

THE PERCEPTIONS OF NON- ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT HANOI METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH GRAMMAR COMMUNICATIVELY

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Abstract: *This study aims to investigate the perceptions of non- English major students at Hanoi Metropolitan University towards learning English grammar; and their difficulties in learning grammar communicatively and solutions that should be implemented. To achieve this objective, a survey has been done by providing a questionnaire with open and close ended questions for 215 non- English major students at Hanoi Metropolitan University in the second term of the school year 2021- 2022. They are students majoring in primary education, law, logistics and Chinese language. The findings revealed that students encountered certain difficulties in grammar lessons adopting the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach. Based on these important findings, recommendations for overcoming the challenges in learning grammar communicatively were given.*

Key words: *Perceptions, difficulties, learning English grammar, non- English major students.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the trend to regional and global integration, good English proficiency people in both grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence are certainly needed to participate into the world. In order to meet the demands of practical needs and settings, the educational system in general and in the area of language education should be reformed. For these reasons, traditional English teaching methods seem not to be suitable and useful in the new social situations so finding another method for innovation is essential. Naturally, CLT should be a suitable alternative to the traditional ones and be implemented in the educational system to meet the demands of the social contexts. However, it should be applied with a close and careful consideration of the cultural values of Vietnam.

Many researchers in the world in foreign language learning situations do seem to indicate that students find error correction and grammar instruction helpful in language learning. In fact, Schulz's (1996) study on the students' and teachers' views on error correction and the role of grammar instruction in a foreign language setting revealed that many students have a more favorable attitude towards grammar instruction than their teachers. The students also believed

that in order to master a language, it was necessary to study grammar. On the other hand, more teachers than students claimed that it was better to practice language in simulated real life situations than to study grammatical forms explicitly. Peacock (1998) pointed out various gaps between teachers' and learners' beliefs on foreign language learning, which were also observed in Schulz's study. He found that learners were much more in favor of error correction and grammar exercises than their instructors, while instructors rated pair and group work much more highly than the learners. Peacock concluded that there is a high probability that this has a negative effect not only on the learners' progress but also on their satisfaction with the class and their confidence in their teachers.

2. CONTENT

2.1. Grammar and the status of grammar in language teaching

There have been various ways of defining grammar- a very common and familiar term in language teaching and learning. In fact, grammar is one of the key elements of a language. Therefore, one person cannot master a language without the knowledge of its grammar. Thanks to grammar, language partly can function as a means of communication, especially in written language. One cannot write well if he/ she lacks the knowledge of grammar. In speaking, though grammatical mistakes are sometimes acceptable, grammar makes one's speech better and more attractive, especially in formal situations. Learners cannot use words if they do not know how to put these words together. Grammar exists to enable us to "mean" and without grammar, it is impossible to communicate beyond a very rudimentary level because "speech is no more than sounds, writing is no more than hieroglyphics" (Peck, 1988: 127). For this reason, the teaching of grammar is very important in English language teaching.

2.2. An overview on language teaching methods in teaching grammar

There are many influential methods widely used by language lecturers in the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. The methods are now discussed in this paper as follows: GTM; DM and AM.

a. The Grammar- Translation method (GTM)

Traditional method or GTM was rooted in the formal teaching of Latin and Greek and become popular in the late 19th century. According to Larsen- Freeman (1986:4), the GTM was used for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. Through studying the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and this helps them use their language more grammatically. The strength of GTM is that it requires few resources so it is easy to apply and cheap to administer. Thus, the method is still used in many places where the class is large (more than 30 students), and there is a great shortage of teaching - learning facilities and equipment, the lecturers with inadequate speaking skill are accustomed to setting teaching procedures. This method, however, has certain disadvantages. According to Richards and Rogers (1986:3), GTM obviously focuses on the form rather than the use of the target language. Students who are in this way did not have a chance to practice their speaking and listening. Students learn rules of grammar and vocabulary without much feeling of progress in the mastery of the target language can lead to the lack of motivation in learning a language for their having little opportunity to express themselves through it. They just learn what they have to without any creativeness. The

method creates frustration for students, for whom foreign language learning is a tedious experience of memorization of new words and grammatical rules, while it makes few demands on lecturers. (Richards and Rogers, 1986:4)

b. The Direct method (DM)

