



Evaluating the Design and Implementation of Grammar Activities: The Case of Grade 10th English Textbook

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ABSTRACT

This research paper assessed grammar tasks in the Grade 10 English textbook for alignment with Communicative Language Teaching. Employing a mixed-methods design, three teachers and the textbook were sampled. Data collection involved an evaluation checklist, observations, and interviews. Findings revealed a focus on structural grammar, with explicit instruction dominating due to resource constraints. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with limited support for communicative-based lessons. In conclusion, the Grade 10 English textbook minimally incorporated communicative practices, emphasizing rule-driven and predetermined-answer tasks.

Key Words: communicative language teaching, communicative grammar teaching, grammar tasks

1. Introduction

Globalization has brought about increased intercultural communication, facilitated primarily through the use of the English language. English has emerged as the dominant medium for global communication in diverse domains such as science, technology, education, medicine, and business. In today's interconnected world, proficiency in English offers individuals enhanced opportunities for skill development, access to information, and employment prospects. This is equally true in the context of Ethiopia, where English serves as a language of instruction across educational institutions nationwide (MoE, 2009) and plays a pivotal role in communication within government and non-governmental organizations. Consequently, the development of strong grammatical skills is crucial for effective communication and mastery of the English language. By examining the design and implementation of grammar tasks in the Grade 10 English textbook, this research aimed to evaluate the extent to which communicative language teaching are incorporated and to identify areas for improvement (MoE, 2009). Grammar is a fundamental skill in English language teaching, playing a crucial role in global communication. It serves as the

foundation for various language skills such as speaking, writing, reading, vocabulary, meaning, and function (Ur, 1988). Scholars, including (Richards and Schmidt, 2010) and also (Ur, 2012), define grammar as the structure of language and the arrangement of words to form accurate sentences.

(Nunan, 1991) emphasizes grammar's vital role in effective communication, asserting that it contributes to meaning creation and long-term linguistic accuracy. (Nassaji, 2017) highlights the importance of grammar knowledge, acquired through communicative language practices, in facilitating effective interactions. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is endorsed for teaching grammar, promoting interaction and communication (Nassaji, 2017). (Jones, 1992) states that CLT aims to familiarize students with natural language usage and provide practical application opportunities. (Haryani and Putry, 2020) endorse Communicative Grammar Teaching (CGT), emphasizing the communicative aspects of grammar.

Explicit grammar teaching, actively providing rules and explanations, is criticized for prioritizing form over meaning (Harmer, 1987; Ellis et al., 2001). Implicit teaching, where grammatical facts are hidden, is favored for its interactive nature and flexibility (Harmer, 1987). English language textbooks are foundational, guiding teachers and influencing learners' attitudes and performance (Cunningsworth, 1995). In Ethiopia, the revised Grade 9-12 English textbook focuses on developing competency rather than knowledge acquisition (English for Ethiopia teachers' guide, 2009-2020).

Despite efforts, learners in Ethiopian secondary and tertiary schools face challenges in improving communicative competence skills (English for Ethiopia teachers' guide, 2009-2020). This study evaluates the design and implementation of grammar tasks in the Grade 10 English textbook,

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aiming to understand the extent of CLT in presenting grammar both in the textbook and the classroom. Despite recommendations in curriculum development and implementation policies, there is a significant gap in knowledge regarding the effectiveness of communicative grammar teaching and competency strategies.

2. Materials and Methods

In this particular study, the primary objective was to evaluate the design and implementation of grammar tasks in the grade 10 English textbook with reference to communicative language teaching approach. Therefore, a descriptive research design was adopted, involving both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to collect the necessary data for the research.

2.1. Sample

The study utilized an available sampling technique to determine the participants for the research. All English language teachers in grade 10 were included as respondents, providing valuable insights into the implementation of grammar tasks in the classroom. Furthermore, the grammar tasks in the grade 10 English textbook were selected as a representative sample for analysis and evaluation purposes.

2.2. Data Instruments

2.2.1. Evaluation checklist

The first instrument was the evaluation checklist, which facilitated a comprehensive content analysis of the grammar tasks and activities included in the textbook. This analysis involved systematically examining the types of tasks, their format, their presentation and their integration with other language skills.

2.2.2. Classroom observation

The second instrument involved conducting classroom observations to directly observe the implementation of the grammar tasks in a real classroom setting. This process allowed for an examination of how the tasks were presented, how students engaged with them, and how they contributed to the development of communicative competence.

