
THE MOST EFFECTIVE ENGLISH GRAMMAR SYLLABUS FOR FRESHMEN DUE TO CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT

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Abstract

*Freshmen of English Department have various backgrounds which affect their understanding on English grammar. Meanwhile, English Grammar is the basic need for English Department freshmen to deal with other subjects in the following semesters. Therefore, teaching grammar to first semester students needs strategies in order to achieve the goal of existing curriculum. One of the strategies is setting the best syllabus on the related course. English Letters Department of University of Sanata Dharma, recently, adjusted its curriculum in 2016. It compounds the syllabus of Structure course of freshman in batch 2016 becomes doubled from the syllabus applied before batch 2016. In other words, grammar study learnt by freshmen of batch before 2016 in the first and second semester advanced into compactly learnt in only one semester by the freshmen of batch 2016. With the same reference which is *Understanding and Using English Grammar 3rd edition* by Betty S. Azar used by the two categories of subjects in this research, later, will be discovered that the syllabus with fewer materials is the most effective syllabus.*

Keywords: *english grammar, syllabus, freshmen*

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is more than just a simple matter to give knowledge. Instead of making a simple arrangement and planning, the education system should have something more evaluable. Smith and Razzouk say that this focus on the syllabus as a contract is useful for students and instructors. For students, this approach makes clear what the rules are (qtd. in Jay Parkes, and May B 55-57). In Indonesia, all the learning plans have been patterned by ministry of education as law, called Indonesian National Qualification Framework or Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI). There are stated all about higher education management. In the Law of Indonesian minister of Education and Culture no 73 in the year of 2013, stated about the responsibilities of institutions in Indonesia. Some of those are; the institution has to make a description of the goals of the study, the institution is obliged to arrange, implement and evaluate the curriculum based on KKNI in field of higher education along with its rule, regulations and policy. Last, each major has to develop the guarantee of internal qualification to accomplish the goals of each major.

Students of English Letters Department in University of Sanata Dharma come from various backgrounds. Some of whom come from places in which environment of English language knowledge are good, and some may not. Ironically, the goal of their department to accomplish qualified graduates is intended to all the students without considering the students' background. Thus, it is important to teach English grammar to help the students with less English knowledge background to gain better understanding, and to support the students with better English knowledge background in reviewing the understanding before facing the following semesters. Therefore, as one of the particular parts of the institution, the department should provide the best strategies of delivering knowledge as the modal for the students. One of which is Syllabus.

In 2016, English Letters University of Sanata Dharma adjusted its curriculum. The fact that it affects English grammar study syllabus adjustment is emerging a question of which one is more effective.

2. REVIEW ON THE RELATED THEORIES

b. The difference between curriculum and syllabus

Being understood interchangeable between curriculum and syllabus, a brief explanation by Richards about what the difference between curriculum and syllabus may become enlightenment.

Historically in the UK, syllabus design fits within the curriculum design; the curriculum is the bigger picture. A curriculum can incorporate three steps within the bigger picture of L2 teaching: (1) course planning, (2) materials/methods, and (3) course evaluation (Nunan, 1988:4-5). Traditionally, because grammar teaching was the norm, syllabus design was simply the order of grammar that would be taught within the framework of the bigger picture, or the curriculum. (Murphy, 3)

c. The Purpose of Syllabus

Summary of the purposes and function of a syllabus and associated elements has been categorized by Jay Parkes and Mary B. Harris into three types, those are;

i. Syllabus as a Contract

Syllabus becomes the obligatory timeline rules for the educator and student to achieve the goal of the course. It usually covers the detail of materials stated with its calendar dates. Coming together, there is grading policies. And other rules used during one period of study such as attendance, assignment and accommodation policies. As Whitley et al and Wittig et al says, if the policy is given in the syllabus—and applied consistently—the instructor will likely be exonerated from the charge of unfairness (qtd. in Jay Parkes, and May B 55-57)

