Collaborative Learning as an Alternative Technique in Teaching Grammar

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Abstract: Mastering English grammar is still one of the important components in mastering English. For beginners and low level students, vocabulary and grammar are probably their focus in learning English. Some difficulties are faced by students who learn English grammar as foreign language. It can be caused by the difference of sentence pattern or tenses of English. It becomes a reason why English grammar is the most difficult subject for students after memorizing English vocabularies. As teacher, we can not neglect that teachers’ teaching technique not only influences students in understanding and applying English grammar but also their motivation in learning English grammar. Unfortunately, many English teachers in my region still use conventional technique which means they just explain the sentence pattern as lecturing. This research is an action research which pays a particular attention to the First Grade of Senior High School Students of SMA Negeri 6 Depok to see the effectiveness of collaborative learning in teaching English Grammar and its relation to students’ grade in grammar test. Pre-test and post-test are given to see the influence of teacher’s teaching technique towards students’ grade in grammar test. The questionnaire were distributed to students to be fulfilled and the result was correlated to the students’ motivation in learning English Grammar.

Key words: collaborative learning, teaching grammar, student, learning English Grammar.

Introduction

Teaching grammar is one of the important components in learning English for students at school. The theories and methods of language teaching has developed various techniques of teaching English. The accuracy in the selection of teaching techniques will support the success of language learning. The reality in the classroom shows that there are many English language learners who have difficulty in mastering grammar.

The difficulty is related to the ability to identify and remember English sentence pattern. The sentence patterns which are different from their mother tongue causes learners often makes mistakes because of forgetting the arrangement of sentence patterns. When learners face grammar test form for example incomplete sentences form, they find difficulty to identify what the missing elements of the sentence and how to complete them. Thus it can be said that the techniques of teaching English grammar which have been used is not effective.

Based on the writer personal experience and the reality at schools in her region, there are many English teachers who use lecturing technique when teaching grammar material. In lecturing, he/she explains the pattern of the sentence and write it on the board. While the students are just sitting quietly and listening to the teacher's explanation. Then the teacher gives an example of each sentence pattern and provide tasks. One of the weaknesses of this technique is it can not optimize leaners’ memory. Only 50% of the material will be absorbed and remembered by learners whose learning process involving hearing and vision alone
(Idawati, 2007:3). Another drawback is the passive learners and less learning experience that can be built in memory.

The problems that the writer found in the classroom is students can not identify a certain sentence pattern. This is supported by the results of the low grade of daily tests for grammar material. In addition, a low student motivation often becomes the second problem in the teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

The problem that arises is how teaching technique will be effective for teaching grammar? The finding will be a solution for the teaching English problem faced in the classroom. In this study, the writer is interested in finding effective teaching techniques for teaching grammar. The technique means a teaching technique that can enhance the students’ absorption of the material on English grammar especially passive voice.

The writer did an action research in her classroom of first grade students of senior high school where she works. Target of the action research is a subject as action actors (Arikunto et.al, 2008: 36). In this study, the writer wants to try a collaborative learning technique for teaching English grammar in passive sentences (passive voice) in order to increase students’ competence in applying passive sentence and motivation to learn English grammar.

**Classroom Action Research**

A teacher or a teacher in the classroom has a lot of responsibility. He/she is not only responsible to deliver the subject matter, but also responsible for the academic progress of their students. When facing a problem related to academic achievement, certainly many factors that are the cause. As a professional responsibility, the teacher must find root of the problem and solve it.

One way that can be done by the teacher in the classroom to solve the daily problems of teaching is by conducting classroom action research. This study not only aims to find solutions to the problems, but it is also one of the professional development of teachers. As stated by Wallace (2004: 14), one of the professional development of teachers is to carry out action research.

There are many definitions of action research. According to Suharsimi Arikunto et.al (2008: 3) "action research is a form of scrutiny on an action learning activities, which deliberately raised and occur in a class together." In other hand, according to Wallace (2004: 1) action research is reflection teaching done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decision about what your future practice should be.

