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Educational Research Association
The International Journal of
Educational Researchers 2016, 7(2): 14-24
ISSN: 1308-9501



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Advocating Communicative Language Teaching for Too Long Now: The Inevitability of Grammar Translation Method and a Balance Between CLT and GTM in Instructional Settings

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Abstract

The CLT, after it was introduced in 1970s, started to be rejoiced as many teaching approaches had often gone short of answering a wide range of needs as CLT. It was all of a sudden that the CLT became the most popular method of all as it attached specific utmost importance to the ultimate goal of learning a language: communicating in the target language. The CLT put everything else aside and focused on speaking activities, thus exposing students to real-life examples as much as possible. Gradually though, the main focus shifted from communicating in the target language to the fact that the very idea that it was actually the structures required to become communicatively competent, not to mention the recent studies indicating fluency and accuracy of communication were dependent upon the explicit grammar instruction. The CLT was a way of contradicting the GTM in a way at the beginning. However, along the way, it turned out that grammar was an indispensable part of building on knowledge of language and ensuring grammatically meaningful messages. For the two opposite models, this study suggests a re-evaluation of the two altogether and a balance of GTM on CLT. In doing so, different theories advocating and reasoning against both approaches were evaluated from different aspects along with attributing reference to course books designed in tune with CLT and still providing many tips for bits of grammar in great detail. In conclusion, this study reviews research from past till now and concluded that in selecting teaching approaches it shouldn't be a matter of trading one approach for another or choosing one way over another, rather, with specific reference to CLT and GTM, the preference of an approach could be an integrated entity where bits of several teaching approaches are blended and act as a complementary approach.

Keywords: Communicative language teaching, grammar translation method, language teaching approaches

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Introduction

Instructional settings where English Language Teaching and English Language Learning are usually confronted against each other from different aspects and in issues such as what it means to know a language (word, grammar, etc.), the interrelatedness or preference of linguistic and communicative competences, the question of whether to manipulate the language so that individuals can communicate or to know the structure or forms make both language professionals and learners get confused about the ultimate goal of language education. This dispute has been going on too long over the decades that both teachers and learners are missing the point and lose track of how to progress and how to monitor the learning process. Discussion is still on in a way that individuals and researchers and even the learners see it as a sub-field of applied linguistics where they try to justify what aspects they are for and refute what they are against. However, the problem and goal has not been addressed and attended yet – how the learning of the language (English) will take place and whether the learners will finally have a good command of English or not.

This being the case, it can be said that, in ELT, there is always a discussion of which method to deploy along with what needs the students have. Though, it seems thanks to Applied Linguistics and ELT, everything is well organized and steps in language teaching including the pedagogical aspects from the language development of a child to SLA of an adult are predetermined with many options, methods, techniques and everything else; this discussion of linguistic and communicative competence doesn't seem to be ending in near future.

Here a closer look should be taken into how this debate was heated in the first place. For a long time since the studies on languages and learning languages began, the idea of knowing the language was heavily about the form and structure probably thanks to both behavioral influence of the time and the current state of the technology of the time not letting many other novel theories into English Language Teaching. Cook (2003) compares linguistic competence to communicative competence asserting that linguistic competence does not necessarily work in actual communication; and, gives a number of examples of grammatically correct but semantically incorrect sentences concluding that learners who have communicative competence will perform better in telling the difference.

Furthermore, a basic rationale for the language teaching practice itself, it is not similar to the teaching of other disciplines like science, mathematics or geography. In other words, in such disciplines, the content is limited to the nature of the discipline and the interdisciplinary practice and content has already produced other branches to these science subjects or disciplines. On the other hand, when it comes to the teaching or learning of the languages, the language is everything. For example, English Language Teaching has a branch of science on itself; however, the English Language encompasses a vocabulary of more than 600.000 words along with a number of grammatical and phonetical features, morphological and syntactic processes and semantic varieties. Considering a language learner who take up on the process; it can be said for him/her that taking on the grammar first, without enough guidance, can cause him/her get lost in the way resulting in thoughts that grammar isn't really helping learners and even though they know the grammatical structures; they can only read, yet they can't speak, listen or write.

