

Strategies for Teaching Junior High School English Grammar Based on Thematic Contexts

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Abstract

This paper focuses on junior high school English grammar teaching. Considering the numerous problems in traditional grammar teaching methods, exploring teaching strategies based on thematic contexts is of great significance. By analyzing the current teaching difficulties, it elaborates that teaching based on thematic contexts is helpful for improving students' language application abilities and emphasizes its crucial role in language learning. The strategies include designing thematic contexts closely related to life, using multimodal resources, and conducting in-depth analysis of grammar points within contexts. For example, using "My Day" to teach the present continuous tense and using animated videos to teach verb tenses. Finally, it points out that this teaching transformation is beneficial for enhancing students' abilities, but there are also challenges such as how to design contexts and balance knowledge and application. Teachers need to continuously explore and improve grammar teaching strategies.

Keywords

Junior High School English; Thematic Meaning; Grammar Teaching.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the field of English language teaching has witnessed a significant shift in pedagogical approaches. With the emphasis on communicative competence and meaningful language use, the traditional grammar teaching methods that focus solely on rote learning and isolated rule explanation have been increasingly questioned. In the context of junior middle school English education, finding effective ways to teach grammar has become a crucial issue.

Thematic context has emerged as a promising avenue in this regard. By integrating grammar instruction within thematic contexts, students are not only exposed to the grammatical structures but also understand how these structures function in real-life communication scenarios. Ellis (2006) highlights the importance of context in second language acquisition. He argues that learners acquire language more effectively when it is presented in a meaningful context rather than in decontextualized forms. According to Cheng Xiaotang(2018), classroom teaching based on thematic meaning is centered around a certain theme to set instructional objectives and design the content and activities related to the theme. In this grammar lesson, the teacher has designed a thematic situation of visiting scenic spots in students' hometown, centering on the main line of tourism, the teacher led the students to visit the mountains and rivers in their hometowns and helped students to enhance the awareness of grammar and develop a systematic structure of grammatical knowledge and then further promote the use of grammar in a proper and flexible way.

This paper aims to explore strategies of junior high school English grammar teaching based on thematic contexts. It hopes to provide valuable insights and practical guidance for English teachers in junior middle schools to enhance their grammar teaching and ultimately improve students' English proficiency.

2. Problems in Junior High School English Classroom Teaching

Grammar is the foundation of learning and using a language and plays a critical role in language forms. Traditional methods often emphasize rote memorization and isolated practice, which can lead to disengagement and limited practical application. The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) offers suggestions for grammar teaching. Students are encouraged to explore grammar in the context based on their understanding of the theme.

It emphasizes that the purpose of learning grammar is to use grammatical knowledge to understand and express meaning in context, requiring students to use learned grammar knowledge in context for description, narration, and explanation. However, in the current junior high school grammar classrooms, some teachers still follow traditional grammar teaching models, characterized by teacher-led classes that mechanically instill grammar rules. Students passively memorize grammar structures without autonomous inquiry, some teachers disregard context and fail to fully explore or utilize the thematic meanings in unit teaching content. Instead, they teach grammar knowledge through fragmented sentences and language, resulting in students lacking a sense of language in context. Additionally, some teachers rely on excessive mechanical drills to teach grammar, leaving students with limited opportunities to apply language in real contexts.

This teaching approach makes it difficult to engage students in grammar learning and weakens their ability to apply grammar and construct unit learning comprehensively. To address these issues, teachers should explore grammar teaching models guided by thematic meaning, leading students to understand and apply grammar knowledge within thematic contexts.

3. The Significance of Teaching Junior High School English Grammar Based on Thematic Contexts

Through researches on junior high school English teaching, it is found that the ability to grasp the context and apply the language are complementary to each other and play an active role in the process of language mastery and utilization. Mechanical language teaching makes it difficult for students to compare with actual situations. By using grammar in various English contexts, students can not only easily grasp grammatical knowledge points, but also make clear the correct occasions and ways of applying grammatical knowledge. Context and social culture are the basis of language, and to learn the English language, it is necessary to understand the context and the culture carried by the language. When students want to make language output, they can make correct use of grammar to express themselves, so as to ensure the quality of language output, reduce expression errors, and minimize misunderstandings in language expression. It can be seen that there is an inseparable relationship between grammar learning and thematic context, and the integration of grammar learning and specific context can help students overcome the problems and confusions in English learning, and lay a good foundation for language teaching at a higher level.

4. Strategies for Teaching Junior High School English Grammar Based on Thematic Contexts

4.1. Designing Targeted Thematic Contexts

For junior high school English grammar teaching, thematic contexts should be designed to closely align with students' real-life experiences to stimulate their interest and engagement.

For example, when teaching the present continuous tense, teachers can design a thematic context like "My Day." In this context, students are required to describe activities they are currently doing at different times of the day, such as "In the morning, I am eating breakfast," or

"In the afternoon, I am playing basketball." This not only enables students to use grammar knowledge in familiar scenarios but also helps them better understand the meaning and usage of the present continuous tense. Additionally, for different grammar points, teachers should design corresponding thematic contexts. Taking the past simple tense as an example, teachers can create a thematic context like "My Holiday Trip," where students are encouraged to recall and describe their holiday experiences, such as "Last year, I went to Beijing and visited the Forbidden City and the Great Wall." Through this process, students naturally use various forms of the past simple tense, reinforcing and deepening their mastery of this grammatical concept.

