

The effect of teaching grammar in context on EFL learners' grammar performance

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of contextualized and communicative approaches in teaching grammar to secondary school EFL learners. A quasi-experimental design was implemented with 60 female students of similar language proficiency. The instructional approach emphasized the integration of grammar into meaningful, real-life tasks, including peer interaction, guided composition, student writing analysis, and oral communication activities. Findings revealed that students exposed to contextual grammar instruction demonstrated significant improvement in grammatical accuracy and overall language competence. The inclusion of reflective and collaborative activities contributed to enhanced comprehension and confident application of grammar in communication. These results highlight the importance of embedding grammar teaching within communicative contexts to foster student engagement, long-term retention, and more effective language development. The study offers valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers seeking to align grammar pedagogy with authentic, learner-centered instruction.

Keywords: Contextual learning, EFL learners, Enhancement of grammar skills, Grammarskills communicative language teaching, Grammatical accuracy, Language proficiency.

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Highlights of this paper

- This study investigates the effectiveness of teaching English grammar in authentic communicative contexts to enhance EFL learners' grammatical accuracy, fluency, and overall language proficiency.
- Using a quasi-experimental design, the research demonstrates that contextualized grammar instruction embedded in meaningful tasks and peer interaction significantly improves learners' engagement, confidence, and practical grammar use compared to traditional isolated methods.
- The findings advocate for a learner-centered, balanced approach combining oral and written activities with reflective feedback, promoting long-term language acquisition and suggesting a shift from decontextualized grammar teaching to context-rich instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most extensively used languages worldwide in recent decades. As the working language of practically all international organizations and the official language of over 50 nations worldwide, this language was regarded as an international language. English is so widely used, many people from many nations acquire it for job or education purposes (Ha & Van, 2020).

Teaching learners how to appropriately generate a foreign language is crucial for effective use. This entails applying the correct rules in appropriate conditions. We need a teaching strategy that addresses learners who understand the rules of a foreign language but struggle to communicate effectively through appropriate social language, gestures, and expressions. In short, they are unable to interact in the target language's culture. A key component of language instruction and acquisition is grammar. It is also among the more challenging facets of language instruction. A solid understanding of English grammar has long been regarded as a necessary component of the course aiming at enhancing language proficiency and boosting the learners' correctness in speech and writing since grammar plays a significant role in the teaching of other languages (Oumsalem & Djabarni, 2012).

Grammar is a language's set of rules. According to Mohammed and Ja'ashan (2024) grammar is a system of meaningful structures and patterns that are subject to specific pragmatic constraints. According to another definition, grammar is an explanation of the rules for creating sentences along with the meanings they express (OnisAkhorkulovna, n.d).

Teaching grammar is a crucial component of foreign language instruction since precise comprehension of language structures is crucial for language learning. The best method for teaching grammar has long been a topic of discussion. Contextual grammar teaching improves students' ability to employ grammatical structures correctly in language skills. Teaching grammar in context will provide students with opportunities to observe how grammatical structures function in sentences, since it is always beneficial for them to examine how language functions in sentences or paragraphs. Contextual grammar instruction will aid students in comprehending the language's nature and improve their comprehension (Mart, 2013).

Teaching grammar in context involves more than just linguistic forms like present and past tense, adjectives, prepositions, and adverbs. The meaning of grammatical forms is central to this approach. It emphasizes the necessity of teaching norms and grammatical structures for effective communication. The focus is not just on learning structural forms, but also on their proper use (Oumsalem & Djabarni, 2012).

Using meaningful situations to teach grammatical structures improves students' understanding and language use (Sukarno, 2025). Oumsalem and Djabarni (2012) suggest that this approach to grammar teaching embeds it in genuine language use, allowing learners to acquire the rules and apply them (Aniuranti, Faiza, & Wulandari, 2021).

