

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

**TEACHER'S PERCEPTION TOWARD TEACHING
GRAMMAR COMMUNICATIVELY****PHAM HAI YEN* - TRAN THI THUY TRANG****

ABSTRACT: Grammar teaching is believed to be effective when being included in the curriculum alongside a communicative task-based component (Ellis, 1995) although some researchers argue that grammar should be taught separately, which is to say that it shouldn't be integrated with task-based component. This study was carried out to investigate English teachers' opinions in a University in Vietnam about communicative grammar teaching and the challenges that they have faced implementing this teaching approach. The results were collected thanks to a semi-structured interview and a 13-item questionnaire in a university in Vietnam. After the investigation, the authors found out teachers' opinion about the role of teachers, their goals, preparations, approaches and techniques. Although they share the same perspectives on the role of teachers and preparations, the participants have different opinions on the goals, approaches and techniques about the integration of communicative task-based components in their grammar lesson, they employed both communicative and traditional grammar teaching. Also, the result pointed out certain challenges that impeded the implementation of communicative grammar teaching.

KEY WORDS: grammar teaching; traditional grammar teaching; task-based component; communicative grammar teaching; challenges.

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1. Introduction

Grammar has an essential role in English language teaching and learning, without good grammatical literacy, the use of language will be limited. In Vietnam, as pointed out by Ho & Binh (2014), Grammar Translation is an over-use method. To be more specific, the teaching and learning process go through a sequence of following steps. Teachers present the grammar rules, explanation and their usage followed by the learning step which involves mostly just note-taking. The next step is the practice with series of follow-up paper-based exercises for the purpose of rule memorization. This method has become prominent due to the grammar dominated exams. (Ha, 2017). On the other contrary, communicative grammar is fresh departure in grammar teaching approach (Polin et al, 2018). It focuses on communicative grammar point rather than memorization. Particular grammatical points are introduced through examples which give students the opportunity to explore and decipher the grammatical structures.

In Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI), grammar has been introduced through an online learning platform in traditional way which students are familiar with for a long time. This traditional technique emphasizes on forms and rules, therefore, lacks of attention to engage students in communicative activities. As a results, students are unable to speak naturally. Besides, traditional grammar teaching has reinforced a passive learning style among learners through note-taking in a non-interactive learning context. These setbacks have motivated to initiate a new approach that is teaching grammar communicatively for the purpose of raising student's engagement and communicative competence in the learning process. However, the successful of application of this method "require certain conditions such as class size, language environment, teacher facilitator role etc.", according to Trang (2016). However, these conditions cannot all be met. Moreover, Grammar Translation Method has been prominent and applied in HaUI for a long time, this traditional method is clung to the teachers. Despite this, they are willing to make a shift in their grammar teaching;

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therefore, the application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a language teaching approach that focuses on meaningful and real communication (Baydikova & Davidenko, 2019), in teaching grammar has newly undertaken. This yields a need into an investigation into teacher's perception toward communicative grammar teaching. To be more specific, in relation to teaching grammar communicatively, the authors explored opinions on the role of teachers, goals, challenges, how teachers implement their communicative grammar lessons (approaches, principles, techniques) and preparations such as training and materials.

2. Literature review

2.1. Traditional grammar teaching

It is believed by (Doughty, C., & Williams, J., 1998) that traditional grammar centers around grammatical principles for example the learning of technical vocabulary for nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. This will prompt to master sentence pattern and minimized incorrect use of language structures. At classroom level, this is usually done by teachers who explicitly introduce grammar rules for students, and proceed to have students work on practice exercise so that they can memorize the rules.

However, rather than putting emphasis on learners' communicative needs in real life circumstances, a significant characteristic of traditional language teaching is to grapple with exams, or in other words, to satisfy the exam demand. For most of the highschool in Vietnam, the classroom teaching has been more exam-oriented rather than offering students the chance to put grammar rules in communicative practice. Consequently, this has led to the difficulties for students to use what they have learn beyond classroom settings. Likewise, Ellis (1995) discovered that this type of language learning stands less chance of impacting on language acquisition. Hence, Shekan (1998) believed that though mechanical practice may be of little help to effective grammar use, precise focus on a particular form can benefit students.

