

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEME-BASED TEACHING IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' GRAMMAR SKILL

Sartika Permata Rosemery

Department of English Education, Indonesia University of Education

sartika.permata.rosemery@student.upi.edu

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Abstract

The study entitled "The Implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in Improving Students' Grammar Skill" was aimed to find out the effectiveness of theme-based teaching in improving students' grammar skill and the students' responses toward the treatment. In this study, two different treatments were given to be compared hence quasi-experimental was conducted. The research involves two groups of participants, namely experimental group and control group. Furthermore, pre-test, posttest and questionnaire were chosen as the instruments of the research in gaining the data. The result of the data demonstrated that theme-based teaching was able to exhibit statically significant result toward students' grammar skill. Moreover, the students' responses which are collected through the questionnaire revealed positive attitudes. Therefore, the implementation of theme-based teaching is effective in Junior High School especially in improving students' grammar skill.

Keywords: Theme-based teaching; grammar; teaching grammar

INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool that has a primary function to communicate information. As a global language, English is believed as one of the important language to be learned in many countries (David, 2003). As in Indonesia, English has been taught since the elementary to the senior stage in order to help the students gaining the communicative skills. In order to gain the communicative skill, there are four domains of skill that should be mastered by the students, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In learning those four domains, the learners need to know the rules so that they can use the language properly.

In order to help people to use English properly, the government has put English as a subject in most of schools in Indonesia. As stated above, English has been taught since the elementary stage to the senior stage. However, teaching English is not an easy task for the teacher (Claude, 2008). Therefore, many teaching methods have been proposed to help the teacher teaching English in the classroom, especially for the students who

have English a foreign language. One of them is theme-based teaching.

It is stated that theme-based teaching is a tool for teaching a set of skill and content by integrating the material around a topic (Institute, 2016). It means that by using this method, the learner will learn around one topic for several meetings. Cameron (2001) proposed that theme-based teaching will provide realistic and motivating uses of the language which has a clear meaning for the children (Cameron, 2001).

Theme is the main point that will cover the material which is chosen based on the learners' need and interest, the institution's expectation and also the program resources; the teacher abilities and interest (adapted from Pusparini 2013, as cited in Stoller & Grabe, 1977). Looking at those factors, the theme should be chosen wisely. Therefore, in order to choose the theme, the teacher needs to do some research on how the theme will relate with their daily life.

Conferring the explanation above, theme-based teaching will perfectly relate in teaching young learners. Young learners, as stated by Pinter, are the children from five to

fourteen years old (Pinter, 2006). Thus, this study conducted to find out the effectiveness of theme-based teaching and student's response toward the treatment.

Literature Review

Grammar is a key concept in general linguistic theory and the essential language skill. Grammar itself is a term that comes from the Greek expression *grammatike tekne* which means "art of letter" (Kruzicova, 2015). Theoretically, it is a branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description, analysis, and formulization of formal language patterns (Hartwell, 2008). Brown stated, grammar is the system of rules that control the conventional organization and relationship of words in a sentence (Brown, 2001). In other words, grammar is the rules on how making a word or a sentence to be meaningful.

It is stated that grammar has been an important element in teaching and learning language. Thus, it is important to learn the aspect of grammar to gain communicative competence.

In teaching grammar, there are many different ways that can be used for example, Grammar-Translation Method and Focus on Form Method. Besides the methods, there are also two different approaches in teaching grammar namely overt and covert. However, it is stated that in choosing a method, the teacher needs to know students' needs and competence.

In this research, the researcher chooses theme-based teaching since it contains the same approach with the covert approach. Theme-based teaching itself is a tool for teaching a set of skill and content by integrating the material and activities around a particular topic (Cameron, 2001). It is stated that theme-based teaching offers a way of solving problem in teaching, the focus of language and the idea about communicative language teaching (Cameron, 2001). Moreover, it further said that theme-based teaching provides a realistic and motivating uses of the language with meaning and purpose for children.

