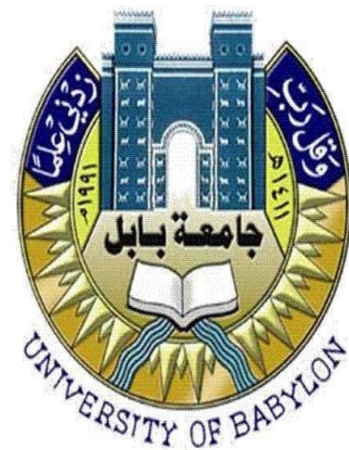


**Republic of Iraq**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**University of Babylon**  
**College of Education For Human Sciences**



# **Investigating the Difficulties Faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in Using Past Simple and Continuous Tenses**

Submitted to the Department of English College of Education  
for Human Sciences in Babylon University as Partial Fulfillment  
for the Requirements of the Degree of B.A. in English Language.

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**1444 A.H.**

**2023 A.D.**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ  
صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ  
سورة البقرة: الآية(201)

**In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**  
**Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the**  
**Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the**  
**Fire.**

Believe God Almighty  
Surah Al-Baqarah (201)

(Al-Munjed,1997:2)

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# Dedication

To my family, especially my mother the second half of my soul and my friends.

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# **Section One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The Simple Past is used for past actions that happened either at a specific time, which can either be given by a time phrase or understood from the context.

The past continuous describes actions or events in a time before now, which began in the past and were still going on when another event occurred.

In doing this study , I select 30students from the third stage of the English Department. Then I give a test to the students in order to obtain accurate information from them.

Accordingly, the following questions are raised:

1. Do Iraqi EFL learners face difficulties in using past simple and past continuous tenses?
2. What are the difficulties Iraqi EFL learners face in using past simple and past continuous tenses?

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

1. Investigating whether Iraqi EFL learners face difficulties in using past simple and continuous tenses.
2. Finding out the difficulties that Iraqi EFL learners face in using past simple and continuous tenses.

### **1.3Hypotheses of the Study**

1-Students have certain difficulties with past simple and continuous tenses.

3-Students are unable to distinguish between past simple and continuous tenses.

### **1.4 Procedures of the Study**

1.Presenting a theoretical study about past simple and continuous tenses.

2.Applying a test to a random sample of students in using past simple and continuous tenses.

3.Analysing and discussing the results that represent the performance of group of students in using past simple and continuous tenses.

### **1.5 Limit of the Study**

This study will limit itself to the analysis of the performance of Iraqi EFL students at the university level in using past simple and continuous tenses. The subjects of the study consist of thirty students from the third class at the Department of English at the Colleges of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon for the academic year 2022-2023.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is hopeful and useful for students and teachers. This result of this study are expected to be useful for the Iraqi EFL learners in order to improve their teaching.



## Section Two

### Past Simple and Continuous Tenses

#### 2.1.Past Simple Tense

One of the main tenses used in English is the simple past tense which typically alludes to past events.

The simple past tense indicates a verb or action that has already happened in the past. For instance, "The diamond crown was stolen by the robber." As the action of "stealing" has already been completed, the statement is in the past tense in this instance.( Esparza,2018:4)

The simple past tense, often known as the "preterite", is used to discuss an activity that is performed in the past. The fundamental past tense in English is the simple past. Action duration is not as significant as action time, which can be in the near or distant past. (Seo,2021:2)

The simple past tense is most frequently used to refer to previous events. So, the verb is in the past tense if any statement describes an action that already occurs at a given period. Everyone who talks about when something happened always employs the simple past, which is why it is connected to the following past time expressions: **frequency, often, sometimes, always.**

1.I sometimes walked home at lunchtime.

2.I often brought my lunch to school.(Sujiono,200:18)

## **2.2.Irregular Verbs in the Simple Past**

An irregular verb is one that does not form its simple past tense or its past participle by adding "-ed" or "-d" to the base form. Irregular verbs contrast with regular verbs, which form the simple past tense and past participle by adding "-ed" or "-d." (Sujiono,200:19)

to go

3.He went to a club last night.

