

Students' Perception toward Online Self-Access Learning in English Language Learning

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Abstract

This study is related to the application of computer which is meant as a medium of online language learning. The study aims at finding out students' perception toward online self-access learning (OSAL) and the correlation between OSAL and their grammar achievement. Online self-access learning refers to a kind of fully autonomous learning done by each individual student through internet. In this study the particular English language learning focuses on a language aspect, grammar. The major discussions regarding the students' perceptions toward English language learning were mainly to seek the answers of the questions on: (1) link addresses of OSAL in general, (2) online grammar materials provided, (3) benefit of OSAL, and (4) the correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and students' grammar achievement. The data were taken from a questionnaire of 20 close items given to 35 undergraduate students of the English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University. The descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the response of the students' perception toward OSAL was generally positive in which the overall average score of their perception toward OSAL was 4.15 in the category of *agree* in the Likert's scale. This means that they supported the application of OSAL in English language learning. Another finding was from the result of regression analysis in which R^2 was 0.279 meaning 27.9% of OSAL gave effective contribution toward students' grammar achievement. Besides, the correlation was negative (r coefficient = -0.528), but there was a significant correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and their grammar achievement as the p -value 0.001 was less than 0.05.

Keywords: autonomous learning, language aspect, online self access learning, students' perception

Introduction

The success of language learning can be obtained from independent study by each individual language learner. The independent study, so called self-access learning, is not new in educational environment as it has been applied by educators from time to time. The term self-access itself can be defined as “the organization of learning materials and equipment which are made available and accessible to students without necessarily having a teacher present” (Diaz, 2012, p. 117). While Hornby (2014, p. 1206) says that self access is a method of learning in which students choose their materials and use them to study on their own. The advantage of self-access learning (SAL) is basically to get extra knowledge about the topic they have from their formal classes. One of the advantages of SAL is that it is a flexible and student-centered option, offering instructors and institution a means of supporting students in their out-of-class learning (McCarthy, 2011).

Self-access learning is a part of autonomous learning. One of the characteristics of autonomous learning is independence (Weiguo, 2003). In this study autonomous learning can be defined as the activity of students to learn what they need to learn related to their previous studies by themselves freely.

The importance of self-access learning has been commonly available in language learning centers as they usually provide facilities such as rooms completed with self-access materials in the form of printed and non-printed ones. Books, magazines, newspapers, etc. are all examples of printed materials. While, CDs, films, cassettes that need equipment to operate, including computer-based materials are categorized as non-printed ones.

The use of self-access learning is unquestionable. Dickinson in Lin and Cheng (2010, p. 2677) provides such five benefits of autonomous learning for self-access learners as to identify what's been taught, formulate their learning objectives, select and implement suitable learning strategies, and monitor their own learning strategies. While Holec as cited in Balçıkankh (2010, p. 80) states that one purpose of promoting learner autonomy, which is meant for self-access learning here, is used to encourage students to define the contents and progressions.

In the era of modern technology self-access learning can be done through online. This means internet has become a popular medium for online educational information retrieval. The use of internet is included in the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education environment especially in English language teaching (ELT). ICT itself has been introduced in many education systems throughout the world since the mid 1980s (Pelgrum and Voogt, 2009, p. 293). Hockly and Dudeney (2008, p. 8) believes that the use of ICT itself is an essential part of ELT as ICT tools provide learners to expose and practice the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This study is about online self-access learning (OSAL) in English language learning. Online self-access learning is a fully autonomous learning through online in which the students feel free to learn any materials they like in a place where internet connection is available. Song, Hill, and Koh (2004) identify both flexibility and convenience are considered as strengths of online learning. In other words, online learning provides students to be able to complete learning units whenever and wherever they like to learn through online.

OSAL can be done in a formal self-access language center equipped with computers connected to internet or in another place where Wi-Fi is accessible so that students can make use of their own laptop or any other related medium. The practice or the implementation of OSAL in this study focuses on English grammar learning.

Research Questions

The idea of getting information about OSAL from the students is essential as to know whether this kind of activity is good enough to be applied for the purpose of grammar learning. Grammar is one of the language aspects that the students commonly study while learning a language. Therefore, the topic seems to have the following problems:

1. What is students' perception toward online self-access learning in English grammar learning?
2. Is there any correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and their grammar achievement?

Meanwhile, the objectives of this study are to find the students' perception toward online self-access in English grammar learning and to see whether there is a correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and their grammar achievement. The term students' perception refers to their idea of or response to what is being introduced or performed, in this case, OSAL.

