

The Recognition of English Tenses: Passive Voice

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Abstract

English proficiency has become a challenge in some Asian countries due to various factors. One of the factors is the status of English. In Indonesia as one of the Asian countries considers English as a foreign language. Meanwhile, unlike in some other Asian countries, English is treated as a second language. This situation impacts the ability of Indonesian learners in learning English, including English tenses. Proficiency in English tenses is essential for mastering the language. Students' comprehension and proficiency in constructing sentences can be improved by mastering this matter. This study purposes to evaluate learners' proficiency in recognizing, identifying English tenses, as one of fundamental aspects of English language learning. The sample of the research are the second-semester students who are in the progress of developing and understanding English, particularly in sentence construction. Through this research, it is anticipated that students' recognition of English tenses will be helpful in the process of English language learning. Proficiency in English tenses is important for learners to enable them to construct and recognize sentences effectively, especially related to transformation from active to passive voice.

Keywords: Recognition, Proficiency, Tenses, Passive

Introduction

English is treated differently in Indonesia. When it comes to comparison of the status of English in some Asian countries, English is treated as a foreign language in Indonesia (Badroeni et al, 2020). Meanwhile, in some other Asian countries, for example some of neighborhood countries (Malaysia and Singapore). English is treated as a second language in Malaysia (Azmi, 2013). Azmi (2013) claims that English has a special role used in government and some official or formal occasions. Singapore treats English as an official language, the national language to bind other users of languages (Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil) (Ng, 2011).

Although Indonesia treats English as a foreign language (Badroeni et al, 2020, 2020), English is learned as a lesson from primary level to senior high level. By inserting English into the curriculum and with the local content (Rahayu, 2023), it shows that Indonesia realizes that English as an international language and yet it is required to respond the globalization (Isadaud et al, 2022). English is considered to be important, therefore it is inserted into the education curriculum (Isadaud, 2022).

However, since Indonesia treats English as a foreign language, it becomes a challenge of Indonesia students in learning and mastering English. Learning English means to master or learn all language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Every basic skill of the language needs to be learned. Among those all-basic skills, grammar as to influence someone's comprehensive in using English, becomes the part of language that most of students do not like or enjoy learning it. Learning grammar sometimes confuses the students, especially when it comes to making sentences (Nesa et al, 2023). They are having a hard time to comprehend or to understand the use of grammar of English.

Meanwhile, grammar is essential skill for students to show how comprehend someone is in using English by mean of communication. (Rosari & Sianturi, 2023) stated that grammar has become essential since the use in performance ability both in speaking and writing. Furthermore, by mastering English grammar, a failure in communication can be avoided (Windy eat al, 2022). In other words, grammar can be said as a standard of someone whose language ability is comprehensive enough or not. A lot of parts in English grammar might confuse students in learning. Seeing the fact, it is a challenge to overcome. Anggrawan et al (2019) states that sometimes grammar is the most challenging part to deal with, and one of the parts that made students confused or even lower their interest in learning English is the tenses.

Mastering English tenses is another problem that are faced by students in Indonesia. Especially knowing that mastery of English tenses is crucial for having an effective communication in the language, the students have been given an extensive instruction and practice to enable students in understanding more about the tenses. However, despite of given those treatments, students often fail in recognizing the tenses.

Another factor that might influence the false recognition of English tenses is the ability of processing the information or characteristics owned by each particular English tense. There are 16 English tenses in total with 12 English tenses which quite often be used. Along with each particular tense of English that is used in such a way accordingly to the time (tense) that is used, has made students become confused how to use. Moreover, students' primary language (bahasa Indonesia) does not have the language system as owned by English. Bahasa (Indonesia language) does not have tenses. There is no difference between verbs used indicating the past and present time. Therefore, students are not familiar with the use of language system applied in English.

