**Mustansiriyah University**

**College of Arts**

**Translation Department**

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**FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR**

**First Year/ Morning Classes**

**Lecture # 6**

**The Uses of Tenses**

**ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN USE**

**R. MURPHY**

**The uses of the Tenses**

The simple present is used:

For a general truth, e.g. Actions speak louder than words.

1. For an habitual or repeated action, e.g. I speak to my students every day.
2. To Introduce a quotation, e.g. Shakespeare says: "Neither a borrow nor a lender be".

The continuous tenses are used:

1. To express an action which is not yet complete, e.g. I am listing to him.
2. To denote an action in the future, e.g. I am going to England next week.

The present perfect is used:

1. For an action which has just concluded, e.g. A minute ago I was working, but now I have finished.
2. For an action in the past continuing into the present, e.g. I have taught

this class for ten years and I am still teaching it. Compare this with: "I taught that class ten years ago, but I am not teaching it now".

1. When the time is indefinite, e.g. I have seen the Queen. Compare it with " I saw the Queen two years age".

The simple past, as can be seen from the above examples, is used to express an action wholly completed in the past.

The past perfect is used for an action which was completed before another, expressed in the past tense, began, e.g. I had studied English before I left Iraq.

 For future tenses two auxiliaries are used, viz, (shall) and (will). There are two forms:

1. Which expresses mere futurity.
2. Which expresses in addition to futurity, a feeling of determination, command or promise in the mind of the speaker. So in the sentence:

will read your letter and then I shall understand what you want me to do", the (will) denotes promise or intention, while the (shall) expresses merely future time.

The Emphatic Form

The emphatic form of the verb is conjugated with (do), e.g. Present: I do speak. He does speak.

Past: I did speak. We did speak.

Imperative: Do speak.

These are the only parts of the verb in which this form is used and it is indicated in speech by a stress on the auxiliary

How To Choose the Right Tense!

When there are lots of different tenses to learn, it can seem a little mind-boggling to decide which one you need to use – and when!

So to help you learn to choose the correct one for each situation, read on for some simple pointers on each tense.

Using the present simple tense

The present simple tense is the one you’ll use the most often. It’s used when you’re talking about something that is happening right in the moment that you are describing the action – not before, or after.

For example:

“She cooks in her kitchen.”

You can also use the present simple tense to describe something that takes place regularly.

For example:

“The train takes a detour every Thursday.”

Using the present continuous tense

The present continuous tense is used when you’re talking about something that is happening in the present moment – but will also be continuing afterwards.

Instead of using the present simple tense, you use the present form of “to be”, followed by the verb, with the suffix “–ing” at the end.

For example:

“I am driving to work.”

You can also use the present continuous to talk about an activity you have planned in the near future.

For example:

“They’re flying in tomorrow evening.”

Using the past simple tense

If you’re talking about something that happened in the past, then this is the tense you’re most likely to use. It’s used when something took place in the past and stopped at a clear point.

For example:

“The car broke down after they crossed the bridge.”

Using the past perfect tense

This is another way of talking about the past – but unlike the past simple tense, this is used to describe something that happened before another action, which also took place in the past.

You put it together by using “had” followed by the past participle of the verb.

For example:

“He had never studied art before he came to college.”

Past perfect continuous

Like the present continuous, this tense is used to describe something that started in the past and continued happening for some period of time.

It doesn’t matter how long the duration was for – whether it was for a few minutes or several years, you would still use this tense.

The important thing to remember is that the activity being described must have already stopped, before the present moment.

To use it, you use “had been” followed by the present participle of the verb.

For example:

“We had been walking for over 2 hours before we finally found help.”

Simple future

Unlike the past and present simple tenses, the simple future is a little more complicated!

There are two different ways of expressing this tense: using “will” or “be going to”. While both are used to talk about something that will happen in the future, they each have a different meaning.

“Will” is usually used to show that you have voluntarily chosen to carry out an action, or to express a promise.

For example:

“I will buy you the biggest cake in the store for your birthday.”

“Be going to” meanwhile, is used to indicate a plan for the future.

For example:

“They are going to take a cruise next summer.”

You can also use both these forms to describe predictions for the future, and neither will change the meaning.

For example, you could say “next year will be amazing” or equally, “next year is going to be amazing.”

The best way to get familiar with the different tenses in English is to practice – so take every chance you get to use each of the tenses, in different situations! Why not try writing one sentence in each tense, by describing a similar action in the past, present and future?