Towards a Discourse Grammar in Language Teaching

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Abstract: *Language is often simply defined as a means of communication. However, communication is a highly complex and intricate process that involves an adequate mastery of a number of linguistic and non-linguistic components. Knowing a language that can effectively be used for successful communication includes, among other things, attaining a functional knowledge of the various language systems including the syntactic system, or the grammar of the language in the narrow sense of the term. The scope of traditional grammar has been confined to sentence structure. That is probably why this approach to grammar has been referred to as sentence-based grammar. However, teaching this form of grammar contributes to the development of learners' grammatical competence rather than to their communicative ability. This paper argues for integrating discourse grammar in language teaching, and provides evidence to support the role that discourse grammar plays in developing foreign language learners' communicative competence. Specifically, this paper attempts to answer the following questions: (1) What does it mean to know a language? (2) What are the differences between sentence-based grammar and discourse grammar? (3) Why do foreign language teachers, curriculum designers and textbook writers accord more prominence to sentence-based grammar than to discourse grammar in teaching foreign languages? (4) What extra linguistic aspects does discourse grammar offer to language teaching that sentence-based grammar does not? In other words, what are the justifications for incorporating discourse grammar in foreign language teaching?*

1. Introduction

Language is often defined as a means of communication. This means that we learn or teach language in order to understand what others say and to make ourselves understood in relevant contexts, using the two major modes of communication which are speech and writing. The ability to use language for such a purpose consists of two principal abilities: the linguistic ability and the communicative ability or competence. The linguistic ability means attaining an adequate level of mastery of the microlinguistic systems of language including the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic components. Although developing a good command of these systems is a necessity and a prerequisite for language learning, it is not sufficient for effective communication. In fact, if we assume that the major goal of learning a language is to use it as a means of communication, the learner still needs a lot to learn. In the process of communicating with others, foreign language learners not only need to be able to say or write something that is grammatically and phonologically well-formed

(linguistic ability), but they also need to accord appropriate attention to interpersonal relationships with their interlocutors (discourse ability), and here emerges the role of context in the process of communication. In order to engage in successful communicative acts and avoid communication failures or breakdowns, interlocutors should always be aware of who says what to whom, when, where, how and why. These questions sum up the contextual factors relevant to the process of successful communication. In addition, these questions refer to verbal (linguistic) and non-verbal (non-linguistic) features in the process of communication. This clearly reveals that communication and language acquisition are highly complex processes that require the learner to develop not only his linguistic competence, but also other essential competences. A cursory glance at foreign language teaching materials, textbooks and teaching practices will reveal that they are not sufficient for turning out communicatively competent foreign language learners. This can be partly attributed to focusing on teaching grammar in the traditional sense, pronunciation and vocabulary.

This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 attempts to delineate what it means to learn a language and differentiates between the types of competences that foreign language learners need. The distinctions between sentence grammar and discourse grammar will be explicated in section 3. Section 4 provides a rationale for incorporating discourse grammar in language pedagogy. The manifestations of discourse grammar and how they can be integrated in language teaching will be presented in section 5. Finally, section 6 will be devoted to the conclusion and a few relevant recommendations.

2. What does it mean to learn a language?

One of the most complex tasks that a human being can learn is language be it the mother tongue or the second language because the process of language learning involves acquiring a number of interrelated linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. In this regard, Ellis (1986:5) holds that:

> Second language acquisition refers to all aspects of language that the language learner needs to master. However, the focus has been on how L2 learners acquire grammatical sub-systems, such as negatives or interrogatives, or grammatical morphemes such as the plural {s} or the definite and indefinite articles. Research has tended to ignore other levels of language.

In this statement, Ellis refers to the inadequate teaching practices in foreign language learning that are common among many language teaching practitioners in different parts of the world. This inadequacy can be partially attributed to the fact that such teachers primarily focus on teaching the microlinguistic aspects of language that are manifest in teaching the various details of the grammatical system as well as pronunciation and vocabulary lists. They also focus on developing grammatical correctness of sentences rather than on fluency and communicative functionality. However, for learners to be communicatively functional in the foreign language, their competence should exceed this level of learning and go beyond the scope of the linguistic

competence. Knowing a language involves a number of competences that have to be developed hand in hand. These competences have been investigated by many language acquisition researchers including Hymes, 1966; 1972; Savignon, 1997; Ellis, 1986; Leung, 2005; Karimnia and Marziyeh 2007; Armostis, 2013. The following are the most common types of competences that have received common consensus among language acquisition researchers.