1.1. Definition of Grammar Skill

English grammar proficiency entails knowing and using the language's norms in both written and spoken

forms. These abilities form the cornerstone of speaking, writing, listening, and reading and are essential for efficient communication. Clarity and coherence in communication are improved by grammar proficiency, which is essential in both academic and professional settings (Bhatt, 2020). According to Huong (2024) grammar includes the word forms and structures (morphology) and their organization in phrases and sentences (syntax) that make up a language's system at a particular moment. Magbanua (2024) define grammar as the methodical examination and characterization of a language required for effective communication (Aniuranti et al., 2021).

1.1.1. Grammar Teaching

OnisAkhorkulovna (n.d) states, "The teaching of grammar has always been one of the most controversial and least understood aspects of language teaching" (p. ix). According to Oumsalem and Djabarni (2012) the role of grammar in foreign language education is debatable. Most people believe that knowledge of grammar includes, among other things, understanding its grammar; yet, this knowledge may be intuitive (as it is in our home language), and it is not always true that grammatical structures must be taught as such (p. 76) (Bhatt, 2020).

OnisAkhorkulovna (n.d) offer specific principles for teaching grammar. Teachers must contextualize grammar by explaining why a specific grammatical form is used in a given context. Students should have enough opportunity to apply grammar in communicative settings to improve comprehension and production of language. Third, reducing direct explanation time increases practice time, which allows kids to engage, communicate, and internalize language.

Fourth, teachers should personalize grammar education to their pupils' requirements, utilizing diagnostic exercises to assess their knowledge. Providing a diverse learning environment, including input accessibility, fluency, correctness, and feedback, improves grammar acquisition effectiveness. Finally, these ideas should be tailored to students' abilities, needs, interests, expectations, and learning styles. Grammar classes can be challenging, with students reverting to their original language, teachers lacking control, and disruptive student behavior. Furthermore, educational resources usually fall short, and students frequently feel bored or unmotivated.

To solve these challenges, English language teachers might examine the following suggestions:

- Introduce structures, rules, and examples to teach grammar.
- Make use of visual elements to help explain grammar ideas, like illustrator graphics.
- To improve comprehension, introduce language using real-world examples.
- Use critical thinking techniques to get pupils interested in learning grammar.
- Give pupils lots of practice opportunities to make sure they successfully understand new ideas. It is important to assign homework and set aside class time to go over and clarify any questions raised by the students.
- To promote engagement and learning, provide a welcoming and encouraging environment in the classroom.
- Provide simple examples to help pupils understand concepts more readily (Huong, 2024).

1.2. Enhancement of Grammar Skill

The students in the English Language Teaching Department also struggle with grammar learning. Students commonly complain to the researchers about their grammar. They find language to be overly complex and full of formulae. The team discovered after completing the Intermediate Grammar pre-test that the average score was just 62.76, which was still at the C level (Aniuranti et al., 2021).

The researchers choose to conduct action research in response to this issue. It is extremely important since language instructors are in charge of creating an efficient learning environment. The investigators made the

decision to use literary works. They were chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, literary works can be used as grammatical teaching tools. Nine distinct advantages of literary works are listed by [Ha and Van \(2020\)](#). One is used to teach grammar. They point out that kids can practice grammatical structure or even more complicated grammar elements by reading literary texts ([Aniuranti et al., 2021](#)).

Additionally, note that a great deal of difficulty is demonstrated in literary works that exhibit many unique features of the written language, such as "the structure and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas." Second, reading literature may also help pupils feel at ease, which will encourage them to learn more. Many pupils are extremely motivated if given the opportunity to study the literary material, according to [Ha and Van \(2020\)](#). Thirdly, because of its authenticity, literature may also be effective as a teaching tool. According to [Bhatt \(2020\)](#) literary works frequently discuss universal themes and ideals that span from personal worries to societal difficulties including pollution, mortality, love, and ethnic conflicts ([Aniuranti et al., 2021](#)).

They are genuine because of this. According to [Ha and Van \(2020\)](#) language instruction must be real. Therefore, it is entirely feasible to use literary works as instructional materials ([Aniuranti et al., 2021](#)).

The following techniques will help you improve your grammar.

