

ONLINE-BASED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

MICROSOFT TEAMS PROGRAMI ile ÇEVİRİMİÇİ DİL BİLGİSİ EĞİTİMİ: NİCEL BİR
ÇALIŞMA

Mithat EKİNCİ

Instructor, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, 0000-0003-1330-8234

Ecem EKİNCİ

Instructor, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, 0000-0003-4559-6218

Abstract

This research aimed to find out the effects of online grammar teaching on the grammar achievement levels of EFL students. It was also aimed to reveal the perceptions of EFL students towards the use of online grammar teaching to improve their grammar knowledge. It is a quantitative study that includes 43 EFL students who were chosen via the convenience sampling strategy. The data of the study were collected through pre-and post-achievement tests and a questionnaire. The data acquired via the data collection tools were analyzed by using SPSS 25 Statistical Package. The results of the study demonstrated that providing online grammar teaching improves students' grammar proficiency. It was also revealed that students were able to learn various grammar topics effectively during the online education process and contented with the effort provided by the instructor to improve their grammar knowledge. Another finding of the study is that despite the advantages of online grammar teaching, the participants still insisted on receiving face-to-face grammar education.

Keywords: Grammar, Grammar Achievement, Microsoft Teams, Language Improvement;

Özet

Bu araştırma, çevrimiçi dilbilgisi öğretiminin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin dilbilgisi başarı düzeyleri üzerindeki etkisini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışma ile ayrıca İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin çevrimiçi dilbilgisi öğretimine yönelik algılarının ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları, uygun örnekleme stratejisi ile seçilen 43 İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencidir. Araştırmanın verileri, ön ve son başarı testleri ve anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Veri toplama araçlarıyla elde edilen veriler SPSS 25 istatistik paketi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, çevrimiçi dilbilgisi öğretiminin öğrencilerin dil bilgisi yeterliliğini artırdığını göstermiştir. Ayrıca öğrencilerin çevrimiçi eğitim sürecinde çeşitli dil bilgisi konularını etkin bir şekilde öğrenebildikleri ve öğretim elemanının dil bilgisi bilgilerini geliştirmek için gösterdiği çabadan memnun oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırmanın başka bir sonucu ise online dil bilgisi öğretiminin faydalarına rağmen öğrenciler yüz yüze dil bilgisi eğitimi almakta ısrar etmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil Bilgisi, Dil Bilgisi Başarısı, Microsoft Teams Programı, Dil Gelişimi;

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of technology in teaching and learning environments is an important feature that has received considerable attention in recent years (Ekinici & Ekinici, 2017). As a result, teaching and learning have stepped into a new area which includes technology, the internet and online materials at the core. These technologies have begun to be extensively utilized in foreign language education both inside and outside language classrooms. As stated by Arikan (2014), currently, the theory of foreign language education supports the use of such technologies both as a tool as well as a resource bank. The movement to replace or supplement traditional pedagogical methods with online learning has seen a significant acceleration in the last few years, especially in relation to distance learning (Emerson & Mackay, 2011). For this reason, language learning and the use of online technologies have created a perfect match in modern education.

In this highly globalized world, teachers, learners and other stakeholders of the education are looking for ways to improve the quality of input and make language learning easier for the students. As identified by Al Jarf (2005), educators around the world are trying to enhance their language instruction through activities and experiences made available through technology. These technologies can be used in language learning significantly to improve grammar knowledge. The vast materials available online such as worksheets, games, audios and videos, as well as online teaching programs, can pave the way for the use of online sources to improve grammar achievement levels of foreign learners. Arikan (2014) states that the online material with which a foreign language learner is studying should offer further assistance with which students learn contentedly.

Grammatical accuracy is critical to quality foreign language knowledge as it helps the language learners express ideas clearly, accurately and precisely. Despite the importance of grammar in language learning, it is not always easy to master the grammatical rules of a foreign language. While learning another language, foreign language learners have to deal with the similarities and differences between the target language and their mother language. As a result, they make various mistakes during the learning process. Coffin et al. (2005) identifies that common grammatical errors include not putting the main verb in each sentence, lack of pronoun agreement in sentences, ambiguous use of pronouns, and inconsistent use of tenses, as well as problems with apostrophe usage. Myhill (2009) also states that grammatical difficulties include overdependence on coordination, difficulty managing ideas over long sentences, and lapses incoherence. To solve these problems, online grammar teaching might be a beneficial source as all of these mistakes can be treated with the help of technology.

