

The Influence of Problem-Based Learning on Students' Mastery of The Simple Past Tense: A Study of Second-Semester English Education Students at San Pedro University

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini menyelidiki pengaruh penerapan Pembelajaran Berbasis Masalah (Problem-Based Learning/PBL) terhadap kompetensi tata bahasa mahasiswa semester dua jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas San Pedro. Dengan menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimental, penelitian ini membagi partisipan menjadi kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol, di mana kelompok eksperimen menerima pengajaran melalui PBL sedangkan kelompok kontrol menggunakan metode konvensional. Penilaian meliputi tes pra dan pasca untuk mengukur kemahiran dalam bentuk lampau sederhana, bersamaan dengan pengukuran kualitatif seperti observasi kelas dan refleksi mahasiswa. Temuan dari analisis kuantitatif menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kinerja kelompok eksperimen, dibuktikan dengan peningkatan skor rata-rata dan pengurangan variabilitas, yang menunjukkan efektivitas PBL dalam menumbuhkan pemahaman dan penerapan aturan tata bahasa yang lebih dalam. Wawasan kualitatif lebih lanjut mengungkapkan peningkatan keterlibatan dan motivasi di antara para pembelajar. Secara keseluruhan, hasil penelitian menggarisbawahi potensi PBL sebagai pendekatan transformatif dalam pedagogi bahasa, merekomendasikan penerapannya untuk pengajaran tata bahasa guna menumbuhkan tidak hanya ketepatan tetapi juga keterampilan komunikatif dan kemandirian pembelajar.

This research investigates the effects of implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) on the grammatical competence of second-semester students majoring in English Education at San Pedro University. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the study involved dividing participants into experimental and control groups, with the former receiving instruction through PBL while the latter utilized conventional methods. Assessments included pre-tests and post-tests to gauge proficiency in the simple past tense, alongside qualitative measures like classroom observations and student reflections. Findings from quantitative analysis indicated marked enhancements in the experimental group's performance, evidenced by elevated mean scores and reduced variability, suggesting PBL's efficacy in fostering deeper understanding and application of grammatical rules. Qualitative insights further revealed heightened engagement and motivation among learners. Overall, the results underscore PBL's potential as a transformative approach in language pedagogy, recommending its adoption for grammar instruction to cultivate not only accuracy but also communicative skills and learner independence.



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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational landscapes shaped by globalization, proficiency in English stands as a cornerstone for academic and professional success, serving as a conduit across diverse fields such as

commerce, scholarship, and diplomacy (Crystal, 2003). Central to this proficiency is mastery of grammar, where the simple past tense holds pivotal importance for articulating completed actions and events coherently (Thornbury, 1999). Yet, learners worldwide grapple with nuances of this tense, including irregular verb forms and syntactic intricacies, often exacerbated by discrepancies between English and native languages (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Conventional teaching paradigms, reliant on lectures and rote exercises, frequently yield passive absorption devoid of contextual relevance, leading to fragmented application in real-world scenarios (Lie, 2007). This limitation resonates notably within Indonesian higher education, particularly in English Education curricula, where foundational grammar remains a hurdle despite aspirations for communicative fluency (Renandya, 2018). At San Pedro University, second-semester students encounter persistent challenges in deploying the simple past tense accurately in speech and writing, reflecting broader issues of low motivation and abstract rule memorization (Huda, 1999).

Emerging pedagogical shifts toward learner-centric strategies, exemplified by Problem-Based Learning (PBL), counteract these deficits by immersing students in collaborative resolution of authentic problems, thereby stimulating critical thinking and active participation (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Rooted in constructivist principles, PBL posits that knowledge emerges through experiential inquiry rather than transmission, aligning seamlessly with language acquisition needs (Kolb, 2015). Within the English Education program, integrating PBL into grammar modules promises to bridge theoretical gaps, equipping aspiring educators with adaptable skills for future classrooms.

This study addresses two focal inquiries: (1) the extent to which PBL influences second-semester students' command of the simple past tense; and (2) alterations in their engagement and motivation levels under PBL implementation. The overarching aim is twofold: to elucidate PBL's role in refining grammatical comprehension and usage, and to appraise its comparative advantage over traditional methods. Significantly, the outcomes hold implications for students seeking enriched learning pathways, lecturers aiming for innovative tactics, curriculum planners targeting competency alignment, and prospective teachers cultivating student-oriented philosophies.

Operational boundaries confine the scope to grammatical facets of the simple past tense among targeted undergraduates, excluding peripheral tenses or modalities like listening. Factors such as prior exposure and facilitator expertise introduce constraints, necessitating controlled conditions. Key constructs delineate PBL as a participatory method leveraging real-life dilemmas for collective exploration, grammatical competence as accurate deployment in oral and written modes, the simple past tense as descriptors of definitive past occurrences, English Education as the preparatory track for bilingual experts, and San Pedro University as the operational venue facilitating this inquiry. Collectively, these elements fortify the study's pertinence amid evolving pedagogical demands.

