Problems Facing English Language Students at AL- Zaytoonah University of Jordan in Learning Perfect Tenses from their Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the problems facing foreign language learners at Department of English, and the Department of English and French literature students at Al Zaytoonah University in learning perfect tenses from the viewpoint of students, and also aimed to investigate the effect of year, and GPA on the point of view of students. To achieve the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was distributed among the students.

The study sample consisted of (180) students; (96) males and (84) females from Al Zaytoonah University. Means and standard deviations and t-test were used to analyze the results.

The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the views of the students on the problems facing them in learning perfect tenses , also showed a statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0,05$) in their views due to the gender variable, as there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0,05$) in their views due to the year variable, and results also showed the existence of clear statistically significant differences in the views of the students on the problems facing them in learning perfect tenses due to the general point average of the students (GPA).

Keywords: Perfect tense, Problems in learning perfect tense, Al Zaytoonah University Students

1. Introduction

People use language to communicate to each other, as we know, language is important to communication with others, and have to a good or correct language we need to know grammar and vocabulary very well. Every language has its own grammar that governs it. English language as any other language focuses on the use of tenses. Tenses are very important for proper language teaching and learning for both teacher and learner. So we need to focus more on how to teach and learn tenses in language. There are different types of tenses in the English language, but in this paper I will talk about one of these tense which is the perfect tenses.

The perfect tense in English language is one of these tenses we use in English language.

Teaching grammar in any language is hard for both teacher and learners because the teacher needs to show the problems which faces learners in learning a new language for them, so teaching grammar is not an easy way in the teaching process, because teaching grammar is the only way to help students to improve and develop their foreign language, so the teacher should clarify and explain all the errors or weakness which face students in their writing and speaking in language. Teaching and learning a foreign language is not an easy task especially when it shows to the native language learner. Teaching and learning a foreign language is not an easy task especially when it shows to the native language learner. (Mohammed 1980)

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study focuses on the problems facing students in learning perfect tenses at the university. It focuses on how students   deal with foreign language grammar depending on their background and mother tongue language grammar, especially in perfect tense because in Arabic language there is nothing called perfect tenses in grammar. The participants in this study are from students of first year from all majors at university comparing

with students of first year in the department of English language and students in the French language and English department at Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan.

This study focuses on student's achievement and their level of English. Also it attempts to investigate and identity the students' problems in the using perfect tenses especially in the past perfect tense and present perfect tense.

1.2 Aims of the Study.

This study aims to evaluate student's competence and their problems in using the perfect tenses in English, and also aimed to investigate the effect of year, and GPA on the point of view of students.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study focuses on students as a sample who are:

1. Students at English department.

2. Student at French and English language.

3. Students from different majors at the university who take English language as an obligatory course at the university.

1.4 Questions of the Study

   The researcher tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are the problems facing foreign language learners at Department of English, and the Department of English and French literature students at Al Zaytoonah University in learning perfect tenses from their viewpoint?

2. Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Al Zaytoonah University on the problems they face in learning perfect tenses due to the year (first year, second year and above)?

3. Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Al Zaytoonah University on the problems they face in learning perfect tenses due to GPA of the students (low, high)?

1.5 Limits of the Study

This study has no limit because the study includes all students' level at university. From first, second, third, fourth, year to students in English Department, French depart and students in deferent majors at university.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Tense and Aspect

Language differs in its indication of the time when a certain action takes place or when a certain state or process holds. This is a representation of a phenomena called "tense". In English there is a distinction between past and non- past tense as shown in the following examples:

1/a)   Jack played tennis

Jack walked to school

Jack ate his breakfast

1/b) Jack plays tennis

Jack walks to school

Jack eats his breakfast

1/c) Jack will play tennis

Jack will walk to school

Jack will eat his breakfast

In English , verb types are used to show the time when an action occurs in the sentence, like in a sentence (1/a) Jack played tennis , Jack walked to school , Jack ate his breakfast , in these examples the action happened before the present time. In (1/b) sentences the verbs walks, plays, eats are actions simultaneous with present time. In(1/c) sentences the verbs will walk , will play , will eat shows that Jack will play ..etc which means that the action occur to the time before the present tense . the examples mentioned above have shown that the verb or action forms used to express temporal situation in the sentences reviled the time at which action takes place in a sentences.

