

English Tenses: Why Slavic Natives Don't Get Them and What English Natives Don't Get in What Slavic Natives Don't Get

12 English Grammar Architecture Charts
Cognitive Approach by Metod12©

Every natural science contains as much truth as much mathematics it contains.
Immanuel Kant

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Foreword. The Experiment

Statistically, translations of English texts into Russian are somewhat 30% longer than the originals.

To observe how it happens, we will translate 4 English sentences in the four English grammar aspects (Simple, Progressive, Perfect Simple, Perfect Progressive) into Russian. To better see the picture, we will mark equal sentences the same colour:

The creator **creates** the creation. Создатель **создаёт** создание.

The creator **is creating** the creation. Создатель **создаёт** создание.

The creator **has created** the creation. Создатель **создал** создание.

The creator **has been creating** the creation for 2 years. Создатель **создаёт** создание 2 года.

Out of 4 unique English sentences we get only 2 Russian ones.

To make our experiment even more picturesque, we take the whole of the English Tenses Table taught at school with the 12 unique sentences:

	Simple	Progressive	Perfect Simple	Perfect Progressive
present	The creator creates the creation.	The creator is creating the creation.	The creator has created the creation.	The creator has been creating the creation <u>for 2 years</u> .
past	The creator created the creation.	The creator was creating the creation.	The creator had created the creation.	The creator had been creating the creation <u>for 2 years</u> .
fut	The creator will create the creation.	The creator will be creating the creation.	The creator will have created the creation.	The creator will have been creating the creation <u>for 2 years</u> .

and translate them into Russian:

	Simple	Progressive	Perfect Simple	Perfect Progressive
present	Создатель создаёт создание.	Создатель создаёт создание.	Создатель создал создание.	Создатель создаёт создание <u>2 года</u> .
past	Создатель создал создание.	Создатель создавал создание.	Создатель создал создание.	Создатель создавал создание <u>2 года</u> .
fut	Создатель создаст создание.	Создатель будет создавать создание.	Создатель создаст создание.	Создатель будет создавать создание <u>2 года</u> .

What happens is - out of 12 English sentences we get just 5 Russian. Then goes math:

$$12 - 5 = 7 = 60\%$$

The direct Russian translation loses seven sentences.

What it means is that **60%** of meanings conveyed by English grammar tenses **are not recognized automatically by the Russian language** (Russians tend to need more words to describe what's in English grammar structures). 60% is pretty critical for communication, isn't it?

In other words, one phrase in Russian grammatically can mean different things in English by default:

Russian	What it may mean in English
Создатель создаёт создание.	The creator creates the creation. The creator is creating the creation. The creator has been creating the creation.
Создатель создал создание.	The creator created the creation. The creator has created the creation. The creator had created the creation.
Создатель создавал создание.	The creator was creating the creation. The creator had been creating the creation.
Создатель создаст создание.	The creator will create the creation. The creator will have created the creation.
Создатель будет создавать создание.	The creator will be creating the creation. The creator will have been creating the creation.

Mathematically, what happens is: by translating English words and “time” (present, past, future) into Russian we convey just 40% of the whole meaning. This leaves the rest of 60% for aspects to convey.

By default, a Slavic native's consciousness is “deaf” to most of those meanings. That is, Slavic natives have no difficulty in composing the tense forms. There is a difficulty for them to understand **why** a form is to be used.

The classical definitions of tense aspects don't help much to interiorise the concepts either, as the matter explained doesn't correspond to the cognitive picture of a Slavic language native.

Just put yourself in their shoes: you are to learn analytic English tenses being a native of a synthetic language which Slavic languages are. You look up the dictionary where you find a definition:

“The perfect progressive tense is used to say that an event or action is, was, or will be continually occurring but that it is, was, or will be completed at a later time, or that it relates to a later time. The present perfect progressive says that a continuous action started in the past and relates to the present. It can be used to say that a continuing action that started in the past is completed. It can also be used to say that a continuing action that started in the past is not completed. Whether the continuous action is completed or not completed, it relates to the present because we know that right now it has already progressed or continued for “X” hours.”
<https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/eb/ga/The-Perfect-Progressive-Tenses>

Have you felt compassion yet?

No matter if a student's teacher is a Slavic native or an English speaker, at both grammar classes we can frequently hear a dialog between a student and a teacher:

- (S): Why is this tense used here?
- (T): It's because there is a rule for this.
- (S): Ok. If so, why is another tense used there, in the similar situation? The rule doesn't work, does it?
- (T): That's the way it's usually said.

- (S): Why is it said so?
- (T): I'm not sure, it's just usage.
- (S): Well, maybe the rule doesn't work?
- (T): It does.
- (S): So why then ...?
- (T): I don't know.

What exactly don't Slavic natives get? Hard to say, isn't it?

What English natives don't get is what Slavic natives don't get.

The below analysis was born as my answer to questions I have been facing for dozens of years of my being a Slavic native speaker and a professional English teacher at the same time.

A few years of hard work, dozens of thousands of English corpora units analysed, and here is Metod12©: a Cognitive English Grammar for Slavic speaking learners, the course I have been teaching since 2018. Summarising the materials of the latter, here I outline the general structure, "the big cognitive picture" of English Tenses and principles of its functioning as a system, as seen by the eyes of a Russian speaker.

"The big picture" fit 12 charts and 16 explanatory notes.

With the help of the below framework I consistently and convincingly answer all the systematic tenses questions of Slavic speakers I've come across along my practice. The system I created has not detected any exceptions (at least, so far).

I resorted to the method of decomposing the English Tense system and reassembling it on a new basis. Cognitive it is called because I tied the decomposition to the cognitive framework of people native in English which is, as I assume, reflected in their mother tongue's grammar. The contrast between English and Russian cognitive pictures helped discover many interesting things about the way we see the world that we don't usually rationalise.

It is reverse engineering, in a way. As the story goes, we find out that the English tenses system is not as "simple" as it has been considered and explained to learners. The good news (at least, to me) is that, having introduced a couple of simple principles, we deduct a sharp multilayer system in all that has been seen as "usus" and exceptions difficult to explain before. We find logic behind all that.

