

PROSIDING

SEMINAR NASIONAL
PENDIDIKAN FISIKA
DAN BAHASA INGGRIS
2014

***CARA PRAKTIS DAN INOVATIF
DALAM PEMBELAJARAN FISIKA
DAN BAHASA INGGRIS***

Surabaya, 17 Mei 2014



Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya
Jl. Kalijudan 37, Surabaya 60114

Judul Buku

Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Fisika dan Bahasa Inggris: Cara Praktis dan Inovatif dalam Pembelajaran Fisika dan Bahasa Inggris.

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Mei 2014

Penerbit

Widya Mandala Press

Gedung Agustinus Lantai 4

Jl. Dinoyo 42-44 Surabaya

e-mail: perpus@mail.wima.ac.id

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ISBN 978-602-96839-5-0



DEVELOPING COMPUTER-BASED STRUCTURE EXERCISES TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENT STUDY OF STRUCTURE I STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Canale and Swain in Leech and Svartvik (2002) stress that communicative competence is a composite competence which includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communication strategies. These competences and strategies have their specific roles in communication, and no one of them is less or more important in successful communication. A language user of English should have good grammar competence besides being fluent in speaking. The main problem faced by the English teachers nowadays is their students' low motivation in learning English grammar. Providing materials which can attract students' attention to learn more beyond classroom hours is thus important. This article reports the result of a study of developing sets of computer-based exercises as independent study materials. As they are used for independent study, they include interactive feedbacks which give inputs for the users about their answers. Four sets of software prototypes are developed based on the result of the needs analysis; they are in the forms of: completion (multiple-choice), count-non-count formation, function identification, and noun-phrase exercise. The result of the try-out shows that the users found the software useful in giving inputs to them and can be done in their free time, and the same time, they found them attractive.*

Key words: *computer-based exercise, independent study*

BACKGROUND

The teaching and learning of English have experienced fast development which is especially backed up by the development of the global communication and technology. Researches in language teaching have resulted in and offered us with various activities claimed to be more effective and efficient. Teachers as decision-makers are expected to be able to choose the most appropriate materials and delivery methods for their students. The choosing and implementation of the two are said to be successful only if the students achieve better in their learning of English.

In terms of the professional practice of teaching, teachers, in whatever educational setting, are concerned with the more or less the same issues including: (1) the aims of teaching, (2) the developing of materials and activities to achieve the aims, (3) the kinds and numbers of class assignments and home-

assignments, (4) the kinds and numbers of out-of-class materials and activities that students are willing to work-out with, (5) the use of textbooks available to support the students' learning, (6) increasing students' motivation to learn beyond class-activities, and (6) the achievement of the ultimate goals of the class (Hedge, 2008).

The current concern of the English teaching is developing the communicative ability in the learners. In line with this concern, some experts argue that teaching and learning grammar will not support learners to have good communicative ability. Canale and Swain in Leech and Svartvik (2002) stress that communicative competence is a composite competence which includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communication strategies. These competences and strategies have their specific roles in communication, and no

one of them is less or more important in successful communication.

The mission of the English Education Study Program of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya (TTEF, WMCUS) is to train students to be English teachers of the secondary schools. This means that the students should master the theory and practice about teaching English, and they have to have good English proficiency. For this reason, the curriculum includes the theories and practice about language skills, and language components: pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and teaching English,

The teaching of English grammar is delivered into four subjects named: Structure I, Structure II, Structure III, and Structure IV. Structure I is given to the first semester students. The first semester students have learned English at least for 9 years starting when they were the fourth graders of the elementary school. These students came from different secondary schools, and they have different entry levels of English proficiency, motivation, and independency in learning English. The fact observed by the teachers of the English Department is that most of the students encounter difficulty in learning English and in joining the courses in the department. Many students fail grammar courses even more than once. Leech and Svartvik (2002) have detected similar complaints in their experiences of meeting with English teachers; and they have come up with their belief about 'grammar fatigue'.

