

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STORYTELLING PRACTICE ON THAI GRADE 6 STUDENTS' USE OF THE PRESENT AND THE PAST SIMPLE TENSES

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were (1) to examine whether using storytelling activity to practice the use of the present simple tense and the past simple tense would be more effective than using the conventional method where students practiced the target tenses using conventional grammar exercises, and (2) to survey students' opinions on the use of storytelling as a language practice. The participants were 40 grade 6 Thai students from two primary schools in Surin, Thailand. The participants were divided into two groups: 1) the storytelling group taught through explicit grammar teaching and practiced with storytelling and 2) the conventional group taught through explicit grammar teaching and practiced with grammar exercises. The research instruments consisted of a pre-test, a post-test, and an opinion questionnaire about the use of storytelling as a language practice. The pre-test and post-test were the verb transformation test with a total of 35 items. Statistical results show that either method could help learners use the present and the past simple tenses significantly more correctly ($p < 0.001$), and there was no significant difference between the two methods in improving the learning of the two target tenses ($p > 0.05$). In addition, the results of the questionnaire analysis revealed that overall student opinion about using storytelling as a language practice was positive. Students enjoyed the lessons and had more confidence in telling stories in English. Suggestions for teaching and future studies are provided.

Keywords: storytelling practice; the present simple tense; the past simple tense

Introduction

In most elementary schools in Thailand, and no exception at the school where the data were collected, students study 'tenses' by rote learning, where the teacher explains the rules then students complete conventional grammar exercises or activities, such as conjugating verb forms and rewriting sentences after a sentence model, and produce sentences using the target tenses. The sentences in such practices are usually stand-alone ones. As a result, when dealing with a longer text where more than one tense is contextually required and where tense continuity and tense shift are expected, students are often confused about what tense to choose.

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To help Thai EFL students increase their grammatical knowledge, research has suggested several positive teaching methods and techniques, and one that is communicative in nature is storytelling as a teaching/learning technique (Garcia, 2017; Isbell et al., 2004). This technique goes along well with viable language learning theories, e.g. the information processing model, the noticing hypothesis and the output hypothesis, to say the least. Although storytelling has been mostly used to teach vocabulary, a few studies discuss its positive effect with teaching and learning grammatical tense. For example, in their study on using storytelling to increase vocabulary knowledge in Thai EFL students, Srihasarn and Wuttipornpong (2013) found that storytelling could not only improve the students' vocabulary knowledge, but also past tense form usage on the students' written tasks. Similarly, Garcia (2017) suggested that storytelling could help students to learn the sentence structures and grammatical rules in the English language. Thus, the present study was conducted to find out whether storytelling practice is more effective than the conventional practice with grammar exercises in improving the use of the present and the past simple tenses.

Literature review

Differences in expressing temporality in Thai and in English

In learning a foreign language, it is basically important to study the vocabulary and grammatical rules of the target language. In terms of language rules, English tense is one of the language elements problematic for Thai EFL students at all education grades because grammatical tense is found in all English sentences and because English and Thai linguistically express time differently. That is, whereas English uses tense to express time, Thai does not have tense. Instead, Thai expresses time through time adverbs, such as 'yesterday' for past time (Kanchanawan, 1978; Iwasaki and Ingkapiro, 2005).

In example (1a), in the Thai sentence, the verb ‘*pai*’ (go) remains unchanged, and the time adverbial ‘*meuawan*’ (yesterday) is used to express past time and signal that the event occurred in the past. In contrast, as in (1b) English basically uses verb inflection to signal time whereas the time adverbial ‘yesterday’ provides a more precise time reference.

(2a) I *went* to the market yesterday.
(2b) *I *go* to the market yesterday.

In (2a), English uses the verb inflection ‘went’, which is a past simple form of ‘go’, to signal past time. It will be ungrammatical if one uses the base form ‘go’ in place of ‘went’ as in (2b).

Examples (1) and (2) illustrate how Thai signals past time. The following example illustrates how the present time is expressed in Thai.

(3a) **Thai:** Jane **pai** tanakarn.
 Jane **go to** the bank.
 (3b) **English:** Jane **goes to** the bank.

In (3a) and (3b), the Thai and English sentences do not have any time adverbial expressing time, but the third person singular morpheme, the -es at the end of the verb 'go' in the English sentence signals the present tense with a third person subject, whereas Thai does not have a similar morpheme to indicate the present tense.

This study only focused on the present simple and its core meaning regarding situations that are complete in themselves, habitual actions in the present and general timeless truths, and the past simple and its core meaning concerning actions or situations completed in the past.

