INDONESIAN EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF GRAMMATICAL DIFFICULTY: A SURVEY STUDY

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STATEMENT OF WORK'S ORIGINALITY

I honestly state that this thesis entitled "Indonesian EFL Undergraduate Students' Perception: A Survey Study", which the thesis that I wrote is free from other people's work, except for those mentioned in quotations and references, as expected from a scientific document. I declare that this thesis represents my best and most recent literary work, and I acknowledge all assistance received in its preparation and all sources needed.

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MOTTO

مَنْ أَرَادَ الدُّنْيَا فَعَلَيْهِ بِالْعِلْمِ، وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالْعِلْمِ، وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالْعِلْمِ

“Whoever wants the world, should have knowledge. Whoever wants the afterlife, then do so with knowledge. Whoever wants both, then let him have knowledge."

DEDICATION

In the name of Allah Swt. i declared this Thesis to:

MY SELF

The last 3.5 years have been a journey full of various challenges, but I am grateful for the strength and resilience that I have built during this time. Looking back, I realize that every obstacle I faced was an opportunity for growth, and I am proud to have overcome them all. Through it all, I remained brave and patient, never losing sight of my goal. I want to take a moment to thank myself for the hard work, determination, and perseverance that have brought me this far. I know that I have what it takes to continue to thrive, whatever the future holds. Then I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved parents, Engkos Kosasih and Herlinawati, for their unwavering support and enthusiasm throughout my journey. Their guidance and presence have been a source of strength and motivation for me in every situation, both in success and setbacks. I am so grateful to have them by my side, and I couldn't have come this far without their love and guidance. Thank you so much for everything.

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Alhamdulillahi Rabbil Alamin,

All gratitude to the presence of Allah SWT and also my blessings to the Prophet Muhammad SAW who has bestowed faith, peace, patience and strength so that I can complete this thesis as one of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor of Education degree and completing my studies.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my beloved parents, Engkos Kosasih and Herlinawati. Their unwavering support, unconditional love, and constant encouragement have been the foundation of my life's journey. Their selflessness and dedication in providing me with the best education is something I am truly grateful for. I am forever indebted to them for their constant prayers and sacrifices, which have helped shape me into the person I am today. I am so blessed to have amazing parents who have always been there for me, through thick and thin. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for all you have done for me.

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There are still limitations in this thesis. However, this study must be willing to provide suggestions and recommendations due to deficiencies in this thesis. I really hope that readers can get benefit from reading this thesis.

Yogyakarta February, 12 2024

The researcher

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ABSTRACT

This survey study described Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' perception of English grammatical difficulty in accordance with Graus & Coppen (2015)'s 31 grammar points on grammatical difficulty. This study using selective sampling method and 90 undergraduate students in a private university agreed to participate in this study. The findings revealed that among 31 grammar points, the grammar points that the participants perceived high in grammatical difficulty are: (1) clause (M=3.20, SD=1.14), (2) unreal condition (M=3.06, SD=1.09), 3) embedded question (M=2.94 SD=1.10), (4) -s possessive, (M=2.84, SD=1.18), and (5) question tag (M=2.78, SD=1.06). The reasons cited for the perceived difficulty of clauses included complexity of use (23.3%), form complexity (34.4%), rule complexity (23.3%), L1 influence (10.0%), and input frequency (8.9%) Reasons given for the perceived difficulty of unreal condition were the complexity of use (13.3%), the complexity of form (37.8%), the complexity of rules (30.0%), the influence of L1 (15.6%), and the frequency of input (3.3 %).Reasons for finding embedded question difficult varied, with 21.1% citing the complexity of use, 38.9% citing the complexity of form, 16.7% citing the complexity of rules, 16.7% citing the influence of their native language, and 6.7% citing the frequency of exposure. Reasons for finding -s possessive difficult were also varied, with 25.6% citing the complexity of use, 33.3% citing the complexity of form, 25.6% citing the complexity of rules, 10.0% citing the influence of their native language, and 5.6% citing the frequency of input. Reasons for finding question tags difficult again varied, with 23.3% citing the complexity of use, 38.9% citing the complexity of form, 14.4% citing the complexity of rules, 10.0% citing the influence of their native language, and 13.3% citing frequency exposure. To conclude, the reason of grammatical difficulty may vary. These findings suggest that lecturers should integrate more practice and conceptual exercise on grammar points that were perceived as difficult. Further research regarding grammatical difficulty can be wider not only from students' perspectives but also cover students' teachers' perspectives to gain a better understanding of grammatical difficulty.

Keywords: *EFL Undergraduate Students' Perspectives, grammatical difficulty, survey study*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Grammar is one of the most crucial aspects of learning English. It also obtains prominence in language learning, mainly as English second language and as English foreign language since knowledge and comprehension of grammar are needed for students' language development (Widodo, 2006). Shakir & Mahmood (2021) stated that grammatical competence is a part of language competence and good grammar is the essence of every language that students must pay attention to. Myhill (2021) argued that grammar is crucial for understanding the relationship between grammatical choice and meaning-making in writing, it also provides rules for constructing sentences and using words correctly, which allows us to convey our thoughts and ideas accurately.

In the EFL context, grammar is generally considered to be a crucial aspect of language learning for both written and spoken text. In written discourse, Watson (2015) argued that grammar plays an important role, especially in helping students to link the improvement of students' metalinguistic understanding to improvement in writing ability to understand how language works, how to use it purposefully, and how to make informed decisions in the writing context. In addition, proper grammar assists in conveying the idea to communicate clearly and effectively, it also assists to ensure writing is easy to read and comprehend and reduces errors that can distract and confuse the reader (Ilgūnaitienė, 2021). Meanwhile, in spoken text,

spoken grammar refers to the grammatical rules and conventions that govern the use of language in oral communication. Salim Mahmood & Ahmed (2022) explained that spoken grammar consists of structural elements, syntax, vocabulary, and stylistic features that are specific to spoken discourse. Unlike written grammar, spoken grammar is characterized by adaptability to real-time conversational interactions, informality, and flexibility. It reflects the natural flow of speech and includes features such as contractions, slang terms, colloquialisms, and variations in word order. Oral grammar has an important role in facilitating effective communication in informal and everyday settings. Salim Mahmood & Ahmed (2022) also stated that understanding and applying spoken grammar is essential for effective communication, cultural awareness, and language fluency in a variety of social and professional contexts. For example, in conversation understanding, spoken grammar allows individuals to communicate more effectively in informal settings, such as conversations with friends, family, and colleagues. This helps convey meaning clearly and precisely in spoken interactions.

In defining grammatical difficulty, English as a Second Language (ESL) literature discussed various approaches (Bialystok, 1979; Krashen, 1982; DeKeyser &Sokalski, 1996). Krashen (1982) proposed the concept of easy rule and hard rule, which is intuitively appealing but fails to make the distinction clear. Based on Bialystok's (1979) study, grammatical difficulty refers to the level of challenge or complexity associated with identifying, understanding, or correcting grammatical errors or structures in a language. This maintains the

level of complexity involved in recognizing and addressing grammatical inaccuracies, inconsistencies, or violations in a particular linguistic context. The way learners overcome grammatical difficulty in language tasks depends largely on how explicit and implicit knowledge interact with each other. DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) pay attention to grammatical difficulty in connection to production and comprehension. They asserted that some grammatical structures are simple to understand but challenging to make, whereas others are simple to produce but challenging to understand.

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, several researchers have been investigating more and more about the challenges language students face in grammatical difficulty. According to Grouse & Copen (2015), grammatical difficulty refers to the complexity that individuals face when trying to understand, apply, or comply with grammatical rules and constructions in a language. Grammatical difficulty covers several factors such as complex syntax, unfamiliar grammatical rules, irregular verb forms, or differences between spoken and written grammar. It is also explained by Grouse & Copen (2015) that the interaction between learner characteristics and factors such as formal and functional complexity, as well as pedagogical rules, contributes to the level of difficulty. Alhaysony & Alhaisoni (2017) found that in the context of EFL students who speak Arabic as the first language, real conditional, embedded questions, prepositions, determiners, conjunction, and the past perfect were the most difficult features of grammar that the students faced. Shousha (2021) found that in the context of EFL students who speak Arabic as

the first language, English tenses, active, and passive voice, and question formation were the aspects that most difficult aspect that Diploma students of King Abdulaziz University faced, with the reasons for the difficulties of the grammatical aspects being lack of exposure to the language, lack of practice, and the way of teaching. Handini et al (2021) found that students had difficulty understanding the use of reported speech, and modal auxiliaries such as memorizing formulas, writing positive or negative sentences, or making interrogative sentences. From those previous studies, it can be concluded that grammatical difficulty for EFL students may vary depending on the context of the study.

In Indonesia setting, Lestari (2023) conducted research on exploring the attributions of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students for their failure in the Basic Grammar course at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia during COVID -19 pandemic. She conducted quantitative research to find out the reason behind the students' struggles in the online learning environment. Lestari (2023) highlighted three main themes regarding the attributions for EFL students' failure in their online Basic Grammar classes, she found that (1) the lack of students' understanding of the material was the most reason that contributed to their failure in grammar class, (2) the lack of students' motivation, and (3) internet connection problem.

