



THE EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED ACTIVITIES ON THE GRAMMAR RETENTION OF EFL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of task-based activities on grammar retention among tenth-grade students at Go Den High School in Long An Province, Vietnam. The research aimed to (1) assess how task-based activities influence students' grammar retention, and (2) explore students' attitudes towards task-based learning in grammar instruction. Ninety-two tenth-grade students participated, with the sample divided into two groups based on their pretest scores: an experimental group, which engaged in task-based activities, and a control group, which did not. The study analyzed pretest and post-test scores to measure the effect of task-based activities on grammar retention. Additionally, to gain deeper insights into students' perspectives, informal interviews were conducted with five students. These students were randomly selected and provided valuable feedback on their experiences with task-based activities. Their responses helped clarify how the method impacted both their understanding of grammar and their attitudes toward learning it. The study also utilized questionnaires to gather more comprehensive data on students' overall attitudes toward the method. The findings revealed a significant improvement in grammar retention among students who participated in task-based activities, as well as a positive shift in their attitudes toward grammar instruction. Students reported that task-based activities made learning grammar more engaging, less monotonous, and more memorable. The study concludes by discussing the limitations of the research and offering recommendations for future studies in the field.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Role of English Language Learning in Vietnam

English has undoubtedly become an essential global language. It is increasingly recognized as crucial for career advancement and professional success, particularly in Vietnam's context of industrialization, modernization, and global integration (Nguyen & Pham, 2015; Le & Tuan, 2018). As English proficiency opens doors to job opportunities, many learners are eager to master the language, not only for personal gains but also to contribute to the nation's development (Tran & Ngo, 2020).

In Vietnam, English is the most important foreign language, taught compulsorily across educational levels, from junior high schools to universities. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has also planned to introduce English as a compulsory subject for third graders (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2017). However, challenges in teaching and learning English, particularly in southern regions of Vietnam, remain significant (Nguyen & Huong, 2019; Pham & Nguyen, 2017).

1.2 English Teaching at Vietnamese High Schools

A clear example of this challenge can be observed at Vietnamese high schools. In traditional grammar lessons, teachers typically introduce grammatical rules, provide one or two examples, and then ask students to complete exercises that are immediately corrected. This method often leads to passive learning, where students simply follow instructions without engaging deeply with the content. Over time, this rigid approach becomes monotonous (Nguyen & Boers, 2018; Nguyen, 2017).

Many students at Vietnamese high schools find the current teaching methods boring and ineffective, particularly when it comes to retaining grammar rules in the long term. They view grammar as a set of rigid rules that are difficult to remember, and the lack of an interactive, dynamic learning environment further hinders their progress (Le & Duong, 2019). Moreover, grammar instruction tends to focus excessively on sentence-level manipulation with minimal context, limiting students' ability to internalize grammar naturally (Pham & Nguyen, 2020).

1.3 Challenges Faced by Tenth Graders at Vietnamese High Schools

Tenth graders at Vietnamese high schools face significant challenges in learning English. As the first year of high school, these students come from diverse backgrounds, and their English proficiency levels vary considerably, despite years of studying the language in secondary school (Nguyen, 2016; Pham & Le, 2017). A key issue is their ability to retain and apply grammar, particularly tenses. While students may perform well in short-term exercises, such as filling in blanks with the correct tense, they often struggle to apply these

rules effectively in longer-term assessments or real-life contexts (Tran & Nguyen, 2018; Le & Duong, 2019).

Furthermore, many students find grammar instruction monotonous and disengaging, which leads to a lack of motivation and interest in the subject (Nguyen & Boers, 2018). Despite the importance of grammar in their English proficiency, students often view it as a set of rigid rules, making it difficult for them to internalize and use grammar in communication (Pham, 2020). This disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application contributes to their feelings of demotivation and disengagement in the classroom.

1.4 Grammatical Competence and Task-Based Activities at Vietnamese High Schools

In 1980, Canale and Swain defined grammatical competence as a fundamental component of overall language proficiency, emphasizing the importance of students' ability to use grammatical structures correctly in communication (Canale & Swain, 1980). To enhance students' grammar learning, it is essential to adopt more effective and engaging teaching methods. Traditional grammar instruction often leads to passive learning, which hinders long-term retention and practical application of grammatical rules (Nguyen, 2016). In contrast, task-based activities have proven to be an effective approach to promoting grammar retention. These activities encourage active participation, enabling students to practice grammar in context and apply it in real-life situations (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). By focusing on communication and problem-solving, task-based activities allow students to internalize grammar rules naturally while increasing engagement and motivation (Nunan, 2004).

In the context of Vietnamese high schools, where grammar instruction often lacks interactivity, task-based activities can address these issues and provide a more dynamic learning experience. This research hypothesizes that incorporating task-based activities into English grammar lessons will significantly enhance grammar retention among students at Vietnamese high schools, making grammar more meaningful and applicable in everyday use (Pham & Le, 2017).

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Despite studying English for four years (Grades 6 to 9), tenth graders at Go Den High School, Long An province, continue to struggle with grammar retention, particularly with tenses. While they may perform well in immediate grammar exercises, they often fail to retain the knowledge in the long term, leading to poor performance in final tests. This passive approach to learning grammar makes lessons feel boring and ineffective, ultimately hindering their progress.

1.6 Aims of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of task-based activities on the grammar retention of Go Den High School students in Long An Province. The study also aimed to explore students' attitudes toward task-based activities in grammar instruction.

To achieve these aims, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do task-based activities improve grammar retention among high school students?
- 2) What are students' attitudes toward learning grammar through task-based activities?

1.7 Significance of the Study

As Woods (1995) stated, a strong grasp of grammar is essential for mastering a foreign language and is a fundamental aspect of communicative competence. Despite its importance, students at Go Den High School struggle with grammar retention. The significance of this study lies in identifying effective teaching methods that can enhance grammar retention and foster more positive attitudes toward learning grammar. The findings are expected to provide insights into making grammar lessons more engaging and effective, ultimately improving students' language proficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

As presented in the previous parts, students at Go Den High School face challenges in retaining English tenses over the long term. This long-term difficulty often leads to what Leech & Svartvik (1988: 11) describe as "*grammar fatigue*." To help students achieve better retention of grammatical structures, it is important to examine the theoretical framework surrounding grammar instruction. This part discusses key aspects of grammar teaching and learning, task-based activities, and the concept of "retention," particularly in relation to grammar retention. Additionally, empirical research in this field is also considered.

2.1 Grammar

The first section of this part focuses on definitions of grammar. It includes various interpretations of the term, followed by a discussion on the role of grammar in language teaching, grammar learning, the organization of grammar instruction, and grammar practice. The part then explores criteria for selecting grammar activities, compares deductive and inductive approaches, and contrasts traditional versus communicative approaches to grammar teaching. Finally, the traditional grammar teaching methods used in high schools are discussed.

2.1.1 Definitions of Grammar

Grammar has been defined in various ways over time. Thornbury (1999) notes that traditional grammar primarily focuses on sentence-level analysis. He defines grammar as "*a description of the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed*." Similarly, Cobbett (cited in Nunan, 1999: 96) suggests that grammar teaches how to use words correctly, focusing on the principles and rules that guide word placement in sentences.

