

GRAMMAR PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENTS IN USING SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE TASK

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Abstract

This research aims to address the grammar problems faced by students in learning simple present tense. The participants of this research were students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung who took intermediate grammar classes. The samples consisted of seven participants. They are students who take intermediate grammar classes. The data collecting technique of this research used observation and students' tasks to gather data and employed a descriptive design with qualitative analysis to understand and describe the phenomena being studied. This approach is particularly useful for exploring complex behaviors, attitudes, or experiences in depth. Based on the analysis of the questionnaire and students' assignments indicated that this research found that grammar problems faced by students in learning simple present tense were the use of third-person singular verbs (-s/-es endings) (33 %), Subject-verb agreement (10%), Negative and question forms (5%), Spelling changes with third-person singular (15%), use of adverbs of frequency (7%), Incorrect use of time expressions (12%), Confusion with stative verbs (8%).

Keywords: *Grammar Problems, Simple Present Tense, Students' Task*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool of communication that is used to convey feelings, ideas, and information to each other. English is indeed an international language that is very important in cross-cultural and cross-country communication. The ability to communicate in English allows individuals from different countries and cultural backgrounds to understand each other and collaborate in various areas of life.

Teaching English grammar based on actual knowledge rather than relying solely on rules of thumb presents significant challenges for educators, especially when teaching grammar in isolation or integrating it effectively into writing instruction (Myhill, D., Jones, S., & Watson, 2013). Anyone who attempts to communicate in a language, whether consciously or subconsciously, inevitably becomes aware of its

grammar (Debata, 2013). It means that paying attention to appropriate methods and materials for grammar learning is crucial for language teachers. Grammar instruction plays a vital role in foreign language learning because it serves as the foundation for developing communicative competence in the language.

In fact, almost all of them still faced grammar problems when learning simple present tense. Grammar is often one of the main challenges for learners. Researchers are interested in identifying these difficulties in order to provide recommendations to teachers and other researchers to address these problems more effectively.

The issue of university students having low English grammar skills despite years of prior study is a complex one with several potential factors. The challenges students face in mastering the Simple Present tense can indeed contribute to difficulties in effectively communicating in English (Muamaroh, 2009). Universities can help students strengthen their English grammar skills and succeed academically and professionally in an increasingly globalized world (Episiasi et al., 2022).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammatical correctness refers to using language in a way that adheres to the rules and conventions of grammar. It ensures that sentences are structured properly, with correct punctuation, verb forms, tenses, and agreement between subjects and verbs. When writing or speaking, achieving grammatical correctness helps convey ideas clearly and effectively to the audience.

Yung (2019) defines grammar as the examination of the structure of meaningful sentences. Mastering English grammar is indeed crucial for foreign language students. Grammar forms the backbone of language structure, providing the rules and principles that govern how words are formed and sentences are constructed. Students with limited grammar have trouble speaking or writing in English. So, students must have mastered grammar because it is a basic rule of the language. Good grammar is very important in foreign language learning. This is the foundation necessary to build listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills in English or any other foreign language. Without a good understanding of grammar, students will face difficulties in conveying their thoughts

clearly and accurately. Therefore, learning grammar rules is a very important part of the language learning curriculum.

Based on (Marković, 2019), the purposes of learning grammar encompass various aspects. Firstly, learning grammar facilitates effective communication, which is one of its primary objectives. By providing rules and structures, grammar enables individuals to construct meaningful sentences, express their thoughts, and engage in conversations. Understanding grammar empowers learners to convey their ideas accurately and ensures successful communication interactions. Secondly, grammar plays a pivotal role in enhancing reading and listening comprehension skills. When individuals possess a solid grasp of grammatical structures, they can decipher the intended meaning of written or spoken texts more effectively. Grammar knowledge enables learners to identify sentence structures, comprehend word relationships, and interpret the message conveyed by the text.

Understanding the rules of grammar is crucial for several reasons, especially for students who are learning and using a language like English (Doe, 2011) :

1. Correct grammar is essential for clear communication.
2. Writing and speaking correctly are fundamental components in establishing credibility, particularly when seeking to build a reputation as an expert in your profession.
3. Correct grammar is often perceived as a mark of intelligence and education by many people. Here are several reasons why it's important not to allow others to form a negative impression.

Lado (2008) defines the simple present tense as being used to describe actions, events, or situations that are habitual, factual, or generally true and that occur in the present time. Absolutely understanding tenses is crucial for effective communication and learning in the language. Tenses allow us to express actions, states, or events in relation to time and situations in relation to time, which is fundamental in both written and spoken English. By mastering tenses, learners can accurately convey when actions occur, whether in the past, present, or future. This skill not only helps in understanding lessons and communicating with others but also opens doors to accessing information

and perspectives from around the world. It enhances our ability to engage with global communities and enriches our educational and personal experiences beyond our native language.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The subjects were students from study programs who stay in the English Department. The participants of this research were seven students who took intermediate grammar classes. This research used a descriptive approach with a focus on qualitative analysis. The methods used include classroom observations, open questionnaires, and interviews. The data collection process was carried out by interviewing students individually and randomly. Then, assess items or questions in an instrument to determine if they align with that definition or criteria (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Class observations were carried out several times to obtain more in-depth information. Open questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Indonesia to obtain detailed data.

