

Tema 22.

LA LOCALIZACIÓN EN EL TIEMPO. DURACIÓN Y FRECUENCIA.

TIME REFERENCE. DURATION AND FREQUENCY.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this topic we will study the resources of the English language to express time. Firstly, we will present a semantic framework for analyzing time notions. On defining “time reference”, we will mention how the language adds information about *When? How long? and How often?* a situation has happened in order to locate time by means of temporal dimensions (i.e. present, past, future). Details about the “exact point in time”, “duration”, and “frequency” of the action will delimit exactly what type of time we are referring to.

We will go from meaning to form as we need to examine the grammar categories which express time. The temporal interpretation of sentences has to take into account different kinds of temporal relations. We must distinguish between relations linguistically expressed by tenses, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, adjectives, conjunctions, specific clause structures and also idiomatic expressions.

Let us start by making a distinction between *time* and *tense* that will lead us to the expression of time by means of verbal tenses in English and how mood and aspect interrelate together to express nuances of the verbal action related to time.

2. TIME REFERENCE: TIME AND TENSE

The expression of when-temporal relationship may be drawn from verbal tenses. From a semantic point of view, it is necessary to take into account **tense**, together with **aspect** and **modality**. Although they are broadly explained in Topic 30, we will make a brief reference here to how these elements are related to time expression.

We must distinguish clearly between the **grammatical category of tense** and the **semantic category of time**. **Time** is dependent of language and is common to all human beings. It is conceptualized by many peoples, though not by all, as being divided into past time, present time and future time (Downing: 1992). **Tense**, on the other hand, is the linguistic expression of time relations when these are realized by verb forms. The tense systems are language specific and vary from one language to another, both in the number of tenses they distinguish and in the ways in which these tenses reflect temporal reference.

Time and **Tense** do not always run parallel. In English it would be erroneous to imagine that the Past tense refers exclusively to events in the past time, that there is a Present tense to refer to exclusively to events in present time and a Future tense to refer exclusively to events in future time.

Tense is a way of expressing events as occurring at points situated along the linear flow of time. Within the linear flow, a point of reference must be established, with respect to which past events precede and future events follow. The normal, universal and therefore unmarked point of reference is the moment

of speaking –speech time (Figure 1). This is the “now” which is implicitly understood in everyday interaction. For example:

- *I hope it rains tomorrow.*
"Rains" is present simple, but it refers here to future time (tomorrow).
- *If I had some money now, I could buy a new car.*
"Had" is past simple but it refers here to present time (now).

These examples above show how tenses can refer to different time.

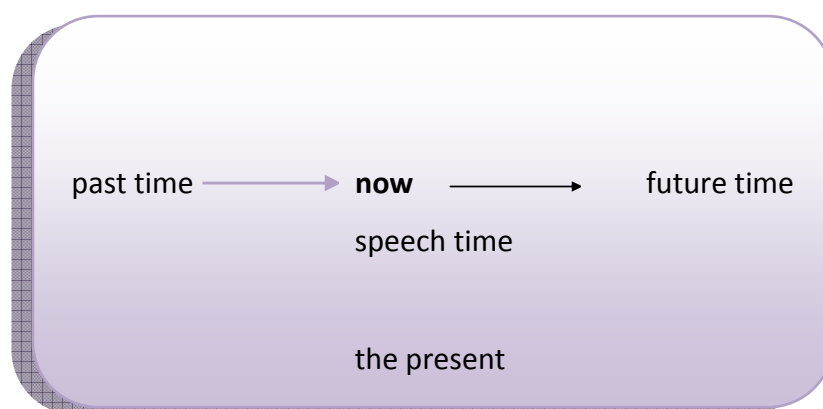


Figure 1. Diagram representing *time*

Tense is a grammatical category that is realized **morphologically on the verb** in English. In accordance with this criterion, English has just two tenses: the Present and the Past, as in *goes/went*, respectively. English has no verbal inflection to mark a future tense.

The forms *shall* and *will* are not verbal inflections but modal auxiliaries which, when reduced, are attached to pronouns, not to the verb root (*I'll wait outside*). Instead of a future tense, English makes use of a number of combinations such as *be going to* to refer to future events. For example, we can compare:

- They do the shopping on Saturdays* (present tense).
- They did the shopping on Saturday* (past tense).
- They are going to do/ will do the shopping on Saturday* (lexical auxiliary/ modal).

In general, as these examples illustrate, past and present events are taken to have the status of real events, while references to the future are to potential, that is, unreal, events.

In English, therefore, the three-term semantic distinction into past, present and future time is grammaticalised as a two-term tense distinction between Past tense and Present tense.

