

## THE USE OF SONGS FOR PROMOTING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH STRUCTURE

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**Abstract:** Student participation is an important aspect in learning. This paper presents the result of a study aimed at solving student participation problem in learning the structure of English using songs. With rhythm, authenticity, and lyric songs give joy, motivation, and sample of language structure in use. The action research study was conducted in a tenth-grade class at *Bina Teknologi Vocational School* in the town of Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and tests. Based on a pre-observation, the students looked passive and less attentive when they were taught the structure of English. The research team agreed that the problem was rooted in deductive teaching, i.e. the teacher spoonfed the structural formulae. Session one of the cycle seemed to be fruitful in the concern of the team. In spite of a few weaknesses, there was a noticeable improvement in teaching performance. The students' participation seemed to improve as well, except for no questions raised. The progress achieved in session one remained in session two. Progress even tended to increase in intensity. Result of the tests administered right before and after the sessions showed a sharp rise. Overall final evaluation which took questionnaire responses into account revealed that this study was successful.

**Keywords:** *participation, the structure of English, songs*

### Introduction

In the EFL teaching and learning, the term 'structure', which refers to sentence patterns, is often discussed. Sometimes, this term is interchangeably used with the grammar. Learning the structure of English is not a simple matter to many Indonesian learners of English. In the meanwhile, it still has a good place in the EFL classrooms, including the ones at the vocational schools throughout the nation. It is meant to help students master communicative competence. In TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), for example, mastery of the structure plays an important role for a success in the test. Unfortunately, based on a classroom pre-observation, some problems were identified (eg. students looked passive and less attentive to the learning of the structure of English) and believed to have been rooted in deductive teaching, i.e. the students were not given enough sample of real use. Rather, the students were spoonfed with structural formulae. Inductive approaches to teaching grammar have proven superior (Sahib, 2007: 231-233). Inductive approaches enable students to participate more in learning.

Student participation is an important aspect in a teaching and learning process. Student participation involves many things, being present alone is not enough. Participation is defined as an activity or situation to take part in order to obtain an optimum advantage (Dusseldorf as cited by Sukidin 2002). Further, in regard to participation, two types of participation are identified, namely contributive participation and initiative participation. The former deals with participation that drives individuals to follow the lessons well within the classroom structured tasks. The latter, however, encourages autonomous, unstructured activities beyond the classroom.

In regard with the students' poor participation, one way that is worth trying for an alternative solution is the use of media. The use of media can develop student learning interest and motivation. With adequate learning interest it can be expected that student participation is not just class attendance. The students will have enough energy to avoid giving negative response to classroom activities. It is likely that with learning interest and motivation the students become actively involved in both inside and outside classroom activities.

Songs are alternative media for facilitating language learning. Suwartono (2012: 149-151) notes that rhythm and authenticity in songs present fun to the listeners. As authentic material they motivate the listeners to repeat the lyrics either wholly or partially. Song lyrics contain sample of language in use, including the sentence pattern. Let us say, for example, the expression "I don't wanna see you *crying*", or "I'll never *let* you go". Within its context such an expression can be brought to classroom when a teacher intends to introduce the sentence patterns that use verbs of senses and special verbs like *let*, *make* etc. Therefore, this advantage can be utilized by a teacher of EFL to facilitate learning. Nurhayati (2009: 278) argues that songs constitute multi-function media when used for language learning.

Features in songs support the development of all language skills as well as components. In her presentation paper, Sari (2009: 180) writes that grammar can be taught with “entertainment” using songs. When students feel excited to learn, their learning participation develops. Even though many Indonesian learners of EFL find it difficult to learn the structure of English, they find a way out when learning is fun.

## Method

The present research is a classroom action research study conducted in a grade 10 class of Computer Network Engineering 2, at *Bina Teknologi* Vocational School, in Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. The research used multi-sources of data: observation, questionnaires, and tests. Observation checklists were used to record the teacher’s intervention implementation and the students’ behavior (student participation). Data obtained from observations was tallied and calculated in percentage. Similar process as done to data from the questionnaires. Test results were analysed using descriptive statistics. Method and researcher triangulations were used to minimize subjectivity and bias.

The team agreed upon the pre-set criteria for the intervention implementation success: student participation increases, positive response toward the teaching and learning process implemented, and student scores increase with average no less than 60.

## Result and Discussion

### Cycle One, Session 1

Prior to first session a test was administered to see the baseline. Session one was about The Present Continuous Tense. The teacher started by asking “What is he doing?” while showing a picture on the screen. Many students replied communicatively with *singing* for a picture of a swimmer in the pool. Then, the teacher played a song “Sailing” by Rod Stewart. Students were expected to fill in the blanks while listening to the song. After that, feedback and exercises were given. The teacher spent the rest of the time initiating a game *London Bridge*. A post-test was administered in the end of the lesson.

Based on a discussion later in relation with the intervention implemented, it revealed that the teacher felt comfortable to teach using the *Power Point*. From team members who observed comments were addressed. Firstly, students could have been given clear instructions as to how many times songs would be played while filling in the blanks task was taking place. This is especially important to make the students serious in doing the task. Secondly, students mastery checking was not convincing. Questions like “Is it clear for you?” tend to be answered “yes” by students. Questions like “Which part of my explanation is not clear? maybe more reliable. Thirdly, the exercises provided did not support understanding. The use of contextual instead of isolated sentences without appropriate time markers such as “The baby is crying” would have been better.

A progress achieved in the session includes student enthusiasm and joy when the song was being played. Overall, the lesson seemed exciting to the students. All students payed full attention and spontaneously did the tasks/exercises provided. A few students, for example, looked at a friend sitting behind just to talk about the topic.

