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The effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning Against Mastery Student Adjectives

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Abstrak

Penguasaan dan penggunaan kata sifat, terutama dalam menentukan jenis dan posisi kata sifat dalam kalimat masih seringkali menjadi kesulitan siswa dalam pembelajaran. Menyikapi hal tersebut, maka diberikan salah satu alternatif pemecahan masalah tersebut dengan menerapkan problem-based learning untuk diujicobakan dalam proses pembelajaran kata sifat. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk mengetahui keefektifan penggunaan problem-based learning terhadap penguasaan kata sifat siswa. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menggunakan desain eksperimen semu dan memilih dua kelas dengan menggunakan cluster random sampling sebagai sampel. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes essay yang hasilnya dianalisis dengan independent sample t-test. Hasil pengujian hipotesis diketahui bahwa diperoleh nilai signifikan sebesar 0,031 dengan signifikansi $\alpha = 0,05$. Dengan demikian, terdapat efektivitas penerapan problem-based learning terhadap penguasaan kata sifat siswa. Selanjutnya nilai N-Gain untuk kelas kontrol adalah 0,482 sedangkan untuk kelas eksperimen adalah 0,564. Dengan demikian dapat dikatakan bahwa problem-based learning dapat digunakan dan efektif sebagai media pembelajaran penguasaan kata sifat. Penggunaan problem-based learning dapat menjadi alternatif yang efektif dalam pembelajaran kata sifat. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa metode pembelajaran yang melibatkan pemecahan masalah dapat membantu siswa dalam memahami dan menguasai penggunaan kata sifat dengan lebih baik. Dalam konteks pendidikan, penelitian ini memberikan bukti bahwa pendekatan pembelajaran yang berfokus pada pemecahan masalah dapat meningkatkan keterampilan linguistik siswa, khususnya dalam hal penguasaan kata sifat.

Kata kunci: *Penguasaan kata sifat, Metode pembelajaran, Problem-based learning.*

Abstract

In the realm of language learning, mastering and utilizing adjectives particularly determining their type and position in sentences often poses challenges for students. To address this difficulty, this study proposes the implementation of problem-based learning as a potential solution, subjected to testing in the teaching process of adjectives. The primary objective of this research was to ascertain the effectiveness of employing problem-based learning in enhancing students' proficiency in adjectives. This investigation employed a quasi-experimental design, selecting two classes as samples through the technique of cluster random sampling. An essay test served as the research instrument, with the resultant data analyzed via an independent sample t-test. The testing of the hypothesis yielded a significant value of 0.031, with a level of significance set at $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating the positive impact of problem-based learning on students' aptitude in adjectives. The N-Gain values obtained were 0.482 for the control class and 0.564 for the experimental class, suggesting that problem-based learning can be effectively deployed as a teaching method for mastering adjectives. Problem-based learning may, thus, present itself as an efficacious alternative in adjective instruction. The study underscores that teaching methods incorporating problem-solving elements can facilitate a more profound understanding and better mastery of adjective usage among students. Within the broader context of education, this research provides empirical evidence that a pedagogical approach centering on problem-solving can bolster students' linguistic skills, specifically in mastering adjectives.

Keywords: Adjective mastery, Learning methods, Problem-based learning,

INTRODUCTION

English sentences constitute an amalgamation of diverse lexical components. Classified these lexical elements into six broad categories, among which one prominent type is 'word classes' (Moreo et al., 2021). Within this classification, adjectives occupy a noteworthy space. They serve the linguistic purpose of elucidating or providing descriptive nuances to a concept, entity, or a sentient being (Cameron et al., 2018). Utilizing adjectives empowers us to articulate the characteristics inherent in an individual or an object. Indeed, the depiction of any object's appearance is virtually unfeasible without the incorporation of adjectives, as pointed out by Leech (2014).

