ELICITING LEARNERS' MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE LEARNING: VOICES FROM GRAMMAR CLASS

by

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Abstract:
The Covid-19 pandemic has affected educational institutions forcing them to switch from an offline to an online learning model. Since it is difficult for Indonesian students to adapt their learning methods, this circumstance has affected classroom life in various ways. This circumstance has also impacted the learners' motivation and involvement in learning. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to examine how learners' online learning experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic were perceived from the perspectives of their learning motivation and participation in grammar lessons, as these two factors significantly impact learners' success in their academic endeavors. The study employed a purposive sampling with 20 English education students who participated in grammar classes at a public university in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. Data were collected using open questionnaires. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data from the opened questionnaires. The thematic analysis revealed that learners encountered numerous difficulties and hindrances when learning grammar online, which affected their motivation and engagement. This result contributes for practitioners to find out the appropriate teaching strategies for online learning, especially in grammar classrooms.

Keywords: engagement; grammar; motivation; online learning

Abstrak:
Pandemi Covid-19 telah mempengaruhi institusi pendidikan yang memaksa mereka untuk beralih dari model pembelajaran offline ke online. Karena sulit bagi siswa Indonesia untuk menyesuaikan metode pembelajaran mereka, keadaan ini telah mempengaruhi kehidupan kelas dalam berbagai cara. Keadan ini juga berdampak pada motivasi dan keterlibatan peserta didik dalam belajar. Tujuan dari studi kasus deskriptif kualitatif ini adalah untuk menguji bagaimana pengalaman belajar online peserta didik selama pandemi Covid-19 dirasakan dari perspektif motivasi belajar dan partisipasi mereka dalam pelajaran tata bahasa, karena kedua faktor ini secara signifikan mempengaruhi keberhasilan peserta didik dalam upaya akademik mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan purposive sampling dengan 20 siswa pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang berpartisipasi dalam kelas tata bahasa di sebuah universitas

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation and engagement have been subject of research recently due to many disgrace factors. One of the pushing factors is pandemic 19 that has been declared ended. Consequently, Education institutions have switched to distance learning after the pandemic struck Indonesia in 2019 in order to prevent the growth of coronavirus suspects. Studies related to this are numerous with different focus and context (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Donaldson & Bucy, 2016; Martin, 2007a; Martin et al., 2018; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Turmudi & Ratini, 2022). All of these scholars reported different variables, participants and results and thus they are gaps for the current study. The current study specifies the motivation and engagement of EFL students’ during the grammar online learning.

During pandemic, the students began their studies at home using an online learning platform. However, all parties involved in education, notably for the students, this condition has brought about a number of issues. The students have to switch their learning process from an offline to an online learning process, which requires certain facilities to assist learning (Burhanuddin & Abdi, 2020). Hence problems arose. Not every student has access to the same infrastructure and resources to support their learning. As a result, their engagement varies among students (Turmudi & Ratini, 2022). The knowledge transfer from the lecturers to the students is disrupted because many students experience issues with internet connectivity. Not only the infrastructures and resources disrupted the learning process, but also some impacts experienced by the students (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). It was reported that online learning causes significant stress and anxiety in a lot of teenagers and young adults, which can lead to a variety of mental health problems (Mohd & Shahbodin, 2021). Some teenagers just find it difficult to keep up their education and to stay motivated and engaged while others may not be able to profit from these foreign learning environments.
Online learning during Covid 19 arises learners’ dissatisfaction with their education, lack of knowledge enhancement for their future careers, poor academic performance, and learners’s inability to access online learning due to technological limitations (Gonzales et al., 2020). Furthermore, Feldman in Adedoyin & Soykan (2020) stated that it should be noted that (i) pandemic-related anxiety will have a negative impact on student academic performance, (ii) racial, economic, and resource differences, and (iii) the majority of instructors were not effectively prepared to deliver high-quality instruction remotely.

