Which tense? – Writing Task 1

Teacher’s notes

Aim: Raise awareness of need to use and practise using complex sentences / accurate grammar in Writing Task 1 responses (Academic) (Writing Assessment Criteria for Grammatical Range and Accuracy highlights the need for good control of grammar and use of complex sentences).

Instructions

1. Write the following question on the board: **Which tense should you use when answering a Writing Task 1 (Academic) question?** Ask Ss to discuss the question in pairs. Do not elicit any feedback at this stage.

2. Hand out Worksheet 1. Ss look at 3 diagrams and decide which tense to use (exercise A). Elicit feedback. Ask Ss the question from stage 1 again (Answer: it depends on the question).

3. Ss read two extracts from candidates’ answers to Diagram 3 and decide which answer is the best and why (exercise B). Elicit examples of the kind of structures used in each extract.

4. Put Ss in pairs to read more extracts from candidates’ answers to the tasks on worksheet 2a or 2b* and try to identify and correct grammar mistakes. Feed back giving more information about the grammar structures where necessary.

   To round up, ask Ss whether the grammar in the extracts is generally simple or more complex (= more complex). Tell Ss they should aim to impress the examiner by using a range of structures, but also to make sure their grammar is accurate and that they use a tense which is appropriate to the diagram.

5. Ss work on their own to write 2 more sentences about each diagram.

6. Ss peer correct the sentences they have written. The teacher can collect the worksheets for marking at the end of the lesson.

Alternative suggestions

*Choose the version which is closest to your Ss’ abilities. Worksheet 2a (mistakes are underlined) may be more appropriate for B1 level Ss, Worksheet 2b (find the mistakes and correct them) for B2 level Ss.

Make similar exercises to stage 4 by noting down common grammar mistakes your Ss make when you’re marking their written work. Write the sentences on the board or make a worksheet. It may be better to collect examples of good and bad grammar as the ‘good’ will boost morale. Ss identify which sentences are correct / incorrect and try to correct errors.
ANSWER KEY – Which tense? – Writing Task Part 1

Worksheet 1

A Diagram 1 – past. There is likely to be a lot of past simple because the data is from one year in the past.
Diagram 2 – past and future. Present is also possible if cand talk about current levels of unemployment.
Diagram 3 – present. There is likely to be a lot of present simple as this is used to talk about facts.

B Extract 2 is better because a variety of structures is used.

Extract 1 repeats present simple active …spend (the money) on…. As well as present simple (…spend the least money…), extract 2 uses present simple passive twice (…money is used to buy…. …money is spent on…), as well as comparatives and superlatives (…12% or less…. the least money…) and infinitive of purpose (…is used to buy…).

All age groups spend a lot of money on smart phones. 75% of 14 – 25 year olds and 63% of 26 – 44 year olds spend the money on smart phones whereas 38% of people aged 45 years or more spend the money on smart phones.

Extract 2

For all age groups, 12% or less of the money is used to buy laptops. UK residents over the age of 45 spend the least money on laptops (5%), whereas for 14 – 25 year olds, 12% of the money is spent on laptops.
ANSWER KEY – Which tense? – Writing Task Part 1

Worksheet 2a / b

1. The percentage of women who gained undergraduate diplomas was almost double that of the men. Undergraduate diplomas were held by over 65% of women compared to just under 35% of men.
   - *The percentage* = singular > *was*
   - *Undergraduate diplomas were held by...* = past simple passive – be (past) + past participle (compare with ‘65% of women held undergraduate diplomas...’)

2. The biggest gender difference was at the lowest post-school level, where 75% of those who have attained a skilled vocational diploma were male, compared to only 25% of women.
   - *have attained* = past simple not present perfect – 2008 is one completed year in the past.

3. After 2015 it is likely that unemployment will fall in Spain to around 11% in 2020, whereas in France it is expected to continue to increase slightly.
   - *it is likely* = the structure is *to be likely to* + infinitive (future prediction)
   - *continue to increase* = verb + verb structure – after continue you need to use the infinitive with to

4. Jobless numbers in France started climbing in 2005 when around 5% of the workforce was unemployed. The percentage has continued to increase since then.
   - *started* = past simple – 2005 is one completed year in the past
   - *has continued* = present perfect with since – something which started in the past and has not finished (i.e. it continues to climb)

5. In France, unemployment decreased slightly from over 5% in 2000 before starting to climb in 2005.
   - *starting to climb* - verb + verb structure – after start you need to use the infinitive with to (you can also use the –ing form after start, however with two –ings ‘starting climbing’ sounds strange)

6. A typical 14 – 25 year old in the UK spends around three quarters of the money on a smartphone. With other age groups, this device is less popular.
   - *A typical 14 – 25 year old...* UK *spends* – present simple 3rd person form

7. E-readers are nearly as popular as smart phones with those in the 45 years and over category. 38% of their money is used to purchase a smart phone, compared to 1% less for an e-reader.
   - *as popular as smart phones* = comparative structure – as + adjective + as
   - *money is used* = present simple passive – be (present) + past participle – compare with 38% of 45 year olds use their money...

