CHALLENGES FACED BY EFL STUDENTS IN LEARNING
GRAMMAR THROUGH INDEPENDENT COURSES

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Setiyono Andi Promono Susanto
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPYRIGHT STATEMENT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of Grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Learning Grammar May Be A Challenge</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pros and Cons about Grammar Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Studies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE STUDY</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments Data Collection Instruments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Procedures</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Procedure</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDING AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHALLENGES FACED BY EFL STUDENTS IN LEARNING GRAMMAR THROUGH INDEPENDENT COURSES

Setiyono Andi Promono Susanto

ABSTRACT

Learning grammar through independent course is part of the most important thing to do by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in order to fully master the English language. However, not everyone can pass this course easily. Students easily encounter challenges that affect their success in mastering grammar. The aim of this study is to determine the challenges and the causes of challenges faced by EFL in learning grammar through independent courses. This study is focusing on EFL students of Language Education Program in Faculty of Language and Arts Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana who failed their first independent grammar courses. This study used a qualitative instrument to collect data which is a semi-structured interview with 8 participants of the mentioned characteristics. With the main questions adapted from the similar research by Alhaysony and Alhaisoni (2017), the study indicated that there are nine challenges in learning grammar through independent courses. Those challenges are; (1) Negative view on grammar; (2) Overcrowded class; (3) Complicated grammatical item; (4) Ineffective individual learning strategies; (5) Scant hour spent to review material outside class; (6) Discrepancy between teachers’ teaching style with students’ learning; (7) Lack of self-oriented motivation; (8) Difficulty in memorizing tenses and rules; and (9) Inadequate background.

Keywords: challenges in learning grammar, independent grammar courses,
INTRODUCTION

Larsen-Freeman (2014) defined Grammar as “the form of a language, a system of lexicogrammatical patterns that are used to make meaning inappropriate ways.” Peng (2017) stated “without learning the grammar of a language, it is hard, and though not impossible, to acquire the ability to produce grammatically acceptable utterances.” Even Bastone (1994) in Wang (2010) believed that “language without grammar would be chaotic.” It makes grammar an essential material in mastering a language, in this case, the English language. There are many ways and methods of teaching and learning English grammar. Students unconsciously learn grammar from every EFL learning activities (implicit knowledge) such as reading, writing and speaking but Indonesian EFL students mainly learn grammar through independent grammar courses (explicit knowledge).

Independent grammar course in which students are given the exact grammar rules, as Larsen-Freeman (2015) stated, “students want the security of knowing what is right, which they believe rules give them.” A survey by Azad (2013) asked teachers whether their students expect explicit grammar instruction. More than half of the teachers (60%) agreed, and 16.67% strongly agreed that their students want explicit grammar instruction. Teachers agreed that a lack of explicit grammar teaching makes their students feel insecure. By this finding, it should be safe to say that independent grammar course should be more convenient for students in learning grammar. Nevertheless, there are still EFL students who failed independent grammar courses.
Being the ‘rules’ of forming a sentence, grammar is not something that is easy to learn. Some students quickly encounter difficulties while trying to master it. A study by Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam (2011) proved that even “in teachers’ perceptions, both educators and students invariably face serious difficulties with regard to EFL grammar instruction, student facing them to a greater extent than teachers.” Kacani & Mangelli (2013) who did a similar study in Albania supported the statement. Despite the difficulties Sogutlu & Veliaj-Ostrosi (2016) found that “a sizeable majority of students agree that study of grammar significant to mastery of EFL. Students share preferences for grammar study and grammar practice which accounts for the importance they think grammar knowledge has in EFL learning”. There are studies on what are the difficulties faced by EFL students in learning grammar, but usually, the student background is not specified, the result of the study by Alhaysony and Alhaison (2017) may not be valid for different specifications of EFL students.

In this case, the writer would like to do a further study specifically about the challenges faced by EFL students in learning grammar through independent courses. This study can be useful for EFL students to understand the class’ situation when learning grammar through independent grammar courses and also can be a reflection for teachers of independent grammar courses on how to help their students to achieve better understanding of the material. This study aims to answer the following research questions:
1. What challenges do Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris (PBI) students face in learning grammar through independent grammar courses?

