

Methods of Grammar Teaching in Schools of Cuttack

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Abstract

Even though Educationists and linguists agree upon the usage of mother tongue as medium of instruction at the primary level of education for a better cognitive development of the child, there has been a spurt in the growth of English medium schools in the nooks and corners of the country. The prestige and status associated with English education and the anticipation of social mobility facilitated by it have led to a growing preference for English medium schools in comparison with Vernacular medium schools. Hence it is imperative to analyse and research upon the differences in the educational environment in the various schools. This study proposes to look at these aspects to bridge the gap between the English medium schools and Vernacular medium schools. This study aims to understand the divergences and convergences in the approach towards grammar teaching followed by the teachers in English medium schools and Odia medium schools. A parallel has been drawn to compare the methods of grammar teaching observed in the two sets of schools.

Introduction

The popularity and growth of English education can be routed to many factors. The colonial legacy, as well as the plethora of professional opportunities offered by globalisation, has led to the admiration and preference for proficiency in the English language. To cater to this demand, some private schools have started in nooks and corners of the country. These schools claim to impart proficiency to students by their pedagogical methods. There exists a vast difference in the methods of language teaching followed in the various schools.

The following differences in approach towards language teaching lead to different classroom exercises. In the case of grammar, there are several approaches and perspectives to teaching grammar. The inductive method of teaching grammar involves teaching through examples. Instead of presenting the rules, the concept is introduced through examples. The students are given examples from language and encouraged to draw rules themselves. The primary focus of this method is the remembering of grammar conceptions which involves usage of techniques and procedure to foster the contextual memory and cognitive thinking of the students. The deductive method of teaching grammar involves laying down instruction before proceeding with examples. It is a mechanical method which focuses on drill methods of practice. Students are expected to internalise the rules through the practice of worksheets. These methods of grammar teaching go hand-in-glove with the procedures of language teaching followed by the teachers.

Methodology

The present study uses a structured questionnaire to explore the various methods of grammar teaching followed by the teachers in the English medium and Odia medium schools of Cuttack. The structured questionnaire was designed to implicitly reveal teachers' approaches and practices of teaching English as a foreign language. The researcher has chosen the Likert scale format, multiple-choice statements and yes-no answer type questions. The study was conducted on twenty-five English teachers of Odia medium and English medium schools to understand the differences in their pedagogical practices.

The research adhered to the principles of ethics by obtaining informed consent from the participants. It also maintained the anonymity of the research participants throughout the discussion of the results.

Results and Discussion

The data obtained by the teachers were analyzed through chi-square tests and cross tabulation to test the significant differences between the responses. The frequency bar graphs of the responses to the questions are also presented. The results of the questionnaire are discussed below.

Q.1 According to you, grammar can be best taught by

Crosstab

| According to you, grammar can be best taught by | Multiple Choice Options | Count | Teachers | | Total |
|---|--|----------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | | | English | Odia | |
| | Rules of grammar must be taught and constantly revised. Student also be made to draw examples from it | Count | 18 | 20 | 38 |
| | | % within Teachers | 72.0% | 76.9% | 74.5% |
| | Examples of sentences and phrases should be introduced and student made to draw rules themselves | Count | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| | | % within Teachers | 20.0% | 23.1% | 21.6% |
| Total | Students should not be made to memorize and learn grammar rules | Count | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | | % within Teachers | 8.0% | 0.0% | 3.9% |
| | | Count | 25 | 26 | 51 |
| | | % within Teachers | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1.1

