

# PROPOSED IDEAS FOR TASK-BASED TEACHING OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR BASED ON COGNITIVE GRAMMAR

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**Abstract:** Task-oriented language education is based on the ideation of the many communication approaches available, which is why it is primarily focused on communication. However, many teachers, in the aim of developing communication skills, tend to avoid grammar teaching. This study goes much farther, arguing that grammar is as significant as lexis (although in a more abstract way), and that teaching grammar should thus, go along with teaching communicating. In our proposals, we first focus on the development and advantages of task-based language teaching with the role of grammar; then, offer an introduction to cognitive grammar and its applications and additionally outline their potential for the foreign language classroom. In conclusion, a mixture of the two approaches of task-based language teaching and applied cognitive grammar will be virtually planned to show how one may benefit from the other and to explain in detail how the grammatical role can be implemented in a task-based action through a communicative situation.

**Keywords:** Task-based language teaching, cognitive, grammar

## 1. Introduction

This study has sparked a renewed interest in grammar teaching among teachers, as well as a desire to provide steps for grammar

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teaching plans, especially for/in the current context of Vietnamese English teaching. Grammar is never an end in itself; it is always designed to make communication easier. And, if communicative competence is defined as a person's capacity to speak exactly what they want to say, the concept of "construal" is critical, as Lee (2001) explained, because there are always several ways to convey anything. According to Niemeier's (2017) research, grammar may be seen as a tool in learners' hands (and minds) that helps them articulate their thoughts precisely as they want them to be interpreted. Language users can actively choose from several forms to actively communicate to their interlocutors how they conceptualize various circumstances or events. In the words of Taylor (2013), construal - also known as an active choice - is the capacity of individuals to cognitively replicate (or construe) a scenario in a variety of ways, such as by using various word types, such as: "terrorist" vs. "freedom fighter" or "colloquial" vs. "formal" writing styles.

The task-based approach is strengthened and combined with insights into (cognitive) grammar, a method that considers language to be meaningful. We would like to discuss how grammar teaching might be included in a communicative language (English) lesson. Students are immersed in circumstances that they may experience outside of the classroom, and they are given communicative tasks to complete and solve, frequently in pairs or small groups. In order to achieve the goal, teachers must invest their own imagination, ways of thinking situations in which language is used as tools of communicative tasks, in order to prepare such classes, since they must create communicative scenarios that lead learners to use a certain grammatical structure.

## 2. Literature Review

Grammar rules have traditionally been a focal point in foreign language classrooms and for millennia, learning a language has meant learning its vocabulary and grammar. Most of us who have studied a

foreign language in school have had grammar-focused methods, which linguists refer to as a structural syllabus. The language class (and generally the related textbook) is structured by grammatical aspects in a structural syllabus. In order to present a new grammar point to learners, teachers have a habit of using examples via coursebooks that look like freezed context without real time speech. The new knowledge of grammar must have been not only deductively taught but also put in learners' minds inductively. Noam Chomsky, in the late 1950s, expressed his opposition to both structural linguistics and B. F. Skinner's behaviorist theories<sup>1</sup> of language development when he criticized structural linguistics for focusing on identifying specific components of language (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) based on language data; such an approach, according to Chomsky, could never adequately explain for a language's grammar because the rules of grammar in every language allow speakers and writers to combine sentences or embed sentences within other sentences, resulting in an infinite number of possible sentences – no sample of language, no matter how large, could ever allow linguists to adequately describe this infinite variety. The so-called PPP Technique (Presentation - Practice - Production) lets teachers analyse the form and use of the grammar features with a tip off that helps learners easily learn by heart. Understanding the worries of language teachers, Odlin (1994), Norris and Ortega (2000), Nassaji & Fotos (2004) have done some research and highlighted the importance of grammar in foreign language classes and how grammar can be successfully taught. Odlin (1994) observes that educational grammar is inherently “a hybrid discipline”, drawing from a variety of fields of study. Although criticism of the Grammar-Translation Method arose quite early on, little changed until World War II, when the need for individuals to really speak other languages became critical, new approaches, such as

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<sup>1</sup>B. F. Skinner was one of the most influential of American psychologists. A behaviorist, he developed the theory of operant conditioning -- the idea that behavior is determined by its consequences, be they reinforcements or punishments, which make it more or less likely that the behavior will occur again. Skinner believed that the only scientific approach to psychology was one that studied behaviors, not internal (subjective) mental processes.

what VanPatten and Williams (2013) stated to as the “Army way”, were created to guide learners toward the capacity to truly speak the language in question. However, the Audiolingual Approach, which is founded on behavioristic ideas via stimulus-response, was established in the United States, but swiftly spread to many German schools in the 1970s<sup>1</sup>. This method emphasized oral practice, repetition, and automation and pattern exercises, in which grammar was performed, for instance, when learners were given an active sentence to turn into a passive sentence, but the transition was not taught further. Instead, the strategy focused on the ‘habitualisation’ of a grammatical structure through repetition: anytime the learners heard a given stimulus, they were supposed to respond with a conditioned response. As a result, the students were nonetheless unprepared for ordinary conversation, although having considerably better pronunciation than those who had been taught using the Grammar-Translation Method. For all of these reasons, the audio lingual technique was quickly abandoned.

