

# Open and Distance Learning (ODL): Seeing from the Eyes of English Grammar Instructors

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## Abstract

*Grammar teaching is approached differently according to teachers' beliefs and students' needs. It has also long been associated with the usual chalk-and-talk approach. However, due to Covid-19 pandemic, teachers had to leave their comfortable way of teaching and adjust with the unfamiliar virtual approach known as the Open and Distance Learning (ODL). So, how do teachers ensure that students can still learn grammar in ODL? This study investigated lecturers teaching grammar to post-secondary ESL learners at one higher learning institution in the Klang Valley. The study sought to investigate how they responded and adapted to emergent education challenges and strategies used to ensure their students' readiness and learning adjustment. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather data. Findings suggested that the lecturers' challenges in adapting to the new norm has led them to reflect on their teaching approach and embrace the use of technology to cope with the teaching and learning process.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19 Challenges; Educational Needs; Grammar Teaching; ODL

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## INTRODUCTION

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Teaching of grammar has been an area of concern and debate among language teachers and linguists worldwide. It is approached differently according to teachers' beliefs and students' needs. Grammar teaching can be divided into two big categories which are deductive teaching and inductive teaching. Some language teachers, under certain circumstances (learners' proficiency, convenience, etc.) still prefer the explicit or deductive teaching of grammar where rules are presented clearly and examples of language usage are discussed in class using charts and boards (see Borg, 2016; Ahmadzai et al 2019; Schurz & Coumel, 2020). This will be followed by an extensive grammar drill. This situation is normal in a face-to-face classroom. However, during Covid-19 pandemic, this conventional form of grammar teaching definitely needs some adjustment since we have to abide by the rules and standard operating procedures. Thus, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is the way forward and it is not a brand-new approach to education. The concept started as distance education about three decades ago (see Bozkurt, 1999) and several other terms like online learning, e-learning, distributed learning were also utilized (Modesto & Gregorioso, 2016). This also means that ODL requires educators to engage with technology in order

to reach out to their students. In the process of adapting and adjusting, language teachers have to cope with both technology and content delivery. As language involves a lot of skills, this process can be arduous and challenging. The purpose of this paper is to identify how language lecturers teach grammar through ODL and their coping mechanisms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar teaching has indeed come a long way and has gone through a lot of development. Ellis (2006, p.84) defines grammar teaching as ‘any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it’. Current trends in language teaching have now accepted that grammar teaching or form-focussed instruction play a role in language development. Before the advent of communicative approach, teachers made students memorise grammar rules and complete piles of grammar drills because the teachers believed that repetition and memorisation can promote accuracy. Currently, this belief still prevails among some groups of teachers who feel they cannot leave drillings and classroom presentations that prescribe rules as ways of teaching grammar. Borg (2016) echoes a similar sentiment in a classroom that he observed (*see* [simon-borg.co.uk/blog](http://simon-borg.co.uk/blog)) where he claims that ‘grammar is still the driving force’ in many classrooms worldwide and how it is taught has not changed very much. With this in mind, the PPP model (Present-Practice-Produce) may still be adopted by some language instructors in their grammar teaching (in a traditional classroom setting) while many others have started using other teaching approaches by incorporating technology to execute their lessons even before the emergence of Covid19 (Lin, 1997; Heigelhemer & Fisher, 2006; Turkmen & Aydin, 2016). In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, classes have to be conducted through ODL and since then, teachers worldwide have to engage themselves with different kinds of technology aids to continue the teaching and learning process. This includes all language teachers worldwide. Since teachers have to teach online, how do they recreate the ambience for grammar drills among students? How do they monitor the students’ progress?

