

THE EFFECT OF TENSES MASTERING ON STUDENTS ABILITY IN SPEAKING

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ABSTRACT; *This study aims to analyze the influence of tense mastery on students' speaking skills through a literature review. Tenses are a crucial element of English grammar that determines clarity and accuracy in oral communication. Based on the literature, it was found that a strong command of tenses significantly contributes to helping students speak in a structured manner and avoid ambiguity. Conversely, a lack of understanding of tenses can hinder speaking fluency and reduce students' confidence. The study also highlights the importance of teaching methods that integrate tense instruction with speaking practice through interactive approaches such as discussions, role-plays, and simulations. In conclusion, mastery of tenses is a key factor in improving students' speaking abilities, necessitating more practice-oriented learning innovations to effectively support students' communication skills.*

Keywords: *Tenses, Speaking Skills, English Language, Literature Review, Interactive Learning.*

ABSTRAK; Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh penguasaan tenses terhadap keterampilan berbicara siswa melalui tinjauan pustaka. Tenses merupakan elemen penting tata bahasa Inggris yang menentukan kejelasan dan keakuratan dalam komunikasi lisan. Berdasarkan literatur, ditemukan bahwa penguasaan tenses yang baik memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan dalam membantu siswa berbicara secara terstruktur dan menghindari ambiguitas. Sebaliknya, kurangnya pemahaman tenses dapat menghambat kelancaran berbicara dan mengurangi rasa percaya diri siswa. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti pentingnya metode pengajaran yang memadukan instruksi tenses dengan praktik berbicara melalui pendekatan interaktif seperti diskusi, permainan peran, dan simulasi. Sebagai kesimpulan, penguasaan tenses merupakan faktor kunci dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa, sehingga memerlukan inovasi pembelajaran yang lebih berorientasi pada praktik untuk mendukung keterampilan komunikasi siswa secara efektif.

Kata Kunci: Tenses, Keterampilan Berbicara, Bahasa Inggris, Tinjauan Pustaka, Pembelajaran Interaktif.

INTRODUCTION

Mastery of grammar, particularly tenses, plays a crucial role in enhancing students' ability to speak English. Tenses are essential for conveying clear meanings aligned with the context of time, ensuring more effective communication.¹ Unfortunately, in practice, many students struggle to understand and use tenses correctly. Mistakes in applying tenses not only hinder speaking fluency but also often result in messages being ambiguous and difficult for the listener to understand.² This indicates that weak mastery of tenses is one of the main obstacles to improving students' speaking abilities.

Difficulties in understanding and applying tenses represent a significant challenge for students in developing English speaking skills. Tenses, which serve to determine the time and form of events, are vital for delivering information clearly and contextually. Students' inability to use tenses accurately often leads to ineffective communication, ambiguous messages, and reduced confidence while speaking.³ Therefore, a deep and contextual learning approach is needed to ensure students not only understand the theory of tenses but also apply them practically in daily conversations.

In many schools, the teaching of tenses often focuses solely on theoretical aspects, such as memorizing formulas and sentence patterns, without being accompanied by contextual application.⁴ As a result, students may succeed in answering written questions related to tenses but struggle to use them in speaking situations. This condition highlights a gap between theoretical grammar mastery and its application in speaking skills.

Moreover, the lack of speaking practice in supportive environments and the limited use of interactive teaching methods exacerbate this issue. Speaking skills require consistent practice and a learning environment that motivates students to actively use English.⁵

¹ Nelson, Katherine N. "Grammatical acquisition of present and past tense verb forms in a communicative setting." (2017). H. 12

² Aldy Rahmaddian dan Ria Fakhurruriana, "Developing Learn Tenses For Students' grammatical Mastery In Senior High School," *ELite Journal: International Journal of Education, Language, and Literature* 3, no. 3 (2023): h. 136-147.

³ Wersi Murtini Ni Made, "English Grammar Mastery of The First Semester Students," *Journal on Studies in English Language Teaching (JOSELT)* 2, no. 2 (2021): h. 20-24.