Task-based Language Teaching (TLT) “places learners in an unconventional and perhaps unusually proactive relationship to their clasaudio lingual,” claim Allwright and Hanks (2009, p.51). They have greater room to demonstrate their seriousness of purpose, some ability for decision-making, and space to be original, according to a significant quote that already touches on a number of essential elements of this approach. Nunan (2015) strongly agreed with the views on realization of methodology in TLT for it pays much attention to learners much rather than other purposes and it also helps learners concentrate on structured communication with specific topics in tasks. Under discussions on what is the essence of language learning in the point of sociocultural views of second language acquisition, learners must experience how language is used as a tool for communication inside the classroom if they are to acquire the competence necessary to use a second language effortlessly and effectively in the types of settings they encounter outside of it as Ellis (2003) argued, and he

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio-lingual\\_method#Fall\\_from\\_popularity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio-lingual_method#Fall_from_popularity)

defines the process of language acquisition as constituents of interaction rather than the result of communication. In other words, acquisition of a second language, thus, is not a wholly individual process, but rather one that is shared by the individual and others because language exists to facilitate communication and engagement. It should come as no surprise that learners acquire language through using it, whether with the teachers or other students, or later in real-world circumstances. Teachers have a responsibility to choose appropriate exercises and themes, taking into account not only the learners' age, motivation, and interests, but also the utility of the elicited language for real-world communication, i.e. outside school. For the above general views, this paper aims at doing some proposals based on the approach of cognitive grammar in English class through task-based teaching principles.

Last but not least, in Vietnam, the form of assessment of teaching effectiveness focuses only on writing, listening, reading comprehension, grammar exercises, especially grade-level exams without practical language in real life. Teachers tend to teach English only for exams instead of enriching themselves in other skills, especially listening and speaking, which contributes to the decrease in the quality of teachers teaching practical English. Moreover, the size of a class (over 35 students/class) and lack of assistive technology make it difficult to teach effective language practice skills. Consequently, all above reasons give a hand in decreasing the motivation to learn English of students, as well as teachers.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Research Questions***

We first, focus on the development and advantages of task-based language teaching with the role of grammar; then, offer an introduction to cognitive grammar and its applications and additionally outline their potential for the foreign language classroom. In conclusion, a mixture of the two approaches of task-based language

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<sup>1</sup><https://giaoduc.net.vn/giao-duc-24h/tai-sao-day-tieng-anh-o-viet-nam-khong-hieu-qua-post193491.gd>

teaching and applied cognitive grammar will be virtually planned to show how one may benefit from the other and to explain in detail how the grammatical role can be implemented in a task-based action through a communicative situation. To achieve that, we will have to answer these questions:

- *Is it important to focus on grammar in a language learning/teaching lesson?*
- *What is /are the advantages / dominance of cognitive grammar over others?*
- *How to adapt cognitive grammar theories for Task-oriented language teaching?*

### 3. Methodology

Cognitive grammar and task-based language instruction have not yet been frequently combined. Tyler (2012)<sup>1</sup> has made a few suggestions, but he hasn't gone into great detail about the subject; however, Jacobsen (2016)<sup>2</sup> has directed a trial on the task-based instructing of the English restrictive clause from a cognitive language structure point of view, the consequences of which show that the intellectually based approach to instructing was more fruitful than the undertaking put together methodology with respect to its own and that both of these approaches to showing worked better compared to conventional techniques.

This examination means to show that an association of errand based educating and mental language is without a doubt an exceptionally productive one, as the two methodologies can be coordinated to yield the methodology of task-based grammar teaching (TBGT). To highlight the importance of grammar education, we first

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<sup>1</sup> Tyler, Andrea (2012): *Cognitive linguistics and second language learning: Theoretical basics and experimental evidence*. London: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobsen, Natalia D. (2016): "The best of both worlds: Combining cognitive linguistics and pedagogic tasks to teach English conditionals". *Applied Linguistics*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw030>.

start with some broad observations on the significance of grammar teaching in different didactic approaches while also exploring the theoretical underpinnings of both didactics and linguistics. Then, we summarize the development of task-based language education, provide a concise introduction to cognitive grammar and its applications, and further discuss their potential for use in foreign language classrooms. Finally, as proposals, we combine the two techniques of task-based language education and applied cognitive grammar and demonstrate how one can benefit from the other in a virtual classroom.

## **4. Results & discussion**

### **4.1. Why Grammar?**

First, we have a quick look at changes of grammar pedagogy throughout time to comprehend the necessity for flexibility in grammar teaching/learning. Historically, studying a second language mostly consisted of grammatical analysis and translation of written forms, as several grammarians, Howatt (1984), Rutherford (1987), remarked. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, linguists comparing and describing global languages discovered that employing the eight elements of speech as an organizing framework was not applicable. As a result, according to Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991), languages are now studied using three subsystems (a method known as structural or descriptive linguistics): the sound system (phonology), bounded components of meaning obtained by sound combinations (morphology), and the scheme of combining units of meaning for information exchange (syntax). The audio-lingual and direct methods to second language learning evolved when this structural understanding of language was linked with the stimulus-response principles of behaviorist psychology and when development of spoken fluency in second languages was required. The curriculum was sequenced using contrastive analysis, a structural comparison between the learner's mother tongue and the second language to identify and

underline areas of possible difficulty. Drills and repetitions were used as pedagogical methods to ensure precise output of the foreign language.

