

Using Stories in Presenting English Grammar to Vietnamese Young Learners

Nguyet Minh Nguyen

University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Corresponding author's email: nguyetminh@vnu.edu.vn

EOI: <http://eoi.citefactor.org/10.11250/ijte.01.03.016>

Received: 30/10/2021

Revision: 16/11/2021

Accepted: 22/11/2021

Online: 23/11/2021

ABSTRACT

Keywords: grammar teaching techniques, young learners, learning through stories

Despite the development of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in recent years, explicit grammar instruction remains an indispensable element in English teaching and learning and needs to be paid more attention to, especially when Vietnamese teachers are struggling at presenting grammar to young EFL learners. With an investigation into 5th-graders' grammar lessons delivered by native English-speaking teachers at Vietnam-Australia School, Hanoi, the research aims at (1) describing the way stories are employed in grammar lessons; (2) exploring teachers' beliefs and (3) students' opinions towards this technique. The research adopts a case study research design with various data collection instruments, including classroom observation, surveys, and semi-structured interviews. The result reveals that using stories is perceived to be effective in presenting grammar to young learners by both teachers and most students. It can inform both native and non-native English teachers of this technique's employment in grammar lessons and Vietnamese students' attitudes towards it.

Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language for young learners has recently received much more attention from educators as a result of globalization and the increasing use of English as the international language. In the Vietnam context, under the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project, which has come into effect since 2008, it became compulsory for primary students to start learning English at third grade instead of beginning from secondary education. Moreover, after finishing primary schooling, students are expected to reach level 1 of the Common European Framework of References for languages (CEFR). Under the influence of that project, curriculum and methods in teaching English for primary learners have undergone changes; additionally, teachers' training has also been taken into consideration with national workshops held especially for English language teachers at primary schools.

Despite the growing interest in English teaching for young learners, much more research in the field is still required, as well as both pedagogy and methodology need to be developed for effective teaching (Cameron, 2001). There have not been so many studies conducted on young learners in Vietnam, which offers numerous unexplored areas for researchers to dig into. Among those are grammar teaching techniques, which play a crucial role in English teaching and learning, as grammar acts as a living resource that facilitates communication with others, rather than just a list of labels and rules (Scrivener, 1994).

Important as it is, teaching grammar to primary learners is not at all simple. Not all teachers are equipped with appropriate methods and resources to teach grammar to primary children. Moreover, the teachers' beliefs and young students' opinions about the techniques used to teach grammar may be dissimilar. Therefore, the research hopes to suggest a useful technique that can be used to present grammar to young learners and teachers as well as learners' attitudes towards this technique.

Literature review

The role of grammar teaching

During the last half-century, different approaches in English language teaching have appeared and contributed to the development of this field (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Among the approaches in English teaching in general and grammar teaching in particular, nowadays, CLT is favored by most language teachers and learners for its comprehensive knowledge and skills offering students. The CLT approach views language as the most important communicative tool (Brown, 2002). Many researchers recognized that grammar is one of the linguistic means in achieving those communicative goals (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Nassaji, 2000; Spada & Lightbown, 1993). Therefore, teaching and learning grammar is necessary but not the ultimate goal of learning a language. Grammar just equips students with the basic and systematic knowledge of language so that they can base on and develop communicative competence. As pointed out by Nguyen et al. (2007), in current CLT classrooms, grammar is neither over-emphasized nor neglected, but it is regarded as an indispensable tool to develop learners' communicative competence. It was also argued by Pham and Tran (2021) that grammar is regarded as a key component of language and has a significant impact on the success of second language learning.

The practice of grammar teaching

Regarding grammar teaching, many scholars like Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988), Larsen-Freeman (1991), and Thornbury (2006) have reached a consensus that the teaching of grammar needs to address three dimensions: Form, meaning, and use. Form is the way a particular structure is formed. Mastering form means knowing the formation of words and the order of words in that structure. This is undeniably important as it is essential for language learners to recognize and produce grammatically well-formed sentences (Thornbury, 2006). Meaning is

what is expressed through a structure. According to Thornbury (2006, p.4), “grammar is a process for making a speaker’s or a writer’s meaning clear when contextual information is lacking.” He suggested that since grammar is definitely a tool for making meaning, learners should pay attention to the Form and the meanings those forms convey. Use or function is the reason why a particular form is selected in a particular context. Several different forms can express one function, and one Form can express a variety of functions. In order to be successful in communication, learners should match Form and function well. Therefore, teaching grammar out of context is not recommended.

