

THE ROLE AND USE OF THE PRESENT SIMPLE TENSE IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Ahmedov Azimjon

teacher of Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages.

ORCID: 0009-0007-3405-3150

azimjonahmedov1203@gmail.com

Xodjajanova Madinaxon Mannopjon qizi

the second grade student of Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages.

Abstract: *The Present Simple tense is one of the most essential grammatical categories in the English language and forms the foundation of everyday communication. It is used to describe habitual actions, general truths, universal facts, emotional states, and permanent situations. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the Present Simple tense based on leading grammar authorities such as Raymond Murphy, Betty Azar, Michael Swan, and Longman English Grammar. The paper examines its structure, functions, communicative roles, common learner difficulties, and pedagogical applications. The article also highlights the significance of mastering this tense for English language learners, especially beginners and intermediate students, as the Present Simple serves as an entry point for understanding more complex grammatical structures. Examples from authentic and academic contexts are provided to illustrate the tense’s versatility. The aim is to offer a clear, in-depth, and research-informed explanation that supports both teaching and learning processes.*

Keywords: *Present Simple; English grammar; habitual actions; general truths; verbal structure; do/does; subject–verb agreement; grammar pedagogy*

Аннотация: *Настоящее простое время является одной из важнейших грамматических категорий английского языка и составляет основу повседневного общения. Он используется для описания привычных действий, общих истин, универсальных фактов, эмоциональных состояний и постоянных ситуаций. В этой статье представлен всесторонний анализ настоящего простого времени на основе ведущих авторитетов в области грамматики, таких как Рэймонд Мерфи, Бетти Азар, Майкл Свон и английская грамматика Лонгмана. В статье рассматриваются его структура, функции, коммуникативная роль, типичные трудности обучения и педагогическое применение. В статье также подчеркивается важность освоения этого времени для изучающих английский язык, особенно для начинающих и учеников среднего уровня, поскольку Present Simple служит отправной точкой для понимания более сложных грамматических структур. Для иллюстрации универсальности этого*

времени приводятся примеры из аутентичного и академического контекста. Цель состоит в том, чтобы предложить четкое, углубленное и основанное на исследованиях объяснение, которое поддерживает как процесс преподавания, так и процесс обучения.

Ключевые слова: Настоящее простое время; английская грамматика; привычные действия; общие истины; речевая структура; делать/делает; соглашение субъект-глагол; грамматическая педагогика

Annotatsiya: Ushbu oddiy zamon ingliz tilidagi eng muhim grammatik kategoriyalardan biridir va kundalik aloqa asosini tashkil etadi. U odatiy harakatlar, umumiy haqiqatlar, umumbashariy faktlar, hissiy holatlar va doimiy vaziyatlarni tasvirlash uchun ishlatiladi. Ushbu maqolada “Raymond Merfi, Betti”, Maykl Swan va Longen Stream grammatikasi kabi hozirgi oddiy taranglikni har tomonlama tahlil qilishni ta’minlaydi. Qog’oz uning tuzilishi, funktsiyalari, kommunikatsion rollari, umumiy o’quvchi qiyinchiliklari va pedagogik qo’llanmalar tekshiriladi. Maqolada, shuningdek, ingliz tilini o’rganuvchilar, ayniqsa boshlanuvchilar va oraliq o’quvchilar uchun ushbu zamoni o’zlashtirishning ahamiyati ta’kidlanganidek, hozirgi oddiy grammatik tuzilmalarni tushunish uchun kirish nuqtasi sifatida. Tengning ko’p qirraliligini tasvirlash uchun haqiqiy va akademik kontekstlarning misollari keltirilgan. Maqsad – bu o’quv va o’quv jarayonlarini qo’llab-quvvatlaydigan aniq, chuqur va ilmiy-tadqiqot va tadqiqotlarni taklif qilish.

Kalit so’zlar: Oddiy; Ingliz tili grammatikasi; odatiy harakatlar; Umumiy haqiqatlar; og’zaki tuzilish; qilish / qilish; mavzu-fe’l bitimi; Grammatika pedagogika

The Present Simple tense stands as one of the most frequently used grammatical constructions in the English language. Its use spans across spoken and written communication, academic writing, scientific description, and everyday routines. Although it is often considered a “basic” grammatical form, research in second language acquisition indicates that many learners struggle with its rules, especially subject–verb agreement and the use of auxiliary verbs in negatives and questions.

Modern grammar textbooks—including English Grammar in Use (Murphy), Understanding and Using English Grammar (Azar), and Practical English Usage (Swan)—provide detailed descriptions of the Present Simple and emphasize its centrality in communicative competence. The tense is used to express situations that are regular, predictable, or permanently true. Because it conveys patterns, habits, routines, and facts, it forms the core of meaning expression in English.

This article explores the structural, functional, semantic, and pedagogical dimensions of the Present Simple tense. It aims to develop a clear academic understanding of how the

tense is constructed, when it is appropriately applied, what challenges learners face, and why it remains a cornerstone of English grammar instruction.