In the late 19th century, increased opportunities among European create a demand for oral proficiency in foreign language. The GTM was not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively and a new method, namely DM was born. DM is characterized by the use of the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the classroom, and by the avoidance of the use of the first language and translation as a technique. It brings the process of learning the target language close to that of first language acquisition. Students are exposed to the target language situations. Therefore, their ability to think in the target language is developed.

Though there is a development in students' thoughts in the target language, it has two-sided effect. Students may develop inaccuracies if they are not properly guided. This is the result if their trying to express themselves in the target language with insufficient knowledge about the language. Because all statements they learn relate to the classroom. The lecturer did not generally think of the students using of the language beyond the classroom. Any connection with real life was expected to come later and was not the business of the school. The graduation and sequences of materials is not based on realistic spoken speech but artificial connected sentences.

c. The Audio-Lingual method (AM)

The AM derived from America during the World War II where there was a need for people to learn foreign languages quickly for military purposes. It led to the development of the AM which then has had a considerable influence on English language teaching all over the world. The first and most successful point of this method is to develop students' listening comprehension and fluency in speaking in the target language. Students are encouraged by the sense of being able to use what they have learned in the very early days of their study. In addition, the study is reinforced by repetition, so the students have good repetition and this is suitable for learners of different abilities.

Another point is that, this method provides a good systematic progression of the materials. However, there still remain some problems. The success or failure of this method depends largely on the qualities of the lecturers and the availability of resources. That is why Brumfit (1983:8) comments "*the objective is generally the mastery of sentence patterns rather than creative or communicative use of language*".

2.3. Communicative Language teaching (CLT) on teaching Grammar

CLT views language as a system for the expression of meaning. Activities involve oral communication, carrying out meaning task and using language, which is meaningful to the learners. Objectives reflect the needs of the learners; they include functional skills as well as linguistic objectives. The learners' role is as a negotiator and integrator. The lecturer's role is as facilitator of the communication process. Materials promote communicative language use; they are task-based and authentic.

a. Characteristics of CLT

One characteristic of CLT is the introduction of authentic material. In CLT, it is considered desirable to give learners the opportunity to genuine communicative needs in realistic second language situations so that they develop strategies for understanding language as actually used by native speakers (Canale and Swain, 1980).

In addition, “*activities in the Communicative Approach are often carried out by students in small group*” (Larsen- Freeman, 1986: 132). Students are expected to interact with one another, either through pair and group work or in their writing (Finicchiaro and Brumfit, 1983).

CLT favors interaction among small numbers of students in order to maximize the time each student has to learn to negotiate meaning. Lecturers therefore select learning activities according to how well they engage the students in meaningful and authentic language use rather than in the merely mechanical practice of language patterns.

Another dimension of CLT is “*its learner- centered and experience- based view of second language teaching*” (Richards & Rogers, 1986: 69). According to CLT theory, individual learners possess unique interests, styles, needs, and goals that should be reflected in the design of instructional methods (Savignon, 1983). Lecturers are to develop materials based on the demonstrated needs of a particular class. Students must be made to feel secure, unthreatened and non- defensive in a CLT classroom, so lecturers using CLT should avoid adopting a lecturer-centered authoritarian posture (Taylor, 1983). Thus, Li (1998: 679) reviews CLT characteristics based on the work of other researchers such as Larsen- Freeman (1986), Richards and Rogers (1986) as follow:

1. A focus on communicative functions.
2. A focus on meaningful tasks rather than on language form.
3. Efforts to make tasks and language relevant to a target group of learners through an analysis of genuine, realistic situations.
4. The use of authentic, from life materials.
5. The use of group activities.
6. The attempt to create a secure, non- threatening atmosphere.

b. Stages in teaching grammar communicatively

In a CLT classroom, the lecturer pays more attention to enable students to work with the target language during the lesson and communicate in it by the end of it. The following is the typical procedure of a grammar lesson according to a CLT author- Adrian Doff (1981).

