

**THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE
TEACHING**

Approved 

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**THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE
TEACHING**

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ABSTRACT

There has been an essential teaching method in the teaching of grammar in China. This method makes the student learning more lifeless and lowers study efficiency. This paper mainly relates to grammar and its application in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This paper reconsiders the functions of the traditional English grammar teaching and the Communicative Language Teaching. Through analysis and practice, I think that they are not opposed to each other. In order to improve the students' ability and gain better teaching results, the two kinds of teaching approaches should not be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, teachers should combine them together and use them flexibly in their teaching work.

The following aspects are addressed in this paper: 1. The Practice of Communicative Language Teaching Approach; 2. The Concept of Sociolinguistic Competence; 3. The Theory of Task-based CLT; 4. the Misunderstanding of the Way of Improving Linguistic Competence; 5. the Concept of Linguistic Competence; 6. The Misunderstanding of Grammar Teaching Method; and 7. the Comparison of Teaching Effect.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in Chinese traditional teaching method grammar has an important position. Thus, many teachers have not used Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT). In 1970's, interest in the teaching of language has increased, as teachers and scholars have become more and more interested in the language used in various social and cultural settings. The focus of CLT is simply to communicate. If the student has communicated to the teacher so the teacher understands him or her that is the initial goal. In China, this interest began in 1980's after the state's implementation of the opening policy. As a result, there has been a rapid shift of research and practice from grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods to the exploration of communicative language teaching, and much attention has been paid to focusing on global and integrative tasks, rather than on discrete structures. Again, the goal is to communicate, not necessarily to communicate with the best grammatical phrasing.

In recent years, teachers of foreign languages in many countries, including China, have been encouraged to adopt an approach known as communicative language teaching (CLT). This approach advocates the development of communicative competence as a primary goal via the extensive use of the foreign language as a means of communication during classroom sessions. Understandably, education authorities and teacher educators are keen to know what teachers understand by CLT and how well they have incorporated this

approach into their foreign language teaching. Since the concept of CLT is a Western idea and methodology, seemingly it might be ill-suited to other contexts such as in China where teaching methods usually require memorization and recitation. In addition, immense misunderstanding surrounds its theory and practice. As such, this exploratory study seeks to investigate the attitude of Chinese high school and institute teachers toward CLT and the amount of time they practice the approach.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed is “What is the relationship between Grammar Teaching (GT) and Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT) in Mastering English Grammar and communicative abilities?”

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and the Library at SCUN, and also will be conducted in internet website.

Method of Approach

The findings of a brief review of relationship between Grammar Teaching (GT) and Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT) in mastering English grammar and communication will be summarized and recommendations made.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is Grammar?

Grammar is the system of a language and is described as the rules of language. It is a field of linguistics that involves all the various things that make up the rules of language. Subfields of linguistics that are considered a part of grammar include syntax, phonetics, morphology, and semantics.

Do students of language need to study grammar to learn a language? The short answer is "no". Many people in the world speak their own native language without having studied its grammar. Children start to speak before they even know the word "grammar". But serious students of a language need grammar to help to learn a language more quickly and more efficiently. It's important to think of grammar as something that can help, like a friend.

What is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It is also referred to as “communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages” or simply the “Communicative Approach”.

The Practice of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

The concept of sociolinguistic competence

Sociolinguistic competence means the ability that the students can use the proper language on different occasions. How to help students express what they want to say? CLT thinks providing them the language situation in the classroom is the best way. Hence, there is a need create all kinds of situations in classroom to let students practice.

The theory of task-based CLT

Task-based teaching is an important way of CLT. The original impetus for task-based teaching came from Bangalore Project, which acted both against the traditional form of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) used in India and the type of communicative teaching at that time. The main reason for this approach was to combat the prevalent refusal to recognize the classroom as a “real” situation. A real classroom has activities that are proper for educational tasks. The tasks are defined not linguistically but in an order based on difficulty. “The whole-class activity consists of a pedagogic dialogue in which the teacher’s questions are, as in other classrooms, invitations to the students to demonstrate their ability as learners, not from assumed roles in simulated situations or from their individual lives outside the classroom”. Educational value depends on the validity of the tasks and their usefulness as vehicles for the students.