Contemporary grammarians increasingly focus on describing how language is used in practice, rather than prescribing how it should be used. According to Ur (1998: 4), grammar can be defined as "*the way a language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) to form longer units of meaning.*" In a more succinct description, Ur (1996: 75) asserts that grammar is "*the way words are put together to make correct sentences.*"

Larsen-Freeman (1995) offers a comprehensive conceptualization of grammar, which includes three interrelated dimensions: form, meaning, and use. She argues that grammar integrates syntax (form), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (use). Similarly, Halliday (1985) defines grammar as "*the study of how syntax (form), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (use) work together to enable individuals to communicate through language*" (cited in Nunan, 1999: 101).

The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008) also defines grammar as "*the study or use of the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences.*"

2.1.2 The Role of Grammar in Language Teaching and Learning

Grammar plays a critical role in both second language and foreign language acquisition. Rinvolutri (1984: 3) argues that "*grammar is so serious and central in learning another language that all ways should be searched for to focus student energy on the task of mastering and internalizing it.*" Beyond the classroom, grammar is seen as essential for effective communication. Nunan (1999: 96) notes that "*the essence of language lies in grammar,*" highlighting that issues with language skills often refer to difficulties with grammar. For example, public discussions about the "*declining standard of English*" typically focus on perceived grammar deficiencies.

Ur (1988: 4) emphasizes the importance of grammatical knowledge, stating that "*a knowledge—implicit or explicit—of grammatical rules is essential for mastering a language,*" as one cannot use words properly without understanding how they are combined. Furthermore, Ur (1988: 5) notes that grammar learning should not be seen as an end goal in itself but as a means to achieve overall language mastery. Brown (1994: 353) adds that "*grammatical information, whether consciously or subconsciously learned, is an enabling system,*" which contributes to communicative competence, alongside phonology, discourse, and the lexicon.

2.1.3 Grammar Learning

Learning grammar involves mastering a vast range of structures, some of which have parallels in the learner's native language, while others are more complex and challenging to grasp. According to Ur (1988: 5), teachers must have a clear understanding of what grammar entails before planning lessons. This clarity helps to identify what structures need to be taught and the skills required to use them.

Ur (1988: 6) suggests that grammar instruction should encompass several related skills, including the ability to recognize grammatical forms in spoken and written language, understand their meaning in context, and produce accurate forms in both

speech and writing. He provides a framework for these skills, as shown in the table below:

Table 2.1: Aspects of the Teaching and Learning of Structures

Skills	Form	Meaning
Listening	Perception and recognition of the spoken form of the structure	Comprehension of the spoken structure's meaning
Speaking	Production of well-formed examples in speech	Use of the structure to convey meaning in speech
Reading	Perception and recognition of the written form	Comprehension of the written structure in context
Writing	Production of well-formed examples in writing	Use of the structure to convey meaning in writing

Ur (1988: 6) advises that teachers should maintain a balance across these areas and consider the specific needs of their students when teaching grammatical structures. The teaching procedures will be further discussed in the section on the organization of grammar teaching.

2.1.4 The Organization of Grammar Teaching

Ur (1988: 6) states that generalizations about the best way to teach grammar must account for both the wide range of knowledge and skills involved and the variety of grammatical structures that need to be taught. He suggests that the following organizational framework serves as a general guide into which various teaching techniques can fit.

2.1.4.1 Presentation

The aim of the presentation stage is to help learners perceive the structure—its form and meaning—both in speech and writing. The goal is to store this information in short-term memory.

2.1.4.2 Isolation and Explanation

During this phase, the focus shifts from context to the grammatical items themselves. The aim is to help learners understand the structure's form, meaning, and function. Learners should understand the rules that govern the structure.

2.1.4.3 Practice

This stage consists of a series of exercises performed in class or as homework. The purpose is to help learners internalize the structure, transferring knowledge from short-term to long-term memory.

2.1.4.4 Test

Learners take tests to demonstrate how well they have mastered the material. Tests provide feedback for both the teacher and learner, which is crucial for progress.

Ur emphasizes that the practice stage is the most important, as it is during this stage that learners are most likely to internalize and retain the material long-term.

2.1.4.5 Grammar Practice

Ur (1996: 83) highlights that the aim of grammar practice is to ensure students can independently produce correct structures. Teachers must provide varied practice activities to help students become familiar with structures in context, addressing both form and meaning.

According to Ur (1988: 11), the practice stage occurs after learners have perceived the material and stored it in short-term memory. However, true mastery of the material is not yet achieved. Practice is defined as any engaging activity, typically under teacher supervision, where the primary goal is to consolidate learning. It is through practice that material is absorbed into long-term memory and learners begin to independently understand and produce examples of it.

2.1.5 Key Elements of Effective Grammar Practice

2.1.5.1 Pre-Learning

Practice should never introduce new material; it must only reinforce previously taught material. If pre-learning has not been effective, practice will be inefficient, resulting in misunderstandings and wasted time.

2.1.5.2 Volume and Repetition

Ur (1988: 12) emphasizes that the more language learners are exposed to or required to produce, the more they will learn. Repetition is particularly important in grammar practice. It does not mean mechanical repetition, but rather engaging with the language in different forms, ensuring learners repeatedly encounter and use the target structure.

2.1.5.3 Success-Orientation

While correcting mistakes helps learners understand rules on an intellectual level, the absorption of material requires that learners experience success. Ur (1988: 12) asserts that success-oriented practice promotes a positive learning environment, increasing student confidence and motivation.

2.1.5.4 Heterogeneity

Ur (1988: 13) defines "heterogeneous" exercises as those that can be done at varying levels of difficulty. These exercises provide more reliable feedback, ensure all students benefit, and promote motivation. Mixed-ability exercises are crucial, as homogeneous exercises may either overwhelm weaker students or lack challenge for more advanced learners.

2.1.5.5 Teacher Assistance

Teachers must be vigilant in providing support during practice tasks. They should focus on helping students perform the task correctly rather than constantly correcting mistakes. Teacher assistance is essential in maintaining student engagement and ensuring progress.

2.1.5.6 Interest

Interest is crucial to successful practice. Ur (1988: 15) argues that motivation should stem from the intrinsic interest of the task itself—its topic and the objective. If practice activities are engaging and relevant, students will not only learn more efficiently but also enjoy the process.

Ur concludes that effective practice procedures generally include the following features: pre-learning, volume and repetition, success-orientation, heterogeneity, teacher assistance, and interest. While not all activities need to incorporate every element, a lack of several can reduce the learning value.

2.1.6 Basic Criteria for Selecting Grammar Activities

Grassick (2006: 8) identifies the E-factors as the essential criteria for selecting grammar activities: they should be easy, economical, and effective.

- **Easy:** The activity should be simple for the teacher to prepare and conduct in class. It should not be time-consuming or complex.
- **Economical:** The activity should require concise instructions to avoid confusion. Overly complex or lengthy instructions can overwhelm learners.
- **Effective:** An effective activity should meet several criteria:
 - **Attention:** It should capture students' attention.
 - **Understanding:** The context should be easy to understand, and the instructions should be clear.
 - **Memory:** The activity should be memorable and appropriate for the age group (e.g., teenagers).
 - **Motivation:** The task should engage learners, be relevant to their needs, and provide an achievable outcome.

In conclusion, good grammar activities should be easy to implement, economical in terms of instructions, and highly effective in engaging learners, ensuring that the activities capture attention, foster understanding, and motivate students to learn.