ii. Syllabus as a Permanent Record

There are at least two general reasons why a syllabus is useful as a permanent record of what was taught in a course: accountability and documentation. What means by accountability is that syllabus will be used to review the goal of the department and performance of the educators. As documentation, syllabus containing information and description of teaching activity will take part to the improvement from the evaluation both for instructor, faculty and institution grading. Besides, this documentation will help the educator to simply continue the courses from the same stop learned by each student. As Woolcock believes, the syllabi can be used to demonstrate that courses are in alignment with the department and/or institutional mission statements (qtd. in Jay Parkes, and May B 57).

iii. Syllabus as a Learning Tool

It is observed that students' process of learning is not only done by sitting and hearing the explanation. According to Hockensmith, students need to read, do research, or present what they have found in the research. In order to accomplish all those activities, students might get some help from such as book and internet. Unfortunately, the major, faculty or even instructor cannot individually control the materials they use to keep them focus. However, the syllabus can (qtd. in Jay Parkes, and May B 57-58) Echoed by Murphy, being an effective learner requires a complex assortment of skills, including time management, the abilities to prioritize and multitask, strategies for studying and learning, the use of technology, social skills, maturity, and responsibility. Here, the function of syllabus is to give information about whether or not they have to have discussion in group or where they can get any source about certain case. Besides, it helps students to relate and see the pieces of context they are learning with what they have studied and will study. However, syllabus does not really limit what students have to learn. It, instead, gives us broader lessons. Hence, instructor can give description about conditional sentence and why it matters to daily life.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research purpose is to concern and analyze is the juxtaposition of two syllabi. To satisfy this aim, we will go further exploring some methods such as analyzing the curricula, syllabi, students'

evaluation and students' works from empirical research design. Data used in this essay is quantitative data taken from an online survey. The survey has three sections. First, respondents should give their identities information so that the researcher can examine the right target respondents and examine to whom the survey will be directed in order to make the data become valid. Second, respondents were asked to fill the midterm and final exam score. This section was applied as the evidence of permanent record indicating written result of students' learning. Third, there was self-completion questionnaires part in the survey for students to deliver their reflection, evaluation and opinion on the subject that had been learnt. A section for students' suggestion and advice for the future English grammar subject was also available in the survey. Besides online survey, researcher will examine the designs as the background where data were resulted which are description of curricula and syllabi taken from study guidance books. Few collected written works of the two categories of subjects are also analyzed in this paper. This work, later, will prove whether or not the final score is consistent to their self-evaluation and prove if the knowledge is still in students' memory.

The researcher also did what Stukat refers to as unsystematic observation. With this kind of observation, the researcher experience herself curriculum 2010 as the student and curriculum 2014 as the senior tutor. This aims to see what actually happens during the class rather than believing on indirect observation such as survey.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

a. The Curricula

In this research, two categories of subjects are coming from batch 2014 and 2016 of English Letters Department, University of Sanata Dharma. Curriculum applied in batch 2014 is Curriculum 2010 and in batch 2016 is Curriculum 2016. The references used to analyze both of the curricula are taken from Academic Guidance Books (AGB) belong to students from each batch. In AGB 2016, it is stated that evaluation and assessment from year of 2010-2015 are done to intensify the performance of all *civitas academica* of English Letters Department that initiate the adjustment of the curriculum. There are several significances in devising the new curriculum, those are; making evaluation on previous curriculum (2010), doing tracer study on the graduates and alumni, collecting input as well as advice from the graduates, juxtaposing the curriculum of English Letters Department University of Sanata Dharma to other similar and equivalence departments outside of the institution, learning the Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI), Standar Nasional Pendidikan Tinggi (SNPT) and Rector Policy on Curriculum Adjustment in University of Sanata Dharma.

