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Abstract: *This article discusses simple and practical ways of teaching the verb “to be” to elementary language learners. The verb “to be” is one of the first grammar points in most beginner courses, but it can still be confusing for students because it changes according to the subject and is used in many everyday situations. The article explains how teachers can present “to be” through clear contexts, visual support, short dialogues, repetition, controlled practice and speaking tasks. It also describes common learner difficulties and suggests classroom techniques that make grammar easier, more meaningful and less stressful. The main idea of the article is that “to be” should not be taught only as a table of forms. It should be connected with real communication, familiar vocabulary and simple classroom interaction.*

Keywords: *to be, elementary English, grammar teaching, beginner learners, classroom techniques, simple sentences, communication, language practice.*

INTRODUCTION

At the elementary level, grammar teaching plays an important role in helping learners build the first structure of a foreign language. Among the earliest grammar topics, the verb “to be” has a special place. It is used in greetings, introductions, descriptions, personal information, location, age, nationality and many other basic communicative situations. For this reason, learners meet this verb almost from the first lesson.

Although “to be” looks short and simple, it is not always easy for beginners. Learners need to understand that the forms am, is and are are connected with different subjects. They also need to learn negative and question forms, short answers and natural pronunciation. If the teacher presents all these forms at once in a dry grammatical way, students may remember the rule for a short time but fail to use it in speech.

A simple and effective lesson on “to be” should therefore move from meaning to form and then to use. Students should first see why the structure is needed, then notice how it is formed, and finally practise it in small but meaningful speaking or writing tasks. This article focuses on practical methods that can help teachers make the topic clear, memorable and useful for elementary learners.

Main Part

The first step in teaching “to be” is to create a clear situation. Grammar becomes easier when learners understand the message before they study the form. For example, instead of beginning with a large table, the teacher may show a picture of three people and say: “I am a teacher. She is a student. They are friends.” In this way, learners connect the verb with real

meaning. Many methodologists emphasize that grammar should be presented in a meaningful context rather than as isolated rules [1].

Visual support is especially useful for beginners. Pictures, flashcards, classroom objects and real people in the classroom help students understand the difference between I, he, she, it, we and they. A teacher may point to himself or herself and say, “I am happy,” then point to one student and say, “He is ready,” and then to two students and say, “They are classmates.” This simple demonstration makes the grammar visible and concrete. For elementary learners, such visual presentation reduces the need for long explanations.

After the context is clear, the teacher can present the form in a small and organized way. It is better not to overload students with every possible rule at the beginning. A simple table with three lines is enough: I am, he/she/it is, you/we/they are. The teacher can read the forms aloud, ask students to repeat them and write two or three short examples under the table. This stage should be short, because beginners usually learn better through practice than through long theoretical explanation [2].

The next useful technique is substitution practice. The teacher gives a model sentence such as “I am from Uzbekistan” and then changes one part of the sentence: “She is from Korea,” “They are from Spain,” “We are from Andijan.” Students repeat and then create their own examples. Substitution drills may seem traditional, but they are still helpful when they are short, clear and connected with meaning. They help learners notice the correct form and gain confidence before freer communication begins.

Negative forms should be introduced after students feel comfortable with affirmative sentences. The teacher may use contrast: “I am a doctor. I am not a student.” “She is tired. She is not hungry.” This contrast helps learners understand that not changes the meaning of the sentence. It is also useful to teach contracted forms such as isn’t and aren’t gradually. At the very beginning, full forms are clearer, but in listening and speaking learners also need to hear natural contractions.

Question forms require special attention because word order changes. Many learners try to say “You are a student?” because this structure may be closer to their mother tongue or because they simply keep the affirmative order. The teacher should clearly show the movement of the verb: “You are a student” becomes “Are you a student?” A good classroom technique is to use cards with separate words. Students can physically move the word are to the beginning of the sentence. This makes the grammar rule easier to see and remember.

