Lyevochkina Svitlana
*PhD in Philology (Candidate of Philological Sciences), Senior Lecturer at the Department
of English Philology and Teaching English
Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy, Cherkasy, Ukraine*
E-mail: svitlana.levochkina@gmail.com
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4783-294X

Leleko Viktoriia
*PhD in Pedagogy (Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences), Lecture at the Department of English Philology
and Teaching English
Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy, Cherkasy, Ukraine*
E-mail: viktoriialeleko@gmail.com
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0092-8479

Developing grammatical competence in primary school English lessons via CLIL

Innovative approaches to grammar instruction in early language education are gaining attention as educators seek more engaging, content-rich alternatives to traditional methods. This study examines how the CLIL methodology supports such development in young learners. As there are the limitations of traditional grammar teaching methods which are often characterized by decontextualized drills and rule memorization the study offers a more engaging and communicative approach grounded in meaningful content and learner participation.

CLIL, as an educational framework, allows young learners to acquire grammatical competence organically by embedding grammar within subject-based activities across various disciplines from the school curriculum. The article outlines various strategies including storytelling, project-based learning, interactive games, visual grammar aids, and digital tools. These techniques foster a deeper understanding of grammatical structures while supporting cognitive development, emotional engagement, and maintaining learner motivation. Special emphasis is placed on scaffolding, multimodal input, and the developmental needs of primary school students.

The study draws from qualitative research, content analysis, and pedagogical modeling to demonstrate how grammar can be internalized through real-life communication contexts and integrated learning scenarios. Practical classroom examples such as sentence-building games, storytelling with targeted grammar points, and interdisciplinary projects illustrate how CLIL promotes both fluency and accuracy in language use.

The article also examines the role of the 4Cs Framework (Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture) in shaping effective grammar instruction. Ultimately, CLIL-based grammar teaching is shown to enhance students' communicative competence, align language acquisition with natural learning processes, and support long-term educational outcomes. This approach contributes to a more holistic, inclusive, and effective model of early language education by emphasizing interaction, creativity, learner-centeredness, and relevance to learners' everyday experiences and interests.

Keywords: *primary school students, grammatical competence, CLIL, 4Cs Framework, scaffolding.*

Introduction. Traditional approaches to grammar instruction in early language education often rely on decontextualized drills, repetition, and rule memorization, which can result in limited engagement and shallow understanding among young learners. As research in child language acquisition has shown, young learners thrive when grammar is taught in a meaningful, playful, and context-rich environment that aligns with their developmental needs (Cameron, 2001: 104; Pinter, 2017: 56). This has led educators to explore more integrated and communicative approaches to grammar teaching that foster both linguistic and cognitive development.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has emerged as a promising framework for rethinking how grammar can be introduced and internalized by young learners. CLIL involves the simultaneous teaching of subject content and a foreign language, creating authentic learning contexts that naturally support grammatical development (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010: 43). Within CLIL, grammar is not presented in isolation but emerges from meaningful communication, scaffolded interaction, and multimodal input.

Recent studies have emphasized the potential of CLIL to enhance grammar instruction through age-appropriate strategies such as storytelling, thematic projects, and content-based games (Mehisto et al., 2008: 88; Dalton-Puffer, 2007: 111). However, there remains a need to systematize these strategies and tailor them specifically for early language classrooms.

This article addresses that gap by exploring CLIL-based approaches to grammar instruction designed to meet the developmental, linguistic, and emotional needs of young learners.

Aim and Tasks of the Study. The aim of this study is to explore and conceptualize effective strategies for teaching grammar to young learners within a CLIL framework. The research seeks to examine how grammar instruction can be reimagined through meaningful content, interactive methodologies, and age-appropriate scaffolding in order to foster both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence from an early age.

To achieve this aim, the following **research tasks** have been identified: to define the theoretical foundations of grammar instruction in early language education, with an emphasis on the CLIL methodology and young learners' developmental characteristics; to analyze current trends and practices in grammar teaching, identifying the limitations of traditional approaches and the potential of content-based and multimodal alternatives. Moreover, this article proposes practical classroom applications, including scaffolding techniques and multimodal resources that support the gradual and meaningful acquisition of grammar in the early years of language learning. This research aims to contribute to the development of more engaging, effective, and contextually grounded grammar instruction practices for the primary language classroom.

