

THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN DEVELOPING GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY

Jonathan Tanihardjo¹ and Rex Stardy²

^{1,2}Bunda Mulia University

¹jtanihardjo@bundamulia.ac.id; ²rexstardy@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

In the past, it had been a common practice to utilize a grammar book to learn about language rules, for it was more practical to use. However, language rules are the components of a language that learners have been trying to avoid learning inside and out due to its complexity. Many learners regard grammar insignificant as they believe that vocabulary plays a substantial role in communication. For such reasons, lecturers have been endeavoring to make an appropriate instrument to make grammar teaching and learning more effective and fun. Nowadays, when it comes to language teaching and learning, lecturers make use of authentic materials to capture the interest and to stimulate students to get motivated to learn. Nunan (1988) & Martinez (2002) defines authentic materials e.g., newspaper, magazine as the material, which have been produced for purposes other than to teach languages. Cook (1981) claimed that students can get more benefits from authentic materials, from which students can get closer to the target language. This research is conducted to find an answer to the question of the potency of authentic materials in learning grammar rules, specifically Gerund and Infinitive. The participants of this study were the second semester students of the English Department, who were then categorized into two dissimilar groups: control and experimental. The control group had a grammar book in the grammar teaching and learning, while the experimental group utilized an authentic material, such as a snippet taken from a short video. The media used to assess learners' grammar competence were pre-test and post-test, which were then analyzed and compared to see the effectiveness of each instrument in developing learners' competence in the specific grammar rules. The results of this study displayed that both instruments, such as the grammar book and the authentic material were of little significance to the improvement of students' grammar knowledge. In other words, despite the fact those instruments play their role in developing students' proficiency, the rise was just utterly trivial.

Keyword: authentic materials, grammar books, effectiveness, proficiency

ABSTRAK

Di masa lalu, penggunaan buku tata bahasa untuk mempelajari kaidah aturan bahasa adalah praktik umum, karena lebih praktis untuk digunakan. Namun, kaidah aturan bahasa adalah komponen bahasa yang mana pelajar sering kali hindari untuk pelajari secara mendalam, karena kompleksitasnya. Banyak pelajar juga menganggap tata bahasa tidaklah penting karena mereka yakin bahwa kosakata memiliki peran yang lebih penting dalam komunikasi. Oleh karena itu, para pengajar berusaha untuk membuat instrumen yang tepat agar pembelajaran tata bahasa menjadi lebih efektif dan menyenangkan. Saat ini, dalam hal pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa, para pengajar menggunakan bahan-bahan otentik untuk menarik minat siswa agar termotivasi untuk belajar. Nunan (1988) & Martinez (2002) mendefinisikan bahan otentik seperti koran, majalah sebagai bahan, yang telah dimanfaatkan untuk tujuan selain untuk mengajar bahasa. Cook (1981) mengklaim bahwa siswa dapat memperoleh lebih banyak manfaat dari materi otentik, yang mana siswa dapat lebih dekat dengan bahasa target. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menemukan jawaban atas pertanyaan tentang potensi materi autentik dalam pembelajaran kaidah tata bahasa, khususnya Gerund dan Infinitive. Partisipan dari penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester dua Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, yang kemudian dikategorikan menjadi dua kelompok yang berbeda: kontrol dan eksperimental. Kelompok kontrol menggunakan buku tata bahasa dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran tata bahasa, sedangkan kelompok eksperimen menggunakan materi otentik, seperti video pendek, yang mana terdapat terdapat percakapan di dalamnya. Media yang digunakan untuk menilai kompetensi tata bahasa peserta didik adalah pre-test dan post-test, yang kemudian dianalisis dan dibandingkan untuk melihat efektivitas masing-masing instrumen dalam mengembangkan kompetensi peserta didik dalam pembelajaran kaidah aturan tata bahasa tertentu. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kedua instrumen, seperti buku tata bahasa dan materi otentik, tidak terlalu signifikan terhadap peningkatan pengetahuan tata bahasa para siswa. Dengan kata lain, terlepas dari kenyataan bahwa kedua instrumen tersebut memainkan peran mereka untuk meningkatkan kemahiran siswa, peningkatan tersebut itu tersebut tidaklah signifikan.

