# A STUDY OF THAI FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN THE USE OF ASPECTS IN DIFFERENT TENSES

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# UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY
## INDEPENDENT STUDY APROVAL
## MASTER OF ARTS
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**TITLE  A STUDY OF THAI FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN THE USE OF ASPECTS IN DIFFERENT TENSES**

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Ketisiri Dalao

Researcher

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# บทคัดย่อ

เรื่อง : การศึกษาการใช้กาลในการณ์ลักษณะต่าง ๆ ของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1
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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อการศึกษาการใช้กาลในการณ์ลักษณะต่าง ๆ ของนักศึกษา
ชั้นปีที่ 1 ผู้เข้าร่วมคือนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1 จำนวน 90 คน สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษและการสื่อสาร
คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานี เก็บข้อมูลโดยการใช้แบบทดสอบปรนัยซึ่งให้ผู้เข้าร่วม
เลือกการณ์ลักษณะต่าง ๆ ที่ถูกต้องในสถานการณ์ที่แตกต่างกัน

ผลการวิจัยพบว่าอนาคตกาลเป็นปัญหาสูงสุดสำหรับผู้เข้าร่วม โดยเฉพาะการใช้รูปกาลของ the
progressive และ the perfective ในขณะที่ปัจจุบันกาลเป็นปัญหาน้อยที่สุดสำหรับผู้เข้าร่วม มี
หลายแง่มุมที่เป็นสาเหตุของผลวิจัย อันดับแรกคือการใช้หลักสูตรแกนกลางการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน
พุทธศักราช 2551 ที่นักเรียนไทยถูกคาดหวังให้ใช้กาล ได้แก่ รูปกาล present simple ตั้งแต่
ระดับประถม ในขณะที่พวกเขาเรียนรูปกาล ได้แก่ present perfect, past perfect, หรือ future
perfect ในระดับมัธยม ดังนั้นพวกเขาจึงคุ้นเคยกับกาลที่ศึกษาตั้งแต่ระดับเริ่มต้นมากกว่ากาลที่ศึกษา
ในระดับที่สูงขึ้นไป อันดับที่สองคือระดับความยากของการใช้แต่ละกาลและการณ์ลักษณะต่าง ๆ
นักเรียนไทยมีปัญหาในการใช้กาลและการณ์ลักษณะต่าง ๆ อย่างถูกต้องเมื่อมีการรวมมากกว่าหนึ่ง
การณ์ลักษณะ และลำดับสุดท้ายคืออิทธิพลการข้ามภาษาศาสตร์หรือการถ่ายโอนภาษาที่ 1 ที่เกิดขึ้น
เป็นปกติในการเรียนภาษาต่างประเทศ

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the tense that is the most problematic for Thai first-year university students' accurate use of aspects. The participants were 90 first-year English and communication majors at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University. The data were collected by using a multiple choice test requiring the participants to choose the correct aspect in different temporal situations.

The findings revealed that the future tense was the most problematic for the participants, especially in the use of the progressive and the perfective aspects whereas the present tense was the least difficult for them. There were various facets that contributed to the findings. The first was the Thai English curriculum based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 that Thai students are expected to use a tense, namely present simple, at the primary education level, whereas they study some tenses, namely present perfect, past perfect, or future perfect, at the secondary education level so they are familiar with tense that they study at beginning level more than the higher level. The second was the level of difficulty of each tense and aspect use. Thai students have difficulties using tense-aspect combinations correctly when it involves more than one-time point. And the last one was the cross-linguistic influence or L1 transfer that normally occurs in foreign language learning.

# CONTENTS

# CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

# LIST OF TABLES

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the rationale, purpose of the study, research question, scope of the study, and definitions of terms.

## 1.1  Rationale and Background

Knowledge of grammar is important for understanding linguistic systems of any language (Petchtae, 2011). Although some might argue that it should not be a required section in language assessment, grammar as the basic rules of a certain language has its important position in language learning and teaching. In English grammar, tenses and aspects are essential parts to be acquired by EFL learners. They are represented by verb forms (Klein, 2009). Tense is used to locate the situation or event in time (past, present, future) whereas aspect is used to show the situation or event from a particular viewpoint (Baker, 1992).

lthough tenses and aspects are undeniably important parts of grammar and are necessary for appropriate and effective communication (Xin, 2010), they are difficult for EFL learners to acquire. As Halliday (1994) stated, learners cannot advance their English to a high level if they do not understand the concepts of tenses and aspects. Realizing that, both government and private institutions in Thailand focus largely on grammar. But unfortunately, students still have problems with tense and aspect usage when they write, read, and speak English (Junpui, 2007). Thai students who finished high school are required to be able to use all tenses in different aspects. However, they still have problems with the use of tense-aspect. This is supported by Tawilpakul's finding (2003) that tense-aspect selection is the most difficult element for Thai students, and therefore in some situations they are not confident of which one to use (Sukasame, Kantho & Narrot, 2013). Sukkasame (2014) who investigated Thai students' errors in learning English tenses suggested that the major cause of the problem was the influence of the mother tongue because Thai does not have a tense-aspect system that explains an event happening in one particular time with a particular viewpoint.

In addition to Thai learners' problems with English tenses and aspects, most EFL students were also found to get confused when they saw various kinds of verb forms associated with tenses and aspects (Fredirickson, 1997) due to various uses of tenses and aspects. For example, the present continuous is not always about progressive action such as, "I am going to the shop tonight." The verb is in the present continuous form, but the event does not concern a progressive action. The subtle and various uses of tenses and aspects easily confound EFL learners, especially those whose mother tongue lacks such systems.

The research on tenses and aspects has been widely conducted in the context of foreign language learning of Thai students, particularly the problems of Thai students on tense-aspect selection. However, a few studies have focused on the problems in the use of aspects in different tenses. Hence, it is interesting to explore the tense that causes the most problems for Thai first-year university students' use of aspects. This study includes three aspects: simple, progressive, and perfective without aspect combination (progressive perfective).

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

This study aims to investigate Thai first-year university students' knowledge in the use of tenses and aspects so as to find out the tense that causes Thai first-year university students the most problems when they use aspects.

## 1.3 Research question

The research question of this study is as below:

Which tense is the most problematic for Thai first-year university students' use of aspects?

## 1.4 Scope of the study

This study involves three simple aspects: simple, progressive, and perfective in three tenses: present, past, and future. The combination of perfective and progressive aspects is not a focus of this study because this aspect combination is beyond the scope of the B1 CEFR level, which Thai first-year university students are expected to reach.

**1.5 Significance of the study**

This study is expected to better help the students realize their problems in the use of tenses and aspects so that they can improve their tense-aspect knowledge. Moreover, a better understanding of causes of errors when using English aspects may lead to appropriate teaching methods and materials that help students improve their use of English aspects.

**1.6 Definitions of terms**

The terms that need defining are as follows:

Tense is a form of verb that indicates the time of state, action or event (Wren and Martin, 2005).

