

A Case Study on Using Presentation Software in Teaching and Learning Grammar for English-majored Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

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In second language acquisition, grammar is important in enhancing skills and language ability. Freshmen who majored in English at university are required to study grammar as a specific subject along with other skills like reading, speaking, listening, and writing. At the tertiary level, students learn grammar differently from at lower levels, so it requires new methods to engage and encourage them in this subject. This qualitative research investigates the effectiveness of using presentation software as the main method of learning grammar in two classes at a university. The study employs classroom observation and interviews with a teacher and some students to explore the attitudes and influences of this method of learning grammar as a separate subject at university. The results show that students are engaged in learning grammar, and they are more confident to explain different grammar knowledge and improve their grammar better. Both the teacher and students have positive attitudes toward learning grammar with this method, and they also hope that presentation can be applied to improve other subjects actively and effectively, like in grammar subject.

Introduction

It is undeniable that grammar plays an important role in language acquisition. A rich source of vocabulary needs the assistance of grammar, which is considered as the backbone, to build a basic sentence, a paragraph, an essay, and in general, language ability. In modern times, people do not focus on learning grammar as much as in the past, and grammar is encouraged to be obtained through context or be learned implicitly. Nunan (2005) mentions teaching grammar in different ways from what teachers did in the past. Students learn grammar during the early stages of language acquisition. Specifically, in the Vietnam education system, students have learned grammar and vocabulary along with four main skills, including reading, listening, speaking, and writing, since primary school. Textbooks and other teaching materials are various for teachers to use in their teaching so that students can practice grammar through a variety of

activities, including traditional exercises, quizzes, games, and other creative ways of teaching and learning grammar. However, not all students can assess these useful means of learning due to their different educational backgrounds in their towns and cities.

Language teachers at higher education institutions focus on teaching grammar because students with good grammar and vocabulary can apply their English ability in their future jobs and higher education. Students at the university level in most schools also study English as a compulsory subject, which means they study and revise grammar along with other skills through thematical lessons. Even English-majored students still learn grammar as a required subject in their first year. English-majored students have a better basis of English than most others, which requires teachers and lecturers to select an appropriate method of teaching grammar carefully. These students have different knowledge backgrounds, so their teachers can neither teach the basic rules of grammar nor advanced applied grammar through contexts. In a limited time of 45 periods, it is not easy for teachers to cover all basic and advanced grammar points for students if they apply traditional methods of presentation, practice, and production. In addition, there are many different methods of teaching grammar, such as using context (Amin, 2016), a communicative approach (Çiftci & Özcan, 2021), using technology and games (Cabrera et al., 2018; Kanyan & Aydin, 2020; Saeedi & Biri, 2016), using stories (Nguyen, 2021). However, these methods with strengths and weaknesses may not be easily applied at the tertiary level.

At Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry, grammar is a compulsory subject for English-majored students. Students are required to master different points of grammar and can apply their grammar knowledge to business contexts given in the material. In limited time and with the current teaching and learning environment, to meet the needs of this subject, teachers need help with using the mentioned methods. Presentation is increasingly used in the university because it improves speaking skills and other skills like presenting and persuasive skills for students. Student-centered approaches are encouraged so that activities like making presentations are not new but easily welcomed by undergraduates. Learning grammar through presentation can help teachers figure out how well students understand and apply that point of grammar in some contexts. However, there is rarely research on the effectiveness of using presentation in learning languages and especially learning grammar at the tertiary level, so research is conducted and developed to investigate this method of teaching and learning.

Literature review

The role of grammar in language acquisition

According to Ur (1988), grammar ‘may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning’ (p.4). Grammar helps people make longer sentences, paragraphs, or even essays. There are some main reasons why this subject is taught widely at school levels. Firstly, without grammar, sentences can be confused and vague, whereas grammar structures play a big role in organizing sentence structure, providing the same meaning for all people (Crystal, 2004). Secondly, Ur (1988) mentions that people cannot use words if they do not know how to combine these words. That

means even people can use a dictionary to look up vocabulary, but without syntax knowledge, it seems impossible for them to create meaningful structures. In addition, each language has its own rules, so people combine words by the rules of their first language leading to misunderstanding when communicating with others.

Grammar has a long history of development. Grammar and its role are clearly explained by many linguists like Chomsky (1965) or Bresnan (1978) with transformational generative grammar. Based on the theory of these authors, Langendoen (2013) argues and divides grammar roles into performance grammar and competence grammar. Performance grammar -direct role- 'is used to construct the semantic interpretations' of language which is used while competence grammar-indirect role- 'provides the vocabulary for the construction of performance grammar.' (p.239). In addition, Celce-Murcia (1991) and Hedge (2000) also mention the importance of grammar competence in building effectiveness and success of communication.

Teaching and learning grammar is considered a necessary aspect of teaching languages because of the essential role of grammar in language skills such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. In the assessment of skills as well as in English proficiency tests like IELTS, grammar is always one of the important criteria which measure how well test takers use a language. However, the question of whether it is necessary to teach grammar separately is still a debatable issue.

