

Teaching Simple Present Tense Using EGRA Technique

Wenssy Steva Nussy¹, Orpa Penina Oraile², Punggulina Andawaty Tiven³, Merlin Djirlyay⁴, Devita Kaidel⁵, Dessy Ratmala⁶

¹ Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; wenssy.nussy@lecturer.unpatti.ac.id

² Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; penioraile96@gmail.com

³ Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; punggulina.tiven@lecturer.unpatti.ac.id

⁴ Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; merlyndly@gmail.com

⁵ Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; devitakaidel283@gmail.com

⁶ Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; dessyratmala@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

As one of Indonesia's underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost regions, Aru Regency faces significant challenges in providing quality English education, primarily due to a shortage of qualified English teachers. This shortage has resulted in students having limited exposure to the English language, particularly in foundational aspects such as grammar. Recognizing this issue, the community development team initiated a program aimed at improving students' grammar proficiency, with a specific focus on the simple present tense. To achieve this, the team implemented the EGRA (Experience, Generalization, Reinforcement, Application) technique, a structured approach designed to enhance both understanding and application of grammar in a systematic manner. The community development program was conducted at SMP Jeljakaka, involving a class of 30 students. At the outset, a pre-test was administered to assess the students' baseline understanding of grammar. The results revealed that the majority of students had not yet mastered fundamental grammatical structures, particularly the simple present tense. Following the intervention using the EGRA technique, the students were given a post-test to measure their progress. The results indicated a significant improvement in their understanding and application of the simple present tense. This demonstrated the effectiveness of the EGRA technique in addressing gaps in grammar mastery while also highlighting the importance of structured and interactive teaching methods in enhancing students' language skills in challenging educational contexts.

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Corresponding Author:

Wenssy Steva Nussy

Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia; wenssy.nussy@lecturer.unpatti.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language widely used in various domains, including education, the workplace, and technology. Proficiency in English equips students with access to global information, academic opportunities, and the ability to communicate effectively with individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. At the school level, English language skills serve as a foundational prerequisite for pursuing higher education and addressing the demands of an increasingly interconnected world. Consequently, mastering grammar, as a core component of English, is critical for ensuring clear and effective communication. Rossiter (2021) stated that grammar is a vital ingredient in the English language teaching mix. Van Rijt and Coppen (2021) also agreed that grammar is essential to be taught for English learners.

Among the fundamental grammatical elements to acquire early is the simple present tense. This tense is essential for conveying universal facts, habitual actions, and daily routines, which are integral to basic communication. For instance, students can employ the simple present tense to describe personal attributes, everyday activities, or topics discussed in class. Mastery of this tense enables students to construct grammatically correct sentences, such as "I like English" or "She is a student". Moreover, a solid grasp of the simple present tense not only enhances their ability to speak and write accurately but also lays a robust foundation for mastering more complex grammatical structures at advanced levels.

Unfortunately, Aru Regency, being one of Indonesia's underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost regions, faces a significant shortage of English teachers. Compounding this challenge is the regency's geographical composition, consisting of numerous islands. Many students from remote villages on these islands who move to the main island, Dobo, to pursue further education lack any foundation in English, as their previous schools often had no English teachers. As a result, these students have minimal or no understanding of English grammar, including the fundamental simple present tense. Recognizing this issue, and following an interview with the English teacher at SMP Jeljakaka Dobo, the community development team decided to address the gap by teaching the students the simple present tense using the EGRA (Exposure, Generalization, Reinforcement, Application) technique.

The EGRA technique (Wallace, 1982) was originally created to help students to learn vocabulary but it was then used to facilitate students' comprehension and application of English grammar through a structured, systematic approach. The first stage, Exposure, introduces students to real-life contexts or situations that are relevant to the targeted grammar concept. For example, teachers may begin by presenting pictures or providing examples of sentences utilizing specific grammar, such as the simple present tense, within the framework of everyday activities. This stage focuses on fostering students' initial understanding through contextual exposure, without immediately presenting formal grammar rules.

