



THE INVESTIGATION OF PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE DIFFICULTIES AT NINETH JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

English learning in Indonesia, especially at the junior high school level has various obstacles. One of these obstacles is that students find it difficult in learning present continuous tense because students think that present continuous tense is similar to present tense. The aimed of this research is to describe students' difficulties in learning present continuous tense. This type of research is descriptive qualitative. The research subjects of this study were 4 students consist of 2 female and 2 male ninth grade students of Al-Fattah Junior High School, Jember The instruments used include observation, interview and document review. The data obtained were analyzed using source triangulation and technique triangulation methods. The results of this study show that students have difficulty in making example sentences using the present continuous tense, difficulty in understanding the meaning of the present continuous tense pattern.

Keywords: Difficult, Present Continuous Tense, Junior High School.

INTRODUCTION

English is a nonnative language that is compulsory in almost all schools over the world, including Indonesia at every educational levels. Depending on the objective of each level, it has been taught at various levels of education, from kindergarten to higher education. It implies that students are at ease with English even if they do not use it in their daily discussions since they choose to speak in their second language. Unfortunately, English is merely a source of information for its students, so it's couldn't said as a second language. (Riyatno, 2020).

Students in English learning must acquire four abilities: writing skills, listening skills, reading skills, and speaking skills. Aside from these four skills, students must also understand grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in English (Nurcholis Pramudiana, 2022). Grammar, according to Swan (1980), is "the rules that govern how words are combined, arranged, and changed to convey different meanings." Grammar is the most important component of the English language, and students must understand it in order to communicate effectively in it. If we understand grammar, we can communicate our message more simply and accurately. Tenses are one of the grammar features that are investigated.

The present continuous tense is one of the tenses. The present continuous tense describes an action that is occurring at the time of speaking. In English grammar, it is frequently used to represent a continuous but unfinished action. We utilize the continuous for occurrences that occur at or near the time of speaking, according to Murphy, R. (2004:6). Elaine and Steve (2000:32) define Present continuous tense for an action that is currently in progress

Based on the research background, it can be concluded that understanding grammar, especially the present continuous tense is very difficult for students in Indonesia. Especially at the junior high school level, such as the ninth grade at SMP Al-Fattah, Jember, the problems faced by students can be more complex and require in-depth understanding. Therefore, this qualitative research aims to investigate the learning difficulties in the use of present continuous tense faced by ninth grade students at the school. The importance of a good understanding of tensions in English is not only related to the ability to communicate, but can also affect the student's academic achievement. By understanding the obstacles students face in this context, we can develop more effective learning strategies to help them overcome such difficulties.

This research will use a qualitative approach to undertake it. The study aims to identify the difficulty and difficulties that students of ninth grade may encounter in using the Present Continuous Tense, both

in the context of communication and in academic tasks. This research will focus on the following research question: What are the factors that may cause students difficulties in using the Present Continuous Tense?

By digging through the students' insights and experiences as well as the teaching approaches applied at Al-Fattah Junior High School, we hope to provide valuable insights on this issue and encourage upgrades in tense teaching in English at the ninth grade level.

Literature Review

a. *Definition of students difficulties*

An explanation of students' challenges when there is interference, it might be difficult for students to study. Lack of comprehension of the subject matter by students is the root cause of learning difficulties. Their learning achievement decreased as a result, and the learning process was hindered. The experts' explanation of the challenges is provided below: a. Djamarah (2011) defines difficulty as a situation in which a learner is unable to learn organically because of risks, impediments, or other study-related distractions. b. According to Westwood (2008), challenges at the word level are associated with the ability to decode and identify words. These challenges include the inability to comprehend, apply phonic knowledge and orthographic units in words, and make use of sentence or paragraph contexts and analogies. c. Side by side with participants who are prepared with the same difficulty, students who are prepared with a mindset of difficulty will be able to get a superior position in the fluid intelligence test at the same range of difficulty level (Raven's Progressive Matrices; Elmore et al., 2016). A growing corpus of research quantifies the extent to which individuals accept difficulty as significant and difficulty as unachievable when thinking about their own assignments and objectives. Based on the experts' explanations of the challenges, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the condition causes learning impairments in pupils because they are challenging to comprehend the words, phrases, or paragraphs you are reading, so that the education. The process is not successful.

