

A Study on EFL Higher Education Student's Ability to Analyze Grammatical Simple-Past and Past-Perfect Tenses

Sitti Halijah¹, Muhammad Basri Dalle², Oky Cahyo Sakti Nugroho³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Muslim Indonesia

¹sittihalijah@umi.ac.id

Abstract

This study attempts to determine the students' Ability to Analyze the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses. The authors used the descriptive method in this study. The population of the study were the fifth-semester students of Faculty of Literature UMI Makassar in academic year 2018/2019. The sample of the study consisted of 20 students and was chosen through a random sampling method. The instruments used were two kinds of instruments: objective test and questionnaire, to acquire data on their analytical capability of the simple past and past perfect tenses. Findings revealed that the ability of the fifth-semester students was categorized as "fair". This depicts that the students' ability to analyze Simple Past and past perfect tense is 59, 20, which was considered "fair". The problems found faced by the students' ability to Analyze the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses were; (1) sometimes students were confused in analyzing simple past and past perfect tenses due to the lack of basic knowledge, (2) many students did not have rich vocabularies after they graduated from high school, (3) they had forgotten the pattern of the tenses, and (4) students were still having difficulties in differentiating between simple past and past perfect tenses. This study implies that fresh graduates of senior high schools still lack the necessary requirements to fulfill the standard English language competency, which leads to poor language outcomes of Indonesian high schools today. Hence, the study strongly suggests that it is essential to pay special attention to senior high school students' second language acquisition before continuing their Higher Education study.

Keywords: *EFL Students, Grammar, Tenses, Ability*

INTRODUCTION

English is significant because it is an international language used to communicate with people from other countries. There are four skills that we need for complete communication. When we learn English, we usually learn to listen first, then speak, then read, and finally write. As one of the aspects or components in English, Grammar seems difficult for students who study English as a foreign language or a second language.

Some people think that correct English grammar matters only to teachers and is of no real importance in daily life. This is certainly not true. Grammar, regardless of the country or the language, is the foundation for communication. When a message is related to the correct grammar, it is easier to understand the purpose and meaning. In order to communicate, a learner should know the grammar of the language. It is essential to express yourself, but this should be done in a way that people find easy to understand.

Writing that is poorly punctuated and contains grammatical errors is difficult to read and sometimes impossible to understand. If the reader has to go back and re-read a sentence several times because they are not quite sure what it means, it spoils their reading

experience and they are quite likely to misunderstand the point or even give up and not read any further.

In linguistics, grammar is the set of structural rules that influence clauses, phrases, and words in any given language. It is the systematic study and description of a language and it helps us to understand how words and their component parts combine to form sentences. With social networks and technology development, students have become increasingly lazier to use grammar in their daily conversations. They tend to use sentences that are as simple as possible. Grammar is unnecessary in these mediums and fragments of sentences are quite acceptable. Unfortunately, it is easy to get into a bad habit based on this. Related to the problem above, the authors focused on discussing the students' ability to analyze simple grammar. Thus, the authors aims to find out; (1) how is the students' ability to analyze the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses at English Literature Department of Universitas Muslim Indonesia?, and (2) What difficulties do the students get in analyzing the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses at English Literature Department of Universitas Muslim Indonesia?.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many people got difficulties in learning English to find the correct understanding of the tenses, whereas in English tenses was a fundamental issue. We might also not be able to use English, both written and oral (with conversation) correctly when not understanding and mastering the problem of tenses. Therefore, the tenses in this section were outlined with detail, this was intended to be easy to understand with their best, and so it could be used properly.

Tense was imperative and fundamental when learning English. Tenses were generally used to form a sentence in English based on the time of the incident or event takes place. In other words, tenses is related very closely to the time of an event. An event could take place in the past, present, and future.

Discussion of Comrie (1985:9) of tenses "is a form of grammatical which puts the events in time. This meant the form of tense integrated in the system of the language. The form of tense in English materialized in the morphosyntax. Verbs that became predicate changed form the basis of such additional specific affixes gets so uncover the meaning of time ".

Other opinions expressed by Carl Bache (1997:11) regarding the tenses that tenses, aspect and action as a category of grammatical which revealed the meaning temporality, aspectuality and actionality in the metalanguage ". The same thing was expressed by Lyons (1995:298) concerning the essential characteristics of that "category of tenses is that it links the time, events referenced language in a sentence with time of speech.

