



Research Article

# The Impacts of The Grammar – Translation Method on Non-English Majors’ Grammatical Competence and Learning Motivation: A Case Study at Dong Nai Technical College

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## Abstract

This article explores the influence of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) on non-English majors’ grammatical competence and learning motivation at Dong Nai Technical College. The purpose of this study is to determine how effectively the Grammar–Translation Method (GTM) enhances learners’ grammatical proficiency and shapes their attitudes and motivation in the process of learning English grammar. Grounded in theories of second language acquisition and functional-pragmatic translation, the research situates GTM as a method that continues to hold pedagogical value in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. A quasi-experimental design using quantitative approaches was applied, involving control and experimental groups. Data were gathered through pre-tests and post-tests to assess grammatical gains and through questionnaires to measure learners’ motivational changes. Statistical analyses, including paired and independent t-tests, were employed to interpret the results. The findings reveal that GTM significantly improved students’ grammatical accuracy while fostering confidence, engagement, and positive motivation. These outcomes suggest that GTM can complement communicative approaches by reinforcing accuracy-based learning and supporting learner motivation. The study contributes to EFL pedagogy by reaffirming GTM’s relevance in technical education and offering insights for teachers and curriculum developers seeking to balance form-focused instruction with motivational teaching practices.

## Keywords

Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), grammatical competence, learning motivation, non-English majors, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

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In recent decades, English has emerged as the global lingua franca, serving as a vital tool in international communication, science, technology, commerce, and education. As globalization continues to expand, English proficiency has become increasingly important for academic success and career advancement, especially in non-English-speaking countries such as Vietnam. In response to this growing demand, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has emphasized English instruction across all educational levels with the goal of enhancing human resources and supporting global integration. Despite these efforts, English language learning remains a challenge for many Vietnamese learners, particularly non-English majors in technical and vocational colleges. These students often display limited grammatical competence and low motivation, as English is viewed as a supplementary rather than a core subject.

One traditional yet widely used approach in such contexts is the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM). Rooted in classical language teaching, GTM focuses on translating sentences between the first language (L1) and English, memorizing grammatical rules, and analyzing sentence structures. This method continues to dominate English classrooms in Vietnam because it aligns with grammar-based examinations, accommodates large classes, and allows instructors to manage time efficiently. However, it has been criticized for encouraging passive learning and offering limited opportunities for meaningful communication. Learners frequently engage in rule memorization and translation drills without developing fluency or confidence in using English in real-life situations.

Learner motivation plays a critical role in the effectiveness of any instructional approach. According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) *Self-Determination Theory*, motivation is driven by the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teacher-centered methods like GTM, while effective for explicit knowledge acquisition, may reduce students' intrinsic motivation by limiting interactive and creative learning experiences. Several Vietnamese studies (e.g., Phan, 2018; Tran & Duong, 2021) have indicated that students taught primarily through GTM often perceive grammar lessons as monotonous and disengaging, suggesting that excessive reliance on this approach may hinder both motivation and long-term language development. Nevertheless, GTM can still provide benefits in contexts where exam-oriented

assessment and accuracy-focused instruction are prioritized. As noted by Richards and Rodgers (2014), the method supports learners who prefer structured learning and need a clear understanding of grammatical systems as an aspect crucial for reading technical materials and academic texts.

Given this pedagogical tension, it is essential to re-examine the effectiveness of GTM in developing grammatical competence and sustaining motivation among non-English majors in vocational education. Despite ongoing debates about its relevance, empirical evidence from Vietnamese vocational settings remains limited. Most prior research has centered on secondary schools or English-major university students, leaving a significant gap in understanding how GTM affects learners in practical, exam-oriented college environments such as Dong Nai Technical College.

The present study, therefore, aims to investigate the impacts of the GTM on two key aspects of English learning: grammatical competence and learning motivation among non-English majors at Dong Nai Technical College. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether GTM enhances students' ability to apply grammatical rules accurately and how it influences their attitudes toward grammar learning. These aims are designed to provide a balanced evaluation of GTM's cognitive and affective outcomes in a real-world instructional setting.