2.2. Communicative grammar teaching

2.2.1. The role of teachers

In contrast to traditional approaches in language teaching, the communicative method is regarded as a revolutionary approach which shifts attention from language competence to communicative competence. According to Oscar (1995:173), communicative grammar teaching is based on the communicative approach to the teaching of target languages. Language structures must be taught within the integration of the four skills of language. In this way, the grammatical structures are practiced orally and in written form. Howatt (1984:2) stated "the Communicative Language Teaching stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching". CLT is learner-centered as the application of it in grammar teaching allows learners to become active thinkers as they discover the grammatical structures themselves. They are encouraged and motivated to use their knowledge of the world to accomplish the tasks; meanwhile, what teachers do is to bring up the conditions embedded grammar rules for their students (Karabutova et al, 2015).

A shift from traditional grammar translation to communicative grammar teaching leads to the change in the role of teachers. Teacher-centered model is now replaced with student-centered model. In traditional grammar teaching method, teachers play the role of knowledge transmitters, hence, students are knowledge receivers. This means the teachers explains the grammar rules then give examples. The lessons are involved with little active use of target language. Therefore, the role of teachers is no beyond a knowledge transmitter. On the contrary, teachers' role in the application of CLT in grammar teaching might be varied. Apart from knowledge transmitter, teachers can take the role of a guide, a consultant and a facilitator at assisting students with their communicative tasks. Moreover, teachers can be an organizer and even a co-communicator in boosting students' communication (Ho & Binh, 2014).

2.2.2. *Approaches and principles*

Thornbury (1999, pp.18-19) distinguished two main types of approaches to CLT that many teachers have been using: the shallow-end approach and the deep-end approach. While the former is considered to be an inductive way which encourages teachers to provide examples from which learners infer rules. It is also known with the name of consciousness-raising (Rutherford, 1996). The later approach to CLT refers to the unconscious acquisition of grammar in communicative contexts without any prior and explicit teaching. This approach adheres to Krashen's Natural Approach theory (1985). Within these approaches, Task-based teaching; Focus-on-form teaching; Content-based instruction and Cooperative language learning are among the most commonly known forms (Newby, 2006). The notion that explicit grammar and communication processes may be associated with each other is supported by all these forms.

Language techniques are to provide students with engaging, appealing and realistic contexts where they practice the use of English for meaningful purposes. Yakubova (2024) lists out several techniques in teaching grammar including: songs and chants, stories, nursery rhymes, poems, games, puppets, play and dialogues. Meanwhile, Trang (2016) mentioned pictures and games are useful resources for teachers as they can lower students' anxiety and present grammar lessons in an entertaining way. Upon the consideration of students' age which are around 18, the authors collected teachers' opinions over only games and pictures as teaching techniques in communicative grammar lessons.

Although "there is no ready-made recipe for which techniques and activities can work best for which structure" (Trang, 2016), there are some principles that are suggested to underpin teachers' practices when they apply CLT to teaching grammar. One most important instruction is that the materials should be based on the relevance and frequency of communicative context (Putra et al, 2021). Communicative activities in real situations with real needs that serve the purpose of communication should be included. Secondly, students' involvement in such learning activities should be expected and encouraged by teachers (Putra et al, 2021).

2.2.3. *Goals*

There has been a large number of evidences proving that grammar should be taught in communicative ways (Singh, 2011). Teaching grammar communicatively could support students' growth as communicators. According to Brown (2001, pp.244-245), "grammatical structures, when combined with specific communication situations, will help learners see the connection between form and function of the structures". As a result, students can rely on grammar to learn how to create sentences and convey their ideas and emotions as well as apply grammatical principles in various communication scenarios.

2.2.4. *Training and materials*

Most teachers still use long-lasting grammar materials which are dominated by conventional grammar teaching method. These books emphasize on English language rules memorization and have been used by many English teachers for decades (Polin et al, 2018). Therefore, students are unable to communicate well and think critically. Since communicative grammar materials give opportunity for teacher to teach effectively and opportunity for students to practice, this has prompted a need for well-developed communicative materials (Polin et al, 2018).