Although the learning goals of prospective graduates are stated more complex and complete in AGB 2016 than in AGB 2010, in general, both of the curricula expect the same qualifications for the graduate such as mastery on the concepts and theories of English language, literature and culture. Besides, analytical and problem solving, English teaching, English communication, journalistic, and social skill also become the aspects of the goal. However, as observed in AGB 2010 and 2016, remarkable differences are found in amount of subjects in 8 semesters and its distribution in each semester.

Comparative case students should take	Year of Curriculum	
	2010	2016
Compulsory subjects	71 subjects (137 credits)	46 subjects (135 credits)
Preference subjects	5 subjects (10 credits)	3 subjects (9 credits)
Amount of subjects per semester from 1 st -7 th	11-13 subjects	6-8 subjects

Table 1. The Remarkable Difference of The Curricula

From the table 1, it is discovered that in curriculum 2016, the subjects are significantly reduced. This happens for as part of Jesuit Universities, English Letters Department University of Sanata Dharma under the circumstance is thought not to be accordance and does not support the educational demand in Jesuit University to encourage the students to think deeply

(qtd. in AGB 2016 23). Therefore, instead of taking quantity by increasing the amount of subjects as matter, the department finally takes quality as matter by decreasing the subjects but dig deeply to the materials. One of the techniques is by integrating or combining several subjects in curriculum 2010 to achieve a learning outcome of curriculum 2016.

b. The Syllabi of Structure and English Grammar Subjects

The adjustment of the curriculum affects the syllabus of structure and grammar for first semester students. As stated in AGB 2010, the structure and grammar subject is called Structure I, in which simple sentence structure will be discussed during the study. At the end of semester, student is expected to understand about simple structure and capable to compose sentence with correct structure. This Structure subjects will later be studied by the students for five semesters. After Structure I in semester one, there will be Structure II in semester 2 and so on until Structure V in semester 5. With only two credits for each Structure subject, learning activity will be held only once a week with three contact hours (50 minutes per meeting) duration per week.

In comparison, as stated in AGB 2016, the structure and grammar study is called English Grammar I, which in the book is described that this subject is arranged to make student understand the basic principles of English Language. Students will study about sentence pattern and tenses; subjects-verb agreement; noun; noun phrases and pronouns; modal; clauses (noun clauses and adjective clauses); gerunds and infinitives; and coordinating conjunction. This complete English Grammar subjects will be learnt in only two semesters; English Grammar I in semester one and English Grammar II in semester 2. With four credits for each English Grammar subject, learning activity will be held three times a week with two contact hours (50 minutes per meeting) duration. The new teaching technique is developed due to the increasing of contact hour. Lecturer will teach only twice a week while the rest will be conducted by a tutor (usually senior students). Compare to years before 2016 which tutor class is an optional, tutor meeting in 2016 is considered to be obligatory.

However, all the materials of English Grammar I and II should cover all the materials in Structure I-V. For the materials listed in the syllabus of Structure I are basic sentence pattern; tenses; noun phrases and modal, it is discovered that the technique to make these Structure and Grammar study become equal is by compacting the materials. Meaning to say, Structure 1 and 2 will be equally covered in English Grammar I, while English Grammar II will cover Structure 3, 4 and 5. In short, both of the syllabi present similar materials but the remarkable adjustment in the duration of learning English structure and grammar in the whole period of undergraduate study.

c. Books/Reference

The course book (or its table of contents) does not have to be, and in some cases, should *not* be, used as a real syllabus design. However, for pragmatic purposes, the course book (or the course book's table of contents) is often a substitute for a specially designed syllabus. (Murphy 4) Even though the syllabus was adjusted, lecturers are still using the same main reference and book which is *Understanding and Using English Grammar 3rd edition* by Betty Schrampfer Azar. It happens as nothing is actually changed in materials of both subjects. Fortunately, the order of the timeline materials in the both syllabi is similar to the order of materials as seen in the book's table of content. According to some teachers, lecturers and students, Azar's book is believed to have the most complete and easiest way of explanation. Likewise, complex examples from each part of the material are also provided in the book.

