

PROBLEMS OF IMPROVING GRAMMAR SKILLS OF A1 LEARNERS THROUGH TALES

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the challenges A1 learners face in grammar learning and examines how the TAILS method can be adapted to support their development. It highlights the importance of visual aids, interactive tasks, and simplified input. The study also discusses the limited effectiveness of traditional tales and the need for teacher training in grammar instruction.

Keywords: A1 learners, grammar, TAILS, visual aids, language teaching, beginner level

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a fundamental part of language learning, especially for beginners at the A1 level. Traditional grammar teaching methods may seem dull or overwhelming to young learners. Tales, on the other hand, offer a narrative context, making grammar more meaningful. Yet, there are several obstacles when integrating tales into grammar instruction for A1 learners. This is an insightful discussion on grammar instruction for young learners. It resonates with your interest in refining teaching methodologies, especially for A1 students. Your expertise in integrating multimedia tools into language instruction could be a perfect complement to this topic-pictures, as mentioned, are

essential for beginners, and your research on video materials for listening skill development aligns well with this approach. Grammar teaching for primary learners presents unique challenges. The idea of grammar as a "living resource" rather than just a set of rules is especially important in fostering communicative competence.

METHODOLOGY

Developing grammar skills in A1-level English learners remains a fundamental challenge in language teaching. These learners often struggle with basic sentence structures, verb forms, and word order due to limited exposure and practice. One innovative approach to address this issue is TAILS (Teaching and Assessing Interactive Listening and Speaking), which integrates interactive activities aimed at improving both receptive and productive language skills. While TAILS is primarily known for supporting listening and speaking, its framework can also be adapted to support grammar development in a more contextualized, communicative way. However, the effectiveness of TAILS for grammar instruction at the beginner level is still under debate. This paper explores the main problems faced by A1 learners when learning grammar through TAILS and examines strategies to overcome them. Despite the interactive nature of TAILS, A1 learners often face persistent difficulties in acquiring grammar due to their limited vocabulary, short attention spans, and lack of foundational language structures. Researchers like Ellis argue that grammar learning must be both explicit and meaningful for beginners to internalize structures effectively (Ellis 2006). In this regard, TAILS activities can be adapted by embedding clear grammar points into speaking and listening tasks, making the process more contextualized and learner-centered. Lightbown and Spada also emphasize that grammar instruction should be repeated in varied communicative settings to help learners notice and process form naturally. Furthermore, integrating visual aids, gesture-based support, and scaffolded sentence-building tasks within TAILS can make grammar more accessible to A1 learners. By aligning grammar goals with the

interactive tasks of TAILS, teachers can create a more supportive and effective learning environment¹.

“One of the older forms of teaching grammar, diagramming sentences, first appeared in the 19th century. This method involves visually mapping the structures of and relationship between different aspects of a sentence. Especially helpful for visual learners, this method disappeared from modern teaching at least 30 years ago”². Killgallon in their book *Grammar for High School*, diagramming sentences was once a staple in American classrooms, used to teach students how words functioned grammatically. Though the method faded over time, scholars like Reed and Kellogg, who developed the system in the 1870s, believed that sentence diagrams offered a logical and analytical way to understand syntax. Today, educational theorists argue that while diagramming does not always reflect natural language use, it remains useful for teaching sentence structure, punctuation, and grammatical relationships, particularly in writing-focused courses³.

Most traditional tales contain rich vocabulary and complex sentence structures that go beyond the A1 level. Learners may struggle to understand the grammar if the tale is too advanced, which can lead to confusion rather than improvement. A1 learners have a limited range of vocabulary. If a tale includes too many new or difficult words, students may lose interest or be unable to follow the story. This distracts from the grammar focus and makes the learning process less effective.

Tales are not usually written with specific grammar targets in mind. As a result, they might not provide enough repetition of the particular grammar structures that A1 learners need to practice, such as present simple tense, articles, or prepositions.

¹ Ellis, Rod. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford UP, 2006.

² Turoпова L.S., & Ismoilova M.K. (2020). Teaching grammar creatively at elementary level. *Экономика и социум*, (12 (79)), 280-287.

