

The Deductive Approach to Teaching English Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense and Future Perfect Continuous

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Abstract

This paper discussed teaching English Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense, and Future Perfect Continuous Tense using the deductive approach. It was obvious after a pre-test that the students did well at all other tenses except the Future Tenses. This prompted the teachers of General Studies (GST101) – Use of English, to enquire into the cause. To guide the study, the researchers asked, “To what extent could the use of deductive approach of teaching grammar improve 100 level undergraduate students’ transposition of Simple Future Tense to Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense, and Future Perfect Continuous Tense?” The one-group pre-test post-test design was used in this study. Four hundred and seventy-seven students were pre-tested during a General Use of English lecture using the English Tense Transposition Achievement Test (ETTAT). The study revealed that the students did not know how to use the modals “will” and “would” in tense transposition. After teaching Future Tenses using the deductive method, the post-test results revealed a significant improvement on the students’ ability to transpose the Future Tense correctly. It was concluded that although transposing the Future Tense may pose a challenge to learners of English as a Second Language, teachers of the course should invest adequate time to teach it using the deductive approach. The paper recommends, among others, that teachers should incorporate activities that encourage active participation, and they should utilize visual aids such as charts, timelines, and flashcards to illustrate the structure and usage of future tenses.

Keywords: *Tense, aspect, transposition, deductive approach, inductive approach*

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Introduction

Learning English language is learning how to handle its verbal system properly. Verbs are the central focus of the activities of the linguist, the teacher, and the student (Chi, 2020). Communication which is the ultimate objective of language would be impossible without the expression of such concepts as grammatical anteriority, posteriority and simultaneity of various actions in time. These concepts are primarily indicated by the tense system of verbs in the English language. The English verb is a word that expresses action, process or state in a sentence. Verbs tell what a noun or pronoun does and indicate the state of being of a person or thing. A verb or verb phrase is the grammatical hinge on which all the elements of a sentence pivot. This is so because not only is a verb the bedrock of a sentence, but it can be modified to express grammatical features such as modality, transitivity, passivity, agreement and aspect (Sherman et al., 2011). The verb holds the power to give meaning to an utterance. In other words, when a person speaks, his/her speech makes meaning to the listener only because of the verbs they use to elucidate their thoughts and intentions. Hence, it is important that English as a Second Language (ESL) students are able to use verbs appropriately.

Beyond the verb merely expressing actions or states of being, it is the means by which human thoughts and actual happenings are differentiated in time. This is done by the device called “tense”. Actions that happened previously are in the “past”, those ongoing are in the “present”, while those that will happen later on will be in the “future”. And so, the English language has three basic tense forms: past, present and future; each one has its special use and conveys a certain time factor. The concept of time with its tripartite divisions is universal – while tense is a grammatical category, time is an extra-linguistic universal idea (Mohammad, 2013). The tense has aspect – the commencement, duration, completion or repetition of the action of a verb. When verbs are inflected to specify the coetaneous, perfective, or progressive forms certain problems ensue for students of English as a Second Language (ESL); they are likely to falter in their articulation of sentences using appropriate English tense aspects due to what Rina and Febriyanti (2020) refer to as difference in “typologies on grammatical features and constructions.” English has tenses while some other languages are either “tenseless” or the tenses are arranged quite differently from English patterns (Uusikoski, 2016). Based on this, ESL students have difficulties transposing English tenses and aspects appropriately thereby confirming Alzuhairy’s (2016) position that some students find choosing between tenses and aspects difficult because their language does not make such distinction.

Tense and aspect are indicated by the use of particular verb forms – an inflected form either of the main verb, or a multi-word construction, or both in combination (Muhammad & Maksud, 2015). Inflection may involve the use of affixes such as the “-ed” ending that marks the past tense of regular verbs, but can also entail stem modifications such as ablaut in irregular verbs as in “sang”, “sing”, “sung”, “song”. Multi-word tense constructions often involve modal verbs. Examples which combine both types of tense marking include that which has a modal verb together with the inflected past participle form of the main verb and the past tense where the proclitic appears in conjunction with the affixed or ablaut-modified past tense form of the main verb (Chevalier-Karfis, 2022). Tenses and aspects are essential components of grammar that should be learnt well. When ESL students mistranspose these in sentences, the tendency is for distorted meanings from the speaker’s intentions to be realised. Teachers of English language have the responsibility of employing appropriate approaches of teaching grammar to students. While there are several methods from which they can choose, this paper highlights two – deductive and inductive.