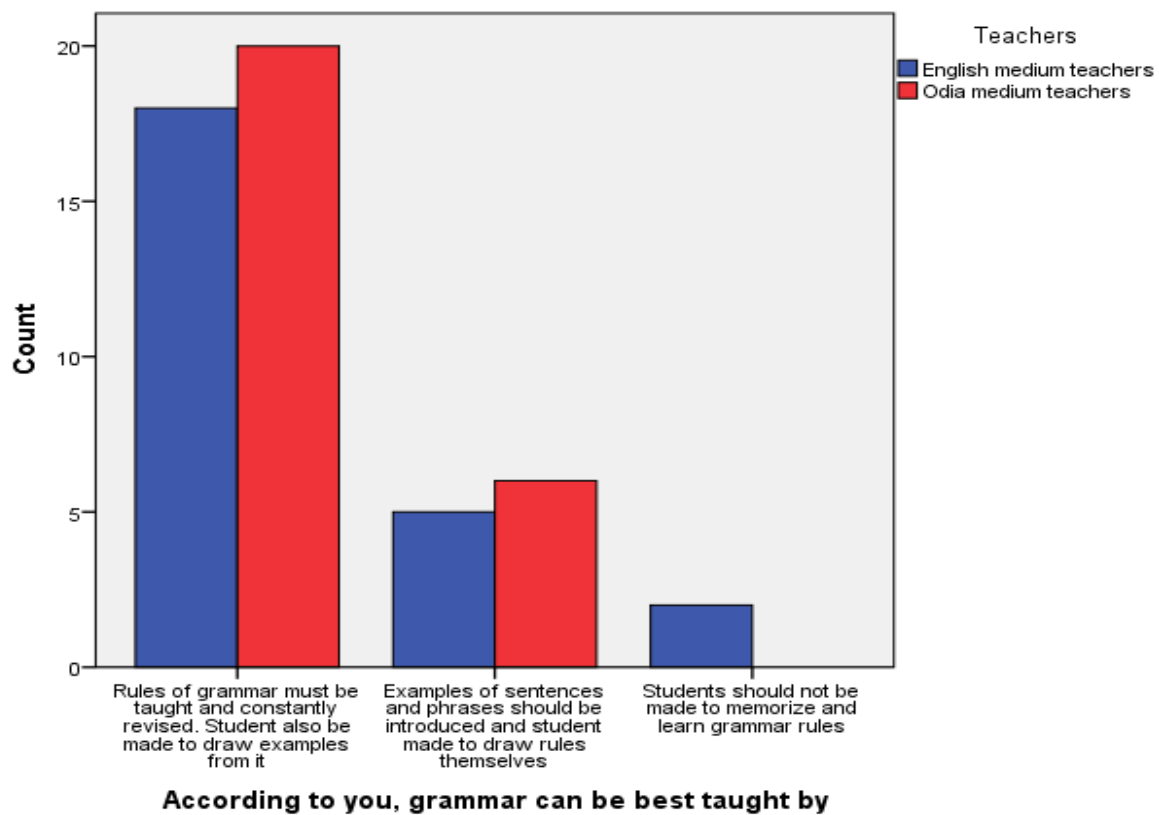


Figure 1.1

From the Table 1.1, we can observe that about 72% of the English and 76.9% of the Odia medium teachers expressed that, rules of grammar must be taught and revised continuously and student also be made to draw examples from it. The bar chart in Figure 1.1, also depicts the corresponding responses of the teachers. Both the school's teachers converge in their majority opinion. The reaction of the majority as represented in this question is that grammar teaching must be taught by rules followed by constant practice of the rules. It is also to be noted that a similar response was observed concerning the option: examples of sentences and phrases should be introduced and student made to draw rules themselves. 20% of the English medium teachers and 23% of Odia medium teachers opted for this response.

Q.2. Repeated grammar exercises from practice books are important to learn grammar rules.

Crosstab

| Repeated grammar exercises from practice books are important to learn grammar rules. | Multiple Choice Options | Count | Teachers | | Total |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | | | English | Odia | |
| | Agree | Count | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | | % within Teachers | 16.0% | 0.0% | 7.8% |
| | Disagree | Count | 14 | 17 | 31 |
| | | % within Teachers | 56.0% | 65.4% | 60.8% |
| | Strongly Disagree | Count | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| | | % within Teachers | 28.0% | 34.6% | 31.4% |
| Total | | Count | 25 | 26 | 51 |
| | | % within Teachers | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1.2

