

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025

FOCUS ON TEACHING GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

**Dilafruz Oybekovna Gofurova**

an English teacher of Jizzakh Academic lyceum  
of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

**Abstract.** The material presented in this article focuses on teaching grammar as the recent research recognizes the necessity of studying grammar and notes that learning is especially effective if grammar categories are included in meaningful communicative context. The paper is especially useful for secondary school

English teachers as it identifies different options for focusing on grammar and integrating it into context, offers examples of learning activities for a specific option. The article also includes the description of the option, its theoretical and empirical basis and an example that illustrates the ways of its implementation in the classroom.

The paper highlights the basic principles for teaching grammar, namely E-Factor and A-Factor. E-Factor means Efficiency and, teaching any grammatical category, its components – economy, ease and efficacy – should be kept in mind.

A-Factor means Appropriacy and contains a lot of factors, such as learners' age, their hobbies and interests, learners' previous level of knowledge, etc. Teachers should consider them all to succeed in grammar presentation. The authors offer multi-vector opportunities for learning grammar to encourage students to learn it understanding its necessity because mastering grammar is the basis of language proficiency.

**Keywords:** grammar-based teaching, factors of teaching, approach to teaching.

E-Factor, A-Factor, grammatical knowledge and skills.

Target setting. In Ukraine, teaching English has changed from focusing on overt grammar instruction to a more communicative approach in recent years.

However, many pre-service teachers have been educated in English by traditional methods of drill and memorization of grammar rules. There can be a mismatch between what they have learned and what is scheduled in the educational programs. In the paper, we are presenting assumptions on how these prior experiences can be made more conscious and integrated into the curriculum. This paper reviews a selection of research from the second language teaching into what is referred to here as teacher cognition – what teachers think, know and believe concerning teaching grammar to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom. Within this framework suggested by more general mainstream educational research, grammar teaching here is discussed with reference to context.

Intended for teachers at all levels, but especially primary and junior secondary school levels, this paper offers practical ideas for teaching grammar not in isolation but in the context. So, the research aims to focus on teaching grammar in context for the reason that recent research recognizes the necessity of attention to grammar and



Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025



demonstrates that form-focused instruction is especially effective when it is incorporated into a meaningful communicative context. Designed specifically for second-language teachers, this text identifies and explores the various options for integrating a focus on grammar and a focus on communication in classroom contexts and offers concrete examples of teaching activities for each option. It also includes a description of the option, its theoretical and empirical background, examples of activities illustrating in a non-technical manner how it can be implemented in the classroom, etc.

In this paper, we consider tasks, which refer to activities designed to push learners to produce output accurately and also consciously reflect on, negotiate, and discuss the grammatical accuracy of the English language use. The main research material. With specific reference to grammar, this paper discusses the data from classroom observations and interviews with teachers, their reflections. These data suggests that enabling teachers to develop and sustain awareness in up-to-date grammar teaching is a significant goal for teachers' education and learners as well.

The studies in language teaching show us why we should teach grammar; prove that grammar knowledge is essential. Accurate teaching of grammar guides learners on how to use the language correctly. Highlighting the pivotal position of teaching grammar in language learning, Azar B. points out that the valuable aspect of grammar teaching is that it helps learners discover the nature of language. We mean students analyze grammar patterns and constructs to understand their interrelations. Language consists of patterns that make everything we say, read, hear and write intelligibly. Without grammar we would have only separate words or sounds and meaningless expressions which will not benefit our communication. "Grammar is the weaving that creates the fabric" (Azar, 2007). This statement is supported by Ellis R. who notes down that grammar teaching involves the instructional technique to focus learners on specific grammatical forms and patterns to help them understand it "meta linguistically and/or process it in comprehension ...so that they can internalize it" (Ellis, 2006, p.84).

We consider that language acquisition without learning grammar will be confusing. The experience shows that learners fail to use the language correctly without grammar skills. Experienced teachers agree that grammar is essential and cannot be ignored. Without profound knowledge of grammar, learners' language mastering will be constrained (Richards, Renandya, 2002, p.145).

Following Richards and Renandya we consider comprehensibility and acceptability to be the significant reasons for teaching grammar (2002, p.152):

So, teaching grammar helps learners understand the nature of language. The key benefits of grammar-based teaching that due to it students gain an understanding of principal grammar concepts, in particular: subordination and coordination; concepts of expressing time relationships using the tense-forms; concepts of parts of speech nouns, clauses, etc. Learners understand grammar concepts with simplified terminology, without theoretical grammatical analysis (Azar, 2007). Furthermore, awareness of these connections and relationship facilitates the English language understanding.

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025



Grammar skills enable learners to be aware of parts of a language, understand and use the grammatical concepts. To support the importance of grammar teaching Mulroy claims that sentences always consist of clauses with subjects and predicates and of words that fall into classes described as verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Having understood this grammar system, ESL learners have an advantage over those who are ignoring these options (2003, p.118).

Across the various languages and subsystems of grammar, perhaps the most widely practiced traditional approach to grammatical instruction has been portrayed as “the three Ps – present, practice, produce” (Larsen-Freeman, 2009, p. 523).

