

FACTORS WHY STUDENTS FAILED IN THEIR INTERMEDIATE GRAMMAR CLASS

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Abstract

This study aims to explore factors that make students fail in their intermediate grammar at PBI-UKSW. This is qualitatively study. There were seven students from an Intermediate Grammar class at PBI-UKSW who participated in the interview that were chosen through criterion sampling. The data were gathered through a semi-structured interviews and used thematic analysis to analyze the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. This study found three main factors that made students fail in learning Intermediate grammar, especially for the students in the major of PBI-UKSW. The first factor was many grammar patterns make students fail in their intermediate grammar classes. Second, another factor was students are not used to taking online classes, so they find it challenging to follow learning. The last, factor was students' become less motivated to study intermediate grammar. To overcome these factors and students must work well together. Creating interesting classes and individual learning from all sources will make learning an intermediate grammar course easy.

Keywords: *Intermediate Grammar students, factor fail intermediate grammar, intermediate grammar challenge*

A. INTRODUCTION

In this era, all people around the world use English to communicate because English is an international language. Language structure such as grammar is an important part to learn English. Brown (1991) argues that grammar serves as a hook for learners, who use it as a foundation to improve their proficiency in the target language. Grammar is learning how words and component parts combine into sentences. Grammar is a set of rules that allow us to combine words in our language to form bigger units (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002). According to Asni and Susanti (2018), grammar includes clear rules for the creation and analysis of words, phrases, and sentences to create a meaningful line of sentences. With the good formation of words, grammar delivers the message of an individual's ideas properly (Ardin, 2017).

However, grammar has always been a challenge for students, even in a college. Grammar complexity inevitably makes some students fail their Grammar classes. This situation also happens at the university student level, such as in the Intermediate Grammar class at the English Language Education Program at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga (henceforth called PBI UKSW). Previous studies reported why students failed grammar classes. Dewi (2019) reported that three factors caused students to fail their Grammar classes. The first factor was mastering too much content and having limited time to study grammar. The second factor was students' difficulties in reviewing grammar lessons at home. The third factor was teachers who explained the materials too quickly and students who struggled to apply grammar principles outside the classroom.

Another factor was a lack of understanding of the complexity of grammatical features and the low quality of textbooks used by students (Komara & Tiarsiwi, 2021). Because of the many formulas and rules in grammar, students experience difficulties understanding them (Warden, 2018). Besides that, Handayani (2018) stated that students are confused by using many tenses in writing. When they write sentences in English, most of them employ incorrect verbs in each tense. This finding might indicate that students' ability to learn grammar remains low, and they also have difficulty learning grammar.

Regarding learning English grammar, some students think learning English grammar is difficult and boring. According to Haudeck in Sani (2016), even often taught intensively, many students struggle to internalize grammar rules. Al-mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) stated that grammar is frequently perceived as a complex or intimidating subject. Sary (2015) reported that 98 percent of her students have significant issues or deficiencies in learning or understanding English grammar. Patterson (2001) explained that students with a poor understanding of grammar would have no idea what they should do while writing and struggle to communicate their thoughts in written form. Moreover, in recent years, technology has quickly advanced and overtaken many aspects of education (Mali & Santosa, 2021).

Students have significantly benefited from the switch from face-to-face to online learning since it has opened the door to all students. However, learning grammar online is quite difficult for students because online lessons require a lot of time, skill, practice, and patience (Halim, *et al* 2021). Halim, *et al.* (2021) stated that the whole situation changed when lessons moved from face-to-face to online. Some students simply attended class without contributing or following their teacher's online instructions. Few students were motivated to learn the material, and most students lacked interest. The frameworks and rules covered in the classes were also less frequently implemented. Finally, students could not understand anything and were afraid to approach their teachers.

Therefore, this research focus on in exploring further factors that make students fail in their intermediate grammar at PBI-UKSW and expected to give teachers insight into students' problems or challenges when learning grammar, particularly in the Intermediate Grammar classes. Moreover, this study is also expected to be a reference for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to learn possible strategies used when learning grammar to succeed in similar grammar classes.

B. METHOD

The researcher approached the study qualitatively. The researcher uses semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews help the researcher to explore more students' perceptions, opinions, and experiences on factors they failed in their intermediate grammar class. In addition, the researcher got more answers from the questions given to students and answers all research questions from her research. The research participants in this study were seven students from an Intermediate Grammar class at PBI-UKSW. The researchers chose those seven participants because the participants had failed more than once in their Intermediate Grammar class. After obtaining all the data needed, the researcher used thematic analysis (henceforth called TA) to analyze the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. TA is a technique for systematically identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) in qualitative data set (Braun & Clarke, 2017; Neville *et al.*, 2015; Niland *et al.*, 2014). The researcher used TA to see and understand collective or shared meanings and experiences from the interview transcriptions.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data gathered from the research, there found some challenges that the students encounter in the ESP Course.

1. Many Grammar Patterns Make Students Fail in Their Intermediate Grammar Classes

Two interview participants said that many patterns used in an intermediate grammar course make them fail in their class.

