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ENHANCING GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE THROUGH CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION IN MEDICAL ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract: The ability to use English accurately and appropriately has become increasingly important for future medical specialists. While medical students often acquire professional terminology successfully, many experience difficulties when applying grammatical structures in professional communication. This study investigates the effectiveness of contextualized grammar instruction in Medical English classes and examines its impact on students' grammatical competence.

The study was conducted with forty second-year medical students at a medical university in Uzbekistan. The participants were divided into an experimental group (20 students) and a control group (20 students). During a four-week instructional period, the experimental group received grammar instruction through contextualized activities, including doctor–patient role plays, symptom-description tasks, case discussions, and treatment recommendation exercises. The control group followed conventional grammar instruction based on rule explanation and controlled practice. Data were collected through classroom observation, pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews.

The findings revealed improvement in both groups; however, the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater progress. The average score of the experimental group increased from 61.5 to 81 points, while the control group improved from 62 to 72 points. Students exposed to contextualized grammar instruction also reported greater confidence and engagement during communicative activities.

The results suggest that integrating grammar instruction with realistic medical communication can strengthen grammatical competence and improve students' ability to use English in professional contexts. The study supports the use of contextualized grammar teaching as an effective approach in Medical English education.

Keywords: Medical English, grammar instruction, contextualized learning, English for Specific Purposes, grammatical competence, communicative competence, future medical specialists.

Introduction

The increasing role of English in healthcare, scientific research, and international professional communication has created new demands for medical education. Future medical specialists are expected to access professional literature, participate in academic exchange, and communicate effectively in multilingual healthcare environments. Consequently, English language instruction has become an essential component of professional preparation in medical universities.

Within this context, Medical English represents a specialized branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that focuses on the communicative needs of healthcare professionals. The primary objective of Medical English instruction is not only the acquisition of professional terminology but also the development of language skills required for authentic professional interaction. Medical students must be able to obtain patient information, describe symptoms, discuss diagnoses, explain treatment procedures, and provide recommendations using accurate and appropriate language.

Despite continuous improvements in ESP instruction, grammar remains one of the most challenging aspects of language learning for medical students. Classroom observations frequently reveal that learners can explain grammatical rules and complete written exercises successfully, yet experience difficulty applying grammatical structures during communication. This gap between grammatical knowledge and practical language use often limits students' ability to communicate confidently in professional situations.

Researchers have increasingly emphasized that grammar should not be taught as an isolated system of rules. Larsen-Freeman views grammar as a resource for communication, while Richards and Rodgers argue that language structures are acquired more effectively when learners use them in meaningful interaction. Similar ideas can be found in the works of Passov, Verbitsky, Jalolov, and other scholars who emphasize the importance of communicative and contextualized language learning. These perspectives suggest that grammar instruction should be closely connected to authentic language use and professional communication.

In Medical English classes, contextualized instruction creates opportunities for students to practice grammar while performing tasks that resemble real healthcare communication. Activities such as patient interviews, case-history discussions, symptom descriptions, and role-play situations encourage learners to use grammatical structures for meaningful purposes rather than simply memorizing rules. Such activities may contribute not only to grammatical accuracy but also to communicative confidence and professional readiness.

The present study investigates the effectiveness of contextualized grammar instruction in Medical English classes. The research aims to determine whether grammar teaching integrated with professional communication activities can improve the grammatical competence of future medical specialists more effectively than traditional instructional approaches.

Literature Review

The development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) significantly influenced the teaching of professional language in higher education. Hutchinson and Waters define ESP as an approach that is determined by learners' academic and professional needs rather than by a fixed language syllabus.[1] This perspective shifted attention from the teaching of language forms in isolation to the development of language skills required in specific professional contexts. Later, Dudley-Evans and St John emphasized that ESP instruction should prepare learners for authentic tasks associated with their future careers. Within medical education, these tasks include obtaining patient histories, discussing symptoms, explaining treatment procedures, and communicating with colleagues.[2]

[1] Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centred Approach*. Cambridge University Press.

[2] Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge University Press.

