

# Teaching Communicative Grammar: A Literature Review

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**Abstract:** One of the most recognizable international languages, English, is widely spoken worldwide since a long time ago in all sectors of human life, such as in education. In Indonesia, the English language is studied as an EFL (English as a Foreign Language). English has some essential skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and other language aspects and components. Teaching grammar, for instance, drives teachers' unique ways in triggering students to use the language communicatively. Somehow, teachers are also required to have tons of strategies in teaching English, especially communicative grammar, since many accents spread around the world as another difficulty in teaching communicative English grammar. The data of this paper are based on reviewing journals and books from the previous studies related to the understanding of communicative grammar, comparison between communicative grammar over traditional grammar, students' and teachers' perspectives and roles dealing with communicative grammar, advantages and disadvantages of communicative grammar, and strategies for teachers which could be helpful to teach communicative grammar.

**Keywords:** *communicative grammar, teachers' strategies, teaching grammar, literature review*

**1. Introduction**

Many EFL students are still considered good at writing while their speaking is not as good as their handwriting. They can draft before they write; meanwhile, to speak, one cannot do such a thing, which is why communicative grammar is focused in this study instead of traditional grammar itself. Teaching grammar in a communicative approach embraces students to optimize their grammar knowledge, speaking skills, and how to apply both simultaneously. Praise and Meenakshi (2015) suggested that the aim is students' communicative competence by not only applying grammatical rules to construct proper sentences, but also to understand how to use them orally, appropriate context to implement the grammar theory when to apply grammatical sentences, and especially to whom is the grammatical sentences be used.

How teachers taught students communicative grammar is also an essential thing in order to accomplish the goal above. How good or how much the students receive and imply the knowledge in daily life after the learning process somehow dependent on the learning method itself. It does not matter how well the material is if it cannot be delivered well. Another study results mentioned the learning process, whether the learning process and the accuracy to the goal. Bancole-Minaflinou (2018) implied in the research finding that only a small

number of teachers teach communicative grammar, and those who confess that they teach it still have a blurry understanding of what exactly it is. Although EFL students would have experiences of using target language effectively by learning through communicative grammar, both approaches are not mutually exclusive to become perfect complement. Rahmawati (2018) argued that the communicative approach is probably frequently used in English language teaching lately, which against the statements above.

Learning communicative grammar is more effective than learning grammar through the traditional textbook. It is because it embraces students to speak English and look out for grammar at the same time. Unlike traditional grammar lessons, students only exercise word and sentence order and tenses. Meanwhile, they do not practice how to use grammar in oral communication. Thus, they only write down something correctly but cannot speak English properly in verbal communication well. Therefore, learning grammar through a communicative approach not only improves students' grammar and speaking skills. The traditional procedure allows students to practice using the rules in translation and pronunciation drills. Meanwhile, the communicative procedure allows the students to use their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in communicative activities (Kaharuddin, 2018).

As additional information, Shimchuk (2021) stated that as a result of completing tasks of an activity nature in the form of communicative games, limitations, and accessible communication, filled with professional, regional, and cultural information, students form the skills of speaking and writing, listening and reading in an atmosphere of natural educational communication.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Communicative as an Approach in Teaching English Grammar

Students do not like a passive learning process, such as listen to teachers' explanation, giving questions if there is any, and then doing tasks. The communicative approach is an interactive method teacher could use to attract and gain students' attention to achieve teaching goals as efficiently as possible. If students enjoy the learning process, they must receive the material well and be good at doing tasks or essays. So, the purpose of this approach is the learning process instead of task assessment. In line with this, Azimova (2019) mentioned that while using the technique, the goal is to embrace students to understand until they can speak in the target language. Therefore, teachers should create an interactive environment to make students find it easy to communicate in the target language and use it in a social context to reach the goal. Also, many EFL students' have problems speaking because the time they are given to learn is minimal. Thus, with this method not only in a speaking lesson, but they also could improve their speaking skills in other lessons, such as reading. Teaching reading by applying a communicative approach is perfect as long as the teacher stays in line with the lesson's principle (Irmawati, 2012).

