

Combining Synchronous and Asynchronous Classes in Remote Learning Design: *English Grammar for Corporate Documents*

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ABSTRACT

Remote learning has become the only option academics choose to support physical distancing due to the pandemic. With all constraints and opportunities, both educators and learners must adjust to the new learning practice. From the educators' side, they need to design their courses harnessing the technology benefits to meet the learning goals. A number of factors needed to be considered to design such remote course to maximize students' learning experience. This study aimed to describe how the English Grammar for Corporate Documents course was designed using ASSURE (Analyse learners; State objectives; Select method, media, or materials; Utilize media or materials; Require learners' participation; Evaluate and revise) model to answer the challenge. Observation and library study were used to gain the data. A qualitative approach was used to conduct thematic analysis to see the challenges and opportunities faced by both educators and learners during the remote learning practice. After considering the constraints and affordances of remote learning, this course was designed by combining synchronous and asynchronous class activities. The design involved independent learning, explanations on materials, mini-quizzes, inviting peer feedback and discussions, and gaining students' evaluations. The evaluation proved that by implementing synchronous and asynchronous class activities, students felt more motivated during the learning process.

Keywords: *ASSURE model, asynchronous, grammar, remote learning, synchronous*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world has been in the COVID-19 pandemic for approximately two years since the disease's appearance in China in the early 2020 [1]. To minimize the virus spread, quarantine and isolation were implemented by numerous nations[2], especially before COVID-19 vaccine was made. Regarding this, Indonesian government implemented restriction of community activities policy since March 2020 with many level adjustments followed, depending on how high the cases were. This policy brought huge effects to almost every sector requiring human interactions [3].

Education was among many sectors experiencing disruption due to COVID-19 pandemic [3]. Following the restriction of community activities policy, education institutions transformed their classes from traditional face-to-face classes into remote classes [4]. This sudden

change forced all parties, from students, educators, educational institutions, and policy makers, to adjust themselves to the new learning practice harnessing the technology [4] [5].

During its implementation, the new learning practice has various challenges. From the educators' side, they need to redesign their previous courses incorporating digital media in such a way while also considering how they can fulfil the same learning objectives [6]. In designing the remote classes, educators also need to think about a number of factors in order to maximize students' learning experiences [7].

Various studies had been conducted related to challenges on remote learning during COVID-19 pandemic [5] [3] [8] [9] [7] [4] [6]. Some focused on the change of face-to-face learning into remote learning, specifically on the use of learning media [6], students'

performance [4], the learning process from teachers' perspective [5] and learners' perspective [9], and also students' preference on the remote learning method [7]. However, there are still limited discussions on how to design a remote course with a consideration on various conditions that are faced by students living in a developing country. In fact, considering students' conditions and incorporating their preference of how they learn can result in better performance of the students [10] [11].

ASSURE model [12] was one among many models could be used to design a course. ASSURE model [12] involves a looping process consisting of: 1. Analyse learners; 2. State objectives; 3. Select method, media, or materials; 4. Utilize media or materials; 5. Require learners' participation; and 6. Evaluate and revise. This model was chosen since it is learner-centered, requiring learner participation in one of the stages, as shown in Figure 1.

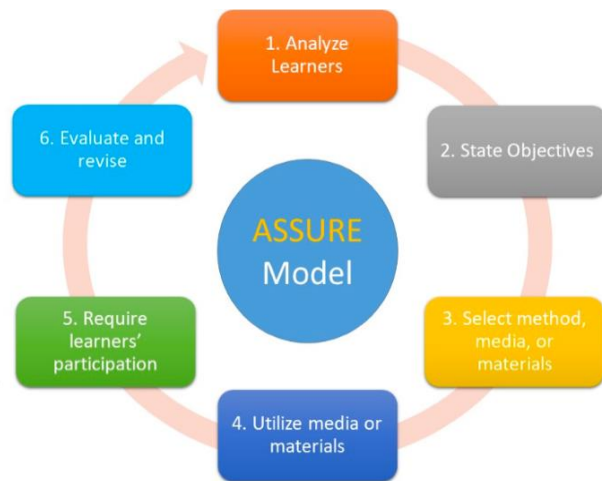


Figure 1 ASSURE model [12]

Considering the aforementioned limited discussion on suitable remote learning design for students in a developing country, this study aimed to fulfill the gap by elaborating how English Grammar for Corporate Documents was designed using ASSURE model [12], combining synchronous and asynchronous class activities.