Deductive and Inductive Approaches of Teaching Future Tenses

The deductive approach is a way of teaching where the teacher takes time to introduce a grammar topic, explain the rules guiding the concept that is being taught, and give some examples to reiterate the rules that have been proffered and the students are given exercises to assess their understanding. Krashen (1982) argued for the deductive approach that it is much more reasonable and teachers are able to present and clearly explicate concepts and have students practice until grammar rules are fully comprehended. However, Latifjono’g’li (2022) and Lafta (2019) opine that the deductive approach poses a challenge to students in that the task of memorising rules of grammar is difficult and they tend to forget these rules in a short time. Besides, Martin and Sippel (2023) assert that memorisation of the rules of tense and aspect does not equal understanding of the concepts.

The deductive method is often referred to as traditional method of teaching (Sika, 2015). It is essential that every lesson is carefully planned to ensure that all content is appropriately covered and accurately delivered. Equally important is the need to ensure that the students’ work is submitted and marked afterwards – it is vital that the teacher knows if the lesson has been successful and that the intended concepts have been grasped by all students. If not, follow up work and personalised instruction will be needed to fill any gap. The teacher is solely responsible for providing students with

the knowledge that they need to complete subsequent tasks correctly. Although it creates more work for the teacher and can be time-consuming, it does ensure that students are clear about what they have been taught.

The inductive method on the other hand, contrasts the deductive method. The English language teacher who is utilising this method guides students to discover grammar rules and how they are applied by looking at examples. The teacher provides a meaningful set of examples of a particular structure or language feature (Arifin, 2016). Then, the students must work out as a group or individually how the language is used, and what the patterns or rules are. After the students have had the opportunity to analyse the examples, the teacher could review that analysis with the class. In the deductive method, the teacher introduces a rule or concept to the students (i.e. “the past tense of regular verbs is formed by adding -ed to the end”), and then provides examples to illustrate the concept. The teacher then gives students practice activities so that they can apply the concept to their own language production (Obeidat & Alomari, 2020; Tsai, 2017). The inductive method builds on the widely accepted principle that students construct their own versions of reality rather than simply absorbing versions presented by their teachers. The method almost always involves students discussing questions and solving problems in class, with much of the work in and out of class being done by students working in groups.

Undergraduate Students’ Problems in using Future Tenses

At the beginning of an academic session, four hundred and seventy-seven 100 Level undergraduate students of Federal University of Education, Pankshin, Plateau State were pre-tested during a General Use of English lecture using the English Tense Transposition Achievement Test (ETTAT). ETTAT consisted of two sections, namely A and B. Section A elicited the bio data of the students which included name of their faculty, department and date. Section B had 100 items covering Simple Present Tense, Present Perfect Tense, Present Continuous tense, Present Perfect Continuous tense, Simple Past Tense, Past Perfect Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Past Perfect Continuous Tense, Simple Future Tense,. While the students performed above average at all other tenses, they performed below average at Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense, and Future Perfect Continuous Tense.

Students of ESL encounter challenges in the areas of grammar, phonology, and vocabulary due to several linguistic and extra linguistic factors (Chiedu, 2023; Chand, 2021). Students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are not exempted (Chigbu et al., 2020). In the area of grammar, undergraduate students have been found to make tense-related errors in speech and/or writing. Specifically, these errors include incorrect verb forms, tense inconsistency, misuse of modal verbs, lack of agreement between subject and verb, and misuse of verb tenses in sentences (Akello, 2024). In order to be proficient in English, students have to master the use of tenses. One of the tenses that undergraduate students struggle with is the use of the Future Perfect Continuous Tense.

Research Question

To guide the trajectory of this study the following question was asked:

1. To what extent could the use of the deductive approach of teaching grammar improve 100 level undergraduate students' transposition of Simple Future Tense to
 - a. Future Perfect Tense?
 - b. Future Continuous Tense?
 - c. Future Perfect Continuous Tense?