The second stage, Generalization, engages students in identifying patterns or deducing rules from the examples provided during the Exposure stage. Teachers guide students to independently infer the underlying grammar rules, promoting active participation and critical thinking. In the third stage, Reinforcement, students' understanding is solidified through targeted exercises, such as constructing sentences, completing fill-in-the-blank activities, or participating in role-play scenarios. The final stage, Application, enables students to use the grammar concepts in broader contexts, such as composing simple paragraphs or discussing daily routines. By incorporating the EGRA technique, junior high school students move beyond rote memorization of grammar rules to actively practicing and applying them in meaningful communication.

2. METHODS

The community development team began the program by establishing communication with the school. An initial interview with the English teacher revealed that the students had limited English proficiency. Based on this information, the team held an online meeting with the Head of the English Education Study Program in Ambon City to discuss the proposed community development program.

The plan was approved, and further details were finalized during the discussion. After confirming the arrangements, the team revisited the school to present the program plan, which received the teacher's approval. Additionally, three students from the English Education Study Program were selected to assist in implementing the program.

The community development activity took place on June 5, 2024, at SMP Jeljakaka Dobo. The opening ceremony included the singing of the Indonesian national anthem, an opening speech, and a prayer. Following the ceremony, the team distributed pre-test sheets to 30 students to assess their pre understanding of English grammar prior to instruction using the EGRA technique. After the pre-test, the team conducted a lesson on the simple present tense employing the EGRA technique. Once the lesson was completed, a post-test was administered to evaluate the students' progress. The pre-test and post-test questions were designed to be similar, with minimal variations to ensure consistent measurement of understanding. For instance, a pre-test question such as "I ... to school every day" was modified in the post-test to "She ... to school every day." This approach aimed to verify the students' comprehension of the simple present tense taught during the session.

The data was collected through the pretest and posttest results were then analyzed. The pretest and posttest data were analyzed with the scores that have been achieved and then calculated using the following formula by Sugiyono (2017):

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{obtained scores}}{\text{Total Scores}} \times 100$$

The first stage of EGRA technique, Exposure was done by exposing students to a descriptive paragraph in which simple present tense is used. Below is the paragraph:

Kora Evar is a beautiful beach in Dobo. It only takes 15 minutes to get there from the airport of Dobo. This beach offers beauty that is no less stunning than other beaches in Maluku. The calm blue sea matches the color of the sky. The green coconut trees complete the view. The sand is so soft to sit on or play with. There is a small island floating on the water adorned with some green trees. Local kids love to swim there and jump into the water to have fun. The sunset at this beach is undeniably beautiful. There are several cabanas that people can use to put their food and other belongings. Once you get there, just put your stuff on a cabana and enjoy the beach.

To enhance engagement and foster a sense of familiarity, a picture of the beach was included on the worksheet accompanying the text. This visual element was particularly chosen to resonate with the students from Aru, as it reflected an environment familiar to them.

During the first stage of the EGRA technique, Experience, one of the lecturers read the paragraph aloud while encouraging the students to read along. This activity aimed to introduce the context naturally without overwhelming the students with grammatical explanations at the outset. The second stage, Generalization, involved extracting two example sentences from the paragraph—one verbal and one nominal. Together with the students, the lecturer analyzed these sentences to identify the structure and patterns of the simple present tense. In the third stage, Reinforcement, students were tasked with identifying additional verbal and nominal sentences from the text. They were further instructed to transform these sentences into negative and interrogative forms, solidifying their understanding of the tense's rules.

Finally, during the Application stage, the team provided a new picture depicting a house on a beach. Below the image, two sentences were given as prompts to help students create their own sentences, integrating what they had learned into a meaningful and practical exercise. The sentences were "I love where I live. The view in front of my house is beautiful...." The students were then asked to continue writing the paragraph using simple present tense.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It can be concluded from the table below that EGRA is a great technique that can improve students' mastery of grammar especially simple present tense. Below are their pre-test and post-test scores.