There are different opinions on what stages teaching grammar should include. Celce-Muria (1988) suggested that a grammar lesson should follow four steps: presentation, focused practice, communicative practice, teacher feedback, and correction. Ur (1988) also came up with four stages that share the same two with Celce-Muria: presentation and practice. He added an explanation step right after the presentation and test as the last stage. Both scholars’ suggestions have their own values; however, this research adopts a more familiar model of teaching grammar: presentation – practice – production, which is also the model that teachers from Vietnam-Australia School Hanoi follow when teaching grammar to 5th graders.

Presentation is the stage where grammar structures are introduced, either deductively or inductively. A good presentation, according to Leech et al. (1982, p.81), “should include both oral and written forms, and both form and meaning. It is important for learners to have plenty of contextualized examples of the structure and to understand them”. In other words, the presentation stage creates a context to help learners comprehend the meaning and use, explains the Form to help them remember, and finally, checks students’ understanding. A wide variety of techniques can be employed to present new grammatical items to learners: using stories, dialogues, and audio/ visual aids. As suggested by Shin and Candrall (2014), stories are most beneficial to young learners as they introduce new cultures, offer an entertaining way of learning, and help students develop critical thinking skills. Thornbury (2006) commented that introducing grammar in meaningful contexts will facilitate students’ understanding since they easily grasp the meaning and function. Situations can be authentic or created by teachers, as long as they are meaningful and can present new grammar well. Pictures, photographs, flashcards, realia, recordings, videos, and songs are also absolutely helpful in presenting grammar. They also help engage students, boost class atmosphere while maintaining the lesson’s effectiveness.

Teaching grammar to 5th-grade learners

Shin and Crandall (2014) offered a specific look at how children deal with learning a foreign language. First, young learners need a learning environment similar to the first language, as children are engaged and highly motivated to learn when they can see the connection between the language and the immediate needs in the real world. As a result, purposeful activities that “mirror first language acquisition” (p.40) are recommended. Second, as children learn language through lots of meaningful exposure and practice, the teacher had better provide plenty of meaningful and comprehensible input and chances to practice using English in class. Last but

not least, young learners do not learn language through explicit grammatical explanations. Instead, they “gain an understanding of the grammar implicitly through repetition and recycling of the language in different contexts” (p.41). Therefore, children should be exposed to language in authentic and meaningful contexts. Repetition and recycling are also encouraged to use to improve learners’ language competence.

Scholars widely agree that grammar actually has a place in children’s language learning and children have the ability to acquire grammatical items. The nativist view in language acquisition (revived by Chomsky, as cited in Brewster & Ellis, 2010) suggested that children have their pre-installed program to learn the language. They can speak and use grammatical structures very well despite being unable to explain why (Pinter, 2006). Cameron (2001) also shared the same viewpoint about the important role of grammar. She asserted that grammar indeed has a place in children’s foreign language learning as it is “closely tied into meaning and use of the language, and is interconnected with vocabulary” (p. 96). It requires “skillful teaching” from the teacher since grammar is not suggested to teach directly but through “opportunities for grammar learning that arise in the classroom” (p. 122).

Related studies

There has been a huge volume of research on teaching grammar by scholars worldwide and Vietnam in particular. For example, researchers in Vietnam National University (VNU) like Pham and Tran (2007) or Nguyen and Le (2010) have explored communicative approaches in teaching grammar in their research; however, the subject is high school students. Techniques in teaching grammar have already been studied in a thesis by Lam and Tran (2008) about the application of games in teaching grammar, also aiming at grade 10 students. Hence, teaching grammar to primary learners is yet investigated.

Likewise, in the field of teaching English to young learners, some VNU undergraduate students have contributed by investigating vocabulary teaching and group work exploitation. Du (2008) found out that grade 4th and 5th students preferred common activities used to teach vocabulary at an English teaching center and drew some implications for teachers when planning vocabulary lessons. With the same subjects chosen, the research of Bui (2011) studied how group work motivated students to learn English in the classroom. Nevertheless, the aspect of teaching grammar to young learners remains a gap to research on.

