



## THE CORRELATION OF BASIC TENSES TOWARDS THE PUBLIC SPEAKING ABILITY OF SIXTH SEMESTER STUDENTS

Wariyati,  
Asnawi,  
Seyufani<sup>i</sup>

Faculty of Education and Teacher Training,  
English Department,  
Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah,  
Medan, Indonesia

### Abstract:

The aim of this study is to see the correlation of mastering eight basic tenses towards the public speaking ability of 6th semester students. This research used qualitative method. The information was collected by employing questionnaire to indicate the participant's perceptions about mastering eight basic tenses towards the general public speaking ability and also the explanations behind such opinion. The subject was 50 students that studied in the department of English Education in one amongst private university in Medan, North Sumatra. The finding found that there is a correlation of mastering eight basic tenses towards the public speaking ability students. They believed that eight basic tenses grammar in this case is important as their starting point if they want to be able to speak. They also believed that it will be appalling if they speak English with wrong grammar. Students also mentioned that it is a problem of pronunciation, confidence and the fear of being criticized by the audience that hamper them from speaking English.

**Keywords:** auxiliary verbs, public speaking, grammar, students

### 1. Introduction

In teaching English Grammar, most of the teacher start from explaining about auxiliary verbs, the function of it, how to use it, how to put it in correct form of grammar. This is done with an intention to make the students master the grammar and how they apply it in sentences or use it when they want to speak. Auxiliary in grammar is a helping element, typically a verb that adds meaning to the basic meaning of the main verb in a clause. Auxiliaries can convey information about tense, mood, person, and number. An auxiliary verb occurs with a main verb that is in the form of an infinitive or a

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [wariyati@umnaw.ac.id](mailto:wariyati@umnaw.ac.id), [asnawi@umnaw.ac.id](mailto:asnawi@umnaw.ac.id), [seyufani24@gmail.com](mailto:seyufani24@gmail.com)

participle. Since auxiliary verbs help the main verb in a sentence, one way to help the class remember this is to refer to them as 'helping verbs' as well as 'auxiliary verbs'. Also, instead of simply giving them the definition and examples auxiliary verbs, they are asked to try to find out what they already know. It's sometimes surprising how much students have learned independently. Auxiliary play an important part for the students to able to master grammar and after that it also impacts their ability to speak, because when students able to create sentence they are also able to speak. Moreover, it also includes many vocabularies. Teaching tenses in Indonesia can also be considered as grammar content as Ur (1996) also defines grammar as a strategy of putting words together to make correct sentences. Radford (1998) describes grammar as principles which administer the construction and understanding of lexical, phrases and sentences. It is also supported by Crystal (1994) in which grammar is deemed as a methodical inquiry of a language and is conventionally categorized into morphology and syntax.

Speaking of problem in mastering public speaking will be not far from tenses, and that is the reason this study occurs. The 8 basic tenses are present tense, past tense, present continuous tense, past continuous tense, present future tense, past future tense, present perfect tense, and past perfect tense. These 8 tenses have been taught by the teacher in the class, so all students have the same starting point. A particular important form of token-reflexive symbol is found in the tenses of verbs. Reichenbach (2005) defined tenses as a component in the language that determines time with reference to the time point of the act of speech, i.e, of the token uttered. The choice of simple, continuous, perfect is governed by several aspects, and not on an unyielding set of grammatical rules. It appears to be quite problematic for the foreign language student to be capable of using the language applicably for the appropriate circumstances. It is because they have not developed on the stressed points efficiently and as a result, they fail to get the message across (Çakır, 2011). Tense is a substance of nuance that is the shifting of the form of a verb by giving an addition or exclusion of a morpheme. The term "tense" refers commonly to a verb form, not to sequential interval (Graver, 1986). Structurally speaking, there are two main tenses; present and past. Future is included in the present. On the other hand, there are three tenses in English; present, past and future. First language interference and existing distinctions are some problems in the learning of the use of these forms.

Public speaking is one of skill that is very important for university students, they need to talk in public one day, or when they present seminar for their thesis. Speaking is often considered timid, so that many teachers and students avoid teaching and learning it. The success of English learning is seen generally through the speaking ability. According to Hasibuan and Ansyari (2007), many language learners regard speaking ability as a measure of knowing a language. The problem of this study is seeing the correlation of teaching mastering eight basic tenses towards the public speaking ability of 6th semester students. Dolman (1992) stated that public speaking is significantly different from teacher performances, which isn't conventionalized imitation of life. It is life itself, a natural function of life, a true person in a very real communication with

neighbors. It means one's ability of delivering what's on their mind is incredibly important to send the message to audience, this process needs the power to rearrange the sentence from what the sender thought into auditory communication. Within the case of English as foreign language, the power of master the English language first is extremely essential.