Teaching or not teaching grammar

Many issues about grammar, such as teaching or not teaching grammar, how to teach grammar effectively, or whether being good at grammar means good at language, have been controversial topics for years.

Some people argue that grammar is an umbrella concept or term which is one of the aspects of a language, and it is not necessary to focus deeply on grammar when people concentrate on meaning (Kumar, 2006; Saraceni, 2008). Some people have not mastered grammar but can communicate very well. Kumar (2006) claims that speaking a language is not just strictly using rules. Language ability can be improved through practice, not through learning grammar rules by heart, but it cannot be applied in practical situations. Bakhtin (2004) agrees that 'students who recognize, successfully identify, and correctly punctuate certain grammatical or syntactic structures do not necessarily employ those same structures in their own writing' (p. 15). Saraceni (2008) lessens the importance of teaching grammar when he suggests that it should be combined with other linguistic aspects.

However, according to DeKeyser (2005), grammar is not easy because of its factors, including the complexity of form, meaning, and the form and meaning relationship. Therefore, learners should master the form, apply the form for discourse purposes, and naturally use grammar in different contexts. The process of teaching and learning is required to find appropriate methods to meet the needs of this subject. Additionally, Krashen (1988) agrees that grammar should be included in the study but not as a core subject in the curriculum for two reasons: grammar is a good beginning to learning linguistics, and grammar is a tool for editing. Particularly, effective reading skills need grammar knowledge, and the concise and quality of writing works are partly decided by grammar use. Krashen (1988) also mentions that suitable times for learning

grammar should be after the learners have absorbed a great deal of reading because grammar improves the accuracy of using language.

In general, grammar has a great role in language acquisition and should be taught when many authors emphasize the importance of teaching grammar (Krahnke, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 1990, 2021; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Terrell, 1991). Grammar helps improve reading, writing, speaking, and even listening skills, which is a fact that no one can deny. Without a basic knowledge of grammar, language learners face difficulties in making a complete sentence and many errors related to mechanisms that can confuse others and not understand them. Tabbert (1984) uses many grammar examples to prove the need to learn grammar, like confused pairs of words (lie-lay), subject and verb agreement, double negative, etc. Grammar is like the backbone from which a good body is built. With good knowledge of grammar, learners can develop their communicative skills, both written and spoken form. When learners master grammar points, they know the core principles of a language, and then, they can improve their language ability through practice in real contexts. Azar (2007) enhances the importance of grammar teaching as he claims that people communicate through separate words, sounds, or body language without grammar. Thanks to grammar points, all aspects of linguistics agree with each other to create a masterpiece of what we call language.

Methods of learning and teaching grammar

Teaching grammar is not just teaching the structures of grammar because a person who can do grammar exercises correctly may not apply them effectively in real conversations. Teaching grammar is defined by Ellis (2006) as follows:

Grammar Teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and / or process it in comprehension and / or production so that they can internalize it. (p.84).

Grammar teaching means helping learners understand and use grammar points comprehensively, which is different from learning by heart the structures and using those structures correctly in various exercises. The role of teachers is a facilitator, and learners are the main people who need to discover the forms and internalize the grammatical forms. During a long history of grammar teaching, there are so many methods employed to transfer grammar to learners. Firstly, according to Celce-Murcia (2001), the audio-lingual method mainly focuses on teaching grammar points from basic to advance, and teachers pay more attention to correcting grammatical errors because learning a language is like forming a habit, so learners should form 'good' habits and avoiding 'bad' habits or errors. Rules are provided through the process of imitating given forms and learning the structures. Secondly, in the cognitive code method, grammar points are taught deductively and inductively. Like in the audio-lingual method, errors are considered because of the influence of the first language. However, in the cognitive code approach, errors are acceptable and unavoidable when people learn languages (Celce-Murcia, 2001). When it comes to communicative methods, it seems that teaching grammar is downplayed when communicative methods focus on meaning and communication ability. The curriculum and textbooks vary in activities that develop communicative skills,

which means learning language focuses on discourse and pragmatic function more than strictly sticking to grammar points and error correction.

There is various research on deductive and inductive methods in teaching grammar as a modern or innovative approach to teaching and learning. The deductive method refers to the traditional ways of teaching in which teachers introduce the rules and learners practice through exercises or make their sentences based on the given structures (Harmer, 2007). This method focuses on explicitly explaining grammar points, meaning learners learn the form before the meaning (Haight et al., 2007). Teachers play an important role in class and become the center. Unlike deductive, the inductive approach focuses on learner-center when learners figure out the form or the rules of certain grammar points through examples (Ellis, 2006). It means that grammar is taught implicitly through examples so that learners naturally absorb grammar knowledge as they do in their first language.