An ability to recognize tense will benefit students in learning English. This ability would impact their recognition on some materials in English that requires more understanding of tenses. Some of them are passive and reported speeches. These two topics are familiar to students especially when they learn English. Those two topics contain specific tenses that will determine the next step to do after recognizing the tenses. Thus, knowing or the ability to recognize tenses is functional and yet beneficial here. It will be helpful for students to recognize tenses. Among those topics, passive is more common to see and use in communication. Thus, the research focusses on passive voice.

There is no doubt to admit that English is an international language. Along with the increasing number of English users, should trigger Indonesia to be more aware of the situation. However, the awareness of Indonesia students has created a new problem especially dealing with tense recognition. The tendency of false recognition of English tenses has become a part that most of Indonesia students face in learning English. With several reasons mentioned before of why students are quite hard in learning English, it raises some research problem and reasons of why to conduct the research. How far students recognize English tenses, which English tense complicates students the most, which English tense ease students the most, and ways in learning English tense, in recognizing the tense.

Literature Review

English Tenses

English tenses are considered to be the core or the essential matter in learning English (Winda et al, 2023), especially for those who are learning English and when English is treated as a foreign language. English tenses consist of 16 tenses in total. Tense which derives from Latin "Tempus" indicates the time of the occurrence of an action or an event (Soomro, 2023). This is in line with Tenses in English which denotes the time. In English, tense is easily recognized by seeing the verb used. The verbs could help us to determine which tense the

sentence belongs to. Besides verbs, some auxiliaries, to be and some modal can signify the tense.

According to the time, 16 tenses in English are categorized into Present, Past, Present Future, and Past Future. Meanwhile, according to the form, English tenses are categorized into Simple, Continuous, Perfect, and Perfect Continuous. The categories made of 16 English tenses can be seen as follows.

Table 1. Category of English Tenses

	SIMPLE	CONTINUOUS	PERFECT	PERFECT CONTINUOUS
PRESENT	She reads book.	She is reading books.	She has read books.	She has been reading books.
PAST	She read books.	She was reading books.	She had read books.	She had been reading books.
PRESENT FUTURE	She will read books.	She will be reading books.	She will have read books.	She will have been reading books.
PAST FUTURE	She would read books.	She would be reading books.	She would have read books.	She would have been reading books.

Among those 16 tenses, not all tenses are used commonly. Only some tenses that are used frequently. Alzuhairy (2016) lists in total 12 most common English tenses used: Present Simple, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, Present Perfect Continuous, Past Simple, Past Continuous, Past Perfect, Past Perfect Continuous, Present Future, Present Future Continuous, Present Future Perfect, and Present Future Perfect Continuous. The list also shows the most common English tenses used Present Simple (as the most used) until Present Future Perfect Continuous (as the least used).

Passive Voice

Passive Voice is the transformation from active voice to passive voice. The main difference between these forms is the agent who is doing the action. Active voice focuses on the agent who is doing the action toward an object. Meanwhile, passive voice focuses on the object which is “a victim” of the agent. In other words, active voice concerns more on subject, passive voice concerns more on object.

Tenses used in Passive Voice are limited. Basically, all of English tenses can be transformed into passive voice as long it fulfills the requirements of passive voices. Some of the requirements are the sentence should consist of an object and the verbs should belong to transitive verbs. Transitive verbs are verbs that require objects to make the sentence complete. However, there are some tenses considered to be inappropriate to change into passive voice. It is both too rare and too weird to have those tenses in passive voice. Murphy (2019) states that there are normally 8 tenses that are used in passive voice, namely Present Simple, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, Past Simple, Past Continuous, Past Perfect, Present Future, and Present Future Perfect.

Methodology

The research is conducted by using a quantitative research method. The sampling and population are all students who enroll English Grammar II (total sampling). There are 54 students who enroll English Grammar II. 37 students answered the questions, which make up 68.52% of the population. It is considered to be valid since it is more than half of the total students.

Multiple choices of questions are used as the research instrument. 40 questions are made in 8 tenses which makes 5 questions for each tense. The type of tenses is taken accordingly from the tenses that are commonly used in passive voice. Students are asked to choose the most suitable English Tense by examining the sentence provided at each number. The sentences used as the research instrument are taken from English Grammar in Use (Murphy, 2019). The questions are in the form of Google-Form. The form is spread to the students in two days maximum to do and submit back.

