Principles of Teaching Grammar in CLT

Xusanova Sharofatxon Isroilovna, Qosimova Inobatxon Qadirjanovna
Academic lyceum under Andijan Institute of Agriculture and Agrotechnology
sharofatxonxusanova@gmail.com

Abstract: The aim of the article is to analyze the different ways of teaching grammar in communicative language teaching and find innovative methods which can be effective in the EFL classrooms. Communicative grammar is based on the communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages. Grammar must not be taught in isolation but it should be integrated to the four skills of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teaching grammar should be based on context. In this article given information about various teaching techniques which in corporate communicative grammar and advantages and disadvantages of applying them.

Keywords: communicative fluency, integrative motivation, prefabricated structures, possible flexibility or transformation, core assumptions, implement new methodology, overall communicative competence, curriculum.

Introduction. The CLT approach first entered the curriculum in Uzbekistan at the end of 1990s, when the Ministry of Public Education developed State Educational Standards. The purpose of the new curriculum was to promote communicative fluency and move away from grammar-based and audio-lingual approaches. The role of the approach increased even more in the last decade and a half, and it started being promoted in teaching conferences, workshops and in-service teacher education by both local and international English educators. However, there still remain some issues that are hampering the effective use of CLT in some Uzbek classrooms, first of which is instructors’ insufficient or wrong understanding of what this method is and how to implement it. Although most teachers have received some training on the concept of CLT, many still adhere to grammar-based and teacher-fronted methodologies. Many people think that CLT’s purpose is to help students improve their speaking and communication skills. While this ideology partly holds to the truth, the main principle of CLT is to improve students’ overall communicative competence in all the skills of a foreign language.

Teachers are responsible for the success of their students in their classrooms, and at the moment it seems that the most appropriate approach to be used in Uzbek classrooms is CLT. There are many ways EFL teachers in Uzbekistan can utilize the CLT approach in their instruction. One of the ways is the use of communicative activities and exercises that use real-life situations and focus on meaning rather than form. By using these activities teachers can encourage students to have opportunities to use English meaningfully, negotiate and express meaning. For these activities to work, however, a student should get at least some sort of feedback from the instructor to “evaluate whether or not his purpose has been achieved. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative.” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.129)

The lack of motivation to speak English in Uzbek students can also be explained by two reasons. Students do not always possess integrative motivation, as, first of all, it sometimes

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contradicts their identity, social norms and culture, and secondly, there is limited opportunity for students to communicate with native speakers of English. Although, the contradiction of identities and norms is decreasing through the globalization process now, the lack of communication with native speakers is still a problem. On the other hand, the instrumental motivation is also rather weak, because not all professions require good command of English, and consequently not all students see the use of learning it, if they are probably not going to need it in future. EFL students in Uzbekistan share the same mother tongue and do not have the immediate need to use English in the classroom. Nor do many of them have this need outside the classroom. Students’ motivation is further reduced by the shortage of exciting study materials, and sometimes by the myriad tutors that offer private lessons with better results.

For years, many English language teachers have taught grammar classes following just prefabricated structures as groups of sentence patterns without any possible flexibility or transformation. But, since the 1990s the Communicative approach has been widely implemented in these classes because “it describes a set of general principles grounded in the notion of communicative competence as the goal of second and foreign language teaching. A new approach that has evolved as our understanding of the processes of second language learning has developed” (Richards, 2006: 23). Consequently, a set of principles based on communicative language teaching can be applied according to the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level, and their learning goals. This way, English language teachers can adapt their teaching strategies to the subject matter and create and apply activities each lesson. This will awaken students’ intuition and creativity when using the language. Through this application of principles, some core assumptions of the current communicative language teaching cited by Richards (2006) will be assumed:

- Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in Interaction and meaningful communication.
- Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful intrapersonal exchange.
- Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities.
- Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as well as those involving language analysis and reflection.

These assumptions help language teachers analyze the approaches used while teaching grammar and make students internalize and use it in a natural and spontaneous way. Here, it is also relevant to mention two approaches that can bring a light to language teaching using communicative activities: the inductive approach and the deductive approach.

The inductive approach provides students with some examples from which a rule is inferred, and the deductive approach with the presentation of rules and some examples in which the rule is applied. At the same time, Thornbury ³ mentioned some advantages and disadvantages of these approaches such as:

The inductive Approach’s advantages:

- Learners discover the rules for themselves – so they are likely to fit their existing mental structure compared to rules being presented to them – creating their own understanding. This in turn will make rules more meaningful, memorable and applicable.

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Students are more actively involved in the learning process, rather than being simply passive recipients: they are therefore likely to be more attentive and motivated.

If the problem-solving is done collaboratively, and in the target language, learners get the opportunity for extra language practice.

On the other hand, **some advantages of the deductive approach** are:

- It gets straight to the point and saves time. Many rules can be simply and quickly explained rather than elicited from examples.
- It respects the intelligence and maturity of many—especially adult—students, and acknowledges the role of a cognitive process of language acquisition.
- It allows the teacher to deal with language points as they come up, rather than having to anticipate them and prepare them in advance.

**Result.** After finishing the practical and analysis parts of this paper, it occurs to me how much I have to learn about selecting activities for classroom use in teaching communicative grammar. It requires a lot of care and attention in selecting activities that don’t mix notions as well as satisfy criteria for learning stages and pedagogical criteria, which is a lot easier said than done. I am confident that I understand the principles behind teaching grammar communicatively, but applying them and finding enough activities for each learning stage (especially performance) will be a challenge. Another extremely important benefit that I see in communicative grammar is its fostering of a student-centered classroom. Communicative grammar places its emphasis on students teaching each other as well as figuring things out by themselves, and places teachers in the position of guides or facilitators of language (rather than knowledge-keepers). The active role taken by students in the communicative grammar classroom mimics the active role that they will have to take in the outside world when interacting with other speakers of English (or any other language), and provides an excellent foundation for autonomous learning.

Teaching grammar requires more than making students memorize lists of words, noun phrases, verbal phrases, prepositions, articles and other grammatical structures. It urges the implementation of effective and useful teaching methodologies to guide, help, and induce students to visualize grammar as an efficient tool for transmitting their ideas in a clear and precise way. Grammar can be the vehicle to encourage a student’s social integration into foreign cultures and peer interactions.

Consequently, language teachers must see grammar teaching strategies as a way to develop techniques to teach the grammar subjects by implementing communicative activities in the classroom. Teachers must understand that students learn in different ways and have different strengths and abilities. This way, they must adjust classroom activities to various student intelligences rather than force everyone into a single mould. This diversity in methodology and written and oral activities allows learners to develop their own learning strategies and self-confidence toward the second language. Through the survey, students mentioned their disappointment in the methodology used by most of the professors. It consisted of written activities that did not allow them to see the grammatical rules and sentence structures as mere tools to write down sentences that will be inserted in conversations with their classmates, teachers or native speakers. That is why the teachers’ duty is to combine traditional teaching of the theory and communicative activities to make grammar fun and catchy.

**Conclusion.** Finally, language teachers must be viewed as facilitators who are in a constant search for alternative teaching strategies. They must be willing to modify, adjust or implement new methodology to make the teaching of grammar a challenging and rewarding experience for learners. Teachers must become co-learners who see their students’ learning experiences as an opportunity to learn grammar from a different perspective.
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