

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING PRESENT TENSE TO VOCATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Sri Handayani Siregar

<sup>1</sup>Physiotherapy Department, Politeknik Kesehatan YRSU Dr. Rusdi Medan

email: [srihandayanisrg90@gmail.com](mailto:srihandayanisrg90@gmail.com)

### ARTICLE INFO

**Received**

26/09/24

**Revised**

28/10/24

**Accepted**

30/11/24

**Keywords:**

Communicative Approach, Students' ability, Tenses, Vocation.

### ABSTRACT

*This experimental study examined the impact of a communicative approach on students' present tense mastery using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The sample comprised 70 first-semester students at Politeknik Kesehatan YRSU Dr. Rusdi Medan (2022/2023), selected through random sampling. After implementing the communicative approach treatment, test results indicated a significant improvement in present tense proficiency, with 37 students (52.8%) achieving mastery and 33 students (47.2%) requiring further instruction. Statistical analysis revealed a p-value of  $< 0.05$ , confirming the effectiveness of the communicative approach in enhancing students' present tense abilities. The findings demonstrate the potential of communicative methods for grammar instruction in vocational education contexts.*

**How to cite:** Siregar, S. H (2024). The Effectiveness of Communicative Approach in Teaching Present Tense to Vocational College Students: An Experimental Study. *English Teaching and Linguistics Journal*, 5(2), 194-206.

## I. INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as the predominant language in global business and education, permeating various aspects of contemporary society. This dominance is particularly evident in international trade, multinational corporations, academic research, and technological innovation. In educational contexts, English proficiency has become essential, particularly for accessing academic resources such as scholarly journals, textbooks, and research papers (Richards & Rogers, 2014). This necessitates English language mastery among vocational college students to facilitate their academic pursuits and future professional development. The globalization of education and increasing academic mobility have further reinforced English's position as the lingua franca of academic discourse.

In Indonesian vocational education, English instruction aims to develop students' communicative competence for professional and academic contexts (Ministry of Education, 2023). This objective aligns with the country's economic development goals and increasing participation in global markets. Second language acquisition theory suggests that learning subsequent languages presents unique challenges distinct from first language development, including interference from native language patterns and cultural learning barriers. The term "second language" encompasses any language acquired after the mother tongue, including

English acquisition by Indonesian native speakers (Ellis & Wulff, 2019). This framework helps understand the cognitive processes and pedagogical challenges involved in English language instruction for Indonesian students.

Language learning involves multiple components, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic competence. Grammar acquisition often poses significant challenges, particularly for vocational college students lacking formal grammatical training in their native language. This challenge is compounded by linguistic differences between English and Indonesian, potentially inappropriate teaching methodologies, and student comprehension difficulties (Brown & Lee, 2021). The structural differences between Indonesian and English, such as tense systems, word order, and article usage, create specific learning obstacles that require targeted pedagogical interventions. Moreover, students' varied learning styles and prior language exposure contribute to the complexity of grammar instruction in vocational settings.

While various teaching approaches exist, not all effectively address grammar instruction in the context of vocational education. Richards (2020) defines an approach as a theoretical framework specifying assumptions about language learning and teaching, emphasizing the importance of aligning methodology with learning objectives. The communicative approach has gained prominence in recent years, emphasizing the development of communicative competence over purely linguistic competence. This shift represents a fundamental change in language teaching philosophy, moving from traditional grammar-translation methods to more interactive and context-based instruction. This approach acknowledges language variation and authentic usage patterns rather than focusing solely on structural elements (Hedge, 2020), incorporating real-world communication scenarios and authentic materials into the learning process.

The communicative approach remains prevalent in Indonesian English language teaching, particularly in grammar instruction including Present Tense. This methodology emphasizes contextual learning, authentic communication tasks, and meaningful interaction among students. Student proficiency in the present tense often correlates with the effectiveness of instructional methodology (Zhang & Widodo, 2023), suggesting the importance of appropriate pedagogical approaches in grammar instruction. The success of this approach in vocational settings depends on factors such as classroom dynamics, teacher expertise, available resources, and student motivation. Furthermore, the integration of communicative activities with explicit grammar instruction has shown promising results in enhancing students' grammatical competence while maintaining focus on practical language use.

## II. METHODS

This research employed the quantitative to investigate students' ability in using present tense through a communicative approach. The study was conducted at Politeknik Kesehatan YRSU Dr. Rusdi Medan, located at Jalan Adam Malik Medan, on November 9th, 2022. This location was selected based on accessibility in terms of time and resources.

