



APPLYING GAMES IN TEACHING THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE TO THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS AT HUNG YEN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This study was carried out with the aim of finding out whether games can help increase the effectiveness of grammar lessons, Present Perfect tense in particular. This is done through using a lesson plan teaching the Present Perfect tense with games, observing classes, administering questionnaires and interviews in order to obtain necessary information for the study. Hopefully, this study will lead to subsequent changes in the grammatical teaching methods of the teachers at school to make the English lessons more interesting and effective as well as increasing students' motivation, and hence students can use English in real life communications, not only on papers and for exams.

Keywords: *games, grammar, Present Perfect tense.*

Introduction

In the English grammar system, learners still find it difficult to master the connection between Time – Tense – Aspect. Tense and aspect are grammatical categories of the verbs which have to do with forms. While tense links the situation represented by a sentence with the time at which it is uttered, aspect represents features of the temporal structure of the situation. Tense and aspect are obligatory because whenever we encode an event through a finite clause, we select one or another tense, one or another aspectual distinction. In fact, tense and aspect can combine in various ways, giving different types, such as: the Present Progressive tense, the Present Perfect tense, the Past Perfect Progressive tense... Having taught college students for a few years, the authors realize that the Present Perfect tense puzzles students most. Of all the English tenses, PPT is undoubtedly the most difficult one for students to learn and the most difficult one to teach. Grammar games are very useful in teaching and learning; grammar games not only encourage but also improve students' ability in using English fluently. However, at our university, teaching grammar, including the PPT - a difficult item of English grammar is very boring and passive. In consideration of these problems, as English teachers, the researchers really want to study the situation of teaching and learning the PPT at UTEHY and make a small contribution to enhancing the effectiveness in teaching this tense through games.

The aims of the study

The study is aimed at examining the effects of games on the teaching and learning of the Present Perfect tense and to explore students' attitudes, expectations and progress in their process of learning the Present Perfect tense through games. Furthermore, the researchers would like to propose several recommendations on game adaptation to make them more enjoyable and productive to the students at UTEHY.

Literature review

Ur (1991: 4) defines grammar as “*the way language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning.*” This definition is quite close to the common understanding of what grammar is. The main difference is that it tells us how the rules of language actually work – they arrange and shape words. Nevertheless, knowing what these rules do is not a very motivating factor alone.

According to Harmer's viewpoint (1987: 12): “*Without some understanding of Grammar, students would not be able to do anything more than utter separate items of language for separate functions. The expression of functional language is only possible through the use of the Grammar of the language*”, teaching grammar helps students understand how the language works.

According to Adrian Doff (1988: 33), teachers should teach the meaning, the form of the grammatical structure as well as how it is used. He also suggests some remarkable points for teachers to remember when presenting a structure:

- Show what the structure means and how it is used, by giving examples
- Show clearly how the structure is formed so that students can use it to make sentences of their own.

The Present Perfect is used when the speaker wants to refer to the past event in relation to speech time, not to a definite moment of occurrence of the event. The speaker views the event as happening at an indefinite time (or unspecified time) in the past. This makes a marked contrast with the simple past which is used when the speaker views the events as occurring at a definite past time. Compare:

a. *The train has left safely.*

b. *The train left five minutes ago.*

In (a) the speaker wants to refer the present situation, the train has left and now it is on the rails with the passengers get on it whereas in (b) there is an adverbial of time to specify the exact time so past tense is appropriate.

We often give piece of news in Present Perfect – it is especially common in reports, letters and conversations. And it often occurs at the start of an exchange and serves to establish past time focus, subsequent references to events being made by means of past tense.

According to Haldfield (1999): “*A game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun... Games should be regarded as an integral part of the language syllabus, not as an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of the term.*” This definition highly evaluates the importance of games in teaching. It adds to teachers’ techniques in teaching that games serve not only as an ‘amusing activity’, but as a technique to carry out tasks to learners amusingly as well.

Haldfield (1999) adds: “*Games can be used at all stages of the progression from controlled to free practice, serving at one end of the range as a memory aid and repetition drill, at the other as a chance to use the language freely and as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. They can also serve as a diagnostic tool for teacher, who can note areas of difficulty and take appropriate remedial action.*” Haldfield further emphasizes the effective use of games. Students are always lazy to do the tasks. Therefore, games are used suitably in the way in which learners are eagerly and willingly participate to have a chance to practice or use the new language items they have just learnt instead of forcing them to do the tasks unwillingly. It is more effective way for students to play and learn at the same time.