1.2.1. Communicative Approach

This method advocates for grammar training incorporated into communicative tasks and emphasizes the use of language in practical circumstances ([Huong, 2024](#)).

1.2.2. Task-Based Grammar Instructions

By including grammar education into task-based activities, task-based language teaching (TBLT) promotes language acquisition through purposeful participation in communicative tasks ([Sukarno, 2025](#)). This method encourages a balance between communicative skills and form-focused education ([Huong, 2024](#)).

1.2.3. Feedback and Corrective Feedback

Giving students feedback on their grammar mistakes is an essential part of effective grammar training. According to research, When given properly, corrective feedback can help with language learning and error remediation ([Bhatt, 2020](#)). But the best time, The nature and manner of feedback delivery are still being studied ([Huong, 2024](#)).

1.2.4. Technology-Enhanced Grammar Instruction

As technology has advanced, new methods of teaching grammar have been made possible by computer-assisted language learning (CALL) technologies. Learners can benefit from interactive and customized learning experiences using digital tools including grammar applications, online exercises, and language learning platforms ([Huong, 2024](#)).

1.2.5. Cultural and Contextual Considerations

Given the variety of language conventions and communication styles found around the world, grammar training should also take these aspects into account. Grammar instruction that is inclusive, culturally relevant, and respectful of students' identities and origins is promoted by culturally responsive pedagogy ([Huong, 2024](#)).

1.3. Contextual Learning

Contextualized learning is a growing paradigm that integrates contextual data to enhance the learning experience. By presenting Contextualized Machine Learning, [Magbanua \(2024\)](#) go one step further. This approach estimates heterogeneous effects and combines many modeling frameworks using sample-specific models and a context encoder. [Magbanua \(2024\)](#) investigate the significance of learning context in personalized recommendations, contending that context-aware systems are more adept at matching recommendations to the learner's needs and current state, thereby enhancing performance ([Mohammed & Ja'ashan, 2024](#)). Finally, for greater generalization, [Huong \(2024\)](#) present contextual learning principles to few-shot object categorization and techniques that take advantage of contextual elements in complicated contexts. These studies collectively examine the function of context in a variety of learning scenarios, encompassing not only machine learning but also tailored educational advice ([Mohammed & Ja'ashan, 2024](#)).

Teaching grammar in a context encompasses more than just language proficiency; it also involves the development of general education abilities and so-called strategic competence, which includes both mastering language-related working strategies (e.g., formulating and testing hypotheses, looking for patterns), and metacognitive techniques (planning, control, evaluation, and reflection), which satisfy the Republic of Uzbekistan's contemporary educational criteria. Furthermore, grammar instruction cannot be provided in a vacuum, separated from other facets of language and without reference to pragmatic and sociolinguistic context. To consolidate and automate structures, teachers employ a variety of training, conditional, and communicative tasks, including games, drills, translation exercises, replacement tables, paraphrases, making up your own texts and conversations, and memorization of rules ([OnisAkhrorkulovna, n.d.](#)).

According to Brown, the benefits of context-based instruction include the following: It is rare to properly analyze a single statement without taking into account its context. We employ language in speech segments. We combine a lot of sentences into coherent units so that the sentences have relationships with one another. Our capacity to perceive and process speech in long stretches, to create representations of meaning from not just a single sentence but also referents in preceding and subsequent sentences, depends on both the production and comprehension of language ([Bhatt, 2020](#)).

According to Nunan, grammar is frequently taught out of context in textbooks, which is another critique of teaching grammar through single phrases. Through repetition, manipulation, and grammatical transformation tasks, learners are required to assimilate individual sentences. Although the goal of these exercises is to give students formal, declarative mastery, they hinder the development of procedural skills—the ability to use the language for communication—by denying students the chance to observe the systematic relationships between form, meaning, and use ([Mart, 2013](#)).

