

## **An Observation on Students' Ability in using 5 Basic Tenses (Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense, Present Perfect Tense, Present Continuous Tense, and Present Future Tense) for Speaking English**

**Elfitriani<sup>#1</sup>, Rini Kustini<sup>#2</sup>, Sri Kusnasari<sup>#3</sup>**

<sup>#123</sup>Program Studi Manajemen Informatika Komputer, STMIK Triguna Dharma  
Jl. A.H Nasution No.73F – Medan  
E-mail: [trianielfi@gmail.com](mailto:trianielfi@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Speaking is the most prominent skill in learning English. No one considers that someone is good at English if he/she good at English if he/she cannot use this language in conversation. But, to have speaking ability is not easy, especially for students. This paper aims to describe an observation on students' ability in using 5 basic tenses in speaking English. The observation shows how far the students can implement the 5 basic tenses they have learned in their speaking. It also shows the problems students have when they are asked to actively participate in the classroom and the solutions as well.

**Keywords:** Observation, 5 basic tenses, speaking English.

### *Abstrak*

*Berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris adalah keterampilan yang paling utama dalam dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris. Tidak ada seorangpun yang menganggap bahwa seseorang terampil berbahasa Inggris jika dia tidak bisa menggunakan bahasa ini dalam percakapan. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan sebuah observasi pada kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan 5 tensis dasar dalam berbahasa Inggris. Observasi tersebut menunjukkan seberapa mampu mahasiswa tersebut dalam mengimplementasikan 5 tensis dasar dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Observasi ini juga memaparkan masalah-masalah yang yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa-mahasiswa tersebut beserta solusi-solusinya.*

*Kata kunci: Observasi, 5 tensis dasar, berbicara bahasa Inggris.*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, so many people have realized the importance of having good ability in English. The role of English is getting more and more important. It can be observed in our surrounding that English becomes a must that a person has

have to be success in their life. There are many fields that need English mastery in order to get them as your jobs. In other words, mastering English is not only the requirement in its field but also other fields requires it into their considerations.

Learning English as a second language offers many benefits in today's business world not only as a means to communicate with people on the other side of the world but it serves to show a person's intelligence too. When a person is willing to commit to learn what has become known as the International language of today's modern world it shows they want to be a success.

Being able to speak English will demonstrate a level of intelligence to others, especially if spoken fluently without hesitation or the need to search for words. The fact you may have an accent really does not matter whatsoever as long as your pronunciation is good enough to be understood.

Having a good mastery in English is not the ability you born with. It is the ability that has to be learnt and practiced for certain time. The success of learning English depends on how serious you are in your efforts. Some people need short period of time to master English but some others need longer time to keep up to it. In brief, the more serious the one to learn it the sooner time needed to master it.

Speaking English is the first priority of learning English. It can be said that no one will consider you as a person who are good at English if you cannot speak this language to communicate with others. Moreover, if we ask an ESL (English as a Second Language ) student why he/she wants to learn English, he/she will answer "I want to speak English". Yes, it is no doubt that most students are really eager to speak English well with various considerations in their mind. But, this desire of speaking this language is not as high as their willingness to sacrifice themselves in learning to achieve their dream; to be able to speak English well.

To boost English Language Learners (EELs)' spirit in studying English is not as easy as it is said. Teachers,

lectures, linguists, and other related people has dedicated their time and efforts to find effective solution to this problem but it has been unsolved yet.

There are some problems faced by students if they are asked why they do not want to actively participate on teaching learning process; 1. They do not have high self confidence; 2. Most of them have a little vocabulary to express what they want to say; 3. They are afraid of making mistakes in the grammar points. Grammar has been still a monster for them that it hinders them to speak actively in class. Although, it has been repeatedly encouraged by the teachers or lecturers that in speaking they do not have to be *Mr. Grammar* but it has been still in vain.

One of grammar point that student are afraid of is Tense. There are lots of different English tenses to know, but there are only 5 that students need to know well in order to sound fluent. Students are intended to master these 5 basic English tenses because when they do, they will speak English so much more naturally and comfortably. Probably 90% of exercises and discussion questions (not related to a specific grammar function) can be answered with one of these 5 tenses. The 5 (five) basic tenses are: 1. Simple Present Tense; 2. Simple Past Tense; 3. Present Continuous Tense; 4. Present Perfect Tense; and 5. Present Future Tense or Simple Future Tense.

## **B. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURES**

### **1. Definition of Observation**

Observation can be defined as the deep look at the thing that is being observed. It is done to find certain data that is intended to find solution that is faced by the thing that is being observed. Here are some definition of observation stated by some experts and dictionary.

According to Fetterman (1998: 34-35), an observation is a systematic data collection approach. Researchers use all of their senses to examine people in natural settings or naturally occurring situations. He adds that Observation of a field setting involves: 1. prolonged engagement in a setting or social situation; 2. clearly expressed, self-conscious notations of how observing is done; 3. methodical and tactical improvisation in order to develop a full understanding of the setting of interest; 4. methodical and tactical improvisation in order to develop a full understanding of the setting of interest; 5. recording one's observations.