Besides tensed forms of verbs, other linguistic forms, particularly adverbs of time such as *now*, *then*, *tomorrow*, Prepositional Phrases such as *in 1066* and lexico-grammatical expressions such as *ten minutes*, *after the plane took off* can make reference to time. English, in fact, relies to a considerable extent on such units to make the temporal reference clear.

2.1. PAST AND PRESENT TENSES

The **Past tense** in English is the marked form. Cognitively, the situations conceptualized by the speaker as past have the status of known, but not immediate, reality; they are not currently observed. Morphologically, the vast majority of verbs in English have a distinctive past form, (*played*, *saw*) and, semantically, the past tense basically refers to a situation that is prior to the present, as in *Yesterday was fine*.

The Past tense is fully described in Topic 33. It has the main following uses:

1. **Past time** situations:

Kim lived in Frankfurt.

It didn't rain yesterday.

2. **Factual remoteness** is given by conditional sentences where we find present verbs:

If Ed comes tomorrow, we can play bridge vs.

If Ed came tomorrow, we could play bridge.

The tense difference signals a difference not in time, but in the speaker's assessment of the likelihood of the conditions being fulfilled: the past tense presents it as a remote possibility, whereas the present tense as an open possibility.

3. **Backshifting in indirect reported speech**, i.e. when giving the content expressed, not the actual words used: *Jane said that you were in the list.*

The **Present tense** is the unmarked tense. Cognitively, it expresses situations which have immediate reality, that is, what is currently observed. Morphologically, it is marked only on the third person singular (with the exception of *be*, which has three forms (*am*, *are* and *is*). Semantically, it covers a wider range of temporal references than the Past tense, including reference to future time (*Tomorrow is a holiday*).

Even in our everyday use, "at present" and "at the present time" have a wider application than simply to the present moment of speech time. Thus, *Birds have wings* represents a situation which holds not only at the present time but has also held in the past, and will conceivably continue to hold in the future.

Within the inflectional category of Present tense, the following uses may be distinguished, according to Huddleston. The Present is fully described in Topic 32.

2.1.1. Present without reference to specific time

As mentioned above, the Present can express timeless statements which apply to all time, including speech time. This includes scientific, mathematical and descriptive statements as in:

Cheese is made out of milk.

Gold has relatively low melting-point.

Two and two make four.

2.1.2. Habitual time statements

Usually with **dynamic** verbs, it covers an unspecified time. But the time reference is not necessarily the present time as the tense used indicates habitual activity.

He works in a state agency.

They go to the beach in August.

Adjuncts of time, frequency, place, destination, etc. accompany statements in the Present which express related or recurrent events.

She always has a cup of tea before going to bed.

2.1.3. Instantaneous events in the present

It is only used with **dynamic verbs** to express an action happening simultaneously with present time, such as:

- **Commentaries:** *Eto shoots and it's a goal.*
- **Demonstrations:** *I slice the onions into little pieces and put them in the pan with a bit of oil.*
- **Exclamations with initial directional adverb:** *Here comes the bus. ; Off they go! and*
- **Performative declarations:** *I acknowledge your letter...; I warn you the coffee is very hot.*
- **In Quotations:** *Plato says: "A man needs slaves to be happy".*

2.1.4. Reference to Past Events

In **Newspaper Headlines** (*Strike hits city to standstill*), in **relating incidents** as in:

(joke) A man goes to the doctor and says: "Doctor, I think I'm a pair of curtains". The doctor replies: "Pull yourself together!".

I was just shopping for some food when all of a sudden I see a little boy nicking the wallet of an old lady and he rushes out of the store.

2.1.5. Present with future time reference

The Present Simple is used when there is a temporal adverbial in the clause and also in conditional and temporal clauses introduced by **if, unless, after before, as soon as, when...**

As soon as you finish, we'll leave on vacation.

I'll call you when I arrive at the train station.

The present can also have future reference when it refers to **programmed timetabled** events:

"The Prime Minister is to visit India next year."

A new production of "Bodas de Sangre" opens next week.

2.2. ASPECT

Aspect refers to the speaker's/writer's perspective on the time of an event. In English aspect is mainly concerned with how the speaker perceives the duration of events and how different events relate to one another in time. An event may be referred to in different ways, even though the point in time when it occurs may be unchanged. For example, the same event in the past can be referred to by either the past simple, the present perfect dependent on the speaker's perception of the importance or relevance of an event.

Speaker A: They've sold their house there, you know.

Speaker B: Oh! Have they? Why have they gone?

Speaker A: Oh! She's a little bit fed up really. They sold the house because she wants a job up north.

