Temporal Concepts:
How They are Expressed in English and Spanish

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Bibliography


For a long time, linguists have recognized the fact that there is a strong correlation between tense inflections in the verb phrase and the various concepts of time. A number of schemes and models have been presented which attempt to show how such-and-such tense inflection indicates such-and-such temporal concept. These schemes and models have often drawn such conclusions as "the present tense form of the verb refers to a state or action taking place at the present moment". Statements such as "Keith works tomorrow night" and "In that year, the English destroy the entire Spanish armada" are said to involve "non-systemic" uses of the tense form in question, because the present form is used to express future and past time respectively. Other models have been presented which attempt to show that time is expressed by combining tense markers and aspect markers in the verb form. For example, present tense in combination with progressive aspect; i.e., the present progressive form, refers to action that is in progress at the present moment. Again, statements such as "He is working in a factory this summer" and "Sue is singing at their reception next Sunday" are said to involve "non-systemic" uses of the given verb form. A more modern—and more accurate—theory holds that time is a function of tense, aspect, and order. For example, the combination of past tense with progressive aspect and anterior order refers to action that was in progress anterior to some past point in time, and is evident in forms such as "had been going". But this theory does not account for the co-occurrence of the
"anterior" order along with the "posterior" order, an example of which would be the form "would go".

One major flaw of the above models is that, for the most part, they ignore the fact that temporal concepts are often expressed by means other than tense inflections. Although in English and Spanish one of the primary devices for expressing temporal concepts is by tense inflection, it is perfectly legitimate to make use of other devices in addition to (or instead of) tense inflection in order to express concepts of time. Other devices by which temporal concepts are expressed are the following: adverbials, context/situation, lexical content of the verb, and particles. When one takes into account the value of these other devices in expressing concepts of time, it is possible to understand why sentences such as "Keith works tomorrow night" express a future time concept even though the verb does not contain the future tense inflection: that is, because the adverbial "tomorrow night" makes the tense inflection unnecessary. And it explains why sentences such as "In that year, the English destroy the entire Spanish armada" indicate a past time concept even though the verb phrase does not contain the past tense inflection: that is, because the context of the sentence signals the past time concept and makes unnecessary the use of a past tense inflection.

* Although the word "will" might be considered a particle which expresses posterior order, I will treat it as a tense inflection, and assume that neither English nor Spanish express temporal concepts by means of particles.
Based on the above idea that temporal concepts are expressed by several different devices, and aided by my study of the various time/tense schemes presented by the authors mentioned in the bibliography, I have developed a model which is useful for comparing the time systems of English and Spanish. This model will accomplish four things. It will provide a definition of the temporal concepts used in English and Spanish; it will provide a definition of the devices used to express these concepts; it will show how English and Spanish use the various devices to express any given temporal concept; and it will show how every sentence marks a number of temporal concepts.

English and Spanish both mark ten major temporal concepts. These ten temporal concepts exist as five pairs of opposing concepts, e.g. PAST concept vs. PRESENT concept is one pair, and every sentence in English and Spanish must mark one concept out of each of the five pairs. Thus, all English and Spanish sentences mark five temporal concepts. The five pairs of opposing concepts which exist in the two languages are the following: PAST vs. PRESENT, POSTERIOR (future) vs. SIMULTANEOUS, PERFECTED vs. NOT-PERFECTED, PROGRESSIVE vs. NOT-PROGRESSIVE, and PRETERITE vs. IMPERFECT. It can be readily recognized that some of the labels I have assigned to the various concepts are the labels which have been traditionally used, e.g. PAST, PRESENT, PROGRESSIVE, etc. Other labels may be less familiar to the reader, e.g. POSTERIOR, SIMULTANEOUS, NOT-PERFECTED,
etc. However, even when I use a traditional label, that does not mean that I am associating with this label the same concept that has been traditionally associated with this label. For this reason, I will now proceed to define each of the ten concepts.

**PAST vs. PRESENT**

**PAST:** When a sentence marks the concept PAST, it means that the action or state referred to by the verb is related to a time period which is over and done with. The sentence may define this time period quite explicitly, as in the sentence "She ate the soup yesterday"; it may define this time period more vaguely, as in "She ate the soup some time ago"; or it may not define the time period at all, as in "She ate the soup". Nevertheless, whether the sentence defines this past time period explicitly or not, the past time period does exist and is expressed by the PAST concept.