English is a universal language that is used as the official language of many nations for communication, so everyone in Indonesia, especially students, needs to acquire at least the fundamentals of the language. English is taught in the Indonesian curriculum has always been required, beginning in elementary school (Rintaningrum, n.d.). But still, Many Indonesian students struggle to learn English, particularly in the language syntax. While some of the pupils can communicate in English, they are unsure of how to they should organize their desired words in a grammatical order. The following issue is that pupils frequently struggle to compose sentences in the appropriate tenses. While some students can communicate in English, many struggle with knowing how to put words in the right order to follow grammar norms. The second issue is that students frequently struggle to construct sentences in the appropriate tenses. Occasionally they make the phrase incorrect by using the incorrect tenses. Furthermore, Indonesian The distinction between English and Indonesian sentence structures confuses students. Sentence type, such that occasionally when speaking English, they utilize Indonesian sentence form phrase (2019, Ameliani).

b. *Present Continuous Tense*

This tense is used to describes: current and future action that occurred in the present. In Living English Structure, W. Stannard Allen states, "English has three main divisions, past, present, and future, expressed by the simple tenses" (Allen, 1987). In English, the verb is influenced by the "time" when it occurs or will occur (present, past, or future), hence a verb should be tied to time. According to Patricia K. Werner, the present tense

is a type of English tense that describes an action happening at the moment of speaking, ongoing action or future plans (Werner, 1990). It is formed with the corresponding present form (is, am, are) and a verb ending in -ing. The present continuous is a construction consisting of subject + auxiliary verb (verb) + main verb (base + ing). It is used to indicate an action that is spoken of in the present continuous tense: the action is happening now, the action in the future happened in the present. In her book *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, Betty Schramfer Azar described that "the present continuous indicates that an action is in progress during speech." (Azar, 1989). It started in the recent past and continues now. And it will probably end sometime in the future. The present continuous seems to mean an ongoing action or event.

The Form of Present Continuous Tense

The present continuous tense is created by adding the present participle (infinitive +ing) to the present tense of the auxiliary verb to be, according to A.J. Thomson and A.V. Martinet (1986).

Affirmative	S	To be	V1 + ing
	I	am	swimming
	You We They	are	swimming
	He She It	is	swimming

Negative	S	To be	Not	V1 + ing
	I	am	not	swimming
	You We They	are	not	swimming
	He She It	is	not	swimming

Negative	To be	Subject	V1 + ing
	am	I	Swimming?
	are	You We They	Swimming?
	is	He She It	Swimming?

Furthermore, Betty Azhar (2003) provides an explanation regarding the usage of contractions in her book *Fundamentals of English Grammar*.

Contraction pronoun + be	Subject	To be	V1 + ing
	I	Am	swimming

	You We They	Are	swimming swimming swimming
	He She It	is	swimming swimming swimming

In her book *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, Betty Azar (2003) provides an explanation on the spelling of -ing. This is the explanation that follows.

1) Verbs that end in -e	a. See – seeing Move – moving Came – coming	If the verb in – e, drop the – e and add – ing.
2) Verbs that end in a vowel and a consonant	One-syllable verbs b. Cook – cooking Know – knowing Glow - glowing	1 vowel – 2 consonants
	c. Finish – finishing Explain – explaining Travel – traveling	1 st syllable stressed – 1 consonants
3) Verbs that end in two consonants	d. Discuss – discussing Act – acting Attack – attacking	If the verbs end in two consonants, just add – ing.
4) Verb that end in -y	e. Apply – applying Carry – carrying Copy - copying	If -y is preceded by a consonant: - Keep the -y, add - ing.
5) Verb that end in -ie	f. Lie – lying Vie - vying Hie -hying	Change – ie to -y, add – ing.