In the world, there has been some research on techniques to teach grammar for primary learners; however, these studies only present several techniques and suggest the way of using them but do not focus on using stories to present grammar. A study carried out recently by Senturk and Kahraman (2020) in Turkey revealed that the involvement of short stories in language lessons can enhance students’ grammar knowledge, but the subjects are middle school students. Therefore, through this study, the researcher hopes to suggest the steps to follow when using stories to present grammar to young learners in Vietnam, as well as teachers’ and the learners’ attitudes towards this technique.

Research Questions

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. How do native teachers use stories to present grammar to grade 5th English learners as observed by the researcher?
2. How do these teachers view this technique, in terms of their advantages and students' preference towards them?
3. What are 5th graders' attitudes towards this technique in grammar lessons?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Vietnam-Australia School, Hanoi (VAS Hanoi) is a semi-international school offering a dual program to all students that include the Vietnamese curriculum together with an English-based program. The English language is put a great emphasis in the school curriculum since it seeks to raise students' ability in the four English language skills through continuous lessons with native English language teachers. For 5th graders, six out of eight English periods per week are instructed by native English language teachers. In the past, Australian teachers took charge of helping the students to develop key skills needed to communicate successfully in English, namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing, while Vietnamese English teachers supported them and specialized in teaching English grammar and vocabulary. However, this distribution is no longer implemented since it is best to integrate both skills and knowledge into English lessons. To put it another way, native English language teachers are currently delivering grammar lessons as well.

In terms of materials, Incredible English (second edition) is the program used. This material has such resources as flashcards, photocopiable masters, story frames book, and fun, lively stories written by popular children's story-writer Michaela Morgan. The book encourages learning other skills, such as working with others, learning how to learn, and to understand more about their own culture (VAS Hanoi website).

In relevance to each language level of primary pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 5, VAS Hanoi identifies a suitable book for each, which can be explained by Figure 1.

The research participants include two native

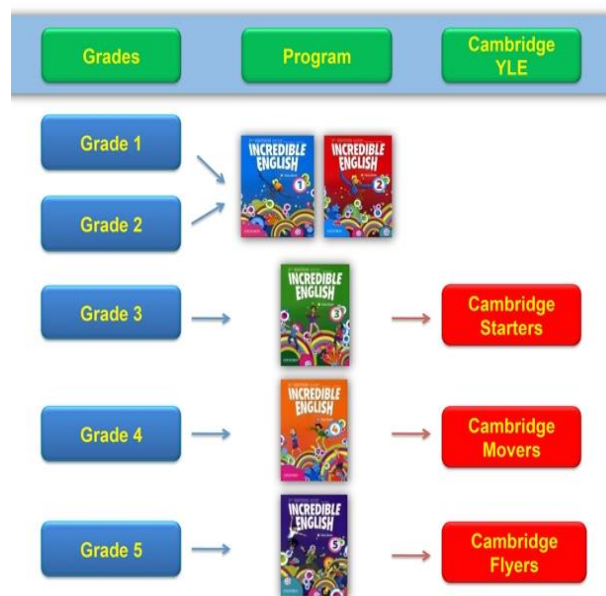


Figure 1. Programs used for primary pupils at VAS Hanoi

English-speaking teachers and 42 pupils at two Grade 5 classes. Both Australian teachers have qualifications in primary education with about 6-8 years of teaching experience. The researcher with the purpose observed their classes is to find out the technique used to present English grammar to the students. After several observations, they participated in semi-structured interviews to share their ways of delivering a grammar lesson and their beliefs towards the technique used. There are two 5th grade classes at VAS primary school, which were named differently in the research as 5A and 5B. There are 21 pupils in class 5A instructed by teacher A (T. A), while there are 20 pupils in class 5B instructed by teacher B (T. B). They responded to a survey designed by the researcher to discover their attitudes towards the technique used to present English grammar. It is believed that 5th graders are more mature cognitively and emotionally than the other ones. Thus, they were able to understand the questions better and give reasonable as well as critical answers. After participating in the survey, three students from each class will be chosen to join in an informal interview.