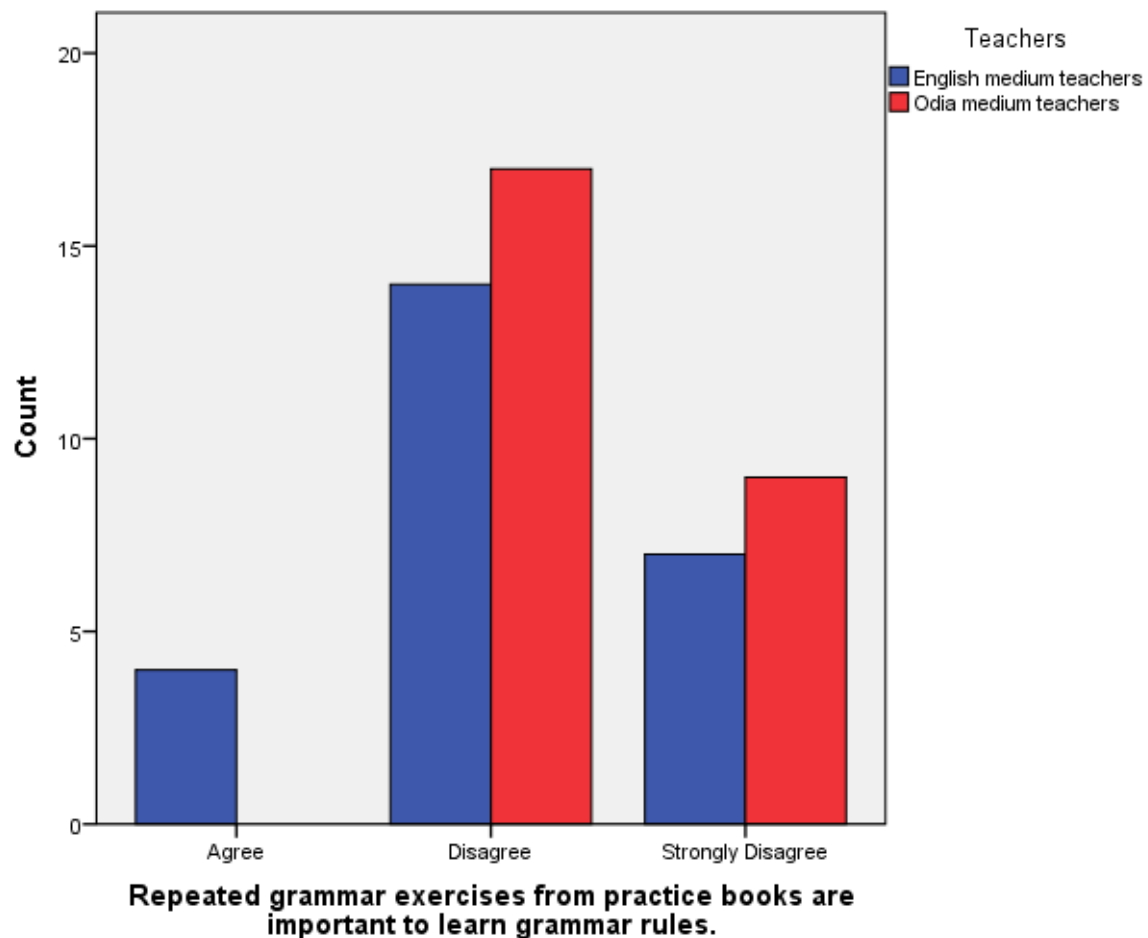


Figure 1.2

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 4.522 ^a | 2 | .104 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 6.067 | 2 | .048 |
| N of Valid Cases | 51 | | |

Table 1.3

In Table 1.3 we can observe that the value of Chi-square statistic was 4.522 and its corresponding p-value was $0.104 > 0.05$. Since the p-value is more than 0.05, we can conclude that there was no significant difference in opinion of the English and Odia medium teachers.

The figures in Table 1.2, show that most teachers from both the groups disagreed with the statement that repeated grammar exercises from practice books are essential to learning grammar rules. Hence, it can be said that majority of the teachers believe that repeated grammatical drills are not crucial to the process of learning grammar rules.