Aspect is connected with the internal temporal constituency of the situation (situation−internal time), including simple, progressive and perfect (Downing and Locke, 2006).

CEFR stands for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is an international standard that describes six broad levels of language ability (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) (North, 2014).

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# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter describes tenses and aspects, tense-aspect knowledge at B1 CEFR level as well as relevant research both in foreign countries and Thailand.

## 2.1  Tenses and aspects

This section presents the definitions of tenses and aspects as well as the meanings of aspects in different tenses.

### 2.1.1  Definitions of tenses and aspects

Tenses and aspects are not the same although many grammar textbooks and instructors do not usually distinguish them. The difference between the two is made by several linguists.

According to Declerck and Cappelle (2006), tense is a linguistic concept that indicates the relation between the time of the situation and the time of the speech. Similarly, Chomsky (2002) states that tense is a grammatical expression and a lexical expression that help identify an event or situation in time. As for Klein and Li (2009), tense is defined as a type of device used to locate situations in time, or mark how the situations are positioned in time whereas aspect is concerned with the way in which the event is viewed with regard to duration and/or completion. In other words, aspect is referred to as the internal temporal contour of the event (Downing & Locke, 2006).

To conclude, tense is a form of a verb that is used to explain the time of an action, state or event while aspect is how an event or action is viewed in relation to time (future, past, or present), rather than when exactly it happens.

### 2.1.2  Types of tense and aspect

Like in any language, there exist three tenses in English: present, past and future. And aspects in English are of three types: simple, progressive and perfective. The details of each will be presented below.

#### 2.1.2.1  Types of tense

Tenses are divided into 3 types as follows:

1) Present tense

It is used with events or states that occur in the present time (Freeman & Murcia, 2015).
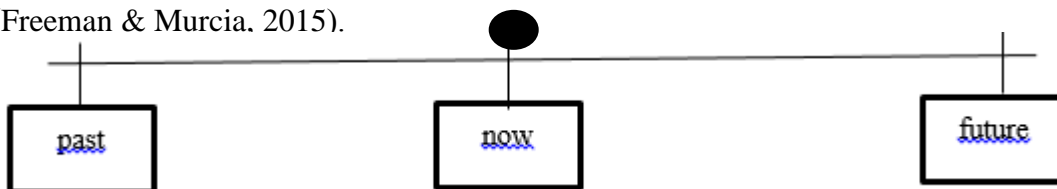


2) Past tense

It is used with events or states that occurred at a time before the present (Richards, C. & Richard, 2013)
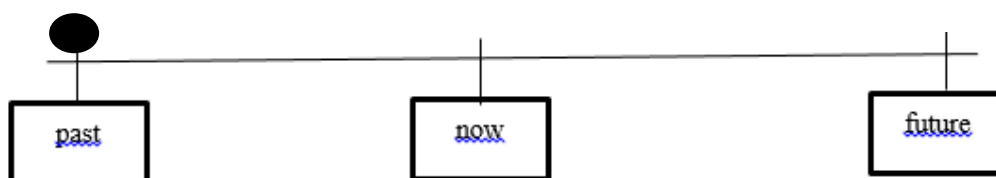


3) Future tense

It is used with events or states that will arise at a future time or after the present time.
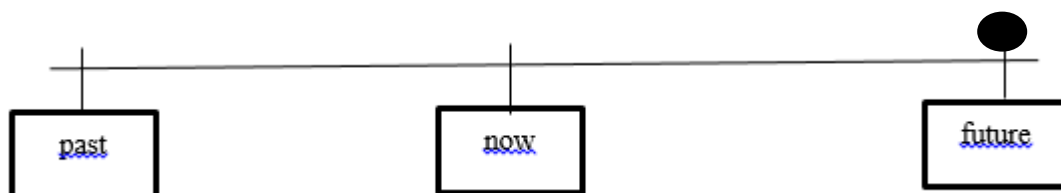


2.1.2.2 Types of aspect

Aspects are also categorized into 3 types as follows:

1) Simple

It is used with facts or habitual events. (Freeman & Murcia, 2015).

2) Progressive

It is used with events or actions that are incomplete, in progress, or developing (Richards, C. & Richard, 2013).

3) Perfective

It is used with completed actions, and it also expresses that the action had, has or will have been completed by a specific point in time. (Freeman & Murcia, 2015).

## 2.2 Usage of tenses in combination with aspects

Tenses are usually used in combination with aspects to denote events in different temporal periods and different internal contours as elaborated below.

### 2.2.1 Present simple

The verb form indicates the present simple is the verb with the base form or with –s or -es at the end for the third person singular subject. It is used to refer to events or actions that happen regularly or permanently. It is normally used to talk about or describe facts and habits that take place in the present. In brief, this tense refers to general habits, customs, characteristics, or truths (DeCapua, 2008). It is typically used with the following situations (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) Habitual actions that occur in the present and current states, events, or actions

e.g. He walks to school every day.

(2) General timeless truths such as scientific facts, laws or customs

e.g. Water freezes at 0 degree centigrade.

(3) Present speech acts where the action is accomplished at the moment of the speaking of it

e.g. I resign from the commission.

In addition to the above use cases of the present simple, it is also used in the following situations:

(1) In the subordinate clause of time or condition when the main clause a future-time verb. That is, the speaker will do something after finishing the current activity.

e.g. After he finishes work, he'll watch TV.

(2) An event scheduled in the future, usually with the future time adverbial

e.g. I have a meeting next Wednesday at that time.

(3) Certain past events in narration

e.g. "So she <u>stands up</u> and waves her arms to catch our attention."

### 2.2.2 Past simple

The verb form indicating the past simple is the verb in the past tense form, generally with -*ed* ending. It is used to describe habitual actions in the past, completed actions, events, or states set at a definite time in the past (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990). The time when the action happened is often stated or understood, or may be identified by a past time adverbial in the same sentence, the preceding language context, or the context outside the language (Leech and Svartvik, 1984). It is typically used with the following situations (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) A definite single completed event or action in the past

e.g. I attended a meeting of that committee last week.

(2) Habitual or repeated actions/events in the past

e.g. It snowed almost every weekend last winter.

(3) States in the past

e.g. He owed me a lot of money.

In addition, the past simple is also used in the following situations:

(1) A hypothetical condition in the present time

e.g. If he took better care of himself, he wouldn't be absent so often.

(2) An event or action with duration with the implication that it was completed in the past

e.g. Professor John taught at Yale for 20 years.

Moreover, the past simple is used with an action interrupting another ongoing action in the past. (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973)

e.g. Yesterday, the phone <u>rang</u> when my mom was cooking in the kitchen.

### 2.2.3 Future simple

The verb form indicating the future simple is the base verb preceded by the modal *will*. Simple future is used with events or actions that have not yet begun. The events in the future cannot be factually knowable in the same way as those in the present and the past. It is typically used with the following situations (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) An action to take place at some definite future time

e.g. Joel <u>will take</u> the exam next month.

(2) A future habitual action or state

e.g. After October, Judy <u>will take</u> the 7:30 train to Chicago every day.