Kata kunci: bahan otentik, buku tata bahasa, efektivitas, kemahiran

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to language teaching, one of the most strenuous tasks for educators is how to catch students' attention and to get their motivation to learn, especially learning grammar, since grammar, the system and the structure of a language, is somewhat hard and tedious to learn. Besides, grammar is believed to be of little importance to most people, particularly language learners.

Despite the fact that lexis, which people have acquired, is more vital in a conversation, rules of a language equally play a substantial role in language mastery. It is true that extensive vocabulary will definitely help people share their thoughts and understand messages that others pass on. However, an improper use of language structure may result in misinterpretation.

It has been a common practice that grammar books are the preferred tool to aid educators to teach language rules. However, the fact that grammar book is generally a nuisance to many learners makes it even harder to understand the rules of a language inside and out. Regardless of any situation that educators find themselves in, they always have to figure out a way to attract students' attention and to promote their learning, one of which is the utilization of authentic materials, which possibly make the learning process more enjoyable. In addition, authentic materials will definitely give learners something beyond the limitations of lessons. As stated by Cook (1981), students can get more advantages from authentic materials, and by having them the students can get closer to the target language. Brinton (1991) also supported the idea that authentic materials can strengthen the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world. In addition, Nunan (1999) affirmed that authentic materials are spoken or written language data that are produced in genuine communication, and not specifically written for language teaching purposes. In summary, it can be concluded that authentic materials are the real language applications in the form of written or spoken language used in genuine communication, from which students can get benefits, like getting to know the target language better.

Being keen to prove the potency of authentic materials, educators have been incorporating those materials in the language teaching in classroom settings. First of all, the research was conducted by Mousavi (2012) on the success of authentic versus non-authentic aural materials on EFL learners' listening comprehension. The purpose of his study was to discover the impact of the authentic versus non-authentic listening materials on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL subjects. The participants were divided into two experimental treatment groups. During one semester, one group was to listen to authentic radio-tapes and the other to listen to non-authentic listening materials taken from the assorted sources. The results exhibited that the participants with authentic radio-tape instructions gained a higher degree of listening comprehension and proficiency than non-authentic groups.

Next, a study on the effect of authentic materials on EFL learners' collocations competence was carried out by Tanihardjo (2018). The focal point of the study was only "verb+noun" combination. The participants from the Tourism Academy were given 5 newspaper articles on tourist attractions in Indonesia. The results displayed that there was an apparent increase in the post-test compared with the score of the pre-test. In other words, students benefited from the authentic materials in the lexical collocation competence.

Finally, Tanihardjo (2021) included authentic materials in his study to find out the effectiveness of such materials in promoting EFL students' grammatical collocation competence. The focus of his study was three collocation combinations, such as (1) *noun + preposition*, (2) *preposition + noun*, and (3) *adjective + preposition* appeared in 3 news articles. The pre-test was aimed to spot the students' understanding at recognizing the use of the combinations, while the post-test was to test their ability to use those combinations. The results showed that the authentic materials did not contribute to the students' awareness of the use of grammatical collocations in the post-test, which was shown in the mean of the post-test being lower than that of the pre-test. To put it differently, the authentic materials were not successful at promoting students' grammatical collocation competence.

It can be inferred from the previous studies that authentic materials worked in a satisfactory manner in developing the understanding and proficiency of vocabulary, and not the grammatical competence. Even so, the authors are still curious to find out whether such materials may work better in another situation. In this study, the instrument utilized to help students learn the rules of grammar, specifically the Gerund and To-infinitive was a snippet in a short film, from which such grammatical rules are used.

The purpose of this study is to seek an answer to the problem formulated: Do authentic materials, like a short film, work better in enhancing students' knowledge of the Gerund and To-infinitive?

RESEARCH METHOD

As many as 68 second semester students from the English Department in Bunda Mulia University were involved in this research. Two sets of grammatical tests, namely the pre- and post-tests were administered to different groups: the Control and Experimental groups. There were 25 test items about the Gerund and To-infinitive, which were in the form of multiple choices in both tests.