d. Evaluation

i. Scoring Result

Here, the researcher also conducted an online survey from Google Form to develop the evaluation, reflection and opinion of the students from each batch 2014 and 2016. A survey entitled Survey on Structure I/Grammar study I in Certain Curriculum was participated by 30 students of English Letters Department University of Sanata Dharma consisting 70% or 21 students of batch 2014 and 30% or 9 students

of batch 2016. To ease the evaluation, the respondents were asked about the score of their midterm and final exam;

Batch	Score range				
	<60	60-69	70-79	80-89	>89
2014	1	6	9	5	0
2016	1	2	1	3	2

Table 2. Midterm Score of grammar study batch 2014 and 2016

Batch	Score range				
	<60	60-69	70-79	80-89	>89
2014	2	5	8	6	0
2016	2	2	1	3	1

Table 3. Final Exam Score of grammar study batch 2014 and 2016

However, we cannot just compare the scores as they are. As mentioned above, English Grammar I covers Structure I and II. Therefore, in order to make the scoring juxtaposition to be equal and fair, scores that should be compared are Midterm result of English Grammar I and Final Exam result of Structure I because both of the exams share the same grammar materials.

Batch	Score range				
	>60	60-69	70-79	80-89	>89
2014	2	5	8	6	0
2016	1	2	1	3	2

Table 4. Score of Midterm English Grammar I and Final exam of Structure II

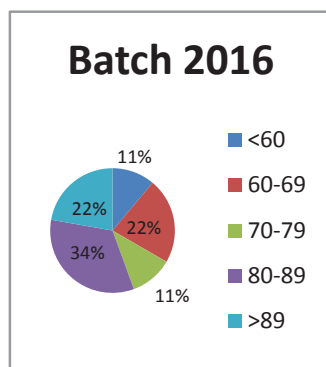


Chart 1. Midterm of English Grammar 1 Structure 1

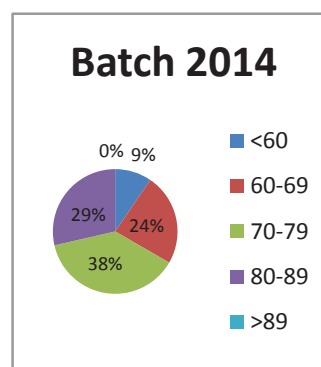


Chart 2. Midterm of Final Exam Structure 1

In the department, students who got scored less than 60 will get D index means fail. From the chart above, it is discovered that the percentage of failed student in each subject is not really distinct; 11% in students batch 2016 and 9% in batch 2014. Surprisingly, more students of batch 2016 got higher range of score; 22% get >89 and 34% get 80-89, than the students coming from batch 2014; 0% got >89 and 29% got 80-89. From the data, it is proven that the adjustment of the syllabus is effective to increase students' score.

ii. **Students' Evaluation**

Not only evaluation on score, there is also space in the survey that asks about the challenge students have when learning structure and English grammar study. 46.7% of 30 respondents chose "too many materials". The rest are varying from lecturer's explanation, hard material, too many materials, too fast explanation,

boring teaching method and uninteresting materials. When it comes to the question of which material is the most difficult between tenses, adverb, subject-verb agreement, noun, pronoun and modals, 53,3% of 30 respondents chose “tenses”. There is also advice section in the online survey. The advice section is dominated, surprisingly, by a lot of advices directed to the lecturers such as asking the lecturer to control the speed of explaining, making the material to be easy and fun to understand, to motivate the class and to builed the good atmosphere during the class. As McKeachie says, having some flexibility to accommodate circumstances that arise during the course of a class is probably a good idea (qtd. in Jay Parkes, and May B 56). This flexibility, somehow, is proven by the advice section; can only be led by the instructor of the class foreven students realize about adjustment of curriculum and syllabus, what affects them more is the lecturer’s way of explanation and not the syllabus

e. Work Results Analysis

As the survey succeed to identify the hardest material of English structure and grammar study of first semester students which is tenses, the researcher tried to get some work done by the two categories of subjects. Analyzed from worksheets about tenses belong to several English Grammar I students, even in simple tense, the students are still confused to determine whether the blank space should be simple or progressive. For example;

Shhh! I (try) _____ to concentrate. I can’t hear myself think with all that noise going on.

