

**AN ANALYSIS ON THE SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS'
ABILITY IN UNDERSTANDING PAST SIMPLE SENTENCES
AT THE ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF
STKIP INSAN MADANI AIRMOLEK**

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Abstract: *A descriptive qualitative method was used in this research. It aimed to find out the students' ability in understanding Past Simple. The instrument of the research to gather the data was in the form of written test which was delivered to the the second semester students. They are asked to do the test of verbal sentence, nominal sentence and irregular or regular verb use. The test was designed based on the relevant literature review and the authors' observation during the teaching learning process which took time especially when the material of the Past Simple was explained. For the test as a whole, there were only 3 students (12.5%) who had high category level of Past Simple understanding. Meanwhile, 10 students' ability in understanding Past Simple (41.7%) was in the middle category. There were 11 students (45.83%) whose ability belonged to the low category. In short, the students' ability in understanding Past Simple was still low. The research findings give some points of view for a lecturer to remember that he needs to have various teaching techniques to get her students' attention to learn and practice more about the use of tense, especially Past Tense.*

Key Words: *Past Simple, Ability*

INTRODUCTION

Learning and understanding a language will of course inseparable from the components of a language. They are phonology, grammar and vocabulary. Understanding these components will lead someone to be

able to use the language appropriately, clearly and correctly. As one of the components of a language, grammar plays an important roles in transferring and receiving spoken and written messages. It involves rules of tenses to create sentences used to convey ideas.

Pavey (2010) claims that grammar is considered as a language used in common by human beings and it focuses on the characteristics of the language structure, well-formed sentence rules, context use, meaning and broader context of a language. In addition, Kurniawan and Seprizanna (2016) state that grammar is the central components of a language which consists of rules of grammatical structures.

Grammar is a very basic knowledge of a language in which a learner needs to understand it appropriately in order he can construct sentences correctly. Suherman (2014) convinces that a sentence is a series of words whose pattern is Subject and Verb. Furthermore, Erliana, et. al (2014) say that a sentence is a group of words that consists of at least 1 subject and 1 predicate and it expresses a complete thought.

There are four kinds of sentence. They are simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound-complex sentence. Simple sentence is a sentence that has one subject-verb pair. The subject refers to the one who does the action (the doer), and the verb refers to the

action of the doer. In English, the simple sentence types are Present Simple and Past Simple.

An English learner may encounter problems in understanding the use of sentence because of its verb form. The verb in a sentence relies much on the change of time and the change of event. Often the student does not know or realize the changes of the verb. For, they make many mistakes or errors even when they create only simple sentences. They do not know the function, the formula for verbal and nominal sentences, and the use of regular and irregular verbs.

Based on what have been described above, the authors are interested in conducting a research entitled, "An Analysis on The Second Semester Students' Ability in Understanding Past Simple at The English Education Department of STKIP Insan Madani Airmolek. The formulations of the problem in this research are:

1. To what extent is the students' ability level in understanding past simple?
2. What forms of simple past sentences do the students make mistakes the most?

3. How is the students' ability in constructing past simple sentences?

It is hoped that the finding of the research can show the students' ability in understanding the past simple sentences and it will become a useful information for the lecturers. The findings of this research is necessary as the guidelines for the lecturers especially in teaching the past simple tense related to what kind of methods they should use in teaching their students so that their teaching becomes more effectively and efficiently.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous Research Findings

Before starting to conduct this research, the authors studied some previous related researches. The first research that was taken into account by the authors is a research named "An Analysis of The Students' Ability in Using Past Simple Tense", written by Siti Maisaroh. She found out that the students' ability in using Past Simple Tense was very low. The average score of the students' past simple form test was 52.09%. And, the average score of the students' ability in constructing past simple tense is

29.5%. It meant that 47.91% of the total number of the students do not understood the form of past simple tense. What came into her surprise that 70.43% students still got difficulties in constructing past simple tense.

Another research which the authors studied was conducted by Agustina in her paper called "An Error Analysis in Using Simple Past Tense in Writing Recount Text Made by The Eight Grade Students of SMPN 2 Papar in The Academic Year 2015/2016. The result of the research showed that there are so many errors of simple past verb (regular and irregular verb) made by the students. The average scores are 5,39% and 1,54%. The errors of past tense form use was 53.85%. The errors are made by those students because they generalised the rules of Past Simple into their mother tongue which has no difference in the use of verb eventhough there are changes of time and event.

