

Tenses: What they are and how we use them

T4T



The learners you will be tutoring need to know about tenses in English, the names of which you have probably never heard.

a. In the lower grades the following tenses are taught:

Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future.
Present Progressive, Past Progressive, Future Progressive.

For their 'Bagrut' exam learners will be expected to be able to at least 10 tenses. Those mentioned above and the Present Perfect Simple and Progressive, the Past Perfect Simple and Progressive and the Future Perfect Simple and Progressive and the passive forms of all of the above.

TIP: Google the names of the tenses to learn more: e.g: Grammar English Verb Present Perfect'

b. In Hebrew, the tense system is very simple. Generally speaking there are only 3 tenses in Hebrew:

Past, עבר [avar] Present הווה....[ho-veh] Future. עתיד [atid]

Some learners will not even know the Hebrew names for tenses and don't understand what a tense means.

In each of the above tenses, learners will need to know how to make

- Positive statements**
- Negative statements**
- Yes/No Questions** because the answer to them can be either yes or no.
- WH Questions** because such questions begin with a WH word: **Why / When / What / Where / Who** and **How!!**

Each of these elements presents difficulties for HLE because they are formed very differently in Hebrew.

Examples of Positive Statements

| Present Simple |
|--|
| I am happy She/He/It is happy You/We/They are happy |
| I/You/We/They like popcorn He/She/It likes popcorn |

Examples of Negative Statements

| Present Simple |
|--|
| I'm not happy / He / She / It isn't happy |
| I/ you/ we / they don't like popcorn He / She / It doesn't like popcorn |

Examples of Yes/No Questions

| Present Simple |
|--|
| Am I happy? Is he / she / it happy? Are you/ we / they happy? |
| Do I/ you/ we / they like popcorn? Does he / she / it like popcorn? |

Examples of WH Questions

WH= When / Why/ Where/ How

| Present Simple |
|--|
| WH am I happy? WH is he / she / it happy? WH are you/ we / they happy? |
| WH do I/you/we/they like popcorn? WH does he / she / it like popcorn? |

What's difficult for Hebrew learners of English? (HLE)

T4T



- 1. Positive statements.** In the Present Simple Tense (and also the past and Future Simple Tense), Positive Statements have 2 forms:

T1a. statements formed with regular verbs:

I **speak** English

T1b. statements formed with the verb 'to be':

I **am** happy

The problem for HLE is that often the Present Tense is taught without this distinction being made clear. Moreover, there is no Hebrew equivalent for positive statements in English that are formed with the verb 'to be'. So Hebrew sentences **אני ילד** [ani yeld] *I am a boy* **הוא בחדר** hu be- cheder *He is in the room/* are translated: I a boy/ He in the room.

- 2. Negative statements.** In Hebrew, a single word is used to negate sentences: **לא**. [lo]

As a result, HLE look for an equivalent **single** word to negate sentences in English. So, we get sentences like:

He **not** know/ I **not** happy/ I **not** a good student / He **no** know/ I **no** happy/ He **no** a good boy

He **isn't** know/ I **isn't** happy/ I **isn't** a good student/ He **don't** know/ I **don't** happy/ I **don't** a good student

- 3. Question forms.**

- There are two types of questions in English: **Yes/No Questions** and **WH Questions**.

Yes/No Questions in Hebrew can be formed simply by putting the 'question word' **האם** in front of any statement, irrespective of the tense.

- In modern conversational Hebrew questions can be asked simply with a raised inflection of the voice or the addition of the word **האם**. Pupils adopt this pattern when asking questions in English.

So we either get a question with a raised inflection: You live in Ramat Hasharon?

or they choose one word as an equivalent for **האם** and we get questions like these:

Where he is live? Is he is live here? Do you are in the room? Does he his homework?

We might even find: If you live in Ramat Hasharon? (since **האם** can also be translated into English as **If**)

- 4. Pronouns**

- Pupils know that in English we add an **'s'** to most nouns to make them plural.

However, it is very confusing that 3rd person (**he/she/it**) in Present Simple verbs we need to add an **'s'** even though the pronoun (he /she /it) is singular.

- Pupils need to know pronouns (**שמות גוף**) in English in order to use tenses correctly. They may not even know the pronoun in Hebrew.

He in English is **הוא** in Hebrew / **She** in English is **היא** in Hebrew.

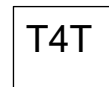
You in English is **אתם/אתה/את** in Hebrew./

- There are several types of pronouns which pupils confuse.

Personal Pronouns: I / **you** / **he** / **she** / **it** / **we** / **you** / **they**

Possessive Pronouns: (which behave like adjectives) **my** / **your** / **his** / **her** / **its** / **our** / **your** / **their**

Possessive Pronouns: **mine** / **yours** / **his** / **hers** / **its** / **ours** / **yours** / **theirs**



5. Names of Tenses

- The names of the tenses in English are confusing: (Present Simple/Present Progressive; Past Simple and Past Progressive)
- There is no equivalent of Present Progressive in Hebrew There is no difference in Hebrew between

אני קורא עיתון יום יום
אני קורא עיתון עכשיו

As a result, Present Progressive is over taught with no relation to meaning.

- There are two ways of forming Present and Past Simple tenses. Often, they are taught as one.
- One of the Present Simple tenses has no verb in the equivalent Hebrew

רעבים אנחנו / הוא בחדר / אני ילד:

As a result, we get sentences in English: **I boy / He in the room / We hungry**

Because of the above mentioned difficulties with verb tenses tutors will get sentences like these:

Present Simple

Positive Statements

They likes this/ I am read the book/ It's depend/ It's costs a lot

Negative Statements

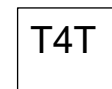
The ticket doesn't ready / They no here / They not hear I amn't happy I don't late

Y/N Questions

Do this is your pen?/ Is he is go to school?/ Are I like him?

WH Questions

Why he is smoke? / Where he does this work?



Note to tutors:

I have used color in the charts which follow. .

If tutors find the color coding confusing, they can be used with or without color.

They are set out in a methodical way which helps pupils understand the differences in the way the tense patterns