⁴ Sorohiti, Maryam, Harun Noor Rochman Nugraha, and Fitria Rahmawati. "Teacher awareness, identification of learning difficulties, and effective teaching strategies for english grammar mastery." *Indonesian EFL Journal* 10.1 (2024): 45-54.

⁵ Karanjakwut, Chalernsup. "Instructional Toolkit for Outcome-Based Instruction on English Grammatical Literacy of Thai EFL Students." *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 12.4 (2024): 14-25.

Given these challenges, it is essential to investigate the extent to which mastery of tenses affects students' speaking skills. By understanding this influence, teachers and educators can design more effective teaching strategies to improve students' speaking abilities, particularly through approaches that integrate tenses instruction with speaking practice. This research is expected to contribute to overcoming students' difficulties in speaking English and support the development of a more comprehensive English language curriculum.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. Speaking Skill

Speaking ability in English is one of the essential skills that students need to master as it serves as the primary tool for verbal communication. In English language learning, speaking is considered a productive skill because it involves an active process of producing language that can be understood by others.⁶ As stated by Brown (2001), speaking ability is not merely about uttering words but also about conveying ideas, opinions, or information clearly and structurally so that the message is well-received by the listener. Speaking ability encompasses several interconnected components:

- a. **Pronunciation:** The ability to pronounce words clearly so that the listener can easily understand the message. Mispronunciation can lead to ambiguity or misunderstandings.
- b. **Fluency:** Fluency refers to how smoothly someone can speak without long pauses or stuttering. It also reflects the speaker's comfort and confidence when speaking.
- c. **Vocabulary:** Speaking requires a sufficient vocabulary to convey ideas effectively. The richer the vocabulary a student has, the easier it is for them to express their thoughts in various contexts.
- d. **Grammar:** Grammar, including the mastery of tenses, serves as the framework for constructing correct and meaningful sentences. Grammatical errors can reduce the clarity of the message being conveyed.

⁶ Jiaxin Chen dkk., "On the interaction of injected zinc with oxide films formed on stainless steel under cyclic oxidising and reducing conditions," 2014, h. 131-145

- e. Intonation: Intonation relates to the tone and pitch patterns used to express emotions, emphasize important information, or indicate specific intentions in a conversation.⁷

By mastering these aspects, students can effectively communicate in English in academic, professional, and social contexts. Good speaking ability reflects not only technical language proficiency but also the capacity to communicate confidently and appropriately in various situations.

Speaking in English requires an understanding of grammar as the foundation for constructing correct and contextually appropriate sentences. According to Nunan (1991), to become an effective communicator, students must not only master the technical aspects of speaking but also be able to use the language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts.⁸ This highlights that speaking ability is not solely about fluency or pronunciation but also involves the proper application of grammatical elements.

One of the critical components of grammar that significantly influences students' speaking skills is tenses. Tenses provide the structure needed to convey the time and aspect of actions or events accurately. Without a solid understanding of tenses, students may struggle to construct sentences that are clear and meaningful, leading to confusion in communication. Therefore, mastering grammar, particularly tenses, is essential for developing effective speaking skills in English.

2. Tenses in English Grammar

Tenses are an integral part of English grammar, serving to indicate the time and aspect of an action or event. According to Azar (1992), tenses refer to verb forms used to show when an action occurs: in the past, present, or future.⁹ Mastery of tenses involves understanding three key components: form, meaning, and use in sentences.

⁷ Patrick E. Griffin, Barry McGaw, dan Esther Care, ed., *Assessment and teaching of 21st century skills* (Dordrecht ; New York: Springer, 2012), h. 24.

⁸ Listia, Rina, and Emma Rosana Febriyanti. "EFL learners' problems in using tenses: an insight for grammar teaching." *IJET (Indonesian Journal of English Teaching)* 9.1 (2020): 86-95.