After the submission within the time given, the data is collected and analyzed.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

There were 37 students who responded by answering the questions. The results are presented based on some categories namely present, past, and future.

Present simple, present continuous, and present perfect are in the category of present. From the questions provided, 72,22% of students chose Present Simple as the correct tense from the statements (questions) given. Present Continuous as the correct tense was chosen correctly for 62,16%. And for Present Perfect, 69,19% of students chose the tense correctly. Those three tenses were chosen correctly with more than half of total respondents (76,22%; 62,16%; and 69,19%). These students might feel it is easy to recognize the statements given since the tenses are quite familiar. Especially Present Simple and Present Continuous as the first tenses when they started to learn English Grammar. Meanwhile, Present Perfect has a very clear or distinction feature compared to other tenses. Present Perfect has the use of *has* or *have* followed with past participle verbs which makes Present Perfect easy to recognize as well.

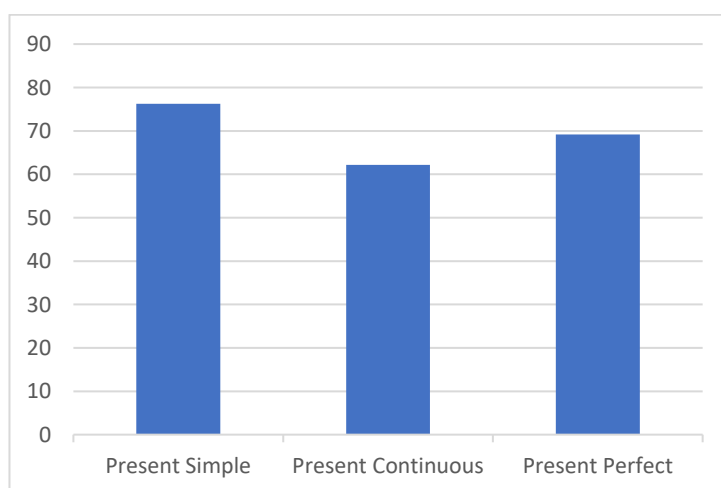


Figure 1. 1st Category: Tense Recognition (in percentage)

The next category, past falls into three sub-categories namely Past Simple, Past Continuous, and Past Perfect. Past Simple was chosen correctly with 72.43%. It means students recognized the statements well when they saw the use of past verbs, and the use of *did* as the

characteristics of the tense. Past Continuous reached 81.62% which makes quite a higher percentage compared to other tenses. This might happen because of the characteristics of the tense itself. The tense which makes it easier to recognize for its use of *to be* (was or were), and the use of *gerund* (v-ing). The last sub-category is Past Perfect which reached 76.76% of total questions answered correctly for the tense. The tense reached quite a high percentage which makes it easier for the students to recognize the tense.

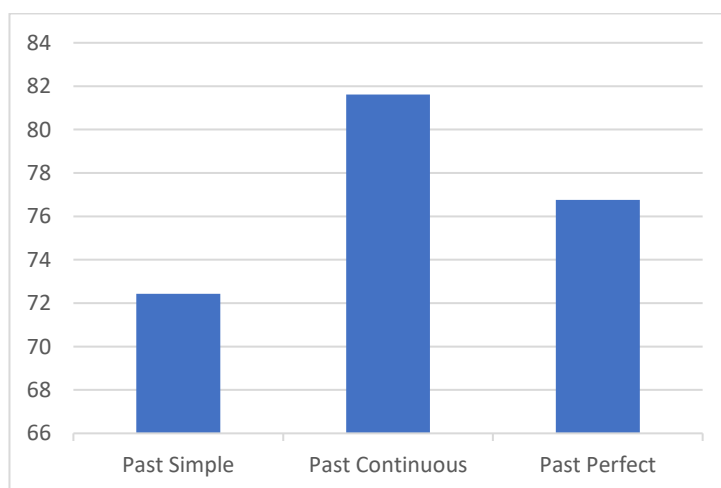


Figure 2. 2nd Category: Tense Recognition (in percentage)