(3) A situation that occurs in the present and will remain in the future with some termination of the activity in the future

e.g. Nora <u>will live</u> in Caracas until she improves her Spanish.

(4) An action that will be done after the completion of a current activity

e.g. Jenny <u>will come</u> here after she finishes work.

### 2.2.4 Present progressive

The verb form indicating the present progressive is the auxiliary verb '*be*' conjugated in the present simple (am, are, is) followed by the main verb in the present participle form: *-ing*. The present progressive is typically used to refer to events, states or actions which happen over a limited period in the current/ present time or in progress at the time of speaking (Bybee et al., 1994).

e.g. He <u>is attending</u> a meeting now.

Besides, the present progressive is also used in the following cases (Bybee et al, 1994).

(1) A planned event, usually with a future-time adverbial

e.g. She <u>is coming</u> tomorrow.

(2) An affective comment on present habit that usually co-occurs with frequency adverbs 'always' or 'forever'

e.g. He <u>is</u> always <u>delivering</u> in a clutch situation.

He <u>is</u> forever <u>acting up</u> at these affairs.

### 2.2.5 Past progressive

This tense is formed with the auxiliary verb '*be*' in the past tense (was, were) and the present participle form of the main verb (with an *-ing* ending). The past progressive is typically used in the following cases (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) An action in progress at a specific point of time in the past

e.g. He <u>was walking</u> to school at 8:30 this morning.

(2) Repetition or iteration of some ongoing past action

e.g. Jake <u>was coughing</u> all night long.

(3) An Ongoing action which is interrupted by another action. (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973; Murphy, 2012).

e.g. <u>Kim was watching TV</u> when we arrived home.

In addition, the past progressive is also used to denote social distance or distance for politeness which makes sentences and requests sound more polite.

e.g. I <u>was hoping</u> you could lend me $20.

### 2.2.6 Future progressive

The future progressive is formed with the modal "*will*" followed by "*be*" and the present participle form of the verb (with an -*ing* ending). It is used when talking about continuing action, something that will be happening, going on, at some point in the future. It is typically used in the following situations (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) An action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future.

e.g. Tomorrow, he <u>will be taking</u> a test at 8 a.m.

(2) An action that will be in progress for a period in the future

e.g. Mavis <u>will be working</u> on her thesis for the next three years.

### 2.2.7 Present perfect

The present perfect is formed with the auxiliary verb '*has/have*' followed by the past participle form of the main verb (V3). The present perfect is used to refer to a situation set at some indefinite time within a period that begins in the past and leads up to the present (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990). It is typically used in the following cases (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) An action, event, or state that began in an earlier period and has continued to the present

e.g. I <u>have been</u> a teacher since 1967.

(2) An action occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance

e.g. I <u>have</u> already <u>read</u> this book.

(3) An action, event, or state that started in the past and recently completed (often with *just*)

e.g. Mort <u>has</u> just <u>finished</u> his homework.

(4) An action that occurred over a prior time period and that is completed at the moment of speaking

e.g. The value of the Johnsons' house <u>has doubled</u> in the last four years.

(5) An event that is completed before another starts in the present or future

e.g. If you <u>have </u>done your homework, you can watch TV.

We will sit here until John <u>has finished </u>his work.

### 2.2.8  Past perfect

The past perfect is formed with the auxiliary verb '*have*' conjugated in the past form *had* and the main verb in past participle form (V3). The past perfect is used to express a time earlier than another past time, or one event happened before another in the past (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990). It is typically used in the following situations (Freeman & Murcia, 2015):

(1) An action completed in the past prior to some other past event or time

e.g. She had worked at the post office before 2011.

In addition, the past perfect is also used to express a hypothetical condition in the past.

e.g. If Sally had studied harder, she would have passed the exam.

### 2.2.9  Future perfect

The future perfect is formed with the future simple of '*have*' (*will have*) and the past participle form of the main verb. It is used for actions that will be completed before some other point in the future (Freeman & Murcia, 2015).

e.g. I will have finished all this word processing at 5 p.m.

## 2.3  Required tense-aspect knowledge of Thai grade 12 students

According to the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), having finished Mathayom 6 (Grade 12), students should have reached B1 level of CEFR, so they are expected to know how to use the tenses and aspects in the situations below:

**Table 2.1  Tense-aspect usage required for Thai twelfth graders**

| Concepts of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|---|
| **Present simple** (1) Habitual actions that occur in the present | √ |
| (2) General timeless truths such as laws or customs | √ |
| (3) Present speech acts where the action is accomplished at the moment of the speaking of it | × |

**Table 2.1  Tense-aspect usage required for Thai twelfth graders (Continued)**

| Concepts of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|---|
| (4) In the subordinate clause of time or condition when the main cause contains a future-time verb. The speaker will do something after finishing the current activity. | √ |
| (6) An event scheduled in the future, usually with a future time adverbial | √ |
| (7) Certain past events in narration | × |
| **Past simple** (1) Definite single completed events, actions, or states in the past | √ |
| (2) Habitual or repeated actions/events in the past | √ |
| (3) Hypothetical conditional in the present time | √ |
| (4) A past event with duration with the implication that it is a completed action or event in the past | √ |
| (5) An action interrupting another action happening for some time in the past | √ |
| **Future simple** (1) An action to take place at some definite future time | √ |
| (2) A future habitual action or state | √ |
| (3) A situation that occurs in the present and will remain in the future with some termination of the activity in the future | √ |
| (4) An action that will be done after completion of a current activity. | √ |
| **Present progressive** (1) An activity in progress at the time of speaking | √ |
| (2) A planned event usually with a future-time adverbial | √ |
| (3) Affective comment on present habit that usually co-occurs with frequency adverbs 'always' or 'forever' | × |

**Table 2.1  Tense-aspect usage required for Thai twelfth graders (Continued)**

| Concepts of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|---|
| Past progressive | |
| (1) An action in progress at a specific point of time in the past | × |
| (2) Repetition or iteration of some ongoing past action | × |
| (3) Social distance or distance for politeness | × |
| (4) An action or event that was in progress at a certain time. | √ |
| (5) An action which happened for some time in the past and was then interrupted | √ |
| **Future progressive** | |
| (1) An action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future. | √ |
| (2). An action that will be in progress for a period in the future | × |
| **Present perfect** | |
| (1) An action, event, or state that happened in a previous period and has continued to the present | √ |
| (2) An action occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance | √ |
| (3) An action, event, or state that happened in the past and recently completed in the present (often with just) | √ |
| (4) An action that occurred over a prior time period and that is completed at the moment of speaking | × |
| (5) An event that is completed before another starts in the present or future | × |
| **Past perfect** | |
| (1) An action completed in the past prior to some other past event or time | √ |
| (2) A hypothetical condition in the past | √ |

**Table 2.1  Tense-aspect usage required for Thai twelfth graders (Continued)**

| Concepts of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|:---:|
| **Future perfect**<br>(1) A future action that will be completed prior to a specific future time | √ |
| (2) A state or accomplishment that will be completed in the future prior to some other future time or event | × |

** √  required at B1 level

    X  not found at B1 level


According to B1 proficiency level based on CEFR, the students have to learn eight tense- aspect combinations, not including the future progressive.  However, this study includes the future progressive to find out whether the participants can transfer their knowledge of the basic uses of tenses and aspects to what they have not learned.


