



Assessing Seventh Grade Students' Proficiency in Utilizing Simple Past Tense and Past Continuous Tense: A Study at SMP Panti Budaya

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are to describe the ability of the seventh-grade students of SMP SMP Panti Budaya in using simple past tense and past continuous tense and to find out the percentage of mistakes they make in using simple past tense and past continuous tense. The population of this research was the seventh-grade students, with 30 students were taken as a sample. The instrument of collecting data was try out test and real test. The result showed that their ability in using simple past tense was 31.84% and past continuous tense was 62.53%. It means the ability the seventh-grade students of SMP Panti Budaya are in the low category to use simple past tense and in the moderate category to use past continuous tense. The most mistakes made by the students based on the result of the thesis with the total incorrect answer were 355. The result showed that the percentage mistake made by students using the Simple Past Tense was 68% and Past Continuous Tense was 32%. The writer also found that the level of the seventh-grade students of SMP Panti Budaya belong to low category, with the percentage 2 (6.67%) in high category, 13 (43.33%) in moderate category and 15 (50%) belong to low category. Thus, the students are suggested to study more the lesson of simple past tense and past continuous tense to do assignment well.

Keywords: *Ability, Simple Past Tense, Past Continuous Tense*

Introduction

English is a means of communication in every country without exception in Indonesia. Although English in Indonesia is still a foreign language but almost every school level has included English language as a compulsory subject followed by students. According to Sari and Br Sembiring (2022:507), English language has been long taught formally from kindergarten level up to university level. This proves that English has become a staple lesson in the educational environment. English in the linguistic context has sentence patterns and structures which are different from Indonesian, for example in using patterns and sentence structures can be seen from the adverb of time used in a sentence. Nowadays, people are obliged to learn a foreign language, especially English. Therefore, English has been determined by the



government of Indonesia as a foreign language to be taught at schools. It has been taught as a formal subject starting elementary until university. It means that the graduates of senior high school have completed English for twelve years. However, still many students who have not been able to use English because English is so difficult to learnt and understood. One of the difficult parts to be learnt is grammar, one of language component, which leads the student to create good sentence and good paragraph in English.

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 (2001:1) says that grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relation of words in a sentence. Some the components must be learned. Sari and Br Sembiring (2019:508) state, "The students have to master all of components of speaking skill". By using all of the components, the students can construct sentences. In teaching grammar, tenses are one of the important topics that must be mastered by students. Tenses 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 students. They are: present tense, past tense, and future tense. In learning tenses, usually the students are difficult to master them. In fact, the tenses do not occur in Indonesian grammar. Indonesian grammar is very different from English grammar, because English grammar has tenses.

Past tense indicates 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 continuous tense are the tenses that make the students confuse to use them in one sentence, because simple past tense and past continuous tense are used to express two ideas in one sentence. The problem faced by the students in general are:

1. *Saya berjalan ke sekolah*
(I walking to the school)
2. *Mereka mengerjakan tugas kemarin*
(They do the task yesterday)

The above sentences are either redundant or ungrammatical because the tenses are neglected. They should be improved as follows:

1. I walked to the school (Simple Past)
I was walking to the school (Past Continuous)
2. They did the task yesterday (Simple Past)
They were doing the task yesterday (Past Continuous) .

Based on the background of study, the problems of the study can be formulated as follows:

- 1) How is students' ability in using simple past tense and past continuous tense?
- 2) What percentage of mistake do they make in using simple past tense and past continuous tense?.

The objectives of this study are formulated as follows:

- 1) To find out and analyze students' ability in using simple past tense and past continuous tense at the seventh grade students of SMP Swasta Santu Fransiskus Pandan.
- 2) To know the percentage of mistakes they make in using simple past tense and past continuous tense.

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for expanding the study by using grammar in English, especially in the simple past and tense past continuous tense.



Literature Review

The Definition of Ability

Ability is the capacity or power to perform act, physical and mental, especially for academic field. Ability is also defined as cleverness and intelligence. A person is said to be in capable if he does not do something he must do. According to Johnson quoted by Wijaya and Rusyan (2002:8), "Ability is a rational behavior to achieve the required goals in accordance with the expected conditions". Ability can also be called competence comes from English "competence" which means ability, power, authority, skill, knowledge, and skills, abilities, and authority. Therefore, the word competence comes from the word competent which means having the ability and skill in the field, so that he has the authority to do something within the limits of his knowledge.

According to Robbins (2007:58) capability consists of two factors, namely:

1. Intellectual Ability

Intellectual ability is the skills needed to perform a variety of mental activity thinking, reasoning and problem solving.

2. Physical Ability

Physical Ability is the ability to perform tasks that require stamina, skills, strengths, and similar characteristics.

