

Adaptive and Personalized eLearning: The Present Perfect Tense Acquisition by Serbian Online Learners

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to emphasize the importance of adaptive and personalized eLearning regarding the acquisition of the Present Perfect Tense by Serbian online learners. The methodology is twofold: (1) the analysis of theoretical frame regarding educational psychology, precisely, experiential learning and (2) the investigation of the influence of specifically designed online lesson activities on Serbian students' cognitive function. The theoretical frame provides an insight into the basic aspects of educational psychology and enables further investigation of the psychological effect of the learning environment on online learners' motivation. A detailed analysis of an online lesson involving the activities and tasks specifically designed to make the acquisition process personalized highlights the importance of adaptive subject material. The conclusion is that the students are more likely to grasp the essence of the Present Perfect Tense efficiently and are fully engaged in the lesson when introduced to the adaptive subject material.

Keywords

personalization, experiential learning, eLearning, the Present Perfect Tense, activities, learning environment

1. Introduction

The concept of eLearning has become an essential part of education, especially with the advancement of technology and a constant search for practicality in knowledge acquisition in recent years (Johnson 2023, Prakash 2023). The benefits of eLearning over face to face learning is evident. For example, Ayodele Johnson (2023) and Surya Prakash (2023) both emphasize certain advantageous aspects of eLearning, compared to the traditional way of learning in classroom.

Ayodele Johnson (2023), while stating the increasing popularity of eLearning in recent years, highlights "an array of benefits", among which flexibility stands as a prominent benefit. The main reason for this claim is that flexibility allows students to be in control of their studying conditions – time and place – as online study material is easily accessible. Time and place are the two factors crucial for knowledge acquisition as they directly affect the way in which the study material is acquired. eLearning allows the students to organize their time for learning and balance their free time, thus enabling them to approach the process of learning with more motivation – they may pick the preferred hours of the day for studying (Pintrich 2003: 667-686). Place factor correlates with time factor as the environment in which learning takes place affects studying. As Melina Uncapher

(Uncapher 2016) states, "Studies show that a well-designed learning environment supplements evidence-based pedagogy and curriculum design." The effect of the environment in which learning occurs is rather significant.

When the learning environment meets the personal needs of a student, most of the obstacles in acquisition process are eliminated (interruption, decrease in attention span and loss of interest for the lesson).

Apart from flexibility, the pace of learning is individualized in eLearning, and the students are able to acquire knowledge according to their own pace (Johnson 2023). Common struggles such as the inability to keep up with the rest of the class in traditional learning process are avoided this way,

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and students build their self-confidence easily, as they do not feel the need to maintain the same level of acquisition as the other students (Tullis & Benjamin 2011: 109-118).

Furthermore, Johnson (2023) claims that “eLearning fosters collaborative learning” referring to the utility of online discussion forums, webinars, chat space etc. These useful aspects of eLearning allow students to cooperate, exchange opinions, overcome insecurities and certain challenges through sharing insights. It is important to highlight that the most important aspect of collaborative eLearning is the “sense of community” (Johnson 2023) that it provides. This aspect is usually absent in eLearning as the learning process excludes the experience of learning together with peers in a classroom. Therefore, the need to share opinion, ask for help and relate to other students is met in collaborative eLearning. This way, the students obtain the abovementioned sense of community, while maintaining the control over their individual learning pace.

However, eLearning has its disadvantages as well. Students may be faced with certain challenges when acquiring knowledge outside the classroom. Johnson (2023) highlights the most prominent challenge: the lack of face to face learning. Although eLearning possess the means of creating a collaborative learning environment, the social factor plays vital role in learning acquisition, as Sophie Partarrieu (Partarrieu 2015) argues:

In situations like foreign-language teaching, where a teacher’s body language and cultural insights provide students with complex information, it’s difficult to imagine a robot or computers entirely replacing teachers. Some robots already do a good job of imitating tone of voice, facial expressions and even mouth shapes, but they’re a long way off from forming emotional relationships, empathising and responding to the needs of individual students (Partarrieu 2015).¹

The face-to-face experience includes important social factors such as emotions and body language that allow students and teachers to create a certain bond and enhance the learning process. These elements are missing in the process of eLearning, and the collaborative online learning using discussion forums lacks live interaction with peers and teachers.