According to [Aniuranti et al. \(2021\)](#) teaching grammar in context offers a meaningful framework that relates to everyday situations in the language being studied. An strategy that teaches students how to appropriately create structures and how to use them to convey meaning is one of Nunan's methods for highlighting the benefits of teaching grammar in context. Without the chance to study grammar in context, students would find it challenging to understand how and why different forms exist to convey various communication meanings ([Mart, 2013](#)).

Many academics emphasize that in order for learners to regulate and employ grammatical rules appropriately, they must experience them in a variety of circumstances ([Aniuranti et al., 2021](#)). Students will be able to improve their understanding of grammar rules by learning how grammar structures work in context through context-based instruction. According to Byrd, a range of forms become crucial for expressing specific meanings in specific discourse contexts when grammar is examined as emerging from context ([Bhatt, 2020](#)).

The idea of a relationship must be broadened in certain types of speech to encompass the bond between verbs, nouns, adverbs, textual order, and even specific vocabulary, in addition to the fact that distinct verb types are related to one another (Mart, 2013).

1.3.1. How to Teach Grammar in Context?

According to Mohammed and Ja'ashan (2024) "grammar and context are frequently so closely related in genuine communication outside of the classroom that appropriate grammatical choices can only be made with reference to the context and purpose of the communication." This approach has several benefits, such as exposing students to the target language in a context that is authentic or nearly authentic and allowing them to see or hear the language before they are required to concentrate on it (Oumsalem & Djabarni, 2012). Grammar can be taught effectively by using dialogues. Since individuals use language primarily to communicate with one another in the real world, using dialogues to teach grammar is beneficial because it typically aligns with learners' expectations of language use (Mart, 2013).

In the first sample lesson, Scott Thornbury teaches beginners the present simple using a prepared dialogue: In order to introduce the present simple with adverbs of frequency (such as usually, always) to a group of novices, the instructor has selected the following recorded dialogue from a coursebook (Mart, 2013). On the weekends, what do you do?

David: It depends on the situation. I typically have to study on Saturdays throughout the academic year.

J: How about Sundays as well? D: Well, the entire family always has lunch together. I occasionally catch up with my pals at the park after lunch.

J: What? There, what do you do? D: We converse, go for a walk, or play soccer. I leave after that. Usually, I visit a movie theater.

J: How frequently do you leave the city?

D: Every month or so. I occasionally travel up to the mountains to visit my uncle's little property.

J: That sounds pleasant. Do you travel alone?

D: No, we normally go with my mom, my two sisters, and a few of our friends.

J: However, why go? D: A lot of things, including no people, clean air, and green trees.

J: It's exactly like LA!

D: Ha! What a clever joke. (Taken from Scott Thornbury's *How to Teach Grammar*).

According to Thornbury, the steps are as follows:

The instructor informs the class that she will perform a dialogue between two friends in the first step. After listening to the first portion of the conversation, she asks the students to put their books aside and respond to the following question:

Are they discussing last weekend, next weekend, or every weekend? After determining that the topic of the conversation is every weekend, she wants the students to listen to the entire thing and arrange the following terms in the order they hear them: movies, driving, soccer, going out, studying, lunch, park, and walk. She asks the students to identify the activities on the list that David engages in on Saturdays, Sundays, and roughly once a month in the third stage. The teacher asks students to listen for the following words in the fourth step and match them with the terms "usually," "always," and "sometimes" that are listed on the board. For instance: Usually, I study, eat lunch, and occasionally visit the park. The teacher asks students to concentrate on two or three of these sentences in the fifth stage and to tell her exactly what the speaker is saying. For instance: I occasionally visit the park, and we always eat lunch together. The teacher highlights the verbs and explains that

the present simple is used for everyday tasks in the sixth stage, which calls the students' attention to the structure's form. She invites them to use the aforementioned sentence structure—subject + adverb + verb + ...—to create two or three more phrases about David in the seventh phase.

