

COMMUNICATIVE GRAMMAR TEACHING: AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: *“...the place of grammar in the language classroom is currently rather uncertain. This uncertainty has been brought about with the development of communicative approaches to language teaching.” (Nunan:1991, 143)*

The conventional approaches of teaching grammar, such as PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) and TTT (Test, Teach, Test), having become outdated. Today it has become essential to integrate grammar instruction with the teaching of the LSRW skills in the contexts of a fixed curriculum. In such a scenario, teachers have to adapt the course materials and integrate communicative grammar tasks in such a way that the learners do something in the class which they would probably do in everyday life using the target language as their own. It is essential to encourage the learners to use English in the class, as they use their language in everyday life. In my own context as an English teacher I have seen learners reluctant to use English in the classroom due to fear. It is essential to draw away the attention of the learners from form and structures in order to enable them to use English. A balance is required between fluency, which a task can provide and accuracy which is provided by the teacher through feedback. Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) not only aims integrate all four (LSRW) skills but it also enables a movement from fluency to accuracy. The main advantage of TBLT is that language is used for genuine purposes as in real-life situations. The learners are required to think about language forms in general to use, unlike the conventional method of grammar teaching. “Best way to learn about TBLT is DO it.” – Jane Willis

Key Words: PPP Model, TTT Model, TBLT Model, Inductive approach, CLT, LSRW Skills, Grammmaring, Experiential learning

“Metaphorically, learning another language by this method is like constructing a wall. The language wall is erected one linguistic ‘brick’ at a time. The easy grammatical bricks are laid at the bottom of the wall, providing a foundation for the more difficult ones. The task for the learner is to get the linguistic bricks in the right order: first the word bricks, and then the sentence bricks. If the bricks are not in the correct order, the wall will collapse under its own ungrammaticality.” (Nunan, 1998:108)

Presently the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is used extensively and considered the best to teach different language skills, but not for teaching grammar.

For a long time, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was the most commonly used approach to teach and learn languages. In a typical GTM class, grammar is taught deductively: the teacher presents the grammar rules, explains them giving examples (usually a list of isolated statements). The learners learn the rules and practice grammar through translation exercises. It is a teacher-oriented class, where lot of attention is paid to reading and writing and very less to speaking and listening. The goal is to achieve accuracy that is, producing grammatically correct sentences. GTM became unpopular with time as learners translated sentences, knew the grammar rules, but could not communicate in the target language. As is the case of the vernacular medium students; they are acquainted with the grammar rules but are unable to implement the rules while communicating in English.

If the learners get an opportunity to use any and all of the language that they can, by performing tasks they learn better. CLT focuses more on the content than on the form. The focus is on the realistic use of language in context. The focus is more on fluency than accuracy. It involves active learning and teaching. However, CLT is not considered an effective approach to teach grammar, as it was meant to provide opportunities to learners to use English (Target language) for communicative purposes and learn grammar, if at all, by inductive approach that is, guided approach.

However, a more recent version of CLT, deals with grammar through ‘focus on form’, that is bringing grammar to the attention of the language learner as a part of communicative language practice. Rather than focussing only on grammar for grammar’s sake, making the learners aware of grammar structures/features while engaged in completing communicative tasks can contribute to the development of greater accuracy in

communication. The teacher acts as the facilitator by creating situations that enable communication and the use of target grammar structure.

It has often been noticed that learners are taught grammar in a linear pattern as a set of rules, and when the learners are asked to apply these set of rules as grammar exercises, for instance, fill in the blanks, they are able to do it, but when they are required to use the same to communicate in a different part of the text or outside the classroom, they are unable to transfer the language. The learners tend to learn the grammar item and forget. As Nunan points out, learners do not acquire a language in a 'step-by-step, building block fashion suggested by the linear model'. (1998: 101)

The problem can be solved if teachers start treating grammar as the fifth language skill. This can be done if the teachers address the three dimensions of grammar: form, content and use, which can be done only when the teacher provides the learners opportunities to use grammar in meaningful and engaging activities.

"In textbooks, grammar is very often presented out of context. Learners are given isolated sentences, which they are expected to internalize through exercises involving repetition, manipulation, and grammatical transformation. These exercises are designed to provide learners with formal, declarative mastery, but unless they provide opportunities for learners to explore grammatical structures in context, they make the task of developing procedural skill—being able to use the language for communication—more difficult than it needs to be, because learners are denied the opportunity of seeing the systematic relationships that exist between form, meaning, and use." (Nunan, 1998:102)

Teaching grammar communicatively is not a mechanical process, like the traditional method of asking the learners to focus on definitions and rules, but rather attention is paid on imparting instructional strategies where the focus is on creative use of grammar. There are no fixed ways in which grammar can be presented effectively in classroom. It depends on the requirements of the learners, age, cultural context, and the curriculum at hand. While deciding an approach to introduce new grammar items the teacher has to take into consideration: the specific needs of the learners, their age, proficiency level, and the teaching context. Grammar practice is essential as Scott Thornbury (1999) points out –

- i. Improves their accuracy (use correct grammar)
- ii. Improve their fluency (speak and write without pauses and get their meaning across)
- iii. Reorganize their knowledge; integrate new knowledge into old – that is, engage in restructuring.