What is more, the diversion from the grammar translation method which heavily relied on memorization and whose language emphasis was heavily on grammar and words to communicative language teaching which put the communicative competence at the heart of its strategy and took a practical approach towards the English language has made the learners

feel less discouraged and more confident that they can easily learn the language and feel safer in the vast lands of the English language.

Here, the thing is that grammar translation method happened to be targeting a greater amount of the huge content of the language and required longer periods of time for the effort put into the learning of the grammar and words to actually start paying off and the communicative language teaching, on the other hand, was offering short-term results and better actual communication skills in real life as opposed to grammar translation method.

1.1. Significance of The Study

This study aims to neither find rationale for one method over the another nor compare two methods to each other and in the end reach already existing results. Rather, by providing rationale of the researchers, pedagogues and ELT professionals going for and against the grammar translation and communicative language teaching methods, this study aims to review of the pre-existing literature and try to come up with ways to let go of the debate over whether linguistic competence or communicative competence is better and offer ways to balance the weight of these two approaches along with others in a way that the learners will get the most out of their learning experiences.

1.2. Purpose of The Study

There are numerous studies aimed at comparing the two methods and justifying one over the another. This study aims to eliminate this need and put forward that the two can coexist. As Cook (2003), many of the theories stemmed from Chomsky's views – some of them were adding on his theories of linguistic competence and the rest start to exist in opposition. This being the case, everything before this discussion happened to be more on grammatical aspects and people started to question the very best grammatical approach with the advent of the high technology, increasing pace of life and other novel pedagogical approaches. These advances have made the notion that GTM can be replaced by a more efficient method. As Richards and Rogers (1986) claimed that the decade after the introduction of CLT was overwhelmed with a rain of methods, materials, approaches containing communicative competence. This may also be one unconscious reason underlying this everlasting debate.

In the light of the background provided above, this study seeks to:

1. provide a rationale for this everlasting debate,
2. recommend a comprehensive analysis of both sides,
3. provide ways to balance the weights of the two methods,
4. suggest ways to treat this debate right.

2. Returning Back To Grammar Translation Method (Gtm) And Communicative Language Teaching (Clt) – A Different Way To Look At The Discussion

Before the issue of a good method, approach or procedure can be addressed properly, the magnitude of the content must be analyzed and evaluated carefully. Acknowledging the fact that Applied Linguistics is everywhere, language is everything that surrounds human beings and literally all creatures. Therefore, for a learner who is about to take up English or any other language is literally setting out to learn everything, with the undeniable truth that one cannot possibly know everything. Human beings, in part, knows something from everything.

Actually, the language is somewhat like other disciplines, though. It has to be broken down into units. The content must be prioritized and levels must be ordained and goals must be set. This, by nature, will make it easier for a learner to do a good job learning. A modern version of GTM suiting the needs of the innovation era and a comprehensive knowledge of grammar and vocabulary can pick up an elementary learner and take him/her through all levels into the advanced level. Why is possible is that grammar can give a learner a general understanding of the structure of the language and not very big margin for error. However, if an unnecessary emphasis solely on communication and throwing the learner into real-life conversation and exposing him/her to real language practice will also help the learner make a swift movement into actually using the language. This also sounds good; but this will rely on the learners' memory and capacity to keep these structures that he/she will deploy in conversation and communication with others. This is of course simpler until a certain level such as intermediate. But what about the levels after it? How many of the learners will have this great capacity to keep chunks and drills in mind? Most importantly, how many of the learners are going to need to take part in an advanced level of conversation where, let's say, he/she's going to discuss randomly "the nature of the sunspots and the explosions in the Sun or the school of salmon migrating through rivers, dams and oceans or the reasons and results of the tea party and its implications on today". Or, at least, where and in what context does a learner ever need to expect to take part in some kind of exposure to advanced language? And, let's assume that he/she has to do it in the next five minutes. As he needs every kind of complex sentence structures and academic vocabulary which he can never get through just engaging in conversation and adopt them naturally through the course of conversation, he/she will must probably fail the conversation. Again, in GTM, though, he/she will probably fail; yet, he/she will be able to understand what he/she is being told and talk back at least with the words and pauses but will eventually convey something.