The root of the term "tense" is related to the Latin word "Temps" which means "time " .

Tense is related to time, and time, as Cowan (2008)   refers to "when an action takes place .it express the time that an action occurs in relation to the moment of speaking ".

More over tense is a grammatical category which "Tense is grammatical category referring to the time of the situation, the tense is indicated by the form of the verb."(Green, S. & Nelson, G. 2002: 55).

According to the Oxford Dictionary we can define tense as:

 1. A name as any of the forms of a verb that maybe used to show the time of the action or state expressed by the verb .

2. A tense (Noun) a verb-based method used to indicate the time, and sometimes the continuation or completeness of an action or state in relation to the time of speaking.

3. A tense is a form taken by a verb show the time of an action.

Aspect in grammar shows how an action, event, or state denoted by verb, extends over time. Aspect has been defined differently by different scholars , the best definition is that aspect has been conceder actually several ways of considering the internal temporal constituency of situation . (Comri: 1967:3) . In addition Klein and Cowan agreed with the same trend of Comri

"Concerns the different perspective where speakers can talk and express with regard to the temporal course of some event, action, and process, etc." (Klein, 1994, p.16)

 "Aspect refers to how a speaker sees the event" (Cowan, 2008, p. 351).

The following examples show the difference between Aspect and Tense in English

Examples	Tense	Aspect
Jack playing tennis	Present	Progressive
Jack has played tennis	Present	Perfect

The examples are in present tense, and we see the differences between them during Aspect not through the Tense. To clarify the form of functions of it , we should understand the Aspects during the tense .

According to Flors and Hassan (2012) Claim. (p.89) " tense without the aspectual distinction fails to convey the difference in meaning between two sentences (belong to same tense), and therefore , aspect is an important as tense in the study of English grammar".

In simple terms" time" express can be as:

In the past, before now

In the present now, or any time that include now.

In the future, after now

But aspect can be: progressive which is uncompleted action. Perfective which is completed action or state to clarifying this more we have these following table to show how these compares.

tenses	Past	Present	Future
* Simple (no aspect)	Play	Plays	Will Play
* Aspect progressive / continuous	Was playing	Is playing	Will be playing
* Perfective	Had played	Has played	Will have played

So simple tenses have simple aspect and it is simply unmarked for aspect.

The progressive aspect use progressive or continuous tense as / past continuous / present continuous / future continuous.

Perfect. and when we want to mix between two aspects like perfect and progressive tense we have a new aspect which is:

Perfect continuous tenses Like: Past perfect continuous.

Present Perfect Continuous

Future perfect continuous

2.2 Tenses in English

Tenses in English show or clarify the study of actions and how they are related to their times in language. All languages show the concept of tenses by verbs of each tense for example:

Concept of the present (I play, I eat, I dance, I go …. etc.)

The past as (I played, I eaten, I danced, I went ….. etc.)

The Future as (I will play, I will eat, I will dance, I will go… etc.)

Tense is grammatical category referring to the time of the situation: "the tense is indicated by the form of the verb". (Green Baum S and Nelson G. 2002:55)

2.3 Three main tenses in English

There are three main tenses in English language:

- The past tense,

- The present tense,

- And the future tense.

Each of these tense has for forms, they are simple, progressive, perfect and perfect progressive / continuous.

2.4 Types of Tenses in English Language.

-In English there are only two type of tenses and they are: (The present tense and the past tense, that because we use or make these two tenses dealing with verb alone in the English language.

We can't use or talk tenses without considering two component of many English tenses.

The present tense

Present tense is an action to express an idea that action is repeated or usual. The action can be habit, hobby, and daily event. The following example clearly how the present tense is:

The boy plays football every day.

