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Teaching Grammar Communicatively

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Language teaching methodologies have evolved significantly over the decades, with an increasing focus on communicative approaches that aim to equip students with the tools to use language dynamically and meaningfully. Traditional grammar instruction, often rigid and rule-focused, has gradually given way to more interactive and student-centered methods. This shift is largely driven by the recognition that language is not just a set of abstract rules but a system for real communication, involving form, meaning, and use. The communicative approach, which emphasizes communication as the ultimate goal, addresses this challenge by focusing on enabling learners to use language in context, not just in isolated exercises. The aim of this article is to explore how grammar can be taught communicatively, offering a detailed look at various practices, methodologies, and strategies that support language learners in acquiring both grammar accuracy and communicative competence.

Grammar plays a central role in the development of effective communication. While it often receives criticism for being overly structured and rigid, grammar remains essential in ensuring clarity, precision, and the correct understanding of ideas. In communicative language teaching (CLT), grammar is not an isolated component but a tool that helps learners express themselves naturally and correctly in various contexts. In communicative teaching, grammar instruction goes beyond the mechanical rules and structures that learners are typically taught. It becomes a means to enable learners to participate in authentic conversations, debates, and discussions, ensuring that they can produce meaningful and accurate language. Effective grammar instruction fosters both elements, helping learners feel confident in their language use while maintaining correctness.

To fully understand the importance of modern grammar teaching methods, we must first examine and evaluate traditional grammar approaches. This allows us to better appreciate the communicative grammar teaching methodology. The evolution of language teaching methodologies is a key factor in reshaping the role of grammar instruction in the classroom. Traditional approaches like *Grammar-Translation*, which focused on rote memorization of rules and translation exercises, have come under scrutiny for their failure to foster communicative competence. While *Grammar-Translation* provided insights into language structure and vocabulary, it often left students unable to engage in spontaneous spoken or written communication in the target language.

Another method, the *Audio-Lingual Method*, aimed to enhance fluency by repeating patterns through drills. However, its reliance on repetition and stimulus-response mechanics failed to promote deep understanding or contextual application of grammar rules. Though it laid the groundwork for the importance of practice in language acquisition, the approach was critiqued for

not addressing the dynamic, communicative nature of language. The **Audio-Lingual Method** emerged as a response to the shortcomings of Grammar-Translation. Drawing on **behaviorism**, it emphasized habit formation through repetition. Teachers would prompt students with sentence patterns, and students would repeat these patterns until they were ingrained in their memory. It focused heavily on speaking and listening skills, reinforcing correct language use through **stimulus-response** reinforcement—repetition was key, and success was measured by the accuracy of responses.

However, this method, too, encountered limitations. Critics, including **Noam Chomsky**, pointed out that behaviorism's focus on rote memorization did not account for the capacity of language learners to produce novel sentences. The idea that language learning was simply a matter of repeating correct responses until mastery was problematic, as it failed to address the more complex, dynamic aspects of language use—such as creativity in communication or understanding meaning within context. While some components of the Audio-Lingual Method, like **drilling** and repetitive practice, remain relevant in today's classrooms, they are now employed as part of a broader, more communicative approach to language teaching.

The **inert knowledge problem** is a key issue for traditional language teaching methods. Coined by philosopher **Alfred North Whitehead** in 1929, it refers to the phenomenon where learners acquire knowledge in a classroom setting but are unable to apply that knowledge outside of it. In the context of language teaching, this means that students may learn grammar rules and vocabulary but cannot use them to communicate effectively in the target language.

The inert knowledge problem is particularly evident in grammar-focused methods like Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingualism. While students may master grammatical structures and sentence translation, they often fail to activate this knowledge in real-life communication. The reason for this failure is clear: grammar has been treated as a static set of rules, rather than as a **dynamic system** that needs to be used meaningfully and appropriately in various communicative contexts.

And, it's high time to focus on an innovative approach - the concept of *grammaring*, a term coined to highlight the importance of grammar as a skill, rather than a static set of rules. In this view, grammar teaching becomes dynamic and flexible, with a focus on helping students apply grammar structures in accurate, meaningful, and appropriate ways.