Material and Methods. This study is based on qualitative research methods, focusing on theoretical inquiry and pedagogical analysis within the context of early language education. The research draws on both established literature in the fields of CLIL methodology, second language acquisition, and early childhood pedagogy, as well as classroom-oriented resources such as activity descriptions and teaching materials aimed at young learners (ages 6–10). The primary methodological approaches include: content analysis of scholarly works related to CLIL, grammar instruction, and young learner language development, generalization and systematization of effective strategies found in the literature and educational practice, and pedagogical modeling, which illustrates how grammar can be introduced and reinforced through meaningful, content-integrated tasks.

Research Findings. One of the characteristics of modern general education schools is the introduction of foreign language learning in primary grades. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Rada Yevropy, 2003), the primary goal of foreign language instruction in secondary education institutions is the development of foreign language communicative competence, which means the ability to use a foreign language as a means of communication. It is also defined as the ability to engage in effective communicative interaction, which entails the accurate use of linguistic, speech, and stylistic means, the ability to distinguish subtle shades of meaning, the achievement of a pragmatic effect, and the capacity for fluent communication in a variety of sociocultural contexts (Vovk, 2024: 34).

Communicative competence is the comprehensive application of linguistic and non-linguistic social and everyday situations, as well as the ability to navigate communication contexts, perceive, and produce texts depending on the communicative situation (Shkvarina, 2007: 77–78).

An important component of communicative competence is *grammatical competence*, which is understood as the correct use of grammatical forms of the English language in accordance with grammatical laws and norms (Shkvarina, 2007: 77–78).

The objective of developing grammatical competence in primary school students is to ensure mastery of both grammatical knowledge (including meaning and forms) and grammatical skills in communication. This involves receptive skills for listening and reading, enabling students to understand the structure of the language, as well as productive skills for oral and written expression, ensuring the correct application of language structures in speech. Additionally, it encompasses knowledge of grammar rules and their functions. An effective and optimal approach to acquiring a foreign language is through systematic study and application of grammar, which serves as a foundation for language learning. Grammatical knowledge refers to a structured, planned, and organized set of grammatical concepts that students must master throughout their language acquisition process (Miroshnyk, 2018).

To enhance the effectiveness of teaching, educators must consider the developmental characteristics of younger students. The primary school years are marked by the maturation of key cognitive processes such as perception, thinking, speech, attention, and memory, which gradually become more structured, conscious, and independent. This stage represents a transitional phase where children exhibit traits of both preschoolers and school-aged learners. These characteristics manifest in complex and sometimes contradictory ways in their behavior and cognition. Like any transitional period, primary school age presents hidden developmental opportunities that must be identified and nurtured in a timely manner (Shevtsova, 2013).

It must also be mentioned that primary school children are characterized by a strong curiosity about the world around them, a blend of reality and imagination driven by boundless creativity and emotional perception, a highly developed sense of feeling and imagination, as well as naive subjectivism and egocentrism. Additionally, they undergo a gradual transition from unconscious to conscious reproduction of imitative actions (Shevtsova, 2013).

The process of learning grammar at this stage is complex and long-term, requiring significant attention from teachers and the implementation of diverse teaching methods and tools. It is essential to ensure the systematic organization of materials, a logical sequence in presenting topics, and a continuous deepening of knowledge at each stage of learning (Bogachyk, 2019: 114–116).

According to O. I. Vovk, among the main features of teaching grammar material to young learners, the following ones should be highlighted (Vovk, 2023: 39):

1. Positive motivation and supportive assistance from the teacher in communicative practice, where the student – rather than the teaching material – is the focus of attention.

2. Taking into account students' levels of speech proficiency, recognizing that in the early years of school, they are as unfamiliar with the grammar of a foreign language as they were when acquiring their native language.

3. Creating typical educational-methodological scenarios, such as speech situations that include games, role-playing dialogs, and topics that reflect students' interests and life experiences.

The use of educational-methodological situations in foreign language lessons can achieve the following teaching objectives: developing speech skills and abilities, facilitating the acquisition of lexical and grammatical material, serving as a means of communication, and checking comprehension of the material. A learning situation should simulate real-life communication, cultivate an attentive attitude among students towards their classmates, foster a sense of collectivism and initiative, stimulate students' motivation for learning activities, and evoke interest in completing assignments (Vovk, 2023: 39).