2.1.7 Overview on Deductive and Inductive Approaches

Thornbury (1999) defines the two approaches to grammar teaching as follows:

- **Deductive Approach:** This approach starts with the presentation of a rule, followed by examples where the rule is applied.
- **Inductive Approach:** This approach begins with examples from which learners infer the rule.

Thornbury (1999: 30) points out several disadvantages of the deductive approach:

- **Student Engagement:** Starting the lesson with a grammar presentation can be discouraging for some students, especially younger learners who may lack sufficient meta-language (language used to talk about language, such as grammatical terms) and may struggle to grasp abstract concepts.
- **Teacher-Centered:** The focus on teacher explanation often leads to a transmission-style classroom, limiting student involvement and interaction.
- **Memorability:** Grammar explanations tend to be less memorable than other forms of presentation, such as demonstration.
- **Rule-Focused Learning:** The deductive approach may promote the idea that language learning is solely about understanding rules, rather than developing practical communicative skills.

However, there are also advantages to the deductive approach:

- **Time Efficiency:** It allows the lesson to get straight to the point, which can save time. Many rules, especially structural ones, are quicker to explain than to derive from examples. This leaves more time for practice and application.
- **Cognitive Alignment:** The deductive approach can appeal to the intelligence and maturity of many students, especially adults, who benefit from understanding rules explicitly.
- **Familiarity with Student Expectations:** Many students, particularly those with an analytical learning style, expect a structured, rule-based explanation of grammar.
- **Flexibility:** It allows teachers to address language points as they arise, rather than anticipating and preparing for them in advance.

Brown (1994: 351) explains that the inductive approach is currently more favored for the following reasons:

- **Natural Acquisition:** It mimics natural language acquisition, where rules are absorbed subconsciously without conscious focus.
- **Interlanguage Development:** It aligns better with the concept of interlanguage, where learners pass through stages of rule acquisition.
- **Communicative Context:** It helps learners develop a communicative feel for the language before being overwhelmed by grammatical explanations.
- **Intrinsic Motivation:** It fosters intrinsic motivation by allowing learners to discover rules themselves, rather than being told what they are.

However, Brown also acknowledges that there are moments when a deductive approach, or a combination of both, may be more appropriate. In practice, the distinction between the two approaches is not always clear-cut.

2.1.8 Traditional Approach Versus More Communicative Approach

Grassick (2006: 8) outlines the differences between a traditional approach and a more communicative approach to grammar teaching in the following table:

Traditional Approach	More Communicative Approach
1. The teacher writes down the grammar point on the board.	1. The teacher uses contexts, situations, or visual aids to present the target language.
2. The teacher explains the rules or structures.	2. Students complete tasks to work out the meaning, form, and use of grammatical items.
3. The teacher gives examples to illustrate the rules or structures.	3. The teacher uses yes/no and simple questions to check understanding of form, meaning, and use.
4. Practice: The teacher asks students to form sentences using the target language.	4. Controlled Practice: The teacher uses repetition drills, substitution drills, or word/picture prompts to guide practice. The language used is contextualized and realistic.
5. Practice: Students complete structured exercises, such as gap-fill or translation.	5. Freer Practice: Students are encouraged to use the new language in less structured ways, promoting more creative use of the language.

2.1.9 Traditional Grammar Teaching Methods in High School

In many high school grammar classes, teachers often follow a simple method:

- **Presentation:** Teachers list grammar rules and explain them to students.
- **Practice:** Students memorize the rules and practice through exercises, such as gap-fill or translation tasks.
- **Production:** Students apply the grammar rules in more open-ended tasks, often with additional written exercises.

This approach mirrors the 3P theory—Presentation, Practice, and Production—which serves different purposes:

- **Presentation:** Introduces new language in context, ensures meaning is clear, connects the new form to prior knowledge, checks comprehension, and prompts students to discover the form.
- **Practice:** Focuses on helping students memorize the form, produce correct word order, provide intensive practice, offer feedback, and build confidence.
- **Production:** Reduces control, encourages students to use the form in their own content, demonstrates the usefulness of the language learned, and helps identify areas of difficulty.

Grammar teaching is considered essential in high school English learning, but it often follows a predictable, rule-listing routine. Teachers typically focus on explaining numerous rules, and students are accustomed to writing down these rules in their notebooks. However, this approach can make grammar classes dull and lead to disengagement, with many students struggling to memorize a multitude of rules.

While students may acknowledge the importance of grammar, they often find the process of memorization tedious and unengaging. Grammar teaching, therefore, should not be confined to this routine. New strategies, such as task-based language teaching, should be incorporated. This approach emphasizes the practical use of grammar, encouraging students to engage with language in real contexts, making learning more relevant and dynamic.

2.2 Task-based Language Teaching

This section begins with an overview of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), followed by definitions of tasks, types of tasks, and key features of task-based language teaching. Finally, the roles of the teacher and learner, as well as the methodology of tasks, are discussed.

2.2.1 Overview of Task-based Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is rooted in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model. It began to develop in the early 1970s as a response to the focus-on-form language teaching methods of the time. However, TBLT is understood in different ways by different scholars. Generally, TBLT is a teaching approach in which tasks are the central unit of planning and implementing language instruction (e.g., Willis, 1996; Nunan, 1989, 1999, 2006; Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Willis and Willis, 2001; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Ellis, 2003, 2006). In a TBLT class, students take the central role. The teacher does not predetermine what language will be studied; instead, the lesson revolves around completing a central task, and the language learned is determined by the task's requirements (Frost, 2004). In other words, students are free to use the language forms they need to accomplish the task.

Willis (1996) further emphasizes that TBLT focuses on students actively doing things—often in pairs or groups—using language to complete tasks under the teacher's guidance. When students successfully complete these tasks, they gain confidence and motivation to continue learning. Tasks are believed to enhance motivation and, consequently, promote language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Moreover, TBLT integrates all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and offers opportunities for learners to explore and experiment with language in a natural context. In fact, TBLT helps bridge the gap between classroom activities and real-world language use. As Nunan (2003) notes, TBLT focuses on learning experiences that have non-linguistic outcomes, providing a clear connection between classroom activities and the practical language skills students will need outside the classroom.

2.2.2 Definitions of Tasks

As interest in TBLT has grown, so has the literature on tasks, with various definitions emerging. Here are some key perspectives: Long (1985:22) defines a task as:

“A task is a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making a reservation, or writing a letter. Tasks are everyday activities that people perform in various contexts.”

In this definition, tasks are non-technical and non-linguistic, referring to activities that are not necessarily language-focused. They have real-world applications and

outcomes that are often non-linguistic. A single task might be part of a larger sequence of tasks (Nunan, 2006).

Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985:34), from a pedagogical perspective, define a task as:

“An activity or action carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language but require the teacher to specify what constitutes successful completion. Using different kinds of tasks in language teaching provides a communicative purpose for classroom activities beyond mere practice.”

This definition underscores the importance of having a non-linguistic outcome and suggests that tasks serve a communicative purpose in the classroom.

Nunan (1989:88) offers a classroom-specific definition: *“A task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or integrating in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form.”* Nunan also emphasizes that tasks should have a sense of completeness, capable of standing alone as a communicative act in its own right.

