

Constraints of Grammar Teaching and Learning: a Case Study at Junior High School

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Abstrak

This study would like to analyse constraint of grammar teaching and learning process in junior high school. The goal of this study was to examine the grammar teaching and learning process and determine the constraints to that process. The design applied in this research is qualitative approach and the type is a case study. The researcher used questionnaires, interviews, and observation to gather the data for this study. The English teacher who taught in second year students and some students became the respondents. The result of research finds the deductive approach was applied in which the rules applied and the exercises were practised. There were four constraints of grammar teaching learning i.e., lack of students' motivation, lack of teachers' role, teachers' method, and lack of materials. It is suggested that the exact plan, approach, and technique that would be most effective for junior high school kids must be determined by teachers.

Kata kunci: constraints; grammar teaching; grammar learning

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Pendahuluan

Language is one of the key components of education. Communicating with others requires using language. English is necessary in today's globalized world. It makes it simpler for people to travel to our country from other countries and speak other languages. Both spoken and written English is used more frequently nowadays. Therefore, proficiency in writing and speaking English, as well as other foreign languages, is crucial for the exchange of information (Ilyosovna, 2020; Tillayeva, 2020). Additionally, it is crucial in training learners to enter and take on the competition of the fast-changing world.

To achieve good level of proficiency in writing and speaking in English, knowledge of grammar is undoubtedly crucial. Grammar instruction has been considered important to be taught as one English lesson since there are teachers who agree that English language learning and teaching revolve around grammar (Aman, 2020: 1). They hold that grammar should be concerned with both form and meaning and that it comprises of rules for sentence formation and the use of appropriate tenses. This in line with Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam's (2011: 70) claim that three things need to be taken into account while teaching grammar: grammar as rules, grammar as form, and grammar as resource.

The decisions instructors make in the classroom regarding curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and classroom management are thought to be heavily influenced by their pedagogical beliefs on how students learn and the best types of instructions for deep learning (Aman, 2020: 2).

The focus of grammar instruction should be on helping students comprehend the proper usage of grammatical terms or sentence constructions (Yusob, 2018:150). In other words, language structure or phrase patterns, meaning, and use should all be covered in the grammar lessons.

Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam's (2011: 70) mention disparity of teachers' and students' perceptions about grammar teaching. While teachers favor communicative activities with a less conscious focus on grammar, students prefer formal and explicit grammar instruction and error correction. In the same vein, Sopin (2015: 68) said that more teachers than students had the opinion that practicing language in made-up scenarios was preferable to studying grammatical structures explicitly. On the other hand, a study by Mirazna and Hikmah (2019: 685) discover that students perceive that learning grammar is beneficial for increasing their knowledge of English. Another study by (Marlina, Sri, and Pujasari, 2016: 266) analyse students' perception toward grammar learning and grammar teaching. In terms of grammar learning, they perceive it as an important and influential to determine their success in writing and speaking English. Meanwhile, the students seem to agree that grammar teaching is better practised explicitly with more practises and exercises because they view it as significantly help them to comprehend the structures prior to practicing it. Sopin (2015: 71) conclude that some students, who have experienced learning English in EFL context, agree that the role of grammar teaching is important in language education while others view that language instruction should avoid putting too much emphasis on grammar instruction.

Difficulties also emerge in terms of what aspect of grammar to teach. Ameliani (8:2019) finds that seventh grade students face difficulties in understanding tenses, plurality, articles, prepositions and pronouns. In addition, there are factors influencing students' success such as negative interlanguage and intralingual transfers. Meanwhile, Sopin (2015: 70) states that grammar instructions should consider three aspects, i.e., the place of grammar construction in the classroom, which language skills require instruction in grammar and error correction and corrective feedback.

This study aims to discover constraints faced by teachers in teaching grammar and by students in learning grammar. Firstly, it is going to discuss the process of grammar teaching and learning at SMPN 13 Lhokseumawe. Secondly, the constraints of grammar teaching learning process of eighth grade students at SMPN 13 Lhokseumawe will be explained.

Metode Penelitian

This research uses qualitative descriptive method. The qualitative descriptive methods have become very common procedure for conducting research including education. the purpose of qualitative research is to find answers to a phenomenon or question through systematic application of scientific procedures with using a qualitative approach (Yusuf, 2014: 300). The study is descriptive qualitative in design, and the descriptive form is used by the researcher. Because the researcher's data collection is based on qualitative data, descriptive qualitative is employed in this study to explain the findings. The study's descriptive design is appropriate since it depicts the constraints faced by teachers in teaching grammar and by the students in learning grammar. The method usually used is interviews, observations, and use of documents (Moleong, 2013:5).

In this study, the following steps were followed. First, researcher observed the grammar teaching learning process of eighth grade students at SMPN 13 Lhokseumawe and asked to students fill out the questioners. The observation result became a record. Then, to deepen the information from observation and questioners, the researcher conducted interview with teacher. Result interview and then transcribed. Finally, taking into account the results of observation, questioners, and interview, researcher collected data. In doing this research, snowball technique was used. Snowballing, also known as chain referral sampling, is considered a type of purposive sampling. According to Creswell, (2012), snowball sampling is a term of purposeful sampling that often proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks participant to recommend another person to be sampled. In this method, participants or informants with who contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study.

