

## An Analysis of Students' Mastery on Constructing Simple Present Tense of English Education Department at STAIN Bengkalis

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**Abstract:** This research aimed to determine the students' mastery on constructing simple present tense of the English Education Department at STAIN Bengkalis and which part would be the easiest and the most difficult to master. The subjects of this study were 19 first-semester students who were given a multiple-choice test. This research was descriptive quantitative and the data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 20. The findings showed that the student's mastery of constructing simple present tense was at an average level with a mean of 64.08. The easiest part for them to master is affirmative sentences with subjects I, You, We, and They with a mean of 66.32. Meanwhile, the most difficult part was in a negative sentence with a mean of 63.16. The analyses explained that the majority of the students made mistakes in putting ending -s/-es for the verbs with subjects She, He, and It, and also still had problems in forming negative sentences in using auxiliaries do/does. It is recommended to English lecturers have more focuses on giving information in forming a Simple Present Tense.

**Keywords:** students' mastery, simple present tense

**Abstrak:** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris dalam membuat *simple present tense* serta mengetahui bagian yang termudah dan tersulit untuk dikuasai. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 19 mahasiswa semester pertama yang diberikan tes pilihan ganda. Jenis penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kuantitatif dan data dianalisa menggunakan SPSS Statistics 20. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menguasai *simple present tense* pada level rata-rata dengan *mean* 64.08. Bagian termudah bagi mereka untuk dikuasai adalah kalimat *affirmative* dengan subjek *I, You, We, dan They* dengan *mean* 66.32. Sedangkan bagian tersulit adalah penggunaan kalimat negatif dengan *mean* 63.16. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa kebanyakan dari mahasiswa membuat kesalahan pada peletakan akhiran -s/-es pada kata kerja dengan subjek *She, He, dan It* serta pada pembentukan kalimat negatif dengan menggunakan kata kerja bantu *do/does*. Disarankan kepada dosen Bahasa Inggris untuk lebih fokus memberikan informasi dalam membentuk *simple present tense*.

**Kata kunci:** kemampuan mahasiswa, simple present tense

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## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is not only one of the foreign languages but also a need that should be known especially for students. Even they have studied English from school until university level, but the fact showed that they still have difficulties in mastering it. The majority of English students are still influenced by their mother tongue (their first language) where they still face many problems in mastering grammar, spelling, and especially in forming sentences with correct grammar (using correct tenses).

Gerot and Wignell state that grammar is a theory of a language of how language is put together and how it works. It is crucial especially for English students to know and learn English grammar to make the sentences understandable. One of focused grammar is in mastering tenses where in English tense indicates when the event or situation occurs. The simple present tense is one of the most used in forming English sentences. It is not like in Bahasa Indonesia where the students form the sentences; there are some rules in using subjects between *I*, *You*, *We*, and *They* with subjects *She*, *He*, and *It*. Have a look at the following examples:

**Table 1.** *The differences in using subject in English and Bahasa Indonesia*

English sentences	Bahasa Indonesia sentences	Note
I <b>go</b> to the beach every weekend	Saya <b>pergi</b> ke pantai setiap akhir pekan	Verb1
They <b>read</b> some books at the library	Mereka <b>membaca</b> buku di pustaka	Verb1
We <b>don't have</b> our lunch at the café	Kami <b>tidak makan siang</b> di kafe	Negative form: Don't + Verb1
She <b>calls</b> her mother every day	Dia <b>menelpon</b> ibunya setiap hari	Verb1 + ending -s for subject <b>She</b>
She <b>doesn't call</b> her mother every day	Dia <b>tidak menelpon</b> ibunya setiap hari	Negative form: Doesn't + Verb1 (no ending -s/-es)
John <b>rides</b> his motorcycle to campus	John <b>mengendarai</b> sepeda motornya ke kampus	Verb1 + ending -s for subject <b>He</b>
John <b>doesn't ride</b> his motorcycle to campus	John <b>tidak mengendarai</b> sepeda motornya ke kampus	Negative form: Doesn't + Verb1 (no ending -s/-es)

The examples in the table above show that there are some differences in forming verbs with subjects *I* and *We* with subjects *She* and *He (John)*. In English, forming verbs in the affirmative sentence with the subject *I* and *We (as examples above)* used Verb1 while subjects *She* and *He (John)* used Verb1 + ending -s. To form verbs in negative sentences, subjects *I* and *We* used auxiliary *don't + Verb1* and the subjects *She* and *He (John)* used auxiliary *doesn't + Verb1 (no ending -s at the verb)*. In addition, there is no difference form in arranging sentences in Bahasa Indonesia with subjects *I*, *We*, *She*, and *He (John)* either in affirmative or negative sentences.