Information processing model

Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) propose the information processing model as “information processing concerned with the mental processes involved in language learning and use” as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

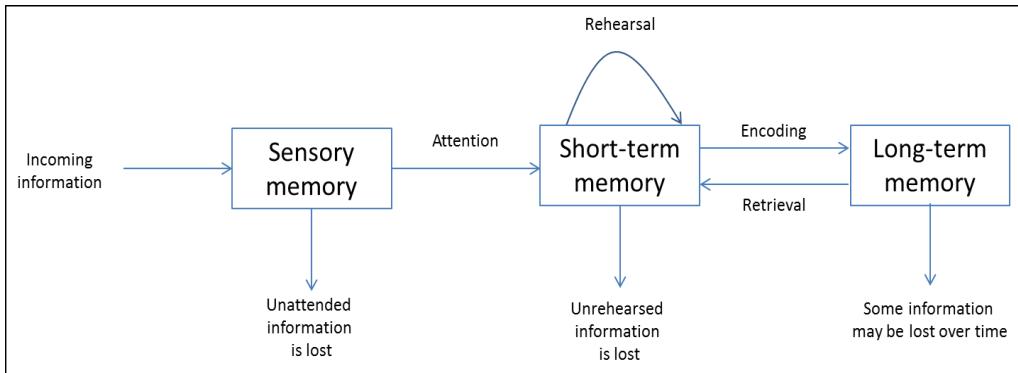


Figure 1 Atkinson and Shiffrin's information processing model (Atkinson & Shiffrin (1968)

The model focuses on how information is stored in the memory, consisting of three stages including sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. Firstly, information or input is received by the sense organs, i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting, and gets into the sensory memory. If learners pay attention to the information, the attended information enters the short-term memory while unattended information is lost. The information in short-term memory is stored for about 15 to 30 seconds before it is lost (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968). In this stage, rehearsal or repetition is needed. If rehearsal does not occur, the information in short-term memory will be lost. The information stored in short-term memory storage requires learners to pay attention to it and make an effort to rehearse or practice it. Thus, adequate practice is very essential for successful the transition of information. If successful, the information from the short-term memory is transferred to long-term memory and is ready to be retrieved for later use. Nevertheless, some information in long-term memory may be lost over time (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968).

Noticing hypothesis

The noticing hypothesis was proposed by Schmidt (1995: 20) as being “what learners have noticed in the input is what becomes intake for learning.” There are three components related to the noticing hypothesis: input, intake, and output. Input is the language feature that learners get exposed to, while intake is the part of the input that is noticed by the learners and further processed until stored in the long-term memory (Schmidt, 1990: 139). Finally, the output is the language that learners produce (Hummel, 2014).

The relationship between input, intake, and output can be explained based on the information processing model (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968) that when learners get exposed to the language input, the part of the information that learners have noticed enters the short-term memory. The information which is stored in the short-term memory must be processed through rehearsal or repetition so that it is gradually noticed and finally transferred to long-term memory. The input in the long-term memory should be able to be retrieved effortlessly. However, some information in the long-term memory may be lost over time if it is not rehearsed or repeated regularly. In addition, Schmidt (1990) points that there are some other

factors that facilitate noticing, such as frequency of the input, perceptual salience (the noticeability of a feature), instructional strategies, individual processing ability, readiness to notice, and task demand.

Although noticing is an influential factor in language learning to raise learners' awareness of a form in language input, it is not sufficient for input to become intake. Furthermore, it requires learners to compare the observed input and their output based on the existing interlanguage system of the learners. In this case, the learners may be able to reflect on what they have noticed and attempt to understand its implications (Schmidt and Frota, 1986). This underscores the necessity for a lot of practice or rehearse.

The Output hypothesis

Having been observing her French immersion students who were learning the target language with floods of input still struggling in speaking French, Swain (1998) came to a conclusion that sufficient input is just not enough and that adequate language production, either writing or speaking, must be delivered because it is a vital part of second language learning. Swain (1995) proposes the output hypothesis holding that the production of the target language makes the learners move from semantic processing to syntactic processing, which is essential for second language development. Producing the language output may force learners to become aware of the word's meanings as well as grammatical rules that are not known to them. Thus, learners should be given a lot of opportunities to produce the target language output and practice the target language meaningfully, which, in turn, promotes automaticity of language use.