However, in the 1960s, English linguists proposed a syllabus based on communicative functions and, as in Johnson & Marrow's view (1981), constructed a system of categories based on the learner's communication demands with the grammar information grouped around the forms needed for certain communicative or situational activities like "asking direction" or "at a hotel reception". Skehan (1998) labeled this approach the three Ps: presentation, practice, and production, with the first stage involving the presentation of a single grammar point, the second stage requiring learner practice within a controlled framework, and the final stage requiring learner production of the form more voluntarily. Chomsky (1957) rejected the structuralist view of language as a habit, instead seeing it as a generational process unique to the human brain, based on a grammar of surface or visible forms of speech and underlying structures.

As a result, the syntactic universality of all languages, such as agents (subjects) and objects, could be identified, and universal grammars were considered to underpin all languages from then. With the emergence of Chomsky's theory of universal grammar and syntax, explicit grammar teaching was re-emphasized.

Grammar classes and classroom curricula are built on the learner's prior knowledge, allowing them to construct new meanings and promoting deductive learning. Moreover, this cognitive view of language learning is that the grammar is too complex to learn naturally, and the cognitive view of language acquisition at the time included an infinite number of structures that the speaker created and understood. As a basic framework for all second language competence, McLaughlin & Zemblidge (1992) showed that second language teaching should include grammar lessons, in which methodology focused on teaching traditional formal grammar and had the additional goal of developing learners' analytical language skills.



Called “focus on form” a new approach to grammar instruction combines formal instruction and communicative language use is based on the distinction between explicit instruction on grammar forms (with an s) and meaning-focused use of form (no s) in such a way that the learner must notice, then process the target grammar structure in purely communicative input. And, both Pienemann (1984) and Long (1991) argued that traditional structural syllabuses that teach specific sequences of grammar forms do not produce communicative competence, only formal knowledge of grammar rules, unless learners have reached the stage of interlanguage development where they are psycholinguistically ready to acquire the instructed forms, according to this theory.

Next, let us discuss some today’s perspectives on grammar teaching in second language classrooms. As seen in VanPatten (1993), Ellis (1994), Skehan (1996)<sup>1</sup>, an emphasis on grammar can be handled at many phases of the teaching/learning process, including Input, Intake, Acquisition, Access, and Output. In Skehan’s (1998), he suggested the following principles:

- Language exposure at a suitable level of difficulty;
- Engagement in meaning-focused interaction in the language;
- Opportunities for learners to observe or attend to linguistic form while using the language; and,
- Opportunities to extend the language resources learners utilize throughout time (both meaning and grammar).

In addition, he suggested that there should be three possible times at which a focus on grammar can be offered in task work: prior to the task, during the task, and after the task. In addition to communicative language activities, the use of exceptional instructor intervention to

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<sup>1</sup> VanPatten (1993), Ellis (1994), Skehan (1996) and others argue five stages of the learning process will be distinguished here in order to arrive at a rationale for grammar-focused instruction in teaching and teaching materials: input, intake, acquisition, access, output.

offer remedial feedback on errors made during task completion is an appealing option to grammar-based instruction. A second language, which may or may not be adequate to reach a satisfactory degree of grammatical correctness while learning. As a result, considerable thought should be given to how to focus on grammatical forms even more during the task design and use process. “A continual cycle of analysis and integration,” according to Skehan (1996), “achieved by altering the learner’s attention focus... and the three goals of reconstruction, correctness, and fluency.”<sup>1</sup> (p. 29)

In contrast, most teachers think of grammar as explanations of a language’s structure, prescriptions for its usage, sometimes as sentence meaning or style, and the kind of books meant to teach all these things. However, highly few instructors have realized that underlying those four senses of grammar is a greater essential one: the unconscious command of syntax that allows us to recognize and speak the language. As Noguchi (1991) referred, for the duration of previous centuries, conventional school grammar seems to have had primary objectives: (1) disciplining and schooling the thoughts (and on occasion the soul); and (2) teaching grammatical paperwork and word usages that have been considered accurate or socially prestigious. Ostensibly the socially prestigious forms were taught to allow the lower classes to move extra effortlessly into the middle elegance (or the middle lessons into the upper elegance), but one suspects that in effect if no longer cause, the end result has more often been to provide the center and top training an excuse for considering themselves advanced to others.

In the last 30 years, there has been much discussion over the role of grammar teaching and learning in the second/foreign language class. However, at the dawn of communicative language teaching as

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<sup>1</sup> Skehan, P. (1996). “Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction”. In J. Willis & D. Willis (Eds.), *Challenge and change in language teaching* (pp. 17–30). Oxford: Heinemann.

Allwright (1979), Krashen (1982), Krashen & Terrell (1983) recommended, the role of grammar teaching has been questioned, and also, has been advocated with the fact that teaching grammar does not correlate with acquiring grammar. Besides, in some researches, Swain (1985), Doughty & Williams (1998) suggested that “natural” language learning does not lead to high levels of grammatical and sociolinguistic competence and they point out various arguments for incorporating a “focus on form”<sup>1</sup> into the language curriculum.

