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**Structured Input Grammar Activities for Penultimate Year Students at Fernández  
Madrid High School**

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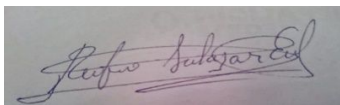
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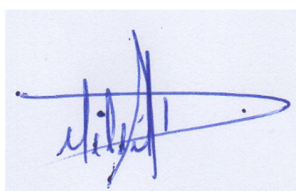
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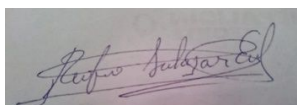
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EXTRANJERA**

**STRUCTURED INPUT GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES FOR PENULTIMATE YEAR  
STUDENTS AT FERNANDEZ MADRID HIGH SCHOOL**

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**Date:**

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**ABSTRACT**

This quasi-experimental research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of structured input grammar activities on students in their penultimate year at Fernández Madrid High School, during the school year 2020-2021. Pre-tests applied to 70 students of penultimate year showed a low level of grammar competence in topics as present perfect, tag questions, passive voice, used to and second conditional. Structured input grammar activities were incorporated in the experimental group of 35 students, while conventional strategies were applied in the control group of 35 individuals. There were 25 interventions of forty minutes in total to introduce input activities such as binary options, surveys, supplying information, matching, selecting alternatives, ordering, and ranking to facilitate the internalization of linguistic forms. The process culminated with a post-test to experimental and control group to compare and analyze the grades of both groups. The results demonstrated that a better average was achieved in the group to which structured input grammar activities were incorporated. In consequence, the incorporation of structured grammar activities has had significant impact on grammar competence of students.

**KEY WORDS:** structured input activities, grammar, internalization, interaction, meaningful.

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**Fecha:**

**Noviembre 2021**

**RESUMEN**

La presente investigación quasi- experimental se llevó a cabo para determinar la efectividad de la aplicación de actividades gramaticales estructuradas en los estudiantes de segundo de bachillerato en el colegio Fernández Madrid año lectivo 2020-2021. Mediante un pre-test tomado a 70 estudiantes de los segundos cursos se determinó un bajo nivel de competencia gramatical en temas relativos al presente perfecto, voz pasiva, segundo condicional, rutinas pasadas y preguntas para confirmar. A fin de mejorar ese resultado actividades gramaticales estructuradas fueron implementadas en el grupo experimental conformado por 35 estudiantes mientras que estrategias convencionales fueron aplicadas en el grupo de control conformado por 35 estudiantes. El grupo experimental fue intervenido 25 veces en total, cada intervención tuvo una duración de 40 minutos para introducir actividades estructuradas relativas a opciones binarias, encuestas, ejercicios de completar, asociación, selección de alternativas y ordenamiento a fin de facilitar la internalización de las formas lingüísticas. El proceso culminó con un post-test tomado al grupo experimental y de control para comparar y analizar las notas de ambos grupos. Los resultados demostraron que el grupo donde se aplicó actividades gramaticales estructuradas tuvieron un mejor desempeño en consecuencia la presentación de actividades estructuradas produjo un impacto significativo en la competencia gramatical de los estudiantes.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** actividades estructuradas de input, gramática, internalización, interacción, significativo.

## INTRODUCTION

Structured input activities provide comprehensible information about the use of specific linguistic forms in communicative contexts. They encourage meaningful classroom interactions as they apply grammar structures in contextualized, real-life scenarios, helping individuals to internalize patterns of language in an unconscious way. (Rowe & Snow, 2019).

Studies by Murtisari, Salvadora and Hastuti (2020) postulates that the incorporation of traditional techniques to teach grammar produced a decontextualized learning process in which students did not use new grammar tenses in interactive situations to convey ideas, messages, opinions or beliefs. In addition, Renau (2016) described that when teachers apply obsolete methods students have limited opportunities to participate in communicative activities which are related to practical scenarios related to real life.

Abduh and Algouzi (2020) commented that the mere memorization of grammar patterns through completion of exercises does not produce any significant learning because individuals do not have the opportunity to share their experiences, hence reducing their chances to retain any new information. Furthermore, Setonji (2020) said that the incorporation of drills to practice grammar is not meaningful to students. These activities lacked context and had no connection to students' reality. Learners simply identify verbs and change the tenses with no background information or context. In addition, the incorporation of explicit techniques to present linguistic forms does not allow assimilation of knowledge about function and meaning of structures according to specific settings (Xudoyberganov & Xudoyberganova, 2019).

The development of grammar competence is crucial for second language learners as it permits individuals to use acquired linguistic patterns in a coherent way to share relevant information. That is why the presentation of structured input activities facilitate the deduction of rules that govern structures more naturally. These kinds of activities are full of meaning. They focus on function of language giving the opportunity to concentrate in communicative situations using linguistic forms in interactive tasks (Ansari, 2020).

According to Ecuadorian National English Curriculum Guidelines (2016), published by Ecuadorian Ministry of Education students of penultimate year should be able to understand, identify and use information related to present perfect, used to, passive voice, tag questions and second conditional grammar structures in listening, reading, writing or oral communication activities to share ideas, opinions, personal perspectives based on their own experiences.

In the first part of this research, the theoretical framework describes the principles, characteristics and benefits of application of structured input to learn grammar. Then, the methodology summarizes relevant information about how this research was done followed by results and discussion where final grades and theoretical support that justifies findings were analyzed. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations were written, and annexes of grammar test was added.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Second language acquisition**

Second language acquisition suggests the creation of an implicit linguistic system that is composed of syntactic, phonetic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of a language. This implicit system is constantly changing. For a second language learner, it takes long periods of time to have system parallel to that of a native speaker. To acquire a second language three steps are required:

- a) **Input processing:** This is related to the form in which learners receive linguistic information and give it a meaning.
- b) **System change:**
  - **Accommodation:** The inclusion of linguistic forms into the implicit system.
  - **Restructuring:** The incorporation of linguistic forms causing unconscious changes in the implicit system.
- c) **Output processing:** The ability of using implicit information to produce statements (VanPatten, 2003).

