

The Effectiveness of Learning by Teaching in Learning Tenses

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ABSTRACT

The education world in Indonesia has recently tried to implement a quite radical shift, from the conservative teacher-centered approach to a more dynamic student-centered learning. Learning by Teaching, one of the approaches which emphasizes the involvement of students in teaching and learning interaction, has been applied across countries despite its introduction several decades ago. In addition, studies towards this approach have reported its success and advantages, yet there have only been a few sporadic attempts to apply this approach in Indonesia. In order to see if Learning by Teaching can really be implemented in classrooms, this case study intends to discover if Learning by Teaching is applicable to teach Tenses. This quantitative study employed an English test as the instruments after the students experienced Learning by Teaching. The result of this study shall offer some insight to schools and universities across Indonesia whether Learning by Teaching as one of student-centered learning approaches can be implemented to help students learn English language.

Keywords: Learning, Teaching, English Language.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers used to be the most authoritative roles in classes. They were the source of knowledge for their students. This long practice has happened in Indonesia for a very long time. As a result, students have been accustomed to being spoon-fed. They have become passive learners who would just accept what their teachers tell them. They unwillingly prefer to find information by themselves [1].

However, Indonesian 2013 curriculum was introduced to mark a dramatic shift in teaching learning interaction in classes across the archipelago. Teacher-centered learning was expected to be a part of history when student-centered learning started to take place in classes. Teachers have to withdraw from their role as teachers who know everything and become students' partners and facilitators [2].

Student-centered learning is believed to be good for students. This approach helps students improve their higher-thinking order skills. In addition, students also learn how to be responsible and be in full control of their own learning. Teachers should be one of the sources of knowledge, but not the only source. That means they also have to encourage their students to learn and become information seekers [3], [2].

As demanded by Indonesian 2013 curriculum, teachers have tried implementing activities promoting student-centered learning, from group discussions to presentations which become the star of student-centered learning activity. Teachers suppose that assigning presentations

means implementing student-centered learning. Nevertheless, presentations are actually not deemed as a good student-centered learning activity. Students tend to present quickly without understanding or remembering the content. They do not care if their friends understand or not [4].

As classrooms are trying to shift from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach and presentations which are mostly used as a new method to suit the new approach are not actually suitable for a student-centered approach, a method introduced by Jean-Pol Martin around two decades ago, Learning by Teaching can be introduced as a student-centered learning activity. The application of Learning by Teaching requires students to assume full responsibility in the teaching role. They will learn a lot about the topic they are going to teach, and they will also contribute to teaching methods with their own perspective. Teachers then support and assist students throughout their preparation and help when students encounter problems [5].

A success story of Learning by Teaching has been recorded in Sudan. A previous study by [6] found that Learning by Teaching helped his subjects improve their linguistic competence. Learning about the topic which was then explained to others helped the subjects remember the topic. It also helped his subjects get better scores in classes. The findings supported the claim that teaching, as experienced throughout periods of time and across cultures, is the best method of learning as found in the “pyramid of learning” by the National Training Laboratories in America. Students remember less than 40 percent when they learn, but they remember up to 90 percent when they teach other people [7].

Ahmed’s qualitative study focused on his subjects’ reflections on their motivation and linguistic competence. Nevertheless, studies in this area, especially focusing on the English language skills such as grammar, are still limited [7]. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether Learning by Teaching is effective for students to learn English language skills, in which this case study focuses on English language tenses, in Indonesian context where students are still passive learners [3]. This study will be beneficial for teachers to consider implementing Learning by Teaching instead of presentations, and for students to comprehend that teaching is a good way to learn.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted in one Junior High School in Jakarta. Two grade eight classes (second grade of junior high school) with fifty students in total were chosen as subjects for this research, one as a control group one as an experimental group with twenty-five students in each group. These two classes were chosen based in their similar score distribution. Both groups were taught by the same English teacher to ensure the reliability of this research. The control group was taught just like in normal teaching learning interaction while the experimental group was assigned to conduct Learning by Teaching as their treatment. The instruments for this research was a grammar test, focusing on English language tenses. This grammar test was given to see if Learning by Teaching was effective for students in learning grammar. Tenses were chosen as the materials because tenses were normally taught in all school levels in Indonesia, including in junior high school level, and tenses were considered difficult materials for Indonesian students.

The tenses covered in the grammar test were five tenses which were Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense, Simple Future Tense, Simple Present Continuous Tense, and Simple Present Perfect Tense. There were fifty questions, ten questions for each tense. The test item type was filling in the blank with the verbs given in the brackets. The questions were made by

the researcher and the English language teacher and were later validated by two other English teachers teaching the same level. After being validated, the test was piloted to ten students from other classes. Later, the test was used as a pre-test and a post-test.