From the above arguments, we wonder if it is any surprise that grammar is a complex and difficult topic for language students and even their teachers. And we strongly agree with the argument that after more than 2,000 years of traditional grammar, and notwithstanding the insights of Communicative Language Teaching, it is time to turn the attention of the field of language teaching back to the structural area of language, but with new points of view. We have some catching up to do, so that grammatical pedagogy can be modelled more closely on what is known about language and communication more generally. It is hoped that the review and suggestions presented here might give some ideas for the design of new grammar books and courses for the millennium. Under the optimistic assumption that there is progress in human history, we can also hope that the knowledge contained in any such books and courses will not be with us for another two thousand years but will rather be recognized as only the most recent step along the path by which grammatical pedagogy will continue to evolve in relation to our descriptions and theories of language.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Long (1988) distinguishes between a “focus on forms” and a “focus on form.” The former refers to traditional approaches to grammar teaching based on a structure-of-the-day approach. The latter refers to drawing learners’ attention to linguistic forms (and the meanings they realize) in the context of activities in which the learners’ primary focus of attention is on meaning.

<sup>2</sup> Martha C. Pennington (1999) “Grammar and Communication: New Directions in Theory and Practice”. *University of Luton, UK* - This paper was presented in abbreviated form at a colloquium on the teaching of grammar held at the TESOL Conference, New York City, March 10, 1999.

#### ***4.2. Task-based language teaching***

Task-based language teaching (TLT) was first launched in the 1980s and 1990s as referred to in the research by Long (1985), Long & Crookes (1992; 1993) Nunan (1989), Robinson (1994; 1998), Skehan (1996). Since then, task-based language teaching has increasingly become popular, integrating into a method of language educating that uses “tasks” as its primary unit of design and implementation of language training with the main principles: Learners should be furnished with possibilities that make the language enter they receive greater understandable; Learners have to be engaged in contexts wherein they need to produce output which others can apprehend; and, Learners need to be uncovered to real-life language conditions inside the language class. This approach aims to provide learners with a natural setting in which to use the target language in the purpose of enhancing communication and building fluency by striving to use the new language under real operational situations. Psycholinguistics, by definition, should have a lot to offer task-based education for it focuses on learning, memory, process, and linguistic performance models. Consequently, the main conclusion we can make is that activities create a very supportive and adaptable environment for learning to occur. There are several options for tasks as well as what happens before, during, and after an activity is completed.

What is a task? The early points of view for task-based learning explained the definitions of a “task”, but they differed in a number of respects. The most comprehensive definition by Breen (1989) considers task “a planned strategy for the provision of chances for the refining of knowledge and skills associated with a new language and its usage during communication,” according to this definition, a task can be both a quick practice exercise and a “more sophisticated workplan that necessitates spontaneous communication”.

However, both Nunan (1989) and Long (1985) agree with some criteria of a task: A task is a purpose-driven action that students concentrate on meaning rather than form; A task does not define the

exact meaning-content to be handled because this will be susceptible to change throughout execution; A task should resemble a task that people execute in real life in some way: “the hundred and one things people perform in everyday life, at work, at leisure, and in between”; and, A task should have a “feeling of completion” and be able to “stand alone as a communicative act in and of itself”. And, Nunan (1989) distinguished between “real-world activities” and “pedagogical tasks”, also he, in (2015) confirmed that, despite the fact that ‘tasks’ are at the heart of task-based instruction, there is no universal agreement on what a ‘task’ is and a task is “the primary building component of the instructional design”. Rather than focusing on grammatical form, he also asserts that the learners’ goal is to transmit meaning.

Susanne (2017) stated the task phase is divided into three parts: the task itself, the preparation of learners’ reports on the task outcome<sup>1</sup>, and the reports themselves. Via most cases, a task is completed in learner-to-learner contact, either in pairs or in small groups. Besides, she stressed that the role of pair/ group work not only, increases the quantity of student speech since only one learner can talk at a time in teacher-class interaction, but many more learners can communicate at the same time in pair or group work (This impact is amplified in pair work since everyone must participate and cannot hide behind those who may dominate the debate floor in a group.) but also, is critical for true communication to emerge since the students have time to interact outside of the teacher’s influence.

To sum up, diffusion of innovation has become a topic of wider interest in language teaching (LT) and applied linguistics since Markee’s pioneering work, much of which focuses on task-based language teaching (TLT) with contributions by Alderson (2009), Carless (2012), Goto Butler (2011), Holliday (1994), Murray (2008), Van den Branden (2009), and Wedell (2009). According to their

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect, R. Ellis (2003) differentiates between ‘task outcome’ and ‘task aim’, claiming that an ‘outcome’ does not necessarily have to involve language,.... are meant to improve their grammatical and their communicative competences at the same time, for which language use is a precondition.

research, numerous elements, both good and negative, have been implicated in the dissemination of innovation in education, including language teaching (LT) and applied linguistics.