2.1. Linguistic competence

This type of competence refers to the learner's knowledge of the language system including its rules that govern the formation of phrases, clauses and sentences. Moreover, it refers to knowledge of word order patterns (grammar in the narrow sense), rules of word formation through inflection and derivation (morphology), rules of sound patterns and permissible and impermissible sound combinations (phonetics and phonology), ways of signaling meaning and sense relations between lexical items of the language (semantics). Linguistic competence may also include the orthographic conventions of the target language. These are the microlinguistic abilities that foreign language teaching practices as well as foreign language textbooks usually focus on without according parallel attention to other competences. That is why foreign language learners usually attain a higher level of competence in these specific abilities than their overall communicative competence. In practical terms, this means that foreign language learners may be able to produce grammatically correct sentences, know the meaning of single words, and pronounce words and phrases without being equally competent in the overall process of communication that involves more than the linguistic competence. This sentence-based grammar, although essential to language learning, does not usually lead to the acquisition of communicative competence. The focus on sentence grammar, rather than on discourse grammar, was manifest in several language teaching methodologies and approaches, including the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method whose major concern was to enable foreign language learners to produce grammatically correct sentences with native like pronunciation. Several language teaching and acquisition researchers criticize sentence- based grammar that primarily leads to the development of linguistic competence. For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1997) hold that "L2 learners often develop grammatical competence in the absence of concomitant pragmatic competence."

2.2. Sociolinguistic competence

This type of competence refers to the learner's ability to use the language properly in sociocultural settings. It includes the ability of the foreign language learner to attain an adequate level of mastery of the rules that enables the learner to express himself and understand others in culturally and socially acceptable contexts. For communication to be successful, the learner needs to be aware of the rules of language use, contextual factors pertaining to the topic, the interlocutors, their age, gender, status and level of education. Furthermore,

foreign language learners need to learn the principles of politeness. That is to say, learners should know how to express themselves politely by learning the norms of polite expression and avoiding impolite ones. Furthermore, they need to learn the norms of political correctness in the process of interacting with others by avoiding the forms of expression that may socially or culturally be understood as implying offence or exclusion of others.

This type of competence is often referred to as the pragmatic competence that encompasses the ability of the foreign language learner to use the language in culturally appropriate settings. Hymes (1972:277) states that "...a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others."
Pragmatic competence involves acquiring a number of skills, chief among which are the following:

2.2.1. Using language to express different functions
Such functions include narrating, thanking, greeting, offering, apologizing, promising, inviting, requesting, asking, accepting, rejecting, suggesting, offering assistance, advising, criticizing, expressing likes and dislikes, and expressing wishes, etc. Language offers its users a variety of structures from which they can choose in order to express their intentions properly. Misselection of form is likely to lead to misunderstanding or to a breakdown in communication. What aggravates this problem is the lack of correspondence between form and function. A declarative sentence, for example, is primarily used for informing or giving a statement. However, it can also be used to convey a warning or a request to do something. For example, the utterance "There is a roasted chicken on the table" may convey the function of informing when uttered by a mother in response to her son who asked her about his lunch. It can also be interpreted as a warning from a mother to her daughter when she sees their cat entering the kitchen.

2.2.2. Changing the language according to different factors
Such factors relate to the interactants, time, place and topic of the conversation. A learner needs to use an appropriate level of language complexity in terms of structure and vocabulary when he talks to children, adults, females, colleagues, high ranking officials, or elderly people. Moreover, the speaker's assumptions about the receivers' background knowledge are decisive factors in adjusting the speaker's message and packaging information according to the receiver's needs.

2.2.3. Observing conversational principles and politeness norms while conversing with others

In addition to rules of usage, foreign language learners need to acquire a different set of rules pertaining to language use, including the maxims of the Cooperative Principle (quantity, quality, relevance and manner) as Grice (1975) simply put them, and the maxims of the politeness principle as stated by Lakoff (1973) as follows: (1) Don't impose, (2) Give options and (3) Make your receiver feel good. Cook (2004:31-33) states that flouting such principles may lead to obfuscation or a breakdown in communication.

Observing conversational norms also includes knowledge of when and how to start and end a conversation properly in different contexts. It also involves adequate knowledge of how to maintain the continuity of the topic, how to utilize body language, how to rephrase a misunderstood utterance, and how far from the other interlocutor should the speaker set himself apart in the process of communication (conventions of proxemics).

These are some of the various aspects of the pragmatic competence that constitute essential components of communication. What makes these aspects essential to be taught to foreign language learners is the fact that they are culture specific. Had they been similar cross-linguistically, there would not have been a need for teaching and incorporating them in the foreign language curricula. Consequently, textbook writers and course designers need to decide when and how many of these non-linguistic aspects should be taught to foreign language learners. Furthermore, although such components are essential to language learning, they are subsumed under discourse grammar not sentence-based grammar. Therefore, focusing on sentence grammar without a concomitant focus on discourse grammar does not lead to the development of communicative competence among foreign language learners. In his study titled "Learning Pragmatics from ESL & EFL Textbooks: How Likely?," Vellenga (2004) holds that although foreign language textbooks constitute the core of the curriculum and syllabus in most classrooms, they rarely provide enough information and teaching materials for learners to successfully acquire pragmatic competence. He concluded that " textbook developers could include authentic examples of speech acts and sufficient metapragmatic explanations to facilitate acquisition of pragmatic competence."