Short dialogues are one of the most effective ways to practise “to be.” For example, students can practise: “Hello. My name is Ali. What is your name?” “My name is Madina.” “Are you a student?” “Yes, I am.” Such dialogues are simple, but they are close to real communication. They also combine grammar with vocabulary and social language. When learners use “to be” in a dialogue, the grammar stops being an abstract rule and becomes a tool for interaction [3].

Another helpful technique is personalization. Students remember grammar better when it is connected with their own lives. After a short presentation, the teacher can ask learners to complete sentences about themselves: “I am ...,” “I am from ...,” “I am interested in ...,”

“My friend is ...,” “We are” These sentences do not need to be long. Even very simple personal sentences create a stronger connection between the learner and the language. Personalization also makes the lesson more natural and less mechanical.

Games can also make the lesson more active. A simple “Find someone who...” activity can be adapted for “to be.” Students walk around and ask questions such as “Are you from this city?”, “Are you good at football?”, “Are you interested in music?” They write the names of classmates who answer yes. This type of activity gives students a reason to repeat the same structure many times without feeling bored. Repetition becomes part of communication rather than simple memorization.

For younger or less confident learners, choral repetition and pair repetition are also useful. The whole class repeats a model, then pairs practise quietly, and finally individual students say the sentence. This order is important because it gives weaker learners time to prepare. If the teacher immediately asks one student to speak alone, the learner may feel stress and make more mistakes. A supportive sequence helps learners move from group confidence to individual production [4].

Teachers should also pay attention to pronunciation. The forms am, is and are are often weak in natural speech. Beginners may not hear them clearly, especially in contractions such as I’m, he’s, she’s and they’re. The teacher can write both full and contracted forms on the board and read them slowly first, then naturally. Short listening activities can help: students hear sentences and choose the correct subject or form. Even simple listening practice makes grammar teaching more complete.

Writing practice should follow oral practice. At the elementary level, students may first complete gap-fill exercises: “I ___ a student,” “She ___ my sister,” “They ___ at school.” Then they can correct mistakes: “He are happy,” “I is from Turkey.” Finally, they can write a short paragraph about themselves or a classmate. This movement from controlled writing to short personal writing helps learners use the structure more independently.

Error correction needs to be gentle and useful. Mistakes such as “I is,” “he are,” or “are you teacher?” are natural at the beginning. The teacher should not stop every sentence too quickly, because this may discourage learners from speaking. During controlled practice, direct correction is useful. During speaking activities, the teacher can note common mistakes and discuss them after the activity. In this way, learners receive feedback but still keep their motivation to communicate.

It is also important to recycle “to be” in later lessons. Many students understand the topic during the first lesson but forget it when new grammar appears. The teacher can review “to be” through warm-up questions, short descriptions, picture tasks and quick games. For example, at the beginning of a lesson the teacher may ask: “How are you today?”, “Who is absent?”, “What day is it?”, “Are you ready?” These small classroom routines give learners repeated exposure to the same structure in a natural way [5].

A simple and effective lesson on “to be” should therefore include several stages: context, presentation, controlled practice, pronunciation, short communication and review.

Each stage should be clear and not too long. The aim is not only for students to know the rule, but also to use the verb in everyday sentences. When learners can say who they are, where they are from, how they feel and ask similar questions to others, the grammar has become meaningful.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teaching “to be” in a simple and effective way requires more than explaining forms on the board. The teacher should present the structure through familiar contexts, use visual support, give clear models, practise affirmative, negative and question forms step by step, and create opportunities for real classroom communication. Beginners need repetition, but this repetition should be varied and purposeful.

The verb “to be” is a foundation for further language development. If students learn it with understanding and confidence, they can later use it in descriptions, dialogues, personal writing and many other communicative tasks. Therefore, the best approach is to make the lesson clear, practical, supportive and connected with learners’ real experiences. In this way, even a basic grammar topic can become an active and meaningful part of language learning.

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