1. The lecturer uses visual aids to present the grammar structure to be taught.
2. Students deduce the meaning, the form and the use of it.
3. The lecturer gets students understanding by asking yes/ no questions focusing on form, meaning and use.
4. The lecturer gets students to practice the structure through Repetition and Substitution Drills, Word Prompts, and Picture Prompts. The lecturer tries to provide maximum practice

within controlled, but realistic and contextualized frameworks and to build students' confidence in using the new language.

5. The lecturer provides students with opportunities to use new language in a freer, more creative way. The lecturer creates activities in which students can integrate new language with the previous learnt language and apply what they have learnt to talk about their real-life activities

What makes this kind of lesson different from the traditional is that the lecturer tries to make the language used in the lesson real and true. The lecturer creates real or like- real situations in which the language can be used. This will enable students to communicate in English outside the classroom. During the CLT lesson, the lecturer often plays the important role of facilitator who facilitates activities to work with the target language.

2.4. Purpose and study methods

2.4.1. Purpose of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To investigate the perceptions of learning grammar communicatively by the non-English major freshmen at Hanoi Metropolitan University
- To make some suggestions to overcome the difficulties in learning grammar communicatively.

2.4.2. Methods of the study

In order to do the research, a lot of references have been selected, read and filtered for information. Furthermore, a survey questionnaire was delivered to 400 non- English major freshmen at Hanoi Metropolitan University. The purposes of the questions in the survey are to find out the students' attitudes to learning English grammar, their difficulties confronted and solutions suggested by them. All the collected information and data have been analyzed and discussed.

2.5. Research methodology

2.5.1. The respondents and scope of the study

A questionnaire was designed in Vietnamese for non- English major students. The questionnaires were distributed to participants via google.docx and zalo in the second term of the school year 2021- 2022 (from January to June), we collected 400 answers from the students. After analysis, we selected 215 questionnaires responding to the study's requirements (the respondents are fresh men, no questions were left blank). All of the respondents participating in the survey are at the age of 18 to 20. Among them, the ration of school- boys to girls is 89/126 (41.4% compared to 58.6%).

2.5.2. Instrumentation and Procedures

In order to get information for the research, survey questionnaires for students were carried out. The study uses a questionnaire in the form of Discourse Completion Task (DCT) for data collection designed by the writer. The questionnaire consists of two types of questions including 10 closed and open-ended ones. To ensure the students' accurate understandings before answering the questions, all of them were written in Vietnamese. Their answers were also written in Vietnamese, which enabled them to express their ideas fully and with ease.

The questions focus on the following categories:

- 1) Demographic information about the students' background of foreign languages before entering the university.
- 2) The students' perceptions towards learning English in general and learning grammar in particular
- 3) The students' difficulties in learning grammar and their recommendations for improving English learning in general and grammar learning in particular

2.6. Results and discussion

a. The students' background of foreign languages before entering the university (Question 1)

Question 1 relates to the students' background of foreign languages before entering the university. The results are presented as follows:

Table 2. Students' background of foreign languages before entering the university (N⁰: 215)

Categories	Number (N ⁰)	Percentage (%)
Students are ethnic minorities (Tay, Muong, H'mong...)	47	21.9%
Students are Kinh ethnic group ones	168	78.1%
Students coming from towns/ cities.	34	15.8%
Students coming from townlets/districts	27	12.6%
Students coming from the 2 nd - 3 rd area communes.	123	57.2%
Students coming from the 1 st area communes.	31	14.4%
Students having learned English for 7 years	75	34.9%
Students having learned English for 3 years	93	43.2%
Students having never learned before the school.	47	21.9%