Despite the fact that there are different names, numerous factors are thought to favor the adoption and dissemination of innovative ideas, as Long (2015)<sup>1</sup> concluded and suggested that several obvious areas are in need of a serious research effort – preferably coherent and coordinated research programs, not isolated one-off studies. The first is the identification of improved criteria for classifying and sequencing target and pedagogic tasks, knowledge of which would help improve the design of task syllabus. Second, and related to the first, (more standardized) work is needed on relationships between pedagogic task-types and various dimensions of linguistic performance. The third concerns the extent to which task-based abilities are task-specific or transferable, knowledge of which would be useful in making both syllabus design and task-based testing more efficient. Fourth, the whole field of task-based, criterion-referenced performance testing needs serious attention. Fifth, detailed classroom studies of the ways teachers and students perform task-based classroom lessons are much needed, with work by Samuda (2001), Block (1994), and East (2012) suggesting some productive lines of inquiry. Among other matters, it will be important to identify if and when pedagogic tasks need to be “proofed” if they are to serve the designer’s purpose, and how their roles can be modified by teachers and students, intentionally or unintentionally.”

### 4.3. Cognitive grammar

Cognitive Grammar (CG) is a theoretical framework for explaining language structure as the result of cognitive and social interaction. It is essential to cognitive linguistics, a vast and rising movement that is part of the “functionalist” heritage. The essential

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<sup>1</sup>*Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching*, First Edition. Mike Long. © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Published 2015 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

idea is that grammar is meaningful (rather than a separate formal system) and can only be revealed in connection to its conceptual significance and communicative function. According to an argument by Harder (1996), although reducing grammar to symbolic assemblages accomplishes critical conceptual coherence, this incorrect statement (by Harder) reveals a double misunderstanding. For starters, it conflates syntactic definability with the existence of a clear and distinct border. However, Langacker (2013) made it clear by critically argue that overlap between lexicon, morphology, and syntax does not preclude us from defining and drawing important distinctions, any more than the lack of a defined border between green and blue limits us to seeing merely grue – a gradation does not imply undifferentiated uniformity. Second, the sentence mixes together reduction with elimination. Reducing grammar to symbolic assemblies serves to describe it rather than to reject its position as a distinguishable level of organization. It is not possible to deny the existence of water molecules by analyzing them as a certain arrangement of hydrogen and oxygen atoms. He, in his previous research<sup>1</sup>, stated the roles that language serves to shape and restrict it. These include a semiological function that allows conceptualizations to be signified by sounds and movements, as well as a complex interactive function that includes communication, manipulation, expressiveness, and social communion. Functional methods to linguistic study are separated from formal techniques (particularly generative grammar) by whether functional issues are seen as foundational or just secondary to the challenge of characterizing language form. In reality, this difference in focus manifests itself in quite distinct substantive arguments about the nature of language structure and how to articulate it.

The general language theory known as cognitive linguistics, which first gained popularity in the USA in the 1980s and then spread

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<sup>1</sup> Langacker (1999). The difference is not a matter of rigor, precision, degree of formalization, or scientific merit. Formal and functional approaches both vary widely along these parameters.

to other regions of the world (mostly Europe and Asia), includes a grammar-focused subfield known as cognitive grammar (also construction grammar) was developed by Fillmore (1988), Goldberg (1995), and Croft (2001) and is a part of the larger trend known as cognitive linguistics, which is itself a subset of the functional school.<sup>1</sup>

In a limit on an article, we offer some of fundamental ideas and key concepts in Cognitive Grammar by Langacker (2013); Cognitive English Grammar by Dirven & Radden (2007) and A Construction grammar by Goldberg et al. (1996) that are psychologically considered relevant to Vietnamese educational characteristics for applied cognitive linguistics and briefly explain why we believe they may be of relevance to anyone interested in second language learning and teaching. Although these notions are separated for the sake of this study, they are in many respects intimately intertwined.

Langacker (1987) founded and advanced the study of cognitive grammar that is made up of symbiotic relationships, or form-meaning pairings: “Lexicon, morphology, and syntax form a continuum of symbolic units serving to structure conceptual content for expressive purposes” (Langacker, 1987, p. 35). And, when it comes to language, meaning is regarded as being more important than syntax by cognitive linguistics, Langacker (2008) added, from the standpoint of language users, the latter appears to be far more natural. Ordinary people are more concerned with the meanings expressed when they talk or listen than they are with the mere pleasure of altering syntactic form. Of course, this does not imply that grammar is not significant in language or in the teaching of languages. However, it is useful to understand that grammar is a means to an aim and not its own.

By examining archetypal usages of a particular grammatical phenomenon as well as its less common but nonetheless explicable usages, cognitive grammar seeks to account for all grammatical phenomena without advancing arguments about rules and exceptions

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Essentials of Cognitive Grammar by Ronald W. Langacker (2013).



to these norms. This requires a shift in perspective for both teachers and students, as compared to other grammatical approaches; because, thanks to Niemeier (2013, p. 15)'s research, cognitive grammar "does not posit a clear borderline between rules and exceptions" but rather refers to "language phenomena as situated within a radial network of meaning with more prototypical instances at the core and more marginal instances on the fringes, all of them related and explainable".

Constructively, a concept regarded as a fundamental argument in cognitive linguistics, the initial concept we choose to express about a specific occurrence may never offer a totally objective image of that reality. Many of the common (or supposedly neutral) construals are linguistically specialized and conventionalized, and "conventional usage almost always has conceptual motivation" (Langacker 2008, p. 72). Only via human sight and from a human perspective can we see things. There are no entirely neutral methods of describing circumstances, even if there are default ways of stating them. Next, consider the following example (in an English park, for instant, we may be instructed to stay off the grass, but in Vietnamese, we would be told not to step into/ on the grass) of how languages construe things in various ways: attention/salience (the part of the phenomenon that stands out most, or in which we are most interested); perspective (the viewpoint from which we view the phenomenon); constitution (how fine-grained or "close-up" our view of a phenomenon is); and categorization (how we divide phenomena up into categories). All four forms of construal represent distinctions in how phenomena are perceived, which has an impact on how they are discussed.