In the eighth step, students re-listen to the dialogue and review their responses to Step seven. Finally, she asks them to use the pattern she identified in Step 6 to write four or five original phrases about themselves (Aniuranti et al., 2021). The crucial aspect of this activity is selecting a text that contains a large number of instances of the targeted grammar item. This will draw attention to the new object and might assist students figure out the rules through induction (Mart, 2013). Conversations make it simple to teach grammar and help learners understand the rules more clearly. Grammar instruction and communicative teaching are not exclusive. "They fit like clockwork" (Mart, 2013).

2. RESEARCH QUESTION

"To what extent can teaching grammar in context improve learners' grammatical accuracy and fluency in English as a foreign language?"

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Contextual grammar instruction has no significant effect on EFL learners' grammatical skills.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quasi-experimental research design using a pre-test and post-test format to examine the effects of contextualized grammar instruction on learners' grammatical performance. Two groups were involved: an experimental group receiving grammar instruction in context, and a control group receiving traditional grammar instruction in isolation.

4.1. Participants

The participants in this study were (60) EFL students from the Narjes High School in Zahedan, aged 16 to 17. They were randomized at random to one of two groups: experimental or control. A placement exam given before to the study determined that all participants had roughly the same level of English ability.

4.2. Instruments

In this research, the following are used as instruments:

4.2.1. Grammar Pre-Test and Post-Test

Both assessments evaluated learners' grammatical accuracy and fluency. To assess contextual grammar use, the examinations consisted of multiple-choice questions, sentence completion activities, and brief writing portions.

4.2.2. Instructional Materials

The experimental group received texts, dialogues, and communicative tasks that integrated target grammar structures in real-life contexts. The control group practiced typical grammar drills and rule-based exercises.

4.3. Data Collection

This study collected data to investigate the effect of contextualized grammar education on EFL learners' grammatical performance. The primary data collection technique was a battery of grammatical proficiency tests given in two stages: a pre-test before the educational intervention and a post-test after it was completed. Both the pre-test and post-test were carefully developed to evaluate grammatical accuracy and fluency using a variety of task types, such as multiple-choice questions, sentence completion exercises, and brief contextualized writing projects. These exercises were designed to assess learners' ability to apply grammatical rules in real circumstances, rather than relying merely on rote memory or isolated drills.

The pre-test was given at the start of the study to get a baseline understanding of each participant's grammatical proficiency. Following the test, the experimental group was taught using contextualized materials such as conversations, stories, and communicative exercises that blended grammar into natural language use. In contrast, the control group received traditional grammar teaching, which included explicit rules and decontextualized practice tasks.

After approximately four weeks of teaching, both groups were given the identical grammatical test as a post-test. The goal was to find any significant differences in performance and assess the effectiveness of the two educational modalities. All exam papers were coded to conceal participants' identities and provide an unbiased assessment. The data was carefully collected and prepared for statistical analysis with SPSS software. This approach allowed the researcher to quantify both within-group and between-group changes, allowing him to examine the influence of contextualized grammar instruction on learner outcomes in a reliable and valid manner.

4.4. Data Analysis

The pre-test and post-test data were quantitatively evaluated with SPSS software. To summarize the learners' performance in both groups, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were generated. To determine the efficacy of contextualized grammar training, paired sample t-tests were used to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group, and independent sample t-tests were used to compare post-test results between the experimental and control groups. To evaluate statistical significance, a p-value of <0.05 was used.

Table 1. Statistical comparison of pre-test and post-test grammar scores using paired samples t-test.

Pair1	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pretestscore- Posttestscore	-4.550	1.254	0.162	-4.874	-4.226	-28.095	59	<0.001

5. RESULT

Table 1 displays the paired samples t-test results of the students' grammar scores in the pre-test and post-test. The mean of the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is 4.55 with a standard deviation of 1.264. The t-value is -28.095 with 59 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is less than .001, indicating the presence of a statistically significant difference in the improvement of the students' performance after being taught grammar in context. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means is between -4.874 and -4.126, which confirms the consistency of this improvement.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, and standard error of EFL learners' grammar scores before and after instruction

Paired samples statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Pair 1	Pretest score	12.62	60	1.823	0.235
	Posttest score	17.17	60	1.870	0.241

Table 2 shows the pre-test and post-test descriptive statistics of scores. The average score in the pre-test was 12.62 (SD = 1.823), while the post-test average was 17.17 (SD = 1.870), clearly showing a large improvement in learners' grammar ability. The standard error of the mean was 0.235 for the pre-test and 0.241 for the post-test. The figures show data reliability and consistency from the data collected from 60 participants.