As can be seen in the above table, most of the students are Kinh ethnic group. The ration of non- English major students to ethnic minorities students was 168/47 (78.1% compared to 21.9%). The students' background is quite different. 57.2% come from the 2nd - 3rd area communes – especially difficult communes of some provinces in the North of Vietnam, 14.4% from the 1st area commune- difficult ones whereas the number of students from townlets/districts is 12.6%. Moreover, their mixed English level is certainly a problem for the lecturers. The students having learned English for 7 years account for 34.9%, 43.2% for 3 years and 21.9% for the students who have never learned English before entering the school.

b. The students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English in general and learning grammar in particular (Question 2- 5)

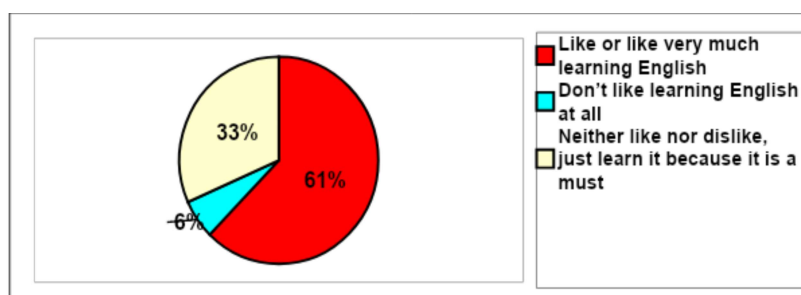


Figure 1. Students' attitudes towards learning English at the university

Question 2, 3, 4, 5 deal with the students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English in general and learning grammar in particular.

Presented diagrammatically, students' responses to *Question 2* can be illustrated as follows

The findings shown in the table indicated the students' attitudes towards learning English at the school. The result from *Figure 1* showed that 61% of them showed their positive attitudes in learning English. 33% thought English is a must. Only 6% of those responded negatively did not find English interesting at all.

Question 3 focuses on students' reasons for learning English.

Table 3. Students' reasons for learning English

Reasons for learning English	Number (N ⁰)	Percentage (%)
Interest in English	67	31.2%
Communicate in English	45	20.9%
Need for future career	125	58%
A compulsory subject	63	29.3%
Others	0	0%

According to the statistics of *Table 3*, the non-English major students at the university were aware of the importance and benefits of learning English. 58% of the students said that they learned English for their future jobs, 31.2% learned English for their interest, 20.9% learning English for communicating. Especially, 29.3% said that it was a compulsory subject. This revealed that a great number of students in this school were not really motivated in learning English.

Question 4 discovers students' motivations to learning English in general and grammar in particular.

Table 4. Students' motivations to learning English in general and grammar in particular

Students' motivations to learning English in general and grammar in particular	(N ⁰)	(%)
Learning English enables them to communicate in their majors.	54	25%
Learning English enables them to read books, newspapers ... and listen to music in English.	67	31.2%
Learning English at least helps them to get good marks in the exams.	157	73%
Learning English enables them to communicate with foreigners.	36	16.7%
Learning English enable them to have more opportunities to get jobs after leaving school.	125	58%
Learning English enables them to broaden their knowledge about the world around because English has become an international language.	134	62.3%
Learning English creates chances to go abroad for further study.	3	1.4%
Learning English does not benefit them. It is just a compulsory subject.	63	29.3%

As can be seen in the above, the students are all motivated to learn English in one way or another and their motivations are more extrinsic than intrinsic. The highest motivation is getting good marks in the exam, accounting for 73%. Although English is a non-major subject, but a must in the curriculum at school, good marks may enable the students to gain the good over-all

mark and scholarship at the end of the term. Furthermore, the way their knowledge is tested in written form also have much influence on the students' aim of learning. 62.3% want to broaden their knowledge of the world around through English. Although the students are strongly motivated in getting jobs after graduation (58%), they seem not to be highly motivated to use English to communicate in their majors (25%) and with foreigners (16.7%). They regard English as a condition for their future job, but not as a means of communication with foreigners. 31.2% of the students wish that learning English helps them to read books, newspapers ... and listen to music in English.

