

## THE CATEGORY OF TENSE IN ENGLISH: EVOLUTION, CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY

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**Abstract:** The article examines various aspects of the tense category in the English language, ranging from the evolution of tense grammar to the influence of cultural characteristics and recent technological changes. The study explores a wide range of topics, including tense vocabulary, phraseology and changes in grammar. The article analyzes in detail how the use of time reflects linguistic aspects, cultural traditions, and emotional nuances. Additionally, it explores the influence of modern technology on language. The conclusions of the article emphasize the importance of the category of time as a key element in the formation and development of language, as well as its ability to reflect the dynamics of society in various historical and cultural periods.

**Keywords:** category; tense; linguistics; notion; evolution; lexis.

### 1 Introduction

The presence of time in the objective world is universally acknowledged. According to I. Tahirov [18] the regulatory function is the first and simplest feature that characterizes objective time. Time is essential for organizing the world; without it, chaos would reign, and distinguishing 'before' from 'after' would be impossible. This issue has been explored in fields such as physics, biology, and psychology. In addition to astronomical time, other types include physical, chemical, biological, genealogical, social, and psychological time.

The division of objective time into three periods - past, present, and future - exists in the mind during comprehension and understanding. This implies that the division of time into past, present, and future is a human construct. According to Akhundov [2], grammar does not create time by itself. In all three temporal contexts, the criterion for determining grammatical tense is based on an approximation to the objective flow of time. The grammatical tense of a sentence is determined by the tense of the event being described. This criterion serves as the starting point for determining grammatical tense and may or may not be explicitly stated by the speaker. Human perception of the world and time is through thoughts and consciousness. Throughout life, individuals are in constant contact with the objective world, experiencing it through their senses and cognitive processes. Each moment is considered the present time. However, human consciousness separates and divides real time into parts. This process is not spontaneous, but rather the result of the interaction between the physical and mental worlds. The physical world is transformed into 'acts of imagination' by the psyche, which serves as the basis for language creation. The present time for humans occurs when they are in direct contact with the objective world and its events. If the objective world and its events are expressed in written or oral speech during this direct contact, then the objective event and its expression in language belong to the same time - the present. Therefore, time attracts attention as a very broad, multifaceted concept, encompassing thought events, physical events, linguistic events, and subjective-psychological events. However, while various fields of study, including philosophy, physics, psychology, linguistics, and natural science, examine time from their unique perspectives, it is natural science, physics, and philosophy that provide the fundamental understanding of time. Linguistics studies time as it is expressed in language, but always in conjunction with philosophy and physics.

### 2 Method

The multidimensional nature of the study determined the use of cognitive and cultural approaches to analyze the material, as well as a variety of methods and techniques for its description. The study is based on contextual analysis, with the help of which the specific compatibility and associative connections of the

minimal units of division of time were revealed. Within the framework of the comparative historical method, an etymological and historical-lexicological analysis of the studied temporal vocabulary is given. The work also used various techniques of lexicographic and system-semantic analysis.

### 2 Results and Discussion

Initially, time was considered a philosophical category, with research related to time in linguistics emerging later. The term 'time' generally refers to three forms of temporal perception: past, present, and future. However, this approach does not meet the requirements of scientific, particularly linguistic, specificity. In linguistic scientific studies, time has been traditionally viewed through two models: the 'periodic model' and the 'linear model', depending on the approach taken. However, this approach does not meet the requirements of scientific, particularly linguistic, specificity. In linguistic scientific studies, time has been traditionally viewed through two models: the 'periodic model' and the 'linear model', depending on the approach taken. Notably, determining past, present, and future time is easier with the periodic model, whereas this distinction disappears in the case of linearity and binary approaches.

The significance of tense in language becomes apparent in various crucial aspects that impact effective communication and information transfer.

Firstly, time markers aid in organizing events in chronological order, facilitating comprehension of the sequence of events. Secondly, tense accuracy ensures precision in information transmission. The use of tense categories enables precise and clear communication of information. For instance, distinguishing between past, present, and future tenses help to avoid misunderstandings and uncertainty. Additionally, it is important to express attitudes towards events objectively. The speaker's attitude towards events, degree of completion, relevance, or plans for the future can be conveyed through the use of tense forms. Creating context is crucial for the correct understanding of messages, and the category of time adds depth and meaning to statements. Narrative design is another crucial aspect to consider.