Swain (1995) specifies three functions of producing output that may help learners in language learning. First, the noticing/triggering function refers to consciousness-raising functions. By producing the target language, learners may notice some linguistic feature problems, or gaps, which may lead them to notice something they need to find about their L2. Second, the hypothesis testing function is the way to test the hypothesis for comprehensibility or linguistic well-formedness against the feedback from interlocutors, who should be native speakers or nonnative speakers with a good command of the target language, which is expected to lead learners to modify, or 'reprocess', their output. Third, the metalinguistic function refers to reflective roles. The output processing provides learners with a way to check their hypotheses and reflect on the form of language use. Learners produce the language output through speaking or writing, based on negotiation of meaning, to modify their output to be more accurate. Therefore, producing output contributes to L2 development.

Storytelling technique

Storytelling as a teaching/learning technique has several strengths for language teaching; it allows the teacher to introduce new vocabulary and sentence structures in a meaningful context (Inal & Cakir, 2014). While retelling a story, students use all of their linguistic knowledge, including both vocabulary and grammatical rules, even sentences structures repeatedly (Marton, 1988). Furthermore, storytelling can draw learners' attention to the language input in the story (Isbell et al., 2004), for example, the story line, the vocabulary and the grammatical structures necessary to tell the story. It is believed that learners are likely to 'notice' the target input or forms as they use them in a meaningful context repetitively (Farzaneh & Mahmood, 2016; Garcia, 2017; Hassan & Mahkameh, 2013; Srihasarn & Wuttipornpong, 2013). Through repetition, this technique may encourage students to get more confidence on retelling the story in English (Tachom, 2021). In this way, students are trained to use vocabulary and grammatical rules in context repeatedly, and their vocabulary and grammar knowledge are likely to be improved.

Due to the strengths of storytelling discussed above, the present study was therefore conducted to ascertain the effect of storytelling on increasing the accurate use of the present and the past simple tenses of grade 6 Thai EFL students at paragraph level as well as to explore their opinions toward training with it. However, it was decided that storytelling was not employed in the teaching phase but only in the practice phase for two reasons. First, the

participants who were students in one of the researchers' class had learned the present simple tense through explicit instruction in their earlier school year and prior to the launch of the present study; hence, it was decided that storytelling was not used in the presentation stage. Second, for storytelling would be new to these participants whose English was very weak and who might be very shy in using English with their Thai peers, they might become reserved and might not feel comfortable participating in this learning activity.

Research objectives

1. To examine whether explicit grammar teaching with storytelling practice can help grade 6 Thai students to use the present simple and the past simple more accurately than that with grammar exercises.
2. To explore the students' opinions towards practicing with storytelling as a language teaching technique.

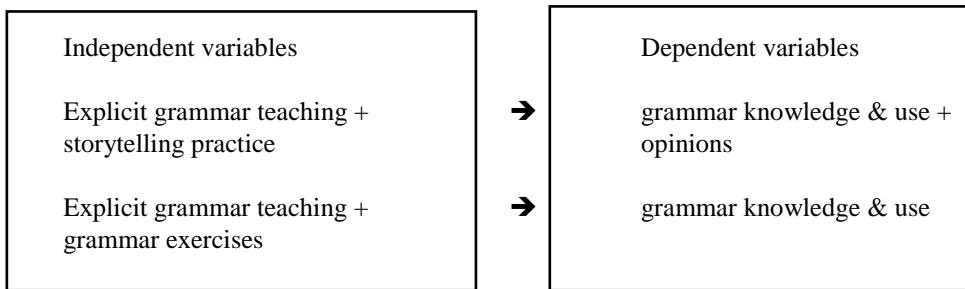
Research methods

This study was a combined quantitative and qualitative design. The pretest and the posttest were used to examine the effectiveness of the two language practices, namely the conventional and the storytelling practices.

1 Population and sample

The population of the study was grade 6 Thai EFL students, and the sample was 40 grade 6 Thai students purposively selected from two elementary schools in Surin province, Thailand. The participants were divided into two groups: the storytelling group (19 students) who received explicit grammar teaching followed by storytelling activities in the practice sessions, and the conventional group (21 students) learning the two target tenses through explicit grammar teaching and practicing with grammar exercises. A few students who had a medically diagnosed learning disability were excluded from the analysis.

2. Research conceptual framework



3. Research instruments and learning materials

3.1 Pretest and Posttest

The pretest and the posttest were the same set of verb transformation tests on the use of the present and the past simple. Each consisted of 35 items for 35 marks, i.e. one mark per item, and scored either one or zero mark. The tests were divided into three parts: the present simple at sentence level, the past simple at sentence level, and the part requiring both the present and the past simple tenses in the same text at paragraph level. The vocabulary selected for the tests was chosen from the previous lessons of the participants' textbook, "Smile Book 6," which was in accordance with the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E.2551.