2.3. *Aim of the research*

In an attempt to explore teacher beliefs in teaching grammar, this research study aims to survey current ESL teacher's beliefs about communicative grammar teaching and their challenges in implementing the method. Hopefully, the data collect may help to shed some light on teacher's perception about teaching grammar communicatively.

2.4. *Research's questions*

1) What are ESL teacher's perceptions toward communicative grammar teaching?; 2) What challenges do teachers face implementing this approach?

3. Methodology

3.1. Method design

This is mixed-methodological research in which the researchers employed both qualitative and quantitative tools to collect the data. To be more specific, a one-and-one semi-structured interview with open questions was used to explore teachers' perception toward communicative grammar teaching in different regards (roles of teacher, goals, how teachers implement their lessons and preparations). In response to the second question, researchers designed a 13-item questionnaire listing out possible challenges that teachers might face up with. The questionnaire was designed with three degrees including: Agree, Neutral and Disagree. It also asked participants to justify their choice to make sure that they were giving honest answer and the data was in validity.

3.2. Participants

Twenty Vietnamese EFL teachers participated in the research. They are currently ESL teachers at a university based in Hanoi, Vietnam. All have more than five-year experience in teaching English grammar and hold at least one Master of Art degree in English language teaching. Grammar teaching was taken place in after-school hours for students who were in need to learn about grammar. With regard to the students' English proficiency, almost all of them were of low English level, which is equivalent to level A1 as beginners.

3.3. Research instruments

A questionnaire was prepared by the researchers and was applied in a university in Hanoi for twenty teachers who have more than 5 years' experience in teaching English grammar. The questionnaire was composed of 13 statements aiming at exploring participants' challenges applying communicative grammar teaching. The questionnaire included three options, namely, 'Agree', 'Neutral' and 'Disagree'. Items in the questionnaire were prepared under the light of the relevant literature and since all of the participants were EFL teachers, the questionnaire was administrated in English.

The second source of data came from the individual interviews with EFL teachers at this university who have been teaching English grammar for more than five years. The interviews were conducted in a structured manner for approximately 20 minutes at mutually convenient times and places. The participants were informed, both orally and in writing that participation in the interview was voluntary, and how their individual data would be processed or secured with confidentiality. After the explanation, the participants signed a consent form. Interview aims at researching participants' perception toward teaching grammar communicative which, to be more specific, are roles of teacher, goals, how teachers implement their lessons (their approaches, principles and techniques) and preparations.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Teacher's perception towards communicative grammar teaching

4.1.1. Role of teachers

Upon the investigation of teachers' opinions over their role in communicative grammar teaching, data from research has revealed that all of the participants dismissed the idea that students should be the center of the class. Therefore, they acknowledged themselves as a facilitator or an advisor who assists their students to obtain grammatical knowledge through varied activities, give them feedbacks and corrections on their oral productions and providing fascinating lessons to encourage students' active engagement. Teacher A said that "unlike what I used to do in grammar lesson that is pretty much just introducing the rules and handing out follow-up exercise, I find myself more of a facilitator. I let my students deduce the rules themselves and I helped them with their oral practices". Teacher B voiced "I present less in communicative grammar teaching. I mean I don't have to talk the whole lesson. Instead, I assign them tasks and provide helps". The finding of current study partly reinforces relevant idea mentioned in research by Ho & Binh (2014) that teachers took the role of a facilitator and advisor as teachers' provision of assistance for students to accomplish communicative

tasks. However, their study also suggests different roles of teachers for different stages of the lessons. Hence, comprehensive research to look for an insightful view over the different role of teachers and how their perceptions about it shape the implantation of communicative grammar lessons could be done in further.