Another great challenge that e-learners face is discipline and motivation due to the lack of interaction with teachers. Some are coping with attention span without live interaction and find it difficult to maintain focus. However, the challenges can be overcome with the presence of virtual tutors and the growing process of *gamification* of learning involving rewarding students’ success and achievements (Johnson 2023).

However, motivation seems to be the most important factor to online learning. It is important to explore the ways in which an online learner can be motivated in order to provide the best feedback possible. Florence Martin, Ting Sun and Claire D. Westine (2020) highlighted the accumulated results from various research on online learner motivation:

Researchers focused on motivation of online learners including different motivation levels of online learners (Li & Tsai, 2017), what motivated online learners (Chaiprasurt & Esichaikul, 2013), differences in motivation of online learners (Hartnett et al., 2011), and motivation when compared to face to face learners (Paechter & Maier, 2010). Harnett et al. (2011) found that online learner motivation was complex, multifaceted, and sensitive to situational conditions (Martin et al. 2020)².

The aforementioned challenges of eLearning all emphasize the importance of motivation as the crucial factor affecting the learning process. The absence of motivation presents the challenge that needs to be overcome in order to provide a successful online lesson, and the way to provide such a lesson and ensure the successful outcome presents the aim of this paper. In order to find the most successful way to boost motivation (apart from the aforementioned enhancements including virtual teachers/tutors and systems of rewards) for Serbian students who study English grammar, precisely, the Present Perfect Tense, the overview of scientific work regarding educational psychology must be tackled. After reviewing the essence of experiential learning and the possible ways of boosting motivation, the focus of the paper shifts to concrete example of a lesson which objective is the Present Perfect Tense acquisition. The creating process, delivery and outcome of the lesson draws conclusion that the study material needs to be adaptive and personalized. Such material can ensure the motivational boost in students. Finally, unification of the aspects of educational psychology –

¹ Partarrieu, S. (2015), *Why we still need face-to-face teaching in the digital age*. Retrieved from: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/why-we-still-need-face-face-teaching-digital-age>, 05 October 2015.

² Martin, F., Sun, T., Westine, C.D. (2020). A systematic review of research on online teaching and learning from 2009 to 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7480742/>, 8 May 2024.

experiential learning, the role of the environmental conditions in learning, motivation and maintaining interest – leads to the fact that personalization of the lesson is the key to a motivated eLearner.

Experiential learning relies on the learner's experience which is often individualized. The learning cycle depends on numerous factors such as personality, cultural and social background of a learner (Kolb 2020). Therefore, the motivation for learning may stem from personalized, adaptive study material that will be in alignment with the students' personal preferences, culture and habits. The online lesson on Present Perfect Tense for Serbian e-learners that is composed of adaptive material is based primarily on the students' individuality and personal interest. The adaptive aspect of this lesson lies in the following key points:

1. Serbian language does not include the notion of Present Perfect tense. Therefore, acquiring the basics of this tense and its usage is complex from the beginning. Being aware of this complexity makes up half of the work as this awareness boosts the inspiration to create an adaptive lesson;
2. The adaptive material relies heavily on the learner's individuality. Exploring the students' personal experiences through an effective questionnaire before making the lessons helps the organization process of the study material. After finding out what motivates the learners, the next step is to incorporate the key aspects to the lesson;
3. Due to the fact that Present Perfect tense is a grammar unit, it requires practice work, which surpasses the importance of theoretical explanations. Furthermore, practice allows the implementation of adaptive study material – the sentences including Present Perfect tense may directly contain the elements of the learners' personal motivation and interest, such as their names, vocabulary denoting specific locations and events linked to the learners' individual experience, cultural and social background;
4. Follow-up activities such as homework and specific tasks are designed specifically to personalize the lesson to the maximum point. The most effective way to design such activities is to make sure that they involve personal feedback from the students, e.g. personal diaries or daily reports in which the usage of Present Perfect seems reasonable. This way, they are keeping track of their own activities, achievements, challenges they face and the whole task becomes maximally personalized to the point of total adaptation of this tense in describing their own daily events;
5. Finally, the adaptive material makes up for the lack of classroom environment and builds up the learners' self-confidence once the success is achieved.