## 2. Methodology

This research used qualitative method. Mack (2011) argued that qualitative research shares these characteristics. It attempts to understand a given research problem or subject from the points of the nearby populace it includes. Qualitative research is especially successful in getting socially data about the qualities, conclusions, practices, and social settings of specific populaces. The information were collected employing a written questionnaire to indicate the participant's perceptions about mastering eight basic tenses towards the general public speaking ability and also the explanations behind such opinion. The information was collected using means of close-ended questionnaire items with multiple choices and *Likert* Scale formats.

The subject was 50 students that study English Education in one amongst private university in Medan, Sumatera Utara. The qualitative data were collected to explore the rationales behind their preferences. Qualitative research is an umbrella term that asks several research strategies that share certain characteristics. Qualitative designs were typically a well-considered and reasonable combination of sampling, and data collection, analysis, techniques. The process of collecting data were first the researchers teach the students for the eight basic tenses, after that the researcher give exercise for the students. It follows by giving some questions to support the data.

## 3. Findings

The researcher got the complete data from all the research instruments. The researcher had analyzed the data systematically and accurately. The data was analyzed in order to draw conclusion about the objective of the study. Researcher described the findings for the first item as follows:

**Table 1:** The participants' percentage score range of eight basic tenses

Number of Participants (f)	Percentage (%)	Number of Correct Questions
0	0	8
2	4	7
3	6	6
7	14	5
20	40	4
18	36	3
0	0	2
0	0	1

The table 1 above showed the participants' percentage score range of 8 basic tenses. From the table we can see that none of the students get correct answers when doing the eight basic tenses exercise. It is followed by 2 out of 50 students who have 7 of 8 correct questions in doing the eight basic tenses. The students were asked *"Do you feel nervous when your teacher ask you to speak English in front of the class?"* and they answered *"No, because I always try to look less nervous in front of the class to make it look more relaxed"*, *"Honestly yes. Because I had to prepare the words and grammar particularly tenses properly"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in front of many people? Why and why not?"* And they answered *"Yes I do. Because people think I'm smart if I talk in front of class"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in English with your friends? Why and why not?"*, and the answered *"I like, but sometimes lack of vocabulary was a barrier as well as wrong grammar and tenses"*.

It is continued by 3 out of 50 students who got corrects 6 of 8 questions in doing the eight basic tenses. One of the students was asked *"Do you feel nervous when your teacher ask you to speak English in front of the class?"* and the answer was *"yes sometimes I feel nervous because there are still many English vocabulary words that I don't know"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in front of many people? Why and why not?"* And the answer was *"Yes, I do. Because while I speak English with my friends I am enjoying, happy and if I make faults in my speaking of English, my friends can explain or say that it is false grammar for me to speak English "*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in English with your friends? Why and why not?"*, and the answer was *"Sometimes, because I'm shy"*.

7 out of 50 students have got 5 of 8 correct questions in doing the eight basic tenses. One of the student was asked *"Do you feel nervous when your teacher ask you to speak English in front of the class?"* and the answer was *"I don't feel confident when teacher ask me to explain material in English front of the class, because I don't feel fluent in English yet and I find it difficult to convey what I want to say comfortably and grammatically especially tenses."*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in front of many people? Why and why not?"* And the answer was *"I like but I rarely speak English with my friends, but I've tried to get used to speaking with my friends"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in English with your friends? Why and why not?"*, and the answer was, *"No, because it is not our habit and tenses is difficult."*

20 out of 50 students got 4 of 8 corrects questions in doing the eight basic tenses. One of the students was asked *"Do you feel nervous when your teacher ask you to speak English in front of the class?"* and the answer was *"No, I don't. I always think that I can't be better than my friends. I'm afraid to make grammar mistake like tenses and also vocabulary and I'm insecure easily"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in front of many people? Why and why not?"* And the answer was, *"no because I'm afraid that my grammar is wrong and people will criticize me"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in English with your friends? Why and why not?"*, and the answer was, *"no, because I'm afraid if my grammar is wrong."*