4.1.2. Goals

Results from the interview indicated that all of the participants assumed that they understood the goals of teaching grammar communicatively. Teacher C highlighted in the interview “well, I think I know what it is. I guess it is different from traditional grammar teaching. That is rather than memorizing grammar rules, students can apply the rules to communicate”. Another point that is noteworthy to make is that they also emphasized on the learning goals implementing communicative grammar teaching, in which students were expected to be able to produce oral utterance in the end of the lesson and their accuracy was also anticipated to be improved. This perspective emphasizes the importance of students using grammatical structures in meaningful communication, thereby enhancing their ability to apply grammar in real-life contexts. Teacher D said in the interview “I think their accuracy will have some changes. I mean students can deliver their thoughts and ideas more accurately”. This view suggests that communicative grammar teaching not only helps students to communicate more effectively but also improves their grammatical precision. However, Diana (2014) considered the use of accuracy as a measure of how well students are in the communicative learning process is actually misconception. A few participants of the present study didn’t emphasize the accuracy and fluency in their teaching. Rather, they paid attention to the interaction between teachers and students. Teacher E said that “I didn’t expect the improvement in their accuracy. Rather than that, I care more about how they can confidently communicate without worrying about making grammar mistakes”. In fact, this is in line with Sotlikova and Sugirin (2016) in their study results which reckoned communicative approach to be a suitable for language teaching because it enables students to speak freely without grammar awareness. Also, Liu & Deris (2023) conclude that senior teachers in their research insisted that CLT did not emphasize grammatical correctness.

Ho & Binh (2014), however, consider the application of CLT in grammar teaching yield fascinating lessons in which learners obtain full understanding and ability to use the structure properly; both grammatical knowledge and oral communication were achieved thereby. These findings are consistent with some of the participants’ opinions that grammar is usually underrated in communication-oriented English teaching. In fact, they consider grammar as a strong tool that can foster oral and written forms for communicative purposes rather than constructing sentence. They agreed that teaching communicative grammar allows students to internalize rules and patterns in contexts to serve social functions. In the interview, teacher F pointed out the broader social benefits of this teaching approach “I think teaching grammar communicatively will provide students the opportunities to insert themselves in real-life situations, and this possible helps them out a lot in their social life in which there are lots of communicating and expressing themselves”. This highlights the goal of preparing students for real-world interactions, enhancing their social integration and communication skills. More importantly, they believe that communicative grammar can create dynamic lessons in which students can be inspiring, stimulating and innovative. This goal reflects a desire to foster a stimulating learning environment where students are motivated and encouraged to be creative. As Borg (1998, p.17) contends, the use of a particular teaching technique is most of the time influenced by the idea of making students enjoy grammar, and apply rules in a practical way using context-based methodologies for effective learning. Overall, these goals collectively aim to develop well-rounded communicative competence, balancing accuracy, fluency, and confidence in grammar usage.

4.1.3. Preparations

The majority of participants confessed on the lack of formal training opportunities to teachers and highlighted the necessity for structured professional development programs to help teachers

effectively implement communicative grammar teaching. Teacher G said “I have never taken any courses. I did involve some self-learning in my journey of exploring this grammar teaching method. But I think this isn’t enough. I still need professional scaffolding to guide me through the challenges”. Teacher S stated that “I think there are some false assumptions about the role of grammar in teaching English communicatively, that leads to the ignorance of teaching grammar and the training of teaching grammar communicatively as well”. This reflects a broader issue where inadequate understanding of the communicative approach leads to insufficient emphasis on grammar instruction in teacher training programs. A few participants shared their experience on taking online courses and this has helped them to change their perception toward grammar teaching and inspired them to engage communicative-based activities in their grammar lessons. They also shared that they got to know about these courses thanks to their personal teaching circles, not their professional working institutions. This means that in their institutions, teaching grammar communicatively hasn’t been put in emphasis, which consequently causes the lacking or, in some case, devoid of professional training of this grammar teaching method. Undoubtedly, most of participants also reported on the poor access to professional and concise teaching materials as a result of the ignorance on communicative grammar teaching at their schools. “I felt struggling and time-consuming searching everything about it using just the Internet. I sometimes felt overwhelmed because there are so many sources and yet I don’t know what should I rely on”, teacher H said. Not only can the lack of reliable materials be a challenge to teachers but they also referred that the existing materials weren’t suitable to communicative grammar teaching. In other research, Trang (2016) concludes that the coursebook used in her Academy is boring and only suitable for traditional method which means there aren’t any communicative activities. Cam (2017) suggests “textbooks designers can relieve a burden from Vietnamese high school teachers if they redesign grammar tasks in English textbooks in a communicative way”. This is because the books focus on giving rules and providing follow-up exercise aiming at memorizing grammar rules. The downside of such books is that they don’t allow students to see the connection between grammar and communicative competence. It is undoubted that implementing effective teaching strategies that is likely to persuade students to view grammar as an efficient tool for language competence and this should be the goal of every teacher. However, to make this feasible, it is necessary for teachers to engage in professional training and have the access to reliable sources of materials