The use of technology in language classrooms can be traced back as early as the 1960s when Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was introduced (Heift &

Vyatkina, 2017). In the 1990s and early 2000 era, the use of technology in language classes were mainly limited to resources sharing which include notes and exercises via websites, blogs and social media platforms. As language teaching paradigm shifts from the structural view to communicative language, more technology-based language pedagogies have emerged. Heift and Vyatkina (2017) explain four technology-based language pedagogies used in second language (L2) grammar instruction namely tutorial CALL, intelligent CALL (ICALL), data-driven Learning (DDL), and computer-mediated communication (CMC). They further discuss the objectives of each model, second language acquisition (SLA) frameworks behind these models and examples of tools developed. They also review studies done in technology-based language pedagogies where these two themes are discussed: feedback for second language and learner autonomy in L2 grammar instruction. Findings from the studies showed that learners mostly benefit from the technology-based pedagogies but there is a concern on learner autonomy because at the end of the day, instructors are still required to guide their learners on best practices of learning grammar using technology (Heift and Vyatkina, 2017). Bikowski (2018, p. 4) also cautions that the use of technology in grammar teaching can be “effective when it is integrated into the curriculum, course, and lesson.” Hence, teachers must ensure that while trying to meet the course expectations, students’ needs must be taken into consideration as well.

In this millennial era, both educators and students are quite comfortable using technology and learning through ODL. Educators in this generation mostly display a positive attitude towards ODL and use of technology (see Nair, et al., 2012, Rezaei & Meshkatian, 2017). However, despite their support for the use of technology, some more senior teachers feel that they need to be trained separately in order to be adept with the technology use (Nair, et al, 2012). Rezaei and Meshkatian (2017) studied how Iranian ELT teachers view social media with regards to their teaching and their general attitudes towards this type of media. They conducted a survey of ELT teachers who used Telegram and Whatsapp in teaching. Findings indicated that these teachers indicated a positive attitude towards the use of social media in ELT. Earlier, Hung (2011) studied the use of blogs in an English for Specific Purposes course in Taiwan. From the learners’ perspectives, they generally agreed that using blogs to view shared resources definitely assists their learning and it allows the students to reflect on their mistakes and weaknesses (Hung, 2011). Another study conducted by Chik and Breidbach (2011) utilized a combination of social media tools which include wikis, Facebook and Skype to teach Language Learning History to two student cohorts from

Hong Kong and Germany. Their findings indicated that young adult learners are capable of learning language through the use of social media platforms.

Currently, there are many applications that teachers and instructors can use such as learning management system (LMS) platforms like Schoology and Google Classroom, online meeting platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, WebEx and many more. There are also videos uploaded on many online platforms that learners can freely access. Basically, educators can decide to approach their lessons synchronously or asynchronously. With multiple options to choose from, educators should be able to fulfil the demands of online teaching. However, switching from a conventional face-to-face classroom teaching requires careful consideration and preparation in order to ensure that course outcomes are met and syllabus content is fairly delivered to the learners. Thus, there is a need to further investigate how language lecturers specifically teaching a grammar course deal with the switch and their strategies to cope with the switch.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For background information, the two general methodologies in teaching grammar are called traditional and functional grammar. Traditional grammar focuses on explicitly teaching students about structuring sentences and the different parts of speech while functional grammar has a strong emphasis on the context of a text (Winch et al., 2010). Grammar classes usually apply both methodologies whereby the instruction uses traditional grammar, and the textbook and assessments employ functional grammar. The common assessment question formats that are utilized at post-secondary level are gap-filling or rational cloze and error analysis at textual level in which these formats weigh on grammar forms in context. In ODL, the teaching of grammar has to be amended in such a way that it fits the online nature of learning yet is still able to utilize the deductive approach such as explaining the rules of grammar and explaining them in context using the grammar textbook. The traditional ‘chalk and talk’ way of teaching grammar also needs to be changed to lecture mode, in which it is something that is atypical because students now do not need to jot down any notes and just listen to their instructors. Even if the instructors insist the students to do so, it is difficult to virtually check if they truly do it.