Puspitasari & Ishak, (2023) explored the relationship between self-regulated learning strategies and grammar achievement among undergraduate students majoring in English. This study aims to investigate the methods

students use to achieve grammar mastery and to examine the relationship between these strategies and grammar achievement. They found that students in undergraduate English majors used self-directed learning strategies to achieve grammar mastery, which included peer learning, metacognitive self-regulation, help-seeking, effort regulation, and management of time and learning environment. Among these strategies, peer learning is the most commonly used strategy, while managing time and the learning environment is the least frequently used strategy. Furthermore, this study revealed that there is a low negative correlation between the use of self-directed learning strategies and grammar achievement. The researchers concluded that higher grammatical attainment was associated with less use of self-directed learning strategies, whereas lower grammatical attainment was associated with higher use of self-directed learning strategies.

However, most of the studies in Indonesian context explored about the difficulties and factors that might influence them (Lestari, 2023; Puspitasari & Ishak, 2023; Cahyani et al., 2022; & Prasetyo, 2020) did not use the same concept as Grouse and Coppen (2015) and Alhaysony & Alhaisoni (2017). Unlike other researchers in EFL countries, they did not really highlight the specific grammar features that the Indonesian EFL learners found difficult. Nevertheless, it is known that in the Indonesian EFL context, there has been limitation of research that tried to explore research regarding grammatical difficulties from the students' perception.

Cahyani et al. (2022) conducted research in Indonesia to investigate the English grammar learning strategies used by high, middle, and low-achieving students. The main aim of this study was to identify the most commonly used English grammar learning strategies and determine significant differences in the strategies used by students at different achievement levels. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of how the student approach and engage with English grammar learning strategies in the Indonesian context. This study found important variations in the strategy used by Indonesian students with different levels of achievement in learning English grammar. In particular, low- and middle-achieving students rely mostly on social strategies, which involve collaborating with others to improve their grammar skills. This includes activities such as asking questions, working together, and showing empathy towards peers. In contrast, high-achieving students tend to use metacognitive strategies more often, which require planning, evaluating, and monitoring their learning process. This suggests that high performers are more skilled at organizing and managing their learning, as well as identifying mistakes and adapting their strategies.

In addition, Prasetyo (2020) who conducted research regarding the difficulty in learning grammar for Indonesian students. The study explored the challenges Indonesian students face when learning grammar. The result show that (1) Indonesian students often have difficulty understanding English grammar, which causes difficulty in forming sentences with the correct tenses and structures, (2) Some students can speak English but face challenges in

applying grammar rules correctly while speaking, and (3) The differences in sentence structure in Indonesian and English also confuse students in learning grammar. However, these studies were carried out to explain the difficulty in learning grammar and did not try to find the students' perspective on the difficulty of grammar points specifically.

However, in the department where the research was conducted, studying grammar was designed in some coursework, such as English Grammar for Written Discourse, English Grammar for Spoken Discourse, and English Grammar for Media Discourse. There is preliminary research before collecting data in the actual research field where from the assessment results and explanations of interpretations by grammar teaching lecturers in each grammar class of EFL students in the English Department, the grammar points that get the lowest score are described as follows:

In the first semester, students take the English Grammar for Spoken Discourse course. They learn about various topics such as simple present, nouns, adjectives, action verbs, adverbs, subject pronouns, object pronouns, question marks, and past tense. Students are given two assignments, two quizzes, and one practical exercise. However, they find it difficult to use the past tense correctly in spoken contexts.

In their second semester, the students took a course in English Grammar for Written Discourse and learned some grammatical features such as part of speech (verbs, nouns, noun clauses and noun phrases, adjectives, adjective

clauses, and adjective phrases, adverb and adverb clauses, verb and verb phrases), types of the sentence (simple, compound, and complex), preposition and prepositional phrase. During the semester, the students were given six assignments, and each of the assignments represented different grammatical structures. From all the assignments given about grammar in the second semester, the students faced grammatical difficulty most in arranging a clause (noun clause, adjective clause, adverb clause), tenses (simple present, simple past,) and type of sentences such as (simple, compound, and complex sentences).

In the third semester, the students took a course on English Grammar in Media Discourse. In this course, the students learned various grammar points such as the simple present, present continuous present perfect, modal verb, quoted speech, reported speech, gerund, to infinite, conditional sentence, causative verb, and passive voice. From all the assignment, the students faced the most grammatical difficulty in identifying modal verb and the function of each modal verb. From the target participants' scores on English grammatical features described, they mainly have a lower score in tenses, clauses, types of sentences, and modal verbs.

In conclusion, the undergraduate students in the department took three English grammar courses over three semesters. Throughout the course, students encounter grammatical difficulty the most in tenses, clauses, sentence types, and modal verbs. However, the perspective of grammatical difficulties and the factors that contribute to grammatical difficulties of the grammar points have

not been explored by other researchers exploring grammar in English language teaching within the department (Jun & Carissa, 2021, & Oniel, 2021) and previous Indonesian EFL researchers (Lestari, 2023; Puspitasari & Ishak, 2023; Cahyani et al., 2022; Prasetyo, 2020). Therefore, this study attempts to fill the research gap by investigating the issue of grammatical difficulty from the Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' perspective in an English language education department when they enrol in undergraduate thesis coursework by using a profile of their grammatical difficulty on their previous grammar-related content coursework.

However, several studies show that the student still not encounter the challenges in mastering grammar (Lestari, 2023; Puspitasari & Ishak, 2023; Cahyani et al., 2022; & Prasetyo, 2020). Nevertheless, it is known that in the Indonesian EFL context, there has been limited previous research that tried to explore research regarding grammatical difficulties from the students' perspective.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Grammatical difficulties are the main problem that this study wants to find out. The definition of "difficulty" covers aspects of defining the degree of grammatical difficulty which is one of the problems of the study. Alhaysony & Alhaisoni (2017) and Grouse & Copen (2015) define grammatical difficulty as a function of salience, which is equated with the frequency with which a feature

arises in the input a student receives. Salience is considered as the degree to which data is available to students, so the more frequent a feature is, the less difficult it is to acquire. Additionally, grammatical difficulty can be related to the form, function, and meaning of a grammar feature. It can also be categorized as functional complexity, which requires complicated mental processing operations, or formal difficulty, which refers to the relationship between function and form.

There were several difficulties faced by student of grammatical difficulty. The challenges faced by student such as understanding and applying grammatical rules and constructions. It highlights factors that contribute to the level of grammatical difficulty, such as complex syntax, unfamiliar grammatical rules, irregular verb forms, and differences between spoken and written grammar. In addition, this text emphasizes the importance of explicit and implicit knowledge in overcoming grammatical difficulties and highlights the need for effective pedagogical strategies to overcome these challenges. However, there had been limited of previous research regarding the grammatical difficulty in Indonesian context. Therefore, this study would focus on the EFL students' perception of grammatical difficulty and investigate the factor contributed to difficulty.

1.3 Research Question

The current research aims to conduct a small research project in the form of a survey study. The main aim of this study was to investigate undergraduate EFL students' perspectives regarding grammatical difficulties. The current study asks research questions to guide this investigation. The research questions of the current study are:

1. What grammatical feature the students perceived more and less difficult?
2. What are the reasons that cause grammatical difficulty from EFL undergraduate students' perspective?

1.4 Research Purpose

This research aimed to identify Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' perception of English grammatical difficulties and identify their perceived reasons on factors contributing to the difficulties.

1.5 Research Significance

Empirically, this study provides insight into the difficulty level of grammatical and the factors contributed to the difficulty. This study can also be a valuable resource for English language teachers, lecturers, and instructors to improve the quality of language programs, enhance their teaching skills, and create more inclusive and supportive learning environments. Finally, it provides

a valuable insight for institutions to improve their English language curriculum and the quality of language education provided.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Grammatical Difficulty in Second Language Acquisition Literature

As the foundation of the study, to do the literature review, the study focuses on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature that discusses the grammatical difficulty in second language acquisition. Eckman, (2004) explained that the process of acquiring a second language in a naturalistic and subconscious way is called Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This is often achieved through immersion, exposure, and interaction with speakers of the target language. This involves developing linguistic and communicative competence in a second language, similar to how individuals acquire their first language. On the other hand, Second Language Learning (SLL) refers to the deliberate and conscious process of acquiring a second language, usually in a formal educational setting. This requires explicit teaching, practice, and exposure to the target language, often through language classes, courses, or self-study programs. While SLA emphasizes the naturalistic and subconscious nature of language acquisition, SLL emphasizes the intentional and instructional aspects of language learning. Both processes contribute to an individual's proficiency in a second language, but they differ in terms of the underlying mechanisms and context of language acquisition and learning.

Additionally, Eckman, (2004) also explained that it is important to understand in the field of second language acquisition that grammar acquired

through language learning (known as second language learning or SLL) does not necessarily lead to increased grammatical proficiency. This is caused by various factors, including Interlanguage Development, Transfer Effects, Individual Differences, Grammatical Complexity, Developmental Stages, and Contextual Factors. In summary, the automatic development of increasing grammatical proficiency in second language acquisition is a complex and multifaceted process that is influenced by several linguistic, cognitive, social, and contextual factors. To achieve higher levels of proficiency and grammatical accuracy requires constant practice, exposure, and engagement with the target language.

