



Improving Students' Mastery of Simple Past Tense By using Real – Life Context Learning Model at Harapan Mandiri Senior High School Medan

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Abstract

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received Oktober 1, 2023

Reviewed: Oktober 16, 2023

Revised: Oktober 20, 2023

Accepted Oktober 20, 2023

Available online Oktober 31, 2023

Keywords:

**Simple Past Tense; Real-
Life Context Learning
Model**

Community service is a form of contribution carried out by individuals or groups to enhance well-being and provide positive benefits to the community at large. This activity is undertaken with the aim of assisting, empowering, and offering solutions to various problems or needs faced by the community. This program was inspired from the writers' desire to improve the students' understanding and mastery on Simple Past Tense at Senior High School of Harapan Mandiri School Medan in the third grade XII IPA IV in which the students consisting of 36 students. This program was conducted during one week on August 2023. This activity implements real-life context learning model in improving the students' understanding and mastery on simple past tenses. This program runs successfully and as it was expected. The students undergo the progress after the program conducted, for instance, the students are able to write the composition using simple past tense with theme such as last holiday or past experiences, they also are able to use the simple past tense to be, modals and verbs in speaking. The Real-Life Context learning model has had a significant impact on education like conducted in Senior High School of Harapan Mandiri Medan, as it has contributed to increased student engagement, motivation, and preparedness for getting learning success especially English.

Abstrak

Info Artikel

Proses Artikel:

Submit 1 Oktober 2023
Review 16 Oktober 2023
Revisi 20 Oktober 2023
Diterima 20 Oktober 2023
Terbit Online 31 Oktober 2023

Kata Kunci :

Simple Past Tense; Model Pembelajaran, Model Pembelajaran Konteks Kehidupan Nyata

Pengabdian kepada masyarakat merupakan suatu bentuk kontribusi yang dilakukan oleh individu atau kelompok untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan dan memberikan manfaat positif kepada masyarakat luas. Kegiatan ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk membantu, memberdayakan, dan menawarkan solusi terhadap berbagai permasalahan atau kebutuhan yang dihadapi masyarakat. Program ini terinspirasi dari keinginan penulis untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan penguasaan siswa terhadap Simple Past Tense di SMA Harapan Mandiri Medan pada kelas III XII IPA IV yang jumlah siswanya berjumlah 36 siswa. Program ini dilaksanakan selama satu minggu pada bulan Agustus 2023. Kegiatan ini menerapkan model pembelajaran konteks kehidupan nyata dalam meningkatkan pemahaman dan penguasaan siswa pada simple past tenses. Program ini berjalan dengan sukses dan sesuai dengan yang diharapkan. Siswa mengalami kemajuan setelah program dilaksanakan, misalnya siswa mampu menulis komposisi menggunakan simple past tense dengan tema seperti liburan lalu atau pengalaman masa lalu, siswa juga mampu menggunakan simple past tense to be, modals dan kata kerja dalam berbicara. Model pembelajaran Real-Life Context memberikan dampak yang signifikan terhadap pendidikan seperti yang dilakukan di SMA Harapan Mandiri Medan, karena berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan keterlibatan, motivasi, dan kesiapan siswa untuk mencapai keberhasilan pembelajaran khususnya bahasa Inggris.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAM

The teaching method of simple present tense is a crucial aspect of language in education, as it forms the basis for expressing current actions, general truths, and habitual actions in English. Its significance in language learning is evident from the fact that its effective teaching can lay a strong foundation for learners to grasp more complex verb tenses and structures in the future. This essay aims to explore the historical context, key figures, the impact of the teaching method of simple present tense, and to identify and analyze influential individuals who have contributed to this field. It will also discuss various perspectives, provide a well-reasoned analysis, and consider potential future developments related to the teaching method of simple present tense. According to research by Smith (2014), "differences between languages in terms of tense structures can create challenges for language learners, as they must reframe their understanding of time and verb usage when learning a new language."

It has been common knowledge that students may face difficulties in understanding the simple past tense for various reasons. Some common challenges such as lack of foundation. If students don't have a solid foundation in basic grammar concepts or haven't been exposed to past tense structures before, they may struggle to grasp the simple past tense. The students also are difficult to understand Irregular Verb Forms. According to Dukes (2016), "irregular verbs in the simple past tense pose a significant challenge for English language learners, as they must be memorized individually and do not follow regular patterns like regular verbs. "The existence of irregular verbs, which don't follow the typical "-ed" pattern, can be confusing. Students may find it challenging to memorize irregular verb forms. Difficulty in understanding Verb Conjugation Complexity, the process of changing the form of a verb to fit the past tense, especially with irregular verbs and negative/interrogative forms, adds complexity. Students also have limited

exposure (Taylor, 2020). According to McClelland and Hihara (2017), students often experience tunnel vision due to their specialization, limiting their understanding of the interconnectedness of different fields and ideas. If students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, they may not encounter enough examples of the simple past tense in real-life situations. They also have cultural and linguistic differences (Kanno, Y.2008) in which students from languages that do not have a strict past tense structure may find it challenging to adapt to the concept of marking past events in English. The difficulty in understanding abstract nature of time, this can be difficult for some learners. Understanding when to use the past tense requires a conceptual understanding of time relationships.