Overview of English Language Learning

This study is actually based on Indonesian context taking place at higher education institution in which English, taught as a foreign language, is included in the curriculum as a school subject. The number of credits of English language learning may vary in higher education institutions. Some study programs offer 2-4 credits while others offer more than 4 credits depending on how important English is taught at the study program concerned. For example, at the Nursing Study Program of Sriwijaya University, students have to take 4 credits as stated in the curriculum of the study program and an additional one hundred-hour Intensive English Training Program before their graduation as certified nurses.

The teaching of English at Sriwijaya University is included in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Most language learning materials prepared at this institution are related to ESP. Reading skill as the target language has been more emphasized for the ESP study. This is in line with what Ramirez (2005, p. 380) says that "the teaching of ESP is meant to increase a deeper knowledge of the context or texts occurring within it". Reading skill has become the target language as most books, journals or any other related sources in educational information center such as library as their academic references are written in English. The learners' purpose for learning the target language became the most important (Maleki, 2008). In addition, the topic of reading materials usually reflects the discipline of the study program. For examples, the topic about "Fish Management" is probably suitable for the students of aquaculture, the topic about "Green House" is good for the students of agriculture, and the topic about "Legal Issue" is appropriate for those majoring in law.

Methodology

This section discusses the participants of the study and data collection.

Participants

This study was conducted to the 35 fourth semester undergraduate students of English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University in the academic year 2013/2014 taking Structure II subject. They had already taken their preliminary subjects, Intensive English Course (IEC) and Structure I. The students taking this study program plan to be secondary school English teachers when they graduate. English Study Program offers major courses of English language education covering the four language skills and aspects, linguistics, and some other related educational ones. The procedures of online self-access learning for grammar learning are so simple as in the following activities.

1. In this study the students were asked to do self-access study about grammar for 1-2 hours after each meeting of their Structure II class within the semester in the language laboratory connected to internet and Wi-Fi.
2. When the students were in the language laboratory, they began searching using computers available or their own laptop. What they did for their OSAL was to learn more about what grammar materials had already been learned during classes by getting access to a variety of link addresses. The grammar materials covered the major topics offered within the semester such as passive sentences, noun clauses, adjective clauses, adverbial clauses, reduced adjective and adverbial clauses, and other related topics.
3. Each student might have different link addresses with a variety of grammar materials or he or she might work together for discussion related to the grammar materials available in the link addresses provided there is no space for the internet individually.
4. There was no need that the students should report their work, but they had to sit and do searching for grammar knowledge within time allocation.
5. Although this activity was purely autonomous learning, the teacher should stay in the lab in case the students needed any help if there was no staff available.

Data Collection

The instrument to investigate students' perception toward online self-access learning was a questionnaire tried out to non sample students for its validity and reliability. The questionnaire consisted of 21 positive statements (items) containing such three major points as link addresses for grammar information retrieval in general, online grammar materials, and benefit online-self access language learning. The students were asked to select one of the five Likert's scale choices (scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1) which had been established and converted to the category of *strongly agree*, *agree*, *fair*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree* for each item. To make sure whether the students' answers to each item was consistent or not, they were given another 21 negative statements which were the opposite of the positive ones. In completing a questionnaire, it sometimes happens that the respondent tends to select whatever choice he or she likes without reading the whole statement. In the website of <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w3241e/w3214e05.htm>, it is mentioned that it is common for a respondent to be increasingly reluctant to the questionnaires because of fatigues as it is close to the end. Logically, when the students' answer for a positive item is *strongly agree*, the answer for a negative item, which is the opposite, should be *strongly disagree* or at least *agree*. It should be noted that these 21 additional statements were not included in the analysis of the study.

As presented in the Figure 1 below, the response of the students toward the OSAL questionnaire is relatively consistent. The result of the questionnaire shows that 79% of the respondents chose the category of *agree* and *strongly agree* for positive statements, while in contrast, 80% of them chose the category of *disagree* and *strongly disagree* for negative statements. Although there is a very slightly different number of percentage (1%), this reflects that the respondents seemed to be consistent in answering the questionnaire.

