Original Research Article

Collaborative Output Task-based Grammar Teaching in High School English Writing Context

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Abstract: Grammar is the core of language which directly affects the accuracy and appropriateness of language understanding and expression. Grammar learning in high school is either lack of interest or full of grammar mistakes in communication. This paper strive to combine grammar teaching with communicative approach based on context to explore some collaborative output tasks for implicit grammar teaching in high school English writing context, with its aim to improve students' grammatical knowledge and awareness, writing skills and communicative competence.

Keywords: Collaborative output task; Implicit grammar teaching; High school English; Task type

1. Introduction

1.1 The importance of grammar teaching in high school

Grammar knowledge is the unity of form,meaning and use, which directly affects the accuracy and appropriateness of language understanding and expression.A good command of English grammar helps to improve students' reading and writing ability, so as to improve students' comprehensive use of English. Grammar is basically needed to learn how to speak and write in a way that is universally recognized and understood. So, grammar, in many aspects, is the backbone of language, is essential in the educational system.

1.2 Current situation of grammar teaching in high school

In current high school English grammar teaching practice, the traditional PPP grammar teaching model attaches great importance to the form of the grammar, single language points are encouraged to teach as the only grammar knowledge, regardless of the specific language context. This kind of grammar teaching model which neglects students' participation in class will inevitably make the grammar teaching classroom complex and boring and remain grammar a real challenge to both teachers and students. However, the communication-oriented, learner-centered Communicative, while at other extreme, for some teachers, they avoid the explicit(form-focused)grammar teaching entirely. As long as the purpose of communication is achieved, the correctness of grammar is not important. Teachers rarely deal with the knowledge of grammar, and students' grammatical inaccuracies may affect the further development of communication. Therefore, there are generally two dilemmas in English learning of high school students: one is students have no interest in grammar classes for a long time; the other is that students are fluent but full of grammar mistakes in English communication.

1.3 The purpose and significance of the study

This paper investigates the way of integrating Grammar Teaching with Communicative Approach through studying the combination of grammar rules, morphology, context and communication on the textual level. This paper presents some collaborative output task for grammar teaching in high school English writing context in order to improve students' grammatical knowledge and awareness, writing skills as well as communicative competence.

2. Problem identification of grammar teaching in high school

Based on the research findings, we can easily draw conclusions as follows: first, grammar teaching has its own significant place and value in the overall organization of language teaching in the institutions. No language can be learned adequately without implicit and explicit awareness of grammar of the same language. The Noticing Hypothesis shows that input does not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed, that is, consciously registered (Schmidt, 1990, 2001). So, explicit grammar teaching model is beneficial to learners' grammar learning. And repeated practice in class can transform explicit learning knowledge into implicit automatic knowledge. The key point is how to take implicit and explicit grammar exercise comprehensively. Second, Discovery Learning through context is more popular among students than teaching and practicing grammar in isolation. Some scholars, thus, have suggested that using classroom tasks in which the learners are required to work together and produce output collaboratively. Based on Vygotskian sociocultural theory, Swain introduced the concept of collaborative dialogues which she argued

are effective due to mediating the construction of linguistic knowledge and that this co-construction of a task can be a source of second language teaching (Swain, 1998). Swain(1985) stressed the significant role of output in learning second language, claiming that output is necessary and vital for learners to move from semantic to syntactic processing. Learners may notice some gaps in their linguistic knowledge because they may find out that they are unable to say or produce what they want to say. With metalinguistic function, it is asserted that output pushes the learners to reflect consciously upon language and decide what to say and what not to say. Collaboration may expedite these functions as it involves the whole process of learning. It is through collaboration in which the learners are asked to work collaboratively to reach a common goal, that is, being responsible for one another learning as well as their own. Some types of collaborative output tasks for implicit grammar teaching in high school English writing context were proposed, with its aim to improve students' grammatical knowledge and awareness, writing skills and communicative competence.

3. Collaborative output task for implicit grammar teaching in writing context

Collaborative output tasks refer to those activities that are designed to encourage learners to produce output collaboratively and reflect on and negotiate the accuracy of their language use. In such activities, the learners' attention is drawn to both meaning and forms (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Here are some writing-based grammar tasks for implicit grammar teaching were proposed in order to improve English grammar teaching in high school, upgrade students' grammar accuracy, enhance students' ability of writing and communication.

3.1 Dictogloss Task

Dictogloss is a language teaching technique where learners are required to reconstruct a short text by listening and noting down key words, which are then used as a base for reconstruction. It is a learner-centered teaching method based on context, students' need and task. It aims to help students learn,apply and master grammar based on context. There are four steps: preparation, dictation, reconstruction, analysis and correction.

First, the teacher prepares a text that contains examples of the grammatical form to be studied. Then, the teacher reads the text the students at normal speed while they take notes for twice. For the first time,students should just listen and find out the main idea of the text, but for the second time, they could take notes of the key words that could be helpful in reproducing the original text. Next, students work in groups to combine their data to reproduce their version of the text. In the final stage, the pairs analyzed and compared the version produced by the students closely.

3.2 Text Reconstruction Editing Task

Text reconstruction editing task is a teaching technique that teachers use to draw students attention to the meaning and the language features in a complex text. Students recreate or reconstruct a text that they have listened to several times, then discussed with their partners, without looking at the text. As students work with partners to reconstruct it, they are negotiating meaning, discussing the content and how it was expressed in the original text, and eventually agreeing as to how the text should be reconstructed so that its meaning closely resembles that of the original text.

For this task, teacher first read the original text twice at a normal speed to the students. Second, the students were required to focus just on the content and take notes. Then, they were given an incomplete version of the original text that contained several blanks and errors regarding the target grammatical structures. The learners were required to identity those erroneous parts, add, delete or change them to improve the accuracy as closely as possible to the original text collaboratively in pairs.

4. Conclusion

Teaching practice and research at home and abroad show that grammar teaching should be combined with specific communicative tasks. By encouraging students to consciously pay attention to relevant language forms from language input, the cognitive process can be activated, so as to output new knowledge and consolidate old knowledge. Some kinds of writing-based grammar tasks discussed in this paper are all based on text and require students to cooperate and interact with each other in a group to complete a certain grammar task. They not only enable students to focus their attention on the form of grammar, but also to consciously pay attention to the meaning and compare the features of various grammatical structures and their effects by writing sentences, paragraphs or essays.

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