Design of the Study

The case study approach is adopted in this research. Yin (1984, p.23) defines the case study approach as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." Likewise, Gall et al.(1996) clarified that a case study helps investigators produce in-depth research of examples of a phenomenon in its natural circumstances and from the participants' views involved in the phenomenon. In the case of second language research, a case study aims to provide a comprehensive description of language learning or use within a specific population and settings (Mackey & Gass, 2005). As Johnson (1993) claimed, it is highly appreciated for "providing insights into the complexities of particular cases in their particular contexts" (cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 172). In other words, a case study can offer the researchers an intensive analysis of an individual unit in a specific real-life context. Since the research seeks to investigate grammar teaching techniques used by native English-speaking teachers in a particular educational setting; hence, a case study is the most suitable research design to adopt. It is believed that thanks to data collected from various instruments case study offers, the findings of the research could be significant to later research. In order to increase the validity and reliability of the case study, a combination of observation, interview, and questionnaire is exploited during the research process.

Data collection & analysis

The data collection procedure involves four phases which are described as the following. The first step was observing two Grade, five classes. Due to the time limit, observation could only take place four times in each class. During the observation, the researcher tried to take note of the technique used and inquiries about the method that needed further explanation from the teacher. After finishing observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two teachers to verify the researcher's subjective observation (if any) and understand their beliefs towards the grammar presentation technique they used. The third phase involved a questionnaire on learners of two classes to identify their attitudes towards the technique used.

This questionnaire was designed based on the data collected from observation and interviews with the teachers. It was made up of scale-ranking questions to easily transform the data collected into statistics, tables, and charts. The questionnaire was written in Vietnamese, and they were delivered to students of each class during the ten last minutes of their English lesson, different from the sessions observed by the researcher. Thanks to the two teachers' generous help, the researcher had enough time to instruct and explain clearly to the students how to do the questionnaire and make sure there were no misunderstandings. When the students had trouble understanding a question, the researcher could immediately give a hand so that they could give the best answers. In a closer look, the questionnaire was divided into two parts with 06 questions in total. The first part included 03 questions asking the children about their personal information. The second part asked the pupils specifically their opinions of the grammar presentation technique used by native English-speaking teachers in grammar lessons with scale-rating questions. Their attitudes can be understood as: to what extent they like the technique and to what extent they think the technique is interesting and effective. The fourth step was informal interviews to understand more about the students' answers. Three students from each class who had interesting answers from the survey were chosen to participate in the interview. Each interview lasted for about 7 minutes.

As the data of the research were collected through three different instruments, a variety of methods could be employed to analyze them. To begin with, the qualitative content analysis method was used to analyze the data collected from the observation and interview. The observation and interview notes could provide a great deal of information, and tape recordings were transcribed to offer the most complete and profound set of information. Then, the whole data was classified, synthesized, and coded to interpret findings. Answers expressing the same ideas would be paraphrased to be in a pattern, which helped the researcher make inferences and then later wrote up a detailed description of methods used and the teachers' attitudes towards them. Later, descriptive statistical analysis was employed to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire. Both qualitative content and descriptive statistical analysis method could bring the researcher a thorough and profound analysis of the data so those valid findings can be reached.

Findings and discussion

Using stories to present stories

The researcher's observation and teachers' interview results reveal that most grammar lessons start with a story. Both teachers shared quite a similar way to approach the story: after having the students listen to the story, they asked questions and explained some vocabulary to clarify the story's content before presenting the grammatical structures. However, the amount of time spent on dealing with the story was different between the two cases. For example, with the same story *Mrs. Midge's famous pies* (Incredible English 5 – Class book, p. 46), while teacher B needed nearly half of a lesson (30 minutes) to play the story over again, teacher A only let the

students listen to it once before explaining and presenting grammar.