The Misunderstanding of the Way of Improving Linguistic Competence

The concept of linguistic competence

The language competence means that one has a good knowledge of grammar and words, he or she can speak, read and write grammatically correct in a foreign language. In conversation, if mistakes were made in one's pronunciation, grammar or words spelling, it will lead to misunderstanding and boredom to others, and even damage their relationship. If we only understand what others say partially and superficially, the communication of ideas can't be properly realized. Therefore, our purpose in teaching is to improve the students' communicative competence, that is to say, we should try to enhance the students' capability of using language in communication in a correct way. It is crystal-clear that the improvement of communicative competence should be based on language practice.

The misunderstanding of grammar teaching method

The British linguist Widdowson(1978) once pointed out that the speech activity has two levels, one is to regard listening, speaking, reading and writing as a means by which the students can grasp the rules of the language after repeated practices. The other is to regard listening, speaking, reading and writing as the ultimate purpose of teaching by which the students can use the language in communication in reality. Some teachers believe that it is good to limit their students only by improving the communicative competence of their students. They pay little attention to the grammatical structure of their students' speaking. This is only one side of the coin. We all know that grammar is not only the core of a language, but a theoretical tool in regulating language. Those above-mentioned teachers ignore this idea; they pay their attentions only to the

communicative function of the language and reject grammar. If a teacher teaches the students in communicative training blindly and fails to help them to summarize the characteristics of the sentence and compare it with other new sentences at proper time, the result will surely be that the students can't fully understand the new sentence and mistakes are unavoidable when they use it. Some teachers think it is enough to explain knowledge and drill sentences because they are always worried that their students can't master the new knowledge. They do not even suspect the role of CLT, and mistakenly believe that the CLT is only used for strengthening the students' oral expression, and not for improving their grammar ability. Their students, therefore, can only have linguistic ability and are unable to have sociolinguistic ability. Sociolinguistics is the study of language as it affects and is affected by social relations. Sociolinguistics encompasses a broad range of concerns, including bilingualism and other ways that language use is influenced by contact among people of different language communities. Sociolinguists also examine different dialects, accents, and levels of diction in light of social distinctions among people. Although accent refers strictly to pronunciation, in practice a dialect can usually be identified by the accent of its speakers as well as by distinctive words, usages, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical features (R. A. Hudson). Students can't put the knowledge into practice well in their daily life. The purpose of CLT is to enhance not only the sociolinguistic ability but also the linguistic ability of the students so the ideas of both above-mentioned teachers are both one-sided. They regard grammar teaching as conflicting with communicative activities. These two groups of teachers are

unable to understand that both ideas are closely related to each other, and they see only one side of the coin instead of two and inevitably go to extremes.

The Comparison of Teaching Effect

How to teach students the grammar with the CLT?

The two principles provided by CLT

(1) Grammar ability is a part of the communicative competence. Static and closed grammar should subordinate itself to the dynamic, open and creative communication. Grammar is nothing but a tool for teaching. Only by accurately understanding the role of grammar in English teaching, neither exaggerating it nor underestimating it, can we eventually come to a good result in grammar teaching.

(2) The relationship between grammar competence and communicative competence is that between “absorbing” and “practicing”. First, knowledge comes from practice. Students are required to participate in the reading and listening activities to observe and understand the structure and function of the grammar. After that, they should summarize the rule of grammar together with their teachers, and absorb the sentence easily in this way. Secondly, teachers should make “absorbing” in accordance with “practicing”, and help students to use the newly learned grammar in all kinds of “practicing” to make them understand.

How to successfully apply this theory to grammar teaching?