2.3. Discourse competence

This competence refers to the ability of the learner to produce and comprehend connected discourse be it speech or writing. For a communicative act to be successful, the linguistic output should accomplish two major conditions. It should be cohesive and coherent. De beaugrande and Dressler (1981) state seven standards of textuality, including cohesion, coherence, informativity, and acceptability, etc. Part of the communicative ability that foreign language learners must develop is the ability to produce cohesive speech or writing where words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs hold together through using grammatical and lexical devices. However, coherence refers to the quality of

speech or writing where the portion of language produced maintains sense continuity and theme unity.

Discourse competence also involves the ability of the learner to have background knowledge of the world that is usually referred to as knowledge structures or schemata. These components of discourse competence, again, are not in the domain of sentence grammar. This is another argument for incorporating discourse grammar in the curricula of foreign language teaching.

2.4. Strategic competence

This is the fourth component required for successful communication. It refers to both verbal and non-verbal strategies that language users employ in order to maintain communication through repairing mistakes and potential breakdowns prior to their occurrence or immediately following it. In other words, it is the ability of the learner to maintain communication and keep it going in case of breakdowns or misunderstanding through adopting a number of verbal and non-verbal strategies. If a speaker, for instance, does not know a word, he may use a synonym or a paraphrase for that word. He may also request for clarification or repetition in case of misunderstanding, or when the message is not clear due to noise effects. In his article titled "Developing Strategic Competence: Towards Autonomy in Oral Interaction," Mariani (1994) defines strategic competence as "the ability to solve communication problems despite an inadequate command of the linguistic and sociocultural code." Furthermore, he classified strategic strategies into two levels: the word or sentence level and the discourse level. Word level strategies include generalization, paraphrasing, foreignizing, restructuring (self-repair), and borrowing (code switching). However, discourse level strategies include the following:

- Opening and closing a conversation
- Keeping a conversation going
- Expressing feelings and attitudes
- Managing interaction (handling a topic or discussion)
- Negotiating meanings and intentions

This clearly shows that restricting teaching a foreign language to only developing linguistic competence falls short of expectations. This is due to the fact that most of the above skills are beyond the scope of sentence grammar which is the focus of most of the teaching practices in several countries. Canale and Swain (1980) hold that strategic competence; grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence can be used as criteria to evaluate the proficiency of foreign language learners. The need to develop pragmatic competence and to incorporate teaching it in textbooks was also stressed by Krisnawati (2011), who suggested raising the pragmatic awareness of foreign language learners through the inclusion of pragmatic instruction in the classroom. Having delineated what it means to know a language and the types of competence that foreign language learners need to develop as a necessary and sufficient condition for successful

communication, it might be expedient at this point to cast a glance at the differences between sentence-based grammar and discourse grammar.

3. What are the differences between sentence grammar and discourse grammar?

Sentence-based grammar refers to the study of sentence structure in terms of functions and categories. A sentence may be analyzed into grammatical categories such as noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, prepositional phrase and adverbial phrase. These grammatical categories may be assigned relevant syntactic functions such as subject, direct object, indirect object, premodifier, postmodifier and adverbial. Most traditional teaching methodologies adopt this model of grammar that focuses on enabling students to produce grammatically correct sentences. Therefore, the focus of such methodologies is on grammatical correctness or accuracy rather than on fluency. Sentence-based grammar examines sentences in isolation and out of context. More often than not, teachers and textbook writers use invented or idealized sentences as illustrative examples to clarify certain grammatical concepts.

Discourse grammar, on the other hand, focuses on sentences and utterances as parts of larger stretches of language in both writing and speaking. Discourse grammar considers the context in which sentences and utterances are used. It attempts to analyze how we communicate and understand each other, taking into consideration the various contextual factors that may contribute to successful communication. These factors relate to the topic of conversation, the mode, the participants, and the setting. Cook (2004:25-6) refers to these factors as the elements of communication that include: the addresser, the addressee, the channel, the message form, the topic, the code and the setting. Discourse grammar goes beyond the scope of the sentence to that of discourse in context. It attempts to explain how we understand others and make ourselves understood. Speaker's intentions, felicity conditions of speech acts, illocutionary forces of speech acts, politeness, information packaging, formal links (cohesive devices), coherence and macro- as well as micro-language functions are among the major topics that discourse grammar investigates. Hughes and McCarthy (1998) summed up the strengths and weaknesses of both discourse grammar and sentence grammar. They stated that discourse-based grammar acknowledges language choice, promotes language awareness of interpersonal features, and can provide insights into certain areas of grammar previously lacking satisfactory explanation such as the use of 'it, this and that,' and the use of the past perfect, whereas sentence based- grammar depicts sentences as manageable units, explicable via minimal-pairs-style and provides a secure basis for analytical learners. Cook (2004:12) clarified these differences as follows:

In conclusion, it should be stressed that each of these models of grammar has its own strengths and weaknesses, and it is not proposed here that discourse grammar should eclipse sentence-based grammar. On the contrary, teaching both models should go hand in hand and both need to be taught concomitantly.

