

The Role Of Storytelling In Enhancing Students 'Understanding Of Verb Tense'

Radita Yogi Oktaviani¹

Danang Dwi Harmoko²

¹²Sastra Inggris, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

¹3321003@bsi.ac.id

²Danang.dnd@bsi.ac.id

Abstract

This study analyzes the effectiveness of storytelling in improving students' understanding of English Grammar, particularly verb tenses (simple present, simple past, and simple future tense). Using a quantitative approach with a quasiexperimental design, this study involved seventhgrade students at SMP Bina Bangsa Mandiri 2. The learning model applied was storytelling-Based Grammar Learning, with the narrative "Squirrel's Dream House" as the core material. Data collection instruments include written tests (post-test), classroom observations, and retelling assignments. The result of the analysis showed that more than 70% of students experienced a significant increase in their understanding of verb tenses after the implementation of storytelling-based learning. In addition, this method proved to be effective in increasing students' confidence in speaking, vocabulary acquisition, and classroom participation. These findings indicate that storytelling provides a framework for grammar learning that is not only meaningful and engaging, but also highly contextual, successfully bridging the gap between abstract grammar rules and real communication needs. Therefore, storytelling is recommended as an effective, enjoyable, and holistic grammar teaching strategy, especially in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom.

Keywords: *storytelling, grammar, verb tense, contextual learning, EFL*

Introduction

In this modern era, English proficiency is a requirement at various levels of education to facilitate global communication. This poses a challenge for teachers to improve students' English learning abilities. Although communicative approaches and various English teaching methods have been developed, attention to grammar teaching is often neglected. Some theorists argue that explicit grammar teaching does not help learners master the language, with the main focus being on spontaneous communication skills. However, it cannot be denied that all language functions consist of grammatical elements. Without grammar, the message conveyed can be unclear and inaccurate to the listener. Therefore, students need to learn grammar in order to use language functions appropriately and produce sentences in a foreign language correctly.

To overcome this problem, a more contextual, enjoyable, and meaningful learning approach is needed. One potential alternative is the use of storytelling in English language teaching. Storytelling allows students to be actively involved in the learning process. Through stories, students can see how verb tenses are used in real life to describe sequences of time, events, and cause-and effect relationships. More than just a method of entertainment, storytelling is a powerful educational tool. Stories can foster imagination, improve listening and speaking skills, and provide repeated exposure to sentence patterns and language structures. In the context of grammar, storytelling can help

students understand tenses not only as rigid rules, but as living and functional tools of communication.

In the context of English language learning in secondary schools, the storytelling approach also suits the needs of students who tend to have visual and kinesthetic learning styles. By giving them space to image, create, and express themselves through stories, the learning process becomes more active, collaborative, and enjoyable. This contrast with traditional methods. Which are often passive and monotonous. Seidhofer (2011) argues that English as a lingua franca (EFL) is used primarily by non-native speakers in global interactions, rejecting the idea that English is only valid if it follows the norms of native speakers. Instead, he emphasizes that in international communication, effectiveness and understanding are far more important than grammatical correctness according to native speaker standards. Jenkins (2015) developed the concept of Global Englishes, which states that there is no single authoritative form of "English", supporting the validity of the variations of English used in different countries.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the learning of English in countries where English is not the primary language. In this context, English language learning tends to be limited to the classroom environment and is not supported by the surrounding environment. Therefore, communicative teaching strategies such as storytelling are very important because they can provide more authentic exposure to the use of English (Brown, 2000; Nunan, 1999). In the context of EFL, students are often stronger in reading and grammar than in speaking or listening due to limited practice in the real world.

Structure in English language learning refers to the pattern of arranging words in a sentence to produce correct and logical meaning. This includes elements such as subject, predicates, objects, and modifiers (Azar, 2002). Grammar is the system of rules in a language that governs how words are formed and combined to convey meaning (Crystal, 1995). Without a command of grammar, foreign language learners will find it difficult to convey messages correctly, both orally and in writing. Grammar forms the basis for all language skills: speaking, reading, and listening (Harmer, 2001).