The growing importance of professional communication has also influenced approaches to grammar instruction. Traditional methods frequently focused on rule explanation and controlled practice, assuming that grammatical knowledge would automatically transfer to communication. However, contemporary researchers challenge this assumption. Larsen-Freeman argues that grammar should be understood as a dynamic resource for communication rather than a collection of isolated rules.[3] Similarly, Thornbury maintains that learners acquire grammatical structures more effectively when they encounter them in meaningful communicative situations.[4] These perspectives suggest that grammar learning becomes more productive when language forms are connected to authentic use.

The relationship between grammar and communication is central to Communicative Language Teaching. Richards and Rodgers describe communication as both the goal and the means of language learning.[5] Canale and Swain further demonstrate that grammatical competence forms only one component of communicative competence and must function together with sociolinguistic and strategic abilities.[6] Consequently, grammar instruction should support learners' ability to communicate effectively rather than focus exclusively on formal accuracy.

The concept of contextualized learning provides an additional theoretical basis for integrating grammar and communication. Verbitsky argues that educational activities become more effective when they reflect situations that learners are likely to encounter in their future professional practice. [7]In medical education, contextualization can be achieved through patient interviews, clinical case discussions, symptom descriptions, and role-play activities. Such tasks allow students to apply language structures while simultaneously developing professional communication skills.

Russian and Uzbek scholars have also emphasized the importance of communicative language instruction. Passov views communication as the foundation of foreign language learning and argues that language forms should be acquired through purposeful interaction. [8] Jalolov similarly stresses the value of learner-centered approaches and meaningful communication in language education.[9] More recent studies conducted by Ashurov and Saidov demonstrate increasing attention to professionally oriented language instruction in Uzbekistan and highlight the importance of linking language learning with future occupational needs.[10]

Although numerous studies support communicative and contextualized approaches to language teaching, relatively limited attention has been devoted specifically to grammar instruction in Medical

[3] Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaring*. Heinle.

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[6] Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*(1), 1–47.

[7] Verbitsky, A. A. (1991). *Contextual Learning in Higher Education*. Vysshaya Shkola.

[8] Passov, E. I. (1991). *Communicative Method of Teaching Foreign Language Speaking*. Prosveshcheniye.

[9] Jalolov, J. (2012). *Chet til o'qitish metodikasi*.

[10] Ashurov, S. (2020). Modern approaches to teaching English in higher education institutions of Uzbekistan; Saidov, N. (2017). *Communicative Approaches in Foreign Language Teaching*.

English classrooms. Many Medical English courses continue to prioritize terminology and reading skills, while grammar is frequently taught through traditional exercises detached from professional communication. This situation creates a need for research exploring how contextualized grammar instruction may influence students' ability to use English accurately and effectively in healthcare-related communication. The present study seeks to address this issue through an experimental investigation involving future medical specialists.

Research Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research was conducted during the 2025–2026 academic year at a medical university in Uzbekistan. Forty second-year medical students participated in the study and were divided into an experimental group (20 students) and a control group (20 students). Both groups demonstrated comparable levels of English proficiency prior to the experiment.

Data were collected through classroom observation, pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The pre-test and post-test were designed to assess students' ability to use grammatical structures commonly encountered in Medical English communication. The assessment included multiple-choice items, sentence correction tasks, short-answer activities, and medical note transformation exercises.

The experimental stage lasted four weeks. The control group received grammar instruction through conventional methods based on rule explanation, written exercises, and textbook activities. The experimental group studied the same grammatical structures; however, instruction was delivered through contextualized activities reflecting authentic medical communication. These activities included doctor–patient role plays, symptom-description tasks, case-history discussions, treatment recommendation exercises, and collaborative speaking activities.

The instructional program focused on grammatical structures frequently used in healthcare communication, including Present Simple, Present Continuous, Past Simple, Present Perfect, modal verbs, question forms, and passive constructions. Following the completion of the instructional period, both groups completed the post-test. The results were compared to evaluate the effectiveness of contextualized grammar instruction.

Results and Discussion.

The pre-test results demonstrated that both groups possessed similar levels of grammatical competence before the experiment. The experimental group achieved an average score of 61.5 points, while the control group obtained 62 points. The minimal difference between the groups provided a reliable basis for subsequent comparison.

Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement
Experimental Group	61.5	81	+19.5
Control Group	62	72	+10

The post-test results revealed improvement in both groups; however, the experimental group demonstrated substantially stronger progress. The average score of the experimental group increased by 19.5 points, whereas the control group improved by 10 points. The difference suggests that

contextualized grammar instruction contributed positively to the development of grammatical competence in Medical English classes.

Several observations help explain these outcomes. During classroom observations, students in the experimental group demonstrated greater participation in communicative activities and showed increased willingness to use English during professional interaction tasks. Unlike traditional grammar exercises, contextualized activities required learners to apply grammatical structures while completing meaningful communicative tasks. As a result, students were exposed to grammar as a functional component of professional communication rather than as an isolated system of rules.

The findings support Larsen-Freeman's view that grammar develops more effectively when learners use language for meaningful communication rather than mechanical practice.11 They also correspond with Richards and Rodgers' argument that language forms are acquired more successfully when integrated into communicative interaction.12 In the present study, grammatical structures were practiced through patient interviews, symptom descriptions, medical case discussions, and treatment recommendations. These activities created opportunities for repeated and purposeful language use.

The results additionally reflect the principles of English for Specific Purposes. Hutchinson and Waters emphasize that language instruction should address learners' professional needs. [13]Within the experimental group, grammar activities were directly connected with future medical responsibilities. Students practiced asking patient-related questions, describing symptoms, discussing treatment procedures, and presenting case information. This professional relevance appeared to increase learner engagement and strengthen the practical value of grammar instruction.

Questionnaire responses further supported the quantitative findings. Most students reported that grammar became easier to understand when presented through realistic medical situations. Participants also indicated that role-play activities and case discussions helped them use grammatical structures more confidently during communication. Several students noted that they were able to remember grammatical forms more effectively when those forms were associated with professional tasks.

Interview data revealed similar tendencies. Students frequently identified doctor–patient role plays and clinical communication activities as the most useful elements of the instructional program. Many participants reported increased confidence when speaking English and expressed greater awareness of the role grammar plays in professional communication. Although some difficulties remained, particularly in spontaneous speaking and complex sentence construction, most students viewed contextualized grammar instruction as more effective than traditional grammar practice.

The findings suggest that contextualized grammar instruction not only improves grammatical accuracy but also promotes communicative confidence and professional language development. The integration of grammar with authentic medical communication appears to create learning conditions that more closely reflect future professional practice. Consequently, contextualized

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[11] Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaring*. Heinle.

[12] Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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instruction may represent a valuable approach for Medical English courses aimed at preparing future healthcare specialists for real-world communication.

Conclusion

The present study examined the effectiveness of contextualized grammar instruction in Medical English classes and its impact on the grammatical competence of future medical specialists. The research was motivated by the observation that many medical students possess theoretical knowledge of grammar but experience difficulties applying grammatical structures during professional communication. In response to this challenge, the study explored whether grammar instruction integrated with authentic medical contexts could improve students' language performance.

The findings demonstrated positive changes in both the experimental and control groups. However, students who participated in contextualized grammar instruction achieved substantially greater improvement. The experimental group increased its average score from 61.5 to 81 points, while the control group improved from 62 to 72 points. These results indicate that grammar learning becomes more effective when grammatical structures are presented and practiced through meaningful communicative activities.

The qualitative findings further supported the quantitative results. Questionnaire responses and interviews revealed that students perceived contextualized activities as more relevant to their future profession and more helpful for understanding grammatical structures. Activities such as doctor–patient role plays, symptom descriptions, and case discussions encouraged active language use and created opportunities for students to apply grammar in realistic situations.

The study suggests that grammar instruction in Medical English should extend beyond the traditional presentation of rules and exercises. Integrating grammar with professional communication allows learners to connect linguistic knowledge with practical application and supports the development of both grammatical competence and communicative confidence. Such an approach reflects the communicative and professional demands that future healthcare specialists are likely to encounter in their academic and professional careers.

Although the study was limited to forty participants and a four-week instructional period, the findings provide evidence that contextualized grammar instruction can contribute positively to Medical English education. Future research may investigate the long-term effects of this approach and explore its application in other areas of professional language learning.

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