

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING AND TESTING AS AN APPROACH TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY ON ENGLISH SENTENCE STRUCTURE TO PROMOTE AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

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Abstract

This study investigates how *Sentence Master* downloaded from Android can be used as a self-study media for students to promote Autonomous Learning to develop students' comprehension on English sentence structure which is grammatically correct. Students can measure, by themselves, whether the material given during the teaching and learning process has been successfully learned. The result of this study is also intended to be used by the teachers and lecturers to indicate the successfulness of teaching and learning that have been conducted. This is an action research which 10 students of English Education Program of the University of PGRI Yogyakarta were employed as the objects of the research. They are tested to run the game of *Sentence Master* and the score will be recorded that benefits teacher to consider whether the learning process that has been conducted is successful. This study also investigates students' difficulty on making English sentence. This study emerges results that *Sentence Master* helps students to understand English grammar better by employing the smart phone to promote Autonomous Learning. This media is used by the students as the indication whether they have the abilities to make good English sentences.

Keywords: autonomous learning, Sentence Master, English sentence structure

Introduction

There are tremendous debates among experts whether English grammar should be taught explicitly and individually, or should it be taught integrated with other skills? There are a lot of approaches been found to teach English grammar to enhance proficiency on making acceptable written English sentences since decades ago. The question that has not been answered satisfyingly is that, "is it important to teach English grammar"? Two experts observed in their study that pre-service teachers show an affirmative attitude towards grammar teaching although they strongly believe that "it should not be taught directly or overtly. Attitudes change depending on the age and purpose of the learners", which "is also seen that there is a gap between the practice and theory the reason of which may be the testing policy in Turkish educational system" (Degirmenci & Yavuz, 2015).

In recent years, people think that “grammar is too important to be ignored. The newest issue is not whether or not we should teach grammar. The issues now center on questions, such as which grammar items do learners need most? How do we go about teaching grammar items in the most effective way? Are they best taught inductively or deductively?” (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In other words, how should we teach grammar to our students?

Teaching and learning nowadays have reached the highest level of thinking in which students are engaged to autonomous learning, which means students have full responsibility to provide and learn the material and elaborate among themselves to gain the learning goals effectively and efficiently. In traditional teaching method, teachers are expected to have 4 basic skill (Jana & Pamungkas, 2018). The skills include pedagogical, character, social and professional. These skills will meet the expectation of teacher and learners during a teacher-centered classroom. However, do these teacher’s basic skills are required during an autonomous learning when students are fully engaged to technology to ‘substitute’ the existence of the teacher?

This study investigates how android app can be used as a self-assessment conducted by the students to measure their level of proficiency on making English sentences which are structurally acceptable. It is hoped that this study will emerge students’ independency on learning English grammar, especially on making English sentences as it is an expected level of proficiency at the university level.

English Grammar

If you ask average speakers of a language what they know about grammar they may remember the odd lesson from school, but beyond that they will say that they have forgotten what grammar they once new (Harmer, 1991). In the sentence of ‘*How many students are there in the classroom?*’, the function was enquiring about numbers, and in the practice which helped the learners use the structure meaningfully, they asked each other questions about hidden items. No mention was made of grammar. But there is an important grammar’s point embedded in that structure; it is countable versus uncountable. In a grammar lesson, the teacher will draw attention to that distinction. Practice of *how many?* (countable) will be contrasted with *how much?* (of uncountable items). The teacher’s concern will not be with communication and mastery of a useful structure, rather it will be with understanding of the concept and mastery of that grammar point. There would be special attention to any clash between the mother tongue and the target language in terms of what is countable (Cross: 1992). Some teachers see no need to teach and practice grammar at all. Some even regard structure practice and other forms of grammar teaching as harmful. Their view is that learners will pick up the regularities intuitively.

Talking about English grammar, as a teacher of it, it is our consideration and responsibility to teach English grammar creatively and contextually which should be based on the needs. It should be so since a lot of students may have various perspectives about teaching and learning English grammar. The question is, does teaching and learning grammar really matter? The grammatical rules provide a structure to learning any language, both FLT and SLT. However, the teachers in

the final year of general education are no longer fixated on grammar. It is hardly mentioned in the curriculum because students are supposed to have learned it in the first four years of general education. They only focus on grammar when there are recurrent mistakes made by the students. The students ought to be able to apply the rules; they are no longer required to actually know them because they should already be internalized. (Vooren, Casteleyn, & Mottart, 2012).