To achieve these aims, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the application of the Grammar-Translation Method affect non-English majors' grammatical competence?
2. How does the Grammar-Translation Method influence the learning motivation of non-English majors in English language classes?

These research questions highlight the study's dual focus on examining both the measurable learning outcomes and the psychological dimensions of English learning under GTM instruction.

In conclusion, understanding the pedagogical value of GTM within the Vietnamese technical college context is of both theoretical and practical significance. While communicative approaches dominate modern language teaching discourse, the persistence of GTM in exam-driven systems like Vietnam underscores the need for context-sensitive evaluation. By analyzing its impact on grammatical competence and motivation, this study

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contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how traditional methods can coexist with contemporary teaching practices. The findings are expected to inform teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers in developing balanced instructional strategies that promote both grammatical accuracy and learner engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar-Translation Method is one of the oldest and most influential approaches in the history of language education. Originating from the classical method used for teaching Latin and Greek in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, GTM was initially designed to develop learners' ability to read and appreciate literary texts rather than to communicate orally. As formal education expanded, this classical approach was adapted for modern languages such as English, French, and German, leading to the emergence of the GTM as a structured instructional framework (Kelly, 1969; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). The method emphasizes grammatical accuracy, vocabulary memorization, sentence translation, and the mastery of written language. Its key principles include the systematic teaching of grammar rules, the use of translation as the main learning technique, and a strong focus on reading and writing over speaking and listening. The teacher plays a central, authoritative role, while students are expected to learn deductively and reproduce correct grammatical forms.

One of the main advantages of GTM is its effectiveness in developing learners' understanding of grammatical structures and vocabulary. It provides a clear, organized framework that allows students especially beginners to build a solid foundation in language form and accuracy. The method is also practical in large classes with limited resources and is particularly useful in examination-oriented contexts, where grammatical competence and written performance are prioritized. Additionally, the use of translation can deepen learners' awareness of linguistic and cultural differences between their mother tongue and the target language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

However, GTM also has several disadvantages that have drawn criticism from modern language educators. Its focus on rote memorization and translation tends to neglect communicative competence, limiting learners' ability to use the language spontaneously. The method often creates passive learning environments, where students depend heavily on the teacher and have few opportunities for authentic interaction. Moreover, the lack of emphasis on listening and speaking skills can reduce learners' motivation and confidence in

real-life communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Despite these limitations, GTM continues to be widely applied in EFL contexts such as Vietnam, particularly in technical and vocational colleges. Its structured approach to grammar instruction remains valuable for improving accuracy and supporting exam preparation, making it a method that, while traditional, still offers practical pedagogical relevance in specific educational settings.

### 2.2. Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence is a fundamental component of linguistic proficiency, representing an individual's internalized knowledge of the rules that govern the structure and organization of a language. It encompasses mastery of syntax, morphology, and sentence formation, enabling learners to construct and interpret grammatically accurate utterances. The concept was first introduced by Chomsky (1965), who distinguished between *competence* - the idealized, mental representation of language knowledge - and *performance*, which refers to the actual use of language in real communicative contexts. In Chomsky's generative framework, grammatical competence functions as an abstract, rule-based system independent of situational variables, emphasizing linguistic form rather than communicative use.

Later models expanded this perspective to align with communicative and pedagogical principles. Canale and Swain (1980) redefined grammatical competence as an essential component of communicative competence, encompassing lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological knowledge that contributes to the accurate expression of meaning. Similarly, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) recognizes grammatical competence as the ability to comprehend and convey meaning through appropriate grammatical structures, thereby linking accuracy with communicative functionality. More recent cognitive and usage-based theories, such as those advanced by Ellis (2006), view grammatical competence as dynamic and experience-dependent, developing through meaningful exposure, interaction, and repeated language use.