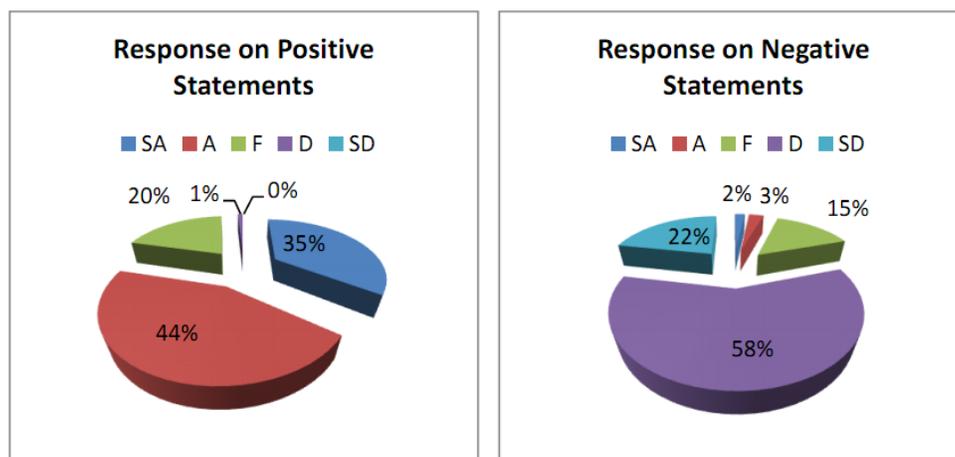


Figure 1. Diagrams of students' response on online self-access learning (OSAL) questionnaire. Note. SA = *strongly agree*, A = *agree*, F = *fair*, D = *disagree*, SD = *strongly disagree*

To determine the validity of the questionnaire, statistical analysis using *Social Package for Social Science* (SPSS) 16.0 version was applied. The first try out shows that three items (4, 8, and 17) were not valid, but after having been revised and retried out, all the invalid items were found valid. Meanwhile, the reliability analysis using *Cronbach's Alpha* reveals that the test instrument was reliable ($0.809 > 0.334$ in *r* table) as shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1 Reliability statistics using *Cronbach's alpha coefficient*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.809	21

The other instrument was a test on grammar actually given to find out whether there was a correlation between OSAL and students' grammar achievement. The test, in the form of essay questions consisting of 20 items containing all topics taught within the semester, was given once at the end of the instruction. All the collected data were calculated and analyzed using regression analysis and simple statistics included in SPSS package 16.0 version.

Results and Discussion

Students' perception toward OSAL

As already mentioned before, the discussion of the students' perception toward online self-access learning focuses on the questionnaire of consisting of 3 major points: link addresses for grammar information retrieval in general, online grammar materials, and benefit online-self access language learning. In addition, the correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and grammar achievement is also discussed.

a) Link addresses for grammar information retrieval

Link address is an internet address of a website, file, or document in the general format (Business Dictionary, 2014). The examples of link addresses of grammar learning are www.ego4u.com, for English grammar online, www.english-grammar.at, www.grammar-horror.de for English materials, and www.perfect-english-grammar.com/grammar-exercises.html for free English grammar exercises and quizzes.

The students' perception on link addresses that provide access on online grammar generally consisted of five statements as shown in the Table 2 below completed with mean and standard deviation of each statement.

Table 2 *Students' perception on link addresses for grammar information retrieval*

No	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	There are many link addresses providing a variety of grammar learning.	4.34	.84
2	Link addresses are easy for access and user-friendly.	4.11	.68
3	Link addresses usually give feedback on exercises provided.	4.34	.84
4	Link addresses usually provide correct answers on grammar exercises available.	4.23	.69
5	Link addresses usually provide some explanations, examples, exercises, and instruction for every single grammar topic.	4.11	.72
Total average score		4.23	.75

From the Table 2, the average of students' perception on link addresses for grammar access is 4.23. This means that the students felt satisfied with link addresses they got access to as the score 4.23 is converted *agree* in the Likert's scale. In other words, link addresses containing a variety of grammar learning materials which are easily accessible and provide various kinds of grammar exercises with explanations and feedback gave a positive response to the students.

b) Online grammar materials

Mean and standard deviation of students' perception on online grammar materials are shown in the Table 3 below.

Table 3 *Students' perception on online grammar materials*

No	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Grammar materials available in link addresses vary in terms of their level of difficulty.	4.34	.84
2	Grammar exercises provided in some link addresses vary in relation to the type of questions.	4.11	.72
3	Grammar materials available in most link addresses cover various kinds of grammar learning.	4.11	.63

4	Grammar exercises available in most link addresses are graded from the easiest to the most difficult ones.	4.34	.84
5	Grammar materials in link addresses are the same as or parallel to the ones taught in grammar classes.	3.97	.66
Total average score		4.17	.74

The questionnaire on students' perception on online grammar materials contained five items. The average mean is 4.17. Referring to the weight of Likert's scale range, in which score 4 is in the category of *agree*, the students seemed to be satisfied with the online grammar materials. The online grammar materials whose available topics are the same as the ones taught in grammar classes present a variety of materials completed with questions with different levels of difficulty. So, the students could learn the materials in the form of grading system from the easiest to the most complex ones.

c) *The benefits of OSAL*

The students' response of the benefits of OSAL related to grammar learning are shown in the Table 4 below with mean and standard deviation.

