THE ENGLISH TENSES USED IN SPEAKING: EVIDENCE FROM EFL STUDENTS IN ACEH

THESIS

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The English Tenses Used in Speaking: Evidence From EFL Students in Aceh

adalah benar-benar karya saya, **kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya**. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan di dalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggungjawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

Banda Aceh, 1 Januari 2025

Saya yang membuat surat pernyataan,

Niswatul Maknunah

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يِم بِسْسِــــــــــــمِ للِاِالَّرْحَمِن الَّرحْيِم

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ABSTRACT

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This research explores the challenges faced by Indonesian EFL students in using tenses while speaking English. Through a qualitative research design, data was collected via field research, including direct observations and interviews with 10 students. The study revealed that students predominantly used the simple present and simple past tenses, while the present continuous, future, and present perfect tenses were used less frequently and often incorrectly. The most common grammatical errors included confusion between the present perfect and simple past tenses, subject-verb agreement mistakes, and article usage errors. These issues were linked to limited tense and limited practice such as fear of making mistakes. The findings suggest that explicit grammar instruction and contextualized practice are essential for improving students' use of tenses, alongside efforts to reduce psychological barriers in language learning.

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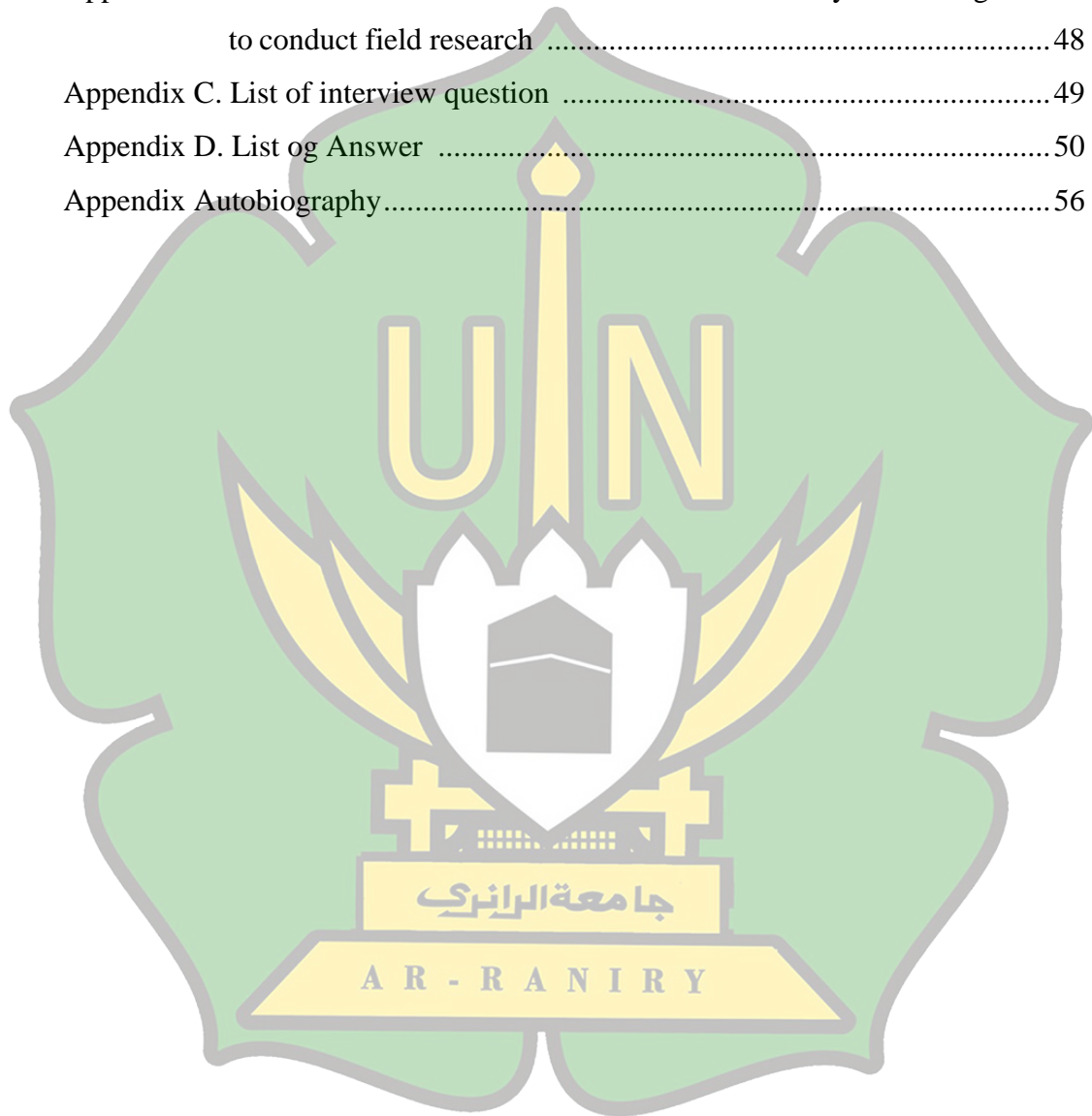
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of study, the research questions, purpose of research and the significant of study.

A.   Background of Study

The ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language, particularly in spoken form, is an essential goal for most language learners. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, mastering spoken English requires not only an extensive vocabulary but also an accurate command of grammatical structures, particularly tenses. Tenses are amount fundamental aspect of English grammar that indicate the time frame of an action or event.

However, for many learners, especially such as Indonesian language whose first language (L1) does not employ tenses in the same way as English, mastering tenses poses a significant challenge. This research focuses on how Acehnese EFL students use English tenses in speaking, investigating both their patterns of usage and the challenges they face.

In the context of Aceh, Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language in formal education, but the opportunities to use English in everyday conversation are limited. The primary languages spoken in Aceh are Acehnese and Indonesian, neither of which has a tense system as complex as English. As a result, many Acehnese students struggle with tense accuracy, especially in spontaneous speaking situations. The complexity of English tenses, combined with the lack of real-world practice, often results in errors that can impede communication. This research seeks

to explore these challenges by analyzing the specific ways Acehnese EFL students use tenses in their spoken English.

According to research by Emma (2019), previous studies on EFL learners have shown that tense usage is one of the most problematic areas of English grammar. Research indicates that students often rely on simpler tense forms, such as the present simple, even in contexts where other tenses would be more appropriate. Moreover, learners may avoid using more complex tenses like the present perfect continuous or the past perfect due to uncertainty about the correct forms.

For Acehnese students, this tendency may be further exacerbated by the influence of their native language structures, which do not emphasize tense distinctions in the same way as English. This study aims to uncover whether similar patterns are evident among Acehnese students, and if so, to what extent their first language influences their tense usage in English.

The influence of a learner's first language on their acquisition of a foreign language is known as language interference, and it plays a critical role in the challenges faced by EFL students. Acehnese and Indonesian, like many languages in Southeast Asia, tend to rely more on context, auxiliary words, or adverbs of time to indicate when an action occurs, rather than altering the verb form itself as is required in English. This fundamental difference in how time is expressed may lead Acehnese EFL students to make systematic errors when using English tenses, particularly in spoken language, where there is less time to consciously apply grammatical rules.

