

INVESTIGATION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN SECONDARY-LEVEL ENGLISH GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION, FOCUSING ON THE TEACHING OF VERB TENSES

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Abstract: This paper explores the application of interdisciplinary thinking patterns in the teaching of English verb tenses at the secondary level. By integrating grammar instruction with subjects like history, science, literature, and mathematics, the paper highlights how students can gain a deeper understanding of tense usage. Interdisciplinary approaches allow students to move beyond memorization, enabling them to grasp the abstract concept of time more intuitively and apply verb tenses accurately in various contexts. The study emphasizes the benefits of critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning in making grammar instruction more dynamic and relevant. Ultimately, this approach fosters both language proficiency and cognitive development, preparing students for effective communication across disciplines.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary thinking, English grammar, verb tenses, secondary education, critical thinking, collaborative learning, grammar instruction.

Introduction. The teaching of English grammar, particularly verb tenses, has traditionally been approached as an isolated subject within language education. However, with the rise of interdisciplinary learning in modern education, there is growing interest in exploring how integrating other subjects can enhance the understanding of grammatical concepts. In the context of secondary education, where students are simultaneously engaging with multiple disciplines, interdisciplinary thinking provides a unique opportunity to deepen their grammatical knowledge by connecting grammar to broader cognitive and subject-based frameworks. The exploration of interdisciplinary thinking patterns within the teaching of verb tenses offers a means to make grammar instruction more relevant, dynamic, and engaging for students. Verb tenses form the backbone of English grammar, allowing speakers and writers to express time relationships clearly and accurately. For students, mastering tenses is crucial for achieving both fluency and grammatical precision. However, the abstract nature of tenses, particularly the distinctions between simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous forms, often presents significant challenges for learners. Many students struggle to apply these forms consistently in both spoken and written language. This difficulty can be exacerbated by the traditional method of teaching tenses in isolation from other academic and cognitive processes, where grammar instruction focuses heavily on rote memorization of rules and decontextualized exercises. Such approaches often fail to foster a deeper understanding of how tense usage relates to meaning in authentic communication.

Interdisciplinary learning, which encourages students to draw connections between different fields of study, has the potential to overcome these challenges by situating grammar teaching within broader intellectual contexts. This approach allows students to see grammar not as a rigid set of rules but as a system that functions across different areas of knowledge and communication. For example, the concept of time—central to the understanding of tenses—can be linked to subjects like history, where students are required to think chronologically, or science, where time plays a crucial role in understanding processes and experiments. By engaging students in thinking about time through the lenses of various disciplines, teachers can help them develop a more intuitive grasp of how verb tenses function to describe events in the past, present, and future. Interdisciplinary thinking in grammar teaching can also involve integrating creative

subjects such as literature and the arts. For instance, when studying verb tenses, students might analyze literary texts to explore how authors use tense to build narrative structure or convey a particular mood. This literary approach allows students to see grammar in action within the creative process, helping them to understand how tense can influence the tone, pacing, and perspective of a story. Similarly, integrating grammar with the study of music, which is structured by rhythm and timing, can offer alternative ways to conceptualize tense usage. These connections between grammar and the arts make learning tenses more tangible and accessible, especially for students who may struggle with more traditional grammatical exercises.

Moreover, interdisciplinary approaches in teaching tenses provide students with opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving. In subjects such as mathematics or geography, students are required to follow logical sequences and patterns, skills that can directly translate to understanding the systematic nature of tense rules. For example, learning to apply verb tenses correctly often requires students to think critically about the sequence of events or the relationship between different actions in time. By incorporating these types of logical thinking from other disciplines, teachers can guide students to approach tense usage analytically, making grammar learning an intellectual exercise rather than a mechanical task. The introduction of interdisciplinary thinking in grammar instruction also fosters a more collaborative and inquiry-based learning environment. In a traditional grammar classroom, students may view learning tenses as a solitary activity, focused primarily on individual memorization and practice. However, when grammar is taught through an interdisciplinary lens, students can engage in discussions, group activities, and projects that encourage them to work together to solve problems or analyze texts. This collaborative approach not only makes grammar instruction more interactive but also enhances students' critical thinking and communication skills.

