SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS GRAMMAR

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan

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INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the one of biggest parts of learning English. Ever since we first studied English we have been exposed to Grammar. We have faced Grammar since we were in students’ school, even in the university. Al-Mekhali and Nagaratman (2011) argue that there are three areas of Grammar, which are Grammar as rules, Grammar as form, and Grammar as resource. They added that many L2 learners think that learning Grammar means learning the rules of Grammar and having an intellectual knowledge of Grammar. People have different perceptions towards the roles of Grammar. Some have positive perceptions and some have negative perceptions.

Grammar is said to be very important and may affect one’s success in English. Grammar has a big role in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. Besides that, Grammar is one of the factors that determine students’ success or not in learning English. According to Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011, p.70), Grammar is a valuable aspect for oral or written communication. In addition, both teachers and students assume that Grammar study is not sufficient, whereas for the real-life communication Grammar is also important.

Although Grammar is important, there are many types of difficulties faced by students with regard to Grammar instruction in an ESL/EFL context. According to Haudeck (1996, cited by European Commission, 2006) many learners have difficulty in internalizing grammar rules, although these have been
taught intensively. For the most part, within the classroom, any mention of *Grammar* causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror.

**Research Question**

Knowing the background and the problem above, this paper aims to investigate Senior High School students’ perceptions toward grammar instruction in EFL context. The research question used in this research is “*what are the students’ perceptions towards grammar in SMA Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga?*” From this research question, the writer hope can investigate types of students’ perceptions towards *Grammar* in their *Grammar* lesson.

**Significance of the study**

The result of this study will be useful for English teachers, because it can help us to find out the students’ perceptions towards the roles of *Grammar* in EFL/ESL context.

It is hoped that, this study can be useful for teachers who want to consider their teaching techniques in *Grammar* related to students’ perceptions towards the roles of *Grammar*. This is supported by Morelli (2003, p.33-34) who stated that “educators should be willing to consider the attitudes and perceptions of students when making decisions and about how to teach grammar”. Besides that, the writer also hope that this study can be helpful for new English teachers to give them references about the students’ perceptions towards *Grammar* in general so that they can prepare an appropriate lesson in the classroom.
LITERATURE REVIEW

I. What is Grammar?

The definition of Grammar is the study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences. People sometimes describe Grammar as the "rules" of a language. Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratman (2011) said that in teaching Grammar, three areas have to be considered: Grammar as rules, Grammar as form, and Grammar as resource. In another words, Grammar has some grammatical parts such as words, sentences, paragraphs, nouns, verbs, and punctuations.

Grammar has been seen to be a problem and the way of helping learners to be successful in learning English. The hard fact that most learners face is often finding the difficulty to understand the rules of Grammar taught in the classroom. Horwitz (1988) said that learning grammar is the principal way in learning foreign a language because grammar is the important rules.

II. Issues related to Grammar

The role of Grammar instruction in an English classroom has been an issue nowadays. Grammar has a big role for students in learning English as a foreign language. The rules of Grammar is not only about the theory, but also as a whole to help learners mastering the important skills in English such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Learners have different points of view and also different perceptions when they learn about Grammar. If students are serious about learning a foreign language, Grammar can help them to learn the language
more quickly and more efficiently. Some people assume that it is important to think of *Grammar* as something that can help students, like a friend. When students understand the *Grammar* (or system) of a language, they can understand many things by themselves, without having to ask a teacher, parent, or look in a book.

III. What is perception?

People have different perceptions toward how they interpret and respond to other people and circumstances. Perception refers to the ability picking out something through senses (seeing, hearing, touching or smelling). According to Lindsay & Norman (1977) perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. In other words, perception is how people think and appreciate something. It is probably different one to another because people sometimes have different thoughts though they think about the same things. Perception can also be described as the way that people notice or understand something using one of their senses.

IV. The previous studies

This study will continue the previous study from a few studies about students’ attitudes towards *Grammar*. The study was conducted by Elkilic and Akca (2008), who reported generally attitudes of students studying English *Grammar* at a private primary EFL classroom towards studying *Grammar*. The result is in particular a little over 50% reported finding some difficulties in learning and remembering *Grammar* and only about 30% reported that students
are not really interested on Grammar and only about 20% of their subjects claimed to enjoy Grammar very much.