The first part of the pretest and posttest required the students to change the verbs given in their base form to their correct present simple form. This part comprised ten items, thus ten verb slots. Among these ten verb slots, five of them took the third person singular subjects while the other five did not. The students were asked to conjugate the given verbs in the

present simple form correctly to complete each sentence. Each correct verb form would earn one mark, otherwise, zero mark. The total score of this part was ten. Like the first part, the second part was intended to elicit the students' performance on the past simple. It consisted of ten verb slots/items in the same format and the same way of marking.

The third part was the same verb conjugation task in nature, however, in a short paragraph of 15 verb slots. This part contained both the present simple and the past simple, designed intentionally to test whether the students could perform tense continuity when the time frame was not changed, and tense shift when the time frame was changed. Among the 15 verb slots, eight were contextualized for the present simple verb forms while seven for the past simple verb forms, embracing four regular and three irregular verbs. The students were asked to provide the correct form of the present simple or the past simple verb forms appropriately in the given context. One mark was given for each correct verb form, otherwise zero mark.

The pretest and the posttest were sent to two experts and an educated native speaker who had academic qualifications to check the content validity, then the tests were revised according to the guidance from them. The reliability of the test was checked using the Method of Coefficient Alpha of Cronbach. The pretest and posttest were put to test for the reliability by administering it with 30 grade 6 student volunteers at another primary school in Surin province. The tests consisted of 35 items and the value for Cronbach's Alpha for the test was $\alpha = 0.709$. The reliability of the test in the pilot range was between 0.7 to 0.8, which was considered as acceptable.

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to explore students' opinions towards using storytelling as a language practice. It was administered right after the last session of treatment. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part asked for general information of the students, the second part aimed to elicit the students' opinions of using storytelling as a language practice, and the third part was an open-ended question for the students to provide suggestions about the storytelling practice. The five-point Likert scale was employed in the second part where students were asked to rate their opinions on the five-point rating scales of 1 to 5 as follows:

5	=	Strongly agree
4	=	Agree
3	=	Moderately agree
2	=	Disagree
1	=	Strongly disagree

The criteria for labeling on the questionnaire was defined as follows (Srisa-ard, 2002):

4.51 – 5.00	means	strongly agree
3.51 – 4.50	means	agree
2.51 – 3.50	means	moderately agree
1.51 – 2.50	means	disagree
1.00 – 1.51	means	strongly disagree

The statements in the questionnaire were examined by three experts who had the academic qualifications to check the content validity. After that, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked using the Method of Coefficient Alpha of Cronbach. To test the reliability, it was sent to 30 grade 6 student volunteers at a different primary school Surin province. The questionnaire consisted of 5 items and the value for Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire was $\alpha = 0.836$. The reliability of the questionnaire in the pilot range was between 0.8 to 0.9, which was considered as good.

3.3 Learning materials

Six stories were used as learning material. The six stories consisted of six to eight sentences. The stories were adapted from the English text book, "Smile Book 6." The target

verbs for conjugation in the present and the past simple tenses were also selected from the grammar point illustrated in the book. The boldfaced letters were used in the main verbs of all six stories to make them more noticeable. The stories described daily life situations, friends, and holidays using the present and the past simple tenses. Both the storytelling group and the conventional group were exposed to these same six stories. Among these six stories, two were assigned for the present simple, another two for the past simple and the last two for both tenses.

3.4 Data collection

The course of data collection was 15 sessions, 55 minutes per session per day, and two days per week. The first session was used for the pretest, distributed to both the conventional group and the storytelling group prior to the instruction in order to determine whether the performance of the present simple and past simple tenses of both groups was homogeneous.

From the second to the thirteenth sessions, both groups learned to use the present and the past simple tenses through the explicit grammar teaching however with different language practices; that is, the conventional group practiced with traditional grammar exercises and the storytelling group with storytelling activities. In more details, the conventional group learned the two tenses in these steps: learning the vocabulary and the meaning, pronouncing the words, learning the forms and uses of the present and the past simple tenses, and practicing through grammar exercises. The storytelling group learned the two tenses in the same way as their counterparts except practicing with storytelling where they also practiced pronouncing the ending sounds of the verb forms that signal tenses, listening to a story, trying to read the story aloud individually, and retelling the story by taking turns in pairs and small groups.

At the fourteenth sessions, the posttest was distributed to students in both groups in order to assess their performance of using the two target tenses after the instruction. Finally, at the fifteenth session, the questionnaire was administered to the students in the storytelling group in order to explore their opinions towards their experiences in using storytelling as a language practice.