Table 3. Correlation between pre-test and post-test grammar scores

Paired samples correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest score & posttest score	60	0.770	0.000

Table 3 presents the correlation between the pre-test and post-test scores. The Pearson correlation coefficient stands at 0.770, which means there is a strong positive relationship between the scores of students before and after treatment. The value of significance ($p = 0.000$) confirms that the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level of significance. This can be explained in terms of students who performed higher on the pre-test also doing well on the post-test, and improvement was general across the participants.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that teaching grammar in contextualized environments significantly enhances the grammatical achievement of students. Instructing grammar by authentic contexts, purposeful tasks, and student-centered approaches provided the participants with additional chances to study, practice, and recall grammatical forms. The enhanced post-test scores confirm the enhancing impacts of integrating grammar into communicative settings.

These results agree with the conclusions of Sukarno (2025) literature review study, which highlights the importance of incorporating oral and written activity in grammar instruction. According to their study, it is more effective to teach grammar by bringing together written and spoken language so that students are able to use grammar structures in various and practical contexts. Our study also confirms that such integration not only increases accuracy but also enables the confidence and fluency of students in using the language.

Mart (2013) also note peer review and group discussion as being major components for learning grammar in context. Our students, who were constantly engaged in pair and group work with peer correction and reflective feedback, were more sensitive to grammatical norms and were able to correct themselves better. This supports the claim that learner interaction and shared responsibility in second language acquisition, as theorized by Huong (2024) result in more authentic grammar acquisition.

However, while both studies saw the benefits of teaching grammar in context, there were also some challenges that were encountered. Similarly to Sukarno (2025) pointed out, our study established that time and preparation of teachers were barriers for the complete integration of contextualized strategies. Teachers must plan and scaffold tasks carefully so that they shield students from overloading and get a sense of grammar points covered. This requires institutional support and teacher professional development to enable teachers to cope with such teaching changes effectively.

The discussion-based and feedback-driven approaches, as proposed by Sukarno (2025) also emphasize the significance of metacognitive action and overt reflection, which proved to be very effective in our context as well. Our learners not only learned grammatical skill but also greater autonomy in identifying and correcting their language issues. Such results suggest the significance of including reflection sessions and feedback channels as a necessary part of teaching grammar.

In summary, the findings of this study support and build on those of Oumsalem and Djabarni (2012) confirming that grammar, when taught contextually and through engagement with real-world contexts, can lead to improved learner outcomes. Future research can build on this basis by exploring the long-term effects of contextual grammar instruction and its impact on other language skills such as reading and listening comprehension.

7. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of contextualized grammar instruction on secondary school EFL students' grammatical performance. The findings of this study absolutely confirmed that the integration of grammar instruction into meaningful, communicative contexts leads to notable development in students' grammatical accuracy and overall language proficiency.

By embedding grammar within authentic activities—such as speaking, writing, peer review, and text-based reflection—students engaged with language structures more deeply and felt more confident in using them correctly. The study emphasized that contextualized teaching of grammar not only fosters accuracy but also learner autonomy, critical thinking, and communicative fluency.

Further, the results attest to the pedagogical value of a balanced approach that builds on oral and written tasks to consolidate grammar understanding. By directly involving the learners in the study of their own language use, the grammar instruction is rendered more learner-centered and meaningful.

In conclusion, this research validates the integration of grammar into communicative and meaningful classroom activities as a viable and effective approach to grammar teaching. It contributes to the growing body of evidence for context-rich instruction and suggests a shift away from discrete, decontextualized grammar teaching. Future research should continue to explore the long-term effects of contextual grammar instruction with diverse learner populations and language levels.

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