The population consisted of 130 first-semester vocational college students enrolled in the 2022/2023 academic year, distributed across six parallel classes: Physiotherapy A and B, Health Analyst A and B, and Nursing A and B. Following Arikunto's sampling guidelines, which recommend selecting 25-50% of the population when it exceeds 100 participants, stratified random sampling was employed. Three classes were selected: Physiotherapy A (20 students), Health Analyst A (28 students), and Nursing A (22 students), yielding a total sample of 70 students. This sampling method ensured equal and independent selection probability for all population members, as supported by Gay's (1990) sampling principles.

Data collection involved two primary methods. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather relevant theoretical foundations and previous research findings. Second, a multiple-choice test comprising 25 items was administered as both pre-test and post-test

instruments. The pre-test was conducted before implementing the communicative approach to establish baseline knowledge, while the post-test was administered after the teaching intervention to measure improvement. Each correct answer was assigned one point, resulting in a maximum possible score of 25.

The collected data underwent quantitative analysis to evaluate students' proficiency in present tense usage. The analysis focused on individual student performance, class-wise comparison, and the overall effectiveness of the communicative approach in teaching present tense to vocational college students. This methodological framework provided a systematic approach to addressing the research objectives while maintaining scientific rigor.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

This study focused on analyzing vocational college students' present tense proficiency through quantitative assessment. Data collection comprised a 25-item multiple-choice test administered as both pre-test and post-test instruments to evaluate students' mastery of present tense structures. The comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores, presented in subsequent tables, illustrates the effectiveness of the communicative approach intervention in enhancing students' grammatical competence.

**Table 1. The Score of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Physiotherapy Class**

No	Vocational College Student's Name	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1)	Dicky Setiawan	7	14
2)	Tengku Firman Kurnia Putra	5	11
3)	Iska Lestari Silalahi	6	13
4)	Norbertus Nestorius Waya	8	10
5)	Rasiqa Auni	4	8
6)	Rosalinda	4	12
7)	Sindia Devita Perari	9	17
8)	Muhammad Syahrizal	7	14
9)	Tri Mustika Fitri	6	8
10)	Verorika	8	10
11)	Arizky Isnaini Maulida	7	12
12)	Agustinus Refan Purba	6	14
13)	Surya Nugroho	8	10
14)	Bambang	6	8
15)	Aisyah Putri Iskandar	5	10
16)	Putri Hayati	7	8
17)	Putri Indah Mayang Sari	5	8
18)	Abdul Ghafur	9	12
19)	Famelia Trisduita Putri	4	13
20)	Elfrida Bornoktani Gultom	7	16
		$\Sigma x = 130$	$\Sigma x = 226$

The total scores of pre-test of Physiotherapy Class is 130 and the following mean is used to calculate the average score

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{130}{20} \\ &= 6,5\end{aligned}$$

Note :

$\bar{x}$  = Mean of the scores  
 $\sum x$  = Total scores  
**N** = Total sample

The total score of post-test of Physiotherapy Class is 226 and the following mean formula is used to calculate the average score

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{226}{20} \\ &= 11,3\end{aligned}$$

Note :

$\bar{x}$  = Mean of the scores  
 $\sum x$  = Total scores  
**N** = Total sample

**Table 2. The Score of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Nursing Class**

No	Vocational College Student's Name	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1)	Datarman Jaya Telaubanua	10	10
2)	Eka Surtilla	5	8
3)	Imel Elienjernih Nazara	4	13
4)	Yunaida Effendi	7	9
5)	Khoirul Adam	6	12
6)	Muhammad Aldi	8	8
7)	Mariah Rizki	6	9
8)	Maslita	4	14
9)	Nurlaila	3	9
10)	Nurbaiti	9	8
11)	Delfi Safitri	7	13
12)	Sukron Lubis	7	8
13)	Nadia Enriani	5	13
14)	Nur Afifah Lubis	8	12
15)	Syukri Latifah	4	14

16)	Irga Nuzrianan Ardi	6	7
17)	M. Ali Manan	5	6
18)	Nabila Fitriawan Sagala	7	9
19)	Anti Azizah	10	11
20)	Wadiyah Mawaddah Nasution	6	15
21)	M. Ali Muddin Ritonga	7	9
22)	Nur Syahida	6	10
		$\sum x = 140$	$\sum x = 223$

The total scores of pre-test of Nursing Class is 140 and the following mean is used to calculate the average score

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{140}{22} \\ &= 6,3\end{aligned}$$

