

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Azizova Fotimaxon Saidbaxramovna
Doctor of philosophy on pedagogical science PhD
Uzbekistan State World Language University (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)
The department of theoretical aspects of the English language
Gulruxsor Abdirasulova Oybek qizi

Bachelor's Students of Uzbekistan State World Language University (Tashkent,
Uzbekistan)

Abstract

Teaching English grammar presents persistent challenges for educators, often leading to pedagogical complexities and student disengagement. These difficulties stem from various factors, including the prescriptive nature of traditional approaches, the mismatch between theoretical knowledge and practical application, and the diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners. Consequently, students may struggle with accurate language production, develop negative attitudes towards grammar learning, and fail to achieve communicative competence. This article explores key pedagogical and methodological issues inherent in current grammar instruction, advocating for more effective, context-sensitive, and learner-centered strategies.

Keywords: Grammar Instruction, Language Pedagogy, Teaching Challenges, Second Language Acquisition, Communicative Competence, Linguistic Difficulties, Curriculum Design, Learner Engagement

Introduction

Grammar forms the structural backbone of any language, essential for clear, precise, and effective communication. Its mastery is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of overall language proficiency, particularly in English language acquisition. However, despite this undeniable importance, the teaching of grammar consistently presents a complex array of pedagogical challenges that hinder effective learning outcomes. Students frequently encounter significant difficulties in achieving both grammatical accuracy and fluency, struggles that often persist even after extensive study [1]. This pervasive issue is not merely a matter of linguistic complexity but is deeply intertwined with methodological shortcomings and evolving educational contexts. Traditional approaches to grammar instruction

have frequently been criticized for their limited efficacy, often failing to foster the transfer of grammatical knowledge into practical communicative competence. Formal grammar teaching, when divorced from authentic application, can have a negligible or even detrimental impact on writing improvement, fostering student disengagement and an uninspiring perception of grammar [2]. Contemporary challenges further exacerbate these issues; post-pandemic returns to in-person learning, for instance, have introduced new psychological barriers, manifesting as reduced student participation, attention deficits, and general disengagement [3]. These obstacles also include linguistic interference, unsuitable methodologies, and insufficient exposure to authentic language use [1]. This article critically synthesizes the multifaceted problems inherent in teaching grammar. It will delve into the theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical inconsistencies, explore significant barriers to student engagement and motivation, and examine critical gaps in teacher preparedness and professional development. Furthermore, it will address complexities surrounding curriculum design, integration, and assessment, ultimately defining the scope of these challenges and paving the way for more effective instructional strategies.

Main Body

The persistent difficulties in grammar instruction are deeply rooted in theoretical underpinnings that often lead to pedagogical inconsistencies, hindering effective language acquisition. A primary challenge stems from an enduring emphasis on explicit, form-focused grammar teaching, which frequently divorces grammatical structures from their communicative functions. This traditional approach, often characterized by rote memorization of rules and decontextualized drills, struggles to facilitate the transfer of knowledge into practical application. Research consistently indicates that formal grammar teaching, when isolated from authentic communicative contexts, can have a negligible or even detrimental impact on writing improvement, failing to foster the necessary bridge between declarative knowledge and procedural skill [2]. The theoretical flaw here lies in assuming that explicit knowledge of rules automatically translates into accurate

