



2026



TITLE:

THE SOCRATIC METHOD: CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING IN GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

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PRESENTATION TYPE: PLENARY

Abstract

Traditional grammar instruction typically follows a deductive model: teachers present grammatical rules first, and students subsequently engage in repetitive drills, rote memorization, and decontextualized exercises. While this approach may support short-term recall and can be appropriate at lower levels, it often leaves learners passive and disconnected, failing to recognize grammar as a system of interrelated structures rather than isolated rules to be memorized.

This presentation proposes an alternative – placing critical thinking at the centre of grammar pedagogy. When students are guided to analyse why particular structures are used, compare stylistic variations, and infer patterns from authentic examples, grammar transforms from a static set of prescriptions into a flexible tool for meaningful communication. This shift promotes deeper understanding, intellectual independence, and a genuine appreciation of language as a living system.

The proposed method is the Socratic Teaching Method, an inquiry-based approach that prioritises thoughtful questioning over direct lecturing. Instead of being given rules upfront, learners discover them inductively through observation, analysis, and reflection. A powerful illustration involves examining the logic behind English tense names – a seemingly simple inquiry that unlocks coherent understanding of the entire verb system. The presentation will offer practical, classroom-tested strategies for teachers to move beyond mechanical worksheets and create intellectually stimulating grammar lessons that cultivate curious, analytical, and confident students.

Biography

Irina Kuzminova has over three decades of teaching experience, including 25 years at the Belarusian State Economic University. She is currently the founder and CEO of Astra School. Passionate about teaching high-level grammar, she applies an interdisciplinary approach to it and has accumulated a wealth of techniques that she gladly shares with fellow educators. She is the author or co-author of several books on English grammar for university students and school leavers, many of which have been republished multiple times. She is also an experienced presenter at local and international conferences for teachers of English.