2. What are the causes of these challenges faced by PBI students in learning grammar through independent grammar courses?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Grammar

Many researchers stated their opinion about the importance of grammar in learning a language based on their findings. Saaristo (2015) stated, “Grammar is the key concept in general linguistic theory”. In his recent study (Saaristo, 2015), he found that over one-half of the students (62%) expressed the view that grammar had a somewhat or significant role in language studies. A study by Jean & Simard (2011) also found that both students and teachers perceived grammar instruction as something necessary in learning a language. Grammar is also defined as a form of language, but more than form, Larsen-Freeman (2014) stated, it is what forms mean and when and why they are used. We cannot produce a correct way in communicating our thoughts without forming grammatically correct sentences.

The writer’s finding in studies by Larsen-Freeman (2014), Peng (2017), Sogutlu & Veliaj-Ostrosi (2015), Saaristo (2015), can be concluded that grammar is an item in mastering a language that we cannot overlook because of its universal application in every aspect of language.
Why Learning Grammar May Be a Challenge

There are many factors that may cause learning grammar becomes challenging for students. Referring to the reviewed previous studies by several researchers, difficulties in learning grammar usually appeared because of:

- Students perception about grammar. Al-Mekhalafi & Nagaratnam (2011) stated that any mention of grammar usually causes moment of discomfort and even terror for students.

- Perception diference of grammar instruction in the context of teaching and learning. A study by Brindley (1984) and Kumaravadivelu (1991) as in Al-Mekhalafi & Nagaratnam (2011) stated while students favour formal and explicit grammar instruction and error correction, teachers favour communicative activities with less conscious focus on grammar. This perception difference can cause a problem especially in independent grammar course. When student expected to get explicit instruction, teacher may present a study material in implicit way.

- Complexity of grammatical features. Nasaji & Fotos (2011) as in Kacani & Mangelli (2013) agreed that some linguistic forms are structurally simple but functionally very complex that they can be difficult to comprehend.

Pros and Cons about Grammar Teaching

Everyone has their own opinion about grammar teaching. Peng (2017) believes that “it is undoubted that the important role of grammar can’t be neglected in
Wang (2010) suggested that teachers need to pay more attention to grammar teaching; ignoring and neglecting English grammar teaching can affect students’ correct use of English. Despite the importance of grammar, some people actually feel that teaching grammar is unnecessary.

English schools stop teaching grammar in the 1960s because small body of research claimed that grammar was too hard for children to learn. It was later supported by another study that stated explicit attention to grammar did not improve children’s writing as stated in Hudson & Walmsley (2005). Elbow (1981) as in Myhill & Watson (2013) even stated, “nothing helps your writing so much as ignoring grammar”. Still, in 1988 the teaching of English grammar made a comeback in National Curriculum of England and Wales. Hudson & Walmsley (2005) suggested that the decline of grammar in schools was linked to a similar decline in English universities, where there was virtually no serious research or teaching on English grammar.

**Previous Studies**

Similar study about challenges in learning grammar has been done by Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam (2011) in which they investigated the difficulties in teaching EFL students and those faced by students in learning it in the teachers’ perception. The result of this study revealed seven types of difficulties for students and teachers themselves and their concerns about classroom application of grammar teaching principles. The difficulties include explicit grammar teaching, the transfer of declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge, the use of grammatical
terminology, error correction, problem solving activities, the use of authentic texts for grammar instruction and the use of spoken and written communicative activities.

Alhaysony & Alhaisoni (2017) studied about the similar topic yet used a different approach. The study investigated grammatical difficulties from the perspective of Saudi University EFL students as well as the perspective of the university teachers. From the data gathered, teachers and students have different reasons for grammar difficulties. One of the difficulties faced by both teachers and students is the existence or non-existence of a particular grammatical feature in the learners’ mother tongue. Graus & Coppen (2015) managed to categorize the factors that can cause difficulties in learning grammar, namely: grammar features, pedagogical arrangement, teacher quality, and learner characteristics.