In using theme-based teaching, the main point of teaching is a theme. Theme is the main idea that will cover the material chosen based on the learners' need and interest, the institution's expectation and also the program

resources; the teacher abilities and interest (adapted from Pusparini 2013, as cited in Stoller & Grabe, 1997). It is stated if the theme chosen is relevant with the learners', the learners will try harder to understand the material and stay focused. Thus, their motivation in learning will be increased. Therefore, the learners' motivation in learning will not only to achieve certain goals, but because they enjoy the learning process (Yang, 2009). Due to its advantages, theme-based teaching has been transferred across from general primary education to the teaching of English as a foreign language (Cameron, 2001; Scott & Yteberg, 1990).

In order to provide successful learning through theme-based teaching in classroom, its planning should be considered. It is stated that a successful learning acquisition is possible when the opportunity to engage is provided. Theme-based teaching can provide the opportunity to engage the learner in the learning process. It can be implemented through an approach proposed by Stoller Grabe called six T approach (Stoller & Grabe, 1997). Those six T are themes, topics, texts, tasks, transitions and threads. By using this approach, it is believed that the learning process will be more interesting and motivating.

Moreover, in using theme-based teaching there are many advantages that can be achieved. They are:

1. Creates a low anxiety environment
In using theme-based teaching, the theme used relates with students' interest background. Therefore, it is easier for the learner to understand the content of the lesson.
2. Provides a language-rich classroom environment by focusing on many aspect of a particular topic
It is believed that using particular topic as a theme in the classroom will highlight the learners' reaction so that they can use a lot vocabulary items related with a particular topic.
3. Offers opportunities for student to make connection between what they know and what they learn
It is stated that theme-based teaching is a connecting thread. The learner can associate words,

function, and situation of a particular context between what they already know with what they learn in the classroom.

4. Presents a variety of content-related activities that help accomplish the learning process (D & McCloskey, 1988).

Since the theme chosen in theme-based teaching relates with students' interest background, it will be easier for the teacher to choose their teaching materials and activities with the recent events. Thus, the learner will be easier to accomplish the learning process.

5. Builds personal touch
In choosing the theme, the teacher needs to know what the learners' interest is. Therefore, during the process, the teacher can create a personal touch that will help the students reach the goal of the learning.

As stated above, theme-based teaching provides many positive outcomes for both students and teacher. Therefore, due to its positive outcomes, theme-based teaching will be suitable for teaching grammar to young learner.

METHOD

This research applied the quantitative method since this research intended to find out the effectiveness of theme-based teaching in improving students' grammar skills. Quantitative method is used to establish the relationships between the variables and explain the causes of the relationship (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). It is also stated by Ledy and Ormrod cited in William (2007), quantitative method is specific in its surveying and experimentation, since it is built up upon existing theories. Thus, quantitative method is suitable with this research.

Moreover, in this research, the researcher used the experimental design which compares two treatments in order to studying their effects. In this study, the researcher compared the use of theme-based

teaching with the conventional teaching to find the effect on the students' grammar skill improvement. The type of experimental design was quasi-experimental design because the participants in this method are not randomly assigned (Creswell, 2003).

In this research, two classes were taken as the sample namely experimental group and control group. The experimental group is taught using the theme-based teaching while the control group using the conventional teaching. The teaching procedures are conducted in both experimental and the control group with different lesson plans. The lesson plan in the experimental employed the theme-based teaching, while the lesson plan for the control group used the conventional procedures. The scheme of the study is presented in Table 1.

The data that is collected from the pretest and posttest will be analyzed quantitatively using the t-test. It is stated that the t-test is used to analyze the pretest and posttest score and to investigate whether there is significance difference on each group or not (Hatch & Faradhy, 1982). Furthermore, t-test will be used to find out whether the hypothesis (null hypothesis) was rejected or accepted. If the null hypothesis is accepted, it means that there is no difference between the experimental and control groups after implementing the theme-based teaching.