The material exposed in this article (as the system itself) grows more complex as the system unwinds. The hierarchy of levels, however, is there to help the reader follow the framework development. A complex system can't be presented in a simple way, - otherwise you present a simple system. A grammar system can't be simple as the human brain generating it is not simple.

Here I try to make my description similar to a piece of technical documentation specifying the arrangement and functioning of some device. I try to make it as succinct, algorithmic and systemised as I am capable of describing a relatively complex multilayer system that grammar is.

The framework below may be useful for learners as a preview for the ESL discipline, as well as for streamlining fragmented knowledge and bringing it to the holistic and meaningful level. Teachers of Russian as a Second Language and grammars researchers may find it interesting, too. Metod12© can be scaled and extended to other languages of Romance and Germanic families. Besides, the Metod12© framework may well find its application in the sphere of NLP and alike. Hope you enjoy it.

§1 Introduction

The four English grammar aspects **Simple**, **Progressive**, **Perfect Simple**, **Perfect Progressive** are seen by Metod12© as four **independent sublanguages** within English, each featuring **formulas** of present, past and future.

The “mission” of each sublanguage is to describe one of the four facets of reality recognised by the cognitive picture of the world of an English native speaker (whether they perceive it consciously or not). The four facets of reality are discriminated by English grammar as the four grammar aspects.

Metod12© distinguishes **two levels of functioning** of the compound of the four sublanguages:

- I. **The Basic Level**, by means of which *neutral meanings free from subjective emotional colouring* are conveyed, and
- II. **The Complementary Level**, where *emotional colouring and shades of meanings are conveyed* grammatically. Technically, “play” on the basic level elements produces those as derivatives.

I. THE BASIC LEVEL OF THE SYSTEM’S FUNCTIONING

On the Basic Level of Functioning of the Tense System we’ll see what **basic** Grammar of Structures **rules** conveying **neutral meanings** free from subjective emotional load look like.

§2 Sublanguages and Their “Meanings”

Each of the four English sublanguages conveys a definite fixed **neutral** meaning. Any utterance, directly or indirectly, formulated in

the sublanguage of **Simple** implies the answer to the question “**when?**”;

the sublanguage of **Progressive** implies the answer to the question “**in what process?**”;

the sublanguage of **Perfect Simple** implies the answer to “**what is prior?**”, or to “**what is the result?**”;

the sublanguage of **Perfect Progressive** implies the answer to the question “**how long?**”¹.

§3 Sublanguages and Their Formulas

Each of the sublanguages has its universal formula (an infinitive) (where verbs in their due forms are inserted to instead of Xs):

Chart 1

<i>formula</i>	<i>sublanguage</i>
to X	Simple (S)
to be Xing	Progressive (P)
to have Xed	Perfect Simple (PS)
to have been Xing	Perfect Progressive (PP)

¹Metod12© attributes a colour to each sublanguage and its meta-meaning: **Simple light brown**, **Progressive blue**, **Perfect Simple dark brown**, **Perfect Progressive purple**.

§4 The Meta-Meaning

It is in the formula (not in words!) where the answers to the above said questions are:

Chart 2

sublanguage	formula	meaning
Simple (S)	to X	“when?”
Progressive (P)	to be Xing	“in what process?”
Perfect Simple (PS)	to have Xed	“what is prior?”/“what is the result?”
Perfect Progressive (PP)	to have been Xing	“how long?”

That is, **the speaker’s choice of one of the four formulas** automatically brings up the meaning fixed behind the formula.

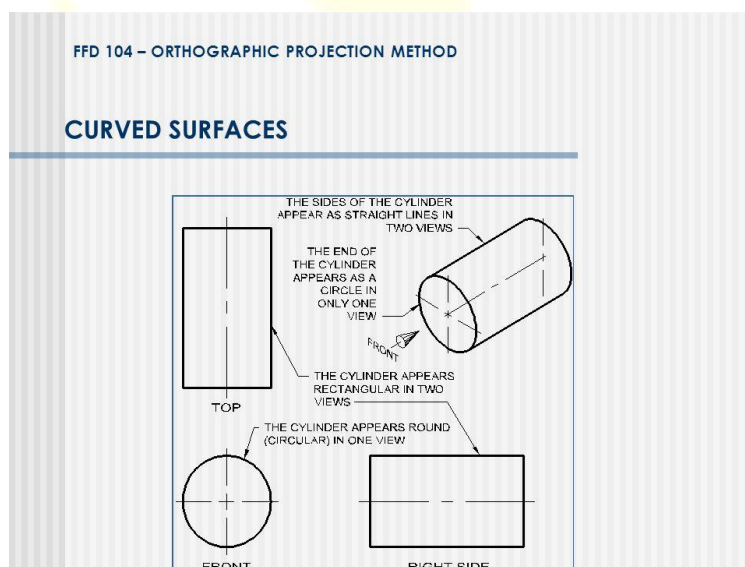
We named this meaning “*meta-meaning*”. **Meta-meaning is the denotation conveyed by a sublanguage formula apart from words.**

I.e., even if we substitute words with any kinds of symbols or figures, the formula still contains denotation: its meta-meaning (Chart 2 above).

Meta-meaning - a meaning in a sublanguage’s formula beyond words.

The same action can be presented in four “aggregate states” highlighting its additional (to lexical) meaning (meta-meaning).

Why four meta-meanings for one action? Let’s see an example. Projecting a cylindrical shaped glass of water onto two-dimensional planes we get a circle on one plane and a rectangle on the other:



<https://slideplayer.com/slide/2390226/>

That is, we can describe a cylindrical shaped glass both as a rectangle and as a circle. The same does English. Judging on a formula used by the author for “packing” their utterance, we learn what “aggregate state” of the action our conversation partner wants us to perceive:

The creator **creates** the creation. Создатель **создаёт** создание*. *when?* (- always), **state of a fact**

The creator **is creating** the creation. Создатель **создаёт** создание*. *in what process is the creator?* (- in the process of creation), **state of a process**

The creator **has created** the creation. Создатель **создал** создание. *what result has the creator got?* (- the creation), **state of a result**

The creator **has been creating** the creation for 2 years. Создатель **создаёт** создание 2 года. *how long?* (- for 2 years), **state of length of a process**

* NB: Interestingly, some English meta-meanings are not recognized by Russian automatically. To convey those it is necessary to resort to additional explanations in Russian.

