

# Teaching and Learning English Verb Tenses in a Taiwanese University

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## Abstract

This study compares the effect of inductive and deductive approaches in teaching English verb tenses to Taiwanese English-majored freshmen of field independent/dependent (FI/FD) cognitive styles. Research questions include: 1) what is the effect of the two approaches on students' learning outcomes? 2) What are the learning outcomes of FI/FD students? 3) Do FI students outperform FD students in the inductive group? Do FD students outperform FI students in the deductive group? The Group Embedded Figure Test was used to identify student cognitive styles. A self-designed test was conducted to realize student learning outcome. T-test, ANOVA, and descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the data. Results indicated that both approaches were effective, and the deductive group had more significant improvement. Next, both FI and FD students improved significantly, and FD student improvement was especially evident. Moreover, FD students in both groups improved more than FI students, but the difference was not significant.

**Keywords:** Inductive, Deductive, Field independent, Field dependent

## 1. Introduction

The growth or the decline of an approach to language teaching often depends on which language skills students need at that time. In the last two decades, the focus of language education has shifted from an analysis of language forms to authentic use of the target language. Many scholars advocate not only teaching students correct linguistic forms, but also when and how to use those appropriate forms to express their meanings in various situations (Ho, 2007).

The importance of grammar instruction has also gone through three stages: the prosperous stage (the first half of the twentieth century), the period of recession (1950-1960), and the period of revival (1980- to date). During the prosperous stage, the Grammar-Translation Method, which stresses linguistic analysis and translation ability, was the main approach to English teaching, especially in the study of Latin and Greek literature. With the passage of time, the increased contact among Europeans required English communication competence. English teaching methods changed to (e.g. the Direct Method) stressing English usage instead of mechanical grammatical drills and pattern practices. During World War II, people needed to learn the target language in a short time for military purposes. The Audio-Lingual Method, which focuses on the development of listening and speaking skills, became the tide of fashion. Thus, the importance of grammar teaching declined and teaching approaches (e.g. The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, and The Total Physical Response Method) disregarded teaching grammar rules. These approaches paid much attention to student communicational skills; however, student communication was grammatically inaccurate or insufficient. Therefore, after the 1980s, teaching approaches (e.g. the Communicative Approach) emphasized combining functions, meanings, and forms of English (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

The recent trend of grammar instruction emphasizes the importance of meaningful practice and authentic communication. Instructors have applied teaching strategies that enhance structured input to direct the attention of students to sentences with the same structure, to raise student consciousness (Ellis, 2001; Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Sharwood-Smith, 1993). For example, teachers first target a linguistic feature that is salient to students using underlining or italic fonts, and then ask students to use this target form in their communicative tasks. This method might awaken internalized grammatical knowledge of students to help them generalize structures on their own.

Some scholars (e.g. Ellis, 1999; McLaughlin, 1990; Van Patten, 1996) divide information processing of foreign language into three parts: input, processing, and output. Teachers who manipulate input of a target language (e.g. the

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Table 1. Students' Test Difference between Groups (Independent t-test)

Class	N.	Pre-test				Post-test				(Post-Pre)-test			
		Mean	S.D.	t	p	Mean	S.D.	t	p	Mean	S.D.	t	p
A	51	55.61	12.73	-1.17	0.246	81.22	12.13	2.945	0.004**	25.61	14.41	4.056	0.000
B	49	58.86	15.05			74.37	11.07			15.51	10.00		

A= Deductive group, B= Inductive group, \*\*= p<0.01, \*\*\*= p<0.001

Table 2. Students' Learning Outcomes within Each Individual Group (pair t-test)

Class	N.	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
A (Deductive Group)	51	55.61	12.73	81.22	12.13	-12.70	0.000***
B (Inductive Group)	49	58.86	15.05	74.37	11.07	-10.85	0.000***

\*\*\*= p<0.001

Table 3. Pre-, Post-, (Post-Pre)- test Scores Difference between FI/FD Students (ANOVA)

Cognitive Style	N	Pre-test			Post-test			(Post-Pre)-test		
		Mean	SD.	p	Mean	SD.	p	Mean	SD.	p
FI	43	58.88	13.91	0.483	76.79	13.67	0.411	17.91	12.17	0.191
FD	27	54.74	12.00		76.81	10.37		22.07	13.67	
FN	30	57.00	15.61		80.33	11.43		23.33	14.45	

FI:GEFT 14-18, FD:GEFT 0-10, FN=GEFT 11-13

Table 4. Learning Outcomes Difference within Individual FI/FD Students (pair t-test)

Cognitive style	N.	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
FI (GEFT 14-18)	43	58.88	13.91	76.79	13.67	-9.652	0.000***
FD (GEFT 0-10)	27	54.74	12.00	76.81	10.37	-8.390	0.000***
FN (GEFT 11-13)	30	57.00	15.61	80.33	11.43	-8.842	0.000***

\*\*\*= p<0.001

Table 5. The Interactive Effect of Inductive/Deductive Approaches and FI/FD Cognitive Styles on Student Performance Difference (ANOVA) (N=100)

