

ANALYZING CHALLENGES IN GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR EFL STUDENTS: Descriptive Quantitative Study

Nawira, Nunung Anugrawati, Muh. Arief Muhsin

English Education Department
Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia
bg15dnawira@unismuhmakassar.ac.id

Received: September 16, 2019 Revised: October 14, 2019 Accepted: November 5, 2019

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out what challenges were faced by EFL students at the English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar in their grammatical knowledge. This research used descriptive quantitative. The population of this research was the fourth semester of the English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The sample or the subject of this research was 50 students taken by accidental sampling technique. The researcher used the questionnaire as the instrument of this research. The result showed that challenges were mostly found by the students in developing their grammatical knowledge were: do not know how to organize the sentences to be a good paragraph, lack of self-confident, lack of vocabularies, lack of tenses and the biggest challenges were learning environment was too crowded, limited of time and lack of facilities.

Keywords: *Challenge, Grammatical, Knowledge, Developing, EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language became more challenging, not only for the learners but also for the educators. Akbari (2015) says that “Teaching English as a foreign language is one of the obstacles task in developing countries in general. In this modern era the English language became a more important aspect to be mastered by some people, especially in the whole world of education and also in the whole world of work, English is the most commonly used after the local language itself. Nowadays in the whole world of communication, the situation sometimes forced us able to speak English fluently. That is why English language becomes very important to be learnt, to be able to speak English properly there are several aspects that should be learnt not only about major skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) but minor skills (vocabulary, structure and grammar) also became more important aspects to be mastered.

Grammar is one of minor skill in English. Grammar became one of the most crucial aspects in learning English. This also supported by Dewi (2014) says that “grammar becomes one of the parts that is important when we study English It cannot be separated from English itself”. Many people think that knowledge of

grammar is not truly important to be mastered when we want to speak English. They think that without knowing the of grammar we still able to speak English and they think that it is okay if we lack knowledge of grammar as long as we can speak English and the other side are understand what we are talking about. Yeah, that is true, but be able to speak English fluently by using grammar accurately was better and absolutely it appreciated more.

According to Mishra (2010), she stated that there are many factors faced by the students in learning grammar. Teaching method is one of those factors. So the misunderstanding of students because of some teacher find difficulties in teaching grammar. The other one is how the students learn grammar itself. Meanwhile, Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), stated that it has been to be a problem for students to communicate fluently. From those statements above we can see that grammar still become a big problem in teaching and learning English as a foreign language, not only for the students but also for the teachers. Some students get stuck in English because lacking knowledge of grammar. That is why some questions appeared in my mind “Why learning grammar becomes more challenging than others, is it the students' fault or is there something wrong which done by the teacher in teaching grammar?. Because of those questions, the researcher tends to know more about what are the challenges faced by the EFL students in the grammatical knowledge. Formulate the research questions as follow: What challenges are faced by EFL students in grammatical knowledge at the English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Grammar

Coghill et.al (2003), stated that grammar is the way how the words are put together in the sentences that have corrects structured and meaning.

Similar to the Coghill and Magendanz, Swan (2005), stated that grammar is the rules that show how words are combined, arranged, or altered to show certain kinds of meaning.

According to Ur (1988), grammar is categorize by manipulating and combining words so that longer units of meaning can be formed. She mentions that grammar is a crucial thing in learning any language.

According to the experts above, it can be concluded that grammar is the way to organize words by words to be good sentence and where the sentences are combined to be a good paragraph.

The Importance of Grammar.

Muhsin (2015) stated that there are some advantages of studying grammar, those were:

- a. Grammar is a fundamental part of preparing for examinations.
- b. Excellent grammar makes someone be good listener, interpreter, reader and author.
- c. Excellent grammar builds up our style.
- d. Logic and reasoning.

Challenges in Developing Grammar

According to Yusof (2018) findings, there are several difficulties that faced by the English lecturer in teaching grammar, those were:

- a. Students' needs
- b. Experience
- c. Facilities
- d. Perceptions
- e. Expectations of the English lecturers

According to Akbari (2016) findings, there are some problems that face by the EFL students in Iran in learning English grammar, those were:

- a. Lack of motivation
- b. Living in rural which lack of facilities
- c. Limited vocabulary knowledge
- d. Weakness in recognizing the grammatical function of different parts of a sentence esp. in complex/compound sentences
- e. Do not know how to learn English.

METHOD

Data Analysis

In analysing the collected data, the researcher applied Likert scale scoring to know the students challenges in grammatical knowledge. After that, Computing the frequency of the rate percentage of the students' score by using the percentage system. The next step the researcher calculating the students' mean score from the questionnaire items.