Specifically, the change in the learning system from offline to online learning process has significantly affected learners’ motivation and engagement. These two aspects have significant impacts on the learners’ learning achievement. Motivation and engagement are viewed as crucial elements to support the learners’ learning. Motivation and engagement are means to desirable ends such as achievement (Martin, 2007a). He further stated that motivation refers to an individual’s inclination, energy, direction, and drive with respect to learning and achievement. It can be considered a feeling of satisfaction/success when being engaged in worthwhile learning (Koh, 2015). The word ‘motivation’ comes from the Latin word motivate, meaning to move (Koh, 2015). According to Oxford Dictionary (2013), motivation is the desire or willingness to do something. It is the condition of being eager to act or work, a force or influence that causes someone to do something (Merriam Webster, 2013). There are two different types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The learners with their intrinsic motivation might feel enjoyable and interested to take part in the learning process. Meanwhile, those who have extrinsic motivation in learning might be encouraged by external factors, such as rewards, getting good grades, or getting a job.

Engagement in an educational context has been conceptualized as time-on-task which plays a very important aspect in learning. It can be considered as the learners’ responses to learning environments less as a psychological construct and more as a description of learners’ connections to the learning environment. Learners who engage will show a condition of increased attention and involvement when participation is seen not just in the cognitive dimension but also in the social, behavioral, and affective aspects (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Engagement in learning is often described in terms of affective engagement, behavioural
Affective engagement is characterized by interest and enjoyment, behavioural engagement by effort and hard work, and cognitive engagement by caring about and valuing the work at hand (Conner & Pope, 2013). The study of learners’ engagement has been investigated by many researchers. The researchers focus on engagement as a multifaceted construct that includes behavioural, affective, and cognitive engagements (Järvelä & Renninger, 2014). Those aspects are the essential factors for learners’ learning achievement because without possessing learning engagement, they will have no desire to learn. To emerge the learners’ engagement in learning, of course, the learning content and activities should be meaningful for learners (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

Motivation is very essential to lead the learners to engage during the learning process, for instance, because of a long-term goal for credentials, learners can be motivated to engage in courses. Motivation can also be a feeling of satisfaction/success when being engaged in worthwhile learning. However, learners’ motivation and engagement are closely related elements of learner learning that can have an impact on learning outcomes. Learners’ motivation and engagement in learning are multidimensional and by understanding each dimension of learners’ motivation and engagement, teachers will be able to assist the learners to achieve their learning goals (Martin, 2007a). To measure the learners’ motivation and engagement, (Martin et al., 2018) has comprised the Motivation and Engagement Wheel which consists of 11 factors and is classified into four clusters. The first cluster is positive motivation comprising self-efficacy, valuing, and mastery orientation. The second cluster is positive engagement comprising planning, task management, and persistence. Next is negative motivation comprising uncertain control, failure avoidance, and anxiety. And the last cluster is negative engagement comprising self-handicapping and disengagement.
The substantive background to the study centers on academic motivation and engagement during online grammar learning due to the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic which forces education to switch the learning process from offline to online learning. This situation brings some challenges for both learners and lecturers in grammar class to hold the learning process which is fully in the online system. The lecturers firstly got confusion in holding an online class, designing learning materials, activities, and tasks that suit to the students’ need in online class, and also maintaining students’ motivation and engagement during the learning process. In other side, this situation is also challenging for learners such as when they need to understand the materials, they had limited facilities or access to discuss with the lecturer or classmates. Moreover, they got easily distracted and stressful due to the task. Learners tend to have negative feelings such as fear and anxiety towards grammar in the beginning of the grammar course (Ainsworth & Bell, 2020). It led to suggest the teachers to create effective teaching strategies to facilitate them learning online without any distraction and also made the learners engage in the learning. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to obtain a picture of their motivation and engagement during online grammar learning. The findings of the study will contribute to the decisions of some pedagogical and practical ideas and teaching strategies that will be implemented in online grammar class to support learners’ motivation and engagement for enhancing their learning achievement.
The researchers try to limit the focus of the study into a research question: *How are the students’ motivation and engagement during the grammar online learning?*

**METHOD**

*Design*

This study focused on investigating the learners’ motivation and engagement during online grammar learning. This study was based on a case study design (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) carried out in an English education program in a state university in Tasikmalaya, West Java Indonesia because it is advantageous in discovering or explaining a phenomenon that was poorly understood from a ‘big picture perspective’ Thus, it is believed as an appropriate method to conduct an in-depth investigation of this phenomenon which was expected to produce comprehensive analyses. The researcher tried to elicit the learners’ motivation and engagement in learning grammar.

