



TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

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Abstract: *This article is dedicated to a new grammar teaching approach – context-based teaching. In order to be proficient at four language skills, having a good understanding of grammar is required. However, learning grammar rules may be difficult, confusing or tiring. This paper, therefore, aims to shed some light on the analysis of context-based approach and discusses its importance in language training. In addition to this, one sample lesson using above-mentioned method will be presented to illustrate and clarify opinions.*

Key words: *Grammar, context-based teaching approach, motivation, texts, paradigm, grammar rules, authentic materials.*

Introduction

Grammar is one of the most important parts of language teaching and learning, since it can help language learners to become more accurate and produce error-free sentences which make the speech easy to perceive and do not cause any confusion. Incorrect use of grammar does not convey meaningful message and it is difficult to communicate with others. According to David Crystal, grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English [1]. However, acquiring grammatical knowledge might be boring and a never-ending process. The main reason behind it is that grammar rules are usually complex and have numerous exceptions. This may lead to lessening students' motivation to learn. This paper, hence, offers a new teaching method – teaching grammar in context. Since a shift from the paradigm of language as a formal system to the paradigm of the language user has taken place in linguistics, context has become a key notion in language study. Language learners' interest in how language is used in real life situations and what people mean when they exploit its meaning potential has grown [2; 59].

If context-based teaching is employed to grammar teaching, learners' competency of using correct grammar and their accuracy will improve. Teaching grammar in context will assist students in learning grammar structures and forms. Learners will be more successful communicators if they master grammatical norms in context [3; 301-309].

Firstly, most language learners fail to utilize grammar rules correctly in speaking, even though they have learned and understand them. Context-based teaching approach can be a good solution to this major problem as it helps students to know about how



grammar rules they have learned operate in real life and conversation. According to Harmer, the teacher's primary duty while teaching grammar is to demonstrate to the students what the language means and how it is used; and must also demonstrate to the students what the grammatical form of the new language is and how it is stated and written [4]. Teaching grammar in context allows students to grasp how language works, which improves their communication abilities. Students need to comprehend how native speakers use the new language, and the best method to achieve this is to provide language in context.

Another point that should be mentioned is that students' motivation to learn the target language is also crucial. Learning grammar structures, rules might be tiring and cause demotivation [5; 77-79]. By teaching grammar in context, this problem could be resolved. The reasons behind it are that grammar rules are easier and simpler to learn and use in speaking when this approach is applied. Another reason is that materials related to context-based teaching include different texts and dialogues, which could be interesting for learners. As Richards puts it, in CLT classroom materials typically make use of authentic texts to create interest and to provide valid models of language [6; 24].

In order to clarify and illustrate above-mentioned opinions, let's look at the following sample lesson and discuss it. Firstly, the following authentic text (text which was not written specifically for teaching) is chosen to teach passive voice form of past simple.

The Titanic

The Titanic was built in 1912. It was designed in a new way and it was thought to be unsinkable. Because of this, it wasn't given enough lifeboats for the passengers and crew. The hull was damaged by a collision with a huge iceberg and it sank very fast. A total amount of 1 513 people was drowned that day. Due to this disaster, new international safety laws were passed and Ice Patrol was established.

The lesson consists of 5 steps.

Step 1

After distributing the text to students, they are given some time to look up the new words in the given text so as not to have a problem with vocabulary during the lesson.

Step 2

Teacher asks the students to read the text and answer these questions: *When was the Titanic built? Why wasn't it given enough lifeboats? What was established due to the disaster?* The students check their answers in pairs before the teacher checks them in open class.

Step 3

The teacher asks the students to turn their paper over, and writes these two sentences on the blackboard: (1) *The hull was damaged by a collision with a huge iceberg.* (2) *A collision with a huge iceberg damaged the hull.* Then the teacher asks which of these sentences have been written in the text and differences between them. The teacher instructs construction of passive voice and active voice identifying (1) as a passive voice and (2) as an active voice.



Step 4

The teacher asks students to find other examples of passive voice and discuss in pairs. Upon checking this task, students learn other rules of passive voice form of past simple.

Step 5

Students are required to write and tell a story they have experienced using passive voice. This task helps students to use the grammar rules appropriately they have learned.

It should be noted that all methods and approaches have advantageous sides and drawbacks. The approach being discussed is not exception here, it has also some advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of context-based teaching approach:

- enhances students' competence of using grammar rules in real conversation;
- increases students' motivation to learn language;
- opportunity to learn new vocabulary;
- improves communication abilities;
- boost learners' language skills, especially reading.

Disadvantages of the approach:

- requires students to have basic knowledge;
- cannot be applied for beginners.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the goal of most English language learners is to gain the ability to use the language either in spoken or written form in an appropriate way. Hence, using context-based teaching approach in grammar lessons is helpful, since it is a good way to instruct students how to use grammar correctly in conversation and the language operates. Apart from that, it is also a good way to maintain the interest of pupils to the grammar, because grammar in context is motivating. Furthermore, by this approach not only do students learn grammar rules, but also they boost their vocabulary through reading texts.



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