Sentence grammar	Discourse grammar
Isolated sentences	Any stretch of language felt to be unified
Grammatically well-formed	Achieving meaning
Without context	In context
Invented or idealized	Observed

4. Why should discourse grammar be incorporated in teaching foreign languages?

It might be expedient, at the outset, to explain why teachers and textbook writers prefer to teach sentence grammar and accord more importance to it rather than to discourse grammar, or at least, why do not they incorporate discourse grammar in the foreign language curricula? Despite the significance of discourse grammar, it is usually neglected or overlooked by teachers and textbook writers. This might be due to the inadequate pedagogical and methodological education and training of the EFL teachers who still believe that language can be better taught as separate independent units rather than as connected and integrated skills. That is probably why they teach grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking as discrete skills. This fragmentation of the language skills does not significantly contribute to the development of the overall communicative competence of the foreign language learners. The preference accorded to sentence grammar can be ascribed to a number of factors. It is very much easier for teachers to teach discrete sentences and analyze their structures in terms of conventional grammatical categories and functions than to analyze the structure of a paragraph, a conversation, or even a larger portion of spoken or written language. Moreover, textbook writers find it more convenient to design learning activities and exercises at the sentence level rather than at the text or conversation levels which are more complex to analyze and comprehend. Another reason for adopting sentence-based grammar in teaching comes from the examination and assessment policies and procedures adopted by educational systems that focus on testing accuracy of sentences in terms of grammar and vocabulary, in addition to testing pronunciation, because this is easier and more manageable than testing discourse abilities.

Linguistic theories such as traditional grammar and generative transformational grammar had the sentence as their focus of analysis. Such language theories often used to invent artificial sentences that were isolated from context in order to support a grammatical rule or argument. It is through sentences that theoreticians can establish rules and constraints regarding what is acceptable or unacceptable. Cook (2004:5) states that "the treatment of language in terms of sentences has been quite successful in revealing how language works…whereas beyond the sentence, such rules seem either to disintegrate or

turn into rules for a different kind—social rules or psychological rules, which are not within the area of linguistic study at all." The absence of a comprehensive theory of discourse consolidated the focus on sentences rather than on larger and natural portions of language. The ability to communicate effectively and efficiently involves more than being able to produce grammatically correct sentences and pronounce words and phrases. A learner who would only be able to do so without taking other factors into consideration would be, as Hymes (1972:227) argues "likely to be institutionalized" for saying all kinds of inappropriate, irrelevant and uninteresting things. This leads us to think of why discourse grammar should be concomitantly taught with sentence-based grammar.

Hymes' statement implies that teaching language as an abstract system for literacy purposes may not lead to the development of communicative competence in foreign language learners. It also implies that language needs to be taught as a means of communication that goes beyond the knowledge of language as an abstract code of grammar, phonology and pronunciation. Language as discourse comprises various aspects that are essential to communication, but do not exist in sentence-based grammar.

Language is not just a set of grammatical sentences used out of context. On the contrary, language is best manifest as discourse that goes beyond the level of sentences to include paragraphs, essays, poems, dialogues, plays, short and long conversations. Many of the factors necessary for conveying information for successful communication lie outside the limits of the linguistic code. The communication process may also be affected by factors relating to the age, gender, role and status of the participants, as well as their level of education. The background knowledge that each participant has about the other interlocutor as well as the illocutionary forces of speech acts, conventions and principles of conversation, politeness principles, schemata and felicity conditions are all necessary conditions for successful communications. In face to face interactions, we utilize paralinguistic features in order to understand messages. These features include facial gestures, eye contact, tone of speech, quality of voice that can indicate self-confidence or the lack of it, and body language in general.

Limiting the scope of language investigation to the study of sentences can be, to a certain extent, justified. However, this narrow scope of analysis will never be sufficient to explain the complex process of communication, and it will not be able to account for what makes stretches of language coherent and meaningful. Cook (2004:13) argues that "If we want to find the answer to the problem of what gives a stretch of language unity and meaning, we must look beyond the formal rules operating within sentences, and consider the people who use the language, and the world in which it happens as well." It is obvious that Cook calls for expanding the scope of sentence grammar and moving towards incorporating discourse grammar in language teaching in order to be able to account for how we understand others and make ourselves understood. The

following are just examples of the areas that sentence-based grammar cannot account for.