The above elaboration about the issues of the English language teaching and learning and the goals of the English Department has become the main concern of the teachers of the English Education Study Program. The issues about finding better solution and better ways of teaching grammar, delivering the materials, motivating students to do the out-of-class

assignments have continuously been a topic being discussed at great length. This study – developing computer-based Structure I materials – is an effort to provide more out-of-class IT-based materials and activities which may attract students' interest in learning grammar – independently and beyond their class hours.

In line with the above background of the study, the problems faced by the teachers and students of the English Department regarding learning the English grammar are as follows:

1. The students of the English Department have different levels of English proficiency as they come from various senior high schools.
2. The students have learned English since they were at their elementary schools; however, most of them still find problems in producing grammatically correct sentences.
3. It has been found out that a few students of the English Department have to retake each structure course more than once.
4. The learning materials, especially computer-based ones, available in the SAC need to be developed to support the students' grammar mastery via out-of class learning.

This study aims at developing learning software for improving the grammar mastery and Structure I achievement of the students of the English Education Study Program.

Specific Objectives

- 1 To provide Structure I interactive computer-based learning software that can be accessed by the students of EESP in their available time.
- 2 To support and motivate autonomous learning outside the

classroom by providing interesting and motivating resources

- 3 To eliminate the students' boredom in learning Structure.

As a developmental study, this study covers the development of structure materials, specifically Structure I, in line with the course syllabus developed by the respective teachers. The decision for making use of a computer program – Captivate – is based on the reason that computer program is attractive to young people. Moreover, computer-based materials can be accessed by the students beyond their class hours and done in their available time.

This grammar software is designed and developed through using Captiva Program, and thus the medium is Computer-assisted Language Learning in nature. The software developed in this study possesses the following specifications:

1. The learning media is IT based, and it comes in the form of software which is not only user-friendly, but also attractive to young people.
2. The software is an interactive learning resource.
3. The exercises in the software are done out-of-class to facilitate students' autonomous learning, and therefore; the existence of the software does not replace the regular teaching and learning activities.
4. The software increases the interest of the students to learn grammar, and it is, then, expected that their motivation will increase along with it.

The result of the study is expected to give the following benefits for the English Department as follows:

- 1) the availability of out-of-class computer-based Structure I materials that can help teachers more assignments for the students both for enrichment and remedial activities,
- 2) a means for increasing students' willingness and motivation to learn Structure I materials based on their own needs and available time.

What is Grammar?

Grammar is defined as the structural foundation of a language by which a language user expresses himself. Nordquist (2013) states that the more aware a language user of how grammar works, he is able to monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the how he can use the language. Nelson (2001:1) states that Grammar is the study of how words combine to form sentences. The better a language user gains a clearer understanding of how a language works, he will gain more control over the way of shaping words into sentences and into paragraphs. This is to say that language awareness helps the language user to become more effective users of the language, either in listening, speaking, reading, or writing.

Richard Nordquist (<http://grammar.about.com/od/basicsentences/grammar>, retrieved 24 March 2013) agrees to David Crystal's insight about why one has to learn grammar by stating that knowing about grammar means "being able to talk about what it is we are able to do when we construct sentences – to describe what the rules are, and what happens when they fail to apply." Nelson (2001:1) emphasizes that only a well-formed or grammatical sentence is understandable. He is of the opinion that speakers of English can quite effortlessly produce sentences without ever thinking about its grammar. Native speakers of English have been shaped by the

environment since they were babies. Meanwhile, a learner learning English as a foreign language has to struggle learning the English grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The Teaching and Learning of Grammar

As grammar is defined as the structural foundation of a language by which a language user expresses himself, it is clear that it is important for a person to have a good mastery of English grammar to communicate in English. However, English teachers often wonder whether the teaching of English grammar will help the students to communicate in English and how to teach their students English grammar. Experts even proposes a vital question: “ Should we teach English grammar at all?”

It is said that the teaching of English as a second language is always a hard nut to crack. Experts in the English language teaching observing the phenomena of learning English as a foreign language have come up with the shared opinions that problems of learning grammar have been encountered by learners in many countries. Leech and Svartvik (2002) have detected similar complaints about the failure of learning and teaching grammar in their experiences of meeting with English teachers; and they have come up with their belief about ‘grammar fatigue’.

