

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ABILITY IN USING THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE AND PAST PERFECT TENSE

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***Abstrak :** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk membandingkan dan mengidentifikasi kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan simple past tense dan past perfect tense. Makalah ini mengumpulkan data dengan melakukan tes tata bahasa. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa; (1) kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan simple past tense dalam kalimat adalah klasifikasi tinggi pada umumnya. Artinya hanya beberapa siswa yang dapat menggunakan simple past tense dalam kalimat. (2) kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan perfect perfect tense dalam kalimat adalah klasifikasi rata-rata secara umum. Artinya hanya beberapa siswa yang dapat menggunakan perfect perfect tense dalam kalimat. (3) kemampuan siswa dalam menggunakan past past tense dan past perfect tense pada umumnya tinggi.*

***Kata kunci:** simple past tense, past perfect tense, tata bahasa*

Abstract : The purpose of this research was to compare and identify the students' ability in using simple past tense and past perfect tense. This paper collected the data by conducting the grammar test. The results show that; (1) the students' ability in using the simple past tense in sentences was high classification generally. It means that only some students that can use the simple past tense in sentences. (2) the students' ability in using the past perfect tense in sentences was average classification generally. It means that only some students that can use the past perfect tense in sentences. (3) the students' ability in using the simple past tense and past perfect tense was high generally.

Keywords: simple past tense, past perfect tense, grammar

A. INTRODUCTION

English is one of important subjects that should be taught in junior high school. It is also one of difficult subjects that should be mastered by the students. It is caused that the students do not understand the structure of English sentences well. To understand it the students should learn and study English grammar. Grammar is one of the important factors in language learning to develop the language skills. It must be mastered by every learners start from elementary school until university level Generally, the goal of teaching grammar is enable the students to carry out the communicative purposes. In addition, grammar can help the students mastering four skills in English. In speaking, when someone speaks with others, he/she must have good grammar, so that the listeners can understand what he/she speaks. In reading, grammar can help the learners to understand or to comprehend the text. In writing, grammar is very important because

writing good sentence or good paragraph need good grammar so that the readers can understand what he/she writes.

Grammar is the central in a language, especially English. It is also one of the more difficult elements of language to teach. Grammar is the system of language, and the set of logical structural rules that govern the composition of sentences, phrases, words, and any give natural language. Brown (2001) says that grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relation of words in a sentence. According to Harmer (2001) grammar is the description of the ways in which words can change the form and can combine into sentences in that language. Grammar give us the rule how words arrange and how to the words combine with others to be a good sentence. Therefore, in curriculum junior high school the students should study grammar intensively.

In addition, the goal of teaching grammar is to give the knowledge about patterns in English sentence in oral and written exercises, so that it can be used by the students in active and passive communication. It means that, the students can use and apply basic patterns of English sentence and can communicate well. It is aimed at making the students learn all of topics of grammar intensively, such as gerund, adjectives, adverbs, modal auxiliary, noun and articles, tenses, and etc.

In teaching grammar, tenses are one of the important topics that must be mastered by English Department students. Hornby (1995) states that tense are any of the form of the verb that may be used to indicate the time of the action or state expressed by the verb. Generally, there are three kinds of tenses that should be mastered by English Department students. They are: present tense, past tense, and future tense. In learning tense, usually the students are difficult to master it.

In fact, the tenses do not occur in Indonesian grammar. Indonesian grammar is very different from English grammar, because English grammar has tenses. For example, in Indonesian grammar: "*Sayapergike Jakarta kemaren*" and "*Sayapergike Jakarta besok*", in these sentences there is not special tense or pattern that is used in those sentences, the verb is used in same way although they have different time. In English grammar like "*I went to Jakarta yesterday*" and "*I will go to Jakarta tomorrow*", these sentences have different tense because they have different time signals. In sentence "*I went to Jakarta yesterday*", the tense used is simple past tense. In sentence, "*I will go to Jakarta tomorrow*", the tense used is simple future tense.