In sum, it is proved that there were some English grammar features that were more difficult and some that were less difficult. Both can cause difficulties to EFL teachers and learners.

THE STUDY

Context of the Study

This study focuses on PBI students in Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, who had taken the independent grammar course both Basic Grammar course and Intermediate Grammar course, but failed and had to repeat the course.

Participants
The participants of this study were randomly selected. They were eight PBI students who failed Basic Grammar and Intermediate Grammar and had to repeat the courses. There were three participants from batch 2014, three participants from batch 2015, and two participants from batch 2017. The purpose was to make sure the findings of this study cover all levels of PBI students.

**Instrument of data collection**

This study used qualitative methodology which involved doing a semi-structured interview with the participants. This interview is the main instrument of this study. Since all the participants were PBI students, they were given a choice to choose the language of interview (Indonesian or English) and told that the interview would be recorded. The aims of this interview were to get a background information of the participants, like their batch and their perspective about learning grammar, and to get the main cause of the participants’ difficulties and challenges in learning grammar through independent grammar course.

The questions that need to be answered were adapted from Alhaysony & Alhaison (2017). First, the participants were asked about his or her prior experience with English grammar, their state of enjoyment in learning grammar and their attitudes towards the usefulness of grammar lessons. The main questions of this interview in order to answer the research questions are:

1. What do you think of learning grammar through an independent course?
2. What are the reasons and causes of your difficulties in learning grammar through independent course?
Data Collection Procedure

First, the writer made the list of participants based on the classification stated. Then, the writer asked their willingness to participate on this study as a participant. Lastly, each participant was interviewed by the writer with the language they have chosen. All of the participants chose to be interviewed using Indonesian. The interviews were audio-recorded for the data analysis process.

Procedure of Data Analysis

The result of the interviews were categorized based on the writer’s questions. Then, the writer grouped the participants’ answers based on their answers to the questions. Themes were developed according to the statements and collected data. Some of the collected data that were mentioned the most were explained descriptively and lastly, conclusions were made based on the finding.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the writer will explain the discovery of this study regarding the two research questions, regarding what challenges PBI students faced in learning grammar through independent grammar courses and what caused these challenges. The excerpts provided on this discussion are not the exact words of the participants; the writer did the translation focusing on the messages.

Based on the participants’ answers to the interviews, it is clear that students had problems with grammar. The top four answers to the question why they failed
independent grammar courses mentioned by all the 8 participants are; negative view about grammar, class situation, complicated grammatical items, and ineffective individual learning strategies.

In general, the interview indicated that students saw grammar as something “difficult” or “confusing”. Those two are the most frequently mentioned adjectives when the participants were asked to describe the first thing that came to their mind when they heard the word grammar and independent grammar course, as said by one of the participants (Participant 3):

The first time I hear grammar, it feels like something difficult, difficult to study and understand.

One of the participants (Participant 4) said that learning grammar was not as easy as she had expected:

Hearing the word grammar is hard for me, because I have repeatedly failed [the course]. At first, I thought it was easy [to learn grammar], but after joining the class, it turned out it was really hard.

When being asked about the participants’ view about grammar, there is only 1 participant (Participant 2) that besides mentioning grammar as something hard and confusing, thought that studying grammar was not really important. Her opinion was based on her reference on the Internet and YouTube, where the native speakers are from USA and England, they do not focus on grammar.

“Looking back, [if you see videos] on YouTube, in reality native speaker from USA and England, they seem not to really care about grammar, so what is the
purpose of learning grammar? Heheh, so, [grammar is] important, but not really important, right? On this course it is important, but for speaking and talk to ‘bule-bule’, for me it [grammar] is not very important.”

She sees grammar as something that is not very important if we directly practice it in speaking.

