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COMMUNICATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Sarvinoz Zuhriddinovna Haydarova

Namangan Institute of Engineering and Technology English language teacher

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COMMUNICATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Cover Page Footnote

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Erratum

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ИНГЛИЗ ТИЛИ ГРАММАТИКАСИНИ ЎРГАТИШДА КОММУНИКАТИВ МЕТОДЛАР

Хайдарова Сарвиноз Зухриддиновна
Наманган муҳандислик технология институти
инглиз тили фани ўқитувчи

Аннотация: Тил ўргатишнинг коммуникатив (CLT) жорий этилганидан буюн кўплаб дарсликлар, шу жумладан, коммуникатив фаолият, оригинал материаллар ва шахсий контекстлар ёзилди. Бироқ, грамматикани ўқитиш ва ўргатиш борасида кўпгина дарсликлар CLT тамойилларини ақс эттирмайди. Мазкур мақола турли методларни назарда тутуди, шунинг учун грамматик машгулотлар таркибий ўқув дастурларининг айрим амалиётларини сақлаб қолиш орқали, янада коммуникатив бўлиши мумкин.

Калит сўзлар: коммуникатив принцип, коммуникатив ёндашув, коммуникатив қобилият, коммуникатив контекст, аниқ, оптимум, ақлли, “онгни ўстириш” топшириги, биринчи даражали ахамият(лилик).

КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ГРАММАТИКИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Хайдарова Сарвиноз Зухриддиновна
Наманганский инженерно-технологический институт
преподаватель английского языка

Аннотация: Со времени введения Коммуникативного Языкового Обучения (CLT) было написано много учебников, включающих в себя коммуникативную деятельность, аутентичные материалы и персонализированный контекст. Однако в том, что касается преподавания и изучения грамматики, большинство учебников не отражают принципы CLT. В этой статье предлагаются различные методы, чтобы грамматические действия можно было сделать коммуникативными, сохранив некоторые практики структурной программы.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативный принцип, коммуникативный подход, коммуникативная компетентность, коммуникативный контекст, явный, неявный, оптимум, рассудительный, задача повышения сознания, первостепенный.

COMMUNICATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Haydarova Sarvinoz Zuhriddinovna
Namangan Institute of Engineering and Technology
English language teacher

Abstract: Since the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), many textbooks have been written to incorporate communicative activities, authentic materials and personalized contexts. However, where the teaching and learning of grammar is concerned, most textbooks do not reflect CLT principles. This article suggests different methods so that grammar activities can be made more communicative by retaining some practices of the structural syllabus.

Key words: *communicative principle, communicative approach, communicative competence, communicative context, explicit, implicit, optimum, judicious, "consciousness-raising" task, paramount.*

1. Introduction. Learning the grammar of a foreign language is important if you want to speak the language correctly. Nevertheless, the grammar of a foreign language can be tricky and not at all resembling the one of your mother tongue. That is why you need to be very well acquainted with your own grammar structures and only then try to learn another grammar.

English grammar is not very difficult, although at first it appears to cause confusion. Grammar knowledge can be achieved through a lot of work and exercises, or even games. Of course it is a lot better if the student starts to learn it when he is very young - at a young age information is stored a lot faster - so that in high school, and later at university, new and difficult information can be placed on a solid base, thus reinforcing the student's ability to communicate more easily in the foreign language.

Knowing only the theory of the English grammar is not enough, as a set of rules cannot help you communicate unless you have practice using them. Most teachers make the mistake of teaching a lot of rules and forget the essential part: exercises, games, assignments - in other words, their focus is mainly on the theory of the language rather than on its practice. In order to attract a student towards a foreign language you must also make grammar seem more accessible by using all the practice methods you can get. Teachers must always remember that only practice makes you better.

What also helps is talking to foreigners (Americans, British, whatever they might be) as you get the chance to see English grammar in action this way. They use grammar constructions, sometimes sophisticated ones, without even thinking about the way they were formed, they use a tense without thinking what it might express, they use a language without being able to explain some of its grammar rules.