Another factor contributing to tense errors in speaking is the nature of spontaneous communication. Unlike writing, where students have time to reflect on grammar and structure, speaking requires immediate language production. For EFL students, this can lead to hesitation, overgeneralization of rules, and reliance on familiar structures. Therefore, an analysis of spoken English among Acehnese EFL students is critical to understanding the specific difficulties they face when applying tenses in real-time conversation. This study will examine whether students tend to overuse simpler tenses and whether they exhibit consistent patterns of tense confusion in speech.

According to research by Hossain et al (2019), among EFL learners, the mother tongue has a considerable impact on how they employ tenses in English. Researchers discovered in their study that when speaking English, pupils whose first language is Bengali frequently struggle to tell the difference between simple and progressive tenses. For example, despite situations where the present continuous tense was needed, a large number of participants had a tendency to misuse the present simple tense. This suggests that students' understanding and use of tenses in their second language may be impacted by grammatical structures in their mother tongue.

However, Wu and Zhang's research (2021) also sheds light on how mother tongue affects tense usage in Chinese EFL students. According to the study, pupils who are used to employing complex time structures in Mandarin have a tendency to modify how they utilize tenses in English. They frequently struggle with the future tense, but they find it easy to employ the past tense accurately. This suggests

that students' linguistic backgrounds affect how they learn English tenses, necessitating more specialized teaching methods to close this gap.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how EFL learners from Aceh use English tenses in spoken communication. The findings will not only shed light on the specific challenges faced by these students but also offer practical recommendations for language instructors. By identifying common patterns of tense misuse and the underlying reasons for these errors, this study hopes to inform more effective teaching strategies that can improve tense accuracy in spoken English among Acehnese EFL students.

B.   Research Questions

Based on the background this study employs the following questions as the suide:

1. What are the common problems related to the use of tenses in speaking English?

2. What are the factors that makes students unable to produce grammatically accepted sentences in speaking English?

C.   Aims of the Study

Based on research questions, the aim of this study as follow :

1. To know their common problems related to the use of tenses in speaking English.

2. To know their factors that makes students unable to produce grammatically accepted sentences in speaking English?

D.   Significance of the Study

It is expected that the results of the research will be useful and make a significant contribution to students. The theories of language learning, particularly those concerning the acquisition of tenses and the use of language in oral communication, can benefit from this research. In addition, it further, in-depth studies on the application of tenses and other linguistic skills may build upon this research.

E.   Research Terminologies

1.   English Tenses

English tenses are grammatical structures used to indicate the timing of actions or events in relation to the present, past, or future. English has a more complex tense system compared to some other languages, and mastering this system is crucial for effective communication. English tenses can be classified into three main categories: present, past, and future, with variations such as simple, continuous (progressive), perfect, and perfect continuous tenses.

The study looks at how proficient Acehnese students are in applying the variety of English tenses such as Present Perfect Continuous or Past Continuous, and whether they tend to simplify tense use when speaking.

2.   EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

EFL stands for efl , which refers to learning English in a non-English-speaking country. The focus is on acquiring English primarily for academic or communicative purposes in contexts where English is not used in everyday life.

EFL differs from ESL (English as a Second Language), which applies to learners in English-speaking countries. In Aceh, students learn English through formal education, making them EFL learners.

Since Acehnese students are learning English in a non-native environment, the research aims to explore the challenges they face as EFL learners, particularly in mastering tense usage in spoken English.

3.   Speaking

Speaking is one of the four key language skills alongside reading, writing, and listening and is considered essential for effective communication. It involves producing oral language and requires the speaker to use grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation accurately. In this research, "speaking" specifically refers to the ability of Acehnese EFL students to produce spoken English with correct tense usage during real-time communication.

The research evaluates how Acehnese EFL students utilize tenses when engaging in spontaneous conversation and whether their spoken language reflects their understanding of tense structure.

4.   Evidence

In this research, evidence refers to any data or information that is gathered to support or refute a hypothesis or research question. Evidence can take many forms, including quantitative data (numbers, statistics) and qualitative data (interviews, observations). In this study, evidence is obtained from the speech samples of Acehnese EFL students to demonstrate their use of English tenses.

The researcher collects evidence through recorded speaking sessions, which are then transcribed and analyzed to determine the frequency and accuracy of tense usage among the students.

5.   Interference

Interference, or language transfer, refers to the influence of a learner's first language (L1) on their use of a second language (L2). Negative interference occurs when structures or rules from the L1 are incorrectly applied to the L2, leading to errors. In this study, interference could occur if Acehnese or Indonesian language rules affect the students' ability to use English tenses correctly, particularly since these languages do not have as complex a tense system as English.

The researcher investigates whether interference from the Acehnese or Indonesian language system leads to tense-related errors, such as using present tense structures where English would require past tense.
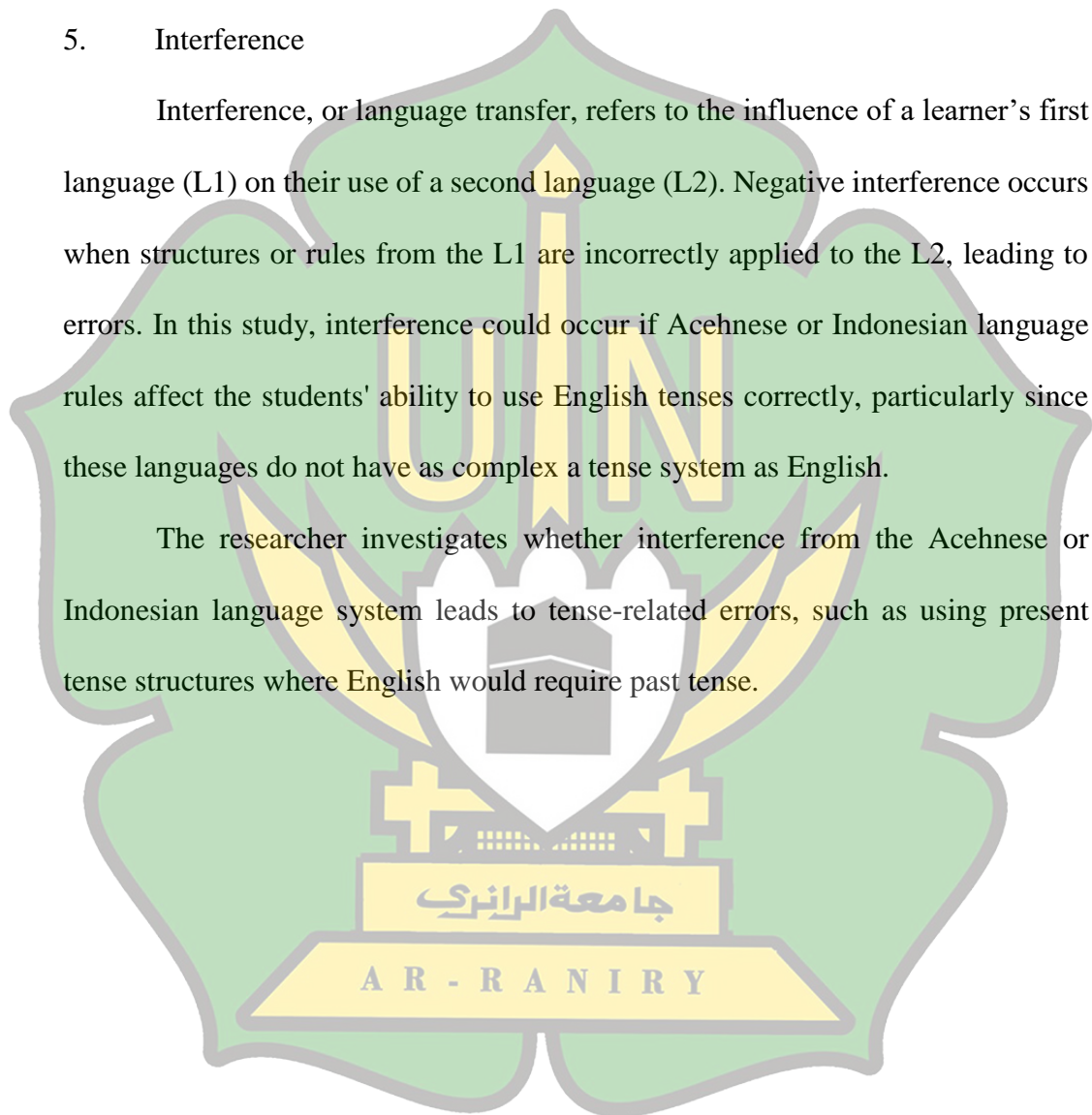
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher discusses several theories related to research. This includes speaking, the elements of speaking, the characteristics of EFL Teachers in Speaking, Tenses, the relationship between tenses and English speaking ability, Tenses that are Often Used by EFL Teachers, and previous studies.

