

Teachers' and students' views on grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University = Quan điểm của giáo viên và sinh viên đối với các vấn đề ngữ pháp được trình bày trong giáo trình Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Hóa học tại Trường Đại học Sao Đỏ. M.A Thesis Linguistics: 60 14 10 / Trần Hoàng Yên ; Supervisor : Dr. Tô Thị Thu Hương

## **PART A: INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Rationale**

- There are several points of view on grammar teaching and grammar presentation between teachers and students
- How to deal with grammar teaching and grammar presentation more effectively at our university

### **2. Aims of the study**

- To investigate into teachers' views towards grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University.
- To investigate into students' views towards grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University.
- To find out in what ways the teacher can make their grammar teaching more suitable to students' expectations and learning styles.

### **3. Research questions**

- 1) What are the teachers' views on grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University?
- 2) What are the students' views on grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University?
- 3) In what ways can the teachers make their grammar teaching more suitable to students' expectations and learning styles?

#### **4. Research methodology**

The main method utilized in this study was a survey using questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students.

#### **5. Scope of the study**

Given the aims of the study, I limited myself to focus on the first year students of Chemical engineering and Food science at Sao Do University.

#### **6. The setting and background**

Sao Do University is a famous university in Hai Duong province located in Chi Linh town. The school is over 40 years of foundation. It has more than 500 teachers and 15.000 students. It is known all over country with electrical and mechanical field. Chemical engineering and Food science Faculty is a young one- only 5 years old. The number of students is only about 300 students. The students related to this study are 50 students of the first year. The program of English for Chemical engineering consists of 45 periods.

#### **7. The design of the study**

The thesis contains three parts: Part one, the introduction, provides an overview of the. Part two has two chapters. Chapter one is aimed at exploring the theoretical background for the thesis. Chapter two is devoted to a detailed description of data analysis and a thorough discussion of the findings of the study. Part three is the conclusion of the thesis, presents the summary of findings and some pedagogical suggestions, which are proposed for the teachers teaching grammar at Sao Do University in general and at other schools in particular. The appendices are the last part of the study, following the references.

### **PART B: DEVELOPMENT**

#### **CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**1.1. What is grammar?**

**1.2. How is grammar viewed?**

**1.3. What is the role of grammar in English language teaching?**

**1.4. Two approaches to grammar teaching**

**1.5. The importance of understanding teachers' and students' views to grammar teaching and learning**

**1.6. The role of course book in language teaching and learning**

**1.7. Summary**

## **CHAPTER II: RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Sao Do University is a university in Hai Duong where students are tested and selected to enter. Apart from their general and special subjects, students are also learned English as a compulsory subject. Each faculty has their own special subject. And English for special purpose is also different in each faculty.

### **2.2. Research questions**

- 1) What are the teachers' views on grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University?
- 2) What are the students' views on grammar presentation in the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University?
- 3) In what ways can the teachers make their grammar teaching more suitable to students' expectations and learning styles?

### **2.3. The participants**

20 teachers of English and 50 first year students in Chemistry and Food Science Faculty took part in the survey. The surveyed students are of class 06 HTP. Those students are at the very early of learning English for their future career. As for the surveyed teachers, they have not been trained to be teachers of Chemistry English.

### **2.4. Methodology orientation: questionnaire survey complimented by interviews**

A survey questionnaire is commonly used to find answer to different types of questions with useful information. Through these answers, we can find out the views of the teachers and students on the grammar presented in their course book.

### **2.5. The procedures for data collection and analysis**

At the end of English course, 20 teachers of English and 50 students of class 06HTP in the Chemistry and Food Science Faculty were approached for consent to participate in the research. All of them agreed. A survey questionnaire was then conducted on the sample. 10 teachers were further selected for interviews.