2. METHODS

This study aimed to elaborate on how ASSURE model [12] was used to design English Grammar for Corporate Documents course, combining synchronous and asynchronous class activities considering challenges faced by students. This consideration was used to maximize their remote learning experiences. English Grammar for Corporate Documents course is a Grammar course offered by Bachelor of Applied

English Study Program, Vocational College, Universitas Gadjah Mada (SV UGM). This course was given to third semester students after they passed Basic Grammar and Communicative English Grammar classes on their previous semesters.

Data needed to design this course was gained through observation on 59 students of Bachelor of Applied English SV UGM classes batch 2020. The observation was needed to analyse learners need and challenges during the first stage of the model. To deepen the analysis of learners, library study was also conducted. This was to gain information related what challenges mostly faced by remote learning in general—looking for its constrains and opportunities. Library study was also used to help selecting proper method, media, and materials for this course. After data in for the first stage was obtained, they were analysed by means of thematic analysis integrating data reduction, verification, and drawing conclusion [13] to decide what to do on the following stages of the model. The whole processes were then described respectively.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Analyze Learners

English Grammar for Corporate Documents course was offered to Bachelor of Applied English SV UGM on their third semester. These students were early adults, aged 18-20 years old. They were post-millennials with diverse origins, coming from all over Indonesia. Some were living in West Sumatra, several parts of Java, Borneo, and even Papua. Aside from their families' financial circumstances which determined how easy they can afford the internet, these varied living locations caused different facilities and conditions when it came to internet signal and other factors affecting remote learning success [7].

Students with good signal would be able to perceive any materials educators gave, but not the ones with limited signals. Video and audio materials as well as synchronous meetings involving virtual discussions would require high bandwidth which would cause difficulties for them in following the class [14]. Another thing to be considered was the immediacy during the learning process. Continuous feedbacks, among students as well as between students and educators that are shown through immediacy were still possible even in a low bandwidth condition, as displayed in Figure 2. A good activity design would accommodate the relationships.

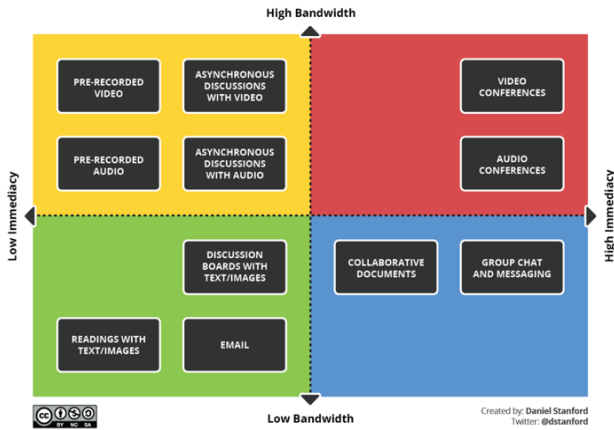


Figure 2 Bandwidth Immediacy Matrix [14]

3.2. State Objectives

Bachelor of Applied English SV UGM students were allowed to take English Grammar for Corporate Documents course once they passed Basic Grammar and Communicative English Grammar. The prior two grammar courses were designed to prepare the students' understanding related to English grammar, especially in general every day context. Starting from their third semester, these students would be guided to deepen their comprehension on real cases in line with their targeted expertise. The study program aimed to prepare their students to become Public Relations professionals. To support this, English Grammar for Corporate Documents course helped the students to be able to analyse and correctly use a number of grammatical rules by introducing them to several documents and showing them how certain grammar aspects were used in those documents.

3.3. Select Method, Media, or Materials

To maximize remote learning experience, a combination of various methods was needed[7]. Educators had to consider every related factor to decide what method and media would suite their classes. To maximize the learning process whilst considering the high and low bandwidth matrix [14], English Grammar for Corporate Documents course combined synchronous and asynchronous class activities. Several methods used were: independent learning, explanation, hands-on-activities, exercises, Q&A, and quiz. The media needed for this course were Grammar module, laptop, Google Meet, tablet with pen, and Padlet. Padlet was a free online platform, whose appearance was similar to huge whiteboard, where everyone with access can collaborate, post and respond one another. The materials for this course, as detailed at Table 1, were chosen by considering the appearance frequency of both grammar rules and types of documents in professional context.