A.   The Importance of Tenses in English

In English, tenses are crucial to pay effection in constructive sentences because they give an action or occurrence context and clarity. A solid grasp of tenses aids non-native speakers in differentiating between events that have previously occurred, are happening right now, or will happen, according to Purdue University research. Tenses such as the present perfect, for instance, are employed to link previous activities to their importance in the present, but the simple past signifies the completion of the action in the past.

Additionally, the University of North Carolina Writing Center states that mastery of tenses is crucial for academic writing since it enables the writer to effectively communicate claims, provide data, and properly credit research. While past simple is frequently used to present the findings of earlier research, current simple is typically used to describe generally understood information. In addition to preventing misunderstandings, using the appropriate tense in communication also gives a clear timeline.

1. Tenses in English Speaking

In English, verb tenses refer to verb forms that express the moment of an action or occurrence. Clear communication requires the appropriate use of tenses, particularly when speaking. In English, tenses fall into three basic categories: present, past, and future. Each category has simple, continuous, and perfect varieties. Tenses, according to Azar (2019), convey information about time as well as characteristics like whether an activity is finished, ongoing, or repeating. Because they have trouble comprehending how tenses express both time and aspect, EFL learners frequently struggle to use tenses effectively, especially in spoken language.

The ability to organize and present language in a coherent and natural way is required for speaking, which is a fundamental skill in language learning. According to Brown (2018), speaking involves using proper grammar, which includes using tenses appropriately, in order to communicate ideas coherently throughout a conversation. Speaking ability in EFL contexts is frequently gauged by how well students can employ the right tenses. It is crucial to grasp common conversational tenses such the simple present, simple past, and present continuous since improper usage of tenses can obstruct communication and cause misunderstandings.

2. Types of Tense

Verb tenses are changes or additions to verbs to show when the action took place: in the past, present, or future. The phrase *verb tense* is also used

for grammatical aspects, which add more details about the duration or time an action takes. When you combine the four grammatical aspects with the past, present and future, you end up with twelve main verb tenses in English.

Verb tenses are essential for speaking English correctly, but with all the different forms and functions, they can get confusing. The standard tense in English is the present tense, which is usually just the root form of the verb. The past and future tenses often require changes or additions to the root form, such as the suffix *–ed* for the past tense and the modal verb *will* for the future.

However, for each of the past, present, and future tenses, there are four different aspects that add additional details. For example, the continuous tense shows that an action is ongoing. It can be used in the present (*she is sleeping*), past (*she was sleeping*), or future (*she will be sleeping*).

The past, present, and future are the central divisions of time in English. The present represents actions happening now, while the past represents actions that happened earlier, and the future describes actions that will happen later. Here are the examples og english tenses:

Table 2.1 Tenses in English Language

	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
SIMPLE	I helped my neighbor yesterday	I help my neighbor every day	I will help my neighbor tomorrow

PERFECT	I had helped my neighbor clean his attic before I fixed his car	I have helped my neighborb too much this week	I will helped my neighbor a hundred times by the end of the month
CONTINIOUS	I was helping my neighbor when he brought me iced tea	I am helping my neighbor while he fixes up his house	I will be helping my neighbor next month niwhen he moves
PERFECT CONTINIOUS	I had be helping my neighbor for a year before he finally thanked me	I have been helping my neighbor since I moved in	I will have been helping my neighbor for a year next month

a) Simple Past

We use the simple past to show actions completed in the past, with no extra emphasis. For regular verbs, you form the simple past tense by adding the suffix –ed to the end of the verb (or just –d if the past tense verb already ends in an e). Be careful of irregular past tense verbs, however. These do not follow the normal rules and use their own unique forms for the past tense. For example, the past tense of the irregular verb *go* is *went*.

a. Regular verbs: *I **picked** up the glass, but it **dropped** from my hand.*

b. Irregular verbs: *This morning I **went** to the store, but I **forgot** the milk.*

b) Past perfect

[*had*] + [past participle]

What if you are talking about two different actions in the past and want to show that one happened before the other? The past perfect, also known as the pluperfect, shows that one past action happened earlier than another one.

*She **had arrived** at the office before she realized it was Sunday.*

*I ran to my car when I noticed my wife **had left** already.*

c) Past continuous

[*was/were*] + [present participle]

Use the past continuous to show an ongoing action in the past, especially if the action was interrupted by another action. It is also used for habitual actions that occurred in the past but not in the present. It is usually used with adverbs like *always* or adverb phrases like *all the time*.

*My dog **was whimpering in his sleep** when the TV woke him up.*

*As kids, my friends and I **were** always **getting** into trouble.*

d) Past perfect continuous

[*had*] + [*been*] + [present participle]

The past perfect continuous tense is used just like the past perfect tense, except it describes ongoing actions that happened in the past instead of a one-time occurence. It is often used with the words *when*, *until*, and *before* to connect it to another past action.

*Before he got his first job as a writer, he **had been working** as a proofreader.*

*I **had been living** on my friend's couch for a year until they kicked me out.*

    e) Simple present

The simple present is the most basic of the English tenses. It is used for individual actions or habitual actions in the present.

Often the simple present is just the root verb with no changes or additions. The main exception to this is when the subject is third person and singular. In this case you add the suffix –*s*. If the verb ends in *o*, *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *ss*, *gh*, or *z*, you add –*es*. If the verb ends in a consonant and *y* (and the subject is third-person singular), drop the *y* and add –*ies*.