The speaker uses perfect aspect ("have sold") to announce the news of the house sale, a typical use of the Present Perfect to mark "newsworthiness", but then uses the past simple "sold" when expanding on the details even though both verbs refer to the same event.

Aspect offers a lot of nuances. The choice of aspect may also reflect an emphasis whether an event was **long-lasting** or just a **point** in time. It may also reflect whether it is to be seen as **temporary or permanent**, whether it is/was already **in progress** when something else happened, whether it is

generally or always the case, whether it happens **regularly**, whether an action has been **achieved** or **completed or not**, etc.

They've been kicking the ball all the morning (Repetition).

He cleans on and off (Interrupted activity, non continued).

Mr. Jackson, who is 105 years old, wakes up early in the morning, works in his orchard up to lunch time and has a nap every day (Habitual, every day).

He didn't manage to get Anne on the telephone (Action not achieved).

English has two morphologically marked aspects in the verb –Progressive and Perfect. With the **PROGRESSIVE ASPECT** the focus is especially on the duration of the event. It may therefore be used to indicate that something is ongoing, unfinished, or that it is extended but temporary. It may indicate that something is/was/will be already in progress when something else happens/happened. In other words, the focus is not on the starting or finishing point of an event, but on the event seen from its centre.

The Progressive aspect involves the use of the verb **to be** and **the -ing** form of a lexical verb. For example:

- In *He has been cooking the whole day*, the situation is presented as on-going, and possibly into the future.
- *My knees were shaking*, expresses an on-going process at the point in the past the speaker is referring to.
- *The water had been leaking since September* expresses an action continuing from September till the moment in the past the speaker is talking about.
- *I'll be calling the clients when you reach the office*. The action will be an ongoing process at the point in the future the speaker is referring to.
- *We'll have been living together for 20 years next April*. The action will continue for 20 years before till the point in the future referred to, April.
- *This must have been going on for months*. An on-going process probably occurring over a period of time leading up to now or up to a point in the past.

The **PERFECT ASPECT** is concerned with the speaker's perspective on the relationship between one time frame and an event that takes place in another time frame. An event which took place in the past may be seen as relevant to the present moment. Likewise and event due to take place in the future may be seen as completed.

Perfect aspect involves the use of auxiliary **have + -ed participle** of a lexical verb. The tense may be present or past. Future perfect forms are created using **will/shall/'ll + have + participle**.

Let us examine some examples:

- *I have worked here for three years.* The action covers the whole period from three years ago till now.
- *I had finished just before I went to work.* The action finished in relation to the time (in the past) when I went to work.
- *Yesterday and tomorrow altogether I'll have spent 300 Euros on travelling.* Yesterday and the period up to now including tomorrow.
- *They may have been confused.* A possible event during a time leading up to now or up to a point in the past.

2.3. MODALITY

Following Carter, mood refers to the **factual** or **non-factual** status of the event. Non-factual here means events which do not happen or are only desired. The moods of English are *indicative, imperative and subjunctive*. The **indicative** is a factual mood. It is by far the most frequent mood and involves all the choices of person, tense, number, aspect modality and voice discussed in other topics.

I'll give you a call in the week.

We were talking about this the other day.

The **imperative mood** is a non-factual mood and is used to issue directives. It involves the base form of the verb:

Pick up all your toys, please!

Just leave it on the table!

The **subjunctive mood** is a non-factual mood as well and is very rare in English. It refers to wishes, desires, etc. It is used after a very limited number of verbs (i.e. *suggest, insist, recommend, demand*), occasionally after conditional subordinators (*if, lest, on condition that, whether*) and occasionally after expressions of necessity (e.g. *important/ essential/ imperative that*). The subjunctive only occurs in **formal style**. It involves the base form of the verb without inflections (in the past of verb to be, "were" for all persons), e.g.:

They insisted that she consult a psychiatrist and Laura had the strength to insist that it be a woman.

I can remember it as if it were today.

On the other hand, as we mentioned earlier, in the relationship of time and tense, English has just two tenses: past and present: unlike such languages as French and Latin, English has no future tense. This means that in English there is no verbal category so as to locate any situation in the future time. Yet, futurity of is course very often indicated by the modal operator *will* (*He will see her tomorrow*).

We cannot refer to future as facts, as we can to past and present situations, since events in the future have not **yet** happened. We can predict, with more or less confidence what will happen, we can plan for events to take place, express our intentions and promises with regard to future events. But these are **modalized** rather than factual predications, and are treated in Topic 34 about the expression of future.

Here we will simply outline the main semantic meanings and syntactic means of referring to future events as seen from the standpoint of present time.

