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ՎԵՐԱՊԱՏՐԱՍՏՄԱՆ ԴԱՍԸՆԹԱՑՆԵՐ

## ՀԵՏԱԶՈՏԱԿԱՆ ԱՇԽԱՏԱՆՔ

Մասնագիտություն

Անգլերեն լեզու

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## Introduction

Grammar is integral to teaching English, especially for second language learners. The goal of the teacher should not be the memorization of rules. The goal should be comprehension and practice. A communicative method of teaching a foreign language involves practicing grammatical skills without memorizing the rules. This research paper explores the integration of communicative grammar approaches in second-language classrooms.

For a long time, teaching languages and teaching grammar were interchangeable terms. It was once thought that grammatical rules made up most of the English language and that learning those rules would be adequate for language acquisition. Teachers feel that teaching grammar is outdated, boring, and should be avoided. Their main concerns are: How can grammar be taught in classrooms again without using the time-honored, frequently shown to be unsuccessful, traditional approaches to grammar instruction? How can a focus on communication and a focus on grammar work together? How may communicative interaction and grammatical education be combined in diverse ways? How can the chance to concentrate on grammar be increased without compromising chances to concentrate on meaning and communication? These questions are especially true for conversation and communicative language classes for students learning English as a second language. A communicative approach to teaching grammar means teaching grammar implicitly rather than explicitly. Some experts still argue that grammar should be taught explicitly. These people say students need to use correct sentence structures when speaking English. Also, they believe that the grammatical knowledge taught explicitly is necessary for communicative competence. It is necessary to pass tests, and it is essential for becoming better writers, speakers, citizens, and so on.

Ultimately, the foremost goal of teaching grammar is that the student reaches a high level of communicative grammatical competence. That is, they achieve the ability to use and understand a structure in a variety of contexts spontaneously. As persuasive as the arguments

favor teaching grammar rules and structures separately, just as many arguments against it form the basis of the communicative approach. It is worth uncovering some of these arguments.

### **About Communicative Grammar**

In order to argue for or against the communicative approach, it is necessary to turn to the history of its emergence. The concept of a communicative approach or Communicative Language Teaching appeared only in the late 60s when some British linguists concluded that the situational approach to teaching a foreign language had become obsolete. Furthermore, in search of new teaching methods, a system was developed in which the formation of communicative competence was at the center of the educational process. With the formation of the European Economic Community, it became necessary for people in Europe to establish economic relations in a single language, which led to a demand for learning English and a revision of learning objectives: possession of solely grammatical competence was not enough, it was necessary to learn to speak and think in English in a short time.

The starting point in creating a new approach to learning was the work of the British linguist Noam Chomsky, who indicated that the structural theories of language that prevailed at that time could not explain the creativity and diversity that people showed in honest communication. Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson later expanded on Chomsky's ideas

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communicatively and not master the numerous grammatical nuances of the English language.

In the United States, American linguist Dell Hymes developed the concept of communicative competence. It is in response to Chomsky's concept of the linguistic competence of an ideal native speaker. Communicative competence clarified what it means to "know a language." Furthermore, Hymes owns the famous quote, "there are rules of use, without which the rules of grammar are useless." Hymes did not develop a specific definition of "communicative competence," but he associated this concept with teaching a foreign language.

### **Theory vs Practice**

The field of teaching a foreign language is constantly changing, and sometimes these changes are radical. There is no consensus on what methodology to apply at different stages of mastering grammar. As a result, this subject is often taught traditionally, so insufficient attention is paid to the practical component. It bores students and makes them reluctant to learn. According to Stephen D Krashen, an American linguist, teaching grammar had little effect on students' grammatical growth and did not promote the development of communicative competence. Therefore it needed to be removed from the curriculum.

The first argument supporting the removal of explicit grammar teaching methods can be characterized as follows: "know-how, but can not use." For example, everybody knows what it takes to ride a bicycle: balance, pedaling, and steering. However, this does not mean everybody knows how to ride a bicycle. The same can be said about language learning. One can study the basics of the language - vocabulary and grammar, or language can be considered a set of skills. So, if we consider the language precisely from the point of view of skill, it is rather logical to assert that it is possible to learn the language in practice without studying the grammatical rules separately.

Since the 1970s, language theorists have insisted that knowledge of grammar is only an element of communicative competence. In a contemporary school setting, this should be the primary goal of language teaching - the formation of language competence. Communicative competence includes knowing how to use the grammar and vocabulary of a language to achieve communication goals. It is important for a teacher not for students to master several rules and a specific set of words but, after graduation from school, to be fully capable of spontaneous intercultural communication. The communicative approach implies the study of the language based on authentic materials, which contributes to the convergence of what is said at school with the actual language reality. World-famous publishers such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Mcmillan release new teaching materials and improve old ones annually so teachers worldwide can select the most suitable textbook for themselves and their students.