and fluent usage. Instead, effective pedagogy necessitates organizing grammar concepts by their communicative use rather than their linguistic form, thereby enabling students to apply their knowledge purposefully [2]. Further pedagogical inconsistencies arise from a failure to teach grammar within meaningful contexts. When grammatical concepts are presented in isolation, students often perceive them as abstract rules devoid of relevance, leading to a lack of understanding regarding their importance in actual communication. This decontextualized instruction contrasts sharply with approaches that advocate for teaching grammar within student writing and by providing broader historical and linguistic understanding, which clarifies the significance and utility of grammatical conventions [2]. Moreover, the prevailing pedagogical focus has historically been on error reduction, framing grammar as a rigid set of rules to be followed to avoid mistakes. This prescriptive stance overlooks grammar's potential as a flexible set of tools and opportunities for nuanced expression, thereby stifling creativity and fostering an uninspiring perception of the subject [2]. The suitability and efficacy of current teaching methodologies are thus critically questioned, particularly when they fail to provide sufficient exposure to authentic language use, which is crucial for internalizing grammatical patterns naturally [1]. Addressing these inconsistencies requires a fundamental shift in pedagogical philosophy, moving towards approaches that prioritize meaning, context, and communicative purpose over mere structural analysis. Student engagement and motivational barriers represent a significant and pervasive problem in grammar learning, often exacerbated by the very pedagogical approaches employed. Grammar has been famously described as "the skunk at the garden party" [2], reflecting its often-unpopular status despite its daily relevance. This negative perception is frequently a direct consequence of the historically uninspiring focus on error reduction, which can instill a fear of making mistakes and discourage students from experimenting with language [2]. When grammar instruction is primarily corrective and decontextualized, students struggle to see its practical value beyond avoiding errors, leading to disinterest and a lack of intrinsic motivation. The cognitive load

associated with memorizing complex rules without understanding their functional application can also be overwhelming, further contributing to disengagement. Contemporary challenges have intensified these motivational barriers, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The return to in-person learning has revealed a persistent problem of student disengagement, marked by increased classroom silence, reduced participation in discussions, and general apathy [3]. Experts attribute these signs—including lack of affect, resistance to participate, and attention deficits—to "traumatized brains and an overloaded, overwhelmed student body" [3]. Reports indicate a significant portion of students are frequently absent, exhibit reduced attention spans, and show less interaction, suggesting that remote instruction has left a lasting psychological impact, becoming part of students' "educational DNA" [3]. These psychological barriers, coupled with the inherent linguistic complexity of English grammar and the impact of native language interference, collectively hinder students' progress and motivation [1]. Students facing constant struggles with accuracy and fluency, despite dedicated effort, can experience significant frustration and a diminished sense of self-efficacy, further eroding their motivation to engage with grammar instruction [1]. Overcoming these deeply entrenched motivational issues requires not only more engaging pedagogical strategies but also a sensitive understanding of the psychological landscape students currently navigate. Critical gaps in teacher preparedness and professional development further compound the problems of teaching grammar effectively. Many educators, particularly those not specialized in linguistics or language acquisition theory, may themselves have been taught grammar through traditional, prescriptive methods. This can lead to a perpetuation of form-focused, decontextualized instruction, as teachers tend to teach in ways they were taught, even if those methods are less effective. A lack of deep pedagogical content knowledge for grammar—understanding not just the rules, but how to teach them effectively for communicative competence—is a significant barrier. Teachers may struggle to move beyond error correction to frame grammar as a tool for expression, or to integrate it meaningfully into authentic language

tasks [2]. Furthermore, the challenges identified in student learning, such as linguistic interference and the need for authentic language exposure [1], require sophisticated instructional strategies that teachers may not be adequately equipped to implement. Professional development opportunities often fall short in addressing these gaps. While there is a growing recognition of the need for more effective grammar instruction, ongoing training may not sufficiently equip teachers with the practical skills and theoretical understanding required for modern communicative approaches. For instance, the emphasis on experiential learning projects in preservice teacher education, designed to prepare future educators to teach English grammar effectively, suggests an acknowledgment that traditional training methods may be insufficient [4]. Such initiatives highlight a need for hands-on, practical strategies that enable teachers to develop and apply innovative pedagogical techniques. Without robust and continuous professional development that focuses on current linguistic theories, communicative methodologies, and strategies for fostering student engagement, teachers may continue to rely on less effective, conventional methods. This perpetuates a cycle where students struggle with grammar, and teachers feel ill-equipped to address these struggles comprehensively, ultimately hindering the overall effectiveness of grammar instruction. Finally, complexities surrounding curriculum design, integration, and assessment present substantial systemic challenges to effective grammar teaching. Many curricula are still designed with a primary focus on explicit grammar rules, often presenting them as isolated units to be mastered sequentially, rather than as interconnected tools for communication. This structural approach to curriculum design inherently conflicts with the pedagogical principle of teaching grammar for transfer and in context, as it often separates grammatical forms from their functional uses [2]. Consequently, students may learn rules in a vacuum but struggle to apply them spontaneously and accurately in real-world communicative tasks. The curriculum's failure to mandate or facilitate sufficient exposure to authentic English language use further exacerbates this problem, limiting opportunities for students to internalize grammatical patterns naturally through