The same goes the other way round, too: before saying something in English Slavic speakers are to decide on which of the four states of an action they want their conversation partner to perceive: a **fact**, a **process**, a **result**, or a specification of “**how long**”.

§5 The Simplex and the Composite Sublanguages (Grammar of Structures)

Metaphorically, as a hawser stranded of four ropes, English is comprised of four independent sublanguages, **Simple**, **Progressive**, **Perfect Simple**, **Perfect Progressive**, each featuring present, past and future.

A sentence in any sublanguage has a fixed SV(O) word order: Who (*The X*) - Does (*X*) (- What (*the X*)).

There is a very important detail (however, usually little spoken of): **three of the four sublanguages (Progressive, Perfect Simple, Perfect Progressive) are composite in their sentence construction, and Simple is a simplex sublanguage.**

Chart 3

<i>metameaning</i>	<i>sublanguage</i>	<i>sentence construction</i>
when/fact	Simple	simplex
in what process	Progressive	composite
what is prior / result	Perfect Simple	composite
how long	Perfect Progressive	composite

That is, what we call “composite sublanguages” is those needing at least two predicative lines (SVO) to form a grammatically correct sentence conveying its corresponding meta-meaning.

In other words, for a meta-meaning to emerge in composite sublanguage sentences in past and future, the latter need a “**background**”, as a painting needs canvas for a colour to be applied on.

Technically, what serves the “**background**” is an add-on sentence, usually, in **Simple** (sometimes in **Progressive**). Or it may be context. This is why we call these sublanguages composite, i.e., having polypredicative sentence units: their sentences, apart from clauses with formulas of **Progressive**, **Perfect Simple**, **Perfect Progressive**, feature also an add-on clause with the formula of **Simple**, serving a background for their meta-meanings to appear.

A composite sublanguage sentence has a “background” clause against which its meta-meaning would reveal.

It is especially critical to take into account the composite structure of the three sublanguages while constructing utterances in past and future (in present the composite sublanguages “survive” without the add-on clauses).

The sublanguage of **Simple** does not need this kind of “background”. **Simple** is capable of existing on its own: as we’ve pointed out, it itself serves a “background”.

“Background” (*in italics*) is attached to the rest of the sentence with the help of **special words** (Chart 4 below).

Chart 4 is an approximate simulation of how English tenses sound and are perceived by a Russian speaker on the cognitive level.

NB: Below Russian phrases go literal translations maintaining the English word order pattern and explaining how **approximately** the English grammar constructions are reflected in the mirror of the cognitive system of a Slavic native:

Chart 4

<i>meta-meaning</i>	<i>utterance model</i>
S: when/fact	Кто-то Делал/Сделал (Что-то) (когда-то). Who Did (What) (when).
P: in what process	а) Кто-то находился в процессе (Чего-то), когда Кто-то Сделал (Что-то). Who Was in the process (of What) when Who Did/Has done (What). б) Кто-то находился в процессе (Ч-т) в то время, как Кто-то находился в процессе (Ч-м). Who Was in the process (of What) while Who Was in the process (of What).
PS: who's the 1 st (=before)/ result	а) Кто-то Делал/Сделал (Что-то) до того, как Кто-то Делал/Сделал (Что-то). Who 1st did/Has done (What) before Who Did/Has done (What). б) Кто-то Делал/Сделал (Что-то) после того, как Кто-то Делал/Сделал (Что-то). Who Did/Has done (What) after Who 1st did/Has done (What).
PP: how long	а) Кто-то находился в процессе (Ч-т) столько-то времени до того, как Кто-то Сделал (Ч-м). Who Was in the process (of What) for this long before Who Did/Has done (What). б) Кто-то находился в процессе (Чего-то) с тех пор, как Кто-то Сделал (Что-то). Who Was in the process (of What) since Who Did/Has done (What).

(Technically, we see little correspondence of Russian to the English structures, neither in clauses of **Progressive**, **Perfect Simple**, **Perfect Progressive**, nor in add-on “background” clauses in **Simple**. There are neither explicit grammar equivalents nor exact cognitive concepts in Russian (but for those of **Simple**, as seen in Chart 4).)

In the absence of context, **once the "background" is removed** from this kind of a compound sublanguage sentence (e.g. in the past), **the meta-meaning** of the whole statement **disappears** and the formula "rolls back" to the basic **Simple**:

Chart 5

	"background" + principal	removing "background" und" →	"background" principle
S	Ann came home. Анн пришла домой. Mike cleaned the house. Майк убрал в доме.	→	Ann came home. Mike cleaned the house. Майк убрал в доме.
P	When Ann came home, Когда Анн пришла домой, Mike was cleaning the house. Майк убирал дом.	→	When Ann came home; Mike cleaned the house. Майк убрал в доме.
PS	When Ann came home, Когда Анн пришла домой, Mike had cleaned the house. Майк до этого уже убрал в доме.	→	When Ann came home; Mike cleaned the house. Майк убрал в доме.
PP	When Ann came home, Когда Анн пришла домой, Mike had been cleaning the house for 2 hours. Майк убирал в доме уже 2 часа.	→	When Ann came home; Mike cleaned the house. Майк убрал в доме.

Once the "background" is removed out of an utterance in **Progressive**, **Perfect Simple**, **Perfect Progressive**, the utterance "rolls back" to **Simple** both in the formula and the meta-meaning.

As we have already noted, **the choice** of a sublanguage to formulate a statement **is determined by the intention of the author** of the statement to highlight one of the four "hypostases" of action envisaged in English.

As one learns English, one technically has to identify their thought with one of the meta-meanings of the framework in mind, then, respecting the above rules of combinatorics, "wrap" this into a grammatical formula.

It's something in between transcoding and translation. Initially such processing takes time. With training, experience and practise it develops into a skill. A special cognitive training provided by Metod12© facilitates the formation and automation of this skill.