## **Instrument**

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather data. This method was applied as it is an exploratory interview used most frequently in the social sciences for qualitative research purposes (Magaldi and Berler, 2018). Although it mostly conforms to a set of guidelines that is formulated preceding the interview and is centred on a fundamental topic to provide a general structure, the semi-structured interview also enables for deeper disclosure, with room to pursue topical paths as the conversation evolves. The instrument was designed to investigate how each lecturer in this study responded and adapted to emergent education challenges and strategies used to ensure their students' readiness and learning adjustment. The researchers also developed a set of questions which consist of close-ended questions (category of questions: sections and subsections). The close-ended questions consisted of questions that had listed a few attributes and elements that the participants could select from to ensure that the responses still followed the formulated guidelines. The responses of these close-ended questions would be analysed quantitatively. The participants were asked to answer these questions before participating in a focus group interview which was then analysed qualitatively. The themes were derived from the combination of quantitative and qualitative data. By the time data were collected, the participants had already been teaching grammar in ODL mode for at least eight months.

## **Research Design**

Each interview consisted of 33 questions in total which were divided into six sections. The first section gathered the demographic data of the sample group which also looked at the number of years they had been teaching grammar in general. The second section inquired about which application and software that they mainly used for ODL grammar classes. The third section queried about the challenges that they faced in teaching grammar in ODL mode. The fourth section probed on their attitudes towards teaching grammar in ODL mode. The fifth section asked about what they perceived on their students' motivation and readiness. The final section delved into how they overcame the challenges that they faced in teaching grammar in ODL mode.

## Sample

The target group was nine lecturers who taught grammar to post-secondary ESL learners at one higher learning institution in Klang Valley. They had been identified prior to the interviews which were conducted via Google Meet. Most of the lecturers were female (n=6) as compared to male (n=3) counterparts. The minimum age of the participants was 30 and the maximum age was 55. The majority (n=5) of them were between 31-35 years old. Furthermore, most of them (n=4) had been teaching grammar for more than 10 years; 3 of them had 5 to 10 years of grammar teaching experience while only 2 of them had 1 to 5 years of grammar teaching experience.

## RESULTS

### Application and Software Used

When asked about which application or software mainly used for their grammar lessons, all nine of them responded Google Meet for their lectures and Google Classroom for their class materials and students' assignment submissions. Besides Google Meet and Google Classroom, the second most used applications are Whatsapp and Telegram (n=4). According to the participants, the main reasons for the application or software choice were because Google, Whatsapp and Telegram generally process efficiency across the institution that they are working at, have real-time visibility, and easy to monitor their students' progress. Efficiency process means that all the information is easily delivered to the platforms used simultaneously and the staff members and students will get notifications immediately after each posting. Real-time visibility refers to how lecturers are able to observe online activities done by their students, such as the time they start their assignment, how much time they take to complete it, and the submission time. Google Classroom also notifies the host if a student submits late.

### Challenges Faced in Teaching Grammar in ODL Mode

Although creating and gathering online materials and resources for grammar lessons in ODL mode was not a significant issue, majority of the participants (n=7) admitted to occasionally having technical difficulties while teaching grammar which

included poor internet connection, program or device hangs due to slow hardware, or issues from the application or software itself. Apart from having internet connection problems from the participants' part, the majority of them (n=8) also pointed out that many of their students experienced the same issue from their home or campus which deterred their learning process and caused them to fall behind the lessons. It consequently made most of the participants (n=8) experience trouble to follow up with their students' progress in learning grammar in ODL mode as it would go back to the same issue: poor internet connection. Nevertheless, all participants commented at how much more challenging it was to keep up with their students' progress when classes were done in ODL mode as compared to face-to-face classes, whether it was due to internet connection issues or not.

Another main challenge that was brought up by the participants was the lack of time each time they taught grammar in ODL mode. The participants were advised to only limit each lesson into one hour even though their schedule allocated two hours. The reasons were to limit the students' screen time and reduce the issue of heavily purchasing internet data for students who did not use Wi-Fi at their place. As a result, there was hardly any discussion on the topic that was being taught in class and the lessons mainly focused on giving lectures and exercises. It was a significant issue as students at post-secondary level were expected to have the ability to justify grammar rules such as basic tenses (simple and progressive tenses), complex tenses (perfect tenses and perfect progressive tenses) and errors instead of merely listening and completing grammar worksheets.