Table 1. Scheme of the Study (Campbell & Stanley, 1963)

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental Group	Y ₁	X	Y ₂
Control Group	Y ₁	-	Y ₂

Information:

Y₁: the test before the treatment (pretest)

Y₂: the test after the treatment (posttest)

T: treatment

Data Presentation and Discussion

The aim of the first research is to find out the effectiveness of theme-based teaching in improving students' grammar skill. The result showed that experimental group gained higher score after the treatment than the control group. It can be seen by the mean for both group which for the experimental group was 77.50 and the control group was 70.78. Thus, to investigate the difference mean

between both groups, dependent t-test was conducted.

The result of the dependent t-test showed that the significance was 0.021. Therefore, it can be inferred that the null hypothesis was rejected. It meant that there was significance difference of students' grammar skill in posttest score between the experimental and control group. Thus, theme-based teaching is effective in teaching grammar to young learners.

Moreover, related to the second research question in finding out the students' responses towards the treatment to improve their grammar skill using questionnaire. The result of the questionnaire indicated that 88% of the students like English and 12% of them did not like English. Thus, 78% of the students like having English lesson and the rest was not. Along with that, 91% of them agreed that the learning English was fun and 97% of them were having fun in English lesson. Besides that, 81% of them think that learning English was satisfying. Additionally, after the treatment 66% of the students agreed that the teaching activities and tasks were more integrated and organize. Moreover, as much as 84% of the students thought that the learning process became more meaningful. Moreover, the learning process is believed became more interesting by 78% of the students.

Related to the grammar improvement, 66% of the students thought that grammar can be learned easily while 34% of them did not agree with the statement. Along with that, 72% of the students believed that grammar became easier during the treatment and 69% of them found that the process of learning grammar became more interesting. Correlated with the theme chosen during the treatment, 84% of the students found the theme interesting, however only 69% of them found the theme suit to their interest and 66% of them thought the theme suit their English level. Lastly, as much as 63% thought the theme relevant to their daily.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that more than half of the students found theme-based teaching useful for their grammar learning. The use of theme-based teaching to teach grammar is in line with the third type of grammar, which is functional grammar. In using theme-based teaching, the students are aimed to learn the meaning of

the language so they can form a well-structured sentence. Along with that, the use of theme-based teaching in grammar learning is also in line with one of the approaches that stated by Ellis. It is stated that the incidental focus on form is focusing on the meaning and it requires minimal use of grammatical structured (Ellis, 2006).

Conferring the result of the test and questionnaire, the implementation of theme-based teaching in improving students' grammar skill gave a positive impact. The result of the posttest showed that the grammar skill of the experimental group was higher than the control group. Moreover, the result of the questionnaire showed that the students' response toward the treatment was positive.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of theme-based teaching in improving students' grammar skill and the students' response towards the implementation of theme-based teaching.

Regarding the effectiveness of the theme-based teaching, the result gained through the pre-test and posttest revealed that the theme-based teaching showed its effectiveness with the experimental group gaining higher scores than the control group. It can be seen from the descriptive statistics. It showed that the experimental groups gained as much as 16.09 point while the control group only improved by 11 point. It showed that experimental gained higher score than the control group. Supporting the idea above, the parametric test was conducted. Regarding the result from the parametric test namely independent t-test, it showed that the value of significance was 0.021. It indicated that the grammar skill between the experimental and the control group were significantly different.

Besides the improvement of the students' grammar skill, the students' response toward the treatment was also investigated in the research. In order to investigate the response, the questionnaire was distributed. The data from questionnaire also revealed positives attitudes. It is shown that more than half of the students found the theme-based teaching useful for their grammar learning.

In conclusion, the implementation of theme-based teaching was effective in

improving students' grammar skill. Likewise, students' response toward the treatment was positive. Therefore, it can be concluded that theme-based teaching which provides meaningful learning is suitable to be taught in young learner classroom as an approach to teach grammar.

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