Technology-based grammar teaching and learning

Technology is increasingly developing, and it is applied in almost all areas, including education. Heift & Vyatkina (2017) claim that technology-based approaches were introduced and have been implemented in teaching grammar since around the 1960s. There are many different types of technology-based or technology-assisted approaches based on the platforms they use such as computer-assisted language learning (which offers wide ranges of resources, instructions, feedbacks, practice exercises for learners to improve grammar and grammatical accuracy (Dikli & Bleyle, 2014; Li et al., 2017)), mobile/tablet-assisted language learning (refers to using games developed for mobile or tablets to motivate students and as a result improve their grammar efficiency (Chen, et al., 2019; Kayapinar et al., 2019; Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018), virtual-assisted language learning (in which students are provided with records or native-like environment to practice their language in general and according to Chen (2016) it improves learner's grammar and syntax knowledge along with other linguistics aspects like phonetic and morphologic knowledge at a higher level), or robot-assisted language learning (in which the effectiveness of robots in the role of tutors and assistance of teachers in teaching grammar is proved by Lee et al. (2011) when they claim that this approach motivates students, boosts their confidence, satisfaction and interest).

According to Hegelheimer & Fisher (2006), innovative online grammar sources created by technology help increase the learner's awareness of grammatical issues. Using computers to teach grammar is more effective than traditional methods (Faizah & Nazen, 2009; Nutta, 1998). There are tremendous studies about technology in teaching skills and especially teaching grammar more efficiently, such as games, videos, animated sitcoms, 'Pixton' (which refers to comic strip generation), or even using computer-assisted language learning to engage learners in activities that used to be done on papers. According to Dudeney et al. (2014), more than exercises and printed material is needed for modern learners to practice and experience actual grammar, which they need to improve their language skills. Therefore, the technology-based tool positively affects learning and teaching English grammar and increases their learning results (Adil & Ibrahim, 2020; Shagga & Omar, 2012). Educational games and designed games like Scratch positively impact achievement and can also boost learners' motivation (Lai & Lai, 2012; Sanjanaashree et al., 2014). Zari & Aso (2016) claim that students change their attitude

and view on grammar when they learn grammar through the more communicative approach of videos through animated sitcoms.

Challenges and attitude of learners towards learning grammar

As the rules of evolution, transferring from traditional teaching methods to computer-assisted language learning faces challenges that come from both teachers and learners. Technology-based teaching and learning face different challenges, such as a lack of policy of management and coordination (Kent et al., 2016; Loizzo & Ertmer, 2016), low availability of technology (Watson et al., 2016), internet connection (Wiebe et al., 2015). However, challenges in applying technologies to teaching and learning grammar are rarely mentioned in research on technology-based teaching grammar. In their research on different technology-assisted approaches for grammar learning, Bahami & Gholomi (2020) mentions challenges such as overload of peer comments when they watch grammar videos, the output of task-based grammar activities in a virtual environment, boundary conditions of practical and artificial grammar learning environment, time control, individual results/score, validity, and reliability of test for different levels, and the integrating of the digital device into the classroom. Additionally, Yusorb (2018) mentions challenges that students face in learning grammar, like attitude, perception, facilities, experience, expectation, and lesson, and even teachers find explaining grammar is a challenging task. In general, technology-based grammar learning platforms still have issues that need further research, especially on the output, validity, and reliability of grammar assessment.

The fact that Vietnamese learners nowadays can be exposed to grammar through many different channels creates a gap between them. Therefore, although they have learned English grammar at least since they were in grade 6, some university students need help remembering grammar points, so they make many writing mistakes and have difficulties in other skills, too. At university, most students have a basic knowledge of grammar which they learned from a lower educational level, so the traditional method seems inappropriate. However, technology-assisted platforms cannot easily be implemented without teacher training and suitable classroom facilities and equipment. Moreover, in most curricula for English-major students, grammar is added as one of the required subjects, so teachers need to select a method or combine methods to engage their students in this subject as well as improve their grammar knowledge and its pragmatic function.

The technology-based approach is a considerable choice for Vietnamese university context for many reasons. Technology is increasingly applied in teaching and learning because of its effectiveness. In addition, people understand better when they transfer their understanding of issues to others. With the development of technology, both teachers and learners have more choices, but it is also a challenging task because it is not easy to engage a university class with different levels and backgrounds in the same activity. Grammar is important, but it is also a boring subject from the perspective of most students, so selecting an appropriate method to teach grammar at university is not easy. Teachers should find a suitable teaching approach to meet the needs of the course as well as the needs of their students.