In the context of grammar and language learning, structure refers to the way language elements (words, phrases, clauses) are arranged into grammatically correct sentences. Sentence structure will differ depending on the tense used, for example:

Simple Present: Subject + Verb 1 + Object

Simple Past: Subject + Verb 2 + Object

Present continuous: Subject + is/am/are + Verb-ing.

Structure learning in Indonesia tends to be explicit, systematic, and based on mastery of grammar rules. Although this helps in mastering grammatical aspects, it can reduce the context of natural communication if it is not balanced with a more communicative approach such as storytelling. Storytelling is effective because it demonstrates the natural use of various tenses in story structure, thereby helping students learn grammar contextually and enjoyably.

Tenses are forms of English verbs that indicate the time or event in a sentence. Tenses also describe whether the event has happened, is happening, or will happen. There are three main types of tenses: Present, Past, and Future, which are then developed in 16 tenses with their own specific functions (Pd., 2017). Mastery of verb tenses is very important, especially in the context of EFL, where differences in the use of time are often a source of common errors among learners (Azar, 2002; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The characteristics of verb tenses include: **Indicating the Time of the Action:** Tenses serve to indicate when an action or event occurs: now, in the past, or in the future.

Describing the Aspect of Time: Tenses not only indicate time, but also the aspect or state of the action (*Simple, Continuous/Progressive, Perfect, Perfect Continuous*).

Affecting Verb Form: Each tense changes the form of the main verb and/or auxiliary verb (e.g., *Go – went, is going, has gone, will go*).

Have Time Markers: Tenses are often accompanied by specific time markers (e.g., *Yesterday, now, just, tomorrow*).

Organize the Sequence of Events: Tenses help readers or listeners understand the logical sequence of events in a sentence or paragraph.

Used Contextually: The use of tenses is chosen based on the context of the story or communication situation, not just based on grammar rules.

Important in Storytelling and Narration: In stories, tenses are used to create a clear timeline (Simple Past for main events, Past Perfect for events that happened earlier, Past Continuous for setting the time).

Storytelling is a learning method that uses stories to convey specific messages or concepts to students. According to Elis and Brewster (2002), storytelling helps create a natural and enjoyable learning atmosphere and improves students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. By using storytelling, teachers can introduce various sentence structures and tenses in context, making it easier for students to understand. The characteristics of storytelling in language learning (Wright, 1995; Haven, 2007) include:

Narrative and Contextual: Stories have a clear beginning, middle, and end, making it easier for students to understand the sequence of events and the use of verb tenses.

Involving Characters and Events: Stories usually have real or fictional characters and events that help students see the use of grammar in the context of everyday life.

Activating Language Skills: Storytelling stimulates listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills simultaneously.

Flexible and Adaptable: Teachers can adapt stories according to students' language level, lesson topics, and specific grammatical structures such as the simple present and simple past.

Several previous studies support the use of storytelling in English language learning. Soleimani (n.d.) found that storytelling significantly improved the grammatical accuracy of EFL students. Isbell (2004) demonstrated the positive influence of storytelling of storytelling on children's spoken language complexity and sentence structure. Atta-Alla (2012) found that storytelling reduced students' anxiety about grammar and increased their confidence in using language structures, including verb tenses, in conversation. Harmoko (2016) also emphasized the importance of good and correct grammar in communication.

This study distinguishes itself by specifically investigating the extent to which storytelling can improve the understanding and application of verb tenses in the context of EFL at the intermediate level. The results of this study indicate that storytelling, when integrated into structured grammar instruction, creates a meaningful and contextual learning environment that supports learners in internalizing complex grammatical forms such as the Simple Present, Simple Past, and Simple Future Tenses.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The purpose of this study is to test the effectiveness of storytelling as a teaching strategy in improving students' understanding of verb tenses in English. According to Sugiyono (2018), quantitative methods are used to test predetermined hypotheses through statistical data analysis. Arikunto (2013) emphasizes that a quantitative approach is

appropriate when the objective is to measure differences in learning outcomes after a specific treatment has been applied.