The measurement of grammatical competence requires approaches that capture both rule-based knowledge and functional application. Traditional discrete-point tests, including multiple-choice items and sentence completion tasks, provide reliable assessments of specific grammatical features but often fail to reflect communicative performance (Purpura, 2004). In contrast, integrative and performance-based assessments such as cloze tests, guided writing, and oral interviews to evaluate learners' ability to apply grammatical knowledge within authentic contexts (Bachman, 1990; Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). Advances in computer-assisted language testing (CALT) have further

allowed adaptive, individualized assessments, though concerns remain regarding their validity in representing real-world communication (Chapelle & Douglas, 2006).

The development of grammatical competence is influenced by multiple internal and external factors. Cognitive abilities, motivation, aptitude, and age affect how learners perceive, process, and internalize grammatical patterns, while external variables such as instructional methods, input quality, and feedback determine the effectiveness of grammar acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Classroom practices that integrate explicit rule explanation with communicative tasks and corrective feedback have been shown to strengthen both accuracy and fluency. Additionally, sociolinguistic environment, first-language interference, and exposure to authentic language use play crucial roles in shaping grammatical development.

In summary, grammatical competence is a multidimensional construct encompassing knowledge of linguistic form and the ability to use grammar appropriately in communication. Its evolution from a purely theoretical notion to a communicative and cognitive construct underscores its central importance in both linguistic theory and language pedagogy.

### 2.3. Learning Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation is widely recognized as a central factor influencing the success of second or foreign language learning. It refers to the internal drive or external influence that initiates, directs, and sustains learners' engagement and persistence in the language learning process. Gardner (1985) defined motivation as a combination of effort, desire to achieve a goal, and positive attitudes toward learning, distinguishing between integrative motivation: a genuine interest in the target language community and instrumental motivation, which is driven by practical outcomes such as academic or professional benefits. Expanding on Gardner's work, Dörnyei (2009) introduced the *L2 Motivational Self System*, emphasizing learners' self-concept and future-oriented vision. This model includes the *Ideal L2 Self* (the person one wishes to become), the *Ought-to L2 Self* (expectations from others), and the *L2 Learning Experience* (situational motives related to classroom context). These perspectives collectively underscore that motivation is a multifaceted and dynamic construct, shaped by psychological, social, and contextual factors (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015).

Within educational psychology, motivation is commonly divided into *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* types. Intrinsic motivation stems from internal satisfaction - learners study a language because they enjoy communication, cultural exploration, or self-development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, arises from external rewards or pressures, such as grades or social approval. According to *Self-Determination*

*Theory (SDT)*, extrinsic motivation can evolve into more internalized forms, leading to greater autonomy and persistence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Research by Noels, Pelletier, and Vallerand (2000) and Moradi Khazaie and Mesbah (2012) demonstrates that both intrinsic and well-internalized extrinsic motivations are associated with stronger engagement and higher achievement, whereas overly controlling rewards can reduce intrinsic interest (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

In grammar instruction, maintaining learners' motivation is particularly important, as repetitive rule-based learning may appear tedious and disengaging. Effective teachers employ motivational strategies to make grammar learning more interactive and meaningful. These include personalizing grammar content, connecting lessons to students' experiences, using task-based and communicative activities to encourage real-life application (Ellis, 2003), and integrating technology such as games and online quizzes to foster enjoyment (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). Encouraging self-reflection, setting achievable goals, and providing supportive feedback also enhance learners' confidence and persistence (Ushioda, 2011). In summary, learning motivation is a dynamic and multifaceted element that not only drives learners' linguistic progress but also determines how effectively they engage with grammar instruction in both traditional and modern language classrooms.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quasi-experimental design within a case study framework at Dong Nai Technical College to investigate the effects of the GTM on non-English major students' grammatical competence and learning motivation. The quasi-experimental approach is appropriate for educational settings where random assignment is not feasible, yet controlled comparison between groups is required. The study combines quantitative data from grammar tests and a motivation questionnaire to provide both performance-based and attitudinal evidence of the method's impact. Specifically, the experiment evaluates the effectiveness of GTM-based instruction in improving grammatical competence and explores its influence on students' motivation toward learning English grammar.