4.Did he go to the cinema last night?

5.He didn't go to bed early last night.

to give

6.We gave her a doll for her birthday.

7.They didn't give John their new address.

8.Did Barry give you my passport ?( Amini,2017:8)

to come

9.My parents came to visit me last July.

10.We didn't come because it was raining.

11.Did he come to your party last week? (Ellis,202:2)

## **2.3.Affirmative**

The affirmative of the simple past tense is simple.

12.I was in Japan last year

13.She had a headache yesterday.

14.We did our homework last night.(Swan,2002:12)

## **2.4.Negative and Interrogative**

For the negative and interrogative simple past form of "to do" as an ordinary verb, use the auxiliary "did", e.g. We didn't do our homework last night. (Sujiono,200:20)

The negative of "have" in the simple past is usually formed using the auxiliary "did", but sometimes by simply adding "not" or the contraction "n't". (Ellis,202:4)

The interrogative form of "have" in the simple past normally uses the auxiliary "did".

### **Examples:**

15.They weren't in Rio last summer.

16.We didn't have any money.

17.We didn't have time to visit the Eiffel Tower.

18.We didn't do our exercises this morning.

19.Were they in Iceland last January?

20.Did you have a bicycle when you were young?

21.Did you do much climbing in Switzerland? (Ellis,2002:9)

## **2.5.Past Continuous Tense**

The past continuous, also known as "past progressive", is a verb tense that is used to indicate that two ongoing acts were occurring simultaneously or that a past activity was still in progress when it was interrupted.(Ellis,2002:4)

## **2.6.Past Continuous Forms**

The past continuous is formed using was/were + present participle. Questions are indicated by inverting the subject and was/were. Negatives are made with not.

22.Statement: You were studying when she called.

23.Question: Were you studying when she called?

24.Negative: You were not studying when she called.

### **USE 1: Interrupted Action in the Past**

The past continuous is used to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action in the simple past. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.

Examples:

25.I was watching TV when she called.

26.When the phone rang, she was writing a letter.

27.While we were having the picnic, it started to rain.

28.What were you doing when the earthquake started? (Ellis,202:7)

### **USE 2: Specific Time as an Interruption**

In use 1, described above, the past continuous is interrupted by a shorter action in the simple past. However, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.

Examples:

29.Last night at 6 PM, I was eating dinner.

30.At midnight, we were still driving through the desert.

31.Yesterday at this time, I was sitting at my desk at work. (Swan,2002:14)

### **USE 3: Parallel Actions**

past continuous parallel actions

When you use the past continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.

Examples:

32.I was studying while he was making dinner.

33.While Ellen was reading, Tim was watching television.

34.Were you listening while he was talking?

35.I wasn't paying attention while I was writing the letter, so I made several mistakes. ( Bakri,2019:3)

### **2.7.Past Continuous Tense Formula**

The past continuous tense formula involves the past tense of to be (was or were) and the present participle of the verb, the –ing form.

[was/were] + [present participle]

36.While I was studying, my friends were playing.

The verb "was" is used for first- or third-person singular subjects, such as I, he, she, or it.

37.She was working on an email when the fire alarm rang.

38.The team was playing well until the second half.

The verb "were" is used for all other subjects, including all plural subjects and the singular second-person subject, you.

39.You were becoming a great novelist before switching to screenplays.

40.The days were getting shorter as winter approached.( Ellis,2002:6)

There are verbs which cannot used in the past continuous tense. They are referred to as stative verbs, state-of-being verbs, or, appropriately, non-continuous verbs.

Stative verbs are more like states or sentiments than they are like acts. They speak of persistent mental states like needs, opinions, or awareness. The following are some of the most typical stative verbs:

(believe, dislike, hate, involve, know, like, love, need, prefer, realize, seem, understand and want).( Bakri,2019:5)

### **2.8.Past Continuous Positive Form**

To form the past continuous, we use the **was / were** form of the verb "to be" plus the infinitive of the verb plus an **-ing** ending.