4.2. Utilizing Multimodal Teaching Resources

In contemporary junior high school English grammar teaching, multimodal teaching resources skillfully integrate images, videos, audio, and other media to inject vivid and authentic elements into grammar instruction.

For instance, when teaching verb tenses, teachers can use animated videos to demonstrate the changes in actions across different tenses, helping students understand and master their usage more intuitively. Meanwhile, audio materials provide students with authentic pronunciation models, aiding in the development of correct language sense and intonation. The organic combination of these multimodal teaching resources not only sparks students' interest in learning but also deepens their understanding and application of grammar rules.

Modern teaching tools, such as interactive whiteboards, offer even greater possibilities for junior high school English grammar instruction. Interactive whiteboards significantly enhance student engagement and classroom dynamism. Teachers can use annotation and drag-and-drop features on the whiteboard to dynamically demonstrate changes and uses of grammatical points, guiding students to observe, analyze, and summarize. Additionally, interactive whiteboards seamlessly integrate with multimedia resources, enabling teachers to access various teaching aids at any time to supplement their explanations. This allows students to learn English grammar in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Grammar teaching based on modern teaching tools not only improve teaching effectiveness but also cultivate students' autonomous learning abilities and innovative thinking skills.

For example, in the junior high school English unit 'What's the highest mountain in the world?', the core topic revolves around Mount Everest, the world's highest peak. This is an adventurous and challenging theme that easily piques students' curiosity and desire to explore. Teachers can utilize multimodal teaching resources to present relevant pictures and videos of Mount Everest, allowing students to experience the mountain's grandeur and magnificence visually. By showcasing photos of Mount Everest in different seasons and from various angles, along with video clips of climbers ascending the mountain, students can gain a deeper understanding of its natural environment and cultural significance.

Additionally, teachers can integrate audio resources, such as interviews with climbers or excerpts from documentaries, to help students appreciate the hardships and joys of climbing Mount Everest. This approach inspires students' interest in adventure and challenges. With the assistance of an interactive whiteboard, teachers can guide students through a series of engaging activities. Also, using the annotation feature on the whiteboard, students can mark the location of Mount Everest and its surrounding terrain on a map, deepening their understanding of geographical knowledge. Such activities not only consolidate students' language knowledge but also enhance their speaking and writing skills. By combining these modern teaching tools with thematic content, teachers can create an immersive and interactive learning experience that promotes deeper engagement and practical language application.

4.3. Conducting In-Depth Analysis of Grammar Points Within Context

English grammar teaching has always been a vital component of junior high school English instruction. However, how to make abstract grammar knowledge lively, engaging, and easy to understand remains a challenge for every English teacher. In practical teaching, teachers can select themes closely related to students' lives, such as "School Life" or "Festival Celebrations," based on the requirements of the teaching syllabus. This creates a familiar and engaging context for students.

Within such contexts, teachers can introduce relevant grammar points, such as the present continuous tense or the simple past tense. By using vivid examples and situational dialogues, students can experience the usage of grammar in context. This teaching method not only captures students' attention but also enables them to learn grammar in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

The ultimate goal of grammar teaching is to empower students to flexibly apply the knowledge they have learned in real-life communication. By combining grammar points with meaningful contexts, teachers can help students bridge the gap between knowledge acquisition and practical application, ensuring that grammar becomes a functional tool for effective communication.

In teaching practice, teachers can design a series of situational tasks related to thematic contexts, allowing students to apply the grammar points they have learned while completing the tasks. For example, when teaching the simple future tense, a teacher can design a situational task titled "Planning Activities for the Upcoming Weekend." In this task, students are required to describe their plans using the simple future tense, such as "I will go to the park on Saturday morning" or "We will watch a movie in the evening." This can help students consolidate their understanding of the grammar point and develop their language application skills and problem-solving abilities. By embedding grammar instruction into meaningful and practical tasks, students are encouraged to use language in a purposeful way, bridging the gap between grammar learning and real-life communication.

Taking the lesson 'I've had this bike for three years' as an example, the teacher can create a thematic context related to discussing possessions and how long they have been owned. By presenting a series of pictures, such as a bicycle, a watch, books, and other items, the teacher guides students to talk about their own possessions and the length of time they have owned them. During this process, the teacher naturally introduces the concept of the present perfect tense and explains its usage and meaning. For instance, the teacher might say, "This is my watch. I've had this watch for five years." Then, students are encouraged to create their own sentences, such as "I've had this book for two months" or "I've had this bike since last year." This activity provides a relatable and engaging context for students and helps them understand the application of the present perfect tense in a meaningful and interactive way. By connecting grammar instruction with students' personal experiences, the lesson becomes more memorable and effective.

5. Conclusion

In junior high school English grammar teaching, shifting from traditional rote methods to a thematic context-based approach is vital to engaging students and improving their practical language application skills. By integrating grammar teaching into meaningful and relatable contexts, students can connect grammar knowledge with real-life communication, enhancing their understanding and usage of the language. Leveraging multimodal teaching resources and modern tools, such as interactive whiteboards, further enriches the learning experience, making grammar instruction more dynamic and effective. Ultimately, grammar teaching should aim to empower students to apply their knowledge flexibly in authentic communication,

bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. However, certain challenges remain in the teaching process, such as how to design thematic contexts that better align with students' real-life experiences and how to balance the teaching of grammar knowledge with the application of grammar in context. In the future, teachers will continue to explore and refine grammar teaching methods in thematic contexts to better support students' English learning and development.

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