In terms of the development of the English language teaching, in recent years, the teaching of English has emphasized on the communicative language teaching. Stephen H. Thewlis (1993) stresses that based on the communicative approach, “grammar teaching has often been downplayed or even overlooked entirely.” However, if teachers argue that the goal of teaching English is to enable students to communicate successfully, they should

share the common ground that the major means to achieve the goal is to teach students to use grammatical structures. Thewlis stresses further that some grammatical items can be acquired naturally by learners if they can have enough language exposure in their daily lives, but explicit teaching of the troublesome aspects of English will facilitate and accelerate their acquisition of the English language. He argues further that in order to achieve the goal, the teaching of English should be done in such a way that the interdependence of grammar and communication should be the main focus of the teaching and learning activities.

In line with the problems of learning grammar, in order to create the interdependence between grammar and communication, to represent the real use of the language, the teaching and learning of grammar should be done in such a way that their focus of attention will be more for the communicative use of the language. This can be done by considering the following ways:

1. students should encounter the grammatical items they learn in a meaningful context where their attention is not immediately drawn to its formal properties,
2. each grammatical features presented to students should be presented in such a way so that students will have the opportunity to use the structure in a communicative activity,
3. learning opportunities should be made in such a way tailored to students’ needs, enjoyable, and can maximize everyone’s learning.

Computer-Based Language Learning

The use of Computer Assisted Language Learning has been there for more than 20 years, and with the advancement of technology, CALL

programs have become not only more and more expanded, but also diverse and interactive. Along with the development, researches probing the issue concerning the effectiveness of computer assisted language learning have resulted more positive results than negative ones.

A comparative study conducted by Lim

(<http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/lim04139.pdf>, retrieved March 17, 2013) on the impact of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on Korean TAFE college students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading classroom in terms of their perceptions of learning effectiveness, tutor, classroom interest and difficulty. The results of the study has proven that students in the CALL based English class reported positively on their learning compared those in the traditional English class in terms of classroom effectiveness, tutor, and classroom interest and classroom difficulty. In particular, students in CALL based English class showed higher interest in their learning compared those in the traditional English class. It is further said that CALL provides enjoyable learning activities and offer ample opportunities for doing the exercises over the time. Pramono (2008) stresses that static and animated pictures complemented for the written texts given for the English learners are beneficial for the learning.

Concerning the use of CALL, Nadzrah (2007:33) argues that, by nature, CALL is beneficial as it can be used beyond the classroom as a structured or free activity. When CALL is developed as a structured or supplementary activity, the materials should support and go hand-in-hand with the syllabus. It is further believed that the students will benefit most from the strength and potential of CALL-based materials whose design derives from the syllabus since these

materials enrich what they have learned in the class.

Kinds of Tasks for grammar

Grammar tasks can be oral or written and the effective tasks would be the ones giving a chance for the communicative use of the language (Scrivener, 2005). Some of the task types that can be used to develop grammar courseware are:

- 1) completion: either in single sentences or in a text,
- 2) giving the correct forms of a verb,
- 3) sentence transformation,
- 4) split sentences,
- 5) quiz on regular and irregular verbs,
- 6) growing stories: a part of a story (narration) is given and students are to continue the story,
- 7) questionnaire development based on the given bones of the questions, e.g.:
Where/go/tonight?, and
- 8) board game.

The questions types that can be used are either (1) objectives like multiple-choice, true/false, matching or (2) subjectives like essay questions.

Structure I Syllabus

Based on the English Department Curriculum 2012, Structure I is offered for the students of the first semester. This class is a -4-credit subject having 2 meetings per week. This course is designed to provides students with the ability to identify and produce sentences with the correct parts of speech; i.e.: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, determiners, verbs and auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, and punctuations, and the tenses are present tenses, past tenses, future tenses, perfect tenses. Further in this class, students will also learn about articles and question tags

(Buku Pedoman PSP Bahasa Inggris,
FKIP, UKWMS)

PROTOTYPES DEVELOPMENT

At this stage of the development, courseware prototypes were developed by using Adobe Captivate 5.5. The steps of the development are presented as follows:

1) Identifying problems

It is necessary to identify the problems faced by the English Department student in studying English. These students came from different senior high schools bringing different areas of English language proficiencies. They also have different attitudes of learning influenced by their ways of learning at their secondary schools.