Though there have been so many researches related to Past Simple, the students' ability in creating tense type, especially Past Simple, is still low. However, the research about the students' ability in

understanding Past Simple has never been carried out at STKIP Insan Madani Airmolek before.

Simple Past Tense: A Brief Review

Definition

Azhar (2006) indicates that past simple tense is a sentence that expresses an activity that started and ended at a particular time in the past. It can be said that the action was completed at one time in the past. Parrot (2010) adds that simple past tense refers to completed events, states, actions, which took place within a finished period of time. It can be inferred that the action in past simple tense was completed without indicating any connecting to the present. In other words, the activity just occurred in the past time without continuing to the present.

Forms of Past Tense

Tense formula can be written based on the tense keys which are the combination of time and event changes. The formula will be divided into Verbal Sentence (Active and Passive) and Nominal Sentence. Suherman (2014) describes verbal sentence is a sentence whose its ordinary verb is really a verb not be. It

can be said that verbal sentence is a sentence that uses verb. When there are actions in that sentence, it means that the sentence is in verbal sentence type.

Meanwhile, Sudirman (2014) also declares that nominal sentence is a sentence whose ordinary verb is in the form of be. It can be inferred that nominal sentence is a sentence which uses non-verb words (noun, adjective, and adverb). The main characteristics of nominal sentence is that it uses be before adjective, noun, or adverb. Be is also used in verbal sentence but only for continuous form. Basic knowledge about parts of speech is a kind of very important point to be understood by learners in order that they can differentiate whether the sentence is verbal or nominal types.

a. Verbal Sentence

Active Sentence

(+) S + V₂ + C

(-) S + did + not + V + C

(?,Y/N) Did + S + V₁ + C?

(-?,Y/N) Didn't + S + V₁ + C?

Did + S + not + V₁ + C?

Asking the subject

(?+) Who + V₂ + C?

(?-) Who + did + not + V₁ + C?

Who + didn't + V₁ + C?

Asking Non-Subject:

(+) WH_{-q} + did + S + V + C?

(-) WH_{-q} + didn't + S + V + C?

Passive Sentence

(+) S + was, were + V₃ + C

(-) S + was, were + not + V₃ + C

(?,Y/N) Was, Were + S + V₃ + C?

(-?,Y/N):

Wasn't, Weren't + S + V₃ + C?

Was, Were + S + not + V₃ + C?

Asking the subject

(?+) Who + was, were + V₃ + C?

(?-) Who + wasn't, weren't + not + V₃ + C?

Who + was, were + not + V₃ + C?

Asking Non-Subject:

(+) WH_{-q} + was, were + S + V₃ + C?

(-) WH_{-q} + wasn't, weren't + S + V₃ + C?

b. Nominal Sentence

(+) S + was, were + 3C + C

(-) S + was, were + not + 3C + C

(?,Y/N) Was, Were + S + 3C + C?

(-?,Y/N) Wasn't, Weren't + S + 3C + C?

Was, Were + S + not + 3C + C?

Asking the subject

(?+) Who + was, were + 3C + C?

(?-) Who + wasn't, weren't + not + 3C + C?

Who + was, were + not + 3C + C?

Asking Non-Subject:

(+) WH_{-q} + was, were + S + 3C + C?

(-) WH_{-q} + wasn't, weren't + S + 3C + C?

Past Adverbs of Time

Ever, this morning, yesterday, in 2014, every day, on last summer, a few minutes ago, the day before, yesterday, on Sunday morning, last night, last century, two days ago, last two days.

Verbs in Past Tense

Murphy (2019) explains that verb used in Past Simple is divided into two: regular verb and irregular verb. Regular verb is formed by adding final -d/-ed at the end of the verb. The adding of the final -d/-ed follows some rules. On the other hand, irregular verb requires people to memorise it because it is not related to the simple in any predictable way. However, to facilitate the learners to memorize the irregular past verb, the following clues can be used as guidance:

- Both forms of present and past which are the same.

Present	Past	Present	Past
bet	bet	put	put
bid	bid	quit	quit
cut	cut	set	set
cost	cost	shed	shed
hit	hit	slit	slit
hurt	hurt	spread	spread
let	let	wet	wet

- There is change only in the final consonant.