Ellis (2003: 54) defines a task as: *“A work-plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. This involves primary attention to meaning, with learners making use of their linguistic resources, although the task design may guide them toward particular forms.”*

Ellis emphasizes that tasks should resemble real-world language use, engaging learners in both productive and receptive skills and various cognitive processes.

2.2.3 Real-Life Tasks vs. Pedagogical Tasks

While many definitions of tasks focus on real-life activities, pedagogical tasks in the classroom are not always directly transferable from real life. For example, daily activities like "painting a fence" or "buying shoes" cannot easily be replicated in a classroom setting. Classroom tasks should be designed to require linguistic communication, either written or spoken, as this aligns with the goals of language learning. Some activities might be important for cognitive development (e.g., solving a mathematical problem), but they are not suitable for language learning tasks.

Thus, there is a need to distinguish between real-life tasks and classroom tasks, which must be linguistically relevant to facilitate language acquisition. Moreover, classroom tasks often integrate multiple elements, such as task completion (achieving the task's goal) and the process of thinking involved in completing the task, which may be regulated by the teacher.

2.2.4 Content and Method in TBLT

In TBLT, there is a significant interaction between the content being taught (i.e., the language) and the method used (i.e., task-based learning). This is in contrast to traditional

methods, which often focus on predefined content (e.g., grammar rules). TBLT is content-driven in that the tasks themselves drive the language learning process. The language forms that learners need will emerge from the task, making the learning process more meaning-focused rather than form-focused.

In this approach, the teacher's role is to guide students through meaningful communication rather than focusing exclusively on language rules. Learners are expected to engage in tasks that are connected to real-life situations, which are relevant to their communicative needs. This method emphasizes interaction, negotiation of meaning, and personalized learning paths, where learners contribute to defining the language, they need to acquire based on the tasks they complete.

In brief, Task-based Language Teaching represents a shift toward a more communicative and learner-centered approach to language learning. By focusing on meaningful tasks, this method promotes real-world language use and encourages learners to develop skills that are directly applicable to everyday communication. Although definitions of tasks vary, they all point to the importance of tasks as dynamic, context-dependent activities that foster language acquisition through engagement with real-world communication.

2.2.5 Types of Tasks

In the field of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), many scholars have proposed various task classifications to guide task design and description. Tasks can be categorized based on different criteria. After reviewing several of these classifications, the researcher found that the one proposed by Willis (1996) best aligns with the types of activities explored in this thesis. Willis (1996) categorizes tasks into six types, which are rooted in traditional knowledge hierarchies. The six types are as follows:

- **Listing:** Although listing tasks may initially seem simplistic, they often provoke rich conversation as learners share and explain their ideas. The process involves two main steps: brainstorming and fact-finding. In brainstorming, learners tap into their own knowledge and experiences, either individually, in pairs, or in groups. In fact-finding, learners gather information by asking others or consulting external sources such as books or the internet. The final product is a comprehensive list of ideas or information.
- **Ordering and Sorting:** These tasks require learners to organize items or concepts based on specific criteria. There are four primary processes involved: sequencing (arranging items or events in a logical or chronological order), ranking (ordering items based on defined priorities), categorizing (grouping items into specific categories), and classifying (organizing items in various ways based on different factors). The outcome of these tasks is a set of information or data that has been logically structured according to the task's parameters.
- **Comparing:** Comparing tasks involve matching or identifying differences and similarities between two or more sets of information that share a common theme. The outcomes of these tasks can vary depending on the specific goals of the task,

but they generally encourage learners to engage in analytical thinking and observation.

- **Problem-solving:** These tasks require learners to engage in critical thinking and intellectual activities, often in the form of puzzles or logic problems. The primary objective is to find a solution to the problem posed by the task.
- **Sharing Personal Experiences:** This type of task allows learners to engage in informal conversation, sharing personal anecdotes and experiences with others. The primary outcome is social interaction, which helps learners practice language in a meaningful, real-life context.
- **Creative Tasks:** Also known as projects, creative tasks often involve multiple stages and can incorporate various types of tasks mentioned above. These tasks typically require learners to conduct research or produce a tangible end product that can be shared with a wider audience.

In conclusion, although there are many types of tasks discussed in the literature, the researchers prefer Willis' classification, as it is simple, relevant to the learners' context, and practical for teaching English grammar. These tasks are convenient for teachers and do not require extensive preparation time.

2.2.6 Features of Task-Based Language Teaching

Nunan (1991: 279) provides a summary of the key features of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as follows:

- **Focus on communication:** TBLT emphasizes learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- **Authentic texts:** TBLT incorporates real-life, authentic materials into the learning process.
- **Focus on the learning process:** TBLT provides opportunities for learners to reflect not only on language use but also on their overall learning strategies.
- **Personal experiences:** TBLT highlights the importance of learners' personal experiences as integral components of classroom learning.
- **Linking classroom learning to real-life activation:** TBLT aims to connect what learners do in the classroom to practical language use outside of it.

These features help students feel more comfortable communicating in English, especially in a classroom setting. Over time, learners' initial shyness diminishes, and they become more likely to engage in conversations. Moreover, task-based activities support better retention of grammar points by involving learners in various stages of the task, providing ample time for them to internalize new knowledge. Tasks create meaningful clues that aid in long-term memory retention.

2.2.7 Teacher and Learner Roles in Task-Based Learning

In Task-Based Learning (TBL), both teachers and learners assume distinct roles, which significantly impact the learning process. Richards and Rogers (2001: 235-236) outline these roles as follows:

2.2.7.1 Teacher Roles

Teachers play a pivotal role in grammar instruction through task-based activities. Their primary responsibilities include selecting and sequencing tasks, preparing learners for tasks, and raising learners' awareness of language forms. These roles are crucial for facilitating effective grammar learning.

- **Selector and Sequencer of Tasks:** Teachers are responsible for selecting, adjusting, and designing tasks that align with learners' needs, interests, and language proficiency levels. This task sequencing ensures that learners progress gradually in their understanding of grammar.
- **Preparing Learners for Tasks:** Effective pre-task preparation is essential. This includes introducing the topic, explaining task instructions, helping students recall or learn useful words and phrases, and offering partial guidance on task completion. This step ensures learners are well-equipped to perform the task.
- **Consciousness-Raising:** Teachers engage learners' attention by using activities that focus on form, such as pre-task exercises, studying authentic texts, or providing guided exposure to parallel tasks. By doing so, learners become more conscious of grammatical structures and their application.

Thus, as a facilitator, the teacher not only selects and sequences tasks but also prepares learners adequately and helps raise their awareness of grammatical forms through various strategies.

2.2.7.2 Learner Roles

Learners also assume specific roles in task-based learning. These roles are crucial for active participation in the learning process. The three main roles learners adopt are as follows:

- **Group Participant:** Learners often work in pairs or small groups. Collaborative tasks encourage communication and peer interaction, but they may require adaptation for learners accustomed to more traditional, teacher-centered methods.
- **Monitor:** In TBL, learners are expected to pay attention not only to the content of their task but also to the language forms used in communication. Monitoring involves observing how language is used in context, which helps learners improve both their fluency and accuracy.
- **Risk-Taker and Innovator:** Many tasks require learners to create and interpret messages despite lacking full linguistic resources. This encourages learners to take risks by guessing from context, asking for clarification, or consulting peers. These skills are vital for building confidence and language proficiency.

