

## The Effectiveness of Substitution Drill in Teaching Simple Present Tense

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### Abstract

*Simple present tense is the most useful tense in English since it is often used in daily life to express habits or regular activities and to talk about facts. Aware of this, the researcher decided to apply substitution drill to teach simple present tense at the eleventh grade of MA Emeyodere Kota Sorong to find out whether the substitution drill technique is effective or not in teaching simple present tense. The design of this research is one group pretest-posttest. The population of this research is the students of MA Emeyodere Kota Sorong with the total of 38 students. Based on the convenience sampling, the researcher chose the eleventh grade with the total of 14 students, but only 7 students involved as the sample from this class in this research. The results of this research show that there is a significant difference in students' average score in pretest and posttest. The students' average score before using the substitution drill (pretest) is 35.71. whereas the students' average score after using the substitution drill (posttest) is 75. Meanwhile, the N-gain's result is 61.11 or 61% interpreted as quite effective. It means that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted. So, the conclusion is that the substitution drill technique is effective for teaching simple present tense.*

**Keywords:** Substitution Drill; Simple Present Tense; Grammar

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### Introduction

Grammar is deemed to be the most important part in a language as it builds the basis for even more advanced language learning (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011). Wang (2010) defined grammar as a set of rules that functioning as a reference of selecting and arranging words into sentences that make sense, plays an important role in language learning. Thus, it can be concluded from those experts' definitions that Grammar is one of the most important components in learning English because grammar involves in all the four English skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). And, with a good understanding in grammar, someone can arrange words into sentences that make sense. Penny ur in her book (1988) cited in Ridhatul (2011) stated that, the ones who know grammar are those who have mastered the rules of a language to express theirselves in what would be considered acceptable language form.

Tenses proficiency is one of many ways to measure one's grammar comprehension. A tense is a grammatical expression of place in time, usually related to the present moment rather than the length of time something happened (Zhuang Xin, 2010). Tenses provides us with farther information about events or actions that happen in the present, past or future time (Azahary P Toago, Sriati Usman, Mukrim, 2013). There are three main verb tenses in English: present, past and future. Thus, in grammar, tense is a category that serves to express time reference. The simple present tense is one of several forms of present tense in English. Lindsay Betts (2017) stated that the simple present tense is when you use a verb to talk about something that happens constantly in the present tense like daily, weekly, or monthly. The simple present tense is used for things that happen frequently or are factual.

Among all of tenses in English, simple present tense is the most useful tense in English because over 50% of interactions are done in the simple present. Hence, it is safe to say that simple present tense needs to be taught as early as possible to increase students' English skill. Because by knowing it, they can do many interactions in English. However,

in many cases, people would agree that English could be troublesome and boring to learn, yet it could be easy and fun to learn when they know that English is the global language and is spoken widely across the world. Which means, it serves as the world's lingua franca. Zuliati Rohmah (2005) stated that when people of different backgrounds come together, they need of a particular language that serves as the lingua franca to help them understand each other. English is the world- renowned lingua franca. As the world's lingua franca, English can help people with different first languages to communicate in one and same language.

In studying tenses, especially simple present tense, there are some differences between Indonesian and English, it is in expressing time and adding different suffixes to verbs of different subjects. In English, simple present tense is used to express habitual and factual events. Meanwhile, Bahasa Indonesia does not even possess tenses as English does. To express time, Bahasa Indonesia only uses adverbial of time such as *kemarin*, *sekarang*, *besok*, etc. Bahasa Indonesia uses the same verb for present, past and future, and it also does not have additional suffixes for verbs of different objects as the simple present does. Those differences between Bahasa Indonesia and English really got the students confused. Furthermore, many English teachers are only focusing on teaching English vocabularies and expressions, so this can be the reason why students probably do not even know what tenses are.

