

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In today's global era, English communication skills have become a crucial requirement, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia. Grammar serves as the foundation for accurate communication, ensuring that messages are understood correctly. As Aniuranti (2021) stated, without a good command of grammar, spoken or written messages can be misinterpreted. One crucial part of grammar is mastery of tenses, which indicate the time of an action and form the basis for constructing clear and precise sentences.

However, mastering tenses remains a major challenge for EFL learners, especially Indonesian students. This difficulty arises because Indonesian lacks a verb tense system, whereas English relies heavily on it. According to Toni (2025), the complexity of English verb forms, the differences between Indonesian and English grammatical structures, and the abstract nature of time representation contribute to students' difficulties in understanding and applying tenses accurately. Therefore, students often experience confusion about the various rules, formulas, and verb changes, which make learning grammar, especially tenses, seem difficult and boring.

English has multiple tense-aspect forms. The past tense is one of the most difficult tenses because it has both regular and irregular verbs. It was proven in the

study conducted by Daud (2023) that students encountered difficulties mastering verb tenses, likely influenced by their first language. Besides that, many rules and inconsistencies in verb tense patterns often confuse students when determining the correct form when writing and speaking (Hartiwi & Sutiwi, 2024). For this reason, past tenses are seen as one of the most complex aspects and are the main focus of this study.

In many educational institutions, tenses are still taught using traditional methods. Even though this method is less effective for students in the future. This is supported by Abiyyu et al. (2023), who stated that learning is a teacher-dominated process that makes students passive and dependent. This condition needs to be addressed immediately to motivate learners to be more active.

One technique that makes learning more interesting is the mnemonic technique. This technique is suitable for teaching tenses, especially in song-type mnemonics. Yeni et al. (2021) found that using songs to teach grammar, especially the Simple Past Tense, significantly improved students' performance compared to conventional teaching. For example, transforming grammar concepts (formulas, V2/V-ing) into a lyrical form that is easy to remember, not just making learning more fun. Besides that, music has an emotional power that can arouse interest and motivation, which ultimately contributes to increased long-term memory retention (Haryadi et al., 2024). Therefore, this technique can be used to increase students' affective involvement during the learning process.

Many previous studies have explored the use of mnemonic techniques and songs in English language learning. Most of these studies focused on vocabulary learning. For example Fawas (2023) used songs to help students enrich their vocabulary. Meanwhile, Haryadi et al. (2024) found that combining mnemonic techniques could improve students' general language skills. However, only a few studies have focused on teaching grammar. One example is Karlina et al. (2022), who used song lyrics to teach only the simple present tense. Based on these previous studies, few studies in the reviewed literature have used a single mnemonic song to teach the four English Past Tenses as a complete learning medium. Therefore, this study was conducted to address this gap by developing MSAL, which combines the Simple Past Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Past Perfect Tense, and Past Perfect Continuous Tense into a single mnemonic song.

This study is different from previous studies in several ways. First, it uses one mnemonic song adapted from the melody of the Indonesian song "*Laskar Pelangi*". Second, it teaches all four English Past Tenses in a single learning medium rather than focusing on a single tense. Third, the study was conducted with Class X students at MA Manba'ul A'laa Purwodadi. Finally, the mnemonic song serves as the primary teaching strategy throughout the learning process, helping students understand and remember the four English Past Tenses more easily. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute not only a new learning medium but also a more complete and practical approach to teaching English Past Tenses.

To address this gap, the researcher creates MSAL as an innovation entitled “*The Past Tenses*”. This song uses the melody of the Indonesian song “*Laskar Pelangi*” by Nidji. The original lyrics are replaced with new lyrics that explain the forms and patterns of the English Past Tenses. This method combines linguistic aspects (tense structure patterns) and cognitive aspects (memory through music), creating an engaging and effective learning experience (Fawas, 2023). Through this song, students are expected not only to enjoy learning but also to remember Past Tenses patterns more easily through repetition and rhythm.

Based on the preliminary study, which included an interview with the English teacher at MA Manba’ul A’laa Purwodadi, the researcher found that the students’ mastery of English Past Tenses was still low. According to the teacher, many students had difficulty changing verbs and felt confused when applying past-tense formulas, especially in more complex sentences. Furthermore, the teacher explained that students tended to be passive during conventional grammar instruction, indicating the need for more innovative and engaging learning media. Based on these findings, MA Manba’ul A’laa Purwodadi was selected as the research site because it was considered an appropriate setting for examining the implementation of the MSAL method.