Meanwhile, Aqib specifies definitions of classroom action research in detailed components, and then summarize it as Arikunto’s. In general, there are three main aspects from the definition of action research. They are observation, deliberately raised, and occurs in the classroom (Aqib, 2007: 13). Whatever definition is used, it is important to be aware of the action research data is collected and analyzed systematically associated with improvements in several aspects of professional practice (Wallace, 2004: 1).
Classroom action research presented in this paper is the experimental classroom action research. It means this research is conducted by applying a variety of techniques or strategies effectively and efficiently in a teaching and learning activities (Aqib, 2007: 20).

Cycles performed in this study is Kurt Lewin model, which consists of four main steps (Lewin, 1990 in Aqib, 2007: 21):

1. Planning
2. Acting
3. Observing
4. Reflecting

The cycle can be described as follows:

![Lewin Model Diagram]

**Motivation**

Motivation is one factor supporting a person's success in learning anything. Internal motivation has a very important role than external motivation, although both of them are mutually supportive. Motivation itself is a kind of encouragement of someone who was able to move, as Harmer stated that "motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (1999: 51). Motivation can be defined as a push or a strong desire for something that one decides to do something to achieve his desire.

Motivation is absolutely necessary in the learning process in the classroom. Motivation of both teachers and students are able to create a synergy learning success in the classroom. According to Harmer (1999: 51-52) there are several sources of motivation that can be acquired by students:

1. Social environment in which people lived, in this case is the environment outside of the classroom.
2. Another thing that is significant to the students’ life, for example, other cultures and the world around the students’ life.
3. Teacher, because the teacher is the main factor of continuity in students' motivation to learn.
4. Method, it is a vital factor for the success of the learning process.
In fact, teachers often face the low motivation of students to the subjects taught. Thus, teachers need to find ways to motivating student in learning. There are various ways which a teacher can do to enhance students’ motivation. Harmer describes three ways to increase students’ motivation (1999: 53-54):
1. Setting goals and objectives.
   The goals are classified into short-term and long term goals. For example, when learning English grammar, the short-term goal is to master the passive voice and long-term goal is to speak English fluently.
2. Learning environment.
   Creating a fun learning environment, including physical condition of the classroom and emotional atmosphere of the teachers.
3. Interesting classroom activities.
   Topics and classroom activities should be interesting.

Based on Harmer’s theory above, one of the goals of this research is to improve students’ motivation. Action research on collaborative learning in teaching of English grammar is done with some consideration. First, the study was carried out by the class teacher because teachers are one source of students’ motivation. Second, this study is applying an alternative teaching technique which is part of a method that can motivate students. Third, this study examines collaborative learning techniques with the assumption that this technique is attractive to students so it can increase students’ motivation in English subjects.

**Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative learning is not a new thing in the world of teaching. The term is well known among educators and researchers in the field of teaching. However, there is still confusion about the understanding of the definition on collaborative learning. The teachers are often understood a collaborative learning as cooperative learning, but they are different. So Panitz makes a contrastive study analysis on the definition of collaborative learning and cooperative learning in his article entitled "A Definition of Collaborative vs Cooperative Learning".

In his writings, Panitz stated that,

*Collaborative learning (CL) is a personal philosophy, not just a classroom technique. In all situations where people come together in groups, it suggests a way of dealing with people which respects and highlights individual group members’ abilities and contributions. There is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the groups actions. The underlying premise of collaborative learning is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, in contrast to competition in which individuals best other group members. CL practitioners apply this philosophy in the classroom, at committee meetings, with community groups, within their families and generally as a way of living with and dealing with other people.* (Panitz, 1996: 1)

Meanwhile, according to Panitz, cooperative learning is:

*Cooperative learning is defined by a set of processes which help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product which is usually content specific. It is more directive than a collaborative system of governance and closely controlled by the teacher. While there are many mechanisms for
From the definition it can be concluded that collaborative learning is a personal philosophy, not just a teaching technique in the classroom. While cooperative learning is a set of processes that help a person to interact in achieving a goal. Collaborative learning is different with cooperative learning. The main difference is that collaborative learning is student-centered, while cooperative learning is teacher-centered. In the implementation of collaborative learning there is processes of cooperative, so it can be said that cooperative learning can be a part of the collaborative learning.