Next, some students might over-rely on the present tense to describe events (Zobl, H., 2000), especially if their native language does not distinguish past and present tenses as clearly as English does. They also are fear of making mistakes. The fear of making grammatical errors can inhibit students from actively using and experimenting with the simple past tense, hindering their learning progress. Students also are lack of contextualization as teaching the simple past tense in isolation, without connecting it to real-life situations or stories, may make it harder for students to understand its practical use. Other factor can be also one of factors causing the students in understanding simple past tense namely insufficient practice, as mastery of grammar concepts requires regular practice. As noted by Jenkins (2018), "insufficient exposure and practice are common barriers to language learning, and students must have opportunities to use the simple past tense in context in order to develop proficiency." If students do not get enough opportunities to apply the simple past tense in various contexts, it may not become ingrained in their language skills (Leana, 2011).

On the other hand, teacher's approach which is not suitable for the students learning style can be a factor causing students are difficult to understand simple past tense. The teaching methods employed may not be suitable for the students' learning styles. A variety of teaching strategies, including visual aids, interactive activities, and real-life applications, can enhance understanding. According to Richards (2020), "incorporating regular and consistent practice of the simple past tense in communicative activities can help students develop a strong understanding and mastery of the tense." This is need to be done by the teachers.

In addition, different cognitive development can be also barrier for teachers to teach simple past tense to the students and students have different ability to understand the learning of simple past tense. Students at different cognitive development stages may struggle differently with abstract concepts like verb tenses (National Research Council, 2000). It's important to consider individual differences in learning readiness. To address these challenges, teachers can use a combination of interactive activities, real-life examples, and continuous reinforcement (Hwang, M. & Moges, M, 2018). Providing a supportive and encouraging learning environment can help students overcome their apprehensions and gradually master the simple past tense

The difficulties described above faced by the students in Senior High School Harapan Mandiri Medan especially in the third grade XII IV in which having challenge in understanding and even apply the simple past tense verbs in daily life. To solve this problem, the writer offered a solution in order to be able to solve this problem and even can give the great contribution to students' ability in understanding and using simple past tense in daily life communication. The writer implements Real-Life Context Learning model (Darling-Hammond, L, 2017) to study simple past tense in Senior High school Harapan Mandiri Medan with the expectation that this program can

run smoothly and successfully, moreover it succeed to improve students' ability in understanding simple past tense.

The importance of real-life context learning can be seen in the field of science education. Research has shown that when students are able to apply scientific concepts to real-life problems, their understanding and retention of the material significantly improves (Kolb, 1984). For example, a study conducted by Smith and McGlynn (2015) found that students who engaged in hands-on, real-life science experiments scored higher on tests and retained more information than those who learned through traditional lecture-based instruction.

One important aspect of teaching the simple past tense is providing clear and concise explanations of the concept. According to Thornbury (2006), it is crucial to first introduce the basic structure and usage of the simple past tense to students. This can be achieved through the use of visual aids, such as charts or diagrams, to illustrate the formation and usage of regular and irregular verbs in the past tense. Additionally, providing clear examples and guided practice exercises can help students to comprehend the concept more effectively.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD OF PROGRAM

The community service conducted at Harapan Mandiri Senior High School which is located at Jl. Brigjend Zein Hamid No.40, Titi Kuning, Kec. Medan Johor, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara, 20219, and the community service conducted in the third grade namely XII IPA IV, the class consists of 36 students. In implementation of the program, the writers get turn to teach the students once in a week during 1.5 hours per meeting. This program takes place during a week in which the students will study simple past tense from three teacher during one week as the program conducted on August, 14, 16 and 18.

The writers are also as teacher in this program begin the teaching learning process by giving explanation of simple past tense. In teaching the simple past tense, incorporating real-life context is crucial to help students understand the relevance and application of this grammatical concept in everyday situations. Here are the key aspects of the basic concept of real-life context when teaching the simple past tense done by the teachers:

First day: Monday, 14 of August 2023

1. Introduction:

Start by explaining the concept of the simple past tense. Emphasize that it is used to talk about completed actions in the past.