Thus, these learner roles support a more active, engaged learning environment, enabling students to move beyond passive learning and interact more confidently with both language and peers.

2.2.8 Methodology of Task-Based Teaching

Task-Based Teaching follows a structured approach with three key stages: Pre-task, During-task, and Post-task. Each phase plays a vital role in the learning process.

2.2.8.1 Pre-task Phase

The pre-task phase is crucial for preparing students for the task ahead. In this phase, the teacher introduces the topic, provides clear instructions, and ensures learners understand what is expected of them. Teachers may also help learners recall useful vocabulary or language structures for the task. For example, teachers might play recordings of similar tasks to provide students with models of expected performance. This phase sets the stage for learners to approach the task confidently.

According to Ellis (2006), the pre-task phase includes activities that help students prepare linguistically and cognitively for the main task. As Long (2000) suggests, framing the task by explaining its purpose and the outcome helps students understand its relevance, thus motivating them to engage more fully. This stage is especially important for students who are more accustomed to traditional, teacher-centered learning environments.

2.2.8.2 During-task Phase

The during-task phase focuses on the actual completion of the task. There are two main types of decisions involved:

- **Task-Performance Options:** These are decisions made before the task begins, such as whether to impose time constraints. Time pressure can influence the complexity of language production, and Lee (2000) recommends setting time limits to encourage more focused language use.
- **Process Options:** These decisions occur during the task and involve online, real-time adjustments. For example, teachers might decide whether students can access materials or whether there should be a surprise element introduced into the task. Skehan and Foster (1997) illustrate this approach in their study of decision-making tasks, where unexpected information was provided halfway through the activity, which affected students' language use.

2.2.8.3 Post-task Phase

The post-task phase offers opportunities for reflection and language focus. It includes three main pedagogic goals:

- To provide an opportunity for students to repeat the task.
- To encourage learners to reflect on how the task was performed.
- To focus on language form, particularly problematic forms that arose during the task.

This phase is essential for reinforcing learning and ensuring that students internalize the language used during the task.

2.3 Retention

2.3.1 Definition of Retention

Retention is commonly defined as the ability to remember or retain information that has been experienced or learned. According to the Oxford Dictionary, retention refers to the process of keeping or holding onto learned information. When applied to grammar learning, grammar retention refers to the capacity of learners to recall and utilize grammatical rules after learning them.

Serivencer (1998) describes retention as the mental ability to store information. He views it as a conscious process that may involve rote learning, practice, or associative learning. In contrast, Ausubel (1968), in his Meaningful Learning Theory, distinguishes between rote learning and meaningful learning.

- **Rote Learning:** This is a process where learners memorize information without making connections to existing knowledge. It tends to be superficial and short-term.
- **Meaningful Learning:** This occurs when new knowledge is linked to existing cognitive structures, which leads to deeper understanding and better retention.

The distinction between these two types of learning has significant implications for grammar retention, particularly concerning short-term and long-term memory.

- **Short-term Memory:** Characterized by limited capacity, this type of memory retains information for brief periods (typically 20 to 30 seconds). It is crucial for everyday tasks and immediate recall but is easily forgotten unless actively rehearsed or encoded into long-term memory.
- **Long-term Memory:** In contrast, long-term memory has a seemingly infinite capacity and retains information for much longer periods. However, transferring information from short-term to long-term memory requires active engagement and meaningful repetition.

According to Tulving (1972), long-term memory can be divided into two types:

- **Semantic Memory:** Responsible for storing factual knowledge and conceptual information.
- **Episodic Memory:** Associated with personal experiences and specific events, including when, where, and how the information was acquired.

As Gairns and Redman (1990) highlight, the boundary between short-term and long-term retention is not always distinct, as information initially stored in short-term memory can transition into long-term memory, especially when repetition and meaningful engagement are involved.

2.3.2 The Process of Retention

For language learners, it is essential to transfer all learned information into long-term memory. This process has been a key focus for cognitivists in the field of memory. Essentially, the encoding process facilitates the transition of information from short-term memory to long-term memory. The primary method for this transfer involves linking new information with pre-existing knowledge in long-term memory. In the case of

grammar, this means connecting new syntactic structures with previously acquired language elements (Boroditsky & Schmitt, 2000).

Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) and Rohwer (1984) proposed storage models that distinguish between ultra-short-term, short-term, and long-term memory. According to their model, ultra-short-term memory receives all sensory information (visual, acoustic, etc.), as noted by Norman (1989). Information stored in long-term memory can remain there indefinitely, although retrieval may be difficult under certain conditions (Norman, 1981; Rohrer, 1984; Vester, 1986). Information retrieval, according to Baddeley (1990), can be understood through the library model, where the more references (or memory traces) available (e.g., author, title, keyword), the faster and more accurate the retrieval.

Stevick (1996) observed that new input typically remains in short-term memory for 20 to 30 seconds unless it is actively rehearsed. The amount of effort learners invest in processing new input significantly impacts its transition to long-term memory. As Stevick (1982) suggests, this is largely a matter of frequency and intensity: the more frequently and intensely the input is processed, the better it will be remembered in the long term.

2.3.3 The Relationship Between Task-Based Activities and Students' Grammar Retention

Task-based activities can be a highly effective method for promoting grammar retention. By engaging students in meaningful tasks, they not only have fun but also acquire and retain new language structures. These activities emphasize the need for students to use the language actively, helping them understand that they must communicate effectively for others to understand them (Schultz & Fisher, 1988).

In addition, task-based activities tend to lower students' anxiety, making it easier for them to acquire and retain language input. In a comfortable, relaxed classroom environment fostered by task-based learning, students are able to remember language more quickly and for longer periods.

As students engage in task-based activities, they often forget they are in a traditional classroom setting. Instead of merely memorizing rules or cases regarding the use of tenses, they are guided through various activities that promote natural language use without the pressure of rigid grammar instruction. This approach leads to more effective and enjoyable language learning.

2.4 Empirical Research

Research on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has shown significant positive outcomes, both internationally and within Vietnam. For instance, Lochana and Deb (2006) conducted a study involving 31 students at Basaveschwar Boys' High School in India, where they found that TBLT notably enhanced learners' language proficiency. In China, Wang Cheng-jun (2006) applied communicative tasks in a college English course with 74 non-English major freshmen, leading to increased fluency and accuracy in their English skills. Similarly, Zhou You-hua (2006) found that TBLT effectively developed

students' communicative competence after conducting research with 78 English majors at Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology. Also, Ruso (2007) conducted a study with 54 first-year students at the Eastern Mediterranean University, revealing that TBLT significantly boosted students' motivation and learning engagement. The majority of participants expressed positive attitudes toward this approach and found the classroom atmosphere enjoyable.

In Vietnam, there has been growing interest in the application of TBLT in foreign language classrooms. Ho Dang Tuong Nguyen (2010) found that TBLT led to more effective outcomes compared to the traditional grammar translation method. It also proved valuable in teaching grammar for communication. However, before this success, Tran Kim Hien (2009) pointed out that non-English major students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry (HUI) were largely unmotivated to learn English in general, particularly when it came to reading skills. These students were primarily taught through traditional methods, expecting teachers to explain vocabulary and grammar structures before completing exercises in textbooks.

