

**The Mastery of Present Perfect Continuous Tense
of The Students of The English Study Program****Windy, Anita Natarana, Cindy, Emilia Marina**

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Corresponding email: windy@widyadharm.ac.id**Abstract**

Mastering a language can be something challenging when it comes to a part of understanding the grammar. English grammar consists of many aspects and tenses have become one of the essential parts of learning the language. Among all tenses learned, present perfect continuous is one of the important tenses to learn yet it is rare to be discussed. This phenomenon has brought a decision to take the tense into research. This paper analyzes the mastery of the Present Perfect Continuous Tense of the second-semester students of English Study Program in University of Widya Dharma Pontianak. The purposes of this research are to know the students' mastery of the second-semester students and to know the most common mistakes made by the second-semester students in using Present Perfect Continuous Tense. The population of this research is 19 students who take Structure II. The research methodology used in this research is the descriptive method. According to the analysis of the test results, the mean score of the students' performance on the test is 59.73. This result can be categorized as Poor to Average. However, considering the criteria of evaluation, the result of the mean score calculation (59.73) can be categorized as Average.

Keywords: *Analysis, Mastery, Present Perfect Continuous Tense*

INTRODUCTION

Language takes an important role as an intermediary in human interactions. It is available in spoken and written forms to provide the function of language which is to do communication. In order to share ideas, information, and knowledge, people use language as the bridge of communication in daily activities. Cruse (2000) declared that the function of a language is to communicate about things, events, and circumstances in the world. Also, it is one of the ways of approaching the study of meaning by trying to relate expressions in language with aspects of the world.

Each country has its language, and English is used and regarded as a universal language commonly used to unite people around the world. It has become a widely spoken language that is used in various fields, especially in the education field. People in Indonesia have realized the importance of English in building interaction and communication with other countries around the world. English in particular has been published as a compulsory subject in international-based schools or bilingual schools. English has been considered to be applied in every area as a subject of choice for all schools starting from elementary school. This will be coordinated by the local government. Therefore, Indonesia has tried to make the English language one of the compulsory subjects in the education system.

Mastering English is a challenge for people who do not use English as their native language. The basic thing that must be mastered by someone when learning English is grammar. Debata (2013) stated that grammar is the study of words about how words work together into sentences. People cannot learn a foreign language accurately without knowing the grammar. Communication failure will occur if people do not master the grammar because the purpose of communication is not reached. Also, learning languages without grammar

would confuse and cause other communication problems. Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) said that grammar is used to refer to the set of regulations that allow people to integrate words in a language into larger units. Learners also need to learn the grammatical system of a language so that they can communicate with others properly. Grammar includes some skills that should be learned such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students will find difficulties in conveying ideas in communication activities, both in written and spoken language if they do not master grammar properly. Students who learn English also have some problems in learning the tense, especially dealing with how or when to use the tense.

In English, grammar has some topics that must be learnt by students. One of them is tense. Tense takes an important role in making English sentences either in written or spoken form. It is the basic grammar related to time. In English, each sentence always contains a tense. Tense helps people to know when the action or event being discussed occurs. Declerck (2006) said that tense is divided into the present and past forms. The timing of situations in the past is called the past tense, past perfect, conditional tense, and conditional perfect. The timing of the situation in the present tense is called the present tense, present perfect, future tense, and future perfect. There are several types of tense, one of them is the Present Perfect Continuous Tense. Present Perfect Continuous Tense is one of the tenses that is needed by students to master. It is one of the important parts of English Grammar because it shows actions or events in the past that have an impact on the present situation. Many people know the form of this tense but they do not know how to use it and also its function.

Several factors influence the achievement of success in the teaching and learning process of Present Perfect Continuous Tense such as teachers and students themselves. The teaching method applied might be too complicated which makes the students difficult to understand. In addition, the students might be embarrassed in asking questions about material they do not understand. Another reason is the grammatical rules. It is because Indonesia is quite different from English, for example, there are no different tenses or using some formulas to make sentences at different times/occasions. Other reasons could be because, for example, the incompatibility of how to use it apart from the mother or native language. Indonesia (Bahasa) has rules for making sentences, but those rules are quite different from the rules in English. The verb used in Bahasa makes no difference when it is used at different times such as when it is used to indicate today, yesterday, or tomorrow. This is different from English, especially it comes to the verb used. Present Perfect Continuous Tense for example has a certain pattern that makes it different from other tenses in English. With a long string of formulas (has/have + been + V-Ing), the Present Perfect Continuous Tense can be a bit confusing.

Considering the reasons mentioned, it has caught the attention in finding a way to improve students' understanding of Present Perfect Continuous.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Grammar

Most people learn English intending to be able to communicate with people around the world. Several methods in learning English, such as listening to songs and watching movies in English. Besides listening to songs and watching movies, learning grammar is essential in improving English ability. Hornby (2015) stated that grammar is the rules in a language for making words and joining them into a sentence. Thus, sentences in a language are formed based on grammatical rules.