Apart from that, these new and unfamiliar challenges also affected a couple of the participants (n=2) in terms of their confidence level in teaching grammar in the ODL mode. They further explained that it could be due to anxiety since using technological devices, applications and software in teaching grammar were something unusual and not easily solved by them if there were any technical complications. In addition, two of the participants had difficulty gathering their students which could either be due to their internet connection or their own personal attitude against attending online grammar classes.

## Attitudes towards Teaching Grammar in ODL Mode

All participants admitted that teaching grammar in ODL mode was much more difficult than face-to-face. One of the reasons raised by the participants was because if they only had one device to teach and had to present materials, they could only present one each time. In face-to-face classes, the participants could choose between the whiteboard to explain the grammar lesson, a projector to project soft copy materials, and a textbook that they and their students could study or use them all simultaneously. When they were able to look at different materials concurrently, the students were able to evaluate what was being taught and understand better as there was much more material support. In other words, they felt that teaching grammar in a traditional classroom was much better as teaching grammar in ODL mode restricted the number of materials that they could present or show on screen at one time, and they could not tell if the students were paying attention.

Other than that, the participants felt like they had much less time to cater to students' needs in ODL than face-to-face since it was difficult for them to assess their students individually in every online class. One of the reasons elaborated by the participants was that they were unable to monitor what their students were doing while they were teaching. The students usually turned off their camera and microphone and would only respond when called. Therefore, to ensure whether the students really understood what was being taught was typically immeasurable. Teaching grammar in ODL mode also made assessing the students individually almost impossible compared to face-to-face. In face-to-face classes, the participants were able to identify even the slightest facial expression of the students if they were confused or would like to chip in some opinion but were afraid to interrupt. This would help the participants to assist these students straight away in class, however it was not the same case in ODL mode.

When queried whether they would still use fully ODL in teaching grammar even after the pandemic ended, four of the participants strongly declined and another four had a neutral thought. Nonetheless, they mentioned that they could tolerate the idea of integrating ODL with face-to-face grammar lessons. Majority of the participants (n=6) also were quite impartial when asked if they thought that using ODL is important in teaching and learning grammar and whether they would recommend it. The main reason was that by the time of this study, the participants had been teaching in ODL mode for more than one year so there were some elements ODL could provide that face-to-face



could not such as online assignment submissions which is cost effective, and the convenience of working from home for the participants. Nevertheless, most of the participants generally would not recommend and encourage their students to keep on learning grammar in ODL mode due to the nature of learning grammar rules in a traditional classroom.

Despite the challenges that the participants faced, all of them stated that they would still try to modify teaching activities in their grammar lessons and take advantage of the capabilities of the ODL system. They asserted that with all the limitations that they faced while teaching grammar online, it pushed them to find alternative methods and approaches that they thought would best suit the needs of their students. These included exploring different grammar websites, discovering grammar videos to share with their students, and creating their own quizzes if no other platforms seemed to provide an appropriate level of tasks for their students. All in all, they summarized that despite all the impediments, they did not think that all the effort in teaching grammar in ODL mode was a waste of time.

### **Students' Motivation and Readiness**

This section examined mainly on the participants' observation and perception on their students' motivation and readiness in learning grammar online. Firstly, all participants believed that their students displayed much less enthusiasm in learning grammar in ODL mode than face-to-face. This was shown when the students refused to turn on their camera during ODL grammar classes and was sometimes admitted by their own students that they sometimes dozed off on their bed or had not taken their morning shower when class was in session.

Most of the participants (n=8) also noticed that their students generally did not respond to the grammar lessons in ODL mode as well as they would if they were in a traditional classroom. Some of the excuses that were highlighted were because of the students' technical device that did not have a functioning microphone and their poor internet connection. It was frustrating to the participants as the students could have responded through the chat box on Google Meet yet in actuality, they were not available near their device even when their name was being called to respond.