Based on the researcher's observation at the eleventh grade of MA Emeyodere, Kota Sorong researcher found that the students had a lack of understanding in simple present tense. The reason why the researcher assumed the students had a lack of understanding in simple present tense is because, after the teacher gave them a mid-test that had a couple of simple present tense questions, most of them answered the simple present tense questions wrong. They did not know the patterns to make simple present tense sentence. Despite of them being already at the eleventh grade, they still not entirely understand the simple present tense which they probably have been taught in the seventh grade.

To overcome this problem and to make learning grammar more interesting and easier, researcher uses a classroom technique called substitution drill in teaching simple present tense in the classroom. Drilling means listening to a model, provided by the teacher, a tape or another student and repeating what is heard, Lisa Kwan Suli (2009) said. Sudarniati (2015) states that substitution drill is a classroom technique used to practice new language. It starts with the teacher first modelling words or sentences which learners then repeat. Thus, the researcher concluded that Substitution drill is a classroom technique where the teacher first introduces a sentence, then followed by students repeating it. The teacher then substitutes one or more key words, and the students say or write down the same structures as before with the substitution words added to it.

The current state of research on the effectiveness of the Substitution Drill technique in teaching the simple present tense indicates its potential to improve students' accuracy and fluency in using the tense through structured practice and immediate feedback. However, there is a research gap in understanding the long-term retention of knowledge acquired through substitution drills, the impact of individual student differences on responses to this technique, and the need for comparative studies to evaluate its effectiveness relative to other language teaching methods. Further research addressing these gaps can enhance our understanding of how best to utilize substitution drills for teaching the simple present tense.

## Literature Review

### *a. Simple Present Tense*

The simple present tense is a verb form used to show an action that happens in the present, to express an action that happens frequently or habits, and also a thing that is true in general or a fact (Slamet R., 2008). The simple present tense is also used to describe everyday activities and to introduce oneself. Lester (2010) stated that, "The most confusing feature of the present tense for English learners is that the simple present tense does not actually signify present time. Its three main uses are as follows: (1) making factual statements and generalizations, (2) describing habitual actions, and (3) describing predictable future events or actions". Siti Maisyaroh (2019) said that, "Simple present mastery is one of many ways to know how far students' understanding in grammar". Realizing the importance of simple present mastery building for the students, teachers must take an effort to build up their students' mastery. Simple present mastery is the most important factor in compiling simple sentences to express daily activities or habit". It becomes important for students to know how to make sentences from this tense, as simple present tense has been used in over 50% of interactions globally. There are many different formulations for different sentences in simple present tense. But, in this research, the researcher will only be focusing on teaching Verbal and Negative Verbal sentence formulations of simple present tense. Below is the breakdown of all the simple present tense formulations.

### *b. Substitution Drill Technique*

The substitution drill is one of many techniques out there that can be used in teaching English as a foreign language, especially in teaching simple present tense. Substitution drill is a classroom technique wherein the teacher first introduces a sentence, then followed by students repeating it. The teacher then substitutes one or more key words, and the students say or write down the same structure as before with the substitution words added to it. According to Paulston and Bruder (1976) cited in Siti Maisyaroh (2019), there are 5 kinds of substitution drill. In this research, however, the researcher only used the 'Single Slot Substitution' technique in teaching simple present tense. The substitution may be given orally or cued by the teacher. The 5 kinds of substitution drill are as follows:

1. Single Slot Substitution. There is only one constituent that is changed throughout the drill. This drill is useful for practicing the word order of difficult patterns or for function words like the frequency adverbs.
2. Double Slot Substitutions. This technique is pretty similar to single slot substitution drill, but instead of only substitutes one constituent, this drill substitutes two constituents. This type of drill is useful for practicing comparison.
3. Multiple Slot Substitutions. Three or more constituents are replaced in the model with each student response. This drill is excellent for practicing comparisons and can be used as problem-solving activities.
4. Moving Slot Substitutions. With each student response one constituent is changed but it is a different constituent in each response. This drill is very useful for extended practice on verb tenses.
5. Correlative Substitutions. The cue triggers a morphological or syntactic correlative change in the pattern. This drill is excellent for testing the students' ability to encode grammatical relationships such as subject-verb agreement, indefinite article choice, count-mass nouns, pronoun forms in short, any structure which contrasts minimally in its various patterns. All correlative drills are by nature testing drills