Although much research has been conducted on TBLT, few studies have specifically explored its impact on grammar retention among high school students, particularly in schools like Go Den High School, where students often lack interest in learning English grammar. This gap is what motivates the current study. The following section will discuss the methodology of this research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Site

The study was conducted at Go Den High School in Ben Luc District, Long An Province. Initially, the school was a semi-public institution, but it transitioned to a fully public school two years prior to the study. Due to its semi-public background, the students at the school struggled not only with English but also with other subjects. However, the school has made significant improvements to its teaching and learning infrastructure, including the construction of a new building and the installation of projectors and cassette players in classrooms, the school followed the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Students attended three English lessons per week, each lasting 45 minutes. Strict adherence to school regulations, including punctuality and regular attendance, was required during these periods.

3.2 Participants

The study involved two classes of tenth-grade students from a pool of five classes at the school. The classes were selected based on convenience, with 10A1 and 10A2 chosen as the experimental and control groups, respectively. Each class consisted of 46 students, totaling 92 participants. Class 10A1 was randomly selected as the control group, while 10A2 served as the experimental group.

3.3 Description of the Textbook Tieng Anh 10 and Its Structure

3.3.1 Aims and Objectives of the Textbook Tieng Anh 10

The Tieng Anh 10 textbook, as outlined in the Teacher's Book published by Nha Xuat Ban Giao Duc (2007), has the following objectives:

- 1) To enable students to use English as a means of communication in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at an elementary level.
- 2) To develop students' foundational knowledge in a systematic manner that is tailored to their psychological characteristics and age-appropriate level.
- 3) To promote awareness and appreciation of the cultures, geography, and people of English-speaking countries, while also fostering pride in their own culture and language.

The textbook is designed to develop all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It covers six primary themes:

- You and Me,
- Education,
- Community,
- Nature and Environment,
- Recreation,
- People and Places.

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

- 1) Comprehend key ideas and details of monologues or dialogues (120-150 words) and understand texts read at a slower pace.
- 2) Engage in conversations on these themes, employing basic communication functions like asking for directions and expressing ideas.
- 3) Read and understand texts (190-230 words) on the themes above and develop language skills such as dictionary usage and contextual appropriateness.
- 4) Write essays (100-200 words) based on sample prompts related to the themes.

3.3.2 Time Distribution for Implementing the Textbook Tieng Anh 10

The teaching plan for Tieng Anh 10, as provided by the Ministry of Education and Training (2007), suggests the following breakdown:

"The textbook comprises 16 units and six review sections (A-F). Each unit should be taught over five periods, each lasting 45 minutes. The review sections, designed to assess student progress after every two or three units, are typically completed in one class period. According to the Teacher's Book, students are encouraged to complete the review sections as homework, with teachers providing corrections in class."

3.3.3 Structure of Each Unit in Tieng Anh 10

Each unit in Tieng Anh 10 follows a consistent structure with five sections: Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Language Focus.

- 1) **Reading:** Each reading passage (monologue or dialogue) is introduced with "Before you read" (contextualization), followed by "While you read" (reading activities), and concluded with "After you read" (comprehension activities such as summarizing or retelling).
- 2) **Speaking:** This section includes 3-4 tasks that help students practice communicative functions like expressing preferences and describing events. The tasks gradually increase in complexity, encouraging students to speak more freely as they build their competence.
- 3) **Listening:** Listening activities are designed to enhance various skills, such as intensive listening, listening for specific information, and listening for gist. Like the reading section, the listening activities are divided into three phases: "Before you listen" (preparation), "While you listen" (tasks like multiple-choice questions), and "After you listen" (comprehension check and reflection).
- 4) **Writing:** Writing tasks begin with a model essay, followed by activities that help students analyze content, structure, and vocabulary. Students then write their own essays with guided prompts to help them organize their thoughts.
- 5) **Language Focus:** This section helps consolidate students' grammatical knowledge through activities in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Key grammar points are often drawn from the reading texts, and the section aims to reinforce the students' overall language skills.

3.3.4 Grammar Points in Tieng Anh 10

The grammar points covered in the Tieng Anh 10 textbook are organized by unit and include a range of important structures, such as verb tenses, conditionals, and passive voice. For example:

Units	Titles	Grammar
Unit 1	A Day in the Life of ...	- The present simple - Adverb of frequency - The past simple
Unit 2	School Talks	- Wh-questions - Gerund and to + infinitive
Unit 3	People's Background	- The past perfect - The past perfect vs. the past simple
Unit 4	Special Education	- The + adjective - Used to + infinitive - Which as a connector
Unit 5	Technology and You	- The present perfect - The present perfect passive - Who, which, that
Unit 6	An Excursion	- The present progressive (with a future meaning) - Be going to
Unit 7	The Mass Media	- The present perfect - Because of and in spite of

Unit 8	The Story of My Village	- Reported speech: statements - Conditional sentence type 1
Unit 9	Undersea World	- Should - Conditional sentence type 2
Unit 10	Conservation	- The passive voice
Unit 11	National Parks	- Conditional sentence type 3
Unit 12	Music	- To + infinitive to talk about purposes - Wh-questions
Unit 13	Films and Cinema	- Attitudinal adjectives - It is / was not until ... that ... - a/ an and the
Unit 14	The World Cup	- Will vs. going to - Will: making predictions - Will: making offers
Unit 15	Cities	- Non-defining vs. defining relative clauses - Although as a contrasting connector
Unit 16	Historical Places	- Comparatives and superlatives - Making comparisons

3.4 Data Types and Methods of Data Collection

3.4.1 The Experimental Project

To assess the effectiveness of task-based activities in grammar learning, participants were divided into a control group (10A1) and an experimental group (10A2). Prior to the intervention, both groups took a pre-test to establish baseline equivalence. The experimental group received task-based grammar lessons during the first semester, while the control group received traditional grammar instruction. Both groups completed a pre-test and post-test, which focused on grammar knowledge, particularly the tenses covered in Units 1 through 8 of the Tieng Anh 10 textbooks.

The pre-test, conducted in the first semester (September), was designed to assess the students' knowledge of grammar points from earlier levels. It consisted of multiple-choice questions and sentence completion tasks. The post-test, administered in the second (December), aimed to measure any improvements resulting from the task-based teaching methods.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

To gather data on student attitudes, a questionnaire was administered both before and after the treatment. The questionnaire included both close-ended and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions used a Likert scale to measure student opinions, while open-ended questions allowed students to express their thoughts freely.

The questionnaire sought to understand students' beliefs about grammar, their motivations for learning grammar, their preferences for grammar teaching methods, and their perceptions of grammar retention.

3.4.3 Interviews

To complement the quantitative data, interviews were conducted with five students from the experimental group. The interviews focused on students' attitudes toward grammar learning with task-based activities. The goal was to gather qualitative insights into their experiences with the teaching methods.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The tests assessed the effectiveness of task-based activities on grammar retention, while the questionnaires and interviews explored students' attitudes toward the method.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using statistical methods, including frequency analysis and independent samples t-tests, to evaluate the impact of task-based activities on grammar retention. The responses from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed to assess any changes in students' attitudes towards grammar learning.

In short, the study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of task-based activities on grammar retention among tenth-grade students. The data collected from the tests, questionnaires, and interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of these activities on students' grammar learning and their attitudes towards it. The results will be discussed in the following part.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1.1 Scores from the Pre-Test

In the pre-test, the scores of the Control Group (CG) and the Experimental Group (EG) were analyzed and compared to test the assumption of normal distribution. The primary goal was to compare grammar retention between the two groups before the experimental project.

