



## USING SMART FINGERS TECHNIQUE IN UNDERSTANDING SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research was to measure the effectiveness of 'SMART Fingers' technique in improving students' achievement of simple present. There were two classes of 7<sup>th</sup> graders of SMP Yadika 10, Tangerang, assigned as experimental and controlled groups, participating as the samples with totally 35 students in each class. The method of quantitative with quasi experimental research design applied in this study. The tools used to collect the data were pre-test and post-test. Quantitative and statistical analysis were taken to analyze the data. The quantitative calculation showed that after the treatment, 8 of the students in the experimental group fell into 'excellent' level, and none of the student in the controlled group was in this level. The statistical analysis of independent sample test revealed that the significant value of the experimental group (2-Tailed)  $< .001 < 0.05$ . This finding indicated that the experimental group reached different achievement after they were taught by using 'SMART Fingers' technique. Thus, referring to the analysis results above, this study concluded that 'SMART Fingers' technique was effective to improve students' understanding of simple present tense.*

**Keywords:** English grammar, English tenses, SMART Fingers technique

### Introduction

“Every language has its grammar and this grammar is important” (Rahman & Ahmed, 2017, p. 123). Without grammar, words stand together without any meaning (Abduh & Gouzi, 2020). In English, parts of grammar that need to be used in relation to the time are called tenses. According to Ruth (2014), tenses refer to the wire or nerves center of any English utterance. Thus, in order to produce meaningful sentences, English learners should be able to use appropriate verb tense forms, hence

any misunderstanding or ill-formed sentences can be avoided (Maiguero & Mohammad, 2022).

There are three major tenses in English; present, past, and future. These three are developed into 16 aspects and the one which current action or repeatedly actions is simple present tense. According to DeCapua (2008), the simple present tense is often described as a timeless time without specific start or endpoints and can include the past, present, and future.

Swan (2005) proposed the use of simple present tense as follows:

- a) In general time; *"It always rains in November."*

Simple present tense is commonly used to describe permanent situations or events that occur regularly or repeatedly.

- b) Not use for things happening just around the present;

Simple present are not usually used to talk about temporary situations or actions that are only related to the gift.

- c) Non progressive verbs talking about the future times;

Simple present tense is used for verbs without progressive forms to indicate a present meaning around the present.

- d) Talking about the future;

Typically, simple present tense is not used when discussing events that will occur in the future.

- e) Series of events; demonstrations, commentaries, instructions, stories.

Simple present is frequently used to describe completed actions, events, demonstrations, commentaries, instructions, and present-tense stories.

- f) How long? Present tenses not used

In order to describe the duration of a past action or situation that has continued into the present, present perfect is used.

Seeing the importance of grammar especially in using correct simple present tense, Muhsin (2016) found that most of junior high school students demonstrated errors that he categorized into four, namely in terms of omission, addition, formation, and improper ordering. His analysis revealed 137 total errors in which missed formation dominant them. Another study was also conducted by Nirmala, Jamiludin, and Mashuri (2023) who reported that among four types of errors; addition, omission, mis-ordering and mis-formation, the students made most frequent errors on omission and mis-ordering. Besides, they also said that

possible source of errors in using simple present tense was interlingual transfer.

The similar issues also experienced by 7<sup>th</sup> graders of SMP Yadika 10, Kosambi. The writers found from their observation and small interview with English teachers at the school that most students found English was difficult to understand due to its grammar, particularly in terms of tenses. This understanding limited by the fact in which in Indonesian language, different time is only differentiated by the adverb of time. For example, in telling present, past and future time, the sentences only need different adverb of time such as *'hari ini, kemarin, besok'*. Meanwhile, in English, the sentences are differentiated by the verb forms of tense, and even the adverb of time is not there, the sentences can be clearly acknowledged only from the verb form used. For example, tense form of the verb *'go'* in simple present changes into *'went'* in simple past, and became *'will go'* in future tense. Besides these rules, confirming the subject used also affects the form of the verb in simple present. For example, *'go'* is used if the subjects are I, You, We, They and *'goes'* if the subjects are. *'She', 'He', 'It'*.

Ismoilovna (2020, p. 97) said that "The study of grammar has only enhanced knowledge about the English language but does not facilitate learners of EFL on how to use the language." This scholar further explained that this theory will not work to improve students' understanding except they are taught grammar rules in a communicative way. In responding to this, the writers proposed one fun technique to be applied in teaching present tense to 7<sup>th</sup> grade students called *'SMART Fingers'*. SMART Fingers is a technique of teaching English tenses that involves using one's fingers (Sudirman, 2018). This is a new technique that the teacher can use to help students master present tenses faster than conventional teaching. The

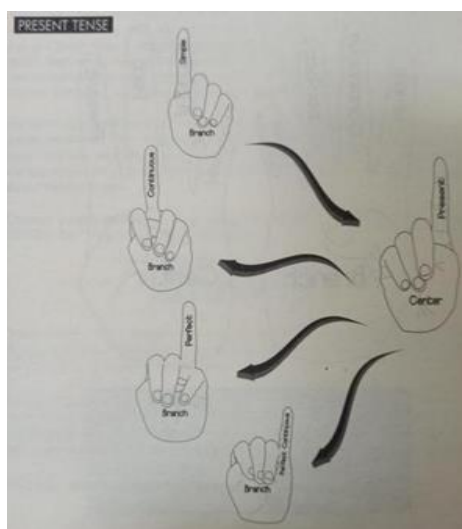
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implementation of this technique is straightforward to use.