Horwitz’s (1988) creation of the well-known Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire, which triggered the so-called “BALLI studies” (Kunt, 1997, as cited in Horwitz, 1999; Oh, 1996; Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995; Yang 1992, 1999). The BALLI questionnaire has 34 items, which fall into five categories: nature of language learning, difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. Although the questionnaire primarily investigates learners’ general beliefs, there are several items related specifically to grammar instruction, such as Item 20, “Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules” (Horwitz, 1988). Results from the BALLI studies (e.g., Peacock, 2001; Samimy & Lee, 1997) seem to suggest that most learners agree with this statement. The BALLI studies are probably among the first to explore L2 learners beliefs about the role of grammar in language learning.

Finally, it should be noted that several other studies have highlighted learners’ belief that studying Grammar is not easy and sometimes when they learn about Grammar, students feel under pressure. However, there are some aspects that can help students to face their difficulties. If students want to be successful in English, the first thing that they should remember is that they have to be interested in English, especially Grammar.
V. Factors affecting the success in learning the rules of Grammar

There are at least two kinds of factors which affect the success in learning the rules of Grammar, there are:

1. Motivation

Motivation in learning English is like the combination of effort and desire in achieving the goal in learning language. According to Sue Lintem (2002) motivation is like a desire or wants to achieve the goal, that combined with the energy to work towards the goal. In line with Brown (2000), "motivation is also like an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to another action."

Motivation becomes the important factor of students that affects to achieve the goal in learning language. Nimmannit (1998) suggest s that students will be more motivated if they are allowed to do activities which they can relate, which encourage them to use the target language and also allow them to choose what they want to say.

Motivation plays a big role in language learning. It can produce effective second language communicators because it makes the learners step into their self-confidence points. Motivation can also create learners who continually engage themselves in the learning even they complete a target total.

Several aspects in human life also influence student’s motivation in learning language. One of them is social aspect. Richards (1972) stated "social aspect will influence students learning, because learning language will reflect a
social process, and different varieties of language reflect different setting for
language learning and language use.”

2. Students feeling towards English

Having a second language also means having another access to another
world of people, ideas, ways of thinking and literature. Currently, English is used
as a medium of knowledge for transferring and sharing among people over the
world. Through language, people will be able to express their thoughts and feeling
with each other in certain ideas or concept.

Nowadays, the status of English is Lingua Franca. It means that the world
needs and uses English for the instrumental reason especially for communication
(Alptekin, 2002). The English language is an important medium of interaction
used many people in various fields, such as in career, academic, and also business
thorough the world.

Feeling, can be divided into at least two, there are positive feeling and
negative feeling. Positive feeling indicates a high and positive energy and full of
concentration in learning. According to Stone (1981) stated if positive feeling is
related social activity and satisfaction to the pleasant events. Otherwise, negative
feeling indicates a negative energy such as anger, fear, and nervousness.
Moreover, Clark and Watsons (1974) also stated if negative feeling is related
stress, poor and frequently of unpleasant events.

Students’ have different feelings towards English. They may like to learn
English as they are aware of the benefits of it. When they learn English they may
increase their self confidence in particular situations. For example, when they
meet foreigners and they have to be able to speak English with them. On the other hand, the students may don’t like English because of the difficulties in learning. The difficulties can be found when they should speak in correct pronunciation and writing a correct spelling and punctuation. Ahen (2009) claimed that the proficiency in English create greater opportunities for further education. Thus, proficiency in English is an important package for the students in order to further their study at the university.

3. Learning Environment

Learning is a conscious knowledge of language rules. It does not typically lead to talk fluently, and it is derived from formal instruction. According to Whittaker (2003), “learning may be defined as a process by which behavior originates or altered through training or experience.” Furthermore, this definition is not different from Cronbach’s (2003), in his book who states that learning is shown by changing in behavior as a result or experience.

Learning environment also has been considered important in the learning process. According to Filla (2002) learning a language is complex, because learning language is taking from simple skills into the complicated ones. To some extent, learning is also influenced by the beliefs that students bear about language learning.

In the teaching learning process, learners can be called as a good learner if they have good learning strategies in their learning environment. Chamot and Van and Abraham (1989) confirm that good learners are characterized by a varied range of learning and communication strategies. The learning environment is one
place of language rules. Learning means knowledge about what we learned and it means that learning without meaning is a form to learn without changing.

The important thing is to create a positive environment in order to encourage the students’ interaction. For example, students should be able to express ideas, feeling and opinion without feeling afraid of making mistakes, and students can also carry out communicative tasks in an effective way.