Grammar teaches us how to compose sentences and the order of how sentences should have. However, several factors cause students to have understood the grammar and the way it's taught. Students might need to practice the grammar they have learned. Grammatical rules and the communicative aspects of language are equally important. Moreover, Cakir (2011) stated that at foreign language teaching process, grammar teaching is one of the emphasized

points that cannot be ignored. Students who only learn grammatical rules without communication aspects will find it difficult to practice in everyday life. Grammar includes several topics, one of which is tense. Furthermore, several types of tenses must be mastered in learning the English language.

Tense

Tense is one of the parts that has to be studied. Tense teaches about the verbs used according to the time of the event. Cook (2012) stated that tense is closely related to time in the use of one term in several languages. Learning about tenses is not only focused on the time, but verbs must be also considered, because time differences affect the verbs used. According to Declerck (2006, p. 94), "A tense is the pairing of a morpho-syntactic form with a meaning, the meaning being the specification of the temporal location of a situation." The word "time" stands for a concept with which people are familiar, divided into past, present and future. "Tense" means a verb form or series of verb forms used to express a time relation. Tense may indicate whether an action, activity, or state.

Tense plays an important role in mastering English. Greenbaum and Gerald (2002, p. 55) stated that, "Tense is a grammatical category referring to the time of the situation; the tense is indicated by the form of the verb". Tense is so important because without tense, people would not be able to say everything that they want to say correctly. They also cannot tell people what they want, what they did, and their plans. Therefore, tense is a form of a verb that allows us to express time. There are several tenses studied in English, such as Simple Past Tense, Simple Present Tense, Simple Future Tense, and so on.

Present Perfect Continuous Tense

Hewings stated that the Present Perfect Continuous is used to express the idea of activity (a task, piece of work, and so on) in progress until recently or until the time of speaking (2005). Present Perfect Continuous Tense puts attention on the fact that the activity is still ongoing rather than the result. Foley and Hall (2008) stated that the form of Present Perfect Continuous Tense is has/have + been + a present participle (-ing form).

Murphy (2004) stated that the Present Perfect Continuous Tense is used for an activity that has recently stopped or just stopped. Present Perfect Continuous Tense has a relationship with the situation now. It means that the activity is still happening and has not ended. The time signals that are often used in the Present Perfect Continuous are how long, for..., and since....

It is suggested to pay attention to the situation and appearance of the activity in the Present Perfect Continuous tense (Foley & Hall, 2008). Present Perfect Continuous Tense has a continuation, duration of the activity, temporary situation and focus on the activity..

1. Continuation

Continuation means things that started in the past and continues to the present. The examples are:

- a. This office has been working with suitable working hours for many years.
- b. They have been living in Bali for 10 years.

2. Duration of activity

Duration of activity means the time that people spend doing an activity. The examples are:

- a. They have been playing football all season.
- b. My best friend's wedding party has been going on all night.

3. Temporary situation

Temporary situations mean things people have never done before, but now they have to do it. The examples are:

- a. I have been cooking less oil recently because of the crisis.
- b. She has been reducing the use of air conditioning due to the rainy season.

4. Focus on the activity

Focus on the activity means people only focus on doing one thing without doing anything else. The examples are:

- a. He has been queuing tickets all day.
- b. We have been watching horror movies all night.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method is chosen as the appropriate method for the research. Descriptive research is also part of a quantitative research method that is used to collect measurable information for statistical analysis of a population sample. According to Leavy (2017, p. 5), "When we want to describe individuals, groups, activities, events, or situations, descriptive research is appropriate". The situation can be described by applying this method (Jackson, 2009). The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the situation as it exists at present (Kothari, 2004). Also, a descriptive method is used to describe the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group accurately.

Population is important to know the results of a research. According to (Sugiyono, 2007: 62), "Population is a generalization region consisting of objects/subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics set by the researchers to be studied and then drawn conclusions." The population of this research is the students of the English Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Widya Dharma Pontianak in the academic year 2021/2022.

The sample is an element that is no less important than the population. "The Sample is the group that you have chosen from your population from which to collect data" (Mertens, 2009, p. 30). McMillan (2016, p. 227) stated that "The larger the sample, the more accurate the survey results. If you include the entire population, there is no sampling error". Based on this statement, therefore, the sample of this research is using a total sampling technique. The whole accessible population is taken which serves as the sample of this research. The sample of this research is all of the second-semester students of the English Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Widya Dharma Pontianak in the academic year 2021/2022 who had enrolled in Structure I subject.