*Today I **feel** like a million bucks!*

*My brother **carries** the groceries while my sister **stays** on the couch.*

    f) Present perfect

[*have*/*has*] + [past participle]

Although it's quite common, the present perfect is one of the most difficult English verb tenses. It is used to describe a few different types of actions, including:

    a. an ongoing action started in the past that is not yet completed

b. the same action completed multiple times in the past and likely to be completed again

c. an action completed very recently (usually with *just* or *now*)

d. an uncompleted action that is expected to be finished (in the negative)

Additionally, the present perfect can be used to emphasize the significance of a completed action, especially one that happened over time.

*We **have tricked** him every April Fool's Day since we were kids.*

*My niece **has grown** so much this year!*

g) Present continuous

[*am*/*is*/*are*] + [present participle]

Use the present continuous to show an action happening right now or in the near future.

I am reading The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy for the fifth time!

*We **are eating** pizza tonight.*

h) Present perfect continuous

[*have*/*has*] + [*been*] + [present participle]

The present perfect continuous shows an ongoing action in the present that was started in the past. It is often used to emphasize the length of time.

*We **have been waiting** for over an hour!*

*The team **has been practicing** nonstop for the tournament.*

 i) Simple future

  Use the simple future for actions that have not happened yet but will later. To form the simple future, just place the modal verb *will* before the root form of the main verb. (Note that if the action will happen in the **near future**, you can use the present continuous instead.)

*She **will be** president one day.*

*I **will** not **go** to the wedding without a date!*

 j) Future perfect

 [*will*] + [*have*] + [past participle]

  The future perfect shows an action that will be completed in the future by a specified time. Because it depends on another time, the future perfect is often used with words like *by*, *before*, *at*, or *when*.

*By the time you read this, I **will have** already **left**.*

*She **will have eaten** lunch before her sister even wakes up.*

 k) Future continuous

 [*will*] + [*be*] + [present participle]

Use the future continuous tense for future actions happening over a period of time, especially when a specific time is mentioned. The future continuous tense also shows more certainty and likelihood than the simple future.

By this time tomorrow, **I will be drinking** *margaritas on the beach.*

We **will be attending** *a meeting from noon until 3 p.m.*

l) Future perfect continuous

[*will*] + [*have*] + [*been*] + [present participle]

The future perfect continuous depicts future ongoing actions that continue up until a certain point. Like the future perfect and future continuous, it's used with a specified time.

In ten minutes, my parents **will have been** *waiting in traffic for four hours.*

I **will have been eating** *healthy for a whole year by September.*

3. **The Importance of Tenses in Language Learning**

Tenses are important for language development because they help to appropriately represent time, which is essential for meaningful and clear communication. Gaining proficiency in tenses enables students to convey the past, present, or future tense of an activity, ensuring that the audience understands the message accurately. Azar (2019) highlights that learners frequently make mistakes that result in misconceptions when they don't have a proper knowledge of tenses, particularly when speaking. In a similar vein, Brown (2018) emphasizes that tenses

are crucial for fluency because they enable speakers to move fluidly between various time periods throughout discussions. Through the practice of tenses in several circumstances, students improve their communication and general language skills.

4.   **Common Problem in Speaking English**

One of the most common issues with English tenses when speaking is that it can be challenging to tell one moment from another, particularly the past, present, and future. The most frequent error is when a speaker uses tenses inconsistently—for instance, by unintentionally moving from the past to the present tense. Moreover, an issue arises from the overuse of continuous tenses, as non-native speakers frequently employ continuous verb forms instead of simpler ones. This gives the talk an awkward, hard-to-understand tone. Research by Richards, J.C.(2019)

According to research by Thornbury (2020), errors are frequently caused by irregular verb mastery deficiencies. Many students attempt to use generic norms, such as adding "-ed" to form the past tense, but irregular verbs, like go becoming went, are exempt from these restrictions. These kinds of errors frequently arise from irregular verbs' lack of a set pattern, which makes it more difficult to employ them effectively in ordinary speech and necessitates more practice and memorization.

Lack of confidence is a typical issue while speaking English, particularly when conversing with native speakers. This is frequently brought on by a fear of pronouncing words incorrectly or making grammatical errors. Other difficulties include having a small vocabulary and having trouble remembering words when

speaking. Understanding fast-paced speech and various accents is another challenge for many English language learners. They consequently frequently pause, talk overly slowly, or even steer clear of talks entirely

B.   Tenses Grammatically Used by Indonesian Students in English Speaking Skill

Specifically, the use of verb tenses by Indonesian students learning English reveals a number of issues and trends. Because Indonesian and English students have quite different grammatical structures, Indonesian students frequently have difficulty understanding English tenses, research by Johan (2018), because English places more emphasis on tense distinctions than Indonesian does, it can be challenging for students to understand the entire spectrum of tense usage, particularly when it comes to speaking skills, which call for precise and rapid tense usage in talks.

According to recent studies by Garrido (2023), Indonesian EFL students frequently make mistakes when speaking in the past and present tenses. These mistakes are frequently caused by Bahasa Indonesia's inconsistent use of tense forms, which frequently use adverbs rather than verb modifications to convey time. For example, students often misuse the present simple tense and struggle with more intricate variations such as past continuous tenses and present perfect tenses.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that resources like Socrative, which offer instant feedback and enable interactive grammar exercises, improve learning. Through the use of these technology resources, students can enhance their performance in both written and spoken English by developing a better grasp of

English tenses. Explicit grammar teaching has been demonstrated to be useful in enhancing speaking skills, especially when accompanied with real-world assignments that simulate actual communication circumstances. Studies over the last five years reveal that students benefit most from grammar sessions that focus on both theory and practice, stressing tense use in spoken contexts.

C.   Problems Experienced of Indonesian EFL Students in Grammatically English Speaking

Grammar correct English speaking is one of the biggest challenges faced by EFL students in Indonesia. According to research, a lot of kids have trouble using proper grammar when speaking, frequently for a variety of reasons.

1.   Influence of native language

The effect of their home tongue, whether it be Indonesian or a regional language, is one of the biggest problems faced by Indonesian EFL students. According to several studies (Lestari, 2020; Rachmawati, 2019), students frequently translate grammatical structures from their home language to English, which results in grammatical problems. Confusion may result, for instance, from the use of tenses and other elements that are different between Indonesian and English.

When learning a foreign language, like English, the native tongue has a big influence. The new language's syntax, sentence structure, and pronunciation can all be influenced by the native tongue. Errors may result, for instance, when someone applies grammatical norms from their home language to English. Furthermore, pronunciation is frequently difficult due to variations in accents or sounds between

the native tongue and English. Word choice and idioms are more examples of this impact; someone may inadvertently transfer terms from their home tongue into English, creating sentences that seem strange.

2.   **Limited vocabulary and grammartical understanding**

 Speaking ability is also significantly hampered by a limited vocabulary. Prabowo and Riyadi (2021) state that a common reason why students lack confidence when speaking is that they think their language is insufficient to convey their views well. They frequently stop communicating in English as a result of this.