Additionally, there are categories and prototypes in grammar. Grammatical elements of any kind "are likely to be polysemous, having a prototypical as well as an array of other, less central values," according to Langacker (2008, p. 79). For instance, word classes can be thought of as categories, and each category has a prototype. While a prototype verb, like "to run," lacks time stability, a prototypical noun, like "house," does. There are also less archetypal, or more

peripheral, members in every group. As lightning only lasts for fractions of a second, the nominal entity “lightning,” for instance, has no time stability, but because the word belongs to the noun category, it is regarded as having an object-like quality. Categorization, the second key concept, can account for change in other components of speech, such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and determiners, in addition to nouns. In English, for example, we split items into countable (e.g., boys, cars) and uncountable (e.g., tea, milk) but no distinction does exist in Vietnamese, although things have varied descriptors depending on whether they are short and flat, long and thin, active or inanimate, and so on.

The last but not least we pay much attention is that, Metaphor (and Metonymy) and Embodiment (also known as embodied cognition) are cognitive processes that allow us to grasp abstract concepts by connecting them to our bodily experience. As previously indicated, generative linguistics’ explanations of language and grammar started to dissatisfy academics, and they eventually started to hunt for other explanations of language in the mid- to late 1970s. The publication of Lakoff and Johnson’s foundational book *Metaphors we live by* (1980) is now seen by many experts as marking the beginning of cognitive linguistics. In this book, philosopher Johnson and linguist Lakoff examine so-called conceptual metaphors that are used frequently in spoken language. Because there are no words specifically for the notion of “life” the conceptual metaphor “Life is a Journey” by Lakoff and Johnson’s, for instance, borrows phrases from the concrete word field of “journey” and applies them to the abstract concept of “life”. Even though a life is not a journey in the literal sense, this metaphor is widely used to describe the intangible nature of life. Additionally, although people typically do not utilize this metaphor consciously, their conceptions and thinking processes are implicitly organized using it. The basic goal of conceptual metaphors is to provide comprehension by making abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.

In conclusion, cognitive grammar provides insightful explanations of common construal patterns and can be applied to teach learners about both potential construal conflicts between their L1 and L2 as well as the various construal options available to them in their L2. The reasons why cognitive grammar is a good technique for use in foreign language training are discussed in the followings, especially given its emphasis on the primacy of meaning.

#### ***4.4. The combination of cognitive grammar & Task-based language teaching***

We finally would like to point out an explicit connection between cognitive grammar and the task-based language teaching approach in order to bridge the gap between these two approaches and briefly present several arguments why it is profitable in order to establish and foster a way of grammar teaching (that motivates foreign language learners). Certain academics have recommended that linguistic explanations be incorporated into communicative classes when needed, but no one has gone so far as to give grammar the same priority as communication in a task-based language classroom, owing to an antiquated understanding of what “grammar” is. Besides, learners are rarely shown or given explanations about the meaning of grammatical constructs, and what is referred to as “grammar” in many task-based classrooms is typically not systematized, as it is not founded on a sound linguistic theory in most situations.

In case a teacher determines that he or she wants to or needs to address a certain grammatical phenomenon, they must first seek for scenarios in which the phenomenon is utilized in natural language and then construct objectives based on those use events. According to Niemeier (2017), such exercises/ tasks must be well-planned and learner-centered, appealing to the learners’ age level, interests, and motivation, as well as addressing circumstances that will be useful to the learners outside of the foreign language classroom with a specific goal or product. Thus, in this scenario, the majority of the teacher’s time is spent planning such a lesson, providing appropriate assignments,

and considering the grammatical theory and how to simplify it for the target population. The learners verbalize this aim in their reports once they have accomplished the goal or completed the output required by the activity (or else, the product is described). For example, Evans (2012) claimed that task-based techniques are congruent with cognitive linguistics' guiding principles. The most apparent explanation is that both approaches are primarily concerned with meaning. Unlike the task-based literature, which views meaning as being in opposition to form and exclusively present in words and communication, cognitive grammar believes that grammar is meaningful as well, but in a less concrete and schematic sense than lexis. Since the idea of 'grammar' is considered as important to meaning-making in the cognitive grammar approach as words are, combining these two techniques appears useful and productive.

Clark/ Paivio (1991)'s twofold coding theory is another point to be noted in support of a mix of cognitive grammar and task-based education. As above stated, cognitive grammar encourages visualisations, and learning in activities entails using several senses. Tasks often need many language abilities (speaking/listening are prioritized but writing/reading are commonly targeted as well), but most tasks also include visuals, sometimes even real items, and occasionally actions must be completed. As a result, another key point of convergence can be noticed in the fact that both cognitive grammar and task-based language training encourage double coding.