Chart 6

Grammar of the Four Sublanguages' Base Structures in the Present, Past, Future

- to simplify, in plural of regular verbs
- italics - “background”
- underlined - “how long”
- in red - “special words”:
 - ❖ “*deadlines*” *before/after* (markers of Perfect/Perfect Progressive),
 - ❖ “*pins*” *when/while* (markers of Progressive),
 - ❖ “*since what time*” *since* (marker of “how long” Perfect Progressive)

	Simple when	Progressive in what process	Perfect Simple what is prior	Perfect Progressive how long
pr	The Xs X.	The Xs are Xing.	The Xs have Xed.	The Xs have been Xing <u>for w time</u> . The Xs have been Xing <i>since The Ws Wed</i> **.
pst	The Xs Xed.	The Xs were Xing <i>when The Ys Yed.</i> The Xs were Xing <i>while The Ys were Ying.</i>	The Xs had Xed <i>before The Ys Yed.</i> <i>The Xs Xed</i> <i>after The Ys had Yed.</i>	The Xs had been Xing <u>for w time</u> <i>before The Ys Yed.</i> The Xs had been Xing <i>since The Ws Wed.</i>
fut	The Xs will X.	The Xs will be Xing <i>when The Ys Y*.</i> The Xs will be Xing <i>while The Ys are* Ying.</i>	The Xs will have Xed <i>before The Ys Y*.</i> <i>The Xs will X</i> <i>after The Ys have* Yed.</i>	The Xs will have been Xing <u>for w time</u> <i>before The Ys Y*.</i> The Xs will have been Xing <i>since The Ws W*.</i>

* NB: In future tenses, after such markers as *when/while*, *before/after*, *since* verbs are used in the present of the corresponding sublanguage.

** NB: In the present Perfect Progressive the “background” sentence verb following *since* is always in the past Simple.

*** NB: On the basic level of functioning of the tenses system, *stative verbs* in utterances with meta-meanings of Progressive and Perfect Progressive “roll back” to the formulas of Simple and Perfect Simple correspondingly. The utterance itself **preserves the original meta-meaning** and combinatorics.

The situations where “roll back” of this kind takes place, i.e., when the meta-meaning is expressed by means of other sublanguage formula, be named as follows:

- the “nominal Progressive” (where the meta-meaning of Progressive is realised by means of the formula of Simple);
- the “nominal Perfect Progressive” (where the meta-meaning of Perfect Progressive is realised by means of the formula of Perfect Simple).

This was the set-up and the manner of functioning of the four sublanguages on the Basic (nominative) Level where neutral meanings free from emotional colouring are conveyed. As we saw, it is essentially combinatorics with a mathematically finite number of combinations of elements.

Let’s pass on to the description of the next Level of Functioning.

II. THE COMPLEMENTARY LEVEL OF THE SYSTEM'S FUNCTIONING

The Complementary Level of functioning of the English Tenses as a system is essentially an 'extension' of the above described Basic level, operating with its toolkit.

§6 The Two Types of Meta-Meanings of the Complementary Level of Functioning

The Metod12© system divides the content of the Complementary Level into two categories:

- 1) **the static** complementary meta-meanings;
- 2) **the dynamic** complementary meta-meanings.

II.1. The Static Complementary Meta-meanings

The static complementary meta-meanings are additional to the basic meta-meanings “fixed” behind the basic sublanguages' formulas (infinitives) (*to X, to be Xing, to have Xed, to have been Xing*).

Here we need to introduce a new concept.

In the production of some static meta-meanings the so-called *transgressive mechanisms* take place. In the framework of the Metod12© system we define **transgression** as **disruption of a rule happening in accordance with certain rules, making the disruption the rule.**

Transgression - disruption of a rule (by certain rules), made the rule.

§7 The Static Meta-Meanings

The static meta-meanings, in turn, are divided into 2 categories:

- a) **the unique** complementary meta-meanings, where a unique additional meta-meaning is fixed behind a sublanguage's formula (up to 5 of those per a formula (see the list below));
- b) **the universal** to all or to some of the sublanguages **static** complementary meta-meanings, where a single additional meta-meaning is realised through grammatical “patterns” of different sublanguages.

In other words, the general meaning of the pattern remains the same for all sub-languages, but its shades of meaning vary under the influence of the sublanguage in which the pattern is used. Metod12© counts 10 types of universal static meta-meanings generically replicated across the sublanguages.

The Complementary Level	
Static meta-meanings	Dynamic meta-meanings
unique 1-5 units per each sublanguage	universal 10 “patterns”

§8 The “Roll-Back” Transgressive Mechanism

In the first part of the article dedicated to the Basic Level of functioning of the English Tenses System I dwelled upon the “roll-back” mechanism where *the meta-meaning (due to some reason) is realised through another*

sublanguage's formula. Here I highlight that in the formula “switch” of this kind both **the original meta-meaning and the original combinatorics of the base sentence are preserved**.

“Roll-back” is one of the transgressive mechanisms of complementary meta-meanings production. Further on we will distinguish between the following “products” of the roll-back:

- the “**Nominal Progressive**” (where the meta-meaning of **Progressive** is realised by means of the formula of **Simple**);
- the “**Nominal Perfect Simple**” (where the meta-meaning of **Perfect Simple** is realised by means of the formula of **Simple**),
- the “**Nominal Perfect Progressive**” (where the meta-meaning of **Perfect Progressive** is realised by means of the formula of **Perfect Simple**).

Roll-back is a transgressive mechanism where a meta-meaning of a sublanguage is realised by means of another sublanguage due to certain reasons.

§8.1 The “Exaggerating” Transgressive Mechanism

And the other way round, - there are situations when, according to the basic rule (e.g., that of the stative verbs), an utterance with the meta-meaning “*in what process*” belonging to **Progressive**, should be constructed in **Simple**; however, due to certain reasons², we neglect the basic rule prohibiting the **Progressive** (or **Perfect Progressive**) formula for stative verbs, and do formulate our utterance in the “forbidden” **Progressive** (or **Perfect Progressive**).

This transgressive mechanism be named “**exaggerating**” (see below for details), and products of this kind of transformation be called as follows:

- the “**Real Progressive**” (where: the meta-meaning is of **Progressive**; the formula, by the basic rule, should be that of **Simple**; still, we do apply **Progressive** to achieve some specific semantic nuances);
- the “**Real Perfect Simple**” (where: the meta-meaning is of **Perfect Simple**; the formula, by the basic rule, should be that of **Simple**; still, we do apply **Perfect Simple** to achieve some specific semantic nuances),
- the “**Real Perfect Progressive**” (where; the meta-meaning is of **Perfect Progressive**; the formula, by the basic rule, should be that of **Perfect Simple**; still, we do apply **Perfect Progressive** to achieve some specific semantic nuances).

