



USING TIMELINE AND CONCEPT QUESTIONS AS MEDIA TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SIMPLE PAST, SIMPLE PRESENT, AND SIMPLE FUTURE TENSE IN UNIVERSITY LEVEL

Ihsan Pratama¹ and Fitrawati²

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: ihsan24pratama@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is aimed to discuss about the use of the Timeline and Concept Questions to differentiate between simple past, simple present, and simple future tense in university level. This media is expected to help students to understand the difference between simple past, simple present, and simple future tense. The activity done by the students can be classified into three steps. *First*, students are introduced to the timeline and concept questions and its relation to the tenses. *Second*, students are asked to fill the timeline based on the sentences that are learned whether they belong to simple past, simple present or simple future tense. *Third*, the teacher gives some questions (concept questions) to the students. This is to see how far students' understanding about simple present tense and simple past tense. After applying this media, it is expected that the students can understand the abstract concept of simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense.

Keywords: *Timelines, Concept Questions, Media, Simple Past Tense, Simple Present Tense, Simple Future Tense*

A. INTRODUCTION

In learning English, students need to master the four English skills. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In order to master the four English skills, students need to be familiar with one of the language components; that is grammatical systems of English. It is almost impossible for students to master the four English skills without comprehension of grammatical systems. Grammar is very important in learning English and it cannot be separated. Nelson (2002) argues that grammar refers to the set of rules that allow students to combine words in target language into larger units. It means that grammar provides guidance and rule in constructing sentences in English, and it is needed for the students to construct correct sentences in conversation both oral and written forms. It is also

¹ English ELTSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on March 2018

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



supported by Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) who state that grammar refers to the set of rules that allow students to combine words in target language into larger units. However, without grammar competency, the students will fail to master the four English skills.

In grammar, the students are provided with many rules of a language. Tense is one of them. Greenbaum, S. And Nelson, G (2002) state that tense is the category of grammar that refers to time which is signaled by the form of the verb. In addition, Hornby (1995) defines that tense is a verb form or series of verb forms used to indicate the time of the action or state also supports it. Regarding those definitions, the writer would say that the word 'tense' stands for a verb form or series of verbs used to express a time relation.

According to Davidson (2006), Generally, there are 16 tenses in English, they are classified into some categories; the simple tenses, the future and conditional tenses, the perfect tenses, and the continuous tenses. In contrary, Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) declares that there are only two tenses in the sense of verb form. They are present tense and past tense. However, other tenses just derive from these two tenses. On the other hand, Cowan (2008) in Rahman (2015), there are only three tenses that categorize as present tense, past tense, and future tense. However, the others are aspect; progressive aspect, perfect aspect. However, this article will be focused on these three tenses, which is the simple form of the tenses; simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense.

Simple past tense describes the activities or situation that happened in the past. According to Leech (2006), in simple past tense, there is only one verb that forms the main verb. While Azar (2002) states that simple past tense indicates that a situation begin and ended in the past at a particular time. It means that there is no relation to the present situation or future situation. Nunan (2003) also states that in simple past tense, there are two types of verb. They are regular verb and irregular verb.

Simple present tense indicates an action or situation that is not finished. It is used to express daily activities or repeated actions such as routines, habits, jobs, hobbies, and other things that always happen and general statement or fact. In this case, the time expressions or the adverb of time that being used is, *always, often, sometimes, seldom, every day, every year, etc.*

Future tense is used to indicate the action in the future related to the speaker or writer. In future tense, there is no change to the verb. However, it indicates by a marker with the base form of the verb. Penston (2005) states that there are four markers generally used to indicate the future time. They are *will, going to, present continuous, and present simple*. In addition, *shall* can also be used as a marker to indicate the future time but it is not commonly used. According to Azar (2002), the use of *shall* in stating the future time is rarely used in American English. However, it is commonly found in British English.

Jufrizal and Refnita (2013) argue that most learners feel that learning grammar is difficult, confusing, and boring. However, many students of EFL are lack of understanding on simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense. They do not understand the abstract concept of those tenses. Even

thought they know that “went” is a past form of “go”, but they often fail to use the appropriate verb form in a sentence. Those happened because they fail to understand the time reference. The change of verb form is influenced by the time, however; the students not only have to understand the change of verb form but also have to understand the time reference.

Saunir (2014) states that the way to teach grammar is about the treatment of the approaches used in teaching process. However, a good approaches to teach grammar is using a media. To help the students understand the concept of tenses easily, the teacher needs a suitable media. According to Fitriwati (2015) there are three kinds of media. They are visual media, audio media, and audio visual media.

From the background described above, the writer would like to solve these problems by suggesting Timelines and Concept Questions in teaching simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense to university students. Workman (2008) states that timeline are lines and drawings that give a visual representation of different verb forms. Timelines give a visual representation of relationship of verb form and time reference. Timeline is a horizontal line drawing from left to right and separated by a vertical line. Everything on the left side of the timeline represents the past event, everything on the middle side of the timeline represents now or present situation, and everything on the right side represent the future. On the timeline, there also have a cross, which indicates a complete action. If the cross is placed on the left side, it means that the action is happened on the past, vice versa.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Teacher's preparation

First, the teacher needs to identify the target verb and its transformation that will be taught. For example, *buy, drive, call, watch, stay, get, etc.* After that, the teacher must consider the verb whether it belongs to simple present tense, simple past tense, or simple future tense.

Second, the teacher needs to prepare media to be used in teaching process. To activate student's background knowledge, the teacher should find some pictures related to the topic of the lesson. Since this paper used non-technical media, the teacher just need to prepare markers and others that will support learning process.

Third, the teacher prepares the timeline and also the concept questions for each sentence that will be taught to the students. It is based on the verb that have been stated before.

Last, the teacher prepare a model of a worksheet for students. The worksheet can be an empty timeline, and the students role is to fill the timeline based on what have they learned before. After that, the students answer the concept questions.

2. The Implementation of timeline and concept questions to teach simple past, simple present and simple future tense.

These are some steps in implementing timeline and concept questions as a media in teaching simple past, simple present, and simple future tense to university students. In accordance to Permendiknas No 41 Tahun 2007, it is stated that there are three phase of teaching process that should be followed by the teachers; pre teaching activities, whilst-teaching activities and post teaching activities. However, whilst teaching phase, it use scientific approach.

a. Pre-teaching Activity

In pre-teaching activity, usually the teacher greets their students, check students' attendance, and ask them whether they are ready to study or not. The teacher also needs to manage the classroom as comfortable as possible. Then, the teacher introduces a new material that will be learned. In this case the teacher tells the students that they will learn about simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense, how to understand the concept the three of them.

b. Whilst-teaching Activity

1) Observing

In observing activity, the students have to observe the information about the given topic. The information can be given by the teacher through various ways. One of them is by showing some pictures related to the topic. The picture can be someone who buys a car, someone who will drive, and someone who call somebody.



The teacher also serves a keyword for each picture. Then, the teacher asks the students to observe the picture and the keyword. What is the relationship between the picture and the keyword, what it is about, and etc.

2) Questioning

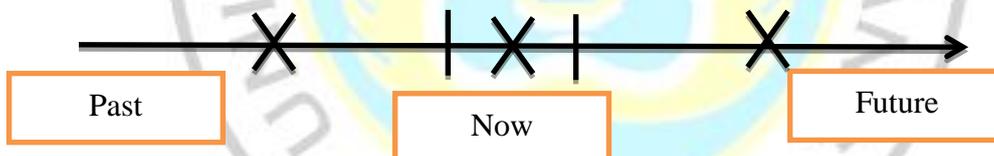
In this stage, after the teacher guides the students finishing their observation, the teacher makes questioning phase. The teacher asks the students to ask some questions related to the topic that is not understood yet. It can be about the differentiation of the verb form in each sentence, the structure of the sentence, and another difficulty that is found in the sentences.

3) Experimenting

In this step, the teacher will begin a new topic. Before drawing the timeline, the teacher explains again about the function of timeline and its part. After that, the teacher shows some sentences. In this stage, the teacher will use the timeline to explain simple past tense, the simple present tense, and simple future tense. Firstly, the teacher shows the students a list of the sentence as follow:

Sentences
I watched a good film last night.
I watch a good film.
They will stay at my house for a day.
I called my Mom yesterday.
I call my Mom on Sunday.
I'll be thirty in July.
I got up late this morning.
I get up 7 o'clock everyday.
Widening the road will improve traffic flow.

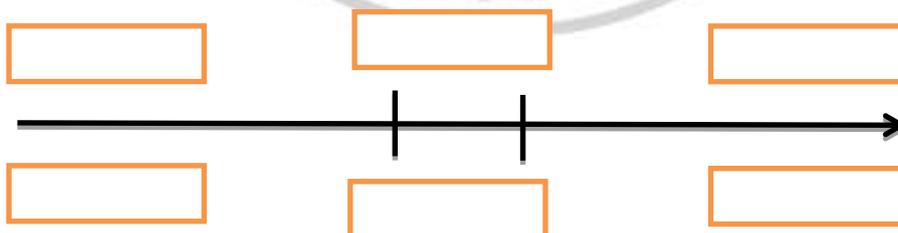
After that, the teacher shows the timeline to the students. Before the teacher begins to use the timeline, the teacher should tell the students about the timeline first. Tell the students that everything to the left of the vertical line represents the past, while everything to the right represents now, the present moment, and a cross is used to show a single, complete action.



Then, the teacher shows the sentence and an empty timeline.

Example:

“I watched a good film last night.”



After showing the first example, the teacher asks the questions related to the sentence in order to make them understand about the sentence and its timeline.

So, they can fill the timeline. For example:

Teacher : Ok students. The condition or sentence is “I watched a good film last night?” who watch the film?

Students : *(they will answer)* I

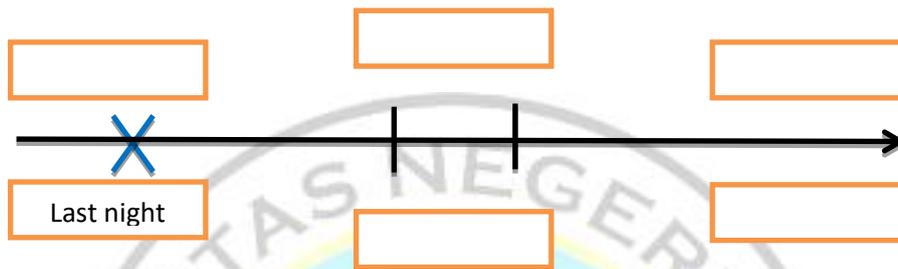
Teacher : You are right. “I” is the first person singular. Next question, When did it happen?

Students : Last night, sir.

Teacher : Good. It happened last night. So, take a look at the timeline Where do you think we put the cross?
 Students : On the left side of the timeline, sir.
 Teacher : You are right. We put the cross on the left side, because it happened last night.

(The timeline will be like this)

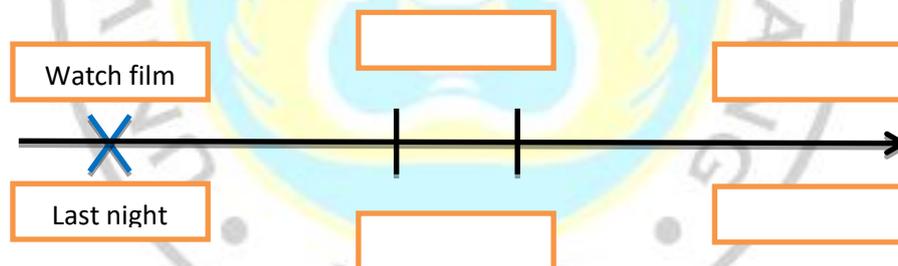
“I watched a good film last night.”



Teacher : Next, we know that it happened last night. So, what did he do last night?
 Students : He watched a good film, sir.
 Teacher : Exactly.

(The teacher guide the students to fill the timeline. It will be like this)

“I watched a good film last night.”



Teacher : Ok students, if you see the timeline. What the tense is being used?
 Students : Simple past tense, sir.
 Teacher : How do you know that?
 Students : The cross is place on the left side of the timeline which means simple past tense. It also use “last night” as a time signal, and “watched” which past form of watch.

Those are the illustration of how the teacher guides the students to understand the tenses by using timeline. The teacher does not need to explain much about what is simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense. Let them draw a conclusion based on the timeline. The teacher’s role is to help them to understand it. The teacher can continue with the next sentence until all sentences are completed.

After all of the timeline have been filled by the students, now it is time for the students to answer the concept questions about the previous sentences. It is used to check whether the student understand about what they have write in

timeline or not. The questions are provided by the teacher (*see appendix 2*) and the students can discuss it with their partner.

4) Associating

In this phase, the students are asked to check and evaluate the result of their timeline and concept questions that they have made. Then, the teacher asks the students to compare one sentence to another and analyse what make them different and what is the difference. The students can discuss it in pair. At last, the teacher helps the students to give more understanding about the related tenses by showing them the structure of the sentence of simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense

5) Networking

In this stage, the students present their own timeline based on the sentence that have served by the teacher in front of the class. After that, the teacher and the students discuss the timeline that have been made and presented.

c. Post Teaching Activity

In this stage, the students present their own timeline based on the sentence that have served by the teacher in front of the class. After that, the teacher and the students discuss the timeline that have been made and presented.

C. CONCLUSION

Simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense is a part of grammar that is learnt by the university students. When the students write sentences, they face some problems, especially in using an appropriate tense between simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense. Thus, the teacher must solve these problems by using a suitable media in order to make them understand about the use of simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense easily. One of those media is Timeline and Concept Questions. This media will help the students to visualize simple present tense and simple past tense and understand easily.

Using timeline and concept questions can be useful as a media to teach simple past tense, simple present tense, and simple future tense since its serve a visual representation of the time. The students are required to understand the time reference by looking at the time signal in the sentences and relating it to the verb. If the time signal signalled the past event, it means the sentence belongs to simple past tense. However, if the students cannot find the time signal. The students can directly refer to the verb. That is also for simple present tense.

By using timeline and concept questions, the teachers can help the students to understand the abstract concept of simple present tense and simple past tense.

Note: This article was written based on Ihsan Pratama's paper under the supervision of Fitrawati, S.S., M.Pd

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Azar, Betty Schramper. (2002). *Understanding and Using English Grammar, 3rd Ed with Answer Key*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Fitrawati (2015). Improving Students' Speaking Ability By Using Instructional Media For Advanced Learners. *Journal of Lingua Didaktika*. Vol. 9 No. 1.
- Greenbaum, S. And Nelson, G. (2002). *An Introduction to English Grammar (2nd ed)*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hornby, A. S. (1995) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jufrizal and Renita, Lely (2013). The Cultural-Academic Gaps Faced by The EFL Learners in Understanding and Using English Tenses. *Journal of Leksika*. Vol. 7. No.1
- Leech, Geoffrey. (2006). *A Glossary of English Grammar*. Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press.
- Nunan, David. (2003) *Practical English Language Teaching*. New York: McGrawHill.
- Penston, Tony. (2005). *A Concise Grammar for English Language Teachers*. Ireland: TP Publication
- Rahman, S.R (2015). Problems in Mastering English Tense and Aspect and the Role of The Practitioners. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol.20. No. 1, pp. 131-135
- Saun, Saunir (2014). The Sentence Patern Aproach in Teaching the English Tenses: Problems in Achieving the Communicative Goals. *Journal of SELT*. Vol. 2
- Workman, Graham (2008). *Concept Questions and Time Lines*. Gem Publishing