A. Necessity of knowledge of the world to account for the grammaticality of sentences: Sometimes, certain sentences may appear ungrammatical according to the strict rules of sentence-based grammar. Consider the following example:

1. The passenger arrived at the airport half an hour late and found that **the** plane had taken off.
2. The nurse was late and decided to call a cab. However, it was difficult for **the** driver to find her house quickly.
3. I had a severe headache last night and decided to go to a nearby medical center. Unfortunately, **the** doctor was not there.
4. A student had a toothache, and **the** dentist gave him a painkiller.

The highlighted definite article 'the' in example 1 is used with the word 'plane' although it is used for the same time in the sentence. This use of the definite article is not warranted by sentence-based grammar that states that a definite article can be used with nouns that have unique reference, or when a noun phrase becomes definite because it has been mentioned earlier   in a sentence, text or   conversation. However, no one can claim the unacceptability of such a sentence because our background knowledge (schemata) about this situation tells us that a cab has a driver and it cannot reach anybody's house without a driver. Therefore, it is our knowledge of the world that accounts for the acceptability of this sentence not the rules of sentence-based grammar. What is said about Example 1 also applies to the other examples. These examples clearly show the inadequacy of sentence-based grammar to account for the apparent ungrammaticality of the above-mentioned examples, and the need for discourse grammar.

B. Understanding the intention of the message sender to interpret seemingly incohesive utterances:

It is necessary for the participants in a conversation or a dialogue to cooperate with each other in order to maintain communication between them. This kind of cooperation is clear in contexts such as when a teacher walks into a classroom and says, "It is hot" and a student immediately says "Ok. Sir. I'll open the windows." Had the student not been cooperative, he would not have done anything. However, he did understand the function or the intention of the speaker's utterance as a request to do something.

Cook (2004:24) gave an example of an elderly neighbor who came to his door one day morning and said, "Sorry, love. I saw you were home. There is a cat stuck under the gate at number 67." He said that he had no problem understanding the utterances of the neighbor although they are not linked with each other with any explicit cohesive device. He did not take them literally, but he understood the intention of the speaker and that she was requesting him to help free the cat. This interpretation would not have been possible had the receiver of the message not gone beyond the literal meaning of the single utterances, and had he not relied on his knowledge of the social world around him, a matter that cannot be explained by sentence-based grammar.

C. Illocutionary forces of utterances

If one of the two participants misunderstands the function or the illocutionary force of an utterance, misunderstanding will be the result. For example, if someone asked you "Can you please show me where the bookshop is?" and you said, "No. I can't." In so doing, you have flouted the maxims of the cooperative principle in the sense that you violated the maxim of relevance because the one who asked this question did not intend to find out whether or not you have the ability to direct him to the bookshop. What he really needed was to request you to give him directions to go to the bookshop.

D. Sentence-grammar can only account for the well-formedness of sentences but not texts. Only discourse or text grammar can do so. Consider the following group of sentences:

> Discourse analysis is the study of language beyond the sentence level. Generative Transformational grammar was initially developed by Chomsky. Dell Hypes was the first to talk about communicative competence. I am presenting this paper in a conference in Coimbatore. Many conferences are held annually to discuss social, political and economic issues.

According to the rules of sentence grammar, the sentences of this paragraph are correct and acceptable. However, it is only through the rules of discourse grammar that we can say that these sentences are arbitrarily sequenced, and therefore, lack an essential standard of textuality, that is coherence.

E. Turn-taking conventions are also significant for language learners who need to know when and at which point of a running conversation they should enter, and when and how they can end their contribution to conversations or dialogues. Turn-taking mechanisms are necessary to teach in the foreign language curriculum because they are culture specific. Cook (2004: 53) state that it is of considerable import for language learners to know how to take turns, pass the floor and interpret body gestures properly.

F. Information quantity and ordering

Foreign language learners need to be made aware of the amount of information to be conveyed in communicating with others at the level of both speaking and writing. They need to be taught how to avoid repeating old information in order to avoid boredom and wordiness. Furthermore, learners are also required to be aware of the manner of ordering this information, taking into account the receiver's status, age, gender and level of education. They need to learn that addressing men is different from addressing women, and talking to adults differs from talking to children. Flouting these discourse conventions will result in undesirable consequences on the part of the sender who will sound boring, and on the part of the message receiver who may lose interest in listening to such a speaker or reading to such a writer. Consider the following examples where a student was asked by his teacher about why he was late to school. The student wanted to be honest and tell the truth. He said:

> I got up at six o'clock in the morning. I was in my bed which is in my bedroom in our house. I was wearing my blue pajamas that my father

bought me last week. I went to the washroom and washed my face and hands. I took the blue towel that was hung on the door of the bathroom and dried my hands and face. Then, I got out of the bathroom and went to the kitchen. The kitchen was cold and dark. So, I switched on the light and had my breakfast in the kitchen. I put on my clothes that were kept in my white clothes wardrobe. I left my house and went out to wait for the school bus, but the bus was late.