4.1.4. Principle and approach

Being asked about the procedure of a grammar lesson in which communicative strategy were was employed, every participant came with different answer. In general, their grammar lessons lasted for about 45-50 minutes. Despite their agreement on the necessity of teaching grammar communicatively, they still described their grammar lessons as a combination of communicative and traditional grammar teaching. Teacher J stated that “I do integrate grammatical rules in communicative tasks, but still, I have to introduce the meaning and use of grammatical patterns because I don’t think my students can’t refer the rules from my communicative activities”. This approach underscores the principle that explicit grammar instruction remains crucial for ensuring that students understand grammatical rules before applying them in communicative contexts. Moreover, all of the teachers admitted that they barely achieved goals of the lesson in which their students can apply targeted rules in communicating without the integration of traditional strategies. Teacher K said “at the end of the lesson, I did some assessment to make sure that my students can both memorize the grammatical rules and put them in oral practice. But this has brought me down as they still make grammatical mistakes”. While assessments aim to verify both theoretical knowledge and practical usage, students often struggle with accuracy, indicating a need for more effective integration of communicative and traditional methods. Despite following a four-section grammar teaching model (presentations, focus practice, communicative practice, teacher feedback and correction) suggested

by Celce-Murcia (1991), all of the participants, as being recorded in the interview, have applied communicative grammar teaching for a short period of time and they believe that they haven't made best use of the approach to teach grammar and facilitate learners' communicative competence. As being stated in the interview, grammar was taught deductively. To be more specific, teachers introduced meaning and use of grammatical patterns explicitly, then a sequential number of activities were introduced aiming at engaging students in using the rules to communicate orally and in written. At the end of the lesson, they distributed handouts as homework, in which students are asked to finish grammar exercise so that they can remember the rules.

In research by Baydikova and Davidenko (2019), their participants applied various communicative exercises which contain small groups, pairs, individual tasks such as role-play, discussion, storytelling, case study and brainstorming to facilitate learners' communicative competence. This is not the case of present study where not a wide range of communicative activities are included in participants' grammar lessons. They admitted that they paid attention to students' accuracy so much that they didn't have time to include variety of communicative tasks.

While Trang (2016) concludes that teachers in her research perceived the use of pictures in communicative grammar lessons can yield certain advantages, and one of them is to allow teachers to present long and complicated verbal cues in a simple way, teachers in present study apparently did not present positive attitudes toward the use of pictures. None of them reported this technique in their lessons. Moreover, despite that games are claimed to be motivating and offer students a fun-filled learning atmosphere (Chen, 2005); therefore, play an essential role in making not only exciting but also free-anxiety lesson in which students can be entertaining, motivating and feel free to express their opinions without thinking much about grammar rules (Trang, 2016), teachers in the present study are reluctant to use games in their grammar lessons. Half of them didn't think that games were appropriate to teach grammars despite their awareness of their benefits. The other half agreed on advantages of games on teaching grammar communicatively but they didn't use games because of the time allowance and shortage of game source. In fact, one of them stated "I use an array of games in speaking lesson. They are fun and successfully engage students, but the application of games in my grammar lesson is very challenging to me. My source is poor and I just don't know how to include it". Teacher R said "I understand that game yields effect on active learners but games can be time-consuming because most of my students are of low English frequency. It takes so much time to explain the rules carry it out". Thus, engaging activities, such as games, can enhance students' participation and enjoyment, but their integration into grammar teaching requires sufficient resources and creativity. Also, there has been some challenges using games in grammar lessons regarding the practical constraint of time and the need to adapt activities to varying proficiency levels to maintain effectiveness.