The pre-test was given to both groups at the beginning of the research. After having the results or scores for both groups, the control group was taught all the five tenses for the next three weeks by the teacher, and mostly teacher-centered learning took place in the class setting. On the other hand, experimental group was given the treatment for three weeks before the post-test was administered.

The twenty-five subjects in the experimental group were asked to form a group of two or three subjects. On the first week, all the groups were asked to do their research on the five tenses. They also had to prepare their teaching materials and decide on their teaching methods. On the second week, all the groups consulted their teaching materials and methods with their teacher. After their teacher had given some feedback to all groups, they got three days to revise their teaching materials and methods. During the three days, they were allowed to consult their progress or problems with their teacher. After the three days, they had to do their teaching demo in front of their classmates and their teacher who would give them some feedback. On the third week, all groups were assigned to teach Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense, and Simple Future Tense to students in the first grade. They also had to teach Simple Present Continuous Tense and Simple Present Perfect Tense to the other second grade classes.

A week after their teaching, both control group and experimental group were given the post-test without prior notice. During that one week, the teacher did not review any materials on tenses. This was to see how much the subjects remembered the materials they learned after a period of time.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings presented are the results of the pre-test and the post-test.

The pre-test was a fifty-question grammar test about tenses, ten questions for each tense. All the tenses had not yet been explained by the teacher prior to the pre-test, but they would be explained later after the pre-test. The pre-test was conducted in forty minutes.

The results of the pre-test in both groups, the control and the experimental, are summarized in figure 1. The figure shows that students from both groups shared similar understanding on tenses which could be seen from their pre-test scores. From the control group, two subjects got very high scores in the range of 80 to 100. Two other subjects scored in range of 60 to 70 while seven subjects scored in range of 41 to 59. Most of the subjects, 14 subjects, scored 40 or below. Similar score distribution can be seen for the experimental group. Only one subject got 80 or above, and three subjects scored between 60 and 70. Five subjects scored in range of 41 to 59. The majority of the subjects, sixteen subjects, scored 40 or below.

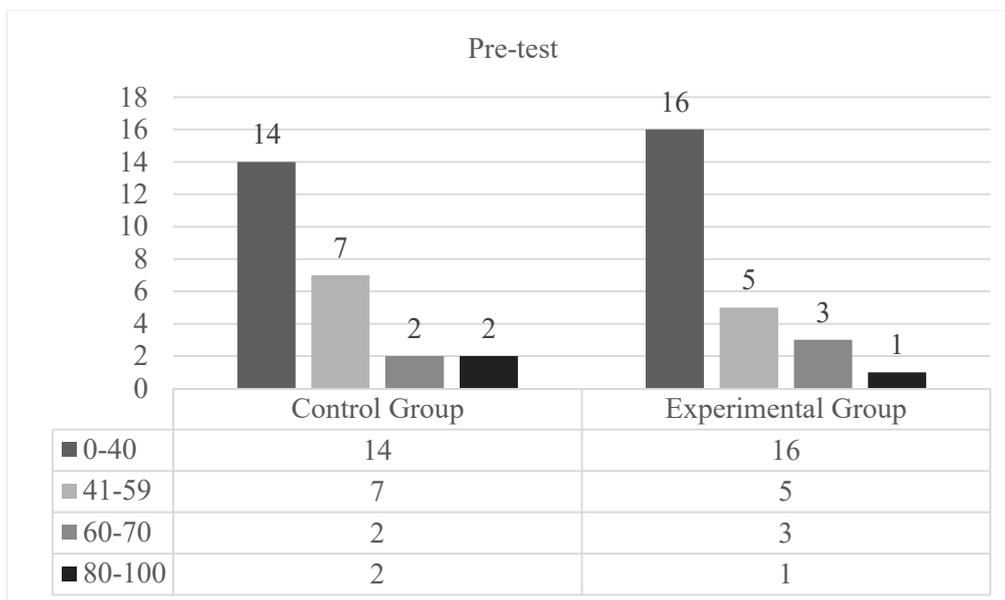


Figure 1. The Results of the Pre-test.

After the pre-test, the experimental group was given the treatment which was Learning by Teaching while the control group was taught about the five tenses by the teacher in the class. This process lasted for three weeks. On the fourth week, an unannounced post-test was given to see if Learning by Teaching had better impact on the subjects' comprehension on tenses. The post-test was the same as the pre-test. The subjects were given the same questions which had to be done in forty minutes.