The train leaves every morning at 8 am

The past Tense

Past tense is an action that started in the past and finished in the past time. The following example clearly show the present tense is

I saw a move yesterday
Sarah washed her car

The future tense

The simple future has two forms in English language, "will" and "be going to" although the two forms can be used interchangeably according to the action and time of using it in the sentence . The following example clearly how the present tense is:
- I will help him later
- He is going to meet Jane tonight
After explaining what the tenses in the language are, we can say tenses are very important in English for establishing effective communication in the language for teacher and learner especially for foreign learners of the English language.

What is perfect?
According to the Oxford Dictionary perfect as an adjective is having everything that is necessary, complete and without fault or weakness. As a verb to make something perfect or as good As gone can.
As a noun the form of a verb that express actions completed by the present or a particular point in the past or future.
 Formed in English language with point of the verb have and the past participle of the main verb.

In Grammar We Can Say The Perfect:
The perfect or aspect is a verb from which indicates that an action or circumstance occurred earlier than the time under consideration.

Types of Perfect Tenses in English Language:
There are three main types of perfect tenses in English Language and they are:
Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect.

The Present Perfect
The present perfect tense is talking about an action that started in the past and, still continuous in the present .The present perfect to say that an action happened at an un spected time before now " (Richard Side and Guy Wellman 2000: 17)
The form of verb that expresses an action done in a time period up to the present, formed in English with the present tense of (Have, Has) and the past participle of the verb as in (I have eaten, She has eaten).
The following example shows how is the present perfect .

I have never been to France
She has never seen that movie
The Past Perfect
"we used past perfect tense to talk about things that took place before another one in the past " (Richard Side and Guy Wellman 2000: 17). The past perfect tense used to clarify that there are two actions in the sentence one action comes before another one and the both actions are in the past.
The form of a verb that express an action completed before a particular point in the past, formed in English with (Had) and the past participle of the verb as in (I had eaten, He had eaten).

The following example show how the past perfect.
She had never seen a bear before she moved to Alaska
Jack had already left when we got there.

3. The problems facing foreign learners by using the perfect tenses in English language.
The learners face many problems in Aspect using and in tense using
Because they are as foreign learners they can't understand how they can use or see an event – aspect in a sentence.
So the biggest mistake they make it is how to use the verb form in correct way in the perfect tenses, epically they can't differentiate between the different uses of verb form for past perfect tense and the simple past tense form.
 (" use of verb forms is one of the two or three most difficult areas for English language learners to master "(Cowan 2008, p. 350)

Here are some examples show how the students make a mistake of using the verb form in the perfect tense in sentence.

She never saw a camel before she moved to Dubai. not correct

She had never seen a camel before she moved to Dubai. correct

My parents had already eat by the time I get home. not correct

My parents had already eaten by the time I got home. Correct

3. Design and Methodology

3.1 Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all English language students at first, second, third and fourth year at Al Zaytoonah University in Jordan.

3.2 Sample of the study

The sample of the study consisted of (180) English language students, from Zaytoonah University in Jordan; a questionnaire was distributed among them.

3.3 Instrument of the study

A questionnaire was distributed among the first, second, third and fourth year students at Al Zaytoonah University and this questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself, it consisted of 25 items. Many variables were included such as the year and GPA of the students.

3.4 Reliability of the instrument

To ensure the questionnaire reliability, the researcher applied it to a pilot sample of (20) students excluded of the study sample at Al Zaytoonah university with a two-week period between the first and second time it was distributed. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using correlation coefficient sand it was found (0.85) which is suitable to conduct such a study.

3.5 Procedures of the study

A questionnaire about students' point of view about the problems they face in learning English language perfect tenses at Al Zaytoonah university was given to (180) students. After that the researcher collected the questionnaires and collected data, and then this data was analyzed statistically.

3.6 Statistical analysis

The results were analyzed for each item in the questionnaire using suitable statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation. The researcher also used figures to clarify the results more.

