

Using “Gramter” to Enhance Grammatical Skills among Standard Six Intermediate Level Pupils

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Abstract

Integration of digital technology in education is seen as a sign of growth in the context of the Malaysian education system. Since the use of digital technology has been accepted and practiced by the young learners, social media is no longer a foreign subject to them. Instagram is commonly known as one of the many platforms that would help to enhance social skills, but due to its current features, people have made full use of it and not only restrict it for social use. Instagram has introduced many new features that could captivate users' attention for hours. Due to this, the usage of Instagram is subconsciously affecting and improving their language learning skills, mainly grammar. Instagram first launched filters in 2010 and they are being used for so many purposes. Hence, it is an opportunity to utilize the Instagram filter as a learning tool. Based on previous studies, many Malaysian pupils suffer from writing in English and confidently express their ideas due to the fear of making grammar mistakes. Thus, this study aims to utilize an Instagram filter (GRAMTER) to enhance grammatical skills among standard six intermediate Pupils. Qualitative research was conducted and data was collected from 20 pupils in one of the schools in Rawang. Observations were made and interview sessions were conducted to collect data needed. The finding shows an outstanding difference between pre-test and post-test results. Pupils also accepted GRAMTER as a tool to enhance their grammatical skills. It is hoped that these findings could provide insights for teachers in integrating technology in education.

Keywords: English as a Second Language, Instagram Filter, Technology-based lesson, Grammar

Introduction

In this new world of era, there are many changes that have happened including teaching and learning. According to (Xiao et al., 2021), the marked transformation of the development in networked technologies had brought a big impact on teaching and learning grammar.

Technologies had been affecting education with an existing body of work examining the relation between games and education (Dimitrios & Agoritsa, 2017). Through games, pupils will get the opportunity to solve the problems, interact with their peers more, critical thinking skills, creativity, motivation, and working together (Victor et al., 2017; Siu, 2021).

In Malaysia, the reformation in the educational field has changed according to the new era of globalization. All the teaching and learning process has changed to 21st century learning. A National Philosophy of Malaysian Education (NPME) has been endorsed and through that, educators can produce a holistic individual through education (Hashim et al., 2022). The Malaysian Ministry of Education has upgraded the teaching and learning language curriculum in school which is called the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (Paramjit, 2022).

Pupils have been learning grammar since kindergarten, but they are still facing a hard time in learning English (Hashim et al., 2022.). If the pupils fail to understand the rules of the grammar, then it will be difficult for them to communicate effectively and from there, pupils will have anxiety (Khairul, 2018). Nowadays, most of the pupils do not really bother to learn a proper grammar because it emphasises more in a communicative approach (Miriam & Marlon, 2021)

Literature Review

Teaching and Learning Grammar in Malaysia

English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in Malaysia has recently received significant attention, focusing on teaching and learning grammar. The task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach involves students in communicative language tasks requiring them to use grammar in context. Recent studies have shown that TBLT is an effective method for teaching grammar in an ESL context in Malaysia (Cheng & Li, 2018). This approach has improved student motivation and language performance, making grammar more meaningful and relevant to students' needs (Fernández-Toro & García-Garraffa, 2020).

Next, the use of technology in teaching grammar. Technology integration in language teaching has been growing in popularity in recent years. Several studies have explored the use of technology, such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), to enhance the teaching and learning of grammar in an ESL context in Malaysia (Lee, 2019). Research has shown that technology can provide students with more opportunities to interact with language, improve their language performance and increase their motivation to learn (Ng et al., 2020).

Last is the importance of explicit grammar instruction (EGI). EGI involves the direct and intentional teaching of grammar rules and forms. Recent studies have shown that EGI is an effective method for teaching grammar in an ESL context in Malaysia, particularly for low-proficiency students (Wang, 2019). This approach has been shown to improve student understanding and use of grammar and provide a strong foundation for further language development (Mak, 2020).

In conclusion, recent studies have shown that different approaches to teaching and learning grammar as an ESL in Malaysia have been practical, including TBLT, the use of technology, and EGI. These approaches have been shown to improve student motivation, language performance, and understanding of grammar.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has significantly impacted various industries, including education. Integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, and blockchain into educational systems transforms traditional teaching and learning methods. A study by Koehler and Mishra (2019) suggests that the 4IR has the potential to enhance the personalization of education and promote student-centered learning. This is achieved through technology-enhanced teaching and learning tools such as intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms.

Another study by Eilam and Eshet-Alkalai (2020) highlights the importance of digital competencies and skills in the 4IR era. The authors argue that education systems must focus on developing these competencies and skills among students to prepare them for future job markets. The 4IR has also opened new opportunities for online and distance education. A report by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2021) highlights the rapid growth of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other online learning platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report suggests that online education has the potential to reach remote and underserved populations and promote equity in education.