According to the previous explanation, if a verb ends in -e, remove the -e and add -ing (see-seeing, for example); if a verb ends in two consonants, add only -ing (beginning, for example). Additionally, for verbs ending in -y, if y comes before a vowel, retain the -y and add -ing (prayer-praying, for example) or if y comes before a consonant, retain the -y and add -ing (replay-replaying). Moreover, for verbs ending in -ie, substitute -y for -ie and add -ing, as in lie-lying.

c. *Related Literature*

The first study is the work of Dwi, et al. This is a recent study that aims to understand the difficulties faced by students in understanding basic tenses in English, especially Simple Present Tense. Poor understanding of Simple Present Tense material can have a negative impact on the achievement of student learning outcomes in English learning. This research uses descriptive qualitative method with the aim to identify the difficulties experienced by students in understanding Simple Present Tense and to determine the most dominant difficulties experienced by class X students in the marketing department at SMKN 2 Kotabumi.

Data collection in this study used questionnaires as the main data, as well as follow-up interviews as supporting data. A total of 8 students became the object of research in data collection, representing students majoring in class X marketing.

The results show that there are four aspects of difficulties experienced by students in understanding Simple Present Tense, namely concepts, functions, sentence patterns, and time signs associated with the use of Simple Present Tense. The most dominant difficulty experienced by students is in sentence patterns. Many students often make mistakes in forming sentences, stringing sentences with Simple Present Tense patterns, and sometimes using to be or verbs that are not appropriate in sentence patterns.

METHOD

The purpose of this research is to learn about the students' learning issues with the Present Continuous Tense. It's about the factors of learning difficulties that student faced. This research was conducted at SMP Al-Fattah Jember. The writer used the Qualitative Method to perform the research. A qualitative study, according to Creswell (1994), defined a qualitative study as an investigation procedure aimed at comprehending a social or human problem, with a focus on creating a comprehensive, multifaceted picture of informants and conducted in a natural context. The procedure of this research are; the teacher teaches students used situational learning approach. Then the researchers act as non-participant. Refer to William (2014) non-participant observation means the observer or the researcher did not participate directly in the situation that being observed but rather "sit on the sidelines", and observe (watch) the situation. After the learning process, the researchers ask some questions (interview) to the teacher and some students used structural interview.

The participants in this study were eighth grade students at Al-Fattah Jember High School. In accordance with the explanation of Cresswell (1994), researchers used purposeful sampling to select individual or participants. Students who have varying levels of understanding of the Present Continuous Tense will be selected to be research subjects. A number of students representing variations in the level of understanding will be taken as a sample.

For the Research Instrument there are three, namely interviews, observations, and analysis of documents:

1. Interviews: In-depth interviews will be conducted with the student selected as the subject of research. The interviews will focus on students' understanding of the Present Continuous Tense, the factors that influence their understanding, and their experience in studying this tense, Roxana (2017).
2. Observations: Class observations will be performed to understand how the present continuous tense material is taught in the school, as well as the interaction between teachers and students during learning. Observation is the technique of gathering unrestricted, first-hand knowledge at a research site through people and place observation. Cresswell (1994).
3. Document review: textbooks, teaching materials, and relevant records will be analyzed to understand the teaching approach used by the school.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, researchers has analysed the answer from the teacher and students. The teacher disclosed some factors of student's difficulties in teaching present continuous tense.

"Often have difficulty in distinguishing the use of this tense from the Present Simple Tense. They can get confused in situations where both can be used, such as 'I play the guitar' (Present Simple) vs. 'I am playing the guitar' (Present Continuous). They can also struggle with forming correct sentences, especially when irregular verbs are involved. This is an area that often requires special attention."
(Teacher interview)

The teachers has said that the first factor that distructed students to understand and make sentences from present continuous tense is that those chapter has similiarity with simple present, especially in irregular word. The students has said the same topic about it. The first students can catch this material easily from the third one. They said that they found some difficulties in learning Present continuous tense.