In addition to modeling real-life communication situations to enhance the productivity of foreign language lessons in primary school, G. Bertolini suggests applying **the 3R rule**: repeat, review, and revise. This rule includes three stages of material reinforcement. Specifically, she recommends conducting short games to review previously learned words and phrases, reinforcing earlier acquired lexical and grammatical material. Additionally, the researcher emphasizes the importance of avoiding abstract concepts and focusing on concrete, familiar objects that children can directly perceive through their senses. Younger students learn best from what they can see, touch, or feel; therefore, when teaching a foreign language, it is advisable to use topics closely related to their daily lives, such as clothing, animals, colors, numbers, family, school, and other familiar categories (Bertolini, 2012: 4).

Traditional grammar instruction, particularly in the early stages of language learning, often focuses on isolated forms and rule memorization. For young learners, however, such **decontextualized** approaches can result in low engagement, limited retention, and reduced communicative competence. Research in early language acquisition emphasizes the need for a meaningful, playful, and cognitively appropriate learning environment (Cameron, 2001: 76; Pinter, 2017: 45). In this regard, CLIL offers a pedagogical shift by embedding language learning – grammar included – into content-rich, communicative tasks.

Within the CLIL framework, grammar is not taught in isolation but emerges from authentic contexts, where learners engage with both subject matter and language. The 4Cs Framework (Coyle et al., 2010) helps guide grammar instruction through:

1) *content* – when grammar is integrated into curriculum topics (e.g., animals, weather, geography);

2) *communication* – during which learners use target structures to describe, compare, or explain ideas;

3) *cognition* – implying that grammar is acquired through thinking skills such as sequencing or classifying;

4) *culture* – exposure to meaningful, culturally relevant input encourages real use of language.

Effective CLIL-based strategies for grammar instruction include:

• **Storytelling with grammar focus**: introducing grammar through narrative structure (e.g., Past Tense through fairy tales).

For example. The teacher reads *The Three Little Pigs*, emphasizing Past Tense verbs ("The first pig built a house of straw"). Students identify and highlight past-tense verbs in the story. They retell the story in pairs, using Past Tense verbs correctly. As a follow-up, students create their own short fairy tale using past-tense structures.

• **Project-based learning**: learners use grammatical structures while creating posters, models, or reports.

For example. In a science-integrated lesson, students track the weather for a week. They compare temperatures and conditions using comparatives and superlatives ("Today is colder than yesterday." / "Monday was the sunniest day."). They create a weather chart and present their findings in groups.

- **Interactive games and kinaesthetic activities**: sentence-building races, grammar board games, or movement-based sentence formation.

For example. *Action Verbs Relay Race* (Present and Past Tenses). Students are divided into teams. Each team has a set of verb cards. One student acts out an action (e.g., jumping), another says it in the Present Tense ("I am jumping."), and a third changes it to the past ("I jumped."). The team that correctly completes the most verb transformations wins.

- **Visual grammar tools**: color-coded sentence strips, pictograms, and illustrated grammar charts to support comprehension.

For example. *Sentence-Building with Color-Coded Strips* (Sentence Structure). Different colors represent parts of speech: nouns (blue), verbs (red), adjectives (green), prepositions (yellow). Students mix and match strips to create grammatically correct sentences (e.g., "The small cat (blue-green) runs (red) under the table (yellow)"). Afterwards they can write and illustrate their own sentences.

- **Digital tools and songs**: grammar songs, interactive whiteboard games, and child-friendly grammar apps provide multimodal reinforcement.

For example. Grammar Song *Fill-in-the-Blanks* (Verb Conjugation). The teacher plays "If You're Happy and You Know It". Students listen and fill in missing verbs ("Clap your hands!"/ "Stomp your feet!"). They create new verses using different verbs and act them out in class.

All the approaches mentioned above rely on **scaffolding** – starting with the guided use of structures and gradually moving toward independent production. The use of multimodal resources ensures learners receive input through multiple channels (visual, auditory, tactile), supporting various learning styles and cognitive development (Walsh, 2010: 27; Serafini, 2014: 19; Sun, 2025). For example, songs can present grammar chunks rhythmically; storytelling visualizes grammar in action; and digital platforms allow for interactive repetition and feedback. Games are beneficial for both young learners and teachers. Through the games primary school students develop their ability to listen to other classmates, share opinions with them while working cooperatively. Teachers reach the satisfying results in this activity (Hayyu Rafikha et al, 2024: 135).

Rather than isolating grammar from real-world contexts, CLIL-based instruction allows students to acquire grammatical accuracy and fluency through purposeful engagement with content. The '*Growing Sentences*' activity embodies this principle by combining science and language learning, encouraging students to describe plant growth using Present Simple and Present Continuous. By constructing and illustrating their own "growth sentences," learners apply grammar in a meaningful, hands-on way that fosters deeper understanding and retention.

