

THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH SONGS ON TEACHING TENSES

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Abstract

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This study was intended to prove that there is a significant effect of using English songs on teaching tenses through an experimental research. This study belonged to quantitative study. The population of this study was the students of SMP Budi Utomo Binjai, and 70 students were taken as samples. To prove the hypothesis, the writer applied the t-test formula. Then the result of the t-test calculation is 2,9455. After comparing the t-test value of the t-table for both 0,05 (5%) and 0,01 (1%) at level of significance, it is found that the t-test value is higher than both level of significance value ($2,9455 > 1,9955$, and $2,9455 > 2,6501$). It clearly means that the English songs significantly affect on teaching tenses.

Keywords: English songs, Tenses

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with tenses. There are twelve tenses based on generative grammar in English, but only there are only several tenses taught to students in junior high school. In competency based curriculum, there are six tenses taught, they are simple present, simple past, simple future, past progressive, present perfect, and present perfect progressive. And the tenses used in this study are only two tenses; they are simple present and simple past.

It is important for students to learn English. The purpose of learning English is in order to be able to communicate in that language both orally and written. English is one of the foreign languages taught in Indonesia. Nowadays, it has been taught to the students of kindergarten, primary school, junior high school, senior high school, and also to the university students. The teaching English to students is intended to master the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills will provide the ability to use the language. But it is a fact that in the teaching – learning process, some students might achieve well while others fail. So, the teacher should know the process of implementing the changes in his or her teaching methods especially in teaching language skill.

In the 2004 SMP curriculum; which is called competency based curriculum; there are fifteen subject matters that must be covered in one year. Each subject matter is divided into four parts, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the writing, unit includes composition and also grammar point.

As Katamba (1994:7) states in traditional approaches, “Grammar only includes morphology and syntax, in generative linguistic the term grammar is employed in a much wider sense. It covers not only morphology and syntax, but also semantics, the lexicon, and phonology.” There are a lot of points of grammar and one of them is tense; which consists of sixteen tenses. Based on competency based curriculum, there are only two tenses for the first year students, six tenses for the second year students, and no tense for the third year students taught in junior high school.

Based on a small survey that the writer has made, some teachers teach tenses by using the same ways for years. Teachers explain the meaning of tenses at the first, then the forms, the time signal and the last give students exercises. This condition can make students get bored in teaching-learning process, because they do not find a new challenging.

In order to make a grammar lesson effective, beneficial, and interesting, a teacher should use some integrated sources and fascinating techniques in the classroom. Saricoban (2000) states, "The example of such integrated sources and technique, the use of songs, verse, and games." The technique that will be used in this study is the use of songs. Songs are very powerful tools to have people be linguistically creative. They are also one of the most enchanting and culturally rich resources that can be easily used in language classrooms. In addition, songs offer a change from routine classroom activities; which can make students enjoy the lesson. Cakir (1999) states, "Language teachers in Turkey, for example, have been using English language songs to help children improve their English trough enjoyable activities."

Using English songs has been done in Turkey by Saricoban, Cakir, and many teachers and worked. Therefore, the writer thinks that this way of teaching can be tried out here to improve the teaching learning process in the classroom.

2. METHOD

Teaching Based on Competency Based Curriculum

Indonesian government has made 2004 competency based curriculum for teaching. This curriculum is intended to:

1. Develop the abilities of communication both written and spoken language. These abilities consist of four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
2. Grow the awareness of hierarchy of language, English or other foreign languages and Indonesian as mother tongue to compare Indonesian to other foreign languages especially English.
3. Develop the comprehension about the relation of language and culture. Thus, students exceed and involve themselves in them.

(Based on Depdiknas competency based curriculum 2004)

Competency based curriculum is very different from the previous curriculum. In this curriculum, students are expected:

1. To learn to do
2. To learn to know
3. To learn to be
4. To learn to live together

To achieve these, a teacher can use the technology development of communication and information. This can be printed media and electronic media. Printed media can be a magazine, newspaper, brochure, textbook, etc. Whereas electric media can be computer, TV, radio, internet, VCD, CD, etc. Students can increase their ability in reading through internet and computer and their ability in listening trough radio, tape, and TV.

Songs

According to Chambers, the definition of song is a set of words to be sung, often include accompanying music. Thesaurus (1989: 560) states that song is music or a piece of music intended for vocal expression (play and sing a song).

English songs are ideal for learning all the language skills. As Dubin and Olshtain (1977: 200) states, "Songs material is adaptable to any number possibilities in the language classroom; songs can be utilized as presentation context, as reinforcement materials, as vehicle through which is suitable to practice stress. Pronunciation or speaking skills, as for example, these certain frequent repetitions of particular grammar points of structural elements."

Songs can be given to almost all people. They can be given or used not only for young children, but also for adult. Like Berghouse (1975: 204) says, "Almost everyone like song, and we have found these songs a great help in making our English classes more enjoyable and more effective. I hope that many other teachers may bring extra dimension of interest to their classes through using songs..."

Lo and Fai Li (1998: 8) states, "Learning English through songs also provide a non-threatening atmosphere for students, who usually are tense when speaking English in a formal setting." And Santoso (1996: ix) also states, "Banyak bahan telah dirancang menggunakan lagu-lagu untuk mengajarkan kosakata, tata kalimat, atau untuk tujuan diskusi." From this quotation, teaching tenses through songs can be taught in the classroom activities. When children like the songs, they will try to memorize all the words in the songs. Therefore, through English songs, we will create enjoyable situation for the students in learning English that leads to the grammar points. They have new variation in learning grammar point. It can encourage students to learn grammar, remember it, motivate them and draw their utmost attention on the subject during teaching. In order to achieve teaching tenses through songs better, it needs a media as Briand (1971: 34) states, "Turning students on through multimedia. It means that students work better if plugged into multimedia, such as by using slide projectors, three-screen panels for viewing, kinescopes on television monitors, cassette tape recorders, and record players."

Arsyad (1997: 36) divides media into five groups based on utilization, they are: (1) human media: teacher, instructor, tutor, field trip, (2) print media: books, module, work book, (3) visual media: charts, map, pictures, (4) audio visual media: video, tape, slide tape program, television, and (5) computer media: interactive video, hypertext. Radio, television and recorded programs are among the many media available for use in the process of teaching.

The application of media will certainly bring about changes in the students' process of learning and motivation to learn. They will get different experience if they are exposed to the use of media. The function of media (Gagne, 1978: 54) is to deliver the communications of stimulation of which instruction is composed. From the various application of the media, this research used tape as the media to conduct a study by using songs, which was played directly from the media.

There are many reasons why songs and singing songs should be included in teaching process, such as:

1. Songs add variety to lesson.
2. Songs increase motivation and create relaxed atmosphere.
3. Songs involve participation of all members.
4. Songs help students practice new vocabulary, grammar items, pronunciation, and listening.
5. Songs offer a lot of additional cultural input.

(Based on Everett, 1987, Kurtology-Eken, 1996, Monreal, 1982)

Choosing songs for practicing certain activities is not always an easy task. There are a lot of songs that can be taken into consideration, but only limited numbers of them are really acceptable. Most of songs which students like are pop, rock, but country and folk songs can be included as well. The chosen songs must fulfill the purpose that used for (Coromina, 1993: 30). This means that the words in the songs must be in accordance with the level of the students' knowledge and with the material used in class (Santibanez, 1979: 16).

The songs that are used in this study are two. They are "Yesterday" by The Beatles, and "Mother, How are You Today" by unknown artist. For the first song is used to teach simple past to students. And the second song is used to teach simple present.

Songs are precious resources to develop students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Besides, the four language skills, songs also include some grammar points; for example tenses; that it can be seen through the lyrics.

There are many kinds of English songs; namely pop, rock, jazz, heavy metal, slow-rock, pop-rock, etc. A teacher must consider the kinds of songs and the purpose of a song to fulfill, so that students can accept them. Most of students like pop songs and slow rock songs.

When a teacher teaches tenses through songs, the atmosphere of class will be changed from a serious atmosphere into relax one. This condition will make students enjoy learning the grammar. If students like the songs, they will try to memorize it including the grammar taught. Hence, students are motivated to learn grammar.

This research used pop songs to conduct the research for students grade VIII at SMP Budi Utomo Binjai.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tense

Tense is one of grammar points taught to the students. This is taught from junior high school until university students. According to The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, the definition of tense is verb form that shows exact time.

