

DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF LEARNING TO LEARN MODULE FOR GRAMMAR MASTERY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

English Language is one of the main language that is being taught in Malaysian Education system and it is taught as a second language from primary school until tertiary level. Grammar plays a vital role in mastering the language as language and grammar are inseparable because the function of a language depends on its grammar. Students from national type school are facing problem in learning grammar in which it has lead them for their incompetency to converse in English language as the language is only used during their English periods as it is not their first language. Using modules in teaching grammar will be quite helpful for the students to learn the grammar as all the techniques and supporting activities included inside it as well as it can be used at any time they want. The objective of the study reported in this article was to gauge students' perception on a Learning to Learn Module in terms of its suitability, usability, and user friendliness. The research design of this study is module development. This is a mix-method study employed questionnaires and interviews for data collection. Year 3 students were used as respondents for this study. 48 students Year 3 were involved in answering the questionnaire on their preferred language learning strategies. This data was then used to design and develop the module. Then, 3 students from this group were purposively chosen to get their feedback on the module for the qualitative data. They were interviewed on the module's suitability, usability, and user friendliness to help master the language. The collected data revealed that the module developed for grammar mastery is very helpful in learning the grammar which leads for the grammar mastery. Students also said that the module made topic easy to comprehend because all needed information and explanations are given in a simple mode. The developed module is able to become a learning tool in mastering English grammar.

KEYWORD(S): development, evaluation, learning, module, grammar, mastery

Introduction

In Malaysian Education system, English language is being taught as a second language from primary school until tertiary level (Hamzah. M.H & Dourado. J.E, 2009) because English language has become one of the main languages and second language in Malaysia. Based on the Malaysian primary school English language curriculum document, it is well stated that "*English is taught as a second language in all government assisted schools in the country...*" (Ministry of Education, 1995, p.1). Undeniable that English language goes parallel with students' life since they have to mingle with English language almost every day in their daily life.

Every students are required to master subject-verb agreement, tenses, adjectives, pronouns, preposition, etc whether they are in primary or secondary school as to help them to write and converse in correct English. By this, the learning objectives have been achieved, thus leading to the achievement of the standard level of English set in Malaysian curriculum. The students also will be most likely to show a good proficiency level in English language by possessing good grammar skill. Learning rules of grammar actually can grow learners' intellectual knowledge (Mekhlafi. A.A.M, 2011) which can lead for successful grammar mastery. Students will be able to show good proficiency level in English language by possessing good grammar skill.

Referring to Malaysian primary school curriculum, pupils are needed to acquire linguistic knowledge and skills through learner-centered and activity-oriented teaching-learning strategies and the main objective in the curriculum to establish English language skills in the primary classroom (Othman.J, 2010). Suppiah,P.C,Subramaniam. S & Michael,A.S (2011) have pin pointed on the issues faced by students from national type schools. It is learnt that the problem they faced in learning grammar has lead for their incompetency to converse in English language as the language is only used during their English periods as it is not their first language. Hence, it is required teachers' creativity and innovation to make the learning become interesting.

Engaging learning tools in language learning empower students to boost up their understanding and improve their knowledge on the target language (Cohen. A.D, 1995,) in which it will be focused for grammar mastery on the target language. Using modules in teaching grammar will be quite helpful for the students to learn the grammar as all the techniques and supporting activities included inside it. A part from that, the modules can be used at any time.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Nowadays, teachers need to be creative and innovative in teaching English language. Teachers' method of teaching grammar always same and quite bored. They need to find the best approach possible (Darus. S, 2009) that can be applied in the multilingual classroom but what is happening in real situation is that few approaches or strategies are used to help the students to learn the language and master its grammar. These strategies are detailed actions that can be used to grab (Oxford.R.L, 2003)

grammatical items conferring students' learning ability. Drilling process of the lesson taught in the classroom happens at all the time where students are required to use the same given technique to answer the related questions.

Students always face problem in identifying language learning strategies that can facilitate their grammar mastery of the language in which it has led to the failure of the learning (Chamot. A.U, 2004). Students are more attracted to use their own strategies (Chamot. A.U, 2004) in grammar learning. Due to this, they fail to identify the correct and appropriate language learning strategies which can facilitate grammar mastery. Some of students might use more than one strategy to tackle grammar concept in which it may not be suitable for the learning. Identifying the suitable and correct language learning strategies for the lesson or topic is quite important for the students since applying it in the learning process can give a productive or undesirable result.

