

## INTEGRATING SIMPLE PAST TENSE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH CURRICULUM: A STUDY OF TEACHING STRATEGIES

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### Abstract

This research explored effective teaching strategies for teaching elementary school students the simple past tense. Given that children at primary school age experienced rapid cognitive development, appropriate teaching methods were essential for building a strong language foundation. This article reviewed teaching methods in the simple past tense, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Game-Based Learning (GBL), and technology integration. CLT prioritized the use of language in accurate and relevant contexts, which helped students understand the use of the simple past tense in everyday conversations. Game-based learning (GBL) increased student engagement and motivation through interactive games, such as card and role-playing games, which facilitated the understanding of tense changes in a fun way. In addition, technologies such as language learning apps and interactive videos provided opportunities for students to practice independently and receive immediate feedback. The research also highlighted the importance of student motivation in successful teaching, where a supportive environment and fun activities increased student engagement and understanding of the material. The results of this research suggested that the combination of CLT, GBL, and technology methods, as well as the cultivation of student motivation, could create a compelling and engaging learning environment.

**Keywords:** Simple Past Tense, CLT, Game-Based Learning, Technology, Student Motivation

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching English at the primary school level is significant because students are at a stage of rapid cognitive development at this age. According to Nunan, D. (2022), language teaching in children, especially at primary school age, has a long-term impact on their future mastery of the language. Effective English teaching methods should be introduced early to help children develop a strong language foundation for future learning. Teaching the simple past tense, a fundamental English structure, requires special attention to ensure students grasp its form and usage, enabling them to progress to more complex language concepts later.

As Brown, H. D., (2014) explained, second language teaching that begins at an early age allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the differences and structures of languages other than their native language. Elementary school students, who are generally between the ages of 6 and 12, can understand the basic rules of language in a more fun way, such as using games, stories, and other interactive activities. Therefore, choosing the right strategy for teaching simple past tense in elementary school is very important.

However, although the simple past tense is one of the most basic tenses, teaching this tense at the elementary

school level often faces various challenges. One of the students' difficulty is distinguishing regular and irregular verb forms in the simple past tense. Jumrah & Azizah (2021), explained that students often experience confusion when using irregular verbs because there is no clear pattern to follow. For example, the past tense of the verb "go" is "went," which does not follow the regular pattern of verb change, such as "play" becoming "played." This requires a creative approach to teaching to help students understand the difference.

In addition, Listia & Febriyanti (2020) emphasized that students' cognitive abilities in elementary school, which are still in the developmental stage, often limit their capacity to absorb grammatical rules formally. Therefore, teaching simple past tense in elementary school classrooms should use methods that accommodate various learning styles and provide space for students to explore language through real experiences, not just through theoretical teaching.

In the English education curriculum in Indonesia, simple past tense is introduced as one of the main topics at the primary school level, especially in grades 4 to 6. This is done by the Merdeka Curriculum issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, which emphasizes the importance of communicative and contextual language learning (Kemdikbud, 2023). This curriculum seeks to provide space for students to learn the language through practical experiences and activities that allow them to use the language in real situations.

According to Kurniawan et al. (2024), the integration of simple past tense in the primary school English curriculum should not only be limited to the theoretical teaching of sentence structure but also involve more creative and fun methods. Story-based learning, games, and

technology applications are some methods that are increasingly used in teaching these tenses. These approaches provide opportunities for students to learn through direct interaction and experience, which is more effective than memorizing grammatical formulas.

Elementary schools can adopt various teaching strategies to teach simple past tense. Some of the most discussed approaches in the literature are Communicative Language Teaching, Game-Based Learning, and multimedia learning. Mustafa (2021), noted that the communicative approach focuses on using language in authentic contexts, which allows students to understand how and when to use the simple past tense in everyday life situations. For example, using stories about events that have already happened or recounting personal experiences can be a fun way to introduce students to this past tense structure.

In addition, Game-Based Learning is increasingly becoming popular as a method for increasing students' engagement and motivation in learning English. Kamayana and Dewi (2022) revealed that using games to teach simple past tense can provide a more relaxed and interactive learning atmosphere. Games such as puzzles, card games, or role-playing can help students understand the concept of time and verb tense changes in simple past tense in a fun way (Misrita et al., 2024).

Technology also plays an important role in teaching English. Language learning apps and interactive videos can provide students with a more immersive experience in understanding tenses. According to Indriani and Wirza (2020), using technology in primary school English classes can improve students' understanding of the material, as it provides opportunities to practice independently through digital platforms. As a follow-up to the above discussion, it

is important to see how these teaching strategies are applied in classroom practice, particularly in teaching simple past tense. As such, this research aims to explore some teaching strategies for teaching simple past tense to elementary school students and the various methods for helping primary school students understand and master these tenses in an engaging and contextualized way.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research used the systematic literature review method, so the systematic literature review research procedure was used to collect data. This method involved searching, examining, analyzing, and interpreting all available research. Researchers used this approach to systematically review and identify journals through established procedures for each step (Triandini, E., Jayanatha, S., 2019). The research methods and materials used in this study were as follows: James Lind's systematic literature review approach was used (Daroina, A., Febriani, W. E., 2022). A systematic literature review aimed to find, assess, and compare previous findings with current research.