#### **4.5. Ideas and steps: Proposals**

In this section, based on Niemeier (2017)'s experimental action research, we shall propose ideas and steps (when planning a task-based grammar session with adaptability to Vietnam contexts) for incorporating grammatical phenomena into a task-based learning strategy with a few recommendations on how to build a task-based grammar lesson:

First, each grammar issue is briefly described in terms of its form, and then its meaning is carefully examined from a cognitive-

grammatical standpoint; Next, a suitable communicative situation should be chosen and outlined, the learners' prior knowledge is discussed (primarily in relation to word fields and grammar structures that should have been addressed before the new grammar topic is introduced), and a didactic reduction of the cognitive grammar theory for the learner is carried out; The skills that the students will gain from the session are outlined, and the whole task cycle for the grammatical issue in question is explained as a final step; Alternative communication circumstances are also briefly mentioned so that instructors have a variety of options.

*Steps when planning a task-based grammar session:*

1. Choose the grammatical structure that will be taught.
2. Completely examine the grammatical phenomena, both in terms of its form and its meaning and application. Only after the instructor fully comprehends the grammatical topic in all of its complexities can it be made into a task.
3. Simplify the grammar issue didactically with the learners in mind, since grammatical information should not be overly complicated. It is always best to begin with prototypical usages and only after these have been internalized by the learners should non-prototypical usages be addressed, as a thorough understanding of prototypical usages is a necessary prerequisite for the introduction of non-prototypical exemplars.
4. Determine a communication context in which native speakers of the target language commonly employ the grammatical issue in question. This circumstance, in particular, must be relevant to the learners' age and interests, as well as stimulating for them in a comparable communication situation outside of the classroom, such as when traveling overseas.
5. Examine the terminology required for the communicative task. Analyze the vocabulary and only utilize lexemes that are totally

consistent. The spelling of the words, as well as their meanings, must be examined.

6. Decide if the activity is best completed in pairs or in small groups. Prepare a method for assigning learners to groups when deciding on small groups.

7. Create a task that relates to the communicative circumstance and allows the instructor to utilize the grammatical construction in issue during the pre-task.

8. Carefully design the work instructions and never underestimate the difficulty of such instructions. Alternatively, print step-by-step instructions on the learners' worksheets or offer step-by-step instructions for sure during the time the learners are working on the tasks.

9. Allow students to examine their own sentences and make their own recommendations, theories, and conclusions. If they're having problems, don't offer them rules to memorize; instead, give them explanations that they can follow and comprehend.

10. If there is adequate time, ask the students to apply the new structure to a different word field or different situations of communications.

#### **4.6. Scenario**

Imagine we are going to have an English present tense lesson of grade 6 (age 11-12). The plan will be prepared:

First, initially define the term "tense," then give a brief formal analysis of it before moving on to a cognitive grammatical study (An explanation of the chosen communicative circumstance and a didactic reduction of the grammatical explanation for the concerned target audience follow the analysis).

##### **4.6.1. Cognitive grammar perspective on tense**

Each English verb has a mark for its tense, aspect, and modality, and these three concepts go hand in hand. However, in order to

provide more clarity in this instance, which is centered on English tense, they are dealt with individually. One of the areas where learning English as a foreign language is most likely to result in mistakes is tense, which is the grammaticalized idea of time. This is especially true for Vietnamese students who are often persuaded to use the past tense and present perfect interchangeably while speaking English because, for example, in Vietnamese, at least in everyday conversation, they can.

In English, these forms must be properly distinguished based on their various roles. The various “tenses” that are listed in English textbooks by Vietnamese writers<sup>1</sup> are viewed as combinations of tense and aspect in cognitive grammar, for instance, the sentence “The boy is running.” combines the present tense with the progressive aspect, and the “The baby was crying.” combines the past tense with the progressive aspect. Langacker (2008) groups tense under the keyword “grounding” since “the term ground is used in cognitive grammar to indicate the speech event: its participants (speaker and hearer), their interaction, and the immediate circumstances (notably, the time and place of speaking)” -Langacker (2008, p. 58). Three distinct elements must be distinguished in cognitive grammar study of tense: speech time, relevance time, and situation time. Therefore, scenario time is the point at which a scenario first occurs: all three parts of the clause “the weather is awful” are present in prototype utterances. Speech time, relevance time, and situation time are all in the present in this instance since the utterance is current and important.

#### 4.6.2. *The present simple tense*

In this step, teachers should prepare:

A brief presentation of the present tense’s structure is followed by a discussion of its extended and iconic meanings from a cognitive-

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<sup>1</sup> Quang, T. H., & Pham, N. T. (2023). Analysis of grammar materials in English textbook for 6<sup>th</sup> grade - Global success. *Journal of Education (VJE)*, 23 (Special Issue on March 15<sup>th</sup>), 52-58.

grammatical standpoint. The communicative scenario chosen for the task of the case is then provided (for example, students should talk about the colors/ fruits they like and dislike), and its selection is discussed. A didactic reduction is carried out since the students cannot be exposed to the in-depth linguistic theory described previously. The task cycle is then thoroughly reviewed, along with some additional teaching strategies that are different from the task cycle that was previously presented (teacher would let students describe his/her mother likes or dislikes and focus on the additional s/es in term of pronunciation and usage with third singular person in English simple present tense).