"I find it difficult because I tend to forget small rules about this tense." (Student 3)

"What makes me difficult is the change of verbs in Present Continuous Tense. Sometimes I forget these changing rules, and it makes me feel confused."(Student 4)

The third and fourth students has same difficulties in learning. Both are them has confused about the rules and structure of present continuous tense. It's a normal s for a student who learn about English Grammatical, especially Present Tense. Either simple present or present continuous. In general, the big difference between them is a verb-ing. But for irregular verb, they have their own uniqueness and rules. So, this is the point of students confuses.

The teacher has same reason fot it, he found at some task that students had misconception about the implementation of present continuous rules. He add some reason out of the student's reasons. Like a lack of motivation to learn more and differentiate ways during present continuous tense learning.

The researchers provided that a comprehensive understanding of students' challenges in mastering the Present Continuous Tense.

1. Tense Differentiation Difficulty: It is evident from both student interviews and the research that some students struggle with distinguishing between the Present Continuous Tense and the Present Simple Tense. This observation aligns with the research's primary findings, indicating that the fundamental understanding of tenses presents a hurdle for students.

2. Sentence Pattern Challenges: Students' difficulty in forming sentences using the Present Continuous Tense pattern is a common theme across interviews and research findings. This consistency highlights that sentence structure and pattern comprehension are crucial areas where students face challenges.

3. Reluctance to Seek Clarification: Both the interviews and the research underline the reluctance of students, particularly those experiencing difficulties, to ask the teacher for clarification when they are confused. This reluctance to seek help can potentially hinder students' progress in mastering the tense.

4. Independent Resource Utilization: The data from student interviews and the research demonstrate that students who struggle often seek out supplementary resources, such as online instructional materials and practice books, to independently improve their understanding. This proactive approach aligns with the research methodology that primarily used questionnaires to collect data.

5. Student Recommendations for Teachers: The suggestions offered by students to the teacher, including providing practical real-life examples of Present Continuous Tense usage, reflect their desire for a more engaging and relatable teaching approach. This feedback from students can be a valuable resource for enhancing the teaching of the Present Continuous Tense at school.

The triangulation of information obtained through student interviews and the insights provided by the teacher substantiates the primary research findings, highlighting the challenges students face in comprehending the Present Continuous Tense. These findings also underscore the need for innovative teaching strategies and additional support to help students overcome these difficulties.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research delves into the challenges students encounter in understanding and utilizing the Present Continuous Tense. Through a comprehensive analysis of both teacher insights and student perspectives, several key findings have emerged. The primary difficulty lies in Tense Differentiation, where students often struggle to distinguish between the Present Continuous and Present Simple Tenses. This foundational issue indicates a need for focused attention on the basic understanding of tenses in the English language.

Furthermore, students consistently express challenges in forming sentences using the Present Continuous Tense pattern. The complexities of irregular verbs add an additional layer of difficulty, leading to confusion among learners. This emphasizes the importance of addressing sentence structure and pattern comprehension in language instruction. An interesting revelation is the reluctance of students to seek clarification from teachers when faced with difficulties. This reluctance can potentially impede their progress, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that encourages students to ask questions and seek help. Despite these challenges, students demonstrate proactive behavior by independently utilizing additional resources, such as online materials and practice books, to enhance their understanding. This indicates a potential avenue for incorporating supplementary materials into teaching strategies to support struggling students.

Moreover, the research highlights student recommendations for teachers, emphasizing the need for practical, real-life examples to make the learning process more engaging and relatable. Incorporating these suggestions into teaching methodologies could contribute to a more effective and student-friendly approach. The triangulation of information from both teacher and student perspectives validates the research findings, reinforcing the identified challenges in mastering the Present Continuous Tense. As a result, there is a clear call for innovative teaching strategies and additional support to address these difficulties and enhance the overall learning experience for students.

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