

The Ability of The Seventh Grade Students of SMP Budi Murni 2 on Using Present and Past Tenses

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Abstract

Tenses are verb forms used to indicate actions within specific timeframes. Grammar refers to the set of rules in a language for modifying word forms and combining them into sentences to convey meaning. Mastery of grammar, particularly tenses, is essential for students to create coherent compositions. This study investigated students' abilities in using the simple present and simple past tenses. The research was conducted with a sample of 60 seventh-grade students at SMP Budi Murni 2. Data analysis was performed using quantitative methods. The findings revealed that the students struggled with these tenses, with an average score of 56.08, significantly below the minimum passing requirement of 75. This indicates that the students are far from meeting the expected competency level. Based on these results, it is recommended that students dedicate more effort to studying tenses, and teachers provide additional home assignments to reinforce their learning

INTRODUCTION

Grammar forms the backbone of any language, providing the rules necessary for constructing meaningful sentences. In the realm of English language learning, grammar poses a significant challenge for many students, particularly those whose native language belongs to a different linguistic family. This difficulty is especially pronounced when it comes to understanding and correctly using tenses, a grammatical aspect that varies considerably between languages. English tenses, which indicate when an action occurs, are notably complex compared to those in many other languages. For instance, while Indonesian does not employ tenses, English utilizes a variety of tense forms to denote the time of an action. This disparity often leads to confusion and errors among English language learners, particularly in their use of simple present and simple past tenses. This study aims to investigate the ability of seventh-grade students at SMP Budi Murni 2 to use simple present and simple past tenses correctly. Specifically, the research seeks to: Assess whether these students can accurately use simple present and simple past tenses, determine if the students meet the Minimum Completion Criterion (MCC) for these tenses, identify which aspects of these two tenses pose the greatest difficulty for students.

Understanding students' proficiency in using simple present and simple past tenses is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it allows teachers to make their teaching methods to address specific areas

of difficulty. Secondly, it contributes to the broader field of English language education by providing insights into common challenges faced by learners. Lastly, it can inform curriculum development and assessment strategies in English language programs. Previous research has highlighted the persistent challenges students face in mastering English tenses. A study by Rinanda et al in 2023 found that seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 15 Sijunjung demonstrated low proficiency in using the simple present tense, with an average score of only 45.46%. Similarly, Rianti in 2022 reported that students at Universitas Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai struggled with the simple past tense, achieving an average score of just 30.16, well below the minimum completion criterion of 75. These findings align with observations made during an internship program at SMP Budi Murni 2, where students exhibited difficulties in constructing grammatically correct sentences using simple present, present continuous, past tense, and past continuous tense.

This study hypothesizes that seventh-grade students at SMP Budi Murni 2 will demonstrate similar difficulties in using simple present and simple past tenses as observed in previous research. The primary variables under investigation are the students' ability to use these tenses correctly and the specific aspects of each tense that prove most challenging. This research employ a quantitative approach, utilizing a test designed to assess students' proficiency in using simple present and simple past tenses. The test cover various aspects of these tenses, including verb forms, time indicators, and sentence construction. For this study, "ability" refers to the students' capacity to correctly identify and use the appropriate tense in given contexts. The Minimum Completion Criterion (MCC) is defined as the lowest score a student must achieve to be considered proficient in using these tenses. By focusing on seventh-grade students in a specific school, it aims to provide a detailed picture of tense mastery at this educational level. The findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by seventh-grade students in mastering simple present and simple past tenses. This information can be used to develop targeted teaching strategies and learning materials. The results provide a foundation for addressing common difficulties and enhancing students' grammatical proficiency. This study may raise questions about the most effective methods for teaching these tenses and how proficiency in these basic tenses correlates with overall English language competence. These questions could form the basis for future research in this area.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a quasi-experimental approach. Pre-test and post-test methods were applied to measure the impact of the intervention on students' learning outcomes. This design was chosen to establish causal relationships between the teaching strategy and students' performance.

The subject of this research is the seventh grade students of SMP Budi Murni 2, which consists of 7 classess within 216 students.

**Table 1. Population of The Research
The Seventh Grade Students Of SMP Budi Murni**

Classes	Amount of Students
VII-1	32
VII-2	30
VII-3	32
VII-4	32

VII-5	30
VII-6	30
VII-7	32
TOTAL	216

Data analysis procedures

In order to collect data from the sample on this research, the writer administers the test to the choser sample as the representative of the population. The test is to find out the students' ability on using simple present and past tenses. The students ill be tested by asking them to answer the multiplechoice or to choose true or false. The test is aimed to describe and analyse the students' ability of SMP Budi Murni 2. After collecting data, the writer will analyze them. By using the test, the writer tries to find out the students' ability. After the students do the test, the writer took the total score from the result of the test. To get description of this answer given by the students, the formula used to analyze the data or to find out the percentage of students' ability as follows :

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

P = Percentage

F = Number of Frequency

N = Number of Students/ Sample

Finding out the mean score of students' ability in using simpe present tense and past tense as follows:

$$M_x = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

M_x = Mean of average score

∑X = The sum of score

N = Number of tester/participants.

Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-test scores within and between groups. Additionally, ANOVA was employed to evaluate differences in performance across subgroups. Data were processed using SPSS version 25, ensuring robust statistical analysis. Qualitative feedback from the questionnaires was analyzed thematically to identify trends and student perceptions.

FINDINGS

Data Analisis

Table 1 below presented the total scores of 60 students as part of the data analysis for this study. The table provides an overview of individual student performance, including their respective scores. This data served as a foundation for further analysis to determine trends, calculate averages, and identify patterns in student achievement. The insights derived from this table will contribute to understanding the overall academic performance of the group.

Table 4.1 Total Student Scores

No	Name	Score
1	Adlf	40

2	Andrew	50
3	Adry	55
4	Chls	60
5	Chrstn	65
6	Eg	60
7	Evndr	50
8	Grld	55
9	Glrnd	65
10	Ir	60
11	Albrth	70
12	Chs	50
13	Efrm	50
14	Fdls	60
15	Grcsll	65
16	Ht C	60
17	Jlln	65
18	Jsf	60
19	Jstn	45
20	Mkhc	50
21	Aldrch	55
22	Arl	45
23	Bnrd	60
24	Clrs	55
25	Ercl	65
26	Flps	65
27	Glbtrh	60
28	Grrnlyn	50
29	Jrm	55
30	Krr	50
31	Arl	65
32	Cln	50
33	Dh	55
34	Angle	65
35	Frl	60
36	Grc	60
37	Hzrn	65
38	Jrm	50
39	Jsn	55
40	Lthr	50
41	Dnl	45
42	Elvr	65
43	Frdnn	60
44	Gvn	50
45	hzk	55

46	Mrcll	50
47	Mrcy	65
48	Nd	60
49	Ry	65
50	Sdrn	65
51	Ys	60
52	Jvt	60
53	Jsln	55
54	Kz	55
55	Lc	45
56	Mywn	40
57	Ndn	45
58	Ptr	45
59	Rl	50
60	Rgn	60
Amount		3365
Average		56,08

The table 1 above provided a detailed breakdown of scores for 60 students, highlighting individual achievements and forming the basis for statistical interpretation. The total score of all students amounted to 3365, with an average score of 56.08, indicating the general level of understanding and performance among the participants. The scores were analyzed further to identify trends, variations, and any potential factors affecting performance. Based on the analysis of the test, it is found out that the correct answer made by the students can be shown below.

Table 2. Percentage of Correct Answer On Simple Present and Simple Past Tense

Tense	Correct Answer	Percentage	Wrong Answer	Percentage
Simple Present Tense	9	23%	51	77%
Simple Present Continuous Tense	12	30%	48	70%
Simple Past Tense	11	28%	49	72%
Simple Past Continuous Tense	18	45%	42	82%

From table 4.2 it can be seen that students make the most correct answer in simple past continuous tense. This can be seen from the number of students who answered simple past tense with 18 students with a percentage of 45%.

Based on the table above, the histogram can be depicted as below:

Table 3. Resume Variable Scores in Using Present Tenses and Past Tenses

Statistics	Variables
High Score	70.00
Low Score	40.00
Mean Score	56.08
Median Score	55.00
Mode	60.00

From the table above it is known that the high score for the variable in using present tenses and past tenses has been sought from 60 students, and based on the number of research samples the highest score is 70 and the low score is 40, the average score is 56.08, the median is 55, and mode is 60.

Percentage of Score Distribution

Based on calculations the average score is 56.08. So the application to determine students' ability to use present tenses and past tenses is included in the low category, this can be seen from the interpretation average score. To determine data disclosure, this is done by grouping variable scores to identify word classes whose intervals are 4.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution in Identifying Present Tenses and Past Tenses

No	Class Intervals	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
1	36 - 40	2	3.3%
2	41 - 45	6	10%
3	46 - 50	13	21.7%
4	51 - 55	10	16.7%
5	56 - 60	15	25%
6	61 - 65	13	21.7%
7	66 - 70	1	1.7%
I = 5		60	100%

Based on the table above, the histogram can be depicted as below:

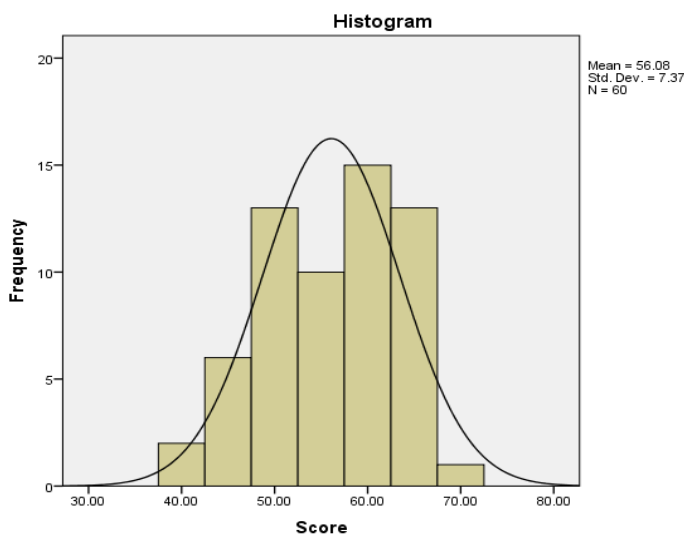


Figure 1. Histogram of students' abilities in using present tenses and past tenses in English learning at SMP Budi Murni 2

Based on the table above, it is known that the variables of students' ability to use present tenses and past tenses show that respondents are in the interval 36 - 40 with a total of 2 students (3.3%), interval 41 - 45 with a total of 6 students (10%), interval 46 - 50 with a total of 13 students (21.7%), interval 51 - 55 with a total of 10 students (16.7%), interval 56 - 60 with a total of 15 students (25%), interval 61 - 65 with a total of 13 students (21.7%), and the interval 66 - 970 with a total of 1 student

(1.7%). So, the meaning of the interval in this study shows the number of samples that received a score in percentage.

The classification of students' abilities in answering multiple choice questions using present tenses and past tenses can be seen in table 4.6 below:

Table 5. Classification Identifying Present Tenses and Past Tenses

Class Intervals	Absolute Frequency
36 - 40	2
41 - 45	6
46 - 50	13
51 - 55	10
56 - 60	15
61 - 65	13
66 - 70	1
I=5	60

Based on the table above, it can be seen that students can answer the questions quite well. This is proven by the number of students who got test scores ≥ 55 as many as 39 people. But it is still below the target score 75. In short, it can be said that the students are not yet able to use simple present and simple past.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings obtained in the research, it can be seen that students' ability to use present tenses and past tenses in class VII at SMP Budi Murni 2 with a research sample of 60 students was done by asking students to answer multiple choice or answer true or false. It is obvious that the seventh grade students of SMP Budi Murni 2 are not yet able to use simple present and simple past, including its progressive form. Since the minimum requirement complete is 75, it is far too high for the students to achieve as their average score is only 56.08. Therefore, the technique of teaching English, especially in simple present tense and past tenses needs improving by providing more exercises and home assignments.

The error was made by students in the simple present tense such as the sentence can be seen in the following items:

4. I...breakfast everyday at 7 a.m

a.eat b.to eat c.ate d.is eating

25. I ...bike last night while he...me seriously.

a.rode, watched **b.was riding, was watching**
c.ride, watch d.am riding, is watching

26. Theyto my party last night.

a. did not come b.are not come
c.do not come d.are coming not

33. What...she...to you yesterday? (give)

What did she give to you yesterday?

In item no.4, most students choose D, but the correct answer is A. And item no 25, most students choose A, but the correct answer is B. Item no 26, most students choose C, but the correct answer is A. Item no 33, most students answer only with the main verb “give” without auxiliary verb “did” since this is interrogative sentence.

From their answers, it seems that the students do not understand yet the present and past tense. Therefore, the teacher should work hard to make them understand the tenses.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the seventh-grade students of SMP Budi Murni 2 have not yet met the expected competency in using basic English tenses, specifically the simple present and simple past tense. This is evident from their average score of 56.08, which falls significantly short of the minimum required score of 75. The findings highlight that their performance is still far from the target, indicating a need for further improvement in mastering these fundamental grammatical structures.

The most frequent errors were observed in the simple present tense (77%), simple past tense (70%), simple present continuous tense (72%), and simple past continuous tense (82%). These high error rates suggest that students face challenges in distinguishing between different tenses and applying them correctly. Despite this, only one student managed to score 70, which, although commendable, is still below the desired standard. These results emphasize the need for targeted teaching strategies to address these specific areas of difficulty and help students achieve the expected learning outcomes.

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