

# REVOLUTIONARY GRAMMAR LEARNING VIA GLOW@CBI (GRAMMAR LEARNING ONLINE WITH CONCEPT BASED INSTRUCTION

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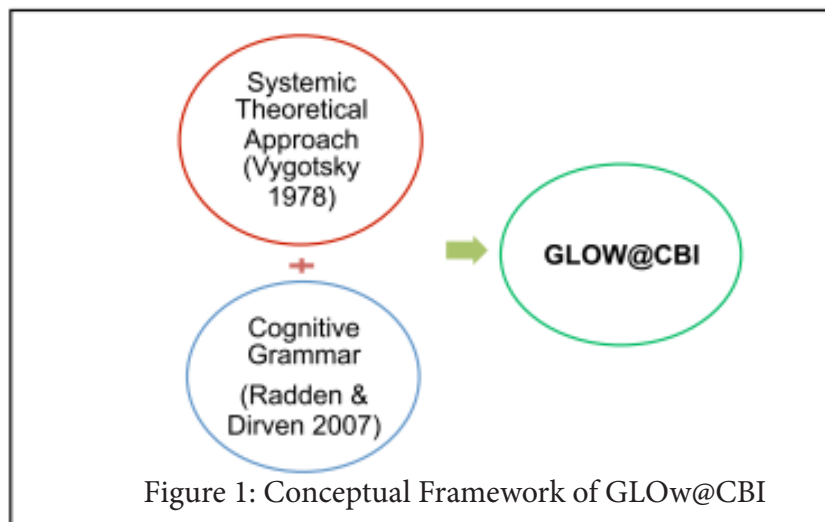
**Abstract:** A great deal of discussion centers on finding the effective solutions to enhance language learners' competency and English language-skills to achieve the target communicative competence. While grammar instruction is regarded as crucial in acquiring the target English language, many of its' learners are still found to have poor grasps in the language. Subsequently, GLOW@CBI may offer a revolutionised approach to the teaching and learning of English grammar rules (i.e. tenses). The theoretical foundation of GLOW@CBI is based on consolidating the theory of cognitive grammar model (Radden and Dirven 2007) and Vygotsky's Systemic-Theoretical Instruction (STI) (1978) to create online lessons and exercises on grammar tenses that are easy to understand and meaningful to serve the learners' communicative purposes. The distinctive feature of GLOW@CBI is the emphasis given on the semantic aspect of the language, rather than only focusing on its' structure and function as reflected in many of the traditional grammar approaches. Thus, the strength of GLOW@CBI lies in the representation of the concept of tenses that are uniquely presented through the manipulation of 'viewing frames' to describe the target actions, situations and events. GLOW@CBI not only allows flexibility in online language learning, but it is also cost-effective, due to its' ability to enroll a large number of learners without any restrictions of users per-licensing. Moreover, due to its' unique presentation of grammar-rules, GLOW@CBI has the potential to be expanded to other grammar components in its' learning platform or even to be used to teach grammar of other foreign language courses.

**Keywords:** grammar learning, concept-based instruction, grammar online, cognitive grammar

## **1. Introduction**

A great deal of discussion centres on finding the effective solutions to enhance language learners' competency and English language-skills to achieve the target communicative competence. In the context of English language teaching (ELT) in Malaysia, it has also undergone several transformations on the different ELT approaches employed in classrooms in line with those adopted worldwide (Ashraf 1996). From the use of audio-lingual method to teach English in the early 1960s, to the use of Communicational syllabus in the 1970s and followed by the current Communicative language teaching approach, efforts have been taken by the Malaysian government to better enhance its' L2 learners with the required second language (L2) competency and appropriate language skills to achieve the target communicative competence (Ting 2007). Accordingly, the changing of the different approaches introduced in the country over the past 50 years has also reflected the change in the views held regarding how grammar teaching should take place in the L2 classrooms nationwide (Asraf 1996, Ting 2007). From being the centre in the L2 pedagogic approach, to having a secondary role, the teaching of grammar has become an issue of intense ESL community interests, especially among those concerned with the dwindling standard of the English language proficiency in the country (Subramanian et al 2013).