Table 1 English Grammar for Corporate Documents Materials

Document Types	Grammar Aspect
Letters and emails	Connecting words and phrases
Meeting minutes	Passive sentences
Business plan	Future continues tense and future perfect tense
Business report	Past perfect tense and past perfect continuous tense
Employment agreement	Relative clauses
Online terms and conditions	Mixed conditionals

3.4. Utilize Media or Materials

Different media were used for synchronous and asynchronous class activities. Synchronous class activities included materials explanation, hands-on-activities, exercises and Q&A. Grammar module file, laptop, along with tablet and pen were used for them. By combining those media, educators could explain the materials as in they used a conventional whiteboard in traditional classes, as seen in Figure 3.

The image shows handwritten notes and exercises. At the top, there's a table for 'MEETINGS MINUTES' with columns for 'Person', 'Action', and 'Passive'. Below that, there are sections for 'GETTING ON' and 'Future Perfect' with various exercises and handwritten corrections. For example, 'Change to active' is shown with 'The minutes accepted by the board' and 'The board accepted the minutes'. There are also notes like 'Someone is installing a new software' and 'New applications needed for the new laptop'.

Figure 3 Explaining materials using the media chosen

During synchronous activities, students could participate on the discussion by answering their educators' questions during the explanations. At the same time, teachers also could check their students understanding whilst keeping the class engagement. Synchronous class activities were also used to discuss the exercises provided in module together. In addition,

Q&A was also held to allow students consult their assignments related to the materials.

Beside doing quiz to check students' understanding, asynchronous class activities were used to support those who were struggling with high bandwidth. Instead of holding a virtual meeting through Google Meet, students were required to do individual assignments exploring and analysing grammar aspects in real documents. After that, they were required to share their analysis and findings through Padlet. That way, they could check others' works and learn from one another in low bandwidth, as can be seen on Figure 4.

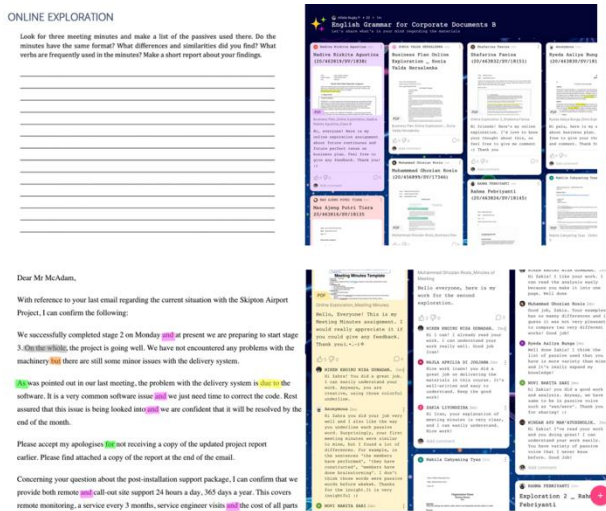


Figure 4 Asynchronous activities using Padlet

3.5. Require Learners' Participation

ASSURE model showed that learners' participation was important during the learning process by incorporating it in the design. Following this model, English Grammar for Corporate Documents course made sure that it allowed the students to participate during both the synchronous—materials explanation, hands-on-activities, exercises and Q&A, as well as the asynchronous class activities—individual assignments, peer feedbacks, and quiz.

3.6. Evaluate and Revise

The last stage of this model was to evaluate and revise the design. An evaluation form with open-ended questions was filled by students to see how they experience the learning process of this course. Their responses showed how the activities in the course helped them not only in understanding materials but also motivating them during the learning process. Some answers were as follows.

"... it is more interesting and interactive. Not only among the lecturer and the students, but also

among the students themselves. We can share our understanding, finding, and open for the discussion to know other students' perspective."

"... also, I can learn by myself on findings the real examples."

"... we can share our findings to our friends, and I enjoy the material explanation when we discuss it together."

"It motivates and encourages me to study harder because I know there is someone out there also learning."

4. CONCLUSION

A good learning design should be able to help learners meet the learning objectives. A consideration on constraints and affordances faced by all parties involved is then needed to design an ideal remote learning. ASSURE model accommodates both educators and learners to conduct a satisfactory remote learning. Combining both synchronous and asynchronous classes enable a thorough learning activity: a learning activity which involves independent learning, explanations on materials, and mini quizzes; inviting peer feedbacks and discussions; and gaining students' evaluations. The evaluation showed that English Grammar for Corporate Documents allowed students feel that they were not learning alone, and this feeling motivated them more during the learning process.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Through this study, author contributed by presenting a remote course design accommodating possible participation by students using ASSURE model.

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