



Exploring the Philosophy of English Grammar Teaching in Senior High School from the Perspective of the New Curriculum Standards

Fei Wang^a, Hongbing Yang^{*}

Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, Gansu, China

^awangfei903@126.com, ^{*}1921173431@qq.com

Abstract. The view of grammar and grammar teaching advocated by the English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2017 Edition Revised in 2020) is a three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar that combines “form-meaning-use”, which is oriented towards language application. It emphasizes the learning and use of grammar in concrete contexts. The three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar provides a new concept and way of teaching grammar in senior high school, which helps to break through the single mode of teaching and learning grammar for the sake of mastering grammar. Through the introduction of context and three-dimensional grammar theory, this paper explores the philosophy of senior high school English grammar teaching from the perspective of the New Curriculum Standards and puts forward some teaching suggestions, hoping to provide some help for grammar teaching and cultivating students’ grammatical awareness and comprehensive use of language proficiency.

Keywords: three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar, form-meaning-use, grammar teaching.

1 Introduction

Language is not only a system of symbols, but also the most important tool for human communication. Cheng Xiaotang pointed out that grammar, as a communicative resource, plays an important role in constructing and understanding discourse [1]. Traditional grammar teaching focuses on the form of language, emphasizes the learning of language structure and rules, detaches from the context, ignores the ideographic and communicative functions of language, and neglects the relevance, integration and systematicity of discourse, context and pragmatics in grammar teaching, resulting in a lack of interactivity and communicativeness in the teaching mode, a lack of active exploration of grammatical knowledge and participation in the process of constructing the meaning of discourse, and a lack of grammar process experience in teaching. Wang Hao et al. found through quantitative analysis and qualitative evidence of grammar teaching activities in secondary English textbooks that the design of grammar activities in secondary English textbooks still follows the traditional concept of grammar

teaching based on linguistic form, and fails to implement the concept and principle of considering both semantics and form as advocated by the curriculum reform [2]. In recent years, with the continuous development of linguistic theories and the innovation of teaching methods and concepts, more and more scholars have begun to pay attention to the reform of English grammar teaching. Among them, the three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar, as a concept of grammar teaching different from the traditional one, emphasizes the dynamics, interactivity and multidimensionality of grammatical knowledge, which provides new ideas and methods for the reform and implementation of English grammar teaching.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the teaching of English grammar in senior high school in the context of the New Curriculum Standards. This will be achieved by elaborating on the three-dimensional grammar theory and putting forward corresponding teaching suggestions. The aim is to contribute to the enrichment and improvement of the current theoretical system of English teaching. A comprehensive examination of pedagogical concepts enables educators to gain a deeper comprehension and proficiency in the implementation of novel teaching methodologies. This, in turn, enhances the efficacy of classroom instruction and fosters the advancement of innovative pedagogical approaches. Moreover, for learners, the introduction of these new concepts can effectively stimulate interest and motivation in the acquisition of English grammar, thereby enhancing their engagement and initiative in this process.

2 Theoretical Foundations of the Teaching Philosophy

2.1 Content Requirements of Grammatical Knowledge in the New Curriculum Standards

English grammar knowledge usually includes lexical knowledge and syntactic knowledge. In language use, grammatical knowledge is the unity of “form-meaning-use”, which is closely related to knowledge of phonetics, lexicon, discourse, and pragmatics, and has a direct impact on the accuracy and appropriateness of language comprehension and expression. The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School (2017 Edition Revised 2020) (hereinafter referred to as the New Curriculum Standards) states that “the study of English grammar in senior high school is an extension and continuation of grammar learning at the compulsory education stage. Students should further consolidate and appropriately apply the grammar knowledge learned at the former stage through various contextualized English learning and practicing activities. Students should try to understand and apply the new grammar knowledge in contexts so as to further develop English grammar awareness” [3]. It can be seen that the New Curriculum Standards emphasizes the need for context in terms of grammatical knowledge. The New Curriculum Standards emphasizes that English grammar teaching in senior high school should help students further consolidate and expand their existing grammar knowledge and enable them to use the grammar knowledge to understand and express meaning in a special context so as to enhance their awareness of English grammar [3]. At the same time, the pedagogical grammar of English adopted in this

Curriculum Standards is a three-dimensional dynamic grammar. In the three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar, grammar is a dynamic language phenomenon, which includes not only a set of static grammar rules, but also the dynamic changes of grammar in practical use.