The Definition of Tenses

Tenses generally express time relative to the moment of speaking. Edward (2001:520) says that tenses is a form of a verb that show the time of an action or condition. If someone wants to talk about tense, he or she may not escape from grammar because tense is part of structure. Grammar may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines words in order to form longer units of meaning.

The Simple Past and Past Continuous Tenses

According to Danesi (2006:139), "The simple past tense also known as the preterit, allows you to refer to actions that occurred in the past without reference to the present". In addition, Parrot (2010:219) states his idea about definition of the simple past tense as one of the tenses which is used to refer to completed events, states, action, consider that the event, state or action took place within a finished period of time.

The past continuous tense is formed by the tense of verb to be + the present participle. According to Hariyanto and Hariyono (2003:227) "past continuous tense is (a progressive form of time) which commonly to show a happening activity in the past form of time or an activity which is happening when another activity happened".

The Definition of Writing

Writing is an expression of ideas, thoughts, feeling and stories about something on a piece of paper. Writing is the last output after students learn separate acts continuously. Wallace (2004:15) states that writing is the final product after students learn several stages of writing separately before. According to Sari (2013:12), writing is meant to fill the gap that exists between the ability to express ideas, feeling, opinions, and thought and the ability to express the same things in written form in English.

According to Carrol, Wilson and Forlini (2001:14), writing can be categorized by:



- a. Mode is the form or shape that it takes. Each type has characteristic that are unique and qualities it shares with other types. Modes of writing that is, narration, description, persuasion, exposition, research, response to literature, poems, and plays, writing for assessment, and workplace.
- b. Reflexive writing is from yourself and for yourself; it means choose what to write, what format to use, and whether to share your writing with others.
- c. Extensive writing is generated writing; it means with extensive writing, you purposely write something for someone else to read.

The Importance of Writing

According to Wilson (2002:5), the importance of writing as stemming from major principles:

1. Writing means construction
Writing is considered to be an activity of self-expression, in which the ideas are put spontaneously and inspirationally. In other words, writing is a process of composition, in the sense of making up or building.
2. Writing is a constant process of reconstruction
The gestation of ideas mentally for a long time before writing them down is one of the characteristics which is attributed to a minority of writers.
3. Writing is a way of thinking
Writing process is the tool or the transferable skill that you carry to express is a written form what you think about in a certain situation.

Methodology

Research Design

This research is descriptive research in quantitative research study. The method would be used in this research is descriptive study. According to Creswell (2012:13), quantitative research problem based on trend in the field or on the need explain why something occurs. Meanwhile, Sullivan (2009:429) states Quantitative research relies on data that consist of numbers, statistics, and mathematical models. Descriptive design is one the design in the research that obtains information focusing in current status and phenomena.

The Technique of Analyzing Data

To analyze the data the writer follows the procedures that are suggested by Sudjana (2002: 67) was used:

- a) Calculating all of the students score
- b) Calculating mean and standard deviation as follows:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where: M : The mean score of the students

- a. $\sum x$: The sum of all score
- b. N : The number of students
- c) Next, calculating the percentage of students who get high, moderate, and low ability:

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100\%$$

Where :

P: Percentage of the students' ability



R: The sum of the students who get high, moderate, and low ability
T: The sum of the students

Findings

Data Analysis

The data of this research were obtained from the result of the students' test in using simple past tense and past continuous tense at SMP Panti Budaya. The test consists of try out test and real test. The writer did the try out test to decide the item difficulties, the validity and the reliability of the test. After revising the try out test, the real test was conducted on Wednesday 17th June 2022 starting 08. A.M to 10.00 A.M at the seventh-grade students of SMP Panti Budaya.

The writer was accompanied by Sir Sihotang, he informed the students that the class was conducted by the writer. Again, before starting the test, the writer and the students prayed together. Then the writer greeted the students and administered the real test sheet to 30 students, 15 students from 7A and 15 students from 7B in one class room. The test was 25 question which consisted of for multiple choice items. The writer wanted to know the students' ability in using simple past tense and past continuous tense. Therefore, in the multiple choices there are 13 items using simple past tense and 12 items using past continuous tense. When the time was up, the writer collected the students' worksheet and one of students led the prayer before leaving the class.