The last category is future which consists of Present Future and Present Future Perfect. These two sub-categories reached 65.57% and 59.46% respectively. It is still easy to recognize Present Future since the characteristics of the tense itself. The tense requires the use of *had* and *past participle* verbs. Meanwhile, Present Future Perfect has the lowest percentage of correctly chosen among all tenses tested. This might happen for students who feel unfamiliar with the characteristics of the tense. The tense is the combination between Present Future and Present Perfect which make the use of *has* or *have* combined with the use of *will*. Students might get confused by *double* tenses combined into one.

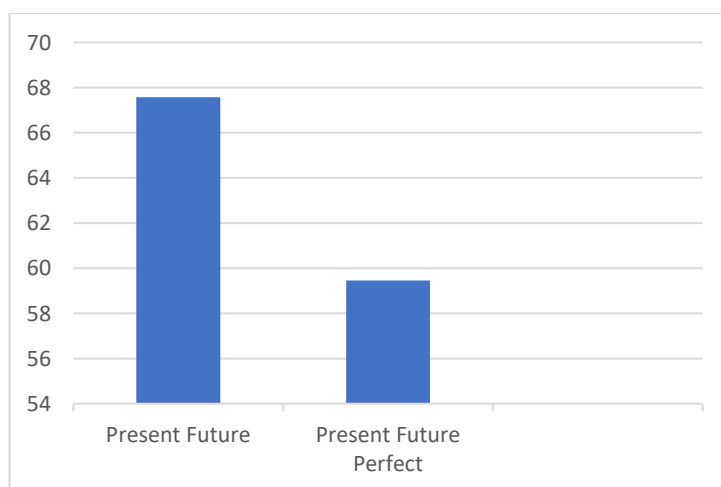


Figure 3. 3rd Category: Tense Recognition (in percentage)

Discussion

The result presented below shows good result of students' recognition of English Tenses. Most of English Tenses that were made into questions were known and recognized well.

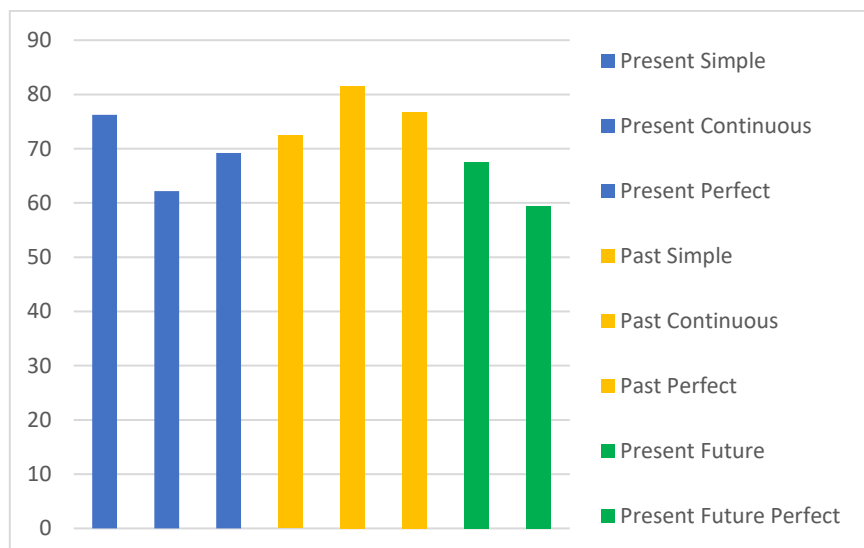


Figure 4. Tense Recognition (in percentage)

From the table presented above, the highest percentage obtained by Past Continuous with 81,62%. The tense that reached the highest percentage shows students' recognition of the tense very well. It might show that tense is the easiest tense to be recognized since it has distinction features as the use of *was* or *were* and *gerund (verb-ing)*. Compared to the quite similar tense (present continuous), past continuous is considered to be easier since it has only two *to be* that need to pay attention. Meanwhile, present continuous has three *to be* that might make students confused which to use. Although the use of *to be* depends only on the subjects, students often get confused how to differentiate the suitable of *to be* used for particular subjects.

