Application Status and Suggestions of Three Language Teaching Methods in Chinese Classroom

Yongshi Liang*

School of Foreign Studies, Lingnan Normal University, Guangdong, 524048, China

*Corresponding author: zszsb211@126.com

Abstract. With the rapid development of economy, the demand for practical skills is increasing. The government is attaching more and more importance to education. All parties are concerned about the quality of children's education. It is very important for teachers to know how to use teaching method properly and how to apply it in practical teaching. However, because of various reasons, teachers only use a single teaching method or there are various problems in the actual teaching. As a result, the teaching quality is not good. This is also not conducive to the cultivation of students' abilities. Based on previous studies on grammatical translation, communicative teaching method and flipped classroom, this study studies the advantages and disadvantages of the three methods through comparative analysis. The research results show that each of the three teaching methods has its own advantages and disadvantages, and according to the characteristics and disadvantages of each teaching method, relevant suggestions are put forward.

Keywords: Teaching methods, English teaching, Suggestions.

1. Introduction

In China, many young children have been exposed to English teaching. English is also one of the three major subjects. Actually, according to Deng (2023) states, the Peking Tungwen College, which was founded in 1862, is where foreign language instruction first began in China. Since then, western ideologies and teaching techniques have been imported into China [1]. In China, due to the testing policy and the needs of students, most teachers adopt a single teaching method. Grammar translation is the most commonly used method in class. This phenomenon affects students' interest in learning and hinders their ability to develop foreign languages. As Li and Yang (2018) stated that Many Chinese EFL courses have consistently adopted GTM. Such a discrepancy between theory and practice should undoubtedly be investigated [2]. In addition, teachers have doubts about other teaching methods and difficulties in implementing them. It is worth thinking about whether other teaching methods are necessary and how to implement them in the classroom.

2. Grammar Translation Method

At the moment, writing abilities of students are the major focus of evaluation and assessment of foreign language education in China. Additionally, there are not many oral tests, and the grammatical translation approach only supports this kind of assessment. As a result, the grammatical translation technique is the one that is most frequently employed in China's elementary and secondary schools, particularly in rural regions, to teach foreign languages.

The main benefit of Grammar translation method is comprehending phraseology, such as abstract terms, idioms, phrases, metaphors, similes, etc. As a result, leaners may better comprehend difficult and abstract knowledge. Additionally, communication between students and teachers is not hampered by language differences. Moreover, this technique is advantageous in that it teaches grammar principles deductively. As a result, the students' understanding and capacity for writing proper sentences both increase. Books are taught to kids in their mother tongues, so they may speak more fluently than other students. Anyone can teach using this approach because it calls for little specific abilities from the instructors[3].

The grammatical translation approach is not without its drawbacks. Firstly, the grammar-translation approach does not focus much on honing practical language skills. As Brown, H. D. states, "It does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language." [4]. Secondly, the overemphasized teacher-centered approach in the grammar translation technique tends to create a dull classroom environment and lower students' motivation to study[5]. Moreover, students may lose interest in learning if they have to repeat the same vocabulary and grammar assignments. Thirdly, teachers often mechanically compare the two languages and translate word by word when using the grammar translation approach. It will lead to an over-reliance on translation. Besides, translation to some degree obstructs learners' ability to think in the target language. When developing the target language, learners' first languages are quite likely to have an impact. Furthermore, the examination system continues to be ruled by the Grammar Translation Method. The learners' originality is hampered by this type of practice, making it difficult for them to think outside of this predetermined range.

Actually, grammar translation entails a teacher-centered teaching strategy. In a grammar-translation class, the instructor often has a dominating position to clarify the grammatical rules and translate the target texts and phrases, with the students typically acting as passive receivers.

3. Communicative language teaching

The greatest highlight of the communicative approach is that it attaches great importance to the cultivation of communicative competence. This is helpful for students to use the target language properly in a certain social environment. As Littlewood (2014) states, it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the knowledge, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself." [6]. After taking the communicative class, students felt more at ease in a communicatively driven English language classroom straight away because they had plenty of opportunities to practice their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills via engaging language games and other activities. Besides, participants could articulate their thoughts more comfortable. Moreover, following the implementation of the communicative method, students may develop their communication skills and increased their abilities in the area of grammatical elements quite quickly [7]. What is more, as learners participate fully in each activity in a communicative classroom, students get more eager and vivacious. Language proficiency was achieved by the students in a free setting in the communicative classroom.

According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), students frequently work in small groups to complete tasks under the Communicative Approach [8]. In addition, students might communicate with one another through small group activities to make the most of the time provided to each student for learning to negotiate meaning.