The next day, the writer started checking and analyzing the real test. The writer gave score one by one of worksheet students. Multiple choice were 25 items, there are 13 in simple past tense and 12 in past continuous tense. the writer gave score 4 for each of item in multiple choice. If the students can answer all items form correctly the total score was 100. After scoring the test, from 30 students as a sample, it is found that the highest score is 92 with the total correct answer 23 questions achieved by 1 student, and the lowest score is 12 with the total correct answer 3 questions achieved by 2 students, to see the score of the students (see appendix IV). The writer also calculated score group of the students and calculated mean score of the students' ability in SMP Panti Budaya. In the table below:

Table 4.1 Score Group of the Students

Score Group	Frequency	x	Fx	FX ²
84-96	2	3	6	18
72-83	4	2	8	16
60-71	6	1	6	6
A.M 48-59	3	0	0	0
36-47	7	-1	-7	7
24-35	5	-2	-10	20
12-23	3	-3	-9	27
			Σ-6	Σ94

C = Kumulatif

$$C = \frac{FX}{N}$$



$$= \frac{fx}{30} = \frac{-6}{30}$$

$$C = -0,2$$

$$C_i = -0,2 \times 13 = -2,6$$

$$\text{Mean} = A.M + C_i$$

$$= 54 + C_i$$

$$= 54 + (-2,6)$$

$$= 51,4$$

After counting the mean result of the student's scores, the writer counted the student's score into percentage by using the formula below:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum x1}{N} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{1478}{30} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Mean} = 49,27 \%$$

Based on the interval of the percentage of ability degree Minimal Criterion Mastery (KKM), The students of SMP Panti Budaya were not able yet to use simple past tense and past continuous tense because they got the mean 49,27 % with the result that the ability of students of SMP Panti Budaya in using simple past tense and past continuous tense, the writer found out 2 (6,67%) students got high ability it means 2 students able in using simple past tense and past continuous tense. Then 13 (43.33%) students got moderate ability and 15 (50%) students got low ability (**see appendix IX**), it means 28 (85%) was unable in using simple past tense and past continuous tense. The following table shows the percentage of students' scores and categories based on the students' scores.

Discussion

As the result of the research based on the totality of the students the writer found 49.27 for mean score and 22.75 for standard deviation. There were 4 students who got score above 75 who passed the Minimal Criterion Mastery (KKM) from 30 students who followed the test. It means that the seventh-year students at SMP Panti Budaya are not able yet to use the Simple Past Tense and Past Continuous Tense because only 13.33% (students) who passed the minimal criterion mastery whereas according to the rule, there must be 70% of the total students who score above 75 in order to be said "able". Therefore, it can be concluded based on Minimal Criterion Mastery that the seventh-grade students of SMP Panti Budaya not yet able to use the Simple Past tense and Past Continuous tense. The writer also calculated the most mistakes made by the students based on the (**see appendix IX**) with the total incorrect answer were 355. The table showed that the percentage mistake made by students in using Simple Past Tense was 68.16% and Past Continuous Tense was 37.47% with some examples below:

Simple Past Tense was 68.16% with example of the mistakes is:

1. Susi *drinking* milk two hour ago.

They missed of using simple past tense (verb 2). It should be *drank* in the sentence.

2. James *gone* to Bandung three days ago.

They missed of using simple past tense (verb 2). It should be *went* in the sentence.

Past Continuous Tense was 37.47% with example of the mistakes is:

1. Who *finish* writing when she came here?

They missed of using auxiliary of past continuous tense. It should be *was* in the sentence.

2. Was she *met* her fiance tonight?



They missed of using past continuous verb. It should be *meeting* in the sentence.

The most mistakes made by the seventh-grade students of SMP Panti Budaya in using the simple past tense, the percentage was 68.16%. Therefore, the writer found based on their ability classification of their score, the seventh-grade students of SMP Panti Budaya was in low level research showed that 2 students (6.67%) belong to high category, 13 students (43.33%) to moderate category, and 15 students (50%) to low category (see **appendix VIII**).

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is presented by the data which have been analyzed in previous chapter. From all the data analysis about the ability of the seventh-grade students in using the Simple Past Tense and Past Continuous Tense, it can be concluded total number of the students, the writer found out only 4 students who got score higher than 75 and passed Minimal Criterion Mastery. It can be concluded that the seventh-grade students at SMP Panti Budaya were not able yet in using the Simple Past Tense and Past Continuous Tense based on their Minimal Criterion Mastery because 26 of the students cannot do the test well. The regulation of saying ability is fulfilled if 70% of the total number of the students can do the test well. The writer found out 2 (6.67%) students got high ability it means only 2 students able in using simple past tense and past continuous tense. Then 13 (43.33%) students got moderate ability and 15 (50%) students got low ability.

Based on the total incorrect answer made by the students in each tense was 355. The table showed that the percentage of the mistakes made by students in using Simple Past Tense is 68.16%, and the percentage mistakes made by students using Past Continuous Tense is 31.84%. Based on checking and analyzing the real test, some students were not understanding about the rule of using simple past tense and past continuous based on the result data from the real test, they were confused of how to make the form of simple past tense and past continuous., they should know the different of each tense so they would not do the mistake. The most mistakes made by the students was simple past tense with the percentage of incorrect answer 68.16%. in this case most of the students could not distinguish of using types of verbs in tenses so it can be concluded that the students lack of vocabulary and grammar.

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