Several recent studies focusing on international students have identified challenges in English language acquisition, particularly in the area of grammar. English Second Language Literature has put forward various approaches to characterizing these grammatical difficulties. Initially, Krashen (1982) introduced the concepts of easy rules and hard rules which, although intuitively appealing, did not provide a clear distinction between the two. Easy rules are grammatical structures or concepts that are straightforward, easy to understand, and relatively easy for language learners to understand and apply correctly such as the rule that singular subjects use a singular verb (e.g., "He sings") and plural subjects use a plural verb (e.g., "They sing") is considered relatively easy for learners to master. Hard rules are grammatical structures or concepts that are complex, challenging to learn, and may involve exceptions or deviations that make them difficult for language learners to master such as Irregular verbs in

English and other languages do not follow standard conjugation patterns, requiring learners to memorize specific forms for past tense, past participle, etc. (for example, "go-went-gone").

Another perspective come from DeKeyser & Sokalski (1996), who emphasize the complexity of grammar with production and comprehension. They argue that certain grammatical structures may be easy to understand but difficult to produce, DeKeyser & Sokalski (1996) note that while it is easy to understand, it can be challenging for native English speakers to produce. The stressed ending "-ia" has a clear one-to-one relationship to its conditional meaning in Spanish. These conditionals are expressed through verb endings which are always stressed and have polysyllabic. This makes it easier to understand conditional forms. However, the lack of verbal agreement morphology in English and differences in word order compared with Spanish make it difficult for English speakers to produce such endings. They observed that students often had difficulty producing correct conditional forms in Spanish due to differences in morphological structure between Spanish and English. Whereas other grammatical structures may be easy to produce but difficult to understand, DeKeyser & Sokalski (1996) note that direct object clitics in Spanish serve as an example of a structure that is easy to produce but difficult for English speakers to understand. The word order in Spanish direct object clitics can differ from what English speakers anticipate, making it difficult for them to understand the structure. However, the structure is relatively simple to create due to the clear relationship between the agent and patient reflected in

the morphological changes between the different shapes. The distinction between comprehension and production challenges highlights the importance of considering both aspects in language learning tasks.

The concept of grammatical difficulties serves as a unifying framework that reconciles the literature on second language acquisition by emphasizing the challenges that learners face when acquiring grammar. By exploring these challenges and their implications for language teaching and learning, researchers can bridge theoretical discussions about grammar with empirical studies of language acquisition, resulting in a more integrated and nuanced understanding of the language learning process.

Grammatical difficulty is considered to be a function of salience as described by Bardovi-Harlig (1987). Because of its importance in second language acquisition, salience can determine how easy and difficult it is to acquire features of that language. Salience is a characteristic of the limited frequency that students receive in the form of input. Furthermore, the form of input refers to the available data obtained by students as explained by Bardovi-Harlig (1987). The three elements of form complexity, meaning complexity, and complexity of the relationship between word and meaning identified by Goldschneider & De Keyser (2005) are considered as determining factors of grammatical complexity. Form complexity can be in the form of sound degrees that can be used to select and arrange all the appropriate morphemes and allomorphs. Goldschneider & De Keyser (2005) also explain that novelty or abstractness can be a problem of meaning complexity.

Goldschneider & DeKeyser (2005) discussed five predictors such as semantic, syntactic complexity, phonological form, perceptual salience, and frequency of occurrence are considered grammatical difficulties. Salience can have a broad meaning and it refers to how easy it is to perceive a given instruction. (1) *Salience* is breaking down into variables such as the number of phonetic substances, stress level, and usual serial in a sentence; (2) *Semantic complexity* refers to the number of interpretations expressed by a functor; (3) *Morpho-logical regularity* refers to the degree to which the functors are (or are not) affected by their phonological context; (4) *Syntactic complexity*, selecting functional category theory as a framework. According to Goldschneider & DeKeyser (2005), they divided syntactic categories (lexical or functional) as grammatical functors; (5) *Frequency* refers to the number of times a given structure occurs in a speech addressed to the student. In further research, DeKeyser (2005) has identified three factors that determine grammatical complexity. These factors are complexity of form, complexity of meaning, and complexity of form-meaning relationships. According to him, the complexity of form is related to the many choices involved in choosing the right morphemes and allomorphs and their correct placement. Complexity of meaning, on the other hand, can be a cause of difficulty due to its novelty or abstractness. L2 learners may struggle with structures such as articles, classifiers, grammatical gender, and verbal aspects, when their L1 does not have such structures, or uses a different system. Finally, when the relationship between form and meaning is unclear, then difficulties can arise in mapping the meaning of form. This can be

caused by redundancy (e.g. third person singular -s in English) or optionality (e.g. zero subject in Spanish).

Grouse and Coppen (2015) also consider learner characteristics as one of the factors that can influence the perceptio of difficulty learning grammar. The questionnaire administered to student teachers included items relating to the influence of learner characteristics on grammatical difficulties. Learner characteristics can include various factors such as language aptitude, cognitive ability, motivation, previous language learning experience, and individual learning style.

Difficulty in grammar learning, as discussed in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature, results from a combination of factors such as the complexity of grammar rules and the difficulty in applying them in context. These factors also interact with the individual characteristics of the learner. Due to the diverse nature of grammatical difficulties, researchers find it difficult to account for all the variables that may influence the difficulty of learning grammar in empirical studies. As a result, many researchers have resorted to investigating how language users apply grammatical rules to better understand the notion of grammatical difficulties (Bialystok, 1979; Green & Hecht, 1992; Robinson, 1996b).

2.2 The development of Instrument to Measure Grammatical Difficulty

As described by Graus and Coppen (2015), the measurement of grammatical difficulty in English second language acquisition can be described

in Bialystok 1979; Green & Hecht (1992; Robinson (1996) theory about English grammar points. Grammar points, as proposed by Graus and Coppen (2015) are discussed as follows: Grammatical difficulty has been discussed in SLA literature as a combination of various factors such as pedagogical rule difficulty and formal and functional complexity, those factors which interact with learners' characteristics. Because of the multidimensional nature of grammatical difficulty, researchers find it challenging to include all the variables regulating difficulty in empirical studies. As a result, it is reasonable that various scholars have turned to studying language users over the years to operationalize the concept of grammatical difficulty (Bialystok, 1979; Green & Hecht, 1992; Robinson, 1996b).

Graus and Coppen (2015) investigated the grammatical difficulties faced by second-language learners. To select the 31 grammar points for analysis, popular English grammar course books in the Netherlands and input from experienced English teachers were considered. Participants were then asked to rate the level of difficulty of each point. The study found that students struggled with several aspects of grammar, with an emphasis on the past simple tense and the use of possessive determiners.

In addition, Alhaysony and Alhaisoni’s (2017) study also used Graus and Coppen's (2015) concept on 31 grammatical points for investigating the grammatical difficulty faced by EFL undergraduate students of Al-Jouf University. They found that EFL undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia perceived that grammar points such as unreal condition were the most difficult grammar feature followed by real conditional sentences, embedded questions, prepositions, determiners, the past perfect tents, and conjunction. Considering that, the 31-grammar points concept proposed by Graus and Coppen (2015) has been adopted by many researchers not only in the research of ESL context but also in the research of EFL context.

A recent example of empirically exploring grammatical difficulty is Scheffler (2011) explained that he relied on teacher intuitions to assess the

concept by citing Ellis (2006) who stated that an empiric approach may be inevitable because 'it may prove impossible to arrive at objective linguistic criteria that will ensure a reliable and valid assessment'. In his study, he asked 20 Polish English teachers to score 12 structures on a one-to-five scale evaluating grammatical complexity, and then he asked 50 Polish English learners to create sample sentences using the correct form with the correct topic. Moreover, he found a strong correlation between the teachers' prediction and the learners.

Table 2.3. Grouse and Coppen's (2015) 31 Grammar points

Tenses and Aspect	Word Order	Determiner and Quantifier
past perfect	Clauses	modal verb
present perfect	third person singular -s	negation
past progressive	adjective (comparative and superlative)	(un)countable noun
present progressive	wh-question	articles
future tense (going to, will)	infinite and gerund	passive voice
real condition	participle construction	embedded question
unreal condition	question tags	possessive -s,
	preposition	quantifying phrases
	singular and plural	determiner
	reported speech	
	adverb	
	conjunction	

Note: The grammar points above were included in the questionnaire.

According to Scheffler (2011), the rules, grouped here based on grammatical categories, are given below. In the actual test and the questionnaire, they were in a random order. Simple tenses: (1) We use the present simple to talk about habits and routines. (2) We use the past simple to describe finished actions. Continuous/progressive aspect: (1) We use the present continuous to talk about actions happening now. (2) We use the past continuous to describe things that were in progress at a specific time in the past.