As discussed in the above parts, Class 10A1 was selected as the Control Group, while Class 10A2 was the Experimental Group. The latter group (10A2) received the experimental teaching, which involved task-based activities during the grammar classes for four months in the first semester, while the Control Group (10A1) did not receive this intervention. To assess whether there were any significant differences between the two groups' pre-test scores, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted. Prior to the test, descriptive statistics were calculated, and the results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Control Group's and Experimental Group's Pre-Test Scores

Classes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test				
Class 10A1	46	3.456	0.835	0.123
Class 10A2	46	3.565	0.834	0.122

As seen from Table 4.1, both groups had a sample size (N) of 46 students each. The mean score of the Control Group (10A1) before the treatment was 3.456 ($M_{pre-contr} = 3.456$), while the Experimental Group (10A2) had a slightly higher mean score of 3.565 ($M_{pre-exp} = 3.565$). These mean scores suggest that both groups were at a comparable level in terms of grammar competency before the intervention.

The standard deviations are also relatively small, indicating that there were not large variations in the scores within each group. However, the standard deviation of the Control Group ($SD_{pre-contr} = 0.835$) was marginally higher than that of the Experimental Group ($SD_{pre-exp} = 0.834$), suggesting that the grammar proficiency of students in the Experimental Group was slightly more homogeneous compared to the Control Group.

To further ensure that any differences between the two groups were not due to chance, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted. The results of this analysis are shown below:

Table 4.2: Independent Samples T-Test of two groups before the study

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pretest	.000	.991	-.624	90	.534	-.1087	.1740	-.4545	.2371
			-.624	90.000	.534	-.1087	.1740	-.4545	.2371

Table 4.2 showed that, before the study, the significance value ($p = 0.534$) was greater than 0.05. This indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group on the pretest, meaning the two groups were comparable at the outset of the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis—that there was no significant difference between the groups—was accepted, and both groups were treated as equal in terms of their pretest performance in English.

4.1.2 Scores from the Post-Test

After the treatment of task-based activities, the post-test scores were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics. An Independent Samples T-test was run to compare the mean scores between the two groups after the intervention. The results of the post-test analysis are displayed in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: The control group's and the experimental group's posttest scores

	Classes	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	CLASS 10A1	46	3.391	.855	.1261
	CLASS 10A2	46	4.130	1.002	.1478

As shown in Table 4.3, following the study, the experimental group had a mean score of 4.130 ($M_{\text{post-exp}} = 4.130$), while the control group's mean score was 3.391 ($M_{\text{post-contr}} = 3.391$). This indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group by a significant margin. A clearer comparison will be provided in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Independent Samples T-Test of two groups after the treatment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Posttest	.002	.963	-3.803	90	.000	-.73913	.19433	-1.12521	-.35305
			-3.803	87.839	.000	-.73913	.19433	-1.12534	-.35293

Table 4.4 shows that the mean difference ($MD_{\text{post}} = 0.73913$) between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant, with $t = 3.803$ and $p = 0.000$ (less than 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis – “There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test” – was rejected.

In summary, the analysis showed that the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method enhanced grammar retention in high school students. Specifically, the grammar retention of students in the experimental group was significantly better than that of the control group.

4.2 Students' Attitude

The previous section clearly demonstrated that the experimental group showed better performance after the treatment. This section focuses on whether their attitudes towards grammar also improved following the intervention.

4.2.1 Questionnaires

4.2.1.1 Opinions About Grammar

Table 4.5 presents the students' opinions on grammar before and after the treatment.

Answer	Before		After	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very boring	19	41.3%	5	10.9%
Boring	16	34.8%	5	10.9%
No ideal	7	15.2%	3	6.5%
Interesting	3	6.5%	25	54.3%
Very interesting	1	2.2%	8	17.4%
Total	46	100%	46	100%

Question 1, "What do you think about learning English grammar?", sought to gather students' opinions on the subject. As shown in Table 4.5, before the treatment, 41.3% and 34.8% of participants considered learning English grammar to be "very boring" and "boring," respectively. However, a noticeable shift occurred after the treatment. The percentage of students who found it "very boring" or "boring" dropped significantly by 10.9%. In contrast, the number of students who found grammar "interesting" or "very interesting" increased dramatically, from 6.5% and 2.2% before the treatment to 54.3% and 17.4% after the treatment. This shift highlights the positive impact of task-based activities on students' attitudes toward learning grammar.

4.2.1.2 Reasons for Learning Grammar

Question 2 of the questionnaire, "Why do you need to learn grammar?" aimed to uncover the reasons students study English grammar. The findings regarding these reasons are summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Students' opinions on the reasons for learning grammar before and after the treatment

Answer	Before		After	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Importance of taking tests	25	54.3%	28	60.9%
Prerequisite for language learning	20	43.5%	22	47.8%
Necessity for listening skill	3	6.5%	9	19.6%
Necessity for speaking skill	6	13.0%	20	43.5%
Necessity for reading skill	2	4.3%	5	10.9%
Necessity for writing skill	7	15.2%	13	28.3%

Table 4.6 presents the students' opinions on the reasons for learning grammar before and after the experimental project, showing the frequencies of their responses. It is evident that after the implementation of task-based activities, there was an increase in the number of students selecting the suggested reasons for learning grammar. Specifically, the reasons related to the necessity of grammar for listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills saw significant increases in percentages, with 19.6%, 43.5%, 10.9%, and 28.3% more students choosing these options compared to before the treatment. Additionally, reasons related to grammar's importance for taking tests and its role as a prerequisite for language learning also showed higher percentages, with 60.9% and 47.8% of students selecting these answers, respectively, reflecting a dominant shift. These findings demonstrate a positive change in students' perspectives. In other words, their opinions on the importance of learning grammar improved significantly after the experimental project.

4.2.1.3 Methods To Teach Grammar

Table 4.7: Methods to be taught grammar before and after the treatment

Answer	Before		After	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
The presentation of rules and followed by examples	39	84.8%	0	0.0%
Starting with some examples from which rules inferred	8	17.4%	15	32.6%
Task-based activities followed by grammar rules	0	0.0%	35	76.1%
Task-based activities without grammar rules	0	0.0%	41	89.1%

Question 3 in the questionnaire, “How is grammar taught in your class?” aimed to investigate whether students noticed any changes in the teaching methods for grammar before and after the treatment. Essentially, this question confirms that the teacher was expected to implement task-based activities in grammar instruction. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 reveals that, before the treatment, the majority of students (84.8%) preferred the traditional method of presenting rules followed by examples. In contrast, 17.4% of students indicated that grammar was taught by starting with examples from which the rules were inferred. Notably, neither the task-based method followed by grammar rules nor the method without grammar rules was chosen by any students.

However, there was a significant shift in the teaching method after the treatment. The number of students reporting the use of task-based activities without grammar, task-based activities followed by grammar rules, and starting with examples from which rules were inferred all saw dramatic increases, with 89.1%, 76.1%, and 32.6% of students choosing these methods, respectively. The traditional method of presenting rules followed by examples was entirely phased out, dropping from 84.8% to 0.0%.