Presentation is increasingly popular in teaching and learning. According to Pham et al. (2022),

presentation skill is essential for students' future success, although they still have some difficulties during the preparation and making the presentation in class because they were not trained in this skill at lower educational levels. In their study, students struggle with 'fear of making mistakes,' 'shyness' (p. 37), and lack of knowledge of the topic. In terms of using technology in learning and teaching at university, Van et al. (2021) and Nguyen (2021) show that students prefer it, and it also helps them improve their language knowledge. Corbeil (2013) claims that students prefer learning French grammar by PowerPoint more than textbooks. When students make a presentation, they need to prepare and master the topic they are going to talk about in front of the class. Therefore, the presentation can be an excellent way to engage students in learning (Miriam & Sara, 1999). In the presentation, they can show what they know about a particular topic as well as develop their creativity through combined activities such as games, open tasks, and interactive communication between students. Miriam & Sara (1999) also mention two types of presentation, and they claim that presentation using software is more effective than an oral presentation. In their research, they confirm the effectiveness of using PowerPoint after observing hundreds of schools applying it in teaching EFL. Students read, understand the material and then create slides to present and interact with their classmates and teacher. In most of the research on technology-based methods of teaching grammar, researchers investigate the issue in the view of teachers because teachers are the ones applying technology. However, in this study, the ones who apply technology are students, and they are also presenters in class. There are rare studies on applying presentation to teaching and learning a specific aspect of a language like English grammar, so the study wants to discover this approach's effectiveness and determine the challenges teachers and learners face when applying this method. This study aims to investigate whether a combination of technology and communicative methods can provide a better experience of learning English grammar and then improve learners' attitudes and grammar knowledge.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, classroom observations and interviews are employed to seek the answers for the following research questions:

1. Does the use of presentation make any difference to English-majored students' attitude toward learning grammar?
2. What difficulties do teachers and students face when applying presentations to learning grammar?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study employs 100 English-majored undergraduates in two grammar classes in which the teacher and students use presentation software in teaching and learning. The students are assigned to these classes based on their registration at the beginning of the semester, so their English levels and backgrounds are various. These students are freshmen, and they learn grammar along with other major subjects in the curriculum, like reading, listening, speaking,

and pronunciation in English and other general courses in Vietnamese. Grammar will be taught in 15 meetings of 45-minute periods; each week, students learn three periods. The main material for this subject is Business Grammar & Practice. Teachers, based on the syllabus, make their own lesson plans and can apply any teaching methods which meet the requirement of providing enough grammar knowledge for students. The quality of teaching is assessed through the final multiple-choice exam.

There are concerns about the methods of teaching grammar suggested by teachers who teach this subject at the university. Teachers can choose any methods that suit their class, such as deductive methods, in which the teacher gives formula and students practice through exercises in the textbook, inductive methods, in which the teacher explains grammar knowledge through examples given in the textbook and then does exercises in the book, deductive or inductive methods when a teacher uses a variety of sources to provide theory and just uses exercises in the textbook or other methods which employ learner-concentrated approach. However, there are better methods than one method. Learner-focused methods are encouraged in teaching at this university, so the researcher wants to investigate the effectiveness and influence of these approaches, especially applying technology to learning and teaching. In addition, both the teacher and students are fine with using technology, and the Internet, as well as presentation equipment, is widely supported in all classrooms on the campus, which can be an advantage for this study.

The study follows the timeline and procedure of classes. At the beginning of the course, the teacher introduces the course syllabus and the importance of grammar; she also collects the students' ideas about their difficulties when they learn grammar, as well as their expectations for this subject. Each class will be divided into small groups of 5 members, and each group will be in charge of 2 topics of grammar points. Each group will prepare a presentation about the given grammar focus, which can be presented on the basics of PowerPoint, Prezi, or other presentation applications. The teacher also introduces criteria for presentation, including the content and practice activities, which means that each group should focus on basic points as well as interesting aspects that they learn when searching for information about their given topics. One of the most important criteria is the interaction between the presenters and other class members. After each grammar lesson, the teacher will give a small quiz of multiple-choice grammar questions, which they can do on any digital device to check their understanding. In terms of practice activities during the presentation, each group can be creative to make their own activities such as games, quizzes, asking and answering, or doing exercises. Presentation groups can give incentives to people who participate in their activities, but they are not allowed to give money.

Design of the Study

Qualitative methods are widely used in applied linguistics, especially in research focused on observation and investigating participants' ideas (Wafaa, 2019). This study uses qualitative methods to investigate the effectiveness of using presentation in learning and teaching grammar through some stages of classroom observations and interviews with a teacher and 6 students from two classes. The teacher based on her criteria, including the content of the grammar points, the quality of slides, and the performance of groups (which refers to the presenter's confidence,

interaction with others, pronunciation, and grammatical mistakes) to give feedback and mark the presentations. In the interview sessions, the teacher and 3 students are interviewed and recorded. As recommended by the teacher, in each class, 3 students from the best, the middle, and the worst graded groups are chosen for the interviews. In the class, the teacher used special names for the achievement of groups like "the outstanding," "the great," and "the good group," and their marks were added to their progress results. Before doing observations and interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and got agreement from all participants. All the participants attending interview sessions are coded to ensure the study strictly follow an ethical guideline.

