Grammar Teaching: State Of The Art

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ABSTRACT: Grammar instruction has constituted an important and debated issue over the history of language teaching and learning. Especially, in the age of Information and Communication Technology, it is necessary to reassess the position of grammar teaching in the second language classroom. This paper provides a brief overview of the changes in the role of grammar teaching throughout a number of linguistic theories and methodologies over the last fifty years along with the current developments in this area. In addition, some predictions for future directions and recommendations regarding grammar teaching are also mentioned.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long historical development of language teaching and learning, the belief in the role of grammar has been changed greatly at different time. These changes display the differences in attitude towards the requirements of language learners' proficiency and communicative competence or the alternation relating to the theories onnature of language and of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2003). Underpinning these differences, there have been many methods proposed in which the role of grammar has varied from being a central pillar to minor status, and then regained its importance in current developments.

This paper aims to provide a brief overview of the changes in grammar teaching over several decades along with discussing the current developments in this area. To finish, some predictions for future directions and recommendations will be mentioned.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF GRAMMAR TEACHING

Grammar translation method

Traditional Grammar was the earliest method employed to teach grammar starting since around 1,000 – 1,400 A.D. Before the 16th century, the Grammar-Translation method was widely used to teach Greek and Latin**.** These languages were then replaced in later years by other languages because of political changes in Europe. However, this approach still dominated in language teaching classroom by the 18th and 19th centuries (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). This approach aims at enabling learners to use the language they learn to read literature and foster their mentality and intellectual (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Actually, grammar was regarded as an ultimate goal of language teaching and learning in this method. One of the major characteristics of this method is its focus on learners' memorization of the rules and factstranslationof the texts from the target language to thefirst language (Richards & Rodgers, 2003). In addition, in this method, grammar is treated deductively and explicitly at the level of isolated sentences (Keck & Kim, 2014). In other words, the grammar rules are first presented, then practiced through writing sentences and translated into the mother language. Hence, accuracy in language use becomes the core focus of this approach.

The Direct Method

As an outcome to against to Grammar Translation method, by the 20th century, the combination of linguists' structural descriptions of world languages and behaviorist psychology led to the development of direct method (Hinkel, 2002). This method was strongly impacted by behaviorist psychology (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011) which is credited to philosopher J.B Watson and was supported by the well-known theorist B.F. Skinner (Moore,2011). Behaviorist theory considered "learning as a process of habit formation and conditioning"; hence, grammatical rules were regarded as necessary for second language learning (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p.3). Because this approach was developed based on this psychology, the focus of it directly associated between "L2 words and phrase and the object, actions, and states referred to" (Simensen, 2007, p.28). In other words,the main focus on using the target language to give instruction in language classroom was considered as the basic principle of this approach (Stern, 1983). Achieving oral communication is the main goal of the learning process;

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hence, grammar was taught using oral practice, drills, and repetition (Hinkel, 2002). This means that there was a shift in the way of teaching grammar from deductively to inductively. In addition, the grammatical structures are explained using the first language, and the second language is also employed as much as possible (Mella, 1998). However, Hinkel (2002) assumed that grammatical principles still played a central role in the learning process.

The Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method, which was mainly structural linguistics, emerged in American schools in the 1960s (Larsen & Freeman, 2000). Similar to the Direct method, the Audio-Lingual method emerged together with the development of behaviorist psychology. Therefore, an important component of this method was that of behaviorist psychology in which language learning was considered as "habit of formation and overlearning, thus mimicry of forms and memorization of structural patterns were used extensively to present rules inductively" (Celce-Murica, 1991, p. 460). When employing this approach, teachers use dialogues with the aim at forming the students' new habits in the target language and successful deal with the old habits of their mother tongue (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). According to Dendrinos (1992), this method focus on forming native language habits in language learnersthrough repetition. To be more specific, learners acquire grammatical rules inductively through various types of drills and practice by repeating the sentence-level patterns, memorize and construct the new ones and then have the correct responses reinforced by the teacher. As such, learners' errors can be limited or even avoided. Although the way the grammatical rules in this method are presented differently from the Grammar Translation Method, the emphasis was still on studying structural components rather than the development of language variation related to real-life communication skills (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

