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## PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR: A COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES

In the following we shall consider how a communicative, use-based view of language on the one hand and a cognitive view both of language storage and of language processing on the other will lead to a reappraisal of pedagogical grammar practices and provide a way forward for designing grammar materials and activities. This dual perspective is denoted by the label Cognitive+Communicative Grammar (C+C grammar).

**Keywords:** cognitive grammar, communicative grammar, pedagogical grammar, dual perspective.

Among the various types of knowledge and skills that learners of a foreign language seek to acquire grammar is, in many ways, unique. It should, however, be stressed that this unique status does not derive from the nature of grammar *per se*; after all, it is but one sub-system in a network of other linguistic sub-systems and sub-skills which need to be acquired by learners. Its uniqueness arises from the culture in which grammar is described, taught and researched, all of which, it seems to me, show a tendency to ignore how grammar operates as a communication system and which fail, therefore, to embed it in insights from the *communicative approach* to language teaching and from more recent *cognitive* views of learning. Whilst a considerable amount of teaching and learning time is devoted to the acquisition of grammar in language classrooms all over the world, its pedagogical status remains hotly disputed. Questions arise such as: How important is grammar? How is grammar best acquired? To what extent are first- and second-language similar? Should grammar be taught synthetically (item by item) or in a more holistic way? Does a conscious knowledge of grammar rules help learners? What contribution do grammar exercises actually make to learning? These are only a few of the issues which are frequently discussed by applied linguists and methodologists but which find little consensus. Indeed, the very issue of whether grammar should be taught at all is a not uncommon topic in books, articles and at conferences. It is a sobering reflection on current pedagogical practices that one of the best-known of pedagogical grammarians, can find 'seven bad reasons for teaching grammar' but only 'two good ones'.

Considerable discussion (Dirven 1990, Chalker 1994) has been given to the differences between pedagogical and linguistic grammar, variously termed 'theoretical' or 'scientific', in particular concerning the extent to which a pedagogical description should have a theoretical basis and what this basis should be [4], [5]. Despite the large number of reference grammars on the market and the important role which grammar rules play in many classrooms, there appears to be relatively little coherent theory underlying rule formulation. This is somewhat surprising since as Dirven (1990) points out 'learners can be and are misled into all kinds of wrong generalisations by the inaccurate rule formulations in their textbooks' [5]. Some grammarians have attempted to give a theoretical basis to their rules: for example, Leech, Svartvik (1975) draw on the linguistic model of functional/systemic grammar [8; 287]; Newby (1989) derives his rules from his own 'notional grammar' model [9], [10], [11]. Yet on the whole the area of rule formulation is one that is relatively unexplored [12; 172].

Of the two theoretical areas that comprise pedagogical grammar – description and methodology – it is the latter that has been the main focus of attention and which has, at recurrent periods in the history of language teaching, represented a highly contentious topic.

The main bones of contention concern:

- the aims of grammar teaching (knowing about grammar or using grammar; manipulating sentences or free production);
- the categorisation of grammar (form, meaning, use) into units which will form a syllabus or teaching objectives;

- the extent to which grammar should be dealt with separately from other aspects of language;
- the use of rules, in particular in how far a cognitive focus on grammar rules assists acquisition;
- the type of grammatical exercises and activities which will lead to automatization.

In modern grammar teaching the influences of the following approaches are most strongly discernible or influential.

**Traditional grammar.** Grammar is defined primarily as a set of forms and structures, which comprise the main focus of the textbook syllabus. Whilst grammatical meaning plays an important role, it is dealt with in an unsystematic way. The sentence is the main unit of analysis and emphasis is placed on the student's ability to form correct sentences. The usual classroom methodology is based on presentation, explanation, practice. Learning is seen largely as a conscious process and grammar rules are used deductively; that is to say, they are explained by teacher or textbook prior to the practice stage. The most common forms of exercise type are gapped sentences, pattern drills and sentences for transformation, reflecting a form-based, rather uncontextualized view of grammar. Grammatical competence is measured according to the student's ability to manipulate sentences, rather than being performance-oriented.

**Communicative grammar.** Language is seen not only as a formal system but primarily as the process of communicating messages between human beings in actual contexts, grammar being a means of expressing certain types of meanings through grammatical forms. Attempts to recategorise grammatical meaning in terms of functions and notions were only partly successful since they did not go very far in addressing the need for pedagogical grammar to give an accurate any systematic specification of meaning. Since, however, the focus of aims had shifted from formal correctness towards communicative effectiveness, the 'grammar vacuum' tended to go unnoticed or was patched up in textbooks by a structural-functional organisation or, in the case of the 'extremist fringe' of communicative teaching, grammar was dispensed with altogether. As far as grammatical rules were concerned, a distinction was made between 'knowing about' grammar and 'knowing how' to use it, referred to as declarative vs procedural knowledge [6; 93], which led to shift of focus from analysis to use. Rules tended to be dealt with inductively, that is to say the understanding emerges from use, rather than the other way round. Various important features of communicative methodology can also be applied to grammar; in particular, a 'learning-by-doing' approach based on small-group oral activities (information gap and similar communicative games), which is reflected in a number of grammar practice books [12; 101]. Whilst the communicative approach brought many benefits in the areas of methodology, its failure to integrate grammar in a coherent way led to the widespread but quite false 'grammar vs communication' dichotomy.

