

THE MISTAKE BUSTER TECHNIQUE FOR SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

Classroom Action Research at SMPN 1 Sukasada

I.P.Y. Sudarmawan¹, N.W. Swarniti², I.K.M. Susila³

¹English Language Education, Dwijendra University
Denpasar, Indonesia

e-mail: sudarmawan@undwi.ac.id, wayanswarniti@undwi.ac.id, dedikususila@undwi.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk meningkatkan kompetensi siswa SMP N 1 Sukasada dalam menyusun kalimat Simple Present Tense dengan menerapkan konsep Subject - Verb Agreement dan Auxiliaries yang sesuai melalui *Mistake Buster Technique (MBT)*. Tata bahasa adalah salah satu komponen bahasa yang harus dikuasai oleh siswa dalam rangka mengembangkan akurasi dan kreativitas dalam menggunakan bahasa dalam komunikasi. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada peningkatan pada kemampuan siswa dalam menyusun kalimat; ditunjukkan oleh nilai rata-rata siswa yang meningkat dari siklus ke siklus. Dari hasil pengamatan ditemukan bahwa MBT memungkinkan siswa untuk menemukan dan memperbaiki kesalahan sendiri yang membantu mereka memahami struktur kalimat lebih dalam.

Kata kunci: Menyusun Kalimat, *Simple Present Tense*, *Mistake Buster Technique*

Abstract

This study was conducted to improve the competence of students of SMP N 1 Sukasada in constructing Simple Present Tense sentences by applying the concept of Subject – Verb Agreement and appropriate Auxiliaries through the Mistake Buster Technique. Grammar is one of the language components that should be mastered by the students in order to develop accuracy and creativity in using the language in communication. The findings of the study show the students' competence in constructing sentence is improving; it is shown by the students' mean score which improves from cycle to cycle. From the observation, it was found that MBT allows students to find and correct mistakes themselves which help them to understand the rules deeper.

Keywords: *Sentence Construction, Simple Present Tense, Mistake Buster Technique*

1. Introduction

Grammar is one of the language components that should be mastered by the students in order to develop accuracy and creativity in using the language in communication. By mastering grammar rules, students will easily express and gain ideas in both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/grammar>). Inappropriate perception in composing or constructing sentences by applying the concept of subject verb agreement and using appropriate auxiliaries in simple present tense leads to the failure in communication in the form of speaking and writing. It can also cause confusion, misconception and misunderstanding. Therefore, it is considered a necessity to teach the students the rules and how to use the subject verb agreement and appropriate auxiliaries properly especially in constructing sentences in the form of simple present tense.

In reality, we may find difficulties encountered by junior high school students related to the structure (grammar rules). For example, based on the preliminary observation which was done during the teaching training, it was found that the first grade students of class VII E in SMP N 1 Sukasada encountered difficulties in dealing with grammar. When the students were asked to tell about their daily activities, some students made sentences as follows; "We a happy family" instead of "we are a happy family". In this sentence, auxiliary was missing. "He go to school by Bemo". This sentence indicated wrong perception about subject – verb agreement, the verb after the word "he" must be added by "-es". So, the right one is "He goes to school by bemo. The other sentence was "Purnawan come from village sambangan"

instead of “Purnawan comes from Sambangan village”. The problem of this sentence was subject – verb agreement and word order. From those sentences, it can be concluded that the students mostly got confused when dealing with grammar particularly in using aspect of tenses such as subject – verb agreement and the use of appropriate auxiliaries in constructing sentences in the form of simple present tense. Therefore, they often made mistakes in composing or constructing a sentence in this kind of tense. As the result, students achievement was very low and do not match with the goal on the curriculum being applied.

These problems occurred because of the teaching strategy that had been conducted was teacher centered technique and grammar was taught deductively. This technique was no longer appropriate since it made the students bored and had less chance to discover the rules of grammar themselves. They just listened to the teacher’s explanation and took a note on it. After that they were asked to do some exercises in the book. When the students made mistake, the teacher had a role as a corrector of the mistake. This situation did not give a chance to the students to identify any mistake that they had made. So, they had lack opportunity to express their ideas and creativities in sentences building because the role of the teacher mostly dominates teaching and learning activities. Consequently, students would tend to be passive, bored, unmotivated in learning the subjects, and finally they would ignore the teacher explanation. Therefore, the students could not internalize the rules as well as apply it successfully.

For that reason, it is urgent for the English teacher to have a critical thinking in building or creating any variation in their teaching strategy. It can be done by applying any appropriate strategy or technique of teaching in order to deliver the language instruction better, especially the grammatical rules of language. So, what the teacher expected from their teaching can be reached successfully.

Based on this reality, the writer proposes to use “The Mistake Buster” technique to solve the problem. This technique eases teacher and motivates students to be actively involved during the teaching and learning process. Besides, it can also encourage students to use language communicatively. Here, teacher prepares an activity where the students take over the role of correcting mistakes which is normally done by the teacher, while the teacher becomes the mistake maker. Through this technique, students will actively involved in the learning process and take a charge of their learning by giving students the opportunity to find and correct mistake by themselves (Huynh, 2003).

Finally, the mistake buster technique is expected to be the appropriate technique to overcome the problems encountered by the first year students of SMP N 1 Sukasada in constructing sentences by using subject – verb agreement and appropriate auxiliaries in simple present tense.

The teaching of language cannot be separated from the teaching of its grammar. In order to be able to speak and write well and to comprehend written and spoken text, students have to master the rules governing the use of language itself. To cope with that fact, Walsh (1972) in Mujoko (2000; 4) states that learning grammar will help the students to master the four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Another fact is that the grammar of a language is necessary to be learned with the purpose of being able to be a native – like or near native – like speaker Kweccien (2005). Those facts may be used as a fundamental reason to give a specific emphasis on the teaching of grammatical rules of language in the classroom.

There are many theorists gave definition of sentence and its types. Geoffrey Leach, Margareth Deucher, and Robert Hoogenraad (1981) as cited in Wijaya (2001) views that a sentence normally consist of either single clause, in which it is known as a simple sentence, or more than one clause in which it is known as complex sentence. Whereas, Trask (1993) in Suarta (2002) defines a sentence as any utterances or written sequence of words, which is regarded as capable of standing alone to express a coherent thought. Meanwhile, P. Tomasouw (1986) in his book stated a sentence as a form of language that can stand by itself, it is not inserted into another form of language that is bigger and has grammatical construction. According to Hornby (1975), a sentence is the largest grammatical unit

consisting of phrases and or clauses used to express a statement, question, command, etc. Furthermore, a sentence is a set of words expressing a statement, question or command. Sentences usually contain a subject and a verb.

Kwecien. (2005) defines grammar as a description of certain organizing aspects of particular language. Further he said that it usually includes phonological (sounds), morphological (word composition) and syntactic (sentence composition) points. Hubbard (1992) also gives a definition of grammar. He states that grammar is the way of spoken words and written words are put together so that thought and ideas can go from one person to another.

The Mistake Buster Technique

This subsection presents three main parts, namely the brief overview of the mistake buster technique, the implementation of the mistake buster technique, and the advantages and the disadvantages of the mistake buster technique.

Huynh (2003) said that the reason behind this idea is simply to help students learn better by creating good opportunities for them to reflect on what they have learned and now take a look at it from a different angle. In this technique, teacher prepares an activity where the students take over the role of correcting mistake which is normally done by the teacher, while the teacher deliberately becomes the “mistake maker”. Through this technique, students will actively engage in learning process and take charge of their learning by giving students the opportunities to find and correct mistake themselves.

Huynh (2003) proposes some steps before implementing this technique. First of all teacher should choose a mistake category which is pertinent to the focus of the lesson being taught. Here, the simple present tense sentence will be used as an example. The next step is preparing the mistakes; false Subject – Verb Agreement and Auxiliaries that should be found and corrected by the students. Those mistakes can be in form of: Verbs list (want, need, work, visit, come, take, bring, go, send, clean, enjoy, study, use, make, finish, etc), Short sentence (she go to bed at 10.00 every night” or “My mother call me if I am late), Long sentences (Jacky don’t go to school because he have an accident, but fortunately he don’t broke a bone or anything.” Or “every night she is studies and does the homework as the preparation for tomorrow), and Narrative (I have a really good day yesterday. First my sister calls me from California in the morning then we talk for nearly an hour. She tells me many exciting things about life in California and promise to call me again soon. Then I go to school and taken a rest. It were quite easy because I study very hard last week to prepare for it. On the way home, I run to my best friend and decide to go for coffee. We find a nice place and enjoy a nice coffee there. We just have a good time together).

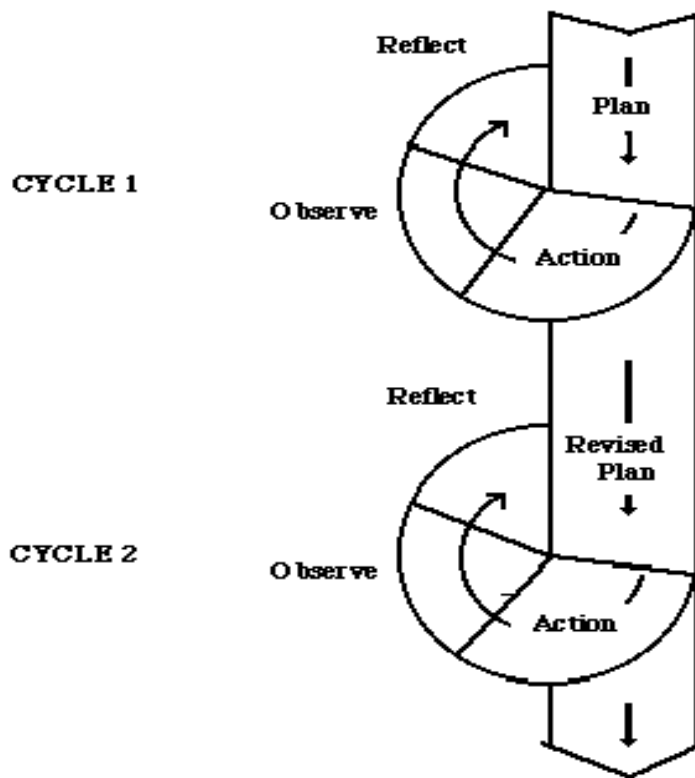
There are several advantages of The Mistake Buster Technique; Students get excited when the role of “mistake corrector” is switched, especially when the class is divided into several teams/groups to compete each other, Students have the opportunity to identify the possible mistakes themselves and give them a sense of accomplishment, Through this technique, teacher can check their students’ understanding of a grammar point, This technique can also reinforce and improve students’ production skills such as writing and pronunciation, and This technique is non – threatening and fun which is the best condition for learning to take place, Huynh (2003)

2. Research Methodology

The subject of this study was the first year student (VII E) of SMP N 1 Sukasada. There are 35 students specifically involving 13 males and 22 females. The students were chosen as subject because the result of the preliminary observation revealed that most students in this year were having problem in constructing Simple Present Tense sentences.

This study was an action based research so that the researcher needs to consider the procedures of doing this study. The steps of conducting an action based research are in form of cyclic process of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis and Targgart, 1998). It is normal for the project to go through two or more cycles.

The action based research spiral can be figured as follows:



The figure above shows the cycles which would be conducted in this study. At first, the pre – cycle was conducted to obtain the preliminary data about the students' competence in constructing simple present tense sentence. In this case, the student was given a pre – test to be answered. They were also be provided by questionnaire about the teaching of English especially the teaching of grammar conducted by their teacher.

After conducting the pre – cycle where the reflection was obtained, the result will be used as a contribution in designing the planning of the cycle 1. It involved the planning, action, observation, and reflection. The result of the cycle 1 would determine the next cycle (Cycle 2). If the result of the cycle 1 was not satisfying; below the Minimum Mastery Criteria. Then, the researcher would conduct the second cycle. In addition, if the result of the second cycle still not satisfying, it will considered necessary to conduct the next cycle. In addition, In this study, the instruments that were used in collecting the data were teaching and learning scenario, test, teacher's diary and questionnaires.

The data was analyzed descriptively after being collected. There were two types of data that would be obtained namely qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was taken from the result of the tests that were carried out at the end of the cycle (Post – Test). The qualitative data was obtained from the observation sheet (teacher's diary) and questionnaires conducted during the treatment during the cycle. Then, the data was analyzed descriptively by finding the students' mean scores of the Pre – Test and Post – Test. The data was calculated by using the following formulas:

1. The score of each students

$$\text{Score} = \text{number of correct answer} \times 4$$

2. The mean score of the students (\bar{X})

The mean score (\bar{X}) was analyzed by using the following formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum x}{n} \quad (1)$$

Where, $\sum X$ = The total score of the students
 n = The total number of the students

3. The percentage of the students' score

Another formula to know the percentage of the students' score, according to Marsidjo (1995) in Wiryasuta (2005) will be:

$$\% = \frac{\text{The score obtained}}{\text{Maximum score}} \times 100\% \quad (2)$$

4. The result of the Questionnaires

The result of the questionnaires was gained by using the following:

$\frac{\text{Number of items chosen by the students} \times 100\%}{\text{Total number of the students}} \quad (3)$
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Marsidjo (1995) in Wiryasuta (2005)

This study would be considered successful if there was an improvement on the students' mean score. The criterion that was used in this study depends on the ideal passing of the mean score proposed by *Standard Ketuntasan Belajar Minimal* (SKBM) SMP N 1 Sukasada in the academic year 2008 – 2009. The minimum competence that is considered as the passing score is 60 for the individual mastery that is categorized into moderate level of mastery, and the cycle will be stopped when 85% of the students for classical mastery could pass the examination.

The action would be considered success and the action would be stopped when the classical mean score of the students reached the passing grade used in the school where the study was conducted. For instance, the passing grade of the students' mean score in SMP N 1 Sukasada where the study was conducted is ($X \geq 60$).

3. Findings and Discussions

Before the treatment was conducted, a pre – observation had been done to get preliminary data of the students' achievement in constructing simple present tense sentences by applying the concepts of Subject – Verb Agreement and appropriate auxiliaries.

Planning had been arranged by the researcher so that all of the activities would be well organized. Those planning were as follows:

Constructing pre – test; The pre – test consisted of 25 items of multiple choices consisted of 12 items about the use of appropriate auxiliaries and the rest 13 items were about the use of Subject – Verb Agreement. The result of the test would be considered as a reference in conducting the research.

Constructing questionnaires; The questionnaire was given to the students to gain information about their opinion, interest and behavior toward the teaching of English especially in the area of simple present tense. The questionnaires consisted of 7 items that should be answered by the students honestly.

In this test, the lowest score of the students was 28 and the highest one was 88. The mean score of the students was 49.77 which showed poor criteria of score. The result of the students' mean score indicates that the students had a problem in constructing sentence in the form of simple present tense by using subject – verb agreement and appropriate auxiliaries.

From the Post – Test I, it was found out that there was good improvement on the students’ mean score. The score increased from 49.77% (result of pre- test) which was categorized as poor level of mastery to 64.23% (result of post- test I) that could be categorized as moderate level of mastery (see 3, 28). However, the result of the test showed that there were still some students who obtained the score less than 60. It was due to the fact that such students paid less attention to the classroom activities. So, they should be given more attention in the presentation of the technique on next cycle. Based on the results of questionnaire, it proved that some students less interesting in learning in group, but almost all of them said that they could learn from other while working in group. Meanwhile, in the questionnaire given, students stated their problems in constructing sentences, most of them said that they felt hard to find the meaning of the word in English (translation) and hard to find ideas in constructing sentences. Therefore, the sentences they constructed were almost similar to their teammate. In reflecting this fact, it was decided to create new strategy in management of grouping the students. Besides, in presenting the material, teacher would provide students with so many examples which were familiar to them. So, they would be easily gaining ideas in constructing sentences.

Based on the reflection done in Cycle I, new plan was made to be applied in the second cycle in order to improve students’ competence in constructing sentences in form of simple present tense. Some plans were prepared by the researcher, such as; selecting the materials which would be different from those in Cycle I (“Traditional and Modern Games” and “Sports”), setting up teaching scenario, preparing the instruments, and preparing Post – Test II for the students.

The result of Post – Test II reflected that the students made a good improvement being compared with the result of Pre – Test and Post – Test 1. There was a significant improvement on students’ ability which increased continuously. It increased from 49.77 in the pre – test to 64.23 in the Cycle I and then became 75.89 in the Cycle II. Meaning that, the application of the MBT could help the students in constructing simple present tense sentence.

Based on the result of teacher’s diary on Cycle II, it could be concluded that the teaching learning activities proceeded in a good and effective way. The students’ attitude and participation during teaching and learning process was really good. Their performances in this cycle were better than the previous one. They really enjoyed their role as a mistake corrector. They showed a good motivation in doing the activities and actively involved in discovering the rules of grammar which made the teaching and learning process ran smoothly. Consequently, all mistakes given could be corrected perfectly. The students did not realize that they discovered the rules of grammar themselves.

In relation to the result of questionnaire, it was found that students liked to learn English especially grammar through the MBT. They enjoyed learning by using this technique because they felt this technique much helped them in learning English especially constructing sentences. They also actively involved in discovering the rules of making sentences. Furthermore, most of the students enjoyed learning in group since they could share ideas and even could learn from other. And the most important thing was that they were able to construct sentences in form of simple present tense properly.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the application of the MBT can overcome the students’ problem in constructing simple present tense sentence by using subject verb agreement and appropriate auxiliaries. Thus, the study was considered successful and going to be finished.

The improvement of students’ mean score during the whole process of this study could be seen in the following table.

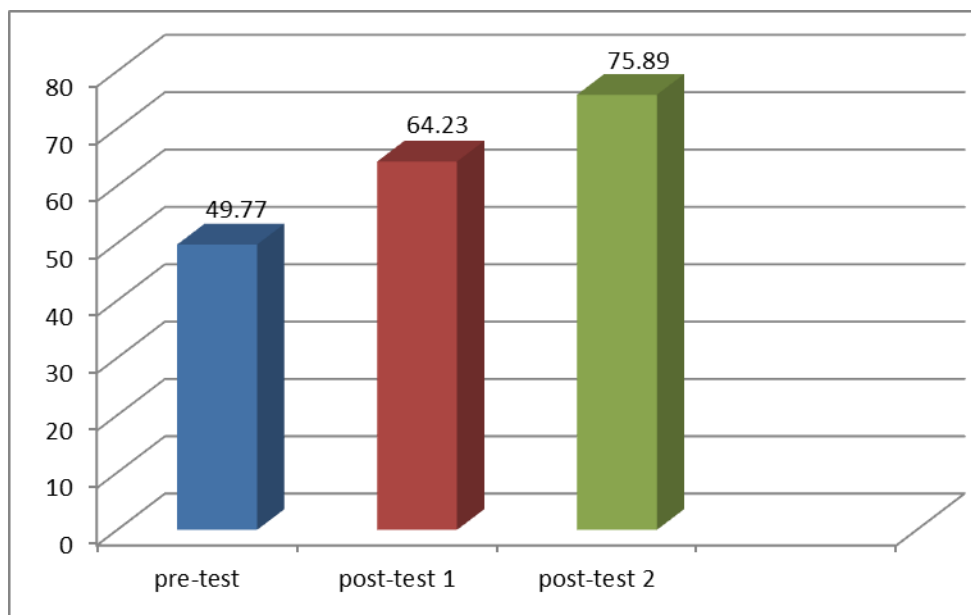
Table.1 The Improvement of the Students’ Mean Score

Type of Test	Mean Score	Level of Mastery
Pre- Test	49.77	Poor

Post- Test I	64.23	Moderate
Post- Test II	75.89	Good

Table above shows the improvement of students' mean score from test to test. The students' competence increased from 49.77 in pre – test which can be said as poor into 64.23 which was categorized as moderate level of mastery. Moreover, the students' mean score was categorized into good level of mastery in the cycle II which increased to 75.89.

From the table above, the improvement of the mean score of the students can be shown in the following graph:



4. Conclusion and Suggestion

As what had been stated previously, this study was conducted to know whether the Mistake Buster Technique (MBT) could improve the students' competence in constructing sentences in form of Simple Present Tense. Based on the analysis after applying the MBT, the following conclusion could be drawn;

The application of MBT could improve students' mastery in grammar (Simple Present Tense), especially the first year students of SMP N 1 Sukasada. Considering students' mean score in every cycle conducted, they made a good improvement. It was proven by the continual improvement of the mean score in each cycle of this study. The mean score of the pre- test was 49.77 which was categorized into poor level of mastery. The students' achievement in learning English grammar had improved after the application of MBT. It was confirmed by the result of the post- test I that was 64.23 which then increased and could reach the good level of mastery, which was 75.89 in the post test II. It proved that the application of MBT contributed significantly in improving the students' competence in learning to construct Simple Present Tense sentences.

In addition, the result of teacher's diary and questionnaires showed that the students respond positively toward the application of MBT. They were very happy, enthusiastic and active in following the activity during teaching and learning process, especially when they realize that they were responsible for their own learning. They also seemed more ready when they should work in group. It can be concluded that the use of MBT in group work really helped the students because they could share their ideas and knowledge as well as their opinions in correcting mistakes given by the researcher.

Based on the results of this study, number of suggestions are made for teacher and students: For the English teacher; English has so complex and many kinds of grammar rules, the teacher is expected to be creative and innovative, especially in finding the appropriate technique to help the students in studying those rules. In other side, it is recommended for English teacher to apply this technique in their teaching since the result of the study proves a significant improvement. Meanwhile, for the student: regarding to the result of this study, it is suggested for the students to apply this technique when dealing with grammar, especially in constructing sentence in simple present tense.

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