The Cognitive Code Approach

Although the Audio-lingual Method gained its popularity in most of the foreign language classrooms, in the late 1960s, its features were denied by Noam Chomsky (Keck & Kim, 2014). He argued that the purpose of linguistics was to determine the grammatical rules that constitute the sentence structure, not just to focus on the surface of sentence description (Chomsky, 1959). Meanwhile, the use of drills in the audio-lingual method puts the emphasis on memorization and repetition of sentence patterns, but not stimulate learners to explore the underlying grammatical rules of the sentence. According to Chomsky (1965), all humans possess their innate knowledge of grammar, also known as Universal Grammar, which enables them to acquire language. Therefore, the purpose of linguistics should be to identify the universal properties shared by all languages. Hence, formal grammar instruction is unnecessary, instead, learners need to be exposed to meaningful input in the target language (Cook, 1989).

Being inspired by the work of Chomsky, the Cognitive code approach became more popular in the early 1970s. In this method, "Language learning was viewed as hypothesis formation and rule acquisition, rather than habit formation" (Celce-Murica, 1991, p.461). Based on different learners, grammatical rules can be introduced deductively and/or inductively. Unlike in audio-lingual method, in this method, teachers and learners could make use of errors in a positive way such as error analysis, self- correction or peer correction activities because errors were considered as anunavoidable part of the language learning process. In this method, Presentation, Practice, and Production model was commonly employed. Specifically, in the first stage, grammatical rules are given through a conversation or a short text. In the second stage, students practice using these structures through drills or substitution exercises. Finally, learners are enabled to apply what they have learned in communicative activities (Richards, 2006). Nevertheless, the focus was still mainly sentence-oriented (Celce-Murica, 1991).

There were many approaches introduced such as the Reading Approach, the Oral and Situational Method, the Silent Way, and Total Physical Response after the emergence of these two methods. The main focus was still on grammatical forms rather than on language functions or real-life communication (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

The Comprehension Approach

The comprehension method emerged in the United State during the 1970s and 1980s (Winitz, 1981). This approach is mainly based on the study of Krashen's Second language acquisition in which language is learned through the process of understanding the meaning of words and expressions. In other words, this method focuses on meaning, instead of form. According to Krashen (2009), "language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious drill" (p.7). This means that grammar instruction merely helps students monitor or become aware of the forms they use so it should be excluded from the classroom. The implication of this theory is that every facet of grammar teaching is useless, unimportant and fragile because this leads to the collection of learned knowledge, which cannot be changed into acquired knowledge (Cowan, 2008). This approach was developed with the aim at providing learners opportunities to expose to enough comprehensible input in the target language that learners themselves are able to employ to

figure out the grammatical structures, thus these structures become can the form of acquired knowledge (Krashen, 2009). Krashen stressed that language instruction outline based on the grammatical arrangement will ruin any real communicational effort (Krashen, 1985). As such, in this method, the importance of grammar is denied and suggested to be omitted in the classroom.

III.   DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA AND THE CURRENT STATE OF ART
Communicative Language Teaching

Since the communicative approach was introduced in the 1970s, the purpose of language learning has been changed. It is not just to know its grammatical rules, but to employ and interpret meaning in real-life communication contexts (Widdowson,1988).The communicative approaches greatly affected by were Hymes' theory of "communicative competence". Theoretically, he differentiated between linguistic and communicative competence and claimed that the nature of language learning is not just to produce accurate structural sentences, but to use them appropriately in communicative contexts (Hymes, 1972). Furthermore, this approach was also impacted by the work of the Council of Europe and other British applied linguists such as Halliday, 1978, Firth, 1957, and the American sociolinguists such as Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Labov, 1972, in which the role of studying functional language use in communication contexts was focused on (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). In addition, Krashen's second language learning theories strengthen the principles of communicative approaches theoretically and particularly the role of grammar teaching (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Communicative approaches consist of Silent way method, Suggestopedia, Total physical response, Community Language Learning and Communicative language teaching (CLT). Among those, CLT has been considered as one of the most dominant and influential methods since it first appeared. However, in the CLT method, grammar teaching is seen as a controversial issue on whether we should teach grammar in CLT or not.According to Thornbury (1999), the CLT method consists of the deep-end approach and the shallow-end approach. In the deep-end approach, it is believed that it is not worth teaching grammar previously and explicitly because it is unconsciously acquired through the interactional situation. Krashen (1981) diminished the role of grammar teaching in his Input Hypothesis. In this hypothesis, he supposed that learners would acquire grammatical rules in natural order by being exposed to comprehensible input (Krashen,1981). Also, through this model, teaching grammar is thought to impact negatively on communicative competence.