In other way Laura Lake, an expert from marketing says that an observation is a method of data collection in which the situation of interest is watched and the relevant facts, actions and behaviors are recorded ([http://marketing.about.com/od/marketing\\_glossary/g/observationdef.htm](http://marketing.about.com/od/marketing_glossary/g/observationdef.htm)).

Observation is also defined by Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia as the active acquisition of information from a primary source. In living beings, observation employs the senses. In science, observation can also involve the recording of data via the use of instruments. The term may also refer to any data collected during the scientific activity (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Observation>).

### 1.1 Classroom Observation

A classroom observation is a formal or informal observation of teaching while it is taking place in a classroom or other learning environment. Typically

conducted by fellow teachers, administrators, or instructional specialists, classroom observations are often used to provide teachers with constructive critical feedback aimed at improving their classroom management and instructional techniques. School administrators also regularly observe teachers as an extension of formal job-performance evaluations.

Classroom observations may be called *learning walks*, *teacher observations*, *walkthroughs*, and many other things, and they may be conducted for shorter or longer periods of time—from a few minutes to a full class period or school day. Educators may also use a wide variety of classroom-observation methods—some may be nationally utilized models developed by educational experts, while others may be homegrown processes created by the educators using them. In many cases, observation notes are recorded using common templates or guidelines that describe what observers should be looking for or what the observed teacher would like feedback on. Increasingly, educators are conducting and recording classroom observations using digital and online technologies—such as smartphones, tablets, and subscription-based online systems—that can provide educators with observational functionality and data analytics that would not be possible if paper-based processes were used.

While classroom observations are conducted for a wide variety of purposes, they are perhaps most commonly associated with job-performance evaluations conducted by school administrators and with professional learning communities—groups of teachers who work together to improve their instructional skills. Classroom observations may be conducted by

teachers in the same content area or grade level—in these cases, teachers share students or similar expertise—or they may be conducted by teachers across academic disciplines—in this case, the goal may be to observe and learn from the varied instructional practices used in different types of classes.

It should also be noted that many educators make a strict delineation between observations made for the purposes of helping a teacher improve, and those conducted for the purposes of job-performance evaluation. Some educators may object to the use of *walkthrough*, or other terms associated with non-administrative observations, when referencing evaluative observations by school administrators.

## 1.2 Speaking English

It is said above that most people who are asked about their aim of learning English is speaking. People have known the advantages of speaking English. Some of them are stated at <http://www.esoe.co.uk/blog/4-reasons-why-learning-english-is-so-important/as> follow:

1. English may not be the most spoken language in the world, but it is the official language in a large number of countries. It is estimated that the number of people in the world that use in English to communicate on a regular basis is 2 billion!

2. English is the dominant business language and it has become almost a necessity for people to speak English if they are to enter a global workforce, research from all over the world shows that cross-border business communication is most often conducted

in English. Its importance in the global market place therefore cannot be understated, learning English really can change your life.

3. Many of the world's top films, books and music are published and produced in English. Therefore by learning English you will have access to a great wealth of entertainment and will be able to have a greater cultural understanding.

4. Most of the content produced on the internet (50%) is in English. So knowing English will allow you access to an incredible amount of information which may not be otherwise available!

Although learning English can be challenging and time consuming, we can see that it is also very valuable to learn and can create many opportunities. There are 4 key skills when you learn a language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking is different from the other three. It is "Odd-One-Out". The other three you can do alone, on your own, without anyone else. You can listen to the radio alone. You can read a book alone. You can write a letter alone. But you can't really speak alone.

Practice your speaking needs at least a friend. With him/her you can exchange information. Grammar is one of the point to make your meanings are well accepted by other (s). Although grammar can make some students are anxious in expressing themselves in speaking but it is claimed that it can make people easier to understand you.

Among the great number of grammar points, the ability to understand 5 basic tenses is considered enough for students to actualize themselves in speaking English. If the students can

implement these 5 basic tenses well, they will be more confident in speaking English.

Tense is an aspect of verb which tells the time of an action. Tenses have certain rules, according to which a sentence is made. Here is the explanation how these 5 tenses used:

### 1.3 Five (5) Basic Tenses

Tense	Affirmative/Negative/Interrogative	Use	Signal Word
Simple Present Tense	A : He works five days in a week N : He does not work 5 days in a week I : Does he work 5 days in a week?  A : You are a typist N : You are not a typist I : Are you a typist?	1.To express daily activity and habitual action 2. To describe a universal facts 3. To give instruction 4. To state fixed arrangement	always, every ..., never, normally, often, seldom, sometimes, usually.
Simple Past Tense	A: She spoke N: She did not speak I : Did she speak?  A: They were happy N: They were not happy I : Were they happy?	1. To describe past action or situation	yesterday, 2 minutes ago, in 1990, the other day, last Friday
Present Continuous Tense	A: We are typing N: We are not typing I : Are we typing?	1.action taking place in the moment of speaking  2.action taking place only for a limited period of time  3.action arranged for the futu	At the moment, now, right now.
Present Perfect Tense	A: He has spoken N: He has not spoken I : Has he spoken?  A: I have been a typist N: I have not been a typist I : Have I been a typist?	1.putting emphasis on the result  2.action that is still going on till now  3.action that stopped recently  4.finished action	already, ever, just, never, not yet, so far, till now, up to now

			that has an influence on the present  5.action that has taken place once, never or several times before the moment of speaking	
Present Tense (using Will/Shall)	Future (using Will/Shall)	A: It will propel... N: It will not propel... I : Will it propel...?  A: They will be there N: They will not be there I : Will they be there?	1.action in the future that cannot be influenced  2.spontaneous decision  3.assumption with regard to the future	Next, tomorrow, two days later, Assumption: I think, probably, perhaps.
Present Tense (using be + going to)	Future (using be + going to)	A: We are going to attend B: We are not going to attend I: Are we going to attend?	1.decision made for the future  2. conclusion with regard to the future	Next, tomorrow, etc.

## 2. Students' Ability in Using 5 Basic Tense in Speaking.

Having students actively participate in the classroom is the dream of every teacher or lecturer. However the dream has not been achieved since only a few students who are brave enough to rise their hands in responding teachers' questions, asking questions or just give their comments. Based on the observations only students who had good score on tests held are eager to actively participate. In facts, this condition not only happened in one school or campus only but it happened almost in every campus and school, as it is said by Naiman, 1978:

"Teachers with communicative orientation are anxious to get their students to talk as much as possible in their classes. Studies on what constitutes 'a good learner' have found that learners who rose their hands more and more often responded to teacher elicitations did better on tests than other learners."( cited in Breen2001: 121):

Being confused on the students' attitude in classroom, one day they were asked to share the problems they faced why they were so reluctant to participate in the class. These are the summary of the problems:

1. The students particularly like participating in the classroom but their fear of making mistakes and being corrected make them reluctant to do so.
2. Many students prefer participating passively in class by taking in their classmates' comments/answers instead of risking their own answer.
3. Some students sometimes feel intimidated by certain teacher who perhaps is very picky (about pronunciation or language/grammar errors).
4. Students' failure to complete assignment. When this is the case, students tend to participate passively in class because they do not have much to contribute to the topic.

Fear of negative evaluation is the next factor most students mentioned as inhibiting their participation (Horwitz and Cope, 1991:31)

Responding to their problems, some effective solutions can be taken in teacher's consideration:

1. Teacher or Lecturer kindly tells the students that they do not have to be afraid or shy in making mistakes. If it is possible, give them guarantee that the teacher will not be angry or give punishment to the students who make mistakes. It can be added that they might make mistakes but it is considered as a process to succeed to learn English. The teacher or lecturer has to be able to fire up the students' spirit in speaking English. For instance, instead of saying *I go to campus*, the student says *I am go to campus*. The student's saying of course wrong but do not show your correction frontally that

make the student feels ashamed. Instead, keep the mistake once and ask the other students to show their ability. If this process finishes and you find that some students make mistakes in their ability, try to explain the topic once again. By doing this certain student does not feel that he /she is being judged.

2. It is often happens that the student feels more comfortable to use his/her friend's answer than his/her own answer. There are some factors why he/she does this whether she/he is unable to do that or she/he is lazy or even she/he does not have enough time to do that (for working student). Being empathy is the best solution to this problem. If we have found the problem then take a time to advise him/her about the importance of being independent.
3. Some students often make mistakes in their pronunciation. Even, they are sometimes influenced by their tribe's dialect. That is a big deal, just correct them slowly and patiently.

Based on the observation, the students ability to use 5 basic tenses for speaking English was categorized 'in middle level'. Here are the results of the observations:

1. Some students do not know which structure rule used whether verbal sentence or non-verbal sentence. Even sometimes they combined between the rule of verbal sentence and non-verbal sentence. For examples: *He is works, he work, He go to his friend's house yesterday. Tuti*

and Andi is going to meet in the mall tonight, etc.

2. Some other students are able to show their ability to use these 5 basic grammar well with only a few mistakes.
3. The other some students can implement these 5 basic tenses well whether in their monolog (she/he told his/her story in front of the class ) or dialog (she/he needed other student to ask him/her).

### C. CONCLUSION

Although most students know the advantages of being able to speak English well but it is not easy to ask them to be serious and persistent in learning this language. Their spirit of learning English is easily fade away especially if they are asked to do rather difficult assignment, for instance implementing grammatical points that they have learned.

Based on the observation, grammar is still the number serious problem students have while speaking English. It seems grammar hinders them to speak fluently. It should not be that way actually because the role of grammar in speaking indeed to make the meanings stated clear and easily understood.

Mastering 5 basic tenses is a must to be able to express what you think and feel in English. This mastery is considered enough for beginners to start actively communicate with others.

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