In addition, 29.3% of the students find English unprofitable and a compulsory subject at school only. These students, of course, have negative motivation towards learning English. Only 1.4% of them are trying to learn English to have opportunities to go abroad for further study. It is the students' background in both physical and mental that influences to this motivation.

Question 5 aims at exploring the students' attitudes to mastering grammar.

With regard to the importance of grammar, it is interesting to find out that all participants agreed that in order to master English, it is necessary to master its grammar. The reasons for the necessity of mastering English grammar were varied but the following are common among the participants:

- Mastery of English helps students to do grammar exercises. "Only by knowing grammar can a student do the grammar exercises given by the lecturer."
- Good understanding of grammar enables students a lot to read books, magazines and listen to music in English.
- Mastery of English grammar is a key to successful communication. "Mastery of English structures enables one to become understood when speaking and writing" (a female student of class Y8D)

From the students' responses, it can be seen that they all recognized the importance of grammatical knowledge not only to their learning English in the classroom but also to their use of the language for communication outside the classroom. A focus on grammar is obviously a necessary or a desirable part of classroom language learning (Hedge, 2000)

c. The students' evaluation of their English grammar lessons

Question 6 helps to find out the students' evaluation of their English grammar lessons. 146/215 (68%) students find that English lessons are normal, sometimes understandable, sometimes not understandable. It shows that the teaching is not very effective.

However, 37/215 (17%) students find that English lessons are interesting, lively and easily understandable. This means that some of the lecturers are successful at the lessons. They use suitable ways of teaching to satisfy their students' needs. 15% (32/215) of the students find that English lessons are boring, not understandable for some reasons.

d. The students' preference in the way of teaching grammar structures

Question 7 is about the students' way of learning grammar structures. The results are illustrated as follow.

Table 5. Students' preference in the way of teaching grammar structures

Students' preference in the way of teaching grammar structures	(N ⁰)	(%)
Teaching in Vietnamese.	34	15.8%
Teaching in English	3	1.4%
Teaching in English first and then in Vietnamese	105	48.8%
Presenting the structure, analyzing the structure and then giving examples to illustrate	57	26.5%
Presenting the situation, analyzing the structure, giving examples and then let students practice using substitution drills	102	47.4%
Giving examples with the new structure and then let students figure out the form	50	23.3%
Combinations of all the ways above	69	32.1%

Table 5 above illustrates the students' preference in the way of teaching grammar structures. Obviously, the students like being taught in English first then in Vietnamese most, accounting for 48.8%. Presenting the situation, analyzing the structure, giving examples and then let students practice using substitution drills is the students' second preference (47.4%). Only 1.4% wishes structures are taught in English. It is the students' limitation on background knowledge in English that have influence on their preference in the way of teaching grammar structures. Furthermore, they are also affected by the traditional way of teaching in which language is considered as a system of structures, not as a means of communication.

e. The students' way of learning grammar structures

Question 8 discovers the students' way of learning grammar structures.

The data in the **Table 6** show that more than half of the participants view learning grammar through listening to the lecturer's explanation of rule and use of a new structure then doing exercises given in the textbooks; copying the examples given by the lecturer then producing sentences using the new presented structure; memorizing grammatical rules given by the lecturer then doing the exercises in the textbooks; analyzing the new structures and memorizing them; and participating in communicative activities and using the learnt structures when having chances as the most respondents accounting for 86%, 62.8%, 58.1%, 61% and 59% respectively. Among them, the students found learning grammar by listening to the lecturer's explanation of rule and use of a new structure then doing exercises given in the textbooks most favored (86%).

Contrary to this, learning grammar through substitution drills; through dialogues or text; and through playing games, doing quizzes, working in pairs, singing songs, ... were regarded to be the least effective by respectively 53%, 41.9% and 39.1% of the participants. Especially, understanding the function of the new structure, then practicing it to talk to classmates about certain topic, without understanding its grammatical rules was considered as not effective way at all accounting for 68.8%. It is worth noting that while 86% of the students viewed listening to the lecturer's explanation of rule and use of a new structure then doing exercises given in the textbooks positively as the most effective way to learn grammar, the number of participants looking this way as the least effective were only 14%. Furthermore, nobody considered this way to be not effective at all. According to the statistics of **Table 6**, most of the students seem to feel more secure when the lecturer explains rule and tells how to use a new structure before they do

exercises given in the textbooks. Obviously, the students get used to the traditional model of grammar teaching namely the PPP (Presentation- Practice- Production).