Temporal forms play a crucial role in shaping narratives. They enable the creation of tension, emphasize important points, and add dynamics to the story. Additionally, the expression of time in language reflects cultural characteristics and attitudes towards time in a given society. For instance, certain languages may prioritize precise timing over events, while others may prioritize events over precise timing.

The study of the grammatical aspect of time provides ample opportunities for comprehensive analysis of this category. Time is inherently linked to movement and the change of events, which is reflected in the verb. The flow of movement through time, along with other time-specific features, is expressed both lexically and grammatically within the verb. In simpler languages, the grammatical category of time is less prominent. However, in more developed languages, it plays a crucial role and significantly influences the expression of time relations. It is worth noting that the ancient Yiddish language lacked a tense system for verbs, and the Indonesian language does not possess a grammatical category for time. Instead, the aspect of time is conveyed through lexical or situational cues in languages. M. Haspelmath demonstrates that the concept of time is deeply intertwined with the concept of space [9]. This connection is evident when examining the sources of tenses in languages. It is important to note that in many languages, tense is not expressed by verbs but by other parts of speech, such as time adverbs or nouns [23]. The tense category of the verb is a reflection of objective time and refers to the action relation of the speech moment or to any other speech moment which is taken as the basis of time relations.

Different languages express tense using a variety of grammatical and lexical mechanisms. For example, in English, verb forms and auxiliary verbs such as 'avoir' and 'être' are used to express time, including special tense forms such as *Passé Composé*, *Imparfait*, and *Futur Simple*. Similarly, Russian uses various grammatical forms of verbs to express tense, including the past, present, and future. Additionally, Russian has aspects (perfect and imperfect) that affect the expression of time in the language. When discussing tenses, R. Uusikochi employs specific markers, while other authors may opt to refer, for example, to tenses such as the Imperfect, which have a specific temporal reference, such as past temporal reference [20].

In Japanese, verb tenses can be changed using different endings and auxiliaries, with a clear division between past and present forms, along with the usage of future forms.

The German language employs various verb forms and auxiliary verbs, such as 'haben' and 'sein'. It also features different tense forms, including *Perfekt*, *Präteritum*, and *Futur I* and *II*.

Each language has its own unique way of expressing time. Studying these differences can help us better understand the linguistic structures and cultural contexts of each language. Tense describes how verbs change, and in English, there are two broad tenses: present and past. According to Thornbury [19], tense adapts to form verb structures in different tenses.

The evolution of tense expression in English has gone through several stages, influenced by different languages and changes in grammatical structure. This overview covers the following periods:

**Old English (5th-11th centuries):** During this period, Anglo-Saxons used verb endings and inflections to express time. For example, the verb 'sing' could change from 'sang' to 'sungen' depending on person and number in the Past Simple.

**Middle English (11th-15th centuries):** Under the influence of the Norman Conquest in 1066 and the Latin language, new grammatical structures began to appear. Additionally, words from French and Latin contributed to the English vocabulary.

During the Early Modern English period (15th-17th centuries), changes occurred in the system of verb endings, and auxiliary verbs, such as 'have' and 'be', were introduced to express tense.

In the 17th century, English underwent significant changes under the influence of the work of linguist and grammarian Lexie Thomas. During this time, the tense system became more standardized, and English adopted forms characteristic of modern language. The evolution of English has been influenced by literature, science, and technology, resulting in an enriched vocabulary and changes in tense expression in modern English. These changes reflect both internal factors related to its grammatical structure and external influences, such as contact with other languages and cultures, that have enriched vocabulary and altered tense expression in modern English.

Some languages have grammatical structures that precisely indicate a specific point or section in time by combining appropriate lexical elements. However, in other cultures, time intervals may not be as precisely defined. For instance, in Australian English, the words 'today' and 'now' cannot be separated lexically [Comrie, p. 7-8; 7]. According to Johnson [11], time is defined as the ratio of movement to the moment of speech. Weber [22] distinguishes between the verb and objective tense, noting that the verb reflects the perspective of the action and its appropriate point in relation to it.

