of the output goal of the lesson. Then, the teacher guides the students to self-induction through a large number of examples, so that the students can actively construct the input, to test the hypothesis and finally achieve the output goal. In this way, the teaching process of “output driving-input enabling-language output” can better realize the concept of learning while using, and integrating input and output. From the meta-analysis of Ehsan Rassail on the effects of input-based and output-based teaching methods, it is found that output-based teaching effects are better [4]. Input-based teaching needs to enhance language saliency through text reinforcement or explicit rule teaching to get the good results. In recent years, there have also been some effective and beneficial explorations and attempts that are output-oriented. For example, Wen Qiufang's “output-oriented method” and Wang Chuming's “extension theory” to promote learning have all passed a series of the empirical research on teaching proves that this output-oriented teaching is significantly better than the grammar teaching method during the input-first method period[5][6].

### **5. Conclusion**

The post-method era of language teaching breaks the myth of the supremacy of methods, and is replaced by a group of methods embodying contemporary views of language, learning, and teaching. As can be seen from the discussion in this article, during the method-post-method transition period, more emphasis is placed on “implicit teaching acquired in the process”, “bottom-up inductive teaching” and “output-driven teaching”. These language ideas are subverting us the view of grammar and language teaching in the traditional “method paradigm” era. Therefore, teachers need to establish their own “method library”, boldly try different language teaching strategies for different grammar projects, and explore new ways of second language grammar teaching during the transition period of “method”-“post-method”.

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