Students can further develop their grammar skills with the activity '*Count and Compare*,' which integrates Math concepts with comparative and superlative adjectives. The teacher presents images of objects (e.g., three different-sized apples) and prompts students to describe them using comparatives and superlatives, such as "This apple is bigger than that one. This is the biggest apple." A counting game follows, where students compare groups of items and form descriptive sentences.

To practice prepositions of place and directions, students engage in the Geography-based activity '*Where in the World*?'. Using a world map with objects (stickers, flashcards) placed on various locations, students describe positions: "The Eiffel Tower is in France." "The Amazon Rainforest is between Brazil and Peru." They then practice giving directions using prepositions: "Go straight, then turn left." This activity enhances spatial awareness and language proficiency simultaneously.

Next, students explore descriptive adjectives and sentence structure in the art-based activity '*Describe Your Masterpiece*.' Each student creates a drawing and writes 3–5 sentences describing it using adjectives (e.g., "The sky is bright and blue. My house is small but beautiful."). Peers then guess which picture matches each description, reinforcing the connection between visual representation and descriptive language.

To further support grammar development, students engage in the music-based activity '*Sing & Fill in the Blanks*.' The teacher provides a simple song with missing words (e.g., "I ___ (go) to school every day"). Students listen to the song, fill in the blanks with the correct verb form or article, and sing along using the correct grammar. This activity enhances listening skills and reinforces grammatical structures in a memorable and enjoyable way.

Through these structured CLIL activities, students acquire both language and subject-specific knowledge in an engaging and interactive manner. This ensures the gradual development of grammar skills, moving from comprehension to production in meaningful contexts.

Conclusions. CLIL-based grammar instruction offers a powerful approach to fostering both accuracy and fluency among primary school students by integrating grammar into meaningful, content-rich activities. This method supports linguistic competence, cognitive development, and motivation by allowing students to internalize grammar in an interactive and authentic context. By shifting away from traditional drills and focusing

on communication-driven learning, CLIL-based strategies create a dynamic and engaging framework for long-term grammar acquisition.

References

Bertoliny, G. (2012). Teaching English to very young learners. 34 p.

Bohachyk, M.S. (2019). Osoblyvosti zastosuvannia suchasnykh metodiv navchannia anhliiskoi movy v pochatkovii shkoli [Peculiarities of using modern methods of teaching English in primary school]. *Naukovi zapysky Natsionalnoho universytetu "Ostrozka akademiia"*, (5) 73, 114–116. Retrieved from: https://journals.oa.edu.ua/Philology/article/view/2252/2024 [in Ukrainian].

Cameron, L. (2001). Teaching Languages to Young Learners. Cambridge University Press. 258 p.

Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning. Cambridge University Press. 184 p.

Dalton-Puffer, C. (2007). Discourse in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Classrooms. John Benjamins Publishing. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.20.

Hayyu Rafikha, Nahyatul Ula, Hidayati Rahmah, Nurul Khaira, Khaira Fitri, Putri Rumai za Ulfa et al. (2024). Seven Innovative Ways to Learn English for Non-Native Speaker. N.p.: USK Press. 165 p.

Mehisto, P., Marsh, D., & Frigols, M.J. (2008). Uncovering CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning in Bilingual and Multilingual Education. Macmillan Education. 238 p.

Miroshnyk, I.V. (2018). Poniattia inshomovnoi gramatychnoi kompetentnosti ta osoblyvosti yii realizatsii v pochatkovii shkoli [The concept of foreign language grammatical competence and its implementation in primary school]. *Molodyi vchenyi*, 2.1 (54.1), 99–103. Retrieved from: http://erpub.chnpu.edu.ua:8080/ispui/handle/123456789/941 [in Ukrainian].

Pinter, A. (2017). Teaching Young Language Learners (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 240 p.

Rada Yevropy. (2003). Zahalnoievropeiski rekomendatsii z movnoi osvity: vyvchennia, vykladannia, otsiniuvannia [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment] (S.Yu. Nikolaieva, Ed.). Kyiv: Lenvit [in Ukrainian].

Serafini, F. (2014). Reading the Visual: An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy. Teachers College Press. 189 p.

