IMPROVING THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' TENSE MASTERY BY GIVING FEEDBACK AT SMP NEGERI 4 JEMBER IN THE 2007/2008 ACADEMIC YEAR

THESIS

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SUMMARY

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Students' mastery on grammatical rules of English, especially tense is very essential. However, most students still face difficulties in applying the appropriate verb form which is suitable with the tense required. It is proved by knowing the result of the tense pre-test of all classes at the first grade at SMPN 4 Jember. There are four classes actually, class VII A got 31,1, VII B got 33,9, VII C got 32,1, and VII D got the lowest mean score that was 26,5. Considering this condition, the English teacher is required to help the students to re-assess their strengths and weaknesses by giving a input to the students in using the verb forms correctly. One way of giving the input to the students was through giving feedback.

The aim of this research is to improve the students' tense mastery by giving feedback. The research subject was the first year students at SMPN 4 Jember who got the lowest mean score among the four classes, which was class VII D. The class consisted of 50 students. Purposive method was used in determining the research subject and the research area.

This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles. There were four meetings for each cycle. They involved three meetings for the actions and one meeting for conducting the tense test. There were two kinds of data collection method, namely, primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained by conducting tense test on Simple Present, Present Continuous, and Simple Past Tense. Furthermore, the results of the test were analyzed quantitatively that was to find the mean score (M) by dividing the total score of the respondents' score ($\sum X$) by the

number of the respondents (N). The actions were considered successful if the mean score could achieve the standard mean score requirement of 65. And, the secondary data were collected by conducting observation during the actions and documentation by studying the school's documents.

The result of the students' tense mastery in cycle 1 was shown through the mean score of the tense test, which were 45.49. From the result as such, it did not achieved the standard mean score requirement of 65. Thus, it was necessary to conduct the next actions in cycle 2.

The result of the students' tense mastery in cycle 2 was improved. It can be seen through the mean score that was 65.5. The mean score of test in cycle 2 had achieved the standard mean score requirement of 65 and the action was considered successful. In other words, the action was stopped.

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that the actions of giving feedback could improve the students' tense mastery covering Simple Present, Present Continuous and Simple Past Tense.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

English considered as a foreign language in Indonesia. A foreign language is a language which plays no major role in the community and is learnt only in the classroom (Ellis, 1996:11). It is seen through the mass media in Indonesia which are almost written in Indonesian rather than in English, such as magazine, newspaper, etc. If there is one available, i.e. English is used as a language delivery in a certain mass media, it is only found in a small number. Besides, English is rarely used in public community. The Indonesian people prefer using their native language or their mother tongue to using English as a means of communication.

On the contrary to the facts stated above, Nadrun (2006:547) said that English is internationally an important language in the global exchange and interaction among the people in the world. It is also world widely used as a means of communication in almost every aspect of life, including in education. It is true that the Indonesian people would rather use their first language than use English. However, they still need to have a relationship with other countries for a certain purpose. Those countries cannot use Indonesian as a means of communication. This condition makes English important to be learnt by the Indonesian people. Considering its importance, English is taught to the Indonesian students in most educational levels and stages, either as a compulsory subject for junior and senior high school students or as a local content subject for the elementary school students.

English which is taught as a compulsory or local content subject is defined as a means of communication which has to be mastered either orally or in the written form. Ability to communicate can be defined as an ability to comprehend and/or produce oral and/or written sentence or text (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2004:8). The ability to communicate involves the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Besides, there are three kinds of language components, namely, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation which are also very

supportive to the student's communication abilities. For that reason, grammar as one of the major factors in learning English should be learnt and mastered by students in order to be able to communicate better since it is argued as '*Sentence-Making Machine*' that provides the students with the means to generate potentially number of original English sentences (Harmer, 1999:14-15).

In line with the previous statement, Eagleson et al. (in Artini, 2001:228) said that by mastering grammar students will get insights into understanding more clearly about what they are doing, when they are speaking, and how they are converting their mental structures into verbal messages which can be comprehended by others.

Moreover, Artini (2001:225) said that grammar is a very complex aspect of language. One of the various aspects is called tense. Azar as translated by Budijanto (1993:6) said that tense is frequently described as the property that relates to the time a verb of action is performed. In addition, Turner (1976:107) stated that tense means time. Moreover, he said that tense tells time of the action from the point of view of the writer or speaker. It means that tense describes the time at which the action takes place in the statement by using a specific verb. It also implies that there is a particular verb used for a certain time signal. For example, 'John usually wakes up at 5 o'clock in the morning', the previous action shows John's habitual action. Since, the statement is known as a habitual action of someone, the suitable tense for that statement is Simple Present Tense. It is why the verb 'wake' is added by 's' becomes 'wakes' since the subject of the statement is considered as the third person singular.