Data from the interview indicated the participants' agreement on the integration of communicative tasks in teaching grammar as part of communicative grammar lessons. However, those tasks didn't come from real-life situations which, as consequences, didn't help students acknowledge the need of communication in target language. Moreover, the reliance on coursebooks that primarily focus on grammatical rules and follow-up exercises further complicates the application of communicative language teaching (CLT) principles in grammar instruction. As teacher M pointed out "our coursebook introduces mostly grammar rules and follow-up exercise. Therefore, in the application of CLT in teaching grammar, we must research other sources". Additionally, all of them agreed on the lack of communication-oriented resources. This underscores the additional effort required by teachers to source supplementary materials that align with CLT principles, highlighting the inadequacy of existing curricular materials to support a communicative approach. Hence, the need for a more communicative-oriented coursebooks or material compilation has become urgent (Trang, 2016).

4.2. Challenges in the implementation of communicative grammar teaching

Table 1. Challenges involved teachers and teaching materials

Challenges	N	PA	PN	PD
Teachers lack training about teaching grammar communicatively	20	100	0	0
Teachers have poor access to appropriate materials	20	95	5	0
Teacher lack competence in teaching grammar communicatively	20	63	34	3
Traditional textbooks don't allow teaching grammar communicatively	20	52	37	11
Communicative tasks are difficult to design	20	90	10	0
Classroom settings don't facilitate teaching grammar communicatively	20	40	0	60
Class size impedes the implementation of communicative tasks	20	81	19	0

*N= number of participants; PA= percentage of agreement; PN=percentage of neutral opinion; PD= percentage of disagreement

It is striking to note that the majority of participants agreed on the lack of appropriate trainings in teaching grammar communicatively along with the poor access to teaching materials (around 100%). This has led to the confession that a large number of teachers felt that they did not have enough competence to carry out communicative grammar lessons (63%). Meanwhile, around 35 percent of participants hold neutral opinions towards lack of competence in communicative grammar teaching as a challenge. Interestingly, around half of participants considered that it was traditional textbooks don't facilitate teaching grammar communicatively while the minority of teachers (11%) seemed to hold the opposing perspective. Furthermore, it is worthy noted that almost all teachers (90%) agreed that it was difficult to design communicative tasks to teach grammar, while 10% hold neutral opinion toward this challenge. In term of challenges involving classroom settings, less than 50 percent of participants considers classroom settings as a challenge implementing communicative grammar lessons while the rest disagreed with this statement. Meanwhile, most of participants (80%) agreed that class size could have a negative impact on this grammar teaching approach, and the rest did not have opinions about this statement.

According to Lewis (1986), since learning grammatical rules is just a small part in the acquisition of foreign languages, teachers should help their students to reach linguistic competence and develop the ability to use grammar as an instrument to produce oral and written discourse in an effective way in given situation. However, most participants admitted that their students, despite being taught grammatical rules, failed to apply them correctly to communicate in real life situations. Although their classroom setting seems not to be a deterrent to teaching grammar communicatively except for the class size, teachers reportedly face up with the lack of inappropriate training of the teaching method. Having stated in the questionnaire, some wrote "I always feel like I am unconfident in carrying out the lessons as I don't have the expertise to do it. I think I need professional ground in communicative grammar teaching". Also, in the questionnaire, they considered large class size could cause difficulties in distributing tasks and giving prompts to students as they can hardly track down on each student's progress. However, some suggested that technological tools can be the remedies to this given its various features in managing classes and keeping teachers updated with their students' learning progress. Likewise, the fact that most teachers agreed on the poor access to the source of teaching materials coupled with traditional textbooks apparently deter them from carrying out communicative grammar lessons. As they justified in the interview, teaching grammar traditionally prepares students better for success in national and tests which are mostly paper-based; therefore, they are just ignorant of communicative grammar teaching. However, it is suggested by Estelle (2018) that teachers should allow learners to use different grammatical principles that they have learnt in various contexts on purpose of communication outside classroom. She referred grammar as

a skill that needs to be mastered so that students can stand the chance of achieving accuracy by conveying meaning appropriately. Also, in her research, she found that the teachers also faced up with the shortage of training and lack of knowledge competence so that they can apply the method successfully and helped their students achieve the learning goals. This finding of current study suggests the necessity for the provision of training courses and the accessibility to communicative grammar resources. Moreover, as organization is considered a factor that has impacts on the circulation of materials and their professional development, their opinions about organization should be included to provide a clear perspective in this regard.

