

IMPROVING THE ABILITY IN USING SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE SENTENCES THROUGH SUBSTITUTION DRILL

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to improve the ability of the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata in using simple present tense sentences through substitution drill. The subject of this research was Grade VIIA. The research was classroom action research conducted in two cycles in which each cycle consisted of planning, implementation, observation and reflection. In cycle one, the students got difficulty in understanding what the teacher meant when teaching because he gave them example without explanation into details. The students were trained individually to construct free sentences by using substitution drill. That is why, the result of cycle one was low. In cycle two, the teacher explained the material into details and gave the students examples in details. The students constructed free sentences by using simple present tense by applying substitution drill. The data of this research were obtained from the results of the test and observation sheet during the implementation of the action. The data were analyzed based on students achievements in two cycles. It can be seen through the progress of the students' successful percentage from 17,86% in cycle I to 96,43% in cycle II. It means that the use of substitution drill is effective in improving the ability of the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata in using Simple Present Tense Sentences.

Keywords: Improving; Simple Present Tense; Substitution Drill.

INTRODUCTION

English is taught at junior high schools. The teaching of English covers four language skills. It is stated in the National Curriculum for SMP called KTSP, “Kompetensi mengacu pada kemampuan menerapkan dan memahami unsur-unsur tata bahasa, kosa kata, lafal dan ejaan di dalam teks yang benar”. Based on the curriculum, the students are expected to explore the language components to support the mastery of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Competence refers to the use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling in correct text.

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In relation to the statement above, the mastery of the language skill must be supported by language components: vocabulary, structure and pronunciation. Based on the teacher's experience during the teaching learning process, he found a main problem faced by the students of Grade VIIA of SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata. They had difficulty in making grammatical English sentences. The students were not able to make their own simple sentences, particularly in simple present tense. The students did not know when a sentence ended with '-s' or '-es', because the teacher never taught them about the use of verb ended with '-s' and '-es' in simple present tense.

Having found the students' problem and factors caused the problem; he intended to help them by improving their ability in making the sentences related to the Simple Present Tense. There were several techniques can be used to help them, but he believed that substitution drill was an effective technique to be applied.

The reasons for the teacher to conduct this research were; Firstly, simple present tense was difficult for SMP students to master because they were not familiar with the tenses, and they could not differentiate the use of affirmative, negative and interrogative. That is why he wanted to use substitution drill. Through substitution drill, the students were trained to substitute the part of the sentences; for example, the students were asked to change the verb, the subject and adverb of time (from simple present to simple past tense). Another example was: *I eat now*; It must be *I eat everyday*. The negative one was *I not eat now*. It must be *I do not eat everyday*. The interrogative was *I am eat now?* It must be *Do you eat everyday?* Therefore, based on the examples given to the students to do, they were able to know when the ending of '-s' and '-es' were used. Through the examples and the exercises, they could make their own simple sentences in simple present tense.

Among English tenses, the simple present tense is a tense that is frequently used. It is most commonly used to talk about events or situation in general time or universal statements. Azar (1989:2) states that in general, the simple present tense expresses event or situation that exists *always, usually, habitually*; they exist now, have existed in the past, and probably will exist in the future. This statement reveals that the simple present tense is used to state general truth, habitual actions, and other universal statement.

The important thing to note that the simple present tense is about the verb agreement was; in this tense, the verbs end *s/es* for the third person singular. Swan (1984:205) states "... Verbs ending with *s, -z, -x, ch* and *-sh* have *-es* in the third person singular". Other verbs have *-s*, exception: *goes, does*. "The examples of verb ending in *-es*

are buzzes, fixes, catches, pushes”. The adverb frequency of this tense takes *always, sometimes, never, frequently, seldom, everyday, rarely, usually*.

In the teaching and learning processes, the teacher needs a suitable technique used to learn English so that after learning the students could understand and master it. We apply substitution drill technique to improve the ability of students in using simple present tense. Drill technique is useful part in a language course in helping learners to be formally accurate in their speech and in helping them to quickly learn a useful collection of words, phrases, and sentences that allow them to start using the language appropriately. Harmer (1987:52) states the substitution drill as a favorite technique for practicing and testing certain grammatical items. Generally these activities are the designed so that the students practice the language while at the sometime being involve in an enjoyable activity.

By using the substitution drill, the students learn structure of Simple Present Tense effectively and it is useful to practice quickly. It makes the students enjoy and motivated in learning English and their structure could increase. In addition, Paulston and Bruder (1976:21) argue the drill are excellent for testing students ability to encode grammatical relationship such as subject-verb, agreement, in definitive article, choice, count mass nouns, pronouns forms- in short, any structure which contrast minimally in its various patterns.

