

STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH TENSES

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Abstract: English as a language has its own structure. It is the basic thing must be learned to master English. In English, there is a sentence structure pattern called tense which deals with the way of constructing sentences based on time. Tenses have many patterns with different use. Besides, tenses also require many items, such as verb changing which is not required in Indonesian. This rule does not exist in Indonesia. Meanwhile, English is learned and taught in Indonesia as a subject in school. This becomes something complicated to be learned by Indonesian students. Some students feel confused when they have to learn about tenses. Some of them also consider that English is difficult because of tenses. Whereas, the students have to master tenses in order they can master English. However, actually there are some students who are successful in learning tenses. They use some strategies in learning tenses, so that they can master tenses well. Those strategies are not only useful for their understanding about tenses, but also useful for improving their English skills.

Keywords: learning strategy, tenses

English grammar and Indonesian grammar are different in some ways. One of differences can be seen in constructing sentences based on referring time. The difference is called tenses which become basic structure in English, while in Indonesian, the use of tenses cannot be found. English tenses require the change of verb and the use of some elements, such as *to be*, auxiliaries and other. The patterns in tenses are considered as the complicated one by Indonesian students who do not have such kind of rule in their language, Indonesian. The difference of grammatical structure between English and Indonesian which will be learnt especially is tenses for verbal sentences because in verbal sentences there will be shown the transformation of verb which does not occur in Indonesian structure.

Learning tenses is important, because a sentence is constructed by using tenses. Even, nowadays in elementary level, the students are taught not merely about vocabulary, but also they are taught how to construct sentence correctly. Besides, tenses mastery has contribution in learning English skills; speaking, reading, listening and writing. Some students are not able to use correct tenses when they use English either spoken or written. They seem reluctant to use English, because they are afraid of making mistake. They think that the structure of English is difficult to apply, because it is quietly different from Indonesian structure, included tenses. Although some consider tenses is complicated, but it must be learnt in order to use language appropriately and in

fact there are some students who have mastered tenses well. That becomes interesting to study how they learn tenses and what strategies they use. This study can show what strategies make learning tenses easier. By knowing the strategies, the learners can master tenses in easy and effective way, so that there will be many learners who master tenses well and use English. When the learners do not know what strategies in learning tenses, they will keep thinking that learning tenses is difficult. As the result, they do not have a mind to learn tenses and there are still difficulties in using English.

The research is done with seven university students who have good achievement in learning tenses as the subjects. They are the students of STAIN Tulungagung from TBI (Tadris Bahasa Inggris) A class in second semester academic year 2012/2013. This research studies on strategies in learning English tenses and how the used strategies support the students in learning tenses. Based on the previous statements, the research questions are: what are learning strategies used by the students at STAIN Tulungagung in learning tenses and how do the used strategies support students at STAIN Tulungagung in learning tenses. Therefore, it can be taken some purposes of this research: knowing what learning strategies used by the students at STAIN Tulungagung in learning tenses and knowing how the used strategies support students at STAIN Tulungagung in learning tenses.

LANGUAGE LEARNING

Johnson (2001: 39) states that learning a language is like learning any other habit, you don't have to think about it; it just develops automatically. Learning language is not merely in the classroom. Most adults can learn language without studying it in the classroom. Though they have more troubles in grammar or pronunciation, they may still be able to communicate. This is the reason why the people are motivated to learn language, especially foreign language such as English. From the explanation above, we can say that language learning is an activity to gain knowledge about language and to master the language.

Language learning seems difficult if it is related to pattern or structure. This happens in learning English. In English, there is sentence pattern concerning with the time which is called tenses. This becomes the complicated one in learning English. Learning described as the conscious process, of course, will involve many things in its process. Those things become factors which will decide the success of learning.

Johnson (2001: 117) divides learning factors into three variables: cognitive, affective and personality. Cognitive is divided into some factors. First is intelligence. Intelligence is often considered the prior factor which will decide the success of learning language. Most of people assume that those who have high intelligence will be succeeded in learning language, and vice versa. The second is aptitude. Aptitude is natural ability or skill. Everyone has their own aptitude and sometimes they are not aware of what exactly aptitude they have. However, now there are such kinds of aptitude tests which will decide what a learner should do for good future. Affective factor also contains of two kinds: motivation and attitude. There are two kinds of motivation: integrative and instrumental.

Integrative motivation is said when the learner learns foreign language by having purposes to learn more about the language itself, the culture and the society. Instrumental motivation involves learning in order to achieve some other goals. The second kind of affective categories is attitude. Attitude toward a foreign language which is being learned will give impact to the success of learning. The last factor of learning is personality which deals with human characteristics. There are introvert and extrovert. Introvert person is quiet, reserved and distant, except with intimate friend. While extrovert is sociable person, needs to have person to talk, and does not like studying by himself.