³ Killgallon, Don, and Jenny Killgallon. *Grammar for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach*. Heinemann

Tales often require more classroom time due to storytelling, discussion, and grammar activities. Teachers with limited time may find it difficult to cover the necessary grammar points thoroughly using tales alone. If you are interested in learning more about teaching A1 students, pictures are a great tool for teachers in any level but for the very beginners they are more than just helpful, they are essential. Even verbs and basic grammar concepts can be conveyed through images in a way that provides clarity for your students and also keeps them interested. For teaching vocabulary they are crucial, given that students at this level often don't have enough of a grasp of the basics to handle contextual examples. Confusion or lack of understanding could lead to frustration or worse- translation into the student's native language concepts.

Despite the growing interest in English teaching for young learners, much more research in the field is still required, as well as both pedagogy and methodology need to be developed for effective teaching⁴. There have not been so many studies conducted on young learners in Vietnam, which offers numerous unexplored areas for researchers to dig into. Among those are grammar teaching techniques, which play a crucial role in English teaching and learning, as grammar acts as a living resource that facilitates communication with others, rather than just a list of labels and rules⁵. Important as it is, teaching grammar to primary learners is not at all simple. Not all teachers are equipped with appropriate methods and resources to teach grammar to primary children. Moreover, the teachers' beliefs and young students' opinions about the techniques used to teach grammar may be dissimilar. Therefore, the research hopes to suggest a useful technique that can be used to present grammar to young learners and teachers as well as learners' attitudes towards this technique.

⁴ Scrivener, J. (1994). *Learning Teaching: The essential guide to ELT* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited.

⁵ Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As a student teacher attending practical training at School No. 4 in Chirchiq city, I observed that A1-level learners face common challenges in mastering basic grammar structures, including sentence formation, verb usage, and word order. Through interactive lessons and the use of visual materials, learners showed gradual improvement in understanding and applying grammar rules in context. When TAILS-based activities were included—such as guided speaking tasks and listening exercises—students became more engaged and confident in using English. The integration of simple tales and visual grammar tools also helped make abstract grammar points clearer. These results show that combining traditional and modern methods can effectively support grammar development among beginner learners in real classroom settings.

The research also highlights that using traditional tales in grammar teaching may not always be suitable for A1 learners. While tales can be engaging, they often contain complex structures and advanced vocabulary, which can confuse beginners rather than support their grammar learning. In my opinion, grammar instruction at the A1 level should focus more on structured and guided materials, like simplified texts, visual aids, pictures, and scaffolded activities that ensure learners stay focused and confident. Another major issue is the lack of sufficient research and tailored methodologies for teaching grammar to young or beginner learners, especially in developing contexts. As stated in the research, grammar should be taught as a living and communicative tool rather than a list of rules. However, many teachers are not well-trained or equipped with the right resources, which leads to ineffective instruction.

I personally think that professional development programs should include practical training in grammar teaching strategies that are suitable for beginners and encourage teachers to use TAILS creatively-integrating visuals, repetition, and interactive grammar tasks. In conclusion, improving grammar skills in A1 learners through TAILS is possible, but it requires thoughtful adaptation. Based on both

research findings and my personal learning experience, combining structured input with visual and interactive strategies is the most effective approach for building grammar competence at the beginner level.

CONCLUSION

Improving grammar skills in A1 learners is a complex yet essential part of language education. These learners often struggle due to limited vocabulary, short attention spans, and lack of exposure to structured input. While traditional methods may not always meet their needs, innovative approaches like TAILS, when adapted carefully, can offer valuable support. By integrating grammar instruction into interactive listening and speaking tasks, and using visual aids, repetition, and scaffolded activities, teachers can make grammar more accessible and engaging. Although tales and diagramming sentences have their limitations, they can still serve as useful supplementary tools if appropriately simplified. For successful outcomes, teachers must be well-trained and equipped with effective strategies that match the learning pace and style of A1 students. With the right combination of methods, grammar teaching can become more meaningful, interactive, and learner-centered.

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