The key to teaching grammar communicatively is providing opportunities for students to use grammatical structures in **meaningful contexts**. Teachers should design activities that allow learners to practice grammar structures in ways that engage both form and meaning. This requires attention to **form**, **meaning**, and **use**—the three essential components of grammar, and this is the key to teaching grammar communicatively

- **Form** refers to the actual structure of the language. It involves the grammatical rules, such as verb tense, sentence structure, and word order, that govern how sentences are formed. For example, the structure of a question in the present simple tense in English involves the inversion of the subject and auxiliary verb (e.g., "Do you like pizza?").
- **Meaning** relates to the message or function that the grammatical structure conveys in a specific context. It's crucial for students to understand not just how to form a sentence, but also how the structure carries specific meaning. For instance, the past simple tense signals

actions completed in the past, whereas the present perfect tense expresses experiences or actions that have relevance to the present.

- **Use** involves knowing when and how to apply the correct grammatical form in communication. Understanding how to use a grammatical structure appropriately in different contexts is key. This includes being aware of social and cultural factors that might influence language use, such as formality, politeness, or register. For example, using the future tense to make predictions ("I will go to the party tomorrow") differs from using it to make promises ("I will call you later").

A communicative approach to grammar teaching requires that learners actively engage with all three components—form, meaning, and use—through practice and reflection, enabling them to use grammar correctly and appropriately in communication.

In a communicative grammar teaching approach, teachers need to direct students' attention to the component of grammar that poses the greatest challenge at any given moment. This requires an understanding of the learner's current proficiency level, their native language, and the specific areas that present the most difficulty. The challenge for students may shift based on their stage of learning. For example, early learners may struggle with understanding and applying basic grammatical forms, such as word order or verb conjugations. More advanced learners, however, might struggle with subtler aspects, such as sentence complexity or choosing the appropriate tense for various contexts. To effectively teach grammar communicatively, it's important for teachers to identify the specific grammar component that causes the most difficulty. For example, take Spanish speakers learning English. The challenge with the passive voice is likely not in understanding its form or its meaning. Since Spanish has a similar construction for passive voice, Spanish-speaking students typically don't find the form itself (e.g., "The book was read by John") challenging. Similarly, they may grasp the meaning (the subject of the sentence is the recipient of the action, rather than the doer). However, the real difficulty lies in knowing when to use the passive voice in English, especially in comparison to the active voice.

For instance, English speakers often use the passive voice to emphasize the action or the receiver of the action rather than the doer, a nuance that may be difficult for Spanish speakers, whose use of passive structures can be more limited and context-dependent. This means that introducing the passive through sentence transformation exercises, such as changing active to passive sentences, may not be the most effective approach. It suggests to students that active and passive voices are interchangeable, which is misleading because the two are not always used in the same contexts.

Therefore, teachers should focus not only on the form of the passive voice but more importantly on its appropriate use. By contextualizing its use in meaningful situations—such as reports, scientific writing, or when the agent is unknown or unimportant—students can better understand the nuances of when and why to use the passive voice. One important detail: The general approach to sequencing when teaching **form, meaning, and use** can differ. A balanced approach often follows this sequence: Introduce Form, Clarify Meaning, Focus on Use, but this can vary depending on the class level."

- **For beginners**: It often makes sense to start with **form** so that they can build their foundational understanding. Afterward, move to **meaning** to show them the function, then finally focus on **use**.
- **For intermediate and advanced learners**: You might start with **meaning** and **use** because students already have a grasp of forms, and you can focus more on nuance and application.

The ultimate goal is to make the grammar useful and communicative, so while "form-meaning-use" is a general sequence, it can be flexible depending on the learners' needs.

Integrating Grammar and Skills Teaching

As we have already mentioned effective language teaching requires more than just a focus on isolated components of the language; it demands an *integrated approach* that reflects how language is used in real-world communication. Now we are going to focus on different approaches while teaching Grammar communicatively, and integration of grammar instruction with language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing not only deepens learners' understanding of grammar, but also enhances their ability to use it communicatively. (Oxford, 1996), worth realizing.

