

Assistance in Learning English Tenses (Simple Present, Continuous, Simple Past) and Prepositions through a Community Service Program by English Education Students for Junior High School Students of Grades VII-VIII

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Abstract

This community service initiative was carried out by English Education students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training at State Islamic University of Palangka Raya. The program aimed to enhance junior high school students' understanding of key English grammar components—specifically the simple present, present continuous, and simple past tenses, as well as the correct use of prepositions. Conducted over two days, the program involved structured lessons using school-provided textbooks, visual aids, and interactive activities such as grammar games and group discussions. Data were collected through direct observation, Q&A sessions, and practice exercises to evaluate students' comprehension and application of the material. The findings indicate that the use of contextualized instruction, real-life examples, and communicative activities—supported by visual media and practice exercises—effectively improved students' grammatical accuracy, confidence, and engagement. The involvement of English education university students as peer facilitators fostered a more interactive and less intimidating learning environment. This program also reinforced the pedagogical value of experiential learning, benefiting both junior high school students and pre-service teachers by providing meaningful and reflective teaching experiences aligned with real classroom needs. Overall, this initiative successfully addressed students' learning gaps in English grammar and showcased the benefits of integrating community service into teacher education.

Keywords: English grammar, community service, peer teaching, experiential learning, junior high school students

Introduction

English grammar mastery—particularly in tenses (simple present, present continuous, simple past) and prepositions—is fundamental for effective communication, yet remains a pervasive challenge for Indonesian junior high school students. Research shows that students often experience difficulties using English prepositions due to first-language interference and a lack of exposure to authentic contexts (Abdalla, 2021; Damayanti & Sundari, 2022). Similarly, mastering English tenses requires understanding temporal structures that differ significantly from those in Indonesian, posing further challenges in distinguishing between habitual actions, ongoing events, and past occurrences (Ismail & Dedi, 2021).

Grammar instruction is a vital component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, yet time limitations, exam-oriented curricula, and large class sizes often reduce opportunities for in-depth grammar teaching in Indonesian junior high schools (Hendriani et al., 2023). In response to this gap, community service programs involving university students majoring in English education have emerged as practical interventions. These initiatives allow university students to support school-based learning while applying their pedagogical knowledge in real classroom settings. Such experiences can enhance the instructional readiness of pre-service teachers and provide junior high school students with more targeted grammar instruction (Nurfitriani, 2024).

Recent studies have emphasized the role of experiential and community-based learning in developing both language skills and teaching competencies. For instance, integrating community engagement with educational practice fosters the ability of pre-service teachers to design contextualized instruction and respond adaptively to learners' needs (Hidayah, Ulfah, & Kadir, 2023). In the context of EFL grammar instruction, a focus on form within communicative tasks has been shown to improve learners' grammatical accuracy and awareness (Putri, Pahlevi, & Wachyudi, 2023).

Based on this context, the present study investigates a community service program conducted by Tadris Bahasa Inggris students to assist 7th–8th grade junior high school students in understanding basic English grammar. The study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent does the program enhance students' understanding of the simple present, present continuous, and simple past tenses?
- 2) How effective is the program in improving contextual use of prepositions?
- 3) What pedagogical approaches do the university students employ, and how do these relate to students' learning outcomes?

The current study is based on a community service activity in which university students majoring in English education formally taught grammar lessons to 7th and 8th grade junior high school students using school-provided textbooks. Rather than employing an experimental or test-based approach, the program focused on delivering contextual and guided grammar instruction within regular classroom settings. The goal was to provide supplemental grammar support—particularly on simple present, present continuous, simple past tenses, and prepositions—through structured lessons that aligned with the existing school curriculum. Instructional methods emphasized clarity, contextual examples, and student engagement, with university students acting

as peer facilitators and teaching assistants to help reinforce grammatical concepts in a supportive environment.

This research contributes to the development of effective grammar pedagogy by demonstrating how community service initiatives can support English learning in junior high school settings. It also offers insights into how such programs can benefit both junior high school students and the university students involved in teaching, by promoting instructional engagement and reflective teaching practices in a real classroom context.

Method

This community service activity was conducted at Junior High School in Palangka Raya City, on May 19–20, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each day. The activity aimed to provide additional support in mastering English grammar, particularly in understanding tenses (simple present, present continuous, simple past) and the use of prepositions. This service was implemented by English Education students as part of a community service program intended to assist seventh and eighth-grade students in grasping the basics of English grammar. University students acted as peer facilitators, temporarily replacing the teachers in delivering the predetermined material, using a contextual and guided approach.

The data sources for this activity were students from grades VII and VIII, who served as the subjects of the learning process. University students were fully responsible for teaching the material provided, without teacher involvement during the instructional sessions. The approach applied was rational—based on relevant pedagogical and linguistic theories; empirical—relying on direct observation of learning practices; and systematic—following a planned and gradual procedure in delivering material and conducting evaluations.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through several techniques, namely:

- Direct observation of the learning process, including student participation in activities and their interactions during the sessions;
- Direct Q&A sessions with students to determine the extent of their understanding of the material, such as asking whether they had comprehended the lesson, and to evaluate their responses to the instruction;
- Practice questions, provided after the material was delivered, based on directions from the packet book used by students, to assess their ability to apply their understanding of tenses and prepositions.

Data Analysis Methods and Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach. The analysis process involved the following stages:

1. Data reduction, which included selecting and organizing the results of direct observation of student engagement, their responses during Q&A sessions, and answers to practice questions administered during the learning sessions.

2. Data presentation, in the form of a narrative, to describe the development of students' understanding of the material based on Q&A responses and practice results.
3. Conclusion drawing, to assess the effectiveness of the program in improving students' understanding of tenses and prepositions, and to evaluate the relationship between the pedagogical approaches used and the students' learning outcomes.