The principles contained in collaborative learning are:

1. Personal philosophy
2. Work in teams or cooperative
3. Sharing, not competition
4. Each member gives contribution
5. Decisions built on consensus.

Action research in the area of collaborative learning has been done by Anuradha A. Gokhale in 1995. Gokhale examines collaborative learning to improve students' skills in critical thinking. Gokhale research is a comparative study between individual learning and collaborative learning. He examined the significant differences in the acquisition of test scores between students who studied individually and collaboratively. The test is given in two forms, in the form of drill-test practice and test in the form of critical thinking. The results of this study showed that students who learn collaboratively attained higher scores in both forms of the test than students who studied individually. The research becomes one of the empirical evidence that collaborative learning is an effective technique. Therefore, this may support the writer’s study.

**Methods**

A. Profile of Research Class

The object of this study is the class of X-2 SMA Negeri 6 Depok. Consideration of the class selection is students in this class got the lowest grade of English subject in the final test of the first semester. Class X (ten) is the first grade students in high school. While the X-2 class is the second class of seven classes that exists at the first grade of SMA Negeri 6 Depok.

There are 34 students in X-2 class, consisting of 21 men and 13 women with an age range between 15-16 years. Unbalance students composition between men and women makes this class tends to be noisy and dominated by men. Most of them come from the middle and low economic background. Motivation to study of X-2 class is low, because they rarely carry out the tasks assigned by the teacher, most students do not have textbooks, not serious following lesson, joking uncontrollable, and low absorbency. The evident can be
seen from the results of daily tests. In general, almost 50% students of X-2 class got grade which is below the minimum passing grade criterion of English subjects at the school. The minimum passing grade of English subject is 66.

Based on this fact, the writer decides to conduct action research as an effort to increase student motivation of X-2 class especially in passive voice so that it will improve their English skills.

B. Population and Sample

The population of this study are all students of X-2 class both men and women numbering 34 people. While the sample of this study are students of X-2 class who got English grade less than 66 on last English daily test. There are 18 people, consisting of 15 boys and 3 girls. Sampling techniques based on specific goals, that is students whose grade is below 66 on last daily tests before the study.

C. Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Data is collected through classification research object, observation, field notes, and reviews. Respondents are divided into groups of 4, so there are 5 groups which are the focus of this research. The groups’ name are "Help Me", "Crazy Club", "My Name Is", "I do not know" and "Do It yourself ". Meanwhile, groups of students who are not the focus of the study consists of 3 groups, just as participants in a collaborative learning research.

During the research, the writer makes the observation records used to know the increase of the student activity and cooperative skills. While at the end of the study, she conducts an evaluation in the form of a test to measure improvements in student achievement. Technical analysis of the data used is a model of the flow, which is "data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion". (Milless & Huberman, 1989 in Aqib, 2007: 106)