In short, the senior secondary level emphasizes the learning and teaching of English grammar in specific contexts, following the principle of combining form, meaning and use, and understanding and applying it in specific contexts. In addition, in the specific use of language, it is necessary to focus on the accuracy of language communication and to understand the effectiveness and meaning of language communication. According to the requirements of The New Curriculum Standards, English grammar teaching in senior high school should be taught in unit thematic contexts, guided by the activity-based approach to English learning, with the theme as the leader and the discourse as the backing, so that students can understand and express the pragmatic function of grammar in specific contexts, and improve their grammatical awareness and comprehensive language proficiency.

2.2 Context and Contextual Studies

The concept of context was proposed by the linguist B. Malinowski. Later, Firth, an English linguist, made a more in-depth study of context and divided it into linguistic context and non-linguistic context, the former consisting of internal factors of language, such as words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs, etc., and the latter consisting of external factors of language, which is constituted by the relationship between language and social environment. Zhang Jieying believed that context creation has the following effects on English grammar teaching: to achieve the relevance of grammar teaching; to be practice-oriented in grammar teaching; and to effectively mobilize students' interest in learning grammar [4].

Context is an important variable in language teaching. The New Curriculum Standards points out that "the context mainly involves circumstantial factors such as time, place, and situation, plus individual factors such as the communication purpose, communication roles, situation, and emotion of the participants. Therefore, in practical teaching, teachers should help students enhance pragmatic awareness. When designing spoken and written communication activities, teachers should strive to create communication contexts similar to those in the real world, specify the communication occasions, and the roles of and the relationship between the participants, and help students understand that the choice of language is influenced by the specific communication situation" [3]. The basic concept of the English curriculum is to develop students' subject core competence and their ability to use the language comprehensively, and the content of the English curriculum is the basis for developing students' subject core competence. The content of the curriculum is made up of six elements, one of which is the thematic context, which includes man and self, man and society, and man and nature. The New Curriculum Standards emphasizes that thematic contexts regulate the scope of linguistic and cultural knowledge and provide a meaningful context for language learning, organically permeating emotions, attitudes and values.

2.3 Three-dimensional Grammar Theory

The three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar adopted in the New Curriculum Standards is derived from the three-dimensional grammar theory proposed by Larsen-Freeman. Larsen-Freeman adopted a more traditional view of language, analyzing it as a collection of outcomes, breaking it down into components, and proposing three dimensions of language in communication. The first dimension is that of linguistic form, which encompasses a range of visible and audible linguistic units. The second dimension is that of linguistic meaning, which considers basic indicative meanings in isolation, as well as meanings that can be found in dictionaries. The third dimension of language is that of use, which pertains to the intentions of individuals when employing language. In the meantime, from the perspective of linguistic communication, Larsen-Freeman put forth a three-dimensional grammar theory. This theory posits that the teaching of grammar in a foreign language encompasses three dimensions: form, meaning, and the use of grammar. Form refers to the composition of the linguistic unit in question; meaning denotes the basic meaning conveyed by the unit; and use pertains to the circumstances under which the unit is employed and the rationale behind its usage. These three dimensions are interrelated and collectively constitute a dynamic, three-dimensional perspective on pedagogical grammar.