In contrast, in the shallow-end approach, it is believed that learners need to learn the structural rules before applying them in a communicative context (Thornbury, 1999). In other words, grammar is regarded as a tool served for communication. According to Canale and Swain (1980), CLT is employed to promote learners' communicative competence, which comprises four key aspects of language knowledge including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic, strategic competence and discourse competence (as cited by Brandl, 2008). As can be seen, in CLT, although grammar competence is a part of communicative competence although it is not the primarily important component as in other methods. Therefore, the goal of grammar teaching in CLT is to make grammar "meaningful and communicative"   (Rama & Agulló, 2012, p.181). Larsen-Freeman (2000) also indicated "teaching grammar means enabling language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully and appropriately" (p. 280). Hence, in order to improve learners' communicative competence, grammar teaching is indispensable. In this method, teaching turns into learner-centered.

Communicative Language Teaching Variations

Within CLT, the Functional-notional approach, Task-based teaching, Focus on form andcontent-based instruction are the most frequently used approaches (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Firstly, Functional-notional approach emphasizes the communicative purposes of speech act. This encompasses two specific terms, namely notions (time, space, movement, cause, effect) and functions ("the intentional or purposive use of language" such as request, apology, negotiation, ordering, promising, etc.) (White, 1988, p.75). In this approach, learners' behavior and communicative contexts are primarily crucial components, however, language collected highly associated with the needs of learners and suitable language form (White, 1988). As noted by Wilkins (1976), "the advantage of the notional syllabus is that it takes the communicative facts of language into account from the beginning without losing sight of grammatical and situational factors" (p.19). Consequently, in this approach, it is obvious that teaching grammar for learners is necessary.

Secondly, in term of Task-based language teaching (TBLT), the notion "task" highlights the engagement in activities that stimulate the communicative language use and focus on meaning rather than focus on grammatical forms (Nunan, 2006). Traditionally, there was no emphasis on grammar form in the strong version of TBLT (Nunan, 2006). However, recently, many researchers have claimed that it is necessary to emphasize grammar in task-based instruction (Skehan, 1996). Skehan (1996) proposed when creating a task, it is necessary to consider both linguistic forms and communication. According to Rama & Agulló (2012), in TBLT, it is completelyachievable to promote both learners' fluency and accuracy simultaneously. To

demonstrate, they gave out three possible reasons. Firstly, the focus on forms can be introduced after the authentic input is given. Secondly, the focus on forms should be presented associated with the communicative task in order to enhance the communicative mood of the lesson. Thirdly, syntactical structures should be presented repeatedly in order to help learner review them constantly and limit the feeling of learning grammar in isolation. In these lights , once again, grammar demonstrates that it is an effective tool towards communication (Rama & Agulló, 2012).

Thirdly, in regard to focus-on-form instruction, there are two basic notions including "focus on forms" refer to the method in which grammar is taught in isolation and "focus on form" refer to the method in which the grammar system is integrated into the communicative activities (Long, 1991). There are many researchers advocating the second type of teaching grammar and promoting the frameworks in which the grammar teaching highlights the integration of a focus on grammar into meaningful communication (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). As stated by Ellis (2001), learners' attention on linguistic forms should happen in a communicative context. Sharing the same perspective, Larsen- Freeman (2000) suggested a communication model of teaching grammar. This model contains three dimensions: structure, semantics, and pragmatics. This model enables learners to use grammar meaningfully and appropriately.