⁹ Stephens, Orpheus, and Ian Sanderson. "Two tenses: An alternative to teaching English grammar tense." *THAITESOL Journal* 34.1 (2021): 25-44.

a. Form

Form refers to the specific structure or construction of a tense in grammar. It involves the way verbs are conjugated and how auxiliary verbs (helping verbs) are used in a sentence. Each tense in English has a distinct form, which dictates how the main verb changes depending on factors such as the subject, time (past, present, future), and aspect (simple, continuous, perfect, or perfect continuous). For example:

- a. In the *present simple tense*, the verb form is typically the base form of the verb, but for the third person singular, an "-s" is added (e.g., "He plays").
- b. In the *present continuous tense*, the form includes the auxiliary verb "to be" (am, is, are) followed by the main verb with an "-ing" ending (e.g., "She is reading").
- c. In the *past perfect tense*, the auxiliary verb "had" is used with the past participle of the main verb (e.g., "They had finished").¹⁰

The correct use of verb forms is essential for conveying the correct meaning and ensuring the grammatical accuracy of a sentence in any tense.

b. Meaning

Meaning in the context of tenses refers to the temporal or situational significance conveyed by the tense. It is how a particular tense indicates the time, duration, frequency, or completion of an action or event. The meaning of a tense helps provide context to the listener or reader, so they can understand when an action occurs, whether it is ongoing, completed, or habitual, and in some cases, the relationship between multiple actions.

For example:

- a. Present simple tense typically indicates habitual actions, general truths, or regular occurrences (e.g., "She walks to school every day"). Here, the meaning suggests a routine or repeated action.
- b. Present continuous tense conveys an ongoing action happening at the moment of speaking (e.g., "He is reading a book"). It implies that the action is in progress at the present time.

¹⁰ Crystal, David. "Specification and English tenses." *Journal of Linguistics* 2.1 (1966): 1-34.

- c. Past perfect tense describes an action that was completed before another action in the past (e.g., "They had left before I arrived"). The meaning here emphasizes the sequence of past events, with one event occurring earlier than the other.
- d. Future simple tense often refers to actions that will happen at a specific time in the future (e.g., "She will travel next week"). It indicates the expectation or prediction of future events.¹¹

In summary, the *meaning* of a tense provides crucial information about the timing, aspect, and nature of the action or event, which helps the speaker or writer convey clear and accurate information.

a. Use

Use refers to the correct and appropriate application of tenses in communication, ensuring that the timing and context of actions are conveyed accurately. It involves choosing the right tense based on the specific situation, context, and the relationship between events in a sentence. Using tenses correctly helps convey whether an action is happening now, has happened before, or will happen in the future, and whether the action is ongoing, completed, or habitual. For example:

- b. In everyday conversation, the present simple tense is used for general facts, routines, or habitual actions (e.g., "She drinks coffee every morning"). Its use in this context communicates something that regularly occurs. The present continuous tense is employed to describe actions happening right now or around the present time (e.g., "I am studying for my exams"). The use here conveys that the action is ongoing.
- c. The past simple tense is used to describe completed actions or events that occurred at a specific point in the past (e.g., "I visited Paris last summer"). The use of this tense provides clarity on the timing of past events.
- d. The future simple tense is applied when talking about future events or actions (e.g., "I will go to the store tomorrow"). It expresses intention or prediction about what will happen.¹²

¹¹ Michaelis, Laura A. "Tense in English." *The handbook of English linguistics* (2020): 163-181.

By using tenses correctly, speakers ensure that their message is clear and their communication accurately reflects the time and aspect of the actions being described. Misusing a tense can lead to confusion, as it may suggest incorrect timing or relationships between actions, potentially disrupting the clarity of the communication. Therefore, *use* involves applying the right tense in the right context to effectively convey meaning. A clear understanding of tenses enables learners to construct sentences that effectively convey their intended messages, ensuring accuracy and clarity in communication.