### **Comprehensible Input**

Krashen and Terrell (1983) stated that individuals acquire a language when they can understand the messages presented in listening and reading resources. This is an unconscious

process in which learners are exposed to meaningful interactions using the target language. The idea is to provide a natural communication like what happens in real life.

Maharsi (2016) states that input has an indispensable role in language, since it is the “entry point” which exposes individuals to activities which reflect the target grammar structure. The quantity of input that students receive determines successful mastery of the language. This leads to the automatic internalization of second language patterns without the necessity of explicit explanations.

Wanlu (2021) describes input hypothesis, demonstrating the importance of presenting comprehensible information, which is easy to understand by learners avoiding the utilization of direct methods. The best way to organize structured activities is simplifying them through the division of grammar topics into manageable pieces to direct student’s attention to just one aspect of linguistic forms. Comprehensible input encourages learners to deduce the meaning of information, analyzing the context in which it is presented, giving opportunity to discover grammar rules during active participation in communicative situations.

### **Input Processing**

VanPatten (1996) is the creator of the notion of Processing Input (PI), which introduces principles of grammar-based instruction to help learners to comprehend and internalize grammar structures promoting the analysis of input information in context. Processing input has the following relevant components. The information presented is related to specific linguistic contents where students learn the rules that govern the use of grammar through interaction in communicative situations that happen in daily life. Structured input activities help students to understand grammar tenses in a spontaneous way, participating in interactive tasks which are full of meaning. Learners will develop grammar competence through correct sentences processing, since they must create messages incorporating target grammar to express or present relevant ideas, perspectives, and opinions.

### **Optimal Input Hypothesis**

According to Krashen and Mason (2020), the input must contain four indispensable characteristics to be effective when teachers use it in the teaching and learning process:

- a) **Comprehensible:** Input presented to the students must be transparent. Students do not always understand presented information in the different activities. So, it is better

not to expect the individual to fully understand lectures in the moment, because this will be developed over time.

- b) Compelling:** Input should captivate learners to the point that they forget they are receiving information in a foreign language.
- c) Rich:** Input must be varied and wide in range, to allow students to discover important ideas, messages or information, providing different contexts in that way learners can practice new aspects of language.
- d) Abundant:** Individuals need a large quantity of input to face many practical activities. Such as those which focus on form, and are associated with real life situations to produce a meaningful experiences while communicating.

### **Focus on Form**

Kellem and Halvorsen (2018) expressed the difference between focus on form or forms. Fundamentally, focus on forms include the presentation of linguistic elements in an isolated way without context, promoting the memorization of grammar rules. On the other hand, focus on form permits individuals to pay attention to the target language through active participation in activities, which are contextualized to real life experiences, concentrating on meaning and communication.

Ellis (2015) described that the elements that focus on form instruction should be: observability, since it occurs during the interaction process, and it is easily observable. Incidental, as it is not planned and occurs naturally. Third, appearing in oral communication, due to it is the basic meaning center. And finally, transitable, so it becomes a rare occurrence and does not replace the premise of focus on meaning.

### **Structured Input Grammar Activities**

Kuhl (2007) indicated the implementation of structured grammar activities facilitate input processing because learners can apply linguistic forms in contextualized situations which are part of a learner's daily routine. VanPatten (2008) described some indispensable elements that structured input activities must have:

- a) Presenting one thing at time:** It is necessary to introduce just one linguistic form in each class intervention. Learners can focus their attention on specific elements of language, making input processing easier.

- b) **Keeping meaning in focus:** The most important aspect for successful grammar acquisition is to focus on meaning, creating several opportunities to use the target structures in communicative activities. Learners can comprehend provided information, semantically and pragmatically.
- c) **Moving from sentences to connected discourse:** It is recommendable for teachers to present short, contextualized sentences at first, and then continue with more elaborated phrases. This helps students to easily process the information given in specific pragmatic situations.
- d) **Use oral and written input:** The utilization of varied oral and written material like short stories, comics, short texts, audios, videos, or films to present the input appropriate to student's various learning styles is key. Language instructors should include different input resources according to learner's abilities.
- e) **Have the learner do something with the input:** Learners must apply the linguistic forms to communicate ideas, messages, opinions or relevant information through interactive situations to generate meaningful experiences. The topics covered in class should take into account the age and student's interests, so learners feel motivated to finish tasks.
- f) **Keeping the learner's processing strategies in mind:** This element is one of the most important, because students show improvements in their processing strategies mainly through the extensive exposition to structured input. Thus, information is comprehended to a greater extent. It is beneficial that the instructor identifies some of student's processing problems, if any, beforehand to intervene in time.

Most instructed activities are developed in groups or pairs because students can learn from the interaction with their partners. When students are working with friends, they tend to feel more confident as opposed to speaking directly to the teacher. This ensures a more spontaneous way of incorporating linguistic forms (Richards, 2006).

### **Types of Structured Input Activities**

There are two types of structured input activities: affective and referential. The main objective of affective activities is to express opinions, beliefs, ideas or other kind of responses

about real life scenarios. These kinds of activities do not have right or wrong answers, as they are subjective to the individuals' own perspectives (Erlam, 2003).

Farley and Erhan (2012) defined referential activities as the ones that encourage students to differentiate meaning from form. In these kinds of activities, there is always a right or wrong answer. This allows teachers to identify the learners' ability to deduce meaning-form relationship in a correct way. Possible answers could be: binary options, surveys, supplying information, matching, selecting alternatives and ordering / ranking activities.

VanPatten (2017) presented the following structured input activities:

- a) **Binary options:** Generally, students choose the statement that correspond to their personal beliefs and experiences showing likes/ dislikes, true/ false or agree/ disagree.
- b) **Matching:** In this activity students find correspondences between input information and the complement.
- c) **Supplying information:** The information provided in this activity could be colors, places, food, names or dates, which is not the target language to be learned. In these kind of activities individuals do not produce the grammatical formula that is taught.
- d) **Selecting alternatives:** Students choose the best option according to their real-life experiences. Here too, there are no right or wrong answers since all statements present proper use of grammar.
- e) **Surveys:** Information is organized using differentiated scales from which students select the answer according to their perspective.
- f) **Ordering- ranking:** Students organize information, deducing the sequence of events, generally on a numerical scale.