Q.3. Language examples help students understand grammar rules

Crosstab

| Language examples help students understand grammar rules | Multiple choice options | Count | Teachers | | Total |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | | | English | Odia | |
| | No | Count | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | % within Teachers | 4.0% | 0.0% | 2.0% |
| | Yes | Count | 24 | 26 | 50 |
| | | % within Teachers | 96.0% | 100.0% | 98.0% |
| | Total | Count | 25 | 26 | 51 |
| | | % within Teachers | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1.4

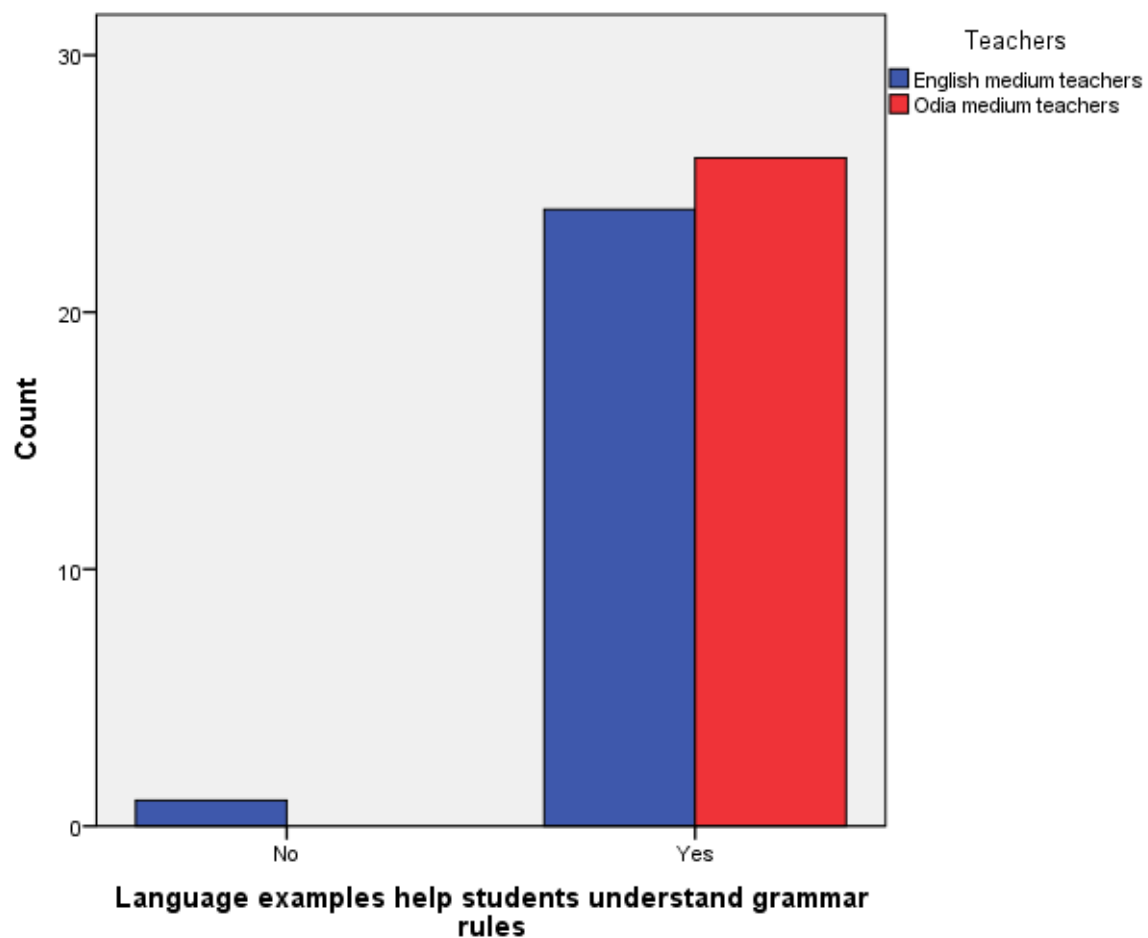


Figure 1.3

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.061 ^a | 1 | .303 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | .000 | 1 | .984 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.447 | 1 | .229 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .490 | .490 |
| N of Valid Cases | 51 | | | | |

Table 1.5

From the Table 1.5, we can observe that the value of Chi-square statistic was 1.061 and its corresponding p-value was $0.303 > 0.05$. Since the p-value is more than 0.05, we can conclude that there was no significant difference in opinion of the English and other subject teachers in language examples help students to understand grammar rules. Hence it can be said that all teachers unanimously believe that language examples help in understanding grammar rules.