Meanwhile, the lowest percentage of tenses' recognition is Present Future Perfect. The tense reached 59,46% which means it is only 9,46% higher than 50% of total responded students who succeed in answering this category. In other words, there were only 32 students who answered correctly. Although it is more than 50% and it can be meant as more than half of total respondents were good, it is still the lowest tense to get. The tense gets the lowest for its more complicated formula compared to other tenses. It is the combination of two forms which come from simple characteristics of tenses namely present future and present perfect. Students might get confused by the combination since they have not understood well the real meaning of Present Future Perfect. Although students have learned the tense in the first semester, the complicated form of the tense makes students have to think more about the tense. Therefore, students might need to get extra attention on this tense, to develop and to gain more understanding of it.

Present Simple, Past Simple, and Past Perfect reached above 70 percent for students' recognition of English tenses. The percentage shows a good understanding or recognition of tenses. Students recognize well the tenses for the tenses that have been taught or delivered in the first semester. Besides that, the tenses have quite simple formulas to be understood, recognized, that have clear distinction from other tenses.

Meanwhile, students recognize Present Continuous, Present Perfect, and Present Future for 60 percent. The percentage was obtained a bit lower than the other three tenses above. It

might happen because these three tenses have a bit more complicated formulas compared to the previous tenses. Present continuous must use *to be*, and gerund (verb-ing). Students get confused about which *to be* to use and the use of gerunds is sometimes forgotten. They might combine the use of *to be* and basic verbs (without the use of gerund). Present perfect is the tense that combines the use of *has* or *have*, and the use of past participle verbs. Students might get confused about which to use (has or have) by considering the use of subjects used. Moreover, the form of past participles of some verbs, especially irregular verbs, have created a particular difficulty for students. They might forget or have not understood enough the concept of regular verbs (adds -d or -ed). Present future makes students confused for the use of *will* with base verb. Students still think that the verbs have to be replaced accordingly in the form of future.

Conclusion

English is treated differently in some countries. For some countries which treated English as an international language, really put the language and use the language as the second language or even becomes the primary language to use in daily life. Meanwhile, Indonesia admits English as an international language, however, positions English as a foreign language. Although English has become a compulsory subject to learn at schools (Rosari & Sianturi, 2023), yet it creates problems to the learners.

The status of English as a foreign language has made students not eagerly to learn English. Thus, it disables students' ability in English to improve and develop. In other sides, English as other languages, has some basic skills that need to learn so the learners would be able to use the language. Among those basic language skills, grammar has become one of the problems faced by the students in Indonesia. And tense is one of the materials in grammar that is also disliked by the students for its complexity and confusion raised while learning.

While tenses are important as it is also the basic of English, students in Indonesia have difficulties in recognizing the tenses correctly. Besides its complexity, the different grammar system of English compared to Bahasa, has made students are to have lack confidence in learning or using tenses. Meanwhile, in fact, tenses would become so much handy when it comes to the use of active passive voices (which are commonly used in daily or written forms of English).

54 students who enrolled English Grammar II are taken as the total sample were asked to choose the correct answer of the tense. They were given 40 questions in the form of sentences.

From the result, it is shown that Past Continuous gained the highest percentage (81,62%) of student's understanding or comprehensive of the tense. Furthermore, present future perfect is the lowest percentage gained (59,46%). However, seeing from the number of percentages gained for present future perfect, it is still above 50%, which means more than a half of respondents answered correctly. Meanwhile, for others tenses such as: Present Simple, Past Simple, and Past Perfect gained above 70% and 60% for Present Continuous, Present Perfect, and Present Future. In conclusion, the students who enrolled English Grammar II understood and are able to recognize the English tenses. It is supported for the lowest percentage gained is 59,56% which means more than a half of respondents answered correctly.

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