THE STUDY

Methodology of data collection

This part of this study contains context of the study, participants, instrument of data collection, data collection procedure, and data analysis. This study answered the following question: What are the students’ perceptions towards Grammar?

Context of the Study

The research was conducted in Senior High School at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga. The reason why the writer chose this school was that when the writer did the teaching practicum, the writer saw many students who did not seem to feel enthusiastic in learning English, especially when the topic was about the Grammar. As we know that Grammar has a big role in studying English, so the writer chose English class grade X because in this class the students seemed to find the difficulties when they learnt Grammar.

Participants

The participants of this study were 45 students of grade X at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga. The participants were around 16-17 years old with
English as their foreign language. The participants were chosen by “criterion based” selection. Blackledge (2001) stated that choosing participants using criteria based means that we have criteria and we are seeking the participants that fit to those criteria. The criteria were students in the first grades of Senior High School.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

This study used a questionnaire to collect the data in order to find out students’ perception towards Grammar. The type of questionnaire was an integration of close-ended questionnaire. Since the writer used close-ended questionnaire, there would be several statements given with scale like strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was presented in Indonesian to make it easier for the participants to understand the statements.

**Data Collection Procedures**

To gather the data, the writer was spreaded the questionnaires to the students of grade X at SMA Satya Wacana Salatiga. Firstly, the writer was piloting the questionnaire in order to find out whether there were any questions that still needed revisions or improvements. Then, after the writer fixed the questionnaire, the writer distributed it to the students of grade X of the different classes. After that, the writer collected the questionnaires and made initial themes based on the research question.

**Data Analysis**

The close-ended questions were analyzed in tabulation form with explanation such as SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree. After the writer collected the questionnaires, teh writer started to
categorize students’ responses based on the initial theme. Then, after those steps, the writer knew what the students’ perceptions towards Grammar are. Finally, the writer analyzed and summarized students’ responses to find out the result of my research.

**DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter discusses the findings from the analysis of the data. The data gained from questionnaire were analyzed to answer the research question “what are the students’ perceptions toward grammar at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga?” In this part, the writer discussed the finding of the closed-ended questionnaire in which students rated each statement according to the four-point scale by putting a check mark on the appropriate column: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The writer categorized 19 questions into 3 parts: table 1 about students’ perceptions towards Grammar, table 2 about students’ feeling toward Grammar and the third is table 3 about environment perception toward learning. After that, the writer discussed several questions that received the highest and lowest percentages. Presented below, are the mean and percentages of the participants’ responses and their discussion.

Table 1. The data collection from the questionnaires

Table 1 below shows the data collected from the questionnaires about their perceptions toward the importance of Grammar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I think learning *Grammar* is important in the context of studying English.  

| %  | 40% | 60% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

2. I think learning *Grammar* can help me to communicate in English well.  

| %  | 51% | 47% | 98% | 2% | 0% | 2% |

3. I can feel that I get more benefits and knowledge when I learn English at school.  

| %  | 27% | 71% | 98% | 2% | 0% | 2% |

4. I think by learning *Grammar* I can measure my ability in learning English well.  

| %  | 31% | 64% | 95% | 4% | 0% | 4% |

5. I think that learning *Grammar* can help me to be successful in acquiring English.  

| %  | 49% | 51% | 100% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

6. I think I need to increase my skills on *Grammar*.  

| %  | 64% | 31% | 95% | 2% | 2% | 4% |

7. I feel that learning *Grammar* is wasting time.  

| %  | 4% | 4% | 8% | 71% | 20% | 91% |

Based on the result of the study, it was found that the overwhelming number of students were aware of the importance of *Grammar*. It can be seen from the table that more than 90% of the respondents believed Statement (S)1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, and S8. From the first question, most of students were aware that *Grammar* is important to be learned for English in context (S1). It means that students believed that *Grammar* is one of the important things to be learned if we
would like to learn English (S1). We can see the other findings from the questions number two and three which show that Grammar has a benefit for the learner to use English well because they could get more knowledge about Grammar (S3). Although 8% of the students said that learning Grammar is wasting time, 71% of the students are still enthusiastic in learning Grammar. Besides that, the questionnaire also showed that learning Grammar can be used as a mirror for the students to know their English skills and the students believed that learning Grammar can help them to rich their achievements in English (S4, S5). That founding was also supported by Loewen, et al. (2009) which showed that the learners stated about the benefits of Grammar for their study (p.99). Most of the students were aware of the importance of Grammar. The data showed that more than 90% of the students need to increase their Grammar skill (S6). Students also reported that Grammar also becomes a crucial aspect to be learned when learning English. The students also believe that they need to learn Grammar. Based on the data above, it means that students’ perceptions towards Grammar are positive.