Learning Autonomously

Learner autonomy in language education is interpreted in various ways and various terms such as ‘learner independence’, ‘self-direction’, and ‘independent learning’ (Little, 1991); (Karababa, Eker, Serkan, & Ar, 2010). Those concepts are used simultaneously to refer to the same object called as autonomous learning. When the students are able to direct the learning process by themselves, what is the role of the teachers? (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012) investigate the role of the teacher in autonomous learning. The investigation reveals a belief that to help learners to assume greater control over their own learning, it is important that teachers help them to become aware of and identify the strategies that they already use or could potentially use. The study highlights the need to integrate learner independence into the language curriculum, with a well structured focus, delivery and content. Holec (1979) as cited by (Okumu, 2015) describes an autonomous learner in various aspects. An autonomous learner is capable of:

1. Determining the objectives
2. Defining the contents and progressions
3. Selecting method and techniques to be used
4. Monitoring the procedure of acquisition
5. And evaluating what has been acquired

A teacher has prepared a lot of things before he comes to the class. Is the autonomous learning possible to happen?

Should the autonomous learning be designed strictly to the norms or ethics? Or can it be arranged through games to draw more attention of the learners? A study has been conducted that games may attract more attention among the high anxiety of the young learners (Celik, 2013). It is true that, when students are learning to acquire the correct English sounds, they should have good concentration. Games will certainly make them spontaneously using their L1. In this case, games will omit the anxiety and raise the motivation to learn English. Generally speaking, motivation leads to the autonomy in learning (Vile & Buyukduman, 2013); (Egel, 2009). It has the meaning that, before actuating the autonomous learning, students and teachers should grow the intrinsic motivation of learning English because it is strongly connected to the autonomy (Daskalovska, Koleva, & Ivanovska, 2012); (Dincer, Yesilyurt, & Takkac, 2012). As it has been stated, the 3 most important things to gain the best result are language, learning motivational and the use of technology (Ali, Soleimani, & Bakhtiarvand, 2014).

Autonomous learning also has strong relationship with E-learning to diminish the distance between teacher and students (Cai, 2012). When teacher employs E-learning, it is benefited that students will have opportunity to gain abundant of material that can be easily accessed at anytime and anywhere. The vast

development of technologies urges the modification of learning and teaching approaches to gain the better results (Goulao & Menedez, 2015). (Farivar & Rahimi, 2015) proves that experimental group autonomy which employs the CALL brings the better results on English test than the control group which does not apply CALL. The reason is that CALL provides abundant material for all aspects of English learning, compared to the traditional teaching and learning method.

Is it only the teacher as the one who should create the autonomous learning environment? Are there others elements that can take participation during the conducting of this learning approach? Autonomous learning has the meaning of making the environments, not just the one in the classroom, more than that, the students should be able to feel the supports from society to apply the autonomous learning. The university or the school should support by providing good facilities and the contexts of learning such as a good library that provides anything to learn that can be accessed through inside and outside the library building as away to develop the students' learning independence which happens not only in one night (Chou & ChanLin, 2015); (Hamdi, 2016); (Laz, 2013); (Ivanovska, 2015).

The main aim of learning a language is to be able to communicate with others using that language, actively and spontaneously. In this case, students are expected to learn the language, not only from teachers at classrooms, independently to gain more results. The students are also expected to be responsible for the conceptual, motivational and content-technological (Popescu, 2014); (Bolsunovskaya, Kemerova, Asadullina, Sentsov, & Chris, 2015). Teachers' duty is to make supportive autonomous learning; students are responsible about the process of learning (Ismail & Yusof, 2012). A teacher should be able to make himself as a partner for the students, meaning that he observes, listens, analyzes and inform when the problem emerges (Cristina, 2015). Besides, it is the teacher's duty to make the students realize their real needs to accomplish the purposes and to grow the motivation environment to gain the learning goals effectively and efficiently (Alhodiry, 2016). On the other hand, the students are expected to find suitable materials based on teachers' direction, state the learning goals and responsible for the assessments (Tran & Duong, 2018).

Method

This research employs 10 students consisting of 7 males and 3 females of the third year students in the University of PGRI Yogyakarta specialized on English Teacher Training Program. The subjects of this study are asked to download the app of *Sentence Master* from their android phones. Those 10 students have joined basic structure, pre-intermediate, intermediate structure, and now they are joining Advanced Structure as the last step to be proficient in English grammar. During the process of data gaining, students are introduced to the level of the game, starting from the beginner, competent, professional and expert. They are expected to start the game with the beginner level as a way to know the game better. In the end, students will be able to finish all the levels without any obstacles, in which it indicates that the learning process of grammar is successfully conducted. The score of each subject of the research will be recorded to measure the ability to

make English sentences, after that, they are expected to answer a series of question in a provided questionnaire regarding their experiences during joining the class of grammar.