Table 4 *Students' perception on benefit of OSAL*

No	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	OSAL activity gives me knowledge how to learn language skills and aspects well.	4.00	.80
2	OSAL activity gives me motivation in learning a language.	4.11	.72
3	OSAL activity needs to be implemented regularly for the purpose of grammar learning improvement.	4.20	.76
4	OSAL activity is fun as it is free from formal grammar learning.	4.11	.72
5	I like OSAL activity more not only for knowledge of language aspect but also for other language skills.	4.11	.68
6	The more I do OSAL activity is the better my grammar knowledge is.	3.97	.62
7	I like grammar more after I do OSAL activity several times.	3.86	.97
8	OSAL activity helps me improve my language knowledge.	4.11	.76
9	There are many additional grammar materials gained through OSAL activity.	4.03	.62
10	My grammar knowledge gets increased and improved after doing OSAL activity.	3.86	.91
11	My grammar materials gained through OSAL can help me learn language skills and aspects better.	4.11	.72
Total average score		4.04	.75

The average score of students' perception toward the benefit of OSAL is 4.04. The score was a little bit lower than that of link addresses and grammar materials. However, it was found that the students still agreed and supported the activity or program of OSAL. The total mean score of the eleven items (4.04) is in the category of *agree* in the conversion of Likert's scale, so it implies that the students have a fairly high positive perception on the benefit of OSAL.

As the overall average score of the 21 questionnaire items above is 4.15 (the category of *agree*), it can specify that the students had good perception and supported the application of OSAL.

Correlation of students' perception toward OSAL and grammar

The students' perception toward OSAL and their grammar achievement are discussed based on the data of the questionnaire and the result of grammar test analyzed using statistical analysis. The result of descriptive statistics shows that the data of students' perception toward OSAL with 35 students had the range of 50, maximum score of 160, minimum score of 110, mean of 134, standard deviation of 11.26, and variance of 126.84. Meanwhile, the data of grammar had the range of 24, maximum score of 86, minimum score of 62, mean of 74, standard deviation of 6.92, and variance of 47.95.

The results of *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test* show that the data of the students' perception toward OSAL were normally distributed with $p\text{-value} = 0.503 > \alpha = 0.05$, and the grammar data were also normally distributed in which the $p\text{-value}$ was 0.666 greater than 0.05.

Table 5 *Correlation between OSAL and Grammar*

	OSAL	Grammar
Pearson Correlation	1	-.528**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
N	35	35

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and their grammar achievement is identified by the coefficient correlation whose score is -0.528. The study has a negative correlation, which means that the higher the OSAL score the lower the grammar score. The strength of correlation is categorized moderate because the r coefficient, 0.528 occurs between the range of 0.36 and 0.65 (Creswell, 2012, p. 347). Meanwhile, the $p\text{-value}$ is $0.001 < \alpha = 0.05$ meaning that there is a significant correlation between students' perception toward OSAL and their grammar achievement.

Table 6 *Regression analysis of OSAL*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
				F Change	df1	df2	
.528 ^a	.279	.257	.279	12.739	1	33	.001

^aPredictors: (Constant), OSAL

Furthermore, from the result of regression analysis as presented in the Table 6, the R square equals to 0.279, which indicates that 27.9 % of OSAL gave effective contribution to the students' grammar achievement. Whereas, the other 72.1% were influenced by other factors, and this is interesting for further study.

Conclusions

This study conducted at the English Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Sriwijaya University aims at finding out the students' perception toward online self-access learning (OSAL) in English grammar learning and its correlation with grammar achievement. The findings of this study reveal that there is a positive response of the students' perception toward OSAL in English grammar learning, which was identified by the overall average questionnaire score of 4.15 equal to *agree* category in the Likert's scale. Meanwhile, regarding the result of the correlational study, although providing a negative correlation (r coefficient = -0.528), it was decided to conclude that there is still a direct effect of OSAL activity (29%) giving an effective contribution to the students' grammar achievement. Perhaps, it is not excessively to say that to apply OSAL in language learning can be meant to improve language learning strategy in particular. Therefore, the related facilities for the OSAL system should be provided for the needs of successful learners. It is advisable that this learning strategy also be applied in the teaching of other language skills and aspects. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study might give a good contribution to the field of grammar learning in other institutions and invite other related studies concerning OSAL.

About the Author:

Muslih Hambali holds a master's degree from University of Western Ontario. His major interests are grammar and ESP, but now he is planning to conduct a research on Regional-based English Assessment for Senior High Schools in South Sumatera, Indonesia.

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