#### *4.6.3. Form and meaning*

In this plan, both the written and spoken modes of the form (of the present simple tense) are rather simple to explain. It is crucial that the teacher pays attention to just using prototypical examples and delaying the introduction of non-prototypical instances when a tense is to be introduced. These might be covered in a subsequent class or lessons because they are simpler to comprehend when compared to a well-established prototype. Therefore, it is important to choose verbs carefully in a task to avoid confusing and possibly overwhelming the learners.

The present tense is also known as the “simple present”, albeit this term may be misleading given that it is one of the most difficult tenses in English, according to Langacker (2001). The present tense is used to talk about “immediate reality,” which is close-by. In its normal usage, speech time and relevant time completely coincide. The present tense is complicated since it is difficult to find a co-occurrence of this kind. For example, using a time axis and drawing reference-time circles and situation-time circles in different colors will make it simple to visualize the actual or virtual coincidence between speech time and reference time. The reference-time circles will always be identical to speech time,



whereas the situation-time circles may be larger (covering the entire time axis, for example, in the case of eternal truths), but will always contain speech time as well as reference time. The students can then verbalize the examples, furthering their understanding of the meaning of the present tense through the similarities between the many prototypical and extended instances of use.

#### *4.6.4. Communicative situation and didactic reduction*

The case is intended for beginners (grade 6), either in elementary school or the beginning of secondary school, as the present tense is presented quite early in the instructed learning of English as a foreign language. Even the shortest, most basic sentences in English contain a tensed verb, usually in the present tense, therefore tensed utterances are utilized very away. The simple present must be used when the students describe themselves, such as “I am a girl.”, “I am ten years old,” “I like chocolate,” or “I am from Vietnam.” and, sentences with an aspect like “I am jumping” or “Look, I’m working on my picture.” should be omitted.

There are many communication events that require talking about third parties, therefore the range of possible communicative circumstances is wide. For this task, the chosen scenario is discussing one’s likes and dislikes, and the learners must learn how to correctly utilize the third person singular -s. Because dislikes and likes can be discussed in a variety of contexts and communicative settings, and because a task must be specific to one situation, the example of making pizza for a school party has been chosen. Everybody has developed unique eating habits and preferences, so this topic relates to the students’ knowledge of the outside world and extends their learning beyond the classroom, at least insofar as the students may find themselves in a situation where they are abroad and must order food for themselves or for someone else, such as a pizza for which they must choose the toppings.

This scenario is even more pertinent if a “real” school party is planned because it involves both a real event and its planning. Additionally, because each student will have a different preference and it is impractical to produce 30+ individual pizzas in classrooms with more than 30 students, a decision must be made regarding which pizza to prepare. As a result, social skills are also developed.

## 5. Conclusion & Implication

This article has made an effort to spread knowledge of the idea that grammar can be explained quite differently from how it has historically been explained and, as a result, can also be taught very differently from what many of the readers of the text have already encountered. One can only hope that ours has been able to alter the perception of “grammar” that some readers may still hold after receiving their own grammar training in high school and, to a lesser extent, in college. Grammar can be viewed as an organized system that helps speakers organize their communication, not as some kind of torturous exercise, and without which language would not function.

We have argued in this study that grammar can be described in a different way than it has historically been explained and, as a result, can be taught in a different way than many Vietnamese English instructors have previously encountered. It is only to be hoped that our efforts have succeeded in changing the perception of ‘grammar’ that many teachers still have, as a result of their own grammar training in school and at university. Instead of perceiving grammar as a kind of torture, it may be viewed as an organized system that aids speakers in organizing their communication and without which language would be rendered useless.

Grammar is unquestionably as important as vocabulary – cognitive linguistics views the two as being on a continuum ranging from more concrete (vocabulary) to more abstract (grammar), and claims that the same organizational principles (for example, metaphorization, categorization, boundedness vs. unboundedness) apply to both.

The three key objectives that were pursued:

First, it seeks to demonstrate that the task-based method is well-suited to incorporating grammar training while maintaining its original communicative focus, despite the fact that the way grammar is addressed in task-based grammar teaching differs significantly from the traditional approach. Grammar is viewed as a tool in the hands of learners, allowing them to communicate exactly what they want to say and to make their subjective viewpoints obvious.

Second, we'd like to provide our views that, rather than forcing learners to memorize rules, the cognitive grammar method, with its explanatory potential, helps them to grasp how and why a foreign language functions (and exceptions). On the one hand, cognitive grammar explanations elucidate the systematicity of language and provide the teacher with explanations for phenomena that have previously been difficult to explain satisfactorily (or at all), and on the other hand, cognitive grammar explanations lend themselves well to integration into task-based grammar lessons, where they stand side by side with a suitable communicative topic.

Finally, we aim to have demonstrated that, contrary to what many learners (and instructors) have previously experienced, grammar teaching approaches may be stimulating and fascinating. After a task-based grammar class, learners are likely to highlight the activity, its outcomes, and their personal engagement rather than saying they learned grammar. From this perspective, the language used throughout the job and subsequent report is nothing more than a tool, but it must be accurate. Grammar isn't taught (or learnt) for the sake of grammar; rather, it contributes to the meanings of the learners' words.

Although task-based grammar instruction is not yet a well-established method, we hope that this paper has inspired our Vietnamese instructors to give it a try in their English lessons.

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