Adjectives have been defined in various ways. The word "adjective" itself was from the Latin *ad jacere*, meaning "throw to" or "add" (Panjaitan & Elga, 2020). In the grammatical sense, this means adding the characteristics of something, that is, qualifying it. Adjectives in the English dictionary employ "adj" to classify adjectives in a short word form. Rozakis (2013) and Tamara (2007) have proposed different definitions. Rozakis posits that adjectives typically address queries such as "which one?", "what nature of object are we referring to?", or "how

many are present?". Ordinarily, a standalone adjective is situated before the words it seeks to modify. Adjectives' role revolves around describing, elucidating, restraining, and modifying nouns or pronouns. Contrarily, Tamara characterizes an adjective as a grammatical component that signifies the quality or condition of an entity or object, commonly referred to as a noun. Within the grammatical taxonomy, it possesses only the comparative degree. Thus, it is inferred that an adjective is a constituent of word classes that succinctly elaborates on pronouns and nouns by incorporating their attributes, symbolizing their quality, and adjusting them to enhance their clarity or detail.

Within the context of junior high school, particularly in the seventh grade, educators shoulder the responsibility of imparting knowledge on adjectives. Students at this juncture frequently engage with adjectives in their endeavors to delineate objects, elucidate the roles of humans, fauna, or objects, and scribe descriptive prose. Nevertheless, the range of adjectives habitually employed by students at this educational stage is predominantly limited to elementary adjectival expressions, rather than extending to more complex adjectival phrases or clauses.

There exist disparities in the categorization of various forms of adjectives. Tamara embarked on a classification predicated on their morphological structure and their semantic traits (Tamara, 2007). Rozakis outlines five distinctive types of adjectives: common adjectives, proper adjectives, compound adjectives, article adjectives, and indefinite adjectives (Rozakis, 2013). Lastly, noteworthy parallels can be discerned between Thomson & Martinet (2015) and Djurayeva et al., (2020) classification methods regarding various types of adjectives, which include demonstrative adjectives, quantitative adjectives, interrogative adjectives, possessive adjectives, and qualitative adjectives.

Nevertheless, divergences exist between their classifications. Thomson and Martinet incorporate distributive adjectives into their categorization of adjectives (Thomson & Martinet, 2015). However, Rao does include numeric adjectives in his classification (Rao, 2016). Given the variations in categorizations articulated by these scholars, this research confines itself to four types of adjectives, given their utilization in the construction of simple descriptive prose. These encompass qualitative adjectives, quantitative adjectives, possessive adjectives, and numeric adjectives.

As an educator, imbuing adjective lessons with interest and enjoyment is crucial for students. A highly effective strategy for teaching adjectives involves the introduction of a more interactive learning methodology (Berliani & Katemba, 2021), such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL). PBL is an instructional methodology that actively engages students in the learning process through experiential problem-solving activities set in real-world contexts

(Nykyoprets et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2022).

In the realm of language acquisition, specifically in terms of mastering adjectives, PBL exhibits considerable influence (Lozano et al., 2020; Yaman, 2014). Acknowledged for its capacity to promote dynamic and interactive learning environments, PBL lays a foundation in problem-solving, thus cultivating students' abilities to think critically, collaborate, and construct solutions independently and creatively (Kolodner et al., 2003). PBL facilitates the understanding and application of adjectives within realistic and pertinent contexts since it frequently integrates case studies or projects reflective of actual scenarios (Kim & Kim, 2021). This problem-solving journey enables students to proficiently employ adjectives for detailed descriptions and precise expressions of ideas or situations.

Furthermore, PBL paves the way for profound learning and enhanced information retention. Studies reveal that active involvement in the learning process tends to boost understanding and prolong memory retention among students (Seknun et al., 2023). In the context of PBL, students' direct involvement in troubleshooting and solution-seeking processes provides them the chance to explore, manipulate, and apply adjective-related concepts. This experience invariably solidifies their mastery of the subject.

In the realm of adjective learning, Bolton (2021) have theoretically elucidated that numerous students' grapple with various challenges pertaining to adjectives, such as: Students struggle with distinguishing adjectives from adverbs; Misplacement of adjectives frequently occurs after nouns and often, the adjectives are arranged in an incorrect order. Similarly, adverbs are also commonly positioned wrongly; There is confusion among students in differentiating between similar adjectives, particularly those ending with -ing and those with -ed; Confusion often arises over the distinction between comparative and superlative forms. Additionally, students often neglect to use "than" or unnecessarily include "more."; Students often grapple with the demonstrative forms of adjectives; There are instances where students confuse possessive adjectives with pronouns and incorrectly pair them with plural nouns; Students randomly use adjectives like some/any, something/anything, someone/anyone.