Methodology

The one-group pre-test post-test design was used in this study. It was used to assess the veracity of teaching English Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense and Future Perfect Continuous Tense using the deductive approach. The one-group pre-test post-test design is a type of quasi-experimental design commonly used in educational research. In this design, a single group of participants is measured on a dependent variable before and after an intervention or treatment. The main goal of the design is to determine whether the intervention has had an effect on the dependent variable by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores.

Presentation of Results

Data for the post-test were collected and analysed using descriptive statistics. The responses related to each of the twelve tenses and aspects were scored and weighted. The weighted scores were used to determine the average scores for each item. Any average score above 50% was considered to indicate that the students performed well. The results are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1: Average pre-test percentage pass for all tenses

Sn	Tenses	Average % pass
1	Simple Past Tense	82
2	Past Perfect Tense	71
3	Past Continuous Tense	76
4	Past Perfect Continuous Tense	56
5	Simple Present Tense	87.2
6	Present Perfect Tense	81
7	Present Continuous tense	81
8	Present Perfect Continuous tense	66.7
9	Simple Future Tense	82.1
10	Future Perfect Tense	43
11	Future Continuous Tense	7.8
12	Future Perfect Continuous Tense	10

The result of the pre-test on Table 1 revealed that the average percentage score of the students on all tenses were above 50% except on the Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense and Future Perfect Continuous Tense where they scored 43%, 7.8% and 10% consecutively.

Given the result of the students' pre-test, the researchers decided to remedy the students' poor performance at Future Perfect, Future Continuous and Future Perfect Continuous Tenses by using the deductive approach of teaching grammar. The students were taught the Simple Future Tense, Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense and Future Perfect Continuous Tense. Each topic was treated once a week for four weeks. After this time the students were subjected to a post-test. Nothing was changed on the ETTAT which was used during the pre-test. The result is as depicted on Table 2.

Table 2: Average post-test percentage pass for each of the Future Tenses

Sn	Tenses	Average % pass	% difference
1	Simple Future Tense	81	- 1.1
2	Future Perfect Tense	76	33
3	Future Continuous Tense	65	57.2
4	Future Perfect Continuous Tense	61	51

Table 2 shows a -1.1% difference between the 82.1% pre-test average score and 81% post-test average score for Simple Future Tense. However, other post-test average scores are 76% for Future Perfect Tense, 65% for Future Continuous Tense, and 61% for Future Perfect Continuous Tense.

Discussion of findings

The common mistake among all the students was their use of the modal “would” instead of “shall” or “will”. For example, the students were required to transpose the verbs in given sentences from Simple Future Tense to a) Future Perfect Tense, b) Future Continuous Tense, and c) Future Perfect Continuous Tense:

a) **Sentence:** I shall finish by 8 o'clock.

Expected response: I will/shall have finished by 8 o'clock.

Students' response: I finished by 8 o'clock.

b) **Sentence:** This time on Monday he will drive to the airport.

Expected response: This time on Monday he will be driving to the airport.

Students' response: This time on Monday he would be driving to the airport.

c) **Sentence:** In December, I am going to work here for 10 years.

Expected response: In December, I am going to have been working here for 10 years.

Students' response: In December, I would have been working here for 10 years.

The use of the modal “would” was consistent across all the test scripts. There are extraneous factors responsible for this generalisation but they are not within the scope of this write-up. However, the performance presupposed that the students did not know the grammatical difference between the modal verbs “would” and “will”. Therefore, there was need to explain the difference between the two terms and demonstrate how they are used appropriately in sentences.

Modal verb “will” or “would”

Wong (2021) explains modal verbs as the action words which add the meaning of logical possibility, ability, necessity, and permission to verbs. Examples of modal verbs are can/could, shall/should, will/would, may/might, and must/have to. They do not need to match their subject in plural agreement, so they do not need to take an “-s” or “-es” ending. Modal verbs are used in sentences to predict a future possibility, describe an ability, give advice, make requests, or ask for permission. For example

1. The girl can buy some mangoes for me. (ability)
2. Dark clouds mean it shall rain. (future possibility)
3. Will you pour me a drink, please? (request)
4. You may wish to sell all the oranges. (advice)
5. May I use your pen? (permission)

“Will” and “would” have their use cases: “Will” is used to a) indicate actions or events that are going to happen in the future, b) make promises or decisions, c) predict future events or situations

- a) I will go to the market tomorrow.
- b) I will help you with your homework.
- c) It will rain later today.