Exaggerating is a transgressive mechanism where an utterance is deliberately formulated using the formula “forbidden” by the basic rule.

§9 List of the Static Meta-Meanings

Here is a list of the main static complementary meta-meanings distinguished by the Metod12© system at the moment.

NB: Some of the English constructions below do have meaningful Russian equivalents, sometimes idiomatic. Such are left here in Russian due to the coincidence of Russian meaning with English form.

Some of them don't have direct Russian equivalents neither in form nor in meaning, so we resort to extended explanations, translated into English below:

² These circular patterns are described in detail in the monograph “The English Tenses System: a cognitive approach of Metod12©”, V. V. T. Lapinskas, 2021.

A. The Unique Static Complementary Meta-Meanings

Chart 7

Simple:

1. "I did this, this and that" The X Xed, Yed, Wed and Ged.
2. "с чего бы?" Why would The X X the X?
3. "бывало..." The X would/used to X.
4. "persistent refusal for present" The X won't X.
5. "perplexed questions for future" What do The Xs do now?

Progressive:

Volatility:

- a) *temporary situations* The X is Xing this month.
- b) *tendencies* The X is getting yer./The X was Xing and Xing.

Perfect Simple:

"ты бы лучше..." The X had better X.

Perfect Progressive:

"cause and effect" Has The X been Xing?

B. Universal Static Complementary Meta-Meanings ("templates")

Chart 8

1. "Plans for the future":

- a) *societal* The X Xs tomorrow. (Present Simple)
- б) *personal* The X is Xing/going to X tomorrow. (Present Progressive)

2. "Lately/Recently":

- a) The X is Xing (this week). (P)
- б) "Activity Switching": The X has Xed (lately). (PS)
- в) "A process Lately": The X has been Xing (lately). (PP)

3. Denials in Perfect Progressive:

- a) "No body, no crime": denial of the process at the stated length: The X hadn't Xed for x time since w. (Nominal Perfect Progressive)
- б) Denial of the *circumstances* of the process with "how long": The X hadn't been Xing *very well* for x time since w. (Real Perfect Progressive)

4. "Likeness":

- a) to a fact: ... as if The X Xed. (Simple)
- б) to a process: as if The X were Xing. (Progressive)
- в) to a cause: as if The X had Xed. (Perfect Simple)
- г) to cause and effect: as if The X had been Xing. (Perfect Progressive)

5. “Emphasis”:

- a) on a fact: **The X does do the X.** (etc.) (Simple)
- б) on a process: **What The X is Xing is (to)...** (Progressive)
- в) on a result: **It was the 1st time The X had Xed the X.** (Perfect Simple)
- г) on “how long” (“давненько я не...”): **It has been a long time since The X (has) Xed the X.** (Nominal Perfect Progressive)

6. “Emphasis on Priority”:

- a) **Progressive:** “*делая/сделав что-то, ...*”: (On) **Xing the X, ...**
- б) **Perfect Simple:**
 - “*сделав дело, гуляя смело*”: **Having Xed the X, ...**
 - “*не успел получить результат, как случились следствия*”: **Hardly had The X Xed the X,...**
 - “*не прошёл и метра, как ...*”: **The X hadn't Xed x amount of x when...**
- в) **Perfect Progressive (Nominal Perfect Progressive):**
 - “*пронаходившись в процессе x времени, ...*”: **Having Xed the X for x time, ...**
 - “*не прошло и полгода...*”: **The X hadn't Xed for x long before ... / X time hadn't Xed when...**

7. Complex Subject

- a) **The X seemed to Y**
- б) **The X seemed to be Xing**
- в) **The X seemed to have Xed**
- г) **The X seemed to have been Xing**

8. Complex Object

- a) **I have this done**
- б) **I am having this done**
- в) **I have had this done**
- г) **I have been having this done**

9. Subjunctive Mood

- a) **I wish you did this.**
- б) **I wish you were doing this.**
- в) **I wish you had done this.**
- г) **I wish you had been doing this.**

10. Modal Verbs Expressing Probability

- a) **The X may X.**
- б) **The X may be Xing.**
- в) **The X may have Xed.**
- г) **The X may have been Xing.**

§10 Perfect Progressive without “How Long”

The usage of **Perfect Progressive** without “how long” should also be highlighted. In case of absence of the process length indication, the utterance gains the meta-meaning of “**a prior process**” (analogous to “**a prior fact**” of **Perfect Simple**):

I was working when my brother came. Я работал, когда приехал мой брат. *I continued working after my brother's arrival*

I had been working when my brother came. Я работал, когда приехал мой брат. *My brother's arrival interrupted my working*

Interestingly, the Russian translation is not capable of reflecting the two nuances of the English sentences above without additional explanations, remaining the same Russian sentence.

II.II. The Dynamic Complementary Meta-Meanings

The rules may be broken, but they can not be ignored. ©

Dynamic complementary meta-meanings are those **generated** by transgressive mechanisms **contextually, in dynamics**. They are not fixed behind the formulas, as static ones are.

The essence of how these mechanisms work has already been described above: the base meta-meaning of a sublanguage (**when? in what process? what is prior? how long?**) by the intention of the author of the statement is expressed by means of a **different** sublanguage's grammar formula.

Due to such “substitution”, the statement acquires an additional semantic connotation.

The **innumerable quantity** of dynamic complementary meta-meanings and combinations can be generated by means of transgressive mechanisms as derivatives of the Basic Level of functioning.

The substitution of grammatical formulas is not random, but according to certain rules often involving formal logic. Here the above cited principles of transgression apply.

The dynamic meta-meanings are generated by means of expressing a base meta-meaning of a sublanguage (**when? in what process? what is prior? how long?**) through the grammatical formula of a **different** sublanguage.

Resorting to such “substitutions”, a countless subjective additional connotations and emotions can be conveyed.