2. Regular Verbs:

Formation: Regular verbs typically form the simple past tense by adding "-ed" to the base form of the verb.

Example: "walk" becomes "walked."

Practice:

Provide a list of regular verbs and have students create sentences in the simple past tense.

3. Irregular Verbs:

Formation: Irregular verbs have unique past tense forms that don't follow the regular "-ed" pattern.

Example: "go" becomes "went."

Practice:

Introduce a list of common irregular verbs and have students practice using them in sentences.

Second Day: Wednesday, 16 of August 2023

4. Time Expressions:

Introduction: Discuss time expressions that are commonly used with the simple past tense, such as yesterday, last week, two days ago, in 1990, etc.

Practice:

Have students create sentences using the simple past tense along with appropriate time expressions.

5. Negative and Interrogative Forms:

Negative Form: Explain the formation of negative sentences using the auxiliary verb "did" + "not" + base form of the main verb.

Example: "I did not walk to school yesterday."

Interrogative Form: Show how to form questions using the auxiliary verb "did" + subject + base form of the main verb.

Example: "Did you walk to school yesterday?"

Practice:

Provide exercises for creating negative and interrogative sentences in the simple past tense.

6. Contractions:

Introduction: Introduce contractions for negative and affirmative forms (e.g., didn't, didn't).

Practice:

Have students practice using contractions in sentences.

Third Day: Friday, 18 of August 2023

7. Regular Practice:

Reading and Writing Exercises: Assign reading passages or writing prompts that require the use of the simple past tense.

8. Review and Feedback:

Review Session: Conduct periodic reviews to reinforce the concept and address any challenges students may be facing.

9. Application:

Real-Life Situations: Encourage students to apply the simple past tense in real-life situations, such as narrating personal experiences or events.

10. Assessment:

One of the key elements of the real-life context learning model is the use of authentic assessments. Rather than relying solely on traditional tests and exams, authentic assessments require students to demonstrate their understanding and skills through real-world tasks and projects (Jonson and Spector, 2007). This type of assessment not only provides a more accurate reflection of a student's abilities, but also helps students develop the skills they will need in their future careers.

Assess Understanding: Use quizzes, exercises, or written assignments to assess students' understanding of the simple past tense.

11. Continuous Improvement:

Feedback Loop: Collect feedback from students and adapt your teaching methods accordingly.

Remember, providing plenty of opportunities for practice and real-life application will help solidify the understanding of the simple past tense for learners.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Through this program students show good progress and Real-Life Context learning model gives several benefits that contribute to a more effective and meaningful learning experience for the students (Newman, R, 2014), such as:

1. Relevance and Practicality:

It makes learning relevant by connecting academic concepts to practical, everyday situations. This relevance enhances students' understanding of how simple past tense applies to their lives.

2. Increased Engagement:

Learning in a real-life context captures students' interest and attention, leading to increased engagement. Practical applications of knowledge make the learning experience more enjoyable and motivating.

3. Application of Knowledge:

Students learn to apply simple past tense to real-world scenarios.

4. Retention and Memory Recall:

Students can anchor new information to existing knowledge and experiences. This helps in better memory recall when needed. In this context, the students are motivated to recall past memories in order to described in simple past tense forms.

5. Cultural and Global Awareness:

Provides opportunities for students to explore and understand diverse cultures, fostering global awareness and appreciation for different perspectives. In this context, learning other cultures in past time which is describe in simple past forms.

6. Improved Problem-Solving:

Students become adept at solving real-world problems, as they learn to apply their knowledge and skills in practical situations that mimic authentic challenges.

7. Flexibility and Adaptability:

Encourages flexible learning environments that can adapt to the diverse interests, backgrounds, and experiences of students. The students can study someone' diverse interests, backgrounds, and experiences in the past.

Some supporting factors to this program are the students have high motivation (Li, J., & Lerner, R. M., 2014) to follow all activities since the beginning until the end of the program, high interest to study (Pintrich, P. R., 2003). English so it gives the own comfort to the teachers during the program. However, there are obstacle factors to this program such as some students sometimes have hectic schedule since they have full day learning so it makes them feel fatigue and sometimes get sleepy during the program. On the other hand, the obstacle factor is limited time, duration of this activity only 1.5 hours per meeting since there are still many activities from school that should be followed by the students, so the teachers feel with the limited time sometimes doesn't reach all goals targeted since the beginning. Here are documentations during the program in Senior High School of Harapan Mandiri Medan