Finally, Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is defined as "the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught" (Krahnke, 1987, as cited in Richards, 2006, p. 27). In other words, it focuses more on learning the topics or subject matters than on learning language knowledge (Crandall, 1999). In CBI, teachers can freely employ different kinds of activities and teaching methods such as grammar-based instruction or CLT method provided that the main theme of the lesson is the priority (Crandall, 1999). The amount of grammar instruction in CBI depend on the particular learning context and teachers need to ensure that they teach enough quantity of grammar in a communicative way rather than cover only grammar as it originates from the main content (Bartels, 2006).

POSSIBLE NEW DIRECTIONS

With the rapid development of science and technology, the integration ofInformation Communication Technology (ICT) into language teaching is evolved. As stated by Kenning (2007), ICT enables learners to control their own learning and teachers individualize their teaching. Hence, the position of grammar teaching in thelanguage classroom, as well as the ways to deal with it will be reassessed and redefined. Grammar teaching will continue being a component of language teaching and learning, however, its role is predicted to become minor, but not omitted. This is because learners' communicative competence consists of not only grammatical competence but also other communicative competence components namely sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence (Savignon, 1983). Also, there will be no space for the method in which grammar is treated in isolation. Furthermore, in the age of Education 4.0 when technology and internet offer learners great chances to improve language skills and other abilities such as self-study, self-efficacy, creativity and team working (Haseand Ellis, 2001). However, the approach that is predicted to work best is the blended learning approach which is considered as "the integrated combination of traditional learning with web-based online approach" (Oliver&Trigwell, 2005, p.17). Particularly, there will be twophases to teach grammar. The first phase in which web-based online approach is used, learners are exposed to linguistic structures and practice the applications with sentencelevel exercises or translation from the first to the target language. The second phase happens in the classroom. Class time will be all devoted to practice grammar along with communicative activities. As such, form-focused together with meaning-focused instructions to boost learners' language fluency and accuracy are balanced. Importantly, teachers will have the flexibility in allocating the curriculum time and choosing the appropriate teaching methods as long as learners can grasp the grammatical rules and enhancecommunicative competence.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over fifty years, grammar teaching has passed through a number of paradigms due to different teaching perspectives. In general, there have been two main trends. At first, the role ofgrammar was consideredas a central pillar and taught at the level of isolated sentences through memorization and repetition. In this trend, learners deal with grammar in a highly mechanical way without considering the functions or communicative contexts. In the second trend and the current so state-of-the-art tendency, grammar has not been the primarily important component, but communicative competence. However, grammar is considered as an essential mean serving for the communicative target. In this trend, CLT is a pivotal method in which grammar is taught for communication. Therefore, teachers should not teach grammar in isolation. Instead, they can integrate grammar teaching into other skills, especially speaking and writing skills.CLT is considered as "a set of core principles" which affects many other language teaching approaches (Richards, 2006, p.45). All of its variations treat grammar in the same way that grammar is taught in context.

In the time of Education 4.0, the use of computer and internet will surely enable grammar instructionto become more interesting and engaging. Thus, teachers should thoroughly exploit technologyto enhance the effectiveness of the lessons.This requires teachersto keep updated, learn how to use new technologies in education and employ them properly. In addition, whenstudents are surrounded by a vast of interesting sources to learn English, teaching techniques gain their key role in the success of teaching and learning process in order to attract and engage learners in classroom activities. As the aforementioned, learners will explore and work on the grammartical rules, their uses from authentic languages, and practice the sentence and discourse levels relating to these points in a real-life contextonline at home. In this phase, the teachers need to give learners direct and immediate explanation and feedback. In the second phase which happens at the classroom, grammar instruction should integrate to speaking or writing skills. The activities such as negotiating, problem- solving, group work, roleplay, reasoninggap, writing, etc. are recommended to employ. Communicative contexts need to be considered as an indispensable component of grammar teaching. The contentsrelating to learners' dailylives and interests should be made use of.As such, students' communicative competence can be promoted. Importantly, teachers need to provide corrective feedback either explicitly or implicitly.

Currently, teaching grammar is still a controversial issue, but an indispensable component of language teaching and learning. The teachers need to choose appropriate methods and activities to teach grammar as long as they suit learning contexts, engage learners in classroom activities and stimulate learners' communication skills. However, before applying those methods, teachers should take into account the learners' variables including age, proficiency level, and educational background.In short, it is the teachers who decide the effectiveness of grammar instructions.

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