METHOD

The investigation adopts a mixed-methods framework, synthesizing quantitative metrics via pre/post-assessments to quantify grammatical advancements and qualitative lenses through observational logs and reflective entries to illuminate experiential dimensions. This dual lens ensures holistic scrutiny of PBL's ramifications on simple past tense proficiency.

Participants encompassed all second-semester enrollees in the English Education Department at San Pedro University, drawn via purposive selection to represent intermediate-level cohorts poised for reinforcement in past tense mechanics. Enrollment specifics aligned with ongoing classes during the designated academic cycle, yielding a cohort tailored for balanced representation.

Data procurement unfolded through multifaceted channels: quantitatively, pre-tests established baseline competencies in simple past tense identification, formation, and utilization, while post-tests measured post-intervention gains across identical parameters. Items incorporated multiple-choice selections, completion blanks, and discursive prompts centered on regular/irregular verbs, tense conversions, sentence constructions, paragraph continuations, and narrative analyses. Qualitatively, systematic classroom observations chronicled interactive dynamics, cooperation, and grammatical integration during PBL episodes, complemented by voluntary student journals capturing subjective impressions, obstacles encountered, and perceived advantages.

Analytical protocols commenced with descriptive summaries, mean values, deviations, and spans for pre/post-performance profiles. Inferential scrutiny invoked paired-sample t-tests to discern intra-group disparities pre/post-intervention, utilizing the equation: $t = (M_d / \sqrt{(s_d^2 / n)})$, where M_d denotes mean difference, s_d pooled deviation, and n participant count. Effect magnitudes gauged via Cohen's d : $d = (M_{post} - M_{pre}) / s_p$, interpreted as trivial (<0.2), moderate (0.2–0.5), or substantial (>0.5). Computations leveraged SPSS-compatible tools.

On the qualitative front, thematic coding was performed manually or aided by NVivo-like utilities, isolating recurrent motifs tied to confidence boosts, collaborative vigor, and perceptions of PBL utility. Triangulation harmonized these threads with numerical outputs, furnishing layered interpretations attuned to objectives. Such integrative rigor aimed not merely at outcome measurement but at unraveling PBL's mechanistic contributions to grammatical acumen.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative revelations from pre/post-testing unveiled pronounced trajectories in grammatical prowess. With thirteen subjects spanning both groups, initial averages stood at 65.46 (SD 13.21, range 40–80), surging to 86.92 (SD 8.55, range 60–90) post-PBL, marking a 21.46-point uplift signifying robust enhancement in simple past tense execution. Reduced standard deviations and narrowed ranges implied homogenized achievements, mitigating inequities among novices and veterans alike, a testament to PBL's inclusivity. These metrics corroborate constructivist tenets, wherein immersive problem-solving cultivates resilient retention beyond drill-based routines (Hung, 2016). The variance diminution suggests PBL's scaffolding alleviates disparate starting points, fostering parity akin to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Complementarily, survey feedback amplified affective dividends. Of twelve respondents endorsing PBL, 95.38% affirmed renewed interest and conceptual clarity in grammar, while 90.77% reported vigorous involvement and real-context impetus. Enjoyment surged to 89.23%, with 84.62% expressing augmented confidence and preference for continuation (86.15%). Lower endorsements on autonomy cues hinted at lingering dependency, warranting scaffold refinement.

Discursively, these converge to validate PBL's synergy of cognition and emotion. Enhanced comprehension mirrors Schmidt et al.'s (2018) assertions on contextualized drills bolstering fluency, while motivational spikes echo Dörnyei's (2001) emphasis on intrinsic drivers. Challenges in standalone applications signal the need for adaptive phases, advocating metacognitive training. Ultimately, PBL transcends mere correction, nurturing versatile competencies vital for tertiary language realms.

CONCLUSION

This endeavor affirms Problem-Based Learning's instrumental role in elevating second-semester English Education students' facility with the simple past tense at San Pedro University. Quantitative benchmarks and qualitative testimonials collectively attest to superior efficacy vis-à-vis traditional pedagogies, engendering precise application, equitable growth, and invigorated participation. Theoretical alignments with constructivism reinforce PBL's viability for bridging knowledge-production divides.

Recommendations entail wider faculty integration of PBL in grammar syllabi, supplemented by workshops for seamless adaptation. Future explorations ought probe cross-skills extensions speaking, reading, writing and longitudinal impacts. Addressing residual hurdles like uneven confidence calls for hybrid scaffolds. Altogether, embracing PBL heralds progressive strides in preparing adept English stewards.

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