Because of many tenses in English grammar, one of them is past tense. According to Cook and Suter (in Hidayah, 2007) past tense indicate that something was completed in the past. Past tense is divided into four kinds, they are: simple past tense, past continuous tense, past perfect tense, and past perfect continuous tense. Generally, among four kinds of past tense, simple past tense and past perfect tense are the tenses that make the students confuse to use them in one sentence, because between simple past tense and past perfect tense are used to express two ideas in one sentence. For example: *Putri cried last night after her mother had expelled her boy friend*

In the sentence, *Putri cried last night after her mother had expelled her boyfriend*. In this sentence there are two verbs in past form. The verb *cried* as simple past tense formula and *had expelled* as past perfect tense formula. To differentiate the use of simple past tense and past perfect tense formula in one sentence, the students must give more attention the time signals and the conjunction that are used in the sentence. However, most students do not too care on the time signals and conjunction in that sentence itself that fall into the wrong formula.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was a descriptive research it was to describe the students' ability in using the simple past tense and past perfect tense. Ary (1985) says that a descriptive research is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomenon. In addition, Gay (1987) states that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer question concerning the current status of the subject of the study. They are directed toward determining the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of the study. The purpose is to describe what exist with respect to variables or conditions in the situation.

The instrument of this research was grammar test. The form of the test was completion test. The test consists of 40 items. In each item the students were asked to complete the sentence in form simple past tense and past perfect tense, based on the verb in the brackets given. In order to know students' ability in using simple past tense and past perfect tense, there are some indicators were used.

Table 1. Indicators of Simple Past Tense and Past Perfect Tense

No.	Tenses	Indicator
1.	Simple Past Tense	S + V2
2.	Past Perfect Tense	S + Had + V3

C. RESULT

1. Students' Ability in Using the Simple Past Tense

After analyzed the students' answer sheet, it can be seen that there were 5 students got very high classification, there were 7 students got high classification, there were 8 students got average classification, and no student got low classification. This research calculated the percentage of students' ability that got very, high, average, and low classification.

Table2. The Classification and the Percentage of Students' Ability in Using the Simple Past Tense

No.	Classification	Interval of Frequency of Students' Ability	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Very high	76% - 100%	Five students	25.00 %
2.	High	51% - 75%	Seven students	35.00 %
3.	Average	26% - 50%	Eight students	40.00 %
4.	Low	0% - 25%	No student	0.00 %

Source: Primary Processing Data 2018

Data on the table above was visualized through figure below:

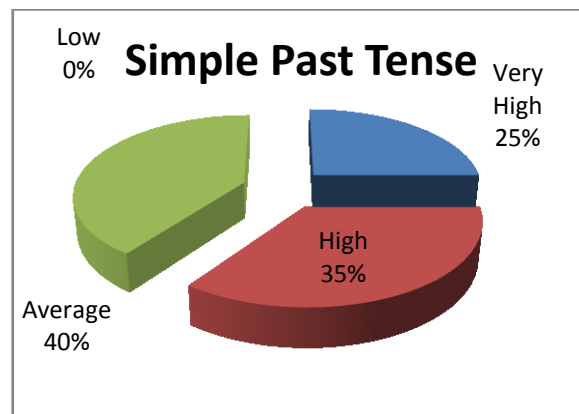


Figure1. The Classification and the percentage of students' ability in using the simple past tense.

2. Students' Ability in Using the Past Perfect Tense

After analyzed the students answer sheet, it can be seen that there was no student got very high classification, there were 4 students got high classification, there 17 students got average classification, and 1 student got low classification. This research calculated the percentage of students' ability that got very high, high, average, and low.

Table3. The Classification and the Percentage of Students' Ability in Using the Past Perfect Tense

No.	Classification	Interval of Frequency of Students' Ability	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Very high	76% - 100%	two students	10.00 %
2.	High	51% - 75%	Five students	25.00%
3.	Average	26% - 50%	Eight students	40.00%
4.	Low	0% - 25%	Five students	25.00%

Source: Primary Processing Data 2018

Then, data on the table above was visualized through diagram below:

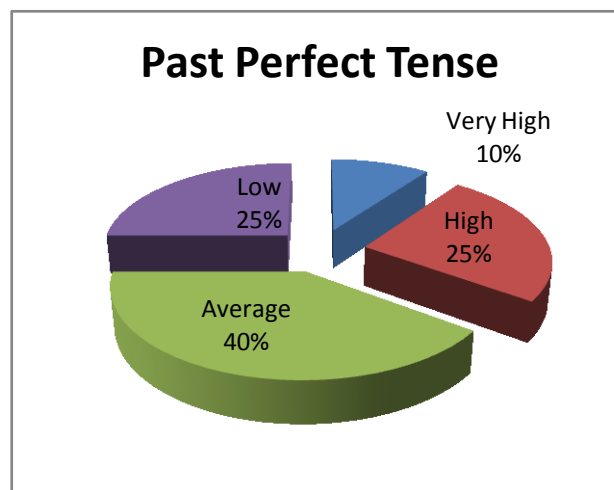


Figure2. The Classification and the Percentage of Students' Ability in Using the Past Perfect Tense

3. Students' Ability in Using the Simple Past Tense and Past Perfect Tense

Based on data description and research findings above, it could be discussed students' ability in using the simple past tense and past perfect tense in sentences as in table below:

Table4. The Students Ability Level in Using the Simple Past Tense and Past Perfect Tense

No.	Items of students' ability	Total Number of	Percentage of Mean Score	Level of Ability
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Students				
1.	Simple Past Tense	20	60.875% (Mean of students' score in using the simple past tense)	High
2.	Past Perfect Tense	20	41.375% (Mean of students' score in using the past perfect tense)	Average
TOTAL			102.25%:2= 51.125%	High

Source: Primary Processing Data 2018

From the table above, this research could discuss that 20 students had **average** ability in using the simple past tense and past perfect tense in sentences. Their total mean score were 51.125%.

The students had **high** ability in stating the simple past tense. Their mean scores were 60.875%. In using the past perfect tense, the students had **average** ability their mean scores were 41.375%.

Based on the findings above, it could be said that the students' ability in using the simple past tense still far from the expectation as stipulated in curriculum. On the other hand, it shows that the students still have problem or difficulties in using the simple past tense. The problem might be caused by the lack of knowledge about simple past tense.

According to Azar (1999) simple past tense indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past. It means that, a past adverbial is either expressed or else understood from the context in which the past tense is used.

In fact, based on the result of this research, there some students had answered the question incorrectly. It is indicated by the students answer on question "*Susan.....(go) meeting last week*". There were some students answered "*Susan had gonemeeting last week*". Based on the theories in paragraph 2, simple past tense is expressed or else understood from the context in which the past. It is clear the problem

might because the students did not understand the context in that sentence, and did not understand the concept of the simple past tense clearly.

Furthermore, the students' ability in using the past perfect tense also still far from the expectation as stipulated in curriculum. On the other hand, it shows that the students still have problem or difficulties in using the simple past tense. The problem might be caused by the lack of knowledge about simple past tense.

According to Muntaha and Alimin (2009) there are three functions of past perfect tense. They are: *first*, to express the activity or action that happened in the past when other activity happened. *Second*, to express the activity that happened before other activity happened in the past. *Third*, to express the activity that happened after other activity happened in the past.

In the sentence, *Putricried last night after her mother had expelled her boyfriend*. In this sentence there are two verbs in past form. The verb *cried* as simple past tense formula and *had expelled* as past perfect tense formula. To differentiate the use of simple past tense and past perfect tense formula in one sentence, the students must give more attention the time signals and the conjunction that are used in the sentence. However, most students do not too care on the time signals and conjunction in that sentence itself that fall into the wrong formula.

D. CONCLUSION

After interpreting the result of data analysis, it can be concluded that 22 students had average ability in using the simple past tense and past perfect tense. From the data found in this research, the students' ability in using the simple past tense and past perfect tense was **high generally**.

Furthermore, the students' ability in using the simple past tense there were five students got very high classification, there were seven students got high classification, there were eight got average classification, and there was no student got low classification. Therefore, the students' ability in using the simple past tense in sentences was **high classification** generally. It means that only some students that can use the simple past tense in sentences.

Next, the students' ability in using the past perfect tense in sentences there were two students got very high classification, there were five students got high

classification, there were eight students got average classification, and there were five students got low classification. Therefore, the students' ability in using the past perfect tense in sentences was **average classification** generally. It means that only some students that can use the past perfect tense in sentences.

The last, based on the data description and research finding above, it can be seen that past perfect tense is more difficult than simple past tense by the students. It was indicated by the fact that the students had high ability in stating the simple past tense. In using the past perfect tense, the students had average ability.

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