Findings

Table 1. Likert Scale Questionnaire

No	Challenges	Likert scale					Total of Frequency	Percentage (%)
		SA	A	U	D	SD		
1.	I have challenges in developing grammatical knowledge.	20	15	3	10	2	50	100
2.	Difficult to organize the sentences.	9	19	13	7	2	50	100
3.	Afraid of being judged	11	22	5	7	5	10	100
4.	Panic when the lecturer asks me to make English sentences by using a proper structure or grammar.	7	10	15	16	2	50	100
5.	Not confident in making sentence.	17	8	10	10	5	50	100
6.	Lack of vocabulary.	20	17	7	5	1	50	100
7.	Do not know how to distinguish the use of all tenses in English.	25	11	6	5	3	50	100
8.	Lack of motivation.	10	10	7	20	3	50	100
9.	Pressured when attending the grammar class.	7	10	15	11	7	50	100
10.	Grammar is a big challenge in learning English.	15	20	4	7	4	50	100
11.	The atmosphere in the class influent to the students' mood.	25	5	7	6	7	50	100
12.	Lecturers' explanation is difficult to be understood.	10	5	20	10	5	50	100
13.	Learning environment is too noisy.	40	5	1	4	0	50	100
14.	Lack of facilities.	35	5	2	7	1	50	100
15.	Limited of time.	26	17	4	1	2	50	100

The first result showed that there were 50 students respond "I am difficult in learning English because I don't know how to organize the sentences". The result indicates 9 students or 18% of students who strongly agree and 19 or 38% students agreed with the statement. 13 or 26% students were answered undecided,

7 or 14% students whose answered disagree and 2 or 4% students strongly disagree with the statement.

The second result showed that there were 50 students respond "*I feel worry if the other students will laugh at me when I make a mistake in making English sentences*". The result indicates 11 or 22% students whose answered strongly agree with the statement, 22 or 44% students answered agree and 5 or 10% students were undecided with the statement. Meanwhile, there were 7 or 14% students whose answered disagree and 5 or 10% of students strongly disagree. It showed that most of the students still afraid of being judged.

The third result showed that there were 50 students respond "*My vocabulary is minimal; therefore I have difficulties in making sentences*". The result from the questionnaire indicates that there were 20 or 40 % students whose answered strongly agree, 17 or 34% students whose answered agree and 7 or 14% students answered undecided. Meanwhile, there were only 5 or 10% students disagree and 1 or 2% student strongly disagree with the statement. It showed that there were 37 or 74% from 50 or 100% students still lack vocabularies, so they cannot make good sentences or paragraph in English.

There were 50 students respond "*I don't know how to distinguish the use of all tenses in English*". The result indicates that there were 25 or 50% students whose answered strongly agree, 11 or 22% students answered agree, 6 or 12% students answered undecided, 5 or 10% students whose answered disagree and there were 3 or 6% students answered strongly disagree. It can be concluded, that there were many students did not know how to distinguish the use of all tenses in English.

There were 50 students respond "*The atmosphere in the class makes me bored in learning grammar*". The result indicates that there were 25 or 50% students answered strongly agree, 5 or 10% students whose answered agree, 7 or 14% students answered undecided, 6 or 12% students were answered disagree and 7 or 14% students whose answered strongly disagree. It meant most of the students agree with the statement.

There were 50 students respond "*My learning environment is too noisy so that I cannot learning grammar properly*". The result from questionnaire indicates that there were 40 or 80% students whose answered strongly agree, 5 or

10% students whose answered agree, 1 or 2% student answered undecided, and 4 or 8% students whose answered disagree. There was no student who answered strongly disagree. It meant *learning* environment became one of the biggest challenges in grammatical knowledge for EFL students at English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.

There were 50 students respond "*I have no enough facilities in learning grammar*". The result fro questionnaire indicates that there were 35 or 70% students answered strongly agree, 5 or 10% students whose answered agree, 2 or 4% students answered undecided. Meanwhile, there were 7 or 14% students whose answered disagree and there was only 1 or 2% student who answered strongly disagree. It meant limited of facilities became one of big challenges in grammatical knowledge for EFL students at English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.

There were 50 students respond "*My time is very limited in learning grammar*". The result indicates that there were 26 or 52% students answered strongly agree, 17 or 34% students whose answered agree, 4 or 8% students who answered undecided. Meanwhile, 1 or 2% student answered disagree and 2 or 4% students who answered strongly disagree. It meant limited of time also became one of the biggest challenges in grammatical knowledge for EFL students at English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis collected through questionnaire, it was found that the majority of the students agree with the statements. There are some challenges faced by the students in developing grammatical knowledge at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, those challenges can be seen as follow:

Not knowing how to make a good sentence

The first challenge that mostly faced by the students in developing their grammatical knowledge is not knowing how to organize the word by word to be a good sentence. Lack of knowledge of structure made the students hard to organize the sentence to be a good paragraph. It supported by the data from the questionnaire and also supported by Muhsin (2015) said that without master the

grammar we cannot be a good hearer, interpreter, reader and author. Words are only words when we do not know how to make them have great meaning.

