

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter firstly presents the summary of the study. Implications for language learning and teaching, and recommendations for further studies are then discussed.

Summary of the Study

This research investigated (1) whether the use of linguistic and communication games at the practice and production stages in grammar teaching would enhance the students' grammatical competence, and (2) what students' attitudes towards : a) learning grammar through games, b) learning English in general through games, and c) game playing in language learning would be like. The subjects of the study were 84 science program M.4 students who were studying the Fundamental English course 12 (Eng. 018) in the second semester of the academic year 2000 at Nawaminthrachuthit Taksin School in Songkhla Province. The students were divided equally into the experimental and control groups. Both groups studied the same four grammatical items taught by the same instructor (the investigator) within two weeks. The experimental group was instructed by using the game-based activities and the control group was instructed by using the non-game activities. Linguistic games were used with the experimental group at the practice stage and communication games were used at the production stage.

To obtain the answers for the two research questions, four experimental instruments were utilized. They were teaching materials, teaching plans, a test of the grammatical competence and a semi-structured questionnaire on attitudes towards learning grammar through games. The teaching materials covered four units of four grammatical items : (1) the past events (*past simple with ago and for*), (2) experiences (*present perfect with ever and never*), (3) necessity (*has/ have to, have/ has got to*), and (4) rules and permission (*can, must, be allowed/ permitted/ forbidden*) Those materials for the experimental group contained the game-based activities at the practice and production stages of teaching while those for the control group contained the non-game activities. The two lesson plans for both groups were written in accordance with the teaching materials. The test for grammatical competence was composed of 25 multiple-choice items with four alternatives. This test was used as the pre- and post-tests of the students' grammatical competence before and after the experiment. The questionnaire on attitudes towards learning grammar through games consisted of 18 five-point rating scale questions and 4 open-ended questions.

The data obtained from the pre- and post-tests were statistically analyzed using a t-test. The data derived from the questionnaire were calculated for means and percentages.

The main findings are summarized as follows:

1. After the subjects were taught through two different teaching methods, it was found that the students studying grammar through games developed grammatical competence better than those studying grammar through non-game activities. However, there were no significant differences between the grammatical competence of both groups.

2. The students in the experimental group had positive attitudes towards learning grammar through games, learning English in general through games, and game playing in language learning. Games were found to greatly help the students

study and practice using grammar more meaningfully and joyfully. Games helped them develop their grammatical competence in all four skills, particularly in speaking and games made the lessons more interesting. Playing games in pairs or groups, helped promote cooperative working. The students suggested that games should be used more in grammatical learning and teaching.

Implications

This study has implications for language learning and teaching in the following ways:

1. Since it was found that the use of games is an effective teaching method in enhancing the students' grammatical competence, it is advisable that English teachers use more games to reinforce grammar learning in class because they provide students meaningful practice in learning grammar. Games were found not only to engage students in using grammar communicatively but also to promote confidence and competence in using it.

2. As found in this study, learning through games is a useful method to create students' positive attitudes towards grammar learning. Games made the lessons more meaningful and enjoyable. In Thailand where English is taught as a foreign language, English teachers often complain about difficulties in motivating their students in learning the English language because most of the students see no immediate need to use the language and therefore treat the subject as irrelevant. To motivate students in learning grammar in particular, teachers should try to generate a more relaxed learning atmosphere by providing them with activities which create attitudinal factors such as interest, relevance, expectancy and satisfaction. Games can be designed to increase interest and motivation of the students who find grammar boring. In playing games, they are expected to complete the task using the language newly learned. In that way, students are more enthusiastic to learn English. It is essential that teachers

use more games and a variety of games to motivate students and facilitate better language learning.

3. To effectively utilize games in grammar learning and teaching, it is advisable that the game procedures must be well planned and organized. Regulations and instructions in playing games should be explained clearly, especially to the students with low language competence because misunderstanding of them will cause troubles during game playing. It is also important that after playing games, teachers should summarize or conclude the language usage and use which are the focus of the games for the students since, while playing games, students do not concentrate much on the language. They put their effort mostly on the use of it.

4. It is advisable that teachers should provide enough feed-in language for students to use in playing games because, while playing games, the students might not have enough vocabulary or they do not know the expressions needed to be used in games. Moreover, students should be encouraged to speak more English and allowed to use their mother tongue only when necessary since the students may lack speaking practice or they are not confident in speaking. In this way they can practice more English and will then be more competent in using it.

Recommendations

The findings and limitations found in this study provide recommendations for both teaching in practice and further studies in this area.

1. In playing games, teachers need to manage time effectively because time affects much to the success of games. If the time given is too limited, students will feel stressed in interacting with each other. If the time provided is too long, students may feel bored. It is inevitable that time allocation for a particular game also varies among different groups of students. To budget the proper length of time for each game or for level of students, it would be a good idea to try it out or use it with

several groups of students. This can be done as a classroom research (an action research) and kept as records. It is useful for teachers to plan a good lesson as well. In this way the flexibility of time for each game can be arranged more effectively.

2. The clarity of students' responses and suggestions to the questions in the open-ended part of the questionnaire caused problems in analyzing of the research results. Students' responses were not sufficiently clear because some of the students' opinions were written in abrupt sentences. It was difficult for the investigator to interpret what information the students really meant to convey. It is advisable that a study of this type requires a post-questionnaire interview to eliminate those possibly misinterpretations of students' opinions.

3. As found that the more the students were familiar with game playing, the more they enjoyed the games. Therefore, in further studies, a pre-experiment may be conducted a week before the experiment to familiarize research subjects with the game playing procedure and rules. The grammatical points and games used in the pre-experiment should, however, be different from the ones used in the experiment. In addition, in this pre-experiment, the teacher can be familiar with students' interests and at the same time can help students get used to particular teaching methods.

4. To eliminate the problem of time constraint, this kind of pedagogical experimental research should be conducted as an in-house investigation done by teachers at their homeschool as a part of their teaching profession. This is relevant to section 30 of the National Education Act of A.D. 1999 which states, "Educational institutions shall develop effective learning processes. In so doing, they shall also encourage instructors to carry out research for developing suitable learning for learners at different levels of education".