Subjects of research in this research were students and teachers. However, source of data in the research was taken by using purposive sampling. In purposive sampling source of data was taken based on consideration or judgment. The particular subjects of research were included because they were believed to facilitate to the research. In the research, source of data was the two of English teachers that taught in second year students and three of students that willing to be participants in each class at second year students because the researcher thought they could give information about the research. From each class, three students were chosen based on the teachers' recommendation i.e., high, middle, and low level of ability. Therefore, there were nine students' participants since there were three eighth grade class in the school.

In collecting the data in this study, the writer used several instruments to find out the constraints teaching learning process at second year students at SMPN 13 Lhokseumawe, i.e., observation, questionnaire, and interview. According to Ekka (17:2021) observation is a method of data collection used mostly in qualitative research by observing behaviours, events, or recording physical traits in their natural environment. There are two types of observations: overt (where everyone is aware that they are being seen) and covert (where no one is aware that they are being watched and the watcher is hidden). During observation in this study, the researcher observed how the teaching and learning process for the grammar lesson was going on and concurrently created a checklist of the information that needed to be gathered in the classroom.

The aim of this observation was to gain direct knowledge of the actions involved in the grammar teaching and learning process between students and teachers. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked ten open questions in which respondents were invited to make additional necessary comments. A questionnaire is a series of questions made to individuals to collect data on a particular subject. Questionnaires can be an essential tool for making claims about particular individuals, groups, or entire populations when they are well designed and implemented. The questions related to second-year students at SMPN 13 Lhokseumawe and explain the limitations of the grammar teaching and learning process. This research utilized structured interviews for the interview process. When it's necessary to gather in-depth data on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings, interviews are the right technique to use (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006: 1). The interview was started by asking pre-planned questions. The researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with the respondent after collecting the data from the observation and questionnaire to make the data more understandable. Prior to the interview, certain interview questions were prepared.

Results and Discussion

Data that were collected from observation, interview, and questionnaire was then analysed to produce the research findings. Some of the research' results contained data that had no bearing on the study's main subject. According to what was observed, there was a dearth of vocabulary, the majority of pupils had trouble pronouncing words effectively, and the settings did not encourage teaching and learning. The data display left out some of the interview responses. For example, when asked about the constraints, the teachers mentioned a lack of vocabulary and pronunciations, even though this research solely focused on the grammar portion. The data from the questionnaires has also been reduced. Some students responded that they enjoyed grammar since they could speak English well on the surveys that asked about their interest in learning grammar. The response was somehow failed to relate.

The observation was conducted using a checklist of observations that was created prior to observing the limitations of the grammar teaching and learning process as well as class management. The observation emphasis mainly on three constraints: the student component (motivation, attitudes, and so on), the teacher factor (method, teaching techniques, etc.), and the material/facilities. From the students' components, it was observed that most of the students didn't have a great willingness to participate in the classroom activities related to grammar. Some of the students were less engaged, motivated, and passive as their teacher delivered the lessons.

In the classroom, the teacher was a key character in the teaching and learning processes and should serve as a manager, a controller, and a role model. One of the classrooms that was seen appeared to lack a teacher who could act as a supervisor or middleman and instead acted as the focal point of the group. She continued to teach grammar in the conventional manners or using a deductive technique, in which the introduction of a rule was followed by examples showing how the rule was used. Other teachers also offered lengthy rules, including all instances in which the grammar point was used and any exceptions, and then had their students practice them. Moreover, most of the time the teachers and students interacted in their first language which could actually decrease success in language mastery. The educational instrument that can enhance the teaching and learning of grammar is a crucial component of grammar instruction. Such instruments include flashcards, engaging books, and other teaching tools for grammar. In the observed classes, the teacher lacks the aforementioned teaching tools as the teacher relied mainly in one textbook.

Two teachers who worked with the eighth grade were interviewed as part of the research. From the interview, the first teacher said that she taught grammar in the classroom using various strategies depending on the subject, audience, and setting of the class or institution. Another teacher mentioned that she typically began her lessons by explaining the grammatical rule to the class before having them do the book's tasks. The students' lack of a dictionary, an English grammar book, or an English textbook, as well as their lack of interest in learning grammar, and the number of students in a class are some of the teachers' reported difficulties in teaching grammar.

The students' responds to the grammar teaching and learning process in the questionnaire revealed interesting results. In terms of their interests in grammar studies. Sixty percent of students claimed they had little interest in learning grammar and acknowledged its difficulty. As one of the crucial methods for learning English, grammar was cited by thirty percent of students as something they were interested in and enjoyed studying. Only ten percent of students reported understanding what their teachers communicated when asked about their performance in teaching grammar. Eighty percent of the students who disagreed said their teacher was too quick to explain things and focused only on book. There was also question regarding participation and collaborating. About sixty percent student claimed that they would participate if the teachers asked them to. As for classroom collaboration, about seventy percent said that they worked by themselves to solve grammar problems. When asked about their teaching methods, they all claimed that they were completely uninteresting.

