

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY NINTH GRADE STUDENTS IN LEARNING THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to describe and analyze the difficulties faced by ninth grade students at SMPN 23 Tangerang Selatan Junior High School Ciputat in learning the present perfect tense. The sample consists of 31 ninth grade students. Employing a case study method, data were collected through observation, tests, and questionnaires, and analyzed using qualitative methods to identify common patterns and specific areas of difficulty. Findings reveal that students struggle with mastering the form of the present perfect tense, including the use of "have/has" and the regular and irregular verb forms of past participles. Additionally, students experience confusion with the time expressions associated with the present perfect tense. Recommendations include that teachers provide clear explanations and additional exercises on the present perfect tense, while students should engage in individual study and pay close attention to teachers' explanations to enhance their understanding.

**Keywords:** *case study; learning difficulties; present perfect tense*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to describe the students' difficulties in learning Present Perfect tense at the 9th grade students of SMPN 23 Tangerang Selatan (abbreviated Tangsel) Junior High School Ciputat, it includes what kind of difficulties faced by the students of SMPN 23 Tangsel in learning Present Perfect Tense. The research aims to analyze about what kind of difficulties faced by the 9th grade students SMPN 23 Tangsel in learning present perfect tense. Sample of the research are as 31 ninth grade students. This research is using case study method by collecting data from observation, test and questioner.

The finding of study state that the 9th grade students of SMPN 23 Tangsel still find difficulties in learning present perfect tense, because the students have not mastered yet the form of present perfect tense: the use of have/has, regular and irregular verb-form of past participle, especially the form of past participle. Besides, the students still confuse using the time expression of present perfect tense. The writer suggested that the teacher should explained about the form and he use of present perfect tense in clear way in other to make students understand, the teacher should give more exercises related to the present perfect tense. For the students, they must learn individually about present perfect tense and should pay attention to the teacher's explanation. English is a foreign language in Indonesia that has been taught from Elementary School as a Local Content, and Junior High School until Senior High School as a compulsory subject, up to university. People realize that teaching English became very important now and needs much concern. In Learning English, there are four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and

complements, they are: grammar, pronunciation, and Vocabulary for supporting the development of those skills. Besides the four skills, Grammar also should be mastered by students. Grammar is needed even in communication, without the proper knowledge of grammar the students will find many problems to build up the sentences and express their idea for communication activities, If the grammar is good, they will be confident in speaking English with other people. According to Penny Ur, “there is no doubt that a knowledge-implicit of grammatical rule is essential for the mastery of language: you cannot use words unless you know how they should put together” Without the proper knowledge of the student’s grammar will find many problems to build up the sentences and express their idea for communication activities.

Now English is the most common language used throughout the world. A distinction is often made that depends on how the language is learned: as a native language (or mother tongue) or as a foreign language. English is as a foreign language in Indonesia. Many schools in Indonesia, English is determined as a compulsory subject in national curriculum. Communication is to understand and to express informasi, thought, feeling and to develop knowledge, technology and culture. Ability in communication and able to understand the text.

Actually, many Junior High School students have some difficulties in learning English language skills and English language complements. These problems can be known from the result of the students’ achievements and the teacher evaluation, so the teacher role is very important to make the students be creative to solve their problems. The writer chooses SMPN 23 Tangsel as a case study because the writer did the research about Some Difficulties Faced by The Students in Learning Present perfect Tense. To measure the ability and to get the data of the students’ score in SMPN 23 Tangsel, the writer decided to give the test and questioner. Writer believes that in learning English as a foreign language or second language the learner should, first of all, master the grammar structure system as the basic structural patterns of sentences. Grammar is one of the language aspects which is taught to every language learner. It has an important role in understanding the English language. As said by W. Stannard Allen in living English structure stated: “English has three main divisions, past, present, and future...” Absolutely, the verb in English influenced by the “time”, when it happens or will happen (past, present, or future), So a verb should be concord or related with the time.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Raymond Murphy (1990) we use the present perfect (have been/ have played/ have done etc.) when we talk about a time from the past until now-for example, your life: I’ve seen that woman before but I can’t remember when. Based on the previous statement, the writer will not discuss grammar in general. She will write about tense. Tense is one of discussions of grammar in general. Laurie Bauer (1983) said tense is usually defined as relating to the time an action, event or state. The time of the action is commonly expressed by the verb. Almost all verbs can show the difference between the past and present by a change in the verb form. With tenses, students can know when the action occurs and understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and their concept of time. According to Richard Viet (1986), “Tense is frequently described as the property that relates to the time a verb’s action is performed.” Some grammarians said that English has a great variety of tenses. This is one of reasons why the Indonesia students have difficulties in understanding tenses, because there are no tenses in Indonesia language. Present perfect tense is one tense that should be mastered by students. When the students want to tell a verb that “used to indicate an action that took place at an indefinite time or over a period of time in the past, but still has relevance in the present”. We call it the present perfect tense. Even though the students of Junior High School have learned it, they still find difficulty in learning present perfect tense, especially in using forms and usages. This is the reason, why the writer is interested in writing about the problems in grammar test in Present Perfect Tense for the ninth year students of SMPN 23 Tangsel.