## **2.6. The findings**

### **2.6.1. The students' views**

#### **2.6.1.1. Students' awareness of the importance of grammar learning**

##### **2.6.1.1.1. Students' awareness of the role of grammar learning English**

It was not surprising to find out in the first question that a majority of students (60%) thought learning English grammar was very important, only 6% of them thought that learning English grammar was not important. 34% of them considered it to be important because of some following reasons. It was easily understood that in order to complete all the grammar exercises students had to know grammar well. Besides, all the tests at our university always required them to master the grammatical structures of the target language.

##### **2.6.1.1.2. Students' views of grammar presentation in the course book**

Look at the chart, two-thirds of the students (64%) found the English grammar presentation in the course book interesting because it helped them learn a variety of grammar rules. A part from this, they partly discovered that English grammar contained irregular rules, which sometimes made them difficult to grasp. In terms of grammar teaching, they said they could enjoy grammar in other ways such as songs, poems, stories and so on. 16 out of 50 students did not feel interested in grammar lessons. They might have lack of interest in learning grammar because their teachers' methodology. They just learned grammar and did the exercises in the course book. There was no integration of grammar into speaking and writing activities.

##### **2.6.1.1.3. Students' awareness of the difficulty in grammar lesson**

Only 4% of the students found presentation in the course book "English for Chemical engineering" easy. Most of them felt hard to understand grammar part because they were lack of vocabulary, they could not understand the meaning of the sentences. That is, the close bound between grammar and vocabulary proved that learning grammar well was not easy at all. When being asked about some detailed grammar points, the

results show that most of the grammar points were quite difficult to the students, especially for tenses (60%), relative pronouns and relative clauses (70%), comparisons and word form (76%), conjunctions (62%). There are two grammar points were appreciated easy: active- passive and possession. For these grammar points, more than 50% of students felt easy, they understood the rules and did exercises well. The fact is that the students remark the grammar points are very difficult or difficult if the course book does not provide enough grammatical rules and the teachers do not explain much.

#### **2.6.1.2. Students' evaluation of current grammar presentation in the course book "English for Chemical engineering" at Sao Do university**

Nearly a half of the students (24/50) wanted to thoroughly understand the teachers' instructions. It is very necessary for the teacher to explain grammatical rules slowly enough so that his or her students can follow. In other words, as the students were in favour of explicit grammar teaching or deductive approach. This result might have come from the students' anxiety in how to learn grammar effectively, especially, for weaker students. The findings indicated that the students were well- versed in the principles of those as proved by responses to the grammatical rules or structures illustrated through examples. Most of them (40/50) were also quite articulate in strengths. Only 2% (1/50) of students don't like this technique at all. Among 50 students, 30 students asserted that they were keen on learning grammar if it was introduced in stimulated situations. In other words, they wanted to learn grammar through games, English songs, poems, and visual aids rather than through texts or dialogues compared with 20 students (40%). They liked learning grammar in a real context, and in a good relaxing environment, which allowed students to comprehend grammar more easily. They themselves felt more motivated and excited during their learning process.

In deed, it came as no surprise to us that a majority of students (43/50=86%) wanted to practise grammar points only after understanding them well. They did not want to make a lot of mistakes when doing exercises. This response accounted for only 14% of students uninterested in this way. In favour of this view, most of students 80% preferred their teachers to model the new grammar points. The high percentage of the students choosing this way of grammar learning revealed that they got used to the traditional method of grammar teaching, called Presentation- Practice- Production (PPP).

Besides, the smallest number of the students in reply to question 7 indicated that they always longed for their language proficiency. Interestingly, more than a half of the students ( $32/50=64\%$ ), truly wished to be given as much time as possible to speak and write in English. They wanted to be good at dealing with grammar exercises to pass the exams but also to communicate with others.

Question number 10 given to see whether there was interaction between teachers and students. 74% of students asked did not want to ask their teachers to teach particular grammatical points when these points needed to be explained as students thought that grammar was more difficult and complex if there was no interaction between the teachers and students. It was better for the teachers to realize the students' weaknesses as well as strengths and find out the reasons why they were still bad at some aspect. Besides, teachers should take into account the relationship between teachers and students. The teachers should create a positive, trusting relationship with their students so that the students will feel interested in learning.