## 2.4  Previous research studies

There have been a number of studies from foreign countries and Thailand that investigated the use of tenses and aspects used by EFL learners as shown in the recent research below:

### 2.4.1  The studies on the use of tenses and aspects in foreign countries

Regarding the use of tense- aspect, Garrido & Romedo( 2012) identified errors involving the use and formation of English tenses and aspects.  The participants were 48 first year students at San Sebastián University, Spain.  The researcher used a task of letter translation from Spanish to English. The translation consists of eight tenses, i. e., simple present, present continuous, present perfect, present perfect continuous, simple past, past continuous, past perfect and simple future. This study revealed that the main problem was in accurate use of tenses and aspects in different contexts. Moreover, the result showed that the highest frequency error is present perfect progressive.

Javed & Ajmad (2013) investigated the secondary school students' performance in five types of tenses, namely, present simple, present perfect, past simple, past perfect, and future simple. Moreover, the researchers compared the performance of male and female students, public and private school students, and urban and rural school students. The participants were 396 grade 10 students of the District Bahawalnagar, Pakistan. Two hundred and fifty-five of the participants were males and one hundred and forty-one, females. The tool was a test of 50 multiple choice questions on five different types. The test was selected from the grade 10 textbook followed by three to four options for each item. Each tense consisted of 10 items and 10 marks each. The ESL experts examined the difficulty level, and vocabulary used in the questions for the test's content validity. The result showed that the students' highest mean scores were future simple tense and the lowest mean scores were past perfect tense. In addition, there was a significant difference between the performance of male and female students in tenses; that is, the males performed better than the females. However, there was not a significant difference between the mean scores of public and private school students in tenses.

Al-Quyadi (2015) explored the use of tenses and aspects by using tests and questionnaires. The study focused on six tenses, namely, Simple Present, Simple Past, Present Progressive, Past Progressive, Present Perfect, and Past Perfect. The tests consisted of two types, i.e., item test and connected sentence test. The participants were 58 students who were on the verge of graduation in the College of Engineering, Jazan University. The findings showed that the learners could learn better the tenses and aspects used in isolated sentences than contextualization because their scores on the item tests were higher than the connected sentences test. In addition, According to the questionnaire, the past progressive was found to be the most complex in the use of tenses and aspects.

### 2.4.2 The studies in the use of tenses and aspects in Thailand

There are related previous studies that investigated the use of tenses and aspects in Thailand. For example, Yamput (2011) investigated the grammar error types in the use of past continuous and past simple based on four error types, i.e., tense, omission, addition and transformation error. The participants were 60 first year students at Silpakorn University. They were 30 English major students and 30 non-English major

students. The instruments were test items of sentence completion, conversation, and cloze test. The result showed that the most frequent error type was tense error in both groups. The researcher suggested that the causes of this problem were interference of mother tongue and performance error.

Chowwiwattanaporn (2013) examined whether time markers could help participants to use tenses correctly in Thai into English translation tasks. The participants of the study were 33 second-year English major students at Kasetsart University. The instruments were two versions of Thai into English translation tests. The first one was the test with 20 sentences in Thai without clearly stated time markers and the other with the same 20 sentences with clearly stated time markers. The finding indicated that clearly stated time markers assisted learners in the correct use of certain English tenses, but the participants who were not proficient enough could not deal with all the tenses because of the differences in the concepts of time between Thai and English.

Isarankura (2013) explored Thai learners' comprehension of English tense-aspect markers. The participants were 99 learners that were divided into three English proficiency groups, namely, high, intermediate and low. The study also investigated whether the lexical aspect aided the learners in their interpretation of grammatical aspects. The result showed that tense markers associated with one time point (e.g. the past, the present) were easier to understand than tense markers associated with more than one time point (e.g. past with present relevance, or before another past event). Therefore, the past perfect progressive was the most problematic for the participants in all groups. For the lexical aspect, the results indicated that it enabled learners to acquire the telic verbs with past markers and atelic verbs with imperfective markers.

Sukkasame (2014) also explored the error in learning English structure in a tense. The participants were 31 grade 10 students of the Demonstration School at Khon Kaen University. The researcher collected data by using a multiple choice test, a table recording each student's errors, and a survey interview. The test questions were taken from English Grammar book by Schrampfer Azar (1993): 'Cambridge Proficiency English' by Stone (1967) and 'Tense Drills' by Giggins and Shoebridge (1970). This study included seven tenses, i.e., Past Perfect, Past Simple, Present Perfect, Past Continuous, Present Simple, Future Simple, and Present Continuous. The result showed

that the students' most errors fell in Past Perfect. The researcher suggested that the problem is caused by the influence of mother tongue because Thai does not have a tense system that explains an event that happens by one particular time. The other reason is the students could not remember the structure of tenses.

Chiravate (2018) investigated the use of simple past and past progressive according to lexical aspects. The participants were 100 Thai learners of English recruited from Silpakorn University. The researcher used a cloze test consisting of 12 short passages. The result showed those in the higher proficiency group used the tense-aspect morphology more accurately than the learners in the low proficiency group, and learners used simple past morphology more accurately than past progressive morphology.

In summary, there are related prior studies that reflected problems in the use of some tenses and aspects. To research the issue in a different perspective, this study tends to explore nine tense-aspect combinations to find out which tense is the most problematic for the use of aspects by taking as participants the first-year English and Communication majors at Ubon Ratchathani University.

# CHAPTER 3
# METHODOLOGY

This chapter described the research methodology including research design, participants, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

## 3.1 Research design

This quantitative study investigated the knowledge of the first-year university students in terms of their use of aspects in different tenses through a multiple-choice test in order to find out which tense causes the most problem for their use of aspects.

## 3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 90 first-year English and Communication majors at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University in the second semester of the 2020 academic year. They were purposely selected because they supposedly learned in the secondary level all of the tense-aspect combinations.

## 3.3 Research instrument

The only instrument for this study was a test consisting of forty-eight multiple-choice items with four options for each item. The multiple-choice test can directly target the investigated data. The source of the test items were related grammar sections of Navigate books: Beginner A1 by Dummett, P., and Hughes, J. (2016), Elementary A2 by Dummett, P., Hughes, J., and Wood, K. (2016), and Pre-intermediate B1 by Krantz, C., and Norton, J. (2016). Thus the test was believed to have validity; besides, the test was double-checked and corrected by English language experts. To also make the test results

reliable, the participants were told not to guess. If they were not sure of the answer, they were required to choose the ·Not sure· option.