However, integrating technology into education also raises concerns about the digital divide and access to technology. A study by Warschauer and Matuchniak (2010) highlights the disparities in access to technology and the internet among different socio-economic groups. The authors argue that addressing these disparities is crucial for ensuring equitable access to technology-enhanced education.

In conclusion, the 4IR is transforming education and providing new opportunities for personalized, competency-based, and accessible learning. However, it is vital to address the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology in education.

Importance of Incorporating Technology in ESL Classroom

The use of technology in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom has become increasingly important in recent years. Research has shown that technology can enhance language learning by providing opportunities for authentic language use, scaffolding, and motivation. One study by Song and Lee (2019) found that using technology in the ESL classroom improved students' speaking skills and motivation. The study also found that technology provided a safe and supportive environment for students to practice their language skills.

Another study by Chen and Liang (2021) investigated virtual reality (VR) use in the ESL classroom. The study found that VR improved students' listening and speaking skills and motivation to learn. The authors suggest that VR creates an immersive and engaging learning environment, which enhances language learning. Additionally, a study by Aljahdali and Alghamdi (2021) found that technology in the ESL classroom increased students' cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills. The study demonstrated that technology provides students access to authentic language materials and cultural experiences, which are essential for language learning.

In conclusion, incorporating technology into the ESL classroom has several benefits, including improved language skills, motivation, cultural understanding, and intercultural communication. The use of technology in the ESL classroom has become an essential tool for language teachers, and they must stay up to date with the latest technology and its applications in language learning.

Instagram and Social Media as a Learning Platform

Instagram has emerged as a powerful social media platform that can be utilized as a learning platform. Several studies have shown that Instagram has the potential to be used for educational purposes, such as promoting critical thinking and providing access to educational resources. In a study by Ha et al (2021), the authors examined the use of Instagram in higher education. They found that students reported using the platform for educational purposes, such as following educators and accessing educational resources. The study found that Instagram can provide students with opportunities to engage with educational content and expand their knowledge.

Another study by Kim and Park (2020) explored the use of Instagram for language learning and found that the platform can be a valuable tool for language learners. The study found that learners can engage with authentic language materials, such as posts from native speakers, and use Instagram to connect with other language learners. However, it is also essential to consider the potential downsides of using Instagram as a learning platform. A study by Papacharissi (2016) found that heavy use of social media, including Instagram, can lead to feelings of anxiety and social comparison, which can have adverse effects on mental health. In conclusion, Instagram can be a valuable tool for education and learning. However, it is also essential to be mindful of the potential downsides and use the platform responsibly.

Methodology

This chapter presents methods of investigation used as a guideline to attain the research's objectives. Therefore, several aspects relevant to this research are discussed in this chapter. These include research design, research sample, research instrument for collecting data, and methods for collecting data and analyzing data.

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative approach to utilize an Instagram filter (GRAMTER) to enhance grammatical skills among standard 6 intermediate Pupils. Qualitative data were collected and analyzed.

Research Sample

The participants of this research are 20 pupils from one of the schools in Rawang, Selangor. The participants are all standard 6 intermediate-level pupils who learned the topic asked during this activity. Their class teachers gave consent to conduct this activity in the classroom. To ensure the identity and privacy of the pupils, pseudonyms were used in the data analysis section.

Research Instrument

The instruments used in this research are observation and interviews. The observation was made during the activity to observe the pupils' pre and post-test results. There were 12 English questions altogether that were asked during the activity. This was done to determine to what degree GRAMTER helps in enhancing standard 6' grammatical skills. Interview sessions were conducted individually right after to see the pupils' acceptance of GRAMTER. There were 10 questions asked during the interview sessions.

Data Collection Procedure

The pupils participated in the activity twice and their results were observed and recorded as pre and post-test results. This was done to compare their results and to see whether GRAMTER helps in enhancing their grammatical skills. Individual interview sessions were conducted afterward to acknowledge their acceptance of GRAMTER to enhance their grammatical skills.

Data Analysis Procedure

The pupils' pre and post-test results were analyzed through SPSS. The means between the pre-test results and the post-test results were compared. The data gathered from the interview sessions were transcribed, and following that, the data were thematically analyzed to find the link between all the responses.

Results and Discussion

Description of GRAMTER

20 pupils from one of the schools in Rawang, Selangor, were involved as participants of this research. All of them are standard six students and have learned the topic asked. The questions were created based on the topic of "Present tense and Past tense". The pupils showed no confusion upon using GRAMTER because all of them are familiar with technology and Instagram. Before participating, they were briefed on what to do but the majority of them seemed to know how to do it. An interview session with each of the students was conducted afterward. The data collected was then analyzed thematically.

