

A Study on Tenses (Simple Present, Present Continuous, Simple past and Past Perfect) and its Difficulties Experienced by the L₂ Learners of First Year Engineering Students

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Abstract:

This study is about the Tenses and its uses for the L₂ learners, as tense is the foundation for the second language learners from first level to second level in learning and comprehending the grammar because tense is the base mark for the level one learner to write effectively by avoiding silly mistakes.

For this study the data has been collected from the first year Mechatronics Engineering Students to identify their knowledge in placing the articles and the difficulties experienced by the L₂ learners.

The total target of the first-year engineering students for this study is **35** from first year Mechatronics Engineering

Key Words:

Background, Right Inflection, Performance, Difficulties, Samples.

1. Introduction:

In the study of language, grammar occupies a central position. If one wants to improve one's language, it is important that one has to learn considerable number of grammatical rules and their functions. At professional level, language tolerance is very less and a professional is expected to commit very less mistakes or not to commit any mistakes at all. There is also a practical reason to emphasize the study of grammar. It is easy to learn to use dictionaries by oneself to find the pronunciation, spelling or meanings of words, but it is difficult to consult grammar books without a considerable knowledge of grammar.

It is also expected that engineering students should learn the rules of grammar so that their language becomes proficient.

2. Writing Skill:

Skills are factors of a language, which can be mastered for an effective communication in the specified language. In order to learn a language thoroughly, and achieve a native like competence, it is essential to master all the four skills. But, as for the present study is concerned, writing is a mandatory skill for the engineering students in Tamil Nadu, since we learn English as a second language, the essential skills we need are reading and writing.

3. Tense:

Tense is a language element refers to the location of an event or action in time either in the past or present. It is marked by an inflection of the verb. However, English language has many ways of referring to past, present and future time.

- Verbs modify themselves to show different types of tenses.
- The present study tested the students in the following tenses.

3.1 Simple Present Tense:

— To express a habitual action or factual information as

Eg: He drinks tea every morning.

I get up every day at five o' clock

— In **exclamatory sentences** beginning with here and there to express what is actually taking place in the present

Eg: Here comes the bus!

There she goes!

— To express a future event that is part of time table or fixed programme.

— Eg: The next flight is at 7:00 tomorrow morning.

The match starts at 9 o' clock

— It is used to introduce quotations

Eg: Keats' saying, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

— It is used instead of the simple future tense, in clauses of time and of condition.

Eg: I shall wait till you finish your lunch.

If it rains, we shall get wet.

3.2 Present Continuous Tense

— The present continuous tense is used for an action going on at the time of speaking.

Eg. She is singing. (now)

The boys are playing hockey.

— For a temporary action which may not be actual happening at the time of speaking

Eg. I am going to the cinema tonight.

My uncle is arriving tomorrow

— It has been pointed out before that the simple present is used for a habitual action. However, when the reference is to a particular obstinate habit- something which persists, for example, in spite of advice or warning, we use the present continuous with the adverb like always, continually, constantly.

Eg. He is always running out into road.

— The following verbs on account of their meaning, are not normally used in the continuous form:

1. Verbs of perceptions. Eg- see, hear, smell, notice, recognize.

2. Verbs of appearing. Eg- appear, look, seem.

3. Verbs of emotions. Eg- want, wish, desire, feel, like, love, hate, hope, prefer, refuse.

4. Verbs of thinking. Eg- think, suppose, believe, agree, consider, trust, remember, forget, know, understand, imagine, mean, mind.

5. Have (+ possess), own, possess, belong to, contain, consists of, be (expect when used in the passive).

4. Sample Collection Data

This exercise was tested by keeping in mind whether the students were able to suggest a verb to complete each sentence either simple present or present continuous.

Suggest a verb to complete each sentence. Use either the simple present or present continuous.

In this exercise I would like to discuss only two questions (one is simple present and present continuous tense) which were taken as samples for discussing the performance of the students.