Although each tense-aspect combination is used in a variety of cases, Thai twelfth graders are expected to learn how to use nine tense-aspect combinations in situations stipulated by CEFR for B1 level as shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1  Uses of tense-aspect combinations required for CEFR B1 level**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|:---:|
| **Present simple** | |
| (1) Habitual actions or states that occur in the present | √ |
| (2) General timeless truths such as laws or customs | √ |
| (3) Present speech acts where the action is accomplished at the moment of the speaking of it | × |
| (4) In the subordinate clause of time or condition when the main clause contains a future-time verb. | √ |
| (5) It involves an event scheduled in the future, usually with the future time adverbial | √ |
| (6) Certain past events in narration | × |
| **Past simple** | |
| (1) A definite single completed events, actions, or states in the past | √ |
| (2) Habitual or repeated action/event in the past | √ |
| (3) Hypothetical conditional in the present time | √ |
| (4) An event with duration that applied in the past with the implication that it is a completed action or event in the past | √ |
| (5) Social distance or distance for politeness | × |
| (6) An action interrupting another action happening for some time in the past | √ |

**Table 3.1  Uses of tense-aspect combinations required for CEFR B1 level**
**(Continued)**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|---|
| **Future simple** | |
| (1) An action to take place at some definite future time | √ |
| (2) A future habitual action or stat | √ |
| (3) A situation that occurs in the present and will remain in the future but there are some terminations of the activity in the future | √ |
| (4)  In a main clause denoting an action that the speaker will do after finishing a current activity. | √ |
| **Present progressive** | |
| (1) Activity in progress at the time of speaking | √ |
| (2) Planned event usually with a future-time adverbial | √ |
| (3) Affective comment on present habit that usually co-occurs with frequency adverbs 'always' or 'forever' | × |
| **Past progressive** | |
| (1) An action in progress at a specific point of time in the past | × |
| (2) Repetition or iteration of some ongoing past action | × |
| (3) Social distance or distance for politeness which comes from the past tense and the tentativeness of the progressive aspect | × |
| (4)An action or event that was in progress at a certain time. | √ |
| (5) An action which happened for some time in the past and was then interrupted | √ |
| **Future progressive** | |
| (1) An action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future. | √ |
| (2). An action that will be in progress for a period in the future | × |

**Table 3.1  Uses of tense-aspect combinations required for CEFR B1 level**
            **(Continued)**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | B1 proficiency based on CEFR |
|---|---|
| **Present perfect** | |
| (1) An action, event, or state that performed in a previous period and has continued to the present | √ |
| (2) An action occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance | √ |
| (3) An action, event, or state that performed in the past and recently completed in the present (often with just) | √ |
| 4) An action that occurred over a prior time period and that is completed at the moment of speaking | × |
| (5) An event that is completed before another starts in the present or future | × |
| **Past perfect** | |
| (1) An action completed in the past prior to some other past event or time | √ |
| (2) Hypothetical conditional in the past | √ |
| **Future perfect** | |
| (1) A future action that will be completed prior to a specific future time | √ |
| (2) A state or accomplishment that will be completed in the future prior to some other future time or event | × |

To investigate the participants' ability in the use of aspects in the three tenses, the test included two items for each use of each tense-aspect combination. As the number of items of each tense-aspect combination depends on the number of its uses, the nine tense-aspect combinations are represented by different numbers of test items. The details of all the test items are illustrated in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2  Details of test items**

| Tense-aspect combinations | No. of items |
|---|---|
| Present simple | |
| (1) Habitual actions or states that occur in the present | 2 |
| (2) General timeless truths such as laws In the subordinate clause of time or condition when the main cause contains a future-time verb. The speaker will do something after they finish the current activity. or customs | 2 |
| (3) In the subordinate clause of time or condition when the main cause contains a future-time verb. | 2 |
| (4) An event scheduled in the future, usually with the future time adverbial. | 2 |
| Past simple | |
| (1) A definite single completed event action in the past | 2 |
| (2) Habitual or repeated action/event in the past | 2 |
| (3) States in the past | 2 |
| (4) An event with duration that applied in the past with the implication that it is a completed action or event in the past | 2 |
| (5) An action interrupting another action happening for some time in the past | 2 |
| Future simple | |
| (1) An action to take place at some definite future time | 2 |
| (2) A future habitual action or state | 2 |
| (3) A situation that occurs in the present and will remain in the future but there are some terminations of the activity in the future | 2 |
| (4) In a main clause denoting that the speaker will do something after finishing a current activity. | 2 |
| Present progressive | |
| (1) Activity in progress at the time of speaking | 2 |
| (2) Planned event usually with a future-time adverbial | 2 |

**Table 3.2  Details of test items (Continued)**

| Tense-aspect combinations | No. of items |
|---|---|
| Past progressive | |
| (1) An action or event that was in progress at a certain time | 2 |
| (2) An action which happened for some time in the past and was then interrupted | 2 |
| Future progressive | |
| (1) An action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future | 2 |
| Present perfect | |
| (1) An action, event, or state that performed in a previous period and has continued to the present | 2 |
| (2) An action occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance | 2 |
| (3) An action, event, or state that was performed in the past and recently completed in the present (often with just). | 2 |
| Past perfect | |
| (1) An action completed in the past prior to some other past event or time. | 2 |
| (2) Hypothetical conditional in the past | 2 |
| Future perfect | |
| (1) A future action that will be completed prior to a specific future time | 2 |
| Total | 48 |

To sum up, the number of items of each tense-aspect combination is presented in Table 3.3 below:

**Table 3.3  Number of items of each tense-aspect combination**

| Tense-aspect | No. of items |
|---|---|
| The present tense | |
| 1. simple | 8 |
| 2. progressive | 8 |
| 3. perfective | 6 |
| Total | 22 |
| The past tense | |
| 1. simple | 6 |
| 2. progressive | 4 |
| 3. perfective | 2 |
| Total | 12 |
| The future tense | |
| 1. simple | 8 |
| 2. progressive | 4 |
| 3. perfective | 2 |
| Total | 14 |

## 3.4  Procedures

After the finalization of the test, the researcher allowed the participants to take it. The researcher asked the participants to take the test right after they finished their English class. They were given as much time as needed to complete the test. But most of them have finished it within half an hour.

## 3.5  Data collection

The tests were marked by the researcher; one mark was given to each correct answer. The total score of each test is forty-eight.

### 3.6 Data analysis

The test scores were categorized, subsequently, into three groups: present, past, and future; the scores of the three aspects under each tense to find out the tense that was the most problematic for Thai first-year university students' use of aspects.

The data was analyzed quantitatively, using frequencies and percentages. The percentages of each tense-aspect were calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{scores x100}}{\text{No. of items x 90}}$$

The scores were then compared to find out the answer to the research question.

# CHAPTER 4
# RESULTS

This chapter presents the result of the study derived from the tense-aspect tests completed by 90 first-year English and Communication majors at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University. Included in data analysis were frequencies and percentages.

**Results**

The results obtained from the scores on the tests of the participants show that among all the three tenses, the future tense is the most problematic for Thai students' use of aspects (32.82%) while the present tense is the least (50.42%). It implies, on average, the participants were least able to use the aspects in the future tense, yet their ability to use the aspects in the present tense was the best as illustrated in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1  The participants' correct use of aspects in different tenses**

| Tense | Aspect | | | |
|-------|--------|-------------|------------|---------------------|
|       | **Simple** | **Progressive** | **Perfective** | **Average percentages** |
| **Present** | 48.19% | 55% | 38.15% | 50.42% |
| **Past** | 41.89% | 46.94% | 27.5% | 38.78% |
| **Future** | 43.47% | 36.11% | 18.89% | 32.82% |

However, all the aspects in the present tense were correctly used at the highest percentages, meaning they are the least problematic for Thai students; not all aspects in the future tense got the lowest percentage values. Meanwhile, the percentage value of the correct use of the future simple was slightly higher than the past simple. While the average percentage of all the aspects in the future tense category was the lowest (32.82%), trailing after the past tense (38.78%) data

It is also worth considering the participants' use of aspects. From Table 4.2, it appears that the progressive aspect was the easiest for Thai students; the present progressive being the easiest (55%), followed by the past progressive (46.94%) and the future progressive (36.11%), respectively. In contrast, the perfective aspect seems to be the most difficult. There was a low‑trend as such: future perfective is the most problematic (18.89%), followed by the past perfective (27.5%) and the present perfective (38.15%), respectively. For the simple aspect, the present simple was the easiest (48.19%), followed by the future simple (43.47%) and the past simple (41.89%), respectively.

**Table 4.2  The participants' correct use of the three aspects**

| Aspect | Tense | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Present** | **Past** | **Future** | **Average percentages** |
| **Simple** | 48.19% | 41.89% | 43.47% | 50.42% |
| **Progressive** | 55% | 46.94% | 36.11% | 38.78% |
| **Perfective** | 38.15% | 27.5% | 18.89% | 32.82% |

It is interesting to look into the easiest and the hardest uses of each tense-aspect combination.

For the present simple, its use in the subordinate clause of time or condition seems to be the most common and easiest for the participants whereas the other uses are a little harder to master as shown in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3  The participants' ability to use different uses of present simple**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) Habitual action that occurs in the present<br>35. Ann and Jane _____ to school every day. (walk)<br>15. Tom_____ television regularly.  (watches) | 42.22% |

**Table 4.3  The participants' ability to use different uses of present simple**
       **(Continued)**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (2) General timeless truths such as laws or customs<br><br>5. Water _____at 0 degree centigrade. (freezes)<br><br>40. The Earth _____around the Sun. (revolves) | 43.33% |
| (3)In the subordinate clause of time or condition when the main clause contains a future-time verb.<br><br>I will give you a call before I____(3)_____.  (leave)<br><br>When he ____(7)____work, he will watch TV. (finishes) | 63.33% |
| (4) An event scheduled in the future, usually with the future time adverbial.<br><br>33. The restaurant _____at 10 a.m. on weekend. (open)<br><br>45. The last plane to Ubon _____at 9 a.m. (arrives) | 43.89% |

According to Table 4.4concerning the participants' use of past simple, the definite single completed event/action seems to be the easiest concept for the participants while the other concepts are quite tough for them.

**Table 4.4  The participants' ability to use different uses of past simple**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) A definite single completed event/action in the past<br><br>1. Sam_____ me a lot of money, but he has returned it all to me recently. (owed)<br><br>32. I _____a meeting of that committee last week. (attended) | 53.89% |

**Table 4.4  The participants' ability to use different uses of past simple**
       **(Continued)**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (2) Habitual or repeated action/event in the past<br>16. It _____ almost every weekend last winter. (snowed)<br>21. When I was a child, I _____ my grandma every weekend. (visited) | 31.67% |
| (3) States in the past<br>9. If I _____in Pattaya, I would swim in the sea all day.(stayed)<br>26. If he _____ better care of himself, he wouldn't be absent so often. (took ) | 43.33% |
| (4) An event with duration that applied in the past with the implication that it is a completed action or event in the past<br>23. John _____at Yale for 20 years. Now he has retired. (taught)<br>13. Emma _____in Brazil for two years. She lives in Bangkok now. (lived) | 26.11% |
| (5) An action interrupting another action happening for some time in the past<br>When the phone ____(33)_____, she was writing a letter.(rang)<br>While I was studying, I suddenly ____(48)_____sleepy. (felt) | 54.44% |

      Table 4.5 below indicates that the case of 'a future habitual action or state' appears to be the most familiar to the participants who, on the other hand, had more problems with the case regarding 'an action that will take place at some definite future time'.

**Table 4.5  The participants' ability to use different uses of future simple**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) An action to take place at some definite future time<br>38. Harry_____ the exam next month. (will take)<br>11. According to the weather forecast, it _____tomorrow. (will rain) | 33.89% |
| (2) A future habitual action or state<br>28. After October, Judy _____the train to Chicago every day. (will take)<br>20. Jacob_____ to the university on Saturdays after June. (will go) | 52.78% |
| (3) A situation that occurs in the present and will remain in the future but there are some terminations of the activity in the future<br>36. Kevin _____at home until he finishes the report. (will stay)<br>43. Nora _____in Caracas until she finishes her Spanish lesson. (will live) | 43.33% |
| (4)  In the subordinate clause denoting that the speaker will do something after finishing the current activity.<br>I _____(2)_____ you a ca<br>ll before I leave. (will give)<br>When he finishes work, he____(8)_____ TV. (will watch) | 43.89% |

Table 4. 6 presenting the correct use of present progressive indicates that the participants could deal with the case of 'an activity in progress at the time of speaking' a little better than the case of 'the planned event usually with a future-time adverbial.'

**Table 4.6  The participants' ability to use different uses of each present progressive**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) Activity in progress at the time of speaking<br><br>14. You can't talk to John now because he _____<br>a meeting. (is attending)<br>25. Right now, Mark _____to her manager. (is talking) | 57.22% |
| (2) Planned event usually with a future-time adverbial<br><br>17. I have to finish all my work today because we_____ for<br>Japan tomorrow. (are leaving)<br>39. I feel so happy because I_____ my boyfriend<br>tonight. (am meeting) | 52.78% |

From Table 4.7 below, the participants were more familiar with the past progressive used to talk about the interruption of an action with another than the action or event that was in progress at a certain time.

**Table 4.7  The participants' ability to use different uses of past progressive**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) An action or event that was in progress at a certain time<br>46. At 8:30 this morning, James _____to school.<br>(was walking)<br>42. I remember I _____ home from work at 5 o'clock<br>yesterday afternoon. (was driving) | 41.11% |
| (2) An action which happened for some time in the past and was<br>then interrupted<br>When the phone rang, she _____(34)_____a letter.<br>(was writing)<br>While I_____(47)_____, I suddenly felt sleep.(was studying) | 52.78% |

For the future progressive, it is used in only one situation, namely, an action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future. The participants gained lower than half of the scores (36.11%), meaning that they had difficulty with this tense-aspect combination. Table 4.8 below displays three uses of the present perfect. It turns out that the participants were the most familiar with the case of 'an action occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance' followed by the cases of 'an action, event, or state that performed in a previous period and has continued to the present' and 'the action, event, or state that performed in the past and recently completed in the present' respectively.