Majority of them (n=8) stated that their students show worse progress in ODL grammar classes than they would have if they were in a face-to-face grammar classroom. Although the chapters taught in both semesters were basic grammar topics, the students still could not fully grasp the fundamental rules of grammar despite the fact that they had already learned the topics in their school. The participants realized this issue when many of the students were not able to explain contextual basic grammar rules such as Simple Past versus Past Progressive, Countable and Uncountable Nouns, Adjectives and Adverbs accurately even after deliberate and laborious hours of lecture and teaching.

Furthermore, all participants declared that many of their students had mentioned personally to them how much they disliked learning grammar in ODL mode and would prefer to physically learn the subject in a classroom. This was related to how the students were not enthusiastic to attend online grammar classes. According to the participants, due to the nature of teaching and learning grammar that is usually traditional and involves drill exercises that are commonly hands-on, the students found that learning grammar rules in ODL mode daunted all the joy of writing down in their notebook, answering grammar questions on the board and working on the grammar activities in a discussion group in face-to-face classroom. Although some of these could be done in ODL mode, the barrier of the screen and not being able to have human touch caused the students to lose enthusiasm and a sense of competitiveness with their classmates to learn grammar and challenge themselves to the fullest.

Five of the participants also expressed that their students hardly approached them to ask questions or get help in the subject matter after learning grammar in ODL mode. This was a very different situation from the students who learned grammar in a traditional classroom before the pandemic hit as they would freely ask questions and guidance in class, through the phone or at the participants' office. Consequently, the participants were not able to identify weak students as quickly as when they did in face-to-face classroom, and their students' progress in grammar were not as up to par as what they were supposed to achieve at the end of the lesson or course.

Ultimately, most of the participants (n=7) believed that their students' readiness is much worse after taking grammar courses in ODL mode than face-to-face. This was clearly seen in how they answered grammar questions, justified grammar errors and their midterm test and final assessment results. Additionally, the participants also

spotted the errors that their students should not have made on their social media such as their assignment videos and photo captions since those types of errors had already been highlighted in class. Generally, at the end of the two semesters of learning grammar courses, the participants still considered that many of their students were not fully ready and capable in using accurate basic grammar rules not just in academic settings but also outside the classroom.

### **Overcoming Challenges in Teaching Grammar in ODL Mode**

This section sought to investigate how the participants responded and adapted to emergent education challenges and strategies used to ensure their students' readiness and learning adjustment. Before they started their online grammar class, most of the participants (n=6) typically spent a long time interacting and getting used to the ODL system. This included trying out online grammar quizzes while presenting on Google Meet to see if it was displayed in real time, writing grammar notes on Jamboard or iPad using a stylus to imitate a physical whiteboard, and setting the time for each test question on Schoology and how the scores would show under each student's account. This was all to make sure that their grammar lessons would be smooth sailing. Likewise, all participants also spent time interacting with their students before and after each grammar class to find out if they experienced any technical issues during the lesson. The participants elaborated that in approaching their students this way rather than starting then finishing the class straight off, at least several of them, if not all, would respond and sometimes give feedback on how they could make their class better.

Additionally, six of the participants had attended webinars and forums in order to improve their grammar teaching in ODL mode. Although there were hardly any webinar and forum that merely focuses on grammar teaching alone, since most of them focused on ODL teaching in general, the ones that they had attended still benefited them in a way that they learned how to gauge their students in online learning, creating online modules, pre-recording their own lectures, and assessing their students' online projects, assignments, and examinations. On top of that, six of the participants went beyond by purchasing extra tools, devices, software and/or applications to aid the teaching of their grammar lessons depending on their needs.