Present	Past	Present	Past
bend	bent	send	sent
build	built	spend	spent
lend	lent		

3. The vowel and the consonant change although the spelling is different, but the past forms of the irregular verb rhyme.

Present	Past	Present	Past
bring	brought	fight	fought
buy	bought	teach	taught
catch	caught	think	thought

4. When the pronunciation of the syllable of the word is /i:/ which is spelled ee or ea, then the pronunciation of /i:/ becomes /e/ because the spelling ee or ea is changed into e. It should also be noted that there are also words with the pronunciation of /i:/ which is spelled ea will have the same spelling like the present verb, but different pronunciation (/i:/ → /e/) for the past verb.

Present	Past	Present	Past
bleed	bled	lead	led
breed	bred	leave	left
creep	crept	mean	meant
deal	dealt	meet	met
dream	dreamt	read	read
feed	fed	sleep	slept
flee	fled	sweep	swept
keep	kept	weep	wept
kneel	knelt		

5. When the pronunciation of the syllable of the word is /i/ which is spelled i, then the pronunciation of /i/ becomes /ʌ/ because the spelling i is changed into u.

Present	Past	Present	Past
dig	dug	string	strung
slink	slunk	swing	swung
spin	spun	win	won
stick	stuck	wring	wrung
sting	stung		

6. When the pronunciation of the syllable of the word is /ai/ which is spelled ind, then the pronunciation of /ai/ becomes /au/ which is spelled ou.

Present	Past
bind	bound
find	found
grind	ground
wind	wound

7. Various vowel changes

Present	Past	Present	Past
come	came	shine	shone
hang	hung	stand	stood
hold	held	shoe	shod
hear	heard	shoot	shot
light	lit	sit	sat
lose	lost	slide	slid
run	ran	strike	struck
say	said	tell	told
sell	sold		

Final -d/-ed

Final-d/-ed is added to the verbs which ends in:

	-d/-ed
-e	add -d ex: date dated
a vowel and a consonant	ONE-SYLLABLE VERBS <i>1 vowel → 2 consonant</i> Ex: Rob robbed Stop stopped
	<i>2 vowels → 1 consonant</i> Ex: Rain rained Dream dreamed
	TWO-SYLLABLE VERBS <i>1st syllable stressed → 1 cons</i> Ex: Open opened
	<i>2nd syllable stressed → 2 cons</i> Ex:

	Prefer preferred
	Consonant + Y
	Vowel + Y = add -ed Ex: play played
	consonant + Y = change y into i add -ed Ex: study studied
-ie	Add -d Ex: tie tied

Note:

- verb ends in *-ee*, the final *-e* is not dropped: *seeing, agreeing*,
- *-w* and *-x* are not doubled: *plow* → *plowed*; *fix* → *fixed*.

Pronunciation of -ed/-d

/ɪd/	/t/	/d/
Voiced	voiceless	Voiced
t, d	p, k, sh, ch, gh, th, ss, c, x	l, m, r, g, v, s, w, y, z
wanted, needed	packed, fixed, breathed	loved, amazed

METHODOLOGY

For this research the authors decided to use descriptive qualitative method to analyse in-depth data about the students’ ability in understanding past tense. Traver (2001) declares that the descriptive qualitative method is used to analyse the data of the research when there is correlation between activities and the human’s behaviour. Cresswell (2013) adds that this method used by the researchers in order that they can have description of an individual setting, analyse the data for themes or category, and interpret

conclusion about its meaning personally and theoretically.

The research took place at STKIP Insan Madani Airmolek. It is located on Jl. Jend. Sudirman, Tanah Tinggi, Airmolek, Indragiri Hulu, Riau. The research took time for three months, from April to June 2021. There are 24 second semester students of The English Department of STKIP Insan Madani Airmolek who became the subject of the research. The object of this research concerned with the students’ ability in understanding past simple (verbal sentence, nominal sentence, and irregular and irregular verb)

Before the research began, the authors observed the situation during the teaching and learning process took time in the class. They finally decided to deliver a kind of written test for the students to see their ability in understanding simple past as the technique of data collection. The test consisted of 30 items which were divided into two categories: multiple choice and essay. The multiple choice category contains 20 question (10 items for verbal sentences and 10 items for nominal sentence). Meanwhile, there are 10 items for

regular and irregular verb uses in the essay category.