Excerpt 1

The factor is from grammar we learn a lot of patterns, for example, simple past, past tense, or present continuous past continuous. There is a test that determines our results later, so in the test, sometimes we are confused when we are told to specify, for example, which pattern it enters, we get confused, and sometimes we make mistakes there, so we fail right on the test. (Student 1/ interview)

Excerpt 2

The first thing that makes grammar difficult is that there are lots of patterns, so I get confused and if I don't know how to translate a sentence, it also makes it difficult for me to learn grammar. (Student 5/ interview)

Based on the statement above both student 1 and student 5 mentioned that many patterns were used while they were learning grammar; the various patterns made them confused, especially when there was a test. Both of them did not master grammar, they easily got confused about which grammar pattern they should use to answer the questions in their Intermediate Grammar test. The findings showed that are many patterns in grammar and online classes made the students fail in their Intermediate grammar class at that time. This finding is in line with Al-mekhlafi and Nagaratnam's (2011); Handayani's (2018); Warden's (2018) views that grammar is complicated and has many patterns that make students confused. Many patterns used in grammar such as the simple present, past tense, present continuous, or past continuous had an impact on students' confusion and they did not know what they should write in their writing test.

Moreover, students' lack of understanding of grammar results in them not being able to write down their ideas. Patterson (2001) explained that students with a poor understanding of grammar would have no idea what they should do while writing and struggle to communicate their thoughts in written form. During the interview, most students said that they frequently had difficulties with what they wrote on their paper when they took a tests, or did some exercises because of their lack of understanding of grammar. It was challenging for them to write their thoughts on paper because the grammar was complex. Al-mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) stated that grammar is frequently perceived as a complex or intimidating subject.

2. Students are not Used to Taking Online Classes, so they find it Challenging to Follow Learning

Most of the students also said that they were not familiar with online classes, and they experienced online classes during learning intermediate grammar classes. Since it was their first-time online class, it was tough for them to understand the explanation that was given to them. Besides that, they felt challenges in Internet connection during the course, and most of them faced unstable internet connections while in online classes. As a result, they do not understand the materials well, making them fail their intermediate grammar class.

The factor for my failure was mainly because of the online learning method, so it was difficult for me to understand the material because the way the teacher delivered the material was not direct. (Student 3/ interview)

Then the second factor that made me fail in intermediate grammar was when I took an online class for intermediate grammar. And for zoom meetings, we only do it a few times, and for the rest, sometimes the lecturer conducts classes via the WhatsApp group. Besides that, the internet network is also less supportive because it often rains here, and the lights go out, so sometimes the internet network is lost. (Student 4/ interview)

The interview above shows that online classes have become a factor in students' failure in their online grammar class. Student 2 said she found difficulties in understanding the materials well. Meanwhile, student 4 faced an unstable internet connection during online class as a result she did not follow the class till the end. Both student 2 and student 4 stated that they found learning intermediate grammar online challenging. Furthermore, the findings showed that students were not used to taking Online Classes, and they found it challenging to follow learning. In this case, all of the students were taking an Intermediate grammar class online; since it was their first time they did the online class, they were not really familiar with the teaching method the teacher used during an online class. In online classes the teacher struggled to deliver the materials, it was different when teachers teach in offline classes. Li and Irby (2008) stated that it can be extremely difficult to create new materials or adapt existing materials from face-to-face sessions for use in an online environment.

This finding also supports Crawley, *et al* (2009) argumentation that lack of visual and face-to-face interaction with their students causes many teachers to struggle with subject delivery and student engagement. Another factor why students fail in the Intermediate Grammar classes was that almost all students when interviewed said they did not understand the lesson well when taking online classes. Students did not contribute enough in the class, they were more passive since their teacher did not ask them to read or present at that time. It decreases students' participation in class. Moreover, McInnery and Roberts (2004) stated that online classes make students feel isolated and disconnected, which could affect their ability to concentrate. Most of the students said that they had an unstable internet connection in the middle of the lesson when the teacher was explaining the material.

3. Students' Become Less Motivated to Study Intermediate Grammar

The way teachers deliver the materials can be a reason why students fail in their Intermediate Grammar course. Some students said that they did not have any motivation to study because the materials were complicated to understand, and the way the teacher delivered the materials was boring, so they did not understand the material well, which made them lazy to study.

The biggest challenge is fighting laziness. It's as tricky as grammar material; it's not that difficult if we are diligent. Because yesterday I learned online. More underestimated while studying, so it's hard to motivate me. (Student 2/ interview)

Without motivation, I feel lazy, which can no longer be controlled. (Student 6/ interview)

The interview showed that both students did not have the motivation to learn. As a result, they were too lazy to study, which made them fail in their Intermediate Grammar class. This finding shows that students become less motivated to study intermediate grammar. Because the grammar is so complex that it has many formulas and tenses used, it makes it difficult for students to understand grammar. Students said that they had no motivation to learn grammar.

They felt lazy because the grammar was complex and online classes made it difficult for them to understand grammar material. As a result, the students were not successful in the grammar test and failed the grammar class. Saade, *et al* (2007) stated the success of learners in online environments depends on their motivation for learning, which helps them to match their efforts with their goals and improves learner persistence. Meanwhile, learning motivation played a significant part for someone. Motivation forces people to study things they do not particularly enjoy since they must do so in order to master grammar. Hung, *et al* (2010) said the desire to do something out of curiosity and enjoyment is referred to as motivation.

E. CONCLUSION

To conclude, three main factors make students fail in Intermediate Grammar classes. The first one is the various grammar patterns the students should use, most of student still fail and have difficulties when taking grammar courses because of many patterns were used while they were learning grammar, the various patterns made them confused, especially when there was a test. The second one is online classes which impact students' understanding of the materials well because students find it challenging to learn in online classes, since it was their first-time online class, it was tough for them to understand the explanation that was given to them.

The third one is the students' low motivation to study grammar, students said that they did not have any motivation to study because the materials were complicated to understand, and the way the teacher delivered the materials was boring, so they did not understand the material well, which made them lazy to study. Therefore, the teacher and students must be aware of this matter in order to prepare for teaching and learning better in future.

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