### **Grammatical Contents**

The English Pedagogical Modules proposed by Ministry of Education to second courses present the following grammar topics:

**Present perfect**

The present perfect tense is used to express some actions which started in the past but hold relevance in the present. This structure is formed using the auxiliary has or have and the past participle form of verbs (Brook, 2015).

**Used to**

The “used to” grammar structure is incorporated to express past habitual actions or states. In addition, it is used to represent facts that were true in past, but they are not valid in the present. This structure is formed from used to and a verb in its base form. The auxiliary for negative statements and questions is the past form of the verb do, did (Latham & Oxeden, 2016).

**Passive voice**

The passive voice is used when the actions, activities or situations are more important than who does it. In addition, sometimes we do not know or it is not necessary to show who performed the action. The grammar structure is rather formal and appears in formal documents or texts. This structure, albeit depending on the tense, is formed by the appropriate form of the to be verb and the main action verb in its past participle form (Brook, 2015).

**Tag questions**

The tag questions are used to ask for confirmation, agreements, favors or new information. This is characterized by a sentence, positive or negative, followed by a small question which means “is that right?”. In order to ask a tag question, an auxiliary verb, a modal verb or to be verb in affirmative or negative, opposite to the sentence, and the corresponding pronoun, followed by a question mark. (Coney, 2002).

**Second conditional**

The second conditional is used to refer to consequences of imaginary or unrealistic situations that probably would not happen. Also, the actions can be in present or future. The structure is “If” and a verb in past simple, followed by the main clause in which would and the action/consequence verb in its base form (Heyderman & May, 2010).

The main objective of this paper is “To determine the effectiveness of structured input grammar activities for penultimate year students at Fernández Madrid High School”. The research questions of this investigation were:

1. What is the grammatical competence level of penultimate year students at Fernández Madrid High School?
2. How can we improve the grammatical competence level of penultimate year students at Fernández Madrid High School?
3. What is the grammatical competence level of penultimate year students at Fernández Madrid High School after the application of structured input activities?

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

A total of 70 students from the penultimate year at Fernández Madrid High School participated in this investigation. There were 40 female and 30 male participants between the ages of 16 and 17. The English level of students was between A2 and B1 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages at the time of investigation. The first language of students at Fernández Madrid High School is Spanish and they were able to:

- **Oral communication:** To participate in oral interactions related to formal and informal situations, integrating knowledge about Spanish language structure using specific vocabulary according to discourse.
- **Reading:** To read autonomously and apply cognitive comprehension strategies in accordance with the reading purpose. In addition, they could select texts demonstrating a critical and reflecting stance regarding the quality or veracity of information.
- **Writing:** To apply the writing process to create argumentative texts, selecting the topic, formulating thesis and adding different types of arguments in paragraphs. Moreover, they could select appropriate words to express several facts and produce effects on readers (Ministerio de Educación, 2020).

**Procedure**

The students were divided into two groups randomly by the institution, experimental (second A) and control (second H) with 35 participants in each one. A pre-test was given to both groups. The main purpose of this test was to know the grammatical competence level of students before applying structured input activities. The test had 25 questions related to present perfect, used to, passive voice, tag questions and second conditional. There are 15 multiple choice questions and 10 sentence completion questions.

In working towards the second specific objective of this research, a class plan was implemented for the experimental group during 25 sessions of 40 minutes each. The class was designed to present structured input related to Present perfect, Used to, Passive voice, Tag questions and Second conditional. Input activities such as binary options, surveys, supplying information, matching, selecting alternatives and ordering / ranking were included to facilitate the internalization of linguistic forms.

After the application of structured input grammar activities, a post-test was given to both the groups to evaluate progress. This was done in order to evaluate whether the third specific objective, “To determine the grammatical competence level of penultimate year students at Fernández Madrid High School”, was achieved or not. A comparison of results obtained by both groups was done to determine which group got better results.

**Scale**

To analyze the results, the grammatical level of students were rated on the following scale (according to their tests results): 20-25 very good; 15-19.99 good; 10-14.99 regular; 5-9.99 poor and 0-4.99 very poor.

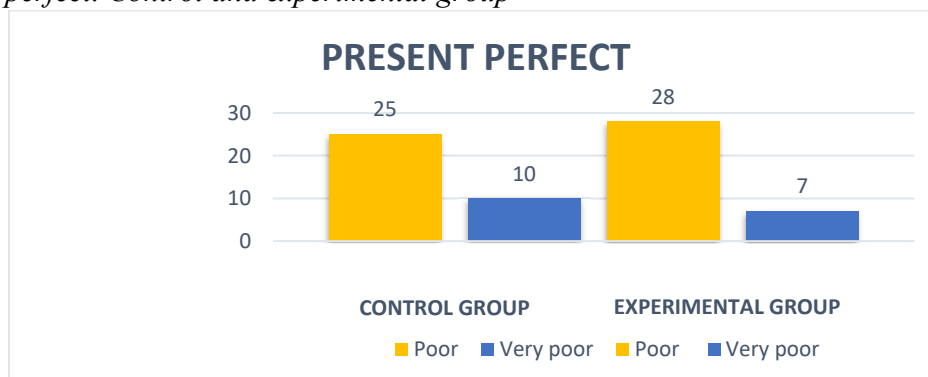
## RESULTS

### PRE-TEST

#### Present perfect

**Figure 1**

*Present perfect. Control and experimental group*



#### Analysis and interpretation

Regarding the *present perfect structure*, it is evident that in the experimental group 28 out of 35 students have a poor level of grammatical competence. The identification of verbs in past participle form to express extreme sports was the most difficult in multiple choice exercises since most of the group, 80%, obtained a low grade (between 5 and 9.99 points). In the control group, a large percentage of students did not recognize the past participle form of verbs to describe pets. This is evident from the graph where 71% of students scored between 5 and 9.99 points, so it is equivalent to poor.