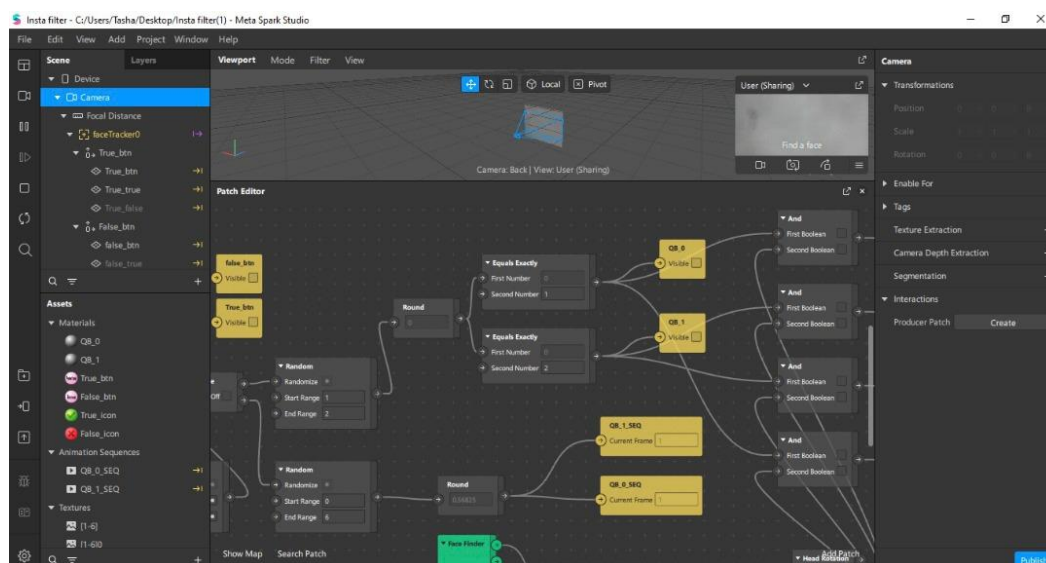


Figure 1. Screenshot of software during the product development process

Figure 1 shows a screenshot of software during the product development process. A software called MetaSpark was used to create the filter. GRAMTER was created thoroughly to cater to pupils' needs. Many aspects were taken into consideration like fonts, colors, speed, movement and others. This is to ensure that the pupils would enjoy the experience of learning with GRAMTER. GRAMTER consists of 12 questions altogether and the questions were thoroughly made with the sole purpose of helping the pupils to enhance grammatical skills overtime with repetitive use of the filter. Thus, pupils are more likely to get higher marks during post-test compared to pre-test stage.



Figure 2. Screenshot photo of the final product

Figure 2 shows a screenshot photo of the final product. Quality of the filter was tested before GRAMTER was uploaded on Instagram for public use. According to Sprout Socialin (2020), Instagram is commonly known among the younger generations for its variety of features, thus making it one of the fastest growing applications. Due to this reason, Instagram was chosen as an E-learning platform for this research.

Data Collection



Figure 3. Screenshot photos of the pupils during pre-test stage and post-test stage

Figure 3 shows screenshot photos of the pupils during pre-test stage and post-test stage. Instruction and explanation were given beforehand to the pupils before they participated in the activity. However, the pupils were already familiar with the Instagram filter, thus, the pupils seemed very excited and eager to try out GRAMTER. The participants were required to answer questions by tilting their head to the right or left based on the answer. The filter detected their movements and marks were recorded afterwards.