The second challenge in learning grammar that was mentioned by all participants is the class situation. There were 6 participants who complained about classes that were too noisy and crowded. One of the participants (Participant 1) stated:

[…] Third [cause of her failure] the amount of students affect [the class situation] […] Second [cause of difficulty in grammar], the class situation is too noisy and there were a lot of students and that makes me less focus in learning.

There was one participant (Participant 4) who even recommended the number of student to make the class conducive:

Yes of course [the amount of student affect the class situation] It will be effective with 20 students.

Another participant (Participant 7) even stated that the level of noise in class is directly proportional with the amount of students that attend that class. She said that the more crowded the class is, the noisier it becomes. This is related to Zyngier (2014) finding that proposed that a smaller class had a long lasting effect on student achievement, in this case, their ability to absorb the lesson materials.
However, the four other respondents did not agree with that finding. They thought that the amount of students in one class will not affect students’ learning. Participant 3 said that as long as the class focused on learning and not being noisy, the amount of students in the class is not a problem:

I think, no. As long as the class is calm, not being noisy, I think the learning process will still work.

Only one respondent (Participant 5) mentioned about the starting hour of the course. He stated that if classes start in the afternoon, it will distract students’ focus on listening to lessons because at that time students already tired.

The next challenge that was also mentioned by the entire participants is complicated grammatical item. The most complicated grammatical item mentioned by 5 out of 8 participants is perfect tenses. Each one of the participants has their own opinion about perfect tenses, but in sum, perfect tenses are categorized as hard and confusing. One of the participants (Participant 2) stated that perfect tenses are the hardest because it is confusing to use. Similar opinion comes from another participant (Participant 4) that pointed out the specific part of perfect tenses that are the hardest which is present perfect tense:

For example, the pattern of present perfect [tenses], [I] usually forgot [how to use it]

On the second place as the hardest grammatical item is adverb, which was mentioned by 4 participants. Each of the participants has different views about which part of adverb that they considered hard. The types of adverb that were mentioned are
adverbial of place, adverbial of time and adverbial of manner, one participant for each type. The first participant (Participant 1) to mention adverb as a challenge considers adverbial of time as the one that confused her:

In tenses, it is [adverbial of] time, for example there are tenses that express activity that happened in the past and already not happening now but have proof, and activity that happened in the past and already not happening now but has no proof. At first it confuses me.

Only one participant (Participant 5) did not mention which part of adverb that causes him struggle. He only stated adverbial as the grammatical item that he did not understand. Four other grammatical items that are only mentioned once by the participants are: the difference between past tense and past progressive tense, article, to be (singular plural), and demonstrative.

Grammatical items that were mentioned as the hardest in their ascending order are future tenses, adverbial, verb, article, to be and demonstrative. Compared to research by Alhaysony & Alhaisoni (2017) that listed of the grammatical item from the easiest to the hardest based on student’s and teacher’s perception on its complexity to master and to apply correctly, the grammatical item that are mentioned by the participants in this study were all categorized as not very hard or even some of the easiest in Alhaysony & Alhaisoni (2017), like adverbial, article, and to be.

This finding made the writer concern about the level of ability and knowledge of the participants compared to EFL students in general. The items themselves were mentioned as the hardest because the participants did not even understand the concept
of the use of those grammatical items. This idea is supported by the way the participants answered the interview questions. When being asked which of the grammatical item is the hardest, the participants only mentioned the item without explaining what made that item hard. When being asked further why they mentioned the grammatical item as the hardest, the most common answers were “It’s confusing”, “I just don’t get it”, and “Sometimes I forgot how to use it”.

It is more likely that those grammatical items were considered to be the hardest because those grammatical items did not exist in Indonesian. Linguistic differences often present difficulties to students. When students cannot find the comparison terms in their mother tongue, they will have a hard time trying to understand the completely new linguistic concept (Alhaysony & Alhaison, 2017).

Another cause of those two challenges in learning grammar according to entire participants is their ineffective individual learning strategies. This varies from lack of practice (4), lack of discipline (2), lack of accuracy in tests (1), and students’ ignorant manner during class (1).