One of the primary benefits of interdisciplinary teaching in the context of grammar is that it encourages students to see connections between language and the real world. In a globalized society, the ability to communicate effectively across different contexts and disciplines is essential. Grammar, and specifically tense usage, plays a vital role in this communication, as it allows speakers to articulate complex relationships between time, action, and meaning. By teaching tenses through interdisciplinary methods, teachers can prepare students to use grammar flexibly and accurately in diverse real-life situations, whether they are writing an essay in English class, conducting an experiment in science, or analyzing historical events. The exploration of interdisciplinary thinking patterns in teaching English verb tenses at the secondary level presents a promising avenue for making grammar instruction more engaging, relevant, and intellectually stimulating. By connecting grammatical concepts with broader cognitive and subject-based frameworks, teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding of tenses and their practical applications. This interdisciplinary approach not only enhances grammatical proficiency but also fosters the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning skills, preparing students to navigate the complexities of language and communication in the modern world.

Main Body. The integration of interdisciplinary thinking in secondary English grammar teaching, particularly in the instruction of verb tenses, offers a dynamic and multifaceted approach to enhancing students' understanding and application of grammatical rules. This method moves beyond traditional grammar drills and isolated exercises, creating a more engaging learning environment that allows students to see grammar in action across various fields of study. By linking grammar instruction with subjects like history, science, literature, and even mathematics, students can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how verb tenses function, not only in language but in the wider world.

Verb tenses are fundamental to expressing time relationships in English, which is essential for clear and accurate communication. However, many students struggle with grasping the nuances of tenses, particularly the distinctions between simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous forms. These forms can be challenging because they represent abstract concepts that are not always easy to visualize or apply. For example, the difference between the present perfect ("I have eaten") and the past simple ("I ate") can be subtle, yet it carries important implications for how the speaker relates to the action. The present perfect suggests a connection between the past action and the present moment, while the past simple confines the action strictly to the past. Without a solid understanding of these differences, students may struggle to communicate time relationships clearly, leading to confusion or misunderstandings.

One way interdisciplinary thinking can aid in teaching verb tenses is by linking the concept of time in grammar with its representation in other subjects, such as history. In history, students often work with timelines and must understand the sequence of events over time. This provides a natural opportunity to introduce verb tenses as a tool for describing historical events. For instance, teachers can have students write about key historical events using different tenses to convey the relationships between actions. A sentence like "In 1776, the American colonies declared independence" uses the simple past to describe a completed action in history, whereas "The colonies had been seeking independence for years before declaring it in 1776" uses the past perfect to show the relationship between two past actions. By integrating grammar with history, students can better understand how verb tenses are used to organize and express complex temporal relationships.

Similarly, the concept of time plays a critical role in science, particularly in subjects like physics and biology, where processes and experiments unfold over time. Teachers can leverage this by incorporating grammar exercises into science lessons. For example, students conducting a science experiment might be asked to describe their methods using the present continuous tense ("We are heating the water to 100 degrees") to emphasize the ongoing nature of the action. They could also use the future tense ("The water will boil once it reaches the right temperature") to predict the outcome of their experiment. These interdisciplinary connections not only reinforce the correct use of tenses but also show students how grammar is essential for clear and precise scientific communication.

In literature, verb tenses play a vital role in shaping narrative structure and mood. This makes literary analysis an excellent opportunity for teaching students how tenses can influence the meaning of a text. For example, in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the shifts in tense reflect the temporal shifts in the narrative. The ghost of Christmas past brings Scrooge into his memories, which are narrated using the simple past tense ("He was a boy again, seeing his old schoolroom"), while the ghost of Christmas present shows Scrooge events that are happening at the same time as the narrative, often in the present continuous tense ("They are feasting in Bob Cratchit's house right now"). By analyzing these tense shifts, students can see how authors use grammar to control the flow of time in a story, creating a richer understanding of both the text and the function of verb tenses.