In the following chapters, the theoretical frame concerning educational psychology and the basic aspects of experiential learning are introduced, as the focus is on the students' personal interests and daily challenges they face which all construct their personal experience. Further on, a detailed description of the acquisition process by Serbian eLearners involving the Present Perfect tense is given, with an example of the successful outcome.

2. Experiential Learning

This chapter focuses on providing the theoretical frame for the proposal of the lesson that will be adaptive and personalized for Serbian online learners. Therefore, the focus is on experiential learning and its basic aspects.

Experiential learning, as the name itself suggests, relies on the notion of experience as the basis of learning. David Kolb's experiential learning theory is rooted in the principle of learning cycle consisting of four different stages: experience, reflection, thinking and acting (Sims 1983:501- 508).

As James Atherton (2013) explains, "the learning cycle has four stages: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Effective learning can be seen when the learner progresses through the cycle. The learner can enter the cycle at any stage(...)" (Atherton 2013).³

Therefore, the experiential learning cycle presents the usage and correlation between the four stages of the learning process: the students engage in a learning activity, thus gaining experience

³ Atherton J S (2013) Learning and Teaching; Experiential Learning [On-line: UK] Retrieved from: <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experience.htm>, September 5, 2015.

regarding the study material type and their own expectations of the lesson. Upon experiencing, the reflection process on the experienced aspects of the lesson occur. Thinking process involves analyzing and processing the perceived elements, i.e. the conceptualization. Finally, acting process involves providing a corresponding feedback in terms of presenting knowledge and understanding of the lesson.

However, the most important fact to bear in mind when exploring the experiential learning cycle is the factor of personalization and individuality regarding the learner's studying progress in the cycle. "The way in which we navigate the learning cycle varies from person to person. Due to personality, educational specialization, professional career, culture, and adaptive competencies, people develop preferences for how they use the learning cycle."⁴ Taking this into consideration, certain learning styles can be distinguished within the scope of experiential learning. Hong Lu (Lu et al. 2007) discusses David Kolb's learning styles, summarizing their essence in two aspects: (1) how a learner understands and processes the information and (2) how that information is conceptualized based on the experience, in order to be processed as a reflective observation (Lu et al. 2007: 187-196).

We can distinguish several learner styles within the context of the experiential learning process, which is of great importance to this research because, in order for the lesson to be adaptive and personalized, the teachers should be aware of the individual aspects of the learners. According to Saul McLeod (2024), "Knowing a person's (and your own) learning style enables learning to be orientated according to the preferred method. That being said, everyone responds to and needs the stimulus of all types of learning styles to one extent or another – it's a matter of using emphasis that fits best with the given situation and a person's learning style preferences."

McLeod (2024) states four different experiential learning styles first introduced by David Kolb (1984) and emphasizes their importance: "Both Kolb's learning stages and the cycle could be used by teachers to critically evaluate the learning provision typically available to students, and to develop more appropriate learning opportunities" (McLeod 2024). These *appropriate learning opportunities* correlate with the aim of creating an adaptive lesson and present all the study material and tasks that will correlate with the learner's experiential learning style. Kolb's learning styles describe learner's preferences, tendencies and manners in which they acquire knowledge, based on the following aspects (McLeod 2024):

Diverging style: learners approach the lesson from different perspectives and gather information from various sources, they rely on social cues and are emotional and intuitive, and their primary focus on observing and feeling;

1. Assimilating style: learners focus on observing and rely on thinking process involving reflecting on the acquired information and seek logical explanations;
2. Converging style: learners are practical, focus on doing and thinking, they rely on activating the processed information and engage in practical approach;
3. Accommodating style: intuitive learners, they prefer a practical approach and do not rely too much on logic.