Findings and Discussion

This research focuses on how *Sentence Master* of Android App can be a media for students of English learning to measure their capability to make English sentences. The students are expected to use the *Sentence Master* to reveal their real capabilities on making English sentences which are structurally correct. The samples of *Sentence Master* are described as follows:



1. Change have ? do you Schedule
2. Like I don't food Thai
3. Very well paints she
4. Your what is ? address
5. Of the order elevator out is
6. Cold liked no one the pizza

This is a kind of grammatical language game, in which the students are asked to re-arrange the jumbled words to be a good grammatical sentence. There are 4 levels of difficulty which can be used as a parameter, in what the level the students are at the best. The principles of this game are:

1. Students choose the expected level of difficulty.
2. Students are expected to be able to arrange the jumbled words to be the grammatically accepted sentence.
3. The ability to make grammatical sentences is fully based on the level of comprehension on the word order.
4. When the students are able to get the high score, it means that the better comprehension after the learning process has been achieved.
5. By recording the score of each student in a class, teacher will get benefit that he or she can measure his successfulness on delivering material that is the English word order.

6. The measurement can be used by the teacher to fix the weak parts, both the material and the way to deliver it.
7. When the teacher is successful to measure the process and result of the learning process, it is expected that the future learning process will achieve the goals effectively and efficiently.

After the students played the game of *Sentence Master*, the researcher gained the data of the students' scores which are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Students' Scores

Respondent	The Sentences	Total Mistakes	Time Spent
Student 1	1. <i>Mike always goes to work by car.</i>	0	11.50'
	2. <i>Matt is studying to be a boat captain.</i>	0	21.37'
	3. <i>Only after the fact did he realize his mistake.</i>	1	19.37'
	4. <i>More than seven-hundred farm animals were destroyed.</i>	0	17.38'
	5. <i>What would you do with so much money?</i>	0	31.90'
	6. <i>I hope that he comes tomorrow.</i>	5	26.20'
	7. <i>Our program was better than was expected.</i>	2	16.42'
	8. <i>When did you return from Madrid?</i>	2	11.41'
	9. <i>Listen now as Dizzy Gillespie and his all star quintet play the song.</i>	3	39.69'
	10. <i>It represents the special relationship between the circus animals and the human performers.</i>	4	46.21'
Student 2	1. <i>When are you completing the computer course?</i>	5	18.58'
	2. <i>Did you put the milk in the refrigerator?</i>	4	22.74'
	3. <i>He does not attend a high school.</i>	1	25.81'
	4. <i>We do this more for pleasure than for money.</i>	4	24.16'
	5. <i>He asked me how to use the program.</i>	4	31.18'
	6. <i>Jack does not need to sleep very much.</i>	5	15.96'
	7. <i>Soon after, music was added to his words.</i>	4	16.53'
	8. <i>How happy are you that John is coming?</i>	2	26.33'
	9. <i>When the snow melted, the flowers began to appear.</i>	5	19.46'
	10. <i>The cinema is next to the park.</i>	4	24.57'
Student 3	1. <i>He is more likely to go than to stay.</i>	2	20.12'
	2. <i>I brush my teeth in the morning.</i>	0	7.43'
	3. <i>If I had a car I would drive to work.</i>	5	35.83'
	4. <i>She liked the dark blue sweater the best.</i>	3	25.50'
	5. <i>May I have a word with you?</i>	1	15.73'
	6. <i>My sister goes to work at 8 o'clock.</i>	2	12.57'

