

THE INVOLVEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY IN ONLINE GRAMMAR LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic has caused a lot of changes in the field of English learning. In addition, this situation has led to a new method towards learning English specifically on grammar skills. The shift from face to face to online learning method brings about major involvements of technology in the learning process. This paper gives overviews on some technology-based tools used in learning English grammar skills specifically. The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the complicity of technology in learning English grammar. Furthermore, the effects of the new method towards the grammar learning mechanisms are also studied. Literature reviews are used as a method to explain the involvement of technology-based tools in the learning. This paper also includes several suggestions on the effective uses of technology in learning English grammar.

Keywords: grammar learning, online learning method, technology-based tools

Introduction

Language grammar learning especially English has undergone a lot of developments from the starting era of Grammar Translation Method in 1840s-1940s up to present situation where Post-Methods era becomes a trend in teaching language (Kumaravadivelu, 2005). In post-methods era, teachers have the right to develop their own teaching and learning methods. As a result, the old methods are put in pigeonholes (Kumaravadivelu, 2005). Not only has this change of perspectives towards the early methods caused the emergence of new methods specifically in English language teaching field, but it also affects the development of grammar teaching.

Normally, grammar teaching is conducted in face to face class sessions between teachers and students. This type of condition is commonly applied in any learning process. However, such a state currently cannot be experienced by both teachers and students because of the spread of Covid-19. In Indonesia, the government has officially and nationally prohibited the face to face learning method (Regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). Since the face to face method of learning has been rescinded in Indonesia, distance-learning (PJJ) is implemented by using some online platforms such as zoom, whatsapp, google classroom, and so on. This drastic transformation towards learning engenders the emergence of new learning method which is online learning method.

Online learning system is highly dependable on the accessibility of internet network. Both teachers and students must ensure that they have good internet

connection in order that the learning process can be conducted smoothly. Nevertheless, through out the implementation of this newly established method in Indonesia, most of the teachers and students still encounter a lot of obstacles regarding the access of internet. In addition, this connection problem is caused by limited internet packages that they have on their phone. This happens because mostly, they use internet packages on their phone. They don't use a wireless fidelity (WIFI) which provides a better internet connection experience due to high monthly payment applied to the service. As a consequence, this method is still far from successful.

Online Learning

Online learning is a learning system which makes a use of some technologies via internet access during its learning process (Moore et al., 2011). In the pandemic crisis such this, online learning is the main option in order to maintain education. All learning activities are conducted online including language learning especially English. Moreover, online learning is also mentioned as a tool which can initiate a more student-centred learning method, in addition to a more innovative and flexible learning environment (Dhawan, 2020). Beside a tool of learning, online learning can provide new experiences using both asynchronus or synchronus methods to teachers and students as well as be more familiar with the advanced use of technology to support the learning process such as handphone, computer, laptop, and other technological devices connected to the internet network (Dhawan, 2020).

Even though the learning processes are conducted online, all the activities, they usually do in classroom, stay the same. The only difference in this part of the process is the execution of the learning which is transformed from face to face into distanced situation (Belawati, 2020). Nevertheless, online learning is not the same as face to face learning because online learning has its own challenges. Russel (1999) in Nguyen (2015) claimed that from 350 research he conducted himself, he found out that there was no significancy between face to face learning and online learning. This means that the effectivity of each method has not yet reached any empirical conclusion.

From the above elaboration, the implementation of online learning has been applied for nationally in any educational levels in Indonesia including language learning. In this case, grammar learning also feels the wind of change from the significant effects of online learning mentioned. There are a lot of developments and changes in grammar learning system during the Covid-19 pandemic. The choice of learning materials, the dependency of technology mastery, and the way of teaching delivery are even adjusted.

Method

This paper uses a semi-systematic review method which aims to find out common concepts around the chosen research topic. The main purpose of this paper also is to overview a certain field of topic which is the technology in English grammar learning. In general, the review tries to identify and comprehend some relevant research that have implications on the chosen topic. In this paper, content analysis is used to identify, analyze, and synthesize the findings on each research related to the topic reviewed. The data in this literature review are mostly common technology-based in grammar learning that are very recent and still widely used by English learners. However, in this paper, only some of the technologies are analyzed and synthesized in order to find the common issues circled around the topic discussed in this paper.

The review go through 4 phases of conduct which are designing the review (phase 1), conduct (phase 2), analysis (phase 3), and structuring and writing the review (phase 4) based on Snyder (2019). These four phases are applied in order to exactly concentrate on the main aim of the review. The data of the review are selected regarding the most recent trends in technology-based grammar learning that are developed during Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Moreover, from the review conducted, some suggestions appear to be beneficial for the further enhancement of the topic discussed in this paper. Also, from this review, the common issues found will open up some gaps towards the future research on the same field in order to advance the knowledge

Findings and Discussion

Online Grammar Learning

As elaborated clearly above, there are many adjustments towards the foreign language grammar learning especially English. This adaptability to the new online system has several impacts on learning materials, methods, effectivities, and specifically the uses of technology. A research studied the effectivities of online learning and explained several suggestions in order to efficiently learn grammar as stated below (Payne, 2020, pp. 246-247):

1. **Sequence Activities**

Learning is conducted by applying synchronous and asynchronous learning system interchangeably. This is done in order to reduce the tendency of the learning loads felt by students.