Materials, Equipment, and Media

The materials and tools used in this activity included:

- Packet books, used by students in their daily lessons to support teaching;
- A brief summary, provided by the facilitators, to clarify the key concepts in the material;
- Supplementary practice questions, tailored to the day's material to enhance students' understanding of tenses and prepositions;
- Whiteboards and projectors, used as visual aids during instruction.

With an interactive and communicative approach, university students played an active role in teaching and providing real-life examples to support students' comprehension. Through this activity, it is expected that students will more easily understand the use of tenses and prepositions in realistic and applicable contexts, aligned with the current school curriculum.

Results and Discussion

The community service activity was conducted over a two-day period at a junior high school in Palangka Raya. The program aimed to improve students' understanding of English tenses—specifically the simple present, present continuous, and simple past—as well as their use of prepositions. During the sessions, junior high school students actively participated in contextual grammar lessons facilitated by university students. In addition to the major instructional objectives, the program provided a platform for the university students to use all of their pedagogical abilities within a real-world classroom setting, and this also allowed for them to modify each of their teaching tactics in response to students' current needs. The lessons intended to not just explain grammatical rules, but also inspire students toward viewing grammar as communicating usefully. The facilitators incorporated examples from students' everyday routines with familiar surroundings. This closed off the divide between abstract grammatical principles and their practical application in the field, helping to keep students interested throughout the two-day period of time.



Figure 1. Student- teacher conducting a lesson in Grade VII.

Observations revealed that students became more engaged, particularly when contextual examples were presented. Many students initially struggled to distinguish between the different tenses, especially between the present continuous and simple present. However, through guided exercises and real-life examples, their comprehension gradually improved. This was particularly evident in tasks where students had to generate sentences together using selected tense forms and prepositions. When they were first asked to orally build sentences, few students answered and those that did typically answered slowly and inaccurately but as the classes passed they began to respond more rapidly and accurately. Although both collaborative and competitive work were outcomes of the peer-support nuance that was used for students to assist in getting the right answer, these environments built a cooperative learning opportunity. This peer-to-peer interaction not only reinforced their knowledge but also helped to calm their fear of going wrong, something



Figure 2. Student-teacher delivering material in the Grade VIII girl's class.

During Q&A sessions, most students were able to correctly identify tense usage and apply appropriate prepositions in simple sentences. The exercises given after the lessons demonstrated a notable improvement in their grammar application, which is in line with findings by Ismail and Dedi (2021) that strategy-based grammar instruction enhances grammatical competence among

EFL learners. Additional analysis of the students' responses indicates that their mastery of identifying time indicators such as adverbs and verbs improved quite dramatically after receiving appropriate instruction. This suggests that focus on form, especially when combined with contextualized approaches, may successfully tackle persistent grammar issues. Furthermore, the preposition exercises showed that students benefitted from the use of real-life illustrations on whiteboards and slides, which aided their association of each preposition with the classroom and their daily life. These illustrations strengthen the argument for blending direct teaching, situations-based background information, and lively presentation when teaching grammar.



Figure 3. Collaborative learning activity in Grade VII.

Students also reported enjoying the grammar games and group activities. The use of visual aids, such as whiteboards and projectors, helped reinforce key concepts. In addition, the Q&A sessions revealed that students were not only attentive but also capable of reflecting on their errors and correcting them. Children in other cases self-corrected without facilitator prompts, showing an increasing awareness of their grammatical errors. This independence was supported by an interactive feature of the games that motivated students to articulate the rules of grammar in a limited amount of time under pressure which somewhat resembles real-life communication. The variety of activities made for different kinds of learning, not simply memory recall. This type of multimodal experience probably aided recall of the grammar concept well beyond training.



Figure 4. Female student-teacher assisting a student in the Grade VIII girls' class.

These findings suggest that peer teaching by university students can be an effective approach to grammar instruction in junior high schools. The collaborative learning environment fostered a less intimidating space compared to traditional teacher-centered instruction. This aligns with the findings of Putri, Pahlevi, and Wachyudi (2023), who emphasized that contextualized and communicative grammar teaching enhances retention and understanding in both short-term and long-term English learning contexts.

Moreover, students' increased motivation and active participation support the findings of Hidayah et al. (2023), who advocate for experiential and community-based learning. The program's success was also supported by the rational and empirical teaching approach, which encouraged learners to apply grammar in everyday contexts, supporting the experiential learning perspective as highlighted by Hidayah, Ulfah, and Kadir (2023).

The inclusion of follow-up exercises and reflective questioning enabled instructors to better assess student progress. Although no formal testing was conducted, the students' increased confidence and grammatical accuracy suggest that the program effectively reinforced their foundational understanding of English grammar.

Conclusion

This community service initiative successfully enhanced junior high school students' understanding of key English grammar components—namely, the simple present, present continuous, and simple past tenses, as well as the correct use of prepositions. The involvement of English education university students as peer facilitators proved to be an effective instructional strategy, fostering a more interactive and less intimidating learning environment. Observations and informal assessments demonstrated increased student engagement, improved grammatical accuracy, and growing confidence in applying grammar in contextual settings.

The use of contextualized instruction, real-life examples, and communicative activities—supported by visual media and practice exercises—contributed to a deeper comprehension of grammar rules among students. Moreover, the program reinforced the value of experiential learning for both junior high school students and pre-service teachers, highlighting the pedagogical benefits of integrating community service into teacher education. Overall, the program not only addressed students' learning gaps in English grammar but also provided university students with meaningful and reflective teaching experiences aligned with real classroom needs.

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