2.3.1. Safe Predictions

These are predictions which do not involve the Subject's volition, and include cyclical events and general truths. *Will* + infinitive is used, *shall* by some speakers for *I* and *we*.

I will be 40 next month.

We shall be free for most of August.

You'll find petrol more expensive in France.

The future progressive combine the meaning of futurity with that of limited duration. At the same time avoiding the implication of promise associated with these modals when the subject is "I" or "we":

I'll be seeing Anne later this afternoon, I'll pass on your message to her.

I can easily give you a lift; I'll be passing your house.

2.3.2. Intended events

Intended events can be expressed by **be + going to + infinitive** or simply by the **present progressive + time adjunct**:

I'm not going to borrow more money from now.

Peter says he's visiting Ciudad Real at the weekend.

He is changing his job next month.

2.3.3. Imminent events

An event which is seen as occurring in the immediate future is expressed by **be + going to** or by **be about to + infinitive**.

From what I've seen so far, it's going to be a difficult game.

I'm about to go into a meeting.

Ronaldo is on the point of signing a new contract.

Jo is on the verge of giving up her university course, because she really hates it.

2.3.4. Future anterior events

A future event anterior to another event is expressed by the Future Perfect:

I'll have finished my report by Friday night.

By the time he realizes he loves her, she'll have moved to Germany.

Otherwise, the Future Perfect expresses the **duration** or **repetition** of an event in the future. The addition of the Progressive emphasizes the "stretching out" of the sequence.

We'll have lived here for ten years by next July.

We'll have been living here for ten years by next July.

After analyzing tense, aspect and mood, we will now proceed to analyze the other important linguistic element which sentences use to express time: time adjuncts.

3. TEMPORAL EXPRESSIONS

In order to structure the following sections we can divide temporal expressions into three groups according to the meaning they express; that is, whether they answer the questions: "**When?**", "**How long?**" or "**How often?**" We can see the three meanings in the following example:

<i>We</i>	<i>are going to study</i>	<i>for two hours</i>	<i>every day</i>	<i>this year.</i>
Subject	Finite referring to a plan for the future	Time Adjunct How long	Time Adjunct how often	Time Adjunct when

Table 1. Temporal expressions

As we studied in previous sections, the time in the sentence is projected into the future by means of the tense used, the lexical auxiliary "be + going to + infinitive" and the time adjuncts.

The answer to "When are you going to study?" is the noun phrase "this year". "How long are you going to study?" The answer is the prepositional phrase "for two hours" and "how often are you going to study?" is answered by the noun phrase "every day." Let us now define *when*, *how long* and *how often* more in detail.

3.1. TIME – WHEN?

With this heading we mean a point in time when something happened. There are two main perspectives to address this idea, by **verbal tenses**, as we have already mentioned, and by **time adjuncts** which include adverbs, nouns and adjectives, referring to time position.

3.1.1. Time Adjuncts

No other type of adjunct has such a wide range of grammatical realizations available as has the adjunct of time.

We will look at the commoner adverbs, nouns, prepositional phrases and subordinated adverbial clauses used as time adjuncts as we examine the expression of each major semantic role in turn. Example:

When did she arrive?	<i>quite recently.</i> (Adverbial) <i>last night.</i> (Noun Phrase) <i>at five o'clock.</i> (Prepositional Phrase) <i>while you were in the garden.</i> (Subordinate Time clause)
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Table 2. Realizations of time adjuncts

Quirk establishes three major divisions of time position adjuncts:

(1) Those denoting a **point or period** of time especially “before”: adjectives and adverbs refer to actions that occurred before the temporal reference in the sentence:

– Adjectives: *early, late, earlier, former, preceding, previous to, prior to, preliminary to, preparatory to...*

He handed a good essay. His previous ones were all poor.

– Adverbials: *before, earlier, first, formerly, up to, previously, so far, before that, until now...*

When I arrived he had already eaten my sandwich.

(2) Those adjuncts which imply **attention to another period of time**, especially “after”.

– Adjectives: *following, later, next:*

I saw him on Friday; the following day he married.

– Adverbials: *afterwards, again, after that, immediately, later, next, since (then), after that, afterwards, subsequent to, lately.*

*The manager went to the bank that morning. He was then shot.
I suggest that we see him tomorrow.*

(3) Simultaneous with given time reference:

– Adjectives: contemporary, simultaneous, ...

The death of the president was broadcast this afternoon. Simultaneous to it, another announcement was reported.

– Adverbials: at present, at this point, at the same time, (in the) meantime, meanwhile, now, presently, simultaneously, then, relative when, as, while, by...