3.5 Data analysis

Paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test were used to analyze the group mean scores from the pretest and posttest by both groups to examine the effectiveness of the two different practices in enhancing the students' knowledge of using the present simple and past simple tenses. Then, a Likert Scale was adopted to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire and interpret the students' opinions.

Research Results

1. Results from the pretest scores of both groups to determine whether the two groups' knowledge about the target tenses were homogenous

The results in Table 4.1 were obtained from the pretest scores of both the conventional and storytelling groups to compare the pretest mean scores between the two groups. This was to determine whether the two groups were similar in their knowledge about using present and past simple tenses as illustrated below.

Table 1 Comparison of the pretest mean scores between the two groups

Group	N	Mean (out of 35)	Std. Deviation	df	T - Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Conventional	21	1.95	2.18	1	6.317	0.016*
Storytelling	19	3.89	1.70			

*p < 0.05

Table 1 shows that there was a significant difference between the conventional group ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 2.18$) and the storytelling group ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.70$) on the pretest group mean scores; $t(1) = 6.317$, $p = 0.016$, which is smaller than 0.05). Thus, to make it statistically

feasible, when the posttest scores of the two groups were compared, the independent t-test result where homogeneity was not assumed was to be selected.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the difference between the two groups mainly came from the fact that students in the storytelling group outperformed those in the conventional group only on the present simple tense part of the test, where the former got 1.71 out of 10 and the latter got 3.63 out of 10.

2. Comparison of the within-group results to determine the effectiveness of the two language practices

Table 2 compares the results of the pretest and posttest scores of the conventional group to find out whether language practice with grammar exercises was effective to significantly improve the students' knowledge about the present and the past simple tenses.

Table 2 Comparison of the pretest and posttest mean scores of the conventional group

Conventional group	N	Mean (out of 35)	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	21	1.95	2.18			
Posttest	21	19.38	5.21	20	15.798	0.000*

*p < 0.001

Table 2 presents the dependent t-test result computed from the pretest and posttest mean scores of the conventional group. Based on the result, there was a significant difference between the pretest mean score ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 2.18$) and posttest mean score ($M = 19.38$, $SD = 5.21$); $t(20) = -15.798$, $p = 0.000$, which is less than 0.001. The result suggests that grammar teaching together with grammar exercises for practice that the conventional group received was effective in enabling them to use the present and the past simple tenses in the tests more accurately, at over 55% of the total score of 35 marks.

To examine more closely as how well the conventional group performed on the present simple in the present time frame alone, the past simple in the past time frame alone, and in the temporal context where both tenses were required, we shall see their performance on each part at the posttest, summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of the pretest and posttest mean scores of the conventional group in each test part

Test part	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value Sig. (2-tailed)
Present simple	Pretest	21	1.71	1.92	20	-13.191	0.000*
	Posttest		8.19	1.75			
Past simple	Pretest	21	0.00	0.00	20	-12.428	0.000*
	Posttest		6.24	2.30			
Making tense shift	Pretest	21	0.24	0.53	20	-8.809	0.000*
	Posttest		4.95	2.39			

*p < 0.001

Based on the results in Table 3, it is clear that students in the conventional group performed significantly better at the posttest than at the pretest at the p-value less than 0.001 in all parts. That is to say, grammar teaching followed by grammar exercises could help the students to select the present simple and the past simple, as well as to make tense shift,

significantly more appropriately. It is noticeable that while the conventional group scored more than 81% and 62% on the present simple and the past simple, they scored less than 50% on making tense shift, which was the worst score.

Next, Table 4 presents the pretest and posttest mean scores of the storytelling group to determine the effectiveness of storytelling practice adopted after grammar teaching on enhancing the students' knowledge about the present and the past simple tenses.

Table 4 Comparison of the pretest and posttest mean scores of the storytelling group

Storytelling group	N	Mean (out of 35)	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	19	3.89	1.70	20	-7.257	0.000*
Posttest	19	17.58	8.14			

*p < 0.001

Based on the results in Table 4, showing the dependent t-test result performed on the pretest and posttest mean scores of the storytelling group, there was a significant difference between the pretest mean score ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.70$) and the posttest mean score ($M = 17.58$, $SD = 8.14$); $t(18) = -7.257$, $p = 0.000$, which is less than 0.001. Thus, it could be concluded that storytelling practice implemented after grammar teaching could enhance the students to use the present and the past simple tenses in the test more correctly, at over 50% of the total score of 35 marks.