This indicates that the teacher completely abandoned the "old" method of rule presentation followed by examples and instead implemented task-based activities as requested by the researchers.

4.2.1.4 Grammar Activities Preferred for Learning

Question 4, “What English grammar activities do you prefer when learning with your teacher?” aimed to gather data on the types of grammar activities students preferred in class. The results are shown in Table 4.8.

As Table 4.8 demonstrates, before the treatment, 34 students (73.9%) selected the option of listening to the teacher’s lecture as their preferred activity. However, after the treatment, this preference decreased significantly, with only 5 students (10.9%) choosing this option. In contrast, there was a notable increase in the number of students who preferred working in pairs or groups, being guided and supported by the teacher to work out new grammar rules, and being actively engaged in performing grammar activities.

These results suggest a shift in students' preferences from a more passive, teacher-centered approach to a more interactive and dynamic learning environment. The students seemed to favor more engaging, collaborative activities in their grammar lessons after experiencing task-based learning.

Table 4.8: Students' opinions on grammar activities preferred to be learnt before and after the treatment

Answer	Before		After	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Listening to the teacher's lecture all the time	34	73.9%	5	10.90%
Working in pairs or groups	12	26.1%	39	84.4%
Being guided and helped by the teacher to work out the new rules	3	6.5%	25	54.3%
Being asked to perform activities in grammar lessons	2	4.3%	12	26.1%

4.2.1.5 Opinions on the Remembrance of English Grammar

Question 5, "What do you think about the remembrance of English grammar?" aimed to assess whether there was any change in students' perceptions of remembering English grammar after the treatment. The results are presented in Table 4.9.

As shown in Table 4.9, prior to the treatment, 21 students (45.65%) reported that English grammar was "very difficult to remember," and 20 students (43.45%) found it "difficult to remember." Only 5 students had no opinion on the matter. None of the students indicated that they found English grammar either "easy" or "very easy" to remember.

However, after the treatment, there was a dramatic shift in the students' opinions. The number of students who found grammar "very difficult to remember," "difficult to remember," or had "no idea" decreased significantly by 10.9%, 15.2%, and 6.52%, respectively. Conversely, the number of students who found grammar "easy to remember" increased substantially, from 0% to 63.04%. Additionally, the option of "very easy to remember" saw a slight increase, from 0% to 4.34%.

These results clearly indicate a positive change in students' perceptions of remembering grammar, suggesting that the task-based learning approach significantly improved their ability to retain and recall grammar concepts.

Table 4.9: Opinions on retention of grammar before and after the treatment

Answer	Before		After	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very boring	21	45.65%	5	10.90%
Boring	20	43.45%	7	15.20%
No idea	5	10.90%	3	6.52%
Easy	0	0.00%	29	63.04%
Very easy	0	0.00%	2	4.34%
Total	46	100%	46	100%

In summary, this section presents robust data that demonstrates a positive shift in students' attitudes toward task-based activities. The following section will introduce another tool to further confirm the positive impact of task-based activities on students.

4.2.2 Interviews

The informal interviews with five students were conducted to gain insight into their opinions about the current state of grammar teaching and learning in their grammar class, the types of activities they expect, and their attitudes toward the application of task-based activities. The participants were randomly selected, and they were eager to respond to the questions posed during the research. Their responses can be summarized as follows:

Question 1: "What is the difference between your teacher's method before and now?"

All five students (100%) responded that the teacher spoke less than before and encouraged students to engage in more activities. They mentioned that previously, the teacher primarily lectured, and students were expected to sit quietly and listen attentively. This response indicates a shift in the teacher's approach to a more interactive and activity-based method.

Question 2: "What does your teacher do during grammar class? Can you describe some of the activities?"

All students noted that the teacher begins by introducing the lesson and writing it on the board. Afterward, they are given handouts to work on individually, followed by pair work to check answers before the teacher provides feedback. Subsequently, the teacher distributes another handout for individual work, with the same steps as the previous activity. The key difference in this case was the strict time limit and the absence of immediate answers. Students were required to discuss their results with their peers and then report their findings to the class.

Question 3: "Do you like these activities? Why?"

Four students (80%) expressed that they enjoyed these activities, particularly because working individually at first helped them develop their problem-solving skills, especially when time was limited. The curiosity generated by not being given the answers immediately also motivated them to engage further. However, one student (20%) stated that she did not enjoy the activities, as she felt anxious about being asked to report the results to the class.

Question 4: "How interesting do you find the grammar class compared to before?"

One student said the class was much noisier than before, while the remaining four students (80%) described the class as more enjoyable. They noted that there was more interaction between the teacher and students, creating a positive and engaging learning environment.

Question 5: "Do you think that learning grammar points such as the present simple, past simple, present perfect, and past perfect tenses through these activities makes them easier to understand?"

All five students (100%) affirmed that they found these grammar points easier to understand when learned through the activities.

In brief, the results of the interviews further validate the findings from the student questionnaires. They highlight that students have a positive attitude toward learning English grammar through task-based activities, confirming the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing their understanding and engagement.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to address two primary research questions:

To what extent do task-based activities enhance the grammar retention of high school students?

To answer this, the previous chapter discussed the findings, which show that the application of task-based activities (TBA) significantly enhanced students' grammar retention. Students who received instruction through TBA demonstrated better outcomes compared to those who did not.

What are high school students' attitudes toward learning grammar through task-based activities?

The findings, as discussed in the previous chapter, reveal that the application of TBA not only improved students' grammar retention but also positively altered their attitudes toward learning grammar. Before the intervention, students found English grammar boring and difficult to remember. However, after experiencing TBA, their attitudes became much more positive.

In conclusion, this research was conducted during the two tests with 92 tenth-grade students at Go Den High School. Pre-tests and post-tests were used to assess any changes before and after the treatment. The results showed that the experimental group, which used TBA, outperformed the control group. Additionally, questionnaires and interviews were employed to investigate students' attitudes toward learning English grammar. The results indicated that students who learned grammar through task-based activities found it less boring and difficult than they had previously thought, and their negative attitudes towards grammar were significantly reduced.

While these results are promising, it is important to acknowledge some limitations, which are discussed in the following section.

5.2 Limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, there are several limitations. First, this was a small-scale study, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the research was conducted with a small group of participants over a short period of time, and the grammar points covered were limited to only four English tenses. Additionally, the study focused on tenth-grade students at one school, which restricts the applicability of the results to a broader population.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for Implementation

Based on the positive effects of TBA on grammar retention, teachers interested in implementing this approach are advised to consider the following:

Preparation: Teachers should carefully plan their lessons ahead of time. While it is possible to find pre-designed tasks, teachers often need to invest significant time in creating tasks that align with the lesson's objectives.

Creating an Engaging Environment: The primary goal of TBA is to foster a fun, relaxed atmosphere in the grammar classroom. It is essential that the tasks are suitable for the students and relate to real-life activities or topics of interest to them. This approach helps students engage more deeply with the content and makes it easier for them to retain the material through familiar, context-rich experiences.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Further Research

While this study has provided valuable insights, there are several areas where future research could expand on these findings. Future studies should consider larger participant groups and extend the range of grammar topics covered, beyond just four tenses, to include other aspects of grammar. Additionally, conducting the research across multiple high schools would help create a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of TBA on grammar retention and students' attitudes toward learning grammar.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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