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THE IMPACT OF PICTURE PROMPTS ON STUDENTS' ABILITY IN SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract
This study aims to find out how the impact of picture prompts can improve the ability of seventh-grade students at SMPN 121 Jakarta regarding the use of subject-verb agreements in simple present tense sentences. Observation before action was carried out in class VII SMPN 121 Jakarta. From the data collected through observation and prerequisite tests before entering a new chapter, it is known that the students have difficulty answering subject-verb agreement questions in simple present-tense sentences. In addition, not all the students are facilitated by gadgets. For this reason, the researchers uses pictures that can be used both electronically and paper-based to encourage students' ability to subject-verb agreement. This research was conducted using the Classroom Action Research method which focused on solving the problems encountered. The use of pictures as a learning medium in English is expected to encourage the students to more easily understand the subject-verb agreement material. From the findings, reports on the student learning outcomes, and observations it can be said that the use of pictures is quite effective in improving students' ability to subject-verb agreement material in simple present tense sentences.

Keywords: classroom action research, picture prompt, subject-verb agreement

Introduction

Tomakin argued that people will not be able to master a language if they are not learning the rules of grammar (as cited in Marsevani, 2023). Grammar has an important role in learning English, to ensure that the sentences used can be understood accurately and clearly. Grammar is a description of the rule that determines how a language's sentences are formed. The sentence should be in the correct grammatical form to make sure other people understand what they are talking about (Shafira, 2021). We use grammar to communicate more effectively, and more precisely with others (Scrivener, 2013). By understanding grammar, we can construct sentences correctly to avoid mistakes in interpreting the meaning of the message conveyed. One important aspect of constructing sentences is understanding and correct use of subject-verb agreement. In line with previous

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research which stated that in making sentences well and correct grammatically, the students need to pay attention to the subject-verb agreement in every single sentence (Dinillah, Anugrawati, & Ariana, 2021)

The expectations above do not match the reality in the field, where studying grammar, including subject-verb agreement, is not easy. Learning grammar is something undesirable subject faced by some students in the teaching-learning process (Suseno, 2021). Difficulties in subject-verb agreement refer to the lack of ability of language users to construct subject-verb agreement in English sentences (Badereddeen, 2023). Subject-verb agreement errors related to the use of singular and plural subjects in respondents' essays often occur because respondents have difficulty determining whether the subject they use is singular or plural (Tarigan et al., 2022).

Based on pre-observations and prerequisite tests to enter a new chapter in seventh grade at SMPN 121 Jakarta, it is known that students have difficulties answering questions regarding subject-verb agreement in simple present tense sentences. Of 101 students who answered the questions regarding this material, only 13 students could answer correctly. Generally, the students are confused about when to add "-s/-es" and when not to add "-s/-es" to the verb that agrees with the subject in simple present tense sentences. This material is also new material for seventh-grade students, so their abilities regarding subject-verb agreement are still very low. Moreover, some students did not get English lessons in elementary school, thus adding to the challenges of learning this grammar concept. Another obstacle faced is that not all students have adequate access and facilities to use electronic devices.

To overcome these problems, this research aims to improve students' ability to understand and use subject-verb agreement by using picture prompts as a tool that can be used both electronically and in printed form. Therefore, this study addressed the research questions: Do the picture prompts improve the seventh graders' ability in subject-verb agreement? And how does the picture prompt improve the seventh graders' ability in subject-verb agreement? The researchers used the digital platform Canva to develop picture prompts. This classroom action research is expected to be able to overcome existing problems and be able to show the impact of using pictures in learning English, especially the material subject-verb agreement in the simple present tense.

Subject-verb agreement in simple present tense

Subject-verb agreement in a sentence is one of the important aspects that must be learned because students are required to make grammatically correct sentences (Sari & Wahyuni, 2022). Subjects and verbs are the main parts needed to make a sentence. Straus said that the term "subject" can be defined as a noun or pronoun that does an action, while "verb" is a word that indicates an action or a state of being (as cited by Hasanah & Habibullah, 2020). Subject-verb agreement is the grammatical rule that the verb or verbs in a sentence must match the number, person, and gender of the subject; in English, the verb needs to match just the number and sometimes the person (Yuniarty et al., 2023). According to Eastwood, subject-verb agreement is selecting the appropriate singular or plural verb that comes after the subject. Subject-verb agreement is like the backbone of grammar because it is the basis of how you will compose your sentences and ideas correctly

(as cited by Cabaltica & Osabel, 2021). In other words, subject-verb agreement refers to the rule which states that the verb in a sentence must agree with the subject (agreement).