Class	N.	Pre-test			Post-test			(Post-Pre)-test		
		Mean	S.D.	p	Mean	S.D.	p	Mean	S.D.	p
Deductive										
FI	23	58.87	12.52	0.243	80.52	13.74	0.698	21.65	13.05	0.195
FD	14	52.14	10.74		80.00	11.42		27.86	14.06	
FN	14	53.71	14.38		83.57	10.38		29.86	16.11	
Inductive										
FI	20	58.90	15.70	0.920	72.50	12.55	0.385	13.60	9.66	0.727
FD	13	57.54	13.07		73.38	8.18		15.85	10.47	
FN	16	59.88	16.53		77.50	11.11		17.63	10.23	

Table 6. Summary of FI/FD Students' Pre-test, Post-test, and Learning Outcomes

Test Score	Deductive Group	Inductive Group
Pre-test	FI>FN>FD	FN>FI>FD
Post-test	FN>FI>FD	FN>FD>FI
(Post-test)-(Pre-test)	FN>FD>FI	FN>FD>FI

FI/FD Cutoff score = Mean+0.5SD

#### Appendix English Tenses Comprehension Test

1. "Hurry up! We're waiting for you. What's taking you so long?"

"I \_\_\_ for an important phone call. Go ahead and leave without me."

- A. wait      B. will wait      C. am waiting      D. have waited

2. "Robert is going to be famous someday. He \_\_\_ in three movies already."

"I am sure he'll be a star."

- A. has been appearing      B. had appeared      C. has appeared      D. appeared

3. "Where's Polly?" "She \_\_\_."

- A. is in her room studying      C. studies in her room  
B. in her room is studying      D. has in her room studied

4. "Hello? Alice? This is Jeff. How are you?"

"Jeff? What a coincidence! I \_\_\_ about you when the phone rang."

- A. was just thinking      B. just thought      C. have just been thinking      D. was just thought

5. "What \_\_\_ about the new simplified tax law?"

"It's more confusing than the old one."

- A. are you thinking      B. do you think      C. have you thought      D. have you been thinking

6. "When is Mr. Fields planning to retire?"

"Soon, I think. He \_\_\_ here for a long time. He'll probably retire either next year or the year after that."

- A. worked      B. had been working      C. has been working      D. is working

7. "Why did you buy all this sugar and chocolate?" "I \_\_\_ a delicious dessert for dinner tonight."

- A. make      B. will make      C. am going to make      D. will have made

8. "Les's go! What's taking you so long?" "I'll be there as soon as I \_\_\_ my keys."  
A. found            B. will find        C. find            D. am finding
9. Next week when there \_\_\_ a full moon, the ocean tides will be higher.  
A. is being        B. is                C. will be        D. will have been
10. While I \_\_\_ TV last night, a mouse ran across the floor.  
A. watch            B. watched        C. was watching    D. am watching
11. Fish were among the earliest forms of life. Fish \_\_\_ on earth for ages and ages.  
A. existed        B. are existing    C. exist            D. have existed
12. The phone \_\_\_ constantly since Jack announced his candidacy for president this morning.  
A. has been ringing    B. rang            C. had rung        D. had been ringing
13. The earth \_\_\_ on the sun for its heat and light.  
A. is depend        B. depending      C. had depend      D. depends
14. I don't feel good. I \_\_\_ home from work tomorrow.  
A. am staying        B. stay            C. will have stayed    D. stayed
15. Today there are weather satellites that beam down information about the earth's atmosphere. In the last two decades, space exploration \_\_\_ great contributions to weather forecasting.  
A. is making        B. has made        C. made            D. makes
16. On July 20, 1969, Astronaut Neil Armstrong \_\_\_ down onto the moon, the first person ever to set foot on another celestial body.  
A. was stepping      B. stepped        C. has stepped      D. was step
17. The plane's departure was delayed because of mechanical difficulties. When the weary passengers finally boarded the aircraft, many were annoyed and irritable because they \_\_\_ in the airport for three and a half hours.  
A. are waiting      B. were waiting    C. have been waiting    D. had been waiting
18. If coastal erosion continues to take place at the present rate, in other fifty years this beach \_\_\_ anymore.  
A. doesn't exist    B. isn't going to exist    C. isn't existing    D. won't be existing
19. Homestead High School's football team \_\_\_ a championship until last season, when the new coach led them to win first place in their league.  
A. has never won    B. is never winning    C. had never been wining  
D. had never won
20. Non-native speakers need many years of intensive language study before they can qualify as interpreters. By the end of this year, Chen \_\_\_ English for three years, but he will still need more training and experience before he masters the language.  
A. will be studying    B. has studied      C. will have been studying  
D. has been studying
21. We \_\_\_\_\_ for a couple of days, so you won't be able to call us.  
A. travel        B. will travel      C. will be traveling    D. will have traveled
22. "When are you going to ask your boss for raise?"  
"\_\_\_ to her twice already! I don't think she wants to give me one."  
A. I've talked        B. I've been talking    C. I was talking        D. I'd talked
23. "Do you think Harry will want something to eat after he gets here?"  
"I hope not. It'll probably be after midnight, and we \_\_\_."  
A. are sleeping      B. will be sleeping    C. have been sleeping    D. be sleeping