In teaching simple present tense, the implementation of 'SMART Fingers' is by combining Index Finger C and Index Finger B as a simple present, Index Finger C and Middle Finger B as a present continuous tense, Index Finger C and Ring Finger B as a present perfect, Index Finger C and Little Finger B as a present perfect continuous. The picture can be seen below:



Thus, this study aimed to measure the effectiveness of 'SMART Fingers' technique in improving students' understanding in simple present. The research was guided by a question: "Does 'SMART Fingers' technique improve students' achievement of simple present tense?". The writers hoped that this study would help the students to learn grammar easier in a joyful way. Besides, the English teachers might also get insights on how to improve their students' English achievement in simple present tense.

## Method

To find out the effect of X variable on the Y variable, the writers used a quantitative experimental method in this research which is able to establish a cause and effect. According to Creswell (2012), in an experiment, an idea or procedure is

tested to determine its effect on an outcome or dependent variable. The research design applied was quasi-experiment of pre-test and post-test with non-equivalent control group.

Quantitative method is needed to find out the answer from several questions about students' understanding of present tenses. The writers used pre-test and post-test to collect the data. The research design is presented below:

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experiment Class	O <sub>1</sub>	X	O <sub>2</sub>
Control Class	O <sub>3</sub>		O <sub>4</sub>

In this design there were four data, pre-test of experimental Class (O<sub>1</sub>) and control group (O<sub>3</sub>). Experimental class post-test was explained by (O<sub>2</sub>) and control class post-test by (O<sub>4</sub>):

X<sub>1</sub>: The treatment

O<sub>1</sub>: pre-test result experimental class

O<sub>2</sub>: post-test result experimental class

O<sub>3</sub>: pre-test result control class

O<sub>4</sub>: post-test result control class

There were two classes of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students involving in this study. Each of the class consisted of 35 students. One class was assigned as experimental group and the other one as controlled group. These two classes were given pre-test before the experiment and post-test after the treatment finished. In each test, 25 multiple choice questions composing the questions related to simple present tense, progressive tense, perfect tense and present perfect continuous tense.

The writers used the pre-test and post-test results to be analysed. The data were taken from total right answers of

students' pre-test and post-test, calculated using the formula below:

Score =	<i>Students' correct answer</i>	X 100
	<i>Total number of items</i>	

After calculating students' pre-test and post-test in understanding present tense, there was rating score criteria used as the reference by the writers to determine students' level as presenting in following Table 1:

**Table 1**  
**The Criteria of Students' Scores**

NO	Qualification	Range of Score	Students	
			Pre-test	Post-test
1.	Excellent	90 – 100		
2.	Good	76 – 89		
3.	Enough	66 – 75		
4.	Poor	40 – 65		
5.	Very poor	00 – 39		

The way to determine qualifications was by adding up the scores obtained by the students in the pre-test and post-test. After this step, the analysis was proceeded to determine the effectiveness of 'SMART Fingers' technique statistically.

### Findings and Discussion

The results of students' qualifications from pre-test and post-test analysis of experimental and control group were presented in Table 2 below:

**Table 2**  
**Students' Achievements of Simple Present Tense**

Qualification	Experiment class		Controlled class	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Excellent		8		
Good		25		29
Enough		2		5
Poor	31		24	1
Very poor	4		11	

At this point, the data revealed that the experimental group gained higher achievement than the controlled one. This data seen from the post-test in which 8 experimental group students fell into 'excellent' level while none of the student in controlled group reached this qualification.

The statistical analysis of t-test was taken in several steps. First, that pre-test average obtained in the experimental class was 50.29 and the post-test was 85.14, while the pre-test average of controlled class was 43.66 and the post-test average was 78.23. Second, test of paired sample t-test that should involve several stages, i.e., normality test, paired sample t-test, homogeneity of variance test, and independent sample t-test.

The normality showed that the data more than 0.05 which meant the data was significant, for the paired sample t-test based on pair 1 and 2 a significant  $<.001 < 0.05$  indicated that the data were normal. Paired-sample test revealed that Pair 1 (experimental group) obtained a significant value (2-Tailed)  $<.001 < 0.05$ , hence the result confirmed that there was a difference in mean score of students' achievements before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the treatment. Meanwhile, Pair 2 (controlled class) reached a significant

value (2-Tailed)  $<.001 < 0.05$  which indicated that there was a difference gained by the students in the average score of their pretest and post-test.

Variance test was taken as the pre-requisite to determine whether or not independent sample t-test could be carried out. This depends on the homogeneity of the data. The result of variance test showed that the value of significant based on mean score was  $0.782 > 0.05$ . This number confirmed that the variance of the post-test of both classes was homogeneous. Thus, this fulfilled the requirement to take independent sample test.

The computation of independent sample t-test revealed a significant value (2-Tailed) of  $<.001 < 0.05$  which meant that there was a significant difference gained by the students in their post-test achievements after experimental class was taught by using 'SMART Fingers' and controlled class was treated in a conventional method.

## Conclusion

This research aimed to prove the effectiveness of 'SMART Fingers' technique in improving students' understanding of simple present tense. The analysis data compared two classes split into experimental class, the one taught by using 'SMART Fingers' technique and controlled class, the one treated by using conventional technique.

The statistical analysis concluded that 'SMART Fingers' technique was effective and able to improve students' understanding of simple present test. It was proven by the qualification the students gained in which after the treatment most experimental group students fell in 'excellent' level, while none of the student in controlled group was classified as 'excellent'. Besides, the test of

independent sample also revealed that the significant value gained by the experimental group (2-Tailed)  $<.001 < 0.05$ , hence this meant that the students made improvement after being taught simple present tense by using 'SMART Fingers' technique.

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