Johnson (2001: 107) describes two stages passed in learning process. Declarative stage is when teacher explains particular tense by giving explanation of how it is formed. The students are given knowledge to memorize. When he wants to perform an action, the stored knowledge has to be recalled from memory. In this stage, the students only accepted 'knowledge about something' delivered by teacher. Then, in the next stage the students are required to produce. The next stage is called procedural stage. Procedural stage is when the students convert 'knowledge about' into 'knowledge how to'. In this stage, the students process their abstract knowledge in their memory then applied in concrete form.

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY

Oxford (1990: 17) classifies language learning strategies into two major classes; direct and indirect strategies. Each class is also divided into three groups. Direct strategies are classified in three sub groups: memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies have metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

Memory strategies in direct strategies is sometimes called mnemonics. Memory strategies fall into four sets: creating mental linkage, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing actions. In creating mental linkage, there are three strategies that form the cornerstone for the rest of the memory strategies: grouping, associating/elaborating, and using context. Second set in memory strategies is applying images and sounds. Four strategies are included here: using imagery, using keywords, semantic mapping, and representing sounds in memory. Reviewing well contains just one strategy, structures reviewing. It means reviewing in carefully spaced interval. The last is employing action which is divided into two. First is using physical response or sensation and using mechanical technique.

Second sub group in direct strategies is cognitive strategies. In this strategy, there are four divisions with each actions employed by the learners. First is practicing which has five categories: repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining, and practicing naturalistically. Second is receiving and sending messages which are classified into two, getting the idea quickly and using resource for receiving and sending messages. The third is analyzing and reasoning. The last in cognitive strategy is creating structure for input and output. Here is three strategies involved in this last division: taking notes, summarizing means making a summary or abstract and highlighting.

The third in memory strategies is compensation strategies. This strategy has two divisions, guessing intelligently in listening and reading and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. The two strategies which contribute in guessing intelligently in listening and reading refer to two different kinds, using linguistics clues and using other clues. In overcoming limitations in speaking and writing, there are eight strategies. Switching to, getting help, avoiding communication partially or, selecting the topic, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words and using a circumlocution or synonym.

The second major class of language learning strategies according to Oxford is indirect strategies. This strategy is divided into three sub classes: metacognitive, social and affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are classified into three. They are centering learning, arranging and planning learning, and evaluating learning. Centering learning can be done by over viewing and linking with already known material, paying attention, and delaying speech production to focus on listening. In arranging and planning learning, the learners can find out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of language task, planning for a language task, and seeking practice opportunities. The last, evaluating can be done by self monitoring and self evaluating. The second is social strategies. Social strategies consist of many strategies; asking questions, cooperating with others and emphatizing with others. Asking questions can be asking for clarification and verification and asking for correction. Meanwhile, cooperating with others means cooperating with peers and or with proficient users of the new language. The last in social strategy is emphatizing with other which can be developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings. The last, affective strategies also can be done in some ways. They are lowering anxiety, encouraging our selves and taking emotional temperature. Lowering anxiety means the learners use progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation, using music and using laughter. Encouraging our selves can be done by making positive statements, taking risks wisely and rewarding our selves. The last is taking emotional temperature. The learners can listen to their body, use checklist, writing a language learning diary and discussing the feelings with someone else. Those are the learners do in affective strategies.

TENSES

Tenses are part of grammar which concerns in sentences construction by referring time. English uses a lot of different verb forms to refer to the events occurring in any different time, while in Indonesian no verb is changed to refer to the events occurring in different time. Therefore, in English there are the number of tenses with each function and pattern. Each tense will be followed by verb changing and appropriate time signal.

Based on time, there are four divisions; *present*, *past*, *future* and *past future*. Viewed from event, each tense has four ways: simple, continuous, perfect and perfect continuous. Thus, there are sixteen kinds of tenses. The table below will show the combination of time and event which establish tenses.

Time	Aspect	Present	Past	Future	Past Future
		Simple	Simple Present	Simple Past	Simple Future
Continuous	Present Continuous	Past Continuous	Future Continuous	Past Future Continuous	
Perfect	Present Perfect	Past Perfect	Future Perfect	Past Future Perfect	
	Present Perfect Continuous	Past Perfect Continuous	Future Perfect Continuous	Past Future Perfect Continuous	

From those all tenses there are only twelve tenses which are frequently used.

METHOD

The approach applied in this study is qualitative. Qualitative deals with data in the form of word, rather than numbers. Moleong (2011: 6) defines qualitative study as study aimed to understand a phenomenon about what is experienced by the subject such as, behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc. The research design of this study is survey. Literally, survey is done to describe opinion, attitude, perception and choice of a population which is being studied (Latief, 2010: 147). This research is categorized as survey because this research studies what are written by the subjects in questionnaire and what are stated by the subjects in interview, not what are done by them.

This study is called survey qualitative study. In this study, researcher found the data to answer the research problems. This study is aimed at knowing strategies used by the students in learning tense and how the strategies support students in learning tenses then describe it. This study describes what strategies used by the students in learning tenses and how the strategies support them in their learning.