Moreover, all participants checked their students' attendance and their progress in grammar after every ODL class. In terms of checking their attendance, the

participants had the choice to either use the institution's online learning platform or manually check on the form provided by the academic affairs department of the institution. Attendance was an important facet in the institution and if the students had a total of attendance less than 80% without any valid reason, they would not be allowed to take the final assessment. Hence, the participants took their students' attendance seriously. Despite that, it was still difficult to ensure that all of the students were present during the whole class session due to poor internet connection that even the participants themselves sometimes experienced. In terms of progress on the other hand, despite the effort of trying to check on each student's progress, it was still debilitating for the participants at the end of the day as what their students declared was usually overstated than the reality.

When probed about the initiatives to overcome the challenges that the participants faced during grammar classes in ODL mode, it was revealed that they had transcended beyond what they never thought they would do prior to the pandemic. Two of the participants stated:

*"I came up with infographics and diagrams in class for the students to better digest the (grammar) forms and functions. I was (also) only able to apply this (approach) a few times before moving on to a new topic (in which) I shared with them some MCQ pop-quizzes such as Quizziz or Kahoot."*

*"I (would) upload extra materials like notes, exercises with answers for students on Google Classroom. Sometimes I randomly call students that I know who are weak in Grammar to answer or share their opinion. But most of the time, these students are very quiet in class and the same good ones would actively answer and participate in sharing opinions. At times, I would ask all students to submit their work on Google Classroom and discuss together with them to ensure that they work on the exercises given."*

Another participant described his initiative by providing external resources for the students' self-study to encourage them to experience independent learning, occasionally conducting games on Kahoot and Quizziz to maintain interest and using didactic methods to ensure two-way communication. One of his examples of applying didactic method was he would provide his students with a topic of instruction and

control instructional stimuli in order to compel a response from the students. He then let the students and their peers evaluate and discuss the students' response on their own. Eventually, he would provide reinforcements for accurate responses and feedback for incorrect ones.

The participants were then asked why those initiatives were adopted. The first general reason that all participants agreed with was that these students had short attention span whenever they learned grammar in ODL mode, and these initiatives might be able to affirm that the students actually understood what was being taught as it would be extremely difficult for the participants to monitor their students' progress and understanding had they stayed with just teaching and lecturing about the topic.

Another main reason for these alternatives was to get full participation from the class and prompt response on their understanding on the topic being taught. One of the participants mentioned that if the alternatives were not adopted, only the same students would be responding to her questions while the rest of the class just kept quiet even though she had a feeling that they knew the answers. One participant also clarified further that her students were mostly quiet during Google Meet sessions and did not ask many questions to initiate discussions. As a result, she had to take the lead to initiate discussion and provide more examples. Another reason why the initiatives had to be implemented in terms of the grammar topics taught, one participant specified that her students had problems with understanding the rules, especially the complex tenses. Some of them were also not enthusiastic in class and struggled with basic forms.

In the final part of the interview, when the participants were probed if they believed that the teaching and learning process improved after employing such initiatives, there were mixed answers. For the participants who found that the teaching learning improved, it was mostly on the students' engagement in class and being able to identify the proficient and weak students. Some of the responses were:

*“Yes, because I got to learn my students' weaknesses or problems immediately. When making them answer questions spontaneously, they were usually unprepared and didn't have time to refer to their notes. Hence, their actual grasp of that has been taught is revealed.”*

*“Yes. At the beginning of the semester, I was the one who kept on teaching and explaining on the lessons. However, since I did not receive full participation from my students all the time, I decided to let them explain whatever they know on the lesson first, like flipped classroom, before proceeding with my explanation. By doing this, I get to see that they put more effort in doing research and are more prepared for the lessons than before”.*

On the other hand, the reactions from the participants who had doubts if the teaching and learning improved after employing their initiatives are as follow:

*“Hmmm...To a small number of students, maybe yes, as these students would ask questions in and outside class. Also, during discussion, they would try sharing their answers so I can somehow know their level. But to most students, I’m not sure as they don’t really ask questions or participate in discussions.”*

*“It does have some improvement, but not as much as I desired. Building up rapport with students via ODL needs more time and effort from both instructors and students.”*

Overall, there was no participant who thought that there was zero improvement even though many initiatives had been implemented.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings, it could be observed that the lecturers are committed to use technology in teaching, but they must be supported through training and exposure to new technological tools in language teaching (see Nair, et al, 2012). On top of that most participants also made attempts to use different approaches in their lessons. This has led them to thoroughly reflect on the feasibility and viability of the approaches they used in coping with ODL. On one hand, there must also be a more comprehensive guideline to monitor students’ participation and progress in learning. Most importantly, both students and instructors should be well-trained to use the platforms.

