COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THEORIES OF GRAMMAR (TRADITIONAL AND MODERN) IN ESL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a brief introduction on the theories of grammar and mainly analysis their similarities and differences. The comparative analysis of the theories helps the ESL learner to see how the elements and structures of two languages are the same or different. The paper concludes that the knowledge and applications of these grammars can help a second language learner of English to master his language and communicate effectively and competently. It points out that though they are quite different; TG is the basis which modern linguist is derived.

Keywords: Grammar, Traditional, Structural, Descriptive, Transformational, Functional

INTRODUCTION

Grammar as a phenomenon has been a port of busy activities. This is owing to the fact that it has undergone several voracious evolutions on one hand, which birthed several typologies, ideologies, school of thoughts, and theories, and lead to the advancement of linguistics, pedagogy, science, and technology, on the other hand. When we consider the historicity of grammar, our starting point would be the various civilizations that embarked upon the noble pursuit of conceptualizing among other things of interest to the human knowledge, language. These civilizations, also known as traditions, are most commonly traced to the Indian civilization of around 400BC, the Greek civilization of around 427 BC, the Roman civilization of around 400AD, and the European Renaissance period. The essence of Grammar, and what it was, during these historical periods differed from one another.

The notion of Traditional grammar, structural grammar, Transformational Generative grammar and others are founded in the aforementioned brief historical recount. The former, undoubtedly, is rooted in the explications and provisions of the Greek, and, the Latin grammar; so that the latter, as we know it, only came into being in the late nineteenth century (de' Saussure), and the early twentieth century (Bloomfield).

Between the periods of Traditional grammar and Structural grammar, therefore, were various hypothesis and postulations about grammar. While some were groundbreaking, like the Greek proposition of the parts of speech, the sentence constituent, and the subjective and predicative functions of nouns and verb, as well as their relationships with other parts of speech; others were structural and descriptive, like "the American anthropologist Boas and Sapir who gave a comprehensive description of American-Indian languages of the Algonkian family" (Syal & Jindal, 2016).

Traditional Grammar (TG)

Traditional Grammar originated in the 5th century B.C., with Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece and a Sanskrit scholar named Panini in India. Some Romans and early Christian-era writers also contributed to Traditional Grammar. Traditional Grammar is regarded as the father of all grammars. It forms the basis for describing the structure of any language. Traditional Grammar aimed to provide a framework for the description of the structure of a language, vis-a-vie English (Heine, Narrog &Haspelmath, 2015). In a bid to establish a model grammar for spoken and written English, traditional grammarians aimed to do three things: to codify the principles of the language and reduce it to rules, to settle disputed points and decide cases of divided usage, and to point out common errors or what were supposed to be errors and thus correct and improve the language (Baugh, 1970). And this explains the prescriptive and proscriptive nature of Traditional

Grammar. By prescriptive, we mean that traditional grammarians set out to provide a long list of grammatical rules required to be followed and adhered to by all users of English language. For example, in Grammatica Linguae Anglicanne. Wallis (1653) prescribes that in declarative sentences; simple future tense should be expressed by "shall" in the first person and 'will' in the second and third persons. Similarly, Lowth (1762) laid down the rules of questions. And other such prescriptions were exemplified in William Ward's 1765, Grammar of the English Language

Principles of Traditional Grammar
Parts of Speech
One of the basic tenets of traditional grammar is the parts of speech. This tenet is important to traditional grammar since patterns of inflection and rules of syntax each depend on a word's part of speech (Frede, 1987). By parts of speech, we mean the structural make up of every utterance and sentence, as well as their taxonomy or label. There is a difference of opinion among grammarians as to how many these parts of speech are. Nonetheless, many traditional grammarians name eight: noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, conjunction, preposition, interjection (Malmkjaer, 2009). These groupings are therefore based on categories of function and meaning in Latin and other Indo-European languages (Huddleston, 1984).

At this point, it is important we mention that the properties of these parts of speech would not be discussed in detail as this is not the main focus of this write up However, we shall illustrate using a table, the most important features of these parts of speech as postulated by the traditional grammarians.