One of the types of the drill was substitution. It is a drill that trains the students to replace the single or more of the subject, verb and object with the same meaning. Through this technique they found it easy to learn. Harmer (1987:62) points out “Substitution drill is good technique for students’ comprehension as well as of their knowledge of individual grammatical such as personal pronoun, preposition and the verb to be etc”. By giving it, the learning of simple present tense could be efficient and useful to quickly practice. It provided the students with practicing the rules of grammar. They do exercises quickly without wasting time, so they could master it both in oral and written form.

Substitution is an effective way or technique of teaching simple present tense. It makes the students think fast and precisely. By using this technique the students can enjoy and feel fun in learning English. Substitution drill is a good technique because it could educate the students by substituting words and it could facilitate them in learning simple present tense.

When they present the materials, the teacher firstly motivates the students and makes their attention get focused on the material. To motivate them, the teacher can ask some questions related to the previous materials. Then, the teacher introduces the topics to

be discussed. In this presentation, the teacher should facilitate the students by giving some explanation or examples. It is called pre-activity.

The second step was while-activity. Teacher may give explanation about the material that would be taught at the time. In connection with the technique, the teacher provides examples about the use of substitution drill. After the teacher give the exercise for a few time, so that the students get the idea about what they would do. The first time would be very difficult because no one know what is expected. Once the students get a pattern, they can do more. However, the teacher would know when to stop it. This is not repetition exercise. It is a substitution drill. By doing substitution, the students could make new sentences so that the teacher should provide the students with some sentences pattern and ask them to substitute or replace the word to another word according to the cues that provided by the teacher. For example, the sentence *“They speak English”* can be replaced its verb with study forming the sentence *“They study English”*. The other examples, the sentences in interrogative form is *“Does she read the letter?”* can be replaced its verb with write forming the sentence *“Does she write the letter?”* The sentence in negative form, *“I do not see the cake”* can be replaced its verb with take forming the sentence, *“I do not take the cake”* and so on. Five to ten words have been changed in the sentence pattern in simple substitution. The teacher also give pictures as a cue. They note and could do the drill orally and in writing. During the practice stage, the teacher should facilitate and assist the students if they get some difficulties.

In while-activity the students are asked to do task in group that have already shaped. After doing the task, the teacher needs to correct the students’ worksheets. Before giving the correct items, the teacher invited the other students to read and check together. The students’ mistakes are best corrected after they try to correct the mistakes by themselves.

The last step is post-activity. Students do the task individually. Sometimes if the time is not enough to complete the task, it become an assignment to be done at home.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied Classroom Action Research (CAR). It focused on describing the use of substitution drill in teaching simple present tense. The data gathered qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data refers to both teaching preparation, teacher’s performance, while the quantitative data refers to the students’ achievement in testing them.

This study used model of CAR proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) which covers planning, implementing of action, observing and reflecting the action. This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata. The number of students was 28 students of Grade VIIA.

This CAR was conducted according to the research schedule. The teacher and collaborator worked collaboratively to prepare lesson plan, instructional materials and media, construct the criteria of success, and design test. The steps of planning were done based on the use of substitution drill technique.

Implementation was the real activity that has been designed by the teacher in the lesson plan. He conducted the treatment in the classroom based on the lesson plan. To conducted it well, he taught simple present tense and focused on the use substitution drill technique during the teaching learning activities.

In this research, the teacher conducted the teaching activities. He was responsible for conducting the teaching activities based on the use of substitution drill technique. While the collaborator observed the teacher during the teaching learning activities.

Observation was a process of recording and collecting data about the teachers' performance and the students' attitude and their performance during the instructional activities. In this level, the collaborator observed the teacher's way in using the substitution drill before the students were asked in turn to do the classroom task or exercise given to them. The teacher analyzed the students' achievement in answering the test items on simple present tense. During the teaching learning activities, the teacher controlled, guided and identified the students' problems. In order to obtain appropriate data in every step, the teacher and the collaborator specified the kind and the source of the data that they gathered. Also, they prepared the instrument and technique of collecting data.

In classroom action research, data were analyzed through reflection. The reflection phase was the phase in which the teacher analyzed the data from different instruments. To validate the data, the teacher used triangulation. It consisted of three main steps. They were data collection, data reduction and data display. Besides, temporary conclusion done and final conclusion after the data were reduced and displayed. The triangulation focused on the crosscheck between the data obtained from different instruments in the research.

The teacher conducted four steps in this research: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. He prepared some instruments to gather data. The instruments

were simple present test items, observation checklist, field notes, and formula to compute the students' achievement. The test was administered at the last meeting of each cycle in order to find out the effectiveness of the technique.

This first test was conducted by the teacher and his collaborator within April 2013. It was planned at least two cycles, each cycle had two meetings. In this step, the teacher and collaborator worked collaboratively to prepare lesson plans, instructional material and media. The steps of planning done were based on the substitution drill technique. The teacher focused on teaching simple present as designed in the preparation mentioned previously. It was expected that the students could improve their mastery in using simple present tense appropriately.

Implementation was the real activity designed by the teacher in the lesson plan. He conducted the treatment in the classroom based on the lesson plan. To conduct it well, he taught simple present and focused on the use of substitution drill technique during the teaching learning activities.

In this research, the teacher conducted the teaching activities. He was responsible for conducting the teaching activities based on the use of substitution drill technique. On the other hand, the collaborator observed the teacher during the teaching learning activities.

Observation checklist was used to identify and obtain data about the students' performance covering their response toward the teaching-learning activities, the way they understood the words and constructed in simple sentences, or problems the students faced in finishing the classroom task. Observation checklist consisted of two; one for the teacher's performance, and the other was for the students' classroom performance.

Field notes were used to get data from the classroom. They contained information about the actual events. Bogdan at al (1998:107-108) state that field notes are written account what the teacher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting data and reflecting on the data in qualitative research.

RESULTS

At this part, the teacher presents and analyzes data gathered through observation checklist and the students' worksheet during and after conducting this research for two cycles with two meetings of each cycle. The data collected through observation checklist show that the students' active involvement in getting the results through substitution drill

had significant progress from Cycle I to Cycle II. The presentation of test result in cycle I can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: The students' score in cycle I meeting 2

No	Initials	Scores of each item of the test		Scores		
		Substitution Verb (0-20)	Substitution Object (0-10)	Obtained score (0-30)	Maximum score (0-30)	Standard score (0-100)
1	ANT	2	4	6	30	20
2	AND	3	6	9	30	30
3	APR	17	8	25	30	83.33
4	LST	4	4	8	30	26.66
5	FDL	4	5	9	30	30
6	DW	2	3	5	30	16.66
7	DST	3	4	7	30	23.33
8	JMR	1	3	4	30	13.33
9	MM	2	4	6	30	20
10	NUR	15	7	22	30	73.33
11	JN	4	5	9	30	30
12	NN	2	3	5	30	16.66
13	AIN	2	5	7	30	23.33
14	NNG	1	3	4	30	13.33
15	SEL	14	8	22	30	73.33
16	NND	3	4	7	30	23.33
17	AR	2	3	5	30	16.66
18	ZNL	3	3	6	30	20
19	AFD	3	4	7	30	23.33
20	PRA	4	5	9	30	30
21	ARD	3	4	7	30	23.33
22	AYU	2	4	6	30	20
23	EHS	2	3	5	30	16.66
24	FKR	3	6	9	30	30
25	FZL	4	5	9	30	30
26	ALM	15	7	22	30	73.33
27	RSL	3	6	9	30	30
28	HJB	17	8	25	30	83.33

To know the students' successfulness in completing the test, the teacher used the formula proposed by Harahap (1992:187)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mastery Percentage} &= \frac{\text{Total number of successful students}}{\text{Total number of the students completing the test}} \times 100\% \\ &= \frac{5}{28} \times 100 \\ &= 17.86\% \end{aligned}$$

Based on the computation above, the result showed that most of the students got failed. They did not get the minimum score namely 65. It means that the successful students was 17.86%.

Table 2: The students' participation during teaching-learning activity in cycle I meeting 2

Number	Aspects	Descriptions	Levels		
			Low	Moderate	High
1	Enthusiasm	The students are enthusiastic to attend the class. They are joyful to be in English class	20 or 71.43	8 or 28.57	0
2	Motivation	The students are motivated to be involved in classroom interaction.	15 or 53.57	12 or 42.86	1 or 03.57
3	Interest	The students tend to ask teacher to repeat her utterances and instruction	10 or 35.71	16 or 57.14	2 or 07.14
4	Response	The students respond teacher's command promptly	20 or 71.43	7 or 25	1 or 03.57
5	Progress	The students can grasp teacher's instruction	19 or 67.86	8 or 28.57	1 or 03.57

The three categories used by the teacher to decide the students' progress during the classroom participation in teaching learning process were based on the achievement level that the teacher and collaborator wanted the students to achieve during the instructional activities. In fact, the students' confidence was very low. They still did not have self-confidence to follow the teaching learning activities during the instructional process.