D. Research Steps

This research is conducted with the following stages:
1. Students are given a questionnaire to know students' motivation toward English learning and teaching techniques favored by students.
2. Students are divided into 8 groups, each group consisting of 4 people.
   The focus of research in 5 groups: "Help Me", "Crazy Club", "My Name Is", "I do not know", and "Do It Yourself".
3. Students are given a pre-test to measure the extent of their mastery of the material in the passive voice.
4. Students are given tasks within the group:
   a. Discovering, the students are asked to find a passive verb forms in the text.
   b. Guided Sentence, the students identify and write passive sentences in 6 tenses of one active sentence given by the teacher.
   c. Unguided sentence, students write their own sentences in passive voice.
5. Students are given a post-test to measure the effect of a class action by teachers.
Results
A. Overview of Research Setting
The experiment is conducted in accordance with the cycle consists of four steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.
A.1. Research Planning
a. Teaching techniques will use a technique of Two Stay-Two Stray which means two students remain in the group to receive guests from other groups who visit them, while two students wander into other groups to seek information.
b. The focus of research is on 18 students.
c. Stages of studies:
   1. Completion of questionnaires and groups distribution.
      The questionnaire was given in order to know the students' motivation in English subjects and their attitudes toward English teaching as well as their preferred teaching technique.
      Diagnostic test is given with the assumption that the X-2 students have learned the material of passive sentences in junior high school.
   3. Tasks: Discovering through a text, Guided Sentence and Unguided sentence.
      The final test is given to know the increase of students’ grade before and after the study.
A.2. Action Research
The study is conducted with time of 90 minutes per action. The details of the time allocation are 15 minutes for preparation, 30 minutes for discussion in the group, 30 minutes to exchange information between the groups and make group inferences, and the last 15 minutes, the teacher gives the conclusion of the day's learning. The detailed overview of the implementation of the research are as follows:
1. Questionnaire and pre-test
   The questionnaire is given to know the profile of the students, their motivation and their attitude towards English. The results of the questionnaire showed that the profile of students of X-2 class on average have studied English for 6 years. The most difficult material to understand is English grammar because 50% of 30 students who completed the questionnaire stated that the the most difficult material is English grammar. Motivation to learn and their attitude towards the English language is low, because 66.67% of the students stated that their attitude is usual. Then, the students preferred teaching techniques are games and group discussion.
   Pre-test is given to know the extent of student mastery of passive voice. The assumption is they have learned it in junior high school. This test is conducted to measure the ability of students in passive sentence before getting an action. The highest test grade was 68 and the lowest grade of 0.8 with an average of test result is 32. It shows that the ability of students in passive sentences is still very low.
2. **Action I: Discovering**

Students are given two pieces of short text in 15 lines, entitled "Quick Work" and "A Wet Night". Text is taken from Practice and Progress by LG Alexander, Longman publication. Then, students are asked to underline all the verbs in the text. Furthermore, students are asked to identify the verb in passive form, and count the number of passive verb is in both of the texts. Finally, students are asked to determine which text has many passive verbs.

3. **Action II: Discovering**

Students are given two pieces of text which are longer than before, entitled "After the Elections" and "A Noble Gift". Text is taken from Practice and Progress by LG Alexander, Longman publication. Then, students are asked to underline all the verbs in passive form of the text. Furthermore, students are asked to calculate the number of passive verb is in both of the texts. Finally, students are asked to analyze syntactically the sentences which have passive verbs in the texts.

4. **Action III: Guided Sentence**

Students are given 12 number of passive sentences divided into two parts. The first part is six passive sentences with a single subject in present tense form (simple present, present continuous, and present perfect). The second part is six passive sentences with plural subjects in past tense form (simple past, past continuous and past perfect). Then the students are asked to analyze the structure of the sentence and then identify the type of tense of each sentence. Finally, students are asked to summarize the differences of those sentences in Action I dan II.

5. **Actions IV: Guided Sentence**

There are two tasks assigned by the teacher. The first task, students are given two active sentences with singular and plural subjects, and then asked to change the sentences into passive voice in six tenses (simple present, simple past, present continuous, past continuous, present perfect, and past perfect tense). Then, students are asked to analyze the differences of ‘to be’ for sentences with singular and plural subjects. The second task, the students are given five active sentences in simple present, simple past, present continuous, present perfect and past perfect tense. Subject of the sentences is the first person singular, third person singular and personal pronouns. Then, students are asked to change those five sentences in passive form.

6. **Action V: Unguided Sentence**

Students are given 15 pictures of an activity and then asked to make passive sentences based on the situation or activity in the pictures.

7. **Actions VI: Unguided Sentence**

Students are given nine pictures of a process how to make a cake, and then asked to describe the process in passive sentences like the example given by the teacher.

8. **Post-test**

This test form is similar to pre-test, but with a different sentences.

