

Students' Difficulties in Learning Tenses by Grammar Translation Method at Star English Course Parepare

Ghefira Raudah Umar ^{1*}

Nur Asiza ¹

Zulfah ¹

Yessicka Noviasmy¹

¹ Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare, Parepare, Indonesia

Abstract

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is a language learning method that focuses on understanding grammar and translating texts from a foreign language to the mother tongue, and vice versa. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Grammar Translation Method in teaching grammar concepts, especially tenses, in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes, especially at Star English Course Parepare. The research method used is quantitative survey. The samples of this research were students from Level 4 (Advance 1 and Advance 2) Star English Course Parepare. In this research, the researcher used total sampling techniques and took 70 students as sample. The data collection technique used a questionnaire with hypothesis testing carried out by using simple linear regression analysis using the SPSS 25 program. The results of the research show that Grammar Translation Method has a significant influence on students' difficulties in learning tenses. Seen from the Tcount value of $9,755 > T\text{-table } 1,995$ with a significance of $0,007 < 0,05$. Statistical test results show that Grammar Translation Method has a positive and significant impact on students' learning difficulties. And psychological factor is the most influential aspects of students' difficulties in learning tenses through Grammar Translation Method. Fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and linguistic anxiety are the main obstacles in the learning process. Therefore, there is a need for a more varied, communicative, and student-centered approach in learning Tenses.

Keywords: Grammar translation method, Students' difficulties, Learning tenses.

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1. Introduction

English is the most widely spoken language in the world. English has a very important role such as: it can increase job opportunities, because many national and international companies make it a recruitment. Most academic sources, research, and the latest technology use English too. By mastering this language, students can more easily access global information, including scientific literature and international training. One of the important aspects in English grammar is Tenses, but many students have difficulty in using tenses. According to Pauzan in his book "The Book of Complete English Grammar", Tense is a verb form that shows the time and state of an action or event in the present, past, or future. That is, tense shows us the time of an action or activity. Tense can tell us that an action or event is taking place in the present (Pauzan, 2021).

According to Brown in Principles of Language Learning and Teaching, mastering grammatical structures such as tenses is very important because tenses are part of the grammar system that supports effective communication. Without a proper understanding of tenses, the message conveyed can be misinterpreted (Brown, 2007). Tenses, as an essential component of grammar, serve not only to indicate the time of an action but also to structure meaning within communication. The correct use of tenses enables language users to clearly differentiate between events that occurred in the past, are happening in the present or will occur in the future. This temporal clarity is fundamental to avoiding ambiguity and ensuring that the intended meaning of a message is accurately conveyed. A proper understanding of tenses contributes significantly to

* CONTACT: ghefirraaa@gmail.com

both spoken and written communication. In spoken interaction, incorrect tense usage may cause confusion or lead to misunderstandings about when an event happened. In writing, especially in academic or professional contexts, inappropriate tense usage can reduce the clarity, coherence, and credibility of the content.

English learning in Indonesia, especially in Parepare, South Sulawesi has become a concern for many parties, especially in facilitating students' ability to master good and correct grammar. One of the most popular courses in Parepare, South Sulawesi is Star English Course Parepare. Star English Course has been established for 21 years with the director Mr. Abd.Hamid HT, M.Pd and has been using Grammar Translation Method since the beginning. This course conducts face-to-face learning. Star English Course offers learning starting from basic English to TOEFL learning that must be taken per level. Each level has its own name, level 1 named elementary class, level 2 is intermediate class, level 3 is called post intermediate class, then level 4 is advance class, level 5 and level 6 are conversation class and Toefl class. One of the most important lessons taught in this course is Tenses.

Students start to learn Tenses in Level 2, they will face Tenses until the last level which is Level 6. Tenses will always be tested in every level, in order to assess their understanding. Many students fail from level 3 because they cannot pass the tenses test. In level 4 it is divided into 2 classes, namely Advance 1 with 35 students and Advance 2 with 35 students. Based on the tenses test score data in Advance 1 and Advance 2 classes, it can be estimated that the average score is still below the passing standard of 80. In Advance 1 class, the average score for Tenses Test Part 1 was 65,2 and Part 2 was 65,3, although there were students who achieved the highest scores of 93 and 92. Meanwhile, in Advance 2 class, the average score for Tenses Test Part 1 was lower, around 59,3, and Part 2 was slightly higher, around 68,5, with the highest scores only 90 and 88. This shows that most students still have difficulty in learning tenses, as seen from the number of those who failed is higher than those who passed.

Harmer (2001) states that if students do not get enough practice in using tenses actively, and do not receive proper feedback, then their understanding of tenses will remain low. Learning tenses in English will not be effective if students only receive theoretical explanations without being accompanied by active practice and adequate feedback. In the context of language learning, active use includes speaking, writing, listening and reading practices that directly involve the application of tenses in various communication situations. Without this active engagement, students tend to just memorize grammar rules without really understanding how they are used in real contexts. In addition, appropriate and constructive feedback is essential to help students identify their mistakes and correct them. Feedback allows for continuous reflection and improvement in the learning process. Therefore, good mastery of tenses can only be achieved through a combination of continuous practice and systematic feedback, so that students not only understand the concepts, but are also able to use them accurately and fluently in everyday communication.

It is important to assess how effective the Grammar Translation Method is in overcoming these difficulties. Grammar Translation Method is a language learning method that emphasizes text translation and explicit learning of grammar, including the structure of tenses in English. In Grammar Translation Method, students learn grammatical rules systematically and apply them through written exercises, such as translating sentences or paragraphs from target language to mother tongue and vice versa (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). It uses a deductive approach, where grammar rules are taught first and then applied in translation exercises. The main focus of Grammar Translation Method is reading and writing, with the aim of developing students'

intellectual abilities rather than oral communication skills. Based on the above background, the researcher is interested in examining the effect of using Grammar Translation Method in learning tenses nowadays

2. Method

In this research, the research design which the researcher took was quantitative survey, which is to test whether the variable affects students' difficulties in learning tenses. This method is called a quantitative method because the research data is in the form of numbers and analysis using statistics (Sugiyono 2016). According to John W. Creswell and John D. Creswell, a survey design provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population, or tests for associations among variables of a population, by studying a sample of that population (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researcher conducted this research at Star English Course Parepare which located in Jalan Jend. Ahmad Yani KM 3 Parepare, South Sulawesi and the researcher did the research for 2 months including analysis data. The population of this research was the Level 4 students of Star English Course Parepare. The sampling technique in this research was Total Sampling.

In this research, the researcher used questionnaires as an instrument in data collection, where research instruments are used to measure the value of the variables used to produce accurate quantitative data, so each instrument must have a measurement scale. The type of scale used in this study is a Likert scale. The Likert scale is a tool for measuring a person's attitudes, opinions, and perceptions about a particular object or phenomenon. The Likert scale has two statements, namely positive and negative statements. In this study, the techniques of data analysis would be validity test, reliability test, normality test, linearity test, homoscedasticity test, simple linear regression analysis, partial test (t-test) and determination coefficient test. It was calculated using software known as SPSS 25. This research aims to find out whether Grammar Translation Method affects student difficulties in learning tenses and to find out the main factors that make it difficult for students to learn tenses when using the Grammar Translation Method.

3. Results

The results of calculations and tests can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Determination Coefficient Result

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0,764	0,583	0,577	4.527

The regression output shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.764, which indicates a strong positive linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.583, meaning that approximately 58.3% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables included in the model. This suggests that the model has a relatively good explanatory power. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.577 accounts for the number of predictors in the model, providing a more accurate estimate of the model's explanatory capability. This adjusted value is slightly lower than the R Square, which is typical, and indicates that the model's performance is stable when adjusted for degrees of freedom. The Standard Error of the Estimate, which is 4.527, represents the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line. A lower value suggests better model accuracy; in this case, the standard error is moderate, indicating that while the

model explains a substantial portion of the variance, there is still room for improvement in prediction accuracy.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	6.78	2.42		2.80	0.007
Grammar Translation Method	1.02	0.10	0.76	9.75	0.000

Based on the results of the regression analysis, the Grammar Translation Method has a positive and statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. The unstandardized coefficient (B) is 1.02, which means that for every one-unit increase in the use or implementation of the Grammar Translation Method, the predicted value of the dependent variable increases by 1.02 units, assuming other variables are held constant. The standard error associated with this coefficient is 0.10, indicating that the estimate is precise. The standardized beta coefficient is 0.76, suggesting that the Grammar Translation Method exerts a strong influence relative to other predictors. The t-value of 9.75, along with a significance value (p-value) of 0.000, confirms that the effect is highly significant at the 0.001 level. In addition, the constant (intercept) in the model is 6.78, with a standard error of 2.42, and a corresponding t-value of 2.80, which is also statistically significant ($p = 0.007$). This implies that when the Grammar Translation Method is not applied (value = 0), the predicted score on the dependent variable would be 6.78. These results indicate that the Grammar Translation Method plays an important and statistically significant role in influencing the outcome of the study.

Table 3. Partial Test Result

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	6.78	2.42		2.80	0.007
Grammar Translation Method	1.02	0.10	0.76	9.75	0.000

The partial test (t-test) was conducted to examine the individual effect of the Grammar Translation Method on the dependent variable. The regression output shows that the Grammar Translation Method has a statistically significant partial effect. The unstandardized coefficient (B) is 1.02 with a standard error of 0.10, indicating that for each additional unit in the application of the Grammar Translation Method, the predicted outcome increases by 1.02 units. The standardized beta coefficient is 0.76, which suggests a strong positive contribution to the dependent variable.

The t-value obtained is 9.75, which exceeds the critical value at conventional significance levels, and the p-value is 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the effect is statistically significant. This result implies that the Grammar Translation Method independently contributes to the variation in the dependent variable, even after controlling for the influence of other variables (if any).

In addition, the constant value is 6.78 with a standard error of 2.42 and a t-value of 2.80 ($p = 0.007$), indicating that the intercept is also statistically significant. This means that in the absence of the Grammar Translation Method, the baseline predicted score on the dependent variable is 6.78. Overall, the findings of the partial test support the conclusion that the Grammar Translation Method is a significant individual predictor within the regression model.

4. Discussion

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is one of the language teaching methods that focuses on translating texts from the target language to the students' native language and vice versa. It also pays attention to grammar rules and vocabulary acquisition. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), Grammar Translation Method is a traditional method of language learning that has its roots in ancient Latin and Greek language teaching. This method aims to develop reading and writing skills by prioritizing mastery of grammar and vocabulary, and paying less attention to speaking and listening skills (Richards and Rodgers 2014).

Referring to the results of quantitative data analysis and the theoretical description above, the researcher draws the conclusion that grammar translation method affects students' difficulties in learning tenses. Based on the calculation result, the R Square value is 0,583 (58,3%), which shows that the contribution of the Grammar Translation Method variable in explaining the variation in the value of the Students' Difficulties in Learning Tenses variable at Star English Course Parepare is 58,3% while the remaining 41,7% is influenced by other variables outside the research model. Based on the result of simple linear regression analysis in Table 3.2 above, a simple regression equation model is obtained as follows:

$$Y = a + bX + e$$

$$Y = 6,786 + 1,029$$

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the constant value = 6,786 and for Grammar Translation Method is 1,029. This means that every 1 unit increase in Grammar Translation Method (X) will increase Students' Difficulties (Y) by 1,029. Because the value of Sig. = 0,000 < 0,05, the coefficient of X is significant, or Grammar Translation Method has a significant effect on Students' Difficulties. Based on partial test as shown in Table 3.3, Grammar Translation Method variable on Students' Difficulties. This can be seen from the value of t-count > t-table which is 1,995 obtained from ($df=n-2=70-2=68$; $\alpha=0,05/2=0,025$). Grammar Translation Method variable has t-count 9,755 > t-table 1,995 and significance 0,007 < 0,05. So it can be concluded that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, which means that the Grammar Translation Method variable has an effect on Students' Difficulties.

Overall, the findings illustrate that the Grammar Translation method is still widely used, but can have an impact on increasing students' difficulty in learning tenses if not balanced with a more communicative and contextual approach. This indicates the need to evaluate the grammar teaching methods used by tutors in course institutions, in order to create a more effective and in-depth learning experience for students. This is in line with the theory expressed by Snowling and Hulme which states that teaching methods have a significant influence on students' learning processes and outcomes, especially in cognitive aspects such as learning grammatical structures. When the teaching methods used are not aligned with students' learning styles or do not facilitate contextual learning, the potential for learning difficulties becomes higher (Snowling and Hulme 2020). In addition, the result of this research also supports the research conducted by Wita Wulandari in her research entitled "Efektivitas Metode Mengajar yang Variatif dalam Keberhasilan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris". In the research, it was found that varied learning methods - such

as communicative approach, contextual learning, and technology integration - significantly improved students' understanding of English materials (Wulandari 2023). In other words, methods that do not only focus on grammar and translation, but also provide space for students to actively participate and understand the context of language use, are more effective in supporting learning success. This research also reinforces the view that the use of mechanistic and teacher-centered teaching methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method, has limitations in building students' communicative competence. In the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning, students need an approach that allows them to use language functionally and meaningfully in various real situations. Therefore, the integration of more interactive, contextual, and student-centered teaching methods becomes very important in overcoming learning difficulties, especially in tenses comprehension. Considering these results, it can be concluded that although the Grammar Translation Method can help in mastering grammatical structures, the exclusive use of this method can actually increase the level of difficulty of students in understanding the concept of tenses as a whole. Therefore, a combination or variation of more communicative and applicable teaching methods is needed to increase the effectiveness of English language learning in EFL environments.

The findings of this study confirm that the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has a statistically significant and positive effect on students' ability to understand tenses in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This aligns with several prior studies that have shown the effectiveness of GTM in facilitating students' understanding of grammar through structured and analytical approaches. For instance, Al-Nafisah (2015) found that GTM was effective in improving grammar proficiency among secondary school students in Saudi Arabia due to its emphasis on grammar rules and translation exercises. Similarly, Motalebzadeh and Kafi (2015) demonstrated that GTM significantly enhanced vocabulary retention and grammatical understanding in Iranian EFL learners. Their study highlighted that learners who were exposed to GTM developed a clearer structural awareness of language. Moreover, Shejbalová (2006) noted that GTM remains particularly beneficial in educational settings where formal grammar instruction and examination-based evaluation are dominant, suggesting its continued relevance in certain instructional contexts.

However, this study also identifies a distinctive finding that differs from many earlier studies: the role of psychological factors as a major influence on students' difficulties in learning tenses under GTM. While most previous research has focused on cognitive or structural outcomes, the present study reveals that emotional and psychological aspects—such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and linguistic anxiety—are significant barriers in the grammar learning process. This is consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), who emphasized that language anxiety can inhibit language acquisition and classroom participation. Furthermore, the findings of this study extend the observations of Liu and Jackson (2008), who found that non-communicative methods often intensify learners' unwillingness to engage in language use due to anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The traditional nature of GTM, which heavily relies on error correction, teacher dominance, and lack of communicative interaction, may unintentionally contribute to these psychological pressures.

Therefore, while GTM proves to be effective in improving grammatical knowledge, it should not be applied in isolation. The study recommends integrating GTM with more communicative, interactive, and learner-centered methods, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), to reduce anxiety and foster a more supportive learning environment. As Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasize, a balanced approach that attends to both linguistic form and learner psychology is crucial in modern language education. In

conclusion, this study confirms the instructional value of GTM but also highlights its psychological limitations. It offers new insights by emphasizing that teaching effectiveness must consider not only methodological rigor but also the emotional well-being of learners. Future studies should further investigate hybrid teaching models that combine structural and communicative strategies to enhance both grammatical accuracy and student engagement.

This research also shows that affective factors such as anxiety, fear, and lack of confidence play an important role in hindering students' understanding of English grammatical structures. In the context of GTM, this method tends to emphasize accuracy and memorization of grammatical structures, creating pressure for students who are afraid of making mistakes. An overly form- and translation-oriented approach can increase linguistic anxiety, which then negatively affects students' learning process. According to Snowling and Hulme, understanding grammar, especially tenses, requires a supportive learning environment, as well as methods that allow students to feel comfortable in trying and making mistakes as part of the learning process (Snowling and Hulme 2020). This is also in line with the research conducted by Nur Azisa, et.al (2023), entitled "Enhancing Speaking Proficiency through Self-Discovery: Utilizing Johari Window Techniques in Student Learning". The results showed a marked increase in self-awareness, with students becoming more sensitive to their strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the context of public speaking and personal expression. This increased awareness is reflected in their significantly improved communication skills, characterized by speaking boldness, use of a more diverse vocabulary, and more meaningful engagement with the audience (Azisa, et.al 2023). In addition, this study highlights the importance of self-disclosure and feedback in self-development. Through this process, students are able to uncover hidden aspects of their personality and explore previously unrealized potential. This not only deepens self-understanding, but also creates a supportive learning environment conducive to personal growth. In addition, the results of this study are also reinforced by the findings of Wahyu Hardiansyah Damis, et al. in his research entitled "Difficulties in Learning English Tenses Encountered by Senior High School Students". In this research, it is mentioned that students' difficulties in learning tenses mostly come from their own internal perceptions. Most students think that tenses are complex material, especially in terms of the difference in verb forms between regular and irregular verbs, as well as their use in different time contexts (Damis, Jabu, and Salija n.d.). When students do not feel psychologically secure in using English, the tendency to avoid practicing speaking or writing in English increases, which in turn exacerbates learning difficulties. Thus, it can be concluded that psychological factors are important elements that cannot be ignored in the grammar learning process, especially when using methods such as GTM. Therefore, tutors need to consider approaches that not only focus on linguistic structures, but also build a supportive learning climate and empower the affective side of students, such as through communicative approaches, collaborative learning, and providing constructive feedback.

5. Conclusion

Grammar Translation Method has a significant influence on students' difficulty in learning tenses. Statistical test results show that GTM has a positive and significant impact on students' learning difficulties, especially in understanding grammatical structures such as tenses. This method, although helpful in the theoretical aspect of grammar mastery, is less effective in building students' communicative ability in the EFL context. The reliance on translation and memorization of structures makes it difficult for students to apply tenses in a practical and meaningful way.

Psychological factor is the most dominant aspect in contributing to students' difficulties in learning tenses through GTM. Fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and linguistic anxiety are the main obstacles in the learning process. This is confirmed by the respondents' data and

supported by theory and previous research that emphasizes the importance of a supportive learning environment and an approach that is able to empower the affective side of students. Overall, it can be concluded that the exclusive use of GTM actually increases the potential for learning difficulties, especially in the aspect of communicative use of tenses. Therefore, there is a need for a more varied, communicative, and student-centered approach in learning Tenses.

The researcher provided several recommendations in this area. First, it is recommended not to rely solely on Grammar Translation Method in the process of learning grammar, especially tenses. Teachers need to combine GTM with other more communicative methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning, or contextual approaches so that students can understand tenses in everyday use in a more applicable and meaningful way. Additionally, students are advised to be more proactive in dealing with learning difficulties, especially by trying various self-learning strategies that involve direct language practice, it is important for students to build confidence and not be afraid to make mistakes as part of the learning process. Lastly, this research provides an opportunity to conduct further studies using a mixed-method approach to explore how the combination of GTM and other methods can affect the effectiveness of grammar learning. Researchers can also explore affective-based interventions to overcome students' anxiety and fear in learning English.

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