**Table 4.8  The participants' ability to use different uses of present perfect**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) An action, event, or state that performed in a previous period and has continued to the present<br>19. She_____ as a teacher since 2012 until now. (has worked )<br>37. I_____ chocolate since I was a child. (have loved ) | 37.78% |
| (2) An action occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance<br>4. I called to make an offer on the flat, but it_____ sold already. (has been)<br>18. I_____ lunch already, but I'll join you for coffee. (have had) | 43.33% |
| (3) An action, event, or state that was performed in the past and recently completed in the present (often with 'just').<br>27. Max _____ _____ his homework. (has just finished)<br>12. I_____ Opal coming out of the cinema. (have just seen) | 33.33% |

Table 4.9 shows that the participants used past perfect for 'an action completed in the past prior to some other past event' more correctly than 'hypothetical conditional in the past.

**Table 4.9  The participants' ability to use different uses of past perfect**

| Uses of tenses and aspects | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|
| (1) An action completed in the past prior to some other past event or time.<br>31. After She _____at the post office for 30 years, she moved to Canada. (had retired)<br>34. We _____that car for 10 years before we sold it. (had used) | 29.44% |
| (2) Hypothetical conditional in the past<br>44. If Sally _____harder last semester, she would not have failed the exam. (had studied)<br>10. If you _____ for directions earlier, we wouldn't have got lost. (had asked) | 25.26% |

The future perfect tense is used for only one situation; that is, 'a future action that will be completed before a specific future time'. It implies that the participants had the most problem using this tense compared with the other tense-aspect combina (18.89%).

To conclude, the results presented in this chapter can answer the research question: Which tense is the most problematic for Thai students? The findings show that the future tense is the trickiest for Thai students' use of aspects while the present tense is the least. Moreover, the future tense causes the most problems for the use of the progressive and the perfective aspects, but the simple aspect is the most difficult in the past tense.

# CHAPTER 5
# DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study and presents implications from the study.

## 5.1  Discussions

This section is divided into two parts: the participants' problems of the use of tenses and the problems of the use of aspects

### 5.1.1 Problems of the use of tenses

The results show that the participants had the most problems using the progressive and the perfective aspects in the future tense and the simple aspect in the past tense. Meanwhile all three aspects were the easiest to master in the present tense. In other words, the future tense is the most problematic for Thai students, especially the use of the progressive and the perfective aspects. It is mainly because future perfective is not one of the tense-aspect combinations to be introduced to learners at the B1 level of CEFR. It is, therefore, undoubted that the participants gained the lowest scores in the use of future perfective. While for the future progressive, the learners are supposed to learn it at the B1 level. Showing that it is an advanced grammatical feature, so it might be hard for Thai students to master it in quite a short time. Moreover, future progressive and future perfective are concepts of time that seems quite hard for learners to acquire as the time concepts in Thai that are close to them, which are 'ja kamlang' (จะกำลัง )and 'ja...laew' (จะ...แล้ว) respectively, are not much used in Thai contexts. As mentioned by Chowwiwattanaporn (2013), certain tenses are still problematic for Thai students because some English tenses could not be clearly expressed by Thai time markers since there are no such obvious or exactly the same concepts of time in Thai.

However, according to the present study, the simple aspect in the past tense, not the future tense, got the lowest average percentage, meaning that past simple was

the hardest for the participants to master, compared with present simple and future simple.

Considering the participants' ability to use past simple in different situations, for instance, an event with the duration applied in the past with the implication that it is a completed action or event in the past, got low scores; which resulted in a lower average percentage of the past simple than the future simple. It shows that not all uses of the past simple are easier to understand than the future simple.

In contrast, the present tense is the least difficult for the participants. There are reasons to support the findings. According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A. D. 2008), Thai grade three completers are expected to use the present simple in sentences to talk about themselves and matters around them, such as persons, animals, and subjects. After P-3, the tense-aspect combination has been part of the continuous English learning. As a result, it turns out that they are most familiar with the present simple. In parallel, according to the CEFR, the present progressive is introduced to English learners at A1 level, making learners most familiarized with this tense-aspect combination. The tense-aspect combination seems easy for the participants, as the meaning or time concept of present progressive in English is close to Thai. Based on the gathered data, it is worth noting that the present perfective got the highest average percentage compared to the past perfective and the future perfective. The result supports the study by Al-Quyadi (2015) which found that the present perfective was easier than the past perfective. Thus, based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A. D. 2008), Thai grade 9 completers are expected to use the present perfect. Then they study past perfect and future perfect at the upper high school level. So the students were more familiar with the present perfect than past perfect and future perfect.

### 5.1.2 Problems of the use of aspects

Regarding the aspects, the perfective aspect was the most difficult for participants while the progressive aspect was the easiest. However, the participants' scores were quite low in all of the tense-aspect combinations.

The progressive aspect in all the tenses happens to be the easiest for the participants, probably because the learners' native language helps them become more familiar with the usage of grammar (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). That is, 'kamlang', a Thai

progressive marker, is used to talk about an ongoing event, so it is equivalent to the progressive concept in English (Chairavate, 2018). As a result, the similarity in this time concept between the two languages can facilitate the acquisition of this tense-aspect combination.

In contrast, the perfective is the most difficult aspect for the participants. It was found by Isarankura (2014), the perfective aspect was problematic because it is hard for foreign language learners to interpret as it involves more than one-time point (past and present). Therefore, Thai students have difficulties using this aspect correctly in whatever tenses.

To conclude, the results of the study come from several of factors. The first is the Thai English curriculum based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 which exposes learners to the present tense from the beginning. The second is the level of difficulty of each tense and aspect itself. The last one is the cross-linguistic influence or transfer from L1 to L2 that is common in foreign language learning (Troike. M., 2006). The participants were familiar with certain tense-aspect combinations due to positive transfers such as present progressive, which has a similar meaning and equivalent aspect marker to Thai.

## 5.2 Implications of the study

Although all the first-year university students had studied all tense-aspect combinations required for the CEFR B1 level, the participants still had problems with tense-aspect combinations. It implies that the acquisition of tense aspects in English is quite hard to achieve, mainly owing to different time concepts between Thai and English. Besides, when EFL learners learn English, they are taught the tense-aspect combinations without being told the meaning of each tense and each aspect. Therefore, they cannot figure out the concepts of aspects when used in a different tense. As in this study, the participants were unable to figure out the usage of future perfective. Moreover, they're not aware of it. The teacher thus may have to distinguish between tenses and aspects when teaching this grammar point.

# CHAPTER 6
# CONCUSSION

This chapter presents the conclusion, limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.