Data collection & analysis

This study collects data from classroom observations and structured interviews. Classes are recorded randomly at the beginning of the course, in the middle, and near the end of the course; the grammar topics for recording are chosen randomly in these classes. In total, there are six recordings during the courses. Two first records are at the beginning of the course when the students present their first presentations. In the middle of the course, two more presentations are observed because, at that time, the students gain some experience and learn from themselves and other groups. Two final observations are conducted when all groups are ready for their second or even third presentations. The study wants to observe the classroom at different stages to see whether there are any changes in the ways the students use presentations to learn grammar, as well as the challenges they encounter during their performances. These recordings aim to investigate the adaptation and improvement or major changes when this learning method is applied; therefore, general criteria of class observation, like effective planning, teaching techniques, and student/teacher relationship, are modified to suit the study purposes. The study focuses on the content of the slides (correct/somewhat correct/incorrect information, simple/enough/extent content), the presenters' performance (confidence/acceptable/shy), the interaction between presenters and others in the class, classroom atmosphere, the teacher's classroom management, and obstacles the groups and teacher may face during the presentations. Each observation lasts about 45 to 50 minutes. The recordings are transcribed and analyzed.

In the last week of the course, the teacher and six randomly chosen students from the classes will go on an interview session that focuses on their attitude about this learning method and their difficulties in using presentation in teaching and learning grammar. The data is also recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The teacher is asked two questions:

1. What do you think of applying presentation in teaching and learning grammar for English-majored students in which the students are in the role of presenters?
2. What challenges do you face during the class in which this method is applied?

Six students are asked three questions:

1. What do you think of grammar and learning grammar as a separate subject at university?
2. Do you like using presentations in learning grammar? Why or why not?
3. Do you have any difficulties in making presentations in your grammar class? If yes, what are they?

Data collection and analysis are carefully conducted to find the answers to research questions, and since the study suggests implications for teaching and learning grammar in the future.

Results/Findings

Classroom observations

Based on the timeline of observations during the course, the study divides them into stages: Stage 1 in five first weeks, Stage 2 in five middle weeks, and Stage 3 in five last weeks of the course.

In stage one, students got familiar with presentations by PowerPoint and other presentation applications. In the first presentation, the presenters were so shy and nervous that they just wanted to make the presentation as quickly as possible. They mainly read from the screen and showed less interaction with other students; they gave other students a chance to do exercises on the board based on the theory that they had just introduced. Using PowerPoint slides to introduce grammar points attracted the audience's attention because of summarized grammar knowledge and animation effects. At first, there were not many volunteers to go to the board. However, when their friends were engaged in activities, the presentation group expressed more confidence, the atmosphere became more friendly, and other students actively raised their hands to answer and get candies. After the presentation, their teacher gave some feedback about their strengths and weaknesses that they should improve. Then the teacher provided some examples and introduced advanced cases of the grammar point, which drew most students' attention because they had an opportunity to learn new things or checked their understanding of that grammar point. Thanks to the basic theory presentation provided, students could revise their knowledge. In addition, they needed more confidence and found it hard to use English to explain the grammar structures or the answers, so they still seek mother tongue for help. In both classes, the first presentations could have been more successful, but at least they had the new experience of sharing what they knew about a particular grammar point.

Stage two can be considered as a developing stage that witnesses many improvements. The groups were more confident and made more efforts to prepare their presentations. They asked the teacher's assistance for vague grammar points, activities to draw attention, ways to increase interaction with other classmates, and games or applications to check whether their friends understood and could apply the grammar points they were going to present. When the students became presenters, they showed their unlimited creativity. In the first class, they added videos to illustrate the grammar they wanted to talk about, while in the second class, the presenters could assign pair work and group work for their friends. They could also use the Quizizz website, which allowed them to create competitive live game shows. Stage 2 saw a big change in the atmosphere as well as the learning attitude of students. However, a few students were still not confident enough to share their knowledge with friends, and they chose the assistant role instead of the presenter role. In this stage, presenters invested more in their presentation, and the audience paid more attention and were willing to join activities. Particularly, all audiences not only joined the games and quizzes but also tried their best to answer the questions related to the grammar point. The leading board in Quizizz showed the average accuracy of the game

was 85%, although the questions were rather varied from easy to difficult level. It means the presenters and the audience engaged in the lesson.

Stage three becomes the adaptation stage of applying presentation in learning grammar. In both classes, students were more eager to attend activities, and they even asked presenters questions that were not clear. If, in the second stage, the presentation group sometimes asked the teacher for help explaining when their classmates asked them questions, they were now more confident to use English to explain and even gave more examples to illustrate the answers. There were more presenters in each group, and nearly all group members could present in front of the class. There were also more creative activities among groups, like battle games in which players could answer questions or steal points from other members, online exercises, and games from the British Council website, etc. Their PowerPoint was not simple with a basic theory like the first stage, and they did not just read the screen as in previous stages. They learned from other previous groups and made innovations, and created their own masterpiece. The content was upgraded with sections like Fun Fact! Are you sure? Did you know? Challenging corner, etc., in which they provided interesting information about the use of a specific grammar point, they showed extracts from a newspaper and asked others to find grammar mistakes, or they challenged their friends about confused grammatical sentences. In the last stage, when they made their second or third presentations, more surprises were waiting, which made others want to discover every time they came to grammar classes.

Through classroom observation, although different grammar points may affect the quality of presentations, all groups show their development and changes in attitudes towards grammar as well as how well they understand and transfer their knowledge to their classmates enthusiastically and positively through various classroom activities and beautiful, creative slides of presentations.

Interviews

Teacher Interview

The teacher shows a positive attitude in the first question about the teacher's attitude towards letting students use presentation in learning grammar. She shared that she had a semester working with them in other subjects, so she partly understands their English ability and technology abilities. The biggest difference is that they use PowerPoint applications for their presentations and play the role of presenters and instructors. They are required to master the assigned grammar points to share their understanding with classmates and design practice exercises or activities. The teacher appreciates this method because it can help her students improve their grammar knowledge, presentation skills, teamwork spirit, cooperation, and class management. She emphasizes how surprised she was after each presentation because most of the groups performed better than she expected. She shared:

"At first, I was rather worried that using presentation software to present grammar points might be a challenging task for students. However, they have basic knowledge of grammar, and they are also familiar with using PowerPoint, so I believe that they can do well in the role of presenters. The fact that my students can do much better than I expected, and I've even learned a lot from their presentations when they show me endless creativity, great teamwork, and a lot

of effort. Although there were some mistakes in their presentations and not all the groups did their tasks successfully, they impressed me with the way they presented what they understood about grammar points from their perspective and how they helped others revise old knowledge. I am so proud of them.”

When being asked about difficulties in applying presentation software in teaching and learning grammar, the teacher mentioned her concerns about the duration of the presentation, the content of the presentations, student’s anxiety towards speaking, the attention of other students during the presentation, and the most important was the effectiveness of this method. She said that “I am worried a lot because this is the first time I let students be in the role of presenters and partly an instructor who provides the knowledge and give out practice activities in the classroom.” During some first weeks, students showed a lot of difficulties because they were not familiar with presentations at lower levels, especially since not all of the students could use 100 percent of English in a presentation for the first time. Therefore, after each lesson, the teacher had to do many reflection activities to note down what she should do to encourage students to actively search for knowledge and confidently share their understanding with others. She said,

“Obstacles in applying something new like this are unavoidable. I predicted challenges and thought about the effective ways to support my students to overcome their obstacles, whereas other groups may be stressed and even scared of presentations. However, I still encountered unpredictable problems, and I had to be flexible to solve them while supporting the presenters as a facilitator.”

She also shared that the learner-centered approach was effective and motivated students more than when the teacher used traditional methods, but to achieve a successful learner-centered lesson, the teacher was required to be good at class management, supportive assistance, and helpful guidance. In addition, the teacher had to be prepared for unexpected situations that might happen when groups made presentations because students were learning, which meant that they were not trained to be an instructor yet and they did not have experience in handling everything during the class activities in the role of presenters. Not all the groups could show good teamwork skills, so some presentations failed to attract other students, and as a result, both presenters and the audience felt bored, and the classroom atmosphere became slow and heavy. In these cases, the teacher had to jump in and give suitable support to the presenting group. Technical problems could also affect the quality of the presentation. For example, one group could not show their warm-up activities due to the limited internet access, which made the group get so frustrated and stressed that they could not make a good representation as expected, although they had spent a week preparing for the presentation. Moreover, feedback after each presentation was a challenge to the teacher because “not only did the teacher have to give comments based on criteria to help students see their need-to-improve aspects but also encourage them to do better.” She said, “if I give evaluations on their presentation too mildly, other groups may not invest in their coming presentations; whereas, if I am too strict in evaluating a presentation, some groups may feel pressure due to their English ability and technology ability.” In general, the teacher claimed that both teacher and presenters had to prepare carefully, and they were required to work more than when using traditional method. However, the teacher happily said, “the result of using presentation in teaching and grammar in

my classes is fruitful and worthy.”

Students Interview

When asked about their attitude towards grammar, 4/6 students admitted that they did not like grammar because it was boring, and they had to learn the structures by heart when they learned English at secondary and high school. One student answered that “I hated learning grammar because high school teachers asked me to learn by heart the structures and do so many exercises in the textbook and also in the workbook,” or another student said that “I like English, but learning grammar is my nightmare because I cannot remember the structure like the more plus something long adjectives or short adjective. It’s hard to imagine.” They also added that students needed to do so many exercises in all types of grammar from the basic to advanced level as preparation for the university entrance exam. Therefore, their first impression of this subject was not good. One student shared that he did not learn grammar at school, and he mainly learned how to use English through games or movies, so his previous teachers always complained about his grammar when he could do well in listening and speaking. He did not have any expectations at first and learned it because it was a compulsory subject. Only one student was very confident because she learned grammar very well at lower school levels. She added, “I like learning grammar, and I always finish all the exercises in the workbook so that I am confident of seeing it again in the university curriculum. However, teaching others about a grammar point is not interesting.” In general, most of them showed no interest in grammar at first.

In the second question about their thoughts on using presentation in learning grammar, all of them agreed that this method was interesting but challenging. They admitted that they did not learn grammar in that way before and felt worried about the presentation in their first year at university. Three students said that they gained more confidence after their first presentation, although they made many mistakes. Particularly, she said:

“I am not good at speaking English, especially when I have to explain a grammar point to others in English. However, after reading many different materials about passive voice and practicing presenting it at least 3 times, I feel calmer and can present rather well in front of my class. I was so happy when our teacher gave us good feedback.”

Two students frankly said that they did not realize that they could perform well in their first presentation until they heard the teacher's feedback and their classmate's positive comments. One girl claimed that she was scared and could not speak in a normal voice because of her low English-speaking competence; however, her group finished the presentation rather well and received positive comments from the teacher. The boy who had no expectations for grammar showed enthusiasm when he had a chance to share what he understood about a grammar point, which he had never done in his life before. He added, “When I am a presenter, I can choose the best way to share what I know with others because I know how boring grammar lessons that generations of students had to suffer when we were young.” Moreover, some of them admitted that their presentations in English improved a lot after the course. According to two interviewees, learning from friends was interesting because “I can check my knowledge of a particular grammar point and even check if my friends present the theory correctly or not,” and

they could even compare how better they understood the grammar point. All of them were eager and waiting for their next presentations and showed how better they could perform. One student shared that she wanted more presentations to organize more games and activities for her classmates to practice. In general, all students showed interest in learning grammar by using presentations, and learning grammar was no longer as boring as they thought. Learning grammar at the tertiary level mainly helps students revise their knowledge as well as synthesize aspects of grammar points. Through engaging presentations, students improve their grammar knowledge because to have a good presentation in front of the class, each presenter needs to read and understand the material carefully, and audiences have a chance to review the grammar points through slides and the presenter's explanations as well as do interesting activities to check their knowledge. A positive attitude toward using presentation software in learning grammar plays an important role in motivating students to learn and improve their knowledge.

In response to the question about difficulties that they faced when using presentations to learn grammar, all students shared at least one obstacle. Three out of six found it hard to explain grammatical structure in English or explain particular cases. For example, one presenter did not know how to explain why future perfect continuous should be used instead of future perfect. She had to use Vietnamese to explain and then asked the teacher for help because her classmates were still confused. Another student shared, "I was so embarrassed when I didn't know how to explain in English. The more I tried to explain, the more confusing my friends became. It's so bad." Three of them just read the screen because they were scared when standing in front of many people, and they were also afraid that if they could not perform well, the group's result would be affected. Some of them felt scared when they had technical problems with the internet connection and the video's sound quality in their presentation. For example, one student shared that:

"I just wanted to cry when I could not play the sound. I had spent a whole day making and editing examples in which famous people use the present perfect tense, but until now, I needed to figure out what was wrong with the connection cable. Luckily, at that time, I had a copy of the video on my phone, so my group showed the video on the laptop, and the sound came from my phone. It took us more than 5 minutes to fix our problem. It's a terrible experience."

In addition, the cooperation of other students was also a big challenge for the present group. One student said that no one seemed to listen during his presentation, and no one was willing to answer when asked. At that moment, he did not know what he should do until the teacher asked him to explain what he wanted other students to do. He smiled and shared that he even respected his teachers' understanding and support. Another difficulty was the time limitation because they did not have the experience to manage time for each activity and how many grammar aspects they should mention in fifteen to twenty minutes. One student mentioned, "Keeping track of time is hard, so when anything goes wrong, we will be in passive status and rush to finish other activities. Although I saw my teacher dealing with unpredictable situations, I couldn't do well in my situation." Most of them said that they had to practice a lot before the official presentation in class.

Discussion

Changes that using presentation to learn English grammar brings to English-majored undergraduates.

For the first question about whether using presentation to learn grammar brings any difference, six classroom observations in three different stages of the course led to positive results in attitudes and grammatical knowledge improvements. Thanks to presentation activities, the course witnessed major changes in students' attitudes toward grammar: It can be seen that students expressed their strong preference for the subject. They felt eager for their presentation turn instead of having no expectations. Grammar became one of the most interesting subjects of the semester instead of a boring one. In the first stage, both teacher and students were worried about how this method worked, especially when the teacher changed from traditional classes with a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one, where the students are viewed as having pivotal roles, and the teacher is just a facilitator. However, after each presentation, students became more confident and active; they tried to improve themselves and showed the desire to do better in the role of presenter. In the role of a presenter, the students actively equip themselves with a deep understanding of grammar points, while in the role of the audience, the students have the opportunity to revise and check their understanding of a particular grammar lesson through various classroom activities. The quizzes after each lesson that the teacher gave her class to check their understanding of specific grammar points showed that students' grammar knowledge improved day by day. That is the evaluation and conclusion of class observations which should be confirmed by future research based on quizzes and test results.