Figure 1. The school building as the location of community service

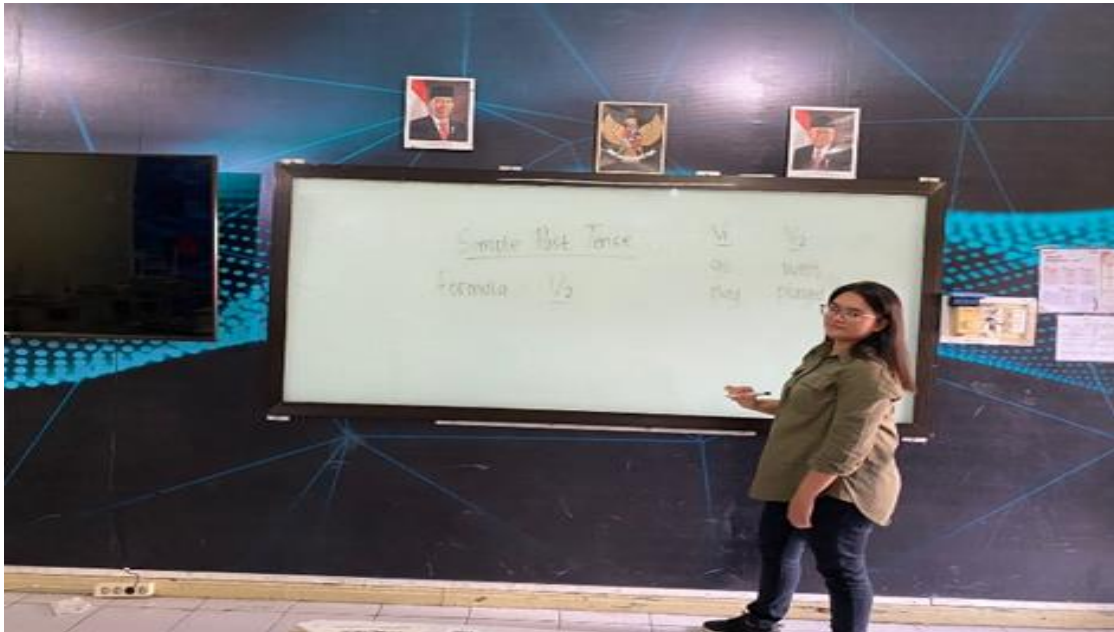


Figure 2. Initial implementation of activities



Figure 3. when the student instructed to do exercise



Figure 4. The students are listening to Teachers' Explanation



Figure 5. The Students are instructed to share past experience with each other

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The Real-Life Context learning model can play a crucial role in equipping students with these essential skills and competencies, positioning them for success in the 21st century especially

after implementation in learning simple past tense in Senior High School Harapan Mandiri Medan. The students undergo the progress after the program conducted, for instance, the students are able to write the composition using simple past tense with theme such as last holiday or past experiences, they also are able to use the simple past tense to be, modals and verbs in speaking. This is a great change for the students as it is the expectation from the headmaster and school parties through this program.

In conclusion, the Real-Life Context learning model is a powerful educational approach that emphasizes the practical application of knowledge and skills within real-world contexts. The Real-Life Context learning model has had a significant impact on education like conducted in Senior High School of Harapan Mandiri Medan, as it has contributed to increased student engagement, motivation, and preparedness for getting learning success especially English. By overcoming problem, the Real-Life Context learning model has the potential to continue making meaningful contributions to the field of education as it offers a host of advantages that contribute to a more meaningful and effective learning experience for students. It aligns education with the practical realities of the world, preparing students for success in various aspects of their lives.

Suggestions

Through the program conducted in Senior High School of Harapan Mandiri School, there are some suggestions expected to be done by the teachers in order to improve increasingly the students' understanding simple past tense, such as:

1. Describe Past Experiences:
The teacher instructed the students to share a story about a special moment in the students' life. This talks about the students' experiences using words that indicate the past.
2. Conversations and Presentations:
The teachers instruct the students to discuss with a friend something they did before. This activity includes to practice talking about real events using past tense words.
3. Learning from History:
The students are asked to read about historical events and discuss them using simple past tense.
4. Cultural Explorations:
The students are asked to explore traditions and discuss past events related to them. This activity uses past tense words to talk about diverse cultural experiences.
5. Travel Blog Writing:
The students are asked to write a blog about a past trip using past tense. This activity combines language learning with storytelling.
6. Family History Presentation:
The students share a family tree presentation, discussing past events. Sharing stories using past tense words.
7. Writing News Reports:
The students write brief news reports about past events.
8. Reading Biographies:
Students read about people's lives and discuss past events. This activity strengthens how past tense is used in life stories.
9. Reflecting on Field Trips:

Students write about a school trip, talking about what happened in the past.

10. Analyzing Movie Scenes:

Students watch scenes from movies or TV shows and discuss them using past tense.

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