Table 1 Specification of The Test

No	Kind	form	Item	Total
1	Verbal	Multi- ple choice	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	10
2	Nomi- nal	Multi- ple choice	11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	10
3	Regular and Ir- regular Verbs	Essay	21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30	10

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

A formula to find the frequency and the percentage of the students’ ability in understanding past simple suggested by Sudijono in his book of Pengantar Statistik Pendidikan was used to analyze the data in this research. The formula are:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

F = Frequency that the percentage is being looked.

N = Number of cases (frequency individual sum).

P = Number of frequency.
100% = Percentage

After getting the students’ percentage and frequency of the students’ ability in understanding past simple, the formula below was

used to find the average score of the students test of the Past Simple:

$$P = \frac{F}{N \times n} \times 100\%$$

When the average score has been gotten, Arikunto divides the score into 5 categories of ability. The criteria of the students’ score is described in the following table:

Table 2 The Criteria of The Students’ Score

No	Score	Category	Score
1	80 – 100	Excellent	A
2	70 – 79	Good	B
3	60 – 69	Fair good	C
4	50 – 59	Fair	D
5	0 – 49	Less	E

By considering the criteria of the students’ score, the students’ score can then categorized into:

1. High = 80% – 100%
2. Middle = 56% - 79%
3. Low = <30% - 55%

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

In this section, the researchers provided a description of the data instruments used in this study. The data was the results of the written test about the students’ ability of simple past tense that are divided into the multiple choice test of verbal sentence

and nominal one and the essay test of the regular and irregular verb. The number of the test given was 30 items, consisting of each 10 items for multiple choice of verbal sentences and nominal ones, dan 10 items for regular and irregular.

The test contained rules of past tense for positive and negative sentence, interrogative sentence (Yes/No question and informative question). There are also question about regular and irregular verbs in the form of essay. Before the authors delivered the test to the students, they observed the implementation of learning in the topic of Past Simple during the Structure II class. After having been gathered, the data were analyzed and interpreted by using descriptive method. Eventhough this is a qualitative descriptive method as the main approach of the research, the data were also analysed quantitatively as an additional approach to calculate the percentage of the students' ability in understanding the Past Simple Tense. What the authors found from the analysis became the conclusion in this research.

The object of the research was the students' ability in understanding

the Past Simple. The object of the research was adjusted to the formulation of the problem in the study. The data in this study were taken on April 23 – 30, 2021. The number of samples in this study were 24 second semester students.

From the students' test result, the students' mistakes indicate that they got confused with the rules of past tense in verbal and nominal sentence. They still got confused about the use past verb whether it regular verb or irregular verb, the auxiliary and be, and about the question sentences in the past (Yes/No and informative questions). In other words, they do not understand the use of the rules of Past Simple.

After gathering the data, the authors analized it and then they obtained the following results:

Table 3 The Students' score of Past Simple Tense Ability

No	Sample	Type		
		Verbal	Nominal	R/IR
1	Student 1	7	8	6
2	Student 2	8	8	6
3	Student 3	7	6	6
4	Student 4	6	7	5
5	Student 5	6	4	4
6	Student 6	5	7	5
7	Student 7	6	6	4
8	Student 8	7	6	5
9	Student 9	7	8	6

10	Student 10	6	4	4
11	Student 11	7	8	7
12	Student 12	7	8	7
13	Student 13	6	4	4
14	Student 14	6	8	6
15	Student 15	6	8	7
16	Student 16	5	6	4
17	Student 17	7	6	5
18	Student 18	5	6	5
19	Student 19	5	6	5
20	Student 20	5	8	7
21	Student 21	5	8	6
22	Student 22	6	4	5
23	Student 23	6	6	5
24	Student 24	5	6	5

Note: R/IR is regular or irregular verb.

