

Leveraging Self-Assessment to Enhance Students' Simple Past Tense Skills at MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu

Fajria,¹ Nur Sehang Thamrin,² Maghfira,³ Nadrun,⁴

Corresponding author: Fajria, fajriarahima8@gmail.com

Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the effect of self-assessment on grammar teaching and learning by analyzing how students identify and correct errors related to using simple past tense in their work. A quantitative approach was used in this study, using a quasi-experimental design. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through a test divided into two: pre-test and post-test. The population in this study was the ninth grade of MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu, where class IX C was the experimental group (n=21) and class IX B was the control group (n=18). Statistical analysis was performed using the Mann-Whitney U test because the study data was not normally distributed. The results demonstrated increased learning outcomes in using simple past tense in the experimental group compared to the control group. It was shown by calculations using the SPSS 24 software system where the Sig (2-tailed) value = 0.000 < 0.05 means the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. In summary, this study indicated that self-assessment significantly enhances students' ability in simple past tense. The findings offer a new perspective for students, teachers and future researchers in enhancing English language teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Self-Assessment, Grammar teaching, Simple Past Tense*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the role of grammar in oral and written communication is crucial as it provides a structure for clear and effective expression of thoughts. Good grammar can improve the speaker or writer's image, giving others the confidence to accept and get involved with shared information (Noviyenty, 2022). Thus, comprehension of the rules of language usage is important for self-expression and interaction with others. Moreover, EFL learners should understand that grammar rules are not a set of instructions but a way to make oneself understood by other people. Common errors often occur in sentence structure, tense usage, and word choice, particularly among non-native speakers (Guo, 2023). Andriani et al. (2021) found that grammatical structure plays a major role in English acquisition, enhancing fluency and extending interpersonal skills. One of the materials focusing on grammar learning in schools is simple past tense. Simple past tense is one of the important elements in English grammar that students must master well (Ramdani & Purwaningsih, 2010). This material emphasizes activities or phenomena in the past. A strong command of simple past tense allows students to improve their language skills further.

However, many EFL learners struggle to learn English grammar, particularly simple past tense. According to research by Daskan (2023), many learners struggle to improve their grammatical language accuracy in communicative activities and find using grammatical terminology such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives challenging. The fact that there are rules for using the English language makes it difficult for many students to understand (Fitria, 2023). Thamrin and Rofiqoh (2021) also claim that most EFL learners struggle to learn grammar. Additionally, students have mentioned struggles with vocabulary, composing sentences, and translating text. Therefore, grammar teachers should incorporate effective teaching strategies

in their classroom practice. For example, using games, aids, context, and involving students in assessment activities through self-assessment (SA) or peer assessment (PA).

Self-assessment is proposed as an effective strategy to overcome the challenges in learning grammar, especially the simple past tense. Self-assessment is an alternative assessment process that allows students to judge and self-reflect on what they have learned and achieved, promoting self-awareness in learning. Jamrus and Razali (2019) and Yan (2020) stated that self-assessment plays an important role in the students' independent development of learning skills, which can lead to better academic achievement. In addition to evaluating students' progress results, it is important to provide in-depth feedback from the teacher to support student self-learning (Larandang et al., 2023; Thamrin et al., 2024). Having this self-awareness can help students when they are in the process of brainstorming prior to choosing tasks and strategies to focus on specific areas for improvement.

This study aims to measure the improvement of students' ability to use simple past tense through self-assessment. As a guide, this study adopts self-assessment guidelines that emphasize the learning process. The indicators of success include an increase in the percentage of students' success in choosing the right verb form in the past context (to be (was, were), regular and irregular verbs), an increase in students' ability to construct structurally correct simple past tense sentences, and an increase in students' confidence in using simple past tense in oral and written communication.