Two intact classes were selected and assigned as the Experimental Group (EG) and the Control Group (CG). Both groups followed the same curriculum content and learning objectives as prescribed by the college's English program. However, the EG received instruction based on GTM principles, which included activities such as sentence transformation, translation exercises, explicit grammar rule explanation, error correction, and form-focused tasks. In contrast, the CG was taught through the communicative-based approach without the explicit use of GTM strategies. The

treatment lasted for 15 weeks, with 13 weeks of instruction and 2 weeks dedicated to pre- and post-testing and data collection. Each session lasted 45 minutes, and all lessons were conducted by the same instructor to ensure consistency.

The study employed three main instruments: a pre-test and post-test to measure grammatical competence, and a motivation questionnaire to examine learners' attitudes and engagement after the treatment period. The grammar tests assessed students' fluency of grammatical forms and structures aligned with their syllabus, while the questionnaire gathered data on motivational changes and perceptions of GTM. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine mean scores, standard deviations, and significance levels between groups. This systematic approach allowed for reliable comparison of performance and motivational outcomes between the EG and CG.

In summary, the research design integrates both experimental control and contextual depth, enabling a comprehensive evaluation of how the GTM influences grammatical development and learner motivation among non-English majors in a vocational college context.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Demographics of the study participants

**Table 1.** Demographics of the study participants – CG (N=28)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	10	35.7%
	Female	18	64.3%
Number of years students have been learning English	Less than 1 year	0	0.0%
	1-3 years	7	25.0%
	5-7 years	11	39.3%
	> 7 years	10	35.7%
The frequency of students using English at work or at school	Never	7	25.0%
	Rarely	5	17.9%
	Sometimes	8	28.6%
	Often	6	21.4%
	Usually	2	7.1%
	Always	0	0.0%
Other English	None	15	53.6%
	Course for communication	6	21.4%

courses	Course for certificates (IELTS, TOEIC...)	7	25.0%
	Others	0	0.0%
GTM familiarity level	Often	0	0.0%
	Sometimes	2	7.1%
	Rarely	7	25.0%
	Never	19	67.9%
Total			

Source: Data collection from participants in the study

The study involved 28 non-English major students at Dong Nai Technical College. As shown in Table 1, most participants were female (64.3%), while males accounted for 35.7%. In terms of English learning experience, 39.3% had studied English for five to seven years, 35.7% for over seven years, and 25.0% for one to three years. Regarding English use, most participants reported limited exposure, with 25.0% never using English and only 7.1% using it frequently. Over half (53.6%) had not attended any additional English courses, while others took communication or certificate-oriented classes. Notably, 67.9% of students reported no prior experience with the GTM and only 7.1% had used it occasionally. These demographics indicate that participants shared similar backgrounds and limited familiarity with GTM, making them suitable for assessing its effects on grammatical competence and motivation.

**Table 2.** Demographics of the study participants - EG (N=25)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	14	56%
	Female	11	44%
Number of years students have been learning English	Less than 1 year	0	0%
	1-3 years	7	28%
	5-7 years	10	40%
	> 7 years	8	32%
The frequency of students using English at work or at school	Never	5	20%
	Rarely	4	16%
	Sometimes	5	20%
	Often	6	24%
	Usually	3	12%
	Always	2	8%
Other English courses	None	15	60%
	Course for communication	2	8%

	Course for certificates (IELTS, TOEIC...)	8	32%
	Others	0	0%
GTM familiarity level	Often	0	0%
	Sometimes	2	8%
	Rarely	7	28%
	Never	16	64%
Total			

Source: Data collection from participants in the study

In Table 2, the EG (N = 25) consisted of 56% male and 44% female students. Most participants had studied English for a considerable period, with 40% learning English for five to seven years, 32% for over seven years, and 28% for one to three years. Regarding English use, learners reported varying levels of engagement: 20% never used English, 20% sometimes used it, and 24% often used it, while only 8% reported using English regularly. In terms of additional English courses, 60% had no prior course participation, whereas 32% attended certificate-oriented programs and 8% took communication courses. Notably, the majority (64%) had never been exposed to the GTM, and only 8% had used it occasionally. These findings indicate that the group had limited prior familiarity with GTM but a moderate background in English learning, providing a balanced foundation for the experimental treatment.