§11 The Three Transgressive Mechanisms

There are **three transgressive mechanisms** which generate new meta-meanings within the English Tenses system (by Metod12©). These mechanisms appear to be similar to alteration in music (pitch lowering/raising):

“**roll-back**” - as with the flat \flat in music, “lower in pitch”;

“**exaggerating**” - as with the sharp \sharp in music, “higher in pitch”;

“**zeroing**” - as with the natural \natural in music, the cancellation of the base rule formula and its transfer to **Simple** (rarely, to **Progressive**).

A speaker is free to use basic constructions (formulas) “unconventionally” if their intention is to add some extra semantic or emotional load to the utterance, to reflect their subjective view of what is happening. Therefore, the tools producing dynamic complementary meta-meanings appear to belong to the modality toolkit.³

The metamorphosis of the basic structures having been influenced by the three mechanisms may be as follows:

- **Simple** can express its **meta-meaning “fact”** → through **the formula of the process (Progressive)**, ⇒ a modification of the basic meta-meaning “fact” is obtained;
- **Progressive** can express its **meta-meaning “process”** → through **the formula of the fact (Simple)**, ⇒ a modification of the basic meta-meaning “process” is obtained;
- **Perfect Simple** can express its **meta-meaning “what is prior”** → through **the formula of the fact (Simple)**, ⇒ a modification of the basic meta-meaning “what is prior” is obtained;
- **Perfect Progressive** can express its **meta-meaning “how long”** → through the formula of
 - **the fact (Simple)**,
 - **the process (Progressive)**, or
 - **the result/what is prior (Perfect Simple)**,⇒ a modification of the basic meta-meaning “how long” is obtained.

The “swinging” of the meta-meanings is in accordance with certain regularities subject to be described in some further article.

In cognitive terms, what happens is as follows: both the speaker and the conversation partner anticipate the sublanguage in which the neutral phrase should appear. However, hearing the speaker say it in a different sublanguage, a “defeated expectancy” effect occurs, a new emphasis/shade of meaning appears.

This can be done with different purposes: either to intensify the utterance, to make it more emotional or dramatic, or to shift the accent from one meta-meaning to another, or with some other subjective purpose of the speaker reacting to the context.

§12 Cognitive Discrepancies between Russian and English

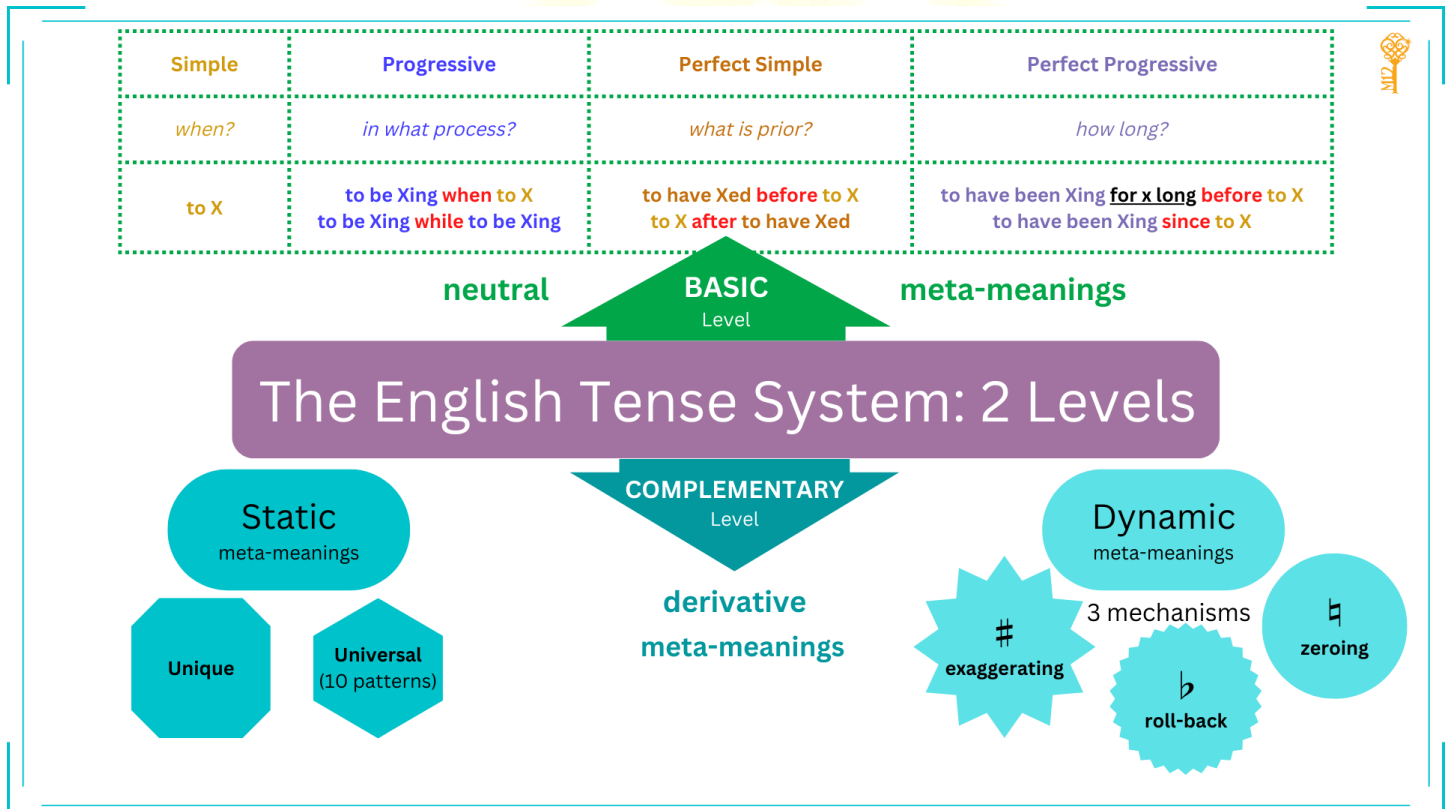
An unprepared Slavic mind differentiates the complementary meta-meanings quite poorly (if at all). Communicating with English natives, from time to time they face this kind of “deviations” and perceive those as violation of all the grammatical rules they’ve known, gross and confusing. **What is perceived as a harmonious symphony of colours and shades of the palette by a native, to those dominating just the Basic Level of the above framework appears to be a chaos of grammatical mayhem.**

It brings to mind a black humour joke: “I don’t like cats.” - “You just don't know how to cook them!”