“Would” on the other hand is used to a) express habitual action that took place in the past, b) make polite requests or offers, c) talk about hypothetical or imagined situations, often in conditional sentences, and d) report what someone said in the past about the future

- a) When I was a child, I would visit my grandparents very often.
- b) Would you like some akara?
- c) If I had a car, I would drive to work.
- d) She said she would call you later.

The Future Tense in its various forms, according to Boland (2006), is rather complicated as it deals with time in the future and conveys that an action will have been completed by a certain time in the future or be in progress until a certain time in the future because human beings often think and behave as though things might be, or might have been, other than they actually are, or were.

The Future Perfect Tense comprises three parts: the first part consists of “will” or “shall” according to the noun or pronoun that is the subject of the sentence, the second part always uses the word “have” irrespective of the noun or pronoun that is the subject of the sentence, and the third part has the past participle as used in other Past Tenses. For example,

- 1. I shall/will have written two songs by tonight
- 2. The harvest will not have finished by next Friday.
- 3. They shall all have left the bazaar in an hour’s time.

The Future Continuous Tense, also known as the future progressive tense, is a verb tense that shows an ongoing action in the future. It is the future version of the present continuous tense, which uses a similar construction (Ellis, 2022). It consists of will/shall + be + verb + ing. For example,

- 1. James will be working.
- 2. They will be watching the news at 9pm.

The Future Perfect Continuous Tense shows an action taking place before a certain moment in time and beyond that time, the emphasis is on the duration. It consists of will/shall + have + been + the verb's present participle (verb root + -ing). For example,

1. When I turn thirty, I will have been playing piano for twenty-one years.
2. She will have been teaching English language for ten years.

The foregoing clearly explicate the concepts of the modal “will” and Future Tenses. The error of the students who took the ETTAT by generalising the use of “would” was due to their ignorance of the fact that modals like “would” cannot be used to indicate an action or state in the Future Perfect, Future Continuous and Future Perfect Continuous Tenses (Aldrich, 2017). This is because “would” has several functions: first, as the past tense of “will”, second, as the conditional mood of “will” and third, as it is used to be polite.

1. I would try to act like my father when I was young. (past tense of “will”)
2. I would get a tan if I worked at the pool. (conditional mood of “will”)
3. I would like more tea please. (used to be polite)

Additionally, the uses of modal verbs “will” and “would” are summarised as explained by Wong (2021) in a table thus:

Table 3: Use cases of “will” and “would”

Use Case	Will	Would
Future actions	I will go to the market.	N/A
Promises/decisions	I will help you.	N/A
Predictions	It will rain.	She said it would rain.
Past habits	N/A	I would visit my grandparents.
Politeness/requests	N/A	Would you like some akara?
Hypothetical	N/A	If I had a car, I would drive to work.

Adapted from Wong (2021)

Conclusion

The Future Tense is relatively complicated to students of English. The use of modals “will” and/or “would” confused many of our undergraduate students who took the General Use of English course. Noticing the problem at an early time helped the teachers of the course to attempt solving it promptly. As complicated as transposing the future tenses may be appear to be, the teachers of English have the responsibility of taking time to teach the teach Future Perfect Tense, Future Continuous Tense and Future Perfect Continuous Tense using the deductive approach as it gives room for a lot of explanation and exercises (Male, 2018).

It is important for undergraduate students to master the use of all English tenses so that they are able to communicate effectively in the language especially as English has solidified its position as a global lingua franca in the 21st century, serving as a crucial medium of communication across various domains. It behoves of the teachers to utilise the various methods of tenses with a view to graduating students who would be proficient and confident to connect and interact with their peers and other people as they disseminate knowledge, and drive progress in various fields.

Recommendations

By combining different relevant strategies, teachers of English grammar can create a comprehensive and enjoyable learning experiences for their students, thereby helping them to master the use of future tenses in English. To achieve this using the deductive method, it is recommended that teachers should,

1. begin by clearly explaining the different types of future tenses in English
2. use examples that are relevant to the students' lives and experiences.
3. incorporate activities that encourage active participation.
4. utilize visual aids such as charts, timelines, and flashcards to illustrate the structure and usage of future tenses.

5. provide a variety of exercises to reinforce learning.
6. offer constructive feedback and correct errors in a supportive manner.

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