Over the past years emphasis has been laid on traditional methods, teachers trying to attempt only recently new modern methods, all these attempts being considered to make the student become more interested in the English language. But the question that comes up is the following: are we sure that these methods actually work? We all know that the traditional way of teaching is very relaxing for a student - he is not forced to think too much, he just writes the information, and then uses it in exercises. The modern methods make students put their brain to use, communicate better, engage in conversation, thus acquiring the new knowledge during the English classes, at school.

Starting from the hypothesis that traditional methods do not exactly help the student learn English more easily and that they definitely do not make the English class very enjoyable, I am going to prove in the following pages that modern methods help a student understand and improve grammar more easily and in a more entertaining way than the traditional ones. All these modern activities are meant to widen the students' horizon and make them realize that grammar is not only theory, but also practice and fun.

Fez – The teaching of grammar has always stirred controversy among researchers. Historically, the question of whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly has always been hotly debated; while the deductive method is traditionally associated with

the dreaded grammar-based approaches, the inductive method is closely linked to the communication-based approaches which have won momentum, nowadays.

However, recent studies in the field of second language acquisition have revealed that, just like the grammar-based approaches were inadequate due to their sole focus on form, the communicative-based approaches, too, have many inadequacies, crucial of which is their mere focus on meaning-based instruction. Therefore, these negative reactions have resulted in the development of a new grammar teaching approach that combines both perspectives, namely focus-on-form instruction to cater for the weaknesses of each approach. This article seeks to discuss the issue of focus-on-form instruction in communicative language teaching. First, it aims at establishing a background to the issue. Second, it attempts to provide a definition of focus-on-form instruction and its main principles. Third, it gives some benefits of the focus-on-form instruction. Last, it presents some practical activities for implementing it.

Approaches to grammar teaching have undergone many changes and fluctuations. These changes that have characterized the teaching of grammar are ascribed not only to the changes in the research findings conducted on this issue, but also due to the movement from grammar-based approaches to communicative approaches. The latter put its primary focus on meaning and the implicit teaching of grammatical rules. As far as the grammar-based approaches, they are built on the assumption that through teaching grammar exclusively, the learners will be able to fully master the target language. As Nassaji & Fotos put it, "One of the major assumptions that underlie traditional grammar based approaches is that language consists of a grammatical forms and structures that can be acquired successively" (2011) [1]. Put differently, if the learner is exposed to the grammatical forms of a language in a sequential manner, he or she will end up acquiring the language. The most renowned grammar-based approaches are traditional translation and audio-lingual methods. Though they differ in many respects, these methods share the assumption that language is best learned through the explicit grammar instruction. These approaches have been put into question with the advent of the communicative movement.

Unlike the grammar-based approaches, the communicative approaches are based on the idea that language is best learned through communication, not via the mechanical presentation of grammatical forms. The communicative approaches have disregarded the explicit use of grammar rules in teaching grammar. This has led to a shift from form-focused instruction to meaning-focused instruction [1]. The exclusive focus on grammar instruction has been found to be inadequate to develop learners' ability to perform in oral communication. Furthermore, many researchers have attested to the fact that language teaching cannot be limited solely to grammar teaching. This is so because the explicit teaching of grammar does not result in fluency. In the same vein, Hymes' theory of communicative competence (1972) has been very influential in the development of communicative language teaching, which puts the development of students' communicative competence as its primary goal [2]. The communicative competence asserts that knowledge of a language not only lies in knowing the grammatical forms of that language, but also of knowing how to use them appropriately in different communication contexts.

Nevertheless, given that each of these approaches focuses only on either the form or meaning while turning a blind eye on the other one, they have both been found to be ineffective on their own. Researchers have come up with ample evidence that assert the importance of the inclusion of both components, i.e. form and meaning in language teaching. For instance, Krashen's *Monitor Theory* (1981) accentuates the interrelatedness of explicit and implicit knowledge, as does *Language Awareness Movement*, which emphasizes the importance of explicit teaching and reflection on language structures [3]. Simply put, both explicit and implicit knowledge are equally important. Therefore, many educators have argued that communicative approaches should revisit its goals and thus incorporate both form and meaning.

