Effective Ways Of Teaching Contextualized Grammar In English Class

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Abstract: This article deal with effective ways of teaching contextualized grammar in English classes. This article are discussed different types of communicative grammar games.
Key words: contextualization, authentic texts, interactive grammar, real-life situation, cultural context.

Teaching contextualized grammar in an English class can greatly benefit students' understanding and application of language structures. Here are some effective ways to do so:

Use Authentic Texts: Incorporate authentic materials such as newspaper articles, short stories, poems, or excerpts from novels. Analyze these texts to highlight and explore grammar structures within their natural context.

Task-Based Learning: Design tasks or activities that require the use of specific grammar points in practical situations. For example, role-playing scenarios, problem-solving tasks, or debates that necessitate the application of targeted grammar rules.

Interactive Grammar Games: Introduce grammar through interactive games or activities. Games like word puzzles, grammar bingo, or sentence-building competitions can engage students while reinforcing grammar rules.

Storytelling and Discussions: Utilize storytelling as a way to introduce and practice grammar in context. Engage students in discussions around narratives, asking them to identify and use grammar structures from the story.

Integrated Skills Practice: Combine grammar learning with other language skills. For instance, after teaching a grammar concept, have students read a passage, discuss it in groups, and then write a summary or analysis using the grammar point.

Real-Life Situations: Bring real-life situations into the classroom. Role-play scenarios where students apply grammar rules in practical settings like ordering food in a restaurant or making travel arrangements.

Technology Integration: Leverage technology to access authentic materials or use language learning apps and platforms that provide contextualized grammar exercises and activities.

Peer Interaction and Correction: Encourage peer interaction and correction. Have students work in pairs or groups to discuss and correct each other's grammar usage in context.

Cultural Context: Integrate cultural elements into grammar lessons. Discuss idiomatic expressions, cultural nuances, or language usage tied to specific cultural contexts, making grammar more engaging and relevant.

Feedback and Revision: Provide constructive feedback on students' written and spoken work, focusing on grammar within the context of their communication. Encourage revision to improve grammar usage.

By implementing these strategies, English language instructors can make grammar learning more engaging, practical, and effective for students, allowing them to understand and apply grammar rules within authentic contexts.

Here are three contextual ways of introducing a new grammar form:

Using music and songs - The ideas from a song, the rhythm, and for younger children, even movement can easily captivate the attention of your student. By doing this, students can discover the

grammar by themselves, and the grammar becomes a conversation topic. Remembering past perfect is much easier by connecting it with a song.

You can use My English Pages while you learn how to develop a contextual grammar lesson based on a song. You can start your lesson by speaking while using karaoke and discussing the topic of the song. Then you can switch to listening by sharing a fill-in-the-blanks worksheet for a specific grammar form, which will ultimately lead to grammar discovery and writing, or rewriting sentences.

Short stories or books - For this occasion, you can select a short passage of a book or a short story. If students provide you with their favorite reading material, that's even better. Start by reading and discussing the content. You can then search for a specific grammar form and discuss how is it used in that sentence. You can finish the reading by paraphrasing or reporting the sentence. This kind of grammar discovery is proven to deepen the understanding of the mother tongue and foreign language as well.

To practice writing and speaking you can focus on a specific grammar form - for example, write an essay and put the short story into the past tense, or do an oral exercise where you will change the adverbs in the text to see how the meaning of the sentence changes. There is no end to what you can do with a text - It all depends on your syllabus and student's learning gaps.

Activities with films or video clips - Films and video clips are great tools for students who do not enjoy reading. The instruction can start by watching a short segment of the film, and then providing a transcript. After that, you can highlight the grammar structures and watch it again to hear how are they used in authentic communication. Speaking activities can include a role-play with a specific grammar structure. Writing activities can include creating a storybook, blog post or even a vlog.

Contextualized grammar teaching develops analytical skills in our students, which helps them comprehend and incorporate the language rules. By learning grammar contextually and by using the grammar-discovery approach with our students, we ultimately create autonomous, 21st-century learners.

There are three effective methods in teaching contextualized grammar in teaching foreign languages.

Presentation via a situation.

Presentation via a situation isn't the most fashionable way to teach a language lesson these days. However, I'd argue that there are plenty of reasons not to totally discard 'via a situation lessons' and to have a few good ones up your sleeve. In this post, we'll look at some of those reasons and some classroom ideas.

This is sometimes also referred to as a PPP lesson (Presentation, Practice, Production). We get students interested in the topic of the lesson, we involve them in the building up of a context, (often through the use of pictures or drawings), we elicit examples of the language from that context and then we clarify the meaning, form and pronunciation of this language before going on to practise it.

Both students and teachers get bored with doing things the same way every lesson. Mixing things up keeps teachers motivated and gives them the chance to be creative – if we as teachers are engaged in our lessons they are usually a lot better! Variety also keeps learners engaged because the lessons have not become a series of predictable steps where they know exactly what's coming and when.