(3) We use the future continuous for actions that will be in progress at a specific time in the future. Perfect aspect: (1) We use the present perfect simple to talk about a finished action if we do not say exactly when it happened. (2) We use the past perfect to talk about an action that happened before another action in the past. (3) We use the future perfect for actions that will be completed before a specific time in the future. Perfect + continuous: (1) We use the present perfect continuous to talk about an action that started in the past but is continuing. Conditionals: (1) We use the first conditional to talk about situations that have a chance of happening in the future. (2) We use the second conditional to talk about situations that are impossible now or in the future. (3) We use the third conditional to talk about a situation that had a chance of happening in the past but did not happen.

2.2.1 Tenses and Aspect

According to Quirk, et al (1985) explained tenses in grammar, it is therefore wise to begin by distinguishing three different levels on which the terms 'present' and 'past' can be interpreted. In an abstraction from any given language, time can be thought of as a line (theoretically, of infinite length) on which is located, as a continuously moving point, the present moment. Anything ahead of the present moment is in the future, and anything behind it is in the past. They distinguished past, present, and future on a referential level, and also on a semantic level. It remains only to mention the familiar fact that 'present' and 'past' are also interpreted on a grammatical level, about tense. They also explained 16 tenses in English.

2.2.2 Word Order

Discussion of word order in languages tends to revolve around the ordering of phrases which are clause elements, and it is notable, for instance, that in English the positions of subject, verb, and object are relatively fixed. In declarative clauses, they occur regularly in the order S V O, unless there are particular conditions (for example, the initial placing of the object pronoun in relative clauses) that lead to a disturbance of this order (Quirk, et al. 1985).

2.2.3 Determiner and Quantifier

This term may be used for the function of words and (sometimes) phrases which, in general, determine what kind of reference a noun phrase has: for example, whether it is definite (like the) or indefinite (like a/an), partitive (like some) or universal (like all). Semantically, all noun phrases are determined in some way or other; e.g. all noun phrases are either definite or indefinite in meaning. But some heads are by their very nature self-determination: proper nouns and personal pronouns, for example, are inherently definite, and in this sense incorporate their determiner (Quirk, et al. 1985).

Grouse and Coppen (2015) conducted the qualitative study as a pilot study to survey as many as possible reasons regarding why English grammar can be difficult. The results identified several themes that influence the learning of English as a second language. The first theme is grammatical

features related which includes the complexity of form and use, and structures that students need to learn, and the qualities of English they encounter outside the classroom. This can include incorrect use of English, slang, and colloquial language. The second theme is pedagogical arrangement relates to how English is taught in the classroom. This includes the complexity of the rules, the number of practice and recap opportunities, and the teaching methods. Respondents criticized some teaching methods for lacking a communicative or meaningful context, being too teacher-focused, or too exam-focused. The quality of the material presented in the textbook is also mentioned. The third theme concerns the quality of the English teachers themselves. Respondents stated that some teachers did not have sufficient understanding of the subject matter, which could result in the instructions given to students being unclear. The final theme relates to student characteristics. This includes their L1 language, motivation, level, aptitude, and the number of years of teaching they have. According to the result, Grouse and Coppen (2015) proposed five factors that are used in determining the reason for grammatical difficulty: (1) complexity of form. (2) complexity of use, (3) Complexity of rule, (4) L1 influence, and (5) frequency of the input.

2.3 Relevant Studies

Numerous researchers have been trying to investigate the difficulty of grammar that students face. Grouse and Coppen (2015) inspected 31 points of grammatical difficulty. The point selected was based on a grammar point that

is analysed from some best-selling English grammar books in the Netherlands. The 31 selection points of grammar were also by the estimate that the English teacher experienced. This study used two empirical studies: a pilot study and the main study. As described by Grouse and Coppen (2015), first of all, they surveyed undergraduate and postgraduate students to cite as many reasons as possible regarding why English grammar can be difficult as a pilot study. Then they devised a questionnaire to decide on how the participants estimated the difficulty of grammar points and the factors that contributed to perceiving the level of difficulty as the main study. The participants were given a questionnaire and asked to analyze the difficulty of 31 selected grammar points. It is found in this study that L2 students faced some difficulties on (1) present perfect continuous (2) future continuous; (3) past perfect; (4) definite article, and (5) present perfect.

Alhaysony and Alhaisoni (2017) also conducted a study investigating the grammatical difficulty faced by EFL undergraduate students of Al-jouf University. The grammatical features were selected by four criteria: (1) the ones that were included in the syllabus of high school, (2) the analyzed grammar aspect dealt with the university course, (3) based on knowledge of researchers considered more/less difficult for Saudi EFL students, and (4) the grammar point that was consulted with some university professors and high school teacher. First, the participants were given questions about their biographical information. Second, contained 31 closed-ended questions each

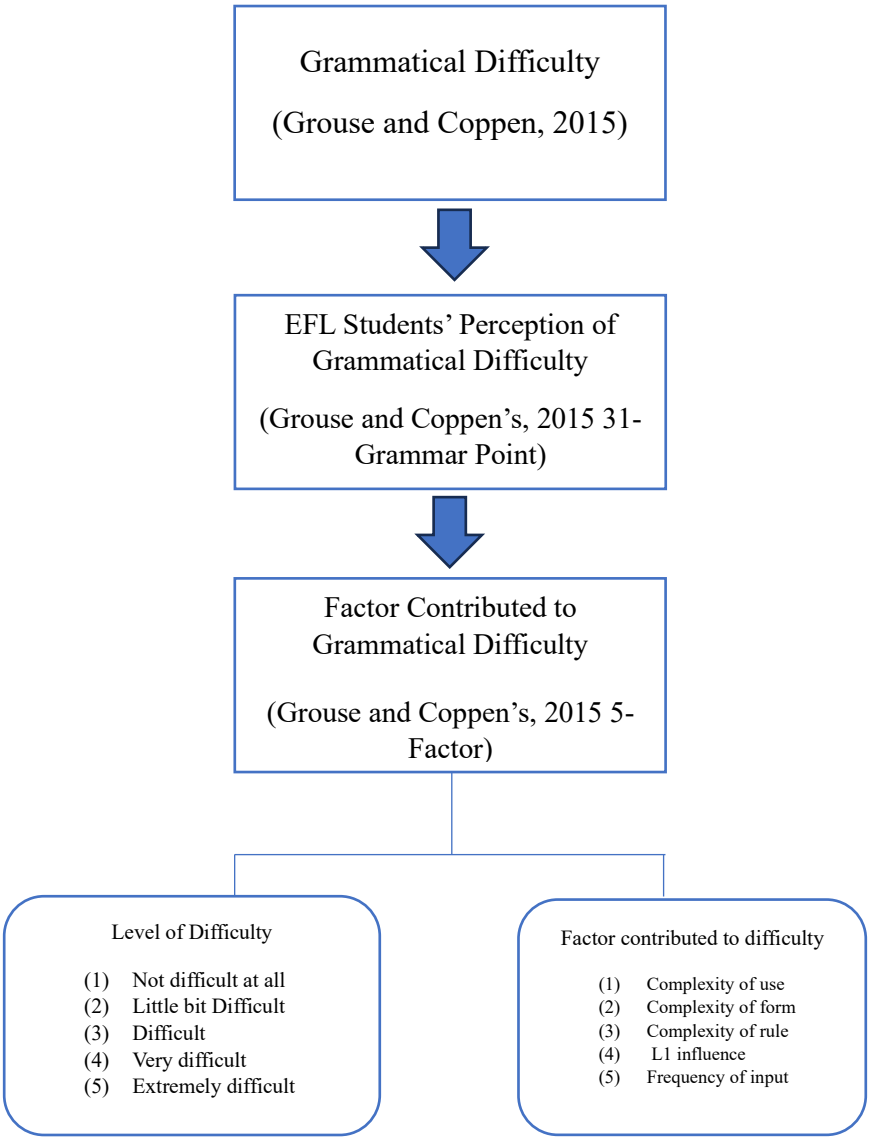
representing the grammar feature. It found that unreal condition was the most difficult grammar feature followed by real conditional sentences, embedded questions, prepositions, determiners, the past perfect tents, and conjunction.

Shiu (2011) conducted a study investigating grammatical difficulty from the perspective of Chinese EFL Learners. The researcher designed a questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section consists of a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and in the second section the learners were asked to rate the difficulty of 11 target grammar from 1 up to 5, that is 1 indicating "very easy" and 5 "very difficult". The questionnaire was distributed to 277 Chinese EFL Learners in two universities in the center of Taiwan. The researcher found that embedded question clauses, prepositions, real conditional, participle constructions, and unreal conditionals were considered the most difficult by participants.

2.4 Flow of The Literature

As shown in Figure 1. This exploration of grammatical difficulty adapted Grouse and Coppen's (2015) concept from SLA Literature, drawn from previous research by Bialystok (1979), Green and Hecht (1992), and Robinson (1996). Grammatical complexity is a multifaceted construct that includes factors such as pedagogical approach, formal and functional complexity, and individual student characteristics. This study conducted a survey study using questionnaires as the instrument of the study consisting of 31 grammar points proposed by Grouse and Coppen (2015) to answer the research question: (1)

What grammar points of English do EFL undergraduate students in the department where the study was conducted find more and less difficult? (2) What are the reasons that cause grammatical difficulty from EFL undergraduate students' perception? This study only focuses on investigating aspects of student perception as a limitation of this research.



