

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

English, an international language, is a compulsory subject taught in every country's school which is taught from Elementary School up to University. It is a universally accepted language with a widely important role. It means that most of countries use English as a means of communications, both spoken and written, in their relationship with other countries. At any conference held by international and regional organizations, English is used as a medium of spoken communications. And it also happens in Indonesia although English is the first foreign language in our country.

Because of that, every school expects their students to be able to communicate in English both spoken and written. But in fact, many studies on the teaching of English, Rachman (2002) and Kurniawan (2004) revealed that around 64% students of junior high school are unable to communicate in written and spoken English form fluently because they often have trouble with the language itself. And to overcome that problem, the students should master the four language skills

of English, they are speaking, reading, writing and listening. But before they master those language skills the students should understand about the component of English too. One of them is structure because structure is one of the important parts of successful learning English.

It is proved by Richard and Rogers (1986: 35) who state that in English, structure becomes important since structure is viewed as the heart of the skill in English. It means that structure becomes an important element to be success in learning English. The idea of the importance of structure is also stated by Allsop (1989: 5) that you (learners) can't use a foreign language without learning the rule of its structure. The same way is that you can't drive a car without learning the traffic code. From those statements, we know that how important English pattern for the students to be learnt and mastered.

In addition, Fries (1968: 78) in Rika (2003: 18) also suggest that it is quite necessary for the learners to be able to arrange their ideas based on the structure they have known as the reference. It implies that the lack of students' knowledge on English structure will be reflected by the students' inability in producing English sentences correctly. In addition to this, it is implied that when the students understand the structure, they will be able to construct new utterances. In other words it can be said that the abilities for the learners to understand, to ask and answer, to take part in conversation, and to write are based on the language component that the students have learnt before.

It is also realized by the writer that structure becomes an important part of mastering English in Junior High School. It is proved by the experience of the researcher when she did her field practice. Most of the students in Junior High School still faced the problem in mastering the tense, especially simple past tense. For examples when they are asked to answer this question “*where did you go yesterday?*”, they answered “*I go to school yesterday*” or when they are asked to write their past holiday, they have problem with the verbs too. It may be caused by students’ knowledge of verbs. They find the difficulties in changing the verb form especially in irregular verb. Meanwhile, irregular verb often used in simple past tense. So it makes they cannot produce English sentence correctly since they do not understand about the verbs in simple past tense. So it is reasonable and understandable that mastering simple past tense is necessary for students to understand or to master English.

As a candidate of English teacher, we must realize that there are at list upper students and lower students in every school. How is the way to make lower students have same capability with upper students? Since we know that in classroom, teacher can not give so much attention to the every students. So it becomes the greatest duty for the teacher to find out the appropriate ways to help the lower students better.

There are so many ways that can be used to finish this problem; one of them is by using group work. Group work provides a context in which individuals help each other; it is a method of helping groups as well as helping individuals; and it can

enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, and organizational and community problems (Brown 1992: 8). It is also asserted by Sibert's statement (1976:86) that group work is a process in which members working cooperatively rather than individually, formulate, and work toward common objectives under the guidance of one or more leaders. It is also found that the group work technique makes the students interact one another to solve the problem assigned although the individual brings his/her own personality, the students have a single purpose in group in pursuit of which they need each other's help. And the time which is use in group work will be efficient because students can help one another. So, it means that there is a helping from the upper students to lower students in overcoming their problem during teaching and learning process.

In addition, it is also proved by Nuttals' statement (1987: 162) who says that by dividing the class into groups, the interaction achieves better result than the individual study. And by using this way the students can share their knowledge and they can help each other in how to apply the simple past tense.

But, Harmer (1991: 248) has different opinion which supports that individual study is a good idea precisely because students can relax from outside pressure (provided there is no time limit or competitive element) and because they can rely on themselves rather than on the other people. It means the students can enjoy their work given without the limited time and they can do their assignment freely.

Considering those reasons, the researcher is interested in comparing group work and individual study to see whether any significant difference of the result between them. Therefore the researcher titled the research “ A Comparative Study Between Students’ Achievement in Learning Simple Past Tense Taught Through Group Work and Taught Through Individual Study At The Second Year of SMPN 23 Bandar Lampung”

1.2 Formulation of The Problem

Based on the background mentioned above, the researcher would like to focus on the following question:

Is there any significant difference of students’ achievement in learning simple past tense between those who are taught through group work and those who are taught through individual study?

1.3 Objective of The research

The objective of this research is:

To find out whether there is significant difference of students’ achievement in learning simple past tense between those who are taught through group work and those who are taught through individual study.

1.4 Use of The Research

The Uses of this research are:

1. Theoretically, to see whether the result of this research is relevant or not to the previous theory.
2. Practically, to share ideas with other English teachers toward the teaching and learning English tense especially the use of group work and individual study in increasing students' English proficiency.

1.5 Scope of the Research

Actually there are sixteen tenses that should be learned by the students, but simple past tense became the important tense that should be mastered by the students. It can be seen from the curriculum that was required simple past tense to be used in second grade of Junior High School materials. So the focus of this research was simple past tense teaching by applying group work and individual study. The population of this research was the students of the second year of SMPN 23 Bandar Lampung. There were treatments which the topics used were chosen based on the curriculum for the junior high school. And the writer also considered that the topics were common for them. This research carried in six meetings that consisted of one meeting of try out, one meeting of pre test, three meetings of treatments to both classes, and one meeting of post test.