*Setting and participant*

This study was conducted in an online grammar class named Grammar in Written Discourse class at a state university in Tasikmalaya, West Java Indonesia. This class was conducted online due to the pandemic situation forcing the education to switch the learning process from offline learning to online one. The learners learned grammar using several LMS such as Google Classroom, Jamboard, Quizizz, and Zoom. Google classroom was used to organize the learning process such as sharing the materials, conducting discussions, and managing assignments. Jamboard was utilized as a platform for writing practices synchronously. The learners practiced writing sentences, short paragraphs, or writing expansions live through this platform and will be compared with their classmates and they would get some reviews from their classmates and lecturer. Furthermore, Quizizz was utilized as a platform for measuring learners’ knowledge before and after they learned grammar. This is mostly done to measure students’ knowledge through multiple-choice questions, fill-in-gap questions, and matching questions. Finally, to facilitate discussion between the learners and
the lecturer through video conference, Zoom was used to have direct communication so the learners would get a direct explanation of the material.

To obtain the data, 20 English education learners from the first grade who enrolled in grammar class in semester 2 were recruited as the participants of this study. They had taken the grammar class since semester one which focused on basic English grammar and semester two they had grammar class which is focused on the grammar in written form. The 20 participants are they who voluntarily are willing to be the research participants.

**Data collection and analysis**

To investigate the learners’ motivation and engagement during the online grammar learning process, the researcher distributed an open questionnaire through Google form. A questionnaire is a method of collecting data by giving various questions to the respondents to be answered (Sugiyono, 2018). This technique was used because it was faster, cheaper, and more flexible to distribute to the participants due to the pandemic situation. In exploring the learners’ motivation and engagement during online grammar learning, Martin’s (2017) motivation and engagement framework covering positive motivation, positive engagement, negative motivation, and negative engagement was utilized in this research. The obtained data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This technique comprises six steps of analysis namely familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. In addition, the current study employs referencing manager Mendeley Desktop to support offline-automatic citing system(Turmudi, 2020). The aim is to secure the in-text citation and reference list.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Two main themes emerged as a broad description of the motivation and engagement of the 20 learners during online grammar instruction as a result of the thematic analysis. These themes, which span both positive and negative motivation and engagement, define how individuals view and feel about their grammar learning process as they engage in a variety of online learning activities. Their positive motivation and engagement were scrutinized through
their beliefs, their persistence, and task management during their grammar online learning. Meanwhile, the learners also experienced negative motivation and engagement that they felt anxious and afraid of being fail.

**Positive motivation and engagement**

From the open-ended questionnaire results, it is obtained that the participants possessed positive motivation and engagement in online grammar learning. The data described the learners’ beliefs and values towards online grammar learning. Learners’ belief in the Motivation and Engagement Wheel measures students’ confidence in their capacity to comprehend and complete their coursework well to overcome obstacle and to perform the best of their abilities. Meanwhile, school value refers to the amount to which students believe what they learn in school is valuable, pertinent, significant, and important (Martin, 2007a). The result shows that the learners believed that grammar is one of the essential aspects to support their language skills. Through online learning, they experienced learning through several online platforms and they stated that those platforms support their learning engagement. The participants reported:

“Grammar is the basic knowledge in English, and I would say it is fundamental knowledge that should be mastered by the students as the candidate for English teachers” (PS).

“When learning grammar by using Jamboard, I could practice making English sentences online and getting feedback directly from the lecturer and friends, and practicing and getting used to distinguishing the sentence elements. I think it is a really useful activity because we can compare and distinguish our writing from others’ and improve our understanding and ability to write properly” (PS).

“I learned through various activities and those are useful for me because I can have more understanding when the lecturer explained materials in the virtual conference. Besides I could also practice writing directly using an online platform or so. If we didn’t have good grammar, a lot of people cannot understand our speaking. So, learning it is very important, I think” (PS).

“I like learning grammar because it’s so fun and challenging, especially when in a virtual meeting, I could listen to the lecturer’s explanation, make small group discussions in the breakout room, do the live exercise using Quizizz, and so on. The activities helped me a lot in understanding grammar”. (PS).