Moreover, 18 out of 50 students got 3 of 8 corrects questions in doing the eight basic tenses. One of the students was asked *"Do you feel nervous when your teacher ask you to speak English in front of the class?"* and the answer was *"yes, I feel nervous when the teacher asks you to pronounce the fear of speaking English incorrectly in front of the class"*; when asked *"Do you like to speak in front of many people? Why and why not?"* And the answer was *"No,*

*because I'm not too confident if I don't really know what I want to say"; when asked "Do you like to speak in English with your friends? Why and why not?", and the answer was "I like it, although sometimes it is mixed with Indonesian as tenses can be confusing."*

The respondents indicated in further questionnaire that the correlation of mastering basic tenses towards the public speaking ability students are indeed important, they believe grammar is 8 basic tenses which becomes their starting point if they want to be able to speak. They believe that it will be shameful if they speak English with wrong grammar or tenses. But not only that they also mention that it is a problem of pronunciation, confidence and the fear of criticize by the audience. Respondents mostly highlighted the grammar as equal to the tenses. From the findings, it also shows that there only two respondents that got seven correct questions. However, apart from the tenses, they are also lack of vocabulary. This is similar to the research conducted by Handayani (2013) which emphasizes the difficulty faced by students in public speaking begun at the level of speaking grammatically since grammar has voluminous rules. However, the study discusses the grammar usage into two categories; they are the function of grammar in public speaking and the grammar awareness in public speaking.

A study conducted by Muhlis (2017) investigates foreign language reading anxiety among Indonesian EFL Senior High School students through a survey research design and questionnaires. The finding discovered that 71,9% students observed anxiety in medium level. The second finding also resulted that there were two foremost potential causes of anxiety namely text features and personal factors. The text features include unknown vocabulary (49% students agreed), unfamiliar topic (40% students agreed), and unfamiliar culture (38% students agreed). Vocabulary as a problem is also mentioned by samples in the present study. On the other hand, under the concept of personal factors, there are two sources of foreign language reading anxiety including fear of making errors (39% students agreed) and worry about reading effects (28% students agreed). The present study is also in alignment to Wati and Widyantoro (2019) research which data were collected by observations and interviews and found that the students' linguistic limitation became problematic in the students' speech process. The study revealed that students lacked vocabulary and understanding grammar became an obstacle in students' speech.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Grammar is an imperative that rule the linguistic conduct of an individual that has variety in its every usage, depend on the context. When it comes to public speaker, it becomes the form how the speaker uses the grammar to deliver purpose in speaking. The study found that the there is a correlation of mastering eight basic tenses towards the public speaking ability students. Students believed that eight basic tenses grammar in this case is important as their starting point if they want to be able to speak. They also believed that it will be appalling if they speak English with wrong grammar.

## References

- Çakır, İ. (2011). Problems in teaching tenses to Turkish learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(2), 123-127.
- Crystal, D. (1994). *An encyclopedic dictionary of language and languages*. Penguin.
- Dolman, J. (1922). *A handbook of public speaking*. Harcourt, Brace.
- Graver, B. D. (1971). *Advanced English Practice* (Vol. 3). London: Oxford University Press.
- Handayani, W. (2013). Grammar Usage in Public Speaking. *Journal Polingua: Scientific Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Education*, 2(2), 81-85.
- Hasibuan, K., & Ansyari, M. F. (2007). Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). *Pekanbaru: Alaf Riau*.
- Mack, N. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. North Carolina: Family Health International.
- Muhlis, A. (2017). Foreign language reading anxiety among Indonesian EFL senior high school students. *English Franca: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 1(1), 19-44.
- Radford, A., Atkinson, M., Britain, D., Clahsen, H., & Spencer, A. (2009). *Linguistics: an introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Reichenbach, H. (2005). The tenses of verbs. *Time: From Concept to Narrative Construct: a Reader*, 1-12.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Ernst Klett Sprachen.
- Wati, A., & Widyantoro, A. (2019). Communication strategies of Indonesian Bilingual School Students: An Analysis in one way communication context. *Journal of Foreign Language Education and Technology*, 4(1).

Wariyati, Asnawi, Seyufani  
THE CORRELATION OF BASIC TENSES TOWARDS  
THE PUBLIC SPEAKING ABILITY OF SIXTH SEMESTER STUDENTS

---

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions, and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of English Language Teaching shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).