Criticizing the three Ps model, Long and Doughty define the traditional approach disadvantage. Students fail to apply their knowledge of grammar when they are communicating even they know all the rules. Students know the grammar rules do not mean that they can apply them in communication. So, learning grammar rules is not the goal itself. The vital point is to establish the connection between explicit knowledge of the rules and implicit control of the system of the language (Long & Doughty, 2009, p. 523). In the traditional approach students are unable to use the grammar rules in speech. In such cases grammar rules do not work in a sentence.

Learning grammar in context enables students to see how rules can be used in sentences. Language is context – sensitive (Thornbury, 2002, p.69). In the absence of context, it is very difficult to reach the intended meaning of a phrase, even a single word (Thornbury, 2002, p.69).

Moreover, we are sure that while teaching grammar modern teachers should keep to Michael Swan’s idea of the “three x’s”, i.e. explanations, examples, and exercises (highlighted by us) (Swan, 2005, p. 376). Let us describe this idea in details.

Speaking about explanations, they should be as concise as possible. The teacher gives only the general information for students to get acquainted with and all the additional information (or exceptions) is better to introduce later. It is necessary to emphasize that the explanations should be clear to understand. For avoiding ambiguity and vague instructions, it is possible to use L1, especially at lower levels. Also, visual aids can be helpful, but they must be seen not as ends in themselves but in terms of how they contribute to help understand the new material.

Examples that are given to illustrate the new material should be taken from the surrounding world (different signs, announcements, cartoons, songs, etc). In this case, they will draw attention, be easily understood and memorized. Besides, from our own experience we have noticed that when the examples are created about any student of the group, these examples are always listened carefully and attentively not only by this student but by the whole group. As the rule, the peers even try to add something to the proposed examples which leads to better understanding and remembering the new grammar material.

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025



And the last “x” is exercises. Without any doubt, when grammar material is only presented, non-communicative exercises can be used. But then teachers should turn to the communicative ones as teaching grammar in context help students understand how these or those rules work in sentences or even situations. Different exercises such as gap filling, writing the captions to drawings/cartoons, etc. are rather useful. But it should be noted that especially effective are the so-called personalized exercises – tasks where a student has to: recollect his/her children’s memories (e.g. for usage Past Simple Tense, used to / didn’t use to, etc.); imagine his/her future life in 10 years (e.g. for usage Future Simple Tense); describe his /her plans for future holidays (e.g. for usage will / be going to).

Besides, if a teacher can combine creativity and humour in the tasks, these exercises will be beneficial for remembering the new grammar material. For instance, student A is given a picture. He/She has to explain this picture to student B who needs to draw the picture based on student A’s explanations. Then the students compare two pictures and find out any differences paying attention to prepositions of place. It goes without saying that such tasks are very positive, funny, and creative and because of this, they are rather efficient.

In any case, teachers should remember that the more various exercises are done by the students, the better new grammar material will be understood. On average, explanations and examples should take one-quarter of the given time while doing the exercises needs three quarters because students learn more effectively while they do and not when they are only explained.

As you can see, Scott Thornbury considers that basic principles for grammar teaching consist of two main factors – E-Factor and A-Factor. E-Factor means Efficiency and, examining any grammar presentation or any grammar activity, the scientist advises keeping in mind the question about its efficiency. The following factors – which are the components of E-Factor – can help to answer it:

economy (the shorter explanation is, the better it is);

ease (the less time and energy are needed for the activity preparation, the better this activity is);

efficacy (whether this activity will be effective).

Besides, the author emphasizes that the efficacy of any grammar task is impossible without attention which is essential for learning. What is more, there cannot be any attention without understanding and, moreover, understanding without memory will be unsuccessful. To crown it all, students should be motivated

to make these conditions work, and it is the teacher who should find or create grammar tasks that will involve children in the learning process (Thornbury, 2002).

Summing up the information about E-Factor or Efficiency, Scott Thornbury is convinced that all these three factors – economy, ease and efficacy – must be taken into account. In other words, whether the time spent and efforts made will bring the results expected by the teacher for this particular grammar task.



Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025



It is self-evident that there are no two similar groups of students. That is why one task which works perfectly in one group will not necessarily lead to the same result in the second group. It happens so because students of the groups can differ in age, level of their preparation, hobbies and interests, their goals and so on. In such a way, even if the teacher follows and observes E-Factor, he or she should think about Appropriacy, i.e. A-Factor. As it can be seen from Figure 1, A-Factor consists of a lot of factors and to be successful with the task teachers should take into account all of them.

Let us demonstrate how to use these basic principles for grammar teaching in practice. As an example we are going to take a grammar construction with “wish” – wish +subject +Past Perfect (regret about the past).

The teacher sticks to the board a picture of a girl and calls her Ann. Next to Ann, the teacher puts two illustrations of: 1) an old car, 2) mountains. Then the teacher asks students to think and to explain how these pictures relate. Listening to the students' thoughts, he/she helps the students come to the idea that Ann has decided to take her grandpa's car and drive to the Carpathian Mountains. After that the teacher discusses with the students what kind of preparation should be done to make such a journey. The students' answers may be as follows: Ann should ask her grandpa for permission to take his car; she should ask him to find a mechanic to check and mend the car; she'd better choose a train than his grandpa's car; she should ask some friends to go with her; she should book round trip tickets; she should take some comfortable trainers, etc.

