

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to acquaint readers with the topic and issues under investigation. The researcher describes the background of study, research problem, research objectives, hypothesis formulation, significance of the study, scope and limitations, and definitions of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Education English has established itself as an international language widely used in education, business, technology, and international relations, making proficiency in it one of the key competencies that students must acquire starting in high school. In Indonesia, English is designated as a required subject in the high school (SMA) curriculum, with learning outcomes for Phase F (11th and 12th grades) requiring students to be able to produce spoken and written texts with appropriate and complex linguistic structures, equivalent to levels B1–B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)¹

One of the linguistic elements that forms the foundation of this sentence structure is tenses a grammatical system that indicates the temporal relationship of an event or action. For students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), mastering tenses often poses a unique challenge due to the differences in grammatical structure between Indonesian which does not involve changes in verb forms based on time and English, which relies heavily on such changes. Such difficulties have been consistently documented in various studies in the field of secondary education, which show that errors in tense usage are among

¹ Standar and Kurikulum, “Capaian pembelajaran mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Fase F kelas 11 dan 12 SMA/MA/SMK/MAK.”

the most common types of grammatical errors found in the writing of 11th-grade students.²

According to the 2025 edition of the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) published by EF Education First, Indonesia ranked 80th out of 123 countries with a score of 471, placing it in the “low proficiency” category and trailing behind most of its neighboring countries in Asia, such as Malaysia (581) and the Philippines (569) (EF Education First, 2025). Indonesia’s productive skills scores namely speaking (447) and writing (479) are lower than its receptive skills scores, such as reading (491) (EF Education First, 2025), a pattern indicating that students’ ability to actively produce language which is influenced, among other factors, by their mastery of grammatical structures, including verb tenses is limited.³

These international findings align with various error analysis studies at the high school level, which consistently report that errors in tense usage particularly the simple past tense and simple present tense are the most frequent types of grammatical errors in students’ writing.⁴ Thus, the issue of tense mastery is not a standalone issue but rather part of a broader problem related to the generally low productive English language proficiency of Indonesian students.

This issue is also evident in a more specific context, namely at SMAN 6 Kediri. As a school with a fairly large student body and a diverse range of academic backgrounds, 11th-grade students at this school face curriculum requirements that demand they be able to use English correctly in accordance with linguistic norms across various communicative contexts. However, based on the results of pre-research interviews with 11th-grade English teachers at

² Sinaga et al., “Error Analysis on Using Lexico Grammatical Features in Descriptive Text of Grade XI Students’.”

³ First, “EF English Proficiency Index 2025: Indonesia.”

⁴ Harjono, “Analisis kesalahan dalam penggunaan simple past tense oleh siswa SMA Negeri 2 Manado.”

Kediri State High School 6 in March, it was found that English instruction still tends to be dominated by conventional, teacher-centered methods, such as lectures and drilling on grammatical exercises, resulting in students memorizing rules rather than applying them in real-life language use.

The teacher also noted that students still have difficulty distinguishing between the uses of certain tenses particularly the simple present and simple past tenses when constructing sentences or using English in various communicative situations. This finding is supported by preliminary observations showing that most students still rely on memorizing sentence patterns and are not yet able to use tenses correctly in writing or speaking. This situation indicates a gap between curriculum requirements and classroom practice, highlighting the need for more contextual and student-centered teaching methods to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding of tenses and their practical application in real-world language use.

Various studies show that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has a positive impact on English language learning. Through a meta-analysis of eleven Scopus-indexed articles, found that PjBL effectively improves the writing skills of EFL learners.⁵ Similar results were also reported PjBL yields better learning outcomes compared to conventional methods in English language instruction.⁶ reported that errors in the use of tenses remain one of the most prevalent grammatical errors among 11th-grade high school students.⁷ However, these studies have not specifically examined the effectiveness of PjBL on tenses mastery as the primary focus of the research. Therefore, this study was conducted to address this gap by testing the effectiveness of Project-Based

⁵ Cahyono et al., "Project-Based Learning in EFL Educational Settings: A Meta-Analysis Study in EFL/ESL Writing."

⁶ Somani and Rizvi, "Project Based Learning over Traditional Method of Language Teaching: A Quasi Experiment Design in EFL Classrooms."

⁷ Sinaga et al., "Error Analysis on Using Lexico Grammatical Features in Descriptive Text of Grade XI Students'."

Learning on tenses mastery among 11th-grade students at Kediri State High School 6 through a quasi-experimental design.

This issue must be addressed immediately because tenses are one of the grammatical elements that play a crucial role in forming sentence structure and supporting language skills. Errors in the use of tenses not only reduce the accuracy of sentence structure but can also obscure the meaning intended in both writing and speaking. Consequently, students' writing and speaking skills may be adversely affected⁸.

To address this issue, a learning model is needed that can bridge the gap between the theoretical understanding of tenses and their application in real-world contexts. One model with the potential to meet this need is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). PjBL is a learning approach that places students at the center of the learning process through the completion of real and meaningful projects. Through these activities, students are encouraged to engage in inquiry, work collaboratively, and produce outcomes that reflect the knowledge they have acquired. In tenses instruction, PjBL provides students with opportunities to actively and repeatedly use tenses in contextual situations, ensuring that learning focuses not only on memorizing formulas but also on applying them in real-world language use.⁹

The selection of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as the instructional model in this study is supported by various research findings that demonstrate its effectiveness in improving the quality of students' learning processes and outcomes. In addition to being proven effective in English language learning, PjBL has also been applied to various subjects and has shown a positive impact on the development of students' collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills as part of 21st-century competence¹⁰. Theoretically, PjBL is

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Bell, "Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future."

¹⁰ Rehman et al., "Project-Based Learning as a Catalyst for 21st-Century Skills and Student Engagement in the Math Classroom."

grounded in constructivist theory, which holds that knowledge is not passively acquired from teachers but is actively constructed by students through learning experiences, social interactions, and the completion of meaningful tasks.¹¹ With these characteristics, PjBL provides students with the opportunity to apply tenses in various contextual activities so that they not only understand the concepts theoretically but are also able to use them appropriately in communicative situations. Therefore, PjBL is considered relevant to be studied as an alternative learning approach to enhance the mastery of tenses among 11th-grade students at SMA Negeri 6 Kediri.

B. Research Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher formulates the problem of question becomes : “Is there any significant difference in English tense mastery between students who are taught using the Project Based Learning model and students who are taught using the conventional method for the 11th graders at SMAN 6 Kediri?”

C. Objective The Research

Based on the research problem above, the objective the researcher is stated as follows : “To find out whether there is any significant difference in English tense mastery between students who are taught using the Project Based Learning model and students who are taught using the conventional method for the 11th graders at SMAN 6 Kediri”

D. Research Hypothesis

Before determining the hypothetical results, the researcher proposed an interpretation of (observations) using the following procedure :

- a. Formulation of the null hypothesis (Ho) : There is no significant difference in English tense mastery between students who are taught using the Project

¹¹ Zainnuha et al., “Investigating Students’ Perceptions of Project-Based Learning in Higher Education.”

Based Learning model and students who are taught using the conventional method for the 11th grade students at SMAN 6 Kediri.

- b. Formulation of the alternative hypothesis (Ha) : There is a significant difference in English tense mastery between students who are taught using the Project Based model and students who are taught using the conventional method for the 11th graders at SMAN 6 Kediri.

E. Significance of The Research

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions:

1. Theoretical Significance

This study introduces project based learning (PjBL) as a new approach to instructing English tenses at the high school level. It examines the effectiveness of PjBL combined with teacher-designed booklets as instruments for contextual and systematic tense learning. This research offers fresh perspectives on the implementation of innovative Project-Based Learning models in grammar instruction, particularly tenses, and their effect on the learning outcomes of 11th grade students at SMAN 6 Kediri.

2. Practical Significance

For teachers, this study offers an alternative instructional model that can be immediately implemented in the classroom to render tense learning more engaging and meaningful through the utilization of a structured booklet. For students, The PjBL model enables students to learn tenses systematically through a booklet, thereby helping them to improve their understanding, confidence and accuracy when using tenses in both oral and written communication. For schools, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for consideration in designing a more innovative and student-oriented English language curriculum and learning strategies that align with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum. For future researchers, this study can be used as a reference in developing similar studies on other

aspects of English language learning or in comparing the PjBL model with other innovative learning approaches.

F. Scope And Limitation of The Research

1. Scope of The Research

This study focuses on examining the effectiveness of the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model in teaching English tenses to 11th grade students at SMAN 6 Kediri. The research specifically compares the learning outcomes of students taught using the PjBL model with those taught using conventional methods such as direct instruction, grammar explanation, and textbook based exercises. The primary skill measured is students' mastery of English tenses, as assessed through pre-test and post-test instruments.

2. Limitation of the Research

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged and may influence the generalizability of the findings. First, the generalizability of results is limited because the study was only conducted on 11th grade students at SMAN 6 Kediri, the findings may not completely reflect the student population in other schools, educational levels, or regions. Second, the focus was only on tenses, which means that this study excluding other areas of grammar such as modality, passive voice, or clause structures. Finally, the Learning Model Implementation, The success of PjBL may vary depending on teacher expertise, classroom conditions, and student engagement. Not all teachers may be equally prepared to implement PjBL effectively.

G. Definition of key terms

To avoid misinterpretation regarding the terms and content of the topic in this study, the researcher must define the key terms employed in this:

a. Project Based Learning (PjBL)

The term Project Based learning in the context of this study is defined as students centred instructional model by which teacher has

the students to make a booklet showing the tenses that help students learn in this semester.

b. English Tenses Mastery

English tense mastery in the context this study is define as the student ability to identify and correctly use various English tenses including simple present tense, imperative sentences, and temporal conjunction.

c. Conventional Teaching Method

Conventional teaching method in the context of the research refer to teaching students through lectures and exercises without extensively engaging them in the teaching and learning process, and without assigning any projects.