In term of assessment, the main focus was on assessing students' knowledge on grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills. And the fact was proved by one student who did not like his grammatical errors being corrected frequently. 74% of students asked favoured being given frequent mistake correction. They needed their teachers' help, support and encouragement.

## **2.6.2. Teachers' views**

### **2.6.2.1. Teachers' awareness of the importance of grammar learning**

#### **2.6.2.1.1. Teachers' awareness of the role of grammar learning English**

Sharing the same view with the students, all the teachers questioned except for one considered teaching English grammar to be important. They thought it was obligatory for students to grasp basic grammatical structures and later use them in particular contexts. Both teachers and students realize the importance of grammar as well as grammar teaching and learning. They have to reach the goal of passing the exams and even the higher study in the future. Without grammatical knowledge, they cannot surely have an access to English.

#### **2.6.2.1.2. Teachers' awareness of teaching grammar**

Strangely, the data showed that none of these teachers found grammar presentation in the course book very interesting. We could see that grammar presentation was not inspired the teachers so much. Five teachers were fed up with grammar presentation which could be explained that some grammar points were too short and boring for them to teach.

#### **2.6.2.1.3. Teachers' awareness of the time spent on teaching grammar lessons**

Obviously, for the students' sake, all the teachers spent much time teaching English grammar in the classroom. In comparison with the 5 teachers spent very much time on teaching grammar points, the rest of 20 teachers taught students within moderate time. The teachers should have flexibility in teaching grammar, that is, teaching grammar is integrated with all skills, with different activities.

#### **2.6.2.2. Teachers' evaluation of current grammar presentation in the course book "English for Chemical engineering" at Sao Do university**

Teachers tried to explain grammatical rules in details, which was exemplified by 85% of the teachers feared that their students could not understand and analyze the new grammar structures without their clear instructions and clarification. They found out their students' weakness and simultaneously, readily taught them grammatical points again if they were confused. The number of teachers approving this idea was 17 out of 20.

Similarity, in response to question 5, 70% of the teachers liked explaining rules then letting the students practise the grammar points, and in particular, 25% of them liked this way very much. This could be explained by the reason that grammar was regarded as important and difficult grammatical point to teach and to learn. One more reason could be seen in question 9. A considerable number of the teachers (80%) wanted their students to do grammar exercises at home and 100% of teachers (question 11) guaranteed to correct their students' grammatical errors frequently.

Surprisingly, 100% of the teachers wanted to apply the communicative approach to teaching grammar. They really wanted to have an innovative revolution in their teaching, such as teaching grammar through examples, stimulated situations, or dialogues. One more noticeable feature was that 80% of the teachers asked were interested in illustrating grammar rules or structures to be taught with examples. To this

point, teachers' and students' views fit. The teachers encouraged the students to develop their creativity and the students themselves liked to prove their ability.

The table showed that a largest number of teachers (80%) favoured giving the students chances to describe the rules of the new grammatical points. The students had to be active, independent and willing to join in group work activities and then find out the core of the lesson by themselves rather than listen to their teachers' explanation passively. This significant feature was also the benefit of communicative language teaching, which created a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

## **2.7. Summary**

Firstly, the analysis of the data reveals that the first year student at Chemical engineering and Food science Faculty at Sao Do University have positive views towards grammar presentation of the course book. They are aware of the important of grammar presentation and grammar points to their learning of English.

Secondly, through the teachers' self-report the data shows the teachers' views towards grammar presentation of the course book. They are aware of the important of grammar presentation and grammar points to their teaching of English.

In the end, the little gap between teachers' grammar teaching styles and students' grammar learning styles towards the communicative approach to grammar teaching is unavoidable. Nonetheless, in addition to applying implicit and explicit approaches should not be ignored. Grammar teaching should be treated flexibly and adjusted with the combination of two approaches so as to suit students' learning styles.

## **CHAPTER C: RECOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **1. Summary of the findings**

First of all, the students in the sample are quite positive about grammar presentation in the course book and their grammar learning. They all see the importance of grammar presentation and grammar understanding for their learning English.