**PRESENT:** When a sentence marks the concept PRESENT it means that the action or state referred to by the verb takes place in a time period which includes the present moment. This present time period may be defined quite explicitly by the sentence, as in "Jason has a cold today"; it may be defined less explicitly by the sentence, as in "Jason has a cold now"; or the present time period may not be defined at all by the sentence, as in "Jason has a cold".
Again, some present time period exists in the sentence whether or not it is defined explicitly by the sentence, and this time period is signalled by the PRESENT concept.

**POSTERIOR vs. SIMULTANEOUS**

**POSTERIOR:** When a sentence marks the concept POSTERIOR, it signals that the state or action referred to by the verb happened posterior to some given event. This event may be the present moment in which the sentence is uttered, as in "They will go to the prom", or the event may be some past moment, e.g., some past moment in which a statement was uttered, as in "They said they would go to the prom".

**SIMULTANEOUS:** When a sentence marks the concept SIMULTANEOUS, it means that the state or action referred to by the verb happened simultaneous to some given event. The given event may or may not be expressed explicitly in the sentence. For example, in the sentence "He heard the explosion while he was lying in bed", his hearing the explosion is quite obviously simultaneous to the event of his lying in bed. On the other hand, in the sentence "I hear birds chirping", my hearing the birds is simultaneous to the event of my uttering the sentence. Obviously the event in the first sentence is much more explicit than the event in the second sentence.
PERFECTED VS. NOT-PERFECTED

PERFECTED: When a sentence marks the concept PERFECTED, it means that the state or action referred to by the verb occurred prior to some given event, but in the same time period as that event. The event may or may not be explicitly defined in the sentence, and the time period may be past or present. For example, in the sentence "He had already eaten his dessert by the time we arrived", the action of his eating took place before the event of our arrival, and both his eating and our arrival took place in some past time period. In the sentence "I have visited Minnesota three times", the action of my visiting Minnesota took place before the utterance of the statement, and both my visiting Minnesota and my uttering the sentence take place in my lifetime, which is a present time period.

NOT-PERFECTED: When a sentence marks the concept NOT-PERFECTED, it means that the conditions which would mark the concept PERFECTED have not been met, and therefore the action or state described by the verb is not perfected. That is, an action which is not viewed as being prior to some event, or in the same time period as that event, cannot be perfected. For example, in the sentence "I visited Minnesota three times", the utterance of the sentence is the event to which the act of visiting is prior, but the act of visiting Minnesota took place in a time period which has already ended and which does not include the utterance.
The sentence. This fact is seen more clearly when the sentence is expanded to read "I visited Minnesota three times when I was in the states", or "I visited Minnesota three times when I was twelve". Consequently, the sentence is marked by the concept NOT-PERFECTED.

**PROGRESSIVE vs. NOT-PROGRESSIVE**

**PROGRESSIVE:** When a sentence marks the concept PROGRESSIVE, it means that the state or action referred to by the verb is one which is temporary; this action is not the normal state of affairs. The term "progressive" is somewhat misleading. It would be much more accurate to label this concept with the term "temporary", but because switching terminology in the middle of the game can only lead to confusion, I have chosen to stick with the more traditional, though less accurate, term "progressive". In English, there is much confusion with regard to this concept. This is true mainly because in English the tense inflection which is used to signal the concept PROGRESSIVE is also the tense inflection used to signal the concept IMPERFECT (see below). For this reason, most grammarians have taken the concept IMPERFECT and included it with what should be called "temporary" and then have labeled this concoction PROGRESSIVE. In Spanish, the two concepts do not have the same tense inflections, and so this confusion is avoided. That both concepts actually exist in English, while
being marked by the same tense inflection, is evidenced in the following pair of sentences:

"Bob is studying his biology right now", and "Bob is studying biology at MIT".