We can see that students were aware the importance of Grammar. The students knew the importance of Grammar for their English skill. It can be seen that students were enthusiastic in learning Grammar.

Table 2 shows about how the students’ feel toward Grammar. There are several questions about positive feeling and negative feeling.

Table 2. The data collection from the questionnaire about students’ feeling towards Grammar.
The result above showed that the more than 50% of the respondents had positive feeling towards Grammar. We can see from the first questions that 67% of the students were interested in learning Grammar (S1). It was supported by respondent from Loewen, et al (2009) who said that “it is my favorite part of a second language” (p.100). Then, the second question also revealed that 68% of the students liked to learn Grammar (S2). We can see from another finding that 71% of the students reported that learning Grammar is fun (S4). All these positive findings correspond to students’ high awareness of the importance of Grammar.
In spite of this, it cannot be denied that learning *Grammar* is difficult, as showed from the questions number three and six, the students said that learning *Grammar* is not easy as well. However the findings revealed that students gave positive responses towards learning *Grammar* although they reported that *Grammar* is difficult. However, even though they stated that learning *Grammar* is difficult, it is good for the students as they like to learn it. Their interest in learning *Grammar* could be a good beginning for them to master English someday.

Table 3 shows the data collected from the questionnaire about environment perception in learning. If I take a look from the environmental aspect, most students had positive responses towards *Grammar*. The data (in percentages) are the calculation of students’ responses.

Table 3. The data collection from the questionnaire about the environment perceptions in learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I like it when the teacher explains <em>Grammar</em> at school.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I feel I can follow the <em>Grammar</em> lessons at school easily.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I think the <em>Grammar</em> teaching system given in school can be easily followed.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I have difficulties when learning <em>Grammar</em> at school.</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown by Table 3, 76% of the respondents approved that they were interested when learning Grammar (S1). The Grammar lesson at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana was also easily followed by the students so that they reported that they liked to learn Grammar at school (S3). A study from Loewen, et al (2009) found that “learner also reported liking grammar instruction that involved contextualized examples and explanations…” (p.100). However, another finding showed that 63% of the students found difficulties when they were learning Grammar and need to study more about it (S4). The questions number five showed that 86% of the students agreed if the school add the schedule of material about Grammar (S5) to help students overcome the difficulties found. As we know that Grammar is not easy to be learned but as long as the students are interested to learn it will give good start for them to learn it.

From the result of the data above, the writer concluded that most of the students knew that learning Grammar is important. They were aware of the benefits and the importance of learning Grammar. As they learned it, they believe that they learned about something important, thus it is not waste of time. From the questionnaire, it was shown that the school may also give a good system to give the Grammar lesson to be easily followed by the students. The problem was only when they feel that Grammar is difficult. This means teachers may find another way to teach so that the students can learn easier.
CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to find out students’ perceptions toward Grammar at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana. After collecting data, from the first part the writer found that students were aware of the importance of Grammar. The data revealed that students need to learn Grammar in the context of studying English. The students assumed that by learning Grammar they can measure their ability in learning English because they may get more benefit and knowledge to be used while they were communicating in English. The students also think that they can gain their English skill by learning Grammar and they feel that they need to learn more about it. They assumed that learning Grammar is useful and not wasting their time in learning. The second part discussed was about the students’ feeling toward Grammar. The study found that the students were interested in learning Grammar. They enjoyed in learning Grammar. The students claimed that they like to learn Grammar and they declared that learning Grammar was fun. Although the study showed that the students face the difficulties in learning Grammar, they seems like enjoy and interested in learning Grammar and did not feel bored. The third finding was about the students’ perceptions toward the environment in learning Grammar. Students stated that they were interested in learning Grammar in the classroom. They felt that the Grammar lesson system was easily understood and they can follow the teaching and learning process well. However, they still found difficulties in their learning and because of that the students thought that the schools need to give additional grammar class for them.
As pedagogical implementation from the finding, the teacher should find new method to make different environment in the classroom especially in the Grammar lesson class. It means that the teacher should make the teaching and learning process more interesting so that they will not feel bored when learning it as the students was aware of the importance of it.

This study was done in very limited time. The results may be more valid and rich if other research was done in a longer time. Second, this study only has 45 participants. Further research can add the number of the participants to get more information about students’ perceptions about Grammar.

References