Teaching skills Grammar, often viewed as a set of rules, is frequently taught in a decontextualized manner, divorced from actual communicative practice. However, research suggests that teaching grammar "at the point of need" – or in the context of the skills learners are practicing – is far more effective (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

The integration of grammar and skills teaching is essential for fostering a holistic approach to language learning. Teachers often face the challenge of working with course materials where skills and grammar are treated as separate entities. In many textbooks, grammar lessons are often isolated in a manner that fails to reflect the interconnectedness of the language skills students need to develop. To address this challenge, teachers must be flexible and adaptable in their approach, tailoring lessons to meet students' needs while also striving for a seamless integration of grammar and skills practice. The SARS strategy is one way to approach this integration: **Supplement**, **Adapt**, **Reject**, and **Substitute**. This strategy allows teachers to modify existing materials, adding grammar practice where needed, adapting activities to encourage more integrated language use, or even skipping sections that don't serve the communicative purpose of the lesson. This method is known as *SARS strategy*:

- S–upplement: the unit or lesson, add grammar activities when and where needed;
- A-dapt: change the focus of an activity /task in the book;
- R–eject: skip parts /activities that are not needed or are not helping learners;
- S-ubstitute: replace activities in the book with different tasks, more suitable for their students.

In real-world language use, skills do not function in isolation. This concept is neatly illustrated by the image of a tapestry. A tapestry woven from the strands of grammar, vocabulary, skills, and content forms a rich, coherent whole. Similarly, the integration of grammar and language skills in the classroom creates a framework that allows students to develop the full range of competencies necessary for authentic communication. When skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught in isolation, students may fail to recognize how they work together in actual communication (Mohan, 1986). Grammar and skills need to be interwoven so that students can grasp how language functions not as a series of discrete rules, but as a dynamic, interconnected system.

The Challenge of Segregated-Skill Instruction

Traditional approaches to language teaching often operate under the assumption that language skills can be taught independently of one another. This segregated-skill approach, seen in many ESL/EFL classrooms, divides language instruction into separate units focused on specific skills, such as reading, writing, listening, or speaking. While it is tempting for teachers to work within these discrete skill areas due to logistical or curricular constraints, this separation fails to reflect how language is used in real life, where communication always involves a mix of skills. (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992).

For example, students may practice writing sentences focused on grammar but fail to see how those sentences are part of a broader context where speaking, listening, and reading skills are also essential. Segregated-skill instruction often leads to a narrow view of language, where grammar is learned as a set of rules rather than as a tool for communication. Moreover, it can result in a disjointed experience for students, where language learning becomes a fragmented process with little real-world application.

While some segregated-skill models may occasionally blend skills—such as reading directions aloud or engaging in class discussions during a writing lesson—this is not always enough to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Students need to be able to transfer what they've learned in isolated contexts into real-world communication, and this is where integrated-skill instruction becomes crucial. The integrated-skill approach allows learners to use grammar naturally while engaging in authentic communication, thus providing a more accurate reflection of language use in the outside world.

The Power of Integrated-Skill Instruction

In contrast to segregated-skill instruction, the integrated-skill approach encourages learners to engage in communication using a range of skills simultaneously. This approach recognizes that language is a tool for communication and that to develop proficiency, learners must use all aspects of language—grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and skills—together. An integrated-skill approach, whether through task-based learning or content-based instruction, enables students to engage meaningfully with the language and use it for real-life purposes (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

Content-based language instruction is one effective method for integrating skills. In this model, students learn language while engaging with subject matter content, such as science, history, or social studies. For instance, a teacher might present a lesson on climate change where students not only read about the topic but also discuss it, write about it, and listen to related content. This approach allows students to practice all four skills while simultaneously learning new content, which reinforces the idea that grammar and skills are tools for understanding and communicating about the world. Another popular method for integrating grammar and skills is task-based language teaching (TBLT). In TBLT, students' complete tasks that require them to use all their language skills. These tasks can range from writing a report to participating in a group discussion or delivering a presentation. By engaging with meaningful tasks, students practice grammar in context, seeing how it functions in actual communication. This approach is especially effective in making grammar teaching more relevant, as it allows students to see the direct connection between grammatical forms and their communicative uses. (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Benefits of the Integrated-Skill Approach

The integrated-skill approach offers numerous benefits for both learners and teachers. First, it allows students to develop a more comprehensive understanding of language. As they practice grammar in context, they begin to see how it functions within real-world communication, moving beyond rote memorization of rules to active use of language. This deeper understanding enables them to use grammar more flexibly and accurately, whether in writing, speaking, or listening tasks.