8. UK citizens who are 45 years and over haven’t fully accepted laptop computers yet. They still spend 5% more money on desktops compared to laptops.
   - *haven’t fully accepted* = present perfect (has / have + past participle) with yet
   - *They ... spend* = present simple to talk about a fact

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Worksheet 1 – Which tense? – Writing Task Part 1

A. Look at the 3 writing tasks below. Which tense(s) would you use to report the information in the diagrams?

Diagram 1

The chart below shows the different levels of post-school qualifications in the UK and the proportion of men and women who held them in 2008.

Diagram 2

The graph below shows the unemployment rates in two European countries since 2000 and predicted unemployment rates until 2020.
Diagram 3

The pie charts below show how different age groups in the UK spend money on technology.

How money spent on technology is spent (percentages)

14 – 25 year olds

- Smart phones: 75%
- Laptops: 2%
- Desktop computers: 2%
- Tablet computers: 2%
- E-readers: 5%
- Other: 5%

26 – 44 year olds

- Smart phones: 63%
- Laptops: 10%
- Desktop computers: 9%
- Tablet computers: 5%
- E-readers: 6%
- Other: 7%

45 years and above

- Smart phones: 38%
- Laptops: 13%
- Desktop computers: 13%
- Tablet computers: 10%
- E-readers: 5%
- Other: 5%

B Below are extracts from two candidates' answers to the task above. Which do you think is better? Why?

Extract 1

All age groups spend a lot of money on smart phones. 75% of 14 – 25 year olds and 63% of 26 – 44 year olds spend the money on smart phones whereas 38% of people aged 45 years or more spend the money on smart phones.

Extract 2

For all age groups, 12% or less of the money is used to buy laptops. UK residents over the age of 45 spend the least money on laptops (5%), whereas for 14 – 25 year olds, 12% of the money is spent on laptops.
Worksheet 2a – Which tense? – Writing Task Part 1

Below are more extracts from candidates’ answers to the tasks on worksheet 1. All the candidates have made one or two mistakes with their grammar. Can you correct the grammar mistakes which are underlined?

Diagram 1
1. The percentage of women who gained undergraduate diplomas were almost double that of the men. Undergraduate diplomas held by over 65% of women compared to just under 35% of men.
2. The biggest gender difference was at the lowest post-school level, where 75% of those who have attained a skilled vocational diploma were male, compared to only 25% of women.

Diagram 2
3. After 2015 it likely that unemployment will fall in Spain to around 11% in 2020, whereas in France it is expected to continue increase slightly.
4. Jobless numbers in France start climbing in 2005 when around 5% of the workforce was unemployed. The percentage continues to increase since then.
5. In France, unemployment decreased slightly from over 5% in 2000 before starting climb in 2005.

Diagram 3
6. A typical 14 – 25 year old in the UK spend around three quarters of the money on a smart phone. With other age groups, this device is less popular.
7. E-readers are nearly as popular than smart phones with those in the 45 years and over category. 38% of their money is using to purchase a smart phone, compared to 1% less for an e-reader.
8. UK citizens who are 45 years and over hasn’t fully accepted laptop computers yet. They still spending 5% more money on desktops compared to laptops.

Write two more sentences about each diagram. You should try to:
- Use the correct tense
- Aim for more complex structures (e.g. not just past simple all the time)
- Use grammar accurately

Ask your partner to check your grammar and highlight any mistakes they find.
Worksheet 2b – Which tense? – Writing Task Part 1

Below are more extracts from candidates’ answers to the tasks on worksheet 1. All the candidates have made one or two mistakes with their grammar. Can you find the mistakes and correct them?

Diagram 1

1. The percentage of women who gained undergraduate diplomas were almost double that of the men. Undergraduate diplomas held by over 65% of women compared to just under 35% of men.

2. The biggest gender difference was at the lowest post-school level, where 75% of those who have attained a skilled vocational diploma were male, compared to only 25% of women.

Diagram 2

3. After 2015 it likely that unemployment will fall in Spain to around 11% in 2020, whereas in France it is expected to continue increase slightly.

4. Jobless numbers in France start climbing in 2005 when around 5% of the workforce was unemployed. The percentage continues to increase since then.

5. In France, unemployment decreased slightly from over 5% in 2000 before starting climb in 2005.

Diagram 3

6. A typical 14 – 25 year old in the UK spend around three quarters of the money on a smart phone. With other age groups, this device is less popular.

7. E-readers are nearly as popular than smart phones with those in the 45 years and over category. 38% of their money is using to purchase a smart phone, compared to 1% less for an e-reader.

8. UK citizens who are 45 years and over hasn’t fully accepted laptop computers yet. They still spending 5% more money on desktops compared to laptops.

Write two more sentences about each diagram. You should try to:

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