Class A:

(1) Practice—creating an environment of listening and reading. Listening and reading is the first step for students to get in touch with new sentence patterns and

grammar. After listening and reading exercises in classes, students will get familiar with the new sentence patterns and grammar little by little, and gradually give up their strange feelings of them. So listening and reading is the best way for students to make their acquaintance with the new sentence patterns and grammar.

(2) Absorbing—creating the environment of questioning

It's a kind of environment that students are absorbed in questions, and they must find the answers by themselves. The problem is that they can't do this if they don't work hard. The effective process in study is thinking. To begin with, the expectations and motives of thinking must rely on purpose. A question is a purpose. It means to give students a real goal and to spark their thought to create a good environment of questioning. In this way, students will change their passive language into active language absorbing.

At the same time, it is also the process in which the teachers should give the students proper guidance.

(3) Practice—creating the environment of activities

It means that teachers should try their best to give students a chance to speak and let them engage in activities in simulated environment. This kind of practice can excite the enthusiasms and initiatives of students. It needs a coordinated cooperation of students' sense organs to get ideal results in grammar rule. Therefore, we should give a certain period of time for students to make practical activities of this kind as much as possible. As the old proverb goes, practice makes perfect. We can say that the creation of the simulated environment of activities is of great importance and significance.

Class B:

The teacher used only two methods creating the environment of listening, reading and doing some kinds of activities. In the first term, teacher hardly taught students grammar. Instead, teacher focused on oral drilling and activities. In classes, students made mistakes quite often, because they couldn't grasp the rule of language. It was a very serious problem because they were unable to use the language they had learned. There is one point that calls for our attention—the emphasis played by CLT on the grammar teaching must be appropriate. If teachers give their students directions at the key points of grammar teaching and tell them how to sum up the rules, students will certainly bring the painted dragon to life by putting in the pupils of its eyes—add the touch that brings work of art to life. By this way, students' linguistic and communicative competence can be greatly improved. Therefore, we must teach our students grammar properly and should not separate it from communication. “We should put the language teaching into the larger framework of the CLT, and carry out language teaching through the communicative activities that is centered on communicative item. Hence we can bring into full play its strong points and overcome its weak points.”

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

How to better teach grammar in the CLT? Teachers should not ignore grammar teaching while they put CLT in place. We should help students to sum up the rules of grammar, and at the same time closely link them with their daily life. Meanwhile, in real or half-real language atmosphere, it is important for the English teachers to make use of all kinds of teaching ways to create the communicative practical activities among students. The idea of practicing while learning and learning from practicing will make students use language to communicate more effectively. Originally, the terms grammar and grammatical, referred to the art of writing, as compared to rhetoric and rhetorical, the art of speaking. As used today by many teachers and learners, grammar is loosely understood to be a set of rules that govern language, primarily its morphology and syntax. But morphology and syntax are only two components of grammar. Communicative language teaching has brought a renewed emphasis on the role that semantics plays in the definition of language. Communicative language teaching is fundamentally concerned with 'making meaning' in the language, whether by interpreting someone else's message, expressing one's own, or negotiating when meaning is unclear. Viewing grammar with all of its components helps us as language teachers understand the complexity of what it means to know the grammar of a language. Clearly, the goal of language learning in the communicative classroom is for learners to acquire the grammar of the second language in its broadest sense, to enable them to understand and make

meaning; that is, to become proficient users of the second language.

I think the purpose of teachers work is to develop the student's capability. And Chinese English Teaching Outline also stipulates that the English teaching aims at making students acquire basic knowledge of a foreign language as well as the communicative competence by way of listening, speaking, reading and writing. All forms of purposeful language, spoken or written, we can give students a chance and condition to acquire the knowledge of grammar. And the grammar ability will help the students to understand and make spoken and written language correct. The grammar ability will also enable students to express themselves accurately and fluently in the course of using the language and to improve their communicative competence. From the above we can see that it is not logical to think that the grammar ability is opposed to the communicative competence.

In conclusion, research and experience have shown that explicit teaching of grammatical rules, even if were able to formulate them all, does not produce such competence.

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