4. Findings of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the problems facing foreign language learners at Department of English, and the Department of English and French literature students at Al Zaytoonah University in learning perfect tenses from the viewpoint of students, and also aimed to investigate the effect of year, and GPA on the point of view of students. To achieve the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was distributed among students to measure their point of view.

A questionnaire was distributed among (180) students from Al Zaytoonah University in Jordan. Means and standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results

To answer the first question about students' point of view towards the problems they face in learning tenses: What are the problems facing foreign language learners at Department of English, and the Department of English and French literature students at Al Zaytoonah University in learning perfect tenses from their viewpoint? A questionnaire was distributed among them and means and standard deviation were calculated. Results were shown in table 1

Table 1: students' point of view about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	4.61	.698
Q2	4.49	.715
Q3	4.42	.805
Q4	4.49	.858
Q5	4.33	.848
Q6	4.32	.767
Q7	4.59	.693
Q8	4.51	.732
Q9	4.18	.907
Q10	4.43	.877
Q11	3.97	1.000
Q12	4.23	.884
Q13	4.47	.905
Q14	4.46	.880
Q15	4.30	.837
Q16	4.41	.806
Q17	4.47	.759
Q18	4.39	.879
Q19	4.54	.741
Q20	4.44	.784
Q21	4.33	.945
Q22	4.63	.679
Q23	4.52	.755
Q24	4.54	.672
Q25	4.42	.812
QALL	4.42	.584

Table 1 show that there are statistically significant differences in students' point of views about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (180) students about their point of views about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that question 22 got the highest mean which was (4.63); question 11 comes next with a mean of (3.97).

Standard deviation for question 22 was (0.679) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for question 11 was nearly the same; it was (1.000) which is also statistically significant.
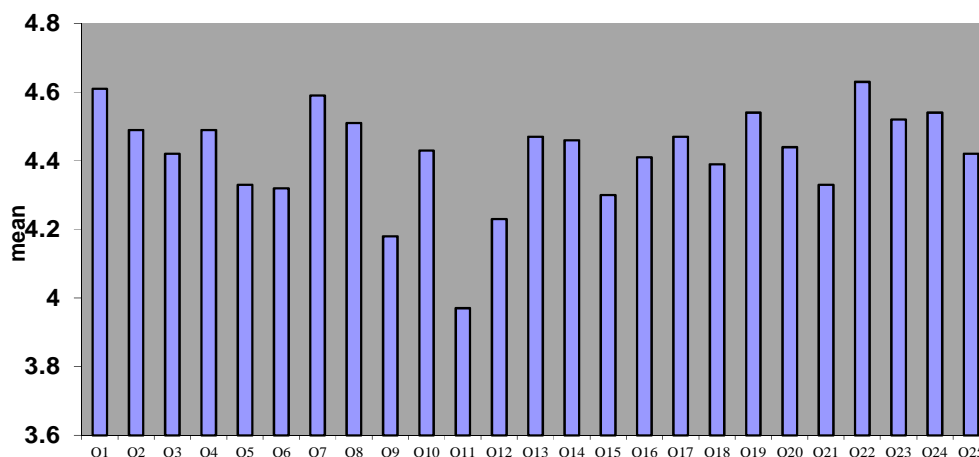
Diagram 1: students' point of views about the about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses

It is clear in the diagram that the mean of question 22 was the highest mean, question 1 comes next. The mean of the (4, 8, 19, and 24) are nearly the same, so students' point of view about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses is nearly similar.

To answer the second question about students' point of views and year: Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Al Zaytoonah University on the problems they face in learning perfect tenses due to the year (first year, second year and above)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to year variable

Year Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
First year	104	4.26	.722	-3.387	168	.001
Second year and above	76	4.55	.385			

Table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to year variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (180) students about their point of views about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that students who are in the first year got a lower mean than students who are in the second year and above which was (4.26, and 4.55) respectively; this indicates that year have an effect on students' point of views.

Standard deviation for students who are in the first year was (0.722) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for students who are in the second year and above was lower; it was (0.385) which is also statistically significant. So, table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to the year variable in favor of the second year and above students.
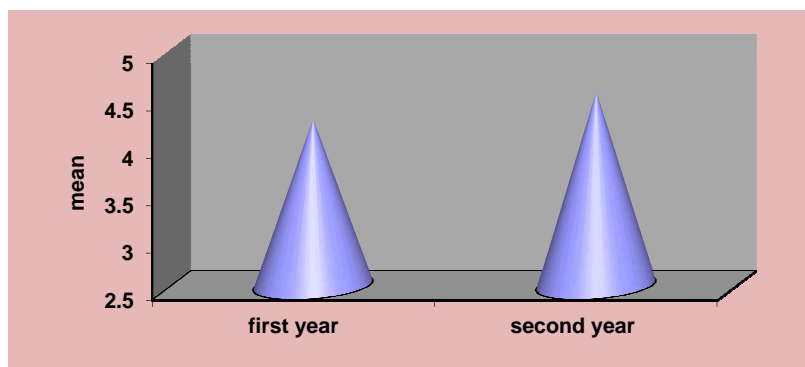
Diagram 2: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to year variable

Diagram 2 shows that students of the second year and above students got positive point of views about the problems facing them in learning perfect tense than students of first year.

To answer the third question about students' point of views and their GPA: Are there any statistically significant differences between the views of the students at Al Zaytoonah University on the problems they face in learning perfect tenses due to GPA of the students (low, high)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to GPA variable

GPA	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Low	124	4.22	.853	-2.299	168	.023
High	56	4.47	.482			

Table (3) shows there are statistically significant differences due to GPA variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (180) students about their point of views on the problems they face in learning perfect tenses at Al Zaytoonah University. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that students with high GPA got a higher mean than students of Low GPA which was (4.47, and 4.22) respectively; this indicates that GPA of the students have an effect on students' point of view.

Standard deviation for students of high GPA was (0.482) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for students with low GPA was higher; it was (0.853) which is also not statistically significant. So, table (3) shows there are statistically significant differences due to GPA variable in favor of students with high GPA.

So, table above shows there are statistically significant differences in students' point of views due to GPA variable in favor of students with high GPA.
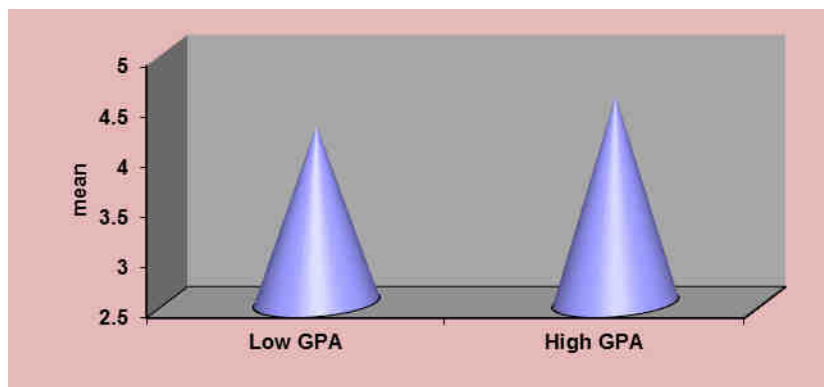
Diagram 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to GPA variable

Diagram 3 shows that students with high GPA got positive point of views about the problems they face in learning perfect tenses than students with low GPA.

5. Conclusion

The result to this study revealed by the test given to students at university, the result depends on students' background in the grammar and in their knowledge of verbs forms and tenses. The result shows that the students really have some problems in using the perfect tenses, epically in using past and present perfect tenses simple, the problems is in using the verb form of using past simple form and the pats perfect form of verbs.

6. Suggestions and Recommendations

1- Teaching Tenses should be given more attention at Al Zaytoonah University

2- Focusing on the difference between perfect tenses in the English language and how they are used in language.

3- Giving students more courses in grammar at university to know how they can deal and compare between Aspect and Tenses.

4- Reading comprehension passages should be more effective in practicing tenses in students' courses and in their books.

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Internet Resources

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