Furthermore, the students of the first semester at the English Education Department still have many difficulties in constructing sentences by using the simple present tense. Hughes explains whether or not grammar has an important place in an institution's teaching, it has to be accepted that grammatical ability, or rather the lack of it, sets limits

to what can be achieved in the way of skill performances.<sup>1</sup> So that it is interesting to administer the research to find out their mastery on constructing it.

This research aims to know how the student's mastery of constructing the Simple Present Tense of the English Education Department at STAIN Bengkalis and which part is easy and difficult for students to master in constructing Simple Present Tense.

## METHODE

The research was conducted in December 2020 and the samples of the research were 19 English Department students in the first semester at STAIN Bengkalis. The data were taken by using a set of multiple choice tests. It was administered to find out their mastery on answering the questions that related to Simple Present Tense. The multiple choice test consists of using verbs with subjects *I, You, We, and They* in affirmative sentences, subjects *She, He, and It* in affirmative sentences, using negative and interrogative sentences. The data were analyzed to determine the students' mastery of constructing simple present tense and which part would be easy and difficult for them to master.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Grammar

Brown states that grammar competence is a major component of communication that has an important position.<sup>2</sup> Gerot and Wignell state that grammar is a theory of a language of how language is put together and how it works. Grammar is always present and that is why we all learn grammar.<sup>3</sup> DeCapua states grammar is a set of rules, often seen as arbitrary or unrealistic.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Chitravelu and others state grammar is the very foundation of all verbal communication.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Thornburry says grammar is partly the study of what forms (or structures) are possible in a language.<sup>6</sup> Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary states that grammar is the rules in a language for changing the form of words and combining them into sentences.<sup>7</sup> Hughes explains whether or not grammar has an important place in an institution's teaching, it has to be accepted that grammatical ability, or rather the lack of it, sets limits to what can be achieved in the way of skill performances.<sup>8</sup> Gabrielatos states that grammar is a set of rules which we must follow in order to use the language correctly or grammar is an

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Hughes, *Testing for Language Teachers*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 173.

<sup>2</sup> H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 2001), 96.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Gerot and Peter Wignell, *Making Sense of Functional Grammar* (Sydney: Gerd Stabler, 1994), 54.

<sup>4</sup> Andrea DeCapua, *Grammar for Teachers: A Guide to American English for Native and Non-Native Speakers* (New York: Springer, 2016), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Nesamalar Chitravelu, Saratha Sithamparam, and Soo Choon Teh, *ELT Methodology: Principles and Practice* (Shah Alam: Oxford Fajar, 2005), 229.

<sup>6</sup> Scott Thornburry, *How to Teach Grammar* (New York: Longman, 1999), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Sydney Hornby and Jonathan Crowther, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 517.

<sup>8</sup> Hughes, *Testing for Language Teachers*, 173.

attempt to present in systematic way observations about the structure and use of language.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Simple Present Tense

According to Oxford Advanced, Learner's Dictionary tense is any of the forms of a verb that may be used to indicate the time of the action or state expressed by the verb.<sup>10</sup> Betty says that simple present tense expresses daily habits or usual activities, general statements of facts.<sup>11</sup> Supono states that simple present tense explains the event that happens at present or a habit/fact.<sup>12</sup> In sum, the simple present tense is used for events or situations that exist always, usually, or habitually in the past, present and, future.

Examples:

- a) Ann takes a shower every day
- b) I usually read the newspaper in the morning
- c) Babies cry
- d) Birds fly
- e) The earth revolves around the sun
- f) A square has four equal sides

## 3. The Pattern of the simple present tense

a. Affirmative sentences. The pattern is as follows:

Subject	Verb	Object/Complement/Adverb
I	go	to the beach every weekend
You	go	to the beach every weekend
We	go	to the beach every weekend
They	go	to the beach every weekend

Subject	Verb	Object/Complement/Adverb
She	goes	to the beach every weekend
He	goes	to the beach every weekend
It	runs	fast

From the examples above, it can be seen that there is a difference in using verbs for subjects I, You, We, They and subject She, He and It, where for the third singular persons are added ending -s/-es for the verb, while the subjects I, You, we and They just use Verb 1.

b. Negative sentences

Subject	verb	Object/Compliment/Adverb
I	don't go	to the beach every weekend
You	don't go	to the beach every weekend

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<sup>9</sup> Costas Gabrielatos, *Grammar: Nature and Teaching*, 2001, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Hornby and Crowther, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 1231.

<sup>11</sup> Betty Schramper Azar and Stacy A. Hagen, *Fundamentals of English Grammar*, 4th ed. (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2011), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Idi Supono, *English Grammar* (Jakarta: Wahyu Media, 2007), 247.

We	don't go	to the beach every weekend
They	don't go	to the beach every weekend
Subject	verb	Object/Compliment/Adverb
She	doesn't go	to the beach every weekend
He	doesn't go	to the beach every weekend
It	doesn't run	fast

From the examples, it can be seen that auxiliary "don't" is used for subjects *I, You, We,* and *They,* while auxiliary "doesn't" is used for subjects *She, He,* and *It* and the verbs must be in a simple form (Verb 1 without any ending -s/-es).

c. Interrogative sentences

Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Object/Compliment/Adverb
Do	I	go	to the beach every weekend?
Do	you	go	to the beach every weekend?
Do	we	go	to the beach every weekend?
Do	they	go	to the beach every weekend?
Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Object/Compliment/Adverb?
Does	she	go	to the beach every weekend?
Does	he	go	to the beach every weekend?
Does	it	run	fast?

It is clear that there is a difference in using auxiliary verb for the subjects *I, You, We, They* and *We* by using do + not + Verb1, meanwhile auxiliary verb for the subjects *She, He,* and *It* by using does + not + Verb1 ( no ending -s/-es for the verbs).

**4. Spelling -s/-es**

a. To form a simple present tense verb in the third singular, ending -s/-es is added

Examples:

Close	Closes
Wear	Wears
Jump	Jumps
Read	reads
Write	writes

b. Ending -es is added if the end of the verb; -sh, -ch, -ss, or -x

Examples:

Wash	Washes
Brush	Brushes
Watch	Watches
Fix	Fixes
Pass	Passes

- c. If the end of the verb is consonant + -y, change the -y into -i.

Examples:

Study	Studies
Try	Tries
Cry	Cries

- d. If the end of the verb is vowel + -y, just add ending -s.

Examples:

Enjoy	Enjoys
Pay	Pays
Play	Plays

- e. If the end of the verb is "o", just add ending -es.

Examples:

Do	Does
Go	Goes

As it was explained earlier, the aims of the research were to find out the students' mastery of constructing Simple Present Tense and to know which part was easy and difficult for them to master. The findings will be shown in the following explanation.

**Table 2.** *The students' mastery on constructing simple present tense*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Ability	19	53.75	82.50	1217.50	64.0789	7.28681
Valid N (list wise)	19					

Nineteen (19) students participated in answering the questions given. The lowest score is 53.75 which is categorized into the poor level and the highest score is 82.50 which is categorized into a good level. The mean score of the result is 64.0789 which is categorized into an average level.

**Table 3.** *The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing simple present tense*

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
53.75	1	05.03	05.03	05.03
56.25	2	10.05	10.05	15.08
58.75	1	05.03	05.03	21.01
60.00	2	10.05	10.05	31.06
61.25	5	26.03	26.03	57.09
63.75	2	10.05	10.05	68.04
67.50	1	05.03	05.03	73.07
70.00	1	05.03	05.03	78.09
71.25	1	05.03	05.03	84.02
73.75	2	10.05	10.05	94.07
82.50	1	05.03	05.03	100.00
Total	19	100.00	100.00	

Based on the table it's known that 5 students get a score of 61.25 (average level), 2 students get a score of 60 (average level), 2 students get a score of 56.25 (average level), 1 student gets a score of 53.75, 58.75, and 67.50 (average level). 1 student gets a score of 70, 71.25, and 73.75 (good level) and 1 student gets the highest score of 82.50 (good level).

**Table 4.** *The students' mastery on constructing simple present tense in each part*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affirmative (I,You,We, They)	19	55	80	1260	66.32	6.634
Affirmative (She, He, It)	19	55	80	1205	63.42	8.507
Negative	19	50	85	1200	63.16	8.368
Interrogative	19	50	85	1205	63.42	8.174
Valid N (list wise)	19					

This table shows that the mean score of the students' mastery on constructing Affirmative sentences with the subject I, You, We and They is 66.32 (average level), affirmative sentences with subjects She, He, It is 63.42 (average level), a negative sentence is 63.16 (average level) and interrogative sentence is 63.42 (average level). It can be concluded that the easiest mastery on constructing Simple Present Tense is in an affirmative sentence with subjects I, You, We, and They, and the most difficult mastery is in constructing negative sentences.

**Table 5.** *The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing affirmative sentences with subjects I, you, we and they*

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
55	1	5.3	5.3	5.3
60	5	26.3	26.3	31.6
65	6	31.6	31.6	63.2
70	3	15.8	15.8	78.9
75	3	15.8	15.8	94.7
80	1	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	19	100.0	100.0	

The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing affirmative sentences with subjects *I, You, We, and They* where the highest score is 80 (5.3%) and the lowest one is 55 (5.3%). 5 students (26.3%) get score 60, 6 students (31.6%) get score 65 and 3 students (15.8%) get scores 70 and 75.

**Table 6.** *The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing affirmative sentences with subjects she, he and it*

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
55	5	26.3	26.3	26.3
60	7	36.8	36.8	63.2
65	2	10.5	10.5	73.7
70	1	5.3	5.3	78.9
75	2	10.5	10.5	89.5
80	2	10.5	10.5	100.0
Total	19	100.0	100.0	

It can be seen clearly in Table 1.5 that the highest score is 80 (10.5%) with 2 students and the lowest one is 55 (26.3%) with 5 students. 7 students (36.8%) get score 60, 2 students (10.5%) get score 65, 1 student (5.3%) gets score 70 and 2 students (10.5%) get score 75.

**Table 7.** *The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing negative sentences*

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
50	2	10.5	10.5	10.5
55	1	5.3	5.3	15.8
60	8	42.1	42.1	57.9
65	3	15.8	15.8	73.7
70	3	15.8	15.8	89.5
75	1	5.3	5.3	94.7
85	1	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	19	100.0	100.0	

The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing negative sentences that the highest score is 85 (5.3%) with 1 student and the lowest one is 50 (10.5%) with 2 students. 1 student (5.3%) gets scores of 55 and 75. 3 students (15.8%) get scores 65 and 70, and 8 students (42.1%) get score 60.

**Table 8.** *The frequency of the students' mastery on constructing interrogative sentences*

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
50	1	5.3	5.3	5.3
55	3	15.8	15.8	21.1
60	6	31.6	31.6	52.6
65	4	21.1	21.1	73.7
70	3	15.8	15.8	89.5
75	1	5.3	5.3	94.7
85	1	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	19	100.0	100.0	

It was explained about the frequency of the students' mastery on constructing interrogative sentences where the highest score is 85 (5.3%) and the lowest one is 50 (5.3%). 3 students (15.8%) get scores of 55 and 70.

## **CONCLUSION**

From this research, it's found that the students' mastery on constructing Simple Present Tense is 64.08 which is categorized into an average level. The students' mastery on constructing affirmative sentences with subjects I, You, We, and They is 66.32 (average level). The students' mastery on constructing affirmative sentences with subjects She, He and It is 63.42 (average level). The students' mastery on constructing negative sentences is 63.16 (average level). The students' mastery on constructing interrogative sentences is 63.42 (average level). It is seen that the easiest part in constructing Simple Present Tense is in affirmative sentences with subjects I, You, We, and They while the most difficult part of it is in negative sentences. It can be concluded that the majority of the students still used ending -s/-es for subjects she, he and it is negative and interrogative sentences,



majority of the students didn't use ending -s/-es for subjects She, He and It in affirmative sentences, and Ending -s/-es of a verb is still used by the students with subjects They and We. In sum, the majority of the students could master the Simple Present Tense. It is recommended to English teachers to motivate the students in learning tenses especially simple present tenses that are almost used.

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