The teacher writes some students' ideas on the blackboard in a column adding some his / her own examples. Then the teacher explains that Ann set off on the journey without any preparation. She took her grandpa's car but didn't ask him for permission; the car wasn't checked and mended; she didn't ask any friends to go with her; she didn't take some warm clothes, etc. After using both the students' ideas and his/her own ones, the teacher makes up a story about Ann's adventure: Ann set off. As the car was rather old and wasn't checked, it often broke down and Ann had to look for someone to mend the car all the time. When Ann got to the Carpathians, the car suddenly stopped. Ann didn't know the reason of its stop and she couldn't find anyone to repair the car. So, she decided to leave the car and walk. Ann didn't have food or water and she wanted to go to the shop and buy some. But she didn't take any trainers with her and soon she became very tired. She didn't have any map and of course Ann got lost. Etc.

Then the teacher asks the students to imagine Ann's thoughts when she got lost and gives the first one as an example: I wish I had asked my grandpa to check the car. Then he/she asks the students: Did Ann ask him to check the car?

Students: No.

Teacher: Was it a good idea?

Students: No.

Teacher: So, what did Ann think when she got lost?

Students: I wish I had asked my grandpa to check the car.

The teacher writes the sentence on the blackboard underlying I wish I had asked. After that he/she encourages the first student to choose any idea from the

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025



column on the blackboard and to make up the next Ann's regret about the past. Then the second student chooses the prompt and so on. Now let us come back to basic principles for grammar teaching. As it was mentioned, E-Factor consists of economy, ease and efficacy. If to speak about economy, it should be pointed out that such a kind of presentation takes more time than an explanation. Besides, as more time was needed to present the material, the less time students had to practice the new material. So, the economy is rated as low here. From the point of view of ease, the teacher should be rather creative (to think of an unusual situation and to make up a number of sentences with a similar structure), gifted (ability to draw can help a lot to save some time), or should have a lot of additional materials, resources and, of course, spare time to prepare all necessary visual aids. In such a way, ease is also rated as low. At the same time, however, students take part in creating the situation which helps them understand the context. What is more, they are involved in solving a grammar task which is more interesting and more memorable than a simple explanation. In such a way, efficacy is rather high here. Nevertheless, from our own experience, we can say that some students can misunderstand the rule. So, the teacher should be very attentive during this grammar presentation and check the correctness of students' understanding with additional questions.

From the point of view of A-Factor, this kind of presentation is rather beneficial because it doesn't need translation or explanation. Also, it can be especially useful at the lower levels or in primary and junior secondary schools.

Conclusions and further research prospects. Summing up, mastering grammar is the foundation in the proficiency of a language. That is why we are confident that grammar teaching is also an essential part of language teaching that should not be ignored. However, many foreign language teachers gradually fulfill little grammar teaching. This paper specifically explores the status of grammar in language learning, the theoretical approaches to grammar instructions, reveals the comprehensive understanding of the necessity of teaching grammar. So, we propose multi-vector opportunities to encourage students to learn grammar showing them alternatives which make their studying more exciting, unexpected, entertaining, and because of this more understandable and memorable.

#### **REFERENCES:**

1. Azar, B. (2006). Grammar Teaching and Communicative Teaching: A Hybrid That Works. URL: [http://www.azargrammar.com/assets/authorsCorners/Transcript-TESOL2008\\_Hybrid That Works.pdf](http://www.azargrammar.com/assets/authorsCorners/Transcript-TESOL2008_Hybrid That Works.pdf) [Accessed 12.02.2022]. [in English]
2. Azar, B. (2007). Grammar-Based Teaching: A Practitioner's Perspective. TESL-EJ. 11(2). URL: <http://www.tesl-ej.org/ej42/a1.pdf> [Accessed 12.02.2022]. [in English]
3. Ellis, R. (2006). Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective. TESOL Quarterly, 40(1), pp. 83-107. [in English]

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June-2025

4. Larsen-Freeman, D. (2001). Teaching Grammar. In M. Celce-Murcia (ed.), Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (pp. 251-266). Boston, MA: Thomson/ Heinle. [in English]
5. Larsen-Freeman, D. (2009). Teaching and Testing Grammar. In Long, M.H. & Doughty, C. J. (ed.), The Handbook of Language Teaching (pp. 518-542). Malde, MA: Wiley Blackwell. [in English]
6. Long, M.H. & Doughty, C. J. (2009). The Handbook of Language Teaching. Malde, MA: Wiley Blackwell. 781 p. [in English]
7. Mulroy, D. (2003). The war against grammar. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook. Publishers, Inc. 144 p. [in English]
8. Swan, M. (2005). Legislation by hypothesis: the case of task-based instruction. Applied Linguistics, 26 (3), pp. 376–401. [in English]
9. Thornbury, S. (2002). How to Teach Grammar. Pearson. 4th Edition. 189 p. [in English]