## METHOD

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study, including the research objectives, location and timeframe, study method, population and sample, research instruments, and data collection techniques. The research focuses on the 9th grade students of SMPN 23 Tangsel, specifically the students of class 9.1, to identify the challenges they face in learning the present perfect tense.

The research was conducted at SMPN 23 Tangsel, located at Sukamulya Raya, Serua, Ciputat, Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten. The data collection took place from January 15th to February 15th, 2024. The study utilized a case study approach combined with field research, where the researcher observed the difficulties faced by the 9th grade students in learning the present perfect tense. To facilitate the analysis, the researcher focused on class 9.1, consisting of 31 students, as a representative sample from the total population of 120 students across three classes (9.1, 9.2, and 9.3).

Various instruments were employed to gather the necessary data. Observation was used to assess the classroom environment, the teaching-learning process, and the specific challenges encountered by the students in understanding the present perfect tense. Additionally, a test comprising 25 items was administered to evaluate the students' grasp of the tense, focusing on the use of "has/have," regular verbs, and irregular verbs. The test results were scored to determine the extent of the students' understanding.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was utilized to gather data that could not be obtained through observation and testing. This questionnaire sought to uncover the reasons behind the students' difficulties with the present perfect tense and served as a supplementary tool to validate the findings obtained through other methods.

To ensure the accuracy of the collected data, multiple data collection techniques were employed, including observation, testing, and questionnaires. Observation allowed the researcher to monitor the teaching process without direct involvement, while the test provided measurable insights into the students' proficiency in the present perfect tense. The questionnaire offered additional qualitative data, helping to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the students' challenges and reinforcing the validity of the research findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In line with the research problems, technique of data collecting present finding as follow it presents technique of data collecting presents finding as follows: (1) Data description (2) Data Analysis (3) Data Interpretation. The writer got the results from the English test score about present perfect tense. She gave the test to the thirty-one students of ninth grade which consists of 25 items which is asking about has/have, regular verb, and irregular verb. The instrument of the test can be seen in appendix I. The following tables are the students' score and the present perfect tense and its distribution.

**Table 1. Present Perfect Tenses and Its Distribution in the Test item**

No	Difficulty	Number of Item
1	has/have	1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25
2	regular verb	2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23
3	irregular verb	3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24

From the table 1 previously, the test consists 25 items which are asking about three main areas of the difficulties in present perfect tense. The test is a multiple choice. This test consists of 25 items which is asking about the difficulties in present perfect tense. This test consists of 25 items which are divided into three main aspects, they are has/have (number of item are 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25), regular verb (number of the item are 2, 5, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23), and irregular

verb (number of the items are 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24). So, every correct item gets 2 points. Finally, the total score for the test is got from the total correct answers in part multiple-choice then divided by 5.

The data analysis is conducted by arranging the data obtained systematically to facilitate the writing of the research report. The data collected from observations consist of field notes and observation sheets. These data are analyzed to address the research questions regarding the difficulties faced by students in learning the present perfect tense.

The writer also used the formula that purposed by Anas Sudijono 2004, such as:

$$M = \frac{TS}{N}$$

Where:

M : Mean Score

TS: Total of the Scores

N : Number of the Students

Besides the formula above, the writer also used the percentage the test formula, as follow:

$$P = f \times 100\%<sup>1</sup>$$

Where:

P: Percentage

F: Frequency of error made

After having percentage and frequency, the writer looked for the

$$p = \frac{fx100\%}{Nxn}$$

Where:

P: Percentage

F : Frequency

N : Number of

n : Number of item test

To know the test result, the writer shows table as follow:

**Table 2. Student's Score of Test Result**

No	Sample	Score
1	Student 1	100
2	Student 2	92
3	Student 3	84
4	Student 4	80
5	Student 5	80
6	Student 6	80
7	Student 7	75
8	Student 8	68
9	Student 9	68
10	Student 10	64
11	Student 11	64
12	Student 12	64
13	Student 13	64
14	Student 14	60
15	Student 15	56
16	Student 16	48
17	Student 17	48

18	Student 18	48
19	Student 19	48
20	Student 20	45
21	Student 21	44
22	Student 22	44
23	Student 23	44
24	Student 24	44
25	Student 25	44
26	Student 26	40
27	Student 27	40
28	Student 28	36
29	Student 29	32
30	Student 30	10
31	Student 31	10
	Total	1724

The writer uses formula to find the mean, as follow:

$$M = \frac{TS}{N}$$

$$= \frac{1724}{31}$$

$$= 55.6$$

According to the data above, the mean score is found to be approximately 55.6. This indicates that, on average, the students scored slightly above half of the total possible score, reflecting significant challenges in mastering the present perfect tense. According to Suharsini's classification of scores, which is outlined in her book, the scores are categorized into different grades and remarks as follows:

**Table 3: Classification of Scores**

Score	Grade	Remark
80 - 100	Excellent	A
66 - 79	Good	B
56 - 65	Fair	C
40 - 55	Poor	D
30 - 39	Fail	E

Based on the classification of scores from the test, student performance can be divided into three broad categories: High Scores (80-100), Middle Scores (56-79), and Low Scores (30-55). Students in the High Scores category have demonstrated a strong understanding of the present perfect tense, falling within the "Excellent" range, which indicates exceptional performance. Those in the Middle Scores category, encompassing the "Fair" and "Good" grades, show a reasonable grasp of the tense but still face some challenges. This group displays moderate proficiency, suggesting a need for further practice and reinforcement. Finally, students in the Low Scores category have shown significant difficulties with the present perfect tense, falling into the "Poor" and "Fail" categories. This indicates substantial weaknesses and a need for intensive support and intervention.

To determine the percentage of students within each category, the following formula will be used:  $P = (F \times 100\%) / (N \times n)$ , where P represents the percentage of students in each score category, F is the frequency of students within the specific score range, N is the total number of students, and n is the number of items in the test (if applicable). The formula is applied by first calculating the percentage of students with High Scores by counting the number of students who

scored between 80 and 100 and applying the formula. The same process is used for the Middle Scores, by counting the students scoring between 56 and 79 and using the formula to determine their percentage, and for the Low Scores, by counting those who scored between 30 and 55 and applying the formula to find their percentage.

For example, if the frequency distribution based on test results shows 6 students with High Scores, 15 with Middle Scores, and 10 with Low Scores, and the total number of students (N) is 31, the percentages for each category can be calculated accordingly. These percentages will provide insight into the distribution of student performance, helping to identify areas that require targeted educational strategies to improve overall learning outcomes.

The frequency of difficulties encountered by students when learning the present perfect tense is presented in the following table:

**Table 4 Frequency of difficulties**

No	Present Perfect Tense	Item Number	Frequency of difficulty	Percentage
1	Has / Have	1	25	69.44%
2	Has / Have	4	22	61.11%
3	Has / Have	7	11	30.56%
4	Has / Have	10	22	61.11%
5	Has / Have	13	7	19.44%
6	Has / Have	16	21	58.33%
7	Has / Have	19	25	69.44%
8	Has / Have	22	27	75.00%
9	Has / Have	25	13	36.11%
10	Regular verb	2	24	66.67%
11	Regular verb	5	14	38.89%
12	Regular verb	8	23	63.89%
13	Regular verb	11	22	61.11%
14	Regular verb	14	12	33.33%
15	Regular verb	17	25	69.44%
16	Regular verb	20	27	75.00%
17	Regular verb	23	18	50.00%
18	Irregular verb	3	10	27.88%
19	Irregular verb	6	13	36.11%
20	Irregular verb	9	29	80.56%
21	Irregular verb	12	28	77.78%
22	Irregular verb	15	30	83.33%
23	Irregular verb	18	28	77.78%
24	Irregular verb	21	29	80.56%
25	Irregular verb	24	30	83.33%
Total		25	535	59.44%

To determine the overall average, the formula  $P = F / (N \times n) \times 100\%$  was used, yielding a calculation of  $P = 535 / (36 \times 25) \times 100\% = 535 / 900 \times 100\% = 59.44\%$ .

In terms of data interpretation, the analysis of the frequency of errors across different items related to the present perfect tense has provided valuable insights into the difficulties faced by students. The findings reveal that the highest percentage of difficulties, 36%, is associated with

the use of "has" and "have." This suggests that students struggle most with correctly applying these auxiliary verbs when forming the present perfect tense. The challenges may stem from confusion regarding subject-verb agreement or the proper usage of "has" and "have" in various contexts. Additionally, 32% of the difficulties are related to regular verbs, specifically with forming the past participle. Students may have trouble understanding or applying the rules for regular verb conjugations, affecting their ability to use these verbs correctly in the present perfect tense. Another 32% of difficulties are observed with irregular verbs. The irregular nature of these verbs, which do not follow standard conjugation rules, presents a significant challenge for students, highlighting the need for focused practice to master these forms for correct usage in the present perfect tense.

The data suggests that students face challenges across all aspects of the present perfect tense, with a notable emphasis on the auxiliary verbs "has" and "have." Addressing these difficulties requires targeted instruction to clarify the usage rules and provide ample practice opportunities. Both regular and irregular verbs are areas where students show significant error rates, indicating a need for comprehensive exercises and reinforcement to improve their understanding and application of the tense.

These findings align with and extend the insights offered by previous research on students' difficulties with the present perfect tense. The study highlights significant issues with the correct use of "has" and "have," revealing substantial confusion among students. This finding corroborates research by Ellis (2006) and Ur (2012), who observe that learners frequently struggle with subject-verb agreement and the accurate application of "has" and "have," particularly in distinguishing singular from plural subjects. Similarly, Ur (2012) notes that such challenges are common due to the complex nature of auxiliary verb usage across various tenses.

The study also identifies notable difficulties with both regular and irregular verbs, especially in forming past participles. This aligns with the work of Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), who discuss the difficulties learners face with irregular verb forms, which lack predictable patterns. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) report that learners often struggle with regular verb conjugations due to the necessity of applying consistent rules. The current study's focus on these verb forms underscores the need for targeted practice, consistent with these previous findings.

Moreover, the study advocates for targeted instruction and ample practice to address these difficulties. This recommendation is supported by Lightbown and Spada (2013), who emphasize the effectiveness of explicit instruction and structured practice in overcoming grammatical challenges. Their research underscores the importance of clear explanations and comprehensive exercises, reinforcing the current study's suggestions for enhancing instructional methods.

The study's focus on error analysis and instructional strategies aligns with established approaches in educational research. James (1998) highlights the value of error analysis in identifying specific learner difficulties and guiding targeted interventions. Richards and Schmidt (2010) further emphasize that effective teaching strategies should address common errors and misconceptions. This supports the current study's recommendations for tailored instructional approaches based on detailed error analysis.

Overall, the findings from this study are consistent with existing research on the challenges students face with the present perfect tense, particularly concerning auxiliary verbs and verb forms. The study reinforces the need for targeted instruction and practice, aligning with broader research literature that highlights the importance of addressing specific grammatical difficulties through focused teaching strategies and comprehensive practice. This comparison emphasizes the validity of the study's conclusions and supports ongoing efforts to improve grammatical proficiency among students.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The analysis of the data reveals that a substantial number of students struggle with both the form and usage of the present perfect tense. The frequency of errors highlights that confusion

persists, particularly with the auxiliary verbs "has" and "have," as well as with the conjugation of regular and irregular verbs. This indicates that students have not yet fully grasped the rules governing the present perfect tense. Therefore, there is a clear need for improved instruction and practice to help students understand and apply the tense correctly. However, the study's sample size of 31 students may not be representative of the broader population of ninth-grade students, and a larger sample size could provide more generalizable results. Additionally, the research was conducted at only one school (SMPN 23 Tangerang Selatan), which may limit the applicability of the findings to other schools or educational settings. The study relied on observations, tests, and questionnaires, which might not capture all aspects of students' difficulties or the full context of their learning experiences. Furthermore, the research was conducted over a limited period, which might not account for variations in students' learning over time or the impact of ongoing instruction.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, teachers should provide more explicit explanations and examples of the present perfect tense, emphasizing both the form and usage. Clear, step-by-step instruction can help demystify the tense for students. Additionally, incorporating more exercises and practice activities focused specifically on the present perfect tense is essential. Regular drills on both regular and irregular verbs, as well as the correct use of "has" and "have," can reinforce learning. To further support students' understanding, utilizing supplementary materials such as visual aids, interactive exercises, and online resources can make learning the present perfect tense more accessible and effective. Implementing formative assessments to regularly gauge students' understanding and provide feedback is also recommended. This ongoing evaluation can help identify areas of difficulty early and address them promptly.

The findings suggest a need for curriculum adjustments to better address the challenges students face with the present perfect tense. Integrating targeted practice into the curriculum can enhance students' grammatical proficiency. Moreover, professional development for teachers should include strategies for effectively teaching the present perfect tense and other challenging grammatical concepts. Training programs can equip teachers with the tools and methods needed to address students' difficulties more effectively.

Future studies could expand on this research by including a larger, more diverse sample and exploring additional factors that may influence students' understanding of the present perfect tense. Longitudinal studies could also provide insights into how students' grasp of the tense evolves over time. Educational policymakers may consider incorporating findings from such research into broader language education strategies. Policies that support targeted grammar instruction and resource development can contribute to improved language outcomes for students.

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