Arif Saricoban and Esen Metin (2000),

authors of “Songs, Verse and Games for teaching grammar” explain how and why games for teaching grammar in class. They say: “*Games and problem-solving activities... have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech and are examples of the most preferable communicative activities*”. They go on to explain that grammar games help students gain knowledge and apply and use that learning. Additionally, games have the advantage of allowing the students to “*practice and internalize vocabulary, grammar and structures extensively*”. Games can teach, and there might be no reason why they cannot be included as a part of a lesson.

Carrier (1980) says that games can be used to open or close a lesson in a stimulating way, to punctuate a lesson, to relieve tension after a test or at any time that teachers feel appropriate. Byrne (1980) advises not to play a game at the beginning of the conversation period and save the game for the use in the middle or toward the end of the session, when the students would welcome a change of pace. He also reminds that teachers should stop playing a game before students are ready to quit.

Methodology

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative method helps to provide the quantified background data. The collected data and information lay the foundation for the study. Comments, remarks, assumptions and conclusions of the study are based on data analysis. Data collection for analysis in the study comes from the lecturers and students in UTEHY by class observation, survey questionnaires and interviews and discussion.

This study first and foremost employed the method of class observation. The researchers observed the class during the course for data used for analysis in order to reveal the effectiveness of games applied throughout the course. The data collected were noted down in the researcher’s observation sheet after each lesson.

To collect the information from teachers and students, one survey questionnaire is done with 149 students in 2 classes in Faculty of Foreign languages in Hung Yen University of Technology and Education and the other is used for 9 teachers in this university. The data collected for the survey questionnaire supplies the information about teachers’ and students’ attitude toward present perfect games, the benefits of the use of games to students and the games applied to teach present perfect games.

To get more information for the research, students as well as teachers was interviewed.

Findings and discussion

Students' attitudes towards Present Perfect games.

The findings of this study showed that most of the students had quite positive attitude towards the use of games in learning PPT. They all believed that the new method was more interesting and more motivating them to learn than the period before the trial. This fact is affirmed by the result of the questionnaire and the classroom observation. As can be seen from the observation in the class MK15.1 because of no new changes in teaching, students learned PPT through the development of language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing in the conventional way. In other words, it looked as if the teaching was rigid and adhered to the guidance in the textbook. As a result, the students soon felt bored and seemed to have lessened their motivation. Failure to remember grammatical items is likely to entail. However, when games were introduced in the three classes, the students agreed that there was a new learning atmosphere and they really liked the relaxing and exciting atmosphere, the competitiveness and the motivation that games brought to the classroom. This is because games seemed to be “*a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class*”, “*motivating and challenging*” “*effort of learning, and “language practice in the various skills”*” (Lee, 1995, cited in Khuat and Nguyen, 2003).

The benefits of the use of games to students.

Through the analysis of the data, it has been found out that games bring numerous benefits to the learners; specifically

- Games encourage students' active and creative spirit, develop their communicative skills and motivation.
- Games help students consolidate, revise and broaden their knowledge, concentrate on communicative function of PPT.
- Games create lively atmosphere in class by learner-centered method, teachers only take a role of guider, helper and build a united class, stimulate students' healthy competition.
- Games help teachers combine 4 skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing during giving the games and form the habit to play them. Therefore, teachers can make class atmosphere lively and effectiveness of learning high because both teachers and students are familiar to the way to play games.

Which games applied to teach The Present Perfect Tense more effectively for the freshmen at Hung Yen University of Technology and Education.

Although benefits and effectiveness of

PPT games are proved, games sometimes cause difficulties to teachers and students. Most of the teachers (77.8%) find that designing new games very difficultly while resources of games are limited and they have difficulties in controlling the students not to use mother tongue in the process of games. Besides, games cannot be successful if the teacher does not explain the rules of the games clearly or gives the instructions at inappropriate time. Using games sometimes fails if there is lack of cooperation among members of the groups. However, in every class there always remain some students who are really serious-minded and introverted so they are not interested in active activities. These students do not like games because games are not their interest or not suitable to their learning styles. In addition, because of our culture, some students feel shy and embarrassed when they have to talk or present in front of the class, or simply too lazy to move their seats when it is their turn. They often let their group-mates do all the tasks. Thus, others would work more than them and obviously, these students did not have chance to practice. Moreover, the number of the students in each class is worth regarding. The common number of students in a high school class ranges nearly fifty students. This is also a challenge to the teacher if he/she wants to carry out a game in the class. Finally, most of students (71.2%) find that they lack necessary vocabulary to join in the games confidently.