According to Azar and Hagen (2016) subject-verb agreement in the present simple tense has several basic rules, such as: when the subject is a singular noun or third-person singular pronoun (she, he, it), the verb is added by -s/-es (E.g., he/she/it/Mary works at the bank). When using the subject "I" or plural subjects (you, we, they, friends) only the base form of the verb is used (E.g., I/you/we/they/my friends live in Boston).

Furthermore, Badereddeen (2023) writes that subject-verb agreement in numbers is embedded in each English sentence. For example, the verb to be, when first-person subjects are used (I "am", we "are"), represents the subject-verb agreement forms. She/he/it takes the "is" form of the verb to be, while we/they/you take the "are" form of the verb to be (E.g., I am a student, they are students, he/she/it is a student). Regarding the verb "to have", the singular form is "has" with third person singular (she, he, it) and "have" with other subjects (I, We, they, and you). E.g., I/you/we/they have a car, he/she/it has a car.

The use of pictures in teaching English

The use of pictures in teaching English is also known as visual aids. It is known that visual pictures are better stored in our brains than verbal ones (Antonova et al., 2019). Dolati and Cameron stated that the most common and simple forms of visual aids are pictures (as cited by Quecan, 2021). The use of pictures, video clips, objects, and internet facilities helps students to have a real-life imagination of the context of what is being taught (Ordu, 2021). The use of visual media is an effective learning medium because it attracts students' attention. Students can be immediately interested in something they see directly through the sense of sight, which stimulates the performance of the student's brain to develop and convey ideas, concepts, and thoughts based on what they see (Santoso et al., 2019). This shows that the use of pictures in learning English has an important role in facilitating students' understanding of the material.

Visual tools can convey meaning or information in a way that is more concrete or more tangible than spoken words can convey (Meilani et al., 2022). With visual aids, the students were able to understand the concept even though it was difficult (Halwani, 2017). Widodo said that visual grammar includes, drawings, pictures, photographs, cartoons, and stick figures which serve as visual aids, and enable students to vocalize particular grammatical patterns (as cited in Pfotenhauer, 2019). It means pictures can help students easily understand and realize the main points they have learned in the classroom, such as learning grammar.

Method

This study used a collaborative classroom action research (CAR) method which aims to improve the ability of seventh-grade students at SMP 121 Jakarta regarding subject-verb agreements in the simple present tense using pictures as learning media. This research involved 30 students who were students of class VII B at the school. The research was carried out in two cycles to see an increase in student learning outcomes.

According to Zulfani et al. (2016), collaborative classroom action research is a research design that aims to provide solutions to class-based problems faced by teachers by forming collaborative teams (as cited in Syahdan et al., 2022). Classroom action is a method of finding out what is the best way in the classroom to improve students' abilities in the learning process (Putra et al., 2022). The research process was carried out in collaboration between the researchers who also acted as a teacher, colleagues as observers, a tutor teacher, and a lecturer as supervisors in carrying out the research. The researchers uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) designed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart model (2013) that consists of four steps namely, planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (as cited in Putra et al., 2022).

The source of the data in this study is quantitative data collected from the results of the pre-test and post-test. The pre-test is conducted to know the students' initial understanding of the subject-verb agreement in the simple present tense before the action is carried out. The test consists of 10 short questions or fill-in-the-blank with the verb in the brackets related to subject-verb agreement rules in simple present tense sentences. After the learning process is completed in each cycle, the students are given the post-test to measure the improvement in their understanding after using picture prompts.

The process of data analysis in this study is a comparison of quantitative data from the result score of the pre-test and the result score of the post-test using descriptive statistical analysis techniques. Descriptive statistical analysis according to Syahrum and Salim (2016) is statistics that studies procedures for collecting, compiling, presenting, and analyzing research data in the form of numbers, to provide an orderly, concise, and clear description of a symptom, state of events, so that it can be certain understanding or meaning is drawn (as cited in Siregar, 2021). The data are presented in table form.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the Kemmis and McTaggart PTK procedures, researchers began research by making observations to identify problems in the learning process that occurred in class (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). So, the researchers identified the problems or the challenges in learning English for seventh-grade students by observing the implementation of learning when the tutor teacher was teaching, discussions with the teacher, debriefing with students, and conducting prerequisite tests before entering a new chapter to find out the problems faced by students. After doing these things it is known that students experience difficulties related to subject-verb agreement material in simple present tense.

