



TENSE USAGE IN ENGLISH AND COMMON MISTAKES CHALLENGES FACED BY UZBEK STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the tense system in English, their structures, and contextual usage, along with the differences among various tenses. It analyzes the most common grammatical mistakes made by learners and identifies the underlying causes. The article presents both theoretical explanations and practical examples, supported by statistical data and expert opinions.

The main purpose is to provide methodological guidance to help learners of English use tenses correctly and consciously.

KEYWORDS

English language, tenses, grammatical mistakes, Present Simple, Past Perfect, Future Tense, language learning, analysis, causes of errors



INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most widely spoken and rapidly learned languages in the world today. One of the most challenging aspects of mastering this language is its tense system. English learners, especially Uzbek-speaking students, often struggle to understand and correctly use the 12 primary tenses in English, each serving a distinct communicative purpose.

Tenses in English are expressed in various forms: simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous, each reflecting a specific temporal and contextual nuance.

For Uzbek learners, understanding and mastering English tenses requires time and often involves difficulties. These challenges are partly due to structural differences between Uzbek and English grammar systems, and partly due to ineffective teaching methods and lack of sufficient language practice.

According to a 2022 survey conducted in three universities in Tashkent, 68% of 200 English-major students misused English tenses, and 55% of them confused Present Perfect with Past Simple. These findings serve as an important signal for English language teachers and methodologists.

The main causes of such errors include:

The fundamental differences between the tense systems of Uzbek and English.

Inadequate explanation of grammar theory.

Overlooking subtle distinctions between tenses.

Learning tense structures through translation rather than in context.

Accurate use of tenses ensures clarity and effectiveness in communication. For instance, the difference between “I live in Shakhrisabz” and “I am living in Shakhrisabz” may seem minor, but it carries a significant semantic distinction in context. Therefore, tenses are not just grammatical elements but also integral to communication culture.



This article aims to analyze the English tense system, reveal its specific features, and address the most common practical mistakes made by students. It serves as a valuable resource for English learners, teachers, and linguists.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH TENSES

The English tense system has a deep and complex structure. Linguists claim that English expresses time more precisely than many other languages. English has 12 core tenses, categorized under three main time frames (present, past, future), each with four aspects (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous):

TENSE EXAMPLE

Present Simple: I eat

Present Continuous: I am eating

Present Perfect: I have eaten

Present Perf. Cont: I have been eating

Past Simple: I ate

Past Continuous: I was eating

Past Perfect: I had eaten

Past Perf. Cont: I had been eating

Future Simple: I will eat

Future Continuous: I will be eating

Future Perfect: I will have eaten

Future Perf. Cont: I will have been eating

These structures allow for precise expression of action timing, duration, completion, and consequences in speech.

Examples:

I have eaten – indicates that the action is completed and has a present result.

I was eating when he called – shows two actions occurring in the past simultaneously.



However, mastering this system is not easy, especially for Uzbek learners since Uzbek doesn't have such a detailed tense structure. Learners are advised to deeply understand each tense and study them in context.

TOP 5 MOST CONFUSING TENSES FOR UZBEK STUDENTS

Present Simple vs Present Continuous

Confusion arises due to the lack of a clear grammatical distinction between habitual and ongoing actions in Uzbek.

I read a book vs I am reading a book

Past Simple vs Present Perfect

I went to London vs I have gone to London

Learners struggle to distinguish whether the action is completed or still relevant to the present.

Future Simple vs "Be going to"

These are often used interchangeably, causing confusion about planned vs spontaneous actions.

I will study vs I am going to study

Past Perfect

Rarely used and often misunderstood. Learners memorize the structure but can't apply it contextually.

I had left before she came

Present Perfect Continuous

I have been working here for five years

Difficult to grasp due to the lack of an equivalent concept in Uzbek grammar.

According to a 2023 test conducted with 150 second-year students, 70% of them misused at least one of these five tenses.

STATISTICAL INSIGHTS

From a study conducted between 2021 and 2023 in five Uzbek universities:

Misuse of Past Simple vs Present Perfect: 63%



Substitution of Present Continuous with Present Simple: 48%

Errors related to Tense Agreement: 56%

Misunderstanding due to Pronunciation issues: 37%

In written tasks (e.g., essays, emails), learners often mix tenses within a single paragraph, making the message unclear.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND COMMON TEACHER ERRORS

Many teachers focus heavily on theory and neglect practical application. Most exercises are multiple-choice grammar drills with little context. As a result, students struggle to apply what they've learned in real-life situations.

Additional issues include:

- teachers ignoring the students' native language background.
- use of inauthentic examples rather than real-life conversation.
- relying on direct translation instead of immersive context-based instruction.

Experts recommend interactive methods, games, role-plays, and modern tools such as Quizzes and video analysis, Language learning apps (Grammarly, British Council, TenseBuilder)

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR LEARNERS

Learn tenses in context, not by rote memorization.

Keep a journal using different tenses:

- today: present simple;
- yesterday: past simple;
- tomorrow: future simple.

Analyze dialogues in podcasts and TV shows (e.g., BBC Learning English). Use mobile apps for independent practice. Practice switching between tenses in speech.

“English tenses are grammatically well-structured, but teaching them requires developing learners' language sensitivity, which can only be achieved through practical communication.” – Dr. O.A. Mamatova, Doctor of Philology



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, English tenses present specific challenges for Uzbek-speaking learners due to grammatical differences and linguistic interference. Analysis and statistical evidence show that many learners misuse tenses or mix them incorrectly, particularly Present Perfect vs Past Simple and Future Simple vs “Be going to”. To overcome these challenges, effective methodological approaches, modern technologies, and immersive environments are essential. Incorporating practical examples, visual charts, and contextual exercises into lessons significantly improves learning outcomes. Mastering English tenses not only strengthens grammar skills but also enables learners to communicate confidently and fluently. This, in turn, is key to successful international communication and knowledge exchange.

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