Despite the fact that it had been gradually implemented into Chinese EFL classrooms as early as the 1980s, it is hard to find Communicative Language Teaching in the majority of English language teaching classes in China [9]. Because no teaching method is perfect. Communicative language teaching is no exception. Communicative language teaching breaks the systematicness of grammar teaching. However, students are used to learn systematic and regular things. Using communicative teaching method, students tend to pile up sentences with different structures and make grammatical mistakes. While mistakes are very normal, teachers will choose to ignore them. Hence, this teaching method is not conductive to students' mastery of grammar, even seriously affect the learning enthusiasm of students.

4. Flipping classroom

As a new teaching method, the flipped classroom approach to education has benefits and drawbacks.

Flipped classroom increases students' consciousness and interest [10]. Li Hongxia believes that the new technical means of flipped classroom can concertize abstract knowledge, making it easier for students to understand the teaching content, reducing students' learning burden, and thus enhancing their participation enthusiasm [11]. Fulton (2012) also found that the flipped classroom causes "students to take more responsibility for their own learning" [12].

What is more, flipping classroom enhances the interaction between students and teachers and between students. Since students need to read the material before attending a live class, this can encourage greater understanding of the subject and enhances interaction between the teacher and other students. In class, students are able to express their thoughts, respond to inquiries, and engage with other students. According to Singh (2018), when international students have the chance to communicate with other students both within and outside of the classroom, they feel more engaged in the communication process [13]. In addition to increasing their knowledge and communication skills, students also learn to accept and comprehend other people's points of view.

Flipped classrooms also allow teachers to evaluate students' individual abilities in a more diverse way [14]. From students' reaction in class, teachers can understand students more intuitively and make diversified evaluations.

Due to the influence of China's examination policy, flipped classroom is rarely used in lower grades, but is generally used in universities, especially for language majors. Since the flipped classroom model is still in the trial period, there are still many questions. First of all, it is difficult to implement in professional theory courses. It is difficult for students to understand the professional content. In addition, there are many resources on the Internet. It is difficult for students to conduct targeted screening of content, so that they are misled by wrong content. Moreover, it was too difficult to make students accountable for watching the pre-work videos or assignments [15]. In addition, there are fewer practical courses.

5. Suggestions

As mentioned above, grammatical translation only focuses on students' understanding of the text, but ignores the application of the language, which is not conducive to students' comprehensive foreign language learning and learning interest. However, grammatical translation is the earliest method of foreign language teaching. Besides, it is also the most popular and influential method of English teaching in many countries. There is still a need for it. However, communicative teaching focuses on the cultivation of language ability, but it is not conducive to students mastering grammar knowledge, and it is not conducive to teachers pointing out students' mistakes in time. So far, many researchers believe that the combination of grammar translation and communicative language teaching are suitable for many learners. Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1998), and Ellis (2002, 2003) (cited in Fotos, 2005:668), for instance, have indicated that both grammar explanation and communicative activities are necessary for the comprehension of target language [16]. Therefore, to a certain extent, communicative approach and grammatical translation approach complement each other.

(1) In the process of grammar translation teaching, the teacher is the main body of teaching and plays a leading role in classroom teaching; In communicative approach, students are the main body of classroom activities, and all teachers' teaching activities should revolve around students.

(2) The purpose of language learning is different. The two teaching methods have different emphasis on the cultivation of language ability. Grammatical translation method emphasizes the form of language, while communicative method emphasizes the use of language.

(3) The teaching method is relatively simple, and the situation creation of communicative method advocates that students can master the language function in a relaxed and pleasant environment. However, before the communicative activities, the students must have the corresponding language ability, then the grammatical translation method and the communicative method become the necessary supplementary means of each other. As a result, the author believes that teachers can combine grammar translation with communication for students of lower age.

In the integration of grammatical translation and communicative teaching, teachers should also pay attention to the following steps: First is to create a close to the real communication environment. Students often worry about losing face by using incorrect grammar structures in English classes. In the introduction stage of grammar class, teachers should create situations close to students' real life and try their best to help students reduce the negative impact of emotional filtering. Second, strengthen language input. In the second stage of grammar class, teachers can make the grammatical structures in the language input materials that are not noticed by general learners stand out by means of bold and capital letters, so as to improve the chances for students to pay attention to them. Third, design rich language communication activities. The design content of teachers' teaching activities should be practical and interesting, similar to group collaborative activities such as situational role playing, story retelling, games and problem solving, which can not only reduce students' anxiety, but also better stimulate students' language output. Those applied teaching activities are an indispensable part of the grammar classroom, students are the protagonist of the activities and teachers are an assistant. Students can experience the use of grammar rules again in the communicative activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing with happy and positive emotions, and truly apply what they have learned.

In the process of teaching implementation, teachers must grasp the relevant teaching principles and summarize all kinds of problems in the teaching process in time.