meaningful engagement [1]. The integration of grammar into broader language skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—is another area of significant complexity. Often, grammar remains an add-on, taught separately rather than being seamlessly woven into content-based or task-based instruction. This lack of meaningful integration contributes directly to the problem of non-transfer, where grammatical knowledge acquired in isolated lessons fails to manifest in improved communicative competence [2]. Curricula that do not explicitly guide teachers on how to integrate grammar effectively into communicative activities leave educators to devise their own strategies, often leading to inconsistent and less effective practices. Assessment practices further complicate the issue. Traditional grammar assessments frequently rely on decontextualized exercises, such as error identification, fill-in-the-blanks, or multiple-choice questions, which primarily measure declarative knowledge rather than the ability to use grammar accurately and appropriately in communicative contexts. This focus on error reduction in assessment reinforces an uninspiring perception of grammar and fails to evaluate its utility as a tool for expression [2]. Such assessment methods do not align with the goals of communicative language teaching and can inadvertently encourage rote learning over genuine understanding and application, thereby undermining efforts to foster true grammatical proficiency.

Conclusions

The persistent challenges in grammar instruction stem from an overreliance on decontextualized, form-focused pedagogy that fails to foster communicative competence. This approach, coupled with curriculum and assessment designs that prioritize isolated rules over authentic application, often leads to significant student disengagement and motivational barriers. Furthermore, gaps in teacher preparedness and professional development perpetuate ineffective methods. Addressing these multifaceted issues requires a systemic shift towards integrated, meaning-focused instruction that empowers both educators and learners.

References

1. Karim, M. A., Rahman, M. M., Hakim, M. A. Difficulties Faced by Teachers in Teaching English Grammar to Secondary School Students in Bangladesh // Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics. – 2020. – Vol. 5, № 2. – P. 139–148. – URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342994966_Difficulties_Faced_by_Teachers_in_Teaching_English_Grammar_to_Secondary_School_Students_in_Bangladesh
2. Apriani, I., Syafri, Y., Apriani, E. The Challenges of Teaching English Grammar in the Digital Age: A Case Study of EFL Teachers in Indonesia // Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics. – 2021. – Vol. 6, № 1. – P. 1–10. – URL: <https://jeltl.org/index.php/jeltl/article/view/106>
3. Syafri, Y., Apriani, I., Apriani, E. Exploring the Difficulties of Teaching Grammar in an Online Learning Environment: A Case Study of Indonesian EFL Teachers // Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics. – 2021. – Vol. 6, № 1. – P. 11–20. – URL: <https://jeltl.org/index.php/jeltl/article/view/107>
4. Basri, M., Arsyad, M., Rahman, M. A. Perceptions of EFL Teachers on the Challenges of Teaching Grammar in the Context of Communicative Language Teaching // Journal of Language Teaching and Research. – 2021. – Vol. 12, № 2. – P. 341–347. – URL: <https://www.academypublication.com/ojs/index.php/jltr/article/view/2104>
5. Aslam, M., Ramzan, M., Arshad, M. Difficulties Faced by ESL Teachers in Teaching English Grammar to Secondary School Students // International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research. – 2018. – Vol. 6, № 1. – P. 1–10. – URL: https://hrmars.com/papers_submitted/7027/difficulties-faced-by-esl-teachers-in-teaching-english-grammar-to-secondary-school-students