Table 6. Students' ways of learning grammar structures

Students' ways of learning grammar structures	Level of effectiveness					
	Most effective		Least effective		Not effective at all	
	(N ⁰)	(%)	(N ⁰)	(%)	(N ⁰)	(%)
A. Learning grammar through substitution drills	78	36.2	90	41.9	47	21.9
B. Learning grammar through dialogues or text	95	44.2	114	53	6	2.8
C. Learning grammar by listening to the lecturer's explanation of rule and use of a new structure then doing exercises given in the textbooks	185	86	30	14	0	0
D. Learning grammar by copying the examples given by the lecturer then producing sentences using the new presented structure	135	62.8	68	31.6	12	5.6
E. Learning grammar by understanding the function of the new structure, then practicing it to talk to classmates about certain topic, without understanding its grammatical rules	6	2.8	61	28.4	148	68.8
F. Learning by heart grammatical rules given by the lecturer then doing the exercises in the textbooks	125	58.1	82	38.1	8	3.8
G. Learning grammar by analyzing the new structures and memorizing them	131	61	65	30.2	19	8.8
H. Learning grammar by participating in communicative activities and using the learnt structures when having chances	127	59.1	66	30.7	22	10.2
I. Learning grammar by playing games, doing quizzes, working in pairs, singing songs	88	40.9	84	39.1	43	20

f. The students' difficulties in learning grammar

Question 9 is about the students' difficulties in learning grammar.

The data in the **Table 7** show that the most serious difficulty to the students is the differences between English word changing forms and Vietnamese ones (92.1% of the students have this problem). As a result, 75.8% feel afraid of making mistakes when they use English. 90.7% of the students asked complained that they had few chances to apply the learnt structures to communicate.

In fact, because of the lack of language environment, the students hardly have opportunities to use the target language to communicate outside the classroom. In addition, 82.8% find the way of expressing ideas in English is different from in Vietnamese.

Table 7. Students' difficulties in learning grammar

Students' difficulties in learning grammar	Number (N ⁰)	Percentage (%)
Overcrowded class	136	63.5
The way of expressing ideas in English is different from in Vietnamese.	178	82.8
English words change their forms as not the same as Vietnamese	198	92.1
Lack of time for learning grammar in class.	47	21.9
English structures are more complex than Vietnamese ones	101	47
Having few chances to apply the learnt structures to communicate	195	90.7
English teaching method is not effective at all	0	0
Being afraid of making mistakes when using English	163	75.8
English grammar exercises are not available	20	9.3
Teaching aids are not available	66	30.7
Poor learning facilities	24	11.2

Big class size, English structures are more complex than Vietnamese ones and teaching aids are not available also cause difficulties to the students accounting for 63.5%, 47% and 30.7% respectively. Grammar is quite difficult to most of the students so 21.9% asked complained about not having enough time to learn grammar in class. Only 11.2% demand more learning facilities. All of the students feel pleased with the English teaching method.

g. The students' recommendations for improving English learning in general and grammar learning in particular

Question 10 is to ask the students for their suggestions for improving English learning in general and grammar learning in particular. The results are stated as below.