Being aware of Kolb's learning styles provides an insight into how learners observe and analyze a new lesson and acquire new knowledge from it. Adding the factor of the learner's individuality, adaptive lesson must cater for all the styles and encourage the activation of the learners' tendencies stemming from their cultural and social background.

Introducing and teaching the Present Perfect Tense while aware of the learners' individual tendencies and learning styles may provide more successful outcome of the lesson, but it requires following certain steps in designing specific tasks and challenges that will annihilate all the possible barriers to successful acquisition such as the lack of motivation and self-confidence that eLearning may include.

3. Integration

This chapter deals with the integration of educational psychology theoretical frame into the process of designing the lesson on English Present Perfect Tense for Serbian online learners. The previous chapter introduced key points regarding the manner in which new information is acquired in

⁴ Kolb, Alice. (2020), "This is Experiential Learning", Experience Based Learning Systems video, 2:59. Retrieved from: <https://learningfromexperience.com/themes/this-is-experiential-learning-video>, April 15, 2020.

accordance with certain sociological, cultural and individual factors affecting the learner's acquisition. Therefore, the main aim is to integrate those points in the overall design of the lesson.

Bearing this in mind, certain steps need to be taken:

1. determining the learning style of the learners and adapting the crucial parts of the lesson to it,
2. designing the explanations, illustrations and examples with an aim to make them adaptive,
3. assigning tasks and homework that will encompass the learners' individual preferences, and daily activities (e.g. mini projects involving learning journal).

If we focus on the very first step, which includes matching various aspects of the lesson with the learners' unique style of learning, it is easily noticeable that the overall aim should be to balance between the activation of the thinking and practical approach to the lesson. Some learners, as stated in the previous chapter, prefer analyzing, reflecting and observing, whilst others engage in various activities involving practical knowledge and gaining experience from logical aspects of the lesson. When it comes to grammar, precisely, the Present Perfect tense, we may integrate the aforementioned in the lesson plan for Serbian online learners through the introductory part of the lesson which involves thinking – understanding the usage and applying the acquired information based on logical comparisons (when the tense shouldn't be used and its comparison to the usage of the tense they're already familiar with – Past Simple).

The Present Perfect tense doesn't have its counterpart in Serbian language grammar, but its usage involves both present and past as general markers of the time of a described action. Notion of present, past (and the future) is an elementary category of all languages. Hence, when introduced with the Present Perfect Tense, students should be aided with something already familiar in terms of describing events and the time of their occurrence. That is why comparing the usage of Present Perfect tense to the usage of Present and Past Simple tenses may help the students grasp the essence of Present Perfect. Also, through presenting the instances when the tense in question shouldn't be used additionally helps the overall acquisition process.

Explanations and demonstrative part of the lesson involve personal sentences connected to their current situation: other relevant online classes, learning progress, upcoming examinations, the experience of studying online that can be easily individualized. The illustration of the usage of Present Perfect can be totally intertwined with other tasks they may have for other subjects, as it is suitable for tracking the progress. By regularly marking their own progress using Present Perfect sentences, the students are both acquiring the tense itself, often subconsciously, and are focused on keeping track of their own progress (regardless of the subject), which makes the lesson maximally personalized.