To maintain the confidentiality of respondents' identities, all data obtained was coded. When citing data from interviews and open-ended questionnaires, all information that could identify the interviewee is replaced with parenthetical expressions, such as "teacher name omitted." Qualitative analysis was carried out based on the results of questionnaires, documents, and classroom observations.

IV. FINDINGS

Based on the observation in class, some students showed more enthusiasm and appeared happy to participate actively and effectively in the course. Besides, based on the students' task, they were able to utilize the grammar in using simple present tense. They still have some difficulties. There were seven data taken from their task that can be classified based on the mistake that they made as follows:

Third-person singular verbs (-s/-es endings)

Almost of the students still got some problems dan difficulties. Here are some common problems:

Forgot to add '-s' or '-es': In the present simple tense, the verb must agree with the subject. If the subject is he, she, it, or a singular noun, the verb must end in '-s' or '-es.'

For example:

Wrong: He play video games. (No '-s')

Correct: He plays video games.

Sometimes, students may ignore the singular nature of the subject, leading to errors when the verb does not match the subject correctly.

Subject-verb agreement

Ensuring subject-verb agreement, especially in complex situations like compound subjects or when subjects come after the verb, can indeed be challenging. For example:

- Incorrect: "The dog and the cat is playing."
- Correct: "The dog and the cat are playing."

Negative and question forms

Students sometimes struggle with forming negative sentences and questions in the simple present tense. They might forget to use the auxiliary verb "do" (does for third-person singular) or to invert the subject and auxiliary verb for questions. For example:

- Incorrect (negative): "He don't like coffee."
- Correct: "He doesn't like coffee."
- Incorrect (question): "You likes pizza?"
- Correct: "Do you like pizza?"

Spelling changes with third-person singular

Verbs ending in "-y", preceded by a consonant, change "-y" to "-ies" in the third-person singular. For example:

- Incorrect: "He cry every day."
- Correct: "He cries every day."

Use of adverbs of frequency

Incorrect placement or use of adverbs of frequency (always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never) can affect sentence structure and meaning. For example:

- Incorrect: "He always goes to bed early in weekends."
- Correct: "He always goes to bed early on weekends."

Incorrect use of time expressions

Students might misuse time expressions related to the simple present tense, such as "every day", "always", "often", etc. For example:

- Incorrect: "He reads a book every day in the morning."
- Correct: "He reads a book every morning."

Confusion with stative verbs

Some verbs are not typically used in the simple present tense because they describe states rather than actions (e.g., love, believe, belong). Students may use these incorrectly or struggle with the correct tense choice. For example:

- Incorrect: "I am believing in you."
- Correct: "I believe in you."

Based on the data students above, some students still have faced problems and difficulties to use simple present tense. There are many mistakes that made by students who make a task in intermediate grammar class. This can happen because their native language structure can sometimes carry over into their English writing or speaking. For instance, in Indonesian, the structure of sentences, word order, and expressions can differ from English. This influence can result in sentences in English that follow Indonesian patterns or use expressions that are directly translated from Indonesian.

V. DISCUSSION

Absolutely, mastering English both orally and in writing is crucial in today's interconnected world. English serves as a primary medium for global communication, facilitating interaction and collaboration across borders and cultures. As technology advances, the demand for proficient English skills only grows, particularly in responding to and utilizing global information flows effectively.

Learning tenses is a fundamental aspect of mastering English grammar and communication. Tenses in English indicate the time of an action or state of being, allowing speakers and writers to convey when something happened, is happening, or

will happen. This research indicated that students have some problems in using simple present tense; they are Third-person singular verbs (-s/-es endings), Subject-verb agreement, Negative and question forms, Spelling changes with third-person singular, Use of adverbs of frequency, Incorrect use of time expressions, Confusion with stative verbs.

Based on the data regarding students' problems with the simple present tense in English. There are many mistakes that made by students. Students might construct English sentences that sound awkward or incorrect to native speakers because they apply Indonesian grammar rules directly to English. Overcoming this challenge requires awareness, practice, and targeted instruction to help students develop proficiency in English grammar and sentence structure independently from their native language habits.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the observation and investigation of the students' task, it can be concluded that some students continue to face challenges in using the simple present tense correctly in English. The research indicates several challenges that students commonly face when using the simple present tense in English, such as Third-person singular verbs (-s/-es endings) (33 %), Subject-verb agreement (10%), Negative and question forms (5%), Spelling changes with third-person singular (15%), use of adverbs of frequency (7%), Incorrect use of time expressions (12%), Confusion with stative verbs (8%). To overcome these issues, students benefit from practice with exercises focusing on these specific grammar points. Providing clear explanations, examples, and correction of errors can help reinforce proper usage of the simple present tense.

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