### Methodology

The research design used in this research is pre-experimental design one group pretest-posttest with quantitative approach. Arikunto (2010) stated that one group pretest-posttest is research that provides a pretest before being given treatment, after being given treatment and final test (posttest). The population of this research consists of 41 students. They are the students at MA Emeyodere Kota Sorong from tenth until twelve grades. The researcher decided to pick 7 samples from the XI class. The main reason why the researcher only picked 7 students as the sample out of 14 students in XI class's population is because when the researcher conducted research there, the other 8 students did not meet the criteria 'availability at a certain time', so the researcher only picked 7 students as the samples. The researcher chose this class as the sample because the students in this class still have a lack of understanding in simple present tense. In this research, the instrument used to collect data is in the test form of grammar test which consists of 10 multiple choices and 10 fill in the blanks in the pre-test and 10 multiple choices and 10 making sentence in the post-test. After all the data is collected, the researcher analyzed the data and find the significant differences. The researcher used some formulas and SPSS 21 software to analyze certain data. To prove the hypothesis of this research the researcher used N-Gain test formula in analyzing.

### Result

In this research, the researcher used pretest and posttest analysis with one group pretest and posttest method. The test consists of 20 questions that divided into 10 multiple choices and 10 fill in the blanks for pretest, and 10 multiple choices and 10 making sentences. The result of students' pretest, and posttest can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1:** *The Students Score in Pretest and Posttest*

No	Classification	Score	Pretest		Posttest	
			F	P	F	P
1	Very High	85-100	0	0	2	29
2	High	69-84	0	0	4	57
3	Moderate	52-68	0	0	1	14
4	Low	36-51	4	57	0	0
5	Very Low	20-35	3	43	0	0
Total			7	100	7	100

The table 1 shows that that there are 2 students who belonged to very high which made up 29% of the samples, 4 students who belonged to high which made up 57% of the samples, and 1 student who belonged to moderate which made up 14% of the samples in the posttest. Moreover, in the pretest, 4 students are classified low which made up 57% of the samples and 3 students are classified very low which made up 57% of the samples. Based on the explanation, the students' score is improved in the posttest.

Mean is where the researcher finds the average score of pretest and posttest that are going to be used later in finding the Normalized gain. Standard deviation functions to measure the dispersion dataset relative to its mean. The researcher finds them using SPSS 21 software. The result is in the bale below:

**Table 2: The Students Mean Score in Pretest and Posttest**

Session	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Pretest	35.71	13.363
Posttest	75.00	10.000

Source: SPSS 21 Software

Table 2 shows the minimum score in posttest (60) is greater than in pretest (15), and the maximum score in the posttest (90) is also greater than in pretest (50) which means students' simple present tense mastery has improved quite significantly. Based on the table above, the average score of student's simple present tense score has improved significantly where in the pretest the mean is at 35.71 and in the posttest after they are being given treatments is at 75. Also, the standard deviation in posttest (10) is smaller than in pretest (13.36306) which suggests the standard deviation in posttest is closer to its mean (reliable) while pretest is further to its mean (less reliable).

In proving the hypothesis research, the researcher calculated the N-gain value to determine the effectiveness of learning outcomes after treatments. The formula to calculate the Normalized Gain Test. Based on the calculation the N-gain 's value is 61.11 or 61%. If the N-gain's value ranges from 56-75 it is interpreted as quite effective. So, referring to that interpretation, the N-gain's result of 61.11 or 61% is interpreted as quite effective. It is proven that the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the Null Hypothesis (H0) is rejected which means substitution drill technique is effective in teaching simple present tense at the eleventh grade of MA Emeyodere Kota Sorong.