Respondent	The Sentences	Total Mistakes	Time Spent
Student 4	7. Her legs felt as she climbed the stairs.	0	11.00'
	8. What do you think of him?	0	8.35'
	9. His mom made sure that Carl finished school.	1	17.36'
	10. The cinema is next to the park.	3	16.14'
	1. There are six of us at home.	0	10.06'
	2. You should see a play while in London.	1	21.82'
	3. The live in the centre of town.	0	7.73'
	4. He is more likely to go than to stay.	0	12.51'
	5. Matt is studying to be a boat captain.	0	18.57'
	6. They live in the center of town.	0	7.73'
Student 5	7. I did not turn off the stove in the kitchen.	0	18.11'
	8. Mike always goes to work by car.	0	11.97'
	9. He does not attend a high school.	0	8.80'
	10. What is your favorite car?	0	7.00'
	1. The Ebola virus affects animal and people.	0	9.48'
	2. What would you do with so much money?	1	20.66'
	3. How happy are you that John is coming?	5	21.66'
	4. May I have a word with you?	0	12.49'
	5. When the snow melted, the flowers began to appear.	4	16.38'
	6. My sister goes to work at eight o'clock.	1	13.63'
Student 6	7. He is considered the world's first music star.	2	23.03'
	8. I hope that he comes to the party tomorrow.	1	16.45'
	9. How much money can you earn?	5	19.31'
	10. Jack does not need to sleep very much.	3	23.61'
	1. What do you think of him?	1	8.41'
	2. When did you return from Madrid?	0	12.14'
	3. May I have a word with you?	0	15.11'
	4. If I had a car I would drive to work.	0	23.54'
	5. My father has suggested that I change my job.	0	19.60'
	6. Jack does not need to sleep very much.	1	13.27'
Student 7	7. Mike always goes to work by car.	0	9.28'
	8. They live in the center of town.	0	9.65'
	9. Do you have anything to eat?	0	7.19'
	10. I brush my teeth in the morning	0	9.51'
	1. I didn't turn off the stove in the kitchen	0	12.78'
	2. Our program was better than was expected.	0	11.63'
Student 7	3. Do you have anything to eat?	0	12.76'
	4. If I had a car I would drive to work	5	28.33'
	5. How far is Houston from here?	1	16.99'
	6. I brush my teeth in the morning.	0	7.36'

Respondent	The Sentences	Total Mistakes	Time Spent
Student 8	7. <i>Does your husband have a boring job?</i>	0	11.27'
	8. <i>There are six of us at home.</i>	1	15.75'
	9. <i>Her legs felt weak as she climbed the stairs.</i>	2	25.17'
	10. <i>She liked the dark blue sweater the best.</i>	3	18.82'
	1. <i>Did you put the milk in the refrigerator?</i>	0	14.01'
	2. <i>Mike always goes to work by car.</i>	0	14.07'
	3. <i>She Liked the dark blue sweater the best</i>	3	43.50'
	4. <i>Our progress was better than was expected.</i>	1	20.81'
	5. <i>It will harm crops, animal and fish.</i>	0	12.41'
	6. <i>More than seven-hundred farm animals were also destroyed.</i>	4	27.05'
Student 9	7. <i>If I had a car I would drive to work.</i>	3	41.21'
	8. <i>How happy are you that John is coming?</i>	3	18.18'
	9. <i>I wonder which dog he said you chased.</i>	1	23.61'
	10. <i>My sister goes to work at eight o'clock.</i>	0	17.99'
	1. <i>Do you know where he lives?</i>	0	7.78'
	2. <i>How far is Houston from here?</i>	1	8.73'
	3. <i>We do this more for pleasure than for money.</i>	3	25.00'
	4. <i>Matt is studying to be a boat captain.</i>	1	10.95'
	5. <i>Jack does not need to sleep very much.</i>	0	7.62'
	6. <i>When are you completing the computer course?</i>	3	14.82'
Student 10	7. <i>The showing of the program seemed to impress people.</i>	4	27.28'
	8. <i>I knew who would come to the party.</i>	3	15.53'
	9. <i>I brush my teeth in the morning.</i>	0	7.35'
	10. <i>Can I have a cup of black tea please?</i>	2	20.80'
	1. <i>I am going to Europe the day I graduate.</i>	4	18.58'
	2. <i>You should see a play while in London.</i>	4	23.51'
	3. <i>He does not attend a high school.</i>	0	9.22'
	4. <i>What do you think of him?</i>	0	6.31'
	5. <i>He asked me how to use the program.</i>	0	13.00'
	6. <i>There is a dog and a cat here.</i>	0	9.75'
Student 10	7. <i>Forest fires begin every summer in the western United States.</i>	5	30.70'
	8. <i>Did you put the milk in the refrigerator?</i>	0	7.05'
	9. <i>Her legs felt weak as she climbed the stairs.</i>	5	21.37'
	10. <i>The scientists will carry out more digging next summer.</i>	2	18.95'