This study is important because mastering tenses is essential for improving students’ English competence. By using MSAL, students can learn more enjoyably and memorably, which is expected to improve their understanding, retention, and application of tenses. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study entitled “The

Effectiveness of Mnemonic Song-Assisted Learning (MSAL) in Improving Students' Mastery of English Past Tenses”.

B. Problem Statement

Based on the background, the problem statements of this research are formulated as follows:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest scores after the implementation of MSAL?
2. What are the students' responses to the MSAL in learning English Past Tenses?

C. Objective of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest scores after the implementation of MSAL.
2. To describe students' responses to the implementation of MSAL.

D. Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis in this study is as follows:

H_0 (Null hypothesis) : There is no statistically significant difference between the students' pretest and posttest scores on English Past Tenses after the implementation of MSAL.

H_a (Alternative hypothesis): There is a statistically significant difference between the students' pretest and posttest scores on English Past Tenses after the implementation of MSAL.

The hypotheses are formulated to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores after the implementation of MSAL. The hypotheses are tested using the statistical analysis described in the research methodology.

E. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of English language teaching, particularly grammar. The findings are also expected to provide evidence that MSAL can help improve students' understanding and memory of the English Past Tenses. Therefore, this research supports the idea that integrating music and mnemonics can create a new approach to language teaching.

2. Practical Significance

In practical terms, this research offers several broader benefits. For students, this research provides a fun and interesting way to learn grammar tenses. For teachers, the results of this study can serve as an alternative to the

conventional, monotonous memorization method, making learning more interactive and effective. For schools or institutions, this research can serve as a reference for developing creative learning media. In addition, for readers, this research is expected to provide new insights into how mnemonic techniques help cognitive processes in understanding complex language structures. Finally, for future researchers, this study can serve as a basis for exploring other creative learning strategies, such as applying the MSAL method to different language skills to upgrade this method in the future.

3. Pedagogical Significance

Pedagogically, the results of this study can help teachers in the learning classroom. The results show how mnemonic techniques influence students' cognitive and affective engagement in learning English. The use of MSAL supports teachers not only in enhancing students' comprehension and participation but also in creating a positive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Thus, this study is expected to provide teachers' views on the importance of using music and mnemonic-based methods as part of an effective teaching strategy to improve students' mastery, especially of English Past Tenses.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstandings about the terms used in this research, the researcher needs to provide several explanations or definitions as follows:

1. Mnemonic Song-Assisted Learning (MSAL)

MSAL is a learning method that uses songs as a mnemonic technique to help students memorize and understand material more quickly. The mnemonic song used in this study is the researcher's own innovation. It uses the melody of the Indonesian pop song "*Laskar Pelangi*" by Nidji. The song's lyrics have been modified to contain sentences that explain the complete forms of the Past Tenses (Simple Past Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Past Perfect Tense, and Past Perfect Continuous Tense). Through the rhythm and repetition, it is hoped that students will more easily remember the patterns, formulas, and usage of each Past Tenses form.

2. Students' Mastery

Students' mastery refers to students' ability to understand and use learning materials correctly and appropriately. In this study, student mastery refers to their ability to understand the forms, formulas, and usage of various past tenses in English. This mastery will be measured through a test covering the Simple Past Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Past Perfect Tense, and Past Perfect Continuous Tense. The test results indicate the extent to which students can recognize sentence patterns, differentiate the function of each tense, and use them

in appropriate contexts. Therefore, students' mastery in this study refers to their understanding of how to use all forms of the past tense.

3. English Past Tenses

The English Past Tenses are grammatical forms used to describe actions or events that happened in the past. In this study, the past tenses referred to include the Simple Past, Past Continuous, Past Perfect, and Past Perfect Continuous. Each form has a different formula and function in explaining the time and sequence of past events. Understanding the past tenses involves recognizing sentence patterns, verb usage, and appropriate time adverbs. Therefore, the English Past Tenses in this study refer to all Past Tenses forms that students must understand and master.

G. Limitations of the Study

This study focused only on the effect of MSAL on students' mastery of the English Past Tenses. It did not examine other English skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, or writing. The study was conducted at MA Manba'ul A'laa Purwodadi and involved 28 students from Class X-B as the research participants. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the supervising teacher's recommendation. The data were collected through tests and a questionnaire.

In addition, this study used a one-group pre-test and post-test design, which is categorized as a pre-experimental design. Since there was no control group, the improvement in students' post-test scores cannot be attributed solely to the use of MSAL, as other factors such as maturation, the testing effect, or learning experiences outside the classroom may also have contributed. The use of purposive sampling may likewise have introduced bias, as the students' initial motivation, cooperation, and class characteristics could have influenced the learning outcomes. Therefore, the results of this study should be interpreted with consideration of these limitations.