CHAPTER III

RESEACH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design with a comprehensive explanation. This includes information about how the data was collected and analysed, the location of the study, and details of the study participants.

3.1 Research Design

In this research, a survey was conducted to measure students' perspective of grammar difficulty in an English education department. The study would like to highlight basic foundation of grammatical difficulty using survey study. Surveys are a commonly used method for collecting data, involving polls of a population. The questionnaire used in this research was adapted from research by Grouse and Coppen (2015) to collect the necessary data.

3.2 Population and Sample

The participants of the study were 90 Indonesian EFL undergraduate students of the English Language Education Department in one of the Islamic private universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia who had already completed the 3-grammar courses. The participants were willing to participate and agreed to approve the consent form. This research used purposive sampling, also called judgmental or selective sampling, to intentionally select participants based on specific characteristics relevant to their research study. This non-random

sampling technique allows researchers to select samples based on research objectives and the information they want to collect. This study involved Indonesian undergraduate students who were studying English as a foreign language. These students took three courses – English Grammar for Spoken Discourse, English Grammar for Written Discourse, and English Grammar for Media Discourse – as a requirement for participating in the study.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The researcher adapted the questionnaire after comprehensively exploring the concept of 31 grammar points as proposed by Grouse and Coppen (2015) to define English grammatical difficulty (Alhaysony & Alhaisoni, 2017; Grouse and Coppen, 2015) to determine English grammar points that the participants perceive to be more and less difficult.

The grammar points presented in Table 3.3.1 adapted from questionnaires created by Grouse and Coppen, (2015), as well as by Alhaysony and Alhaisoni, (2017). This study used 31-grammar points proposed by Grause and Coppen (2015) and personally composed and formulated grammar sentence samples. To ensure accuracy of the grammar sentence made, two experts were consulted to validate sample sentences from each grammar point. These experts were Astri Hapsari who is the supervisor of this study and Nizamuddin Sadiq who is a linguistics expert.

Table 3.3.1 Grammatical Points and Example of Correct Sentences

Grammatical Points	Examples of Correct Sentences
1. Adverb	Amir is a fast runner. He can run fast, even much faster than other runners.
2. Negation	We had not seen each other since we left high school.
3. Third Person Singular -s	Mr. Adam, one of senior teachers at our school, teaches us English. We really like the way he speaks English.
4. Simple Past -ed	Mother put the apples in the freezer, then cut them into pieces to make some apple pies yesterday.
5. Simple Progressive	Today a lot of people are talking about the candidate of the next Indonesian President on social media.
6. Future tense (will & be going to)	" I have bought a ticket for the movie. I am going to watch it tonight. Will you join me?" " I am afraid I will not join you tonight. I have got lots of assignment"
7. Quantifying Phrase	Every new term, each of the students is given a time schedule.
8. Singular and plural	That's an amazing aquarium, I think. We can see a lot of kinds of fish in a giant glass pool.
9. Pronoun	When the teacher asked the students to answer the questions, one of them raised his hand.
10. Modal auxiliary	‘’You look so weak and tired. I think you should take a rest for a while’’ ’’No, thanks. I'm okay’’
11. Adjective (comparative and superlative)	'Why did you leave the movie in the middle of the show?’’ ’’It was boring. It was the worst movie I've ever seen’’

12. Wh-question	Lili: ' How does your father get to work?' Lala: ' by public transportation'
13. Articles	The leaves fall on to the ground.
14. Passive voice	The victims of the natural disaster were evacuated by the local government to the safer area, meanwhile the wounded were taken to the nearest hospital to get medical treatment.
15. Possessive -s	To keep the existence of freshwater in the future is not only the government's responsibility but also ours as young generations.
16. Subject-verb agreement	One of my friends had been given a scholarship to study arts abroad.
17. Past progressive	The thief broke into my house last night when I was sleeping
18. (Un)countable noun	The doctor suggested the patient drink enough water to avoid getting dehydrated during extreme hot weather.
19. Reported speech	She said that she was visiting Paris the following weekend
20. Present perfect	She looks so tired and sweaty. She has run around the city park for almost an hour.
21. Question tags	They will not stay here for any longer, will they?
22. Infinitive and gerund	We all object to having a test on Saturday.
23. Clauses	Donny, whose father is an outstanding lawyer, wants to study laws.
24. Past perfect	I had arrived at the railway station before he phoned me
25. Conjunction	The water of river is heavily polluted by the industrial waste; however, many people still use it for their daily need
26. Determiner	She had invited a lot of people for the party, that's why it was held in city hall.
27. Preposition	The sun shines into my bedroom through the window.

28.	Embedded question	I wonder what time the meeting is scheduled for tomorrow
29.	Real condition	If it rains, we will stay indoors and play games
30.	Participial construction	I wake up in the middle of night when I heard a baby cried
31.	Unreal condition	Thrilled by the surprise, Sarah thanked her friends for the birthday celebration.

The questionnaire design in this study consists of three sections. The first section consists of sentences of 31 grammar points proposed by Grouse &Coppen (2015) as presented in Table 3. 3.1. The grammatical points were divided into 3 categories such as tense and aspect, word order, and determiner and quantifier. In order to elicit the participants' perception of grammatical difficulty, the instrument was designed to make the participants choose the correct examples of sentences that represent each grammatical point and measure their perception of difficulty level to choose the correct option rated from a Likert scale of 1 (not difficult at all), (2) "a little difficult", (3) "difficult", (4) "very difficult", and (5) "Extremely difficult". The participants' task was only selecting examples of grammatically correct sentences. As a result, participants' scores will not be considered in this section because the purpose of this section is to help students determine grammatical complexity. This section aims to explore learners' perspectives on the difficulty of grammar.

After that, the participants should choose the reason on what factors contributed to the difficulty of grammatical points. In this section, the

participants were asked to indicate the factor which contributed to the difficulty of certain grammatical features. These factors in the questionnaire include: 1. Complexity of form, 2. Complexity of use, 3. Complexity of pedagogical rules, 4. Influence of L1, and 5. Frequency of input. The factors selected based on Grouse and Coppen's, (2015) study.

3.3.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the extent to which the evidence and underlying theory are accurately measured as a result of using the instrument (Grouse and Coppen, 2015; Alhaysony and Alhaisoni, 2017). According to Chapman (2018) the accuracy of a study in measuring or assessing what it wants to measure is called validity. This relates to the adequacy and accuracy of conclusions drawn from research findings. Consistency, stability, and repeatability of research findings or measurement results constitute reliability. It shows how much the results of a study or measurement are trustworthy and reliable. It indicates the extent to which the results of a study or measurement are uniform and reliable. The study tested the validity and reliability of the questionnaire using SPSS. it can be seen in Table 3.3.2 that the questionnaire has 31 items (N) in total with Cronbach alpha value .974.

The result of the 31 total items in first section got the Cronbach alpha value which is .974. According to Taber (2018) if Cronbach alpha value shows results higher than .93 then the questionnaire can be considered as strong. Then, we can conclude that a questionnaire used to measure grammatical difficulty is reliable and consistent.

Table 3.3.2 Reliability Test of First Section

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.974	31

The result of the 31 total items in second section got the Cronbach alpha value which is .906. According to Taber (2018) if Cronbach alpha value shows results higher than .90 then the questionnaire can be considered as reliable. Then, we can conclude that a questionnaire used to measure grammatical difficulty is reliable and consistent.

Table 3.3.2 Reliability test of Second Section

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.906	31

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

In this study, the researcher conducted the quantitative analysis of data carried out using the SPSS program. Chapman (2018) explained that quantitative analysis using SPSS involves applying statistical methods to analyse numerical data and draw meaningful conclusions. The data were analysed from questionnaires by calculating a presentative value of the data set (M= mean) and measurement of the spread or variability of data points (SD=

standard deviation) scores and standard deviations, for each difficulty level and factor across selected grammar points. In addition to identifying the participants' perceived grammatical difficulty, a factor contributing to their perceived grammatical difficulties was also identified. This additional analysis helps identify which factors which were considered more influential in contributing to the difficulty of a particular grammar point. Specifically, descriptive statistics was used to identify participants' perspective on the 31 grammar points on grammatical difficulty, as measured by Likert scale responses. The mean score and standard deviation of each grammar point was presented in the table and listed from the highest mean score to the lowest mean score. Furthermore, SPSS was also used to map the percentage of the participants who rate the level of difficulty and their chosen reason of factors that contribute to the difficulty.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

To examine students' perception regarding the grammatical difficulty of the 31 grammatical features, descriptive statistics was used to draw the data from the students' perspective of grammatical difficulty. The items were ranked in ascending order based on their average score value. In this section, the results are shown in two subsections: the first is about Indonesian undergraduate students' perspective of grammatical difficulty level, and the second is the reason contributed to the grammatical difficulty level from the Indonesian undergraduate students' perspective.