Using technology and online sources to improve grammar knowledge and solve grammar problems of the students is not a new approach in foreign language teaching. As stated by Bowen (1999), many teachers and researchers have integrated a variety of technologies in the teaching of grammar in foreign and second language learning environments. The advantages of online grammar learning are clearly established: for example, web-based learning can be used to meet the needs of non-traditional students, leading to more open access to higher education (Mottarella, Fritzsche & Parrish, 2004), and allows more flexibility for learners (Allen & Seaman, 2006). It is clear from the literature that online programs for grammar learning have beneficial effects on students' grammar accuracy and achievement level.

The influence of technology on the growth of language skills in grammatical development was the focus of several studies. For example, Toth, Fougler and Amrein-Beardsley (2008) conducted research to find out the practicality of online-based grammar teaching. The results identified that online grammar teaching provides advantages for language learners. In another study, Collentine (2000) found that technology and online grammar teaching are practical tools in teaching and learning grammar. Also, Lin (2007) found in his study that when students become actively engaged in discovering information for themselves during online grammar learning, they will be able to solve problems and learn on their own.

Despite the importance of grammar teaching and using online applications to improve the language proficiency of EFL learners, using online grammar teaching to improve the grammar achievement level of EFL students is a rare strategy in the literature. For this reason, this study merged the use of online materials with online instruction to improve the grammar proficiencies of the EFL students. To this end, the grammar lectures were given through Microsoft Teams software. It is one of the online applications that is used to have online teaching sessions during the coronavirus outbreak. As suggested by Microsoft (2018), Microsoft Teams is a digital hub that brings conversations, meetings, files and apps together in a single learning management system. The software was hired by the institution, and instructors were provided with the premium version of the application. The students can make use of their laptops, tablets and mobile phones to connect to the online lectures.

1.1. Aim and Scope of the Study

This study aimed to find out the effects of online grammar teaching on the grammar achievement levels of EFL students. It was also aimed to reveal the perceptions of EFL students towards the use of online grammar teaching to improve their grammar knowledge.

1.2. Research Questions

1. Does the use of online grammar teaching affect the grammar achievement level of EFL students?
2. What are the perceptions of EFL students about the use of online grammar teaching to improve their grammar knowledge?

1.3. Limitations to the study

There are some limitations to be considered in this study. First of all, the number of participants in the study was 43. For this reason, it is not possible to generalize the results as the study involves a small population. Hence, future studies that will include more participants can give more comprehensive information about the effect of online grammar teaching on the grammar achievement levels of EFL students. Moreover, an achievement test and a perception questionnaire were used to obtain the intended data. As a result, upcoming studies might implement more data collection tools to have more reliable results.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The present research was conducted as a quantitative study that aims to find out the effects of online grammar learning on the grammar achievement level of EFL learners. This quantitative research also sought to reveal the perceptions of EFL students about the use of online grammar lectures to improve their grammar knowledge. As it is suggested by Burns and

Grove (2005), quantitative research methods seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena, use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, quantifies variation, predict casual relationships, describe characteristics of a population, and their data format is numerical. For this reason, quantitative data collection methods were utilized so as to collect intended data and find answers for the research questions in this study.

2.2. Sampling and Participants

This study was applied during the fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic year. The participants were 43 EFL students studying at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. They are between the ages of 17 to 21 and learning English for at least 6 years. These participants were chosen via the convenience sampling strategy.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Data were gathered from several sources during the study implementation. Two data collection tools were utilized in the research. Related research questions and data collection tools are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Collection Tools

| Research Question | Data Collection Tool |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Does the use of online grammar teaching affect the grammar achievement level of EFL students? | - <i>Pre-Post Achievement Tests</i> |
| 2. What are the perceptions of EFL students about the use of online grammar teaching to improve their grammar knowledge? | - <i>Questionnaire</i> |

As shown in Table 1, two data collection tools were addressed to find answers to the study's research questions. The first data collection tool of the study was an achievement test taken from English File Elementary Teachers' Books. It was implemented to identify whether online grammar teaching has any effect on participants' grammar achievement levels. The achievement test contained 5 separate parts, including twenty-five items in total. Each part of the test focused on a different grammar chapter emphasized during the online sessions. On the other hand, the researchers prepared the questionnaire considering similar examples in the literature, and it includes 16 items with 5- Likert type. The questionnaire items demonstrated positive reliability (std. alpha > .825) as a result of the pilot study, which was conducted with 21 participants who were excluded from the study later on.