## 4.2. Data Analysis and Results

### Data analysis for the tests

Table 3. The results of the pre-tests for the 2 groups

Group Statistics					
2 groups - 1 control - 2 experimental		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores of the two groups	CG	28	6.036	1.3467	.2545
	EG	25	6.320	1.0296	.2059

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Scores of the two groups	Equal variances assumed	.184	.670	-.855	51	.396	-.2843	.3324	-.9515	.3829
	Equal variances not assumed			-.868	49.876	.389	-.2843	.3274	-.9419	.3733

The pre-test results for the CG and EG indicate that both groups had comparable levels of grammatical competence before the intervention. As shown in Table 3, the CG obtained a mean score of 6.04 (SD = 1.35), while the EG achieved a mean score of 6.32 (SD = 1.03). An independent-samples t-test was conducted to examine whether the difference between the two means was statistically significant. The results ( $t(51) = -0.855, p = .396 > .05$ ) demonstrate no significant difference between the groups, confirming that both the control and experimental groups started from an equivalent proficiency level. This baseline similarity ensures the validity of subsequent comparisons in the post-test phase, as any differences in later outcomes can be attributed more confidently to the GTM intervention rather than pre-existing disparities.

Table 4. The results of the post-tests for the 2 groups

Group Statistics - 4a					
2 groups - 1 control - 2 experimental		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores	CG	28	6.08	.8504	.1607
	EG	29	6.08	.8504	.1607

post-test of the two groups	E G	2 5	7.02 0	1.0555	.2111
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Independent Samples Test - 4b									
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						t-test for Equality of Means			
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
						Lower	Upper		
Equal variances assumed	.930	339	-3.551	.001	-.9307	-.2621	-1.4569	-4046	
Equal variances not assumed			-3.508	.001	-.4613	-.9307	-.2653	-1.4647	.3967

The post-test results reveal a significant difference between the two groups. The EG achieved a higher mean score (7.02) than the CG (6.09). The independent samples t-test shows a p-value of .001 (< .05), indicating that the difference is statistically significant. This suggests that students taught through the GTM performed better in grammar after the treatment, demonstrating the effectiveness of GTM in improving grammatical competence among non-English major students.

Table 5. The results of the pre-test and post-tests of the CG

Paired Samples Statistics									
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1	Pre - test scores of the CG	6.036	28	1.3467	.2545				
	Post-test scores of the CG	6.089	28	.8504	.1607				
Paired Samples Test									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre - test scores of the CG	-0.0536	1.2718	.2403	-0.5467	.4396	-0.223	27	.825
	Post test scores of the CG								

Table 5 presents the pre-test and post-test results of the CG revealing only a minimal improvement in students'

grammatical performance. The mean score increased slightly from 6.04 in the pre-test to 6.09 in the post-test. However, the paired samples t-test result ( $t = -0.223, p = .825 > .05$ ) indicates that this difference is statistically insignificant. The findings suggest that students who were not taught using the GTM showed no substantial progress in their grammatical competence throughout the study period. This outcome implies that conventional instruction methods used in the CG may not have been effective enough to enhance students' grammar skills without the structured support of GTM-based activities.

Table 6. The results of the pre-test and post-tests of the EG

Paired Samples Statistics									
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Pair 1	Pre - test scores of the EG	6.320	25	1.0296	.2059				
	Post test scores of the EG	7.020	25	1.0555	.2111				
Paired Samples Test									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre - test scores of the EG	-0.7000	1.2500	.2500	-1.2160	-.1840	-2.800	24	.010
	Post test scores of the EG								

Table 6 illustrates the pre-test and post-test results of the EG which received instruction through the GTM. The findings reveal a noticeable improvement in students' grammatical competence, as the mean score increased from 6.32 in the pre-test to 7.02 in the post-test. The paired samples t-test ( $t = -2.800, p = .010 < .05$ ) indicates that this difference is statistically significant. This demonstrates that the GTM had a positive effect on learners' grammar performance. The increase in scores suggests that GTM-based instruction, emphasizing translation, grammatical rule explanation, and error correction, effectively reinforced students'

understanding of grammar structures. Overall, the results support the use of GTM as a beneficial method for enhancing grammatical competence among non-English major students.