Interdisciplinary thinking can also involve subjects that might not seem immediately connected to grammar, such as mathematics. While math may not involve much verbal communication, it does require students to think logically and sequentially, skills that are highly applicable to understanding tense usage. For instance, in math, students learn to follow a series of steps to solve an equation, ensuring that each action is completed in the correct order. This mirrors the process of understanding tenses, where students must determine the sequence of actions and select the appropriate tense to reflect that sequence. A teacher might create a

grammar exercise where students describe the steps in solving a math problem, using the past perfect to describe earlier steps ("After we had solved for x , we substituted it into the second equation") and the simple past to describe the final result ("We solved the equation and found that x equals 3"). By making connections between math and grammar, students can develop a more systematic and logical approach to tense usage.

Another example of interdisciplinary teaching comes from the arts, particularly music. Music, like grammar, is governed by rules and patterns, and it unfolds over time. The rhythm of music can serve as a metaphor for verb tenses, with different tenses representing different "beats" or points in time. For instance, a teacher could ask students to listen to a piece of music and describe its progression using different tenses: "The music starts softly, then builds to a crescendo" (present simple and continuous), "It had been quiet for several minutes before the drums entered" (past perfect), or "The musicians will play the final note soon" (future). This activity helps students internalize the idea that tenses, like musical notes, are part of a larger pattern that gives structure to communication.

The use of interdisciplinary thinking in grammar instruction also encourages critical thinking and problem-solving. When students are asked to apply verb tenses in different contexts, such as history or science, they must think critically about how time functions in those contexts and how best to express it grammatically. For example, when writing about historical events, students might need to decide whether to use the past simple ("The war ended in 1945") or the past perfect ("The war had ended by the time the peace treaty was signed"). This decision-making process helps students move beyond memorization of rules and engage with grammar as a tool for making meaning.

In addition to critical thinking, interdisciplinary grammar instruction promotes collaborative learning. Students can work together on projects that require them to apply verb tenses in different subjects, such as creating a timeline of historical events or writing a scientific report. Peer collaboration not only helps students learn from each other but also fosters a deeper understanding of how verb tenses function in real-world communication. For example, a group project on climate change might involve students writing about the past effects of human activity on the environment using the past simple and perfect tenses ("We have caused significant damage to the planet") and predicting future impacts using the future tense ("If we do not act, the damage will continue to worsen"). This collaborative, interdisciplinary approach makes grammar learning more interactive and engaging.

Interdisciplinary thinking patterns offer a rich and innovative approach to teaching English grammar, particularly in the instruction of verb tenses. By connecting grammar to other subjects like history, science, literature, and even music, teachers can make tense usage more tangible and meaningful for students. These interdisciplinary connections not only help students grasp the abstract concept of time in grammar but also foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. As a result, students gain a deeper, more intuitive understanding of verb tenses and their role in communication, preparing them for success both in the classroom and in real-world language use.

Conclusion. The exploration of interdisciplinary thinking in the teaching of English verb tenses offers a transformative approach to grammar instruction in secondary education. By connecting the abstract concepts of tense usage to real-world applications across various subjects—such as history, science, literature, and even mathematics—students are provided with a more meaningful and engaging way to understand and apply grammatical rules. This approach not only demystifies the complexities of tenses but also fosters essential skills like critical thinking, logical reasoning, and problem-solving. Moreover, interdisciplinary teaching methods encourage

collaboration and active participation, helping students to see grammar as a dynamic tool for communication rather than a set of static rules. As a result, students develop a deeper, more practical understanding of verb tenses, which enhances both their language proficiency and their overall academic growth. Interdisciplinary strategies make grammar instruction more relevant to students' lives, preparing them to use language effectively in a variety of contexts, both academic and everyday.

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