Nunan in his article draws focus on experiential grammar teaching with the help of authentic examples of language, so that the learners are exposed to more experiential contexts. The teachers should provide opportunities for recycling of language forms, by engaging the learners in tasks 'designed to make transparent' the links between form, meaning, and use. The learners should be enabled to form their own understanding of grammatical principles of English through inductive learning experiences to explore grammar in context. Gradually, the learners should be able to encounter the target language in an increasingly diverse and complex range of linguistic and experiential environments. (Nunan, 1998:108)

The learners learn one thing at a time and tend to forget. If the teachers tend to teach grammar as a set of linear rules, it wouldn't help their learners much; however, if their instruction/teaching follows the U curve, it would help the learners. This can be done if the teachers start treating grammar as the fifth language skill – in addition to the LSRW skills. Diane Larsen – Freeman coined the term '**Grammaring**' to describe this process. In her words, "**Grammar(ing) is one of the dynamic linguistic processes of pattern formation in language, which can be used by humans for making meaning in context-appropriate ways...Grammaring is the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.**" (Larsen-Freeman, 2003: 142-143) And this goal can be achieved only if the teachers address three different dimensions of grammar: form, meaning and use.

Integrated Skill Instruction

Integrated skill instruction is probably one of the most effective ways of teaching grammar in a non-monotonous way. There are two forms of integrated-skill instruction, that is, content-based and task-based language instruction. While content-based language instruction focuses on learning content through language, task-based instruction emphasizes on doing tasks that require communicative language use.

My paper aims to give an insight into the advantages of Integrated Skills approach, especially Task-Based instruction in undergraduate classes.

The advantages of integrated skills approach are –

- Exposes the learners to authentic language
- Challenges them to interact naturally in the target language
- Learners are able to gain a quick picture of the richness and complexity of the target language as employed in real life communication contexts

- The integrated skills approach, whether used for the content-based or task-based language teaching, is highly motivating to the learners of all ages and backgrounds.
 - Even if a particular course or instructional material is labelled according to a particular skill, still the teacher can integrate other language skills through appropriate tasks.
 - Teachers can apply the **SARS** strategy:
Supplement, by adding grammar activities whenever and wherever needed;
Adapting tasks and activities as per learner’s needs and capabilities;
Rejecting the tasks or activities which are not helping the learners; and
Substitute activities in the instructional materials / textbooks with tasks more suitable for learners
- Integrated grammar teaching focuses on revision, restructuring, providing contextualised practice, focusing on a particular problematic item or a new meaning or use of an already known structure.

Task – Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

“In task-based instruction, students participate in communicative tasks in English. Tasks are defined as activities that can stand alone as fundamental units and that require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form.” (Nunan, 1989:10)

Task Based Language Teaching is an approach in language instruction developed within the communicative framework. As it has many key principles in common with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, it is learner-centred. It promotes learner engagement with tasks which are in real-life context, focussed on communication and meaning. TBLT also focuses on **implicit learning**, along with opportunities for **intentional learning**. In this approach, learners do tasks while the teacher monitors their performance. The teacher identifies the language need and focuses on it in the last stage of the task at hand.

TBLT is complete reverse of a conventional Presentation – Practice – Production (PPP) approach. While working on a task the learners are primarily focussed on meaning. However, towards the last stage of the task-based approach, the learners also focus on form, which is organically embedded in a meaning-based lesson. “The TBLT framework offers far more opportunities for free language use than the presentation – practice – production lesson format.” (Willis, 1996:136)

According to Dave and Jane Willis in their book **“Doing Task-based Teaching”** (2007:13), TBTL focuses on –

- i. A meaning-focused approach, in which students are focused on communication
- ii. What we know about language acquisition, that is – meaning is a starting point for language development, and form (grammar) develops from meaning
- iii. Grammar is not the initial aim of the instruction
- iv. Students first focus on meaning and then focus on form (grammar)
- v. Students focus on form during communicative instructions, rather than being presented with forms in isolation.

A framework of Task - Based Lesson has been suggested by Dave and Jane Willis -

Task-based lesson framework		
Phase	Stage	Activity
Pre-task	Introduction to topic & task	The teacher introduces the topic and explains the task. Students may brainstorm language they can use in the task. Students may listen to a recording or read a text.
	Task	Students do the task, in pairs or small groups The teacher monitors and encourages students, provides help if needed.
	Planning	Students prepare to report (orally or in writing) how they did the task, what they decided or discovered. The teacher acts as a language adviser, helps students to correct or rephrase their reports.