### 4.3. Data analysis for the questionnaire

**Table 7.** Explanation of Mean Interval for students’ opinions for the questionnaire

Mean Interval	Opinion
1–1.80	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
1.81–2.60	<i>Disagree</i>
2.61–3.40	<i>Neutral</i>
3.41–4.20	<i>Agree</i>
4.21–5.00	<i>Strongly agree</i>

Source: SPSS data

The Mean Interval was used to interpret students’ opinions collected from the post-experiment questionnaire regarding their motivation and attitudes toward learning grammar through GTM. The mean scores were divided into five levels to indicate the degree of agreement: 1.00–1.80 (strongly disagree), 1.81–2.60 (disagree), 2.61–3.40 (neutral), 3.41–4.20 (agree), and 4.21–5.00 (strongly agree). These intervals allow for a clearer understanding of participants’ perceptions of GTM-based instruction. The categorization helps identify whether learners viewed GTM positively or negatively in relation to motivation, confidence, and engagement. Overall, this interpretation framework provides a systematic approach to analyzing attitudinal data and ensures consistency in evaluating students’ responses across different aspects of the questionnaire.

#### 4.3.1. Data Analysis for the Questionnaire

**Table 8.** The results from Question 6 through 10 in Theme 1 of the

Theme 1	Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T1Q6	Translating texts from English to Vietnamese and vice versa helps me understand grammar rules better	3	5	4.16	.624
T1Q7	Understanding and memorizing vocabulary with their meanings	2	5	4.08	.862

	improves my ability to use correct grammar.				
T1Q8	Learning grammar rules and the instructions for the grammar exercise in the learning tasks through rule explanation helps me apply them more accurately.	3	5	4.04	.539
T1Q9	Practicing grammar by transforming sentences (e.g., active to passive voice) with the GTM helps me master grammar structures.	3	5	4.12	.440
T1Q10	The GTM makes it easier for me to perform well in grammar tests and exercises.	3	5	4.20	.510

Table 8 displays students’ responses to Theme 1, which investigates their perceptions of GTM in enhancing grammatical competence. The mean scores range from 4.04 to 4.20, all within the “Agree” level, indicating that most students viewed GTM as a beneficial method for grammar learning. Among the items, the highest mean score (M = 4.20, SD = .510) was found for the statement “The GTM makes it easier for me to perform well in grammar tests and exercises.” This suggests that students believed GTM directly contributes to improved test performance and accuracy. Similarly, translating texts between English and Vietnamese (M = 4.16) and transforming sentences (M = 4.12) were highly rated, reflecting learners’ appreciation for translation and transformation activities that reinforce grammar structure understanding. In addition, vocabulary learning (M = 4.08) and rule explanation (M = 4.04) were also positively perceived, showing that explicit grammar teaching remains effective. Overall, the data demonstrate that GTM-based techniques significantly support learners’ grammatical accuracy and confidence in applying grammar rules.

**Table 9.** The results from Question 11 through 15 in Theme 2 of the questionnaire (N=25)

Theme 2	Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T2Q11	Learners feel more motivated to study when grammar rules are clearly explained in Vietnamese	3	5	4.40	.707
T2Q12	Learners feel more confident about grammar when they can connect English rules with Vietnamese structures.	2	5	4.44	.768
T2Q13	The GTM helps reduce the fear of making grammar mistakes.	3	5	4.48	.653
T2Q14	Learners feel more engaged in grammar lessons that involve translation and rule-based	3	5	4.40	.645

	exercises.				
T2Q15	Classroom translation activities fail to enhance my interest in learning English grammar.	1	3	1.60	.707