Unlike the technology-based pedagogies mentioned by Heift and Vyatkina (2017), the participants' students mostly relied on materials and resources provided as well as live class sessions. Practices or games may promote awareness to grammatical forms since the learners receive some metalinguistic feedback, but these may not be able to increase deeper understanding of the grammar rules in authentic language contexts where the use of tenses is more diversified. Despite the synchronous approach used by all the participants through the use of online platforms like Google Meet, the learners seem to be more comfortable in learning grammar in a face-to-face classroom because they prefer a hands-on session where the lecturers can provide direct feedback on their language use. Synchronous learning through online meetings can cater to these needs but due to factors like internet connectivity, learning environments (most students are following lessons from their respective homes) and other personal factors (learning styles, personality, etc.), online student-teacher interaction may not be as similar as face-to-face interaction. These learners seem to still yearn for that social connection to build up rapport with their lecturers. On top of that, none of the participants were absolutely certain that their students followed the lessons closely.

These findings imply that educators need to constantly self-reflect in order to adjust their teaching approach. In addition, more strategies need to be implemented to allow students to gain better understanding of grammar forms used in various language contexts. In terms of technology used to assist lecturers in teaching in ODL mode, a more thorough course syllabus review must be done to integrate the use of technology with the content taught as suggested in Bikowski, 2018. Moreover, students should also be encouraged to take charge of their learning by completing online grammar exercises to support and enhance their understanding of the grammar rules taught during the synchronous sessions. Lastly, it is important for the lecturers to initiate good rapport with their students in order for the students to excel better academically and socially. The apparent issue of this hindrance is that teaching in ODL mode creates a barrier between the two sides since they cannot see each other face-to-face. Therefore, there is a strong need for future research to look into teachers' commitment to build healthy rapport with their students.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study have identified how language lecturers teach grammar through ODL and their coping mechanisms. This study presents a point of view

regarding the way the higher educational system had to be reformed in an unexpected moment of time and adapt various modifications in which if done right, it will make progress after a series of adjustments and habituation of educators and learners with the online environment. It is crucial for educators to remember that they must conduct a series of actions that are able to accelerate and expedite its adaptation to this simulated, virtual type of learning to adapt to ODL appropriately and effectively. Therefore, it is recommended that the training division and continuous professional development of all higher learning institutions organize more language teaching courses that serve to strengthen educators' performance and indirectly, the quality of the online learning system. More specifically, the training should focus on course alignment to technology use, particularly to create online exercises and assessments as language is an exceptionally delicate component to assess in the education system. Furthermore, higher education institutions and the ministry should generate an effective strategy to meet the necessary needs and support the learning process for students from families with low incomes who cannot afford to pay for decent internet connection and essential digital learning devices.

The usual problem with students' dearth of critical thinking skills, active learning, and their poor ability to question and voice out their thoughts which are so much needed in a language class have now become more and more alarming in online learning at the higher education level. It is extremely vital that educators make themselves available and approachable to meet their students' needs to boost their engagement and participation in the ODL process. Educators should also continue supporting and giving suggestions if their students are stuck in the unaccustomed circumstance of ODL. If the issues persist, the educators should avoid penalizing their students when it is unclear whether they are at fault to avoid impairing their motivation and escalating their disappointment as well as the risk of withdrawing from the program. More studies should also be conducted to better understand the needs of both teachers and students in language teaching and learning. To conclude, it is hoped that the results of this study can advise policymakers and design strategic mediations to make language teaching, specifically grammar, accomplish anticipated outcomes and produce excellent language students.



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