In association with the aforementioned difficulties related to adjectives, further issues concerning adjectives have been identified in academic settings. Based on preliminary research conducted at a public junior high school in West Lampung, through interviewing teachers, it was discovered that students face numerous obstacles in vocabulary learning, specifically adjectives. English is perceived by students as a challenging subject. Teachers infer that the fundamental issue is students' limited vocabulary (deficiency in vocabulary). This limitation can be attributed to a general lack of motivation among students in memorizing

the meanings of new vocabulary and categorizing new words into word classes.

The instructor noted a prevalent reluctance among many students to engage in reading or employ a dictionary for discovering new vocabulary. Moreover, differentiating verbs, nouns, and adjectives poses a significant challenge due to the multiplicity of meanings certain English words carry in Indonesian. Perpetuating the usage of paper-based learning could potentially lead to diminished student involvement and an onset of monotony. Therefore, the objective of this study is to bridge existing knowledge gaps by investigating the efficacy of PBL in adjective instruction at the junior high school level. The findings of this study hold the potential to equip educators with meaningful insights for the development and execution of more effective instructional strategies to enhance students' proficiency in adjectives.

Research on the mastery of adjectives has been conducted previously by various researchers. For instance, Davies et al., (2022) demonstrated the importance of adjectives in enriching vocabulary and developing conceptual understanding. Additionally, research on students' mastery of adjectives in writing descriptive texts has shown satisfactory results (Siregar & Dongoran, 2020). The use of learning media has also had a positive impact on the mastery of adjectives, such as the use of Wordwall (Hartatiningsih, 2022), the Memrise application (Lubis et al., 2023), and character figure media to introduce adjectives in English language learning for children. These have been shown to increase student interest and motivation (Sholihah et al., 2021). Other studies have emphasized the importance of employing effective teaching methods, such as the outdoor experience method (Gazali, 2022), and the systemic approach has proven effective for enhancing students' mastery of adjectives (Akil, 2018). On the whole, the research underscores the need for a focus on adjective mastery in implementing effective learning to support student development. However, in the existing research, no study has been found that utilizes a problem-based learning model for students' adjective mastery in learning. Therefore, the aim of this research is to determine the effectiveness of problem-based learning on students' mastery of adjectives.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a quantitative research approach with a quasi-experimental method. The design adopted was the pre-test post-test control group design. The control group, along with an experimental class, received instruction using problem-based learning, while the control class received no specific treatment.

Participants

The research population comprised all first-semester seventh-grade students at a public middle school in West Lampung, with a total of 140 students distributed across five classes. The sample group was chosen from two classes, VII-1 and VII-5, totaling 60 students. The selection was made cluster random sampling, a technique employed with the intent to draw samples randomly, without consideration of each individual's ability (Firmansyah, 2022).

Instrument

The instrument used to collect research data was an essay test comprising 20 questions. The test was used to gather data on student mastery of adjectives through the application of problem-based learning. Prior to the administration of the test, validity and reliability tests were performed on the instrument to be used.

Data Collection

IBM SPSS 25 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 25) was used for data analysis, including normality and homogeneity testing, hypothesis testing, and testing of normalized gains.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Result of Experimental and Control Class

The present investigation utilizes two groups for sampling purposes. To begin with, class VII-5 serves as the experimental group, where problem-based learning is implemented thrice for the acquisition of adjective mastery. On the contrary, class VII-1 acts as the control group. In this group, no such treatment is applied; instead, PowerPoint presentations are utilized to deliver lessons on adjectives through descriptive texts. Despite the different methods of instruction, both groups are exposed to identical materials, tasks, and learning activities. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable divergence in the pre-test and post-test scores across these two groups. The detailed outcomes from each group are systematically outlined in the subsequent table:

Table 1. The Score of Pre-test and Post-test

Class	N	Score of Pre-test			Score of Post-test		
		Mean	Max	Min	Mean	Max	Min
Experimental	30	48,77	66.9	33.3	78,88	100	62
Control	30	47,83	61	32.1	72,84	92.3	55.3

The findings suggest that the participants initially demonstrated relatively limited proficiency in adjectives, with average pre-test scores of 48.77 for the experimental group and 47.83 for the control group. Given the marginal differences between the mean scores of the two cohorts, it can be inferred that they possessed a comparable level of understanding in the domain of adjectives. Upon the application of the respective instructional methods, a noticeable improvement was evident. This advancement in the students' command of adjectives is reflected in the average post-test scores. The experimental group recorded an average post-test score of 78.88, whereas the control group yielded an average score of 72.84 in the same assessment.

The Result of Validity and Realibility Test

The quality of the test was assessed by evaluating both its content and construct validity. The former was determined through a review by the class's English teacher, Ms. Cahyani Sutriyani, S.Pd., M.Pd., who served as the validator. Upon evaluation, she concluded that the research instrument was valid and required no suggestions for enhancement.

The construct validity of the test was examined using IBM SPSS 25. This analysis was based on preliminary trials conducted on a separate group of 28 students from class VIII-1, with a set significance level of 0.05. The validity of the test items was ascertained by contrasting the observed r-value with a benchmark r-value of 0.388. The research instrument consisted of 15 items for each test, and an item was considered valid if its r-value surpassed the r-table value. Consequently, out of the 20 items examined, five were deemed invalid and therefore excluded from the pre-test (items 1, 5, 11, 17, and 18), and four from the post-test (items 10, 12, 16, and 20).

Once the validity of the test was established, a reliability analysis was conducted to ensure the instrument's consistency and stability. The reliability of the pre-test and post-test were assessed using IBM SPSS 25, employing Cronbach's Alpha formula. The findings of this analysis are presented in the ensuing table:

Table 2. The Reliability of Pre-test and Post-test

The tests	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Pre-test	.935	15
Post-test	.817	16

Interpreting the data from the table, it's clear that the items used in both the pre-test and post-test are reliable. This conclusion is drawn from the reliability test results obtained rcount were > rtable, namely $0.935 > 0.388$ for the pre-test and $0.817 > 0.388$ for the post-test. Hence, the items contained in the research instrument fulfill the feasibility criteria for usage and are suitable for testing the two sample groups chosen for this study.

Fulfillment of the Assumption

Following the execution of pre-tests, the interventional treatment, and post-tests, the subsequent step involved calculating the post-test outcomes for both classes and conducting tests for normality and homogeneity, ensuring that these assumptions were met. The mastery of adjectives by the students was indicated through the average post-test scores from both classes. The experimental class scored an average of 78.88, while the control class averaged at 72.84. To verify if the gathered data fulfilled the requirements, tests for normality and homogeneity were performed. In computing the normality test, the Kormogolov-Smirnov method was used on SPSS 25. This indicated that both pre-test and post-test data from the classes had a significance value greater than 0.05, demonstrating that the data followed a normal distribution. For the homogeneity test, Levene's method was applied with the aid of SPSS 25. The results showed that the research data were homogeneous; the data, based on the means of both classes, had a significant value exceeding 0.05, specifically 0.281. The findings from the conducted tests of normality and homogeneity are presented in the subsequent table:

Table 3. The Normality of Pre-test and Post-test

Tests of Normality		
Class	Sig.	Inference
Pre-test Experimental Class	.077	Normal
Post-test Experimental Class	.123	Normal
Pre-test Control Class	.067	Normal
Post-test Control Class	.122	Normal

Table 4. The Homogeneity of Pre-test and Post-test

Test of Homogeneity of Variance				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	1.185	2	59	.281

Result of a Hypothetical Test

To distinguish potential differences in student results regarding adjective mastery between the experimental class, which received intervention through the application of problem-based learning, and the control class, which did not receive the intervention, the data were analyzed with the help of IBM SPSS 25. With a level of significance (2-tailed) of 0.05, then the hypothesis test data is presented as follows:

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis of the Test			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	2.300	58	.031

The hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t-test. The results revealed a significance level of 0.031 with homogeneous variance in the hypothesis testing. Consequently, we accepted the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and rejected the null hypothesis (H_0) since $0.031 < 0.05$, with the provision that the significance value is less than alpha (α) = 0.05. This indicates that the use of problem-based learning has a real influence on students' mastery of adjectives.

Normalized Gain (N-Gain) Test

Given the significant difference in the average post-test results of both classes based on the preceding t-test analysis, an N-Gain test was conducted. The IBM SPSS 25 program was utilized to compute the N-Gain test, thereby explaining the effectiveness of using problem-based learning given previously in the experimental class. The outcomes of the N-Gain test calculations are shown in the subsequent table:

Table 6. Normalized Gain Test Results

Class	N-Gain Score	Category	N-Gain Percentage (%)	Interpretation
Experimental	0,564	Medium	56%	Effective enough
Control	0,482	Medium	48%	Less effective

Within the experimental class, the N-Gain test yielded a score of 0.564, equivalent to 56%. Meanwhile, the control class attained an N-Gain score of 0.482, or 48%. According to the N-Gain score distribution category, both classes with scores of 0.564 and 0.482 fall within the moderate range. Furthermore, interpreting the effectiveness of the N-Gain score places the 56% score from the experimental class in the "sufficiently effective" bracket, while the 48% score from the control class is deemed as "less effective".

Discussion

This study was carried out through a series of procedural steps. Initially, preliminary research was undertaken, followed by the submission of a request to the school for discussions with the English teacher. This led to the execution of content and construct validity tests. Subsequently, pre-tests were administered to two different classes. Each class then received adjective lessons three times. The experimental class was exposed to adjective teaching through problem-based learning, whereas the control class was taught using a power point presentation, without the application of problem-based learning. In the experimental class, students were segmented into various groups and were instructed to engage with, learn from, and complete a series of quizzes over a span of 40 minutes. Following the adjective instruction, both classes were subject to a post-test.

In order to validate these methods, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted, leading to the attainment of normal and homogeneous data. Once these criteria were fulfilled, the next procedure encompassed hypothesis testing using an independent sample t-test, with the aim to determine the effectiveness of problem-based learning on adjectives. The frequency table indicated a significance value of 0.031, thereby accepting the hypothesis (H_a), confirming the effectiveness of problem-based learning on students' mastery of adjectives. The final procedural step involved the execution of an N-Gain test, subsequent to validating its effectiveness, to gauge the level of efficacy of problem-based learning. The result highlighted that problem-based learning is an effective tool in enhancing students' mastery of adjectives, a finding corroborated by several previous studies.

Research congruent with this study's findings demonstrates that problem-based learning effectively enhances students' mastery of adjectives. For instance, Asyhari & Sifa'i (2021) explored how problem-based learning models can indeed improve students' academic achievements, inclusive of their problem-solving abilities. This underpins the assertion that problem-based learning can facilitate the enhancement of students' adjective mastery. Additionally, the research conducted by Hariadi (2015) bolsters the contention that problem-based learning significantly boosts students' command of adjectives. This study probed into the influence of varying instructional strategies on student performance. The results manifested that problem-based learning could indeed amplify students' proficiency in handling adjectives.

The implementation of problem-based learning elicited several impacts. Nevertheless, the research faced some limitations. For instance, the methodology for data collection was solely reliant on students' test scores. Additionally, the treatment was administered only three

times across four meetings, based on the permissions granted by the school in which the research was conducted. The final limitation lay in the inability to control elements beyond the researcher's reach, including analyzing the level of student engagement during the study of adjectives. However, generally, the students were compliant with instructions, thus ensuring a smooth teaching and learning process.

CONCLUSION

The data analysis clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of problem-based learning in improving students' mastery of adjectives. This effectiveness is evident in the independent sample t-test table, where the significance level (2-tailed) for assuming the same variance is 0.031, a value lower than the threshold of 0.05. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. In addition, the results of the normalized gain test demonstrate varied effectiveness. The control class achieved an N-Gain score of 0.482 (48%), which interprets to a less effective result. However, the experimental class achieved an N-Gain score of 0.564 (56%), which translates to an adequately effective result. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the implementation of problem-based learning can serve as a potent method to foster adjective mastery among seventh-grade students at SMPN. This approach not only can be readily applied, but also demonstrates substantial effectiveness.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand this study by incorporating additional research instruments, such as questionnaires, to strengthen the substantiation of their findings. Furthermore, analogous studies could extend to other areas of language acquisition such as writing, listening, reading, or speaking skills, and to components such as vocabulary and grammar. This diversification can significantly contribute to the enhancement of English language teaching methodologies.

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