Table 4 The Total Students' Score of The Past Simple Tense Ability

No	Sample	Type			Total Score
		Verbal	Nominal	R/IR	
1	Student 1	7	8	6	7
2	Student 2	8	8	6	7.3
3	Student 3	7	6	6	6.3
4	Student 4	6	7	5	6
5	Student 5	6	4	4	4.6
6	Student 6	5	7	5	5.6
7	Student 7	6	6	4	5.3
8	Student 8	7	6	5	6
9	Student 9	7	8	6	7
10	Student 10	6	4	4	4.6
11	Student 11	7	8	7	7.3
12	Student 12	7	8	7	7.3
13	Student 13	6	4	4	4.6
14	Student 14	6	8	6	6.6
15	Student 15	6	8	7	7
16	Student 16	5	6	4	5
17	Student 17	7	6	5	6
18	Student 18	5	6	5	5.3
19	Student 19	5	6	5	5.3
20	Student 20	5	8	7	6.6
21	Student 21	5	8	6	6.3
22	Student 22	6	4	5	5
23	Student 23	6	6	5	5.6
24	Student 24	5	6	5	5.3

		146	156	129	143
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DISCUSSION

The table above showed the result of the whole test given to the students. The researcher has gathered the students' score. As the table above showed the result of the whole test given to the students. The authors had gathered the students' score as their data in this research. The data included all of the students' score. After getting the students's score for each type of the past simple tense test, the authors got the mean score of the students's ability in understanding past simple.

Table 5 The Mean Score of the Students' Ability in Understanding Past Simple

No	Type	Score	Mean
1	Verbal	134	5.6
2	Nominal	156	6.5
3	R / IR	129	5.4
Total			5.9

The authors analyzed the test to find out the students' ability in understanding Past Simple: verbal sentence, nominal one and regular or irregular verbs. The students' ability which was analyzed not only to find out the average score for each type but also the score for the whole test.

For the first type of the simple past test given (verbal sentences), it was found that there were 8 students (33.3%) whose ability was in high

category, 9 students (37.5%) whose ability was in middle one, and 7 students (29.2%) whose ability was in low one. It can be stated that their ability in understanding the verbal sentences was almost in the same level. The students might still be confused about the used of Past Verb, auxiliary did for negative and interogative sentence and the rules for informative questions. No wonder for the verbal test, the average was 5.6 which is considered fair.

Meanwhile, for their ability in nominal sentences, no students belonged to the high category. 4 students (16.7%) were in the low one, and the rest, 20 students (83.3%) had the ability in understanding past simple in the middle category. The average score for this type of the test was 6.5 and it could be said good. Although it can be seen that there were no students got high category of the test score, they had been able to understand the use of nominal sentence in Past Simple whether the sentence is positive, negative or interogative sentence.

For the use of regular and irregular verb of Past Simple, the average score was 5.4 which was

considered good. There were 24 students whose ability in understanding Past Simple was 100% in the middle category. The problem the students had when they were asked to do the test of regular and irregular verb was almost because they had no idea about the change of the verb in Past. Verb.

For the test as a whole, the students' ability was also analysed. The average score of the students in the was 5.9. It can be described that there were only 3 students (12.5%) who had high category level of Past Simple Understanding. Meanwhile, 10 students' ability in understanding Past Simple (41.7%) was in the middle category. There were 11 students (45.83%) whose ability belonged to the low category. In short, the students' ability in understanding Past Simple was still low because they still could not able to understand the rules of past simple in positive, negative, and interogative for verbal, nominal and question sentences.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to find out the second semester students' ability in understanding past simple at

The English Department of STKIP Insan Madani Airmolek. The average score for the test obtained was 5.9 and it was in the good level (verbal 5.6, nominal 6.5, regular and irregular verb 5.4). What can be inferred from the test was just that the students' ability in understanding Past Simple was good enough although they need to study more about it. They need to learn more the rules of Past sentences, auxiliary and be used for the past sentences and also about regular and irregular verbs of Past. Therefore, they need more practice about the tense.

SUGGESTION

A grammar lecturer must prepare not only good teaching materials but also various interesting teaching techniques in order that the students can enjoy the learning process which could help them to understand more about the tense uses. It is also OK when the lecturer uses audio and visual aids to support his teaching in class. Furthermore, he also has to give his extra time to the students to teach them the materials which haven't been acquired well outside the classroom.

It is hoped that the students can have motivation to learn more about grammar because it is really

important as their basic component of the language they are learning. Understanding the grammar will help them to have good ability in mastering the four language skills. That is why, if they do not understand the lesson yet, they are supposed to ask their lecturer or friends about it.

In the end, it would be a pride for the authors if the research can be a source of reference for other researchers to conduct a research related to the past tense ability of the English students in the future.

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