THE CASE **FOR** GRAMMAR

* The sentence-machine argument

Only “item-learning” is not enough. There comes a time when we need to learn some patterns or rules to enable us to generate new sentences. That is to say, grammar. Grammar is a kind of sentence-making machine. The teaching of grammar offers learners the means for potentially limitless linguistic creativity.

* The fine-tuning argument

Written language needs to be more explicit than spoken language in order to avoid ambiguity. Therefore, the teaching of grammar serves as a corrective against ambiguity.

* The fossilization argument

Even if you are a highly-motivated learner to pick up certain elements of language, you reach a “language plateu” beyond which it is very difficult to progress. In other words, their linguistic competence fossilizes. Research suggests that learners who receive no instruction seem to be at risk of fossilizing sooner than those who do receive instruction.

* The advance organizer argument

Grammar instruction might have a delayed effect. During conversation with native speakers, certain features of talk might be noticed. Noticing is a prerequisite for acquisition.

* The discrete item hypothesis

Tidying language up and organizing it into neat categories (sometimes called discrete items) makes language digestible.

* The rule-of-law argument

Since grammar is a system of learnable rules, it lends itself to a view of teaching and learning known as transmission. A trnasmission view sees the role of education as the transfer of body knowledge (in the form of facts and rules) from those having the knowledge to those who do not.

THE CASE **AGAINST** GRAMMAR

* The knowledge how argument

Translating rules into language skills might be a problem in most cases. Therefore, you learn languages by doing, not by studying them. (experiential learning)

* The communication argument

Grammatical knowledge (linguistic competence) is merely one component of what is called communicative competence. (CLT)

Achieving the objectives of CLT requires putting language to communicative use.

* The acquisition argument

The distinction between learning and acquisition. Krashen states that learning results from formal instruction and is of limited use for real communication. Acquisition is a natural process. Success in a 2nd language is due to acquisition, not learning. Learnt knowledge can never become acquired knowledge.

* The natural order argument

Krashen’s acquisition/learning hypothesis drew heavily on studies suggesting that there is a natural order of acquisition of grammatical items. It derives partly from the work of Noam Chomsky. UG helps explain similarities in the development order in 1st lg acq as well as in 2nd lg acq.

* The lexical chunks argument

Language learning involves an element of item-learning like vocabulary, idiom, whole phrase and social formulae learning. However, learning them in the form of chunks plays an important role in language development. (lexical approach)