Pre-test and Post-test results

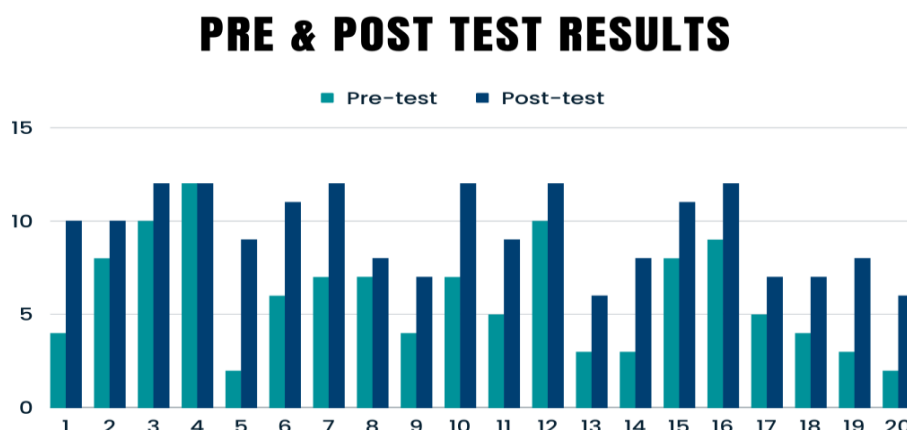


Figure 4. Results of pre-test and post test

Figure 4 shows the results of pre-test and post-test. Based on the graph, 19 out of 20 pupils showed improvement in the post-test results while one pupil’s result remained the same during both stages. Pupil (4) remained the same because he had scored the highest mark during pre-test. The result shows a similarity with a previous study done by Devi, Virginia, and Auli (2020) that shows how Instagram is an interesting medium to practice English especially outside of the classroom.

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre_test	20	5.95	2.911	.651
Post_test	20	9.45	2.212	.495

Figure 5. The difference of mean for both tests

Figure 5 shows the difference of mean for both tests. For pre-test stage, the mean is 5.95 while for post-test stage is 9.45. Based on figure 5, there is a significant difference in both means. There is a slight improvement in marks during the post-test stage. Thus, it is concluded that the pupils managed to score higher marks in the post-test stage compared to pre-test stage. Hence, this shows that GRAMTER helps to enhance their grammatical skills.

Analysis of Themes

Results showed that all students believe that GRAMTER helps to enhance grammatical skills among standard six pupils. They also think that innovation like GRAMTER is fun and should be used in schools. Since all of them are familiar with Instagram filters and technology in general, they did not face any difficulty upon participating in the invention, even during pre-test stage and all of them enjoyed learning through an interactive Instagram filter. Based on the interview conducted, three themes were derived.

Fun Experience

The first theme that was derived from the data collected is fun experience. Pupil (2) mentioned that “Gramter is a fun interactive way of learning, and I would recommend it to

everyone.” This shows that they do not feel like learning is a heavy process when a tool like this is involved. Based on the observation made on the data collection day, the pupils did seem like they really enjoyed the whole learning process. Pupil (3) also mentioned that *“Gramter helps me to learn in a non-stressful way. It’s also refreshing to have something like this once in a while.”* Pupil 5, pupil 6 and pupil 9 also agreed on the same thing. Another statement that most pupils agreed on was *“I enjoyed this game and would do it again”*. Based on this, it is concluded that the students appreciate having another alternative way to learn instead of the traditional way of learning.

Pupils’ Preference

Another theme that could be seen is preference. All of the students mentioned that they prefer a technology based learning classroom. Pupil (1) mentioned that *“I prefer to play games like this instead of the usual board games, at least this could help me with my studies”*. This statement shows that integration of any form of technology is highly preferred by the pupils. Pupil 2, pupil 3, pupil 7 and pupil 8 also agreed that having technology in the classroom is not a usual thing for them, thus, they appreciate having to experience this once in a while. *“If I have to choose between this and other activities, I prefer to play this activity”* was mentioned by pupil (4). This shows that their teacher did incorporate other forms of activities in the classroom but they still would prefer the integration of technology in the lesson. Hence, teachers nowadays are constantly encouraged to create lessons that are accustomed with 21st century skills in order to produce top notch quality students (Jemima et al., 2017).

Increase of Motivation

Finally, the analysis also discovered that the pupils were highly motivated to participate in the activity. During the activity, all of them were eager to wait for their turn to try the filter and pupil (9) mentioned that *“this might be one of the best activities i have participated in class this year”*. Pupil (5) also said that *“this is the type of game that motivates me to get my homework and stuff like that done”* Based on these two answers, it is concluded that this kind of activity helps to motivate them to learn better, Due to the fact that the filter is considered as an integration of technology in the lesson, this shows that there is a relation between technology and increase of motivation. This can be seen from research done by (Pazilah et al., 2019) which stated that technology is used to motivate students and create an interesting learning environment to attract their attention during lessons.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all of them have shown greater results during the post-test stage compared to pre-test results and this indicates that GRAMTER does help to enhance grammatical skills among standard six intermediate level pupils. Difference in means between pre-test and post-test shows that GRAMTER is an effective interactive Instagram filter that could help pupils to improve their grammar when done repetitively. Based on the data collected, it is highlighted that due to their preference on technology-based classrooms, they had fun during the activity and they were very motivated to participate in the activity. Therefore, teachers are highly encouraged to utilize Instagram filters as it is one of the easiest, effective and convenient ways to grab the students attention as well as to be used as a tool to teach. Unfortunately, not every school can afford to integrate technology in education. If students were to learn from an invention like this, a laptop or a mobile phone is needed for them to participate. Thus, there is a restriction when it comes to incorporating technology in education.

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