Tense and Aspect of English In Pedagogical Grammar: How essential are they for EFL Learners in Indonesia

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Abstract

Tense, aspect, and modality are those of universal grammatical features which make specific characteristics on human languages cross-linguistically. As a *tenseness language*, English grammatically constructs the tense, aspect, and modality in sentential constructions in different ways compared with those of *bahasa Indonesia* and most of local languages in Indonesia which belong to *tenseless languages*. The grammatical strategies used by English concerning with tense, aspect, and modality should be intentionally and academically learned in any program of English learning. This paper discusses *the grammatical features tenses and aspects of English on the particular perspectives of pedagogical grammar*. This paper continuously analyzes the *how essential the understanding on English tenses and aspects is for EFL learners in Indonesia as the way of building and strengthening grammatical competence and language awareness*. It is scientifically believed that the descriptive and pedagogical perspectives on English tenses and aspects are academically and psychologically essential for EFL learners in this country.
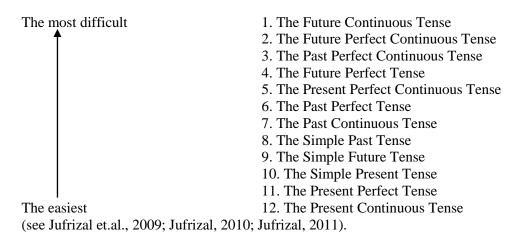
Key words/phrases: *tense, aspect, English, descriptive grammar, pedagogical grammar, tenseness language, tenseless language*

A. Introduction

It should not be "negatively" questioned anymore that linguistics and language teaching are in mutual cooperation and interaction both in theoretical and practical matters. Linguists, in linguistic studies, have to do descriptive and analytic descriptions of human languages in order to explore the nature of human languages. The data, description, and conclusions of the various linguistic works lead linguists to draw grammatical and linguistic theories which may be appropriately consumed by the experts and methodologists in language teaching. In other words, the teaching-learning processes of language cannot be extremely separated from linguistic theories and grammatical properties of particular languages. In this relation, Valdman (1966) and Corder (1973) as quoted by Stern (1994: 174) argue that linguists may seek validity in a coherent and consistent linguistic theory, while language teachers judge a theory for its usefulness in the design of materials, in curriculum development, or in instruction. In addition, different linguistics theories may offer different perspectives on language, and they can be treated as equivalent resources.

Although all human languages have phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels as the language universals, how particular languages construct their grammatical constructions are not the same. English and *bahasa Indonesia*, for instance, have different typology on grammatical features and constructions. Typologically, English belongs to tenseness languages, but *bahasa Indonesia* and most of local languages in Indonesia are tenseless languages. In accordance with this, most learners in Indonesia are in psychological and academic difficulties in understanding and using English tenses and aspects appropriately (see Jufrizal, et.al. 2009; Jufrizal, 2011).

A research concerning with problems and difficulties in teaching and learning English *tenses* and *aspects* tells us that most students of English Department of FBSS Universitas Negeri Padang faced difficulties and problems in understanding and using English tenses appropriately. The hierarchy of the difficulties can be shown as follows:

The most difficult

1. The Future Continuous Tense
2. The Future Perfect Continuous Tense
3. The Past Perfect Continuous Tense
4. The Future Perfect Tense
5. The Present Perfect Continuous Tense
6. The Past Perfect Tense
7. The Past Continuous Tense
8. The Simple Past Tense
9. The Simple Future Tense
10. The Simple Present Tense
11. The Present Perfect Tense

The easiest

12. The Present Continuous Tense

(see Jufrizal et.al., 2009; Jufrizal, 2010; Jufrizal, 2011).

The hierarchy of difficulties above tells that English Department students of FBSS UNP are in "various" difficulties in understanding and using English tenses and aspects. It seems that they are in serious difficulties to understand and to use complex tenses, the English tenses that are actually the combination of tense(s) and aspect(s) (Jufrizal, 2010). Linguistically, *tense* and *aspect* are not really the same; the terms past, present, and future are tenses, while continuous (progressive) and perfect are the aspect. For academic and practical purposes, they are just called tenses as pedagogical grammar.

The theoretical-linguistic descriptions (descriptive grammar) of tenses and aspects in English may cause psychological and academic problems and difficulties in teaching-learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Consequently, learners of English in Indonesia have a negative image of English grammar. Then, prescriptive grammar of English in terms of tense and aspect even give further difficulties and problems because it comes to have *right* or *wrong* dichotomy. It is a psychological burden for learners as they are always afraid of being wrong; the TFL learners, in Indonesia for instance, will be too careful in using English (Jufrizal, 2011).

The phenomena of tense and aspect in English brought into the practical instruction in the EFL classrooms based only on descriptive grammar and/or prescriptive grammar are confusing and problematic. Tense and aspect, as parts of grammatical features cross-linguistically, are grammatically constructed in syntactical (clause and sentence) constructions. English, in this case, belongs to tenseness languages in which tenses and aspects are grammatically constructed in the predicate constituent. As suggested and intended by language teaching-learning methodologists and practitioners, both descriptive and prescriptive grammar need be derived into a type of grammar which is helpful in practical uses. The derived grammar may fulfill the practical-pedagogical uses for non-native speaker learners. In particular references, the type of grammar is formally called *pedagogical grammar* (see for example Bygate et.al. (eds.), 1994; Odlin (ed.), 1994). This paper, developed further based on parts of research report conducted in 2009 and other related papers (see Jufrizal, 2010; Jufrizal, 2011), discusses: (i) *the grammatical features tenses and aspects of English on the particular perspectives of pedagogical grammar*; and (ii) *how essential the understanding on English tenses and aspects is for EFL learners in Indonesia as the way of building and strengthening grammatical competence and language awareness*.

It is scientifically believed that the both descriptive and pedagogical perspectives on English tenses and aspects are academically and psychologically essential for EFL learners in Indonesia. On this occasion, however, this paper just focuses on the description of English tenses and aspects in pedagogical grammar. The main aim of the discussion presented in this paper is to have pedagogical and practical explanations of English tenses and aspects in the perspectives of pedagogical grammar and how the grammatical properties of English tenses and aspects are essential for EFL learners in non-English speaking countries, like in Indonesia. The description and discussion of English tenses and aspects based on perspectives of pedagogical grammar may give theoretical, communicative, and academic contribution to the learners'

comprehension on English grammar, as a way to build and strengthen learners' grammatical competence and language awareness.

B. A Brief Review of Related Theories

1. Tense and Aspect in Linguistics: a Short Review

Human languages do not have the same grammatical constructions concerning with tense and aspect to communicate meanings. According to Cruse (2000: 274), the grammatical features of tense serves essentially to locate the event referred to in the sentential constructions with reference to the time at which the utterance was produced. Only languages which encode timing distinctions by means of grammatical elements can be properly said to manifest the grammatical feature of tense. Many languages encode the timing of a designated event lexically, by means of expression equivalent to yesterday, last year, tomorrow, next week, etc. Typologically, languages which belong to the first group are simply called as *tenseness languages*, whereas those belonging to the second group are the *tenseless languages* (see also Jufrizal, 2010; Jufrizal, 2011).

English, as a language which belongs to *tenseness languages*, gramaaticalizes the grammatical features called tense and aspect in clause constructions as the core predication. Meanwhile, *bahasa Indonesia* and most local languages in Indonesia are those of *tenseless languages*. In a tenseless language, the category of tense and aspect are not grammatically expressed in clause constructions. They are just expressed in lexical items which have similar meaning with tense and aspect. Linguistically, there are three basic primary tenses: (i) past (event occurs before time of speaking), (ii) present (event occurs concurrently with speaking time or includes it), and (iii) future (event is projected to occur after the time of speaking (see Lyons, 1990; Matthews, 1997; Saeed, 1997).

Tense and aspect are the main grammatical categories which must be held in clause or sentential constructions in English as a tenseness language. For practical and pedagogical purposes, many grammar books of English (formally called pedagogical grammar) just use the term tense to refer to aspect and/or the combination of tense and aspect (see further Jufrizal, 2009; Jufrizal, 2010; Jufrizal, 2011). Although they are similar in many cases, tense and aspect are linguistically different. According to Lyons (1987: 304 & 313), the category of tense has something to do with time-relation, in so far as these are expressed by systematic grammatical contrast. Traditionally, the term tense refers to past, present, and future. Aspect, on the other hand, was firstly used to refer to the distinction of perfective and imperfective in the inflective languages.

Theoretically, grammarians distinguish aspect from tense. Saeed (1997) and Cruse (2000: 275) describe theoretical description about tense and aspect. Tense serves to locate an event in time, but aspect says nothing about when an event occurred (except by implication). However, either encodes a particular way of conceptualizing an event or conveys information about the way the event unrolls through time. It is also important to make a distinction between aspect as a semantic phenomenon and aspect markers in a particular language which may have a variety of semantic functions. Lyons (1990: 678-679), in this point, states that tense semantically is a category of the sentence. In a tenseness language, such as in English, the participant in the language-event must be able to control and inter-relate at least two different frames of temporal reference; the deictic and the non-deictic. Tense, in this language, is a part of the deictic frame of temporal reference; it formally grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context. Not all languages have tense; when it is said that Chinese and Malay do not have tense what is meant is that these languages do not obligatorily relate the time of the situation being described to the time of utterance by any systematic variation in the structure of the sentence. The same linguistic cases occur for category of aspect (see also Flawley, 1992: 339-340).

The linguistic description of tense and aspect above (descriptive grammar) may be too complicated for many language learners since they are full of theoretical explanation. The

problems and difficulties on understanding the linguistic concepts of tense and aspect may become more serious if the language learners, whose mother tongues are tenseless languages, have to learn a tenseness language, as what is faced by EFL learners in Indonesia. They are highly assumed to have pedagogical and psychological problems and difficulties in understanding and using appropriate tense and aspect in communication (see further Jufrizal, 2010; Jufrizal, 2012).

2. Grammar and Foreign Language Teaching

It has been common sense that (human) language consists of four main layers: form, meaning, function, and value. They interact in systematic ways as performed by language form and used by human beings in communication. Human beings normally acquire and intentionally learn the four layers for their first, second, or foreign language(s). It is highly believed that languages are learnable and teachable due to the fact that they are naturally systematic and conventionally regulated. The regulations and rules governing the language forms are simply referred to *grammar*. It is on the right point to say that grammar of a language learnt should be academically taught and learnt in order to have linguistic competence and language awareness, as a part of primary foundation for communicative skill.

According to Lyons (1987: 133), the term grammar originally goes back to a Greek word which may be semantically translated as "the art of writing". But quite early in the history of Greek scholarship, this word went to a much wider sense and come to embrace the whole study of a language. Then, linguistic theories and grammatical concepts and descriptions have been giving essential contributions to the theories and practices of language teaching. Thus, most language teaching methodologists argue that teaching directly implies learning with a further implication that language teaching should be treated as the activities which are consciously intended to bring about language learning. The ideas stating that grammar is mostly essential in a foreign language instruction are declared by most methodologists and practitioners of language teaching and learning (see also Stern, 1994).

Grammatical theories and descriptions should be accommodated in order to construct appropriate approaches, methods, and/or techniques for successful language teaching and learning. In addition, the grammatical descriptions may provide particular data and information for suitable materials of instructions. In accordance with this, Stern (1994: 166) states that the idea that language teaching theory implies the theory of language and that of linguistics had a direct contribution to language pedagogy become more and more accepted. Quoting Spolski, Stern (1994) also argues that the relations between linguistics and language teaching as dual: 'applications and implications'. The descriptions of language made by linguists can be 'applied' in the sense that they provide the data needed for writing about teaching grammars, course books, and dictionaries. The need for grammar teaching in any form and level of language teaching and learning is not only for the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) but also for foreign language (FL). According to Brown (2001: 65), one thing that must be concerned with is that the language itself and how learners deal with complex linguistic systems. And of course, the well-planned programs and selective materials on grammatical features are more highly needed in a foreign language teaching, then.

The needs for having grammar instructions, in fact, are not only for foreign language and second language learning, but also for first language one. Even Tonkyn in Bygate et.al. (eds.) (1994) states that grammar, for many (language) teachers and educationists, had never gone away. Moreover, foreign language teaching-learning should not be free from grammar instructions. All language learning programs need to include the appropriate methods and materials of grammar learning, as what EFL programs have in Indonesia. Among the others, the main purposes of having grammar instruction in foreign language learning are to have sufficient linguistic-grammatical competence and to build language awareness on the learnt language. These are psychologically and academically needed to support the learners' communicative competence (see also Brown, 2001).

3. Descriptive, Prescriptive, Pedagogical Grammar and Language Awareness

Theoretically, descriptive linguistics studies and describes the language phenomena as what they are. In contrast, prescriptive linguistics explains and expresses the language phenomena as what they should be. Prescriptive linguistics discusses the "purity" or "correctness"; it is about "right" and "wrong" in language uses (see Lyons, 1987: 42-43). Prescriptive grammar is also frequently called by linguists as normative grammar. Following the ideas, the terms descriptive grammar and prescriptive grammar are well-known among grammarians and linguists. For most practical uses and educational programs, these terms are also brought into language teaching and language planning theories.

According to Lyons (1987: 43-44), the linguists' first task is to describe the way people actually speak and write their language, not to prescribe how they ought to speak and write. Thus, linguistics is descriptive, not prescriptive (or normative). However, it does not mean that linguists have to say 'no place' for prescriptive studies on language. In particular, there are of course obvious administrative and educational advantages in having a natively unified literary standard. The descriptive grammar as one form of descriptive linguistic works contributes to theories and frameworks in linguistics, while the prescriptive grammar may be useful in literary uses of language such as language in school and researches, standardization, administrative language, or language planning (see also Jufrizal, 2011).

In addition to these two types of grammar, other types of grammar are academically needed for language learning and other specific purposes. For academic purposes, there are, at least, three types of grammar necessarily introduced. They are (i) academic grammar for university students, (ii) teachers' grammar, and (iii) grammar for learners. The academic grammar for university students should be more theoretical and descriptive. The grammar for learners is intended to be practical, selective, sequenced, and task-oriented. Then, the teachers' grammar may be in the matter of academic and learners' grammar (Leech in Bygate et.al (eds.), 1994:17). Leech also argues that the types and levels of grammar for academic purposes at schools should be selected.

Related to the ideas, Chalker in Bygate et.al (eds.), 1994) introduces one more type of grammar called pedagogical grammar. The idea of pedagogical grammar introduced by Chalker can be said as the accommodation of the ideas of academic and learners' grammar by making pedagogical modifications in order to achieve specific and practical goals in learning a language. The main aim of learning grammar in pedagogical sense is to enable learners to be skillful in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The term grammar in this case does not refer to theoretical and complex phenomena as linguistics tells; it simply refers to rules (see also Jufrizal, 2011; Jufrizal, 2012).

Pedagogical grammar, as explained by Chalker (in Bygate et.al (eds.), 1994: 32-33), and also quoted by Jufrizal (2011), is grammar for pedagogues. Quoting Greenbaum, she describes that pedagogical grammars (that is, grammar books) teach the language and not about the language. They are inherently prescriptive, since their purpose is to tell students what to say or write. A pedagogical grammar is a course book, books intended for self-help and offering comprehensive coverage. Such kind of books has five desirable characteristics:

(i)   it must be constrained by the length of class lessons;
(ii)   it should be determined on psycholinguistic grounds (i.e. in accordance with the best methods for learning a foreign language);
(iii)   grammar topics and material should be graded;
(iv)   learners should be helped by having their attention drawn to general rules; and
(v)   it should be provided for practical applications (possibly with exercises in a separate book).

It can also be said that pedagogical grammar is not merely as grammar for learners, but as a specific type of course book. Pedagogical grammars are the books specifically designed for teaching a foreign language, or for developing an awareness of the mother tongue.

In addition to brief explanation above, Tomlin in Odlin (ed.) (1994:143 – 144) states that pedagogical grammars are defined in taxonomic opposition to linguistic grammars. Linguistic grammars are descriptions of language forms, and in some cases functions, cast in a coherent, constrained, and self-contained meta-language. A complete grammar includes descriptions of all major components of language – syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology, lexicon, and conditions on use. Pedagogical grammars, in other side, may well address several distinct audiences. They may be used by language students to augment or clarity classroom activities. They may be used by prospective teachers and their professors to intensify their detailed knowledge of the workings of some target language. For teachers, pedagogical grammars are ultimately translations of linguistic descriptions, translations which should help them enhance instructional efforts in two ways. One, they must provide explicit descriptions of grammatical structures and use in a simple and straightforward manner. Two, they should provide the basis, either explicitly or by examples, for creating additions and amendments to pedagogical descriptions. A pedagogical description must provide the language teacher with information sufficient to construct learning activities targeting the selected grammatical problems.

Then, according to Swan in Bygate et.al. (eds.) (1994:45 – 52), at least, there are six 'design criteria' for pedagogical language rules that should be involved in pedagogical grammar. First, rules presented in pedagogical grammar should be true. It is obviously desirable to tell learners the truth. The writers of pedagogical grammar need to consider and decide which rules are "relatively" right for educational and practical purposes. Second, a pedagogical language must have demarcation; a pedagogical rule should show clearly what the limits on the use of a given form are. Third, a pedagogical rule should be clarity. In other words, the rules should be clear because teachers tend to be good at making things clear. Fourth, a pedagogical rule has to have simplicity; a pedagogical rule should be simple. Simplicity is not quite the same thing as clarity, though it may contribute to it. Clarity relates above all to the way an explanation is worded; simplicity, in other side, relates to the way it is constructed. Fifth, a pedagogical rule should be conceptual parsimony. An explanation must make use of the conceptual framework available to the learner. It may be necessary to add to this. If so, one should aim for minimum intervention. The last one, a pedagogical rule should have principle of relevance. A rule should answer the question (and only the question) that the student's English is 'asking'.

As a matter of fact, the understanding on grammatical rules, both in linguistic and pedagogical perspectives is the fundamental foundation for having linguistic competence. The linguistic competence is one of the principles that should be had by language learners in order to be able to have language performance or communicative competence. Although the grammatical competence is not the 'sole' feature supporting the communicative competence as performed through four language skills, it is a basic component of having language awareness (see further Brown, 2001). Sufficient language awareness is a good stepping stone to construct grammatical sentences in having verbal communication.

C.   Data Analysis and Discussion

1. Tense and Aspect of English in Pedagogical Grammar Perspectives

Linguistically, as they are in *descriptive* and *prescriptive grammar*, tense and aspect are main grammatical features commonly found in all human languages. It should be understood, however, that human languages have different grammatical strategies to express the categories. Some languages grammaticalize the tense and aspect in the morphosyntactical features in sentential constructions and others may have phonological and semantic strategies in their syntax. These are found in tenseness languages, as in English. Some other languages do not grammaticalize the category of tense and aspect in clause constructions. Such kind of language just uses lexical items which have the same or similar semantic categories as tense and aspect. These are the characteristics of tenseless languages. Bahasa Indonesia and most of Malay languages family belong to tenseless languages.

In accordance with this, tense shows when an even happens; before now ('happenED'), right now ('IS happenING'), after now ('WILL happen'), or even all the time ('happenS'). Aspect, on the other hand, expresses whether an action is continuing, completed, iterative, intermittent, or other possibilities (Hofmann, 1993: 121). Tense and aspect systems do not allow speakers to relate situations to time, but they offer different slants on time. Tense allows a speaker to locate a situation relative to some reference point in time, most likely the time of speaking. The terms past, present, and future refer to tense, while progressive (continuous) and perfect are the aspects. In practical uses and in sentential construction the tense in English may stand alone, but aspect does not. One tense in this language may be combined with other tense(s) and/or with aspect(s) (see Leech and Stortvik, 1975; Hofmann, 1993). The ways how one tense merges with other tense(s) or aspect(s) are grammatically complex and full of semantic properties. In this sense, the descriptive grammar and prescriptive grammar on English tense and aspect use the term *simple tenses* to refer to one single tense in clause constructions, and *complex tenses* to refer to any permitted merger of one tense with other tense(s) or aspect(s) (see Jufrizal, 2010; Jufrizal, 2011).

The followings are the classification of tenses and aspects in English:

A. *The Simple Tenses*:
   1. The Simple Present Tense
   2. The Simple Past Tense
   3. The Simple Future Tense

B. *The Complex Tenses*:
   1. The Present Continuous Tense
   2. The Present Perfect Tense
   3. The Present Perfect Continuous Tense
   4. The Past Continuous Tense
   5. The Past Perfect Tense
   6. The Past Perfect Continuous Tense
   7. The Future Continuous Tense
   8. The Future Perfect Tense
   9. The Future Perfect Continuous Tense
   10. The Past Future Tense
   11. The Past Future Continuous Tense
   12. The Past Future Perfect Tense
   13. The Past Future Perfect Continuous Tense (see also Leech and Startvik, 1975; Pransninkas, 1975; Werner, 1985; Jufrizal, 2011).

The descriptive and typological grammar on English tenses and aspects, as shortly described above, tend to be complicated and full of theoretical-conceptual terms. It does not mean, however, that tenses and aspects should be left away in academic activities, particularly in language learning as in EFL learning Indonesia. The grammatical features should be learnt, comprehended, and trained through various pedagogical ways. Tense and aspect should be theoretical understood as different grammatical features, although they have something to do with time and actions. It should be realized and academically programmed that EFL learners from multilingual society like in Indonesia have to have such kind grammatical competence in order to increase the language awareness and accepted communicative competence.

Based on the concept of *simple* and *complex* tenses, there are some possible combinations between one tense with other tense(s) or aspect(s) in English. If all grammatical and semantic properties concerning with tenses and aspects are brought into practical and academic purposes as what they should be in the classroom activities at schools, those may be too complicated and confusing for many EFL learners. Therefore, it will be so hard to teach and to learn the simple and complex tenses in the senses of descriptive grammar without any practical and pedagogical modifications.

So, what should we do with the descriptive grammar on tenses and aspects in English in order that they are academically teachable and learnable for Indonesia learners? The 'nucleus-academic' answer for this question is that EFL teaching-learning processes in Indonesia need pedagogical grammar, a form of grammar which is in the combination between descriptive and prescriptive grammar with some pedagogical principles. Based on the principles of pedagogical grammar, according to Jufrizal (2011), there are, at least, five strategies how to "package" or to transfer the descriptive grammar of English tenses and aspects into pedagogical grammar. The strategies are:

(i)   the theoretical-linguistic explanation and description about tenses and aspects in English have to be reduced into simpler and more practical explanation;

(ii) the simple and complex tenses should be graded based on the complexities and learning difficulties.

(iii) constructing and organizing the learning materials become more comprehensive and interesting.

(iv) the grammatical rules concerning with English tenses and aspects should be in serious attention through having explanation in the form of combination between descriptive and prescriptive points of view, especially at intermediate and advanced levels.

(v)   allowing learners or teachers to comprehend and to build communicative competence on English tenses and aspects by using learners' L1, translation, and/or by means of code-switching.

The strategies of transferring English tenses and aspects based on the principles of pedagogical grammar proposed above may lead us to academically have and/or to practically use, at least, four ideas as the ways to place English tenses and aspects in the 'domain' pedagogical grammar, so that they are not too complicated to be learned and communicatively used by EFL learners in Indonesia. First, it is alright to use only the term 'tense(s)' for all types of simple and complex tenses as they are commonly found in most pedagogical grammar books used as course/reference books for EFL. Therefore, the names used as in Introduction Part of this paper are fairly welcome. Please remember, however, that they are intentionally used for practical-pedagogic purposes at elementary up to intermediate levels.

Second, for having better grammatical competence and language awareness of EFL learners, the distinction between *tense* and *aspects* should have been linguistically introduced, mainly for learners at post-intermediate and advanced levels. Third, communicative-practical exercises should be followed the grammatical explanation. On this occasion, the EFL teachers and learners are in good cooperation to have theoretical-academic discussion during the instructional activities. The last one, it is relatively possible to have contrastive analyses and comparative discussion on the phenomena of tenses and aspects in English with those of relevant ones found in *bahasa Indonesia* or in learners' L1. In this point, it is also allowed to have translation, code-switching, and/or other practical ways in order to build grammatical competence and language awareness concerning with tenses and aspects of the foreign language. The last point may meaningfully work at the advanced level, as well.

2. The Essence of Understanding English and Tense and Aspect for EFL Learners

How essential is the understanding on English tenses and aspects for EFL learners to build and strengthen grammatical competence and language awareness? It is highly believed that there are many answers for this question. In this paper, however, the answers for this question are more on linguistic-grammatical viewpoints rather than methodologists' or pedagogical ones. Naturally, every native speaker (user) of particular languages has to have grammatical competence and language awareness in order to have fair communicative competence practically performed by language skill, it is reasonably argued that the understanding on English tenses and aspects for EFL learners in Indonesia is highly essential.

There are, at least, four main reasons why the understanding on English tenses and aspects is descriptively and pedagogically essential for EFL learners in Indonesia. Firstly, English is typologically assigned as tenseness language; it formally grammaticalizes the tenses

and aspects in sentential constructions; no clauses or sentences are free from tense and/or aspect in English. This grammatical fact should be realized by EFL learners in Indonesia since they have tenseless languages as their L1. If they do not give serious attention to the grammatical phenomena and communicative uses of English tenses and aspects, they are in high possibility to have ungrammatical sentences or utterances. This is, of course, a form of academic problem in EFL learning programs.

Secondly, language awareness, among the others, is fundamentally built and strengthened by grammatical competence, and one component of the grammatical competence is the understanding on tenses and aspects. It is sure that successful EFL learners should have sufficient language awareness and grammatical competence as the bases for communicative competence which is realized in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thirdly, tenses and aspects in English are not only theoretical-conceptual phenomena but also practical ones. The knowledge on tenses and aspects is probably *Abstract*, but their uses are concrete and practical ones. So that, EFL learners have to know the nature of the grammatical features psychologically and academically, then they need to be able to use them in actual uses of verbal communication. The last one, English is learned and taught as a foreign language. Consequently, environment and society of the EFL learners in Indonesia do not optimally serve and facilitate the understanding and the communicative uses the tenses and aspects outside the classroom or in natural settings. This condition academically forces the EFL learners to be in serious attention on the tenses and aspects by which they are successful in learning the foreign language, then.

D. Concluding Remarks

Many Indonesia learners of EFL at any level feel that learning and understanding English grammar is problematic and confusing, especially the English tenses and aspects. Meanwhile, understanding grammatical features of a learnt language is highly necessary in order to have linguistic-grammatical competence, language awareness, and then communicative skills. The explanation and description on English tenses and aspects based on the descriptive grammar are frequently too theoretical and complicated, while the explanation and description about these two grammatical features in the sense of prescriptive grammar are often too normative and monotonous. Academically, the EFL teaching-learning in Indonesia needs another description and explanation concerning with English tenses and aspects. It is reasonably argued in this paper that pedagogical grammar is the solution. In addition, the grammatical explanation on tenses and aspects based on pedagogical grammar perspectives may be helpful to build language awareness and to increase communicative skills. It is also claimed that the understanding on the nature of tenses and aspects in English is highly essential for EFL learners in Indonesia.

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