³ [Modality](#) is about a speaker’s or a writer’s attitude towards what is happening.

Two Levels of Functioning Of the English Tense System

Chart 9



§13 List of the Dynamic Meta-Meanings

Here is the list of most of the complementary meta-meanings including those generated by the mechanisms of *roll-back*, *exaggerating*, *zeroing*, distinguished by the system of Metod12© at the moment.

NB: In Chart 10 below, the smaller font suggests neutral statements, the larger font statements are those with “unconventional” formula usage resulting in complementary meta-meanings.

Chart 10

The Transgressive Mechanisms and the Dynamic Complementary Meta-Meanings They Generate

M e c h a n i s m s

meta-mean. (mm) → formula	roll-back †	exaggerating ‡	zeroing †	stat/ dyn.
S will↔shall		forecasting: He will X. ↔ domineering: He shall X.		dyn.
mmP→S	<i>inanimate object in P:</i> The moon was hanging like a light bulb in the sky. → The moon hung like a lightbulb in the sky.			bas.
mmP(S) →P		<i>Personification of an inanimate object in P:</i> The moon hung like a light bulb in the sky. → The moon was hanging like a lightbulb in the sky.		dyn.
mmS→P		<i>grumbling:</i> You always smoke . → You are always smoking !		dyn.
mmS→P		<i>overstatement:</i> He always experimented . → He was always experimenting .		dyn.
mmP/PP →S/PS	<i>verb staticity:</i> I am believing you . → I believe you. I have been believing you . → I have believed you.			bas.
mmP/PP →P/PP		<i>verb staticity cancelling (real P, PP), dramatisation:</i> I believe you . → I am believing you! I have believed you . → I have been believing you!		dyn.

meta-mean. (mm) → formula	roll-back ʌ	exaggerating #	zeroing ʌ	stat/ dyn
mmP→S	<p>shift from process to <i>process circumstances</i>:</p> <p>He was standing and listening.→ He stood very straight and listened to the person on the dark bed in the completely featureless night.</p>			stat patt ern
mmP→S			<p>simultaneous processes with <i>as/while</i>:</p> <p>He was reading as he was eating.→ He read as he ate.</p> <p>I was watching him while he was eating.→ I watched him while he ate.</p>	stat patt ern
mm P→S	<p>anger, anxiety:</p> <p>Why aren't you reading your examples?→ Why don't you read your examples?</p> <p>Why aren't you answering? John, what has happened?→ Why don't you answer? John, what has happened?</p>			dyn

meta-mean. (mm) → formula	roll-back ʙ	exaggerating #	zeroing ʙ	stat/ dyn
swinging pstS ↔ pastPS	<p>“<i>what’s prior</i>”(cause and effect)→“<i>I did this, this and that, ...</i>”:</p> <p>She had lost her wallet so she didn’t buy the food.→ She lost her wallet so she didn’t buy the food.</p>	<p>“<i>I did this, this and that, ...</i>”→“<i>what’s prior</i>”(cause and effect):</p> <p>She lost her wallet so she didn’t buy the food.→ She had lost her wallet so she didn’t buy the food.</p>		dyn.
swinging pstS ↔ prPS	<p>“<i>result</i>”→“<i>when?</i>”:</p> <p>Jane has talked to him today.→ Jane talked to him today.</p>	<p>“<i>wheb?</i>” →“<i>result</i>”:</p> <p>Jane talked to him today.→ Jane has talked to him today.</p>		dyn.
swinging PP ↔ P	<p>“<i>how long</i>”→“<i>process</i>” with short “<i>how long</i>”:</p> <p>We have been arguing <u>all evening long</u>.→ We are arguing <u>all evening long</u>.</p>	<p>“<i>process</i>”→“<i>how long</i>” with short “<i>how long</i>”:</p> <p>We are arguing <u>all evening long</u>.→ We have been arguing <u>all evening long</u>.</p>		dyn.
swinging mcPP ↔ PS	<p>“<i>how long</i>”→“<i>result</i>” (stability):</p> <p>We have been living in Lisbon <u>for 18 years</u>.→ We have lived in Lisbon <u>for 18 years</u>.</p>	<p>“<i>Result</i>”→“<i>how long</i>” (readiness to changes):</p> <p>We have lived in Lisbon <u>for 18 years</u>.→ We have been living in Lisbon <u>for 18 years</u>.</p>		dyn.
mm pastPS → pastS			<p>“<i>cache archive</i>”:</p> <p>Darwin had kept his belief a secret before publication.→ Darwin kept his belief a secret before publication.</p>	dyn.
mmPP → S			<p>“<i>cache archive</i>”:</p> <p>Bach had been writing his symphony <u>for many years</u>.→ Bach wrote his symphony <u>for many years</u>.</p>	dyn.

meta-mean. (mm) → formula	roll-back ʙ	exaggerating #	zeroing ʙ	stat/ dyn
mmPP→ P			<p><i>annoyance at “too long”:</i></p> <p>That had been cycling <u>for years and years</u>.→ That was cycling <u>for years and years</u>.</p> <p>We will have been paying the price <u>for centuries</u>.→ We will be paying the price <u>for centuries</u>.</p>	dyn.
PSS↔ SPS		<p>“<i>what’s subsequent</i>” (the “long awaited”)</p> <p>He had left before I had a chance to speak to him.→ He left before I had had a chance to speak to him.</p>		dyn.
mmPP→ PS		<p>“<i>what’s subsequent</i>” (the “long awaited”)</p> <p>She had been running along <u>until</u> she left them far <u>behind</u>.→ She ran along <u>until</u> she had left them far behind.</p> <p>I had been driving <u>half an hour</u> before I found the spot.→ I found the spot before I had driven <u>half an hour</u>.</p>		dyn.

§14 Grammar of Structures: Combining Different Sublanguages' Elements

Apart from the transgressive mechanisms of the tense system functioning above, it is necessary to mention such an interesting feature as combining elements of different sublanguages in one statement.