The technique and tools of data collecting in this paper are:

1. Technique of Data Collecting

The data collection technique in this research is measurement. The purpose of this measurement is to find out the mastery of second semester students' English Study Program in using present perfect continuous tense.

2. Tools of Data Collecting

The tool used to collect data by the measurement technique is through a written test. The test consists of 20 multiple choice questions with 4 options and must be done in 45 minutes. The correct answer for each number is scored 5.

In analyzing the data, the second semester students are asked to fill out the distributed question sheets based on their knowledge on Present Perfect Continuous Tense. The intended test is used to determine the student's individual score and the student's mean score.

1. The Students' Individual Score

The following is the formula used to find the students' individual score:

$$A = \frac{S}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

A: the students' individual score of the test

S: the right answer

N: the total number of items

(Hadi, 1987:17)

After conducting the data collecting, the results is analyzed and give grades to the results based on the score in order to know the students' mastery in Present Perfect Continuous Tense. The criteria for evaluation are based on David P. Harris (1969: 134):

Table 1. The Criteria of Evaluation

<i>Test Score</i>	<i>Qualification</i>
80-100	Well
60-79	Average to Well
50-59	Poor to Average
0-49	Poor

2. The Students' Mean Score

The following is the formula used to find the students' mean score:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

\bar{X} : the students' mean score of the test

\sum : the sum of

X: raw score of the students

N: the number of the students who join the test

(Ary et al, 2010: 108)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The test is arranged in the form of multiple-choice which consists of 20 multiple choices with 4 options and must be submitted within 45 minutes. The correct answer for each number is scored 5. Therefore, the total score, if all the answers are correct, is 100.

Table 2. The Student's Individual Score

No.	STUDENT	CORRECT ANSWER	SCORE
1.	A	14	70
2.	B	16	80
3.	C	14	70
4.	D	18	90
5.	E	12	60
6.	F	17	85
7.	G	13	65
8.	H	8	40
9.	I	6	30
10.	J	12	60
11.	K	7	35
12.	L	14	70
13.	M	4	20
14.	N	17	85
15.	O	11	55
16.	P	16	80
17.	Q	11	55
18.	R	11	55
19.	S	6	30

There were 27 students as the sample taken from second-semester students. However, the samples who filled out the form given were only 19 students. Other students who did not fill out had their reasons such as having problems with the network so they were late in submitting since the form given was automatically closed when the time was up. Unfortunately, it made their answers were rejected. Moreover, some students did not attend the zoom meeting during the research activity. The reason was that the problem of power outage affected the internet network used by them. Therefore, there were 19 data collected out of 27 students.

The data then are processed by using the following formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

\bar{X} : the students' mean score of the test

\sum : the sum of

X: raw score of the students

N: the number of the students who join the test

(Ary et al, 2010: 108)

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{X} &= \frac{\sum X}{N} \\ &= \frac{1135}{19} \\ &= 59.73\end{aligned}$$

From the calculation above, the mean score of the students' mastery on Present Perfect Continuous Tense is 59.73. Also, to describe the categorization of students' mean score, the writers use the criteria by Harris (1969: 134):

Table 3. The Criteria of Evaluation

Test Score	Qualification
80 – 100	Well
60 – 79	Average to Well
50 – 59	Poor to Average
0 - 49	Poor

Based on the criteria, the second semester students' mastery of using Present Perfect Continuous Tense is categorized as *Poor to Average* (50-59). However, considering the table above, the result of the mean score calculation (59.73) which is approaching the border line of 50-59 (*Poor to Average*) and 60-79 (*Average to Well*), it can be categorized as *Average*.

Based on the results of the test, the mean score of the students is 59.73 which can be categorized as *Average*. Furthermore, for data analysis of hypothesis testing, the students' scores on the test are grouped in the following table:

Table 4. The Category of the Students' Scores on the Test

Test Score	f	Qualification
80-100	5	Well
60-79	6	Average to Well
50-59	3	Poor to Average
0-49	5	Poor

From the table shown above, the calculation referring to the percentage of the student's mastery can be done through this formulation:

$$p = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P: percentage

f: frequency of needed criteria

N: the number of the students who join the test

(Sudijono, 2009:43)

$$\begin{aligned} p &= \frac{f}{N} \times 100\% \\ &= \frac{11}{19} \times 100\% \\ &= 57.89\% \end{aligned}$$

The result of the calculation above shows that 57.89% students from the total number of the students who joined the test (11 from 19 students) get high scores which are from 60 up to 100. Thus, the result describes the fact that the students have mastered Present Perfect Continuous Tense.

Automatically, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) in the second semester students of the English Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Widya Dharma University Pontianak in the academic year 2021/2022 that have mastered Present Perfect Continuous Tense is accepted. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected.