2. **Understand the Limitation of Video Conferencing Tools Like Zoom**

VCT is a definitely useful technology support in online learning. However, there are also many limitations towards the use of VCT such as learning interaction between both teachers and students especially for big classes which consist of more than 30 students and time as well as internet connection which complicates the interaction during class sessions.

3. **Create Mini-Lecturers**

Making mini-lecturers can be an alternative choice to deliver learning materials. Thus not only do teachers deliver the learning materials spokenly through VCT, but they can also record the delivery during class sessions which can be sent later on to students. In this way, students who are absent can also get the benefit from the recorded sessions. This method of delivery is called Microlearning Approach.

4. **Grammar Instruction**

This method of grammar learning depends of types of instruction given to students in relation to certain grammar lessons. For example, teachers give presentation assignments to explain one of tenses in English. Then in VCT, teachers only have a representative of the class to present the material and listened by other students until all of them are able to grasp the presentation together.

5. **Avoid Explicit Error Correction During Text Chat Sessions**

This is done in order to prevent students's reluctancy to communicate via text. Hence from that, teachers are adviced to avoid correction feedback directly to them via text as much as possible.

6. **Teacher Participation in Asynchronous Discussion Forums**

In asynchronous sessions, discussion forums are one of the most effective learning methods. Teachers give a certain topic, and then students discuss it. However, it

will be much better that the roles of teachers are only a facilitator during the discussion sessions, and a clarifier when the discussions go too far from the focus of the lesson.

7. Acknowledge Student Discussion Forum Contribution in Live Class Sessions. This is done in order to know that teachers pay attentions to the flow of discussion. Provided information during asynchronous sessions can be a reference for synchronous discussions. From this reference, the involvements of silent students can be increased in online communication.

Some of the suggestions for learning grammar online explained can be a reference for teachers in order that the implementation of online learning can run efficiently. Besides that, by noticing several aspects mentioned above, the purpose of online learning can be achieved. In addition, the learning materials are accessible for students. The efficiency of online learning can also be seen from online learning facilities and flexibilities of the usage. A study found out that supporting facilities and usage flexibilities could influence the success of online learning (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). Furthermore, the enhancement of internet connection infrastructures and learning instruction also become crucial factors in succeeding the online learning (Giatman et al., 2020). This shows that the success of online grammar learning still faces many challenges which need to be considered carefully. Moreover, this can also affect the escalation of learning qualities during Covid-19 pandemic.

Technological Involvements

The online grammar learning method has run into some changes. One of them is the use of web-based learning. Web-based learning is full of learning materials provided in the internet and, it can be accessed freely by people (Yusof & Saadon, 2012). However, this grammar learning method has significant differences if compared to the traditional ones (Yusof & Saadon, 2012). In spite of this, teachers have to control the choice of learning materials obtained from the internet and observe the learnability and accuracy of the materials. In relation to the online grammar learning materials, some of them sourced in the internet are classified traditional and structural which are not based on communicative grammar learning approaches. Both teachers and students have to be well aware of this issue and consider carefully the use of the materials and technologies based on the aim of learning (Arikan, 2014).

Although the understanding of learning materials and technologies should be considered, those obtained from the internet can develop an autonomous learning because students are able to access varieties of grammar resources and practice their grammar ability by using all the provided exercises in the internet (Pinto-Llorente et al., 2017). Furthermore, as the advancement of web-based learning continues to grow, some studies have tried to examine several types of this method. For example, the transformation into this web-based learning does not only involve computer users, but the development of its learning method needs to be considered also (Margaryan & Kalugina, 2020). Based on this view, several modified versions of this method raise the head. Some of them are personalized online learning lab (Sizemore, 2017) and English in the Digital Age (Margaryan & Kalugina, 2020).

The personalization towards the online grammar learning is conducted in order to see its effectivities. This is also one of the learning innovations made to limit the use of online materials too freely from the internet. The emergence of personalization in

learning makes possible for teachers and students to implement better learning outcome and reach achievable learning aims.

Benefitted from the free access online learning materials, teachers and students are faced with the impacts of other sources of learning. One of them is online website link which has influenced the comprehension of students's grammar outcome (Ekaningsih, 2017). Besides that, one of the research mentioned those online learning materials as concordancers which can be integrated into online grammar learning (Türkmen, 2016). These concordancers can be in the form of readings and videos. One of the studies on the use of online video learning materials is called SITCOM learning videos from youtube platform. This study shows that by watching such videos, students are able to improve their grammar ability (Saeedi & Biri, 2016). Moreover, video-based learning uploaded in youtube can have positive impacts towards online learning even though basically the methods used in the video are very traditional (Fay & Matias, 2019). This method indicates that video-based online grammar materials have beneficial effects to students, and it can give purposeful contributions in the improvement of their grammar knowledge.