This lengthy description is full of unnecessary information and it violates the maxims of quantity since more information than needed was given. It could have been sufficient for the student to say, "The school bus was late." From a sentence-based grammar perspective, what the student said is grammatical and accurate. However, discourse grammar tells us that many discourse conventions have been violated and, therefore, the student's message is full of redundant and given information that could have been avoided had the student been aware of the rules and conventions of discourse and information packaging.

G. Logical relations between sentences: A paragraph consists of a number of sentences that develop one main idea that is usually expressed in the topic sentence. This main idea is referred to as the controlling idea that is further developed through supporting details. Very often, students produce a general statement at the beginning of a paragraph but they may not know which part of this statement is to be developed through supporting details.

Example
*Surgery, a method for treating diseases, is used for many important purposes in medicine and involves many stages. It is performed by cutting tissues with a scalpel, doing what is important, and finally stitching the incisions. Doctors perform surgery for many reasons.

These are the first sentences of the first paragraph a student wrote on a topic titled 'Purposes of Surgery'. Two major problems can be diagnosed in this paragraph.

-      The topic sentence is broad. It contains three general controlling ideas: use of surgery for treatment, the purposes of surgery and the various stages of surgery.
-    The second sentence of the paragraph is not logically related to either of the two ideas mentioned in the topic sentence. It is a digression because it is about the process or steps of conducting an operation in general, not about the purposes or stages of surgery.

These sentences clearly indicate that the student is not aware of the logical relations holding between sentences, nor is he aware of the paragraph development patterns that require logical sequencing of ideas. The above-stated arguments clearly prove that sentence-based grammar, although essential, cannot account for many aspects of the complex communication process. Therefore, we would be defeating our purpose if we restrict our teaching practices to sentence grammar and exclude teaching discourse grammar in foreign language classrooms. This is because, sentence grammar primarily

contributes to the development of linguistic competence with total or partial exclusion of the other types of competences such as the discourse, sociocultural and strategic competences that really reflect the true knowledge of language. Consequently, curriculum designers, textbook writers and teachers should be aware of the inadequacies of relying solely on sentence grammar in preparing teaching materials. In fact, they have to concomitantly incorporate elements of discourse grammar in the various stages of teaching foreign languages. The following section of this paper provides examples to show how we can incorporate aspects of discourse grammar into teaching.

5. How can we incorporate the various manifestations of discourse grammar in language pedagogy?

It has become clear that sentence-based grammar cannot adequately deal with many aspects of communication that are indispensable for explaining the unity and meaningfulness of messages. Therefore, curriculum designers and textbook writers need to move gradually towards an explicit and concomitant incorporation of discourse grammar in teaching foreign languages. In this section, illustrative examples of how to teach certain components of the overall competence of foreign language learners will be presented.

5.1. Development of logical relations or coherence between sentences in a paragraph

At the outset, a teacher can show his students a model paragraph that is well organized and logically developed. This paragraph needs to be analyzed with the participation of the students in terms of topic sentence, controlling idea and supporting details. The teacher should make sure that the students know the role each sentence plays in developing the paragraph. Having explained how a paragraph is structured and developed, the teacher can move to the next practical step which is writing a coherent paragraph.

A teacher can select a topic that is of interest to his students and write the title on the whiteboard. He can solicit ideas relevant to the topic from the students. Together with the students, the teacher may formulate a topic sentence that clearly shows the topic and the controlling idea. The paragraph has to be built sentence by sentence. Once a sentence is added, the teacher should make sure that students can see why this sentence is relevant or not to the topic. He can then ask them to add another sentence that develops the controlling idea. Students can provide relevant sentences in light of the paragraph text type (narrative, explanatory, argumentative, definition, process, comparison, etc.). Each time a sentence is added, students need to make sure that it contributes to the development of the controlling idea in the topic sentence. This practice can always be reinforced through teaching reading where a teacher can select a paragraph from the reading text under discussion, and ask students to analyze it in order to see the logical progression of the ideas.

5.2. Story completion

Another technique that can be used to teach students to write coherent paragraphs and essays is referred to as story completion where the teacher gives the students a sentence or a clause that contains a topic to be developed. Each student will be asked to add a sentence that contributes to the development of the controlling idea expressed in the main sentence. At the end, the teacher may display the completed paragraph or story and ask the students to clarify how each sentence relates to the preceding ones. If a sentence digresses from the main theme, it has to be deleted. This type of exercise promotes the students' sense of coherence and logical development of ideas. The following are examples of starter sentences:

Story completion

- While   I   was   doing   my   homework   last   night, …………………….2…………………..

