

# Issues in TESL

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

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*Ratnawati Mohd Asraf*



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# **THE THEORETICAL BASES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SYLLABUS DESIGN**

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The history of language teaching has been, to quite a large extent, the history of ideas concerning language teaching. It has been concerned with the conceptualization of the nature of language. It has been concerned with *what* aspects of language are to be taught—if they are to be taught at all - -and *how* language is to be taught. And it has been concerned with how best to develop language abilities. Of these issues, the one that has probably generated the most discussion has been that concerning the extent to which explicit knowledge about language on the part of the learner is a desirable or useful thing (Halliday, 1973). Indeed, the role of grammar in language teaching has been the subject of intense debate. “No other area of language arouses more passion and debate than grammar. Hate it or love it, everyone has views about it which are expressed with great vehemence” (Alexander, 1990; p. 379).

In the past thirty years, views regarding grammar and the emphasis to be given to grammar in language teaching started to shift. From being the centre of the pedagogic plan—a position that grammar had enjoyed for the entire 2,500 years of recorded language teaching (Rutherford, 1988), grammar assumed a secondary, and sometimes even nonexistent, role.