Finally, the tasks are designed in accordance with the abovementioned progress tracking process which has numeral benefits: learners rely on themselves to check their progress and are, therefore, motivated to regularly apply the acquired knowledge. Furthermore, they are becoming aware of their own progress, as well as stagnation, which is essential for online learners to build up self-reliance and the ability to spot any type of problems. Moreover, composing their own sentences to serve as an illustration of the lesson, specifically, to demonstrate the usage of Present Perfect, allows simultaneous application of different perspectives on the lesson. They approach the acquisition through progress checking related to some other subjects (reflecting on the progress in completing a non-related task/project (a personal achievement of the day) or the specifically designed task within the scope of English (reflecting on the progress of a related project, for example, writing a journal on understanding English grammar). Both non-related and related tasks contribute to the learner's self-awareness and motivation, thus making the lesson highly personalized and adaptive.

Writing journals is probably the most efficient task for enabling regular work and avoiding the procrastination with online learners. This task requires the activity-tracking process, and the students must reflect on their achievements regularly. It is important to highlight that not all tasks involving writing a journal require daily updates, as it would lead to creating unnecessary pressure and online students tend to prioritize their activities (see Introduction).

All these tasks promote the learner's self-discipline, as learning online requires higher level of motivation and control due to the excessive flexibility. The integration of theory regarding learners' unique learning styles and tendencies to approach the lesson in a particular way is entirely possible when the teacher is familiar with some other activities the online class is engaged in. The following chapter provides an example of a successfully adapted online Present Perfect lesson, from its organization and delivery to the students' feedback.

4. The Research: Lesson, Assignments and the Learners' Feedback

This chapter analyses the online lesson on the Present Perfect Tense at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade as a basic methodology for investigating to what extent such a lesson can contribute to the students' individual learning style, with possible reference to its applicability to other areas of language teaching. The main goal of this lesson was to apply it as a research project that would provide some valuable insights into the importance of connecting the study material with the students' personal obligations and tasks assigned within other subjects.

The online class consisted of 75 students who had opted for the subject *Contemporary English* (level A2-B1) as their elective course at the Faculty of Philology, University in Belgrade. The students were from the Department of Serbian language and literature. The entire semester consisted of online lessons, and the communication with the teacher was through emails and online meetings. The students were introduced to the basic requirements and the structure of the exam at the very beginning of the semester, and they were inspired to rely on their own organization of completing the tasks and preparing for the online lessons.

Although the Present Perfect Tense presents the focus area of this research, what had sparked the interest for investigating the connection between the students' personality, their assignments and obligations and the English lessons, was a small experimental task assigned during one of the introductory classes. The lesson dealt with the new personality vocabulary, and the material used was an excerpt from a certain source material. The excerpt in question presented personality adjectives classified according to a corresponding Zodiac sign:



Figure 1: Cambridge Face2Face, 2 Edition, CUP, p. 32. Personality Adjectives Classification.

The topic of Zodiac didn't seem as an ideal tool to help the online students acquire the new vocabulary, as not all the students were familiar with the Zodiac signs, nor they were interested in such a topic. Bearing this in mind, the immediate reaction was to include certain adjustments to the lesson and allow for freedom in terms of topic choices. This was the very first step in investigating experiential learning, adaptive lessons and personal motivation of the students. Therefore, a short survey was conducted in order to gather significant information regarding the students' opinion on the topic of Zodiac:

- Are you familiar with the Zodiac signs?
- Would you be more comfortable speaking or writing on topics that are more general and do not include Zodiac?
- What type of personality should the following types of people have: a teacher, a shopkeeper, a waiter, a friend, a sibling? ➤ **Students' response:**

*I would be **more comfortable** if I wouldn't have to talk about Zodiac.*

*I am **not familiar** with Zodiac, so I am not sure what I would talk or write about.*

*I know something about it, but I **don't think I could** write more than one sentence...*

***May we somehow change** the way the adjectives are classified?*

***Do we have to** talk about zodiac?*

*I can talk about my sister's personality, but I'm **not sure** what her zodiac sign is.*

The survey confirmed the expectations that the adjustments were needed, since the response reflected a high rate of insecurity. This was a huge risk in terms of their motivation as well, as it may have declined significantly. Therefore, the students were asked to write (and join the discussion) about their relatives or friend.