4.1 Finding

The first part of the quantitative data was analysed to answer this research question: *what are grammatical features the students perceived more and less difficult?* Table 4.1 presented participants' grammatical difficulty profile from 31 grammatical features. The result showed that (1) clause was reported as the most difficult grammatical feature faced by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students followed by (2) unreal condition in second position, then (3) embedded question, (4) -s possessive, and (5) question tag. Additionally, the 5 easiest grammar points from a student's perspective were (1) wh- questions are reported as the easiest grammatical feature faced by

Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' followed by (2) pronouns in second, (3) comparative and superlative adjectives, (4) articles, and (5) simple past -ed.

Table 4.1 Participants' grammatical difficulty profile

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Clauses	90	3.2000	1.14362
2. Unreal condition	90	3.0667	1.09954
3. Embedded question	90	2.9444	1.10526
4. Possessive -s	90	2.8444	1.18900
5. Question tags	90	2.7889	1.06523
6. Subjective-verb agreement	90	2.7778	1.05764
7. Real condition	90	2.7667	1.18084
8. Passive voice	90	2.7111	1.09385
9. Participial construction	90	2.7000	1.07526
10. Adverb	90	2.6889	1.10814
11. Quantifying phrase	90	2.6556	1.05107
12. Future tense (will and be going to)	90	2.6444	1.11488
13. Negation	90	2.5667	1.19972
14. Present perfect	90	2.5333	1.14362
15. Infinitive and gerund	90	2.5222	1.10390
16. Reported speech	90	2.5222	1.17299
17. Singular and plural	90	2.5222	1.14389
18. Determiner	90	2.4778	1.11403
19. Third person singular -s	90	2.4778	1.10930
20. Past progressive	90	2.4444	1.13287
21. Past perfect	90	2.3889	1.04607
22. Uncountable noun	90	2.3778	1.06610
23. Conjunction	90	2.2889	1.14408
24. Simple past -ed	90	2.2889	1.16353
25. Modal auxiliaries	90	2.2889	1. 07311
26. Present progressive	90	2.2778	1.13204
27. Preposition	90	2.2667	1.08927
28. Articles	90	2.2333	1.19032
29. Adjective (comparative and superlative)	90	2.1667	1.10413
30. Wh-question	90	2.1333	1.16310
31. pronounce	90	2.1333	1.14362

Table 4.1. described the descriptive statistics for the 31 items administered. Based on the table above, the 31 items are ranked based on the average score (from lowest to highest). The mean scores for these statements ranged from 2.10 to 3.22. The result described the difficulty level from the students' perspective, by ranking the mean scores obtained by using SPSS. The researcher determined the difficulty level order of the features and identified the grammar points that were more difficult than others. The results of this study are similar to the research conducted by Shiu (2011) that found embedded question, clauses, prepositions, real conditional, participle constructions, and unreal conditionals were considered the most difficult grammar point by participants. Additionally, Alhaysony and Alhaisoni's (2017) study reported a similar finding that unreal condition was the most difficult grammar feature followed by real conditional sentences, embedded questions, prepositions, determiners, the past perfect tents, and conjunction.

The second part of the quantitative data was analyzed to answer this research question: *"What are the reasons that cause grammatical difficulty from EFL undergraduate students' perspective?* As reported in Table 4.2, participants were asked to choose the causes of difficulties regarding 31 different grammatical features by selecting the factor provided in the questionnaire. The resulting data reveals that, among the grammatical features examined, the factor referred to as "complexity of form" received the highest score, indicating its significance in the perceived challenges faced by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students. Furthermore, related to "complexity of use,"

"complexity of pedagogical rules," and "L1 influence" (native language) proposed by Grouse & Coppen (2015) follow a descending order of scores, emphasizing the diverse nature of the linguistic constraints encountered. Additionally, the feature with the lowest scores was related to "frequency of input", implying that, from the perspective of the surveyed students, the regularity of exposure to frequency of input had a relatively reduced impact on their perceived grammatical difficulties.

Table 4.2. Factor contributed to difficulty

	Use	Form	Rule	L1	Frequency
Adverb	30	29	17	10	4
	33.3%	32.2%	18.9%	11.1%	4.4%
Negation	14	30	32	11	3
	15.6%	33.3%	35.6%	12.2%	3.3%
Third person singular -s	28	32	14	11	5
	31.1%	35.6%	15.6%	12.2%	5.6%
Simple past -ed	26	34	9	16	5
	28.9%	37.8%	10.0%	17.8%	5.6%
Present progressive	21	34	14	10	11
	23.3%	37.8%	15.6%	11.1%	12.2%
Future tense (will and be going to)	24	27	18	9	12
	26.7%	30.0%	20.0%	10.0%	13.3%
Quantifying phrase	21	38	16	6	7
	23.3%	42.2%	20.0%	6.7%	7.8%
Singular and plural	21	33	21	10	5
	23.3%	36.75	23.3%	11.1%	5,6%
Modal auxiliary	31	19	24	10	6
	34.4%	21.1%	26.75	11.1%	6.7%
Adjective (comparative and superlative)	25	20	30	10	5
	27.6%	22.2%	33,3%	11.1%	5.6%

Wh-question	30	24	15	11	10
	33.3%	26.7%	16.7%	12.2%	11.1%
Articles	23	26	14	16	11
	25.6%	28.9%	15.6%	17.8%	12.2%
Passive voice	17	38	20	7	5
	18.9%	42.2%	22.2%	11.1%	6.6%
Possessive -s	23	30	23	9	5
	25.6%	33.3%	25.6%	10.0%	5.6%
Subject-verb agreement	22	45	11	7	5
	24.45	50.0%	12.2%	7.8%	5.6%
Past progressive	24	33	15	14	4
	26.7%	36.7%	16.7%	15.6%	4.4%
Uncountable noun	21	25	24	9	11
	23.3%	27.8%	26.7%	10.0%	12.2%
Reported speech	20	33	19	14	4
	22.2%	36.7	21.1%	15.6%	4.4%
Present perfect	23	47	13	5	2
	25.6%	52.7%	14.4%	5.6%	2.2%
Question tags	21	35	13	9	12
	23.3%	28.9%	14.4%	10.0%	13.3%
Infinitive and gerund	29	30	21	6	4
	32.2%	33.3%	23.3%	6.7%	4.4%
Clauses	21	31	21	9	8
	23.3%	34.4%	23.3%	10.0%	8.9%
Past perfect	28	42	11	6	2
	31.1%	46.7%	12.2%	6.7%	3.3%
Conjunction	29	16	33	10	2
	32.2%	17.8%	36.7%	11.1%	2.2%
Determiners	30	23	21	11	5
	33.3%	25,6%	23.3%	12.2%	5.6%
Preposition	29	19	27	12	3
	32.2%	21.1%	30.0%	13.3%	3.3%

Embedded question	19	35	15	15	6
	21.1%	38.9%	16.7%	16.7%	6.7%
Real condition	21	33	21	7	8
	23.3%	36.7%	23.3%	7.8%	8.9%
Participial conjunction	24	30	23	9	4
	26.75	33.3%	25.6%	10.0%	4.4%
Unreal condition	12	24	27	14	3
	13.3%	37.8%	30.0%	15.5%	3.3%

Further data analysis also of five grammatical points that are perceived to be the most difficult grammar points from the participants' perspective (*clauses, unreal condition, embedded questions, possessive -s, and question tags*) revealed that 76.6% of participants found *clauses* (M= 3.20, SD= 1.14) to be the most difficult, while the remaining 23.4% did not find it difficult. The reasons cited for the perceived difficulty of clauses included complexity of use (23.3%), form complexity (34.4%), rule complexity (23.3%), L1 influence (10.0%), and input frequency (8.9%).

The second most difficult grammar point, according to 74.4% of participants, was the unreal condition (M= 3.06, SD= 1.09). Interestingly, 23.6% of participants found it an easy concept to understand. Reasons given for the perceived difficulty of this concept were the complexity of use (13.3%), the complexity of form (37.8%), the complexity of rules (30.0%), the influence of L1 (15.6%), and the frequency of input (3.3 %).

The third set of embedded questions (M= 2.94, SD= 1.10) was considered challenging by 71.1% of participants, while the remaining 28.9% found it not difficult. Reasons for finding it difficult varied, with 21.1% citing the complexity of use, 38.9% citing the complexity of form, 16.7% citing the complexity of rules, 16.7% citing the influence of their native language, and 6.7% citing the frequency of input.

Similarly, the fourth grammar point involving possessive -s (M= 2.84, SD= 1.18) was considered challenging by 64.4% of participants, while the remaining 33.6% found it not difficult. Reasons for finding it difficult were also varied, with 25.6% citing the complexity of use, 33.3% citing the complexity of form, 25.6% citing the complexity of rules, 10.0% citing the influence of their native language, and 5.6% citing the frequency of input.

Finally, the fifth grammar point regarding the Question tag (M= 2.78, SD= 1.06) was considered challenging by 66.6% of participants, while the remaining 33.4% found it not difficult. Reasons for finding it difficult again varied, with 23.3% citing the complexity of use, 38.9% citing the complexity of form, 14.4% citing the complexity of rules, 10.0% citing the influence of their native language, and 13.3% citing frequency of input.