Larsen-Freeman, in *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Gramming*, gave a simple definition of language in relation to the question of what it is: language is a dynamic process of schema formation, whereby people can use linguistic forms to express meaning in a decent and contextually adapted way [5]. In light of this definition, Larsen-Freeman posited that grammar (Gramming) constitutes one of the dynamic processes through which language forms schemas that may be employed to express semantics in a contextually appropriate manner. In the traditional view of grammar, grammar is often conceived as a static grammatical knowledge, a set of discrete linguistic structures and rules. However, in Larsen-Freeman's view, grammar is a dynamic process in which the meanings and uses of forms are part of a rational, flexible, interconnected open system [6]. In other words, grammar is a dynamic, evolving, and developable skill that can be used as a means of communication. Larsen-Freeman employed the term "Gramming" to represent the processual and dynamic nature of grammar, noting that grammatical skill (Gramming) is as crucial as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Larsen-Freeman defined grammatical skill as the capacity to utilize grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. In order to assist students in developing this ability, it is necessary to alter the conventional perspective on grammar. This entails acknowledging grammar as a fifth skill with generative power, rather than merely an area of knowledge [6]. Similarly, the New Curriculum Standards emphasizes the dynamic nature of grammar and the necessity of developing students' capacity to utilize language in a variety of ways in language teaching. Grammar is not a fixed rule; rather, it is a dynamic system that evolves through use. Therefore, a grammatical system should be constructed and developed as a process of use.

Larsen-Freeman posited that there is always one aspect of language-form, meaning and use- that is the most challenging and time-consuming to learn. The analysis of

language according to these three aspects, and the subsequent teaching thereof, does not necessitate that the teacher present all of the information pertaining to these three aspects to the students. Indeed, it is not even necessary to present all of this information within the confines of a single lesson. Instead, it does require that the teacher make certain trade-offs and adopt a selective approach to the teaching process. This necessitates that the instructor, following a comprehensive analysis of the students and considering the students' native language background, cognitive abilities, affective factors, motivational interests, learning progress, and other pertinent factors, prioritize the actual teaching of explanations, emphasizing both main and difficult points, to avoid attempting to cover too much material and failing to achieve the objectives of grammar instruction. As outlined by Ji Xiaoting and Ke Jinyun, the acquisition of form, meaning and use is inextricably linked. However, at varying stages of learning and among different learners, the emphasis placed on these aspects may vary. It is incumbent upon the teacher to consider and analyze which of the three aspects is the source of difficulty for the students, according to their mother tongue background, language level and learning progress. This analysis should inform the focus of the teaching [7].

In the field of grammar instruction, the New Curriculum Standards posits that instructors should prioritize the contextual presentation of grammatical knowledge. This approach entails guiding learners to observe the circumstances of use, forms of expression, fundamental meanings, and pragmatic functions of the grammatical items they will acquire within a contextual framework. The consolidation of grammatical knowledge is achieved through exercises and activities conducted within and beyond the classroom, as well as through the influence of information technology. Additionally, students are guided to learn how to apply their grammatical knowledge to comprehend and express meanings in context, and to strengthen continuously their awareness of using language forms accurately and appropriately. In terms of grammar practice and application, instructors should adopt and design different types of learning and practical activities according to the actual needs of students around the "form-meaning-use" [3]. The new textbook espouses a three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar that combines the "form-meaning-use" and adopts a "discovery approach" to design grammar teaching activities. For instance, the new textbook adds students' experience of the process of grammar learning in the Grammar Inquiry section, which requires students to first discover the patterns in specific contexts and have some sense of the target language structure, then further recognize and summarize the features of the language structure, and finally apply this knowledge practically [8].

Liu Wei highlighted that the concept of three-dimensional grammar instruction has transcended the conventional syntactic scope of grammar at the linguistic level, particularly the dimension of use, which integrates the comprehension of grammar and its practical application within the domain of discourse [9]. Therefore, it is imperative that instructors should adopt a three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar in grammar instruction, which would be more beneficial to create a context based on the theme of the unit, situate grammar learning and teaching within the discourse, facilitate students' exploration of the significance of grammatical knowledge in particular contexts, and offer them opportunities to perceive, practice and utilize grammar.

3 Teaching Suggestions

3.1 Multidimensional Activation of Existing Knowledge

The purpose of a classroom introduction is to stimulate students' interest for the learning content and their intrinsic motivation, focus their attention and comprehension of the learning objectives and establish a connection between prior and new knowledge [10]. Prior to the commencement of classroom instruction, it is incumbent upon the instructors to understand the target grammar to be elucidated, to analyze the three dimensions of the target grammar, and to make a comprehensive analysis for students. Therefore, instructors must facilitate the activation of students' prior knowledge and integration of their cognitive processes through diverse ways and dimensions to prepare them for the acquisition of novel information. Teachers can effectively mitigate students' learning pressure by organically integrating their existing knowledge with the context of the unit and introducing familiar topics into the classroom, thereby facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge [11].