When learning a language, especially English, a lack of vocabulary and grammatical comprehension can be a major barrier. People who have a limited vocabulary may find it difficult to communicate their thoughts or comprehend normal conversations. On the other hand, poor grammar skills can result in mistakes when building phrases, which might change the meaning. Students frequently feel insecure or even terrified to talk as a result of this. As a result, communication skills do not develop to their full potential and the learning process slows down.

3.   **Lack of speaking practice in daily contexts**

Another problem is that there aren't enough opportunities to practice speaking in authentic settings. According to research by Hidayati and Budi (2022), EFL students in Indonesia rarely have regular opportunities to practice speaking English, which leaves them feeling unprepared for circumstances in which they must communicate in the language.

One of the biggest obstacles to learning English is a lack of practice speaking in everyday situations. Even if someone understands grammar theory and has a respectable vocabulary, their speaking performance tends to stagnate without frequent practice opportunities. Insufficient speaking experience also impairs fluency and the capacity to think rapidly in the language. Additionally, learners find it challenging to develop their listening skills and confidence due to the lack of direct connection. Therefore, honing effective communication skills requires practicing speaking in authentic settings.

4.   **Ineffective teaching methods**

Another factor in this issue is the use of ineffective instructional strategies. According to a number of studies, students' ability to speak can be hampered by conventional teaching methods that prioritize grammatical instruction over speaking practice (Santoso, 2023; Wati, 2021). Too much theory and little hands-on practice make it hard for students to use proper language when they talk.

Ineffective English teaching strategies can impede students' language proficiency growth. Rigid or conventional approaches, like depending only on lectures or textbooks, frequently cause students to get distracted and lose interest in learning. Furthermore, children may find it difficult to use the language in authentic situations if instruction does not incorporate a variety of methods that balance speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. In addition to making the learning process boring and uninteresting, methods that disregard individual learning needs and styles can also lower the effectiveness of instruction as a whole.

D.   Previous Research Finding

There are several research finding about the exploring the english tenses used by efl students in speaking: evidence from Acehnese efl students that research undertaken:

1. The Influence of Mother Tongue: Previous research has shown that the influence of the mother tongue (linguistic interference) often leads to grammatical errors when speaking English. Students tend to apply the grammatical structure of Indonesian or their regional languages when speaking in English, which leads to errors in the use of tense and prepositions (Lestari, 2020).

2. Limitations of Speaking Practice: Other research has found that the lack of opportunities to practice speaking English in real-life environments is one of the main reasons EFL students struggle. Students are more often exposed to passive learning and are not sufficiently involved in active speaking activities (Hidayati & Budi, 2022).

3. Dependence on Theoretical Learning: Studies reveal that teaching methods that focus too much on grammar theory, without practical application in speaking, lead to difficulties for students in integrating grammatical knowledge into their speaking abilities (Wati, 2021).

4. Vocabulary Limitations: A lack of vocabulary mastery is another significant obstacle. Students feel less confident to speak due to their limited vocabulary, which hinders the use of proper grammar (Prabowo & Riyadi, 2021).

5. Difficulty in Using Tenses: The most common mistake found in previous research is the incorrect use of tenses. Indonesian does not have a complex tense system like English, so students often get confused about using the correct tense when speaking (Rachmawati, 2019).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher describes the research method. It covers the following topics: Research Design, Setting, Techniques of Data Collection, and Data Analysis.

A.   Research Design

This research used a qualitative research design. The qualitative approach is very suitable for exploring complex phenomena such as students' difficulties with grammar when speaking, as it allows researchers to delve deeper into students' experiences, perceptions, and thought processes.

I can define field research as a test by asking some questions with students during their activities to find out what tenses are often used by foreign language learners when speaking in English . This research is also used to collect data and be able to obtain information to complete the data about what the researcher needs. The process of obtaining information from the researcher was carried out through field research in which the researcher directly observed the students during their activities so that with this direct observation the researcher could determine what tenses were most often used by foreign language learners when speaking in English. Apart from that, this field research also does not require expensive costs, just by asking the students   at the collage to be willing to observe, the researcher can collect data that suits the researcher's needs.

B.   Population and Sample

A.   Population

The population of this research selected from groups of Indonesian EFL students studying at the university level. The total of this population is 141 students.

B.   Sample

Population sample were taken using random sampling. A total of 10 students from various backgrounds were taken as a sample for the research. The participants is the students of faculty of education and teacher training departement of English language education Ar-Raniry state islamic university who studied English in five semester.

C.   Techniques of Data Collection

Before implementing the research, the researcher first of all made a research design cover as follows : The instrument was used in the data collection process of this study as follows :

Interviews

Students were interviewed about their experiences learning English, their daily activities, the challenges they face in speaking, and the grammatical issues they encounter.

D.   Data Collection Instrument

Interviews

The method used is a qualitative method with field research techniques. The researcher ask and saw the students directly during their answer the questions and then the researcher recorded what the students said. Next, the I wrote the audio recording into a text and then I examined the text and interview each English students about why they use tense tenses to produce the data needed by the researcher, namely what tenses are most often used by English students when speaking in their daily activities. So that researchers obtain data according to their needs.

E.   Data Analysis

The data obtained analyzed thematically. Several steps used in the data analysis include:

1. Transcription: All recordings of interviews and observations transcribed.

2. Categorization of Grammatical Errors: Errors found in speaking test categorized according to their type, such as tense errors, subject-verb agreement, or article usage.

3. Thematic Analysis: Interview and observation data analyzed to identify the main themes related to students' perceptions and challenges in using grammar in speaking.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings from the data collected through interviews of EFL students' in Aceh use of tenses in spoken English will be presented and discussed. The data were analyzed thematically, focusing on the types of tenses used most frequently by the students, the grammatical errors related to tense usage. The chapter is divided into two main sections: Findings and Discussion.

A.   Findings

This section present the main findings based on the thematic analysis of the interview. Many English learners struggle to choose the correct tense, especially when talking about events that occurred in the past, present, or future.

According to the study, EFL learners have a lot of trouble using the proper tenses when speaking English. The most frequent problems include using the simple present tense excessively and confusing the present perfect with the simple past tenses. This is mostly because the trainees' native Indonesian language lacks comparable tense structures that distinguish between past and present-relevant acts. Furthermore, students find it difficult to articulate continuing activities or future plans, which results in a decreased usage of the present continuous and future tenses. These challenges stem from a number of issues, such as language transfer, in which students mistakenly apply rules from their home tongue, and a lack of practice in authentic interactions, which leaves them unconfident when employing

complicated tenses. Learners are often discouraged from trying out more complex tenses due to psychological obstacles like a fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, these problems are made worse by inadequate grammar education, which leaves students with a poor comprehension of tense usage and further impairs their capacity to construct grammatically sound sentences in spoken English.

1.   **Frequents use of tenses**

The analysis of the students' spoken English revealed that the simple present tense was the most frequently used tense across the group. This was consistent both in everyday conversations and in the students' responses during interviews. The simple present tense was used to describe habitual actions, general facts, and current states.

Examples:

"Having a regular routine helped students be more productive and feel better. For example, consistent sleep schedules or dedicated study times made activities smoother" (Students E)

The simple past tense was the second most commonly used tense, primarily used to describe actions that happened in the past. Most students used the past tense to talk about personal experiences or events they had participated in.