By the end of May I will have my new car.

Words with temporal significance do not always have a connective function to other clauses. Thus, someone might say: *John's previous wife was Monica*, without prior mention to John's subsequent or present wife.

Adverbials *already*, *still* and *yet* deserve further study as they are normally studied together. They do not always need a stated time reference in the sentence as all of them express duration **up to the moment of speaking**:

- ALREADY refers to processes or states which occurred before the present moment. It is typically used in **declarative or interrogative positive sentences**:

I am 18 and I already have a car.

Have you already got a car?

Has Tom already gone? Yes, he has already gone.

- STILL refers to processes or states which continue to occur or not occur up to the present:

I still love you.

I still haven't got a car.

Do you still want to go on holiday?

- YET refers to processes or states which may occur in the future or have not occurred up to the present moment. It is used in **negative and interrogative sentences** and always at the end:

I haven't bought his present yet.

Have you heard the news yet?

Semantically, time adjuncts play an important part in specifying time reference of the verb phrase when this is not stated. For example in *He is singing*, does the speaker refer to the present or to the future? Thus "now" determines that the reference is present in *He is singing now* and "tomorrow" is future "*He is playing tomorrow*."

3.1.2. Prepositional Phrases

There are a series of prepositions which specify location and which students normally find difficult to apply, especially in lower levels at the EOI.

- **AT.** We use “at” for exact points or periods of time and also in some set phrases that take that preposition: *at six o'clock; at Christmas; at the weekend; at noon; at the end of July; at dinner time; at the moment; at midnight; at the same time...*

Exceptions: *She came in the middle of the night.*

- **ON.** We use “on” to talk about days of the week: *on Friday*; dates: *on the fourth of July*; and with parts of a particular day: *on Sunday night; on that particular afternoon.*

On is optional before days and dates in informal contexts:

I'll see you Monday.

We met the following day.

They got married March 12th.

We do not use *at/on/in* before “*last, next, this*”:

I'll see you next Friday.

They got married last March.

- **ON TIME vs. IN TIME.** The former means punctual: *The train left on time* (the opposite is “late”); the latter means “soon enough”:

Will you be home in time for dinner? (the opposite is “too late”).

I got to the station just in time to get the train.

- **IN.** We use “in” to talk about how long it will take before something happens. It is used with seasons: *in summer*; years: *in 1978*; parts of the day: *in the morning* (but at night):

In a few days I'll be in London.

I'll do it in ten minutes (duration).

- **BY.** We use “by” when we say that something will happen or be achieved either before a particular time or at that time at the latest:

By the age of twenty he had married the daughter of a merchant.

“By now” can also be used when time is not stated as being obvious from context:

They should be home by now.

- **IN** and **DURING** are more or less equivalent, but only *during* can be used to mean “in the course of”, standing out the idea of duration: *You could see her crying during the exam*. Also *by* can replace *during* in some contexts:

I like travelling by night.

For measuring time we find the following prepositions:

- **AGO** is used to measure time from the present to a point in the past:

I was the happiest woman in the world two years ago.

- **FROM NOW (ON)** is used to measure time from the present to a point in the future:

The hospital will be ended two years from now.

I will treat you better from now on.

The **ordinals** constitute a temporal series of **adjectives**: *first, second third...* with *next* as a substitute for any of the middle terms when moving up the series, and *final* or *last* as a substitute for the term for the end of the series:

The first boy who entered the room was my brother; the second/the next one was my boyfriend.

There is a corresponding series of **adjuncts** that mark the beginning of a set of events: *to start, to begin with, originally, at first, in the first place, firstly...*:

I shall explain what happened; but first I will give you a cup of tea.

Others such as *lastly, eventually, finally, at last...* mark the **end of a set of events**:

We went to the cinema for the third time and we then managed to buy the tickets at last!

Temporal sequences can be expressed with some of those adjuncts:

First, they went to the restaurant. Then he took her to the pub and finally they got home.

At the end means at the time when something ends. The opposite is “at the beginning”.

We will go abroad at the end of May.

However, **in the end** means “finally”. The opposite is “at first”.

He didn't go anywhere in the end.

3.1.3. Subordinate Clauses

As for Subordinate clauses are concerned, temporal relations can be expressed by finite, non-finite or verbless adverbial clauses. They may be introduced by **conjunctions** such as:

after	until	(at) once	now (that)
before	when	whenever	so/as long as
since	as	while	...

Table 3. Conjunctions

– Finite:

When I entered the room, I felt a shiver down my spine (The moment I ...).

When the film finishes, we'll go and have a pizza.

Buy your tickets as soon as you reach the station.