4.2 Discussion

Further analysis of this finding was quite similar to Grouse & Coppen's (2015) study. The finding in this study revealed that the most cited factor that contributed to grammatical difficulty was the complexity of use. Meanwhile, in Grouse & Coppen's (2015) study the finding found that the influence of participants' native language was the most cited factor that contributed to grammatical difficulty, followed by the complexity of use as the second. Also, the result different with Alhaysony and Alhaisoni (2017). Found that the most cited factor by the participants was the pedagogical rule as seen as a factor contributing to grammatical difficulty.

An examination of these most difficult grammar features illustrates from the study and the previous study result that it can be distinguished from several aspects. In Indonesian context Cahyani (2022) explained that the factor

contributing to students' difficulties of failures in learning grammar was complexity of grammar rules in which the complex nature of grammar rules, with many formations and structures that must be understood, can create difficulty for students in mastering grammar. Cahyani (2022) also mentioned limited input to language is the factor contributing to students' difficulties of failures in learning grammar. The frequency of input, especially for non-native speakers, can make learning grammar more challenging due to a lack of understanding of the language. Additionally, Prasetyo (2020) has a similar explanation of the factor contributing to students' difficulties of failures in learning grammar which is complexity in applying grammar rules. He explains that some students struggle with arranging words according to grammar rules and forming sentences in correct tenses.

This study found the five grammatical points that are perceived to be the most difficult grammar points form participants` perception which are; clauses, unreal condition, embedded question, possessive -s, and question tags.

The first section, the quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed to answer this research question: What grammar points of English do EFL Undergraduate students find that are more difficult and less difficult? The outcome described the difficulty level from the students` perspective. The researcher had determined the difficulty level order of the features and identified the grammar points that were more difficult than others. Reported the order of the 31 grammatical features given based on Indonesian EFL undergraduate students` perspective, shown that (1) clause was reported as the

most difficult grammatical feature faced by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students followed by (2) unreal condition in second position, then (3) embedded question, (4) -s possessive, and (5) question tag. This means that the level of difficulty may be due to the complexity of the regulations. Additionally, the 5 easiest grammar points from a students' perspective were (1) wh- questions are reported as the easiest grammatical feature faced by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students` followed by (2) pronouns in second, (3) comparative and superlative adjectives, (4) articles, and (5) simple past -ed.

The second section of the questionnaire was specifically designed to investigate the exploration of various factors that contribute to grammatical feature difficulties, aiming to answer the second research question: "What are the reasons that cause grammatical difficulty from EFL undergraduate students` perspective? Reported the perceived difficulty of the 31 grammatical features given based on Indonesian EFL undergraduate students` perspectives. As reported in Table 2, respondents were tasked with rating the causes of difficulties regarding 31 different grammatical features on a comprehensive five-point Likert scale. Reveals that, among the grammatical features examined, the factor referred to as "complexity of form" received the highest score, indicating its significance in the perceived challenges faced by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students.

However, the causes of grammatical difficulty may be different. It is recommended that instructors include additional drills and awareness-raising exercises related to grammatical topics that are considered difficult. The results

imply that teachers should include additional exercises and activities that increase students' awareness of grammar rules. Likewise, as noted by Widodo (2006), grammar is a fundamental element in English language learning. This is especially true for individuals learning English as a second or foreign language, as a thorough understanding of grammar is essential to successful language development which can be done through data-driven (Oniel, 2021) or teaching grammar learning strategy (Juniar & Carissa, 2020). It has also been explained that grammatical difficulty in second language acquisition literature is based on linguistic criteria such as formal and functional complexity and salience (Bialystok, 1979). Meanwhile, there are also those who define it based on the characteristics of pedagogical rules (Widodo, 2006) and the use of metalinguistic and conceptual clarity (Oniel, 2021; Juniar & Carissa, 2020; Sadiq, 2013). Many other researchers ask students to explain these differences; in this view, factors such as the learner's L1, his or her developmental stage, and his or her aptitude are the main predictors of grammatical difficulties. The difficulty of grammatical features, the difficulty of pedagogical rules, and learner characteristics tend to interact in complex ways which cannot be discussed properly only by rating the grammatical difficulties in certain grammar points.

CHAPTER V

CONCUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of Indonesian undergraduate EFL students and identify the factors that contribute to their difficulties in grammar. All 90 students of the English Language Education Department, batch of 2020, who took three grammar courses, English Grammar in Spoken Discourse, English Grammar in Written Discourse, and English Grammar in Spoken Discourse, have given comprehensive and satisfactory responses to all questions in the questionnaire.

The result reported that 5 of the most difficult grammar points faced by students were clauses as the most difficult with the factor contributed the difficulty are complexity of use (23.3%), form complexity (34.4%), rule complexity (23.3%), L1 influence (10.0%), and input frequency (8.9%), followed by unreal condition as a second with the factor of the complexity of use (13.3%), the complexity of form (37.8%), the complexity of rules (30.0%), the influence of L1 (15.6%), and the frequency of input (3.3 %), then embedded questions with the factor of 21.1% citing the complexity of use, 38.9% citing the complexity of form, 16.7% citing the complexity of rules, 16.7% citing the influence of their native language, and 6.7% citing the frequency of exposure, possessive -s with 25.6% citing the complexity of use, 33.3% citing the complexity of form, 25.6% citing the complexity of rules, 10.0% citing the influence of their native language, and 5.6% citing the frequency of input, and

question tags with the factor of 23.3% citing the complexity of use, 38.9% citing the complexity of form, 14.4% citing the complexity of rules, 10.0% citing the influence of their native language, and 13.3% citing frequency exposure. Additionally, the factors based on the students' perspectives were the complexity of use as the most factor that contributed to grammatical difficulty.

It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. By focusing only on students' perspectives, this research may ignore valuable insights from teachers who are experts in language teaching. Additionally, teachers may offer different perspectives on grammatical difficulties that can complement and enrich students' experiences. Limited understanding of pedagogical strategies, as teachers play a significant role in designing and implementing teaching strategies that address grammatical challenges, may lead to biased results that do not reflect the broader educational context. Findings based solely on student perspectives may also have limited generalizability to other educational settings or student populations. Therefore, including teachers' perspectives may help provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of grammatical difficulties. This research only focuses on the perspective of students' grammatical difficulties by identifying the difficulties among 31 grammar points.

5.2 Recommendation

To conclude, this study suggests that the causes of grammatical difficulties may vary among 31 grammar points. Therefore, it is recommended

that instructors include additional grammar exercises and awareness-raising activities for areas of grammar that are considered challenging. This can be achieved through the use of data-based conversation or teaching strategies aimed at improving grammar learning.

Future research may include mix-method research design approaches on a larger scale of participants, which not only involves students' but also teachers' perspectives of grammatical difficulty. By combining students' experiences and teachers' perspectives, a more comprehensive discussion on grammatical difficulties may be better addressed. Ideally, the concept of grammatical difficulties serves as a unifying framework that reconciles the literature on second language acquisition by exploring the challenges that learners face when acquiring grammar and their implications for language teaching and learning, so that researchers can bridge theoretical discussions about grammar with empirical studies of language acquisition, resulting in a more integrated understanding of the language learning process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. 31-Grammar Point (Grouse and Coppen, 2015)

Tenses and Aspect	Word Order	Determiner and Quantifier
past perfect present perfect past progressive present progressive future tense (going to, will) real condition unreal condition	Clauses third person singular -s adjective (comparative and superlative) wh-question infinite and gerund participle construction question tags preposition singular and plural reported speech adverb conjunction	modal verb negation (un)countable noun articles passive voice embedded question possessive -s, quantifying phrases determiner

Appendix 2 Grammatical Points and Example of Correct Sentences

Grammatical Points	Examples of Correct Sentences
1. Adverb	Amir is a fast runner. He can run fast, even much faster than other runners.
2. Negation	We had not seen each other since we left high school.
3. Third Person Singular -s	Mr. Adam, one of senior teachers at our school, teaches us English. We really like the way he speaks English.

4.	Simple Past -ed	Mother put the apples in the freezer, then cut them into pieces to make some apple pies yesterday.
5.	Simple Progressive	Today a lot of people are talking about the candidate of the next Indonesian President on social media.
6.	Future tense (will & be going to)	" I have bought a ticket for the movie. I am going to watch it tonight. Will you join me?" " I am afraid I will not join you tonight. I have got lots of assignment"
7.	Quantifying Phrase	Every new term, each of the students is given a time schedule.
8.	Singular and plural	That's an amazing aquarium, I think. We can see a lot of kinds of fish in a giant glass pool.
9.	Pronoun	When the teacher asked the students to answer the questions, one of them raised his hand.
10.	Modal auxiliary	‘'You look so weak and tired. I think you should take a rest for a while'’ '’No, thanks. I'm okay'’
11.	Adjective (comparative and superlative)	'Why did you leave the movie in the middle of the show?'’ '’It was boring. It was the worst movie I've ever seen'’
12.	Wh-question	Lili: ' How does your father get to work?'