Q.4. Should students be introduced to the grammar rules and encouraged to draw examples from them

Crosstab

| Should students be introduced to the grammar rules and encouraged to draw examples from them. | Multiple choice options | Count | Teachers | | Total |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | | | English | Odia | |
| | No | Count | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| | | % within Teachers | 16.0% | 61.5% | 39.2% |
| | Yes | Count | 21 | 10 | 31 |
| | | % within Teachers | 84.0% | 38.5% | 60.8% |
| Total | Count | | 25 | 26 | 51 |
| | % within Teachers | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1.6

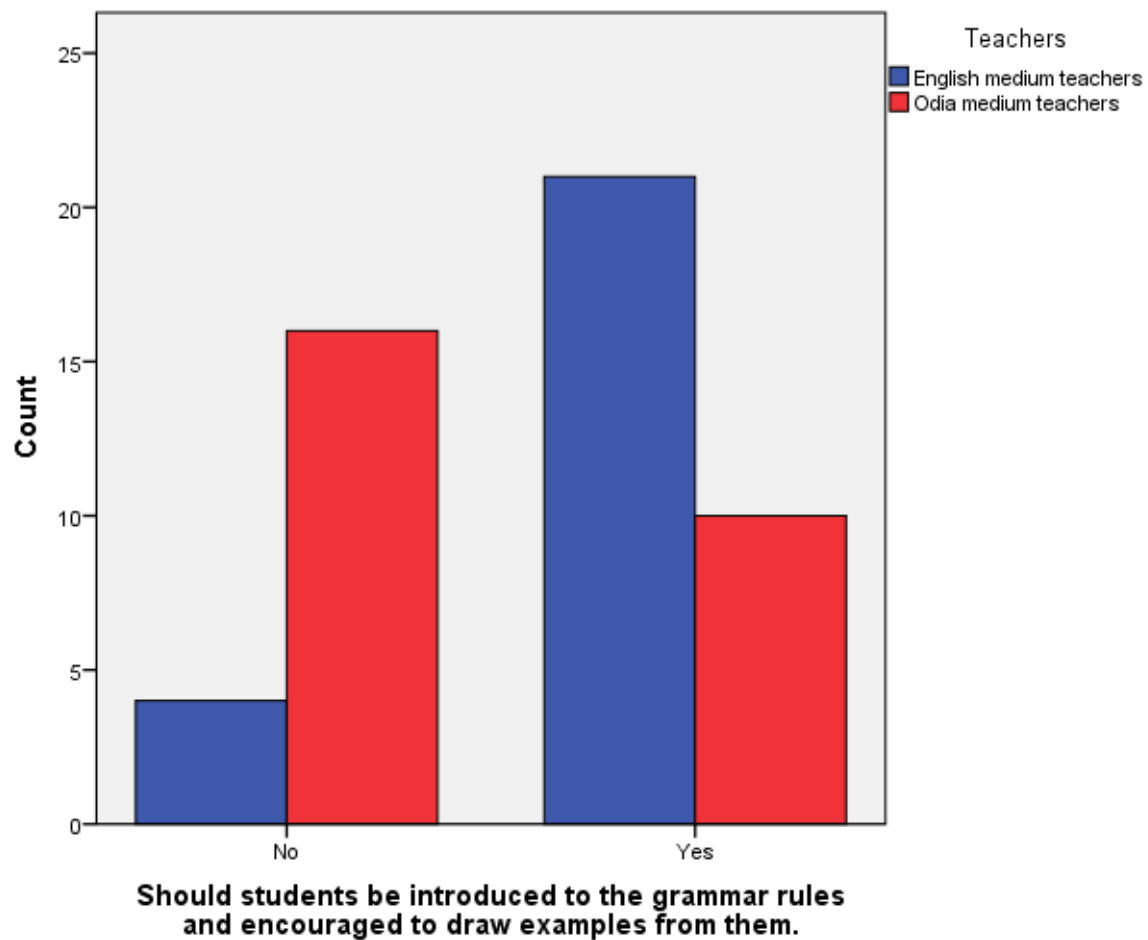


Figure 1.4

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 11.088 ^a | 1 | .001 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | 9.260 | 1 | .002 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 11.680 | 1 | .001 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .001 | .001 |
| N of Valid Cases | 51 | | | | |

Table 1.7

From the Table 1.7, we can observe that the value of Chi-square statistic was 11.088 and its corresponding p-value was $0.001 < 0.05$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that there was a significant difference in opinion of the English and Odia medium school teachers.