The interesting thing here is that a native English speaker, while combining different sublanguages' grammatical components into one statement, would arrange them so that those become logical structural supplements to each other without breaking the harmony nor the formal basic rules described in the first part of the article:

When the manager came in, Jack had finished the diagram he had been elaborating and was writing the legend to it.

Когда **зашёл** управляющий, Джек уже **закончил** диаграмму, которую до этого **рисовал**, и **подписывал** пояснения к ней.

“came in” is the **“background”** for both **“had finished”** and **“had been elaborating”**, as well as for **“was writing”**:

When **the manager came in**, Jack had finished the diagram. (*background* + “what’s prior”)

Когда **зашёл** управляющий, Джек уже **закончил** диаграмму.

When **the manager came in**, Jack had been elaborating the diagram. (*background* + “prior process”)

До того, как **зашёл** управляющий, Джек **рисовал** диаграмму.

When **the manager came in**, Jack was writing the legend to the diagram. (*background* + “in what process”)

Когда **зашёл** управляющий, Джек **подписывал** пояснения к диаграмме.

Ann left the office where she had been working since 6 am and was walking slowly along the busy avenue thinking about the conversation she had just had with her boss.

Анна **покинула** офис, где **работала с 6 утра**, и медленно **шла** вдоль оживлённого проспекта, раздумывая над разговором, который у неё только что **состоялся** с начальником.

“left” is the **“background”** for both **“had had”** and **“had been working”**, and for **“was walking”**:

Ann **left** the office where she had been working since 6 am. (*background* + “how long”)

Анна **покинула** офис, где **работала с 6 утра**.

Ann **left** the office and **was walking** slowly along the busy avenue. (*background* + “in what process”)

Анна **покинула** офис и медленно **шла** вдоль оживлённого проспекта.

Ann **left** the office where she had just had a conversation with her boss. (*background* + “what’s prior”)

Анна **покинула** офис, где у неё только что **состоялся** разговор с начальником.

§15 The Conditionals

The system of Conditionals is installed into the English tense system and can be thought of as a separate sub-system of the Complementary level.

The system of Conditionals makes use of the material of the Basic level (§1), whose fixed combinations imply definite meta-meanings:

Chart 11





The System of Conditionals



0	1st	2nd	3rd
Universal Truth	Real Condition	Unreal Condition	Lost Chances
Meta-meanings:			
The Truth (<i>fact</i>)	Real Condition	Imagined Situation “если бы да кабы”	Lost Chances “поезд ушёл”
<i>If there is a will, there is a way.</i> Если есть желание, всегда есть и способ.	<i>If there is a will, there will be a way.</i> Будет желание - найдётся и способ.	<i>If there were a will, there would be a way.</i> Было бы желание - и способ нашли бы.	<i>If there had been a will, there would have been a way.</i> Если бы (<i>тогда</i>) было желание, нашли бы и способ.
+/- probability of the event realisation:			
100%	50-75%	0%	0%
Time of the event:			
present	future	present/past	past
Sublanguage in which the construction can be realised:			
All the 4	All the 4	(Past) Simple , (Past) Progressive	(Past) Perfect , (Past) Perfect Progressive

Chart 12

Examples of Conditionals in Different Sublanguages:

	0 Universal Truth	1st Real Condition	2nd Unreal Condition	3rd Lost Chances
S	If I have time, I sing. Если у меня есть время, я пою.	If I have time, I will sing. Если у меня будет время, я буду петь.	If I had time, I would sing. Если бы у меня было время, я бы пел.	-- 
P	When I am singing, I feel happy. Когда я пою, я счастлив.	When I am singing, I will feel happy. Когда я буду петь, я буду чувствовать себя счастливым.	If I were singing now, I would feel happy. Если бы я сейчас пел, я бы был счастлив. If I were happy, I would not be crying now. Если бы я был счастлив, я бы сейчас не плакал.	-- 
P S	When you have reached your goal, you feel victory. Когда ты достигаешь цели, ты чувствуешь победу.	When you have reached your goal, you will feel victory. Когда ты достигнешь цель, ты почувствуешь победу.	-- 	If you had reached your goal, you would have felt great. Если бы ты тогда достиг цель, ты бы почувствовал победу.
P P	If you have been working out, you are strong. Если ты постоянно тренируешься, ты силен. If you are strong, you have been working out. Если ты силен, это значит, что ты в последнее время постоянно тренируешься.	If you have been working out, you will be strong. Если ты будешь постоянно тренироваться, ты будешь силен. If you are strong, you will have been working out for a longer time. Если ты будешь сильным, ты будешь тренироваться подольше.	-- 	If you had been working out, you would have been strong. Если бы ты тогда постоянно тренировался, ты был бы силен. If you had been strong, you would have been working out for a longer time. Если бы ты тогда был сильным, ты бы тренировался подольше.
Nominal Formula:				
	If The X Xs, The Y Ys.	If The X Xs, The Y will Y.	If The X Xed, The Y would Y.	If The X had Xed, The Y would have Yed.

The clauses of the four types of Conditionals can be compiled to produce complementary forms with new meta-meanings. Such are known as Mixed Conditionals.

§16 Conclusion

In the preceding 15 paragraphs and 12 charts I made my best to succinctly outline the arrangement of the English Tense System as seen by the framework of Metod12©, the two levels of its functioning, the mechanisms involved, as well as the key derivatives generated by the transgressive mechanisms.

I dare say, all the diversity and beauty of English arises from the skillful mastery of combinatorics of its basic grammar elements realised by the above principles, as well as from the play of the finest meta-meanings generated by the combinatorics.

The given framework is centred on a Slavic speaking mind using its mother tongue's components to ecologically and consistently construct their new mindset imprinted by the English grammar.

"When face to face

We cannot see the face.

We should step back for better observation.." (S. Yesenin, transl. by Alec Vagapov).

Being an integral part of a system, it's extremely difficult to describe it from the inside. It is "stepping back" to the point of view of a different cognitive picture mindset that makes the research of the English Tense system possible in the suggested arrangement.

I admit that a native English speaker staying in their mindset paradigm would describe the tense system in a different way. Nevertheless, I'm sure there will be no difficulty for them to recognise their language system and agree with the suggested tailoring and interpretation of the material.

Thank you for your attention.

V.V.T. Lapinskas

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