The varieties of answers are;

Shhh! I am trying to concentrate. I can’t hear myself think with all that noise going on.

Shhh! I try to concentrate. I can’t hear myself think with all that noise going on.

Shhh! I trying to concentrate. I can’t hear myself think with all that noise going on.

Some students still seem to consider the answer as simple tense instead of progressive tense. Another problem is in the use of to be. Even some students also understand that the sentence is a direct speech telling about activity at present time and put ‘trying’ as the answer, they forget to put to be ‘am’ before the verb. The other problem in worksheet is in the adding of morpheme –s or –es in verb of simple present when the subject is singular.

Analyzed from diagnostic tests from Structure I students, the mistakes found are more complex. It is when there is binary construction in some texts, such as;

I (tell) 1. _____ tell you an Eskimo story..... Their lives (be) 2. _____ are usually very hard..... Here I (begin) 3. _____. On day an old man (go) 4. _____ seal hunting on the ice a short distance from the land.

The varieties of answers for each blank are;

1. will tell
2. are/were
3. will begin/ begin/ began
4. went

There are missing parts in a text where a narrator tells some narrative text. When it should be present tense in narrator parts and past tense in narrative parts, the students tend to use past tense for both.

This difference on the mistakes found is reasonable. The process of structuring new information takes time; but it is time well spent, because students find it almost impossible to remember something that they do not properly understand. (<http://www.ugr.es>) As Valcárcel et al. (1996) also echoes which the idea that simply knowing 'about' the language is insufficient if what the learner wants is to be able to use the language for successful communication. To use the L2 functionally the learner must have acquired the necessary procedural knowledge, which,

in Anderson's terms, can only be mastered slowly and after a great deal of practice. (qtd. in <http://www.ugr.es>) There is a possibility that students of batch 2014 could do better in the diagnostic test since when they did the test, they had practiced further on English grammar and other linguistics problem, and also they have longer time to memorize the grammar rule than the students of batch 2016. As influence, 2014 students will be more common to recognize grammatical error, while the students of batch 2016 can easily forget about simple rules of grammar as they failed memorizing materials due to the fast learning and short period of time to do exercise.

5. CONCLUSION

From the analysis of survey data about exam scores, it is observed that students of batch 2016 have more satisfying score than students of batch 2014. In this case, syllabus in 2016 is more effective.

However, after the students' works are analyzed, there are found some different mistakes that students made. Students from batch 2016 tend to forget simple element of linguistic, and time range to be applied in their hardest material, tenses. While students from batch 2014 have more complex mistakes such as differentiating tenses to be used in binary opposition of narrative and direct speech. Here, the short duration as result of the too many and compact materials that make the lecturer jump to the next material to obey the goals of the syllabus, limits the students to do exercise and memorize the materials. As effect, the students will easily forget about materials that have been given and make the clarity of certain materials left the behind.

From the self-evaluation, even they realize that they have too many materials as their challenge, what dominantly the students think they depend on is the lecturing by the lecturers. According to Krashen the best methods for teaching a Foreign and or a Second Language are those methods that provide 'comprehensible input in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the foreign language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production' (qtd. in Tendoh 9). Therefore, as Valcárcel et al. says, learning process should be done slowly with great deal of practice (www.ugr.es) So, syllabus with less material in one period of study will give the student longer time to understand and do some practices in the materials. Finally, It can be said that the most effective syllabus for English grammar and structure study in English Letters Department University of Sanata Dharma is the one which applied in curriculum 2010.

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