The first sentence clearly refers to an action which is only temporary—that is, not the normal state of affairs; whereas, the second sentence clearly refers to an action which is imperfect (see below). In Spanish, the first sentence would translate

"Bob está estudiando biología en este momento", whereas the second sentence would translate

"Bob estudia biología en MIT", thus avoiding confusion by not employing a single tense inflection for the two concepts. Other English sentences which express the temporary concept PROGRESSIVE are the following:

"They're playing baseball."

"You were reading the newspaper all morning."

"For some reason, Dr. Brown is working in a factory this summer."

NOT-PROGRESSIVE: When a sentence marks the concept NOT-PROGRESSIVE, it means that the state or action referred to by the verb is not temporary. Most grammarians divide this concept into several sub-concepts and give these sub-concepts labels such as "natural law", "habitual action", "repeated action", "permanent truth", and "generalization". The important thing is that all these types of action are
non-temporary or NOT-PROGRESSIVE. Examples of sentences which mark this concept are the following:

"The earth revolves around the sun."
"Dr. Brown works in a factory every summer."
"Oranges grow in warm climates."
"All men are mortal."

**PRETERITE vs. IMPERFECT**

**PRETERITE:** When a sentence marks the concept PRETERITE, it means that the state or action referred to by the verb has a clear-cut beginning or end, that is, the state or action occurred at a specific time or within a specific time interval. This specific time or time interval need not, however, be explicitly mentioned in the sentence. For example, in the sentence "He threw a stone at his dog" the throwing occurred during a specific time interval, even though that time interval is not mentioned in the sentence.

**IMPERFECT:** When a sentence marks the concept IMPERFECT, it means that the state or action referred to by the verb is unclear with respect to its beginning or end. The beginning or end of the action is vague, if expressed at all. For example, in the sentence "He was throwing stones at his dog when the police arrived" it is unimportant when he began to throw or when he stopped throwing stones.

* This concept is more clearly marked in Spanish, but English marks the concept also.
at his dog. It is only important that the action was going on at the time the police arrived. And in the sentence "Bob is studying biology at MIT", it is not important when he began to study at MIT or when he will stop studying there; what is important is that the action is being carried out at all.

Now that the temporal concepts have been defined, it is necessary to describe the various devices by which these concepts may be expressed in English and Spanish sentences. English and Spanish make use of four devices for marking temporal concepts. These devices are tense inflections, adverbials, context/situation, and lexical content of the verb. Although tense inflection is the device most widely recognized as marking temporal concepts in English and Spanish, the other devices, particularly adverbials, are also very important in marking temporal concepts. Herewith, a list of the four devices used in English and Spanish for expressing temporal concepts, along with some explanation of how these two languages use them.

**TENSE INFLECTIONS:** In both English and Spanish, one of each pair of temporal concepts can be expressed by means of tense inflection. That is, for one temporal concept of each pair, there is a morpheme which, when added to the verb phrase, will cause the sentence to express that concept. Within the pair PAST vs. PRESENT, both English and Spanish have a morpheme for PAST which can be attached to the verb phrase to signal the PAST concept; and both English
and Spanish lack such a morpheme to express the PRESENT concept. Likewise, in the conceptual pairs POSTERIOR vs. SIMULTANEOUS, PERFECTED vs. NOT-PERFECTED, and PROGRESSIVE vs. NOT-PROGRESSIVE, both English and Spanish have verb phrase morphemes which can be used to express the concepts POSTERIOR, PERFECTED, and PROGRESSIVE, while lacking verb phrase morphemes which would be used to express the concepts SIMULTANEOUS, NOT-PERFECTED, and NOT-PROGRESSIVE. With respect to the conceptual pair PRETERITE vs. IMPERFECT, however, English and Spanish differ. English chooses to assign a verb phrase morpheme to the IMPERFECT concept of this conceptual pair; whereas Spanish chooses to assign a verb phrase morpheme to the PRETERITE concept of the conceptual pair. So when one wishes to express in English any of the concepts PRESENT, SIMULTANEOUS, NOT-PERFECTED, NOT-PROGRESSIVE, or PRETERITE, he cannot do so by using tense inflection, but must do so by using one of the other devices mentioned below. And in Spanish the same holds true for when one wishes to express any of the concepts PRESENT, SIMULTANEOUS, NOT-PERFECTED, NOT-PROGRESSIVE, or IMPERFECT.*

