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## THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

*Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is premised on the assumption that learners do not need to be taught grammar before they can communicate but will acquire it naturally as part of the process of learning to communicate. In some versions of CLT, there is no place at all for the direct teaching of grammar. The goal of this paper is to show that it is possible to teach grammar with the opportunities for learners to communicate. Furthermore, it demonstrates the studies which have investigated the effects of formal instruction on the acquisition of grammar.*

**Keywords:** Foreign language teaching, communicative language teaching, grammar, linguistic competence, productive skills.

*Коммуникативное обучение языку (CLT) основано на предположении, что учащиеся не нужно обучать грамматике прежде чем они смогут общаться, они усвоят ее естественным образом в процессе обучения общению. В некоторых версиях CLT вообще нет места для непосредственного обучения грамматике. Цель этой статьи – показать, что можно преподавать грамматику, предоставляя учащимся возможность общаться. Кроме того, обращается внимание на исследования, в которых изучалось влияние формального обучения на овладение грамматикой.*

**Ключевые слова:** обучение иностранному языку, коммуникативное обучение языку, грамматика, языковая компетенция, продуктивные навыки.

There has been a continuing disagreement in foreign language (FL) teaching whether grammar should be taught or not. In some versions of CLT, there is no place at all for the direct teaching of grammar [1]. On the one hand, there are people who think grammar has no effect on acquisition of linguistic competence in a foreign language. For example, Krashen [2] argues that acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to rough input which they are able to understand and learning is restricted to gaining knowledge of a few rules. On the other hand, there are people who think that grammar should be taught for acquisition. White [3] implies that some grammatical forms cannot be learned on the basis of comprehensible input and formal teaching might be necessary for learners to acquire these forms.

When learners are participating in tasks which ask them to negotiate the meaning is considered to be essential. They are obtaining comprehensible input and produce output which promotes acquisition of linguistic competence. Moreover, it provides them with real situations to develop fluency.

The goal of this paper is to prove that it is possible to teach grammar with the opportunities for learners to communicate including exchanges of information. This can be done by providing learners with grammar tasks which need to be done interactively.

The following thoughts are based on studies which have investigated the effects of formal instruction on the acquisition of grammar. These studies propose the following statements:

Formal instruction facilitates FL acquisition and contributes to development of achievement [4].

Studies [1] suggest that formal instruction directed at grammatical structures has little result in natural language use.

Formal instruction is productive to develop clear knowledge of grammatical features.

Formal instruction can work when it is combined with opportunities for spontaneous communication.

Lock [5] noted that learners of foreign language understand grammar as a set of rules, which distinguish the sentences grammatical and ungrammatical. Instead it is better to learn grammar as a system of communication, in other words, they need to focus on relevance of communicative purpose.

When learners want to use the language effectively they need to understand grammar more than form and structure of the language. It shows them what it is for and how it is used [5]. He continued formal and functional grammar differs in their assumptions. Formal analysis is interested in relationships with structures and less interested in meaning and context. Functional analysis regards language as a communicative resource and is interested in how structures express meaning. Learners think that grammar is a resource for creating meaning in spoken and written forms. Learners who prefer formal approach to grammatical analysis work with the texts that have been demonstrated many different rules rather than sentences that brought from real- life situations.

One of the important goals of communicative language teaching is to provide learners with opportunities to interact through exchanging meaning [6]. This approach is focused on components of communicative competence and not on grammatical competence because it aims to keep learners engaged in language use.

It suggests that grammar can be learned better if it is included in functional categories. One of the important characteristics of CLT is the use of authentic

materials [6]. They provide learners with opportunities to develop their language as it is used in real life. The choice of which authentic material to use in the classroom largely depends on learners' language level. For instance, doing activities after watching the news on TV can be used among high- intermediate learners while doing activities through watching a weather forecast on TV might be suitable for learners with low language level.

Freeman [6] continues when learners concentrate on functions they use their four skills from the beginning. They read the text and negotiate meaning through interaction with each other. Target language is used even in explanation of activities or appointing homework. Learners have a chance to learn a language even from these little exchanges that occur every day in the classroom. In function focused classrooms learners; limited knowledge of grammar or linguistic forms are tolerated unless they can communicate successfully through negotiating meaning.

When learners are concentrated only on form they might not be able to use the language outside the classroom because they were not using the language communicatively but they knew the rules of grammar [6]. In other words, using the language communicatively requires learners to perform functions. More importantly it requires communicative competence.

Communicative competence enables us to carry and explain messages and to negotiate meanings in particular contexts. In language teaching classrooms communicative competence is the goal of language teaching. In this classroom instructions are in the target language. Learners can use their predictions in learning a language. They are creative in coming up with their own ideas. Group work, linguistic games, problem solving activities, role plays and negotiation of meaning are encouraged. Learners' errors are ignored and considered as natural outcomes of the improvement of communication.

According to Freeman [6] the teacher is considered as a facilitator and advisor during communication activities. The grammar is followed from the function in learning a language. When learners learn to communicate in the target language they need to be aware of the knowledge of forms, meanings and functions. They need to know that many different forms can perform a single function and also one form can deliver a variety of functions. For example, «He may come», «He might come» or «Perhaps he will come». These sentences perform a single function, predicting through many forms. Likewise, the sentence «It may rain today» is used to make prediction while «You may sit» gives permission.

Being able to come up with grammatically correct structures does not enable learners to use the language in real life tasks [7]. They have to build grammatically correct structures but they also need to know about speech situations

in which they occur. By doing so, learners are producing the language that is influenced by different situations.

Communicative approach is used in many different contexts. The classroom should not be spent on language drills or controlled practice. Instead learners need to do activities whose language will be useful for them to use outside the classroom.