Secondly, the study covers teachers' views towards grammar presentation in the course book and their grammar teaching. The teachers well understand the importance of the presentation and the grammatical points presented in the course book.

Lastly, the grammar presentation, the teachers' grammar explanations, teaching methods, together with activities should be taken under consideration so that their



students get interested in grammar lessons. More importantly, the gap between grammar teaching styles and grammar learning styles need to be narrowed.

## **2. Suggestions for grammar presentation in the course book “English for chemical engineering” and grammar teaching at Sao Do University**

\* For grammar presentation in the course book “English for chemical engineering”:

In order to achieve the teaching goal, the grammar presentation should be changed to suit the students’ ability.

One more thing we should take into consideration is that the grammatical points in the course book are not understandable enough for the students.

\* For grammar teaching at Sao Do university:

Firstly, as indicated in the findings, the teachers’ method of grammar teaching is an important source of students’ motivation in learning grammar in particular and learning English in general.

Secondly, grammar is best taught and practised in context. The reading text or the dialogue in the course book provides a good context for grammatical presentation and practice. This means that the teacher should always employ the dialogue or text as contexts for grammar teaching. The finding of this study indicated clearly that most of the students found it easier to understand the new grammatical structure or item if it is presented through a dialogue, or a text.

Finally, while explaining grammatical rules, the teacher should keep their language simple and clear to make their explanation comprehensible to the students. Pedagogical grammars can be made less formal by avoiding metalinguistic terms, or at least keep it into minimum and by avoiding elaborate and complicated analyses. For example, Mohammed (1997) suggests that this can be done by using “this word”, “this part” rather than a technical term while pointing at or underlining a word, a part of a sentence.

## **3. Limitations of the study**

In terms of methodology, the study is limited in the fact that the data may not fully reflect all aspects of teachers’ and students’ views towards grammar presentation and the evaluation of the current grammar teaching in the course book “English for chemical engineering ” at Sao Do University.

In addition, the data collection period took place nearly at the end of the term when students were busy preparing for their end-of-term examinations. As a result, the students might not have spent sufficient time thinking over the questions in the questionnaires before responding.

Apart from that, the only instrument (survey questionnaires) for data collection has been applied, so the researcher might not give full and satisfactory analysis and even the evaluation of the teaching methodology with in-depth understanding of why the respondents respond like that.

#### **4. Recommendations for further research**

On the basis of the findings and the limitations of the study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

As indicated in the above section, error treatment has not been investigated as part of a grammar lesson. The study has not suggested some adaptations for the grammar presentation of the course book. More research should be conducted on these issues.

Moreover, the effectiveness of teacher's teaching grammar in terms of the students' learning is an important indicator, but the researcher of this study has not been able to explore this. Further studies could examine how much learning really occurs in the grammar lesson.

Finally, the subjects of the study, as indicated above as a limitation of the study, were the first year students in Chemistry and Food Science Faculty at Sao Do University. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study on all students at Sao Do University and compare the results.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the present study, though at the preliminary level, has not only helped us understand the teachers' and students' views towards grammar presentation in and grammar teaching and learning using the course book "English for chemical engineering" at Sao Do University, but also provided insightful information about teachers' style preferences for grammar teaching and students' style preferences for grammar learning as well as the existing gap between teaching styles and learning styles.

with reference to grammar instruction. The majority of the students are motivated in learning English grammar but they are not quite satisfied with the way grammar is being presented and taught. However, they have different learning styles for grammar learning, some preferring a more explicit to grammar, others appreciating a more implicit approach. We have also seen the importance of using varied techniques of teaching grammar such as using games, songs, pictures...Especially, the study highlights the necessity of presenting grammar in context through texts or dialogues as well as a combination of both implicit and explicit approaches to grammar to meet students' expectation and to suit their learning styles. Obviously, when the gap between teaching style and learning styles is narrowed, the students will be more motivated to learn grammar and the effectiveness of grammar teaching will also increase.