Table 3: The students' score in cycle II meeting 2

No	Initials	Scores of each item of the test		Scores		
		Substitution Verb (0-20)	Substitution Object (0-10)	Obtained score (0-30)	Maximum score (0-30)	Standard score (0-100)
1	ANT	18	8	26	30	86.66
2	AND	15	7	22	30	73.33
3	APR	18	8	26	30	86.66
4	LST	17	6	23	30	76.66
5	FDL	14	6	20	30	66.66
6	DW	17	7	24	30	80
7	DST	18	7	25	30	83.33
8	JMR	14	6	20	30	66.66
9	MM	14	7	21	30	70
10	NUR	16	8	24	30	80
11	JN	15	8	23	30	76.66
12	NN	14	6	20	30	66.66
13	AIN	13	6	19	30	63.33
14	NNG	15	8	23	30	76.66
15	SEL	15	8	23	30	76.66
16	NND	16	8	24	30	80
17	AR	14	6	20	30	66.66
18	ZNL	14	7	21	30	70
19	AFD	17	7	24	30	80
20	PRA	15	8	23	30	76.66
21	ARD	16	9	25	30	83.33
22	AYU	16	8	24	30	80
23	EHS	17	7	24	30	80
24	FKR	16	7	23	30	76.66
25	FZL	14	7	21	30	70
26	ALM	14	7	21	30	70
27	RSL	18	6	24	30	80
28	HJB	14	6	20	30	66.66

To know the students' successfulness in finishing the test, the teacher used the formula proposed by Harahap (1992:187).

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mastery Percentage} &= \frac{\text{Total Number of successful students}}{\text{Total Number of the students completing the test}} \times 100\% \\ &= \frac{27}{28} \times 100\% \\ &= 96.43\% \end{aligned}$$

Table 4: The students' participation during teaching-learning activity in cycle II meeting 2

Number	Aspects	Descriptions	Levels		
			Low	Moderate	High
1	Enthusiasm	The students are enthusiastic to attend the class. They are joyful to be in English class	1 or 03.57	7 or 25	20 or 71.43
2	Motivation	The students are motivated to be involved in classroom interaction.	2 or 07.14	6 or 21.43	20 or 71.43
3	Interest	The students tend to ask teacher to repeat her utterances and instruction	2 or 07.14	4 or 14.86	22 or 78.57
4	Response	The students respond teacher's command promptly	0	3 or 10.71	25 or 89.28
5	Progress	The students can grasp teacher's instruction	1 or 03.57	3 or 10.71	25 or 89.28

The data presented above indicate that the affect of substitution drill through students' achievement consisting of two meeting. The result of the computation of cycle II was a progress which made difference between the students' score in cycle I. The students' score in cycle I was 17.86 lower than the students' score in cycle II 96.43

Based on the result of implementation of reflection in cycle II, the teacher recognized that the research was not necessary to be carried on because the result of the cycle II was already reached sufficiently. The data really supported well the teaching objective. In other words, the process of implementing substitution drill is effective in improving to the students' ability in using simple present tense.

DISCUSSION

Based on the result of students' score in cycle I, it can be seen that most of students got score lower than 65. It happened because the students got difficulty in understanding what the teacher meant when teaching. He gave them example without explanation into details. The students were trained individually to construct free sentences in simple present tense by using substitution drill. That is why, the result of cycle one was low.

The teacher found that most of students Grade VIIA were still confused to use verb ended with '-s' and '-es' in simple present tense and they had difficulty to construct free sentences in simple present tense by using substitution drill. The students also confused to learn because they had still poor vocabulary.

After conducting the treatment, the teacher gave post-test in cycle II. He found that by giving explanation into details, the students could know how to use subject, verb and object in simple present tense. By looking at the students' score in cycle II, the teacher found a good progress of students' successful percentage from 17.86% in cycle I to 96.43% in cycle II.

By comparing the result of cycle I and cycle II, the teacher concluded that the use substitution drill is effective in improving the ability of the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Referring to the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the use of substitution drill is effective improving the ability of the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Sindue Tobata. In addition, the increase of the students' active involvement contributed to enhancing their ability in using simple present tense through substitution drill.

Referring to the conclusion, the teacher would like to suggest that before teaching, the teacher have to prepare and think first what the suitable method or technique could be applied in classroom. The teacher should give many opportunities to students in practicing their own ideas in oral or written activities.

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