3………………4………………..5…………………6……….………… …………...7.   ……………..8…………………9………………………10. ………………………

- Universities should offer courses to help students find jobs after graduation.

2…………………………3………………4………………5………

5.3. Identifying irrelevant sentences

Students are given a paragraph that includes an irrelevant sentence that has to be crossed out. This activity raises the students' awareness of the relationships between sentences at the level of comprehension.

5.4. Reordering jumbled sentences

Another activity to promote students' awareness of coherence is giving them a paragraph with jumbled sentences to be put in order according to their understanding of the logical relations between these sentences. This activity can be done individually, in pairs or in small groups. It helps students to think hard in order to identify how such sentences are logically constructed. The teacher can help the students by identifying the first sentence for them. He can also mark one or more of the middle sentences in accordance with the students' level. The following is an illustrative example:

Read the following sentences and reorder them to produce an organized paragraph. The first sentence is given to you.

1. **California is the most wonderful place to visit because of its variety of weather and its beautiful nature**.
2. They can find places that are difficult for humans to live in the summer because they are so hot.
3. Or they can find places closed in the winter because of the snow.
4. On the other hand, visitors can find the nature they like.
5. Visitors can find a huge forest, a dead desert, and a beautiful coast.

6. So California is the most wonderful place to visit because of its weather and nature.
7. Visitors to California can find any weather they like.
8. They can find cool temperatures in the summer; also they can find warm weather in the winter.
9. They can find high mountains and low valleys.

5.5 Using video clips

Video clips are used to model native speaker's performance of certain language functions or speech acts. In this activity, students watch a short video clip of two native speakers performing the speech act of apology, request, offering, asking for permission, turning down an offer politely, expressing likes or dislikes, inviting, etc. Students will listen to what the native speakers say while watching them. They will also learn from their use of body language. In such an activity, learners will have a chance to be exposed to authentic material. They will also notice the proper expressions that native speakers use in certain contexts. The following is and illustrative dialogue script that clarifies to learners how to make an appointment:

Making an appointment

Henry: Are you free on the thirteenth in the afternoon?
Allan: No I'm afraid not. I'm meeting a friend then. How about the fourteenth in the morning?
Keith: I'm sorry. I'm attending a meeting at the Hilton then.
Cathy: What about the next day?
Keith: No. I'm busy then too. I'm meeting Scott at North Bridge Road. Are you free on Thursday afternoon?
Cathy: Yes, I think I am. Let's meet for lunch at Grand restaurant.
Keith: Good idea! Is two o'clock okay?
Cathy: That's fine. See you there!

Having analyzed this dialogue and highlighted the phrases and questions used in making an appointment, the teacher can ask students to act out the dialogue, using the same words or their own words.

It is worth mentioning that dialogues should be short so that students can memorize them and act them out. They should also reflect the students' needs and interests. Otherwise, students will be bored. The teacher may also ask the learners to work in pairs and to produce a similar dialogue.

5.6. Gap filling

This activity can be an expansion of the previous one in which students will be asked to fill in deleted questions or answers as can be seen in the following example:

Ordering a meal.
John: Where shall we sit? Look! There are some free seats in the corner.
Jill:

…………………………………………………………………...
Jean: Okay. What would you like to eat?

Jill: I'm really hungry. ……………   Why don't you have chicken too?
Jean: ……………………………. . I'll have a cheese sandwich instead.
Jill: And what about drinks? I think I'll have some mint tea.
Jean: …………………………………………………………….…
Waiter: Good evening.
Jill: ………………………….……………………………………….
Waiter: What would you like to drink?
Jean: ……………………….……………………………..
Waiter: Okay. ………………………………………………….

5.7. Speech acts and functions

Students need to learn the relationship between form and function. Moreover, they need to be made aware of the fact that the relationship between form and function is not always direct and it is not often one-to-one, but one-to-many. An interrogative sentence, for example, usually expresses the function of asking. However, the same form can be used to convey different illocutionary forces according to the context in which the utterance is used. Consider the following examples:

Can you jump over this wall? This is an interrogative sentence that conveys the function of asking.

Can you help me paint my house? This is also an interrogative sentence that expresses a request.

Can I leave early today? This is another interrogative sentence that represents the function of asking for permission.

These examples show that the same form can be used to express different functions. Moreover, one function can be expressed by more than one form. The following is an activity that can be utilized for teaching the relationship between form and function:

Identify the function of each underlined sentence or phrase in the following sentences.