The mere change in the topic that doesn't require specific knowledge (such as Zodiac), allowed the students to express themselves clearly and with confidence. This, of course, reflected the increase in their motivation once the topic became more general, thus allowing them to have more freedom in picking subtopics to express their opinions.

The short survey had allowed for the general information on students' personal interests to be gained. This was the crucial point that became useful once again in the following lessons, including the Present Perfect Tense.

Together with the valuable information regarding personal motivation of the students (retrieved directly from the students), the aforementioned connection with educational psychology allowed for further investigation of the applicability of David Kolb's learning styles to the specific group of online learners.

Therefore, the need for another survey had surfaced, this time to uncover in more details what the specific group of online students had to deal with at the time of taking this course in terms of other faculty obligations and personal interests:

- List top 5 obligations you have to fulfill by the end of the semester.
- How much time do you have per week to study English?
- Does English overlap with some of your other subjects? To what extent?
- Do you think you can apply something you've learned in this course to another subject? If so, how?



Figure 2: Survey results

The survey showed that the students were engaged in a Serbian literature project that required writing commentaries on the selected novels, short stories and essays they had to read by the end of the semester. By the time Present Perfect Lesson was due to be covered, they were fully engaged in the project. This information was crucial for designing the lesson in the adaptive manner. Therefore, the first step having already been covered – gathering information regarding the students' individual preferences, preoccupations and other projects – the remaining steps were concerned with keeping their motivation to complete the lesson for the elective course through connecting the requirements with their project. However, this couldn't have been done immediately without introducing the basic concepts of the Present Perfect Tense and providing the basic explanations.

The assignments that followed were specifically designed to allow the students to rely on English even when working on other subjects or areas. However, the most effective way to design an adaptive and personalized present perfect lesson was through the application of the assignments: personal illustrations of the usage of Present Perfect and the mini project corresponding with the students' biggest preoccupation at the time of learning Present Perfect – the project on Serbian Literature. The decision to merge these projects provided many benefits both in terms of acquisition and the feedback the students provided.

The mini project required writing a journal in which they would keep track of their reading progress for another subject. They were supposed to insert their comments on their progress and the parts they had completed.

Finally, analyzing the results of the surveys and tracking the students' behavior regarding the aforementioned examples they were provided with, remains a basis for further application of a lesson that is fully adaptive.

Table 1.

Online Lesson on the Present Perfect Tense Structure.

PART OF THE LESSON	ORGANIZATION	LEARNER'S STYLE CORRELATION David Kolb's learner styles (Kolb 1984; McLeod 2024)
INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION 1	Theoretical part, the explanation of the usage of the Present Perfect Tense	Assimilating style: activating the thinking approach and relying on the given information and its analysis
INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION 2	Comparison: Past Simple and Present Perfect	Diverging style: information is acquired from a different source, the students are encouraged to reflect on the other lessons
ASSIGNMENTS	designing their own illustrations of the usage (personal sentences) journal – recording daily/weekly/recent achievements	Converging and Accommodating style: focus on practical approach and taking actions to accommodate the acquired information

4.1. The Journal Assignment

The extracts from the students' journal were more than valuable, as they clearly reflected the students' overall progress. Here is the extract from one of the journals:

Ex.1

So far, I have read most of the recommended literature. This week, I have finished „Pripovetke“ by Laza Lazarević. I haven't completed my essay on the character of Mitar in the short story „Prvi put s ocem na jutrenje“ yet.