The learning environment was too crowded

The second challenge is most of the students agree with the statement of learning environment is too noisy, so they cannot learn the grammar correctly. This statement also supported by the researcher experience as the student at Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, the researcher stated that place is too crowded of people so we cannot learn properly. It also supported by Akbari (2015) stated that the students not able to practice properly if the classes are too crowded, they don't know how to overcome the problem of language learning and also they do not know how to communicate each other.

Lack of vocabularies

One of the biggest challenges faced by the students to develop their grammatical knowledge is lack of vocabularies; it supported by the data from the questionnaire result. Most of the problem faced by the student in learning English including grammar is vocabulary, they didn't know many vocabularies, so it can make the students hard to express their ideas in English. It supported by Akbari (2016) stated that limited vocabulary knowledge is one of the problems faced by the EFL students at Iran in learning English grammar.

Lack of facilities

According to the questionnaire result, lack of facility and also lack of tenses knowledge were the biggest challenges faced by the EFL students at English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. Lack of facilities made the students difficult to develop their grammatical knowledge, many of them argued that facilities are one of the biggest challenges in developing their grammatical knowledge, because they don't have enough facilities to learn more about grammar, it supported by the data from the interview. Meanwhile, according to Akbari (2015) also stated that one problem faced by the students in learning English is a facility, most of the students have textbooks only as the tools to learn English.

Lack of knowledge of tenses

The other challenge is lack of understanding of tenses, lack of tenses made the students difficult to learn grammar because they cannot organize the sentence based on the rules or formulation of tenses. It supported by the data from the questionnaire result and Effendi et al. (2017) who said that the difference between the structure of English and Indonesian language made the students difficult to understand how to write in English by using good structure.

Lack of self-confident

The next challenge is lack of self-confident; most of the students at University Muhammadiyah of Makassar failed in grammar because they lack confidence, it supported by the data from the questionnaire result. The students feel a lack of confidence because they were afraid if they made a mistake. And afraid of being judged by their friends, so it makes the students feel a lack of confident.

Limited of time

Limited of time also one of the biggest challenges faced by the students in learning grammatical knowledge at English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. It also supported by the researcher's experience as a student at University, because there are too many activities that should be run together sometimes make us difficult to learn more properly at the same time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded there were some challenges in developing grammatical knowledge by EFL students of the English Department Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The result showed that problems were mostly found by the students in their grammatical knowledge were: they don't know how to organize the sentences to be a good paragraph, lack of self-confident, lack of vocabularies, lack of tenses, and the most significant challenges were; learning environment was too crowded, limited of time and lack of facilities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akbari, Z. (2015). *Current challenges in teaching/learning English for EFL learners: The case of junior high school and high school*. Iran: Isfahan University of Medical Sciences.
- Akbari, Z. (2016). *The Study of EFL Students' Perceptions of Their Problems, Needs and Concerns over Learning English: The Case of MA Paramedical Students*. Iran: Isfahan University of Medical Sciences.
- Al-Mekhlafi, A.M. & Nagaratnam, R.P. (2011). *Difficulties in teaching and learning grammar in an EFL context*. International Journal of Instruction.
- Coghill et.al. (2003). *English Grammar*. New York: Wiley Publishing, Inc.
- Dewi, S. M. (2014). *Difficulties in Teaching Grammar in Junior High School*. Satya wacana Christian university salatiga.
- Effendi et.al. (2017). *A Study on Grammar Teaching at an English Education Department in an EFL Context*. International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL).
- Mishra, P. (2010). *Challenges and problems in the teaching of grammar*. Language in India.
- Muhsin, M. A. (2015). *The Correlation Between Students' Grammar Knowledge Writing Ability*. Indonesia: Muhammadiyah University of Makassar.
- Munir, S. (2009). *Grammatical Awareness Among Primary School English Language Teachers*. GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies.
- Refnita, L. (2014). *Students' Grammatical Problems in Writing Simple Paragraphs: Lack of Grammatical Competency or Language Carelessness?*. Padang: Bung Hatta University.
- Sopin, G. (2015). *Students' Perceptions of Grammar Teaching and Learning in English Language Classrooms in Libya*. IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME).
- Swam, M. (2005). *Grammar, Meaning and Pragmatics*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.
- Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar Practice Activities: A Practical Guide For Teachers*. 1. Vyd. Cambridge University Press, Isbn 9780521338479.

Widianingsih, N. K. A. (2016). *Grammatical Difficulties Encountered by Second Language Learners of English*. Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching (ISELT-4).

Yusof, F. K. (2018). *Challenges of Teaching Grammar at Tertiary Level: Learning From English Lecturers' Insights*. E-Academic Journal.

How to Cite (APA style):

Nawira, Anugrawati, N., & Muhsin, M. (2019, November). Analyzing Challenges in Grammatical Knowledge for EFL Students. *Exposure: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*, 8(2), 158. Retrieved from <https://journal.unismuh.ac.id/index.php/exposure/issue/view/437>