Table 1. Steps to explain stories in two classes

Class 5A– Teacher A	Class 5B – Teacher B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tasked Ss to open their books to page 46 and look at the story - T played the story once - T called some Ss to read out loud the narration and dialogues in each picture. - After each picture was read, T explained structures and vocabulary. For example, he asked questions: “What does this mean by ‘How much does it weigh?’ here?” “What is ‘recipe?’” “Do you know what does this mean by ‘ingredients?’” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tasked Ss to close their books and guess the name of the story - Ss listened to the story once - Tasked such simple questions about the story as "Who is Mrs. Midge?"; "What does she do?"; "What does she make?" "Why do the students come to her restaurant?" Not all questions were fully answered by the Ss. - Ss listened to the story for the second time while opening the books - T tried to retell the story in detail. He said: “So Mrs. Midget is a baker. She is going to make a chicken pie. Do you remember what she needs to make a pie?” Ss reply “Onions!” – “Onions, yes, anything else?” – “Flour!” “Yes, flour...” - Ss listened to the story for the third time. - Tasked, "Any questions?" "Any words that you can't understand?" and explained the words "recipe" and "ingredients" - T played the cartoon (story on-screen) twice - Ss worked in pairs, read the story to their partners while T went around and asked questions about the story to check understanding.

One possible explanation for this dissimilarity is the disparity in English competence between two classes, as shared by the teachers and observed by the researcher. Class 5A is known to have better English ability than class 5B; thus it took them a shorter time to get the gist of the story. As a matter of fact, from observation, the researcher also realizes that only after three times listening to the story could help the students from group 5B answer most of the teacher's questions, whereas 5A students were able to answer all the teacher's questions right after one time listening. However, it was not guaranteed that all the students from group 5A could fully understand the story as there were only some familiar faces that frequently raised their voices in reply to the teacher's questions. In other words, the activity seemed not able to involve all students, though the teacher tried to call different students for each question. To explain why he did not spend so much time reading the story, teacher A shared:

“Using stories takes time, sometimes there're additional pieces of vocabulary or concepts that I need to explain. I mean, you're testing different skills, the kids are listening and reading the story, but the focus is not reading; it's the grammar, so you don't want them to get lost too much in the story". (T. A)

Meanwhile, thanks to the pair work and teacher B's supervision, the story might be fully

understood by all students of group 5B.

Another factor affecting the time allotment for stories was their level of difficulty, as shared by teacher B. He said:

“There are some stories that are more difficult, for example, Ancient Egypt, which is just too far away and too much vocabulary. They take more time for the students to understand”. (T. B)

Even though there was a difference in the time spent on stories, both teachers agreed that after discussing the story and ensuring that there was no concept unfamiliar to the students, they would move to talk about grammar. In this case, they moved to task 2 (Incredible English 5, class book, p.47) where sample sentences of the targeted grammatical structures (too many, too much, enough) were presented. They asked students to read the samples and find similar sentences in the story, for instance: “We haven’t got enough onions” and “You’ve got too much flour”. By looking at the pictures and context, students then could somehow understand the meaning of such sentences. At that time, both teachers went on explaining those structures by giving examples and writing on the board. Since two teachers’ ways of presenting grammar at this point bore much resemblance, the researcher will only demonstrate teacher A’s talk.

Teacher A: These structures help us to talk about what do we need and what have we got, OK? For example, we need 6 apples (wrote number “6”) and we have 10 (wrote number “10” below number “6”). Who can make a sentence similar to the sample sentences?

Student 1: We’ve got too many apples.

Teacher A: (drew two columns: “countable” and “uncountable”) So, is “apple” countable? Can we count “apple”? Can we say “one apple”, “two apples”, “three apples”?

Students: Yes.

Teacher A: Yes, “apple” is countable (wrote “apple” in the column “countable”). So we have the sentence “We’ve got too many apples” (wrote “many” on the top of the column). This time, we need 10 apples, but we only have 6 apples. How can we say?

Student 2: We haven’t got enough apples!

Teacher A: Correct! What about “uncountable”? (pointed to the “uncountable” column) Is this different or the same? Who can give me some uncountable ingredients?

Students: Flour... Sugar...

Teacher A: So flour (wrote “flour” in the “uncountable” column), I have 6 kilos of flour. I only need 5 kilos. So...?

Students: I’ve got too much flour.

Teacher A: (wrote “much” on the top of “uncountable” column) How about I need 6 but I only have 5 kilos of sugar?

Students: I haven’t got enough sugar!