The students' improvement of subject-verb agreement in cycle I

At the time of planning, the researchers discussed with colleagues, lecturer, and tutor teacher to develop learning designs and assessment instruments. The researchers identified the important parts of the subject-verb agreement which can be illustrated by pictures. Then the researchers developed the picture prompts using Canva with the concepts involving singular and plural subjects as well as situations in daily life. In each developed picture, the researchers wrote sentences describing the subject-verb agreement below the pictures. After that, the researchers consulted with the lecturer and tutor teacher, about whether the lesson

plan, the assessment instruments, and the pictures used were the material to be measured.

At the implementation stage, the researchers started the learning process by showing a picture as a trigger accompanied by trigger questions such as: "Based on this picture, how many children are in it?", "What are they doing?", "Can you make a simple sentence based on the picture?" Then, the researchers helped the students to understand the basic rules of the subject-verb agreement by providing other pictures that have differences in singular or plural subjects in the form of worksheets. For example, the researchers showed a picture of two children studying mathematics. The students are asked to circle the correct verb or rewrite the verb in the bracket by adding -s/-es or don't/doesn't if needed. The students identified the subject-verb agreement through the worksheet in groups. After they completed the worksheets, the groups exchanged the answer sheets to be corrected together. The students are assisted by the teacher in discussing the worksheets as well as strengthening teaching material. At the end of cycle I, the students were given a post-test to see how far their ability had increased in subject-verb agreement material.

In the observation and reflection stages to determine the assessment scale, the researchers referred to the Permendikbud no. 104 of 2014 concerning the assessment of learning outcomes by educators in primary education and secondary education, as shown in Table 1 (as cited in Wachidah & Khatimah, 2018).

Table 1. Assessment scale of learning outcomes

Category	Score Range
Very Good (A)	86-100
Good (B)	71-85
Fair (C)	56-70
Low (D)	≤55

The results of the pre-test and post-test in Cycle I can be presented in Tables 2 and 3 below:

Table 2. The students' pre-test results in cycle I

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good (A)	86-100	0	0%
Good (B)	71-85	0	0%
Fair (C)	56-70	2	6.67%
Low (D)	≤55	28	93.33%
Mean score: 29			

Table 3. The students' post-test results in cycle I

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good (A)	86-100	7	23.33%
Good (B)	71-85	2	6.67%
Fair (C)	56-70	9	30%
Low (D)	≤55	12	40%
Mean score: 62			

By comparing the results of the average pre-test and post-test scores in cycle I, it is known that student learning outcomes have increased quite significantly.

The average score of the pre-test cycle I is 29, while the average score of the post-test cycle I is 62. Table 3 shows that 23.33% of the students got a very good score, 6.67% got a score in the good category, 30% got fair, and the remaining 40% still got a low score. The increase in the percentage of very good, good, and fair categories shows that the student's abilities regarding subject-verb agreement have improved. It means that the pictures provided can help the students visualize and make it easier to understand the concept being studied. This finding is supported by the previous research which stated that the pictures in the cards act as concrete materials in guiding the students to know about the rules of subject-verb agreement (Layat et al., 2017).

Besides, the findings of increased learning outcomes, the researchers also saw that the students became more active when answering trigger questions with the picture prompts. It shows that pictures can create more interactive learning. In line with the previous research that stated that using pictures can make exercises and activities more interesting and more interactive (Hashanah, 2015). In addition, from the students' worksheets, the researchers also found that the students had difficulty answering post-test subject-verb agreement questions in the form of negative sentences. For this reason, the researchers prepared learning materials, activities, and media for cycle II which focused on studying subject-verb agreement in the form of negative sentences.

The students' improvement of subject-verb agreement in cycle II

During re-planning for cycle II, the researchers discussed with colleagues, tutor teacher, and lecturer to develop pictures and lesson plans that more focused on subject-verb agreement in negative form in the simple present tense. The researchers designed a lesson plan and developed picture prompts that support negative sentence statements such as adding crosses to pictures and creating assessment and reflection instruments. After that, the researchers consulted again whether the lesson plan, materials, instruments, and media used were appropriate for the material to be taught.

Similar to cycle I, the learning activities in cycle II also began by showing pictures as a trigger for learning. Asked the students to make positive sentences based on pictures, then changed them into negative forms. The students are also invited to remind themselves of learning subject-verb agreement in previous lessons. The activity continued by asking the students to identify subject-verb agreement using the pictures along with the example sentences that have been provided. The pictures were more focused on the visualization of singular or plural subjects with negative concepts. For example, a picture of a woman with a crossed soda drink shows that she does not drink soda. After the students complete the worksheet, the correct answers are discussed together.