The presentation of grammar teaching and learning in the observed class followed these steps. Traditional methods of teaching grammar include the deductive approach, in which the teacher first presents a rule before giving examples of how the rule is used. Four stages had been established i.e., presentation, isolation and explanation, practice and test. In the presentation stage, a short dialogue or short tale in the textbook was frequently read aloud by the teacher, after which the students are requested to repeat and retell it. The second stage is exclusion and justification. Teachers concentrated on the form, meaning, function, and rules of grammar at this point. The third stage is practice. At this point, teachers created a number of exercises for homework or practice in the classroom. The last stage is test. It was a fantastic idea to give the students a test to see if they had fully learned the grammar rules.

Based on observation in teaching learning process and result of interview with teachers' and students' questionnaires, four constraints of grammar teaching and learning at second years students at SMPN 13 Lhokseumawe were found. The first one is students' lacking of motivation in learning grammar. It was observed in the first meeting that the students that most of the students did not like grammar. Since they didn't pay attention to the teacher and didn't engage in the conversation during the first meeting, the majority of them weren't motivated to learn grammar. Since they only remained silent when their teacher requested them to, they exhibited passive behaviours. However, only a small percentage of pupils were enthusiastic about learning grammar. Throughout English class, they actively engaged and participated. They weren't overly engaged during the teaching and learning process, though. They were actually able to respond to the

questions, but they were ashamed to. The majority of them merely used the teacher's translation. Even when the teacher asked them to interpret the questions, they were not interested. Only some of them participated at the second meeting, while others did not. Since they had little interest in the course, they disliked learning grammar. At the second meeting, only some of them took part while others did not. They did not enjoy learning grammar because they were uninterested in the course.

The same thing occurred at another meeting in the classroom of the other teacher; despite their teacher giving them the chance, the majority of the students chose not to take part in the conversation. They simply remained mute when their teacher requested them to participate in the debate since they lacked drive to study grammar. The students were given the chance, but the majority of them did not pay attention to the teacher. They simply remained passive, demonstrating a lack of interest in studying grammar.

As observed during the first and second meetings, the majority of the students disliked grammar. They did not listen to their teacher, and they were even unaware of the lesson's subject. As it was observed in two meetings, the majority of students were uninterested in learning English and had no preparation. They just remained silent and did not take part in the discussion. They refused to translate or respond to the passage or text when their teacher asked them to do so.

The second constraint is the lack of teachers' role. According to the findings of the class observation, the teachers failed to provide the pupils with the opportunity to discover the grammatical rule on their own. In the initial meeting, the teacher and students interacted in a teacher to student setting where the teacher spoke to the students almost exclusively. Without asking any pupils to compare it, the teacher took up the most of the time by describing the formula.

The third constraint is the teaching strategy. Based on the observations, the lecturers assigned grammar exercises during grammar lessons. However, the teacher served more as the focal point of the class than as a controller or mediator in the classroom. She continued to teach grammar in the conventional manners or using a deductive technique, in which the introduction of a rule was followed by examples showing how the rule was used. Other teachers also offered lengthy rules, including all instances in which the grammar point was used and any exceptions, and then had their students practice them. The majority of the pupils reported that their teacher's teaching style did not pique their attention. They claimed that their teachers usually used the same communication technique and put greater emphasis on the textbook.

The fourth constraint is lacking of materials. From the observation, interview and students' questionnaires responses, it was found that the lack of grammar textbook and educational tools was detrimental toward the teaching and learning process. The success of the grammar session was aided by the teacher and students' access to textbooks. Lack of textbooks in the classroom might hinder or lower student and instructor motivation. Giving them previously published material was one method to help solve this problem. In the class, the teacher presented the grammar lesson using power point presentation while in another class the teacher provided copies of materials for the students to read.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, four constraints in the grammar teaching and learning are found i.e., is students' lacking of motivation in learning grammar, the lack of teachers' role, the teaching strategy, and lacking of materials. The practical implication of the results of this study is that teachers have to determine the precise strategy, approach, and technique that would work best for the junior high school students. The teacher needs to apply the model that is deemed appropriate to ensure that the learning objectives can be achieved optimally. Students' learning motivation can increase if it is done by encouraging students to be actively involved in the learning process. The practical application that can be obtained from the results of this study is that the teacher needs to apply the model that is deemed appropriate to ensure that the learning objectives can be achieved optimally. Based on the findings of the research results, further suggestions

can be made. For the teacher. The results of the study indicate that application of appropriate method can become the factor which influences the success of learning. Further research is expected to develop more in-depth research related regarding grammar teaching and learning in an effort to make a learning activity's process and product more impactful in order to make the study's findings more practical.

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