To examine more closely as how well the storytelling group achieved on making tense selection and tense shift, their performance on individual test' parts are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 Comparison of the pretest and posttest mean scores of the storytelling group in each test part

Test part	Test	Mean	SD	df	T-value	P-value Sig. (2-tailed)
Present simple	Pretest	3.63	1.34	18	-4.652	0.000*
	Posttest	6.05	1.47			
Past simple	Pretest	0.00	0.00	18	-5.659	0.000*
	Posttest	5.16	3.94			
Making tense shift	Pretest	0.26	0.56	18	-6.824	0.000*
	Posttest	6.16	3.77			

*p < 0.001, n = 19

According to the results in Table 5, like their counterparts in the conventional groups, students in the storytelling group also performed significantly better at the posttest than at the pretest at the p-value less than 0.001 in all parts. Hence, grammar teaching followed by storytelling practice could significantly improve the students' performance on selecting the present simple, the past simple and making tense shift. It is noticeable while the conventional group scored better than the storytelling group on the present simple and the past simple, the storytelling group scored higher on making tense shift.

In conclusion, regarding the effectiveness of the conventional practice with grammar exercises and that of the storytelling practice, the within-group t-test results, from Tables 5, indicate that both practices could significantly increase the students' performance on using the present and the past simple tenses, in terms of both tense selection and tense shift. Next, section 4.3 presents the between-group t-test results from the posttest mean scores of both

groups to compare the effectiveness of the conventional practice with grammar exercises against the storytelling practice on using the present and the past simple tenses.

3. Comparison of the between-group results of the posttest mean scores by the two groups

This section presents the between-group results taken from the posttest mean scores of the conventional and the storytelling groups so as to determine whether one was more effective than the other in enhancing the students to use the present and the past simple tenses in the context where single tense selection and tense shift are required. Table 6 below summarizes the independent sample t-test results on the posttest mean scores of both groups.

Table 6 Comparison of the overall posttest mean scores by the two groups

Group	N	Mean (out of 35)	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value (t-test) Sig.(2-tailed)
Conventional	21	19.38	5.21	1	0.824	0.416*
Storytelling	19	17.58	8.41	1		

*p > 0.05

According to Table 6, result shows that there was not a significant difference in the posttest mean scores between the conventional group ($M = 19.38$, $SD = 5.21$) and the storytelling group ($M = 17.58$, $SD = 8.41$); $t(1) = 0.842$, $p = 0.416$, which is greater than 0.05). In other words, none of these groups performed better than the other after the instruction.

We have observed the between-group analysis and the effects of both the conventional and the storytelling practices on using present and past simple tenses. Now we shall closely examine the effects of these two language practices in each test part, which yields interesting results. Next, Table 7 below presents the between-group results from the posttest mean scores by the two groups on the use of the present simple.

Table 7 Comparison of the posttest mean scores on the present simple tense by the two groups

Group	N	Mean (out of 10)	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value (t-test) Sig.(2-tailed)
Conventional	21	8.19	1.75	1	4.121	0.000*
Storytelling	19	6.11	1.41	1		

*p < 0.001

According to Table 7, results show that there was a significant difference in the posttest mean scores on the present simple part between the conventional group ($M = 8.19$, $SD = 1.75$) and the storytelling group ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.41$); $t(1) = 4.121$, $p = 0.000$. With the higher mean score, the conventional group significantly outperformed the storytelling group, indicating that the conventional practice is more effective in improving the students to use the present simple in the present simple context. Next, Table 8 presents the between-group results for the past simple posttest mean scores by both groups.

Table 8 Comparison of the posttest mean scores on the past simple tense measure by the two groups

Measure by group	N	Mean (out of 10)	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value (t-test) Sig.(2-tailed)
Conventional	21	6.24	2.30	1	0.919	0.366*
Storytelling	19	5.32	3.79	1		

*p > 0.05

According to Table 8, results show that there was not a significant difference in the past simple posttest mean scores between the conventional group ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 2.30$) and the storytelling group ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 3.79$); $t(1) = 0.919$, $p = 0.366$, which is larger than 0.05. This indicates that none of these groups significantly outperformed the other. That is, also based on the within-group results from Tables 3 and 5, both the conventional practice and the storytelling practice could equally improve the students' performance on using the past simple in the past simple context.

Next, Table 9 presents the between-group results computed on the mean scores from part 3, making tense shift, i.e. changing one tense to another in the same sentence or paragraph according to the new time frame, by the conventional group and the storytelling group.