This short excerpt shows how the journal writing technique allowed the students to focus on their progress on the important project of a personal significance, as it was the eliminatory project for their main exam. At the same time, they are practicing using the Present Perfect Tense without any guidance (except for suggested time prepositions and adverbs such *as so far, already, yet* etc.), which allows for both thinking and practical approach to the task. Furthermore, apart from the introductory part of the lesson, the illustration and assignments are adaptive and personalized – the learners were engaged in the well-known aspect of study material whilst using a newly introduced lesson to keep track of their own progress. They felt motivated to complete the journal and update it regularly, and claimed that it helped them organize their work on the literature project in the best manner.

However, the initial pages of the journal of the same student show certain mistakes regarding the correct usage of the auxiliary *have*:

Ex.2.

The first part of the story haven't been read.

I will read it later, but the teacher have told us to focus more on other works.

First pages showed the lack of confidence and basic struggles / mistakes, however, the latter part of this student's journal became mistake-free (see ex.1). The student gained freedom to use their own examples and commentary on the novel which they were analyzing, which showed they were focused on the novel, and the grammar was used as a tool to express the opinion. The sentences in the first example are longer and more complex.

This improvement was observed in other students as well. Longer sentences and usage of corresponding adverbs and adverbial phrases are noticed in the journals. Let us observe another contrast:

Ex 3.

I am reading a new novel. I have not read it before. I have written down the tasks. I hope I will complete all the tasks by the end of the semester.

Ex.3.1.

My opinion has changed since I first read the novel. The story has become more interesting towards the end, and I have completed all the tasks the teacher assigned. I have written 4 pages of my essay on the main character so far.¹⁸¹

The improvement has shown the important achievement of the journal assignment – the students became confident in their grammar towards the end of the assignment to the extent that Present Perfect was used as a tool, and the focus was on the task – literary criticism - rather than on how to correctly construct the English sentences. The pressure to use Present Perfect decreased towards the end of the assignment, and the focus on the task increased.

Finally, providing their own examples of the usage of Present Perfect was partly covered within their mini project (individual commentary on their progress). Another part was covered in class and as part of homework through the following activities which are all highly personalized:

1. Sentence making: illustrating the usage of the tense based on the given sentences in the lesson;

2. Writing short paragraphs on what they have never done with provided material: texts on food specialties, interesting vacation destinations, extreme sports and challenges, experiences etc. that would inspire them to write (and discuss in class) about something they haven't experienced yet;

3. Discussion in class: spotting and correcting the mistakes in sentences and paragraphs with Present Perfect which inspired them to share insights and build awareness of the possible mistakes, which ultimately led to higher self-confidence.

The learner's feedback showed a high level of motivation to complete the exercises and participate in the online lessons. They were inspired to talk about everyday events and imagined situations suitable for Present Perfect usage, and felt that the lesson was in accordance with their own pace of learning and style. One part of the students relied on discussion and mistake correction, while the other part of the group relied on completing written assignments, and the whole group submitted their journals.

5. Discussion

Applying the aspects of educational psychology to grammar acquisition in online students is of a great importance when it comes to designing the lesson that is both adaptive and motivational. As stated in the introductory chapter of this paper, online learning requires the motivation that is complex in terms of various influences on online learners that may motivate them to engage in an online lesson. This refers to personal preferences and learner styles, as well as on the situational conditions under which the lesson is acquired.

Situational condition under which Serbian online learners acquired the Present Perfect tense in an elective course of Contemporary English turned out to be the crucial point in enhancing the motivation in learners. It is due to the fact that the condition in question involved their completion of Serbian literature project. Merging the two projects – reading literature and writing a journal consisting on the commentary of the reading progress using Present Perfect tense, thus illustrating its usage in the most practical manner - resulted in the highest level of personalization of the lesson.

The students were motivated, inspired and ready to regularly rehearse and update the information in their journal. The individual differences in the learning pace were still noticed, which is in correlation with the individual learning style of the learner and the conditions and circumstances under which he or she participated in the lesson, or, the learning environment.