According to Smith (1991:231), "tenses circumstances also consist of dynamic verbs and complement noun which expresses the meaning of habitual, IE the meaning of interactional to be included in this type of situation". Other opinions expressed by Lyons (1977:678) a traditional grammarian stated that "is a grammatical category is limited to the category of inflectional. The linguistic tool that serves to reveal the time or tenses linguistic is tenses and temporal information ". The other thing was expressed according to Comrie (1985:65) that "the form had + Verb (past participle) and described the meaning of 'past in the past '. Future perfect tense shape will have + verb (past participle) and describe the past ".

METHOD

This study employs quantitative research by using a descriptive method that could help answer the question of what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem. The descriptive method was used to obtain information concerning the status of the phenomena and describe “what exists” respected to the situation’s variables or conditions. In this case, the researcher focused on the students’ ability to analyze the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses.

“In a quantitative model, it was known as a decision model that uses numbers. The role of numbers was vital in the manufacture, use, and solution of the quantitative model. The solution’s results were used as the basis for a decision to generate variables in the form of numbers.” (Muslich, 1993:4) In Basri (2016:89).

The population and sample of this study were:

1. Population

The population of the study were the students of the third Semester in English Literature Department Universitas Muslim Indonesia. A number of the students were 112 students. They had been divided into 4 classes.

2. Sample

In this research, the data obtained from the Fifth Semester students of English Literature Department Universitas Muslim Indonesia. The researcher took 20 students as samples randomly. The reason for choosing them was that they had learned about the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses.

The data would be collected by giving them some tests that covered the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses and questionnaire to know the difficulties the students got in analyzing the Simple Past and Past perfect Tenses. The researcher used a quantitative method.

The data was analyzed quantitatively through several steps. First, the question was identified by students. Then, the number of the wrong question was corrected by re-write with the correct answer. Second, the students’ performance in both tests would be tabulated and the authors will put in the table. The results were classified into five levels by using the following criteria:

80-100	Excellent
60-79	Good
40-59	Fair
20-39	Poor
0-19	Very poor

Then to find out the score of the students, the authors used the following formula:

$$S = \frac{P}{Q} \times 100$$

Where:

S = Score

P = The Correct Answer

Q = The Sum of Question

As for percentage of the students’ score, the authors used the following formula:

$$P = \frac{S}{R} \times 100$$

Where:

P = Percentage

S = Score

R = The sum of the score

And finally to find out the mean score of the students, the authors used the following formula:

$$M = \frac{R}{s}$$

Where:

M = Mean

R = The sum of the score

s = The sum of the student

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Students' Ability to Analyze the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses

The authors used a quantitative method to analyze the data in numeral form. Those data describes the student's ability to analyze simple past and past perfect tenses at the English Department of Faculty of Literature UMI Makassar. The authors formulated an objective test as the research instrument to determine the student's ability to analyze them.

Table 1: The students' ability to analyze simple past and past perfect tenses.

No	Indicator	Score	Classification
1	Simple past	64,05	Good
2	Past Perfect	54,40	Fair
Total		118,45	
Mean		59,20	Fair

Based on the table above, the researchers concluded that students' ability to analyze simple past is 64,05, which is classified as "good" and students' ability to analyze past perfect tenses was 54,40 classified as "fair", as a result to get mean of both indicators is 59,20 classified fair. After looking at the student's score, the students have difficulties analyzing simple past and past perfect tenses.

B. The Difficulties of the Students in Analyzing the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses

Here are the authors used two kinds of questionnaire that are open and close to get the information about it.

a. Open Questionnaire

Below all the statements that is got from researched students

1. Sometimes, students are confused in analyzing simple past and past perfect tenses.
2. There are many students did not have rich vocabularies.
3. They forget the pattern of the tenses.
4. Students are still difficult to differentiate between simple past and past perfect tenses.

b. Close Questionnaire

Table 3: Questionnaire.