2) Need analysis

At this step of development, questionnaires were given to the students to know their needs in line with grammar topics and the types of tasks they prefer to do.

3) Selecting grammar topics and the task types to be developed,

The result of the needs analysis gave information about the area of grammar that need to be developed and the task types that can attract students to use the courseware.

4) Developing the exercises and the explanations

The exercises were developed for the selected grammar topics and task types selected by the students. Explanations are for developed for the questions.

5) Developing the courseware prototypes

The courseware prototypes were developed for the exercises developed complemented by animations and come background music.

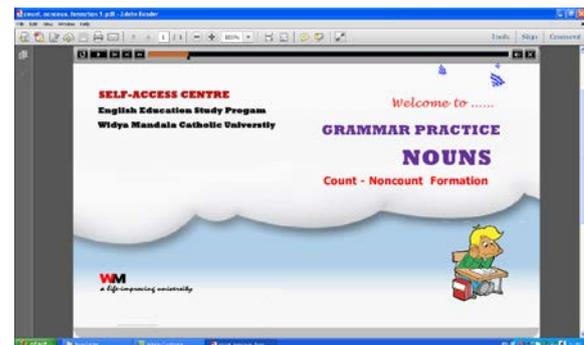
6) Trying-out the courseware

After finishing the development of the prototypes, the try-out was conducted with 15 students of the second semester who were the target users of the courseware.

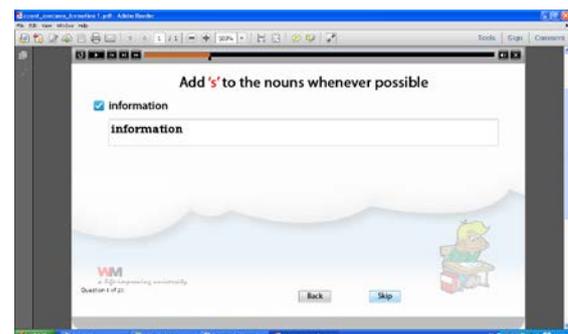
THE RESULT OF THE PROTOTYPES DEVELOPMENT

There are 4 courseware prototypes developed in this study: (1) count and non-count noun formation, (2) word function identification, (3) noun phrase identification, and (4) word completion with multiple-choice items. The examples of the tasks are as follows:

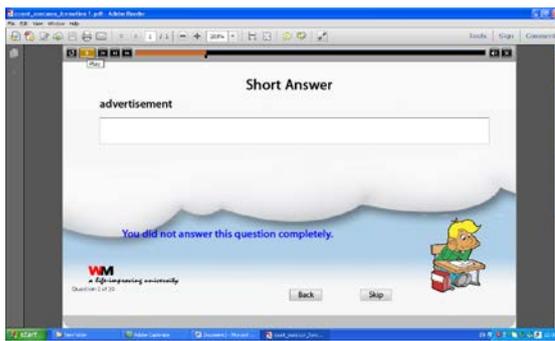
Example 1: Count and Non-Count Noun Formation