There are 12 main tenses in English, each with specific rules and functions. A good understanding of these tenses enables students to construct sentences with correct structures and express their ideas accurately.¹³ In speaking skills, errors in tense usage can lead to ambiguous messages and hinder effective communication. Here's a table summarizing the 12 main tenses, their forms, and functions:

Tense	Form	Function
Simple Present	Subject + Verb(s/es)	Describes habitual actions, general truths, or present states.
Present Continuous	Subject + is/am/are + Verb-ing	Indicates ongoing actions happening now or temporary situations.
Present Perfect	Subject + has/have + Past Participle	Refers to actions completed at an unspecified time or continuing effects in the present.
Present Perfect Continuous	Subject + has/have + been + Verb-ing	Emphasizes duration of ongoing actions started in the past and continuing in the present.
Simple Past	Subject + Verb-ed/irregular verb	Describes completed actions or events in the past.
Past Continuous	Subject + was/were + Verb-ing	Indicates actions that were ongoing at a specific moment in the past.
Past Perfect	Subject + had + Past Participle	Refers to actions completed before another past event.
Past Perfect Continuous	Subject + had + been + Verb-ing	Focuses on the duration of an action before another past event.
Simple Future	Subject + will/shall + Base Verb	Expresses future actions or predictions.
Future Continuous	Subject + will/shall + be + Verb-ing	Refers to actions that will be ongoing at a specific moment in the future.

Future Perfect	Subject + will/shall + have + Past Participle	Describes actions that will be completed before a future point in time.
Future Perfect Continuous	Subject + will/shall + have been + Verb-ing	Highlights the duration of actions up to a specific point in the future.

The table offers a concise and comprehensive summary of the 12 main tenses in English, highlighting their forms, functions, and uses. It serves as a practical guide for learners to grasp the fundamental rules of each tense, enabling them to construct sentences accurately and appropriately. By understanding these rules, learners can effectively express time, actions, and events, which are essential for clear and meaningful communication.¹⁴

Moreover, the table bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing learners with a structured approach to mastering tenses. It is particularly useful in helping students identify the appropriate tense to use in both spoken and written contexts, thus improving their overall language proficiency. The organized format simplifies complex grammatical concepts, making them easier to understand and apply, whether in casual conversations or formal writing.

Pengaruh Penguasaan Tenses terhadap Kemampuan Berbicara Mastery of tenses plays a crucial role in students' speaking ability. Thornbury (2005) emphasizes that grammar mastery, including tenses, provides a framework that helps students construct sentences accurately and systematically. When students understand and use tenses correctly, they can convey their ideas or information logically and clearly. This competence enables them to engage in effective communication, as the intended meaning of their messages is properly expressed.

Conversely, errors in tense usage can lead to misunderstandings and create ambiguity in communication. Such mistakes may also undermine students' confidence when speaking, as they might fear being misunderstood or judged. Therefore, mastering tenses is not just about grammatical accuracy but also about ensuring clarity, coherence, and confidence in verbal communication.

¹⁴ Rahmaddian dan Fakhurriana, "Developing Learn Tenses For Students' grammatical Mastery In Senior High School," 139.

However, teaching tenses with a sole focus on theoretical aspects often does not have a significant impact on speaking ability. Lightbown and Spada (1999) argue that effective grammar instruction should be integrated with contextual speaking practice. This combination ensures that students can apply grammatical knowledge in real-life communication scenarios, rather than simply memorizing rules.

Through consistent practice, students develop the skill to use tenses appropriately in various communication contexts. This practical application not only enhances their grammatical accuracy but also boosts their overall speaking ability. By engaging in meaningful and contextual speaking exercises, students become more confident and capable of expressing themselves clearly and effectively.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is the *library research method*. This approach involves collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information from existing literature, including books, academic articles, journals, reports, and other relevant sources. The primary goal of library research is to gather secondary data to understand, discuss, and explore a particular topic or research question.¹⁵

In this case, the library research method is used to examine existing studies and theories on tense learning, as well as educational strategies and teaching methodologies. The research aims to identify best practices, innovative approaches, and challenges in teaching tenses, providing a theoretical foundation for the proposed framework.¹⁶ By reviewing and analyzing various scholarly works, the researcher can develop insights and

¹⁵ Amir Hamzah, *Metode Penelitian kepustakaan Library Research) Kajian Filosofis, Aplikasi, Proses, dan Hasil Penelitian* (Malang: Literasi Nusantara Abadi, 2020), h. 3.