Shevtsova, H.H. (2015). Molodshyi shkilnyi vik: tradytsii ta innovatsii v doslidzhienniakh [Junior school age: Traditions and innovations in research]. *Pedahohichni nauky. Zbirnyk naukovykh prats*, 68 (36), Herson: HDU, 134–138 [in Ukrainian].

Shkvarina, T.M. (2007). Metodyka navchannia inozemnoi movy doshkilnykiv [Methods of teaching a foreign language to preschoolers]. Kyiv: Osvita Ukrainy, 300 p. [in Ukrainian].

Sun, H. (2025). Strategies and effectiveness of integrating teacher and peer scaffolding into an L2 reading programme. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 1–16. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2025.2465497.

Vovk, O.I. (2023). Metodyka navchannya anhliyskoyi movy uchniv molodshoyi shkoly. Navchalno-metodychnyy posibnyk. Vyd. 5-te: vypr. i dop. Cherkasy: Nechytaylo O.F. 155 p. [in Ukrainian].

Vovk, O.I., & Pashis, L.O. (2024). Komunikatyvno-kohnityvna kompetentnist maibutnikh filolohiv i vchyteliv-movnykiv [Communicative-cognitive competence of future philologists and language teachers]. *Visnyk Cherkaskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni Bohdana Khmelnytskoho*. Seriia: Pedahohichni nauky, 1, 24–35. Retrieved from: https://new.ejournal.cdu.edu.ua/pedagogics/issue/view/1 [in Ukrainian].

Walsh, M. (2010). Multimodal Literacy: What Does it Mean for Classroom Practice? *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 33 (3), 211–239.

Розвиток граматичної компетентності на уроках англійської мови в початковій школі за допомогою методології CLIL

Лєвочкіна Світлана Владиславівна
*кандидат філологічних наук, старший викладач кафедри англійської філології
та методики навчання англійської мови
Черкаського національного університету імені Богдана Хмельницького, Черкаси, Україна*

Лелеко Вікторія Володимирівна
*кандидат педагогічних наук, викладач кафедри англійської філології
та методики навчання англійської мови
Черкаського національного університету імені Богдана Хмельницького, Черкаси, Україна*

Інноваційні підходи до викладання граматики в початковій мовній освіті набувають дедалі більшої уваги, оскільки педагоги шукають більш змістовні та захоплюючі альтернативи традиційним методам. У цьому дослідженні розглядається, як методологія CLIL сприяє такому розвитку в молодших учнів. Усвідомлюючи обмеження традиційних методів викладання граматики, які часто характеризуються позаконтекстними вправами та заучуванням правил, дослідження обґрунтовує доцільність більш залученого й комунікативного підходу, заснованого на змістовному навчанні й активній участі учнів.

CLIL як освітня модель дає змогу молодшим учням органічно формувати граматичну компетентність, інтегруючи граматику в предметні види діяльності з різних дисциплін шкільної програми. У статті описано низку стратегій, серед яких: сторітелінг, проєктне навчання, інтерактивні ігри, візуальні граматичні засоби та цифрові інструменти. Ці методи сприяють глибшому розумінню граматичних структур, водночас підтримуючи когнітивний розвиток, емоційне залучення та мотивацію учнів. Особлива увага приділяється поетапному навчанню (scaffolding), мультимодальному сприйняттю інформації та віковим особливостям учнів початкової школи.

Дослідження ґрунтується на якісних методах, аналізі змісту та педагогічному моделюванні, щоб показати, як граматика може засвоюватися в реальних комунікативних ситуаціях та інтегрованих навчальних сценаріях. Практичні приклади з класу – ігри на побудову речень, сторітелінг із граматичними цілями, міжпредметні проєкти – ілюструють, як CLIL сприяє розвитку як мовленнєвої плавності, так і граматичної точності.

Також розглянуто роль моделі 4Cs (зміст, комунікація, мислення, культура) у формуванні ефективного граматичного навчання. У підсумку викладання граматики на основі CLIL показано як дієвий засіб підвищення комунікативної компетентності учнів, гармонізації процесу засвоєння мови з природними механізмами навчання та підтримки довготривалих освітніх результатів. Такий підхід сприяє формуванню цілісної, інклюзивної та ефективної моделі раннього мовного навчання, акцентуючи увагу на взаємодії, креативності, орієнтації на учня й актуальності змісту для повсякденного досвіду та зацікавленості дітей.

Ключові слова: *молодші школярі, граматична компетентність, CLIL (методологія інтегрованого навчання предмета та мови), 4К основа, скаффолдінг.*