

THE RECYCLING OF GRAMMAR IN THE CONTEXT OF PROBLEM SOLVING

The research deals with the analysis of the possibilities for developing problem-solving skills alongside language skills in a Grammar lesson. The way of integrating problem solving to develop English language skills in students' classroom activities at the beginning of studying at a linguistic higher educational establishment are illustrated in the fragment of a Grammar lesson; students' feedback and teacher's reflection are described.

The scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, and description have been used in order to define the key notions. The research focuses on context as the situation in which language is used or presented, the context of a piece of language as its surrounding environment. An utterance becomes fully comprehensible only when it is placed in its context and Grammar is best taught and recycled in context. Problem solving is defined as the process of making something into what you want it to be. Some techniques for problem solving to create competitive business environment are expected to be effective in EFL class to develop language skills in classroom activities if adapted. Problem solving can be a part of a Grammar lesson to provide the communicative context encouraging students' interaction in a real-life situation.

Interactive learning techniques give members of the group the opportunity to interact too and pool their Grammar resources to solve the presented problems. The authors of the article offer the fragment of a Grammar lesson using interactive techniques (brainstorming, change your position, three persons' discussion) to master the language skills and turn problems into opportunities foreseeing the proper step-by-step students' involving in the studying process.

The results obtained prove the possibility to integrate the development of problem solving and language skills in a Grammar lesson. The implementation of the suggested activities has proven to be successful and is highly recommended as it involves students in speaking, writing and recycles their Grammar resources, provides an excellent opportunity for genuine communication. The conclusions made underline the possibility to enhance the development of students' foreign language communicative competence in the context of problem solving, as well as shape positive thinkers turning problems into opportunities.

Key words: *problem-solving, language skills, context, a EFL Grammar lesson.*

Preparing students to apply their grammatical knowledge in communicative use is a problem foreign language teachers face. On the other hand, on employee evaluation forms, the category "Problem-Solving Abilities" takes up more room than any other evaluated trait. Employers seek people who can handle problems that are a part of every business. Without realizing it, quite a few problem-solving skills such as identifying the problem, analysing it, researching, brainstorming many options, thinking creatively and logically, forming a hypothesis, selecting the best option, negotiating possible pitfalls, troubleshooting are developed every day [3, p. 1]. However, these skills can be reinforced while teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) at a linguistic higher educational establishment too. So, if you created activities in a EFL Grammar lesson to develop both your students' language and problem solving skills, your students would get more benefit. In addition, Grammar is best taught and practiced in context, and problem solving serves as a meaningful context meeting students' needs.

Teaching grammar in context is not an innovation in education. The recommendations to use context to present and recycle grammar are found in foreign language methodology (Nunan D, Thornbury S., Weaver C., etc). Grammar instruction will be more effective in classrooms where there are opportunities for recycling of language forms, and learners are engaged in tasks designed to make transparent the links between form, meaning, and use. In addition, over time, learners must encounter target language items in an increasingly diverse and complex range of linguistic and experiential environments [2, p. 108], etc. With increasing emphasis on developing problem solving skills alongside language skills to achieve the appropriate level of foreign language communicative competence an important goal would be to improve them in a Grammar lesson.

Thus, the objectives of the article are to analyse the prior research on problem solving as possible context to recycle grammar, at the same time, offer ways to integrate the development of problem solving and language skills in EFL Grammar lesson.

The presented article is PRESETT follow-upers' dissemination after British Council Ukraine – IATEFL Ukraine Professional Development Schools (2015–2016) which was a part of 'New Generation School Teacher' project jointly initiated by the British Council in Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and launched in March 2013 to design the Core Curriculum of English Language Teaching Methodology for Bachelor's Level [1].

Before describing the disseminated ideas, it is important to deal with some basic terms concerning the discussed issue. In General Glossary of Core Curriculum context is the situation in which language is used or presented, for example, a story about a holiday experience could be used as the context to present and practise

past tenses. Werth P. describes the context of a piece of language as its surrounding environment. But this can include as little as the articulatory movements immediately before and after it, or as much as the whole universe with its past and future [6, p. 78–79].

Thornbury S. summarizes that language is context-sensitive, which is to say that an utterance becomes fully intelligible only when it is placed in its context. There are at least three levels or layers of context: the co-text (that is, the surrounding text); the context of situation (that is, the situation in which the text is used) and the context of culture (that is, the culturally significant features of the situation). Each of these types of context can contribute to the meaning of the text. The implications of this context-sensitive view of language on grammar teaching are that: grammar is best taught and recycled in context. This means using whole texts as contexts for grammar teaching [4, p. 89–90].

MacCrimmon and Tailor define a problem as a gap between a current and desired state of affairs – that is the gap between where you are and where you would like to be [5, p. 21]. An example might be when you are dissatisfied with the mark for your Grammar course and wish it were higher. If you do not feel that way or there is nothing you can do about it, however, then, as VanGundy A. states, perhaps you do not have a problem.

If you accept a problem as a gap between a current and a desired state, then problem solving is defined by VanGundy A. as the process of making something into what you want it to be. The more ideas you generate, the closer you will come to transforming an existing problem state into a desired one. Every idea you generate increases the overall probability of reducing this gap and achieving your goal, thus turning problems into new opportunities for you [5, p. 22].

A number of proven techniques for problem solving are offered to trainers and human resource professionals to create competitive business environment (basic idea generation, ticklers, combinations, free association activities, brainstorming, brainwriting, etc) [6]. Some of them are likely to be effective in EFL class to develop language skills in classroom activities at a linguistic higher educational establishment after some adaptation. Several activities used in EFL Grammar lesson (Second year practical grammar course) are described below [1].

Objectives: to practise the Oblique Moods in the communicative context to turn problems into opportunities.