The post-test results of both the control and the experimental groups are summarized in figure 2. Nine subjects from the control group scored 40 or below. Most of the subjects, twelve subjects, scored in range of 41 to 59. Moreover, two subjects scored between 60 and 70 and two subjects scored 80 or above. On the other hand, none of the subjects from the experimental group scored 40 or below. Two subjects scored in range of 41 to 59. The majority, eighteen subjects, scored in range of 60 to 70. Lastly, five subjects received the scores of 80 or above.

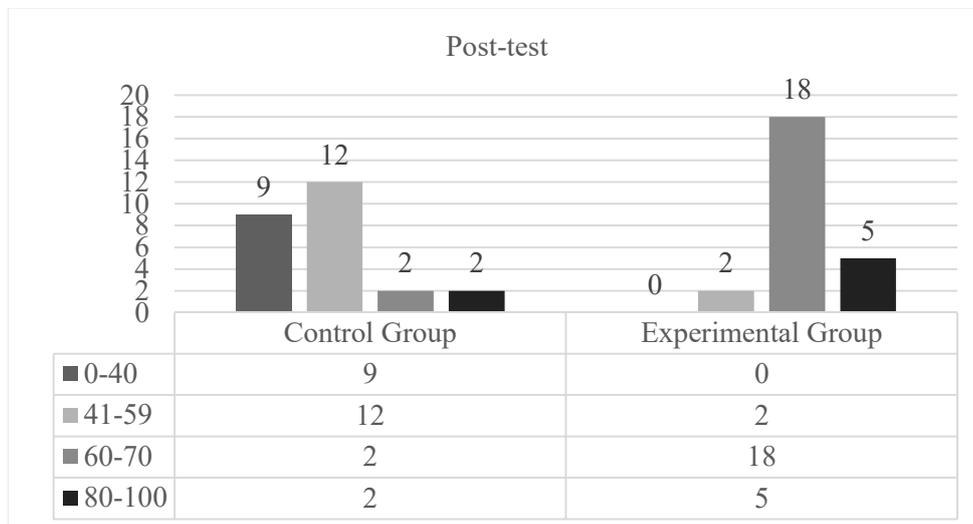


Figure 2. The Results of the Post-test.

Although both groups showed some improvement, more significant improvement was experienced by the experimental group. The treatment of assigning the subjects to teach tenses to other students helped decrease the number of subjects scoring 40 or below from sixteen subjects to none. A slight decrease was also experienced in the number of subjects receiving their scores in range of 41 to 59, from five to two subjects. The number of subjects scoring between 60 and 70 showed significant increase, from only three subjects to eighteen subjects. That shows sixty percent increase of the total improvement. There was also a surprising increase in the number of subjects scoring 80 or above, from one subject to five subjects.

Even though the control group also showed some improvement, the most significant increase happened in the group of subjects scoring in range of 41 to 59, from seven subjects to twelve subjects, representing twenty percent increase of the total improvement. Very slight decrease could be found in the groups of subjects scoring 40 or below, from fourteen subjects to nine subjects. However, there were no changes on the number of subjects getting their scores in range of 60 to 100.

Based on the scores, the fact that three weeks of learning the tenses in two different ways, Learning by Teaching and the usual classroom learning, for two different groups and one week without any discussion related to the five tenses has shown that Learning by Teaching helps subjects remember longer the materials or topics they teach to other students or other people which is similar to the findings by [6]. Subjects who taught could score higher than those who learned the materials in the class due to their brain memory. This supports the statement that students remember 90 percent of the materials they teach to others [7].

Subjects could also score higher as they understood better. Subjects' direct involvement in researching for the materials, in discussing with their peers and teacher, and also in teaching the materials with their own chosen methods has helped subjects' comprehension on the subject matter. Through teaching, subjects understand the materials more thoroughly as also mentioned by Ahmed [6]. Subjects' better comprehension on the materials has also been the result of their being given a chance to discuss the materials as also stated by Kemberas cited in [8].

However, this study was conducted with some limitations too. The first one was the small number of subjects which could not be used to generalize the findings. The second limitation was related to the time to conduct the research. Three weeks could result in conducting the research and the process in a rush.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As teachers in Indonesia are looking for the right activities to implement student-centered learning, this study aims to show that Learning by Teaching could be one beneficial activity to apply. Learning by Teaching has been proven to be a helpful student-centered learning activity. This method is not only useful to improve motivation and confidence as presented in the previous study [6], but it is also useful to improve subjects' comprehension on English language tenses.

The findings of this research could be seen as evidence to apply Learning by Teaching in schools. In addition, future research could be done with more subjects and more time as well as wider scope to improve and strengthen the position of Learning by Teaching in English language learning.

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