Table 9 Comparison of the posttest mean scores on making tense shift by the two groups

Group	N	Mean (out of 15)	Std. Deviation	df	T-value	P-value (t-test) Sig.(2-tailed)
Conventional	21	4.95	2.40	1	-1.266	0.213*
Storytelling	19	6.16	3.56			

* $p > 0.05$

According to Table 9, results show that there was not a significant difference in the scores on making tense shift between the conventional group ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 2.40$) and the storytelling group ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 3.56$); $t(1) = -1.266$, $p = 0.213$, which is larger than 0.05. This suggests that none of these groups performed better than the other after the instruction and that, based on the within-group results from Tables 3 and 5, both the conventional practice and the storytelling practice could equally help the students to perform tense shift where the context required. It is observable that the only test part that the storytelling group did better than the conventional group was the part on making tense shift, unfortunately not significantly better.

In order, section 4.2 has presented the within group results and section 4.3, the between group results. The within-group results have illustrated the positive effects of the conventional practice with grammar exercises and the storytelling practice after explicit grammar teaching that both could significantly enhance the students to correctly select the present simple in the present simple context and the past simple in the past simple context, as well as make tense shift appropriately.

In the next section, section 4.4 presents and describes the results from the opinion questionnaire administered to explore the students' opinions toward using storytelling as a language practice.

4. Results from the students' opinion questionnaire by the storytelling group

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: students' opinions of using storytelling as a language practice and open-ended question for the students to provide suggestions. The results are presented in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10 The storytelling students' opinions towards their experiences in practicing with storytelling activity

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation of the score
1	Storytelling practice made you enjoy the lesson.	4.84	0.37	Strongly Agree
2	Storytelling practice made you understand the use of the present and the past simple tenses better.	4.32	0.89	Agree
3	The time allocated for storytelling practice was suitable.	3.26	1.19	Moderately
4	You got more confidence in retelling a story in English after being trained with storytelling practice.	4.84	0.37	Strongly Agree
5	You want to learn through storytelling practice again.	4.89	0.32	Strongly Agree
Total N = 19		4.43	0.47	Agree

According to the results in Table 4.10, the overall score of 4.43 ($SD = 0.47$) or 'agree' indicated that the students had positive opinions toward implementing storytelling in the classroom as a teaching practice. When examining the result for each questionnaire item, it was found that the mean scores between 4.51 to 5.00, or 'strongly agree,' were given for the item 1, "Storytelling practice made you enjoy the lesson," item 4, "You got more confidence in retelling a story in English after being trained with storytelling practice," and item 5, "You want to learn through storytelling practice again". These high percentages suggested that they had very positive opinions toward this language practice. As for item 2, "Storytelling practice made you understand the use of the present and the past simple tenses better," it received the mean score of 4.32 ($SD = 0.89$), which implied they believed that storytelling helped them learn these two English tenses better than the conventional practice.

Interestingly, the mean score for item 3, "The time allocated for storytelling practice was suitable," was the least at only 3.26 ($SD = 1.19$), considered as 'moderately agree'. This could be interpreted that the students wanted more time for storytelling practice. This opinion was supported by the result from the open-ended part of the questionnaire for students' suggestions, given only by four students (19%) who provided only one suggestion that there should have been more time for the storytelling practice.

All in all, the results from Table 4.10 showed that the students had positive opinions toward the storytelling practice. The overall students' opinion mean scores were 'agree' in practicing with storytelling activity, with a remark that the students 'strongly agree' on most of the statements. Unfortunately, the statement 'The time for storytelling practice was suitable' received the score of 3.26, which pulled down the overall score.

Discussion of Results

Based on the statistical results, both the conventional group, receiving explicit grammar teaching and practicing through grammar exercises, and the storytelling group, receiving explicit grammar teaching and practicing through storytelling activity, got significantly higher scores after receiving the respective course of instruction. This means explicit grammar teaching and practicing through either grammar exercises or storytelling activity could indifferently help students use the present simple and the past simple tenses more accurately. One possible reason for this may be because both groups received explicit grammar teaching, where the teacher explains language rules directly, prior to the practice phase. Although the conventional group practiced through 'grammar exercises' and the storytelling group through 'storytelling activity,' both kinds of practice seemed to facilitate the students to learn the target tenses equally well, enabling the two groups to pass 50% of the total score at the posttest.

Nevertheless, concerning the accurate use of the present simple, the posttest mean scores suggested that the conventional group significantly outperformed the storytelling group. It could be that, at the same amount of practice time, the grammar exercises allowed the conventional group have more chances to directly use the rules more often than their storytelling counterparts. This is because when retelling a story, these students devoted much of the available practice time to the storytelling activities, in which they had to think about other things apart from the present and the past simple tense rules, e.g. the sequences of events (Garcia, 2017) and vocabulary to be used, causing them to spend less time focusing on the target grammar point. Another possible explanation for this may be that students in the conventional group practiced using grammar exercises with the same format as the items in the test, i.e. fill-in-the-blank format.