Teacher A: That's right, so it's the same for "enough"! (pointed to two columns respectively)

In short, although the amount of time spent on working with the stories may vary due to the difference in students' level and the stories' difficulty, the usual procedure of exploiting stories to present grammar still can be affirmed in teacher B's sharing:

"First, we introduce the story, we talk about the story, we try to answer the questions about the story. Once the children have the understanding what the story is about, we move to the grammar". (T. B)

Teachers' belief

Both teachers reached a consensus that the stories provide context for the students to understand grammar better and keep them excited during the lesson. According to teacher B, it is challenging if we teach grammar without context in the stories since "they give children an idea of how we use the language and why we use it." Similarly, teacher A asserted that using stories has a huge advantage, which is helping students to see grammar in action, in context so that they could make their own connections to the world outside, as he believed that one of the teachers' important jobs is to help the children relate themselves to real life. He added, "Everything in life is better taught by examples, and the stories help provide examples". In other words, two teachers hold the belief that stories offer context, where the students can understand how and why we use the grammar or sentence structures in real-life situations, thus making teaching and learning grammar less difficult.

Another advantage of using stories shared by both teachers is the exciting atmosphere it can bring to the classroom. Compared to the "not much fun" traditional way of presenting grammar, stories can keep both the teacher and students more excited, commented by teacher A. He gave an example:

"The students get to look at the story and something that interests them, so I think that's a huge advantage. We don't have to just say "Well, today we are going to learn too much, too many, here it is, it's on the board, now copy this to your book", it's not much fun. For example, the story about making a pie, kids would like to make a pie. We can talk a lot about that, and we can do a lot of interesting things about making pies". (T. A)

Teacher B supported this idea by pointing out that since the stories are engaging to the students, they would want to learn more and more, using them can make both teaching and learning easier. The lessons even stand a high chance of becoming boring without the presence of stories, said teacher B, since "some students would not understand what we are trying to do".

In conclusion, it is a shared viewpoint between two teachers that using stories helps the children understand and relate the grammar to the real use better through its context. Moreover, stories make both teaching and learning more interesting. Thus students do enjoy working with stories in grammar lessons. This is similar to Shin and Crandall (2014)'s ideas about how children learn the language, which is presented in the literature review section: children learn through meaningful exposure to the language; moreover, they are engaged when they can see the

connection between the language and real-life context.

Students' attitudes

To discover students' attitudes towards the exploitation of stories to present grammar, the researcher asked all students from the two classes to express their level of agreement to three statements: (1) I like learning grammar through stories; (2) I think learning grammar through stories is interesting; (3) I think learning grammar through stories is effective.

Students' preference for learning grammar through stories can be expressed through responses to the statement (1), which is visualized in Figure 2. Their opinions of whether learning grammar through stories is interesting and effective or not are also presented in Table 2 below.

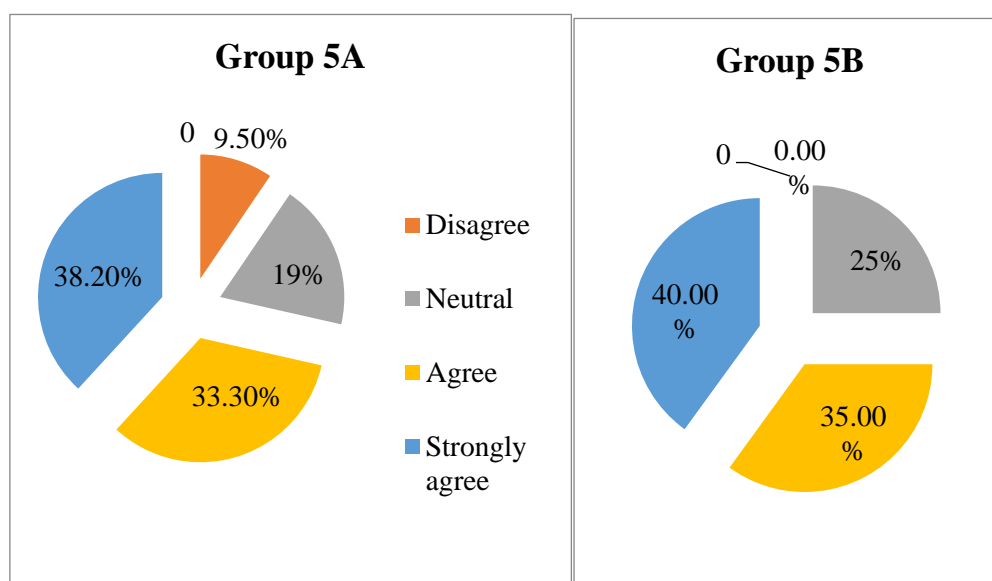


Figure 2. Students' response to the statement "I like learning grammar through stories"