Table 2. Challenges involved students

Challenges	N	PA	PN	PD
Students aren't interested on learning grammar communicatively	20	8	12	80
Students are used to traditional grammar teaching	20	95	5	0
Students lack awareness toward learning grammar communicatively	20	71	5	
Students know grammar rules but can't speak English (lack communicative competence)	20	96	4	0
Learning goals are not achieved	20	50	43	7
Students aren't confident to communicate	20	40	0	60

*N= number of participants; PA= percentage of agreement; PN=percentage of neutral opinion; PD= percentage of disagreement

It can be seen that with almost all of the participants' agreement, students' poor communicative competence can be a challenge in communicative grammar lessons. Likewise, most teachers agreed that their students are used to learn grammar with traditional technique and this can affect their communicative grammar lesson. This challenge is followed by "learning goals are not achieved" with half of participants' agreement. Results of the interview revealed that the majority of the students took interest in learning grammar communicatively as 80% of the teachers disagreed that their students weren't interested in this teaching method at all. This is not the case in research by Cam (2017), which investigates high school students' attitudes toward communicative English grammar teaching, found out that they are not interested in learning grammar in the discussed approach. This is because her students are only motivated by marks. On the contrary, students in HaUI are driven to attend grammar classes for the improvement of communicative competence due to their school's curriculum which emphasizes communication. It is students' wants yielding their motivation that is believed to be one factor that shapes teachers' views in what constitute good teaching (Arshad & Elisah, 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that students' motivation should be taken into consideration in the making-decision process of what teaching approach to apply.

It is also interestingly noted that almost all of them weren't communicatively competent enough to completely engage in the lessons despite the fact that they knew the grammatical rules. In other words, they felt the hurdles applying these rules to communicative tasks in classroom settings. This is considered as a challenge for teachers, along with students' familiarity to their traditional grammar learning which focused on use and doing exercise to memorize the rules instead of engaging in communicative activities. It can be concluded from the result that students' proficiency should be considered. Teacher L admitted that "some students, despite their seemingly thin interest in communicative grammar lessons confessed to them that they sometimes feel unfollowed as they aren't good enough to produce vocal utterance". Other reported "students usually asked me to assign them with grammatical exercise so that they can do them at home. I feel like they underrated communicative grammar learning as they have been with traditional grammar teaching for so long". According to Celce-Murcia, (1991), students' learning style should not be overlooked as they usually come with different abilities, strengths as well as shortcomings. This is consistent with findings in

research by Trang (2016) in which she mentioned that unqualified students yield difficulties for teachers in grammar lessons. Their weak English was blamed for the over attention on other subjects such as Math or Physics for the university entrance exam and as grammar-translation method is easier for them to fix their grammatical incompetence.

5. Conclusion

This study explored English teachers' perceptions of communicative grammar teaching and the challenges they face in implementing this approach at a university in Vietnam. The investigation, conducted through semi-structured interviews and a 13-item questionnaire, revealed several key insights into teachers' roles, goals, preparations, approach and principles.

Firstly, most of the teachers reach a consensus on the shift in teachers' role in communicative grammar teaching. Instead of being the center of class who distribute the knowledge, they play different roles, mainly as facilitators and advisors.

Secondly, teachers expressed varied goals, from improving students' grammatical accuracy to building their confidence in using language fluently. This divergence reflects a broader debate within language education about the balance between accuracy and communicative competence. Furthermore, the study highlighted a mix of communicative and traditional methods employed by teachers, revealing an ongoing effort to find the most effective balance.

While some participants focus on frequency and accuracy of students, the others put emphasis on the ability to speak naturally of the students. Listening skill has put underemphasis as teachers in present study focus on speaking skill, of which they believe their students are weak; therefore, do not come up with good results in the end-of-term speaking test. With regard to the materials, the majority of teachers confessed on the insufficiency of communicative teaching materials and the unavailability of professional training of this method in their institutions. In term of principle and approach, the majority of participants combined traditional and communicative approach in which, despite the integration of communicative tasks, teachers still have to introduce the grammar rules in the presentations instead of offering the rules deductively. Moreover, not a wide range of task-based activities are included given the time allowance and learners' weak English. Although there is an agreement on the benefits of using game in teaching, most of the participants are reluctant incorporated them in their lessons. Moreover, follow-up paper-based exercise are still distributed to students for the purpose of the rule memorization.