This systematic review aimed to determine the effective teaching strategies to teach simple past tense to elementary school students. The first step was to collect data from online search literature sources and visit scientific journals that discussed the theme of simple past tense

from various perspectives with various articles from 2019-2024. Then, the selected article data was presented in a table consisting of the author's name, year of publication, article title, and research results. Furthermore, the researchers analyzed it by drawing conclusions that met the principles of validity and reliability of the findings that had answered the questions. In this research design, the researcher chose an explorative qualitative descriptive method.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, a systematic literature review was conducted to identify effective teaching strategies for teaching simple past tense to elementary school students. Ten scientific articles published between 2019 and 2024 were reviewed. The findings of these studies were categorized under four main themes: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Game-based Learning (GBL), Technology Integration, and Student Motivation. The following is a discussion of each theme based on the research findings.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the effective strategies for teaching the simple past tense to elementary students, a review of relevant articles was conducted. The selected studies, summarized in Table 1, highlight various approaches and their impacts on learning outcomes.

**Table 1.** List of Articles Reviewed for Effective Strategies in Teaching Simple Past Tense

No	Researchers & Years	Title of Research	Research Results
1	Hendri Kurniawan, Vitriani Vitriani, Tengku Muhammad Hanafi. (2024)	Implementation of Discussion Method On Past Tense Nominal And Verbal Material In English Learning At SMAN 5 Pekanbaru	Observations showed improvements in attention, enthusiasm, student activeness, and the learning atmosphere in the classroom. Thus, this method not only increases students' enthusiasm for learning but also inspires teachers' creativity in teaching.

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2	Faisal Mustafa. (2021)	The Use of Past Tense Verbs and Adverbs in Students' Recount Texts	Understanding past tense verbs and adverbs is crucial for mastering English. Using the correct past tense verb, its change, and appropriate adverbs is essential in writing recount texts. Providing adequate learning facilities can enhance the teaching process, improve student motivation, and help them apply their knowledge in real-life situations, fostering better learning outcomes.
3	I Gusti Nyoman Putra Kamayana , Putu Chrisma Dewi. (2022)	Improving Learning Outcomes of Simple Past Tense with Picture and Picture Learning Model	The picture and picture model improved students' mastery of the simple past tense and boosted learning achievement. In cycle I, only two students (6.67%) achieved learning completeness, while 28 students (93.33%) did not, highlighting the need for further instructional refinement to enhance overall student success.
4	Titik Kadarsih. (2019)	Application of Pafosnala (Past Tense in Snakes and Ladders) Media in Simple Past Tense Material	Through a series of processes, from initial conditions to cycles I and II, the application of PAFOSNALA game media in teaching the simple past tense effectively enhanced students' writing skills and fostered positive attitudes. This improvement demonstrated the media's effectiveness in enriching learning experiences and ultimately elevating the overall quality of English instruction.
5	Rahmi Indriani, Yanty Wirza. (2020)	Teachers' Practice in Technology Utilization in English Language Classrooms	The finding of this study revealed that internal factors such as self-efficacy and teacher's competence were the factors that influenced technology utilization practice in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher's teaching

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		experience also influenced how the teacher perceived technology utilization. This study implied the need for intensive technology integration training for the teachers to help them prepare for more effective English teaching and learning with technological integration.	
6	Ratna Rintaningrum. (2023)	Technology Integration in English Language Teaching and Learning: Benefits and Challenges	The findings indicated that integrating technology in English language learning offers several advantages, including the ability to engage in coding, participate in online quizzes, enhance response speed, improve English test scores, acquire a second foreign language, engage in collaborative learning, foster independent learning, access opportunities for writing, speaking, listening, and reading in English, utilize online learning resources, obtain online references, employ various computer applications, access up-to-date information, facilitate translation, and utilize multimedia presentations while demonstrating innovative teaching methods.
7	Andi Sasrawangi, Iskandar; Muhlis. (2021)	Improving Students' Motivation in Learning English through Games in Class VIII of MTSS Badan Amal Ujung Loe, Bulukumba Kab, South Sulawesi.	The increase in student motivation could be seen from the increase in observation results in pre-action research, after-action cycle I and cycle 2. In implementing the action, student motivation increased through the teacher providing opportunities for students to show their abilities. In this case, the teacher acted as a facilitator. Role-playing affected the results of cycles 1 and 2; it impacted student motivation.