The number of participants taking parts in the control group was 37 students. This group was used as a benchmark to measure the students' understanding using traditional methods, in which the teacher made use of grammar books and explained the rules of the target language, such as the Gerund and To-infinitive thoroughly.

There were 3 stages in the process of teaching and learning. First of all, the pre-test was administered to find out students' prior knowledge of the grammatical rules. Next, in the treatment session, in-depth explanations were given, and the particular items tested were also brought into discussion. Finally, the post-test was administered to see their degree of understanding of the topics discussed and scores.

On the other hand, the number of participants involved in the experimental group was 31 students. In this group, authentic material, such as a snippet from a short film was utilized. The film, of which the topic was *to live a life*, took around 6 minutes to finish.

Like the stages in the control group, the experimental group also had 3 stages. First of all, the pre-test was administered to get the information on the students' prior knowledge. Secondly, the short film was played two times to let themselves be aware of the applications of the Gerund and Infinitive. Finally, the post-test was administered to see its effectiveness to promote students' awareness and boost the students' scores.

Before starting doing the analysis, the authors collected the students' works and had them scored. The results of both pre- and post-tests were then compared from both control and experimental groups with the aid of SPSS program to see the effectiveness of both instruments, and find out which one worked more effectively.

FINDINGS

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control_Pretest	63.57	37	20.608	3.388
	Control_Posttest	66.81	37	18.853	3.099
Pair 2	Experimental_Pretest	64.52	31	16.354	2.937
	Experimental_Posttest	66.84	31	16.369	2.940

There were 2 groups in this study: control and experimental groups. The control group with the aid of grammar book in grammar teaching got average scores of 63.57 in the pre-test and 66.81 in the post-test, which made an increase of 3.24 points. On the other hand, the experimental group with the use of authentic materials also showed a rise of 2.32 points, with the average scores of the pre- and post-tests of 64.52 and 66.84 respectively.

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Control_Pretest - Control_Posttest	-3.243	10.234	1.683	-6.656	.169	-1.928	36	.062
Pair 2	Experimental_Pretest - Experimental_Posttest	-2.323	12.384	2.224	-6.865	2.220	-1.044	30	.305

In order to discover which instruments were more effective in the teaching of grammar rules, specifically the Gerund and To-infinitive, a t-test has to be employed.

In pair one, the table above displays that the control group, with $df = 36$, has the t-score of 1.928. From the two-tails T distribution table, the t-score of 5% significance is 2.0281, and that of 1% significance is 2.7192. With both t-score is lower than both t-scores from the T distribution table ($1.928 < 2.0281$ and $1.928 < 2.7195$), it indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted, and proves that the traditional method with the grammar book as the support in grammar learning was not so effective to improve the students' understanding.

In pair two, the table exhibits that the experimental group, with $df = 30$, has the t-score of 1.044. From the two-tails T distribution table, the t-score of 5% significance is 2.0423, and that of 1%

significance is 2.750. With both t-score is lower than both t-scores from the T distribution table ($1.044 < 2.0423$ and $1.044 < 2.750$), it as well shows that the null hypothesis is accepted, and manifests that the authentic materials as the tool to assist in the grammar teaching did not make a significant difference to boost the students' scores.