Subsequently, GLOW@CBI may provide an alternative approach that can facilitate the L2 learners in understanding and acquiring the appropriate grammar knowledge in their attempt to achieve the targeted communicative competence. GLOW@CBI introduces a revolutionised way in teaching and learning of grammar tenses via online learning platform. More specifically, the focus of GLOW@CBI is on the grammar tenses (present tenses and past tenses) to help low proficiency language learners (MUET Band 1 – 2) grasp the basic understanding of constructing sentences in English. The strength of GLOW@CBI is that it combines the meaning of tenses (i.e. semantic), with the structure and function of the language through the analogical representation of 'viewing frames' to demonstrate how the target grammar tenses can best describe the actions, situations and events (Radden and Dirven 2007). In addition, the language learning procedures are exclusively designed based on Vygotsky's Systemic-Theoretical Instruction (STI) (1978) framework (see Figure 1) that amalgamates with the representation of grammar concepts introduced. This is enhanced with the use of online learning tools in the forms of videos, animations, along with the explanatory diagrams and texts, to promote the demand of the 21st century learning, namely critical thinking, independent learning and problem-solving skills via the online learning platforms known as GOALS (Global Open Access Learning System) developed by Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) to motivate the language learners' learning process.



## 2. Problem Statement

Despite the different approaches implemented, the English second language learners performance are still 'off target' as learners are still found to be unable to use the correct language expressions required in a specific given context. This is evident from several studies that have been conducted in the Malaysian contexts, that identify the difficulties of learners mastering the L2 English tense as one of the language difficulties that contributes to the learners' low language proficiency. Among these studies include those documenting the struggle faced by the Malaysian learners in mastering the L2 English tenses or more specifically, their inability to use the correct temporal expressions to appropriately describe an event (SuHie et al. 2007; Wong 2012).

This problem is further complicated by the view that grammar learning is not only seen as being a boring lesson, but also as being an overwhelming topic to the students, due to the emphasis given in teaching explicitly the different grammar rules in the attempt to master the target language (Hamzah & Dourad 2009). Consequently, there is a need to identify other alternative approaches in the teaching of grammar that will not only motivate the

learners to learn the language, but more importantly, to provide them with the opportunity to develop the capacity to understand how meaning is constructed as well as to gain in-depth understanding of semantic and structural aspect of the language, to achieve the desired L2 communicative competence (Negueruela & Lantolf 2006).

### 3. Objectives

GLOW@CBI is an online language learning platform that is developed to facilitate low-proficiency learners to be able to understand how meaning can be constructed in the target language through the appropriate use of conceptual grammar tenses. Additionally, emphasis is also given to ensure that learners have the opportunities to engage effectively (i.e. communicate appropriately) using the relevant grammar concepts presented. To this end, the grammar lessons and activities in GLOW@CBI are developed to meet the following objectives:

1. To create meaningful grammar learning experience to help low proficiency language learners understand and use correct grammar tenses in their daily communication
2. To motivate grammar learning experience via use of online learning tools for lessons and exercises that offer attractive lessons with the support of online learning tools to cater the needs of 21st century learners
3. To provide easy-access and flexibility of grammar learning via online platform

### 4. Novelty

Grounded on the conceptual framework that consolidates the cognitive grammar model (Radden and Dirven 2007) and Vygotsky's STI-mediation theory (Systemic Theoretical Instruction-mediation) (1978), GLOW@CBI offers learners a different experience of grammar learning through its' grammar lessons and exercises on tenses that are not only easy for students to understand, but which are also meaningfully presented (Haliza et al 2017).

How does a speaker use tense to describe the action/situation/event (verb)?

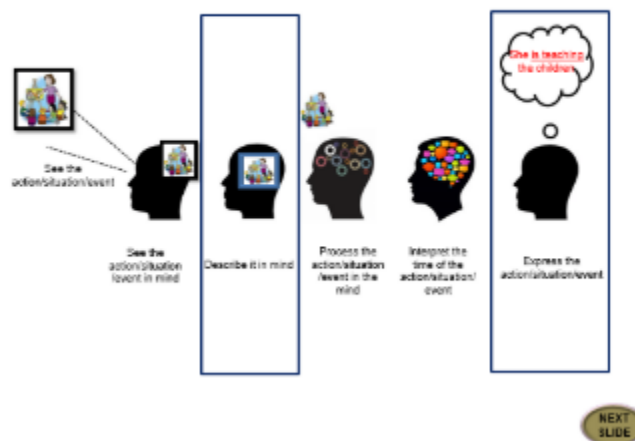


Figure 2: Introduction lesson on 'viewing frames'

The novelty of GLOW@CBI lies in its' distinctive presentation of the grammar rules (i.e. grammar tenses) that adopts the analogical approach of representing the selected grammar tenses to the concept of 'viewing frames' (Radden and Dirven 2007). The semantic feature introduced in GLOW@CBI is unique on its' own as it emphasises the additional linguistic property that has been missing in the traditional grammar structural approaches (e.g. Audiolingual method, structural method) or even other performance-based approaches (e.g. Communicative language teaching, Task-based learning and others). In this instance, combined with the functional and structural properties of the language, the strength of GLOW@CBI is on the representation of the grammar items using concepts that are uniquely based on viewing every day actions or events through different 'viewing frames' (Radden and Dirven 2007).