### 2.2 The Importance of Grammar in Language Learning

Grammar is the system of language, so every language has its grammar. One is required to understand the grammar to master any language. Grammar is also a component of language. The development of four language skills cannot be acquired without using grammar which is vital to mastering language skills (Saidvaliyevna, 2018). Teaching grammar is way more critical than is expected. Demir and Erdogan (2017) gave the idea that grammar lets students explore and discover the nature of a particular language. Without understanding it, students will not be able to construct any proper sentence. By mastering it, a student could use a particular language the way she or he loves to. Another reason why grammar is essential in language teaching is that language and grammar are two separate things. Learn about a language is easy, but learn how to use it in every context properly is on a whole different level. Debata (2013) agreed that mastering a language enables the individual to understand the meaning of underrated words or phrases or sentences or the grammar rules. Knowing a language means applying its grammar rule and proper usage if we keep in mind that language as speech, as linguists do as well.

### 2.3 Teachers' Perspective in Communicative Grammar

There are too many teachers spread around the world, which means many thoughts about communicative language teaching. Also, there are several teachers' misconceptions about communicative language teaching. Such as, teachers use fluency as the measure of how well the students in the communicative method learning process (Diana, 2014). They recognize students as fluent in speaking if they can speak confidently in English in front of the class. Numerous criteria must be fluent, including intonation, gesture, correct place of articulation usage, and talking smoothly without temporary pause. Diana (2014) also confirmed that teachers understand noise to decide whether the class or the learning process they have created is going well or not. In reality, the teachers have to recognize what kind of noise is happening at the moment. Does the noise come from students' rebel or because the students enjoy and feel comfortable with the method that they all race to achieve?

Nevertheless still, there are also good thoughts about this approach. The communicative approach uses the teacher as the center of attention and involves students in the activity, so there is the interaction between teacher and students, which gives more advantages for both teacher and students themselves. It is in line with Sotlikova and Sugirin (2016) in their study result, which mentioned that using a communicative approach in language teaching allows students to speak up freely apart from grammar awareness. They think this approach is suitable for language teaching since it requires more effort, such as think about the study and the activities for students' sake.

In addition, as a teacher applying this communicative approach in class is challenging, but it is not that difficult to do. The disadvantage of this approach will be the challenge teachers would face. To use this approach, teachers have to prepare a few things, such as method, media, and material from reference books relevant to applied syllables. Also, teachers have to instruct the media which they are going to use in the class. Sherwani and Kilic (2017) agreed that this kind of approach is a morphed learning process model, from the teacher as the center of attention to learner-focused, with teachers initiate the activity as multiple roles, including the mediator, guide, and facilitator. However, teachers only explain to students how to deal with the media and the participation rules of the particular activity, such as games, role-play, etc. (pp. 191-206).

#### **2.4 Students' Perspective about Communicative Grammar**

In EFL class, it is not the majority of using communicative approach in teaching grammar. Some classes still use the traditional approach in teaching English grammar. Consequently, students' speaking skills and writing skills do not develop simultaneously. Male (2011), in his statement, described that a majority of students viewed grammar as extensive involvement in writing but has no significant role in speaking. Thus, students have various experiences in learning grammar.

As Bancole-Minaflinou (2018) mentioned in his finding, there are 55% of post-beginner EFL students respond 'I know grammar, but I cannot speak English,' and 45% of advanced students respond the same thing like 'grammar lessons are often boring, because of lack of interaction and involvement' responded by 64.71% post-beginner students and 35.29% advanced students. Also, 'learning goals are not met' responded 73.33% by post-beginner students and 26.67% by advanced students. Thus, a small gap between post-beginner students and advanced students in 'I know grammar, but I cannot speak English' means that although some students considered an advanced level, still, they cannot speak English well. So, by applying this approach, students can get numerous benefits. Such as, it helps students raise their grammar knowledge and use it in a communicative situation in an appropriate way, at least in oral production. Besides, this approach persuades students to be more attracted to grammar lessons (Ho & Binh, 2014, p. 74).