Grammar mastery is seen as a very important factor to tackle and become proficient user of English language. It is also learnt that learners' grammar knowledge reflecting on their intellectual knowledge, thus creating a good language learner and user (Mekhlafi. A.A.M, 2011)

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of the study is to know the effectiveness of the learning to learn module for grammar mastery in primary school.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study has been set up to study the objective as stated below:

a.) To gauge students' perception on the Learning-Learning Module in terms of suitability, usability, and user friendliness.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions to achieve the objective

a.)What is the students' perception on the Learning-Learning Module?

2.0 Language Learning Strategy Instruction

Language learning strategy instruction (LLSI) is able to improvise learner's language performance by using particular learning strategies that has been trained to them as well as to indorse the efficiency of strategy training (Kinoshita.C.Y ,2003).

Undeniable that learners need to be introduced with notions, ideas and concepts in language learning strategy so that they will become familiar with the learning strategies (Rahimi. A.H , 2012). Positive instruction in the strategy training in language learning is able to expand students' language performance. It is vital for teachers in implementing LLSI in language learning to facilitate learning process.

2.1 Definition of Language Learning Strategies

According to Embi.M.A (2000), LLS helps to expand language learning process in order to achieve learning goals. Learners implement some plans and action in the learning process. O'Malley *et al* (1985,p23) in Griffith.C (2004,p4) has appealed that LLS is the "operations or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information"

Meanwhile LLS is seen regards as *specific mental and communicative procedures that learners employ in order to learn and use language* (Wong L.L.C & Nunan. D (2011) cited from Chamot, 2005; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Learners have some strategies to employ in the language learning to assist them to comprehend the learning. So, sometimes they go for one or more strategies that seems easier for them to apply in the language task and they are unconscious of the strategy that they are employing (Wong L.L.C. and Nunan. D, 2011). Each and every learner are varies from the type of strategies that they are using to assist language learning. Everyone has their own preferences toward using language learning strategies.

2.2 Importance of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies are capable to assist the learners in exploiting learning opportunities by developing their learning-how-to-learn skills (Wong L.L.C & Nunan. D, 2011). Learners can bring their learning outside classroom and get exposed to the real world situation to test their language skill and to improve their language enactment.

Other than that, learners can advance their knowledge on language learning with the help of language learning strategies (Cohen.A.D, 1995). The strategy that is employed to learn the language has some impact on the level of proficiency obtained by the learners (Nambiar.R, 2009). Learners need to choose suitable strategy that suits their learning style as appropriate strategy may improve and lift their language proficiency.

2.3 Teaching and Learning English Grammar

Zhang.J (2009) has regard teaching and learning grammar is quite vital in a students' life as it is the foundation for successful English learning and this will help them to develop their English language without any problem or barrier. Thus, this situation leading for a positive learning environment to enhance learners' language capability and proficiency (Widodo. H.P, 2006).

English language complies with several of sub section of language to make it perfect, thus, teaching it not an easy task. For example, in a sentence, it contains various part of grammar subsection which is playing an important role in making the sentence

to be sensible and a good sentence. A part from that, grammar teaching also examine the exact form of grammar use but it is depends on the whole communication in which it may get pretentious by the contextual meaning (Gunawardena. M ,2014).

Using old fashioned techniques and principles of teaching and learning grammar need to evolve depending on the current situation. Teaching pedagogy need to be given more attention when dealing with teaching grammar. Richards. J.C & Reppen.R (2014) in their writing have pointed out that, one can improve their grammar teaching by having various type of principles and practices which impact for a better pedagogy in providing a productive grammar teaching. This will help to develop from sentence-level grammar and focuses on fundamental communicative resource

3.0 Methodology

The research design of this study is module development. This is a mixed-method study where quantitative and qualitative will be used to gather the required data to answer the research question and objective. About 40 participants will be used for need of analysis data and 3 participants will be selected to interview to answer the research question. To get participants' perception on LLS and preferred LLS, questionnaires will be employed to fit the quantitative method whereas interview questions will be used on 3 participants for qualitative method. The module will be based on the participants' preferences and it will be evaluated from three sides which are contents, usability and user friendliness using interview questions. The designing and developing of the module will be based on the instructional model, ADDIE model using feedbacks from need of analysis questionnaires form.