Because students already see grammar as something that is difficult to master, their learning strategies become affected by it. Something difficult is often regarded to be boring and not an exciting. Students got unexcited and lost interest in learning grammar, resulting in a lack of practice. One participant (Participant 1) was very aware of this as a cause of her failure in her first independent grammar course:

[the failure was caused by the lack of] my own initiative to study grammar independently at home.
With this behavior, lack of discipline is something that is easy to spot. The first participant to admit it (Participant 3) said that she only studied the night before exams or tests, and explained the real cause of that behavior:

Actually it [the cause of challenge] is not from the grammar, but from [our own] private life, still a lot of ‘playing’, still frequently influenced by groups and social environment, so it is pretty distracting, distracted [EFL’s] growth in grammar.

It seems that the amount of hours spent to learn grammar outside class affected students’ achievement in learning grammar, and thus becomes a challenge. There are 6 participants who said that they reviewed the material ranging from less than 1 hour per week to not more than 4 hours every week. Those participants stated that they did not exclusively spare time to review material outside class. One of the participants (Participant 7) did not even bother if she did a review or not. Reviewing a material outside the class becomes something that is not essential:

For grammar, [reviewing material] is not a must. Occasionally, everyday, I set aside some time to read, like, just to review a little, I do not need to plan how many hours it needs to take […]

The ineffective individual learning strategies and the amount of hours to review materials was part of students’ learning style. This confirmed the previous study of Astuti (2017) who found the correlation between learning style with student’s ability in understanding a lesson. When student have a bad learning style, then it will result in students’ poor grammar.
Because of the complexity of grammar, discipline is a crucial thing that one should have in order to fully understand the material. That is why practice, doing exercise and reviewing material cannot be done only in class, but also outside the class.

The interview also shows that there were discrepancy between teachers’ teaching style with students’ learning, 6 out of 8 participants agreed it becomes a challenge to their attempt in understanding grammar. The two main cases that brought up by the participants are the speed of teachers’ explanation and unclear explanation from teacher. There are 4 participants who experienced the situation where teacher seems to be chased by the material. Unclear explanation by teachers mentioned by fewer participants with only 3 out of 6 who face this case. One of the participants (Participant 4) even experienced both conditions as she stated below:

[...] sometimes teacher explain the [tenses’] pattern in a rush, and some [material] are unclear, make it hard to understand

Another participant (Participant 7) even confessed that the reason she did not pass her first independent grammar course is because she cannot follow the flow of her teacher’s teaching method. There are two participants who brought up the teachers’ ability in mastering the materials. The first participant (Participant 7) mentioned that her first teacher ability is not very good since he rarely answer students’ questions:

It is because the teacher taught too fast, [...] when he/she finished the material we instantly moved to the other subject. Some teacher cannot even answer
[students’] questions, but this time the teacher [on her repeat class] usually knows [the answer of students’ questions]

The teacher who taught the second participant (Participant 5) even confessed that he is the wrong teacher to teach grammar because his ability in grammar is low:

Turns out, the teacher that I chose that time, his explanation could not really be understand. He even confessed [to his class, he] said that, “oh, you are wrong to choose my intermediate class, because [I] cannot really teach grammar”.

Nevertheless, teachers’ speed and clarity is relative for each student and depends on each individual. The participants did not give further explanation on what kind of material serving that was categorized as unclear. If it is really the teachers’ fault on serving the lesson in a wrong way, there should be a huge amount of students who did not pass the course. This finding though, confirmed the statement of Peacock (2002) that said most students are frustrated by the mismatch between the teaching and learning style and that difference affects their learning.