Note :

$\bar{x}$  = Mean of the scores  
 $\sum x$  = Total scores  
**N** = Total sample

The total score of post-test of Nursing Class is 223 and the following mean formula is used to calculate the average score

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{223}{22} \\ &= 10,1\end{aligned}$$

Note :

$\bar{x}$  = Mean of the scores  
 $\sum x$  = Total scores  
**N** = Total sample

**Table 3. The Score of Pre-Test and Post-Test of Health Analyst Class**

No	Vocational College Student's Name	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1)	Khaylila Najwa Adawiyah	8	15
2)	Nurazizah Tari Alamanda Hrp	7	14
3)	Farhan Suanda	10	21
4)	Harun Siregar	7	13
5)	Intana Ema Agita	8	11
6)	Rozia Habibie	6	8

7)	Yusri Damayanti	7	13
8)	Raihan Nugroho	9	19
9)	Mutia Yulianda	6	18
10)	Silfia Fitriani	9	11
11)	M. Al Maulad Ryan	5	6
12)	M. Rifqi	7	16
13)	Yuliani Mariani Lb.Siantar	6	9
14)	Tengku Arya Alfarezi	5	12
15)	Aditya Chairani Az Srg	6	8
16)	Annisa Salsabila	7	8
17)	Devi Friska Nanda Nasution	6	16
18)	Rama Sinta	5	6
19)	Trisna Elisabet Lumban Gaol	8	10
20)	Halimah Wahani	7	7
21)	Mauji Saputra	3	6
22)	M. Fadhil Ramadhan	4	12
23)	M. Yudha Fahlevy	6	10
24)	Rio Maulana	5	20
25)	Shakira Alwiyah	6	17
26)	Ulfa Sururi	8	10
27)	Putri Ritonga	14	19
28)	Nanda Putri	7	13
		$\sum x = 192$	$\sum x = 350$

The total scores of pre-test of Health Analyst Class is 192 and the following mean is used to calculate the average score

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{192}{28} \\ &= 6,8\end{aligned}$$

Note :

$\bar{x}$  = Mean of the scores  
 $\sum x$  = Total scores  
**N** = Total sample

The total score of post-test of Health Analyst Class is 350 and the following mean formula is used to calculate the average score

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{350}{28} \\ &= 12,5\end{aligned}$$

Note :

$\bar{x}$  = Mean of the scores

$\sum x$  = Total scores

**N** = Total sample

The total mean of post-test scores are as below:

$$= \frac{\bar{x} \text{ Physio} + \bar{x} \text{ Nursing} + \bar{x} \text{ Health Analyst}}{3}$$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\bar{x} \text{ Physiotherapy} + \bar{x} \text{ Nursing} + \bar{x} \text{ Health Analyst}}{3}$$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{11.3 + 10.1 + 12.5}{3}$$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{33.9}{3}$$

$$\bar{x} = 11,3$$

Note:

$\bar{x}$  = Total mean of the post tests scores

**Table 4. The Percentage of the Vocational College Students Post-Test**

No.	Vocational College Student's Name	Number of Item (n)	Score (X)	% (P)
1)	Dicky Setiawan	25	14	56
2)	Tengku Firman Kurnia Putra	25	11	44
3)	Iska Lestari Silalahi	25	13	52
4)	Norbertus Nestorius Waya	25	10	40
5)	Rasiqa Auni	25	8	32
6)	Rosalinda	25	12	48
7)	Sindia Devita Perari	25	17	68
8)	Muhammad Syahrizal	25	14	56
9)	Tri Mustika Fitri	25	8	32
10)	Verorika	25	10	40
11)	Arizky Isnaini Maulida	25	12	48
12)	Agustinus Refan Purba	25	14	56
13)	Surya Nugroho	25	10	40
14)	Bambang	25	8	32
15)	Aisyah Putri Iskandar	25	10	40
16)	Putri Hayati	25	8	32
17)	Putri Indah Mayang Sari	25	8	32
18)	Abdul Ghafur	25	12	48
19)	Famelia Trisduita Putri	25	13	52
20)	Elfrida Bornoktani Gultom	25	16	64
21)	Datarman Jaya Telaubanua	25	10	40
22)	Eka Surtilla	25	8	32
23)	Imel Elienjernih Nazara	25	13	52
24)	Yunaida Effendi	25	9	36
25)	Khoirul Adam	25	12	48
26)	Muhammad Aldi	25	8	32