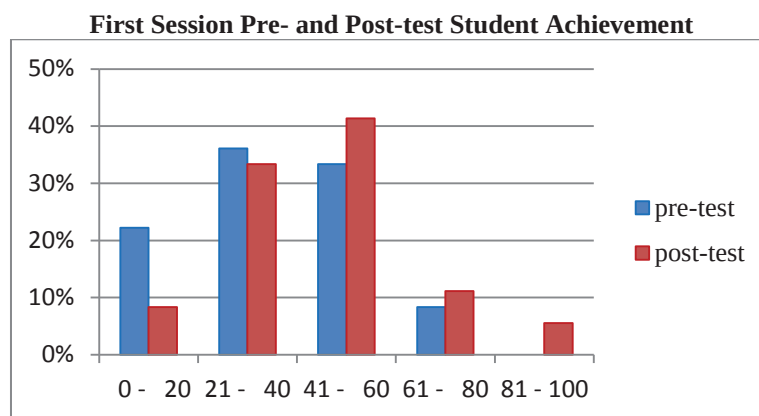
### Cycle One, Session 2

A test was administered before the lesson began. Soon the teacher started the lesson by showing a picture through the *power point*. Then, a song “Nothing to Loose” was played. A question and answer was followed by brief discussion. The material presented was “There is/There are”. The teacher used the *Power Point*. Exercises along with an oral feedback were given untill the end of the lesson.

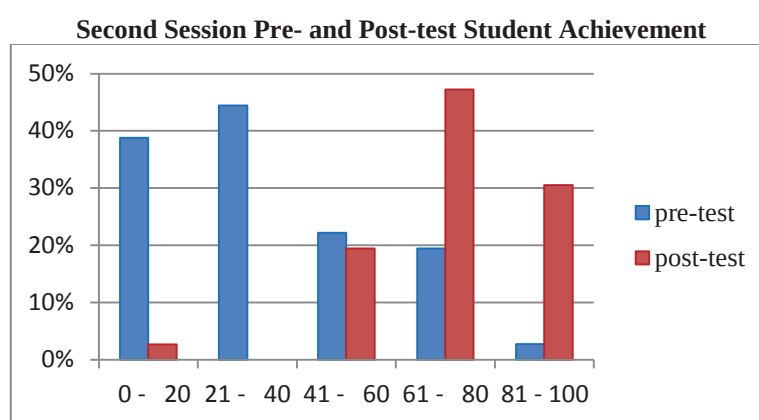
The research team discussion this time was done as an overall evaluation. In the discussion input from team members who observed the class was put forward. Firstly, too much Indonesian was used as the language of instruction. Secondly, the examples given were not contextual. The teacher could have used things around the classroom to support understanding. For example, there are two pictures on the wall, there is no fan in the classroom.

Overall, students looked active in doing the tasks and exercises given. In regard with teacher performance in implementing the intervention, research team members agreed that out of 13 indicators only 1, i.e. “answering student question” remained untouched just because no student asked questions during the lesson. The teacher performance achieved score 50 out of 65 (Excellent). Therefore, the observation already showed improvement in student participation and teacher performance in implementing the intervention.

Result of the tests administered showed that pre-test and post-test of the first session presenting “The Present Continuous Tense” reached average scores of 41.67 and 48.89 respectively. The distribution of the first session pre- and post-test scores can be seen in the chart below.



Result of the tests administered in the second session presenting “There is/ There are” showed that the pre-test and post-test reached average scores of 42.47 and 67.75 respectively (an increase by 60%). Regardless of material complexity, the scores gained by the students in the second session are better.



In pre-test eight students got score 60. In post-test, however, twenty-eight students or 77.7%, achieved the score.

This means implemetation of the intervention, namely, the use of songs in the teaching of English structure has brought about big changes in both student participation and learning achievement.

The questionnaire that was administered to see the student perception toward the lesson in which the intervention was implemented revealed some interesting facts. First, at least 52% of the students perceived that the lesson gave new insight/knowledge. Besides, over 55% students stated that they liked the material taught to them. It was also found out that nearly 75% of the students liked the audio-visual utilized. Above all, around 86% of the students enjoyed the songs as the teaching media.

All those findings tend to be consistent with the observational data, that showed the students looked cheerful, more active, serious, and attentive when the teaching and learning process was going. Viewed from student participation, learning gain, and positive response towards the instruction using songs as media, it can be said that implemetation of the intervention, namely, the use of songs in the teaching of English structure has brought about big changes in both student participation and learning achievement. The improvement met the pre-set criteria. Since time availability was a problem at the end, the team decided not to proceed to another cycle.

### Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on data analysis that obviously showed a trend of improved learning outcome as expected, it can be concluded then that the use of songs in the teaching of English structure is the right solution for the student participation problem in the class under investigation. Thus, the intervention chosen is recommended for use as an alternative to student participation problem in the teaching of English structure in specific and grammar in general. Limitation of this study includes the minimum cycle due to time availability. With only one research cycle there is a threat of bias.

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## Biodata

**Dr. Suwartono** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English Language Teaching, Teacher Training Faculty, Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, Indonesia. He has carried out lots of researches on English language teaching. He has presented papers in many conferences within and beyond the country, incl. ICLC Thailand, CELC Symposium Singapore, CITC Hong Kong, ACLL Japan, ICELL India, and CamTESOL Cambodia. He has also given trainings and workshops nationwide. He has actively written articles in mass media, extensively published articles in scientific journals and productively written reference books, incl. "It Sounds like Native English" and "Dasar-Dasar Metodologi Penelitian".