24. Paul, could you please turn off the stove? The potatoes \_\_\_ for at least thirty minutes.  
A. are boiling    B. boiling    C. have been boiling    D. were boiling
25. “Is it true that spaghetti didn’t originate in Italy?”  
“Yes. The Chinese \_\_\_ spaghetti dishes for a long time before Marco Polo brought it back to Italy.”  
A. have been making    B. have made    C. had been making    D. make
26. “I once saw a turtle that had wings. The turtle flew into the air to catch insects.”  
“Stop kidding. I \_\_\_ you!”  
A. don’t believe    B. am not believing    C. didn’t believe    D. wasn’t believing
27. “Could someone help me lift the lawnmower into the pickup truck?”  
“I am not busy. I \_\_\_ you.”  
A. help    B. will help    C. am going to help    D. am helping
28. Just relax, Antoine. As soon as your sprained ankle heals, you can play soccer again. At this time next week, you \_\_\_\_\_ soccer again.  
A. will play    B. are playing    C. play    D. will be playing
29. “Are you going to be in town next Saturday?” “No, I \_\_\_ my aunt.”  
A. will be in Chicago visiting    B. visit    C. am visiting    D. will have visited
30. I know you feel bad now, Tommy, but try to put it out of your mind. By the time you’re an adult, you \_\_\_ all about it.  
A. forget    B. will have forgotten    C. will forget    D. forgot
31. Mary was born in 1975. By the year 2025, she \_\_\_ on this earth for 50 years.  
A. will have been living    B. is living    C. lives    D. had lived
32. After ten unhappy years, Janice finally quit her job. She \_\_\_ along with her boss for a long time before she finally decided to look for a new position.  
A. hadn’t been getting    B. isn’t getting    C. didn’t get    D. hasn’t been getting
33. They \_\_\_\_\_ about something when I walked into the room.  
A. were arguing    B. argued    C. had argued    D. have argued
34. At one time, huge prehistoric reptiles dominated the earth. This Age of Dinosaurs \_\_\_ much longer than the present Age of Mammals has lasted to date.  
A. lasted    B. was lasting    C. has lasted    D. had lasted
35. Jim, why don’t you take some time off? You \_\_\_ too hard lately. Take a short vacation.  
A. worked    B. work    C. were working    D. have been working
36. The city is rebuilding its dilapidated waterfront, transforming it into a pleasant and fashionable outdoor mall. Next summer when the tourists arrive, they \_\_\_ 104 beautiful new shops and restaurants in the area where the old run-down waterfront properties used to stand.  
A. will found    B. will be finding    C. will have found    D. will find
37. A minor earthquake occurred at 2:07 A.M. on January 3. Most of the people in the village \_\_\_ at the time and didn’t even know it had occurred until the next morning.  
A. slept    B. had slept    C. were sleeping    D. sleep
38. The little girl started to cry. She \_\_\_ her doll, and no one was able to find it for her.  
A. has lost    B. had lost    C. was losing    D. was lost
39. What? He got married again? At this rate, he \_\_\_ a dozen wives by the time he dies.  
A. has had    B. had had    C. has    D. will have had



40. Jane's eyes burned and her shoulders ached. She \_\_\_ at the computer for five straight hours. Finally, she took a break.  
A. is sitting    B. has been sitting    C. was sitting    D. had been sitting
41. She will \_\_\_\_\_ almost \$ 1000 by then.  
A. save    B. have saved    C. have been saving    D. be saving
42. By the time I go to bed tonight, I \_\_\_ my work for the day.  
A. will finish    B. have finished    C. will have finished    D. finish
43. By next year, Roger will \_\_\_\_\_ here for 10 years.  
A. live    B. be living    C. have been living    D. be going to
44. Fatemach looked down to discover a snake at her feet. When she saw it, she \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. was screaming    B. had screamed    C. screamed    D. screams
45. By the time Alfonso finally graduated from high school, he \_\_\_\_\_ seven different schools because his parents moved frequently.  
A. attended    B. was attending    C. had attended    D. had been attending
46. By April, I \_\_\_\_\_ my new car for a year.  
A. have driven    B. will have been driving    C. will have been driven  
D. will drive
47. I borrowed four books on gardening the last time I \_\_\_ to the library.  
A. go    B. went    C. had gone    D. have gone
48. Before I started the car, all of the passengers \_\_\_ their seat belts.  
A. will buckle    B. had buckled    C. buckle    D. have buckled

### Twelve Tenses and Their Corresponding Test Questions

Tenses	Question numbers
Simple Present	8. 9. 13. 26.
Present Progressive	1. 3. 5. 14.
Present Perfect	2. 11. 15. 22.
Present Perfect Progressive	6. 12. 24. 35.
Simple Past	16. 34. 44. 47.
Past Progressive	4. 10. 37. 33.
Past Perfect	19. 38. 45. 48.
Past Perfect Progressive	17. 25. 32. 40.
Simple Future	7. 18. 27. 36.
Future Progressive	21.23. 28. 29.
Future Perfect	30. 39. 41.42.
Future Perfect Progressive	20. 31. 43. 46.