Examples:

41.She was going to school.

42.You were all doing the chores together.

43.Sadly, she was playing games with me.

44.We were fighting about politics all evening long. (Bakri,2019:6)

### **2.9.Past Continuous Negative Form**

To make an affirmative (positive) statement negative, "not" is added before the verb + -ing.

45.I was not going to bed. / I wasn't going to bed.

46.You were not doing your homework.

47.The children weren't sleeping during the drive home.

48. My boyfriend was not telling me the truth.

49. They were not playing this week.

50. She wasn't planning her wedding.

51. They were not studying English last week during vacation. (Mack, 2005:2)

### **2.10. Past Continuous Yes/No Questions**

Questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" are formed by inverting the subject and correct form of the verb "be" (was / were).

#### **Examples:**

53. Was I snoring?

54. Was he studying all night again?

55. Was the baby crying a lot today?

56. Were we talking too loud last night?

57. Were we eating lots of candy? (Seo, 2021:7)

## **Section Three**

### **The Test**

#### **3.1.The Test**

A language is a methodical approach and a way to assess student performance using elicitation behavior to draw conclusions about specific traits of a person.( Peshkin,1993:5)

The test is made to pinpoint the precise location where college students struggle with word order in positive sentences in English and to pinpoint the reasons why they make certain mistakes.(Ibid,6)

#### **3.2 Characteristics of a Good Test**

There are two important characteristics of a good test which are:

##### **3-2-1. *Validity***

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what is supposed to measure. In validity two questions must be considered.

1-What precisely does the test measure ?

2- How well does the test measure ? (AlJoboury,1999:22)

##### **3-2-1-2 Face Validity**

Face validity simply means the way the test looks to the examinees, test administrators, educators and the like and its importance should not be underestimated ( ibid ).

#### **3.2.2 Reliability**

Reliability means the stability of the test scores . If the same test is given twice to the same group of the students under the same condition, it will



give the same results. A reliable test requires multiple sample , standard condition ,standard tasks and standard scoring ( ibid : 23 ).

### ***3-3. Test Design***

The test consists of two questions of( 10) items. In these items, The students are given different maxims which are put randomly and their task is to answer them.

### **3.3.The Sample**

The sample of test is (30 ) learners taken randomly from third stage , Department of English / College of Education for Human Sciences / University of Babylon for Human Sciences during the academic year 2022 - 2023 .

### **3.4. Design and Material**

The test contains two questions, the first question contains ten items, and the second question has also ten items.

## Section Four

### Date Analysis

This section is only concerned with the analysis of the data gathered for the study. The test results are separated into two areas. As for Question one the students are instructed to choose the right answer. The answers has three options, this question contains 10 elements.

Table: (1), in the Question One, the researcher asks the students to choose the right answer between brackets

Items	Number of correct responses	Percentage%	Number of incorrect responses	Percentage%
1	28	93.33%	2	6.67 %
2	25	83.33%	5	16.67%
3	27	90%	3	10%
4	29	96.67%	1	3.33 %
5	26	86.67%	4	13.33%
6	23	76,67%	7	23.33%
7	27	90%	3	10%
8	27	90%	3	10%
9	29	96.67%	1	3.33%
10	28	93.33%	2	6.67%
Total	269	89.67%	31	10.33

In the table above, we have seen that the highest percentage is in point4 and they are used 29 times. constituting (96.67 %). On the other hand, the lowest percentage seen in the table is point6 and they are used 23 times. constituting (76.67 %).