Since he came, Mary has been in a bad mood.

– Non- finite:

He wrote his greatest novel while working as a fireman.

Once published, the book caused a remarkable stir.

– Verbless:

When in difficulty, consult the manual.

Travelling by metro, I get the impression of a greater affluence there.

(Position “when”)

3.1.4. Position of Time-when Adjuncts

Time-when adjuncts' order depends in part on information focus, but the tendency is for the adjunct denoting the more extended period to come last:

I'll see you at 10 on Monday.

However, the order may be reversed if the shorter-in-time adjunct is considerably longer:

I was in New York in 2002 when the suicidal airplane crashed.

We found the lost child within a few hours.

Only the longer one in time can come initially:

On Monday, I'll see you at nine.

Front positions means that the adjunct becomes the Theme of the sentence and it gives greater emphasis to the adjunct:

In summer we went to Egypt.

3.2. DURATION – HOW LONG?

The temporal dimension of duration is elicited by the questions *How long ...?* and more specifically *Till when...?* and *Since when...?*

Linking duration to specific positions on the linear time scale, we have the concept of **span**. *Span* is subdivided to correspond to the only rudimentary analogue to spatial direction that is conceptualized with respect to time, the **Forward Span**, until, up to a specified point of time, and the **Backward Span** since, from a specified point of time. Forward span extends from the point of time to which the speaker and hearer are oriented, forward to some point which is “future” in relation to the orientation point. For example:

I'll be working on this project till next month.

The converse of this, **Backward span**, indicates the stretch of time back from the speaker-hearer orientation point. For example:

I've been working here since last week.

3.2.1. Forward span

The key items in realizing adjuncts of forward span are “*until*” and “*till*” introducing either clauses or prepositional phrases. Other adjuncts expressing forward time projection are:

	Forward span time Adjuncts
<i>I'll be in Chicago</i>	<u>all next week</u> <u>the whole month</u> <u>part of the year</u>
<i>I'm not ready yet; this work will take me</i>	<u>another half hour</u> <u>till 6.30</u>
<i>I think I'll be ready</i>	<u>by 6.30</u>
<i>I won't keep you waiting</i>	<u>beyond 6.30</u>

Table 4. Forward-span adjuncts

3.2.2. Backward span

Backward span is elicited by questions such as: *how long have you...?; how long is it since you...?, when...?, or since when?:*

Since when have you been lying in the sun?

The key item in realizing adjuncts of backward span is “*since*” introducing either a prepositional phrase or a clause, or used alone as an adverbial by ellipsis:

She hasn't had an ice cream since last summer.

We have been talking to them since their parents left.

I spent some time in the national library last year, but I haven't been there since.

Then there are more general expressions of duration without necessary relation to a particular point of orientation. For example

I'm staying for three weeks.

In terms of time adjuncts *duration* is realized by prepositions like *since, until, over* and by noun phrases like “*this/ past month, this /next near*”.

3.2.3. Prepositional Phrases expressing duration

Let us now study some basic prepositions denoting duration:

- **FOR** and **SINCE** are both used to say how long something has been going on:

He has been singing for the last 30 minutes.

I worked in USA for two years.

I have been living here since 1980.

The difference between them is that “for” is followed by a period of time (*two hours, six weeks...*) whereas “since” is followed by the start of that period (*8 o'clock, Monday, 1900...*):

He has lived here since last Tuesday /for 7 days.

“For” is used with the present perfect and the past simple; “since” needs perfect aspects.

“For” is often omitted, especially when preceding “all”:

They have been married ten years.

He has been singing all night long.

However, it cannot be omitted when it goes in front position or after a negative:

For 600 years, the Arabs inhabited Spain.

I haven't read a book for two weeks.

- **FOR AGES** means that an action has been going on for a long time, usually with surprise:

He's been sleeping for ages!

- **FOR GOOD** means “forever”: *I want to separate for good.*

- **FOR vs. DURING.** We use **for + a period** of time to indicate the **length** of the action; and **during + noun** to say **when** something happens, not how long:

I fell asleep during the film, for about half an hour.

(When? During the film; How long? For half an hour)

- **DURING vs. WHILE.** Both mean “in the course of”, but “during” is followed by noun and “while” by a clause:

I fell asleep while I was reading my book.

I fell asleep during the film.

“While” changes its meaning according to the kind of verb it goes with, with stative verbs it implies duration; with dynamic verbs it means time-when, *i.e.*:

I was by his side while he still could talk.

I arrived while he was talking about it.

- **OVER** can be used instead of *for* in some contexts referring to short periods:

I was in Seattle over the summer.