It is clear that both control and experimental group are not adept at the structure of *present perfect*. This result is the consequence of solely applying traditional methods to teach grammar. Murtisari, Salvadora and Hastuti (2020) mentioned the use of traditional techniques to present linguistic forms cause descontextualized learning. Since students just focus on form without paying attention to meaning, it encourages mere memorization of language patterns. These practices consequently effected learner's performance as they were not able to understand specific information in context related to *present perfect tense*.

## Used to

**Figure 2**

*Used to. Control and experimental group*



### Analysis and interpretation

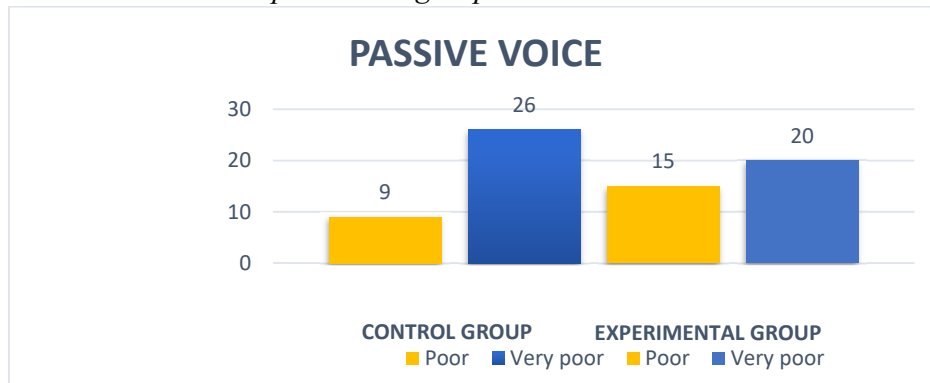
Collected data related to the *used to* structure of the experimental group indicates that 30 of 35 students have little knowledge about completing basic sentences using this grammar structure. The incorporation of verbs in present and expressions to characterize the physical appearance of people is what they knew least. Most of the students, about 86%, had a low grade (between 5 and 9.99 points). The scores from the control group are no different. It is evident that a lot of students do not recognize how to construct elementary sentences describing past routines using *used to*. As the graph shows, 94% of population obtained a grade between 5 and 9.99 points, which is equivalent to Poor.

It is noticeable that the control and experimental groups presented a low proficiency in the use of the *used to* structure. This is mostly caused by the incorporation of obsolete mechanisms to teach grammar. Abduh and Algouzi (2020) confirmed that the completion of drills promotes mechanic learning. Students just repeat and memorize the norms which govern the patterns of language without understanding pragmatic situations where communication occurs. This is thanks to having students just analyzing the linguistic elements and apply them in sentences out of context. The latter hinders the students' performance since they are not able to detect specific details about personal appearance and routines including *used to*.

## Passive voice

**Figure 3**

*Passive voice. Control and experimental group*



### Analysis and interpretation

According to the collected data, the use of *passive voice* structure in the experimental group, 20 of 35 students present low grammar competence. The form of to be verb in past tense for singular and plural nouns is what caused a lot of confusion in multiple choice exercises. The majority of students, (57%) got the minimum grade (between 1 and 4.99 points). Regarding the control group, a lot of students (74%) do not differentiate the auxiliary, the affirmative and negative form of *passive voice* tense in future.

It is apparent that the control and experimental groups have little understanding of the *passive voice* structure. This may have been produced by students having little interaction with their teachers when they apply traditional techniques to teach grammar. Renau (2016) described that one of the biggest disadvantages of using outdated methods is the limited opportunity to participate in interactive conversations, debates or spaces to convey relevant messages, ideas or opinions. This aspect affected to both groups since they were not able to identify the structure of *passive voice* in present, past and future to complete specific ideas.

## Tag questions

**Figure 4**

*Tag questions. Control and experimental group*



### Analysis and interpretation

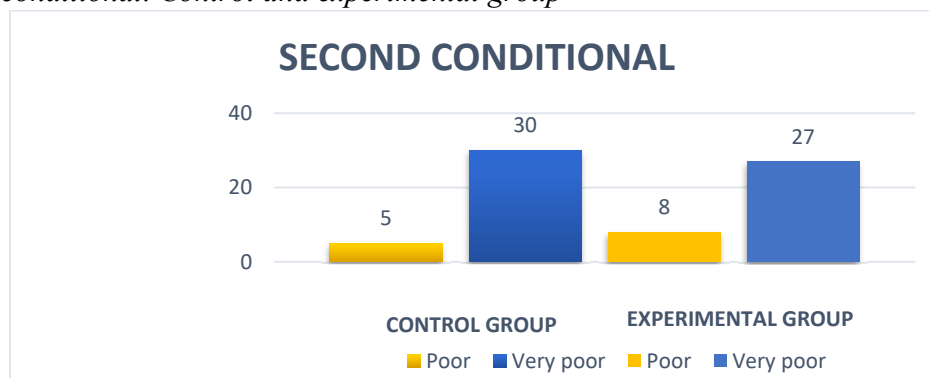
Regarding the collected data of *tag questions* in the experimental group, 21 students of 35 have little knowledge of the structuring of questions. The identification of auxiliaries related to simple present, simple past and future made it difficult for the completion of questions in multiple choice exercises; most students, about 60%, obtained the minimum grade (between 5 and 9.99 points). The data of the control group demonstrates that a large number of students, 54%, were confused and they failed to identify the auxiliary of to be verb in affirmative and negative statements. Also, they did not know the form of the verb to be for singular and plural nouns.

The control and experimental groups have a low aptitude for *tag questions* structure in the pre-test stage. This may have been a consequence of using drills to practice grammar competence. Setonji (2020) commented that the incorporation of mechanic exercises or drills are not beneficial to students because these are not contextualized to situations which happen in the real life and learners focus on the identification of linguistic elements without analyzing the context in which they appear. In fact, this aspect negatively affected the students' performance because priming to follow drills does not let them recognize linguistic elements outside the few examples they know.