2.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

At the beginning of the fall semester, 43 students were identified as participants of the study purposively. Then, an achievement pre-test was completed by the participants. After that, the participants received 14 weeks of online grammar training three hours a week. Finally, at the end of the study, a post-achievement test was completed by the participant students. Also, they were asked to fill in the questionnaire that includes 16 items.

After the data were collected, different analysis methods were applied to different data that were collected independently. First of all, the pre and post-test results of the participants were recorded. Then, these numbers were analyzed by using the pair sampled t-test method of SPSS 25 Statistical Package to find out the alteration between the pre-test and post-test

achievement scores. In order to analyze the data obtained through the perception questionnaire, SPSS 25 Statistical Package was used, and descriptive statistics were obtained.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Influence of Online Grammar Lectures on Students' Grammar Achievement Level

Pre and post grammar achievement test scores of the participant students were utilized to determine whether the online grammar lectures improve students' grammar proficiency in English. In pursuance of finding out whether any significant differences exist between the achievement levels of the participants before and after the treatment period that took 14 weeks, the scores of the participants in the pre and post grammar achievement tests were examined by the researchers, and these figures were compared by using paired sample t-test method, and the results are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Paired Sample T-test Analysis for Achievement Pre-test and Post-test Scores

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | df | t | p |
|------|----|-------|-------------------|----|-------|------|
| Pre | 43 | 51,13 | 8,21 | 42 | -6,47 | .000 |
| Post | 43 | 61,32 | 11,01 | | | |

As it is evident in Table 2, forty-three participant students were included in the study. The participants' pre-test mean score was calculated as 51,13, while the post-test mean score was calculated as 61,32. The difference is statistically significant (**p < .05**) as it is proposed by the p-value (**p = .000; p < .05**). It can be inferred from the data that the grammar achievement level of the participants increased after the online treatment period.

3.2. Perceptions of the EFL Students towards Online Grammar Learning

The data obtained through a questionnaire was used to find out the perceptions of the EFL students towards online grammar learning. The researchers prepared the questionnaire considering similar examples in the literature, and it includes 16 items with 5- Likert type. The researchers analyzed the questionnaire items by using SPSS 25, and Table 2 below demonstrates the findings of the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items.

Table 3***Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire Items***

| ITEMS | Mean | Std. D. |
|---|------|---------|
| 1. I managed to learn various grammar topics effectively during the online education process. | 4,76 | ,57 |
| 2. I improved my English grammar knowledge as a consequence of online lectures. | 3,13 | ,91 |
| 3. The amount of repetition for grammar topics was enough for my proficiency. | 3,65 | 1,1 |
| 4. The materials used for grammar teaching have enough quality for me. | 3,67 | 1,0 |
| 5. I was able to ask questions about grammar topics learned during the online lectures. | 4,27 | 1,0 |
| 6. The software used to teach grammar was practical for me. | 3,69 | 1,0 |
| 7. The instructor made enough effort to teach me grammar during online lectures. | 3,11 | ,90 |
| 8. The instructor provided extra materials to improve my grammar knowledge. | 4,30 | ,91 |
| 9. Online grammar lessons made me curious about learning more grammar topics. | 3,37 | 1,1 |
| 10. I felt satisfied after the online grammar lectures. | 3,02 | 1,2 |
| 11. Learning English grammar online improved my motivation to learn English. | 3,23 | 1,2 |
| 12. I really enjoyed studying grammar in an online atmosphere. | 3,04 | 1,3 |
| 13. The grammar lectures were hard to follow online for me. | 2,97 | 1,4 |
| 14. I think I can learn English grammar online at any time and everywhere. | 2,69 | 1,2 |
| 15. The online grammar lectures were tedious and time-consuming. | 2,02 | 1,0 |
| 16. Online grammar learning is better than face-to-face grammar learning. | 1,97 | 1,4 |

Table 3 provides detailed information about the mean and standard deviation scores of the individual items. The mean scores of the items demonstrated that item 1 about students' learning various grammar topics effectively during the online education process (4,76), item 8 about the extra materials provided by the instructor to improve grammar knowledge (4,30), item 5 about students' ability to ask questions about grammar topics (3,67), item 6 about the effectivity of software used to teach grammar (3,69) and item 4 about the quality of materials used to teach grammar online (3,67) have the highest mean scores. On the other hand, item 16 about students' preference for online grammar learning (1,97), item 15 about grammar lectures being tedious and time-consuming (2,02), item 14 about the ability of participants to learn English grammar online at any time and everywhere (2,69) and item 13 about grammar lectures being hard to follow online (2,97) have the lowest mean scores.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the effects of online grammar teaching on the grammar achievement levels of EFL students. The study also tried to determine EFL learners' perceptions about the use of online grammar teaching to improve their grammar knowledge. An achievement test and a questionnaire were used as the data collection tools to find answers to the research questions. The study results uncovered some notable facts about the use of online grammar teaching as a means of improving the grammar proficiency of EFL learners.