2.2.3. Interview

The third instrument was interview conducted with teachers. These interviews provided valuable insights into their perspectives on the grammar tasks, their instructional strategies, and their experiences with integrating communicative language teaching principles into their classroom practices.

2.2.4. Validity & Reliability

In the context of this study, validity is a crucial aspect in ensuring that the data analysis in the textbook evaluation is reliable and accurate. To address validity concerns, the researcher employed an evaluative checklist to collect the grammar activities. This checklist was adapted from established EFL scholars whose expertise and validity of

the checklist have been previously validated. Furthermore, reliability was a key consideration in evaluating the gathered qualitative data. The data that was collected through classroom observation was crosschecked against teachers' interview to make sure there were no inconsistencies among the gathered qualitative data for the study as well.

2.2.5. Data collection & Analysis

The textbook's grammar task data was collected using an evaluation checklist aligned with experts' recommendations in English as a foreign language, such as (Cunningsworth, 1995; McNonough and Shaw, 1993; Mukundan et al., 2011). Criteria were modified to match study objectives. Classroom observation provided primary data on grammar task implementation, teacher-student interactions during instruction, and follow-up interviews with grade 10 English language teachers offered additional insights into teaching approaches and perspectives on grammar lessons.

In the analysis of data, following (Kothari, 2004) definition, a mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The quantitative phase involved employing content analysis to categorize grammar tasks based on criteria like task type, format, presentation, and integration with other language skills. This process facilitated the quantification and summarizing of task characteristics using numerical data (frequencies and percentages), presented in tables for an overview of task distribution and prevalence.

In the subsequent qualitative phase, the categorized data underwent further analysis, involving interpretation and discussion of findings. This method provided detailed descriptions and meaningful insights, presented alongside each table. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher achieved a comprehensive understanding of grammar tasks in the textbook, enhancing the study's reliability. The data collected from classroom observation and teachers' interviews underwent a thorough qualitative analysis, involving meticulous examination, transcription, and extraction of valuable observations and significant patterns.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this research have illuminated insights into both of the posed research questions, with a thorough presentation, analysis, and interpretation. The evaluation checklist analysis not only examined the emphasis on structural and communicative grammar tasks in the textbook but also explored other significant elements such as its presentation, forms and integration of grammar with other language skills. Therefore, the analysis revealed a clear inclination towards structural tasks, which indicated a traditional approach to grammar instruction. Additionally, it highlighted a preference for rule-driven tasks that hindered active student participation in the classroom. Consequently, these findings in the textbook underscored the necessity for a more balanced and communicative approach to grammar teaching.

Table 1: Structural and Communicative Based Tasks

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Structural	67	60.91%
Communicative	43	39.09%
Total	110	100%

Table 2: Explicit and Implicit Grammar Presentation of the Respondents

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Explicit	74	67.27%
Implicit	36	32.73%
Total	110	100%

Table 3: Integrated Language Skills of the Respondents

Other language skills	Frequency	Percentage
Speaking	17	15.45%
Listening	7	6.36%
Reading	26	23.64%
Writing	37	33.64%
Vocabulary	23	20.91%
Total	110	100%

Table 1 shows the distribution of structural and communicative based tasks grade 10 English language textbook. Table 2 presented the frequencies and percentages of explicit and implicit grammar presentations in the textbook. Out of the total 110 instances of grammar presentation, 74 (67.27%) were explicit, while 36 (32.73%) were implicit. The data analysis revealed a predominant focus on discrete grammar points in structural tasks, emphasizing specific language rules through activities like fill-in-the-blanks, matching exercises, and sentence transformations. These tasks aimed at enhancing students' grammatical accuracy and knowledge.

In contrast, communicative tasks took a different approach, striving to foster meaningful language use, interaction, and communication. These tasks, encompassing role-plays, discussions, and information sharing, required students to apply language skills in real-life contexts, emphasizing the development of communicative competence.

The distribution indicated that the textbook primarily employed an explicit approach to grammar presentation, involving direct instruction of rules and explanations. Implicit presentation, though less frequent, took a more indirect approach, incorporating grammar instruction within meaningful contexts like authentic texts or communicative activities. The higher frequency of explicit presentation suggested a heavy reliance on direct grammar instruction during classroom lessons, aiming to provide a strong foundation of grammatical knowledge. However, it is crucial to acknowledge potential limitations associated with an overemphasis on explicit instruction, as it may not fully support the development of communicative competence and the practical application of grammar in real-life situations.