2. Focus on Form Instruction: The growing dissatisfaction with both grammar and communicative approaches to teaching grammar has led Long (1991) to propose an approach which he termed *Focus on Form instruction* (henceforth FonF) [4]. According to Long, this approach is distinguished from a *focus on forms* instruction, which is associated with grammar-based approaches, and a *focus on meaning* instruction, which is the instruction employed by communicative approaches and that pays no attention to form. In contrast, FonF instruction tends to combine both positions through drawing students' attention to grammatical forms in communicative contexts (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011) [1].

According to Long (1991) [4], FonF instruction is an approach that "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long as cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2011: 11) [1]. The concept emphasizes an incidental focus on explicit grammatical forms to direct learners' attention to various linguistic features of their language along with making them aware of the linguistic forms of their utterances while conforming to the communicative practices. Similarly, the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching* defines Focus on Form as follows: "In a more technical sense, focus on form has been defined as a brief allocation of attention to linguistic form as the need for this arises incidentally, in the context of communication" (C. Richards & Schmidt, 2002) [5]. In view of this, FonF grammar instruction attempts to combine the teaching of communication with the teaching of grammatical structures (Larsen-freeman, 2001) [6]. Such type of instruction represents an optimal position. While it adheres to the communicative principles, it also gives due importance to the place of explicit teaching of grammatical items in language learning.

2.1 Benefits of Focus on Form instruction: The Focus on Form instruction yields many beneficial outcomes in communicative contexts. First and foremost, Focus on Form instruction draws students' attention to grammatical forms and aspects that might go unnoticed if the focus is put solely on meaning. Another benefit of Fonf's instruction is that students will be able to increase their noticing as well as monitoring capacity while engaging in communicative tasks. Differently stated, not only will they manage to attain fluency, but also accuracy. In addition, Focus on Form instruction is also beneficial in making students become creative in terms of coming up with new structures (Larsen-freeman, 2001) [6]. More importantly, this type of instruction contributes to the development of meta-linguistic awareness, not only of the target language, but also of that of native language. To achieve these benefits, effective classroom activities are needed.

2.2 Activities for doing Focus on Form instruction: Focus on Form is closely linked with task-based style, and it is used as a follow-up activity to alert students' attention to explicit formal aspects of language (Cook, V. 2008) [7]. In task-based language teaching style, Focus on Form tasks attempt to alert students' attention to the grammatical forms in an optimum and judicious manner, since focusing merely on meaning may not help students induce the rules from the input and some structures or rules may escape their attention. This approach is based on input-processing and consciousness-raising tasks (Larsen-freeman, 2001) [6]. Using these processes, the teacher makes his or her students aware of certain grammatical forms whilst engaging in communicative tasks. As Cook puts it, "by letting language form in through the back door" (Cook, V. 2008) [7].

Conclusion. Generally, there is a wide range of activities and techniques developed by different scholars. Some activities make use of classical exercises or activities in bringing students' attention to form such as translation, dictation, and rote memorization (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011) [1], while others attempt to develop communicative ones such as "noticing" tasks (i.e. learners are asked to notice and underline grammatical aspects in a texts or statements), "consciousness-raising" tasks (i.e. learners complete an helped to discover how the target language structure works by analyzing texts), "checking" tasks (i.e. learners are asked to complete an activity to check if they have understood how the structure of the target language works), etc. Although these activities are aimed at making grammar forms salient to learners, this is always achieved through communicative tasks. Such tasks are designed in such a way that they promote learners' awareness of the grammatical forms of the target language along with engaging them in communicative interaction. Together these activities can enhance the learners' target language development and awareness.

In a nutshell, Focus on Form instruction is the most recent method of teaching grammar that attempts to bring together both form and meaning in the course of teaching. This method is built on the assumption that a return to form is inevitable in grammar teaching and that any teaching of grammar that tends to turn a blind eye to the teaching of grammatical aspects of language is doomed to be inadequate. For this reason, Focus on Form instruction stresses that both form and meaning are of paramount importance to language development and, therefore, they should be used in an optimum and judicious manner in order for learners to be able to develop both fluency and accuracy.

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