Table 9 presents students' perceptions regarding the motivational impact of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM). Overall, the mean scores show a strong positive response toward GTM in promoting motivation and confidence in grammar learning. The highest mean ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = .653$ ) corresponds to the statement “*The GTM helps reduce the fear of making grammar mistakes,*” suggesting that students feel more secure and less anxious when grammar is taught explicitly through translation and explanation. Similarly, learners expressed strong agreement that clear explanations in Vietnamese ( $M = 4.40$ ) and the ability to connect English and Vietnamese grammar structures ( $M = 4.44$ ) increase their motivation and confidence. This highlights the supportive role of the mother tongue in facilitating comprehension and reducing learning anxiety. Students also indicated that translation and rule-based exercises make lessons more engaging ( $M = 4.40$ ), emphasizing GTM's interactive potential when applied effectively. Conversely, the negative statement about translation activities lowering interest ( $M = 1.60$ ) received strong disagreement, confirming that most learners find GTM activities motivating rather than monotonous. Collectively, these findings indicate that GTM fosters both motivation and positive emotional engagement in grammar instruction.

#### 4.4. The Study Findings

This study investigated the influence of the GTM on the grammatical competence and learning motivation of non-English major students at Dong Nai Technical College. Specifically, it sought to determine (1) whether the application of GTM significantly enhances students' grammatical competence, and (2) how the method affects their motivation toward grammar learning. Data were obtained through pre- and post-tests administered to both the CG and the EG, complemented by a post-treatment motivation questionnaire.

The results of the pre-test indicated that the CG ( $M = 6.036$ ) and EG ( $M = 6.320$ ) performed similarly, with no statistically significant difference between their mean scores ( $p = .396$ ). This suggests that both groups possessed a comparable level of grammatical competence prior to the intervention. However, post-test results demonstrated a notable divergence in performance. The EG, which received GTM-based instruction, achieved a higher mean score ( $M = 7.020$ ) than the CG ( $M = 6.089$ ), and the difference was statistically significant ( $p = .001$ ). The paired-samples t-test further revealed that while the CG showed no meaningful progress between the pre-test and post-test ( $p = .825$ ), the EG exhibited a significant improvement ( $p = .010$ ). These findings confirm that the implementation of GTM had a positive effect on students' grammatical competence, leading to measurable gains in their ability to apply English grammar accurately.

In terms of learning motivation, results from the post-treatment questionnaire provided additional insights. Responses under Theme 1 indicated that translation-based and rule-focused activities contributed to deeper grammatical understanding, with mean scores ranging from 4.04 to 4.20. Students reported that translating texts, memorizing vocabulary, and practicing sentence transformation supported their comprehension and retention of grammatical rules. Under Theme 2, motivational factors were further reinforced by affective responses. Learners expressed heightened confidence and engagement when grammar was taught through Vietnamese explanations and translation tasks. The statement "The GTM helps reduce the fear of making grammar mistakes" yielded the highest mean score ( $M = 4.48$ ), suggesting that GTM fosters a supportive learning environment conducive to risk-taking and reduced anxiety.

In summary, the empirical findings demonstrate that the Grammar-Translation Method significantly enhances grammatical competence while simultaneously promoting positive motivational attitudes among non-English majors. The results underscore GTM's pedagogical relevance in EFL contexts where explicit grammar instruction and linguistic accuracy remain educational priorities.

#### 4.5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the GTM exerts a positive influence on both grammatical competence and learning motivation among non-English majors at Dong Nai Technical College. The EG demonstrated a noticeable improvement in post-test results ( $M = 7.02$ ) compared with pre-test scores ( $M = 6.32$ ), while the control group (CG) showed no significant progress. This outcome indicates that the GTM, despite being considered traditional, remains pedagogically effective in contexts where accuracy and comprehension are prioritized. To better understand the underlying causes of this improvement, it is essential to

analyze the main factors influencing learners' grammatical competence and motivation.