¹⁶ Lynn Silipigni Connaway dan Ronald R. Powell, *Basic Research Methods for Librarians*, 5th ed, Library and Information Science Text Series (Santa Barbara, Calif: Libraries Unlimited, 2010), h. 12.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mastery of tenses significantly influences students' speaking abilities in English. Tenses serve as the foundation for sentence structure, enabling students to convey ideas clearly and in an organized manner, aligned with the context of time. When students have a solid understanding of tenses, they can select the appropriate sentence forms, ensuring that their messages are comprehensible to the listener without causing ambiguity.

Conversely, errors in the application of tenses often lead to ineffective communication, creating confusion and misunderstandings. Such mistakes can also undermine students' confidence, making them hesitant to express themselves in spoken English. Thus, mastering tenses is not merely about grammatical accuracy but is integral to fostering clarity, coherence, and confidence in verbal interactions.

This highlights the essential role of tenses in effective communication, emphasizing that a strong grasp of grammar directly contributes to a student's ability to articulate thoughts and engage in meaningful conversations. Integrating practical exercises and contextual applications of tenses in language learning can further enhance students' speaking proficiency and overall confidence.

To overcome this issue, it is crucial to incorporate practical and communicative approaches into English language learning. Traditional methods that focus solely on theoretical grammar often fail to develop students' speaking abilities. By blending grammar instruction with speaking activities, students can bridge the gap between theory and practice. For example, group discussions, role plays, and daily conversation simulations provide students with opportunities to actively use tenses in meaningful contexts, improving both their grammatical accuracy and their fluency in speaking.

These activities encourage students to move beyond memorizing rules and instead engage in authentic communication. Through role plays or discussions, they learn to apply tenses in real-time, adjusting to different scenarios, time frames, and contexts. This hands-on practice fosters a deeper understanding of tenses and their practical applications. In addition, creating a supportive learning environment that promotes English interaction is essential. When students feel comfortable using English in a space that encourages communication, they are more likely to gain confidence in their speaking abilities. By offering opportunities for consistent practice and creating a space where students can freely engage with the language, teachers can help

students develop not only their grammar skills but also their overall speaking proficiency. This approach helps students use English naturally, improving both their accuracy and their confidence in communication.

Therefore, the main solution to improving students' speaking abilities is through tenses-focused learning that is oriented toward practice. Teachers should integrate practical applications of tenses with speaking exercises to help students gain a more hands-on understanding of grammar. This approach ensures that students not only understand the theoretical aspects of tenses but also become proficient in applying them in real-life communication scenarios. The key to success lies in making learning interactive and relevant to everyday speaking situations.

Additionally, teachers must provide regular feedback on students' mistakes. Constructive feedback helps students identify areas where they may be struggling and gives them the opportunity to refine their understanding and application of tenses. This continuous cycle of practice and feedback enables students to learn from their errors, gradually improving their speaking skills.

By adopting this practice-oriented approach, students' speaking abilities can be significantly enhanced. As their understanding of tenses deepens through active use and correction, they gain the confidence and competence needed to communicate effectively in English. Ultimately, this strategy fosters students' growth as proficient English speakers, equipping them with the necessary tools to express themselves clearly and professionally in both academic and real-world contexts.

CONCLUSION

Mastery of tenses plays a crucial role in enhancing students' speaking abilities in English. A solid understanding of tenses allows students to convey ideas clearly and appropriately according to the context of time, ensuring effective and organized communication. Errors in tense usage, however, often lead to misunderstandings and reduced confidence, hindering students from expressing themselves fluently. Therefore, mastering tenses is vital not only for grammatical accuracy but also for building clarity, coherence, and confidence in verbal interactions.

To address this, English language learning should emphasize practical, communicative approaches that integrate grammar instruction with speaking activities. Methods such as group discussions, role plays, and real-life simulations help students apply tenses contextually, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Additionally, consistent feedback and a supportive learning environment encourage students to engage in authentic communication, boosting both accuracy and fluency. By combining interactive practice with continuous feedback, students can develop strong speaking skills, confidently using tenses in various scenarios and achieving proficiency in English communication.

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