S/N	Parts of speech	Definition	Example
1.	Noun	A name of a person, animal, place or thing.	Jonas, Lion, Nigeria, Table
2.	Pronoun	A word used instead of a noun	She, He, It, They
3.	Adjective	A word used to qualify a noun or a pronoun	Red, ugly, hefty
4.	Verb	A doing or an action word	Look, write, jump
5.	Adverb	A word used to modify a verb	often, happily, sadly
6.	Preposition	A word used to show relationship between a noun or pronoun and other parts of the sentence.	At, on, in,
7.	Conjunction	A word used to join a word, or group of words to a larger unit	because, and, so
8.	Interjection	A word used to express emotions	Hurray!, Wow!

Phrase
The phrase as asserted by the traditional grammarians is a group of related words that does have a finite verb. This structure is often seen as a part of a sentence that pairs up to function as either a subject or a predicate in a sentence. In traditional grammar, the phrases identified include: noun phrase, prepositional phrase, gerund phrase, participial phrase, infinitive phrase.

Clause
A Clause by traditional grammarians is a group of words that has a finite verb. Clause as agreed upon by them is of two types: the main/independent clause, and the subordinate/dependent clause. By main clause, they mean a group of phrases that has a subject and a predicate; and as such can stand on its own to make a semantic meaning. Subordinate clause on the other hand is a group of phrases that has a subject and a predicate, yet cannot make an appreciable semantic meaning. However, Quirk (1972), as well as other grammarians have faulted, and modified these definitions. To them, a clause can include the non-finite, as well the verb-less clause.

Sentence

According to traditional grammarians, a sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete idea. Their teaching is that for us to have a sentence, we require a clause, or group of clauses that can convey a complete meaning or message. To them, a sentence is made up of a subject and a predicate. Therefore, while the subject talks about the doer of the action, the predicate talks about what is done.

Meaning

Meaning in the traditional grammarian view is associated with the works of great philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. To them, their preoccupation was on the nature of human language itself. This therefore led to the naturalist and nurturist debate on the nature of language.

In traditional semantics, meaning of a word is actually what it refers to(Ayer,1936) It is the image of a word that takes shape in the speaker's or hearer's mind(Grice 1957,&Katz,1972,as cited in Ogbulogo (2005). To this, meaning involves the study or reference, concept, etc.

Traditional grammar is very useful in ESL (English as a Second Language) learning environment. Azer (1998) maintains that despite its disadvantages, traditional grammar is of great value to language teaching, school grammar, and a great many people still believe that it is a functional, elegant, time honoured way of teaching people that the should know about language.

Modern Linguistics

Modern Linguistics began from the Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who is often described as 'father of modern linguistics' and 'a master of a discipline which he made 'modern' (Culler 1976). Modern linguistics is a science of linguistic study. According to Modern Linguistics, language is a system and grammar is regarded as a systematic description of a certain language, either written or oral. Grammar also refers to distributional analysis of surface structure elements according to distributional criteria. Also, phonetics, phonological and semantic components are considered in modern grammar. Generally speaking, modern grammar is currently evaluated on the basis of applicability, simplicity, completeness, explicitness, and lack of contradiction. Modern grammar starts from descriptive grammar, structural grammar, functional grammar, transformational-generative grammar (case grammar) and many other grammars.

Descriptive Grammar

Descriptive grammar describes how a language is actually spoken and written and does not describe how a language ought to be spoken or written. According to descriptive grammar, it states that speech is the basic form of language, and there is a difference between spoken and written language. Fries is a distinguished grammarian, his work 'American English Grammar' is a famous work. According to him, all words are classified into two parts: content words and functional words, not ten different parts of speech as in Traditional grammar. The content words refer to those words which have inflection and which have lexical meaning, such as noun, verb, adjective etc. Functional words are those words which place on important part in formulating structures, determines, subordinate conjunctions, auxiliaries and emphatic words.

Structural Grammar and its advantages: Structural grammar is quite different form the Traditional Grammar. Instead of focusing on the individual word and its notional meaning or its part-of-speech function in the sentence, Structural grammar focuses on cluster of structures — sounds, forms, word groups, phrases — working from smaller to larger units. Structural grammar does not ignore semantic meaning (although some of its earlier advocates tried to do so.), but it tends to emphasize syntactic over semantic meaning. That is, Structural grammar analyzes the meaning carried by the syntactic patterns that morphemes and words make with each other, patterns like those formed by plural morphemes, modifier-verb or modifier-adjective connections, subject-predicate connections, and so on.