The participants acknowledged the importance of learning grammar to enhance their language skills such as speaking and writing. Mastering grammar helps them produce their
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English speaking and writing effectively and reduces misunderstanding about the information they convey to the listeners or readers. Through online learning, they also considered that various activities utilizing several online platforms help them more not only in improving their understanding of the materials but also in enhancing their grammar mastery, especially in writing. Workgroup discussion held in the Zoom breakout room, for example, it gave the participants a chance to discuss and share their difficulties in learning grammar. The use of Jamboard and Quizizz also facilitated the participants to practice grammar and got feedback directly. They believed that there is a strong connection between the importance of learning grammar to support their language skills and the meaningful activities which facilitate them to understand it more. Furthermore, the learners’ motivation and engagement can also be seen in their persistence and task management in learning grammar.

“The lecturer used several interesting platforms and activities in grammar class, so those benefited me a lot to understand the material. I became more engaged to join without skipping this class.”

“So far, I understood the material being explained when we met in a virtual meeting even though when coming to the analysis part, I got confused to analyse the sentence. I usually tried to focus on the lecturer’s explanation, read the materials after class, or discuss with my friends to get more comprehension.”

“I find more difficulties in understanding and applying grammar, especially in my writing. When using Jamboard and I had to write some sentences, my writing got reviewed by my lecturer for my mistakes, so I need to learn more and more. I used to find some references that are easier to understand. Sometimes I asked my friends or discussed it with them.”

“I sometimes experienced poor connection when doing synchronous meetings though I really want to join the class in order to comprehend the materials, so I looked for the best spot for getting a good connection. And also, I read and read again the materials shared by the lecturer and searched for some explanation on the internet.”

From the data, the learners’ persistence and task management began when they encountered some challenges in online grammar learning, such as confusion in understanding the materials for grammar related to the rules of language, and poor connection. In spite of those challenges, they showed their willingness to continue to try. Their persistence in learning is demonstrated by their efforts to keep on reading, finding more information from other resources, or discussing with their mates. The lecturer also provided them with several resources and communicative tasks through online platforms. Persistence in learning is shown

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by the learners when they keep trying to work out an answer or to understand a problem, even if that problem is difficult or challenging (Martin, 2007a). Facilitating the participants with the feedback also gives them the motivation to be more careful and comprehend the materials.

**Negative motivation and engagement**

Gathered from the opened questionnaire, it is obtained that the learners experience anxiety and uncertain control during online grammar learning. Anxiety and failure avoidance are categorized into maladaptive or negative motivation in which anxiety describes that the learners experienced an uneasy or sick feeling, and failure avoidance illustrates their fear of failure.

*I usually got a poor connection because I was located in a rural area. I am afraid I can’t understand the subject. In case this subject is very important.*

*I sometimes felt nervous when learning grammar because I am not good at grammar. It seems grammar is very confusing for me. I am also afraid of being asked and having to answer in English for my grammar competence.*

*When looking at my friends’ ability in grammar, or when I had to do the exercise in Jambord or Quizizz, I am usually worried and not confident because if I get a bad review for my writing or a bad score, my friends could see the result.*

*Yes, I am very nervous and worried because I am afraid of making mistakes and can’t understand them.*

One of the challenges the learners encountered during the online learning in grammar class is internet poor connections. Some of them lived in remote area where it is difficult to have good internet connection for online learning. Some students concerned that they wouldn’t fully understand the topic they learn. Another challenge is feeling nervous. The learners were worried and nervous when they had to do the task due to a negative review from their classmates and lecturer if they made errors.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that the learners viewed grammar learning is important for them to support the English language skills and providing them through online learning platforms and activities made them more motivated and engaged during the learning process.
process. Abuhassna et al., (2020) claimed that the current technologies in education play an essential role in providing a fully online learning experience that is close enough to a face-to-face class in spite of the physical separation of the students from their educator, along with other students. Besides, they met challenges during the learning process such as limited understanding about the grammar topic they got or even the internet connection. However, they desired to try to understand more through reading, or discussing with their classmates. Discussion assisted them to get more comprehension about the materials. Donaldson & Bucy (2016) state in projects in which students collaboratively produce artifacts intended for public audiences, higher levels of engagement may be anticipated. The use of Jamboard and Quizizz also facilitated the participants to practice grammar and got feedback directly. The participants believe that there is a strong connection between the importance of learning grammar to support their language skills and the meaningful activities which facilitate them to understand it more. When students continuously attempting to figure out an answer or understand an issue, regardless of how complex or difficult it may be, they demonstrate persistence in learning (Martin, 2007b). Their persistence in learning is demonstrated by their efforts to keep on reading, finding more information from other resources, or discussing with their mates. Facilitating the participants with the feedback also gives them the motivation to be more careful and comprehend the materials. This can be considered that appropriate and meaningful activities for learners may support their motivation and engagement to propose their self-directed learning (Marlina et al., 2020). Once students realised that grammar had the potential to bring pleasure rather than (or at least as well as) fear, they were keen to change the minds of others (Ainsworth & Bell, 2020).

