USING TECHNOLOGY IN COMMUNICATIVE GRAMMAR TEACHING

Doston Sadullayev
student of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
dima.max.1212@gmail.com
+998902807981
Scientific supervisor: Buranova Madina Uktamovna
PhD, Associate professor at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages
madinaburanova82@gmail.com

Abstract: This article examines the role of technology in communicative grammar teaching within English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The study explores how digital tools, such as including corpus-based resources, interactive platforms, mobile applications, and online communication environments, can be integrated into grammar instruction that prioritizes meaning and communication. The analysis argues that technology is most effective not as a substitute for principled pedagogy but as an instrument that, when guided by clear theoretical rationale, extends the range and quality of communicative grammar practice available to learners. Challenges relating to pedagogical design, digital access, and teacher preparedness are also addressed.

Keywords: technology, communicative grammar teaching, computer-assisted language learning, mobile-assisted language learning, digital tools, communicative competence, second language acquisition.

Every teacher who has walked into a classroom in the past two decades has felt the pressure to incorporate technology. Sometimes this comes from institutional policy, sometimes from learners who arrive already accustomed to digital environments, sometimes from a genuine conviction that the tools are transformative. Technology is neither a method nor a guarantee of learning. It is a medium through which good or poor pedagogy can be delivered. The question that matters is how and in particular, how technology can be recruited to serve the communicative, meaning-driven orientation to grammar instruction that contemporary applied linguistics has established as most effective.

The relationship between technology and language teaching has evolved considerably since the earliest experiments with language laboratories in the 1960s.[79] Warschauer and Healey [1998; pp. 57-71] trace this evolution across three phases. In the first, behavioristic phase, technology was used primarily to deliver drill and practice exercises with the structural methods dominant at the time. In the second, communicative phase, software began to offer more flexible, meaning-oriented tasks, though the communicative potential of machines remained limited by processing constraints. In the third, integrative phase, the rise of the internet and multimedia technologies fundamentally changed what was possible: learners could interact with authentic texts, communicate with speakers of the target language in real time, and access grammatical resources far beyond what any physical classroom could provide. It is in this integrative context that the question of how technology

[79]Warschauer and Healey (1998) trace three phases in the history of computer-assisted language learning: behavioristic CALL (1960s–70s), communicative CALL (1980s), and integrative CALL (1990s onward). Each phase reflects a shift in the underlying theory of language learning rather than simply a change in available hardware.

supports communicative grammar teaching[80] becomes both practically urgent and theoretically rich.

This article addresses that question by reviewing the theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence that bear on the use of technology in communicative grammar instruction, examining the specific affordances of major categories of digital tools, and reflecting critically on the conditions under which technology genuinely enhances grammar teaching. The argument developed here is that technology mediated grammar instruction is most valuable when it creates conditions that are difficult to replicate in traditional classroom settings: extended authentic input, individualized and immediate feedback, opportunities for interaction beyond the classroom walls, and the kind of reflective attention to form that drives grammatical development.

This study employs a descriptive and analytical methodology, synthesizing theoretical and empirical literature on the use of technology in grammar teaching and communicative language learning. Sources were selected from peer-reviewed journals including Language Teaching, Language Learning and Technology, TESOL Quarterly, and System, as well as foundational monographs in CALL and SLA. The works examined include Warschauer and Healey (1998), Chapelle (2001), Godwin-Jones (2011), Ellis (2006), Schmidt (1990), Doughty and Williams (1998), Krashen (1982), and Thornbury (1999). The review was organized around three analytical questions: what theoretical frameworks inform the use of technology in communicative grammar teaching; what specific types of digital tools have been shown to support this goal; and what conditions and limitations must be considered by EFL teachers adopting technology in their practice.

The theoretical foundation for using technology in communicative grammar teaching draws on the same SLA frameworks that underpin communicative language teaching more broadly. Krashen's input hypothesis [1982; p. 20] holds that acquisition is driven by exposure to comprehensible input slightly beyond the learner's current level. Technology is exceptionally well positioned to serve this function: digital environments offer access to an essentially unlimited supply of authentic target-language text and speech, calibrated or not, from which learners can encounter grammatical structures in natural contexts of use. Where a textbook might offer two or three instances of the present perfect in a reading passage, a corpus search or a streaming video platform can expose the learner to hundreds of instances in varied, authentic contexts.