Second, the integrated-skill approach helps to make language learning more motivating. Students are more likely to stay engaged when they see the relevance of what they're learning. Instead of isolated grammar drills, they experience language as a dynamic, interactive system that they can use to express themselves and understand others. This motivation is critical in sustaining language learning over time and helping students achieve long-term proficiency. Moreover, integrating grammar and skills teaching encourages learners to develop strategic learning behaviors. For example, by engaging in tasks that require them to think critically, analyze information, and communicate effectively, students learn to use a variety of learning strategies that are transferable across different language skills. These strategies might include predicting content, summarizing information, and negotiating meaning, all of which help learners become more independent and confident in their language use.

Practical Implementation: How Teachers Can Integrate Grammar and Skills Teaching

Teachers can integrate grammar and skills teaching in a variety of ways, even when working with textbooks that treat grammar and skills separately. One common method is to apply the SARS strategy: **Supplement**, **Adapt**, **Reject**, and **Substitute**. By supplementing lessons with additional grammar activities, adapting tasks to involve multiple skills, or rejecting parts of the course book that are not useful, teachers can ensure that students receive comprehensive language instruction. For example, a reading lesson might be supplemented with a speaking activity where students discuss the main ideas of the text, or a writing task might be adapted to include grammar exercises focusing on sentence structure.

Additionally, teachers can implement *content-based* or *task-based instruction* to promote integrated learning. In content-based instruction, teachers can select topics that allow students to practice a wide range of language skills, while task-based instruction gives students the opportunity to apply grammar in real communication. Both approaches encourage the use of grammar in meaningful contexts, promoting fluency and understanding.

To ensure the integration of grammar with language skills in a meaningful and communicative way, it is crucial to implement teaching approaches like content-based or task-based instruction within well-structured lesson frameworks. For instance, the **Task-based Lesson Framework (TBLF)**, an essential element of **Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)**, aligns perfectly with the goal of teaching grammar communicatively. This framework emphasizes real-world tasks where students use language actively to achieve specific communicative objectives, thereby promoting grammar learning as a tool for communication rather than a set of abstract rules. By embedding grammar instruction into tasks that require learners to engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, teachers create opportunities for grammar to emerge naturally at the point of need. Such lessons not only highlight the practical use of grammar but also offer students a holistic learning experience. Thus, whether through TBLT or other content-driven frameworks, structuring lessons around communicative tasks ensures that grammar instruction remains relevant, dynamic, and directly

applicable to the way students will use language outside the classroom, thus fostering a more integrated, contextual understanding of grammar in communication (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Conclusion

While the ideas presented in this article about teaching grammar communicatively may not be entirely new, they remain crucial for educators striving to improve language instruction. The significance of this approach lies in its ability to enhance learner engagement, foster practical language use, and promote deeper understanding of grammar within real-world contexts. In an era where language learning is increasingly centered around communication rather than rote memorization, emphasizing grammar in a communicative way becomes essential for developing students' fluency. For teachers, this approach is especially useful as it provides strategies to make grammar lessons more interactive, relevant, and effective. By adopting communicative grammar teaching techniques, educators can create a more dynamic classroom environment that empowers students to use grammar as a practical tool for communication rather than a set of isolated rules. This article is particularly valuable for teachers looking to bridge the gap between traditional grammar instruction and the dynamic needs of today's learners, ensuring that grammar serves not just as a rule set, but as a tool for meaningful expression.

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ეკატერინე ჯულაყიძე
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გრამატიკის კომუნიკაციური სწავლება

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ენის შემსწავლელი, გრამატიკა, კომპეტენცია

ინგლისური ენა, ერთ-ერთი მთავარი და მნიშვნელოვანი საკომუნიკაციო საშუალებაა საჭდევრებს გარეთ. სწავლების მეთოდიკა ასევე, წარმმართველია ენის ათვისების პროცესში, აღსანიშავია, ენის სწავლა არ შემოიფარგლება ენის შემსწავლელთათვის ახალი სიტყვებისა და მათი წარმოთქმის სწორიად მიჩოდებით. გრამატიკა, ერთ-ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი ფაქტორია თანმიმდევრული და ეფექტური კომუნიკაციის საწარმოებლად. ზოგიერთი შემსწავლელი არ მიიჩნევს გრამატიკას ენის კომპეტენციის არსებით ნაწილად და მიმართულია მნიშვნელობისზოგადი გაგებისკენ, მაგრამ თუ გვინდა, რომ ვიცოდეთ ენა საფუძვლიანად და გააზრებულად, აუცილებელია გრამატიკის ადეკვატური ცოდნა.