No	Tabulation						Percentage					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total	A	B	C	D	E	Total
							%	%	%	%	%	%
1	4	3	13	0	0	20	20	15	65	0	0	100
2	3	2	9	6	0	20	15	10	45	30	0	100
3	0	2	9	7	2	20	0	10	45	35	10	100
4	5	5	6	4	0	20	25	25	30	20	0	100
5	2	5	3	7	3	20	10	25	15	35	15	100
6	2	1	12	3	2	20	10	5	60	15	10	100
7	8	5	4	2	1	20	40	25	20	10	5	100
8	3	0	9	5	3	20	15	0	45	25	15	100
9	3	5	2	7	3	20	15	25	10	35	15	100
10	0	2	9	5	4	20	0	10	45	25	20	100

Notes:

- A. is always
- B. is often
- C. is sometimes
- D. is seldom
- E. is never

1) Item 1. About the lecturer gives students a test about past perfect and past tenses

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 4 or 20% students choose A that is always, 3 or 15% choose B that is often, 13 or 65% choose C that is sometimes, 0 or 0% choose D that is seldom and 0 or 0% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is C with 13 students or 65% that their lecturer seldom gives them a test about past perfect and past tenses.

2) Item 2. About the lecturer gives an explanation about past perfect and past tenses clearly.

So the researcher concludes the researcher gets the result that 3 or 15% students choose A that is always, 2 or 10% choose B that is often, 9 or 45% choose C that is sometimes, 6 or 30% choose D that is seldom and 0 or 0% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is C with 9 students or 45% that their lecturer always gives explanation about past perfect and past tenses with clearly.

3) Item 3. About students review past perfect and past tenses at home

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 0 or 0% students choose A that is always, 2 or 10% choose B that is often, 9 or 45% choose C that is sometimes, 7 or 35% choose D that is seldom and 2 or 10% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students choose is C with 9 students or 45 % that they sometimes review past perfect and past tenses materials at home.

- 4) Item 4. About students will ask their lecturer, if they do not understand his explanation about past perfect and simple past.

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 5 or 25% students choose A that is always, 5 or 25% choose B that is often, 6 or 30% choose C that is sometimes, 4 or 20% choose D that is seldom and 0 or 0% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose C with 6 students or 30% that they sometimes ask the lecturer, if they do not understand past perfect and past tenses.

- 5) Item 5. About they make a group in study past perfect and past tenses

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 2 or 10% of students choose A that is always, 5 or 25% choose B that is often, 3 or 15% choose C that is sometimes, 7 or 35% choose D that is seldom and 3 or 15% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that most of the students chose is D with 7 students or 35% that they never make a group to study together particularly past perfect and past tenses.

- 6) Item 6. About the lecturer gives them homework about past perfect and past tenses.

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 2 or 10% of students choose A that is always, 1 or 5% choose B that is often, 12 or 65% choose C that is sometimes, 3 or 15% choose D that is seldom and 2 or 10% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is with 12 students or 40% that their lecturer seldom gives homework about past perfect and past tenses.

- 7) Item 7. They will ask their friends if they do not understand the explanation about past perfect and past tenses.

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 8 or 40% students choose A that is always, 5 or 25% choose B that is often, 4 or 20% choose C that is sometimes, 2 or 10% choose D that is seldom and 1 or 5% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is A with 8 students or 40% that they sometimes ask their friends, if they do not understand the explanation about past perfect and past tenses.

- 8) Item 8. About their lecturer gives them back the homework after correcting.

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 3 or 15% students choose A that is always, 0 or 0% choose B that is often, 9 or 45% choose C that is sometimes, 5 or 25% choose D that is seldom and 3 or 15% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is C with 9 students or 45% that their lecturer often gives them back the homework after correcting.

- 9) Item 9. About the lecturer gives motivation after studying.

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 3 or 15% students choose A that is always, 5 or 25% choose B that is often, 2 or 10% choose C that is sometimes, 7 or 35% choose D that is seldom and 3 or 15% choose E that is never.

So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is D with 7 students or 35% that their lecturer sometimes gives motivation after studying.

- 10) Item 10. About students practice to write an essay by using past perfect and past tenses not only in campus but also out of campus.