## Second conditional

**Figure 5**

*Second conditional. Control and experimental group*



### Analysis and interpretation

The collected data for use of the *second conditional* structure in the experimental group shows that 27 of 35 students presented little comprehension of questions expressing hypothetical situations. The poor understanding of ideas in context made it difficult for students to answer the exercises correctly since the majority of students, 77%, received the minimum grade (between 1 and 4.99). Regarding the control group, a large number of students are unable to respond questions implementing the *second conditional*. They were not able to correctly identify its structure. In addition, the lack of knowledge of verbs in simple past made learners use incorrect conjugations when writing sentences. As the graph demonstrates, 86% of participants from the control group had grades between 1 and 4.99 points, which is very poor.

Both groups showed lackluster results when producing *second conditional* structure. This could be the result of incorporating explicit techniques to present grammar. Xudoyberganov and Xudoyberganova (2019) explained that the presentation of linguistic forms utilizing deductive instruction in which teachers explain rules which govern the tenses do not allow students to focus on function and meaning of language. The results presented above are a clear example which proved this, as it unequivocally impacted students performance as demonstrated by them not being able to recognize the information in context in order to answer some questions related to *second conditional*.

In conclusion, the majority of students in the experimental and control group got the minimum grade (between 5 and 9.99 points) in the pre-test. The students had little knowledge on using the present perfect, used to, passive voice, tag questions and second conditional in contextualized situations, demonstrating a poor level of knowledge.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### POST-TEST

#### Present perfect

**Figure 6**

*Present perfect. Control and experimental group*



#### Analysis and discussion of results

The collected data of *present perfect* structure in experimental group indicates that 19 of 35 students presented a very good level of grammar competence post application of the structured input activities. The identification of specific information using *present perfect* such as extreme sports, personal data and explaining symptoms to a doctor is what they excelled in. 54% of the students from the experimental group had grades between 20 and 24.99 points out of 25. 82% of students in the control committed errors selecting answers related to sports, describing pets and expressing the sports that individuals played.

There is tangible difference between the experimental group and the control group in the comprehension of basic information related to the *present perfect* structure. This difference between both groups is produced by implementation of comprehensible input activities where learners understood the use of *present perfect* tense while completing information about situations that started in past and continue to have a consequence in present. As a consequence, it can be derived that automatic internalization of linguistic forms

without the necessity of explicit explanations happened as postulated by Maharsi (2016). Another cause that can be attributed to development of experimental group is the organization of structured input activities in reference to *present perfect* since it was introduced in chunks (Wanlu, 2021). The use of matching activities to associate correct complement of sentences helped students to identify the function of *present perfect*. This structure was presented in parts. For example, in first place the affirmative form then, the negative and last, the interrogative statements.

### Used to

**Figure 7**

*Used to. Control and experimental group*



### Analysis and discussion of results

The obtained results of the *used to* structure in experimental group shows that 18 out of 35 students had a good level of grammar competence. The completion of sentences related to physical appearance, workplace, residence, and past habits incorporating “used to” was the activity. 51%, or the majority of students, got grades between 15 and 19.99 points. On the contrary, in the control group, many students did not recognize the structure of *used to*. The verbs incorporated in sentences were not in their infinitive form. As the graph demonstrates, 60% of students used the form of the verb in a wrong way. In this section of grammar test students had to understand the information and complete the sentences according to the context, applying the *used to* structure.

The progress of experimental group is far superior to that of the control group in their ability to use *used to* grammar structure. This advance could be viewed as a direct consequence of implementing structured input activities where students could analyze

specific information in context about familiar activities and past routines. In addition, the constant interaction and the employing of target language helped them deduce the rules which govern this tense (VanPatten, 1996). This argument is confirmed by Krashen and Mason (2020) who affirmed the importance of exposing students to a large quantity of input, so they can face many practical activities and focus on form while creating meaningful experiences. For example, students presented a list of 10 activities related to past routines and their partners must guess if these were true or false (binary options). This activity was meaningful to them, because they shared own experiences, incorporating *used to*. In addition, students feel motivated to participate actively in the interactions.

### Passive voice

#### Figure 8

*Passive voice. Control and experimental group*



#### Analysis and discussion of results

According to collected data of *passive voice*, in the experimental group 25 of 35 students achieved a good level of grammar competence. The general comprehension of short paragraphs which contained *passive voice* in present, past, present perfect and future was presented. They achieved considerable proficiency in that, as observed by the 71% of students who obtained grades between 15 and 19.99. On the other hand, just 38% of students in control group recognized the structure of *passive voice*. Also, they had limitations in understanding basic ideas in context referring to present, past and future situations.

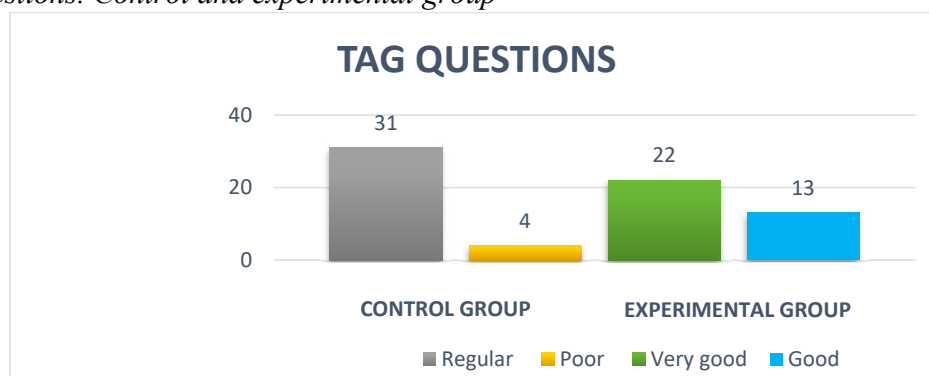
It is evident that the experimental group had a better development than control group in acquiring *passive voice* grammar structure. This difference is due to the result of applying

structured input activities, moving from sentences to connected discourse (Farley & Erhan, 2012). First, students faced short sentences describing a process in which the action was more important than the person who performed it. Then, learners continued to more elaborate phases, allowing them to easily process the target language. Another benefit of structured input observed here is the utilization of referential activities that permit students to differentiate the meaning from form through the identification of answers in context (VanPatten, 2017). The supplying information activity made easy general comprehension of *passive voice*, since students manipulated simple sentences related to common actions and later they used surveys that contained more elaborated sentences in affirmative and negative form to express their opinions, presenting a scale from 1 to 5.