Along with the evidence revealing the positive motivation and engagement, the result showed that the learners also experienced negative motivation and engagement when the encountered internet poor connection during the online learning and feeling anxious and failure due to bad review from their lecturers and classmates for their errors in grammar. Anxiety has two parts: worrying and feeling nervous. Worrying is their fear of not doing very well in schoolwork, assignments, or tests. Feeling nervous is the uneasy or sick feeling students get when they think about or do their schoolwork, assignment, or test (Martin, 2007b). Further, he stated that the students who have failure avoidance usually try to avoid
Marlina & Sulastri (2023) doing poorly or letting others down. From the data, some students stated that they sometimes felt nervous, worried, or even not confident when learning grammar or when doing the exercise because they were afraid of being asked and making mistakes, or even they were afraid of not being able to understand the materials due to the poor connection that led them to the incapability of understanding it. Moreover, they reported that they were anxious because they were afraid of failure. This anxiety and failure avoidance may affect the participants’ motivation which further will affect their learning achievement. The learners’ higher anxiety will negatively affect their academic engagement (Wang et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The obtained data gained from the opened questionnaire and analyzed thematically viewed from the Motivation and Engagement Wheel (Martin et al., 2016), this study found that the learners’ motivation and engagement during online grammar learning comprises how the learners’ beliefs, values, and persistence toward online learning grammar. They experienced learning grammar online through online platforms mediated various activities which support them to be more motivated as well as engaged in the online classroom. Besides, they experienced some challenges due to poor internet connection and low capability in understanding and mastering grammar have led them to be more anxious and afraid of failure. The findings delineate the importance of recognizing the learners’ motivation and engagement in online grammar learning. Therefore, the teachers or practitioners can anticipate to find out the best learning and teaching strategies to overcome the problems encountered. It is believed that creating conducive environments for learning where learners feel supported is viewed as another factor that can motivate them to actively engage in-class activity (University of Texas, 2013). Other pedagogical treatments are also required to facilitate the learners which can engage them more emotionally because it is believed that emotional types of engagement as mediators of the influence of different variables (including motivation) on other aspects of student engagement (Dierendonck et al., 2021). This claim is crucial to our comprehension of
the potential psychological processes that underlie the relationships between motivation and engagement as well as how motivation affects engagement.

**Limitation**

This study has several weaknesses, such as, it only implemented a single data collection technique, so it is recommended for further researchers who have the same interest to utilize multiple data collection techniques to have a deeper picture of the learners’ motivation and engagement. Another weakness of this study is that the researcher did not investigate deeply the impact of the utilization of online learning platforms used on the students’ grammar mastery. Thus, to hook a more comprehensive understanding, the next researchers are suggested to investigate it.

**Implication**

The findings of the study emphasized several areas, such as that addressing the students' challenges during the learning process, specifically in online learning, has an impact on improving their motivation and engagement. Thus, it needs the involvement of educational institutions and policymakers to provide support and resources. In addition, educators should also explore ways to enhance students' motivation and engagement, especially in learning grammar and other challenging subjects. One effective approach could be incorporating interactive and gamified activities into the curriculum, which can make learning more enjoyable and increase students' participation. Another strategy could be providing personalized feedback and support to students, which can help them overcome difficulties and stay motivated throughout the learning process.

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