4.1 Question No:1

Gopi _____ (read) popular novels in his spare time. It is his hobby.

Expected answer: reads

Received answer: read, is reading

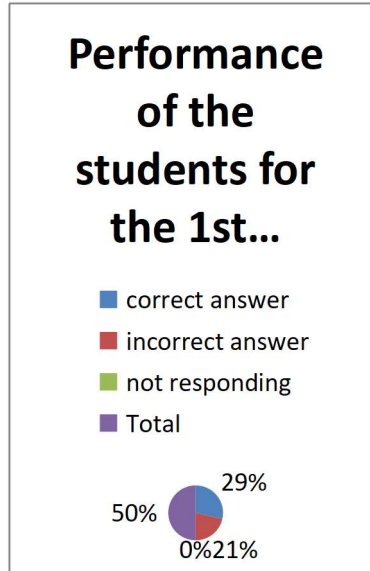
4.2 Question No:2

They have an important project to finish by next week, so the _____ (work) in the evenings at present.

Expected answer: are working

Received answer: is working; were working

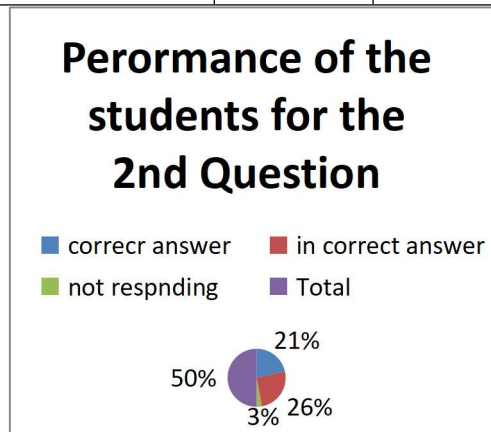
SL.No	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER	NOT RESPONDED	TOTAL
1	20	15	-	-



Performance of the students for the First Question:

4.3 Performance of the student for the second question:

SL. No	Correct Answer	In correct answer	Not Responded	Total
1	15	18	2	-



The above table reveals that some students found it difficult to place the correct verb to complete the sentence. The students did not know the rule to identify the tense for placing the correct verb. In question no:1 20 were able to produce right answer and 15 got wrong answer and in question no 2: 15 were able to give right answer and 18 got wrong answer and 2 not responded. The performance of the students was not to the expected level as teacher wants right answer from all the students and even English medium were not up to the mark.

5. Learners' knowledge in the selected area of tense (Simple present and Present Continues Tenses):

The data collected from 1st year Mechatronics Engineering Students. The total targets of the informants were thirty-five (35) for this study. The study revealed that only 50 percent got correct answer for the two questions; though the questions were very easy to answer. The students confused to place the correct verb because they were not sure of the grammar rules from school days because of less practice in the English classroom.

6. Difficulties faced by the students to mark the right inflection of the verb at the right tense:

The study revealed that the informants found difficult to place the right inflection of the verb at the right tense because learners were not sure of the right inflection of the verb where to be added 's' and where to be added 'is' and where to be added 'are' and also not sure about the main verb. This shows that the students did not have regular practice in their day-to-day usages and also less conscious in placing the right inflection of the verb at the right tense to make the sentence a meaningful one.

7. Remedial Measures:

- (i) Teacher should explain all the rules in the tense because tense is the base form for the learners to write without mistakes.
- (ii) Explain with simple examples.
- (iii) Teaching methodology can be modified according to the learner's convenience.
- (iv) Technology based teaching can be implemented for teaching grammar in the English classroom.

8. Conclusion:

This study has identified the difficulties faced by the informants in placing the right inflection of the verb even for the easy questions through the samples collected from the first year engineering students. Here by the study tells the learners of L₂ have less conscious in placing the verb where tense is the base form for the learners to write without mistake and to avoid silly errors which is essential and conscious one while constructing the sentences.

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