This paper evaluates the two approaches to teaching grammar - deductively and inductively. The first approach is that everyone learns the language in order to use it in practice. Nevertheless, the rules must first be studied and used in life and communication. The second approach is that a person learns to communicate by communicating. Representatives of this direction were sure that grammar is acquired unconsciously in communication and that learning grammar is a waste of time (Flesch 1954). This argument is based on the fact that none of us were taught grammar as children when we learned our mother tongue. If it works for the first language, it must also work for the second. Why study grammar rules separately if we can master the language without them, just as we mastered our native language? An inductive approach facilitates understanding of grammatical structures in the natural order of language acquisition, which means the students need to practice and use present tense before acquiring the ability and knowledge to use past tense.

## Lexicon

Learning a language consists of three key components - grammar, lexicon, and phonetics (pronunciation). Each of these areas deserves particular attention. But for this paper's research purposes, we will look at the lexicon within the argument for communicative grammar. The communicative grammar approach argues that second language learners should start the path to the advanced level of English by mastering the basic words of the English language, which will become a solid foundation for further accumulation and systematization of their knowledge. To understand speech and conduct a dialogue, it is not necessary to memorize all the English words from the Oxford Dictionary. It is enough to be persistent and learn a small list of words containing the most essential to the student's concepts.

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes and listening to teachers. They must make what they learn part of themselves (Chickering, Ehrmann).

There is a common misconception that with the introduction of the communicative approach, attention to grammar was weakened since the emphasis was on purely communicative purposes. This view has also become widespread due to the tendency to equate grammar with the correctness of speech. Nevertheless, the latter can be acquired with a proper introduction to the English language lexicon in the classroom. The argument favoring language acquisition through lexicon is no less significant than other arguments favoring the communicative approach. The followers of this argument insist that language is acquired by memorizing phrases, idioms, and set expressions within context. Furthermore, they believe that expressions and phrases should be memorized instead of studying various grammatical structures. This method increases motivation by minimizing aspects of language learning that could be considered tedious. It allows students to discover grammar usage rules using a lexicon, thereby retaining a more comprehensive understanding of those rules.

## Context

Unfortunately, grammar topics are always taught as rules rather than being pointed out as a part of the language in context. Learning grammar can be boring when it is taught out of context. Rules must be memorized, and the class is built primarily upon written exercises. Students grasp the rule but cannot use it when they are trying to communicate. So when presented with the grammar topic in context they focus on the function of the rule because functions can not be understood out of context. For example, present tense refers to actions happening at the moment of speaking or writing - in the present. It is important to showcase these functions in meaningful contexts. For example, if the teacher explains the concept in context with an immediate example, it might not work as it can be easily confused with the present continuous tense. Instead, the teacher should come up with situations and different memorable ways to provide more context for the showcase of this rule.

The communicative approach showcases how grammatical patterns are used in everyday conversation. For a productive exercise in context, the teacher must consider the age of the students. Unfortunately, deductive teaching fails to consider the abilities and age of students, thus endorsing a universal approach. The younger the students, the less likely they can understand abstract concepts. The lower the proficiency, the less likely the students will be able to use intricate grammatical structures. If there is a linguistic distance between the first and second languages, students will need more practice to master new grammatical structures.

Games and visual presentations should be arranged for younger students rather than isolation and explanation. It is productive to use more imagery and try to incorporate group work.



## Lesson Plan

As we expand into non-traditional, communicative grammar techniques, it is essential to highlight what a lesson plan for communicative grammar class might look like. It is relatively straightforward.

Without a complicated regiment, a teacher's first step for the class would be to place themselves in context to present grammar concepts. Before addressing the importance of grammar, as a rule, the teacher must establish that the taught grammar point is beneficial to master. The usefulness must be addressed for students to understand that they are not memorizing rules but empowering themselves with tools to communicate better with their peers. After establishing a relatable example where the teacher is the subject, the acquired knowledge must be practiced. Depending on the group of students, this activity may vary. A short question and answer activity should take place so that students can get a chance to hear their peers and hear the grammar rule repeated a few times. I do my best to encourage all students at any level to speak English in class. From the first class, the teacher must speak to the students in English, paying particular attention to classroom language, that is, phrases that are used every day in class: stand up, sit down, thank you, you are welcome, please, etc. This is how students get rid of the translation habit and learn the language that comes naturally to them. Nevertheless, it is not advised to exclude the native language from class completely. It is vital to maintain a balance and ensure that all points are communicated, and everything is clear for the students in class.

Let us take into account the example discussed before - present tense. We have already established that when teaching present tense, it is a good idea to go with concepts that will not be confused with present continuous. In context, they both relate to the present and can be incoherent for second language learners. So, it is a good idea to start with their daily routine as a topic of questions and answers. Speaking about their daily routine implies using the present tense in context and sharing information about themselves with their peers. They do not feel tested when they talk about day-to-day things. It is necessary to not

forget about the importance of visual aids during communicative grammar classes. They can be very impactful during this exercise. One should not underestimate the power of simple chalk and board, especially when teaching past and present tense. Visual aids do not have to be fancy graphics or outstanding visuals. They must be concise, to the point, and easily understandable for the student. For example, a simple straight line signifying a timeline can go a long way when explaining the difference between past and present tenses. Even with the absence of the straight line visual, one can refer back to it in their mind because this concept was communicatively taught to them. Writing exercises can also be beneficial as the class can consist of different learners. Moreover, with a small written break, it is easier for the teacher to circulate in class, checking in on their progress. I always encourage students to simply write down new words and concepts in their notebook and then try to practice by writing them down in a sentence. Either trying to define the concept in their own words or practicing new vocabulary. According to Michael McCarthy the key is to encourage students to make notes about their learnings within the context in which they heard or read the word or concept.