Steps:

1. Warming-up. Have you thought about the meaning of problems, why problems exist, how problems make people feel, if you can resolve all problems by yourselves?

2. Using brainwriting on a sheet of paper present your problems no one can resolve (for example, *exams at University*). On a different sheet of paper draw a smaller circle inside a bigger one. If you can resolve a problem by yourself put it into a smaller circle (for example, *no time for sports*) and problems someone else should help you with in a bigger one (for example, *difficult Grammar structures*). Formulating your problems, make use of the suggested patterns with Subjunctive II: I wish I/ somebody were/ did smth; It is time I were / did smth. For example, *I wish there were no exams at university. It's time I went in for sports, but I don't know what to start with. I wish Grammar were not so difficult.*

3. Throw away the former sheets of paper (as there is nothing you can do; it is not your problem). Exchange the latter ones several times (not knowing who has written them) to turn problems into opportunities generating some solutions and using the suggested patterns with the Oblique Moods: I suggest you should ..., If you did smth, you would ..., If I were you I would ...

4. As a follow-up activity a teacher can use interactive techniques engaging students in pairwork, groupwork to analyse the common problems, select the best option, negotiate possible pitfalls, etc. Moreover, it can be extended into speaking, writing with the brainwritten ideas serving as organizers for simple paragraphs. Lastly, it is a valuable source for further reflection.

For instance, exam problems many students are sure to point out can be formulated in the statement "Exams are not as black as they are painted". To see some opportunities exams offer the interactive technology "change your position" is used.

Steps:

1. Split into pairs. Take cards. If there is a plus on the card, work out three arguments for supporting the following saying giving reasons and examples from your experience. If there is a minus, give three against-arguments. Use the Oblique Moods / the suggested patterns, for example: *I don't find it necessary that we should cancel exams. If we had not any exams, students would not revise the previously learnt material ... I suggest that all exams be banned. But for exams, students would not suffer from stress ...*

2. Find your partners by the same colour of the cards. Offer them your arguments, listen to theirs and refute them.

3. Change your roles. Give two arguments for / against the suggested statement.

4. What is your point of view on this problem?

The suggested statement can be debated in three persons' discussion following the procedure:

1. Work in groups of three (Student 1, Student 2, Student 3). Discuss the suggested statement, make use of the Oblique Moods.

2. Student 1: Express your intention. Say what you wanted to say. Invite an opinion of a group member you are interested in.

3. Student 2: Respond to what Student 1 said. Express your intention. Say what you wanted to say. Invite an opinion of a group member you are interested in.

4. Student 3: Respond to what the two previous students said. Express your intention. Say what you wanted to say. Invite an opinion of a group member you are interested in. Summarise the opinions of your partners for the whole group.

Thus, the theme of the lesson was "The Oblique Moods", but the activities can be adjusted to your needs dropping the grammar patterns you have not practised yet. So, first the students were asked to list the problems that were out of their competence. Then they crumpled and threw those sheets of paper away. The students couldn't solve the problems so why should they get frustrated over them? After that they listed the problems that they could solve by themselves or somebody could help them find the solution to. When it was done those sheets of paper were shuffled and each student took one of the sheets at random and wrote down what s/he would do if s/he had such a problem. There could have been various follow-up activities as suggested above. Finally, the students received their lists of problems back but with possible solutions suggested by their groupmates. It let them take different views, look at it from different perspectives.

In short, these activities helped them develop not only grammar skills in a communicative context but it was a chance for them to talk about the things they really cared about. The students enjoyed it very much and the teacher managed to achieve the main objective of the lesson to arrange that the students should recycle different patterns with the Oblique Moods (wish-sentences, conditional sentences, etc). As reflected by the students, it helped them to look at their problems as opportunities with plenty of potential energy, they understood that to turn problems into solutions is to redirect the energy away from exerting a negative influence toward a more positive orientation.

Briefly, EFL classes can help develop your students' language skills alongside problem-solving ones as EFL is an effective means to communicate and problem solving is a communicative context appealing to students. Moreover, the more activities to develop problem-solving skills they have at their disposal the easier it will be to do problem solving. As one of the important life-skills is to turn problems into opportunities, it should be shown to students that it is not worth while focusing on problems. It is more important to concentrate on finding opportunities. Integrating other problem solving techniques into EFL lesson is the objective of further research.

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БАГАТОРАЗОВЕ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ГРАМАТИКИ В КОНТЕКСТІ ВИРІШЕННЯ ПРОБЛЕМ

У статті аналізуються можливості використання бізнес технологій вирішення проблем, які забезпечують комунікативний контекст, з метою вдосконалення граматичних навичок використання умовного стану. Наводиться фрагмент заняття для удосконалення навичок використання умовного стану. Робиться висновок про те, що вирішення проблем дозволяє багаторазово вживати граматичні конструкції для досягнення комунікативних цілей, розвивати мовленнєву компетентність та одночасно формувати позитивне ставлення до життєвих проблем.

Ключові слова: вирішення проблем, мовленнєві навички та вміння, комунікативний контекст, заняття з граматики англійської мови.

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МНОГОРАЗОВОЕ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ГРАММАТИКИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ РЕШЕНИЯ ПРОБЛЕМ

В статье анализируются возможности использования бизнес технологий решения проблем, обеспечивающих коммуникативный контекст, с целью усовершенствования грамматических навыков студентов языкового вуза на занятии английского языка. Представляется фрагмент занятия для усовершенствования навыков употребления сослагательного наклонения. Делается вывод, что решение проблем позволяет многократно использовать грамматические конструкции для достижения целей коммуникации, развивать речевую компетентность и формировать позитивное отношение к жизненным проблемам.

Ключевые слова: решение проблем, языковые навыки и умения, коммуникативный контекст, занятие по грамматике иностранного языка.

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