It is possible to draw a conclusion that all the steps required to design such an adaptive lesson were equally important for the students' positive feedback. It can be illustrated in the following way:

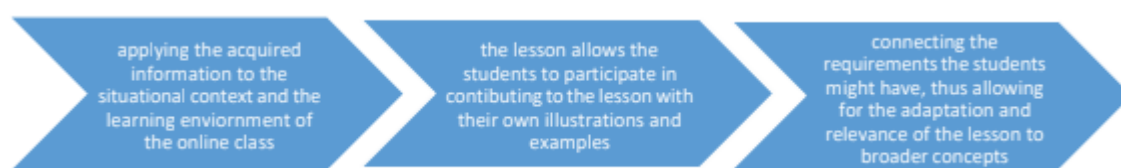


Figure 3: Steps to designing an adaptive online lesson

This illustration sums up the organizational process of the adaptive online lesson and its outcome. It suits the learners individual pace, and, most importantly, sparks the interest as the task of writing a journal was created as relevant for their other project. Finally, the key points of the overall process refer to the following:

1. Learning environment (the conditions affecting the acquisition process, especially important for an online lesson);
2. Motivation (highly complex, depends on the learning environment and learners' individual preferences);
3. Experiential learning (basic terminology and the relevance of Kolb's learning styles);
4. Assignments (important for maintaining regular work for online learners, it should be made relevant for the learners and specifically designed in accordance with their learning conditions);

5. Explanation part of the lesson (involving the students' participation and contribution);
6. Activation of both thinking and practical approach to the lesson.

The illustrated organization of an adaptive online lesson is fully applicable to various types of online lessons and courses, regardless of the lesson type, as getting familiarized with the learning environment of the students presents a prominent factor in acquisition process. Even if the information on the learning conditions is unreachable, the students' personal opinion and attitudes belong to the realm of easily-accessible information, as long as it is encouraged by the teacher/mentor.

Overall, it is impossible to be completely aware of all the elements of the students' personal preferences and learning environment. However, David Kolb's learning cycle and learning styles (see Ch.2) play vital role in the process of acquisition, therefore, being aware of some of the basic terminology and understanding the essence of the acquisition process makes it easier to design an adaptive and fully personalized online lesson that will ultimately ensure the students' motivation enhancement.

Students' suggestions and impressions regarding this type of lesson was a main indicator on how successful the implementation of the adaptive lesson on Present Perfect tense was. At the end of the semester, the students were asked to share their opinion on the freedom of choice they had been given when it comes to the topics and areas of study material and the journals they were keeping. Almost all of the students from the group agreed on the following:

The journals showed them their own progress and was actually fun to write since they were completing the Serbian literature task using English, which felt as they were playing and experimenting rather than studying (this turned out to be a unique experience, the building block of their experiential learning).

6. Conclusion

It is important to think about further possibilities of implementing adaptive online lessons. Theory suggests that the aforementioned design of the lesson should be successful as it is correlated with the students' individual learning style and certain psychological factors, but the practice doesn't always allow for all the elements to be successfully integrated in the lesson. It depends a lot on the learners themselves – how well they would accept it and understand the ongoing process. Still, the success of this lesson allows for further experimentation with other areas of language, e.g. speaking, as it was the case with switching the topic of Zodiac in this group.

What might be crucial for further investigations is the fact that merging two seemingly unrelated tasks and subjects provides a unique experience for the learners and allows them to multitask and broaden their skills. This is particularly true for languages - completing tasks such as oral presentations or written tasks related to various topics using English (or any language other than the mother tongue) proved to be a successful method. Further research may be applied to the subjects that are even less related (compared to English and Serbian Literature), so that writing short articles or essays on wildlife or anatomy for example may serve as a good way to practice English phrases and vocabulary, as well as grammar. This way, the students are using English as a tool and are slowly and subconsciously overcoming some minor issues with the language itself, as they are focused primarily on the task. Finally, we may agree that the students must go through all the learning cycles in order to achieve the effective learning.

Declaration on Generative AI

The author(s) have not employed any Generative AI tools.

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