Further, the lack of self-oriented motivation to learn grammar outside class was mentioned by 6 out of 8 respondents. There are 4 out of those 6 respondents who only studied grammar outside the course only if there is going to be a test or an exam on the next day, the others (4) confess that they learned grammar outside the class just so that they can pass the course. As if they already guarantee to pass the class, they probably prefer not to learn grammar at all.
Tests or exams, and passing class are the participants’ motivation in learning grammar, and both are external factors. That means it did not come from their own desire. The participants who only study for the upcoming test seems forced to learn grammar. One participant confessed that she studied grammar just to face exam days:

Usually I learn grammar individually, learning grammar outside class is only [to prepare] for test/exam

One of the participant (Participant 1) confessed his motivation in learning grammar is just so she can pass the class:

[motivation in learning grammar outside class] Because I want to pass the grammar course. I do not want to repeat [the class] for the third times.

Self-oriented motivation is very important in learning something. Just like what Liu (2017) found on his study, motivation and learner autonomy is highly correlated to each other. Therefore, motivation contributes to whether student is good at what they are learning or not.

From the interview there were only 2 participants who had self-oriented motivation which means they studied grammar not only so they could pass the exam or pass the course, but truly for improving their skill and because they believed that grammar is something important to master. Besides, another participants (Participant 5) also confessed that he did not want to waste his time on college because he came so far from his hometown to study.

The next challenge came from the grammar itself. The idea of grammar as something complicated and confusing comes from the fact that grammar is a bunch of
rules that needs to be remembered and apply in its correct place and form. There are 4 participants who stated that the amount of rules in grammar makes it harder to understand and master it.

The opinion that grammar was hard and difficult because there are a lot to be remember is reasonable, Participant 6 explained:

There are a lot to memorize, [...] rules and patterns of grammar [...], there are a lot of rules like, there are a lot of tenses, and we should memorize that, memorize those 16 tenses, that is the challenging part.

The most frequently mentioned thing when participants were trying to explain their struggle in relation to the amount of rules on grammar is the part where they needed to memorize the tenses and rules. In this case, instead of thinking about mastering it by understanding the purpose of pattern and rules, grammar rules are seen to be mastered by memorizing it.

The only one participant (Participant 3) with inadequate background told his difficulty on learning English compared to his classmates because he just knew English language when he enters college.

At first, I do not know English very well, and have heard from friends that there are a lot who struggle in [learning] English [...] 

When students have a low proficiency level when being enrolled in college, it will affect their way of learning and of course it is different with those who have a higher level of grammar mastery. This is in line with Pradana (2016) who concluded
that student who already knows grammar will have a better attitude about it and therefore should have a good grade in grammar courses.

All of these challenges that were mentioned before are mostly internal factors, which mean it is from within oneself that actually could be controlled individually. Meanwhile, the external factor that comes from outside oneself and cannot be control by the participants, are the least mentioned.

Those challenges that categorized as internal factors are; Complicated grammatical item; The mindset that sees grammar as a hard subject; Ineffective individual learning strategies; Scant hour spent to review material outside class; Difficulty in memorizing tenses and rules; Discrepancy between teachers’ teaching style with students’ learning; Lack of self-oriented motivation, and the external factors; Overcrowded class; and Inadequate background.

Yet, both of those internal and external factors of challenge in learning grammar should not be underestimate and should be seen as a whole unity that cause struggle in students who is learning grammar through independent grammar course that needs to be solved.
CONCLUSION

By the end of the study, the writer can get the answer of the research question of this study that wanted to discover the challenges of EFL students in learning grammar through independent course and the causes of those challenges.

This study found the challenges that are faced by EFL in learning grammar through independent grammar course can be categorized in two main factors; internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are things that come from within themselves and external factors are things that come from outside like social environment or classes. The nine challenges found in this study mainly come from internal factors which is from within student selves. But, external factors also can support those internal factors and cause student to be even more unsuccessful in learning grammar.

Those challenges based on the most mentioned by participants are; (1) Negative view on grammar; (2) Overcrowded class; (3) Complicated grammatical item; (4) Ineffective individual learning strategies; (5) Scant hour spent to review material outside class; (6) Discrepancy between teachers’ teaching style with students’ learning; (7) Lack of self-oriented motivation; (8) Difficulty in memorizing tenses and rules; and (9) Inadequate background. Number 1,3,4,5,6,7 and 8 are all internal factors, and the external factors are number 2 and 9.