Several studies have been conducted using self-assessment as a strategy for learning. The first research was from Larsari et al. (2023), who found that self-assessment as an alternative form of assessment significantly impacts improving academic motivation in EFL grammar achievements. Another study conducted by Priyatni et al. (2019) proved that implementing self-monitoring can significantly impact students' ability to use the simple past tense and encourage students to be active in the academic process. Furthermore, based on the results of the analysis conducted by Khonamri et al. (2021) support that self-assessment helped improve The free clause ($p = 0.031$), meaning the self-assessment group made significant improvements in this feature. These studies show that using self-assessment as a learning technique positively impacts students and teachers who can help them provide in-depth feedback and new learning strategies.

Self-assessment in writing allows students to assess their grammar abilities, identify strengths and problems, and work to improve their proficiency. This technique improves their communicative effectiveness while increasing their confidence and competence in written communication. Eswaey and Ihmoumah (2024) state that self-assessment training can significantly improve students' writing skills and proficiency, resulting in better performance and increased awareness of writing problems. Studies show that writing lessons incorporating self-assessment are more effective than traditional methods in improving students' writing ability (Purwanti, 2015). Self-assessment has been found to improve learner autonomy and self-confidence in using English. Self-assessment can increase self-efficacy by providing a sense of self-mastery and confidence in learners. The lack of empirical evidence on the effect of self-assessment on self-efficacy in EFL learners highlights the need for further research in this area (Moqbel, 2018).

In connection with the above background, the researcher has concluded that learning grammar in school, especially simple past tense, has become challenging for students. Therefore, the researcher researched leveraging the implementation of self-assessment to enhance student's ability to use simple past tense at MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu.

METHODS

The study employed a quantitative research approach. (Creswell, 2003; Williams, 2011:18) states, quantitative research "employ strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collect data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data".

Research design

In this research, the researcher used quasi-experimental research design. This approach was used to see whether the use of self-assessment can improve students' ability in written simple past tense. The design of this research is suggested by (Cohen et al., 2007:282) as follows:

Experimental	O₁	X	O₂
Control	O₃		O₄

Where:

O1 : (pre-test experimental group)

O2 : (post-test control group)

O3 : pre-test (experimental group)

O4 : post-test (control group)

X : treatment

Research participants and Sampling Procedures

In conducting this study the researcher chose ninth grade students at MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu as the population of this research. The following table shows the distribution of students in each class.

Table 1. Population Distribution

No	Class	Number of Students
1	IX-A	19
2	IX-B	18
3	IX-C	21
Total		58

Referring to the target analysis, the researcher applied a purposive sampling technique to choose the sample for this research. According to research by Thomas (2022:3), purposeful sampling is the emphasis of the investigator's sampling designing phase for the objects to be studied. In other words, purposive sampling was used as the technique in this study, where the researcher evaluated and chose samples based on specific criteria. In this study, the research sample was taken based on the population that has an average English score of 75, based on observations made by the researcher, which show that among the three classes of the ninth grade, two classes have an average English score of 75, which are class IX-B and IX-C. In applying this technique, the researcher selected two classes in ninth grade of MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu they were IX-B as the control group and IX-C as the experimental group.

Data Collection

The data was collected by administering tests. The test carried out by the researcher consisted of pre-test and post-test where there were two groups of classes, consisting of an experimental group and a control group. According to Alam (2019), the main purpose of pre-test and post-tests is to measure knowledge changes and examine teaching effectiveness during one academic year. Pre-test and post-test models were used to monitor students' progress and learning along the course or program. This test is conducted to determine whether implementing self-assessment can effectively improve students' ability to understand the usage of simple past tense. The test consisted of one form of test, namely multiple choice. The multiple-choice consisted of 30 questions, and each answered correctly would get one score. Therefore, the total score was 30. It is shown in table 3.

Table 2. The Scoring Guide

No	Types	Number	Scores	Total Score
1	Multiple Choice	30	1	30
Total		30		30

Previously this test was tested on ninth grade students of MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu and SMP Negeri 2 Sindue, this test was carried out with the aim of testing the validity and reliability of the best to be used as a research instrument. The number of question items given in this validity and reliability test was 30 question items with multiple choice questions. For the results of the validity and reliability test the researcher describes in the table below.

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Test	R-hitung	< , >	R-table (N = 31, a = 0,05)	Status
1	0.613	>	0.355	Valid
2	0.567	>		Valid
3	0.279	<		Invalid
4	0.602	>		Valid
5	0.530	>		Valid
6	0.479	>		Valid
7	0.407	>		Valid
8	0.429	>		Valid
9	0.481	>		Valid
10	0.521	>		Valid
11	0.567	>		Valid
12	0.378	>		Valid
13	0.513	>		Valid
14	0.517	>		Valid
15	0.616	>		Valid
16	0.297	<		Invalid
17	0.687	>		Valid
18	0.465	>		Valid
19	0.624	>		Valid
20	0.405	>		Valid
21	0.143	<		Invalid
22	0.425	>		Valid
23	0.616	>		Valid
24	0.433	>		Valid
25	0.551	>		Valid
26	0.405	>		Valid
27	0.417	>		Valid
28	0.559	>		Valid
29	0.377	>		Valid
30	0.591	>		Valid

The validity test in the table above was carried out to compare R- values and R-tables (for N = 31 with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$). Based on the results shown in the table which shows that of the 30 items tested, 27 items were declared valid and 3 items were invalid. The items that are declared valid have an R-value > R-table (0.355). However, there were 3 invalid question items because the R-count value < R-table, this indicates that these items are not significantly correlated and need to be considered for revision or elimination so that the research instrument becomes better and more accurate.

Table 4. Reliability Calculation Results

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.886	30

This reliability test was carried out to measure the internal consistency of the research instrument. Based on the results of the table above, which shows that Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.886, the research instrument, which consists of 30 question items, has a very good level of reliability. Therefore, it can be concluded that the questions in the instrument used consistently measure the same variable.

The researcher analyzed the data statistically, assisted by the SPSS application. After analyzing the results of the student's scores on both pre-tests and post-tests, the researcher inserted the scores into the SPSS working paper to analyze the descriptive statistics. In addition, the researcher tested the research hypothesis through inferential statistics. Therefore, the normality test and homogeneity test were conducted before determining whether the hypothesis would be tested through an independent T-test or Mann-Whitney U Test.

Interventions

This study used a quasi-experimental design by providing treatment for 4 weeks. There were eight meetings for all, where the beginning and final meetings were pre-test and post-test, then six meetings were for treatment. In which the researcher applied self-assessment after the pre-test. The treatment was designed to improve students' ability to use simple past tense. The researcher provided treatment with a different focus at each meeting and was done gradually. In the first meeting, the researcher introduced self-assessment and explained the simple past tense material to be (was/were). In the second meeting, students were introduced to the general list of verbs of both past tenses, namely regular and irregular and how to distinguish them. In the third meeting activity, the researcher asked students to make positive, simple past tense sentences, which helped them learn the sentence structure of simple past tense correctly. Then, at the fourth meeting, convert positive sentences to negative simple past tense sentences; in the fifth meeting, students are asked to convert positive and negative simple past tense sentences into interrogative forms. Finally, at the sixth meeting, students review the material given. For more details, consider the following table:

Table 5. Self-Assessment Guidelines

No.	Statements	Yes	No
1	My sentences have a "subject"		
2	My sentences have a "verb"		
3	My sentences have "object/complement"		
4	I can use 'was' in sentence well for the subject I, she, he, it		
5	I can use 'were' in sentence well for the subject you, we, they		
6	I can make sentences with regular verbs in the simple past tense.		
7	I can use irregular verbs correctly in simple past tense sentences.		
8	I can show time signals (e.g. yesterday, last week, two days ago) in my sentences (if any)		
9	I can make negative simple past tense sentences with was not/were not (or wasn't/weren't)		
10	I can make negative simple past tense sentences using did not/didn't and the base form of the verb.		
11	I can make simple past tense questions by putting was/were at the beginning of the sentence.		
12	I can make simple past tense questions by using Did at the beginning of the sentence and the base form of the verb.		

RESULTS & FINDINGS

In this finding, the researcher presents the research results and data analysis. This data was collected from January 13th to February 12th, 2025. This data was analyzed from the pre-test and post-test research results from both classes that were the research samples: the experimental and the control groups. The researcher used an instrument in the form of a test, which was given twice at the beginning and end of the meetings in both research sample groups. The first test (pre-test) was given before getting treatment, and the second test (post-test) was given after treatment was completed until the end of the meeting.

The Result of the Pre-Test

Before applying the treatment, the researcher conducted a pre-test to both research samples, experimental group and control group. This was conducted to measure the students' basic understanding of their grammar skills, especially on simple past tense material. The complete results of this analysis were presented in the following table:

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test Results

No	Group	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
1	Experimental	21	28,95	10	53	11,191
2	Control	18	28,67	20	50	7,881

The researcher pre-tested 21 students in the experimental group and 18 students in the control group. It can be seen that the highest pre-test score in the experimental group was 53, with the lowest score being 10, while the data results from the control group showed that the highest score was 50 and the lowest score was 20. The students in the experimental and control classes only achieved the highest score of 50 in the pre-test, and none got the standard score of more than 70. This is because students have difficulty understanding the patterns and rules of the simple past tense, especially in determining the use of the verb two and to be (was/were).

Meanwhile, the two classes showed a significant difference in standard deviation. The standard deviation in the experimental group was 11.91, and 7.881 in the control group. This means that the standard deviation of the control group was smaller than that of the experimental group, which had a greater variety of abilities.

To sum up, the pre-test results in the table above showed that the mean pre-test score of students in the experimental group was 28.95, while the mean score of the control group was 28.67. It can be said that students in the experimental group and control group had almost equal understanding of using simple past tense before the treatment.

The Result of the Post-Test

After conducting the pre-test, the researcher administered a post-test to measure students' simple past tense skills after receiving treatment for 6 meetings. This post-test was given to both experimental and control groups. This post-test has the same format as the pre-test but with different words. The following table shows the complete results:

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Results

No	Group	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
1	Experimental	21	61,67	37	100	19,571
2	Control	18	36,22	10	83	19,750

The post-test results in the table above indicated that the experimental group experienced a significant increase after being given treatment. The experimental group got a mean post-test score of 61.67, which was higher than the control group which only reached a mean of 36.22. It can be said that the treatment given is effective in the experimental group which causes an increase in learning outcomes in students.

Furthermore, the table above also explained that the two research groups had differences in achievement in the minimum and maximum values. The maximum score achieved by the experimental group was 100 and the minimum score was 37 while the maximum score of the control group was 83 and only reached 10 for the minimum score. So, it can be interpreted that students with the lowest ability in the experimental group had a better understanding after being given treatment than the control group which only applied conventional methods. In addition, in terms of data variation, the experimental group showed a more even distribution of values with a standard deviation of 19.571 while the control group was 19.750.

Overall, the results of this post-test proved that treatment using the self-assessment method given to the experimental group had an impact on enhancing students' learning ability as well as their understanding of the simple tense, while the control group did not show a significant improvement.

Normality

This study needed a normality test to determine whether the research data was normally distributed or not. If the data were normally distributed, it was analyzed using the t-test, while if the data were not normally distributed, it was analyzed using a non-parametric statistical test, one of the methods was the Mann-Whitney U test. The following table shows the calculation results obtained:

Table 8. Test of Normality

No	Group	P-value (Sig.)	Description
1	Pre-Test Experimental	0,452	Normal
2	Post-Test Experimental	0,085	Normal
3	Pre-Test Control	0,013	Abnormal
4	Post-Test Control	0,018	Abnormal

The normality test results in the table above used the Shapiro-Wilk method because the sample in this study was small (< 50). From the normality test, different results were obtained from the pre-test and post-test data in both experimental groups and control groups. The results obtained from the experimental group showed that the data were normally distributed, this was because the significance value of the pre-test was 0.452 and the post-test was 0.085 which proved that the significance value of both was > 0.05. Meanwhile, different results were shown by the control group where the significance value in the pre-test was 0.013 and the post-test was 0.018, this indicated that the control group data was not normally distributed

due to the significance value < 0.05 . Since there were groups of data that were not normally distributed, the next statistical analysis used a non-parametric statistical test, a Mann-Whitney U test.

Students Learning Outcomes

In this research, the researcher applied the Mann-Whitney U test which is one of the non-parametric statistical methods to analyze the difference between two independent groups when the data was not normally distributed. Mann-Whitney U test was chosen to test the hypothesis about the difference in students' ability to use simple past tense between the experimental group given self-assessment treatment and the control group using conventional methods. The Mann-Whitney U test results can be seen in the following table:

Table 9. Test Statistics

No	Group	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Post-Test of Experimental Group and Control Group	0,000

Based on the results presented in the Mann-Whitney U test table above, it can be seen that the significance value (p-value) obtained was less than 0.05, namely 0.000. This value showed that there was a significant difference in learning outcomes between class C (experimental) and class B (control), therefore it can be concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It indicates that the self-assessment treatment in the experimental group had a considerable impact on students' learning development. Thus, this difference supports the alternative hypothesis that "Leveraging self-assessment does effectively enhance students' ability to use simple past tense."

DISCUSSION

This study aims to find out whether the leveraging of self-assessment impacts enhancing students' learning outcomes in teaching and learning grammar, especially in simple past tense. Previously, the researcher conducted a pre-test on both experimental and control groups to measure their basic skills in simple past tense. The researcher found the result that both groups had equal understanding, with the mean score of the experimental group pre-test being 28.95 and the mean score of the control group pre-test being 28.67. Based on the results of the mean score, it was found that students had a lack of knowledge of the use of to be (was/were) and verb 2 (regular and irregular), so none of the students got the maximum score > 70 . Thus, it can be concluded that the students from both experimental and control groups had a poor ability to use the simple past tense.

Based on the problems in the pre-test, the researcher analyzed the results of the post-test after being given treatment for six meetings. The statistical analysis results showed that there were differences in the mean scores of the two experimental groups and the control group. The experimental group that received treatment had a mean score of 61.67, which can be interpreted as the experimental group's improvement in learning outcomes after being given treatment using the self-assessment method. The control group that used conventional methods also showed an increase but not so significant, with a mean score of 36.22.

In the implementation, the researcher focused on teaching the simple past tense to the experimental group by using the self-assessment guidelines checklist as a media that is customized to the learning objectives. Self-assessment guidelines were made to include some criteria related to simple past tense in order for students to know the target to be achieved and to know whether their understanding develops every learning meeting. Each of the criteria contained in the self-assessment is based on the theme of each meeting.

In the first meeting, the researcher explained how to use the self-assessment guidelines and what the benefits of using the media were for their learning. Afterwards, the researcher explained the material on the use of to be (was/were). In this beginning material, the researcher found that students still had difficulties in using between to be present (am, is, are) and to be past (was/were), including determining the use of subjects for each to be used. This difficulty can be seen when students did self-assessments to identify their worksheets, where some students seemed less able to identify their mistakes in using to be in simple past tense sentences. Learners are still often mistaken in matching to be with the right subject of the sentence. Some of them mixed up the use of 'is/are' and 'was/were' when using past tense sentences. Nonetheless, the difficulties faced by these students have provided opportunities for growth and improvement. By providing the right approach through self-assessment, students can develop a stronger understanding based on predetermined criteria.

In the second meeting, the researcher continued the material on the explanation of regular and irregular verbs. This material is quite complex because irregular verbs have several rules when changing them from first-form verbs to second-form verbs. Outside of these rules, memorization is necessary if the students want to master it. In contrast, regular verbs do not have rules for each verb that changes into the past tense. During the teaching process, the researcher gave the students a list of regular and irregular verbs that are used in general. Before the students were asked to work on the worksheet, the researcher asked the students to work on a question example where they identified regular and irregular verbs in a narrative text and then made them into sentences. The researcher wanted to see if the students responded well to the explanation of the material. Afterwards, while working on the worksheet and filling in the self-assessment, some students seemed to understand the use of past tense verbs. The self-assessment results showed that most students felt more confident with regular verbs but not with irregular verbs. Even so, students are better at understanding their learning progress, and with the use of self-assessment, students become more confident in improving their skills in using simple past tense.

In the third, fourth and fifth meetings, the researcher focused on making positive sentences that were converted into negative and interrogative sentences. This phase was made to strengthen students' understanding of sentence structure in using past-to-be and past-tense verbs. The researcher observed that there was progress in determining the appropriate use of subjects with to-be (was/were) and V2 verbs (regular & irregular). For example, when given worksheets containing positive sentences, most students were able to convert them into negative sentences by adding 'did not' or 'was/were not' appropriately, as well as forming interrogative sentences by moving 'did' or 'was/were' to the beginning of the sentence.

However, the utilization of self-assessment must also be accompanied by sufficient guidance. This was because most students were not able to analyze their own errors based on their basic abilities, and this also included students' lack of understanding of the assessment criteria in self-assessment. Therefore, during this study, the researcher helped students recognize errors and directed them gradually. With the help of self-assessment guidelines, students were able to encourage their self-reflection to improve their learning performance by using simple past tense. This statement supports the findings of Khonamri et al. (2021), who suggested that self-assessment proved to be very beneficial for learners in improving student learning competence through the use of tools such as evaluation checklists and feedback that support learners' progress by utilizing their strengths to improve their weaknesses. This activity proved that learning that involves the active involvement of students can produce better results in learning performance.

According to Larsari et al. (2023), the use of self-assessment has an important role in encouraging students to engage in the evaluation process so that it can increase student motivation and independence in the learning process. The finding was also proven by the observation during this study, where the researcher found that students were more likely to understand grammatical concepts after actively using self-assessment and learning the simple past tense. This process allows students to correct their mistakes, such as incorrect verb placement or incorrect sentence structure, independently. This indirectly motivates students to improve their language skills and encourages students to take control of their own learning process.

The application of self-assessment in this study not only improved students' academic grades but also encouraged students to be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, which allows students to monitor their learning progress during simple past-tense learning. Thus, this study supports the research conducted by Priyatni et al. (2019), who claimed that the application of self-monitoring as a whole contributes to increasing students' awareness as well as their ability to use simple past tense, where students were given the opportunity to correct mistakes thus increasing students' personal control over their learning. Providing such opportunities for students to evaluate their own work gives them strong motivation to learn grammar, especially the simple past tense.

After completing data collection from student learning outcomes using self-assessment, the researcher conducted an analysis with the help of Mann-Whitney U analysis, and a significance value (p-value) of 0.000 was found, which was lower than 0.05. This indicated that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. This means that the experimental group showed an increase in grammar learning outcomes after treatment compared to the control group, which only used conventional methods. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that self-assessment significantly enhances students' ability to learn grammar, specifically in using simple past tense. In other words, this study supports previous research conducted by Larsari et al. (2023), Priyatni et al. (2019), and Khonamri et al. (2021). In conclusion, this study proves that the use of self-assessment is effective in enhancing students' ability in simple past tense at MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that implementing self-assessment effectively enhanced students' ability to use simple past tense in ninth grade at MTs Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu. Self-assessment can be a tool that can help students actively evaluate their understanding and application of grammar. Moreover, this process can encourage students to focus more on their limits, increase motivation, and learn about their weaknesses and strengths, thus allowing students to monitor learning progress during simple past-tense learning. Even so, there are challenges, such as learners struggling to identify their weaknesses due to lack of experience in self-assessment; hence, guidance is needed to make self-assessment work effectively and provide feedback so that students can accurately assess their improvements. Based on the discussion and data results obtained in this study, it is evident that self-assessment is a very useful learning tool for students and teachers in assessing their work. Also, future researchers are advised to make continuous observations regarding the effects of using self-assessment on the mastery of simple past tense because this study was conducted in a limited period of time. Therefore, examining how self-assessment affects the understanding of students of different ages and abilities is recommended. In addition, by doing a comparison between various forms of self-assessment to find out which format has a fairly good level of effectiveness.

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