"Having a regular routine is helping students be more productive and feel better. For example, consistent sleep schedules or dedicated study times are making activities smoother"(Students D)

However, the present continuous tense and the future tense were less commonly used, although they appeared in certain contexts. The present continuous tense was used for ongoing actions, but with some inconsistencies. The present perfect tense was used much less frequently and was often misused by the students. Some students had difficulty using the present perfect tense correctly, especially in contexts where they should have used simple past.

2.   Grammatical Errors Related to Tenses Usage

Several grammatical errors were identified in the students' use of tenses. The errors were categorized into three main types: tense errors, subject-verb agreement errors, and article usage errors. Tense Errors: The most common error was the confusion between the present perfect tense and the simple past tense. Many students used the present perfect when simple past was more appropriate, and vice versa.

a. Daily physical activity, such as light exercise, walking, or yoga, <u>greatly affect</u> the sleep quality of college students. When the body <u>are</u> physically active, the energy used <u>help</u> the body be better prepared to rest at night. (Student N)

Here are several mistakes in subject-verb agreement. First, in the sentence "Daily physical activity, such as light exercise, walking, or yoga, greatly affect the sleep quality of college students," the verb "affect" should be in the singular form "affects" because the subject "activity" is singular. Second, in the sentence "When the body are physically active," the verb "are" should be replaced with "is" because

the subject "body" is singular. Third, in the sentence "the energy used help the body be better prepared to rest at night," the verb "help" should be in the singular form "helps" because the subject "energy" is singular. These mistakes highlight the importance of ensuring subject-verb agreement in a sentence to convey the intended meaning correctly.

b. Social media is an important part of students' daily lives. They use it for various purposes, such as communicating with friends, keeping up with the latest information, and supporting the learning process, like searching for materials or joining learning communities. (Student N)

In the sentence "Social media is an important part of students' daily lives," the verb "is" is correctly used with the singular subject "social media." Then, in the sentence "They use it for various purposes," the verb "use" is also correct because the subject is plural, "they." The structure of the sentence is appropriate for conveying the intended meaning, with the use of "such as" to clearly provide examples of social media's purposes, such as communicating with friends, keeping up with the latest information, and supporting the learning process. A small change, such as replacing "like" with "such as," could make the list of examples more consistent and clear.

c. Even light physical activities such as walking or light exercise greatly helped students sleep better. An active body during the day became healthily tired, making it easier to fall asleep at night. (Student E)

The first error is in the phrase "greatly helped," where the verb "helped" is in the past tense, but since the subject "activities" is plural and the context is describing a general truth or habit, the verb should be in the present tense: "help." The second error is in "became," where the verb is incorrectly in the past tense. The subject "body" is singular, so the correct present tense form is "becomes." Correct subject-verb agreement is essential to ensure the sentence clearly communicates ongoing actions or facts in the present, rather than mistakenly suggesting that these actions occurred in the past.

d. One of the most frequent mistakes was mixing up tenses. For example, using past tense for events that are still happening or present tense for something that had already finished. Additionally, students often forgot basic rules, such as when to use 'to be' or the correct verb forms

The first error occurs with "was mixing up," which should be in the present tense ("is mixing up") because it refers to an ongoing or current situation. The second error is with "are still happening," which should be in the past tense ("were still happening") because it refers to events that were happening in the past. The third error is with "had already finished," where the present perfect tense "has already finished" is more appropriate, as it indicates something completed in the past but still relevant to the present. Finally, "forgot" should be "forget," as the sentence talks about a recurring mistake students often make. Proper tense usage is crucial to ensure that the time frame and actions are accurately conveyed.

e. Students often <u>made</u> common mistakes when using English tenses, primarily due to the complex nature of the language. Typical errors <u>included</u> confusing simple past and present perfect tenses, misusing continuous tenses, and inconsistent time references in sentences.

The verb "made" should be in the present tense ("make") because it refers to an ongoing or habitual action. The verb "included" should also be in the present tense ("include") for the same reason. The sentence is describing typical, recurring mistakes that students often make, so the present tense is more appropriate to reflect this.

a. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors: Many students struggled with subject-verb agreement, especially in sentences where the subject was plural or where there was a shift in the subject.

b. Article Usage Errors: Errors with the use of articles (a, an, the) were also common, though they were not directly related to tense. These errors were observed more frequently in students' spoken English.

B.   Discussion

In this section, the findings will be discussed in relation to existing research and the broader context of second language acquisition, particularly focusing on the common prblem related to the use of tenses in speaking English. And the factors that makes students unable to produce grammatically accepted sentences in speaking English.

Common problems related to the use of tenses in speaking English often involve confusion and misapplication of various tense forms. One of the most frequent issues is the confusion between the simple past and the present perfect tenses. Many learners mistakenly use the simple past when the present perfect is more appropriate, often due to the lack of a direct equivalent of the present perfect tense in their native languages.

According to a study by Xie and Zhang (2019), this confusion arises because students tend to think of the present perfect as a tense that only refers to recent actions, rather than understanding its broader function of connecting past events to the present. Another common issue is the overuse of progressive tenses (e.g., "I am reading" for habitual actions) when the simple present should be used, as in the case of repeated or habitual activities. Zhao and Liu (2021) argue that learners often rely on the continuous form because they perceive it as more dynamic, but this leads to errors when describing habitual actions.

Several factors contribute to students' inability to produce grammatically accepted sentences when speaking English. One of the primary reasons is insufficient exposure to the language, particularly to authentic, real-world contexts. Many students rely heavily on textbook learning, which often lacks the practical application of grammar in daily conversation. According to a study by Lee (2020), students who have more exposure to natural language use, such as through media or interactions with native speakers, show a greater ability to produce grammatically correct sentences.

Another significant factor is interference from the native language (L1), where students transfer grammar rules from their first language into English, leading to errors. Smith & Andrews (2021) found that students whose native languages do not emphasize tense distinctions or use simpler sentence structures tend to struggle more with English grammar. Psychological factors like anxiety and lack of confidence also play a role, as students often avoid using more complex structures due to fear of making mistakes.

This is supported by Shah & Ali (2022), who found that anxious learners tend to simplify their speech, thus bypassing grammatical challenges. Limited practice and interaction in English-speaking environments prevent students from internalizing correct sentence structures, as emphasized by Lopez & Garcia (2023), who noted that continuous practice and feedback are crucial for improving grammatical accuracy.

Based on these findings, it is clear that Indonesian EFL learners face significant challenges in mastering English tenses, particularly with respect to tense usage that does not have direct equivalents in their native language. Teachers can help students by focusing more on explicit grammar instruction and providing contextualized practice in both spoken and written forms.

Using real-life scenarios, such as role-plays or storytelling, could help students understand the appropriate use of different tenses in context. Additionally, addressing the psychological barriers to language learning, such as fear of making

mistakes, can encourage students to experiment with more complex tenses and become more confident in their speaking abilities.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A.   Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the use of tenses by Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students during their speaking activities, focusing on the most frequently used tenses, common grammatical errors, and the challenges they face. Based on the findings from interviews and direct observations, several key conclusions can be drawn:

The study found that the most frequently used tense in students' spoken English was the simple present tense, followed by the simple past tense. These tenses were primarily used to express habitual actions, general facts, and past experiences. The present continuous and future tenses were used less often, indicating that students felt less comfortable using them to express ongoing actions or future plans. The present perfect tense was also used sparingly and often incorrectly, suggesting difficulties in mastering its usage.

Several grammatical errors related to tense usage were identified, with the most common being confusion between the present perfect and simple past tenses. This confusion is attributed to the lack of equivalent tense structures in the Indonesian language. Additionally, subject-verb agreement and article usage errors were frequently observed, reflecting the challenges students face when learning a language with a more complex tense system than their native language. These

findings highlight the difficulties in mastering English tenses among Indonesian EFL students.

In conclusion, the study found that while Indonesian EFL students are able to use basic tenses such as the simple present and simple past, they face considerable difficulties with more advanced tenses, particularly when these tenses do not have direct counterparts in their native language. These difficulties are compounded by a lack of awareness of grammatical rules and psychological barriers such as the fear of making mistakes.

B.   Suggestions

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several suggestions can be made for improving the teaching and learning of English tenses for Indonesian EFL students:

1. Provide Focused Grammar Instruction: Teachers should provide explicit and systematic grammar instruction, especially focusing on the tenses that cause the most confusion, such as the present perfect and the simple past tense. This instruction should include clear explanations of when to use each tense, supported by numerous examples and contextualized practice.

2. Contextualized and Communicative Practice: Language learners need opportunities to use tenses in context. Teachers should incorporate activities that require students to speak and listen in realistic situations, such as role plays, storytelling, or discussions that naturally involve various tenses.

These activities help students to gain a deeper understanding of tense usage and boost their confidence in using them correctly in conversation.

3. Increase Awareness of Tense Usage: It is essential to raise students' awareness about the importance of tense usage in communication. Teachers can do this by regularly pointing out errors during speaking activities, providing immediate corrective feedback, and encouraging self-reflection. Awareness-raising activities, such as error correction exercises and peer feedback, can also help students become more conscious of their grammatical mistakes.

4. Use of Authentic Materials: To help students see how tenses are used in natural communication, teachers should incorporate authentic materials (e.g., audio recordings, movies, podcasts) that feature native speakers. Analyzing real-life examples of tense usage will provide students with a better understanding of how tenses are used in everyday English.

5. Address Psychological Barriers: Teachers should create a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes. Encouraging a low-anxiety atmosphere and promoting positive reinforcement can help students overcome their fear of speaking and making errors. As suggested by Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, reducing anxiety can improve students' willingness to experiment with more complex tenses and improve their overall speaking skills.

6. Focus on Language Transfer: Teachers should be mindful of the potential language interference from Indonesian. Highlighting the differences

between Indonesian and English tense structures, and providing explanations of these differences, will help students understand where the errors might arise. Comparative grammar exercises, where students compare tense structures in both languages, can help make these differences clearer.

7. Continuous Practice: Since mastering tenses is a gradual process, continuous and varied practice is necessary. Teachers should encourage students to practice using different tenses regularly, both in written and spoken form. This practice can be facilitated through homework assignments, group work, and interactive speaking exercises that allow students to use tenses in diverse contexts.

C.   **Recommendations for Future Research**

Given the limitations of this study, future research could further explore the following areas:

1. Larger Sample Size: Future studies could involve a larger and more diverse sample of EFL learners, including students at different proficiency levels and from different regions of Indonesia. This would allow for a broader understanding of tense usage across various learner populations.

2. Comparative Studies: Research could compare the tense usage of Indonesian EFL learners with learners from other language backgrounds to examine the influence of native language on tense acquisition.

3. Longitudinal Studies: A longitudinal study tracking students' progress over time would provide valuable insights into how students' use of tenses improves with sustained practice and exposure.

4. Exploring Teaching Methods: Future research could also investigate which specific teaching methods (e.g., task-based learning, communicative language teaching, etc.) are most effective in helping students master the use of tenses in spoken English.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies and materials that can help EFL students overcome their challenges with tense usage and improve their overall proficiency in English.
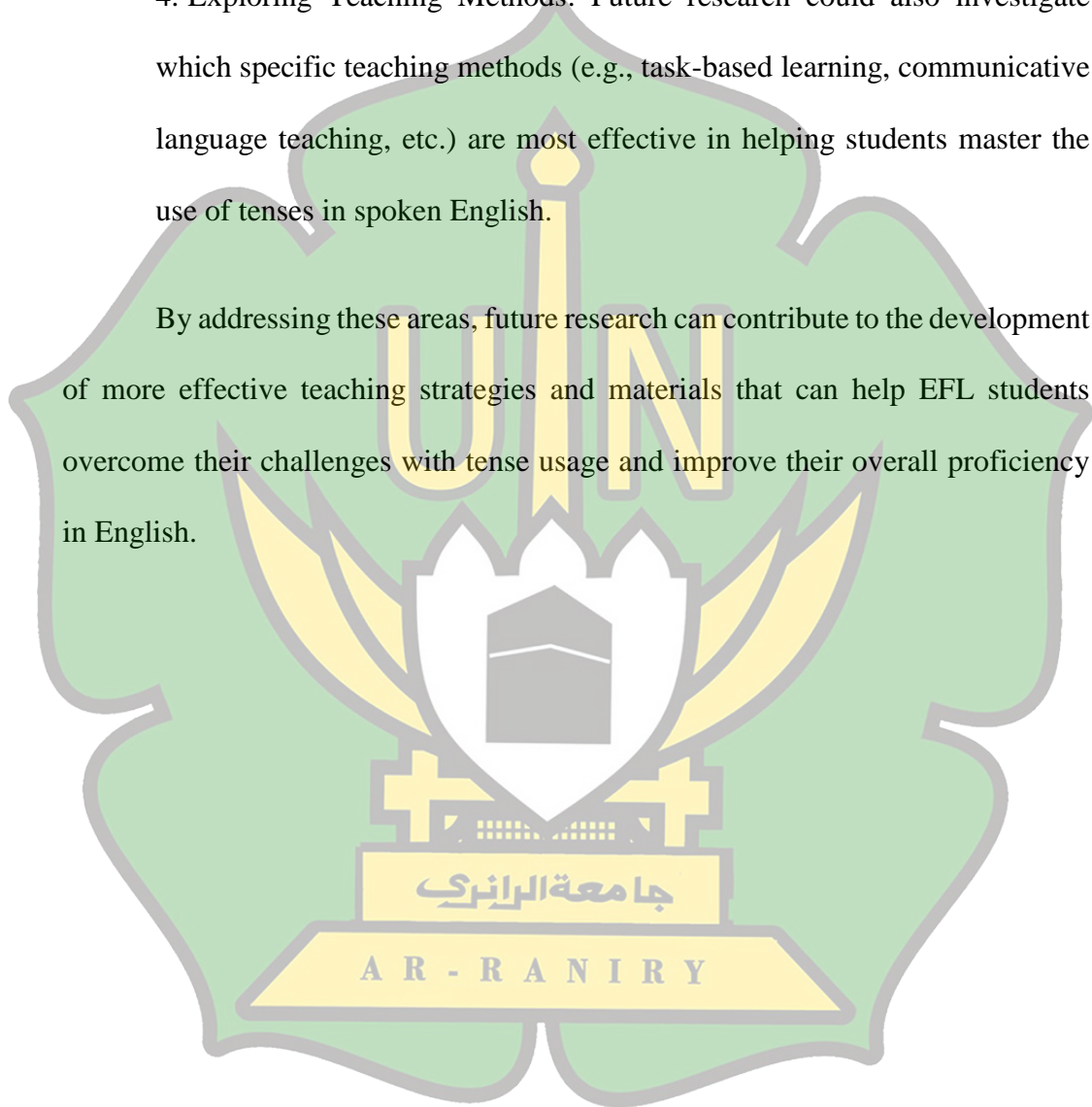
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APPENDICES

