



## A STUDY OF USING VISUAL AIDS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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**Abstract:** *Grammar plays an important role in second language learning process. How to make grammar teaching and learning interesting and effective is a great concern of many teachers. Therefore, the research was carried out to investigate the effectiveness of visual aids and the attitudes of students towards using visual aids in grammar learning as well. The results show that visual aids have a positive effect on students' learning outcomes, and they have positive attitudes towards this method.*

**Keywords:** *English grammar; visual aids; learning outcomes; students' attitudes*

### 1. Introduction

English has become an officially international language. The competence of using English, hence, is one of the prerequisite conditions of a developing nation like Viet Nam to be able to integrate into international market economy. Therefore, learning English has become the general tendency not only for people of all ages and professions.

It is assumed that most of the English textbooks are designed in attempting to accommodate to the expectations of the communicative syllabus. However, it does not mean that teaching and studying grammatical points are ignored. Together with teaching and learning listening, speaking, reading and writing, teaching and learning English grammar is also a crucial part of foreign language teaching. Celce-Murcia (1985) claimed that no grammar teaching will result in the product of clumsy and inappropriate foreign languages. Similarly, Ur puts it, "You cannot use words unless you know how they should be put together" (1988).

Though how important it is, teaching and learning grammar is not always easily implemented. In contrast, practically, it has engaged many teachers and students in great challenges. Many teachers find it difficult to convey a certain grammatical point as well as get students involved in the content of the lesson. The traditional style of teaching

grammar makes learners feel bored, demotivated or become passive receivers of English knowledge. Additionally, the implication of grammatical points into the real situations or contexts is many times much more difficult. Many students, when asked to make a sentence using the grammar points they have learned or apply it into a daily conversation with one of their partner, show embarrassment, confusion or even surrender without hesitation for not abling to do those requests. Therefore, how to teach and learn English grammar effectively is a matter to take into vigorous consideration today. Actually, any presentation of any grammatical structure called "successful" only when showing students its rule, meaning, usages in specific situations by providing illustrative examples or role-plays, and simultaneously stimulating their excitement, enthusiasm in grammar periods. There exists a practice that current ways which many teachers are implementing at high schools appear to be far from reaching these above standards. To fulfill that end, using visual aids in grammar teaching and learning is strongly believed to be feasible. They not only facilitate the process of learning, improve the vividity of the lessons but also help students store the new items in long-term memory and make learning more meaningful for learners (McLeod, 2007). However, in many real cases witnessed, for some reasons, the use of visual aids in English grammar periods is not adequately concerned or properly carried out,

while the effect of this kind of teaching aids is undeniable.

What is more, although there exist many researchers about the field of teaching grammar, no specific studies on using visual aids in teaching and learning grammar to the first-year English majored students at Khanh Hoa University in Khanh Hoa province have been found. Thus, it is my hope that this study can partly help the teachers and students at this school find out the interesting and effective technique to teach grammar in the demand of globalization.

Last but not least, I have been trained to be a teacher of English and my personal point of view is that one of the heavy duties of an English teacher is how to teach students not only to remember the structures but also to be able to produce English accurate sentences and actively get involved to the lesson. Moreover, it is Khanh Hoa province that I am working and this is also the place where I was born and grow up. This research, therefore, is conducted as my modest contribution to high schools there and also puts the deep foundation for my further study in the aspect of methodology in which I am interested.

All the reasons mentioned above have inspired me to carry out "*A study of using visual aids in teaching and learning English grammar*". The current study is conducted with two primary aims: (1) to investigate the effectiveness of using visual aids in teaching certain English grammar points on the students' learning, and (2) to ascertain students' attitudes towards using visual aids in grammar lessons. To obtain the above purposes, the study addresses the two following research questions:

- 1) How teaching grammar with visual aids affect students' grammar learning?
- 2) What are the students' attitudes towards using visual aids in teaching grammar?

## **2. Literature review**

In this part, theories related to aspects of grammar and visual aids will be taken into consideration.

There are many different definitions of grammar. According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, grammar means the study or use of the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences. Grammar can be understood as the rules and the structure of a language and thanks to it, people can use language correctly and succeed in communicating with others

(Nunan, 2008). Harmer (1987:5) stated that when the teacher introduces a new piece of grammar, he/she must "teach not only the form, but also one of its functions, and not only the meaning but also use". Similarly, Doff (1998:10) agreed that the teacher should "show what the structure means and how it is used, by giving examples; and show clearly how the structure is formed, so that students can use it to make sentences of their own" when presenting a structure so that students can use the language they learn successfully in the real situation. Generally, grammar teaching is essential for language learning (Zhu, 2007). And in order to create motivation for teaching and learning environment, the teacher can take advantage of visual aids.

Pham (2003:15) stated that visual aids are "anything visible to learners, which the teacher uses for different teaching purposes in the class." Accordingly, pictures, posters, photographs, flashcards, drawings, cut-outs, charts, maps, real objects are examples of visual aids.

It is said that using visual aids bring some certain benefits to language teaching and learning and it is helpful for teaching grammar as well. Ur (1996) claimed that visual material can contribute to understanding of the structure. Additionally, visual aids help students master the grammar items faster and remember them longer. According to Doff (1995:23), the teacher can present a structure clearly by showing it "directly using things the students can see: objects, the classroom, yourself (teacher), the students themselves, pictures". Thus, visuals allow the teacher to talk less and encourage students' participation in language teaching and learning, which matches with the current approach of teaching which is learner centered (Le, 2001). Visual aids can be utilized in all stages of a grammar lesson and motivate students to be engaged to "respond in ways that more routine teaching aids, such as a textbook or a sentence on the board, cannot" (Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1998, p.73).

In addition, there are some considerations when using visual aids. Kreidler (1971, p20-21) points out that, first, the teachers should check for ambiguity. Realistic and clear aids need to be chosen. Second, it is advised that the teacher should not clutter pictures with nonessential details because ones with too

many details will look like a mass of color or lines to students, which might make them confused. In other words, each visual aid needs to be as simple as possible in order to help the learners understand the lessons more easily. Third, make sure that the aids are culturally recognizable.

In conclusion, using visual aids to teach grammatical points is very important and should be specially paid attention to. The maximum effect always accompanies with the what, when and how visual aids are used.

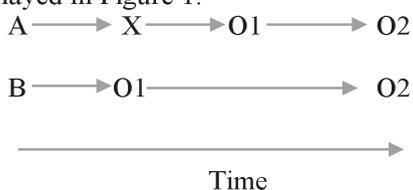
### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

Sixty-two first-year English majored students at Khanh Hoa University were chosen as participants in this research. They were all the age of eighteen and had compulsorily learned English for at least seven years at school. These students were divided into two groups: the control and the experimental group. This selection was based on the students' equivalent in English language proficiency. It can be said that before the treatment, the participants had some aspects in common such as: learning environment, learning conditions, and learning aptitude.

#### 3.2. Research design

In an attempt to examine the effectiveness of utilizing visual aids in teaching certain English grammatical points, the study followed a quasi-experimental study design in the form of pretest-posttest control group. The design of the research is displayed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Design of the research**

A= experimental group, B=control group,

O1=pre-test, O2=post-test, X= treatment

#### 3.3. Procedure

The study was conducted from the middle of October 2020 to the middle of December 2020.

Before the treatment, all preparations were carefully made. First of all, six grammatical points in the curriculum of English grammar were chosen to teach namely simple present, simple past, past perfect tense, used to, passive voice and comparatives. The grammar points were

taken from the textbook “*Understanding and Using English Grammar*” by Betty Schramper Azar. Secondly, the six grammar lessons were planned in two different methods. The experimental group was taught with the illustration of visual aids. In this study, pictures, flashcards and drawings were used in the different stages of a grammar lesson. In the presentation stage, the author used visual aids as a means of explaining exactly the form, the meaning and the use of grammatical structures. From the examples with visual aids, students derived an understanding of the rules, the form and the meaning of the structure as well. In practice and production stages, instead of asking students to do a lot of boring activities day after day in the textbook, the author took advantage of visual aids to provide more real meaningful context in which the learners attempted to use the grammatical points they studied to speak or write. And the control group did not receive the research treatment. They were taught the new points through the traditional method without visual aids. The teacher presented and explained forms and rules first and then drilled students on them. This method was usually taught to students at high school. Additionally, the pre- and post-tests were prepared. Finally, the student questionnaire for the experimental group was concurrently designed.

At the beginning of the treatment period, the researcher distributed the pre-tests to all participants of the two groups to examine their equivalence in their English proficiency. Then came the process of teaching and learning. Both classes were given the same grammatical points. The only difference was the strategy taught to them as mentioned above. After more than two months, two classes finished the process of learning.

The questionnaire was distributed to the treatment group to investigate students' attitudes as well as their evaluation about the effectiveness of using visual aids in teaching grammar afterwards. It was completed within fifteen minutes and then returned to the researcher. After that, the same post-test was administered to both groups to evaluate the grammar development of the participants and to identify the effectiveness of visual aids in grammar teaching and learning.

Based on the data collected, an analysis and comparison to consider the change in

results of the two groups were carried out after applying the two different ways of teaching grammar.

### 3.4. Data collection and analysis

In terms of the student questionnaire, it was designed including closed-ended questions to get specific aspects of the issue. When designing the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire the researcher used the five-point Likert's scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire included two main parts. The first part aimed to seek personal information about the participants in the experimental group such as ages, genders, a period of time of learning English. The second part consisting of twelve items was designed to collect data on the students' attitudes towards grammar lessons with the instruction of visual aids. In this part, the author exploited students' opinions around the following aspects: the preference of using visual aids in grammar lessons and the students' attitudes towards the usefulness of visuals for learning grammar. In an attempt to make the results of the questionnaire more reliable, the researcher invested a serious effort into making sure that every participant could understand all the requirements of the questionnaire before completing them. After finishing the questionnaire in fifteen minutes, the respondents handed them in to the researcher.

The pre- and post-tests for the control and experimental groups were developed with the same language content and in the same matrix by the researcher. Additionally, the tests were constructed to meet the criteria of validity and reliability tests. However, the items in the two tests were quite different. The test tasks such as multiple-choice items, error correction items, completion items, transformation items and sentence building-up items were utilized. It took the participants forty-five minutes to complete the tests. The tests were hand-scored carefully and the total mark for both pre- and post-tests is 10 marks.

In order to investigate the effectiveness of using visual aids in teaching grammar, the t-test was applied for assessing the significant of the mean difference. The author calculated and analyzed the data based on the students' scores on the pre- and post-tests in the experimental and control groups. Additionally, it is essential to mention that Microsoft Excel was used for statistical analyses.

### 3.5. Data analysis and interpretation

To investigate the effectiveness of using visual aids in teaching grammar, the t-test was used. The author calculated and analyzed the data based on the students' scores on the pre- and post-tests in the experimental and control groups. The illustration of data analysis and interpretation was presented below.

**Table 1. Summary of pre-test results**

Group	Control	Experimental
N	31	31
M	6.06	6.21
SD	1.69	1.81
Mean difference	0.15	
t statistics	-0.33	
t-critical		2.00
Degree of freedom		60

As shown in Table 1, the means of the control and experimental groups were 6.06 and 6.21 respectively which revealed that the results of the pre-test of the two groups revealed that the mean of the experimental group was slightly higher than the mean of the control group. The standard deviation of the control group was 1.69 and 1.81 for the experimental group. In addition, the value of t statistics was smaller than the value of the t-critical ( $0.33 < 2.00$ ). This indicates that the two groups were quite equivalent in grammatical knowledge before the treatment.

**Table 2. Summary of post-test results**

Group	Control	Experimental
N	31	31
M	6.26	7.24
SD	1.56	1.41
Mean difference	0.98	
t statistics	-2.53	
t-critical		2.00
Degree of freedom		60

According to Table 2, the mean of the control group was 6.26, while the mean of the experimental group was 7.24, and the standard of deviation of the control and experimental groups was 1.56 and 1.41 respectively. Furthermore, the table of t-critical with 60 degrees of freedom for 0.05 level showed t-critical of 2.00. The value of t statistics was greater than that of t-critical ( $2.53 > 2.00$ ). This results implies that the experimental and control groups were significantly different at the end of the research period and the null hypothesis of the study is rejected.

In an attempt to raise the persuasiveness for the research, the development within each group was also calculated. Paired t-test analysis was used to examine the differences between the pre-test and the post-test within each group separately. Table 3 presents the results of the paired t-test in the control group and Table 4 shows the results of conducting paired t-test in the experimental group respectively.

**Table 3. Summary of Paired T-test of Control Group**

Control Group	Pre-test	Post-test
N	31	31
M	6.06	6.26
t statistics	-1.15	
t-critical two-tail		2.04
Degree of freedom		30

**Table 4. Summary of Paired T-test of Experimental Group**

Experimental Group	Pre-test	Post-test
N	31	31
M	6.21	7.24
t statistics	-4.95	

**Table 5. Students' responses towards the use of visual aids**

Item	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Visual aids have significant effect on students' motivation.	0%	0%	6.5%	29%	64.5%
2	The use of visual aids make students concentrate more on the lesson.	0%	9.7%	0%	58%	32.3%
3	Visual aids make learning process much better	0%	0%	0%	41.9%	54.8%
4	Visual aids make the lessons more memorable.	0%	3.3%	0%	38.7%	58%
5	Students enjoy learning English grammar when teacher uses visual aids	0%	0%	3.2%	35.5%	67.7%
6	Visual aids help students develop their language proficiency.	0%	16.1%	9.7%	54.8%	19.4%
7	Visual aids help students be more confident in using language	0%	9.7%	22.6%	51.6%	16.1%