1. Ann: Hello, Suzan. Happy Christmas to you and you family!
   Suzan: Come in. I am glad you have come.
   A. A wish   B. A request   C. A welcome   D. An apology

2. Keane: The race will start at 8 a.m., won't it?
   Clerk: That's right. After registration, you have to assemble at the starting line in the field.
   A. Giving information B. Greeting   C. Requesting   D. Description

3.   Ronnie: Our team played badly, especially I.
     Mat : It's all your fault. <u>You have let the team down</u>.
     A. Advice   B. Blame   C. Protest   D. Warn

These are just examples to show how we can incorporate various aspects of discourse grammar into teaching a foreign language. Teachers' experiences should not be neglected in this field. They can certainly add to, modify these activities or create their own exercises.

5.8. Discourse markers

Discourse markers or sentence connectors are words or phrases that are used to link together sentences, paragraphs and even larger portions of language. They are more commonly used in writing than in speaking. They are used to signal and create logical roles of sentences in conversations and texts. They contribute to creating cohesion and coherence, two major standards of textuality. In addition, they can indicate logical roles of sentences such as contrast (in contrast, however, nevertheless), comparison (similarly, like, unlike), concluding (to conclude, finally, to sum up, in conclusion), addition (furthermore, moreover, and), cause (because, since, as), and result (consequently, as a result, therefore), etc. The roles that these linking devices play in communication can only be appreciated in context. Therefore, foreign language learners need to be taught how to use them in real communication in both speaking and writing. They need to learn where and when to use such connectors in discourse because overusing, underusing or misusing discourse connectors will result in awkward texts. The following are illustrative activities for teaching discourse markers:

5.8.1 Raising learners' awareness of the significance of discourse markers

While teaching reading, and whenever a discourse marker is encountered in the text, the teacher should draw the learners' attention to this connector and explain its function in the text. Teachers may also select a paragraph or a longer text and ask their students to identify discourse markers and attempt to identify the function of each in signaling logical relations between sentences. These activities help students to recognize the existence and significance of connectors in discourse. However, it is not enough for students to identify connectors at the recognition level alone; they need to move to the stage of producing them in real discourse.

5.8.2   Another activity that teachers can utilize to help students produce connectors properly is to ask them to fill in blank spaces with appropriate connectors as in the following activity:

Fill in the blanks with the word or phrase that best completes each of the following sentences:

Moreover   firstly as long as   whereas   though
   A. _____, I would like to welcome you all to the conference today.
   B. _____the film was boring, we still had a nice evening out

    C. My brother works in a large company _____ I work on my own at home.

    D. You should go to university because it offers you better job opportunities._____ , it introduces you to many new people.

    E. You can attend the meeting _____ you don't say anything.

These are just examples of how educators can integrate discourse grammar in teaching foreign languages.

6. Conclusion

It has become evident that sentence-based grammar, although essential to language teaching, is not sufficient due to a number of inadequacies that cannot account for several aspects of the communicative competence required of foreign language learners. Nevertheless, sentence-based grammar should not be discarded or marginalized in the teaching learning process of foreign languages. This paper highlighted the aspects of communicative competence that sentence grammar cannot deal with, but discourse grammar can. Curricula designers and textbook writers should accord balanced importance to both approaches of grammar and promote teaching both of them concomitantly rather than excluding one at the expense of the other.

Teachers of foreign languages ought to realize that teaching learners to produce grammatically correct sentences should not be the only expected outcome from them. In addition, learners should be able to produce correct sentences in culturally appropriate settings. They should be taught how to use the language for communicative purposes in natural contexts. Moreover, these factors are beyond the realm of sentence grammar. Unless these elements are intentionally incorporated in the foreign language teaching curricula and textbooks, and unless they are put into practice in the foreign language classrooms, the students' communicative competence will remain lacking. Sentence grammar and discourse grammar must complement each other to enable foreign language learners to use language functionally rather than artificially.

Teachers still believe in teaching sentence-based grammar because of the different reasons mentioned earlier. Therefore, they should be trained on how to incorporate and integrate discourse and pragmatic components in their teaching. To accomplish this goal, teachers must receive in-service training as part of their professional development in order to raise their awareness of the significance of discourse grammar and to enable them to create relevant activities to teach the various aspects of discourse grammar. Sentence-based grammar and discourse-based grammar complement each other for the ultimate purpose of developing the learners' communicative competence. This conclusion is harmonious with what Hughes and McCarthy (1998: 284-285) stated:

> We would certainly not wish to suggest that traditional and discourse-based grammar approaches are mutually exclusive. In all probability, a wisely chosen combination will be the best course of action in most situations, and teachers may best tackle many complexities of English

grammar (e.g., prepositions, dative movement, adverb positions) first through simplified, sentence-based approach, moving later to the discoursal nuances of larger contexts.

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