With the above-mentioned difficulties, teachers should select games based on the following criteria:

- A game must be more than just fun.
- A game should involve “friendly” competition.
- A game should keep all of students involved and interested.
- A game should encourage student to focus on the use of PPT rather than on PPT itself.
- A game should give students a chance to learn, practice and communicate.
- A game must be suitable to students and specific context.

Using games to teach PPT can be both fun and rewarding for teachers and the students. Just remember to keep them engaged and make sure that you're games are truly teaching the skill at hand and you'll soon have a class full of students who get excited about learning PPT!

This study provides further evidence that both the teacher's careful lesson plan and students' well-behaved participation play an important role in the success of the new method. In terms of the teacher's teaching, games cannot be successful

if the teacher does not prepare the lesson plan carefully. A carefully prepared lesson helps the teacher know clearly what to do in every stage of the lesson, especially with stages in conducting games, and anticipate what might happen during the teaching process.

Game activities and materials which engage students include: games appropriate to students' ages and levels, suitable tasks and topics, and adequate time for games completion. Game materials stimulating students' involvement can be pictures, maps, flashcards or real objects. Using suitable materials not only saved the time for explaining but also helped with easy memorizing of new knowledge as well as motivating students' learning because this helped students produce the language in a more interesting way.

Some suggestions in adapting and applying games

With respect to giving instructions, teachers should give the directions clearly and simply to make sure that everyone understands exactly how to play. Instructors also need to create something that could help the students to understand what they are supposed to do. In fact, it has been proven that the use of poster-sized paper with instructions stuck on boards or instruction slips provided to each group was very useful. In the worst situation when you suddenly discover that the students are all doing completely different things, do not try and explain to each individual student, stop the whole class and give your instructions again.

Another issue of concern is how to group students in a game, for example, nearly fifty students as the situation in the study. A point of note is that grouping dependent on students' preferences could be very motivating but also problematic as the groups are not always of equal numbers. The

teacher, at this point, needs to subdivide large groups or combine two small ones.

Regarding the students' participation, the recommendation focuses on the students who usually refused to take part in games. To these subjects, teachers should pay more attention to them in order to find the reasons whether it is their learning style, interest, or other things. Since it is impossible to force them to change their interest or learning style, convincing is recommended. It is better to make clear that games are not just entertainment activity but have high educational value. These styles of the students should understand that they are playing games but learning. In case that it is hard to change these students' mind, teachers should at least reach some kinds of compromise with the students.

Besides, students always have to do their homework and prepare the new lesson before going to class. They should learn vocabulary and practice the communicative skills frequently. When teachers explain how to play the games, students should listen attentively and join in contributing their ideas, shouldn't be shy. Moreover, students should have the activities out of class which are both learning and relaxing so that they are more active, confident and creative

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study helped the researchers confirm the facts that the students were weak at remembering PPT, which led to the bad results in the test. The causes of this problem were in the way the teacher presented and practiced PPT as well as the way the students were involved in learning. Then, the solution - using games in teaching PPT - was implemented. This solution helped students improve their learning in many ways. This study has attained some mentioned-above noticeable results

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NGHIÊN CỨU VIỆC ÁP DỤNG TRÒ CHƠI TRONG VIỆC DẠY THỜI HIỆN TẠI HOÀN THÀNH CHO SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN NĂM THỨ HAI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM KỸ THUẬT HƯNG YÊN

Tóm tắt:

Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu mang tên "Nghiên cứu việc áp dụng trò chơi trong việc dạy thời Hiện tại hoàn thành cho sinh viên không chuyên năm thứ hai trường ĐHSPTK Hưng Yên" là để tìm hiểu về lợi ích của việc áp dụng trò chơi trong việc dạy ngữ pháp cũng như thời Hiện tại hoàn thành cho sinh viên khối không chuyên ngữ. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện dựa trên phân tích, đánh giá giáo án, quan sát lớp học, phát vấn câu hỏi điều tra và phỏng vấn giáo viên cũng như sinh viên là đối tượng được lựa chọn để nghiên cứu. Hi vọng rằng, nghiên cứu sẽ phần nào giúp tạo ra những thay đổi đáng kể trong phương pháp giảng dạy ngữ pháp của giáo viên từ đó giúp cho các bài học ngữ pháp thêm thú vị, cải thiện động lực học tiếng Anh của sinh viên và giúp sinh viên nâng cao khả năng giao tiếp với đúng ngữ pháp tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: trò chơi, ngữ pháp, thì hiện tại hoàn thành.