Besides the general emphasis on morphology and syntax, Structural grammar developed three particularly useful analytical techniques: test frames, immediate constituent analysis, and sentence formulas. Test frames especially have been helpful in teaching grammar in the schools.

Disadvantages

It presents an incomplete description of the grammatical system of language, and does not provide the rules needed to construct an infinite range of grammaticality.

It attaches excessive weight to morphological and morph-phonological rules, but semantic relations received slight attention, it is the same with Traditional grammar.

It describes the surface structure of sentences and mis-making a number of deep generalizations.

Structural grammar gives a criterion to determine grammaticality and degree of grammaticality of sentences. And it does not provide sufficient explanation to guarantee clear understanding and correct usage. This may lead learners to make errors.

It excludes the treatment of meaning, but any grammatical analysis will be of no use if meaning is not taken into consideration.

It doesn't provide satisfactory basis for another two important areas: constructive analysis and translation in applied linguistics.

Transformational-Generative Grammar. Transformational-generative grammar, TG grammar, is developed by Norman, Chomsky. It appeared in 1957 when a revolution occurred in linguistics. According to some linguistics, TG grammar is a synthesis of contribution of Traditional grammar and Structural grammar. As far as Structural grammar is concerned, Chomsky reconstruct ICA (Immediate Constituent Analysis) as a first stage of his grammar, but he went much further and satisfied the demands of precision in the formalization of his undergone several stages: classical theory, standard theory, extended theory, and revised extended theory.

In the first stage, representative work, 'Syntactic Structure', it deals with an infinite set of sentences produced by context free structure. If forms the basic transformational rules. In the second stage, with the representative work 'Aspects of the Theory of Syntax', the original syntactic theory is extended to a general theory of grammar which includes phonology and semantics. The basis of the syntax is the deep structure, and the surface structure phenomenon, such as intonation, word order and themes-rheme. In the stage of extended theory, the focus has been transformed from individual grammar o universal grammar. In this stage, all transformational rules are reduced to only one rule, that it move 2. Also in this stage, the universal formulation of constraint is developed. Hence, the advantages of TG grammar are: first, it actually combines syntax phonology, lexicon, and semantics. So, it gives an overall conception of the system language. And this system is more accurate and more complete that other grammatical model. Second, TG grammar gives a more economical and systematic description of language, it provides a system of rules which permits the generation of an infinite number of grammatical sentences. Unlike Traditional grammar, rules stated in TG grammar are very clear and formally explicit. Third, TG grammar shows us very clearly that it processes a great generalizing power. It is also able to clarify underlying structures and regularities, which have been ignored by grammarians of Traditional grammar and Structural grammar. Fourth, TG grammar admits the existence of linguistic universals and analysis between languages at the level of deep structure. As for language universal, Traditional grammar admits the existence of language universals, but Structural grammar objects this view. According to Structural grammar, each language presents an individual structure. But TG

grammar admits that descriptions of all languages have the same general form and the same type of rules. This refers to the former universals. And they also present common categories and deep structures and this refers to the substantive universals, and the last advantage of TG grammar is that it can characterize notions of grammaticality and degree of grammaticality which are indispensable in the area of evaluation, testing and error analysis.

Functional Grammar. Functional Grammar was created by M.A.K. Halliday. It was called systematic grammar in 1950. In Functional grammar, meaning is taken as the aim of what's the speaker wants the hearer to understand. Here, the meaning of a sentence is equated with its function. The aim if Functional grammar is to study the range of relevant choices of meaning and wording. And one important implication of the functional view of language is its context. That is to say, Functional grammar takes context into consideration, and it takes linguistics toward sociology. That is the systematic study of the relevant features in the culture and society, which form the context in which language used. According to Functional grammar, all words can be divided into open set and closed set. Open set are noun, verb adjective and adverb; they are lexical word or content word. Close set are also grammatical functioned words such as Pron, Conj, Prep, Article. In Functional grammar, group and phrase are two different concepts. Group is the extension of words, while phrase is the compression of clause. Phrase exclusively refers to P.P; also there are structured and functional labels in Functional grammar. Structural labels refer t the nature of structure of elements, while functional labels refer to the syntactic function of clauses.