Based on the analysis of the test results, it is found out that there are some problems the students have while doing the test. Most of the problems that occurred in the test are the difficulty to distinguish between Present Perfect Continuous Tense and another tense, which is Present Perfect Tense.

There are 5 out of 20 questions that are mostly answered incorrectly.

1. His hands are very dirty. He ... the car. (*repair*)

In this question, most of the students answered "*has repaired*" on the action that has not finished. In fact, the correct form of *auxiliary verb* used in the sentence should be "*has been repairing*" because the action is still continuing. To decide the answer, students should focus on the activity stated in the question (*his hands are very dirty*). Also, it is answered correctly by 9 out of 19 students. To sum up, most of the students can not differentiate the use of Present Perfect Continuous Tense and Present Perfect Tense. As shown in the test results, there are 9 out of 19 students answered "*has repaired*", and 1 out of 19 students answered "*have been repairing*" in this question.

2. Look! Somebody ... that window. (*break*)

In this question, several students are not able to differentiate the plural and singular subject, so they used "*have*" on the singular subject. In fact, the correct form of *auxiliary verb* in the sentence should be "*has*" because the subject "*somebody*" is singular. It is answered correctly by 5 out of 19 students. The test results show that 3 out of 19 students answered "*have been breaking*" and 11 out of 19 students answered "*has broken*" which is incorrect.

3. Why are your clothes so dirty? What ... you ...? (*do*)

In this question, most of the students answered "*have done*" on the action that has the relationship with the situation in the present. As shown in the test results, 10 out of 19 students answered "*have done*". In fact, the correct form of *auxiliary verb* used in the sentence should be "*have been doing*" because the action shows the evidence (*why are your clothes so dirty?*) that can be seen by other people. It is answered correctly by 9 out of 19 students

4. Ann's clothes are covered in paint. She ... the ceiling. (*paint*)

In this question, several students are not able to differentiate between Present Continuous Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Present Perfect Tense, and Present Perfect

Continuous Tense. So, students chose "*is painting*", "*was painting*", and "*has painted*" on the action that has not had the relationship with the situation in the present. In fact, the correct form of *auxiliary verb* used in the sentence should be "*has been painting*" because the action shows the evidence (*Ann's clothes are covered in paint*) that can be seen by other people. It is answered correctly by 8 out of 19 students. As shown in the test results, 1 out of 19 students answered "*is painting*", 4 out of 19 students answered "*was painting*", and 6 out of 19 answered "*has painted*" which is incorrect.

5. A: Are you hungry?

B: I'm not. I ... chocolates all day. (*eat*)

In this question, several students are not able to differentiate between Simple Past Tense, Present Perfect Tense, and Present Perfect Continuous Tense. Most of the students chose "*eaten*" and "*have eaten*" on the action that is still ongoing. As shown in the test results, 1 out of 19 students answered "*eaten*" and 9 out of 19 students answered "*have eaten*". In fact, the correct form of *auxiliary verb* used in the sentence should be "*have been eating*" because the action is still continuing. Also, it is answered correctly by 9 out of 19 students.

Based on the analysis of the questions above, students in this test mostly are not able to analyze the tenses used in each question because they are still confused about the differences between tenses. As the examples above, students cannot differentiate the differences between Present Perfect Continuous Tense and Present Perfect Tense because both have the same auxiliary verb (has/have). Moreover, students cannot differentiate the auxiliary verb that is used for the singular or plural subject. Thus, to improve students' understanding of tense, especially Present Perfect Continuous Tense, students should study it deeper and practice more about it with the help of their lecturers/teachers.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that some students make mistakes on Present Perfect Continuous Tense. Although based on the calculation of the students' scores on the test, most of the students can answer the test correctly, with a mean score of 59.73 which is approaching the borderline of 50-59 (Poor to Average) and 60-79 (Average to Well), the mean score can be categorized as Average. The percentage of the students who get scores varying from 60 up to 100 is 57.89% or 11 out of 19 students who joined the test.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, the test results show that 57.89% or 11 out of 19 students who joined the test can answer the test items well with scores varying from 60 up to 100. Furthermore, the mean score obtained from the test is 59.73 which can be categorized as Poor to Average. Since it is approaching the borderline of 50-59 (Poor to Average) and 60-79 (Average to Well), the mean score can be categorized as Average according to the level of performance criteria stated by Harris (1969). From the test results, it can be concluded that the second-semester students of the English Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Widya Dharma Pontianak in the academic year 2021/2022 have mastered Present Perfect Continuous Tense.

The most common mistake that the students make in this test is not able to analyze the tenses used in each question. Many of them are still confused about the difference between Present Perfect Continuous Tense and Present Perfect Tense. Students also are not able to differentiate the plural and singular subject. Besides, lack of practice also seems to be some of the students' main weaknesses that causes many errors produced on the test.

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