### Tag questions

#### Figure 9

*Tag questions. Control and experimental group*



### Analysis and discussion of results

With the *tag questions* structure, in the experimental group, 22 students out of 35 had gotten a very good level of this syntactic structure. The organization of *tag questions* in present, past and future, while implementing the correct auxiliaries is what they did best. In addition, the distinction of auxiliary in affirmative or negative form aided students in choosing the correct answer; 63% obtained high grades (between 20 and 25 points). On the other hand, in the control group, 88% of students had made mistakes identifying the auxiliary for singular and plural nouns related to short texts which presented *tag questions* in present, past and future.

Again, significant progress of the experimental group over the control group is evident. This is caused by the organization structured input activities have that facilitates the creation of an implicit linguistic system in learners that is composed by elements such as syntactic, phonetic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects (VanPatten, 2003). This was beneficial to students because they could better identify the patterns related to *tag questions* in present, past and future. Furthermore, the incorporation of structured input activities encourages the development of grammatical competence producing correct sentence processing (VanPatten, 1996). This aspect was indispensable since students focus on *tag questions* through supplying information exercises, where learners must find someone in class who has done certain activities. It produced meaningful experiences due to active interaction. The use of selecting alternatives activities helped students to process the *tag questions* patterns in automatic way, developing the implicit linguistic system by reading sentences and deciding the best option according to their reality.

## Second conditional

**Figure 10**

*Second conditional. Control and experimental group*



## Analysis and discussion of results

The collected data related to *second conditional* in the experimental group demonstrates that 29 of 35 students had a good level of this syntactic structure. The comprehension of specific details about hypothetical situations and the correct elaboration of sentences to answer questions using second conditional is what was achieved. The majority of students, or 83% had grades between 15 and 19.99 points. However, in the control group a significant number of students did not identify the structure of *second conditional*. This can

be observed in the graph above, 77% of those students confused the simple past form of verbs.

The development of the experimental group was superior to that of the control group in the mastery of second conditional tense. This is due to the incorporation of structured input activities. Since they focus on form instruction, which is intrinsic to interactive situations (Ellis, 2015). This principle is relevant because learners paid attention to the meaning of target language (in this case, second conditional) to express hypothetical situations in their lives. Another positive aspect of applying structured input activities to learn grammar is the opportunity that individuals added new linguistic forms in meaningful communicative situations (Kuhl, 2007). Fundamentally, this characteristic of these kind of activities was beneficial for students due to constant interaction between them; using the target language in small groups and answering questions about imaginary situations. The use of ranking activities helped students to focus on form. This implied a good understanding the structure of *second conditional* through ordering imaginary situations related to the actions they would do if they won the lottery.

To conclude, the students of experimental group obtained a better grade than control group after the application of structured input grammar activities. The majority of students in the experimental group had gotten a high grade (between 15 and 19.99 points) in the Post-test. Students were able to identify and understand specific information related to present perfect, used to, passive voice, tag questions and second conditional in contextualized situations, showing a good level of knowledge.

## CONCLUSIONS

The grammatical competence level of penultimate year students at Fernández Madrid High School was low before incorporating structured input activities. The application of traditional methods to learn grammar encouraged memorization of grammar rules, promoting the completion of drills through repetition techniques as the end of language learning. In consequence, students were not able to use linguistic forms to create logical sentences in order to convey basic messages in communication.

The improvement of grammatical competence of the studied sample was evidently achieved through implementing structured input grammar activities. Structured instruction

provided comprehensible input which is indispensable to automatize the processing of knowledge. The organization of structured activities simplified the identification of complicated linguistic forms and its function by frequent interaction in meaningful situations, producing the imminent internalization of grammar patterns.

The presentation of structured input activities in the experimental group increased their grammatical competence as reflected in their higher scores which vary in between 15 and 19.99 points. The best way to introduce structured input is dividing the topics into manageable pieces to facilitate students' attention. This encouraged learners to focus more on form, since the input was transparent and easy to deduce the meaning in context.

The use of binary options, matching, supplying information, selecting alternatives, surveys and ordering / ranking helped students to move from sentences to discourse since the target language were presented one at a time. It was possible to incorporate oral and written input through interactive situations in which students shared their personal experiences applying present perfect, used to, passive voice, tag questions and second conditional. Also, the incorporation of structured activities encouraged students to keep processing strategies in mind, creating the much elusive parallel internal system similar to the linguistic systems of native speakers in automatic way.

The application of structured input activities encouraged students to participate in interactive situations organized in class since they easily comprehend the meaning and function of linguistic forms. Students felt motivated to share opinions, ideas or perspectives using present perfect, used to, passive voice, tag questions and second conditional due to the structures were underlined, making easier their identification.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the successful results obtained at the end of research, one need to go no further to look for a magical formula for better language teaching in schools across Ecuador. The schools must implement structured input so as to improve other areas of language, such as speaking, while taking into consideration aspects like fluency, pronunciation and lexical resources, which can be reinforced through presenting activities like: binary options, surveys, supplying information, matching, selecting alternatives and ordering/ ranking activities to facilitate the use of English elements in communicative situations.

It is useful to include structured input grammar activities to present basic or advanced linguistic topics as the verb to be, simple past, present progressive, past perfect, future will / going to, relative clauses, conditionals, and others to make the comprehension and use of these patterns in contextualized scenarios easier. In addition, the input activities can be adapted according to the necessity and level of students.

Incorporate structured input grammar activities for A1 and A2 levels or eighth, ninth or tenth basic education courses in public or private institutions can be implemented and investigations can be conducted to further determine and study its efficacy. A control study can be organized for this purpose and determine its applicability for different levels of English.