Table 8. Students' recommendations for improving English learning in general and grammar learning in particular

Students' recommendations	N ⁰	(%)
Teaching facilities should be sufficient	50	23.3
Teaching materials should be reasonable and suitable to students' level	75	34.9
Curriculum arrangement should be more reasonable	7	3.3
Lecturers should supply more communicative opportunities to students in the class and encourage them to take part in	203	94.4
Lecturers should use pictures, visual teaching aids to make the lesson more interesting and livelier	155	72.1
Students should join in communicative activities actively and positively	168	78.1
Lecturers should give various kinds of grammar excises to students	209	97.2

The statistics show that both lecturers and students play important roles in improving and encouraging the students to learn English in general and grammar in particular. 97.2% of the students recommend that lecturers should give various kinds of grammar excises to them. 94.4% expect their lecturers to supply more communicative opportunities to students in the class and encourage them to take part in. Also, the students believe that using pictures, visual teaching

aids will make the lesson more interesting and lively accounting for 72.1%. In addition, 78.1% think that they should join in communicative activities actively and positively whenever they have a chance. 34.9% said teaching materials should be reasonable and suitable to students' level, 23.3% for improving teaching facilities. Only 3.3% suggest that curriculum arrangement should be more reasonable.

2.7. Findings and suggestions

2.7.1. Findings

Data analysis of questionnaire for non- English major students at the school show their difficulties in learning grammar and their expectations. The results are presented as follow.

Generally, most of non- English major students at the university have not paid much attention to learning English in general and grammar in particular. These are the reasons for this. Firstly, they do not have positive attitude and motivation towards English. They consider English as a non- major subject in the curriculum. Furthermore, they confront with problems in learning grammar such as lack of chance to apply the learnt structures to communicate, the differences in the way of expressing ideas between English and Vietnamese, being afraid of making mistakes when using English, over- crowded class etc.

In order to overcome the difficulties as well as to improve the grammar learning quality, the students want to be given various kinds of grammar exercises. Also, they expect their lecturers to supply them more communicative opportunities in class and encourage them to take part in class activities. In addition, the students wish to be provided with pictures, visual teaching aids to make the lesson more interesting and livelier. Suitable teaching materials, sufficient teaching facilities, reasonable curriculum arrangement are their expectations. Especially, the students agree that they themselves should join in communicative activities actively and positively.

2.7.2. Suggestions

There are some suggestions for overcoming the difficulties in learning grammar communicatively.

a. Changing students' attitude towards learning English

In order to apply CLT effectively in a traditional language classroom, changing students' attitude towards learning English in general and grammar in particular is essential to be changed. English should be considered as important as other subjects in the training course and communication should be their final goal of learning English. Besides the students' own efforts, lecturers play a very important role in changing students' attitude. Obviously, CLT is a "Western method"- a new method so they need to let their students have opportunities to get used to it. From my point of view, to change students' attitudes, improving students' motivation in learning grammar needs to be considered.

b. Improving students' motivation in learning grammar

Some effective ways for the lecturers can be applied in the classroom to improve students' motivation in learning grammar.

** Creating interesting topics, games and communicative activities*

This may make the students enjoy learning English as well as create enjoyable atmosphere in the class. When the students find something interesting, they are willing to join in.

** Designing suitable exercises*

It is necessary for the lecturers to design exercises that are suitable with the students' level. In fact, at three university, big and mixed- ability classes are popular. Therefore, exercises need to be arranged from easy to difficult ones. As a result, good English proficiency students do not feel de-motivated with the limited competence tasks and low ones can also catch up with the others.

** Organizing English speaking club*

It may be a good chance for the students to exchange their experience in learning or discuss about their interests or learn English songs together.

c. Encouraging students' participation in class activities

Students' lack of participation in class activities is of lecturers' concern. Obviously, the lecturer plays a vital role in class. Lecturers should encourage students to take part in class activities and speak out. Also, lecturers must spend more time giving their care to low English proficiency students who are often passive and shy. Exercises given should be suitable with students' level so that the weak students can do. Furthermore, positive praise from the lecturers should be given at the right time instead of negative ones. For instance, lecturers should say "try another time" or "thank you" instead of "wrong" or "nonsense". This is an effective way for the low students to keep their face with other ones in the class.