If we always, for example, teach language through a text, we may not be catering to all our learners. Some may really enjoy learning language through a text, while for others, the extra reading or listening load may be stressful / distracting. Variety means there is something for everyone at some point.

Presentation via a situation is often criticised for being too teacher-centred, but there's no reason we can't apply guided discovery tasks and techniques in the same way we do to a presentation via a text or Test-Teach-Test lesson when we get to the clarifying meaning, form and pronunciation stage.

Students can forget their books, photocopiers can break down, we can be called in to teach at a moment's notice…but if our lesson doesn't absolutely need much in the way of materials or technology we needn't panic if something unexpected like this happens. With a few simple drawings on the board, a good idea for a situation, and the right techniques, we can still have an effective lesson.
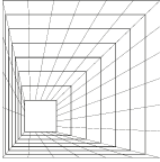
For students who have come to their classes with experience of a much more traditional way of teaching, presentation via a situation has some elements that may feel a little familiar and comfortable. If all your English grammar lessons to date have taken place with the teacher at the front, explaining, being immediately thrown into Test-Teach-Test or Task Based learning could be rather intimidating. Although we still want to maximize student interaction and engagement when we teach grammar through a situation, the more recognizable format may give a little bit of welcome familiarity for these students while they make the transition to new ways of learning and classroom management.

Focusing on language via a situational presentation

Stage 1: Introduce the general topic

Stage 2: Tell a short anecdote with/without illustrations

Stage 3: Identify the focused grammar structure

Stage 4: Continue the lesson with controlled practice and free/production activities

Test-Teach-Test

Now we come to a slightly different approach., the language was put into context and then clarified – we helped students with MPF in the earlier stages of the lesson and then they practised it. Test-Teach-Test turns this on its head a little bit.

We will keep to a lesson where the target language is the past simple positive, as this should make it easier to compare all three approaches.

Not all teachers include a lead-in in a Test-Teach-Test lesson. However, one of the dangers of this approach is that it can be rather dry and decontexualised – so we are going to show how one can be included, and how we can strive to maintain some context when using this approach.

We could very easily use the same lead-in as we did for using a text and using a situation and follow the same procedure.

With Test-Teach-Test our aim is to see what student do and don't already know. It's rare to teach something to a class and find that absolutely no one in it has ever come across anything at all about the structure you are going to teach. Most learners will have had at least limited exposure to most language that they are going to study at their level, before we decide to actively deal with it in the classroom. For this reason, Test-Teach-Test seeks to find out what it is they already know / can do and help them with the parts that they don't know / can't do. If this is done effectively, then it could be argued that Test-Teach-Test is a more efficient use of time than using a context or text, since we are not wasting students' time teaching them things they already know

To find out what they can and can't do, we start with a 'test'. This is usually some kind of controlled practice. In other words, a task where students have no choice but to try and use the target language, so that we can see if they use it correctly or incorrectly.

Focusing on language via task-teach-task

Stage 1: Complete the first set of sentences with the correct article.

Stage 2: In small groups, discuss why you chose your answers and refer to any article rules that you already know.

Stage 3: complete the second set of sentences. Did you apply the same rules or new ones?

Stage 4: With your group, create a list of rules to share with the class.

Teaching Grammar Through Texts

If learners are to achieve a functional command of a second language, they will need to be able to understand and produce not just isolated sentences, but whole texts in that language.

Language is context-sentitive; which is to say that an utterance becomes fully intelligible only when it is placed in its context.

Coursebook texts tend to be specially tailored for ease of understanding and so as to display specific features of grammar. This often gives them a slightly unreal air, as in this example:

(Contrasting Present Progressive – "Going to" Future)
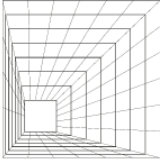
This is Mr West. He has a bag in his left hand. Where is he standing? He is standing at the door of his house.
What is Mr West going to do? He is going to put his hand into his pocket. He is going to take a key out of his pocket. He is going to put the key into the lock.
(from Hornby, A.S. Oxford Progressive English
Course, Oxford University Press, 1954)

Authentic texts or classroom texts?

Advocates of authentic texts argue that not only are such specially written EFL texts uninteresting - and therefore unmotivating - but they misrepresent the way the language is used in real-life contexts. On the other hand, the problems associated with authentic texts cannot be wished away, either, as any teacher who has attempted to use a dense newspaper article with low level students will have discovered. The linguistic load of unfamiliar vocabulary and syntactic complexity can make such texts impenetrable, and ultimately very demotivating.

A compromise position is to take authentic texts, and to simplify them in ways which retain their genuine flavour. This is the approach generally adopted by coursebook writers nowadays. Another alternative is to write classroom texts, but to make them more engaging than the example quoted above. In fact, with only the slightest change, the text about Mr West could be made somewhat more attention-grabbing:

This is Mr West. He has a bag in his left hand. Where is he standing? He is standing at the door of his house. What is Mr West going to do? He is going to put his hand into his pocket. He is going to take a gun out of his pocket. He is going to point the gun at...

The **implications** of this context-sensitive view of language on grammar teaching are that:

• Grammar is best taught and practised in context.

• This means using whole texts as contexts for grammar teaching.

Advantages of using texts:

➢ They provide co-textual information, allowing learners to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar grammatical items from the co-text.

➢ If the texts are authentic they can show how the item is used in real communication.

➢ As well as grammar input, texts provide vocabulary input, skills practice, and exposure to features of text organisation.

- Their use in the classroom is good preparation for independent study.

➢ If the texts come from the students themselves, they may be more engaging and their language features therefore more memorable.

One way we can allow students to see the language in context is for the context to be a text. This can be a written text or a spoken text – students can either read or listen to something which naturally contains good examples of the target language.

Have a look at the following short text. What particular language structure/s do you think it could be used to contextualise?

Hi Sam,

We're here! We arrived about 10am yesterday morning. It was really easy to get from the airport to the centre of the city, so I don't think you'll have any problems. There's a bus that leaves every twenty minutes. It cost about 8 euros.

Our hostel is in the centre, which is great. Yesterday we walked all over the place. We visited a large square, or Placa in Spanish, then we went to see Gaudi's cathedral – which was amazing – ! Later we had some typical Spanish food – batatas bravas and fish and then we watched the sunset at the beach. You are going to love it here – see you on Friday!

Ana

Answer – the text contains lots of examples of the past simple positive (it was easy, it cost, we walked, we visited, went, had etc.), so it could effectively be used to present this tense.

So – let's imagine we are going to use this text to teach the past simple positive. Below are the stages we can go through when presenting language via a text.

As in almost every lesson, we first want to get students interested and engaged, and thinking and speaking in English. In many cases, students may have been operating in their first language up until the minute they enter the classroom. We need to lead them into the lesson and the language.

We also need to motivate students. If the first thing we say in the lesson is, 'Today we're going to learn about the past simple", we may immediately turn off many of the learners who perhaps have negative preconceptions about learning grammar. So firstly, we want to interest students in the topic of the text (not in the topic of the grammar).

In this instance, an example of how to do this might be to put students into pairs to discuss the question, 'Where in the world do you want to visit for a holiday?'

Since we have ensured that we have put the language into a suitable context, we don't want the language, but that context, to be the first thing we get students to focus on – in this case holidays.

In the previous stage, we got students interested in the topic, which should help generate a desire to read it. The text is the context for the language and we need to create motivation / a reason to engage with it – to read it (or to listen to it if it is an audio text). We want them to have a general understanding of the content of the text, before we start focusing on the particular language used in it. For that reason, we set an initial task that is general in nature. This is sometimes called a gist question.

In this example, we could ask students to read quickly (less than one minute) and answer the following questions

Where is he?

Does he like it?

We set the questions (task before text) and students read to find the answer within the given timeframe. We then ask them to quickly check their answer with a partner, before checking the answer as a class. When we have done this, we can either set further reading tasks first, or we can move directly onto tasks which pull the language out of the context so students can start examining the meaning, form and pronunciation of that language.

Up until now, the students have spent time looking at the context but have not zoomed in on the main aim of the lesson – the language used in it. We now want to pull the target language from the context and help students understand it. We can do this by setting another reading task where the answers are all examples of the TL, or by asking students to go back to the text and underline all the examples they can find.

Now we have the students looking at several specific examples of the language and we need to deal with the big 3 (MPF). Of these three, we always want to deal with meaning first. This is because there is little point helping students with the pronunciation or form of some language if they don't actually know what it is for. Then they might be working on how to say something with no clue what it means! The context (in this case the text about a holiday), should have gone some way to helping communicate the meaning of the language (past simple) already. As we read the text, we can begin to get an idea of what the language in it is doing – what its purpose is grammatically. But we need to be sure students understand, and to do this, we can employ CCQs – questions that help clarify meaning and show us as teachers if we need to help students further, or if they have got it. In this case, we want to check they understand the meaning of the past simple.

When we have adequately checked the meaning, we need to help with pronunciation (how to say it), by drilling, and highlighting pronunciation features, and the form (how to make it).

Now that students have a much better idea how this language works and how to say it, we need to give them the opportunity (through practice) to focus on using it
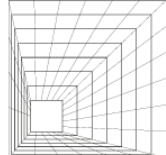
Practice – using the language – now continues, moving more towards improving fluency and students having the freedom to make choices about the language they use. (This stage will follow the task cycle.)

For a summary / visual representation of these stages, see Language Presentation Stages.

Focusing on language via a text

Stage 1: Language in Context

Stage 2: Analyze (function & form)

Stage 3: Practise

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