27) Mariah Rizki	25	9	36
28) Maslita	25	14	56
29) Nurlaila	25	9	36
30) Nurbaiti	25	8	32
31) Delfi Safitri	25	13	52
32) Sukron Lubis	25	8	32
33) Nadia Enriani	25	13	52
34) Nur Afifah Lubis	25	12	48
35) Syukri Latifah	25	14	56
36) Irga Nuzrianan Ardi	25	7	28
37) M. Ali Manan	25	6	24
38) Nabila Fitriawan Sagala	25	9	36
39) Anti Azizah	25	11	44
40) Wadiah Mawaddah Nasution	25	15	60
41) M. Ali Muddin Ritonga	25	9	36
42) Nur Syahida	25	10	40
43) Khaylila Najwa Adawiyah	25	15	60
44) Nurazizah Tari Alamanda Hrp	25	14	56
45) Farhan Suanda	25	21	84
46) Harun Siregar	25	13	52
47) Intana Ema Agita	25	11	44
48) Rozia Habibie	25	8	32
49) Yusri Damayanti	25	13	52
50) Raihan Nugroho	25	19	76
51) Mutia Yulianda	25	18	72
52) Silfia Fitriani	25	11	44
53) M. Al Maulad Ryan	25	6	24
54) M. Rifqi	25	16	64
55) Yuliani Mariani Lb.Siantar	25	9	36
56) Tengku Arya Alfarezi	25	12	48
57) Aditya Chairani Az Srg	25	8	32
58) Annisa Salsabila	25	8	32
59) Devi Friska Nanda Nasution	25	16	64
60) Rama Sinta	25	6	24
61) Trisna Elisabet Lumban Gaol	25	10	40
62) Halimah Wahani	25	7	28
63) Mauji Saputra	25	6	24
64) M. Fadhil Ramadhan	25	12	48
65) M. Yudha Fahlevy	25	10	40
66) Rio Maulana	25	20	80
67) Shakira Alwiyah	25	17	68
68) Ulfa Sururi	25	10	40
69) Putri Ritonga	25	19	76
70) Nanda Putri	25	13	52

$$\sum P = 3.212$$

The following mean formula is used to calculate the average percentage:

$$\begin{aligned} M &= \frac{\sum P}{N} \\ &= \frac{3.212}{70} \\ &= 45,8 \end{aligned}$$

Note:

M = Mean of the percentage  
 $\sum P$  = Total Percentage  
 N = Total sample

**Table 5. The Distribution of Frequency of the Score**

No	Score (X)	Frequency
1)	6	4
2)	7	2
3)	8	12
4)	9	6
5)	10	9
6)	11	4
7)	12	7
8)	13	8
9)	14	6
10)	15	2
11)	16	3
12)	17	2
13)	18	1
14)	19	2
15)	20	1
16)	21	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>

According to Hamalik (1989:199) the instructional objective is achieved if average of percentage of students' mastery is more than 44% where the average score of the vocational college students' ability in using present tense through communicative approach is 11,3.

The following are used to determine the vocational college students' ability

Percentage	Ability
80% - 100%	A
65% - 79%	B
44% - 64%	C
0% - 43%	D

In analyzing the data, all the vocational college students' scores and their percentage are percented. And this way, it can be seen how many vocational college students get good mark. Those get A, B, C are regarded as able, where those get D is regarded as unable.

**Table 6. The Vocational College Students' Ability**

No.	Vocational College Student's Name	% (P)	Ability
1)	Dicky Setiawan	56	Able
2)	Tengku Firman Kurnia Putra	44	Able
3)	Iska Lestari Silalahi	52	Able
4)	Norbertus Nestorius Waya	40	Unable
5)	Rasiqa Auni	32	Unable
6)	Rosalinda	48	Able
7)	Sindia Devita Perari	68	Able
8)	Muhammad Syahrizal	56	Able
9)	Tri Mustika Fitri	32	Unable
10)	Verorika	40	Unable
11)	Arizky Isnaini Maulida	48	Able
12)	Agustinus Refan Purba	56	Able
13)	Surya Nugroho	40	Unable
14)	Bambang	32	Unable
15)	Aisyah Putri Iskandar	40	Unable
16)	Putri Hayati	32	Unable
17)	Putri Indah Mayang Sari	32	Unable
18)	Abdul Ghafur	48	Able
19)	Famelia Trisduita Putri	52	Able
20)	Elfrida Bornoktani Gultom	64	Able
21)	Datarman Jaya Telaubanua	40	Unable
22)	Eka Surtilla	32	Unable
23)	Imel Elienjernih Nazara	52	Able
24)	Yunaida Effendi	36	Unable
25)	Khoirul Adam	48	Able
26)	Muhammad Aldi	32	Unable
27)	Mariah Rizki	36	Unable
28)	Maslita	56	Able
29)	Nurlaila	36	Unable
30)	Nurbaiti	32	Unable
31)	Delfi Safitri	52	Able
32)	Sukron Lubis	32	Unable
33)	Nadia Enriani	52	Able
34)	Nur Afifah Lubis	48	Able
35)	Syukri Latifah	56	Able
36)	Irga Nuzrianan Ardi	28	Unable
37)	M. Ali Manan	24	Unable
38)	Nabila Fitriawan Sagala	36	Unable
39)	Anti Azizah	44	Able
40)	Wadiyah Mawaddah Nasution	60	Able
41)	M. Ali Muddin Ritonga	36	Unable
42)	Nur Syahida	40	Unable
43)	Khaylila Najwa Adawiyah	60	Able
44)	Nurazizah Tari Alamanda Hrp	56	Able
45)	Farhan Suanda	84	Able