რამდენიმე ათეული წლის განმავლობაში ინგლისური გრამატიკის სწავლება უმეტესად ემყარებოდა უხეშ დაზეპირებას, განცალკევებულ სავარჯიშოებსა და წესებზე დაფუძნებულ ახსნებს, რომლებიც რეალურ კომუნიკაციასთან არ იყო დაკავშირებული. თუმცა, ენის სწავლების თანამედროვე მიდგომები ხაზს უსვამენ ინგლისურის სწავლების კომუნიკაციურ ასპექტს და აქ გამონაკლისი ვერ იქნება ენის გრამატიკის კომუნიკაციურად სწავლების მნიშვნელობას, რაც თავის მხრივ პრაქტიკული კონტექსტზე ორიენტირებულ სწავლებას გულისხმობს, რაც უფრო ახლოს არის რეალურ კომუნიკაციასთან.

ინგლისური გრამატიკის სწავლება კომუნიკაციურად აძლევს სტუდენტებს შესაძლებლობას, უფრო ღრმად გაიგონ, როგორ ფუნქციონირებს ენა რეალურ კონტექსტებში. გაგება არ შემოიფარგლება მხოლოდ ცალკეული სიტყვების ამოცნობით; იგი მოიცავს წინადადებების მნიშვნელობის გაგებას, როგორც ისინი იქნება რეალურ საუბარში. როდესაც გრამატიკა სწავლება ხდება კომუნიკაციურ კონტექსტში, სტუდენტებს უფრო ადვილი ექნებათ მისი დანახვა როგორც პრაქტიკულ ინსტრუმენტს მათი მიზნების მისაღწევად, როგორიცაა საკუთარი აზრების გამოთქმა ან სხვების გაგება.

კომუნიკაციური გრამატიკის სწავლების კიდევ ერთი უპირატესობა არის ის, რომ იგი ხელს უწყობს უკეთეს ინფორმაციის ხანგრძლივ შენახვას, უკეთ რომ ვთქვათ შემსწავლელის გონებაში სწორად და ხანგრძლივი ვადით ჩაიბეჭდება ესა თუ ის გრამატიკული კონსტრუქცია, რომელსაც გონება საჭიროების შემთხვევაში მექანიკურად გასცემს. ეს მიდგომა აძლიერებს სტუდენტებს მათ ენაში კომუნიკაციის უნარის ჩამოყალიბებაში, რის შედეგადაც თავდაჯერებულად და სიზუსტითა ახორციელებენ კომუნიკაციას, რაც ენის სწავლების საბოლოო მიზანია.

ჩვენ მიზანია ერთ ჩარჩოში მოვქცით და გაგიზიაროთ სხვადასხვა ექსპერტებისგან, მკვლევარებისგან **და/ან** პრაქტიკოსებისგან მიღებული ცოდან-გამოცდილება. გრამატიკის კომუნიკაციურად სწავლების წარმოდგენილი თანამედროვე მეთოდების წარმოდგენისას საშუ'ლება მოგვეცემა:

• ვნახოთ გრამატიკულ სტრუქტურებში, როგორ თანმიმდევრულად ხდევა მნიშვნელობიდან ფორმამდე ლოგიკური სვლა.

• განვიხილოთ გრამატიკის სწავლების სხვადასხვა ტიპის ტექნიკების დადებითი და უარყოფითი მხარეები.

• განვიხილოთ კარგად აწყობილი გრამატიკის სწავლების პრეზენტაცია.

• წარმოვადგინოთ გრამატიკის კომუნიკაციურად სწავლების გაკვეთილის ნიმუშები.

გარდა იმისა, რომ წარმოდგენილი თამადეროვე მიდგომებით მიწოდეული უცხო ენა საშუალებას აძლევს შემსწავლელებს მეტი თავდაჯერებულობი ისაუბრონ უცხო ენაზე, ასევე აღნიშნული მეთოდიკის საშუალებით თავად სწავლების პროცეს მოსაწყცენ და სტრესული გაკვეთილიდან გადრაიქმენება სასიამოვნო და სასიამოვნო პროცესად.