Students' anxiety in public communication is another problem. In order to minimize it, lecturers need to encourage students to work in pairs or in groups so that they can have chance to share their experience as well as improve their speaking in English. To avoid the dominance of good students in group work, changing the group leader from this student to another one should be carried out. It is a good way for all students in a group to realize their duty for the task group. In addition, the information gap in group work is sure to be considered so that each student can have chance to exchange their thoughts. Besides those, lecturers should go around the class, observe and give students his/her assistance. This partly contributes to reduce the students' Vietnamese speaking during group work.

d. Correcting students' mistakes with a positive attitude

Mistakes can be seen as indispensable and inevitable to students in the process of language learning. Mistake correction is necessary but which correcting techniques are more positive and effectively largely depend on lecturers, not on students. Lecturers should also decide when and how to correct. Mistake correction is also considered to be a positive way if students themselves correct mistakes, not just by their lecturers. In students' mistake correction, the duty of the lecturers is "to value students, prize their attempts to communicate, and then provide optimal feedback for the system to evolve in successive stages until students are communicating more clearly" (Brown, 1994). There are some suggestions for lecturers on mistake correction in class:

- Collecting mistakes made by the students and involving the whole class as much as possible in the correction process.

- Spending less time correcting what is only problem for one student and more time on problems common to the whole group.
- Helping students understand *why* they are wrong by indicating that a mistake has been made (by gestures), showing the students where the mistake is and what kind of mistake is (wrong tense, wrong- stressed word...), getting him/her try again if he/she can get it right
- Not interrupting the student before he/she finishes his/ her utterance because he will find it disconcerting or frustrating.
- Trying not to repeat the mistakes, even in mocking, astonished way.

g. Presenting grammar in context

Lecturers should present grammar in context to make clear the relationship between grammatical forms and communication functions. This can help students a lot in guessing and memorizing the words and phrases. If words, phrases, sentences or structures are taught in isolation, students may fail to produce English correctly and effectively in real situations. For example, when the lecturer teaches the structure *There is + a/an + N_(sing)* in page 34 of Unit 5, she/ he can point at the picture in the book and ask a student to say *There is a dog/ a table*.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This research is an attempt to find out the perceptions of non-majoring English freshmen in learning grammar communicatively. Based on the instrument as questionnaires for the students, the study has figured out the important findings with a help to improving the English teaching and learning at the school. The findings are divided into two categories such as difficulties and suggestions. To apply CLT in teaching grammar effectively and enable the students to have improvements in learning English in general and English grammar in particular, some of suggestions are recommended such as changing students' attitude towards learning English; improving students' motivation in learning grammar; encouraging students' participation in class activities; correcting students' mistakes with a positive attitude; presenting grammar in context. Among these factors, lecturers are central to long- lasting changes that can affect the success or failure of the innovation. Besides the administrators' support and assistance, the lecturers must try their best to adapt themselves to use CLT. Good communicative competence, creativity and enthusiasm are necessary for the lecturers to apply CLT in teaching effectively.

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THÁI ĐỘ CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN Ở TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC THỦ ĐÔ HÀ NỘI VỚI VIỆC HỌC NGỮ PHÁP TIẾNG ANH THEO ĐƯỜNG HƯỚNG GIAO TIẾP

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm nghiên cứu nhận thức của sinh viên không chuyên ở trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội đối với việc học ngữ pháp tiếng Anh; và những khó khăn của sinh viên gặp phải trong quá trình học ngữ pháp theo đường hướng giao tiếp và đề xuất một giải pháp. Để đạt được mục tiêu, người viết đã tiến hành một cuộc khảo sát thông qua việc cung cấp bảng câu hỏi với các câu hỏi đóng và mở cho 215 sinh viên không chuyên tại trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội trong học kỳ 2 năm học 2021-2022, bao gồm các sinh viên thuộc chuyên ngành giáo dục tiểu học, luật, logistics và ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên gặp phải một số khó khăn trong các bài học ngữ pháp được áp dụng phương pháp Giảng dạy theo đường hướng giao tiếp (CLT). Qua đó, tác giả cũng đã đề xuất một số khuyến nghị để vượt qua những thách thức trong việc học ngữ pháp theo hướng giao tiếp.

Từ khóa: Nhận thức, khó khăn, học ngữ pháp tiếng Anh, sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh.