

Applying Group Work to Improve Student's Grammar Achievements

Farisatma¹, Nasmilah² & Fathu Rahman³

¹Postgrade Student of ELS, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University

^{2,3}Teaching staffs of ELS, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Abstract: Grammar is one of the English language elements which is very important to be mastered in all skill of language such as speaking, reading, and writing. In English learning subject, teacher emphasizes student to be focus best on grammar if they want to master English. However, many students still low in grammar skill. They felt that learning grammar is difficult. Students tend to be passive because of the way teacher brings the material is monotonous. The aim of this paper is to find out the increase of students' achievement in learning past tense grammar by applying group work. This study used a descriptive quantitative research. The sample of this study was 40 students by using purposive sampling. The instrument of this study was an instructional past tense test that consisted of 40 items. The procedure of collecting data used test distribution and analysis data. The finding showed that students had high achievement in grammar through group work learning. It was indicated by the mean score was 5.58 at pre-test, it meant that the students' grammar ability was in Low criteria, and then the mean score became 7.55 at post-test, it meant that the students' grammar ability was in High criteria. It means that applying group work improves students' grammar achievement significantly.

Keywords: Grammar, Students' achievement, Grammar ability

1. Introduction

English in senior high school is aimed at developing the four language skills in order that the students are expected have ability to do communication both in written and oral language to achieve functional and informational literacy. In the first year of Senior High School, particularly in the productive skill such as writing and speaking, the basic competency that should be achieved is the students have ability to develop and produce written and oral simple functional text in the recount text, narrative text, news items, procedures, and descriptive text. They can use right diction, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and organization. As an element of language, Grammar takes an important

role in learning process of English. "Grammar may also as the basic signals by which a language transmits meaning"[1]. It means that grammar is what we learn in our native language, thus, any native speaker of a certain language knows the grammar of his language. Therefore, if we know how to construct sentence in order to say that grammar consists of the patterns of utterance in using a language. So grammar will usually control the use of language. For many years, student has been taught grammar in English subject. They have been taught since in elementary school. So, when they're going to tenth grade in senior high school, absolutely it can be easier for developing their knowledge in English, especially in grammar. Furthermore, various way and methods have been applied by teacher to teach grammar such as using direct method, grammar translation and the others. However, this phenomenon still gives dissatisfaction in students' grammar achievement. Based on the explanation above, the problem statement can be raised that although senior high students have been long time to be settled in grammar knowledge of English and teacher have applied some kinds of methods to achieve students' grammar ability, but still the students have low achievement in grammar especially in the form of past tense grammar.

Some researches has shown finding related to the use of group work in learning grammar for students. A previous research about the social effect of cooperative work in learning grammar, the result found that cooperative work had positive impact on social variable including inter group relation, ability to work collaboratively with other and self esteem [2]. In addition, another research also found that the group work could motivate students' learning interest and motivation, cultivate their exploring ability and creative thinking [3]. As mentioned above, it can be said that group work has good effect in learning grammar not only in social aspect but also in students' cognitive aspect.

However, these reports are not conclusive because researches only focus on the students' motivation to use group work in learning grammar. It

should be completed by showing the progress of students' grammar achievement to know in what extent applying group work can help students in their grammar learning. In short, applying group work in learning grammar to know students' motivation are a limit information to confirm that group work can be used as a good learning technique.

This paper finds out whether the use of group work can improve students' grammar achievement at senior high school level or not. It is because of since twenty century language teaching and learning method was characterized by frequent change and innovation [4]. In English teaching and learning, there are many method and technique that can be applied by teacher to teach the material especially grammar to make learning more successfully. Mostly ,in teaching grammar teacher develops method without considering the learning need of the student. The teacher presents material by focusing of dictation and doing written task. Consequently, this phenomenon affected the students' achievement. Here, the students must be encouraged to respond to the text and situation with their own thoughts rather than just answering question and doing abstract learning activity [5]. Therefore, to determine that group work is the good technique in learning grammar especially past tense grammar, it is very important to do research in applying group work. So, by this research it can confirmed the progress of student' achievement in learning grammar.

As a result, this present research gives the emphasis for applying group work to the development of language learning, especially in learning grammar. This has been taught to students at *SMAN 2 Baubau* and shown that there was an improvement in grammar achievement. The result of this study is proposed practically to the other English teachers in senior high school to conduct the teaching and learning process, especially in the field of grammar.

2. Gap of the study

Applying group work is an instructional model that also shifts the focus of learning to the student. A primary goal in group work is that each student becomes a heterogeneous groups to master the content. The students are not only responsible for learning the material, but also for helping their group mates in learning. The group work has enhanced students' goals for lessons, helped students take responsibility through roles, improves students' motor skills and strategizing, enhanced students' communication skills, improves students' working together and help students accountable through the use peer assessment and task sheets. However, group

learning fosters learning and comprehension. Students working in small groups have a tendency to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same material is presented in other instructional formats [6]. "Students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities in the classroom and who interact more with group members get better grades, are more satisfied with their education, and are more likely to remain in school" [7]. In sum, those theories are in the field of the benefit of group work generally and theoretically.

However, the researcher does not get enough data that specific to achievement in learning grammar for students in certain levels. In Dyson theory, it explains about group work and its benefit to the student to enhance their learning goal. In addition, Barkley et al also give their statement that group work affect the content of material that is taught can be retained longer in student's memory. Besides, in Wasley also give argument that students who are settled in group work can achieve good grade especially to outside classroom activity. Those theories do not give limitation in language learning and in what specific part of language learning that must be enhanced optimally. In brief, the theories are still lack of confirmation in what part of language learning specifically to be learnt. By applying group work, it can make the emphasis of grammar learning is more effective rather than other part of language.

Although, Dyson, Barkley, and Wasley as well, they only stated theoretically, a previous research has been carried out on applying group work in language learning especially focus on grammar. A research was conducted to measure the impact of group work on students' achievement of English grammar [8]. Liao's study examined the impact of group work on motivation, learning strategy utilization and grammar achievement of English foreign language learners in Taiwan. In his study, he used a quasi-experimental comparison group study for three months was designed. Forty-two students of two college classes participated in the study. Learners' pre-test and post-test scores were used to collect data. The result revealed that cooperative learning had large positive effects on motivation and English grammar achievement. The research had success to support the learning in applying group works, especially in grammar proficiency, strategy and motivation to the students. But, the research did not give any explanation or clarify in what form of grammar the students were successful on it. Here, the limitation of his research has made his study report still inconclusively and calling for some questions for the exact benefit of applying group work in grammar learning.

The finding of this research not only confirm the benefit of applying group work in learning grammar, but also more clear in what kind of grammar that have to be achieved for senior high school students. In conducting this research, it was supported by good procedures to gain accurate data. By giving limitation to grammar material that refers to past tense form and it is aimed to students' level in senior high school, it makes this research becomes more clear in categorizing the level of students and kinds of grammar. Furthermore, what this research used, especially in applying group work for learning grammar, it can be the evidence to applying group work in learning grammar in the form of past tense for senior high school students as an effective technique of learning activity.

3. Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to reveal whether group work affect students' grammar achievement.

4. Method

This research used a descriptive quantitative research and applied pre-experimental design. A single group is observed at two time points, one before the treatment and one after the treatment. Changes in the outcome of interest are presumed to be the result of the intervention or treatment.

5. Population

The population of this research was the first grade students of *SMA Negeri 2 Baubau* in academic year 2012 / 2013. There were eleven classes on the first year students of *SMA Negeri 2 Baubau* which is separated in class X1 through X11. Each class consist of 40 until 44 students. So the numbers of population of this research were approximately 432 students.

6. Sample

In taking the sample of this research, the researcher used purposive sampling. The sample was class X4 which is consist of 40 students.

7. Procedure of the study

Technique of data collection was done by following procedures, as follows:

1. The researcher gave pre-test to know the students' prior knowledge in learning past tense grammar before treatment.

2. The researcher gave the treatment for six meetings. At the first meeting after pre-test, students were taught the overview of past tense such as the form, the rule, and the fuction by the teacher.

Second meeting, students were formed into ten groups by the teacher. In each group consists of four students. Third meeting, the teacher asked the students to discuss the grammar test and give a question and students prepare their answer with providing reasons. In the fourth, the teacher calls a numbers 1, 2, 3, or 4. The students from different groups with that number leave the group to give their group answer. In the fifth, the teacher asked the students to repeat with some or all the other answer. And the last meeting, the students discuss in groups and then a whole class, in order to get the true answer according to the question and the teacher evaluated their result of discussion.

8. Data analysis

To evaluate the test given to the students in pretest and posttest, the researcher adapted from 'Standar Isi Depdiknas' [9]. The Students' score will be determined as follows:

1. Adding up all the corect answer
2. Deviding it with the total number of test item
3. Multiplying it with 100.

Furthermore, students' score could be classified into the following table.

Table 1. Students' score criteria

Score	Classification
80 – 100	Excellent
70 – 79	Good
60 – 69	Fair
0 – 59	Poor

Furthermore, to find out the mean score, the researcher determined it by using the following rule:

1. Multiplying the score with the number of frequency.
2. Adding up all the students' scores.
3. Dividing it with the total number of students.

In addition, the mean score described by using the following criteria scale:

Table 2. Students' mean score classification

Score	Criteria
8 – 10	Very high
7 – 7.9	High
6 – 6.9	Moderate
0 – 5.9	Low

The results of data analysis were then used to present an evidence of applying group work as an effective technique to improve students' achievement in learning grammar at SMAN 2 Baubau.

9. Result and discussion

Table 3. Students' grammar achievement in pre-test and post-test.

Student Achievement in Pretest			Student Achievement in Post test		
Score	Category	Frequency	Score	Category	Frequency
7.50	High	1			
7.25	High	2	9.25	Very high	7
6.75	Moderate	4	8.75	Very high	1
6.50	Moderate	5	8.25	Very high	2
6.25	Moderate	2	8.00	Very high	3
6.00	Moderate	7	7.75	High	4
5.50	Low	4	7.50	High	3
5.25	Low	2	7.25	High	4
5.00	Low	4	7.00	High	2
4.75	Low	3	6.75	Moderate	2
4.25	Low	1	6.50	Moderate	12
3.75	Low	3			
2.50	Low	2			
223.25	Low	40	302	High	40
Mean			Mean		
5.58			7.55		

From the table 3, it can be shown that students' achievement of grammar in pretest section resulted that the score lead into low criteria. It can be shown by the mean score of students' achievement in 5.58. While in posttest section showed the mean score of the students' achievement in 7.55 which meant that the score lead into high criteria.

The main goal of this research was to find out the increase of students' achievement in learning grammar by applying group work. This section deals with the discussion of applying group work in learning grammar for senior high school students. The result shows that the mean score of students' achievement in pretest was 5.58. it indicates students' competence in grammar get low criteria. Here, the students have not had a good enough competence in grammar. However, the students do not show any learning technique to work out with their grammar difficulties and tend to be passive one in doing test. So, it needs treatment to improve their grammar achievement by applying an learning technique to make them effective in mastering grammar. In other hand, after giving a treatment that is aplying group work to learn grammar in form of past tense particularly, students get improvement to their achievement. It can be seen by the result of students' achievement in posttest which gained the mean score 7.55 (table 3) that lead in high criteria. It indicates that group work improves students' grammar competence effectively and it is proved by the significant increase of students' grammar achievement. Additionally, in learning grammar by applying group work, students more being active because they interact each other among their groups' member to discuss the material and expressing their idea.

Besides, grammar has always been an important issue in second and foreign language learning and teaching. It is also an area of some controversy as there is much debate regarding its role in language learning and teaching. Some hold the view that grammar is not essential for second or foreign language learning and therefore have a 'zero position' regarding grammar teaching. On the other hand, some view that grammar is necessary for second/foreign language learning. In English learning classroom, grammar is one of the language element that is very important to be learned by the students. "If student can master grammar, he or she can unlock ideas and thoughts that were written across time and place" [10]. Proper grammar is very important. Correct grammar keeps from being misunderstood and lets the students effectively express their thoughts and ideas.

The results can be generalized to recommend that group work can be applied as an effective learning technique to improve students' grammar achievement in senior high school.

10. Conclusion

It has been explained that grammar is one of the main element of language which is very important to be mastered in all skill such as speaking, reading, and writing. Based on the finding of this study, it can be concluded that there was a significant effect of students' achievement in English grammar after being taught through the use of group work technique. The descriptive analysis proves also that the mean score of students' achievement in english grammar before applying group work technique is low category. It is indicated the mean mark in pre test is 5.58 or it was low category. Meanwhile, the mean score of students' achievement in english grammar after applying Group work technique is high category. It is indicated the mean score in post test was 7.55 which meant that in high category. So, it can be drawn an evidence that group work as an effective learning technique to student that can be used to improve the students' achievement in learning grammar particularly in form of past tense for senior high school student.

Furthermore, by considering the finding of this study, the researcher suggested to the English teacher since the researcher was proved that group work technique contributed to students' achievement in grammar mastery, English teacher are highly recommended to implemenet this technique to teach grammar as the intentional grammar learning instruction.

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