Task-based lesson framework		
Phase	Stage	Activity
	Report	Groups present their reports and compare results. The teacher acts as chairperson and gives feedback on content and form.
Post-task (language focus)	Analysis	Students examine and discuss specific features of the text or recording. The teacher brings useful words and language patterns to students' attention. She may also focus on language items from the report stage.
	Practice	The teacher conducts practice of new words and patterns, either during or after the analysis.
	Evaluation and reflection	The teacher asks students to reflect on the task cycle and say or write down how they felt about it and what they learned.

Adapted from: Willis, 1996; Willis and Willis 2007

Firstly, it is essential to select the appropriate tasks for a particular group of learners, to ensure the success of a TBLT lesson. Depending on the learner's current and future language needs, the teachers have to choose relevant tasks that would generate a good conversation and create contexts that facilitate language learning. The TBLT method was used successfully to teach Negotiation skills to a set of second year Bachelor of Commerce students. The grammar item focussed on, - Modals were learnt and reinforced effectively using the TBLT framework given by Willis and Willis as follows:

Task Based Language Teaching - Lesson Plan Class: Second Year B. Com Topic Language Skills: Negotiation Skills Grammar item: Modals		
Phase	Stage	Activity
Pre-task	Introduction to topic & task	The teacher introduces the topic – Negotiation Skills and gives a situation to the students for role-play. Students listen to a recording and read a text provided by the teacher. Students work in groups of 4. Decide their roles and brainstorm the language they can use to carry out the role-play.
Task-Cycle	Task: Role-Play (Negotiations between Seller and Buyer)	Students do the task in a group of 4 in pairs as buyers and sellers. The teacher monitors and encourages students, provides help if needed.
	Planning	Students prepare to report in writing, how they negotiated as buyers and sellers – the situation, arguments, suggestions, compromising and final agreement. The teacher acts as a language adviser, helps students

Task Based Language Teaching - Lesson Plan Class: Second Year B. Com Topic Language Skills: Negotiation Skills Grammar item: Modals		
Phase	Stage	Activity
		to correct or rephrase their reports.
	Report	Groups present their reports, discuss and compare results. The teacher acts as chairperson and gives feedback on content and form.
Post-task (language focus)	Analysis	Students examine various language functions they used while negotiating, viz. – making a proposition, argument, counter-argument, asking permission, interrupting, giving suggestions, compromising and agreement. The teacher draws students' attention to the language form – Modals used. The teacher also focuses on the language functions used by the students while reporting.
	Practice	The teacher conducts practice of use of modals in formal language use during business transactions, during and after the analysis
	Evaluation and reflection	The teacher asks students to reflect on the task cycle and say or write down how they felt about it and what they learned.

The modal verbs include *can, must, may, might, will, would, should*. They are used with other verbs to express ability, obligation, possibility, and so on. Below is a list showing the most useful modals and their most common meanings:

MODAL	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Can	To express ability	We can give a 2% discount.
Can	To request permission	Can I make a suggestion?
May	To express possibility	I may consider an increase of 0.5%.
May	To request permission	May I explain my point please?
Must	To express obligation	I must end this meeting now.
Must	To express strong belief	We must reconsider the decision.
Should	To give advice	You should rethink the terms and conditions.
Would	To request or offer	Would you like a cup of tea?
Would	In 'If' sentences	If I give a 5% discount, we would consider...

For a wide range of learning experiences, the teachers should make efforts to include a variety of tasks in their teaching. Willis and Wills introduce six main types of tasks, which the teachers could modify for use in any topic, using the SARS strategy, which are –

- i. Listing
- ii. Ordering and Sorting
- iii. Comparing

iv. Problem – solving

v. Sharing personal experiences

vi. Creative tasks

These tasks have some common characteristics, they make the learners use their previous knowledge, challenges them to think critically and creatively. They involve the learners in interacting, expand their interests, develop their confidence and help in developing fluency and accuracy in target language use. As Larsen-Freeman points out, - “When use is the challenge, it is because students have shown that they are having a hard time selecting the right construction for a particular context. Thus, relevant practice activities will provide students with an opportunity to choose from two or more forms that are roughly semantically equivalent the one best suited for the context and how they wish to position themselves.” (Celce-Murcia, 2014:265)

When it comes to ESL teaching, no other aspect of language teaching is as controversial as teaching grammar. It has long been a bone of contention for both teachers and researchers whether and how grammar should be taught. However, the fact is, we do not use language without grammar, hence there is a need to understand that it is not grammar that is the problem, but the approach used to teach and learn grammar. To conclude, integrating grammar and skills instruction in a principled way allows the teachers to address the learners needs in a better way and help them to overcome their learning difficulties. By adopting SARS, the teachers will be able to provide the right input at the right time and design motivating tasks for learners irrespective of the method used.

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