Interviews also confirmed the changes in the attitude of both the teacher and students towards grammar learning and teaching. The teacher became more confident in applying this method in her class and in giving feedback that could help students improve themselves as well as encourage students to do better. In the era of technology, students prefer applying technology in their learning because they can show their creativity and how better they can do in the role of presenters. The fact that they could use not only traditional PowerPoint but also Canvas, Prezi, or other online presentation tools; they could design games and activities on technology-based applications; they could make short videos for intro and outro to draw the attention of classmates; they could even show how deeply they understood about a grammar point by searching information from different trustable sources.

Obstacles in applying presentation to learning and teaching grammar

As a normal rule, when people face something new, they have a tendency to reject it, and during the applying process, participants come across difficulties and challenges. Besides students who were eager and enthusiastic with this method, there were a few cases in which students with low English ability refused to present in front of the class, or some students did not want to join games or activities that groups organized during their presentation because of their own personality or other reasons. However, after some weeks of getting familiar with this method of learning, they gradually showed their changes, and at least they finished simple things that group leaders assigned and became curious and active in joining classroom activities in the last stage of observation.

When the attitude changed positively, students became confident and found ways to overcome difficulties. Technology problems appeared less frequently in the second and third stages when students got familiar with presentation applications, and they were calm and actively searched for solutions for their problems. Although the teacher sometimes had to assist in explaining or clarifying the information or adjusting the classroom atmosphere, most students built their confidence and flexibility in solving problems. For instance, in the case the online game did not work, and then they decided to write the questions on the board and asked their classmates to go to the board to answer them. In case of bad internet connection causes challenges for students because they cannot use their presentation slides online; they use 4G or 5G, or even they can even confidently present their PowerPoint slides without the Internet. Although dealing with problems took longer, students were not affected negatively and finished their presentations successfully.

Comparison with previous research

Using presentation in learning grammar is a new experience for students to learn and to improve themselves. The classroom observations and interview results agree with previous research on the effectiveness of using technology in teaching and learning grammar. The attitude of both the teacher and students confirms other previous research on applying technology in learning and teaching grammar (Adil & Ibrahim, 2020; Nutta, 1998; Shagga & Omar, 2012; Sanjanaashree et al., 2014; Zari & Aso, 2016). In general, students who were born and grew up in the technology era can easily apply technology in their learning and achieve learning better when they can work with technology; students in this study are motivated and eager to transfer what they understand about grammar points and share knowledge with their classmates through presentation applications.

In terms of difficulties that the teacher and students face when using presentation in learning and teaching grammar, the results of classroom observation and interviews, using presentation brings fewer concerns than other technology-based approaches. However, like previous research done by Bahami & Gholomi (2020), time control is still a challenge for students and teachers because students have not had enough experience in figuring out how much time they have for each section, and the teacher has the pressure to follow the curriculum for this subject but not put much pressure on student's presentations, which can affect the quality of the presentation as well as demotivated students. Compared with the challenges of previous research (Bahami & Gholomi, 2020; Kent et al., 2016; Loizzo & Ertmer, 2016; Watson et al., 2016; Wiebe et al., 2015; Yusorb, 2018), the study shows fewer challenges, and both the teacher and students can handle these challenges in their classroom.

In general, the study agrees with previous research about the positive changes in the attitude of the teacher and students toward technology-based learning grammar methods. Students show a favorable attitude in using presentations, and they can improve their grammar knowledge as well as other skills when they are in the role of presenters. Difficulties and problems during the implementation of this method are carefully solved day by day by both the teacher and the students.

Conclusion

Technology-based language learning methods are encouraged in educational settings because of their effectiveness, and this study confirms that using presentation software in learning and teaching grammar brings positive results in changing the attitude of students from a 'boring' subject or having no expectation of the subject to having favor for it and being eager to use their creativity to share their understanding with teacher and classmates. Although students are required to work more than they often do in a traditional class, students do not show any hesitates or complaints about their group's presentations, and they are active and ask for help if they have any confusing or unclear information about the grammar point that they are going to present in front of the class. Learning from friends provides students with the confidence to talk and contribute to the lesson; the presenters feel less pressure when they share a grammar point that they learned and carefully searched, and other students feel more comfortable when they answer their friends' questions than when they answer their teacher's ones. The teacher's feedback should be positive to encourage them to do better for the next presentations and help them improve their flaws. Learner-based classrooms give students the chance to learn and improve themselves actively. As a result, the presentation should be widely applied in grammar and other subjects to help them develop their language and soft skills. However, the effectiveness of this method should be further researched through regular quizzes and tests to prove how their grammar knowledge has been improved. Future research should be on how teacher feedback affects the quality and effectiveness of students' presentations. Besides limitations, the study successfully finds the answer to two main research questions and recommends that teachers actively allow students to learn from teachers and friends. They can do well in grammar subjects, so they may be confident to use presentations in other subjects. In addition, teachers can reduce their workload on lesson preparation and improve their professional development when they apply different methods in their teaching career for tertiary-level students.

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Biodata

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