Shall we discuss it over lunch/over a drink?

“Over” is similar to **all through** or **throughout** but these two give more the sense of duration:

We sat through two lectures and then left.

He yawned throughout the performance.

- **FROM... (UP) TO / UNTIL...** identify a period by its beginning and its end:

Drinks will be served from seven o'clock.

Most of the tapestries in this room date from the seventeenth century.

The price of petrol will rise by 5p a gallon from tomorrow.

The museum is open from 9.30 to 6.00 Tuesday to Sunday.

From can be omitted thus not stating the beginning of the action:

I will be on the beach until 2 o'clock.

On the contrary, if we want to leave the end of the action undetermined, we can say:

I will be on the beach from 12 onwards.

Until means different things according to the polarity of the sentence:

I could not sleep until midnight (meaning “before”, it marks the beginning of the action).

I could sleep until midnight (meaning “up to” until marks the end of the action).

- **BETWEEN... AND...** mean the same as *from... to...* but they do not convey the idea of the whole time span:

I will phone you between lunch and dinner (anytime in between).

3.2.4. Adjuncts of Duration

Apart from Prepositional Phrases, adjuncts also express duration:

always	long	briefly
momentarily	permanently	temporarily
lately	recently	for the summer
the whole day	for the moment	for a while/time

Table 5. Duration adjuncts

I have long admired his style of writing.

This office is closed temporarily for redecoration.

3.2.5. Position of Time-duration Adjuncts

Time-duration adjuncts order depends in part on information focus, but the tendency is to place them at the end or in front position:

I am going to England for the summer.

Throughout history, all commanders have known that no victory is complete until the chief of the opposing side has been killed, captured or fled.

They may be found less frequently in other positions, in more formal styles:

The church has throughout the ages given a moral lead to society.

Bruckner showed, throughout his life, an attitude of deference, if not abasement, towards established authority.

(Between the verb and object; characteristic of journalistic style)

3.3. FREQUENCY – HOW OFTEN?

Time-frequency adjuncts are usually adverbial phrases or prepositional phrases. **Quirk** divides them semantically into two major categories: those naming explicitly the times by which the frequency is measured, called **Definite Frequency**, those not doing so, called **Indefinite Frequency**.

3.3.1. Definite Frequency

Definite Frequency is addressed from the question *how many times...?* They are definite frequency periods which can be measured:

weekly	per week	annually
monthly	hourly	once a day
per month	daily	twice a month
three times a day	once	again (one time)
every other day		

Table 6. Definite Frequency

You should take this aspirin daily.

The post comes twice daily.

Your starting salary is £13 000 per annum and will be reviewed annually.

3.3.2. Indefinite Frequency

Indefinite Frequency, which is addressed from the question *How often...?* refers to the indefinite frequency periods that cannot be measured unless we establish a ranking occurrence from the most usual to low frequency (from *always* to *never*):

normally	sometimes	commonly,	hardly ever
generally	(very) often	never	at intervals,
occasionally	frequently	not ever	regularly
continuously,	Seldom	rarely	repeatedly
continually	on and off	now and then/again	many times
on several occasions	on frequent repetitions	day in and day out	time and again
again and again	over and over	day after day	

Table 7. Indefinite frequency

I have to do the same boring jobs day in day out.

We rarely see each other now.

I hardly ever go to the dentist.

Time and again people are protesting about pollution.

3.3.3. Position of Time-frequency Adjuncts

Definite frequency adjuncts order depends in part on information focus, but the tendency is to place them at the end:

She goes to the gym three times a week.

The temperature is checked twice.

They also occupy front position, for greater emphasis or for reasons of topical linking. They do not normally occupy mid position.

Every day she spends hours on her personal fitness program.

Indefinite frequency adjuncts most typical occur in mid position when they take the form of adverb phrases.

They quite often ask about you.

I sometimes go to the market.

It normally happens that way.

Prepositional adjuncts and longer adjuncts in general expressing indefinite frequency are normally used in front or end position:

I see her from time to time.

I've had toothache on and off for a couple of months.

Every now and again they would get her to fill in those forms.

More often than not, a student will come up with the right answer.

For emphasis indefinite frequency adjuncts can be used in front or end position. End position is much more common in spoken language.

Usually it's a matter of discussing things till we reach an agreement.

We don't get a candidate for my party except at general elections usually.

When there are two definite frequency adjuncts at the end, the tendency is for the adjunct denoting number frequency to go before the one denoting period:

You have to take the train twice daily.

However, only the one denoting the longer period can occur initially:

Each day, she felt her pulse hourly.