The study results demonstrated that providing online grammar teaching is a fruitful strategy that can help students improve their grammar proficiency. The comparison of the achievement pre and post-test results of the participants identified that the difference between the pre and post-test scores of the students was significant ($p=.000 < .05$). From these findings, it can be concluded that the achievement level of the participants increased as a result of online grammar treatment. This result is consistent with the studies of Grant (1998) and Nagata (1996) that illustrated that online grammar learning and teaching might increase the grammar achievement levels of the students.

It is also identified that students managed to learn various grammar topics effectively during the online education process and contented with the effort provided by the instructor to improve their grammar knowledge. They also liked the grammar teaching materials provided for them during the online lectures. In addition, the participants were happy with the practicality of the software used to improve their grammar proficiency levels. This finding of the study is supported by Nutta (1998) that reveals that a computer-based approach with the use of online technologies is an effective grammar teaching method and might be more influential than traditional approaches.

Another interesting finding of the study is that despite the advantages of online grammar teaching, the participants still insisted on receiving face-to-face grammar education. They think that the advantages of online grammar education are outnumbered by face-to-face education. The result of the study goes parallel with the ones conducted by Ward (2004) and Sweeny (2010) that find out that despite the pros provided by online grammar education, the learners might still benefit more from face-to-face education as online education may lead to an accelerated but superficial, and often inaccurate, understanding of the content.

REFERENCES

- Al-Jarf, R. S. (2005). The effects of online grammar instruction on low proficiency EFL college students' achievement. *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(4), 166-190.
- Allen, I. & Seaman, J. (2006). Growing by degrees: online education in the United States. 2005 *The Sloan Consortium*.
- Arikan, A. (2014). An examination of online grammar teaching materials available for young learners. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 158, 18-22.
- Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2005). Using statistics to examine relationships. Burns N, Grove SK, eds *The Practice of nursing research: Conduct, Critique and Utilization 5th ed* St Louis, MO: Elsevier, 486-700.
- Collentine, J. (2000). Insights into the construction of grammatical knowledge provided by user-behavior tracking technologies. *Language Learning & Technology*. 3(2), 44-57.
- Coffin, C., Curry, M. J., Goodman, S., Hewings, A., Lillis, T., & Swann, J. (2005). *Teaching academic writing: A toolkit for higher education*. London, England: Routledge.
- Ekinci, E., & Ekinci, M. (2017). Perceptions of EFL Learners about Using Mobile Applications for English Language Learning: A Case Study. *International Journal of Language Academy*, 5(5), 175-193.
- Emerson, L., & MacKay, B. (2011). A comparison between paper-based and online learning in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 42(5), 727-735.
- Grant, J. (1998). *Does integrating technology into the curriculum increase student learning?* ERIC No. ED431006.
- Lin, C. H. M. (1997). Teacher's tips: Online grammar teaching and learning. *Society for Reading and Literacy (Singapore) News magazine*, 9(3), 11-12.
- Microsoft (2018) *Welcome to Microsoft Teams* [online] Available at: <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/teams-overview> [Accessed 15 April 2021]

Mottarella, K., Fritzsche, B. & Parrish, T. (2004). Who learns more? Achievement scores following web-based versus classroom instruction in psychology courses. *Psychology Teaching and Learning*, 4, 1, 51–54.

Myhill, D. (2009). Becoming a designer: Trajectories of linguistic development. In R. Beard, D. Myhill, M. Nystrand, & J. Riley (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of writing development* (pp. 402-415). London, England: SAGE Publications.

Nagata, N. (1996). Computer vs. workbook instruction in second language acquisition. *CALICO Journal*, 14(1), 53-75.

Nutta, J. (1998). Is computer-based grammar instruction as effective as teacher-directed grammar instruction for teaching L2 structures? *CALICO*, 16(1), 49-62.

Sweeny, S. M. (2010). Writing for the instant messaging and text messaging generation: Using new literacies to support writing instruction. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 54(2), 121-130.

Toth, M., Fougler, T. S. & Amrein-Beardsley, A. (2008). Post implementation insights about a hybrid degree program. *TechTrends*, 52, 3, 76–79.

Ward, J. M. (2004). Blog assisted language earning (BALL): Push button publishing for the pupils. *TEFL Web Journal*, 3(1), 1-16.