4.0 Data Analysis

a.) *"Is the learning purpose is clearly stated?"*

All three respondents have responded that the learning purpose is clearly stated in the module. Apart from it, teacher's explanations of the learning purpose has make them easier to understand and move on to next stage of the module.

b.) *"Do you think the main idea/ usage/ value/ benefit are clearly stated?"*

The main idea / usage/ value/ benefit of the topic is clearly stated in the module. Respondents can understand the reason or idea of learning the topic well.

c.) *"In your opinion, are the steps/ procedures/ examples clearly stated or not?"*

All the steps/ procedures have been explained thoroughly and clearly. Respondents are able to follow the steps/procedures to comprehend the topic and complete the given exercise.

d.) *"How the steps/ procedures/ examples helps you in learning to use the grammar strategy?"*

The given the steps/ procedures/ examples have enabled the respondents to answer correctly the given exercise. A very clear explanations on the steps/ procedures/ examples give a clear view on the topic. Respondents are able to show good understanding on topic based on the given examples as well as the steps/procedures given.

e.) *"How formulas or diagrams provided helps you to understand the grammar strategy better?"*

Respondents have stated that that the diagrams were followed by detailed explanations which are seem to be precise and simple for them to comprehend. Respondents also refer to the diagram during doing the exercise as to help them to answer it correctly. Other than that, the provided diagrams give a clear view on the topic they are learning.

f.) *"How the unit allows you to do self-assessment /reflection of the grammar strategy?"*

Respondents refer to the number of question which they are able to answer correctly .so, from there, they are able to measure their performance on the topic. So, when they calculate their performance, it is seen that, they have done the best using the step or procedures.

g.) *"How you found that the unit is easy to follow?"*

The used language in the module is very simple and up to the respondents level which make it easier for them to understand the strategy. A part of it, respondents also have stated that they are able to answer the questions as they can comprehend the steps/procedures thus answer correctly the given exercises.

5.0 Discussion

Since the learning purpose is clearly stated in the module before the learning processes as well as the main idea / usage/ value/ benefit of the topic, it has helped the learners to have a clear idea on what they will go through in learning the topic. Sykes.A.H (2015) cited from Willing (1989) that learning objectives, educational and cultural background, personality and previous language learning experience may lead to a varying degree of success in achieving high level of proficiency in the language. This has been supported from the data finding that the respondents were able to comprehend the idea in learning the topic thus, it has led for a grammar learning session.

Respondents were able to make the best throughout the module because of their attitudes as well. Respondents listened clearly and gave full attention to the explanation given by the teacher. Other than that, respondents have to do the module by their self at

home by referring to all the stages and steps or procedures stated in module. Respondents also need to be motivated in order to achieve and need carefully study all the steps/procedures, diagrams, and example to understand the strategy and answer the given activities. Finally, all have accomplished the given task properly. All this attitudes resembles some of GLL characteristics which have been outlined by Thompson. S (2005). Those characteristics are as below:

- a.) Motivation
- b.) Self-confidence and a willingness to make mistakes and take risks
- c.) Having good learning strategies in place
- d.) Willingness to accept feedback and respond to suggestions
- e.) A willingness to actively participate
- f.) A willingness to forge a working relationship with the teacher

The designed module is for English language grammar mastery, so the used language of instruction is English language. It is accepted that the respondents or learners were able to cope with the language as it has been used in a simpler way. The vocabularies and sentences used in the module is up to the learners' level. They have easily understand the given explanations, step/procedures, and examples to master the given strategy and then master the grammar topic. Besides that, the module also has become a tool which is assisting the respondents to practice the strategy of grammar learning. It is said that the activities have catered them with the knowledge to master the given topic. Other than that, the activities also reflecting the strategy that they employ in grammar learning which they always prefer to master grammar topics. As been said by Ahmadi.A (2012), instructions in strategy training is capable to increase the usage of specific strategies more than other ones. Through this, respondents have developed their strategy by generalising the strategies with other context as to learn better and tackle the grammar topic that they are learning. The activities in the module are capable to develop respondents' strategy to master the grammar topic.

Apart from that, the module reflecting a good self-assessment of the good language learner. It provides the learners to measure their own achievement using the scale which has been provided in the module. So the respondents, calculated the number of questions they got it right to measure their understanding or achievement in the topic.

The module also seen as user friendly since pictures and simple language that attracts learners' attention deployed in the module. Learners felt comfortable and secure during the learning process. Their anxiety on learning the grammar of the second language is able to be eradicated through strategies used in the module.

5.1 Conclusion

This study has been conducted to know the effectiveness of the learning to learn module for grammar mastery in primary school that has been designed. After implementation, the module was evaluated from three sides which are contents, usability and user friendliness. The results are remarkable and received positive feedbacks. The module has helped the ESL learners to master the grammar topic easily. This module will be able to improve learners' grammar mastery if it is continued for all other grammar topics. The modules can serve as a medium for the learners to learn English grammar in a better way as to language proficient in the language. It is suggested more researches to done to ease grammar learning and other English language skills.

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