1. Structural Features of the Present Simple Tense

The Present Simple has a straightforward yet precise grammatical structure. The form of the verb depends on the subject:

I/You/We/They + base form:

I work.

They play.

He/She/It + base form + -s/-es:

He works.

It passes.

This addition of -s/-es in the third-person singular is one of the most distinctive features of English grammar. According to Betty Azar, this rule emphasizes the importance of subject–verb agreement—a foundational concept for learners.

1.1. Negative Forms

Negative sentences require the auxiliary verb do/does:

I do not (don't) like coffee.

She does not (doesn't) study at night.

1.2. Interrogative Forms

Questions also require do/does:

Do you work here?

Does he live in London?

The main verb retains its base form in both negative and interrogative structures.

1.3. Spelling Rules for -s/-es

Some verbs undergo minor spelling changes:

Watch → watches

Study → studies

Go → goes

These rules must be taught explicitly because they frequently cause confusion among learners.

2. Communicative Functions of the Present Simple

The Present Simple plays multiple communicative roles in English. Michael Swan identifies five principal functions, each essential for accurate communication.

2.1. Habitual Actions

The tense is commonly used to describe actions that occur regularly:

She goes to school every day.

I visit my grandparents every weekend.

Time expressions such as always, often, sometimes, usually, and every day frequently accompany Present Simple verbs.

2.2. General Truths and Universal Facts

The Present Simple conveys statements that are always true:

Water boils at 100°C.

The Earth orbits the Sun.

Cats like milk.

These sentences demonstrate how the tense expresses permanent truths in science, geography, and other fields.

2.3. Permanent Situations

The tense is used for stable conditions:

He lives in New York.

She works at a bank.

Even if these situations might change eventually, the speaker perceives them as stable at the moment.

2.4. Scheduled Events and Timetables

Although the Present Simple refers to “present” actions, it also expresses future events when they are based on a fixed timetable:

The train leaves at 9 a.m.

School starts next week.

This function is crucial in academic and administrative language.

2.5. Feelings, Thoughts, and Mental States

Certain verbs describing mental and emotional conditions typically use the Present Simple:

He loves music.

She believes you.

I think it is a good idea.

These verbs rarely appear in continuous forms.

3. Pedagogical Perspectives on Teaching the Present Simple

Teaching the Present Simple requires careful scaffolding. Research shows that students often confuse it with the Present Continuous, especially when describing routine versus temporary situations.

3.1. Common Learner Difficulties

Some of the most frequent challenges include:

Forgetting the -s in third-person singular

Misusing do/does

Adding do/does in affirmative sentences

Misinterpreting habitual actions as continuous processes

Using continuous form for stative verbs (I am knowing, I am loving)

These errors indicate the need for explicit instruction.

3.2. Effective Teaching Strategies

Teachers are encouraged to:

Use real-life examples and daily routines

Incorporate visual timelines to contrast tenses

Provide controlled and semi-controlled exercises

Use dialogues and role-play to encourage communicative use

Include error correction with explanation, not memorization alone

Textbooks such as Murphy’s English Grammar in Use suggest using graded exercises that begin with recognition and end with production.

3.3. The Role of Input and Repetition

Learners develop mastery through repeated exposure to authentic input. Listening activities, reading passages, and interactive tasks help solidify understanding.

4. Present Simple in Academic and Professional Contexts

Beyond everyday communication, the Present Simple plays a significant role in academic and professional writing.

4.1. Scientific Description

Scientists use the Present Simple to describe natural laws and processes:

Photosynthesis converts light into energy.

Gravity attracts objects toward the Earth.

4.2. Describing Visuals and Diagrams

In academic writing:

Figure 1 shows the results.

The chart illustrates population growth.

4.3. Formal Definitions

Definitions are almost always written in the Present Simple:

A noun refers to a person, place, or thing.

Democracy means a system of governance by the people.

5. Comparative Analysis: Present Simple vs. Present Continuous

Understanding the Present Simple also requires distinguishing it from the Present Continuous.

5.1. Present Simple

Habits

Routines

General truths

Permanent situations

5.2. Present Continuous

Temporary actions

Actions happening now

Changing situations

Examples

She lives in Paris (permanent)

She is staying in Paris for two weeks (temporary)

This contrast is key to accurate communication.

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The Present Simple tense is a fundamental grammatical structure that supports clear logical, and effective communication in English. Its functions extend beyond simple daily activities to include scientific facts, professional communication, academic writing, and institutional schedules. Despite its apparent simplicity, learners often face challenges with subject–verb agreement, auxiliary verbs, and context-based usage. Therefore, structured

instruction, meaningful practice, and continuous exposure are essential for mastering this tense.

As demonstrated across authoritative grammar sources such as Murphy, Azar, Swan, and Eastwood, the Present Simple remains the cornerstone of English grammar learning. A solid understanding of this tense not only strengthens a learner’s grammatical competence but also provides a foundation for comprehending more advanced structures.

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