A.3. Observation
During the research, the writer makes field notes which are the result of observation on those class actions. The records can be summarized as follows:

a. Note I: Action I and II
   1) Students do not have difficulty in finding a passive form of the verbs. This is because students are allowed to see passive sentence pattern in the textbook ‘Look Ahead’, Erlangga publication, Indonesia on pages 190-191 or dictionary of passive sentence patterns.
   2) In the action I and II, almost all students are active to do the instructions because the text is interesting to them. The texts have illustrated pictures, the stories are funny and new for them.

b. Note II: Action III and IV
   1) Students are able to identify the differences of ‘to be’ for singular and plural subjects.
   2) Students find a little difficulty to change active into passive sentences, especially when they have to determines ‘to be’.
   3) Students are allowed to see the textbook on pages 190-191 or dictionary to help them in finding a third form of the verb (past participle).
   4) Enthusiasm of the students is still good.

c. Note III: Action V and VI
   1) On action V, motivation of students begin to decline because of boredom with the group work situation. Thus, the teacher takes the initiative to make a game in early learning.
   2) The game is to arrange an English word from the word "Environmental".
   3) Playing a game in the beginning of learning is effective because class becomes enthusiastic and one of the winners is the group that is the focus of the research. It is "Do It yourself" group.
   4) Students are still difficult in memorizing vocabularies especially third form of the irregular verbs (past participle of irregular verbs).

d. Final notes:
   1) Each end of a teaching session, the teacher draws conclusions on the students' answers.
   2) From the observations, there are three students who does not seriously follow collaborative learning.
   3) Collaborative Learning is conducted with students who are sitting on the floor, so that there are positive and negative effects of the learning activities done on the floor. The positive effect is students are relaxed, less depressed, and can move freely. The negative side is students who are not serious in the lesson will tend to play with their friends, in this case, they play smack-down.

Picture 1. Situation of the classroom during the research
B. Research Result

The results are presented in table and in the reflection. Data analysis is performed by comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test, then used as a basis for making conclusions.

B.1. Results of Pre-test and Post-test

After going through a series of processes that class actions has been carried out by teachers in teaching English grammar of passive voice, the students are given a final test (post-test). This test is intended to measure the increase of students’ ability in passive sentences after receiving specific actions from the teacher, which is a collaborative learning technique. The results of pre-test and post-test are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Results of the Passive Voice Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>PRE-TEST</th>
<th>POST-TEST</th>
<th>GRADE INCREASE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF GRADE INCREASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DG</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MSH</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ER</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B.2. Reflection

From the above table, it can be seen an increase in the average grade from 32 to 57. It means there is an grade increase by 25 points after the students did collaborative learning. The highest grade of post-test is 80 and the lowest is 32, whereas in the pre-test, the highest grade is 68 and the lowest is 0.8. It is obvious that there is a significant grade increase after the teacher uses collaborative learning techniques in teaching English grammar. Percentage of grade increase in average is 43% which means that almost all students have increased their grade. There is only one person whose grade is stable, and three students who falls in their grades. Thus, it can be said that this study is successful and shows that collaborative learning technique in teaching English grammar is effective.

After all the research settings, students are given a questionnaire in the end of the study to know their response to the techniques tested by teachers. The results of the final questionnaire indicates that their motivation have increased because 90% of students express that they like the techniques used by the teacher and get better understanding to the material by using the techniques. Learning atmosphere that is serious but relaxed makes students enjoy the process of learning, so they advise the teacher to use collaborative learning technique more frequent than other techniques.

Conclusion and Suggestions

A. Conclusion

Based on the data analyzed and described above, the conclusions of this study is collaborative learning techniques is effective technique to improve students' motivation and
ability to master the material in English grammar. It can be an alternative techniques for teachers in teaching English grammar.

B. Suggestion

1) Teachers should use collaborative learning techniques in teaching English grammar and play games to enhance students’ motivation and achievement.

2) The teacher should make notes of observations during the research process and reflection on every action.

References