From the Table 1.6 and Figure 1.4, it was observed that the teachers feel that students need to be introduced to grammar rules. Further, they support the use of examples while teaching grammar. This somewhat also suggests that these teachers do give weightage to the communicative and functional aspect of grammar and not merely a traditional one.

Q5.. Do you think students are capable of drawing rules from language usage.

Crosstab

| Do you think students are capable of drawing rules from language usage. | Multiple choice options | Count | Teachers | | Total |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | | | English | Odia | |
| | No | Count | 12 | 17 | 29 |
| | | % within Teachers | 48.0% | 65.4% | 56.9% |
| | Yes | Count | 13 | 9 | 22 |
| | | % within Teachers | 52.0% | 34.6% | 43.1% |
| | Total | Count | 25 | 26 | 51 |
| | | % within Teachers | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1.8

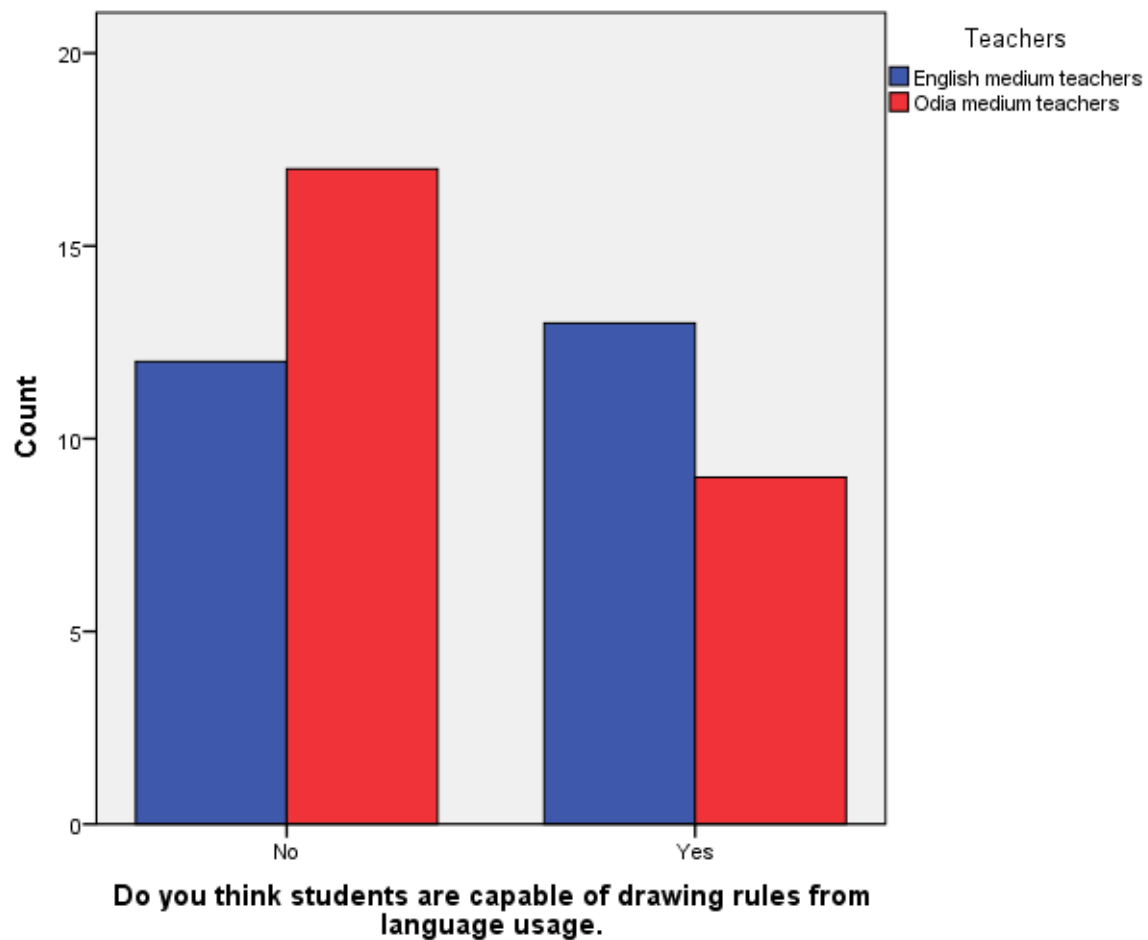


Figure 1.5

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.570 ^a | 1 | .210 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | .942 | 1 | .332 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.578 | 1 | .209 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .264 | .166 |
| N of Valid Cases | 51 | | | | |