## 6.1  Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the tense that causes the most problems for the correct use of aspects. The participants were 90 first-year English and communication majors at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University. The results showed that the future tense was the most problematic for Thai students' use of aspects, while the present tense is the least. However, most errors occurred in the progressive and the perfective aspects in the future tense, but the simple aspect was the most problematic in the past tense. Regarding the aspects, the biggest problem of the participants' aspect usage fell in the perfective. Arranged in order: the future perfective being the most problematic, followed by the past perfective, and the present perfective, respectively. Categorically, for the simple aspect, the present simple was the easiest, followed by the future simple, and the past simple. In terms of participants' performance, in descending order: they performed best at the progressive aspect, followed by the past progressive and the future progressive, respectively. The facets that probably affect the result of the study include the Thai curriculum that determine the introduction and contents of tenses and aspects in each grade, difficulty of each tense and aspect itself, and influence of the native language.

**6.2 Limitations of the study**

There were various limitations in this study. First, the participants were 90 first-year English and Communication majors at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University, so there's only one group of respondents. Second, the present study focused on nine simple tense-aspect combinations. Thus, it did not consider the combination of two aspects in various tenses such as present perfect progressive. Third, there were only 2 test items for each use of each tense-aspect, which were too few. Fourth, the test was in the multiple-choice format, which gave students limited alternatives and did not investigate their actual performance of the use of tense-aspects nor their recognition of the verb form in each tense-aspect combination.

**6.3 Recommendations for further study**

Further studies need to consider the following: first, future research should consider more participants to make the findings more conclusive. Second, the present study consists of nine simple tense-aspects, excluding the combination of aspects in each tense, namely, present perfect progressive, etc. So, future studies may also investigate all of them to consolidate the findings. Third, more test items are necessary per usage per tense-aspect to make the study more reliable. Fourth, future studies may use different test types which require the participants to provide the answers by themselves, which can more accurately reflect their performance.

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**APPENDIX**

# Tense and Aspect test

**Choose the correct form of verb in each sentence.**

1. Sam_____ me a lot of money, but he has returned it all to me recently.

      a. owed      b. was owing      c. had owed      d. not sure

I _____2._____you a call before I_____3._____.

2.     a. will give     b. will be giving     c. will have given     d. not sure

3.     a. leave     b. am leaving     c. has left     d. not sure

4. I called to make an offer on the flat, but it_____sold already.

      a. is      b. is being      c. has been      d. not sure

5. Water _____at 0 degree centigrade.

      a. freezes      b. is freezing      c. has frozen      d. not sure

6. Joe can't get here tomorrow morning because he _____a test at 8 a.m.

      a. will take     b. will be taking     c. will have token     d. not sure

When he _____7.____work, he_____8._____TV.

7.     a. finishes     b. is finishing     c. has finished     d. not sure

8.     a. will watch     b. will be watching     c. will have watched     d. not sure

9. If I _____in Pattaya, I would swim in the sea all day.

      a. stayed      b. was staying      c. had stayed      d. not sure

10. If you _____ for directions earlier, we wouldn't have got lost.

      a. asked      b. were asking      c. had asked      d. not sure

11. According to the weather forecast, it_____tomorrow.

      a. will rain      b. will be raining      c. will have rained      d. not sure

12. I_____Opal coming out of the cinema.

      a. just see      b. am just seeing      c. have just seen      d. not sure

13. Emma _____in Brazil for two years. She lives in Bangkok now.

      a. lived      b. was living      c. had lived      d. not sure

14. You can't talk to John now because he_____a meeting.

      a. attends     b. is attending     c. has attended     d. not sure

15. Tom_____television regularly.

      a. watches     b. is watching     c. has watched     d. not sure

16. It _____almost every weekend last winter.

      a. snowed     b. was snowing     c. had snowed     d. not sure

17. I have to finish all my work today because we_____for Japan tomorrow.

      a. leave     b. are leaving     c. have left     d. not sure

18. I_____lunch already, but I'll join you for coffee.

      a. have     b. am having     c. have had     d. not sure

19. She_____as a teacher since 2012 until now.

      a. works     b. is working     c. has worked     d. not sure

20. Jacob_____to the university on Saturdays after June.

      a. will go     b. will be going     c. will have gone     d. not sure

21. When I was a child, I_____my grandma every weekend.

      a. visited     b. was visiting     c. had visited     d. not sure

22. I _____all this word processing, and then I will go to bed.

      a. will finish     b. will be finishing     c. will have finished     d. not sure

23. John _____at Yale for 20 years. Now he has retired.

      a. taught     b. was teaching     c. had taught     d. not sure

24. This time next week, I_____ to my parents' house.

      a. will drive     b. will be driving     c. will have driven     d. not sure

25. Right now, Mark_____to her manager.

      a. talks     b. is talking     c. has talked     d. not sure

26. If he_____better care of himself, he wouldn't be absent so often.

      a. took     b. was taking     c. had taken     d. not sure

27. Max_____ _____his homework.

      a. just finishes  b. is just finishing    c. has just finished   d. not sure

28. After October, Judy_____the train to Chicago every day.

      a. will take    b. will be taking     c. will have taken   d. not sure

When the phone_____29._____, she_____30._____a letter.

29.    a. rang        b. was ringing      c. had rung        d. not sure

30.    a. wrote      b. was writing     c. had written     d. not sure

31. After She _____at the post office for 30 years, she moved to Canada.

      a. retired    b. was retiring     c. had retired     d. not sure

32. I _____a meeting of that committee last week.

      a. attended    b. was attending    c. had attended d. not sure

33. The restaurant _____at 10 a.m. on weekend.

      a. opens    b. is opening    c. has opened     d. not sure

34. We _____that car for 10 years before we sold it.

      a. used    b. were using    c. had used     d. not sure

35. Ann and Jane_____to school every day.

      a. walk    b. are walking    c. have walked     d. not sure

36. Kevin_____at home until he finishes the report.

      a. will stay    b. will be staying    c. will have stayed   d. not sure

37. I_____chocolate since I was a child.

      a. love    b. am loving    c. have loved     d. not sure

38. Harry_____the exam next month.

      a. will take    b. will be taking    c. will have taken     d. not sure

39. I feel so happy because I_____my boyfriend tonight.

      a. meet    b. am meeting    c. have met     d. not sure

40. The Earth_____around the Sun.

      a. revolves    b. is revolving    c. has revolved     d. not sure

41. By the time we get home, the film_____.

      a. will start    b. will be starting    c. will have started    d. not sure

42. I remember I_____home from work at 5 o·clock yesterday afternoon.

      a. drove    b. was driving    c. had driven    d. not sure

43. Nora_____in Caracas until she finishes her Spanish lesson.

      a. will live    b. will be living    c. will have lived    d. not sure

44. If Sally harder last semester, she would not have failed the exam.

      a. studied    b. was studying    c. had studied    d. not sure

45. The last plane to Ubon_____at 9 a.m.

      a. arrives    b. is arriving    c. has arrived    d. not sure

46. At 8:30 this morning, James_____to school.

      a. walked    b. was walking    c. had walked    d. not sure

While I_____47._____, I suddenly_____48._____sleepy.

47.    a. Studied    b. was studying    c. had studied    d. not sure

48.    a. Felt    b. was feeling    c. had felt    d. not sure

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