Last but not least, the study also indicated that teachers experienced some major challenges in the implementation of teaching grammar communicatively. While class size and classroom settings are not sources of problems, the lack of professional training and the circulation of traditional textbooks are noted to lead to the difficulties in designing communicative tasks. Also, the study pointed out that students' poor communicative competence can prevent them from engaging in learning tasks enthusiastically. The study also suggests teachers to take learners' features into considerations to ensure the achievement of learning goal which is students can internalize grammar rules and produce oral and written language.

6. Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged to ensure a nuanced understanding of the study's findings and implications. Firstly, the study's focus on a single university in Vietnam restricts the generalizability of its findings. Educational contexts can vary significantly across different institutions, regions, and countries due to factors such as institutional policies, student demographics, and cultural norms. Therefore, the experiences and perspectives of ESL teachers in this specific university may not fully represent those of educators in other contexts, limiting the broader applicability of the study's results. Secondly, the use of a semi-structured interview and a 13-item questionnaire as the primary data collection methods introduces potential limitations related to data validity and reliability. Self-report measures like interviews and surveys rely on participants' ability and willingness to accurately recall and articulate their thoughts, experiences, and opinions.

However, participants may provide socially desirable responses, consciously or unconsciously, leading to biased or incomplete data. Moreover, the limited scope of the questionnaire may not capture the full range of factors influencing teachers' perceptions and practices regarding communicative grammar teaching. Additionally, administrators' support and policies play a crucial role in shaping teachers' instructional practices and professional development opportunities. Therefore, a more comprehensive research approach that incorporates multiple stakeholders' perspectives could provide a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with communicative grammar teaching in ESL contexts. Moreover, the study's findings regarding the challenges faced by ESL teachers in implementing communicative grammar teaching raise important questions that warrant further exploration. Factors such as teacher training and professional development, resource availability, and classroom dynamics may interact in complex ways to influence teachers' ability to effectively integrate communicative and traditional grammar instruction. Therefore, future research should seek to unpack these complexities and explore potential solutions in greater depth.

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Nhận thức của giáo viên về việc giảng dạy ngữ pháp định hướng giao tiếp

Tóm tắt: Một số nhà nghiên cứu cho rằng việc dạy ngữ pháp bằng cách kết hợp các nhiệm vụ học tập với mục tiêu giao tiếp trong chương trình giảng dạy sẽ mang lại hiệu quả cho việc học tập ngữ pháp (Ellis, 1995). Trong khi đó, những nhà nghiên cứu khác lại cho rằng ngữ pháp nên được dạy riêng biệt, nghĩa là nó không nên được tích hợp với các nhiệm vụ giao tiếp. Vậy nên, nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm tìm hiểu ý kiến của giáo viên dạy tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ thứ hai (ESL) trong việc dạy ngữ pháp theo đường hướng giao tiếp và những thách thức mà họ gặp phải khi áp dụng phương pháp giảng dạy này. Nghiên cứu sử dụng kết quả thu thập được từ các buổi phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc và bảng câu hỏi gồm 13 mục tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Sau khi tổng hợp và phân tích, các tác giả phát hiện ra rằng, mặc dù những người tham gia thể hiện nhận thức sâu sắc về việc tích hợp các thành phần dựa trên nhiệm vụ giao tiếp trong bài giảng ngữ pháp của mình, họ vẫn áp dụng cả hai cách dạy ngữ pháp giao tiếp và ngữ pháp truyền thống. Đồng thời, kết quả cũng chỉ ra những thách thức nhất định cản trở việc thực hiện dạy ngữ pháp theo hướng giao tiếp.

Từ khóa: Giảng dạy ngữ pháp; giảng dạy ngữ pháp theo hướng truyền thống; nhiệm vụ học tập; giảng dạy ngữ pháp định hướng giao tiếp, thách thức.