The results from section 4.3 also revealed that explicit grammar teaching with storytelling practice received by the storytelling group also enhanced their ability to use the target tenses. This can be explained using the information processing theory (Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968). Based on the theory, while completing the storytelling activity through

listening to the story and paying attention to the input, the students revisited not only the words necessary to be used but also the target tenses embedded in the story. In doing so repetitively, they were pushed to 'notice' (Schmidt, 1995) the target verb tense forms in the meaningful context (Farzaneh & Mahmood, 2016; Garcia, 2017; Hassan & Mahkameh, 2013; Srihasarn & Wuttipornpong, 2013). Once noticed, the target forms were stored in their short-term memory storage. Then, when the students repeatedly produced language output, i.e. the verb tense forms, these forms were transferred from their short-term memory storage to their long-term memory storage, where the forms were ready to be retrieved for subsequent use (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968; Schmidt, 1995).

Furthermore, regarding the students' opinions toward the storytelling practice, the overall questionnaire result showed that these students were comfortable with completing the activity to practice the present and the past simple tenses. Precisely, the students enjoyed the lesson where storytelling practice was implemented, got more confidence in retelling stories in English after having been trained with it, and wanted to learn through storytelling again. In addition, they thought that the time given for the activity was not sufficient, and some of them suggested that more time should have been allocated. All things considered, it can be assumed that these young Thai students were comfortable with and welcomed storytelling activity as a language practice.

According to the constructive posttest and questionnaire results, although storytelling practice was not more effective than the conventional one, it can be used as a language practice because it was as effective as the conventional practice with grammar exercises. It could draw the students' attention to the target language input (Isbell et al., 2004) and assist them to significantly use the target English tenses more accurately. Importantly, as evident from the result of questionnaire item 4, having practiced with storytelling repetitively, the students became more confident in using English to retell stories (Tachom, 2021), which is indeed a very satisfactory finding.

Conclusion

In corresponding to the two research objectives, the independent t-test results suggested that storytelling practice was not more effective than the conventional practice with grammar exercises. As the paired t-test results indicated, each practice could significantly increase the students in its group to use the two target tenses more accurately. Results from the opinion questionnaire revealed that the storytelling students were not shy when using English with their Thai classmates. In contrast, they were comfortable with, enjoyed and welcomed storytelling practice as they agreed that it was enjoyable, enabled them to better understand the target tenses, and made them become more confident in retelling stories in English. Importantly, they wanted to practice with the activity again.

Implications for teaching

1. Storytelling practice is one of the teaching tools that is suitable for students at the primary school level in the Thai EFL context. This is because the retelling of a story makes students enjoy the lesson. As a result, students feel more comfortable to learn through storytelling. However, storytelling demands a lot of time for practicing, especially for weaker students. For these students, it is quite difficult to read or pronounce a large number of the words in a story. Thus, the teacher who wants to use storytelling activities should allot more time for this kind of activity.

2. The teacher has to spend a good deal of time to prepare some learning materials such as the stories, flash cards, and activities to help students learn about stories in the class. In some schools' context, it can be difficult for the teacher to use storytelling only during their English classes because students also have to learn other points in the lessons as well. Thus, the teacher is encouraged to find ways for the students to practice their storytelling outside the regular class.

Recommendations for future studies

1. The type of test used in this study might have favored the conventional group. That is, only 'fill in the blank' format tests were used in this study. Future studies should also include a pronunciation or read aloud test of the ending sounds that signal a specific tense in English because what signals English tenses is not only the written final morphemes, e.g. -s, -es, -ed or a change of verb form for irregular verbs, but also the ending sounds of the verb forms, e.g. /s/, /z/, /d/, and /ɪd/, which are closely related to the written morphemes. Apart from the major results, it was personally observed that the storytelling group pronounced the ending sounds of the verbs better than the conventional group, even a year after the completion of the data collection.
2. Future researchers may wish to explore the effects of storytelling as a teaching technique, i.e. learning a grammar point solely through storytelling with storytelling practice, in comparison to another method or technique.
3. As having pointed out earlier that the storytelling group scored higher than the conventional group on the part of making tense shift, yet did not reach significant level, future research may examine the effect of storytelling in doing so in longer texts where plenty of occurrences of tense shift are presented.

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