Schmidt's noticing hypothesis [1990; pp. 129-158][81] provides a further justification for technology-enhanced grammar instruction. If learners must consciously attend to a grammatical form in order to acquire it, then technologies that direct and sustain directly support the cognitive conditions for acquisition. Chapelle [2001][82] extends this argument, proposing a framework for

[80]The term 'communicative grammar teaching' is used here to describe instruction that treats grammatical forms as resources for meaning-making rather than as ends in themselves. It encompasses task-based, focus-on-form, and other approaches that situate grammar within authentic or authentic-like communicative activity.

[81]Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990, p. 129) holds that learners cannot acquire features of the input to which they are not consciously attending. Technology can serve this function through input enhancement techniques such as bolding, colour-coding, or animated highlighting of target grammatical forms.

[82]Chapelle (2001) argues that evaluating CALL materials requires attention to the same criteria applied to any language instruction: the degree to which they provide appropriate input, promote learner engagement with form, and create opportunities for meaningful interaction.

evaluating CALL materials in terms of SLA criteria: does the software promote the processing of comprehensible and meaningful input? Does it direct learner attention to form in context? Does it offer opportunities for meaningful output and interaction? These questions translate the theoretical insights of SLA directly into evaluative tools for CALL design, helping teachers and curriculum designers distinguish between technology that serves genuine communicative grammar learning and technology that merely repackages decontextualized drill.

The Focus-on-Form (FonF) framework developed by Long and adopted in Doughty and Williams [1998] is particularly productive for thinking about how technology supports communicative grammar teaching. FonF describes moments within otherwise meaning-focused activity where attention is briefly redirected to a formal linguistic feature — because of a communicative breakdown, an error, or a teacher prompt. Technology creates new and potentially richer conditions for FonF: automated error detection in writing tasks can trigger metalinguistic prompts at the precise moment when a learner's own output reveals a gap; corpus tools can be used to show learners how a grammatical form they have misused actually functions in native-speaker production; collaborative online tasks can prompt negotiation of meaning that surfaces formal problems requiring attention. In each case, the encounter with grammar arises from communicative necessity rather than from an externally imposed grammatical syllabus.

Among the digital tools most relevant to communicative grammar teaching, corpus-based resources deserve particular attention. A learner corpus, such as those made available through the British National Corpus or the Corpus of Contemporary American English, allows learners and teachers to explore how grammatical structures actually function in real texts not how they are idealized in grammar books. Thornbury [1999] argues that grammar is better understood as a dynamic, probabilistic system than as a fixed set of rules, and corpus data gives learners direct access to this probabilistic reality. A learner who searches for the phrase 'I was wondering if' in a corpus of spoken English will discover that this structure functions routinely as a polite request opener — a pragmatic function that a grammar table alone would never reveal. This kind of discovery-based, data-driven learning integrates naturally with the inductive dimension of communicative grammar teaching.

Online communication platforms offer a second major category of technology that supports communicative grammar learning. These platforms create authentic communicative contexts in which learners must use grammatical resources to achieve real communicative goals: negotiating meaning, expressing disagreement, elaborating an argument, or making a request. Research reviewed by Warschauer and Healey [1998; p. 64] demonstrates that asynchronous online writing, in particular, gives learners more time to attend to formal accuracy than real-time spoken interaction, while still preserving the communicative stakes that motivate careful language use. This creates conditions unusually favorable for noticing and self-correction.

Mobile applications represent a third category of technology with growing relevance for grammar learning. Godwin-Jones [2011; pp. 2-11][83] surveys the landscape of mobile language applications and identifies their principal strengths: accessibility, flexibility of use across contexts, and the potential for short, frequent engagement sessions that align with spaced repetition

[83]Godwin-Jones (2011, p. 3) notes that mobile language applications tend to favour discrete-item vocabulary and grammar drills over extended communicative practice, reflecting the constraints of small screen interfaces and short session durations rather than any principled pedagogical design choice.

principles. However, he also notes a persistent weakness: the majority of language apps at the time of his review, and much subsequently, were organized around decontextualized vocabulary and grammar drills rather than communicative tasks. This does not disqualify mobile applications as tools for communicative grammar teaching, but it does mean that teachers must be selective: an app that requires learners to choose the correct form of a verb in an isolated sentence contributes little to communicative competence; one that asks learners to compose a message, respond to a prompt, or engage in a structured exchange builds the grammatical skills that communication actually requires.