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of integrated language skills in the grade 10 English textbook. Writing tasks dominate with the highest proportion at 33.64%, aligning with

the textbook's focus on written assignments. Other integrated language skills exhibit uneven distribution: speaking (15.4%), listening (6.36%), reading tasks (23.64%), and vocabulary tasks (20.91%). This comprehensive integration aims to enhance overall language proficiency. The results highlight thorough integration of grammar tasks with multiple language skills, emphasizing a holistic language learning approach. The majority of tasks, notably, are intertwined with writing skills, emphasizing grammar in written expression. Reading skills also receive significant attention, emphasizing understanding grammatical structures for improved comprehension. However, reliance on writing and reading alone may not sufficiently support effective communication. In contrast, speaking and listening skills, essential for real-life communication, show the lowest integration in grammar tasks, suggesting a relatively lesser emphasis in the textbook.

3.1. Observation

The observations made using the observational checklist revealed that in terms of presentation, the teachers generally followed a pattern of providing explanations of grammar rules followed by illustrative examples on the board during their presentations. However, there was limited encouragement for students to independently discover grammar rules, indicating a need for a more interactive teaching style. To achieve this, teachers should incorporate student-centered activities and discussions, fostering active participation and deeper understanding.

Regarding practice, teachers demonstrated effective practices by offering clear instructions for practice tasks, but there was a consistent lack of student interaction. Passive listening prevailed over active participation, hindering engagement and limiting the overall learning experience. The absence of textbooks in the classroom further impeded grammar practice, as a significant number of students did not have access to their textbooks, impacting both lesson presentation and active participation.

Concerning grammar, practice tasks were beneficial for achieving lesson objectives, with students actively manipulating the structures of new grammar points. However, it was observed that students did not effectively utilize grammar lessons for communication purposes, particularly in oral interactions such as speaking. In terms of mistakes and feedback, teachers occasionally provided comments on assignments related to specific lessons but missed the opportunity to address grammar lessons in the context of communication. Therefore, teachers should ensure that written or oral feedback is directed toward enhancing students' communicative abilities, guiding them on improving classroom participation and effectively applying grammar skills to enhance their communication skills.

In conclusion the observation revealed a structured teaching pattern but lacks encouragement for independent learning. Effective practice task instructions exist, yet limited student interaction hampers engagement. The absence

of textbooks impacts lesson presentation and student participation. Practice tasks succeed in achieving objectives, but students struggle to apply grammar in oral communication. Teachers provide occasional feedback on assignments but miss addressing broader communication contexts. Recommendations include adopting an interactive teaching style, addressing textbook challenges, and redirecting feedback to enhance communication skills.

3.2. Interview

The interview with teachers also provided important insights into the significance of promoting student engagement and interaction with grammar tasks. Teachers emphasized the need to address resource limitations, such as the scarcity of textbooks and essential materials, which hindered effective teaching and learning. They also highlighted the importance of improving the effectiveness of grammar task presentation by employing varied assessment methods and incorporating techniques that enhance student engagement and interaction. These findings also underscored the significance of creating interactive learning environments that allows active participation, enabling students to develop a deeper understanding of grammar concepts and their practical application.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research explored grammar instruction through an evaluation checklist, classroom observations, and teacher interviews. The textbook analysis revealed a traditional emphasis on structural tasks, hindering student participation and suggesting a need for a more balanced, communicative approach. Classroom observations indicated a reliance on teacher-led instruction, with passive student participation and limited access to textbooks, leading to predominantly teacher-centered sessions. Teacher interviews emphasized the importance of addressing resource limitations and improving grammar task presentation for enhanced student engagement and interaction.

In conclusion, the combined findings obtained from the evaluation checklist, classroom observation, and teacher interview underscored the importance of resolving the implementation of grammar tasks and activities in the classroom with respect to communicative language teaching approach. Thus, by addressing these issues and also taking the recommendations in to account, the researcher believes that, students can enhance their language skills, nurture a deeper understanding of grammar, and effectively utilize it as a tool for practice, communication, and the development of language proficiency. This, in turn, will also hopefully contribute to an overall improvement of grade 10 English textbook and help students develop their abilities to use English language through communicative practices.

Conflict of Interest

“ The author declares that there is no conflict of interest involve in publishing this research paper”

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