Table 1. List of the Gerund and To-infinitive with verbs

No.	Gerund & To-Infinitive with verbs	Control group (37 students)				Experimental Group (31 students)			
		Pre-test (number of students with correct answers)	%	Post-test (number of students with correct answers)	%	Pre-test (number of students with correct answers)	%	Post-test (number of students with correct answers)	%
1	Try	33	89.19	24	64.86	29	93.55	22	70.97
2	Suggest	9	24.32	21	56.76	12	38.71	12	38.71
3	Look forward	8	21.62	8	21.62	12	38.71	9	29.03
4	Mean	29	78.38	29	78.38	26	83.87	24	77.42
5	Remember	29	78.38	19	51.35	25	80.65	16	51.61
6	Want	29	78.38	32	86.49	30	96.77	26	83.87
7	Imagine	22	59.46	32	86.49	17	54.84	26	83.87
8	Aspire	29	78.38	23	62.16	26	83.87	27	87.10
9	Continue	23	62.16	25	67.57	20	64.52	21	67.74
10	Neglect	6	16.22	19	51.35	4	12.90	16	51.61
11	Get	26	70.27	29	78.38	23	74.19	24	77.42
12	Miss	30	81.08	30	81.08	29	93.55	25	80.65
13	Remember	27	72.97	31	83.78	24	77.42	29	93.55
14	Struggle	25	67.57	28	75.68	20	64.52	27	87.10
15	Afford	26	70.27	21	56.76	14	45.16	17	54.84
16	Mean	24	64.86	22	59.46	22	70.97	13	41.94
17	Stop	17	45.95	28	75.68	19	61.29	27	87.10
18	Regret	19	51.35	20	54.05	15	48.39	16	51.61
19	Forget	30	81.08	32	86.49	24	77.42	24	77.42
20	Stop	27	72.97	31	83.78	15	48.39	24	77.42
21	Manage	24	64.86	30	81.08	18	58.06	21	67.74
22	Try	19	51.35	30	81.08	17	54.84	22	70.97
23	Forget	21	56.76	23	62.16	20	64.52	21	67.74
24	Regret	31	83.78	17	45.95	24	77.42	12	38.71
25	Prefer	15	40.54	14	37.84	15	48.39	17	54.84

The table above displays the list of 25 verbs with the Gerund and To-infinitive that were assessed in this study as well as the number of students that managed to accurately answer the questions, each of which was given a context to make it easier for the students to understand the situation better.

The verbs assessed were categorized into 4 types: (1) verbs followed with to-infinitive, (2) verbs followed with gerund, (3) verbs followed with gerund and to-infinitive with no change in meaning, and (4) verbs followed with gerund and to-infinitive with a change in meaning.

It was found there were the same five verbs that were the most problematic (the questions with less than 50% correct response rate) in the pre-test results of both the control and experimental groups, such as: *suggest*, *look forward*, *neglect*, *stop* and *prefer*. However, there seemed to be a drop in number of mistakes in both groups: 3 most problematic verbs in the post-test in the control group, for example, *look forward*, *regret*, and *prefer*, and 4 verbs in the post-test in the experimental group, such as *suggest*, *look forward*, *mean* and *regret*. However, it turned out the problematic verbs in the pre- and post-tests for both groups were rather different, with the verb *look forward* as the most problematic one.

The result also shows that learners from both groups in the end gave correct answers in the post-test, which proved to be a significant increase for some verbs, such as: *suggest*, *neglect*, *stop*. Nevertheless, there was also a sharp decrease of correct answers in the post-tests from both groups, namely: *try*, *remember*, and *regret*.

From the results of the pre- and post-test from both control and experimental groups, it comes to conclusion that both instruments, particularly grammar books, along with authentic materials proved to play their roles in transferring knowledge of the application of the Gerund and To-infinitive, although it was inconsiderable. In addition, the results showed that both instruments had helped increase the students' awareness of the application of only some, and not all verbs with the Gerund and To-infinitive from both groups.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Language rules are often deemed for learners to be monotonous, trivial and the most complex language component to learn. Consequently, the centre of attention is vocabulary, which they believe to play a more substantial role in language learning. Educators have been endeavouring to figure out an alternative yet efficient way to transfer knowledge of grammar to learners. However, it proves to be such a challenging task to do, since the same method may not always work like a charm in different situations.

Authentic materials are a good way to learn natural and real language in contexts. Nonetheless, in this study, authentic materials are of minor significance in transferring knowledge of the Gerund and To-infinitive, and so are grammar books. Despite the fact that authentic materials were not so effective in this study, it does not necessarily mean that it is true to everyone in different situations.

One possible justification for such instruments to fail to show the effectiveness in developing grammar proficiency is that language rules are something that needs continual practices to make it perfect. To put it differently, giving a treatment when learning a language, more specifically language rules only at a time proves to be insufficient, and thus constant repetition is highly recommended.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Complete Name	Institution	Education	Research Interests
Jonathan Tanihardjo	Bunda Mulia University	Master Degree – English Applied Linguistics	Teaching, Linguistics, Skills
Rex Stardy	Bunda Mulia University	Master Degree – English Applied Linguistics	Teaching, Skills