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## **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a practical approach for teaching the simple past tense, as it emphasizes language use in real, meaningful situations, encouraging students to apply the tense in authentic communication and enhancing their language skills. As Nunan, D. (2022) explained, CLT prioritizes language use for communication over formal grammar instruction, which is especially important for young learners. Teaching the simple past tense through stories, role-playing, and sharing personal experiences makes learning more engaging and relevant, helping students connect with the material and apply it in meaningful contexts. According to Kurniawan et al. (2024), integrating CLT with real-life scenarios allows students to understand the application of past tense in daily conversations, which enhances their learning experience.

The research by Mustafa (2021) supports this approach, highlighting that when teachers use stories about events that have already happened or invite students to retell past experiences, students learn the structure of simple past tense and understand its function in communication. For example, using the sentences “I went to the zoo” or “We watched a movie last weekend” helps students connect the grammar lesson to their own lives. This approach shifts the focus from memorizing verb tenses to understanding the function of the simple past tense in context, which is essential for retaining and effectively using language in communication.

CLT is highly effective in primary schools as it promotes active engagement, enabling students to practice the simple past tense in a communicative environment. This approach encourages meaningful interaction and supports the development of language skills in real contexts.

## **Game-based Learning (GBL)**

Game-based Learning (GBL) has emerged as a popular method for teaching simple past tense, mainly due to its ability to increase engagement, motivation, and fun in the learning process. According to Kamayana and Dewi (2022), game-based approaches such as card games, puzzles, and role-playing benefit young learners. These games can be designed to reinforce simple past-tense grammar rules while keeping students entertained.

In a research by Kadarsih (2019), using a card game where students had to match the present tense form of the verb with the corresponding past tense form proved to be an effective strategy. Students were actively involved in correcting their mistakes during the game, which improved their understanding of regular and irregular verb tenses. The game's interactive nature allows students to practice iteratively without feeling overwhelmed, making learning more enjoyable and effective. Similarly, the role-play activity, where students act out past events, allows them to apply simple past tense in context, reinforcing their understanding through experiential learning.

The success of GBL is seen in its ability to turn grammar learning into a fun and motivating challenge, which is especially important for primary school children who may feel bored with grammar lessons. In addition, the game's competitive aspect also encourages students to improve their language skills, resulting in better retention of the simple past tense.

## **Technology Integration**

Technology is increasingly recognized as an effective tool in language teaching, especially in teaching complex grammatical concepts such as simple past tense. Integrating digital tools such as interactive apps, educational games, and multimedia resources has significantly

increased student engagement and comprehension. As noted by Indriani and Wirza (2020), technology allows students to practice language skills independently, providing opportunities for individual learning and immediate feedback.

Rintaningrum (2023) found that language learning apps such as Duolingo and Busuu offer game-based exercises that help reinforce the simple past tense through repeated practice in a fun and interactive environment. These apps often provide visual cues and auditory feedback, which cater to different learning styles and make learning more dynamic. For example, students can practice verb changes in the simple past tense through exercises that involve matching, filling in blanks, or completing short stories.

In addition to apps, interactive videos, and virtual classrooms allow students to watch simple past tense-related content and participate in activities such as quizzes or video-based discussions. Technology also provides teachers with a variety of resources to support their lessons, including virtual flashcards, quizzes, and online exercises that can be easily customized to suit students' needs.

Therefore, technology not only makes learning more accessible but also allows students to interact with the language in various ways, making it easier for them to grasp the concept of simple past tense.

### **Student Motivation**

Student motivation is another key factor that affects the success of teaching strategies for simple past tense. Sasrawangi et al., (2021) emphasizes that motivation plays an important role in language acquisition. Students will find it difficult to focus and understand the material without motivation. Therefore, teachers must create a positive, engaging learning environment that encourages active participation.

The research by Kadarsih (2019) shows that when students are given activities that are fun and relevant to their lives, their motivation to learn increases significantly. This includes using real-life examples, games, and interactive activities that allow students to see the practical value of learning the simple past tense. When motivated, students are more likely to be actively involved in the learning process, which results in better understanding and application of the tense.

In addition, creating a supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable to make mistakes and receive constructive feedback can also increase motivation. Teachers should recognize and celebrate students' efforts, which can reinforce positive behaviour and build their confidence in using the simple past tense.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research highlights the importance of integrating effective teaching strategies for teaching the simple past tense to elementary school students. Based on a review of various studies, it is clear that methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Game-Based Learning (GBL), and technology integration play crucial roles in enhancing student engagement and understanding. CLT encourages real-life language use, making the simple past tense more relatable, while GBL adds fun and motivation through interactive games. Technology tools like language apps also provide opportunities for independent practice and immediate feedback. Overall, combining these approaches and fostering student motivation creates an engaging and effective learning environment that helps students master the simple past tense. Educators are encouraged to use these strategies to support students in learning English more dynamically and contextually.

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