From the table above, the researcher gets the result that 0 or 0% students choose A that is always, 2 or 10% choose B that is often, 9 or 45% choose C that is sometimes, 5 or 25% choose D that is seldom and 4 or 20% choose E that is never. So the researcher concludes that the most of the students chose is C with 9 students or 45% that they

sometimes practice to write an essay by using simple past and past perfect tenses not only in campus but also out of campus.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data analysis, it can be assumed that the students' ability to analyze Simple Past and Past Perfect Tense at English Department of Faculty of Letters UMI Makassar for the third semester consisted of twenty students randomly is fair. The students' difficulties get in analyzing the Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses were; (1) sometimes students were confused in analyzing simple past and past perfect tenses, (2) there were many students does not have many vocabularies, (3) they forgot the pattern of the tenses, and (4) students were still difficult to differentiate between simple past and past perfect tenses. The implication of this study is that fresh graduates of senior high school are still lacking the necessary requirements to fullfil the standard English language competency which leads to poor language outcome of the Indonesian high schools today. Hence, the study srongly suggests that it is essential to pay special attention to senior high school students' second language acquisition before continuing their Higher Education study.

Concerning the improvement of the students' ability to analyze Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses, the authors suggest that the students should highly be motivated study about using Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses both inside and outside of the campus and that they should be guided to master grammar such as vocabulary and tenses. And the government should further improve second language acquisition in senior high schools.

REFERENCES

- Anggawirya, Erhans. 1995. *Tata Bahasa Inggris(English Grammar) Sistem Cepat Tepat*. Cirebon: Indah Surabaya.
- Arham, M., & Akrab, A. H. (2018). Delving into content lecturers' teaching capability in content language integrated learning (CLIL) at an Indonesian university. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 14(7.2).
- Azar, Schampfer Betty. 1992. *Fundamentals of English Grammar*. United States of America: Tina B. Carver.
- Cherlents De. 2013. *Easy Grammar*. Bandung: Ruang Kata Imprint Kawan Pustaka.
- Kibe, Abdullah. *Muda dan Cepat Bisa Berbahasa Inggris dengan Metode London Village*. Makassar: CV. Mandiri
- Kardimin, Akh. 2006. *Essential English Grammar*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Murphy, Raymond. 1985. *English Grammar In Use A Self Study Reference and Practice Book For Intermediate Students*. University of Cambridge: The Bath Press, Avon.
- Mas'ud, Fuad. 2005. *Essential of English Grammar A Practical Guide*. Yogyakarta: Bp-Yogyakarta
- Salsabilla, Hanifah. 2014. *Merangkai Kaliimat Dengan Benar Sesuai Tenses*. Online http://hanifah_salsabilla.blogspot.com/2014/06/normal-0-false-false-false-en-us-x-none.html. Accessed on 24th September 2018.

- Cec. 2017. *Pengertian, Rumus dan Contoh Teses Bahasa Inggris*. Online <https://pangkajene-tinggris.co/2017/10/18/pengertian-rumus-dan-contoh-tenses-bahasa-tinggris>, accessed on 24th September 2018.
- Sulistyo, Ule dan Gunawan. 2010. *Learn From The Expert: 16 Tenses & Their Secrets*. Online <https://books.google.co.id>, accessed on 24th September 2018.
- Safira, Sarah, Siti. 2018. *Simple Present Tense*. Online <https://www.studiobelajar.com/simple-present-tense/> accessed on 25th September 2018
- Mubaraq, Zaki. 2018. *Present Perfect Continuous Tense*. Online [https://www /present-perfect-continuous-tense/](https://www.pengertian-perfect-continuous-tense/), accessed on 28th September 2018
- Safira, Sarah, Siti. 2018. *Simple Past Tense*. Online <https://www.studiobelajar.com/simple-past-tense/> accessed on 25th September 2018.
- Felecia, 2017. *Rumus Past Continuous*. Online <https://azbahasinggris.com/rumus-past-continuous-tense> accessed on 25th September 2018
- Wuryanti, Suci, Maria. 2015. *Mini Smart Book Bahasa Inggris SMA*. Online https://books.google.co.id/books?id=fUhqCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA301&dq=fungsi+simple+past&hl=id&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwig763n_fdAhWJQI8KHfw6AQoQ6AEIMDAB#v=onepage&q=fungsi%20simple%20past&f=false, accessed on 26th September 2018.