Table 2. Students' opinions of learning grammar through stories

		Group 5A	Group 5B
2	I think learning grammar through stories is interesting.	3.95	4.15
3	I think learning grammar through stories is effective.	3.90	3.75

As illustrated in Figure 2, a very large proportion of students (72% in class 5A and 75% in class 5B) have an interest in learning grammar through stories. Moreover, it is a widely held belief among 5th graders that learning grammar through stories is both interesting and effective, with an average rating above 3.75 for two questions in both classes. According to four interviewed students, two from class 5A and two from class 5B, stories make the lessons more exciting as they offer the chance to look at beautiful pictures or even cartoons on the screen:

"I pretty like the stories because the pictures look nice, and the teacher sometimes lets us watch the cartoon." (S. A1)

Stories also feature different characters, thus making the students want to discover and explore more. In addition, all of them admit that they can understand sentence structures very quickly and remember them through stories.

"Because when I look at the pictures, I already understand the context, so I can understand the sentences easily." (S. B1)

Although no one strongly dislikes learning grammar through stories, a small percentage of students do not perceive using stories to learn grammar as their favorite. Four students of class 5A and five students of class 5B choose "neutral" for the question, and most noticeably, two students of class 5A disagree with the statement "I like learning grammar through stories." When being asked about the reasons for not being fond of this technique, a student from 5A explained that the content of some stories is quite boring to him; as a result, he does not fancy reading those stories. Another student from 5B also admitted that sometimes he felt bored since either his mother had already taught him those stories at home, or he had already read similar stories elsewhere. In both cases, despite not having an interest in learning grammar through stories, they still regard this technique as an effective way to present and learn grammar.

In a nutshell, using stories is the most commonly used technique to present grammar to grade 5 students in VAS Hanoi for two main reasons: it brings context and keeps both teachers and students excited. Although most students are interested in learning through stories, which is similar to the teachers' beliefs and expectations, there are still some children not engaged by this technique.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the technique used to present grammar to grade 5th students by native English – speaking teachers at VAS Hanoi, with an attempt to answer three research questions: (1) how the stories are used to present grammar, (2) how the teachers view the technique in terms of its advantages and the students' preference towards it, (3) what the students' attitudes towards the technique used are. Observation, questionnaires, and interviews are the instruments utilized to collect the data needed for the research.

It is revealed that in the presentation stage, the most frequently utilized technique is using stories since it has such advantages as bringing real-life context to the classroom and keeping both teachers and students excited, as approved by both teachers. The story should be played first and discussed later. After the children get the gist of the story, sentence structures are presented. This technique also receives positive attitudes from the students as the teachers expect, though there are still some children not engaged due to the lack of originality in the stories' content.

The findings of this study coincide with the results of a study by Senturk and Kahraman (2020) with Turkish middle school students. It is suggested that most students enjoy the inclusion of short stories in their lessons, which contribute to the students' successful language acquisition.

From the results found in this study, native English-speaking teachers' technique to present

grammar to 5th graders in VAS Hanoi, their beliefs, and the student's attitude towards it might act as a reference for other teachers working in the Vietnamese context. Understanding the benefits of using stories in grammar presentations and how students feel about them will probably better prepare teachers for planning grammar lessons so that teaching and learning grammar can be more engaging and effective. Particularly, exploiting stories can be a good way to present grammar. Extra vocabulary should be introduced alongside so that students can understand the story's content before looking at the grammar patterns. However, careful consideration should be taken when teachers choose the stories so that they best suit students' English level, characteristics and interests. The amount of time spent on discussing stories also varies corresponding to the story's level of difficulty and students' reading ability.

Despite the researcher's strong desire to investigate the techniques used by native English – speaking teachers in VAS Hanoi, some difficulties encountered during research time led to several limitations. In the first place, as a result of the researcher's lack of time, a limited number of observations were done. With only four sessions for each class, the data presented may not fully reflect all the techniques used in grammar lessons of VAS Hanoi's teachers. Another consequence of the time shortage is the limited chance to interview the students. There are 41 students participating in the survey in total. However, the researcher only managed to talk to 6 pupils, 3 from 5A and 3 from 5B. The opinions of these students might not represent all the students in their class. Moreover, each interview only lasts for 10 minutes, which can restrict students' further explanation for some questions.