#### **2.5 Students' Role in Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative language teaching focuses on students instead of the teacher. A teacher only guides the class, not as the focus of the class anymore. Regardless of the approach itself, teachers and students have their roles in realizing the planned classroom model. Students have an essential role in doing role play in the class. Language's functional aspect can be obtained when students force themselves to do the communicative task given by the teacher (Rouf & Sultana, 2018). Students and teachers have a mutual role which crucial and need to be well done. Rouf and Sultana (2018) also stated that the role of the students is as a mediator over themselves, the classroom activity, and the object of learning (also cited in Breen & Candlin, 1980, p. 110). Although the teacher is the guide, mediator, and facilitator, it could not have happened if they did not play their roles appropriately. The teachers do not have anybody to be guided, have no objection to use the media, and do not have any objection to facilitating. Both roles have to be played; otherwise, the learning process is not progressed and planned.

#### **2.6 Comparison between Communicative Grammar and Traditional Grammar**

Communicative grammar and traditional grammar have noticeable differences which give various inputs also goals to students, and the learning environment would be different based on the approach used. Based on Ciftci and Ozcan's (2021) statement, the traditional method is more practicable and productive than the communicative method. Students who taught English grammar by traditional method make more minor errors than the communicative method in writing and oral—more vocabulary obtained by traditional grammar students instead of communicative grammar students. In contrast, Azimova (2019) confirmed that appropriate use of a language is more emphasized than accuracy when using a communicative approach. Once the students figure how to use target language appropriately, then accuracy comes right away. Language cannot be learned through rote memorization and in isolation. It has to be taught through an interactive environment (p. 473). Thamarana (2015) also argued that the communicative approach is one of the best and recent approaches in teaching English, and many linguists and researchers are into this approach (p. 90).

Kaharuddin (2018) gave an idea about different goals of communicative grammar and traditional grammar in the Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Goals of Traditional Grammar vs Communicative Grammar*

Aspects	Goals
Traditional Grammar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To able to read classical texts</li> <li>2. To promote language accuracy in writing</li> <li>3. To memorize rules and vocabularies</li> <li>4. To develop mental discipline and intellectual capacity</li> </ol>
Communicative Grammar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To be able to communicate in English</li> <li>2. To enhance initiative in communication</li> <li>3. To develop real communication awareness</li> <li>4. To promote fluency in speaking</li> </ol>

He also affirmed that even though the overall aim of the subject is to achieve communication mastery, it does not mean one is ignoring grammar and vocabulary as essential elements in the language. Therefore, it is obvious to combine both methods to take part in the learning stage to serve the purpose of the approach with maximum effort (pp. 244-248).

Bancole-Minaflinou (2018) emphasized in his investigation's finding that few teachers use communicative as an approach in teaching grammar and still do not have a clear insight about what it is supposed to be (p. 58). However, Diana (2014) set out in the argument that most teachers use the communicative approach as the method in language teaching according to its primary aim to improve students' communicative ability (p. 36). In line with this, Rahmawati (2018) argued that the communicative approach is probably frequently used in English language teaching lately (p. 92).

### **2.7 Advantages and Disadvantages of Communicative Grammar**

No approach suits every learning condition, especially for every kind of EFL student learning style and strategy. Regardless of this approach which supports the overall objective of learning a language, it also has some weaknesses.

Santos (2020) displayed advantages of communicative grammar: This approach disposes to apply student as center-focus and student as the orientation of language teaching practice instead of teachers as the focus in the learning process, the interaction between students, teachers, and peers be more intense, and frequently increases students' interest in the learning process. However, in his points, there are more disadvantages than the advantages of the approach: Less language mastery, students do not fully accept the whole approach due to their perception of traditional grammar method, the pressure and standard of examination of certain classes may affect the application of the approach, communicative approach has limitation due to different social and cultural background of each EFL students, the more participant in the class the more challenging to use the approach (pp. 106-107). Mondal (2012) argued that advantages as following: It stresses the infestation of students' skills and knowledge in learning a language, it initiates students to implement what they have learned, it increases students' recognition and thinking in the target language instead of source first language, and embraces students to enjoying poplar recognition and support in the educational world. However, he also described the disadvantages in numerous points: students claim that they cannot fully understand some language points. Therefore, students' output has been influenced by limited input. As a result, their speech has nothing to depend on, although they have a great enthusiast to communicate (p. 21).