The impact of foreign languages on the development of a language's tense system can occur through various cultural and linguistic contacts. One primary way in which foreign languages

can affect the tense system is through the borrowing of vocabulary. This occurs when a language comes into contact with other languages, leading to the adoption of new words and phrases related to the expression of time. The text should maintain a formal register and avoid biased or emotional language. This fragment of text discusses the potential impact of language contact on grammatical structures and cultural exchange. It is important to use clear and concise language, avoiding complex terminology and ornamental language. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure grammatical correctness and precise word choice. The content of the improved text must remain as close as possible to the source text, without adding new aspects.

Cultural interactions and exchanges may influence the perception of time, as reflected in the expression of time in relation to traditions, customs, and cultural characteristics. Additionally, technological and scientific advancements can impact language, including the introduction of new terminology related to time. These terms, originating from fields such as information technology and astronomy, should be integrated into the language with consideration for their appropriateness and relevance. Furthermore, the influence of great literature from other languages on a language's time system is notable. The study of foreign literary traditions and translations of literary works can lead to changes in how time is expressed and perceived. Globalization further complicates the relationship between language and time, requiring careful examination of its impact on linguistic and cultural practices.

Globalization and cultural contact in modern society can lead to languages influencing each other, including the time system. This is especially true in environments where people use multiple languages in everyday life. These factors collectively influence the language system, including its tense structure, resulting in changes that reflect cultural, social, and technological influences.

During cultural contacts between countries, languages influence each other, shaping the linguistic landscape and leaving historical legacies that serve as valuable resources for researchers. Cultural content holds significant importance for both its creators and consumers, contributing to community formation and the affirmation of cultural identity. Cultural institutions play a crucial role in fostering community cohesion, which in turn enhances organizational development. Developing a robust system for assessing the quality of cultural content, including the establishment of indicators and criteria, is imperative. The outcomes of this endeavor will significantly influence the types of cultural products produced and consumed, the values they transmit, and the cultural environment in which future generations will grow up.

The research concludes that the formation of grammatical tense is closely linked to cognitive processes, which are influenced by an individual's spatial experiences. In grammar, a tense verb indicates the timing of an action or existence, such as the present (something happening now), the past (something that happened before), or the future (something that will happen). Verbs take on different forms to convey information about their state, including simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive. While the simple tense does not always denote completion or non-completion of an action, the progressive tense is used for ongoing and unfinished actions, while the perfect and perfect progressive tenses indicate completed actions. The verb's grammatical category of tense reflects the speaker's perception of time [3], although the term 'objective time' requires clarification. For instance, in the sentence 'I watched TV last night', the past tense verb 'watched' signifies an action completed in the past, while in 'I wish you would leave', the verb 'would leave' denotes a future action from the perspective of the speaker. English primarily employs two tenses: past and present, which correspond precisely to verb forms and indicate the relationship between the action and the moment of speech or a specific moment in the past or future. This relationship is

closely intertwined with the category of manner in linguistic analysis.

Tense is a grammatical category expressed morphologically through inflectional morphemes. Therefore, verb forms that lack inflectional tense morphology, such as the present perfect and the analytic will-future, are sometimes excluded from the definition of true tenses. Some scholars, like Finch [8] and Thornbury [19], narrowly define tense to include only present, past, and future tenses. However, others, including Crystal [5] and Declerck [6], argue that the analytic will-future should also be classified as a tense in English, bringing the total number of tenses to at least three. This topic remains a subject of debate among linguists. When discussing tense meanings, linguists often employ the timeline analogy, conceptualizing time as an unbounded line divided into past, present, and future segments. The crucial aspect of tense, as noted by Lyons [15], is its deictic nature, meaning it refers to a specific point or period of time relative to the moment of utterance. Many linguists maintain that English possesses only two tenses - present and past.

English tense grammar encompasses various tense forms that enable the expression of past, present, and future events. The past tense, also known as the Past Simple, is utilized to convey actions or occurrences that took place in the past and have concluded. It is typically formed by adding '-ed' to the infinitive form of regular verbs (e.g., 'played', 'talked'). However, it is important to note that some verbs form the past tense irregularly. For example, 'go' becomes 'went' and 'eat' becomes 'ate'. An example sentence using the past tense is: 'She visited Paris last summer.'

The present tense, encompassing the Present Simple and Present Continuous, is employed to convey general facts, habits, and regular actions.

The Present Continuous tense describes actions that are currently taking place. For example, instead of stating 'He works in an office', we can say 'He is working in the office'. Similarly, instead of 'She reads a book', we can use 'She is reading a book'. Future tense can be expressed through the Future Simple, Present Continuous, or the 'going to' structure.

The Future Simple, Present Continuous, and 'Going to' are all used to express future intentions, predictions, and plans. It is important to choose the appropriate tense for the specific context. For instance, the Future Simple can be used to make promises for the future, while the Present Continuous can describe planned events. Example of Present Continuous: Next week, they will be flying to London. Example of 'Going to': She is going to start a new job. According to Estling Vannestål [21], "There is no proper future tense in English due to the fact that there is no specific form of the verb to express future events. Future events are expressed by means of different constructions, with the two most regular ones being shall/will and be going to".

It is worth noting that other tense forms, such as the Past Continuous and Present Perfect, can more accurately convey attitudes towards time and the degree of completion of events. Understanding the rules and context for the use of these tenses helps English speakers convey time information correctly and accurately.

The vocabulary used to express time in a language may reflect cultural attitudes towards time in a particular society. Unique words and expressions can signify differences in how cultures perceive and organize their time. For instance, the use of precise time expressions may reflect cultural attitudes towards punctuality and precision.

Certain cultures may place greater importance on punctuality and precise timekeeping. Their language may include more detailed expressions for time, beyond basic terms like 'morning' or 'evening.'

Some languages may have words or expressions that convey an appreciation of time, such as 'time flies' or 'the day seems to

drag on'. These expressions may reflect the cultural perception of time.

In some cultures, time markers may be associated with specific events or ceremonies. There may be words in a language that indicate time periods associated with traditions or holidays. Additionally, the concept of time zones is relevant to understanding how time is perceived and measured globally.

In cultures where people live in different time zones, there may be vocabulary that reflects an understanding of the geographic distribution of time and communication across different parts of the world. Additionally, some languages may have a rich vocabulary for expressing evaluation of the past tense. For instance, some cultures may value punctuality differently, which can be reflected in their language through the use of words that express either respect for punctuality or a more relaxed attitude.

New vocabulary appears in the language, and words and constructions are borrowed from other languages. Vocabulary is thought to be more susceptible to change than grammar. However, these two areas of language are closely related, so changes often affect both. An example of the simultaneous updating of a language at the level of vocabulary and grammar is the new models of incorporated nouns in the English language, where a new way of life is reflected in the appearance of packaging events in a compact linguistic form. One of the ways of saving linguistic effort in this way is the process of incorporation, which involves, for example, the creation of nouns from two stems - a verb that designates an actor/activity and a noun that designates the object on which the action is performed. So, the whole situation is understandable and recoverable from one lexeme. Example: vase-breaker - someone broke a vase, car-driver - someone drives a car. The same model is used to construct all the above examples. The vocabulary related to time is part of the cultural code that is passed down from generation to generation. It reflects society's characteristics, including its history, values, and attitude towards time organization.

The understanding of the word as a cultural phenomenon can be illustrated by the following example: in English, the word backslapper is a person who treats people in a familiar way, not all of whom are considered his or her friends. The semantics are understandable to those cultures where a pat on the back is a demonstration of a friendly attitude, a gesture of greeting, encouragement. In countries such as Korea, Thailand, China, and the Middle East, it is considered bad manners to touch strangers. For example, a pat on the back may only be given to one's closest friends or relatives. In English-speaking countries, it is a possible greeting for strangers, but carries the connotation of showing cordiality. In Mediterranean countries, it is believed that if the person the one is talking to does not engage in physical contact, it may be interpreted as a sign of coldness. So, the word 'backslapper', if translated into Greek, for example, would not be understood without additional explanation.

The vocabulary of time in English includes many words and expressions associated with different time periods. Here are some examples:

1. Past tense: yesterday, last week, a while ago, in the past, previously, before;
2. Present tense: today, now, currently, at the moment, presently, at the moment;
3. Future tense: tomorrow, next month, soon, in the future, eventually;
4. Time periods: morning, afternoon, evening, night, midnight;
5. Seasons: spring, summer, autumn/fall, winter;
6. Days of the week and months: Monday, January, Friday, July;
7. Holidays and events: Christmas, New Year, birthday, anniversary;
8. Terms and periods: deadline, term, era, phase, period.

This represents only a fraction of the words and expressions related to time. The diverse range of tense vocabulary in English enhances the flexibility for articulating and precisely delineating various temporal dimensions in everyday conversation.

Incorporating phraseology into written communication can infuse it with depth and emotion, elevating expression and enhancing the conveyance of meaning. Here are several ways in which this enrichment occurs:

1. **Picture images:** Phraseological expressions can create vivid images and metaphors, making the text more visual and memorable. For example, using “black sheep” or “like two peas in a pod” can add an emotional tone to the text and describe the situation more colorfully.
2. **Expression of feelings:** Phraseology often contains emotionally charged expressions that help convey the feelings and mood of the text. For example, phrases like ‘ringing the bells’ or ‘over the moon’ evoke specific emotional responses.
3. **Language nuances:** Phraseological expressions can add linguistic nuance and sophistication to a text, enriching its vocabulary and style.
4. **Contextual understanding:** Phraseology can highlight contextual understanding and agreement within a text, enhancing the reader's comprehension.
5. **Humor and irony:** Phraseological phrases often contain elements of humor and irony, lightening the text and adding interest with the author's personal style.
6. **Character portrayal:** Phraseology can help create unique character profiles within a text, reflecting their communication style, personality, and character traits.
7. **Expressiveness:** Phraseology exhibits a high degree of expressiveness, enabling authors to vividly and emotionally convey their thoughts and feelings.

By incorporating phraseological expressions, the author can enhance their text, making it livelier and more attractive to readers, while also conveying a wealth of cultural and linguistic nuances.

The Swiss scholar Charles Bally is regarded as the founder of phraseology as an independent linguistic discipline. In his work “*Traite de stylistique française*” (1909), he emphasized the significance of phraseology. However, it's worth noting that not all linguists recognize phraseology as a distinct discipline. Slovak phraseologist J. Mlatsek and Bulgarian colleague Boyadzhiev consider it only a relatively independent part of lexicology. In contrast, Russian phraseologist A.V. Kunin not only advocates for phraseology as an independent discipline but also argues for the necessity of distinguishing it as a fifth level of language, opposed to lexicology, a viewpoint shared by German phraseologist V. Fleischer and Czech phraseologist F. Chermak.

The establishment of phraseology as a linguistic discipline in Russian science traces back to the 1940s, attributed to the work of academician V.V. Vinogradov. However, in the countries of Central and Western Europe, attention to phraseology began later. For instance, in Slovak linguistics, it gained active recognition only at a later stage.

In Czech linguistics, the initial studies on phraseology emerged around the 1960s of the same century. Initially, both phraseological and paremiological units were examined as a category of stable units. However, over time, the focus shifted to considering only stable phrases, which were not complete sentences but were regarded as equivalent to individual words. These were termed as ‘true phraseological units.’

Time phraseology in English comprises numerous popular expressions and phrases used to convey various ideas and situations. Here are some widely recognized examples: 1. **Time Flies:** Used to express how quickly time passes. 2. **In the Nick of Time:** Indicates that something happened just in time, at the last second. 3. **Time is of the Essence:** Emphasizes the importance of taking action as soon as possible. 4. **Behind the Times:** Describes something that is not in line with current trends and technology.

5. **Killing Time:** Refers to spending time aimlessly or waiting for something to happen. 6. **Make up for Lost Time:** Involves increased efforts to regain time lost in the past. 7. **A Stitch in Time Saves Nine:** Warns that early intervention can prevent more serious problems in the future. 8. **Time Heals All Wounds:** Asserts that emotional or physical wounds heal over time. 9. **Ahead of One's Time:** Describes a person or idea introduced before it becomes popular. 10. **Time is Money:** Emphasizes the importance of using time effectively to achieve success and prosperity.

These phrases and expressions are part of the rich cultural heritage of the English language, reflecting various aspects of time in society. In the age of the Internet, when intercultural contacts have become more active, language modernization occurs at an elusive pace, making it difficult to determine the boundaries of new vocabulary. Isolated phenomena become trends, and words become historical ‘artifacts’. Modern learning technology represents one of the most rational ways to organize the educational process, aiming to achieve learning goals with minimal time, effort, and money [1]. Key aspects of a young person's development, such as communication and learning, are increasingly shifting to a digital format. Consequently, global computerization has a profound impact, particularly on the linguistic awareness of future members of society.

The modernization of a language occurs gradually as part of its natural evolution. This updating is influenced by various factors, both external and internal. External factors encompass linguistic, political, economic, and cultural interactions between countries, as well as globalization and internal political developments. Technological advancements have also had a significant impact on language and the expression of time in everyday communication:

1. **Speed and instantaneity:** With the advancement of technology such as the internet and mobile devices, communication has become more instantaneous. This has introduced new phrases and expressions to reflect this speed, such as “send an instant message” or “receive real-time feedback.”
2. **Social media terminology:** The advent of social media and online platforms has introduced new terminology related to the expression of time. For example, “online status” or “like” are now common phrases associated with the instant sharing of information.
3. **Changing the rhythm of work:** Technologies such as email, video conferencing, and cloud services have changed the way businesses work and interact. This has influenced language expressions such as “conducting online calls” or “extending deadlines via email”.
4. **Terms in the field of information technology:** The development of information technology has led to the emergence of new terminology such as “software,” “software update,” and “coding”. These terms have become generally accepted and reflect changes in the expression of time within the context of development and technical aspects.
5. **Electronic gadgets and time management:** With the advent of electronic gadgets and time management apps, new phrases have emerged such as “set a reminder”, “schedule an event”, and “set an alarm”.
6. **Big data and time analytics:** The development of data analytics and big data technologies has introduced new terminology in expressing time, such as “time series”, “time intervals”, and “time trend forecasting”.

Technological changes have not only expanded vocabulary but also influenced the perception and use of time in everyday life. Language now reflects the faster and more dynamic nature of modern society, with new terms and expressions becoming integral parts of communication in the digital age.

#### 4 Conclusion

1. **Evolution of Temporal Forms:** The grammar of time in English has evolved from the use of simple tense forms to

- more complex ones, enabling a more precise expression of attitudes toward time and the completeness of events.
2. Influence of Culture on Time Vocabulary: The vocabulary of time broadly reflects cultural characteristics and societal attitudes toward time. Words and phrases associated with different time periods mirror the perception of time within cultural contexts.
  3. Phraseology of Time: Time-related phraseology enriches language, imbuing texts with richness and emotional nuances. Popular phrases and expressions pertaining to various temporal aspects create vivid imagery and convey emotional tones.
  4. Impact of Technology on Time Language: Technological advancements have significantly influenced the language of time. New terms and expressions, such as 'virtual meeting' and 'digital footprint', reflect contemporary realities and the dynamic nature of time usage in the digital age.
  5. Flexibility and Variability of Language: The study of time in language underscores the flexibility and variability of language as a reflection of cultural, social, and technological trends. Language continually evolves to mirror current societal and technological changes.

In conclusion, the category of tense in English is a multifaceted and dynamic aspect, reflecting not only grammatical rules but also cultural, emotional, and technological dimensions of society. It serves as a crucial element in shaping linguistic expression and facilitating effective communication across diverse contexts.

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#### Primary Paper Section: A

#### Secondary Paper Section: AI