The Differences between Modern Linguistics and Traditional Grammar
Linguistics is descriptive not prescriptive: Most modern linguistics is descriptive, because it attempts to describe what people actually say, not what people should say. It describes language in all its aspects, but does not prescribe rules of 'correctness'. This is in contrast with the study of language in previous centuries. It was mostly prescriptive. Traditional grammars told people how to use a language. Modern linguists, however, do not believe that there is an absolute standard of correctness concerning language use which linguists or school teachers should view as their duty to maintain. Instead, they would prefer to be observers and recorders of facts, but not judges. They believe that whatever occurs in natural speech (hesitation, incomplete utterance, misunderstanding, etc.) should be describe in their analysis. They might recognize that one type of speech appears to be more socially acceptable than others because of the influence of fashion. But this will not make them think that socially acceptable variety can replace all the other varieties, or the old words are always better than new ones or vice visa. They will regard the changes in language and language uses as the result of a natural and continuous process, but not something to be feared. Language changes should be observed and described. However, this does not deny that languages have rules. They obviously do or we would not understand each other. On the other hand, no single rule or expression is necessarily there forever.

Linguistics regards the spoken as primary and not the written
Another cardinal difference between the traditional grammar and structural grammar is the dissension on what should be the primary focus of language study. The traditional grammar favours written language over spoken. From this, we understand where the movement of prescription originates since the prescribed rules of grammar were based on classical literatures and authors deemed impeccable. They went ahead with the believe that spoken language was too arbitrary, and at such, should not be adopted as a model for ascertaining a grammatical language use. Converse to this, structural grammar emphasis the need to focus language study on spoken rather than written samples. The is because it made more sense to analyse actual verbal samples of language to understand the entails of how language works among certain

people. To the structuralist, imposing the language use of a select few on a larger group is impractical, and non-objective. This dichotomy therefore, is inherent in the traditional view that a word is primary in language study, as against the structural view that a phoneme is the primary unit of language study.

Linguistics differ from Traditional Grammar in that it does not force Languages into a Latin based Framework

One of the greatest undoing of traditional grammar has been its over reliance and resemblance to the Latin grammar. It is no secret that the pioneering traditionalist openly assert to an almost verbum lifting of the Latin grammar rules to the English grammar. This, we can say, is hinged on their faulty belief that Latin provides u universal framework wherein all languages fit. This view by traditional grammar is vehemently negated by the structural grammar. The structuralists believe that it is irrational to assume that a certain language can function as a model to study other languages. This is because structural grammar preaches that language use differs between language communities, and that imposing the framework of one language on another is merely superficial. In light of this, such traditional grammar rules as "never split infinitives", holds no water in structural grammar because certain language communities accommodates splitting infinitives, as in the English phrase 'to humbly apply', where the infinitive 'to apply' is split 'by humbly'. The idea that infinitive splits is wrong is based on Latin. Purists insist that, because a Latin infinitive is only one word, its English equivalent must be as near to one word as possible. The structural grammar further asserts the need to carefully and objectively study individual languages to describe and understand the obtainable reality in their structure and usage. They are vehemently opposed to the notion that any one language can provide an adequate framework for all the others. This is a huge departure from the Latin based traditional grammar rules.

CONCLUSION

Summarily, the application of these schools of grammar in ESL (English as a second language) environment cannot be overvalued because those studying a second language still find analysis of sentence construction useful. They use it in a method called comparative analysis, in which they see how the elements and structures of two languages are the same or different. It is important because a person sometimes has to abandon the engrained structural rules of his native language to properly employ the second language. In English, for example, adjectives precede the words they modify. In French, they generally follow the modified words. Using the proper words but with ungrammatical and wrong arrangement is an indication that the language user is not a native speaker and has not learnt nor mastered the basics of such a second language. Teachers still use structural grammar in language and composition classes. Through their contributions, these schools of grammar provide linguists and other language researchers' insights and knowledge about how a person learns language according to the sounds and arrangement of words which he selects. Their research provides vital information on what a person can and cannot understand at different age levels. And the knowledge of these grammars can help a second language learner (in this case, English) to master his language and communicate effectively and competently.

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