During the implementation of cycle II, the researchers found that the use of pictures began to make the students feel bored during learning. This appeared to be caused by learning activities that were no different from cycle I. This cycle ended by providing a post-test and student reflection. The reflection is carried out orally by answering reflective questions: "How enjoyable is this learning process?", "How well do you understand the material?" The researchers asked the students to give points by raising their fingers from 1-3 regarding the questions. From this oral reflection, it can be concluded that, on average, the students gave 2

points in the category of quite understanding and having fun in learning subject-verb agreement using picture prompts.

As shown in Table 4, the average score of post-test cycle II was found to be higher than the average score of post-test cycle I. There were 33.33% of students who got very good marks, 13.33% got scores of which is good, 33.33% were fair and the remaining 20% is still in the low category.

Table 4. The students' post-test results in cycle II

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good (A)	86-100	10	33.33%
Good (B)	71-85	4	13.33%
Fair (C)	56-70	10	33.33%
Low (D)	≤55	6	20%
Mean score: 71			

In Figure 1, it can be seen that there is an increase in the average score from the pre-test which is 29 to post-test I which is 62, and post-test II which is 71.

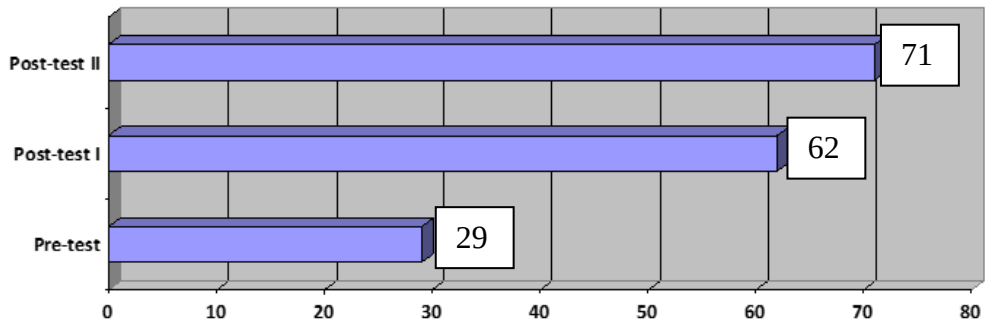


Figure 1. Mean scores of pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II

The findings above show that the picture prompts were quite effective in improving the seventh-grade students' ability to subject-verb agreement in the simple present tense. This result is in line with similar studies, Sartika stated that flashcards are effective in improving the third graders' mastery of the simple present tense (Sartika, 2020). Learning using the picture and picture model can improve students' mastery of simple present tense material and improve student learning achievement which is marked by increased completion in first grade of accounting students at SMK Negeri 1 Langsa (Linda & Nasir, 2022). This also answered the first research question, "Do the picture prompts improve the seventh graders' ability in subject-verb agreement?"

To answer the second question, "How do the picture prompts improve the seventh graders' ability in subject-verb agreement?" It can be related to the impact of using picture prompts on improving student learning outcomes regarding the subject-verb agreement material. The pictures used have attracted the attention of students and made the learning process more interactive. For seventh-grade students, visual aids can improve understanding of complex concepts such as subject-verb agreement rules. The pictures provided concrete examples of singular and plural subjects with variations in subjects and daily situations so that the students can see how subject and verb interact in a sentence through identification

activities during learning. This makes abstract concepts more real and easy to understand. The statement is supported by previous research which stated that different visuals bring variation in the classroom as they help to draw the attention of the learners toward the topics. The use of different pictures related to the lesson of the class leads the classes to be lively as well as learners get some outlines of the topic. It is always better to have something visual in front of the learners so that they can understand the point well (Macwan, 2015). In addition, the teacher provided direct feedback during class discussion and worksheet discussion. This feedback helped the students correct their mistakes and strengthen their understanding of subject-verb agreement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that picture prompts are proven to have a positive impact on increasing the ability of the seventh graders at SMPN 121 Jakarta to learn subject-verb agreement. The results of the study show that the use of pictures as learning media can make material more interesting and interactive, produce a significant increase in learning outcomes as can be seen from the comparison of the average pre-test scores with the average post-test II scores, as well as provide a better understanding of complex concepts such as subject-verb agreement. Even though challenges such as boredom arise in the second cycle, the pictures still play a role in improving student learning outcomes. The use of pictures can be varied and combined with other media so that students do not feel bored during learning. More attention needs to be paid during implementation, observation, and reflection regarding the involvement of students in learning so that it can be taken into consideration in planning the next learning strategy.

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