The application of structured input activities to learn grammar in combination with other interactive strategies such as task-based learning can enhance the presented results through the organization of communicative activities like simulations, role plays, conversations or oral presentations.

In order to improve the teaching and learning process of structured input grammar activities in online classes, it is appropriate the organization of communicative tasks to encourage the active participation of students using the target forms in real life situations. Moreover, the incorporation of didactic material like videos, songs, flash cards, comics or games can help to introduce and practice the new linguistic content.

Structured input activities can be applied to develop other grammatical competence like vocabulary because it facilitates the presentation of new words in communicative contexts in which students process the meaning easily without the necessity of explicit explanations or the utilization of first language. In addition, an experimental research can be done comparing perception and production techniques to use the vocabulary in different class activities.

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**ANNEXES**

Annex 1 *Test to identify the grammar level of students before and after the application of structured input activities.*



GRAMMAR TEST FOR PENULTIMATE STUDENTS YEAR AT FERNÁNDEZ MADRID  
HIGH SCHOOL.

**GRAMMAR TEST****Level B1.1**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: / 25

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Section A****• PRESENT PERFECT**

Listen to the recording and put a cross (x) in the box next to the correct answer. (5 points)

**1. How long has he been a student?**

A  10 years

B  15 years

C  17 years

**2. What sport has he never played?**

A  football

B  basketball

C  tennis

3. What is the most extreme sport he has ever done?

- A  rafting  
B  skydiving  
C  hang glider

4. Why has he had a medical operation?

- A  because he broke the leg  
B  because he broke the foot  
C  because he broke the hand

5. What pets has he had?

- A  fish and cats  
B  cats and dogs  
C  dogs and fish
- 

## Section B

- USED TO



Listen the conversation and complete the notes. (5 points)

6. You have changed your hairstyle completely. You used to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. And of course, you used to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Hmm, well I have changed my job too. I used to \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Don't tell me you have forgotten about that old Volkswagen you used to \_\_\_\_\_!
10. Very little actually. I have moved into a new apartment on the other side of town. That place I used to \_\_\_\_\_ and cramped for me.
-

**Section C****• PASSIVE VOICE**

Read each text and put a cross (x) by the missing word or phrase.  
(5points)

11.

70 cellphones were stolen from the City Mall last week. The robbery \_\_\_\_\_ by the watchman in the morning. The thieves were captured by the police hours later.

- A  were reported  
B  was reported  
C  wasn't reported

12.

According to NASA, the earth \_\_\_\_\_ by an asteroid in about 350 years. This asteroid is made of rock and metals and it is not very big, but it can cause a catastrophe.

- A  will be hit  
B  won't be hit  
C  were hit

13.

A pet named Ringo \_\_\_\_\_ inside a car when some trees fell over it. The trees were cut into smaller sections to rescue the dog. Fortunately, the dog was not hurt.

- A  were trapped  
B  wasn't trapped  
C  was trapped

14.

“Hurricane Kim is expected to hit the coastal area of San Felipe. Schools and roads \_\_\_\_\_ and people are being evacuated”.

- A  are closed  
 B  was evacuated  
 C  is closed

15.

Archeologist, Dave Franco, was discovered one of the most important ancient ruins of a city that \_\_\_\_\_ by water for almost 5000 years. Its exact location has not been revealed yet.

- A  has covered  
 B  have being covered  
 C  has being covered

---

## Section D

- TAG QUESTIONS



Read each text and put a cross (x) by the missing word or phrase.  
 (5points)

16.

The flight tickets and the passports are in our carry-on bags, \_\_\_\_\_?

- A  aren't they  
 B  isn't it  
 C  are they

17.

The Hilton hotel looks fantastic,  
\_\_\_\_\_?

- A  **does it**  
B  **don't they**  
C  **doesn't it**

18.

Meals are not included in the plan,  
\_\_\_\_\_?

- A  **aren't they**  
B  **are they?**  
C  **don't they**

19.

They will serve breakfast at 8 AM by the  
pool, \_\_\_\_\_?

- A  **won't they**  
B  **will they**  
C  **would they**

20.

We booked a room with a view of the  
beach, \_\_\_\_\_?

- A  **don't we**  
B  **didn't we**  
C  **did we**
-

## Section E

- **SECOND CONDITIONAL**



Read the essay below and answer the questions. (5 points)

### IF I WON THE LOTTERY

I can imagine what my life would be like if I won the lottery. Wow! I could do so many things, and my life would be so different. I would love the chance to change my life with the money. The first thing I would do is buy a big, new house. I live in a small apartment, and I have always dreamed of living in a big house in the country. With all that money, I could buy anything I wanted. I don't have a car right now, so I would buy a new car. Or, I might even buy a new motorcycle. I like motorcycles, and I can imagine myself driving down the highway with the wind in my hair.

Of course, if I won the lottery, I should give some of the money to charity. I would probably give my money to a charity that helps sick children. Also, if any of my friends needed anything, I could help them pay for it. I know many people that have student loans, and I could help them pay the loans back. That would make them very happy. Plus, if I won a lot of money, I would certainly save some of it in the bank.

Also, I think that if I won a huge amount of money, I would open a business. I love to cook, and I have always wanted to open a restaurant. With all that money I could open a fancy restaurant.

However, I know one thing I would not do is travel. I have a friend who won \$100,000 in the lottery three years ago. She took the money and travelled for three months. I think she is crazy. Travelling is nice, but then she had nothing left after her vacation.

I think, however, that the only problem with dreaming about the money I could win is that I have never even played the lottery before. As they say: "You can't win if you don't play."