There are 100 sentences that are used as the research data, taken from 10 students that we use as the respondents of this research. Those 100 sentences are going to be used as the parameter which indicates which kinds of sentences are

difficult for most of the students to construct to be grammatically accepted. We considered that sentences which spent more time and more mistakes are the sentences that difficult to construct. The easy sentence construction should spend no more than 15 seconds which has 1 tolerable mistake. In these categorizations, we employed 4 kinds of sentences; those are simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentences. According to those criteria, here we present the sentences that are difficult to construct by most of the students:

Table 2. Difficult Sentences

The Sentence	Sentence category	Time Spent	Total mistakes
1. <i>I hope that he comes tomorrow.</i>	Complex Sentence	26.20'	5
2. <i>It represents the special relationship between the circus animals and the human performers.</i>	Complex Sentence	46.21'	4
3. <i>Listen now as Dizzy Gillespie and his all star quintet play the song.</i>	Complex Sentence	39.69'	3
4. <i>Our program was better than was expected.</i>	Passive Simple Sentence	16.42'	2
5. <i>When are you completing the computer course?</i>	Interrogative Simple Sentence	18.58'	5
6. <i>Did you put the milk in the refrigerator?</i>	Interrogative Simple Sentence	22,74'	4
7. <i>We do this more for pleasure than for money.</i>	Comparative Simple Sentence	24.16'	4
8. <i>He asked me how to use the program.</i>	Indirect Simple Sentence	31.18'	4
9. <i>Soon after, music was added to his words.</i>	Passive Simple Sentence	16.53'	4
10. <i>How happy are you that John is coming?</i>	Interrogative Complex Sentence	26.33'	2
11. <i>When the snow melted, the flowers began to appear.</i>	Compound Sentence	19.46'	5
12. <i>He is more likely to go than to stay.</i>	Complex Sentence	20.12'	2
13. <i>If I had a car I would drive to work.</i>	Compound Sentence	35.83'	5
14. <i>She liked the dark blue sweater the best.</i>	Comparative Simple Sentence	25.50'	3
15. <i>How happy are you that John is coming?</i>	Interrogative Compound Sentence	21.66'	5
16. <i>He is considered the world's first music star.</i>	Complex Sentence	23.03'	2

The Sentence	Sentence category	Time Spent	Total mistakes
17. <i>How much money can you earn?</i>	Interrogative Simple Sentence	19.31'	5
18. <i>Jack does not need to sleep very much.</i>	Interrogative Simple Sentence	23.61'	3
19. <i>Her legs felt weak as she climbed the stairs.</i>	Complex Sentence	25.17'	2
20. <i>More than seven-hundred farm animals were also destroyed.</i>	Passive Simple Sentence	27.05'	4
21. <i>The showing of the program seemed to impress people.</i>	Complex Sentence	27.28'	4
22. <i>Can I have a cup of black tea please?</i>	Interrogative Simple Sentence	20.80'	2
23. <i>I am going to Europe the day I graduate.</i>	Compound Sentence	18.58'	4
24. <i>You should see a play while in London.</i>	Complex Sentence	23.51'	4
25. <i>Forest fires begin every summer in the western United States.</i>	Complex Sentence	30.70'	5

One of the problems indicated by the table above is that the students still get difficulties in constructing the interrogative simple sentence. The patterns on making interrogative sentences from Simple Present, Present Progressive and Modal Sentences are still the problems for most of the respondents. It gets more problematic whenever the students are expected to construct the Interrogative Compound Sentence as in '*How happy are you that John is coming?*' It stresses that they are still need repetition on practicing using this kind of sentence both oral and written. It is hoped that when the teacher conducts this kind of repetition, the students are able to making interrogative sentences spontaneously. Another problem raised from constructing the Simple Sentences is the Passive Voice and the Indirect Sentences as shown in '*More than seven-hundred farm animals were also destroyed*' and '*He asked me how to use the program*'. The different principles of those two sentence structure may be resulted on students' confused.

Conclusion

From the result of the game of *Sentence Master*, it can be concluded that most students are still get difficulty in making and forming the grammatically correct English sentence. The students found that English pattern is very much different with their L1 pattern. This concept has the same meaning with the hypothesis of Contrastive Analysis which stated that whenever LI patterns are so much different with the pattern of the language being learned, it has the meaning that the students should struggle a lot to master the L2.

This study has some points that are still unclear, such as the number of participants is limited to draw general conclusion. Do all the students have the

same experiences as the respondents have? It is expected that the future research employs more respondents and broader range of ages and education backgrounds. Another point to recommend is that the result of teacher's follow up through the repetition is required to reveal in the future research in order to reveal the effectiveness of this kind of research.

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