Badilla and Chacon (2013) explained about advantages of communicative grammar. However, they did not describe the disadvantages: Make honest communication the focus of the learning, provide opportunities for students to experiment and try what they know, be tolerant of students' errors as teachers indicate that students are developing their oral skills, gives chances for students to level up accuracy and fluency, combining four essential English skills in the real world (pp. 272-273).

### **2.8 Strategies for Teachers in Teaching Communicative Grammar**

After discussing the communicative approach in teaching English grammar, it is necessary to consider how to apply the approach to achieve the learning process's objective. In order to engage the approach to the classes, teachers have to know the essential principle for this approach. Baydikova and Davidenko (2019) provided an idea about principles that need to be applied in initiating a communicative approach in teaching grammar: First, the material delivered should be arranged based on the relevance and frequency of the communicative context. Second, the method has to embrace students' involvement in a real-life communication environment (p. 3). By keeping these principles in mind, hopefully, teachers will be able to apply the approach in the class, but of course, teachers have to arrange strategies to successfully engage the approach and reduce the disadvantages while the class is in progress.

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Siregar (2019) revealed that a teacher must figure matters relating to goals directed at changing behavior, a democratic, open, fair, and fun approach, which can increase interest, talent, initiative, creativity, imagination, innovation, and success to be achieved. She also agreed that games are motivating and offer students a fun-filled and learning atmosphere. Thus, the class is all happy and enjoyable while the class is on (Chen, 2005).

Zang and Li (2014) summed up that in order to teach in a communicative approach, numerous systematic steps have to be overviewed based on a divided approach, as described in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Deductive and Inductive Approach*

Approaches	Steps
Deductive Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explicit formal instruction of grammar</li> <li>2. Consciousness-raising input</li> <li>3. Deductive structure-based task</li> <li>4. Corrective feedback on errors</li> </ol>
Inductive Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consciousness-raising input</li> <li>2. Inductive structure-based task</li> <li>3. Explicit formal instruction of grammar</li> <li>4. Productive task</li> <li>5. Corrective feedback on errors</li> </ol>

Two patterns of grammar which are divided into inductive and deductive approaches for the EFL, are proposed. In deductive teaching, a grammatical structure is delivered first and then practiced in one way or another. In inductive teaching, students have first been exposed to an example of the grammatical structure and are asked to meet a metalinguistic generalization independently. Thus, there may or may not be a final explicit of the rule. Nevertheless, in the deductive approach, the author provides a final explicit statement of the rule that should be included.

Baydikova and Davidenko (2019) confirmed that teachers might apply communicative exercises which might contain small groups, pairs, or individual tasks, such as roleplay, discussion, case study, brainstorming activity, and storytelling (p. 5).

### 3.0 Conclusion

To sum up, the overall aim of learning a language is to achieve communicative competence and apply the target language in a real-life context. In order to make it happens, communicative grammar is a suitable method. Communicative grammar creates a learning process by the function as student-centered focused. Students are embraced to use the target language repetitively until they can speak in the target language. To implement this approach, teachers have to set some tactics. Teachers have to create an interactive environment. Thus students will find it easy and comfortable to adapt to this approach considering a previous study summed up a minority of teachers who use this approach, but the others argued oppositely.

The result of this paper displayed a contradiction of which approach that suitable for teaching grammar. Following teachers' and students' perspectives, advantages and disadvantages of communicative grammar, comparison between both approaches, and social and cultural background of EFL students made previous studies do not give the same view of which suits particular class. It is also revealed that students have a more considerable contribution in the learning process, meanwhile teachers' roles in the class as the instruction of the method and media that they are going to use.

More research and testing are required to reveal how to reduce or even eliminate the disadvantages, optimize the advantages, and how effective the strategies are provided if used in a different class of EFL context. Authors expect that the subsequent research figures apply the strategies or the media in online situations, especially while facing today's pandemic. Also, in the future, there could be a way to combine both approaches to make the learning process more intense, complex and get one step closer to the ultimate goals of learning a language. The writers also hoped there would be way more strategies and media to help teachers be more creative and innovative in teaching grammar in EFL classes, which keeps developing. Hopefully, there is no more doubt or hesitation among teachers to use the approach in the future due to a lack of knowledge of the approach. Also, students do not get stuck in their perception that grammar can only be delivered by the traditional approach or translation method.

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