**21. Why would she buy a big house if she won the lottery?**

---

**22. Why would she buy a motorcycle if she won the lottery?**

---

**23. Why would she give money to charity if she won the lottery?**

---

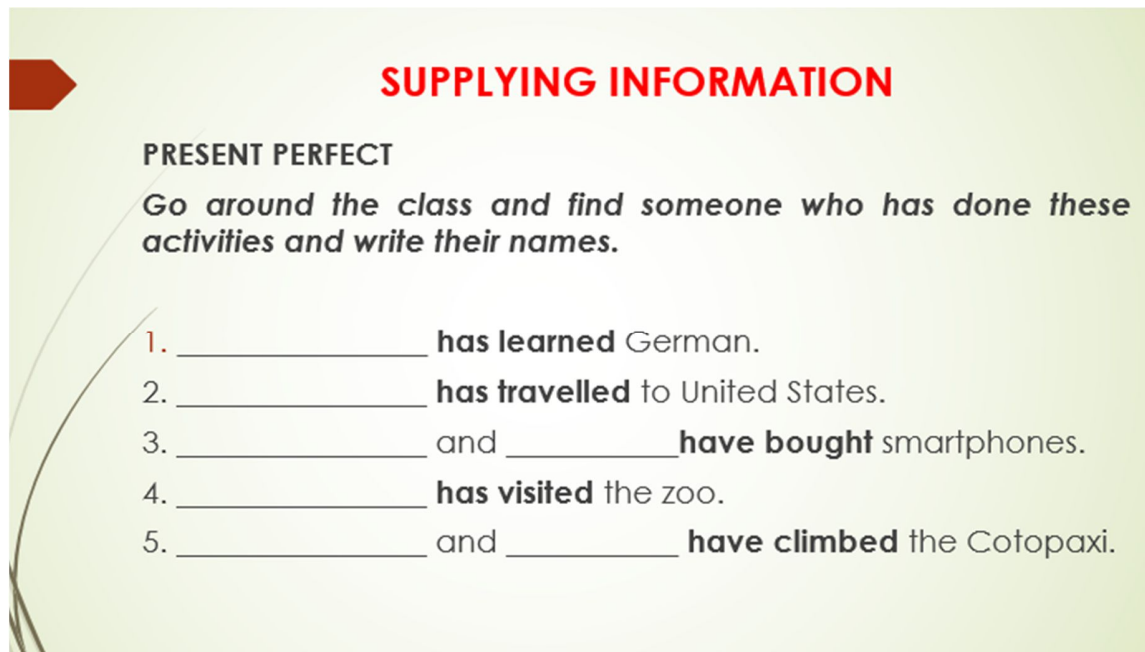
**24. What would she do if some friends needed something?**

---

25. What business would she open if she won a huge amount of money?

---

*Annex 2 Slides used in class to introduce the different grammar topics.*



**SUPPLYING INFORMATION**

**PRESENT PERFECT**

*Go around the class and find someone who has done these activities and write their names.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **has learned** German.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **has travelled** to United States.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ **have bought** smartphones.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ **has visited** the zoo.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ **have climbed** the Cotopaxi.

## BINARY OPTIONS

### USED TO

Think about some activities that your teacher used to do five years ago and decide if each of the sentences are TRUE or FALSE.

### Five years ago.....

1. She **used to** travel to Loja on vacation.
2. She **used to** watch science fiction series on Netflix.
3. She **used to** eat seafood on weekends.
4. She **used to** read the newspaper in the morning.
5. She **used to** visit her family on Sundays.

## MATCHING

### PASSIVE VOICE

Read each situation and match the facts with their author.

#### A

1. The Mona Lisa **was painted** by
2. The microscope **was invented** by
3. The tower Eiffel **was designed** by
4. Facebook **was created** by
5. The lightbulb **was created** by

#### B

Zacharias Janssen  
 Mark Zuckerberg  
 Thomas Edison  
 Leonardo da Vinci  
 Gustave Eiffel

## SELECTING ALTERNATIVES

### SECOND CONDITIONAL

*Read the situations and decide which option you would choose.*

If I **were** rich,  
 I **would travel** the world.  
 I **would buy** a big house.  
 I **would buy** an expensive car.  
 I **would go to** exclusive restaurants.

If I **had** longer summer holidays,  
 I **would sleep** more time.  
 I **would read** more books.  
 I **would learn** Chinese.  
 I **would practice** soccer.

*Annex 3 Worksheets used to help students to process the different grammar topics.*

### PRESENT PERFECT

- **What have you done lately? According to your reality, write yes or no.**

YES / NO	ACTIVITIES
	1. I <b>have eaten</b> octopus.
	2. I <b>have watched</b> "The Lord of the Rings" movie.
	3. I <b>have planted</b> a tree, fruit or vegetable.
	4. I <b>have gone</b> to the cinema with my family.
	5. I <b>have written</b> a poem.
	6. I <b>have visited</b> my grandparents many times this year.
	7. I <b>have ridden</b> a horse.
	8. I <b>have studied</b> for a Math exam.
	9. I <b>have been</b> a member of a dance club.
	10. I <b>have read</b> a good book recently.

### USED TO

- **Organize the daily routine of Cristina in chronological order.**

My name is Cristina. I studied at Central University five years ago. I used to have this routine:

ACTIVITIES	ORDER #
1. I <b>used to</b> go to university at 7: am to attend Math classes.	_____
2. I <b>used to</b> return to home at 6:00 pm to have dinner.	_____
3. I <b>used to</b> have lunch at 1:00 pm in a restaurant close to university.	_____
4. I <b>used to</b> get up at 6:00 am.	_____
5. I <b>used to</b> stay at library from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.	_____

### PASSIVE VOICE

- **Choose the best option to complete the sentences, use the information from the box below.**

Chewing gum	More wine	More moons and stars
International Women's Day	Quito	NASA's main headquarter

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **is recognized** on March 8<sup>th</sup> each year.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **is located** in Washington.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ **is produced** in Italy than France.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ **is known** as the Carita de Dios.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ **is not sold** in Disneyland.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ **are given** female names.

### TAG QUESTIONS

- Read the questions and give your opinion using this scale.

**5= strongly agree 4= agree 3=neutral 2=disagree 1= strongly disagree**

1. Ecuador is a beautiful country, **isn't it?**
2. Guayaquil and Manabí are dangerous cities, **aren't they?**
3. Netflix and Amazon Prime are the most popular streaming platforms, **aren't they?**
4. Quito's climate is very changeable, **isn't it?**
5. Guillermo Lasso is a good president, **isn't he?**