

## THESIS FOR A RESEARCH PAPER ON HOW TO TEACH IF CONDITIONALS WITH MODERN METHODS

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### **Abstract**

*This thesis aims to examine the perpetual issues existing in teaching “if conditionals” and suggest teachers possible effective ways to show that enticing students to learn grammar points is easier if teaching methods include using video materials and online games in the case of a chosen subject.*

### **Introduction**

Teaching English grammar has always been one of the topics for heated debates whether it is important to learn this knowledge about the targeted language or students should work on this individually. As this aspect of the language was at the center of English classrooms all over the world a few decades ago, it shows that grammar plays an important role in teaching and learning English language for both teachers and students equally. As Thornbury notes “We could open up our concept of “grammar” if we start thinking of it as not just a noun, but as a verb as well (i.e. the active skill of using a language)” grammar shouldn’t be seen as just a set of boring and exhausting rules, but means of making impressions, achieving better results in both academic and non-academic field by the learners. In this project, one of the problematic points in learning grammar of a chosen subject will be analyzed and solutions will be provided to overcome those issues.

### **Learner Profile**

The chosen subject is a female, 23-year-old student who has been practicing English for many years and studying at Pedagogical Institute and majors in teaching English. After getting her consent for participating in the project, the first thing that I conducted with her was the interview about her background knowledge and the ways that she used to learn English language over the years. During the interview it was clear that her level was Low Intermediate despite the time she spent for learning the language. She is enthusiastic in terms of learning languages, doing self-study in her free time and working on her mistakes with the

help of her peer students. As she says she has a certificate of language proficiency of B2 level that she got recently. Because the results didn't please her and she needs higher level certificate for job positions she is planning to attend English courses again later this year. Her first language is Uzbek and English is a second language for her as locals don't speak in other languages except Uzbek in the area. She has experience in working as a teacher of English at school with different classes and she attended a couple of training programs during her bachelor's before applying for a job. The existing problems in her grammar were spotted using Speaking and Writing tests that showed what was challenging for her and what she easily mastered in learning grammar. As she started answering the Speaking questions, I realized that she was using simpler structures in her speech and unintentionally trying to avoid using *if conditionals* and *modal verbs*. As the topic of conditionals is also used for specific occasions in Uzbek language, too, she barely used them in English. One of the reasons for her struggling with using *conditionals* was the mixed rules and the difficulty of using those rules in a real-life context. During her English exam she understood that she responded with short answers and couldn't extend her ideas using different structures like conditionals, relative clauses, passive voice sentences, and thinks that this is why she got low band score for the Speaking part of the test. To deal with these issues, I decided that it was necessary to design a plan of the lesson using the varieties of if conditionals and include activities that help to better understand and use them daily. For this process effective teaching principle will be used by Edward Thorndike who invented the "Laws of Learning" that contains readiness, exercise and effect as main parts of the principle.

### **Part 2. Description of the grammar point for remedial teaching.**

If conditionals or conditional sentences are used to describe the outcomes of a specific condition and are used with different tense pairs. There are 5 types of conditionals: zero, first, second, third and mixed conditionals. **Zero conditionals** are used for stating general truths, facts or habits while **the first conditionals** are used to predict future possibilities. **Second conditional** informs us about impossible or unlikely situations in the future and for the situations that are not true now. In the **third conditional** the situations like regret or mistakes are described whereas in the **mixed conditionals** a pair of conditionals like second and third can be used accordingly for the imaginary present results of past events.

Examples of the conditionals:

- Zero conditional: Present Simple/Present Simple – If you boil water, it gets hot.

- First conditional: Present Simple/Will/Won't+Verb – If you study hard, you will get better results.

- Second conditional: Past Simple/Would+verb – If you sold your car, you would be rich.

- Third conditional: Past Perfect/Would have+Past Participle – If I had been sick, I wouldn't have come to the party.

- Mixed conditional: 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional/3<sup>rd</sup> conditional – If I were taller, I would have reached the doorknob.

As easy and clear it may look, students still find it difficult to understand and use these forms in practice because of the possible similarities between **zero** and **first conditionals**, putting the **would** or **will** auxiliary verbs in the if-clause for the first, second and third conditionals. Especially the third conditional makes it worse because of the number of auxiliary verbs and the length of the formula in sentences.

And the last but not least of the problems is because these conditionals have two clauses which take turns in the sentences (Halliday&Hasan, 1976). "If students learn about conditional sentences, they not only learn basic tenses, but also find some tenses that are not commonly used in everyday conversation" (Fatimah, 2019, p.4) shows that sometimes learning how to use conditionals can be difficult as much as possible. Based on what Fulcher (1991) noted it can be said that it is up to teachers which conditional types to teach first based on the availability rate of them in the texts. For teachers it can be a problem to teach the structure of conditionals and at the same time help students in making meaningful sentences because these are complex sentences.

Abovementioned problems do exist in the subject's both written and speaking answers and can be seen in the following examples from the interview part:

1. If I go out now, I **can (will)** catch the bus.
2. If I were you, I **would do (have done)** the same (mixed conditional).
3. If you **would** (sold) sell your car, you could (would) be rich.

In terms of pedagogical approaches, as it already has been mentioned that teachers should understand which conditional to teach first. Because to understand the second and third conditionals students must have knowledge about past and perfect tenses and past participle forms, as simple tenses are primary topics in most textbooks teaching conditionals should start with first conditionals after which zero conditionals can be explained.

As students find visual and audio materials more helpful and interesting, explaining the topic with the help of textual information isn't the best way to conduct the lesson effectively.

Below are recommendations to enhance students' understanding about conditional sentences and how to bolster the effectiveness of a lesson working with different levels of students:

**Objectives:** students can differentiate the types of conditionals using following recommendations and properly exploit them in their daily conversations.

**Connections:** being able to use and juxtapose Present, Past and Perfect tenses.

It is better to start the lesson by playing students a video about basics of using conditionals (it can be an extract from a movie, song, TV show, etc.). In this stage of the lesson students are encouraged to notice what is happening in the video and what kind of grammatical structures are being used while listening to the video. In addition to this, teachers can ask students conclude the video and ask what kind of relation the video may have to the lesson and share their opinions. For lower level students, it is highly recommended that the teacher provides handout materials with the subtitles or transcribed version of the video materials.

Involving the students in speaking activities like oral questionnaires is preferable than asking them to make sentences using the learnt material. Rather than making sentences on the blackboard, teachers can take them from books that students are familiar or have started reading to make the memorization process easier and creative.

Considering the fact that social activities are extremely popular among youth, next set of activities should be held on Internet platforms that let students use their mobile phones while getting involved in the lesson. Fun writing activities like "Type rally" or "Wish ball" can embellish the lesson and keep students focused on the topic averting the possibility of boredom that traditional lessons can cause. Finally, as a consciousness awareness activity, teachers use sentences with highlighted and misused words in conditional sentences and let the students decide what to change. This activity can be initiated in pairs or small groups so that the students could have discussions between them and learn from each other.

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