If we see those challenges closely, it is highly linked to each other. When student already see grammar as something complicated and hard to understand, they will be skeptical in studying grammar just by looking at the amount of tenses and
rules that they need to master. Unless they have self-oriented motivation that force them to raise their skill in grammar, their own mind-set will cause them lose interest in learning grammar independently when their learning style is not in line with their teachers’ teaching style. This kind of situation will affect students’ achievement in learning grammar and result in students’ poor grammar understanding.

In sum, this study proved by Сивак (2017) that found the challenges in learning English includes the lack of interest and motivation, lack of concentration in class and overcrowded class. These three categories are all included in the writer’s study, lack of interest and motivation are internal factors and lack of concentration & overcrowded class are external factors of challenges.

In addition to this research, the writer’s finding also found that educational background also plays roles in whether student can easily understand grammar or not.

The result of this study is useful for the faculty to see that the real cause of challenges in learning grammar comes from within students, but their surrounding also take parts on this. Therefore it should be conditioned accordingly so student may achieve their maximum potential in learning grammar through independent grammar course.

Students who did not pass independent grammar course may see this finding and reevaluate their view and motivation in learning grammar through independent course to maximize their chance in passing their next independent grammar course in the future. The faculty may help by raising awareness about the importance of
grammar and how it is not as hard as students may have thought so students may show excitement toward learning grammar.

The complexity of grammar and the amount of rules that grammar has cannot limit students on mastering it. A faculty program like grammar clinics or a brief explanation during the beginning of every independent grammar course may help to change students’ view on grammar as something that is not meant to be memorize but a guide that needs to be understood so student may not be intimidated by the amount of lessons they need to focus on in order to master grammar.

This study only takes a limited number of respondents and the result may not yet cover all types of EFL students and cannot be generalized. There should be a further study about the same topic to study this problem in a wider range. The next possible researches that can be conducted in order to open more insight regarding challenges faced by EFL in learning grammar through independent course shall discuss about how to change students’ perception about grammar as a hard subject, the kind of learning strategies that may help student to learn grammar effectively or an insight towards students’ perception on complicated grammatical items.
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APPENDIX

Semi-structured Interview Question List with Follow Ups Questions (Indonesian)

1. Mengapa anda pikir anda gagal di kelas basic grammar semester lalu?
2. Apa kesan/ yang Anda pikirkan ketika Anda mendengar kata "grammar"?
3. Apa kesan/ yang Anda pikirkan ketika mendengar frase "mata kuliah grammar"?
4. Bisakah Anda ceritakan pengalaman Anda ketika belajar di kelas mata kuliah grammar?
5. Apa yang menyebabkan kesulitan Anda? Mengapa nilai Anda kurang bagus?
6. Bagaimana tingkat kompleksitas struktur/grammatical item yang diajarkan?
7. Apakah pendapat Anda tentang struktur/grammatical item yang diajarkan?
8. Bagaimana pendapat Anda tentang bahan ajar dalam kelas?
9. Apakah ada item-item yang sulit?
10. Item apa yang menurut Anda sulit? Mengapa?
11. Apa pendapat Anda tentang metode pengajaran dosen?
12. Apa pendapat Anda tentang metode pengajaran yang dipakai dosen?
13. Metode pengajaran seperti apa yang Anda harapkan?
14. Bagaimana kecepatan pengajaran dari dosen?
15. Apa pendapat Anda tentang kecepatan pengajaran terhadap efektifitas pembelajaran Anda? Kecepatan seperti apa yang Anda harapkan?
16. Apa pendapat anda tentang suasana kelas, apakah itu juga menyebabkan anda kesulitan belajar?
17. Apa jumlah mahasiswa juga mempengaruhi anda dalam belajar?
18. Berapa jam Anda gunakan untuk belajar setiap minggu?
19. Apakah anda belajar berlatih sendiri di luar latihan yang ada?
20. Apa motivasi anda dalam belajar sendiri di luar kelas?
21. Apa tujuan anda belajar di luar kelas?