As for the problems mentioned above in flipped classroom, which are difficult to achieve in professional theoretical classes, unable to be responsible for students' pre-class preview tasks and less practical classes. The author puts forward the following suggestions.

First of all, it is difficult to implement in professional theoretical courses. In view of whether a class can carry out flipped classroom mode, it is suggested that teachers should first clarify the teaching purpose of the class. Flipped classroom is not applicable for the highly professional class, which should be based on the actual situation of the course. However, due to the special situation of some professional theoretical courses, specific flipped classroom forms can be considered.

The second is unable to be responsible for students' pre-class preview tasks. It is suggested that the teacher make a learning task list and check the completion of the students to ensure that the students are prepared before class. Moreover, teachers can check students' pre-class mastery by asking questions as detailed as possible.

Thirdly, the popularity of practical courses is low. The root cause is that flipped classroom is still in the exploratory period, and teachers and students have less experience to use. In this case, teachers and students are required to have more frequent mutual communication. Whether it is comments from teachers or feedback from students, it is suggested that teachers should not only communicate with students about how to make the class more efficient and how to make students more active in the teaching process, but also exchange experience with teachers in the same class, share video resources, topic topics, etc., so as to solve the low popularity caused by the insufficient implementation of flipped classroom resources.

6. Conclusion

As was already said, grammatical translation primarily concentrates on students' comprehension of the text and overlooks the use of the language, which is detrimental to their interest in and ability to learn a foreign language in its entirety. While communicative teaching focuses on developing language skills, it is not suited for helping students grasp grammatical rules or for helping teachers catch their mistakes early. Flipped classrooms are challenging to implement in less practical and professional theoretical seminars because instructors are unable to be in charge of the students' pre-class preparation assignments. According to the characteristics of grammatical translation method and communicative method, the author puts forward that the two methods can be combined in teaching and puts forward some points for attention. In view of the difficulties faced by flipped classroom, the author puts forward some suggestions for teachers' concerns, recommended tasks and

adjustment methods. This study fills in the gaps of the advantages and disadvantages of the three teaching methods and provides some suggestions, which is conducive to teachers' application of teaching methods in the actual classroom. At present, there is a problem that the age span of the research objects is too large and the lack of pertinence. In the future, relevant researchers can study the teaching methods that can be used in the same age group.

References

[1] Deng, M. T. (2023). An Analysis of the Grammar Translation Method in the 20th Century and the Inevitability of Its Application in China. The Educational Review, USA, 7(3), 305-308.

[2] Li, Z. S. and Yang. G. Y. (2018) Modern English Teaching Theory. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.

[3] Littlejohn, A. L. (1992) Why are ELT materials the way they are? Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Lancaster University, United Kingdom.

[4] Eisa, S. A. H. (2020). The Pros and Cons of the Grammar Translation Method on the Performance of Saudi EFL Learners, Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing, 3(16), 381-392.

[5] Brown, H. D. (1994). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents. The Chinese University of Hong Kong, (416)

[6] Siefert, T. R. (2013). Translation in foreign language pedagogy: the rise and fall of the Grammar Translation Method (Doctoral dissertation).

[7] Littlewood, W. (2014). Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here? Language Teaching, 47, 349-362.

[8] Mehta, N. K. (2015). Communicative Approach in Learning English Language: Effectiveness at Middle School Level (with Special Reference to Government Middle School of Ujjain City in the State of Madhya Pradesh, India). Limbaj Si Context, 7(2), 1-6.

[9] Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching. New York: Oxford University Press.

[10] Rao, Z. H. (2002). Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom. System, 30, 85-105.

[11] Ding, Y., Huang, W. Y. An analysis of the applicable methods of Flipped Classroom in English Teaching -- A case study of Southeast University. Progress in Education, 21,11(2):568-572

[12] Li, H. X. Advantages and application challenges of flipped classroom teaching model in English teaching. Modern Commerce and Trade Industry, 2015, 36(6): 135-136.

[13] Fulton, K. (2012) The Flipped Classroom: Transforming Education at Byron High School, T.H.E. Journal, p18-20.

[14] Singh, J.K.N. and Jack, G. (2018), The benefits of overseas study for international postgraduate students in Malaysia Higher Education, Vol. 75 No. 4, pp. 607-624.

[15] Nachatar Singh, J. K., Nagpal, S., Inglis, S., & Jacob-John, J. (2019). International student's experiences in a flipped classroom environment: An Australian perspective. International Journal of Educational Management, 33(6), 1303-1315.

[16] Du, Y. Grammar Translation and Its Use in Present-Day China Challenges and Issues. Journal of Arts & Humanities, 2021, 10(5): 28-35.