**Acquisition-based approaches to grammar.** In the 1980s various factors led some methodologists to take a quite different view of grammar. At the core of this movement was an increasing interest in the psychological processes underlying first-language acquisition and the belief that many of these processes could apply to second languages if suitable learning environments and conditions were provided. The best-known proponent of this view was Stephen Krashen [7; 45], who distinguished between learning – with a conscious focus on grammar (explicit rules, terminology etc) and automatic, unconscious acquisition. It was only through the latter that students could achieve communicative competence. The proposed method entailed providing learners with what he termed comprehensible input and allowing the intake process to function automatically, following an innate acquisition order for which the learner's brain was already 'wired up' and which could not be influenced by structuring the input. Despite – or perhaps because of – their rather simplistic nature, these views enjoyed considerable appeal in some quarters and were part of a more general 'anti-grammar' movement. This was especially the case in Britain, which unlike most other European countries, had seen the abandonment in schools of formal grammar teaching.

**Language awareness approaches to grammar.** In recent years, particularly under the influence of educational psychologists, renewed interest has been shown in the special role of the learner in formal educational in general and of the specific nature of various cognitive processes linked to learning a language in particular. Central to this view, which is part of a wider learner autonomy credo, is the notion of language awareness – that learners should be guided towards focusing on aspects of language and be encouraged to use various cognitive strategies to explore for themselves how language works.

Teachers should not ‘impose’ their own grammatical knowledge on learners but should be facilitators of the learning process. Thus, grammar rules explained by the teacher give way to consciousness-raising or discovery techniques and tasks given to students [12; 81], [2; 24].

It would probably be true to say that modern classrooms reflect a variety of approaches. Whilst there is almost uniform rejection of traditional grammar among methodologists, the security its structured practices offer to teacher and learner is obviously appealing. A traditional core, with bits of communicative methodology and awareness-raising activities superimposed, is a not uncommon classroom scenario.

The following principles may be applied to assess the extent to which a grammar activity replicates conditions of communication:

1. Clear and realistic context
  - grammar arises from an actual situation;
2. Realistic use/processing of language (authenticity of process)
  - grammar is communication, not mathematics;
3. Meaning, and meaningfulness of grammar stressed
  - grammar helps to convey messages;
4. Personalisation (students link grammar to their own knowledge, ideas, experience, wishes etc.)
  - grammar is a way of encoding experience;
5. Open-ended exercises
  - grammar is part of a creative process;
6. Task-based
  - grammar is a means to an end;
7. Integrated skills (vocabulary, speech acts, speaking, writing)
  - grammar works with other linguistic sub-systems and skills to generate meaning.

There is, of course, no simple binary distinction between ‘communicative’ and ‘non-communicative’ activities. It could be stated that the more of the above criteria which a grammar activity fulfils, the farther along the continuous cline towards ‘100% communicative’ it might be located. An example of a grammar activity which fulfils several of these criteria is the following, the aim of which is to practise the generation of meaningful ‘wh’ questions. In this activity students have to write questions which may lead to the answers given:

1. A: *Why are going to bed already?*  
B: Because I feel tired.
2. A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: A hamburger, please.
3. A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: Let's go to France. I've never been there.
4. A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: English and Spanish.
5. A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: For five years. She really loves it there.
6. A: \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: Fantastic! We had seats in the front row!

With the exception of criterion 6 (task-based) this activity appears to satisfy all the communicative criteria.

Whilst giving an activity a ‘communicative’ stamp will validate the link between pedagogy and real-life use, this is a necessary but not a sufficient criterion on which to assess its effectiveness within the overall process of learning. The communicative criterion may guide us as to whether to use an activity; it will not, however, provide any information as to the stage of learning during which an activity might most usefully be applied. To do this, we need to add a cognitive learning dimension.

The C+C axis has the potential not only to provide a theoretical base for modelling both the use and the acquisition of grammar but contributes to pedagogical grammar by helping to systematise specific tasks. The most significant outcomes of C+C grammar are the following:

- A theory of grammar based on ways in which grammar is stored in the human brain and used in communication. This gives focus to how grammar is processed when grammatical meanings are created and how these are encoded (and decoded) in communication.
  - Pedagogical applications of this theory of grammar:
    - a) formulation of grammatical objectives
    - b) syllabus design
    - c) grammatical 'I can' descriptors – also for level specification self-assessment
    - d) formulation of grammatical rules
    - e) entry point for methodology
  - A theory of learning based on how human beings process and store new information and how human beings recall and utilise information
    - Pedagogical applications of this theory of learning:
      - a) framework for designing and evaluating grammar methodology
      - b) framework for test and assessment design

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### ПЕДАГОГІЧНА ГРАМАТИКА: КОГНІТИВНИЙ ТА КОМУНІКАТИВНИЙ ПІДХОДИ

У даній статті розглянемо як комунікативний, орієнтований на використання мови з одного боку та когнітивний погляди на обробку та використання мови з іншого призведе до переоцінки педагогічних граматичних практик та забезпечить створення передових граматичних матеріалів та вправ. Отож, ця подвійна перспектива відповідає формулі Когнітивна+Комунікативна Граматика (К+К граматика).

**Ключові слова:** когнітивна граматика, комунікативна граматика, педагогічна граматика, подвійна перспектива.

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В данной статье рассмотрим как коммуникативный, ориентированный на использование языка с одной стороны и когнитивный взгляды на обработку и использование языка с другой приведет к переоценке педагогических грамматических практик и обеспечит создание передовых грамматических материалов и практик. В итоге, эта двойная перспектива соответствует формуле Когнитивная Грамматика+Коммуникативная Грамматика (К+К грамматика).

**Ключевые слова:** когнитивная грамматика, коммуникативная грамматика, педагогическая грамматика, педагогическая грамматика, двойная перспектива.