By the end of the class, students should be expected to work in pairs or groups. This is where the teacher removes themselves from the activity allowing students genuinely immerse themselves in the communicative activity

### **Inclusive teaching**

There are four stages of teaching grammar - Presentation, Isolation and Explanation, Practice, and Test (Penny Ur, 1998). The communicative approach considers that all four stages must be flexible to comply with the classroom environment, proficiency, and students' ability. It is important to note that we are looking at the communicative approach from the perspective of teaching second language learners, where capabilities vary from student to student. The communicative approach fosters an inclusive classroom regarding language

proficiency, abilities and considers the four types of learners: visual, auditory, reading and writing.

An approach for higher proficiency auditory learners can be dialogue, short stories, and relatable anecdotes that can be introduced in the presentation stage. This learner will have opportunities to hear and use the target structure in communication. For a different type of learner, an effective method can involve playing games and using the medium of entertainment for teaching grammar communicatively.

### **Teaching Online**

Communicative grammar methods can be especially useful when teaching online. It is worth noting the teacher's unique role in the communicative learning process. Unlike a traditional school, where the entire lesson is based on the teacher's personality, here, the prominent participants in the educational process are the students. The teacher only directs, competently sets tasks, and facilitates the learning process. This is especially true for teaching online. Many students in schools lose confidence in themselves because they are constantly corrected, they develop an insecurity, and they become afraid to speak, especially elementary school students. In the case of the communicative approach, a sharp and constant interruption of the student's statement is unacceptable and dialogues flow naturally. In any situation, the students express their opinion on relevant topics, talk about themselves, and discuss their interests. This happens through work in pairs and groups. Which today is made possible by many digital tools. This form of educational activity organization helps students open up and show their creative abilities and leadership qualities, which only contribute to the development of a foreign language.

## **Against Communicative Grammar**

Nevertheless, Recent research suggests that without attention to the form of the language, that is, grammar, students risk reaching a dead end (Cambridge University Press, 2004). Focusing on the form does not mean going back to boring repetition exercises. Focusing on the form means correcting errors. Learning delivers results if the teacher uses methods that draw the student's attention to the form and organizes the necessary activities that clarify the need for grammar. Students must understand what they are being taught. It is essential to make the process of mastering new material consciously. There are many arguments in favor of the fact that without the study of grammar, and the conscious construction of speech, students will never advance above the basic level of communication. Communicative competence is achieved only through communication, but it cannot be achieved without knowledge of grammar. G.W. Leibniz wrote: "Language is learned through practice, but perfected through grammar."

## **Conclusion**

As a teacher of more than 20 years, I can attest that the demands for teaching a language change with each generation. The more they change, the more flexible the approaches must become. I believe that as languages evolve, so should the teaching methods. My observations in class show that the new generation of students who want to be more active and involved in class grasp ordinary concepts faster when I bring relatable examples from my day or refer to their peers for samples. I consider this necessary as it builds a relationship of trust that even if the student fails, we are simply exchanging ideas and examples from our life in class. It encourages a more comfortable environment. Involving students in activities with no right or wrong answers is most effective. They are happy to participate, talk about real things, and be authentic.

Nevertheless, I do not think I have yet had the chance to teach grammar solely explicitly. The teacher still needs to oversee students making sure they make distinctions between essential grammar points, which to an extent have to be memorized. However, the teacher needs to integrate these concepts into a broader understanding of grammar in practice and communication.

Communicative grammar is an excellent approach to start incorporating more proactively into class. However, it is essential to note that communicative grammar requires more preparation and creativity for those teaching English as a second language.

It is essential to talk about the mandatory authentic nature of the training materials that need to be used for the successful implementation of the communicative method. We need to understand that initially, the communicative approach to teaching grammar was developed in the countries where English was a native language (the United Kingdom, United States of America). It was obvious that students leaving the classroom had many opportunities for actual practice. In countries where English is not an official language, it is not easy to find applications for one's knowledge. The teachers have to put so much effort into creating artificial learning conditions. This can only be done on the basis of authentic materials and an environment. Of course, it would take a significant amount of time to get accustomed to this method so that it comes naturally to both teachers and students. Even though the communicative approach arose almost half a century ago, it became prevalent in the 21st century. And every day, many educators worldwide are working to improve it. In this research paper, we talk about only a tiny part of the possibilities that this approach provides because we consider it from the point of view of teaching grammar, which is only one aspect of language learning.

## Resources

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