Picture 1.1 Front Page



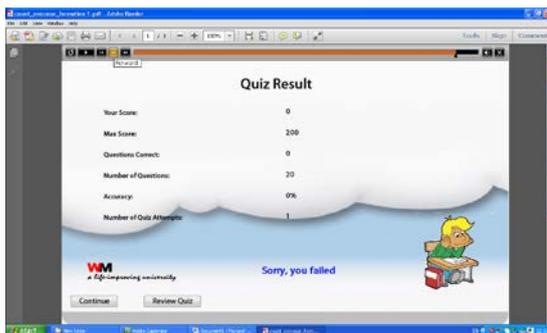
Picture 1.2 The Exercise



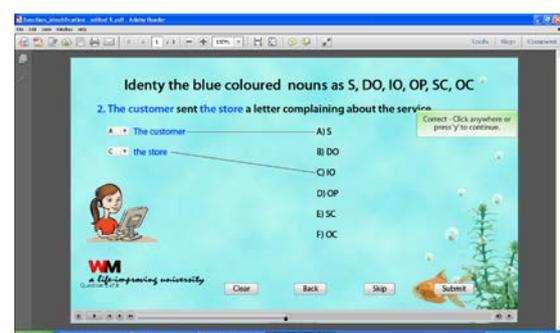
Picture 2.2 The Exercise



Picture 1.3 The Exercise



Picture 2.3 The Exercise

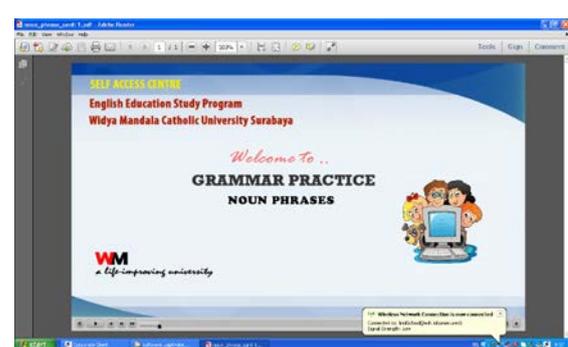
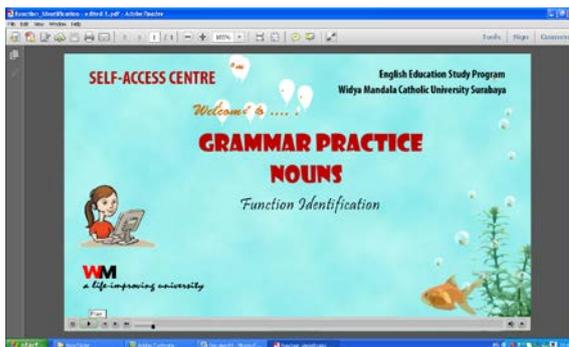


Picture 1.4 The Evaluation

Picture 2.4 The Evaluation

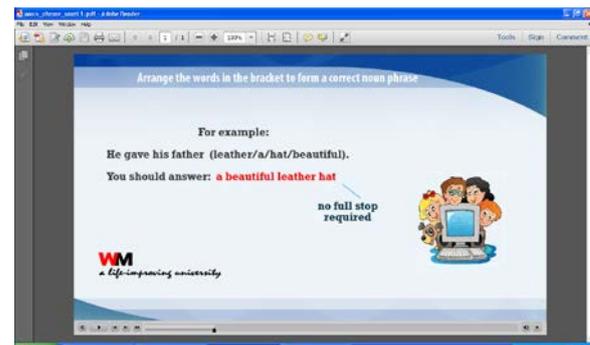
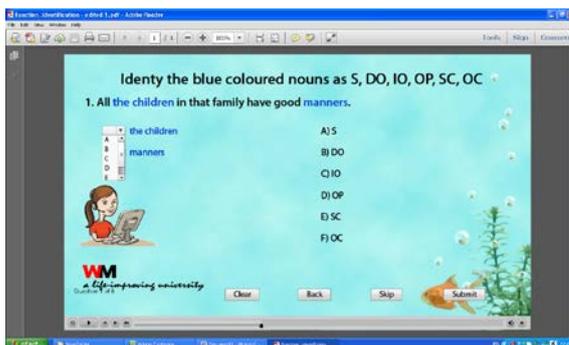
Example 2: Word Function Identification

Example 3: Noun Phrase Identification

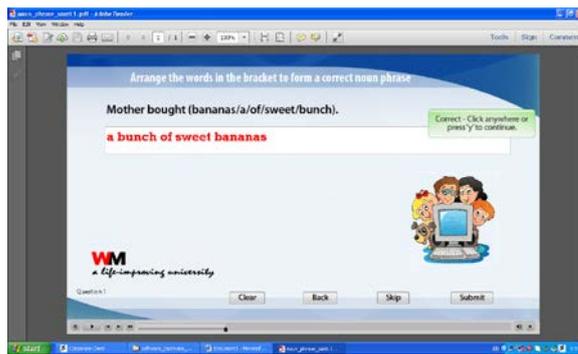


Picture 2.1 The Front Page

Picture 3.1 The Front Page



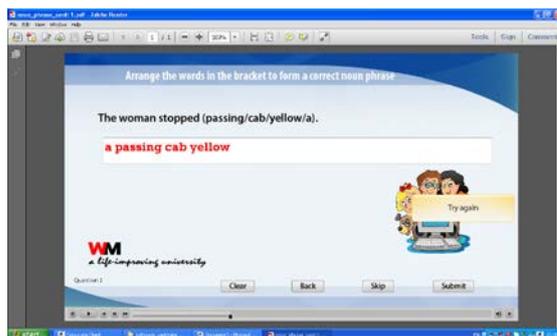
Picture 3.2 The Instruction



Example 4: Word completion with multiple-choice items.