Beside video-based materials, reading resources can also be a reference in learning grammar online. There are many types of readings that students can read online such as newspaper, articles, journals, news, magazines, and many more. Newspapers, for example, are very resourceful information about a lot of reading topics. Teachers can look for one of the texts in the newspaper and bring it into the class. However, this way of learning using newspaper has not given any proves regarding its effectiveness. One of the evidences of a study comparing two different groups of students with newspapers and without them shows that the newspapers group has lower scores in learning than the other one (Novita et al., 2016).

From the explanation related to some considerations towards online grammar materials, there is another big challenge which is the use of technology as a supporting tool in learning process. The use of technology is a major factor in online grammar learning. Technologies play a crucial role as means of communication between teachers and students. They also have a role as learning supports because they are used to replace the normal teaching activities during Covid-19 pandemic.

There are many technological supports used and studied regarding their efficiency in online grammar learning. One of them is concept-based instruction (CBI) or Glow@CBI. This technology can be an alternative learning application especially for students on beginner level to focus more on their target language learning (Harun et al., 2018). Although it is not fully explained how to use the application on the article, this still shows that technology can help improve their grammar knowledge. Apart from Glow@CBI, one of video conference tools, released long time ago, is skype. This VCT is also used in online grammar learning. Skype offers various learning facilities which can fulfill the purpose of online learning (Szedmina & Pinter, 2010). Some of them are listed below:

1. Simple and easy communication system.
2. Easy conference settings.
3. Interaction between users can happen with or without headset or headphone.
4. Chat features are provided in order to write comments writtenly.
5. Easy learning materials transfer between users.

However, these easy and simple features provided by technology are not separable from the limitation of internet connection owned by each user. Hence from that, online grammar learning is in need of other applications to evaluate grammar accuracy learned synchronously. One of the programs emerged in recent years is grammar checker. It is a program which is able to assess the grammar accuracy used in it. The utilization of the program has proven positive impacts in the improvement of its user grammar ability especially in the accuracy and writing evaluation. From this, it becomes one of the solutions in upgrading writing qualities because writing qualities are rated based on accurate grammar and language systems (Perdana & Farida, 2019). This indicates that the program become an important innovation in online grammar learning if it is seen in terms of evaluative aspect of learning.

Furthermore, grammar checking softwares (GCS) also help their users in understanding correction written when they do checkings. This proves positive impacts especially to the development of grammar learning and grammar updating learned by students (Kokkinos et al., 2020). Grammar learning always go through shiftings as the language itself. GCS assist their users to adjust with the updates. One of the most popular GCS studied in the research is grammarly. A research studies on the use and efficiency of grammarly in scoring grammars and punctuations which found out that grammarly is able to ameliorate its users's writing, give feedback on grammars and punctuations, and connect to Ms. Office in for the data transfer, as well as show definitions and synonyms of words with only two clicks (Gain et al., 2019).

With the emergence of grammarly application which has been proven for its efficiency based on research mentioned, online grammar learning becomes more innovative and modern. Teachers are given easiness in checking grammar mistakes in their students' writings, and students even can access the application easily to see the accuracy of their grammars. With this simplicities provided, online grammar learning can be conducted more efficiently. Some of these GCS can be accesed freely. However, some are also limited to premium uses that require monthly payments by giving different privileges to its users.

Other than grammarly, during the Covid-19 pandemic, some online learning technologies are released. One of them is called EdTech start-ups. These learning technologies consist of some online learning applications which can be accesed freely or paid by its users. In Indonesia, some of the applications are cakap, ruangguru, zenius, quipper, and many more. Some of these applications as well offer a lot of learning services other than language. This becomes a unique characteristic of learning in pandemic era because face to face learning is not yet allowed. In Addition, those applications are not only for learning, but they also become media of interaction between teachers and students. This interaction is needed especially in grammar learning, so that their language knowledge remains maintained because they have practice partners and times.

Besides the use of applications, collaborative learning can also be another alternative for online learning. Collaborative grammar learning can also promote cultural knowledge, so students is able to know both the language and the culture of that language (Angelova & Zhao, 2016). Learning collaboratively also influence students's general knowledge, so they become more closed to the language they learn. This familiarity towards the target language can be achieved in some ways. One of them is through gamification which is an approach in learning using games. One of the applications in gamifications is called wordbricks. Wordbricks is a cellular

technology which is intended to introduce various types of games in a form of jigsaw blocks to learn foreign language grammars (Purgina et al., 2020).

Conclusion

From detailed elaboration above, it can be observed that the impacts of limitations caused by Covid-19 pandemic are the emergence of new learning method which is online learning. This learning method uses technologies as means of learning. Furthermore, the emersion of online-based learning applications helps interaction proses between teachers and students. However, online grammar learning is still faced by many big challenges in terms of technical and implementation issues. For these reasons, a lot of future research on the field of online grammar learning are crucial for accomplishing full success and efficiency in grammar learning.

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