Table 1
Students score in pre-test and post test:

Students	Pre-test score	Post-test score
1	40	80
2	30	70
3	20	70
4	40	70
5	30	70
6	50	70
7	50	80
8	40	80
9	30	80
10	20	70
11	20	80
12	20	70
13	20	70
14	30	80
15	20	70
16	30	70
17	50	70
18	50	90
19	40	80
20	30	80
21	20	70
22	20	80
23	30	70
24	50	70
25	50	90
26	40	80
27	30	80
28	20	70
29	30	70
30	50	70

Based on observations of the classroom activities, it can be concluded that students demonstrated a high level of engagement and enjoyment while learning grammar through the EGRA technique. This approach provided a more interactive and participatory learning experience compared to traditional grammar instruction. Instead of being directly taught grammatical rules in a top-down manner, students actively collaborated with the lecturer to discover patterns and structures on their own. This process not only fostered a deeper understanding of the material but also encouraged critical thinking and active involvement in the learning process.

The hands-on nature of the EGRA technique allowed students to immediately apply what they had learned by practicing sentence construction. This immediate reinforcement helped solidify their understanding and gave them a sense of accomplishment as they successfully created sentences independently. Furthermore, the collaborative atmosphere created during the lesson reduced anxiety often associated with learning grammar, making the process more enjoyable and effective. By integrating discovery-based learning with practical application, the EGRA technique empowered

students to take ownership of their learning, which is a crucial step in fostering long-term language development and proficiency.

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Previous studies conducted by various researchers have also demonstrated the effectiveness of the EGRA technique in teaching grammar. Research by Maaliah and Aziz (2018), Dwi and Amzah (2021), and Yuliawati and Nuriyanti (2021) has consistently highlighted the technique's ability to improve students' grammar mastery across different educational levels, including junior high school, senior high school, and even university. These studies provide robust evidence that the systematic stages of EGRA—Experience, Generalization, Reinforcement, and Application—facilitate not only a deeper

understanding of grammatical structures but also their practical application in real communication contexts.

For instance, Maaliah and Aziz (2018) reported that the interactive and participatory nature of the EGRA technique motivated students and reduced their fear of learning grammar, leading to better learning outcomes. Similarly, Dwi and Amzah (2021) found that applying EGRA in senior high school settings significantly improved students' ability to identify and use complex grammatical patterns, as the method actively involved students in the learning process. At the university level, Yuliawati and Nuriyanti (2021) observed that students displayed a marked improvement in their ability to construct grammatically accurate sentences after participating in EGRA-based lessons. These findings collectively underscore the versatility and efficacy of the EGRA technique, making it a valuable tool for grammar instruction across various age groups and educational contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this community development program underscore the efficacy of the EGRA technique in enhancing students' mastery of grammar, particularly the simple present tense. As demonstrated through the pre-test and post-test results, the structured, student-centered approach of the EGRA method effectively addressed gaps in the students' understanding of grammatical concepts. The four stages—Experience, Generalization, Reinforcement, and Application—not only engaged the students in active learning but also provided opportunities for meaningful practice, fostering both comprehension and practical application of grammar rules.

Observations of the classroom activities revealed that students responded positively to the interactive and discovery-based nature of the EGRA technique. This participatory learning environment encouraged students to think critically, collaborate, and take ownership of their learning process, significantly reducing the anxiety often associated with grammar lessons. The integration of familiar contexts and visual aids further enhanced the students' engagement and relatability to the material, making the learning process enjoyable and effective.

Moreover, the findings align with previous research, such as studies by Maaliah and Aziz (2018), Dwi and Amzah (2021), and Yuliawati and Nuriyanti (2021), which consistently highlight the versatility and effectiveness of the EGRA technique across various educational levels. These studies, along with the outcomes of this program, affirm that EGRA is a robust instructional approach that not only improves students' grammatical proficiency but also equips them with the skills to apply grammar in real-life communication contexts.

In conclusion, the EGRA technique proves to be a valuable pedagogical tool, particularly in resource-limited settings such as Aru Regency, where challenges such as teacher shortages and limited exposure to English persist. Its systematic and interactive framework offers a promising solution to improve grammar instruction and overall language development, ultimately preparing students to meet the demands of a globalized world. Future programs and research can build upon these findings to further explore the potential of EGRA in addressing diverse educational needs.

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