Celce (1983: 61) states, there are twelve traditional English "tenses". They are (1) Simple Present Tense, (2) Present Progressive, (3) Simple Past, (4) Pas Progressive, (5) Simple Future, (6) Future Progressive, (7) Present Perfect, (8) Present Perfect Progressive, (9) Past Perfect, (10) Past Perfect progressive, (11) Future Perfect, (12) Future Perfect Progressive.

In this study, the writer only observed two kinds of the tenses, namely simple present and simple past. Since for the grade VIII in junior high school, simple present and simple past are taught based on the curriculum. The data were taken by administrating pre-test and post-test to both experimental and control groups. Before the post-test, the writer applied a kind of treatment by teaching the groups about simple present and simple past by using songs for experimental group. The data shows the lowest score of pre-test is 30, and post-test is 55; while the highest score for pre-test is 80 and post-test is 90. For control group shows the data after administrating the pre-test and post-test; which the lowest score in pre-test is 15, and the lowest score in post-test is 30. While the highest score for pre-test is 75 and for post-test is 80.

From the twelfth tenses, one of the major challenges in teaching students how to use the tenses of English is not so many students learn the uses of each individual tense but getting students sensitized to the differences between and among the test. In this research, the writer only puts two tenses; they are Simple Present and Simple Past. Helz (1979: 62) consulted for a discussion of these tenses.

Simple Present

Simple present is usually used for these activities:

1. Habitual actions in the present.
e.g. He walks to school everyday
2. General timeless truths, e.g. physical laws or customs.
e.g. Water freezes at 0⁰C
3. With be and other stative verbs in the present tense.
Stative verbs normally are not verbs of state – or stative verbs – which fall into following main categories.
Sensory perception or physical perception verbs. It means that verbs related to the five senses; such as see, observe, look at, watch, notice, smell, hear, listen to, feel, taste. When an immediate and literal sensory perception is being expressed without any suggestion of hallucination or impermanence. E.g: I see a tree behind the house.
Mental perception, e.g. know, believe, doubt, understand, remember – with no expression of change overtime or of discrete successive states. E.g. Zake knows the answer. General stative verbs that can express either sensory or mental perception are seem and appear.
Emotion – e.g. want, desire, love, hate, like, dislike – without any added expression of change overtime or of exceptionally strong feeling. E.g. we desire an explanation.
Measurement – e.g. weigh, cost, measure, equal. E.g. this steak weigh 10 oz.
Relationship – e.g. have, own, contain, entail, and belong. E.g. Phill has a new car.
4. In the subordinate clause with verbs in future time.
e.g. After he finishes work, he will do the errands.
5. In the subordinate clause of future conditional sentence.
e.g. If she passes the bar exam, she will be able to practice law.
6. Express future (when a scheduled event is involved; usually with future time adverbial). E.g. I have a meeting next Wednesday at that time.
7. Present event/action or speech act. E.g.: Here comes the pitch; Jackson swings and misses.
8. Conversational historical present (used to refer past events in narration). E.g.: “So, he stands up in the boat and waves, his arms to catch our attention.”

Simple Present is formulated as follow:

For the positive form: Subj + Vb₁+ Obj

For the negative form: Subj + do + not + Vb stem + Obj
does

For the interrogative form: Do + Subj + Vb stem + Obj
Does

If the subject is the third person singular, the verb will be added –s, or –es, or –ies. Based on the Valentino group states the verbs using –es are that verbs having end alphabet as follow:

-o, e.g.: do → does

-ss, e.g.: miss → misses

-sh, e.g.: wash → washes

-ch, e.g.: watch → watches

But –ies is used for verbs, which the second last alphabet is consonant and ended by –y, e.g.: carry → carries, cry → cries.

And if the second last alphabet is vowel enden by-y, it will be added –s, e.g.: buy → buys, pay → pays.

For the time signals usually used for this tense are from adverb of time and adverb of frequency. It is shown as follow:

Table 1. Adverb of time and Adverb of Frequency

Adverb of Time	Adverb of Frequency
Everyday	Always, usually
Every morning	Often, once a week
Every Sunday	Three times a month
On Sunday	Sometimes
Now	Seldom
Today	never

Simple Past

The simple past is used for a completed action that happened at one specific time in the past (Michael and Ellen, 1987: 52). Simple past is formulated as follow:

For the positive form: Subj + Vb₂ + Obj

For the negative form: Subj + did + not + Vb_{stem} + Obj

And for the interrogative form: Did + Subj + Vb_{stem}

Verbs in the simple past have two kinds form; they are irregular and regular verb. Irregular verbs are sometimes very different in the present forms; for example:

Table 2. Irregular Verbs

Infinitive	Past
Beat	Beat
Begin	Began
Catch	Caught
Teach	Taught
Keep	Kept
Cut	Cut

The regular way of making the simple past is by adding –ed to the verb stem, or –d if the verb ends with the letter –e; such as:

Walk → walked

Ask → asked

Stop → stopped

Helz (1979: 63) consulted for a discussion of this tense:

1. A definite single completed even / action in the past.
e.g.: I attended a meeting of that committee last week
2. Habitual or repeated action / event in the past (suggests that come change in this habit / event has taken place).
e.g.: Sam walked his dog everyday last year.
3. An event with duration that applied in the past with the implication that it no longer applies in the present.
e.g.: Prof. Nelson taught Yale for 30 years.
4. With stative verbs in the past time.

e.g.: I saw a large house on the corner.

5. Past conditional or imaginative events in the subordinate clause.

e.g.: If he took better care of himself, he would not be absent so often.

The time signals used for the simple past are yesterday, two days ago, three weeks ago, this morning, last night, last week, last month, last year.

Teaching Process

This study is an experimental research, therefore, it deals with a design; namely experimental. The former is used to find and collect the data while the later is used to describe the findings.

To obtain the data, some activities were conducted such as dividing the samples into two groups (the experimental and the control group). The experimental group is that receives treatment by using songs in teaching tenses while the control group is the group that receives tenses in conventional way or treated without giving songs.

There were two groups or class that will be compared in this study. For the first group is called as experimental group, and another group is called control group. Experimental group means that the class will be taught by using English songs. While control group means that the class will be taught by using conventional teaching. The treatment was held after the administration of the pre-test. The procedures of this treatment are as follows:

I. With English Songs:

1. Greeting the students as usual as to start the lesson.
2. Checking if the students are mentally ready for the lesson by asking them some questions about their activities.
3. Relating the questions with the tenses taught.
4. Distributing sheets problem of the song lyrics to students.
5. Telling students the story of the songs at first.
6. Allowing the students listen to the songs three times to answer the omitted words in the lyrics.
7. Checking the students' sheet and then discussing their answer.
8. Giving the titles of songs for the treatment.

II. Conventional Treatment

1. Greeting the students as usual as a start the lesson.
2. Checking if the students are mentally ready for the lesson by asking them some questions about their activities.
3. Relating the questions with the tenses taught.
4. Making a discussion for students about two tenses; simple present and simple past.
5. Give some examples about those tenses to the students.
6. Giving students exercises about the simple present and simple past.
7. Checking students' sheet and then discussing their answer.

In order to collect data, the writer performed the objective test. The data analyzed by descriptive quantitative. The data is described systematically a situation of interest factually and accurately. To analyze the data, it is used t-test formula.

After conducting the research, the data shows; for the experimental group; the lowest score of pre-test 30, and post-test is 55. For the highest score for pre-test is 80 and the post-test is 90. With the total of the students for experimental group are thirty seven (37) students.

Whereas the data shows; for control group; the lowest score of pre-test is 15, and post-test is 30. The highest score for pre-test is 75 and post-test 80.

It is gained the result of t-test calculation is 2,9455. It means that the t-test value of the t-table for both 0,05 (5%) and 0,01 (1%) level of significance, it is found that the t-test value is higher than both level of significance value ($2,9455 > 1,9955$ and $2,9455 > 2,6501$). It clearly means that the English songs significantly affect on teaching tenses.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has reported on the results of a study that looked at the significance of teaching tenses by using English songs. This study focused on the teaching simple present and simple past to the students in junior high school in SMP Budi Utomo Binjai. The treatment that has been done were for two groups, namely experimental and control group. The students for experimental group are thirty seven students, and the students for control group are thirty three students. The treatment has been done by using English songs. The songs that was used in this study were two. Based on the study, it is found that English songs significantly affect on teaching tenses for students junior high school in SMP Budi Utomo Binjai. From this study, it is expected to give some contributions for English teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning process, particularly tenses. Besides, it is to give some contributions for English teachers who have difficulties in finding a new and enjoyable teaching method.

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