What is more, to clarify, Crystal (2005) gives a general understanding of the language, in other words, what a learner is face to face when learning a language – at least what he/she is supposed to:

- words are clues for the meaning,
- there's a predetermined order in the sentence, which will help understand the meaning and react to it,
- phonetical varieties of which each word is made up of, which will help alter the meaning, stress or tone or vice versa to get an understanding of something altered, meant something else,
- other varieties can be in place regarding utterance, tone of voice – in writing it is easier to understand but in speech it is harder and easier at the same time.

All of the aspects above have things to do the with grammar, all of which can be said to be worked from linguistics down to grammar.

Another aspect of this analysis is somehow related to the motivational issues – what a learner would want to learn English for. Generally speaking, nobody would want to learn a foreign language just for the sake of language and communicating foreigners – of course, at least not the ones who happen to be part of this discussion and analysis. Some learners want to get a job a multinational company, some would pursue graduate education, some would basically need it because they need it for something that they will get benefit. Therefore, they are going to need style, sense of humor, intonation, stress, pronunciation, and everything else. That's why, the argument of knowing a language cannot be minimized into a preference of

knowing the structure and forms or being able communicate and having communicative competence. It defines the learner's personality just like his/her native language defines who he/she is. If the learner lets the language penetrate through himself/herself, then he/she can become the second person, a different person. This means, if learning the language was like flying planes, achieving this native-like proficiency would be flying the plane upside-down. A way to manage this would certainly be to set a balance at least between GTM and CLT among many other things that can be done as also suggested by a number of researchers who consistently suggested integrating form-focused structures into communicative approach based activities (Fotos, 1994; Nassaji, 2002; Wang, 2009; Lightbown, 1998; Ellis, 2006; Spada and Lightbown, 2009). In other words, they believed a more effective instruction was possible by creating a balance between GTM and CLT and eliminating the need to make an unnecessary predetermined discrimination and the urge of having to take sides. Spada (2007) also suggested that even the researchers looking into CLT started to becoming involved in form-focused instruction along with communicative activities.

As Garret (1986) put forward, communicative competence is dependent upon linguistic competence. However, she thinks learning only grammar does not help. That is true; however, it does not necessarily mean that grammar translation method and learning grammatical structures are useless and do not contribute to the learning of the second language. The discussion at hand in this paper is generally about this. Vice versa, trying only to communicate will be in vain unless accompanied by linguistic competence and again this doesn't mean that using communicative language teaching method and communicating while learning are useless and do not contribute to the learning of the second language. It can be said that this is why this is a never-ending discussion in the field of "language".

3. Different Approaches to Communication and Grammar – Some Implications of GTM And CLT on Teachin and Learning of English

In Applied Linguists, and more heavily in ELT, this discussion has taken the form of "all in for the grammar or no grammar at all" and it is presumed that linguistic competence and communicative competence can't be present in the teaching process at the same time.