One of the most prominent factors contributing to learners' progress is the clarity of grammar explanation. The data from Theme 2 of the questionnaire show that most students valued learning grammar rules through explicit instruction in Vietnamese (T2Q11:  $M = 4.40$ ). When grammatical structures are presented systematically, learners develop a clearer conceptual understanding, which enhances confidence and reduces language anxiety. This result supports Ellis's (2006) theory of explicit grammar instruction, which argues that conscious knowledge of rules fosters greater linguistic accuracy. In this study, students expressed that receiving explanations in their mother tongue allowed them to grasp complex grammatical concepts that would otherwise be confusing in a fully communicative setting.

Another crucial factor is the use of translation as a cognitive bridge. Translation-based tasks, such as transforming sentences or converting between English and Vietnamese, helped learners internalize grammar patterns more effectively (T1Q9:  $M = 4.12$ ). This finding aligns with the cognitive theory of learning, which emphasizes that learners construct new knowledge by linking it to existing linguistic frameworks. In this case, translation serves as a mediating process that connects English grammar with familiar Vietnamese structures, promoting deeper comprehension and long-term retention. Such practices also reduce errors and strengthen analytical thinking, both essential for mastering grammar in academic contexts.

A third factor that significantly influences motivation is test-oriented learning. Vietnamese students often associate success in grammar tests with overall language competence, which reinforces their preference for rule-based approaches. The finding that students believed GTM helped them perform better in grammar tests (T1Q10:  $M = 4.20$ ) demonstrates the role of *instrumental motivation*—a desire to learn for practical rewards, such as good grades or exam success (Gardner, 1985). By directly addressing learners' academic goals, GTM enhances their engagement and effort in grammar learning.

Furthermore, GTM contributes to reducing learning anxiety and building confidence. The majority of students agreed that understanding grammar rules lessened their fear of making mistakes (T2Q13:  $M = 4.48$ ). This observation resonates with Krashen's (1982) *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, which suggests that emotional comfort facilitates language acquisition. When learners understand how grammar works, they feel more secure in their performance and more motivated to participate actively in lessons.

Lastly, the cultural and educational context plays a significant role in the effectiveness of GTM. Vietnamese classrooms often emphasize accuracy, discipline, and teacher-centered instruction. The GTM aligns with these expectations by offering structured, rule-based learning and

measurable results. As Larsen-Freeman (2011) notes, teaching methods should match contextual needs rather than follow global trends uncritically. In this context, the GTM is not outdated but rather contextually appropriate, as it meets learners' expectations and supports their educational objectives.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that the GTM remains a valuable pedagogical approach for developing grammatical competence and sustaining learner motivation among non-English majors. Its effectiveness stems from a combination of clear rule explanation, translation as a cognitive tool, test-oriented motivation, reduced anxiety, and cultural compatibility. While modern communicative methods emphasize fluency, this study highlights that GTM continues to play a significant role in environments where grammatical precision and academic success are central learning goals.

## 5. Conclusion

Although this study provides meaningful evidence of the GTM's effectiveness in improving grammatical competence and motivation, several limitations should be acknowledged. The research involved a small number of participants from a single institution, limiting the generalizability of the results to other contexts. Moreover, the focus was restricted to grammar and motivation, without examining broader language skills such as communicative competence or long-term language retention. The study's short duration and reliance on self-reported data may also have affected the accuracy of the findings, as participants' responses could reflect perceived expectations rather than actual attitudes. In addition, factors such as prior English exposure, learning styles, and teaching variations were not fully controlled, which might have influenced the outcomes. Future research should therefore expand the sample size, adopt longitudinal and mixed-method designs, and explore how GTM can be integrated with communicative or task-based approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact.

The results of the study showed that GTM significantly improved students' grammatical accuracy and confidence while fostering higher motivation through translation tasks and explicit grammar explanations. These findings affirm the continued relevance of GTM, particularly in contexts where grammatical precision and exam performance are key learning goals. Although modern communicative methods dominate EFL teaching, this study demonstrates that GTM can effectively complement them by offering structured, accessible instruction that reduces learner anxiety and supports accuracy. Overall, GTM should be viewed not as an outdated method but as a valuable pedagogical option when thoughtfully integrated into contemporary English teaching

practices.

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