Interactive grammar feedback systems constitute a fourth relevant category. Ellis [2006; pp. 83-107][84] establishes that corrective feedback on grammatical errors, when provided appropriately, supports acquisition. Technology allows this feedback to be delivered consistently, immediately, and privately, three features that are difficult to achieve simultaneously in a busy classroom. A teacher correcting thirty students' written work cannot respond to every error in real time; automated feedback can. Moreover, the privacy of technology-mediated feedback removes the social discomfort associated with public correction, which is known to raise the affective filter and reduce learner willingness to take risks. Learners who are not afraid of being corrected in front of peers are more willing to attempt complex grammatical forms, and it is through attempting and receiving feedback on complex forms that acquisition progresses.

The evidence reviewed above suggests a clear principle: technology enhances communicative grammar teaching when it is used to create, extend, or enrich conditions for meaningful engagement with grammatical from. A corpus exploration task that leads a learner to notice how a particular tense functions in real discourse is doing something pedagogically different from, and superior to, an online multiple-choice grammar quiz that tests the same tense in isolated sentences. Both use technology; only the first uses it communicatively.

This distinction matters because the field has a long history of enthusiasm for new technologies that, on closer inspection, deliver the same old decontextualized grammar practice in a shinier format. Warschauer and Healey [1998; p. 68] observed this tendency already in 1998. The same temptation exists today with mobile apps and AI-driven chat bots: the technology is genuinely new, but the underlying pedagogy may be as old as the Grammar-Translation Method. Teachers who bring a clear theoretical framework to the evaluation of digital tools are far less likely to be misled by novelty.

A further dimension of the discussion concerns access and equity.[85] The benefits of technology-enhanced grammar teaching are not uniformly distributed. In contexts where internet connectivity is unreliable, where institutional funding for software is limited, or where teachers have not received adequate training in digital pedagogy, the potential of technology to support communicative grammar teaching remains theoretical. Any honest account of this field must

[84]Ellis (2006, p. 99) cautions that the benefits of any form of grammar instruction — whether technology-mediated or not — are highly dependent on whether learners are developmentally ready to acquire the target structure. Technology does not override the learner's internal syllabus.

[85]The concept of the 'digital divide' — unequal access to technology across socioeconomic groups, geographic regions, and educational institutions — is a recurring concern in the CALL literature. In many EFL contexts, including parts of Central Asia, institutional infrastructure remains a significant constraint on the adoption of technology-enhanced language teaching.

acknowledge that the most sophisticated CALL tools are most accessible to learners who already enjoy educational advantages, while learners in under-resourced contexts continue to rely on textbooks and teacher-fronted instruction. This is not an argument against technology; it is an argument for investing in the training and infrastructure that make technology genuinely useful, rather than treating digital access as a problem already solved.

For EFL teachers in contexts such as Uzbekistan, where curricula are undergoing modernization but digital infrastructure varies considerably between urban and rural settings, the most practical approach may be a selective and principled integration of freely available, low-bandwidth tools into otherwise communicative lessons. The goal is not to transform the classroom into a technology lab but to use digital resources where they genuinely extend what is possible: bringing the learner into contact with authentic language, creating channels for interaction beyond the classroom, and providing feedback that the teacher alone cannot always deliver.

Technology has changed what is possible in grammar teaching. It has not changed what good grammar teaching requires. The theoretical frameworks reviewed in this article—Krashen's input hypothesis, Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, Long's Focus-on-Form, and the evaluative criteria proposed by Chapelle—make clear that effective grammar instruction, whether technology-mediated or not, must create conditions for meaningful engagement with form: rich and authentic input, opportunities for communicative output, feedback that is timely and targeted, and learner attention directed to the formal features that matter for communication. Technology is at its best in the grammar classroom when it makes these conditions more accessible, more varied, and more learnable—not when it replaces pedagogical judgement with the mere convenience of a digital interface.

As digital tools continue to develop the challenge for language educators is to remain theoretically grounded rather than technically dazzled. The teacher, who understands why communicative grammar teaching works, will know how to evaluate any new tool on the basis of whether it serves that purpose. That understanding is not a product of technology; it comes from the kind of careful engagement with SLA theory and reflective classroom practice that has always been the foundation of effective language teaching.

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