Although there are other factors affecting second language learning; as the front line of ELT is eventually the classroom and the learners are expecting to see the language and get something out of the teaching, researchers also happen to get more involved in the practical aspect of the science that is directly related to the outcome of the process. Lightbown and Spada (2004) list (a) *intelligence*, (b) *aptitude*, (c) *personality*, (d) *motivation and attitudes*, (e) *learner preferences*, (f) *age of acquisition* as factors affecting second language learning along with the discussion of acquisition vs. learning. They also list twelve facts and ideas, all of which can be refuted and reinforced in terms of stance at each of them:

- (1) *Language are learned mainly through imitation*
- (2) *Parents usually correct young children when they make grammatical errors*
- (3) *People with high IQs are good language learners*
- (4) *The most important factor in second language acquisition success is motivation*
- (5) *The earlier a second language is introduced in school programs, the greater the likelihood of success in learning*
- (6) *Most of the mistakes which second language learners make are due to interference from their first language*
- (7) *Teachers should present grammatical rules one at a time, and learners should practice examples of each one before going on to another*
- (8) *Teachers should teach simple language structures before complex ones*

- (9) *Learners' errors should be corrected as soon as they are made in order to prevent the formation of bad habits*
- (10) *Teachers should use materials that expose students only to language structures which they have already been taught*
- (11) *When learners are allowed to interact freely (for example in group or pair activities) they learn each others' mistakes*
- (12) *Students learn what they are taught*

As mentioned before, besides having a great magnitude of content to process, language teaching and learning are also completely sophisticated processes and cannot be degraded into a mere discussion of grammar or no grammar as there are studies showing that grammatical competence must be the base of communicative competence. It can be possibly said that this discussion is easier and more concrete than engaging into discussions in factors, facts and ideas affecting the language teaching and learning processes. In the table by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) below; it can be seen that, by looking at only a comparison of the two methods, the factors, ideas and facts affecting second language learning are mostly addressed.

Table 1. The comparison between GTM and CLT

Principle	Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
Characteristic of teaching-learning process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students are taught to translate from native language to the target language. 2. Students learn grammar deductively. 3. Learners memorize native language equivalents for the target language vocabulary. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everything is mostly done with communicative intent. 2. Students use the language through communicative activities such as game and role-plays. 3. Communication is purposeful. 4. Using authentic materials. 5. Activities are often carried out by students in small groups. 6. Grammar is taught inductively.
Nature of interaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The interaction is mostly from the teachers to the students. 2. Little students' initiation. 3. Little student – student interaction. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher is a facilitator. 2. Teacher sometimes becomes co-communicator. 3. Students interact with one another.
Handling the students' feeling and emotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no principle related to this area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivate the students. 2. Teacher gives the opportunity to the students to express their individuality. 3. Students' security is enhanced by cooperative interaction.
The role of native language of students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating into the learners' native language. 2. The native language is mostly used in teaching learning process. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students' native language is permitted. 2. Most of the activities are explained by using target language and native language only for certain thing.
The language skills that are	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vocabulary and grammar are 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The functions are reintroduced

emphasized	emphasized. 2. Reading and writing are the primary skills.	and the more complex forms are learned. 2. Students work on all four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) from the beginning.
The way of teachers' response to students' error	1. Correct answer is extremely significant. 2. If students make an error, the teacher will supply them with the correct answer.	1. Error of form is tolerated during the fluency-based activities. 2. The teacher may note the learners' error and return to the learners with accuracy-based activities.
(Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, Techniques and principles in language teaching, 2011)		

All of the items in the table can be refuted taking different theories and approaches into account or they can be justified in a way. As Krahnke (1985) suggested instead of putting meaningless effort into talking learners or teachers out of focusing on grammar, they can be shown how to benefit from grammar along with communicative competence.

4.A Fresh Look At The Discussion And A Balance Between GTM and CLT

This discussion, though it came after the introduction of CLT, is a considerably prolonged one where scholars have made invaluable contributions to the fields of Applied Linguistics and ELT. Here, this study tries to compensate for the time-consuming paradox of trying to choose between communicative and linguistic competences.