Research Subjects

This study studied about students' learning strategy in learning English tenses. The subjects of this study are the students who have been learning English tenses, especially tenses for verbal sentences. They are the students of STAIN Tulungagung from the same semester. They are seven female students from the second semester in TBI (Tadris Bahasa Inggris) A class academic year 2012/2013. The subjects are chosen from TBI A class because this class in an excellent class. The students of TBI A are chosen from the entrance test which is not done for other classes, so it indicates that they are the best students among other classes. The second semester students are chosen because they have passed Grammar 1 course in the first semester, where English tenses is taught in this course. The scores in Grammar 1 course show seven students who have got the best scores. It indicates that the seven students are the best in English tenses mastery. Therefore, the seven students from TBI A class in second semester are chosen as the subjects of this study.

Data Collection Method

The data was collected during the research at STAIN Tulungagung. The researcher used two methods in collecting data. The first method of collecting data in this research is distributing questionnaire. By giving questionnaire to the subjects, the researcher got the data from subjects about their strategies in learning tenses. In the questionnaire, the subjects decided which strategies they usually used in learning tenses, by answering "Yes" or "No" in each statement. The data then became reference to conduct interview. Giving questionnaire first to the subjects was aimed at stimulating subjects' memory and feeling about their strategies, so they became easier to explain more when they were being interviewed.

The second method is doing interview. The interview was done to gather information about subjects' opinions and feelings about learning tenses in their own words. The interview was conducted to clarify the data collected from questionnaire completed by the subjects. The researcher aimed at knowing more and deeply about the strategies used by the subjects in learning tenses and how the used strategies support the subjects in their learning. The researcher applied in-dept interview. In-depth interview is that is a way to collect data or information by meeting directly with the interviewee to get detail and complete information (Bungin, 2001: 158).

Data Analysis

Analyzing data in qualitative is different from analyzing data in quantitative. In qualitative, the data tend to be described in the form of words rather than numbers. Sugiyono (2008: 245) says that data analysis in qualitative research is done in inductive way, which is analyzing the finding data, and then developing it into hypothesis. After that, collecting data is done again continuously.

Miles and Huberman (1994: 10) develop a technique in qualitative analysis. In this analysis, the steps are: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification

FINDINGS

Each subject had her own strategies. The strategies were applied by them based on their needs and condition. Most subjects used the same strategies, but some of them used different strategies. Some subjects supposed that a certain strategy was very common to do, but others admitted that the strategy was the most difficult to do.

All subjects learned tenses from the pattern first and then they tried to construct sentence by their own selves. That was they do for the first time they learned tenses. This way was called learning deductively meant learning the pattern first and then applying what have been learned in communication. The next strategy is memorizing. In order to keep their understanding about tenses, the subjects did many exercises. Another strategy employed by the subjects was by asking to others and discussing with their friends. They usually asked for questions or correction. All subjects did this strategy in their learning. Analyzing

tenses from text was also done by some subjects. Noticing was also one of students' strategies in learning tenses. The parts usually noticed in tenses were adverb of time and verb changing, because those were very influential in tenses. Translating is also done by some subjects in learning tenses.

The researcher found based on the data taken from the subjects that the strategies employed by the students in learning tenses were very useful. Learning tenses was supposed by some students as the most complicated, but using those strategies made them easier to learn tenses. Those strategies did not only give advantages in their understanding about tenses, but also helped them in learning English skills, especially writing and speaking. Therefore, the students' strategies gave many advantages toward their learning, either learning tenses or learning English skills.

DISCUSSION

Oxford (1990: 14) draws a distinction between direct strategies and indirect strategies in learning language. In simple way, direct strategies means the strategies done related to the learners them selves. Indirect strategies indicate the strategies related to other learners or people. The used strategies in learning tenses are included in both direct and indirect strategies. Here is the table showing the used strategies based on Oxford's classification:

Direct Strategies	Indirect Strategies
Learning deductively	Asking to others
Memorizing	Discussing with friends
Doing exercises	
Practicing in speaking	
Practicing in writing	
Analyzing from text	
Translating	
Noticing	

Oxford (1990: 1) argues that strategies are important for two reasons. First, strategies are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. Second, learners who have developed appropriate learning strategies have greater self-confidence and learn more effectively. According to Oxford also, language learning strategies support learning both directly and indirectly. Supporting directly means supporting students in learning a certain item. In this case, those strategies support students in learning tenses. Meanwhile, supporting indirectly means supporting students in other aspects. It is felt by the students in improving their ability in English skills.

CONCLUSION

It is found that the students of English department who have high achievement in tenses mastery at STAIN Tulungagung use various strategies in learning tenses. They use their own strategies based on their need and interests. The learning strategies used by the students are: learning deductively, memorizing, doing exercises, practicing in speaking, practicing in writing, asking to others, discussing with friends, analyzing from text, noticing, and translating. Those strategies do not only give advantages for them in learning tenses, but also help them to improve their ability in English skills, especially speaking and writing skill. Those tenses learning strategies are easier, faster, effective, and understandable. Therefore, those strategies are needed in learning tenses.

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