Another example like, 'John sang a song in my party last night' shows that the action happens in the past time. It is known from the past form of the verb '*sang*' and the time signal '*last night*'. Those examples imply the changing verb forms based on the time signal. This often causes confusion to the students and may sometimes create difficulty in studying the language, especially for Indonesian students.

Based on the result of pre-test which was conducted on 8th and 9th August for all classes at the first year level of SMPN 4 Jember, class VII D got the lowest mean score that was, 26,5. The rest of the first level classes such as VII A got 31,1, VII B got 33,9, VII C got 32,1.

Considering this condition, students in class VII D had problems in applying tenses, covering Simple Present Tense, Present Continuous Tense, and Simple Past Tense. The students in class VII D got difficulties in applying the verb form that was suitable for a certain tense required. For example, 'My grandmother usually *sits down* in an arm chair every afternoon (see item no.11 of the Pre-test).' Verb form of Simple Present Tense as '*sits down'* was rarely found on the students' answer, they tended to use verb form of Present Continuous Tense like 'is sitting down' or verb form of Simple Past Tense as 'sat down' or even they used a verb form of Simple Present Tense without adding a letter *'-s' (sit down).*

Here, the teacher was required to help the students to re-assess strengths and weaknesses and observe the ingrained pattern of statements. One way of helping students in mastering English tenses was through feedback. Giving feedback helps students to clarify their understanding of the construction and the meaning of the language (Ur, 1998:154).

Besides, Kamarwanta (2006) had proved the benefit of giving feedback on the students' writing achievement by conducting a research entitled the effect of giving feedback on the students' writing achievement. In his research, he focused on the written feedback or written comment only. Then, he found that there was a positive effect of giving written feedback on the students' written achievement. In other words, the students' writing achievement became much better after receiving the written feedback from the teacher.

As the additional information of the result of the informal interview with the English teacher, he said that he tries to give feedback in every meeting to the students' work by conducting discussion (Conference) in order to help the students understand well about the English material that has been learnt. But, he has not used

the written comment on the students' work yet while correcting them. He also said that any types of feedback might improve the students' achievement in every aspect of knowledge if the feedback is given effectively.

Based on the issues above, the researcher believed that feedback might be given in the teaching of tense since it was possible to help the students to be aware of the complexity of the tense patterns and also to clarify their understanding about tense. Therefore, a research entitled, improving the first year students' tense mastery by giving feedback at SMP Negeri 4 Jember in the 2007/2008 academic year was conducted.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the problems are formulated as follows:

1.2.1 General Problem

Can giving feedback improve the first year students' tense mastery at SMP Negeri 4 Jember in the 2007/2008 academic year?

1.2.2 Specific Problems

a. Can giving feedback improve the first year students' tense mastery of Simple Present Tense?
b. Can giving feedback improve the first year students' tense mastery of Present Continuous Tense?
c. Can giving feedback improve the first year students' tense mastery of Simple Past Tense?

1.3 **Operational Definition of the Variable**

It is essential for the researcher to specify how the variable is defined in order to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation. In this research, there are two variables to be defined, they are: Giving feedback on the teaching of tenses and students' tense mastery.

1.3.1 **Giving Feedback on the Teaching of Tenses**

Keh (1990:244-303) stated that there are three major areas of feedback as revision, namely, peer feedback, conference and written comment. In this research, the researcher focused on giving conference and written feedback on the students' work. Conference feedback was an input which was given orally to the students' work which was done in front of the class (written down on the whiteboard). It seemed like a discussion among the students and the researcher. While, the written feedback was given on the students' second exercise after doing the previous practice by using codes and abbreviation. However, the written feedback was not given directly to the students' work as the previous practice. The researcher collected the students' exercise at the end of the class. Afterwards, the written feedback was given on the students' exercise outside the class and gave the work back to the students as soon as possible before the students went home.

1.3.2 **Students' Tense Mastery**

The students' tense mastery means how successful the students in applying the verb forms based on the tense required which covers Simple Present, Present Continuous and Simple Past Tense. Those three kinds of tense are all covered in the tense achievement test in the form of objective type with multiple choice formats. The students' tense mastery will be showed through the scores of the tense test on those tenses which are mentioned above.