This study involved a group of Junior High School students, namely 7th grade students at SMP Bina Bangsa Mandiri 2, with a total of 32 students per class. The core material use was the narrative *"Squirrel's Dream House"* divided into three parts for three learning sessions. Data collection instruments included: Written Test, Classroom Observations, and Story retelling Assignments. Data analysis was conducted quantitatively to measure the effectiveness of storytelling in improving students' grammar skills, particularly in the accurate use of verb tenses, and to compare the learning outcomes between students taught using storytelling and students taught using conventional methods.

Results

1. Quantitative Observation Results

Based on data from daily assignments and worksheets, students' understanding of tenses showed improvement: Transformation from Present to Past: 71% of students (25 out of 32) were able to correctly change sentences from Present to Past Tense. Use of Future Tense: 63% of students (22 out of 32) were able to use Future Tense correctly when writing predictions. Narrative Construction with Three Tenses: 57% of students (20 out of 32) were able to construct short narratives using three tenses consistently and logically.

2. Challenges Encountered

Mixing Tenses: 51% of students (18 out of 32) still mixed tenses in a single sentence. Vocabulary Deficiency: 63% of students (22 out of 32) lacked the vocabulary to continue the story. Lack of Confidence in Speaking: 74% of students (26 out of 32) showed a lack of confidence when speaking in front of the class.

3. Progress After Solution Implementation

Visual Tenses Chart + Verb Conversion Exercises: 77% of students (27 out of 32) showed improvement in accuracy when choosing tenses while writing. Illustrated Glossary + Sentence Exercises: 69% of students (24 out of 32) experienced an increase in vocabulary when telling stories. Group Discussions & Story Reading: 83% of students (29 out of 32) showed an increase in confidence and verbal participation.

Students' Observation Results, Challenges, and Progress

Aspect	Description	Number of Students	Percentage
Quantitative Observation Results	Correctly changed Present → Past	25/32	71%
	Correct use of Future Tense	22/32	63%
	Constructed narratives	20/32	57%

	with 3 tenses		
Challenges Encountered	Mixed tenses in a single sentence	18/32	51%
	Lack of vocabulary to continue stories	22/32	63%
	Low confidence in speaking	26/32	74%
Progress After Solution Implementation	Visual Chart + Verb Conversion → improved tense accuracy	27/32	77%
	Illustrated Glossary → improved vocabulary	24/32	69%
	Group Discussion → improved confidence & participation	29/32	83%

Discussion

The results of this study strongly support the theory that storytelling is an effective method for teaching grammar, especially verb tenses, in the context of EFL. The significant improvement in understanding tenses (more than 70% of students showed improvement) is in line with Larsen-Freeman's (2003) view that grammar should be understood as a system that allows learners to make meaning in context, not just a set of rules. Storytelling provides this natural context, allowing students to see how tenses are used in real communication, as emphasized by Wright (1990).

Although there were challenges such as tense mixing and vocabulary limitations, the solutions implemented, such as the use of visual tense charts and illustrated glossaries, proved effective. This shows that exercises can overcome specific difficulties in grammar learning. The increase in speaking confidence and oral participation after group discussions and story reading also confirms the findings of Isbell (2004) and Atta-Alla (2012) on the positive impact of storytelling on communication skills and anxiety reduction.

Concclusion

This study concludes that the Storytelling-Based Grammar Learning method is very effective in improving the understanding of seventh grade students at Bina Bangsa Mandiri 2 Junior High School regarding verb tenses (Simple Present, Simple Past, and Simple Future Tense). This method not only helps students internalize grammar rules in a contextual and meaningful way, but also increase their confidence in speaking, vocabulary acquisition, and active participation in learning. Although there were initial challenges related to mixing tenses and confidence, the solutions implemented, such as visual tense charts and group discussions, succesfully overcame these problems, resulting in significant improvements in most students.

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