Table 1.9

The majority of the English medium teachers answered in the affirmative whereas as in the case of Odia medium teachers, the answer was no, as can be seen in Figure 1.5 and Table 1.8. But the deviation between the teacher's responses is very negligible. From the Table 1.9, we can observe that the value of Chi-square statistic was 1.57 and its corresponding p-value was $0.21 > 0.05$. Since the p-value is more than 0.05, the significant difference between the responses of the two groups of the teacher is nil. The teachers, overall in both the schools, are divided in their opinion. While a majority of 52% English medium teachers believe that students are capable of drawing rules from language examples, 65% of the Odia medium teachers express the contrary. Again, 34% of the Odia medium teachers opine that students are capable of drawing rules from examples concerning 48% of the English medium teachers who express the opposite opinion. It can be seen that the difference between the majority and minority opinion is very negligible.

Q6. Regular practice of grammatical rules before the learning of speaking skills should be ensured

Crosstab

| Regular practice of grammatical rules before the learning of speaking skills should be ensured. | Multiple choice options | Count | Teachers | | Total |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| | | | English | Odia | |
| | No | Count | 16 | 8 | 24 |
| | | % within Teachers | 64.0% | 30.8% | 47.1% |
| | Yes | Count | 9 | 18 | 27 |
| | | % within Teachers | 36.0% | 69.2% | 52.9% |
| | Total | Count | 25 | 26 | 51 |
| | | % within Teachers | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1.10