The study's limitations give rise to numerous suggestions for further research. The issue may be dug deeper into by requiring more observations and face-to-face interviews with the students so that the whole picture can be described thoroughly and the results may become more reliable. Another direction is to conduct research with the same topic but in another setting. The setting may be a public primary school and the subjects may be non-native English-speaking teachers. In addition, a comparative study between techniques used by native English-speaking teachers and non-native English-speaking teachers is also a possible recommendation for later research.

References

- Brewster, J. & Ellis, G., Girard, D. (2010). *The primary English teacher's guide* (new edition). Essex: Penguin.
- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. California: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Bui, T. Q. T. (2011). *The exploitation of group work to increase the 4th and 5th graders' motivation in classroom to study English in lower movers classes, British Council, Hanoi*. BA thesis. Hanoi: VNU-ULIS.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Celce-Murcia, M. & Hilles, S. (1988). *Techniques and resources in teaching grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Du, T. H. T. (2008). *An investigation into students' preference towards common vocabulary activities at British Council, Hanoi*. BA thesis. Hanoi: VNU-ULIS
- Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R. & Gall, J.P. (1996). *Educational Research: An introduction*. New York: Longman Publishers.
- Haznedar, B. & Uysal, H. H. (2010). Introduction: Embracing theory and practice in teaching languages to young learners. In B. Haznedar & H. H. Uysal (Eds.). *Handbook for teaching foreign languages to young learners in primary schools* (pp.1-20). Ankara: Ani Publications.
- Jatmiko, A. (2011). *Teaching grammar to young learners: techniques and implementation*. Sebelas Maret University.
- Lam, T. T. T. & Tran, X. D. (2008). *The application of games in teaching grammar with reference to Tieng Anh 10 textbook at Ha Trung high school, Thanh Hoa province*. MA thesis. Hanoi: VNU-ULIS
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1991). Teaching Grammar. In M.Celce-Murcia (Ed.) *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. New York: Harper & Row/Newbury House.
- Leech, G. Deuchar, M. & Hoogenraad, R. (1982). *English Grammar for today*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (1990). Focus on Form and corrective feedback in communicative language teaching: Effects on L2. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 12, 429-448.
- Mackey, A. & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Nassaji, H. (2000). Towards integrating form-focused instruction and communicative interaction in L2 classroom: Some pedagogical possibilities. *The modern language journal*, 84(2), 241-250
- Nguyen, Q. T., Le, V. C., Nguyen, T. M. H., Hoang, T. X. H., Do, T. M., Nguyen, H. M. et al. (2007). *Cẩm nang dạy và học Tiếng Anh trung học phổ thông*. Hanoi: Education Publication.
- Nguyen, T. T. L. & Le, V. C. (2010). *Teachers' attitudes towards grammar teaching in the light of communicative approach to first year non-major students at Haiduong Medical Technical University*. MA thesis. Hanoi: VNU-ULIS
- Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching young language learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Publication.
- Pham, V. P. H., & Tran, V. D. (2021). The Effects of Vietnamese High School Teacher's Utility of Google Forms on Eleventh Graders' Grammatical Knowledge. *AsiaCALL*

- Online Journal*, 12(4), pp. 30-45. Retrieved from <https://asiacall.info/acoj/index.php/journal/article/view/65>
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Scrivener, J. (1994). *Learning Teaching: The essential guide to ELT* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
- Sentuk, S. & Kahraman, A. (2020). The Use of Short Stories in English Language Teaching and Its Benefits on Grammar Learning. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 12(2), pp. 533-559.
- Shin, J. K. & Crandall, J. J. (2014). Teaching young learners English: from theory to practice. *National Geographic Learning*.
- Thornbury, S. (2006). *How to teach grammar*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Biodata

Nguyet Minh Nguyen is currently an English lecturer at Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Faculty of English language teacher education. She graduated from Korea University with a master's degree in English Education. Her interests include teaching EFL to young learners, technology application in EFL teaching, and English applied linguistics.