Newby (2015) has long tried to say that CLT can be a way that could take the teaching of grammar in the manner of GTM into a manner of communicative competence. Because, there is no solid way of acquiring a language without knowing the grammatical system – the ways that will make everything regarding a language meaningful. Chang (2011) adds to the fact that grammar makes the words make sense in communication and that the teaching of grammar is not only a way for students to convey what they want but a road map through their learning of the languages. They will know what to do and how to proceed. Liao (2006) also put forward that, though something advocating GTM, translation was an efficient way of learning and making sense of the language and the process. On the other hand, Zhang (2009) implicitly favors the CLT putting explicit grammar instruction at the heart of its strategy as a way to achieve communicative performance.

Therefore, already in CLT, and in many course books based on this approach, there is not a discrimination of grammar or communication. The two concepts do not need to be traded for one another. Cook (2007) sees grammar is the key of the process through which the learner who is supposed to learn the language can get an understanding of what he/she is facing. Also, even though some researchers think that grammar teaching hasn't well worked so far, Bax (2003) contradicted that giving too much credit to communicative competence and putting communicative activities at the center of the instructional settings will not necessarily solve all of the problems in the process.

Neither GTM nor CLT forbids the use of native language during teaching. Accepting that CLT also allows the inclusion of using grammatical structure and the native language in a

way to enable that the activities and instruction can be carried out more effectively (Wells, 1999; Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002).

On the other hand, Spada (2007) argues that researchers who claim that CLT focuses on meaning and not on grammar are defending myths or misconceptions. What is more, Thornbury (1999) states that, even though the syllabus of CLT is usually prepared according to meaning or functions, it has a strong base on grammar; because, doing communicative teaching with little reference to linguistic competence is not likely to be sufficient in helping learners to gain native-like proficiency (Pica, 2000).

3. Discussion And Conclusion

Teaching of grammar must eventually be seen as a facilitator of making sense of the target language. If too much emphasis is attributed to CLT and the class is carried out only targeting communicative competence and activities, the learners who are not able to keep with the pace of the activities and process what is going on will not be able to learn and will lose track of the content. As mentioned in Table 1, CLT already allocates time for L1 use and inductive teaching of grammar. It doesn't deny grammatical competence altogether, neither GTM denies the communicative competence altogether.

More or less, the learner will eventually will feel the need to compare the structures of the foreign language into L1. There is no other way of not doing that unless the learner is at a far advanced level and able to manipulate the language at native-like proficiency. According to some researchers (Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Harmer, 2005; Brown, 2007), foreign language content that has been acquired will be reflected to L1 by the learners; because, the learners use L1 to understand the foreign language.

With grammar at the centre of language teaching for a considerably long time, no grammar and all communicative approach found supporters though emphasis in coursebooks with study tips and grammar sections has still continued (Whitney & White, 2001; Evans & Dooley, 2002; Soars & Soars, 2003; Duckworth & Gude, 2003; Haines & Stewart, 2004; Carr & Parsons, 2007; Lebeau & Rees, 2008; Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2010; Whitney & White, 2013).

Holliday (1994) put forward that CLT is very capable of cognitive teaching of grammar rather than opposing grammar teaching by all means and one way to do that, according to Lee and VanPatten (2003) is to specify some structural input, that is to say the content should be organised meaningfully and convey grammar inductively and enable learners to take part in communication.

In conclusion, the content of a language is of a great magnitude and first things first, teachers need to understand it. The content that they need to convey as part of their syllabus is so small that it is very likely that it will not help the learners get a good command of English. By no means, the learners need to see some progress – they need to be able to understand some content (movies, TV series or songs) otherwise they may lose motivation and confidence and feel that they will not be able to learn the language at all. Though syllabus and curriculum suggest teaching little part of the language for the specific term, it is up to teachers to prioritize some crucial additional content to be conveyed with the structured syllabus to

ensure that the learner will make some progress and gain confidence for the future learning experiences.

Teachers need to go out of their way and make an integration of the methods, content and skills necessary for a meaningful learning experience that will ensure a good command of the language in the way of native-like proficiency.

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