## Discussion

This research was conducted to find out the effectiveness of Single-slot Substitution Drill in teaching Simple Present Tense. Based on the research's findings, the mean's result of 35.71 in pretest has improved significantly to 75 in posttest, which is beyond the KKM of 70. It means that there is a huge improvement in students' simple present tense score and mastery. Also, the N-gain's result of 61.11 or 61% is interpreted as quite effective. It suggests that the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the Null Hypothesis (H0) is rejected, which also means the substitution drill has an effective impact to improve students' simple present tense mastery. The reason why this technique said to be quite effective in teaching simple present tense by the researcher is because according to Paulston and Bruder (1976), the drill is useful for practicing the word order of difficult forms. There are also some previous studies that considered substitution drill as an effective technique toward students' ability in simple present tense. First study by Maisyaroh (2019), it is in line with Maisyaroh that the mean in posttest was higher than it was in the pretest meaning that the Null Hypothesis (H0) is rejected, so the substitution drill is effective in teaching simple present tense.

Second study by Purwito (2011), he found that the single slot substitution drill technique has been given good contribution in developing students' mastery and positive attitude towards simple present tense. This atmosphere was also felt by the researcher in this research, where all the 7 students were so interested, vibrant and positive throughout the 4 meetings held by the researcher. However, in this research, the researcher found out that this technique also helps students to increase their focus in learning tenses since they need to be concentrated enough to know which part of speech is being substituted in the sentence, and where to place the specific part of speech in the sentence according to the simple present tense's patterns. Because at first, the students at the eleventh grade of MA Emeyodere were having a hard time to get their concentration to memorize the simple present tense' patterns, but after the researcher taught them through substitution drill, they can be more concentrated to memorize the simple present tense's patterns faster. So, in this

research, the researcher concluded that the Substitution drill technique is effective in teaching simple present tense especially at the eleventh grade of MA Emeyodere Kota Sorong.

The discussion of the research highlights the positive impact of the Substitution Drill Technique on students' learning outcomes related to the Simple Present Tense. The results suggest that through the structured practice provided by the Single-slot Substitution Drill, students were able to significantly improve their understanding and mastery of the tense. This finding underscores the value of incorporating this technique into language teaching practices to enhance students' proficiency in using the Simple Present Tense. Furthermore, the study also revealed that students who consistently engaged in Substitution Drills demonstrated higher levels of confidence and fluency when using the tense in both written and spoken communication. This not only suggests an improvement in their language skills but also indicates a boost in their overall language proficiency. Therefore, educators are encouraged to leverage the benefits of this technique to effectively support students in mastering the Simple Present Tense and ultimately, enhance their language learning experience.

### **Conclusion**

Applying the single-slot substitution drill technique is effective in teaching simple present tense. It is proven by the increase in students' minimum, maximum, and mean scores in the posttest after being given treatments. Also, the standard deviation value in the posttest was smaller than in the pretest, which means this technique is reliable. And the N-gain's result of 61% suggests that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted, and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, or, in other words, that the substitution drill is effective. Generally, the substitution drill technique can help the students memorise the patterns of the simple present tense due to its repetitiveness. The substitution drill also helps to increase the focus of students in the eleventh grade of MA Emeyodere Kota Sorong. Furthermore, the consistent practice of substitution drills can lead to improved fluency in using the simple present tense. Additionally, incorporating varied activities alongside substitution drills can enhance overall language acquisition and retention for students. In conclusion, while some may argue that substitution drills can be monotonous, they serve as a valuable tool in language learning. By providing a structured and repetitive way for students to practice forming sentences in the simple present tense, these drills lay a solid foundation for fluency. Through consistent practice and the addition of diverse activities, students can not only improve their language skills but also retain the information for future use. Therefore, it is important for educators to recognize the benefits of substitution drills and incorporate them effectively into their teaching strategies.

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