A survey [7] on communicative language teaching revealed that communicative approaches to language teaching can be differentiated from traditional approaches to language teaching.

In traditional approaches type of language used tends to be formal and deeply relied on books while in communicative approaches real-life, everyday language is stressed. For the teachers who participated in the survey the idea of communicative language teaching was prominent.

I have learned English more concentrated on forms of language. Teachers used grammar translation method to teach English. In the classroom we always used to read literature. Teacher's goal for teaching English was to teach us learn to read in a target language. Freeman [6] claimed reading a literature is different to spoken language and culture of the target language is restricted to its content.

Also we had to translate the literature we have read into our language. It meant for the teacher and us that we have learnt English successfully. It was not appropriate because words and phrases can be difficult to translate especially phrasal words and idioms. Using dictionaries every time we encountered new words was time consuming. Besides that, it did not allow us to use our predictions to find meaning from the context. We were dependent on dictionaries and it was difficult to choose the right meaning if the word had plenty of meanings.

The lessons were concentrated more on reading and writing but not on listening and speaking. When we spoke we were reproducing a given text. Maybe it is because learning to communicate was not the goal for learning English.

The most important aspect to learn a language was to study about form of English. Furthermore the teacher checked our knowledge of English through the vocabulary and grammar that we have memorized. Freeman [6] compared this to a mental exercise. Also, learners should be aware of the grammatical rules of the target language. Learning grammar was a deductive process; we were given the grammar rules examples which we had to memorize and asked to show that we have learnt through written and spoken forms. Grammar was introduced to us in our language. Example sentences within grammar rules were also translated into native language (L1). Besides that activity, instructions and assigning homework were also in L1.

Ellis [1] implied formal instruction and communicative language teaching can be put together through the use of grammar tasks which develop commu-

nication about grammar. They develop knowledge of FL grammar and provide opportunities to interact through exchange of information.

Language teachers tend to require from students written like language, where sentence structure is clear. Speaking however is different to writing and it contains forms that would be regarded ungrammatical in writing. This happens a lot in our communication but we still understand each other's speech through negotiation of meaning. So, our speech did not have to be perfect as it should be in written form.

Language teachers who wish to encourage natural talk of their learners need to adapt their standards when they correct learners [8]. Besides this they need to use various types of spoken discourse (phone calls, opening bank account, chat shows and etc) because with the help of these activities learners will produce output which is similar to natural talk.

Lock [5] claimed the most practical classroom application of functional descriptions of language was established in functional syllabus. In this approach grammar which was the primary attention in structural syllabus, was regarded as a secondary focus. Curriculum was organized according to those functions, giving permission, inviting, etc. This syllabus remains today in qualified form and a typical textbook would have certain list (introducing yourself, exchanging personal information or asking for repetition of names) of functions in a particular sequence.

The study among ESL learners was set up to investigate to what extent the grammar task was successful in developing an explicit knowledge of language and also whether the task produced interaction which facilitates FL acquisition [1]. The study revealed that the students' knowledge of the grammar was gained through performance of the task activity and even fewer students could show significant proficiency in their target language.

These activities not only practice their linguistic competence but also develop their strategic competence, which gradually extend the learners' language proficiency by establishing more creative and supportive environments.

Activities like role-play are usually considered to develop productive skills of the learners [1]. Giving focus on productive skills has been evaluated as one of the most communicative way of teaching a language. It is supposed that one learns best when he/she is able to produce words in the target language.

At the beginning levels of foreign language learners in a comprehension approach, are not required to speak the language for several months [9]. This is because it allows them to develop their receptive skills before using the language. I think this is very useful for beginners as it reduces their pressure and anxiety to speak a foreign language when they are just starting to learn.

Teachers can make teaching grammar if not fun but at least interesting. Language consists of two things, words (clothing of the language) and a grammar (the bones of the language) [10]. If someone had learned the language the old fashioned way, he/she had to learn verb endings as rules and without any conversational drills which is not fun and not useful. An up-to-date language course will let learners to learn a few patterns of sentences and they can learn something about grammar. These rules let learners to manipulate the grammar of L2.

Further Fuller [10] compared learning the grammar with learning to drive a car. He explains nobody thinks that he can drive until he/she learns to manipulate all parts of the car. This is the same with the language. You can learn a lot of words and sentences, but until you know how to use them in different ways and change them, you cannot think that you know the language.

This paper argued that grammar tasks may help to FL acquisition in two ways. They may help by providing opportunities to communicate which is considered to develop the acquisition of implicit knowledge. Also they may help learners to develop explicit knowledge of FL grammar rules which will promote the acquisition later.

The study which was undergone among EFL learners showed that they were able to improve their knowledge of FL rule by performing grammar tasks. Besides learning about grammar by doing the tasks learners also had the opportunity to communicate through exchanging information.

It is important to note that peer and group work can have an effect on development of explicit knowledge. The grammar tasks produce a great number of interactional adjustments. Grammar tasks which stressed the development of cognition seemed to be the efficient type of classroom activity, and their use is supported by the way a second language is acquired.

Moreover, these tasks provide an important content and they encourage learners who believe that learning about grammar is important in second language acquisition. They give a chance for learners to communicate in the FL in small groups or pairs, and they motivate active, exploring participation from learners which fits current views about good learning.

Grammar tasks may have their restrictions. Some learners may find grammar boring or difficult to learn because they might not have the basic linguistic knowledge. Learners may rely on their target language when performing the tasks. It is possible that some grammar tasks might not be appropriate for beginner level learners because they might not be able to speak in the second language. Grammar tasks are suitable for intermediate or advanced learners who are motivated to learn about grammar.

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