3.2 Multicontext Perception of Target Grammar

The implementation of the teaching concept of the three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar is best achieved through the teaching of grammar in context. It is incumbent upon instructors to create contexts that are closely related to the topic, to use multi-modal discourse input, and to present the target grammar in multiple contexts in order to allow students to integrate into the contexts, to initially enable them to perceive the form, meaning and use of the target grammar, and to promote the construction of the students' new cognitive structure. It is crucial to emphasize that instructors must identify the alignment between students' existing and emerging knowledge. Furthermore, instructors should select contexts that students are already familiar with, such as the content of the discourse they have learned in this unit and related topics.

3.3 Multiform Inquiry into Grammar Rules

The new curriculum reform has led to an increasing focus on the cultivation of students' discovery learning ability and creative thinking [12]. During the teaching process, students are not expected to explore the subject matter independently; rather, they are required to construct the meaning of grammatical knowledge under the guidance of the instructor. It is incumbent upon the instructor to present the target grammar in specific contexts and to guide students in exploring the grammatical rules embedded within it. This process should enable students to discover and summarize the distinctive features of the language structure in question. Students constitute the primary focus of the learning environment and are the active constructors of information. It is therefore incumbent upon instructors to fully mobilize their students' subjectivity and initiative. Instructors can direct students' attention to the understanding of the target grammar through a variety of activities, including awareness-enhancing activities, text-enhancing activities, deductive activities, text-construction activities, and others. This allows

students to engage in independent and collaborative learning, exploring the grammar rules in a meaningful way. It is therefore incumbent upon the instructors to provide guidance at the appropriate juncture in order to improve the efficiency of the enquiry process.

3.4 Multilevel Consolidation of Target Grammar

Larsen-Freeman posited that the purpose of grammar practice activities is to facilitate the acquisition of target grammar through the systematic focus on grammatical structures or forms [6]. Consequently, in the teaching session of practice and internalization, instructors should implement targeted, contextualized exercises, present a range of grammatical variants, establish a connection between form and meaning, and facilitate students' comprehension and consolidation of the target grammar through meaningful, progressive activities. Teaching activities should be designed in a manner that progresses from the superficial to the profound, encompassing multiple levels and approaches, with the purpose of fostering students' internalization of the target grammar, grammatical awareness, reading comprehension, and creative thinking.

3.5 Multicontext Integrated Use of Language

“The flexible, multi-contextual use of language is essential to integrated learning and thinking” [13]. In the teaching part of use and practice, instructors should endeavor to create a variety of contexts, expand the unit theme in depth, and facilitate the transfer of grammatical knowledge to real-world contexts. As Hou Shuchen emphasizes, in the use stage, instructors should create situations that align with the communicative function of the target grammar. This entails combining grammar teaching with listening, speaking, reading and writing activities, and integrating the learning of grammar knowledge with comprehensive skills training. This approach enables learners to experience and internalize the grammar in “use” [14]. Consequently, in the integrated use of grammar, instructors can implement diverse text construction activities (including speaking and writing text construction activities), guiding students to demonstrate their grammatical abilities in various contexts and accomplish specific tasks.

4 Conclusions

This paper explores the philosophy of teaching English grammar in senior high school under the perspective of the New Curriculum Standards. It emphasizes that in English grammar instruction, the application of the three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar should be emphasized. This involves focusing on the practical use of grammar and the learning and teaching of grammar in specific contexts, which is designed to improve students' grammatical awareness and linguistic communicative competence. The philosophy of grammar teaching based on the three-dimensional dynamic view of grammar emphasizes the practical use of language in specific contexts, which is more consistent with the principles of language acquisition. It would be beneficial to further

explore and improve the teaching philosophy in order to reinvigorate English grammar instruction.

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