## 5. Usefulness

GLOW@CBI offers learners a revolutionary grammar learning experience. The lessons offered in GLOW@CBI focus on providing learners with easy and simple explanation of the grammar tenses via the use of various multimedia annotations (i.e. videos, animations, still-pictures and diagrams) to motivate and maintain learner's interests. In comparison, the exercises offered in GLOW@CBI are also interactive as they provide immediate feedback to the learners along with explanatory texts and diagrams to strengthen the understanding of the tenses. Accordingly, the usefulness or benefits of GLOW@CBI are as follows:

- Caters to low-proficiency language learners needs with simple explanations
- Offers authentic meaningful context of grammar learning
- Creates low-anxiety language learning environment
- Promotes 21st century learning skills (critical thinking, independent learning and problem-solving skills)

## 6. Commercialization Potential Or Impact Towards Socio Economy Humanity

To ensure that GLOW@CBI is effective in providing learners with intended meaningful language learning experience, several studies were conducted to identify its' strengths and weaknesses. In essence, results obtained from the 300 learners using GLOW@CBI illustrate positive outcomes in their correct use of grammar tenses in a given context. Moreover, feedbacks obtained from the learners also indicate a positive reaction to the use of the grammar online learning platform. The positive effect of GLOW@CBI has also then been currently expanded as one of the courses introduced in the MOOC platform managed by the university in its' effort to facilitate and promote learners' learning of the L2 English language.

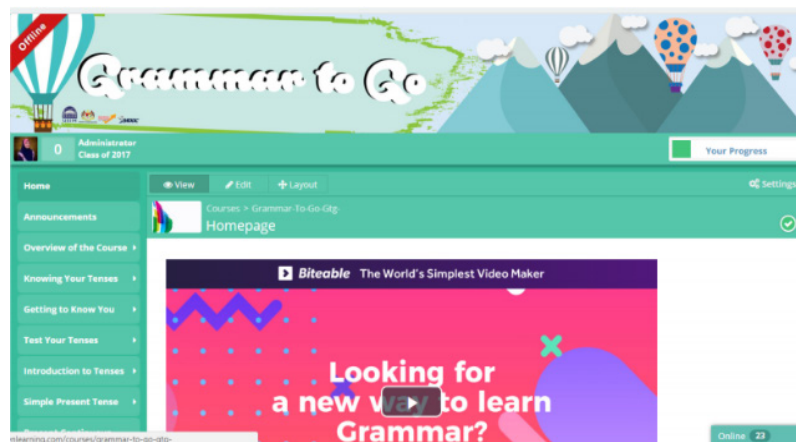


Figure 3: GLOW@CBI via MOOC platform

As mentioned earlier, the strength or uniqueness of GLOW@CBI is on the presentation of the grammar concepts that is further enhanced with the help of online tools. Subsequently, due to its' simplified illustration of the meaning, function and appropriate structure of the grammar concepts, GLOW@CBI has the potential to be developed as a software or applications for schools, and higher institutions in improving L2 English grammar learning experience. Additionally, other grammar components (preposition, articles, nouns, adjectives) can also be further explored using (preposition, articles, nouns, adjectives) to help learners master the language. Finally, due to its simplified and attractive grammar, GLOW@CBI can also be employed to cater to the teaching of grammar in other languages or other foreign language courses.

## 7. Conclusion

GLOW@CBI is a online learning grammar module that combines the theoretical foundation of STI-mediation introduced by Vygotsky (1978) and cognitive grammar model (Radden and Dirven 2007). Accordingly, it provides language learners with a unique experience of learning grammar through the additional semantic feature that has been missing in traditional and mainstream grammar teaching approaches. Subsequently, equipped with the combination of solid theoretical underpinnings along with the enhanced features of online tools, GLOW@CBI will not only offer its' learners a low-anxiety learning environment, but also will be able to capture the interest of the low proficiency and less motivated students to learn English grammar.

## 8. Funding Acknowledgement

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