We should also stand out that when negative adjuncts are placed at the beginning of the sentence, **inversion** occurs (see Topic 17), generally in formal language:

Not only is it a remarkable book, it is also a highly successful one.

Rarely has a minister been faced with such a problem.

Seldom has the teacher given a worse performance.

Frequency can also be expressed by prepositional phrases. Note the difference between this pair of sentences:

A: *When did you go for a walk on the beach?*

B: *On Sunday (one particular Sunday).*

A: *How often do you go for a walk on the beach?*

B: *On Sundays (all Sundays).*

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON POSITION

Adjuncts from the three major subclasses can co-occur in final position. In this case, the order would be time-duration, time-frequency, time-when, and we go back to our initial example:

<i>We</i>	<i>are going to study</i>	<i>for two hours</i>	<i>every day</i>	<i>this year.</i>
Subject	Finite referring to a plan for the future	Time Adjunct How long	Time Adjunct how often	Time Adjunct when

Table 8. Position of adjuncts

Other examples are:

I lived there for a month every summer after the war.

(How long? For a month; How often? Every summer; When? After the war)

Time expressions in the same subclass can also be combined:

Today and tomorrow / now or later (Time-when)

For the day and for the week (Duration)

Two or three times a day (Frequency)

5. CONCLUSION

The expression of time reference dealt with in this topic is relevant to the learning of vocabulary of English since differences between the students' native language and English may lead to several problems, such as the incorrect use of expressions and the use of a required preposition. For instance, the most common mistake for our students at the Basic level is to express time position reference in English: *in the afternoon, at night, at two o'clock since* in Spanish it is expressed by means of other prepositions ("*por la tarde, por la noche*") and do not correspond literally to the translation the students make.

It has been suggested that a methodology grounded in part in the application of explicit linguistic knowledge enhances the second language learning process. In the curriculum designed for the Basic and Intermediate Level in Madrid, 31/2007 Decree, the expression of time by means of prepositions is envisaged from earlier stages in terms of simple descriptions of temporal situations and frequency of habitual actions such as describing what they do in a normal day to higher stages towards more complex descriptions of temporal situations, comprising not only prepositions, but also the use of adverbial, noun phrases and non-finite clauses (Preposition + ing clauses).

This is a very important topic for our students, as it deals with something they will encounter in everyday English duties. Besides, knowing about the expression of time is part of the Communicative Competence and we assume that there is an intrinsic connection between its learning and successful communication.

6. SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – From meaning to form. – Expression of time by means of tenses, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, adjectives, conjunctions, specific clause structures and idiomatic expressions.
2. TIME REFERENCE, TIME VS. TENSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time: semantic category divided into past, present, future. – Tense: grammatical representation of time. – Time and tense do not run parallel. – Tense is morphologically marked in present and past. – Past tenses: past situations, factual remoteness, backshift. – Present tenses: 3rd p.s., present without reference to specific time, habits, instantaneous events, reference to past events, future time reference. – Aspect: is the speaker's perspective on the time of the event. – Two morphologically marked aspects: Perfect (relation of an action on one frame and another time frame) and Progressive (ongoing action, unfinished, extended in time). – Modality: indicative-> facts; Non-factual moods: imperative and subjunctive. – The future in English is modalized, it expresses: safe predictions, intended events; imminent events, future anterior events.
3. TEMPORAL EXPRESSIONS 1. TIME – WHEN? 2. DURATION – HOW LONG?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time adjuncts: adverbs, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses and adjectives. – Adverbial phrases: time before, time after, simultaneous time. – Already, still, yet. – Time prepositional phrases with: at, on, in, by, during, ago, from now on. – Temporal sequence: ordinals (<i>first, second...</i>), <i>at/in the end</i>. – Clauses: finite (<i>when I entered the room</i>) non –finite (<i>while working as a nurse</i>) and verbless clauses (<i>when in difficulty</i>). – Position: end position or front position. – Forward span: until, till, by, beyond, another half hour, next week. – Backward span (since when?): since, this past month. – Prepositional phrases: for, since, for ages, for good, for & during, during & while, over, from.. up to/until, between... and... – Adjuncts of duration: always, lately, recently, briefly, ... – Position: at the end or in front position.

3. FREQUENCY – HOW OFTEN?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Definite frequency (how many times?): daily, weekly, once.– Indefinite frequency (how often?) normally, generally, never, rarely, at intervals...– Position: indefinite short adjuncts mid position, if long end position.
4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Co-occurrence of different adjuncts: <i>We are studying for <u>two hours every day this year</u>.</i>
5. CONCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Implications in the class, difficult for our students, taught from Basic levels onwards.– Importance within the Communicative Competence.

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