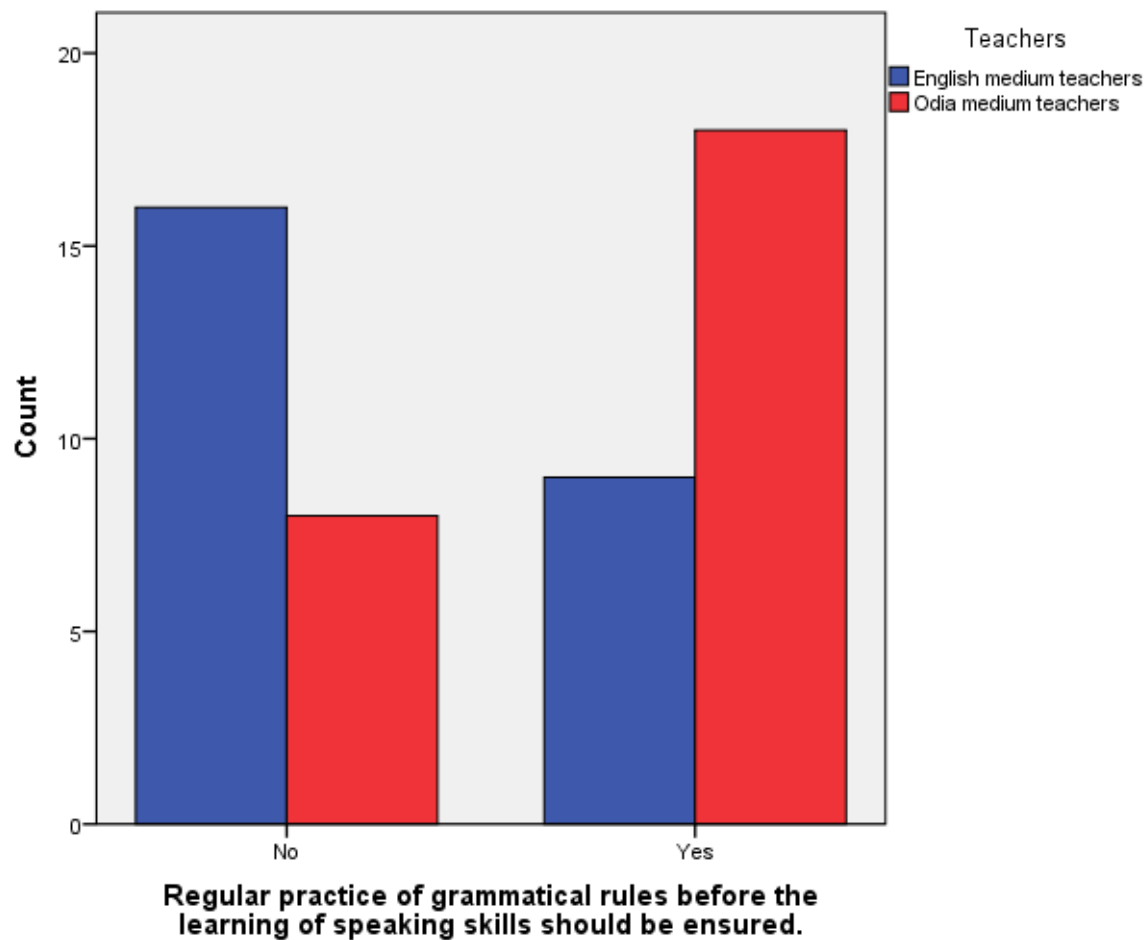


Figure 1.6

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5.649 ^a | 1 | .017 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | 4.394 | 1 | .036 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 5.757 | 1 | .016 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .025 | .018 |
| N of Valid Cases | 51 | | | | |

Table 1. 11

From the Table 1.10, we can observe that the value of Chi-square statistic was 5.649 and its corresponding p-value was $0.017 < 0.05$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that there was a significant difference in opinion of the English and other subject teachers in the regular practice of grammatical rules before the learning of speaking skills should be used.

Majority of English medium teachers did not agree to the statement that regular practice of grammatical rules before the learning of speaking skills should be ensured. On the contrary, a majority of the Odia medium school teachers agreed to it.

The inference from the above questions.

It can be seen from the above discussion that, the majority of the teachers from both the kinds of school follow a prescriptive notion of grammar teachers. They agreed on explaining grammar rules first and supporting it with examples. This shows that they practice the deductive method of grammar teaching. Baring a single question (Table 1.11), there was a congruity of opinion in regards to their responses.

In the question no. 1, about teaching of grammar, it was observed that majority teachers from both English medium and Odia schools agreed that rules of grammar must constantly be revised. This places their belief on the deductive way of grammar teaching.

In question no. 2, the teachers in both the schools disagreed on the point that repeated exercises are essential for learning grammar and denied the drill method for grammar teaching.

In question no 3, most of the teachers in both the schools overwhelmingly agreed that language examples help students to understand grammar rules. This bears the testimony to their belief in teaching through examples, i.e. the inductive method of grammar teaching.

However in question no 5, there was a stark difference in opinion of the two groups of teachers. Most of the teachers in the English medium schools agreed to the introduction of grammar rules followed by drawing the examples from it. This shows that the majority teachers in English medium schools believe in the practice of the inductive method of grammar teaching. Whereas the majority teachers in Odia medium schools denied the statement and placed their belief in the deductive method of grammar teaching. This inference was reinforced by the results in question no 5. Majority of the English medium teachers expressed their confidence in the student's ability to draw rules from language examples while most of the Odia medium teachers did not think so.

In question no.6, it was aimed to understand the underlying belief of the teacher with regards to learning of speaking skills. Most of the teachers from English medium schools denied the sequencing of grammar teaching before learning of speaking skills. The Odia medium

teachers, however, believed that grammar teaching must precede learning of speaking skills. This shows that Odia medium teachers practice a structural approach to language teaching. Structural approaches like GT method advocated the regular practice of grammar rules before fostering speaking skills.

Thus, we can conclude from the results that, there is a significant difference of opinion of English and Odia medium teachers with regards to grammar teaching and English medium school teachers believe in the inductive method of grammar teaching while Odia medium school teachers believe in the deductive method of grammar teaching.

Conclusion

Thus it was observed that there is a significant difference in the approaches of the two sets of teachers towards the teaching grammar. It can be noted that the Odia medium teachers follow a structural approach towards grammar teaching. They accord primacy on the learning of prescriptive grammatical structures. To the contrary, English medium teachers follow a functional approach towards grammar. There are several points of divergences in the approaches of the two sets of teachers.

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