	Lala: ' by public transportation'
13. Articles	The leaves fall on to the ground.
14. Passive voice	The victims of the natural disaster were evacuated by the local government to the safer area, meanwhile the wounded were taken to the nearest hospital to get medical treatment.
15. Possessive -s	To keep the existence of freshwater in the future is not only the government's responsibility but also ours as young generations.
16. Subject-verb agreement	One of my friends had been given a scholarship to study arts abroad.
17. Past progressive	The thief broke into my house last night when I was sleeping
18. (Un)countable noun	The doctor suggested the patient drink enough water to avoid getting dehydrated during extreme hot weather.
19. Reported speech	She said that she was visiting Paris the following weekend
20. Present perfect	She looks so tired and sweaty. She has run around the city park for almost an hour.
21. Question tags	They will not stay here for any longer, will they?
22. Infinitive and gerund	We all object to having a test on Saturday.

23.	Clauses	Donny, whose father is an outstanding lawyer, wants to study laws.
24.	Past perfect	I had arrived at the railway station before he phoned me
25.	Conjunction	The water of river is heavily polluted by the industrial waste; however, many people still use it for their daily need
26.	Determiner	She had invited a lot of people for the party, that's why it was held in city hall.
27.	Preposition	The sun shines into my bedroom through the window.
28.	Embedded question	I wonder what time the meeting is scheduled for tomorrow
29.	Real condition	If it rains, we will stay indoors and play games
30.	Participial construction	I wake up in the middle of night when I heard a baby cried
31.	Unreal condition	Thrilled by the surprise, Sarah thanked her friends for the birthday celebration.

Appendix 3. Concerned Form

Indonesian EFL Undergraduate Students' Perspectives of Grammatical Difficulty: A Survey Study

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

Nama saya Evanda Aradea Rizky, sedang melakukan penelitian saya mengenai pandangan mahasiswa terkait tingkat kesulitan pada Grammar dalam berbahasa Inggris bagi mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, saya bermaksud meneliti tingkat kesulitan dari setiap Grammar point bagi mahasiswa yang telah mengambil mata kuliah English Grammar for Spoken Discourse, English Grammar for Written Discourse, dan English Grammar for Media Discourse.

Untuk itu, saya meminta kesediaan teman-teman mahasiswa Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang telah mengambil matakuliah English Grammar for Spoken Discourse, English Grammar for Written Discourse, dan English Grammar for Media Discourse untuk menjadi partisipan penelitian saya.
Link instrument penelitian : https://forms.gle/QRX5WC9cLHWESXqd9

Instrumen ini terdiri dari 31 item yang disajikan berdasarkan konsep 31 point of Grammatical Difficulty (Grouse and Coppen, 2015) . Setelah teman-teman memilih jawaban yang dianggap tepat , akan ada pernyataan yang merating perspektif teman-teman terkait level Grammatical Difficulty mulai dari 1 (tidak sulit sama sekali/ not difficult at all hingga amat sangat sulit/extremely difficult). Setelah merating teman-teman akan memilih alasan mengapa Grammatical point tersebut di rating dengan skala tersebut. Hasil jawaban teman-teman akan direkam di email teman-teman.

1. Bagian pertama berisi Data Diri (Nama, NIM, No WA, pernyataan kesediaan untuk berpartisipasi di penelitian ini)
Bagian kedua berisi 31 English Grammar Points, Skala Perspektif, dan Alasan yang dapat diselesaikan dalam waktu 45 menit
2. Bagian kedua berisi 31 Skala Persepsi mengenai Kesulitan Gramatika Bahasa Inggris yang dapat diselesaikan dalam waktu 30 menit

Untuk kesediaan diri menjadi partisipan penelitian saya ucapkan terima kasih.

Yogyakarta, 29 Desember 2023.
Peneliti.

Evanda Aradea Rizky (20322019)
CP: 081222439109

This form is automatically collecting emails from all respondents. Change settings

Appendix 4. Questionnaire

(1) a. Adverb: *

Amir is a fast runner. He can run ... even much faster than other runners.

- fastly
- fast
- faster

b. How difficult the grammar difficulty level from the question above *

	1	2	3	4	5	
not difficult at all	○	○	○	○	○	extremely difficult

c. which factor contribute to the grammatical difficulty level above *

- Simplicity/Complexity of use
- Simplicity/Complexity of form
- Simplicity/Complexity of rule
- Low/high Second language influence
- Low/high Frequency of input

Appendix 5. Students' Perception of Grammatical Difficulty

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
pronouns	90	2.1333	1.14362
wh-question	90	2.1333	1.16310
adjective (comparative and superlative	90	2.1667	1.10413
articles	90	2.2333	1.19032
preposition	90	2.2667	1.08927
present progressive	90	2.2778	1.13204
modal auxiliares	90	2.2889	1.07311
simple past -ed	90	2.2889	1.16353
conjungtion	90	2.2889	1.14406
uncountable noun	90	2.3778	1.06610
past perfect	90	2.3889	1.04607
past progressive	90	2.4444	1.13287
third person singular -s	90	2.4778	1.10390
determiners	90	2.4778	1.11403
singular and plural	90	2.5222	1.14389
reported speech	90	2.5222	1.17299
invinitive and gerund	90	2.5222	1.10390
present perfect	90	2.5333	1.14362
negation	90	2.5667	1.19972
future tense (will / be going to)	90	2.6444	1.11488
quantfying pharase	90	2.6556	1.05107
adverb	90	2.6889	1.10814
participal construction	90	2.7000	1.07526
passive voice	90	2.7111	1.09385
real condition	90	2.7667	1.18084
subject-verb agreement	90	2.7778	1.05764
question tags	90	2.7889	1.06523
possessive -s	90	2.8444	1.18900
embedded question	90	2.9444	1.10526
unreal condition	90	3.0667	1.09954
clauses	90	3.2000	1.14362
Valid N (listwise)	90		

Appendix 6. Factors Contributed to Grammatical Difficulty

	Difficulty				
	use	form	rule	L1	frequency
adverb	30	29	17	10	4
	33.3%	32.2%	18.9%	11.1%	4.4%
negeation	14	30	32	11	3
	15.6%	33.3%	35.6%	12.2%	3.3%
third person singular -s	28	32	14	11	5
	31.1%	35.6%	15.6%	12.2%	5.6%
simple past -ed	26	34	9	16	5
	28.9%	37.8%	10.0%	17.8%	5.6%
present progressive	21	34	14	10	11
	23.3%	37.8%	15.6%	11.1%	12.2%
future tense (will / be going to)	24	27	18	9	12
	26.7%	30.0%	20.0%	10.0%	13.3%
quantfying pharase	21	38	18	6	7
	23.3%	42.2%	20.0%	6.7%	7.8%
singular and plural	21	33	21	10	5
	23.3%	36.7%	23.3%	11.1%	5.6%
pronouns	25	26	17	15	7
	27.8%	28.9%	18.9%	16.7%	7.8%
modal auxiliares	31	19	24	10	6
	34.4%	21.1%	26.7%	11.1%	6.7%
adjective (comparative and superlative	25	20	30	10	5
	27.8%	22.2%	33.3%	11.1%	5.6%
wh-question	30	24	15	11	10
	33.3%	26.7%	16.7%	12.2%	11.1%
articles	23	26	14	16	11
	25.6%	28.9%	15.6%	17.8%	12.2%
passive voice	17	38	20	10	5
	18.9%	42.2%	22.2%	11.1%	5.6%
possessive -s	23	30	23	9	5
	25.6%	33.3%	25.6%	10.0%	5.6%
subject-verb agreement	22	45	11	7	5
	24.4%	50.0%	12.2%	7.8%	5.6%
past progressive	24	33	15	14	4
	26.7%	36.7%	16.7%	15.6%	4.4%
uncountable noun	21	25	24	9	11
	23.3%	27.8%	26.7%	10.0%	12.2%
reported speech	20	33	19	14	4
	22.2%	36.7%	21.1%	15.6%	4.4%
present perfect	23	47	13	5	2
	25.6%	52.2%	14.4%	5.6%	2.2%
question tags	21	35	13	9	12
	23.3%	38.9%	14.4%	10.0%	13.3%
invinitive and gerund	29	30	21	6	4
	32.2%	33.3%	23.3%	6.7%	4.4%
clauses	21	31	21	9	8
	23.3%	34.4%	23.3%	10.0%	8.9%
past perfect	28	42	11	6	3
	31.1%	46.7%	12.2%	6.7%	3.3%
conjunction	29	16	33	10	2
	32.2%	17.8%	36.7%	11.1%	2.2%
determiners	30	23	21	11	5
	33.3%	25.6%	23.3%	12.2%	5.6%
preposition	29	19	27	12	3
	32.2%	21.1%	30.0%	13.3%	3.3%
embedded question	19	35	15	15	6
	21.1%	38.9%	16.7%	16.7%	6.7%
real condition	21	33	21	7	8
	23.3%	36.7%	23.3%	7.8%	8.9%
participal construction	24	30	23	9	4
	26.7%	33.3%	25.6%	10.0%	4.4%
unreal condition	12	34	27	14	3
	13.3%	37.8%	30.0%	15.6%	3.3%