In point 1, we see that 28 students answer correctly, while 2 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 2, we see that 25 students answer correctly, while 5 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 3, we see that 27 students answer correctly, while 3 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 4, we see that 29 students answer correctly, while 1 student answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 5, we see that 26 students answer correctly, while 4 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 6, we see that 23 students answer correctly, while 7 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 7, we see that 27 students answer correctly, while 3 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 8, we see that 27 students answer correctly, while 3 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 9, we see that 29 students answer correctly, while 1 student answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point10, we see that 28 students answer correctly, while 2 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

Table: (2), in Question Two, the researcher asks the students to correct the tense in the following sentences.

Items	Number of correct responses	Percentage%	Number of incorrect responses	Percentage%
1	26	86.67%	4	13.33%
2	28	93.33%	2	6.67%
3	27	90%	3	10%
4	27	90%	3	10%
5	24	80%	6	20%
6	20	66.67%	10	33.33%
7	5	16,67%	25	83.33%
8	13	43.33%	17	56.67%
9	29	96.67%	1	3.33%
10	20	66.67%	10	33.33%
Total	219	73%	81	

In the table above, we have seen that the highest percentage is point9 where they are used 29 times constituting (96.67%).

The lowest percentage has been seen in point7, where they are used 5 times. constituting (16.67 %).

In point 1, we see that 26 students answer correctly, while 4 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 2, we see that 28 students answer correctly, while 2 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 3, we see that 27 students answer correctly, while 3 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 4, we see that 27 students answer correctly, while 3 student answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 5, we see that 24 students answer correctly, while 6 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 6, we see that 20 students answer correctly, while 10 students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 7, we see that 5 students answer incorrectly, while 27 students answer correctly, this means that students have less knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point 8, we see that 13 students answer incorrectly, while 7 students answer correctly, this means that students have less knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point9, we see that 29 students answer correctly, while 1 student answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

In point10, we see that 20 students answer correctly, while 10students answer incorrectly, this means that students have knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

## **Section Five**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the preceding chapter's research findings and data analysis, it can be said that the students answered incorrectly in the points 7 and 8 in the question two.

In this study we try to know the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learners in using past simple and continuous tenses. In the Question Two in point 7 and 8, we see that students have less knowledge in using past simple and continuous tenses.

The results of the test question one shows the total number of correct answers is 269 the percentage of them is 89.67%. The total number of incorrect answers is 13 the percentage of them is 10.33 %.

The results of Question Two shows the total number of correct answers are 219 (73%). The total number of incorrect answers is 81 (27%).

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## **Appendix(1) The Test**

Q1.Choose the right answer between brackets

- 1.I was ..... to the radio when Helen phoned.(listen, listening, listened)
2. When I ..... this morning, it was snowing. (wake up, woke up, waking up)
- 3.I was ..... when you called me. (sleep, sleeping, slept)
- 4.I ..... to give him some advice, but he wasn't listening. (try, trying, tried)
- 5.While I was studying, I suddenly ..... sleepy.(felt, feeling, feel)
6. A thief stole his watch while he was..... (swims, swam, swimming)
7. My parents arrived while I was ..... .(shop, shops, shopping)
8. By the age of nine, I ..... training to be a ninja.(is, was, were)
9. The players ..... training, while the coach came.(were, is, was)
10. When the whistle blew, I was ..... .(ran, run, running)

Q2.Correct the tense in the following sentences

- 1.I travel to Cancun last summer.
- 2.I was visit the National Anthropology Museum.
- 3.I watch TV.
- 4.Ali and Ahmed were jump into a car.
5. At 4 pm last Tuesday, I working in the office.
- 6.I break my leg when I was skiing.
- 7.As I go to work, I saw an old friend.
- 8.We watched television when the power went off.
- 9.When the guests arrived, Jane was cook dinner.
- 10.She was working on an email when the fire alarm rings.



## **Appendix(2) The Answer of the Test**

Q/1

1. Phoned

2.woke up

3.sleeping

4.tried

5.felt

6.swimming

7.shopping

8.was

9.were

10.running

Q/2

1.travelled

2.visiting

3.watched

4.jumping

5.was

6.broke

7. I'm going

8.were watching

9.was cooking

10.rang