Appendix A : : Appointment Letter of Supervisor

Appendix B: Recommendation Letter from The Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan to conduct field research

KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN
Jl. Syeikh Abdur Rauf Kopelma Darussalam Banda Aceh Telp/Fax. : 0651-752921

Nomor : B-10228/Un.08/FTK.1/TL.00/12/2024
Lamp : -
Hal : *Penelitian Ilmiah Mahasiswa*

Kepada Yth,
Ketua Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh
Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry dengan ini menerangkan bahwa:

NIM : 200203021
Nama : NISWATUL MAKNUNAH
Program Studi/Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Alamat : JURONG KERAMAT, RT 000 RW 000

Saudara yang tersebut namanya diatas benar mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan bermaksud melakukan penelitian ilmiah di lembaga yang Bapak/Ibu pimpin dalam rangka penulisan Skripsi dengan judul **THE ENGLISH TENSES USED IN SPEAKING : EVIDENCE FROM EFL STUDENTS IN ACEH**

Banda Aceh, 08 Desember 2024
An. Dekan
Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan

Prof. Habiburrahim, S.Ag., M.Com., Ph.D.
NIP. 197208062003121002

Berlaku sampai : 17 Januari 2025

Appendix C: List of interview question

Assalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb

I am Niswatul Maknunah, a students of Department of English Language Education at UIN Ar-Raniry. I need to interview you about "Common problem in tenses and Ungrammatical errors". You will be asked several questions to get the data for this research. Your name will remain confidential and the interview will take 10-15 minutes maximum. So, I would like you to feel comfortable in expressing your ideas during the interview.

Question

1. How does daily routine affect the productivity and well-being of individuals among students?

2. How does daily physical activity affect the quality of sleep in students?

3. To what extent is social media usage involved in daily activities among students?

4. What are the common mistakes made by students in using tenses when speaking in English?

5. What factors prevent students from using the correct tenses when speaking?

Appendix D: List of Answer
Student E

1. Having a regular routine helped students be more productive and feel better. For example, consistent sleep schedules or dedicated study times made activities smoother.

2. Even light physical activities such as walking or light exercise greatly helped students sleep better. An active body during the day became healthily tired, making it easier to fall asleep at night..

3. Social media has become a significant part of students' lives. Many use it for discussing assignments, finding study materials, or simply for entertainment. In some cases, social media even serves as a learning platform, such as watching educational videos or joining online communities.

4. One of the most frequent mistakes was mixing up tenses. For example, using past tense for events that are still happening or present tense for something that had already finished. Additionally, students often forgot basic rules, such as when to use 'to be' or the correct verb forms

5. Many students focus more on learning theory but rarely practice speaking. they feel confused when they have to speak directly. A weak understanding of the basics of tenses also plays a role.

Student D

1. Having a regular routine is helping students be more productive and feel better. For example, consistent sleep schedules or dedicated study times are making activities smoother.

2. Daily physical activity has a profound influence on sleep quality among students. Regular exercise helps regulate sleep patterns by reducing stress, releasing endorphins, and promoting physical fatigue that naturally encourages deeper, more

restful sleep.

3. Students use social media for learning, peer interaction, entertainment, and personal branding, but excessive use can lead to decreased productivity, increased stress, and reduced face-to-face social interactions. The key lies in maintaining a balanced approach to social media consumption.

4. Students often made common mistakes when using English tenses, primarily due to the complex nature of the language. Typical errors included confusing simple past and present perfect tenses, misusing continuous tenses, and inconsistent time references in sentences.

5. Students often lack comprehensive understanding of tense rules, suffer from anxiety about making mistakes, and haven't developed sufficient practice in real-world conversations. The inherent complexity of the English tense system, with its numerous nuanced rules and exceptions, further complicates the learning process.

Student D
1. A consistent daily routine significantly enhances students' productivity and well-being. By scheduling study time, leisure activities, and rest, students can prioritize tasks, manage time efficiently, and balance academics with personal life. This balance boosts focus, concentration, physical and mental health, and reduces stress and anxiety.

2. Regular physical activity positively impacts sleep quality among students. Exercise regulates sleep patterns, increases sleep duration, and improves daytime alertness.

3. Social media plays a vital role in students' daily lives, offering connectivity, information sharing, relaxation, and networking opportunities.

4. Students commonly struggle with incorrect verb forms, mixed tenses, and inconsistent tense usage. These errors stem from limited grammar knowledge, insufficient practice, language learning anxiety, and inadequate exposure to authentic materials.

5. Factors contributing to tense errors include:

1. Limited grammar knowledge.

2. Insufficient practice.

3. Language learning anxiety.

4. Inadequate exposure to authentic materials.

5. Inconsistent instruction.

Students N

1. Daily routines play an important role in determining students' productivity and well-being. If students have a structured schedule, such as specific times for studying, resting, exercising, and socializing, they tend to be more productive because each activity has a clear time.

2. Daily physical activity, such as light exercise, walking, or yoga, greatly affect the sleep quality of college students. When the body are physically active, the energy used help the body be better prepared to rest at night.

3. Social media is an important part of students' daily lives. They use it for various purposes, such as communicating with friends, keeping up with the latest information, and supporting the learning process, like searching for materials or joining learning communities.

4. Many students make common mistakes in using tenses when dealing with singular and plural forms in English.

5. Many students just memorize the rules without really understanding how to apply them. Secondly, they lack confidence when speaking in English. The fear of being wrong or embarrassed often makes them hesitate, so they focus more on the content of the conversation than on the sentence structure. Third, the influence of mother tongue interferes with their ability to speak English.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The reseacher, Niswatul Maknunah, was born on 13th march 2OO2, in Sigli. She is the child of her beloved parents, Abdul Muis and Yusmarni. She has two beloved sisters and one young brother: Putri Muthmainnah, Riska Maisarah, and Muhammad Zakiyul Hafizh.

The researcher began her education at TK Al-Qur'an. She containued her studies at SDS Pertiwi Sabang and graduated in 2014. In the same year, she enrolled at SMP Islam Al-Mujaddid Boarding School and completed it in 2017. Then she continued he education at SMA Islam Al-Mujaddid Boarding School, where graduated in 2020.

In the following year, she was accepted to the English Language Education study program at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh.