

SEMINAR 8 – THE PRESENT PERFECT, THE PAST PERFECT

THE PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE (**have / has + -ed / past participle**)

- always suggests a relationship between present and past
- time reference is often undefined – **we don't say *when st happened* but if it happened (or not!) – and therefore has some present results!!**



e.g. *I haven't seen* him. (= I don't know if he is here.)

I've lost my key. (= I don't have it.)

I've cut my finger. (= It's bleeding.)

She's broken her arm. (= It's in plaster.)

They've sold the car. (= They don't have it any more.)

Have you done your homework? (=Do you have it or not?)

Often this tense is used with some **typical expressions**:

- never
- ever
- so far
- yet (in negatives)
- yet (in questions)
- recently / lately
- just
- since (1990)
- for (2 months)
- before now
- up till now
- in the last few days
- for a long time
- always
- already (positive sent.)
- already (in questions)
- also expressions which refer to a period seen as unfinished – today, this morning, this month, this week, etc.

Compare:

Past simple

(finished period – nothing can change)

I didn't see him last week.
I had two cups of coffee yesterday.
We weren't on holiday last year.
I wasn't at the cinema last month.
When did he arrive?
My grandfather never smoked.

(He died in 1995.)

Shakespeare wrote a lot of plays.
I worked in Prague for two years,
then I moved to Brno.

Present perfect

(unfinished period – things can still change)

I haven't seen him this week.
I've had two cups of coffee today.
We haven't been on holiday this year.
I haven't been to the cinema this month.
Has he arrived yet?
I have never smoked. (= I'm still alive)
My aunt is a writer. She's written 3 books.
I have worked / I've been working in
Brno for three months. (I'm still here.)

The present perfect simple is also used in the following structure:

It's / This is the first (second, third) time st has happened

e.g. It's the first time **I've driven** a sports car.

This is the third time Bill **has phoned** this evening.

x

! But! It's two years since I last **saw** John.

Tenses in conversation

- the new information is expressed using the present perfect
- the following sentences concerning further details are in the past simple

e.g. A: I've burnt myself.

B: How did you do that?

A: I picked up a hot dish.

A: Have you ever tried bungee jumping?

B: Yes, I have.

A: Really? When did you do that? /

How did you feel? / Was it exciting?

THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

1) **we say how long the activity is** - it is unfinished – it started at some moment in the past – it is going on now – and will probably continue

e.g. How long have you been working on that? - Since 2 o'clock.

How long have you been learning English? – For 5 years.

It's been raining since yesterday.

She's been studying for her exams for 3 days.

Have you been waiting long?

2) **activity was happening for some time** – it is finished at the moment of speaking, but there is still some result of it at present

e.g. Your eyes are red. Have you been crying?

You are out of breath. Have you been running?

The kitchen is a mess! What have you been doing there?

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE V. CONTINUOUS:

Activity	Result
The room stinks. He's <i>been smoking</i> here.	He's <i>smoked</i> all my cigarettes.
My hands are dirty. I've <i>been repairing</i> the car.	I've <i>repaired</i> it. You can drive it.
What <i>have you been doing</i> all those years?	What <i>have you done</i> so far?
She's tired. She's <i>been typing</i> letters all day.	She's <i>typed</i> 10 letters so far.
I've <i>been saving</i> for the new car for months.	I've <i>saved</i> 10,000 so far.

!! Careful about negative sentences:

I haven't been waiting long. (= just two or three minutes.)

X It hasn't rained since Monday. (not hasn't been raining!!) - it didn't happen at all.

!!Some verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses – know, like, believe, have, etc.

e.g. We've known each other for 10 years.

We've had this car since 2001.

!! Live and work – can be used both in continuous and simple tenses

e.g. How long have you been living here? / How long have you lived here?

How long have you been working here / How long have you worked here?

!! Actions repeated over a long period - both the continuous and simple tenses are possible:

e.g. I've been playing tennis / I've played tennis since I was a child.

THE PAST PERFECT SIMPLE

- is used to describe **the order of events**, i.e. which of two events happened first

e.g. The patient died when the doctor arrived.

The patient had died when the doctor arrived.

- we are talking about the past- the past perfect is used to go back to an earlier past time

e.g. When I returned from my holiday, I found out that someone **had broken** into my flat.

No wonder her French was excellent – she **had lived** in Paris since childhood.

I realized we **had met** before.

When the police arrived, the thieves **had run away**.

When we bought it, the house **had been** empty for several years.

I could see from his face that he **had received** bad news.

He wasn't exactly a stranger – I **had met** him before.

- we do not need to use the past perfect:

a) when we report the events in the same order as they happened

e.g. I was tired when I came home, so I went to bed.

b) when it is clear which event came first

e.g. I rang the bell but nobody answered the door.

I got out of the taxi, paid the fare and went to the station.

!But sometimes we need to be very precise, particularly with ‘**when**’:

Compare:

1. When I came, John left.
2. When I came, John had left.

3. When Peter arrived, his wife made dinner.
4. When Peter arrived, his wife had made dinner.

With the conjunctions **after** and **before** it is possible to use the **past perfect** – if we want to stress that something finished and only then something else happened; but we can also use the **past simple** because the conjunctions clearly state what came first (esp. in AmE)

e.g. She (had) cleaned all the flat before the guests arrived.
She phoned him after she (had) finished her work.

!!!Notice the use of the present perfect and past perfect:

e.g. Juliet **is** excited. She **has never been** to a dance before.
Juliet **was** excited. She **had never been** to a dance before.

THE PAST PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

- we emphasize that the action or situation was in progress up to some past moment.
e.g. When she arrived I **had been waiting** for three hours.

Compare:

e.g. She **is** tired. She’s **been typing** letters all day.
She **was** tired. She **had been typing** letters all day.

Her eyes **are** red. She’s **been crying**.

Her eyes **were** red. She **had been crying**.