The result in the first statement indicated that 64.5% of the participants strongly agreed that visual aids affect students' motivation and 29% of them agreed that, but only 6.5% were neutral. Statement 2 confirmed that the majority of the students (90.3%) said that the use of visual aids attract their attention to the lesson and only 9.7% disagreed that visual aids help students concentrate more on the lesson. The analysis of the third statement positively indicated that 54.8% of the respondents

t-critical two-tail	2.04
Degree of freedom	30

According to Table 3, it is observed that the value of t-statistics was 1.15. The table of t-critical with 30 degrees of freedom for 0.05 level, showed t-critical of 2.04. The value of t-statistics was smaller than that of t-critical ( $1.15 < 2.04$ ). These results reveal that the difference between the pre-test and post-test in the control group was not significant enough.

Table 4 shows that the value of t-statistics was 4.95. Considering the degree of freedom (30), the t-critical was 2.04 in the table. The value of t-statistics was greater than that of t-critical ( $4.95 > 2.04$ ) which means that the pre-test and post-test were different from each other in the experimental group and this difference was statistically significant.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire was exploited to investigate students' attitudes as well as the effectiveness of using visual aids in learning grammar. Thus, a huge amount of data were collected and the following table will show the response of students towards the use of visual aids in learning English grammar.

strongly agreed and 41.9% agreed that visual aids make learning process much better. In statement 4, it is noticed that 58% of the participants strongly agreed, 38.7% agreed that visual aids can help students memorize the grammatical more easily, but only 3.3% disagreed with that. In statement 5, 67.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 35.5% agreed and 3.2% were neutral that students enjoyed English language learning when the teacher used visual aids. Moreover, statement 6

supported the fact that the majority of the participants (74.2%) stated that visual aids helped them develop their language proficiency, whereas 9.7% were neutral and 16.1% disagreed with that. In statement 7, 67.7% of the respondents acknowledged that visual aids helped students be more confident in using language.

### 3.6. Discussion of findings

Firstly, as can be inferred from the results of the data analysis, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group. The participants in the control group were better in the field of grammar knowledge but this improvement was not statistically significant. Moreover, the improvement in the control group is natural because it also received a traditional treatment. However, when the results of the control group were calculated and compared to those of the experimental group, the t-value in the experimental group was greater than the t-value in the control group. Secondly, the information from the questionnaire indicated that students have positive attitudes towards the use of visual aids in learning English grammar. Students are interested in grammar periods when the teacher uses visual aids. Moreover, visual aids help students have more motivation to learn and it creates a dynamic learning environment. The data showed that students concentrate more on the lesson. Visual aids can help students remember and apply the grammatical points in the real situations. Therefore, they can develop their language proficiency and feel more confident in using language. Briefly, the findings from the literature review and this study prove effectiveness of visual aids on grammar development; therefore, the teacher should apply this strategy into the classroom.

### 4. Conclusion, recommendations and limitations

The research, finally, finds out the evidence for the benefits of utilizing visuals in grammar teaching and learning. As discussed above, the experimental group outscored significantly than the control group through the mean difference between the pre- and post-tests. Moreover, based on the data collected from the questionnaire, it came to the conclusion that

students have positive attitudes towards the application of visual aids in grammar lessons.

Although the research gets certain success, some limitations should be recognized. The first one is about the small size of the sample. Another limitation is the constrain of the time and the limited capability of the author. Finally, the number of the grammatical items taken into the treatment process is quite limited. It is recommended that the same topic be carried out on a larger scale and more grammar points be included to make the findings more persuasive and general.

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# NGHIÊN CỨU VIỆC SỬ DỤNG PHƯƠNG TIỆN TRỰC QUAN TRONG DẠY HỌC NGỮ PHÁP TIẾNG ANH

**Đỗ Hàng Uyên Thy**

Trường Đại học Khánh Hoà

***Tóm tắt :** Ngữ pháp đóng một vai trò quan trọng trong quá trình học ngôn ngữ. Làm thế nào để dạy và học ngữ pháp trở nên thú vị và có hiệu quả là mối quan tâm lớn của nhiều giáo viên. Do vậy, bài nghiên cứu này được thực hiện để điều tra tính hiệu quả cũng như thái độ của người học trong việc sử dụng phương tiện trực quan trong các tiết học ngữ pháp. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy rằng phương tiện trực quan có ảnh hưởng tích cực đến kết quả học tập của sinh viên, đồng thời họ cũng có những phản hồi tốt đối với phương pháp này .*

***Từ khóa:** ngữ pháp tiếng Anh, phương tiện trực quan, kết quả học tập, thái độ người học*