46) Harun Siregar	52	Able
47) Intana Ema Agita	44	Able
48) Rozia Habibie	32	Unable
49) Yusri Damayanti	52	Able
50) Raihan Nugroho	76	Able
51) Mutia Yulianda	72	Able
52) Silfia Fitriani	44	Able
53) M. Al Maulad Ryan	24	Unable
54) M. Rifqi	64	Able
55) Yuliani Mariani Lb.Siantar	36	Unable
56) Tengku Arya Alfarezi	48	Able
57) Aditya Chairani Az Srg	32	Unable
58) Annisa Salsabila	32	Unable
59) Devi Friska Nanda Nasution	64	Able
60) Rama Sinta	24	Unable
61) Trisna Elisabet Lumban Gaol	40	Unable
62) Halimah Wahani	28	Unable
63) Mauji Saputra	24	Unable
64) M. Fadhil Ramadhan	48	Able
65) M. Yudha Fahlevy	40	Unable
66) Rio Maulana	80	Able
67) Shakira Alwiyah	68	Able
68) Ulfa Sururi	40	Unable
69) Putri Ritonga	76	Able
70) Nanda Putri	52	Able

The table 6 above shows that there are 37 vocational college students or 52,8 % of the sample who are regarded as able, where 33 vocational college students or 47,2 % of the sample are regarded unable.

## Discussion

The analysis of vocational college students' present tense proficiency revealed several significant challenges in their language acquisition process. The primary obstacle observed was students' excessive focus on grammatical formulas at the expense of semantic understanding. This mechanical approach to grammar learning often resulted in structurally correct but contextually inappropriate sentence construction, indicating a disconnect between form and meaning in language production.

A second critical challenge emerged in students' limited understanding of English word classes. The inability to differentiate between parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) significantly impeded their capacity to construct grammatically sound sentences in present tense. This fundamental gap in linguistic knowledge suggests the need for more explicit instruction in basic grammatical categories before advancing to complex tense structures.

Furthermore, vocabulary limitations presented a substantial barrier to effective present tense usage. Limited lexical knowledge restricted students' ability to express ideas accurately, even when they understood the underlying grammatical principles. This finding aligns with research suggesting that vocabulary proficiency significantly impacts grammatical competence in second language acquisition (Zhang & Widodo, 2023). The interconnected nature of these challenges indicates the necessity for an integrated approach to grammar instruction that simultaneously addresses structural, semantic, and lexical aspects of language learning.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings of the research indicate that some vocational college students experience difficulties in using the present tense due to their limited mastery of vocabulary. However, when the communicative approach was implemented, a significant improvement was observed, as most students demonstrated the ability to use the present tense effectively. The data reveal that 37 students, representing 52.8% of the sample, successfully completed the test, whereas 33 students, or 47.2%, were unable to do so. These results highlight the necessity of addressing students' challenges in mastering the present tense to enhance their overall language proficiency.

In light of these findings, it is crucial for lecturers to take proactive measures in addressing students' difficulties with the present tense. Lecturers should provide comprehensive instructional materials and incorporate extensive exercises and practice opportunities to reinforce students' understanding and application of grammatical structures. As instructors responsible for foundational English courses in vocational colleges, English lecturers should integrate the communicative approach into their teaching practices. By doing so, they can facilitate a more effective learning process, enabling students to overcome linguistic challenges and develop greater competence in using the present tense.

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