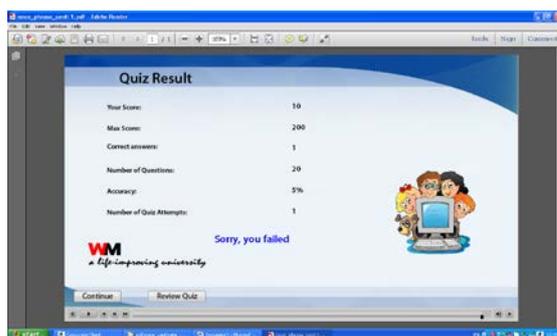
Picture 3.3 The Exercise



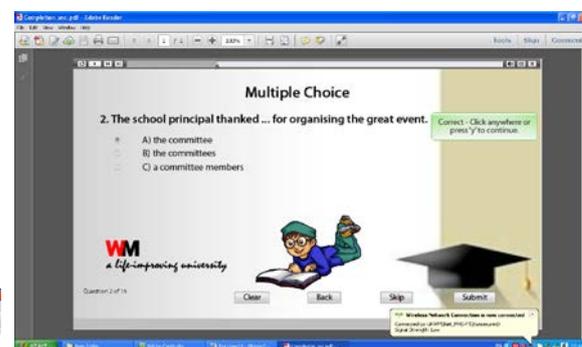
Picture 4.1 The Front Page



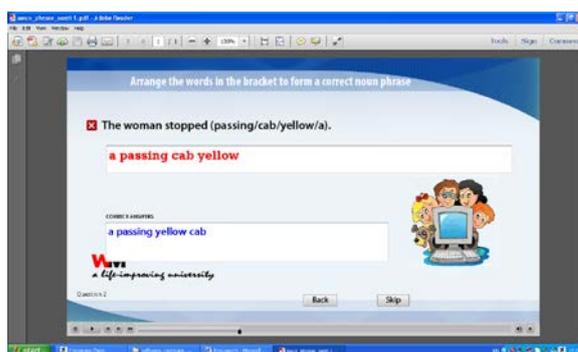
Picture 3.4 The Exercise



Picture 4.2 The Exercise

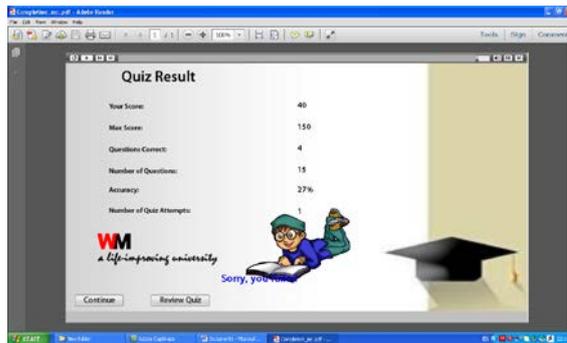


Picture 3.5 The Evaluation



Picture 4.3 The Exercise

Picture 3.6 The Feedback page



Picture 4.4 The Evaluation

The result of the try-out

The try-out was done with 15 students. The students were asked to do use all the four courseware prototypes and to fill out a questionnaire containing questions to gather information about the effectiveness of the prototypes. The result of the try-out shows that the users found the software useful in giving inputs to them and can be done in their free time, and the same time, they found them attractive.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the development of the grammar courseware prototypes for Structure I students, it can be concluded that interactive courseware can help students in studying grammar based on the individual needs and pace of learning. Such learning resource can increase students' motivation of learning as they give direct feedbacks concerning their answers and they can be used in their free time beyond class hours. Therefore, it is suggested that more coursewares could be developed to facilitate students learning.

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