* Most Spanish linguists consider the morphemes "-ía-" and "-aba-" to be tense inflections marking the IMPERFECT concept. I have treated these two morphemes as inflections for marking the PAST concept, however, while holding that the tense inflection for IMPERFECT's opposing concept PRETERITE consists of removing the PAST morpheme and substituting in its place an accent mark. For example, PAST concept is marked in the word "volvía". When one wishes to also mark PRETERITE concept, he removes the morpheme "-ía-" and replaces it with an ac-
ADVERBIALS: In both English and Spanish, the use of adverbials is a very common way of expressing concepts of time. This is the device most often used to express those above-mentioned temporal concepts which cannot be expressed by means of tense inflection. However, adverbials are also used a great deal in expressing those temporal concepts which can be expressed by means of tense inflection. With respect to these temporal concepts, the adverbial may be used in combination with the particular tense inflection to express the associated concept, or the adverbial may be used alone. When the adverbial is used alone, it is often the case that such use achieves a certain effect in the sentence. Let me give an example. The concept PAST may be marked inflectionally and/or adverbially. Usually, one would express the concept PAST by using both the tense inflection and adverbial, as in the sentence, "In the 15th century, all of Spain united itself to drive out the Moors."

However, the concept PAST may be expressed by adverbial alone, as in the sentence, "In the 15th century, all of Spain unites itself to drive out the Moors."

In this case, an effect of greater perspective in time is achieved.

CONTEXT/SITUATION: In both English and Spanish the context of the sentence or the situation in which the sentence at this point is the non-word "volv". But when the person/number morpheme (as opposed to temporal morphemes) for PRETERITE is added, we obtain the word "volvió".
tence is uttered can be devices by which temporal concepts are expressed. These devices are used less often than either inflections or adverbials, but they are important, particularly in spoken English and Spanish. Because it is often hard to distinguish between context and situation, I have lumped them together in one category. An example of a sentence using this device is "I am here", in which the PRESENT concept is signalled by the situation.

**LEXICAL CONTENT OF THE VERB:** This device, although of great importance in some languages (e.g., the Slavic languages), has only minimal value in English and Spanish. In these two languages, the lexical content of the verb can sometimes signal the concept IMPERFECT. It cannot signal any other temporal concept. An example of a verb which inherently signals the concept IMPERFECT is the verb "believe". Since it is already IMPERFECT, it is not necessary to add the IMPERFECT morpheme "be-ing" in order to mark this concept (although "be-ing" can be added to this verb to mark the PROGRESSIVE concept).

Now that I have defined both the temporal concepts and the devices English and Spanish use in expressing these concepts, I can go ahead and give examples of English and Spanish sentences which show how any particular temporal concept may be expressed by any of several devices. The examples are divided into ten sets—one set of sentences for each of the ten temporal concepts. Herewith, the examples:
One of the most common means of expressing the PAST concept in both English and Spanish is by using tense inflections. These tense inflections are morphemes which attach to the verb phrase. In English, the morpheme "-ed", along with its allomorphs, expresses the concept PAST: whereas in Spanish, the morpheme "-ía-", along with its allomorphs (most notably "-aba-"), expresses the concept PAST. This means of expressing the PAST concept is evident in the following examples:

"Rafael had the flu."
"Rafael tenía gripe."

Adverbials indicating a past time period may be added to these sentences, as in

"Rafael had the flu yesterday",
"Rafael tenía gripe ayer",

but still the major device for expressing the PAST concept is by means of tense inflection.

Both English and Spanish may express the concept PAST by means of the adverbial alone, as in the sentences,

"On that December day, the old rooster dies",
"En aquel día de diciembre, se muere el viejo gallo",

though this is used mainly as a stylistic trick when the producer of the sentence wishes to view the event outside of time, while still making it clear that the action happened in the past.

Spanish may use only the adverbial to express the concept PAST, when the action of the verb takes on an aspect of vital immediacy, as in the sentence,

"Por poco le matan", 
which would translate literally into English as

"They nearly kill him".

Besides tense inflections and adverbials, English and Spanish may also express PAST by means of the context of the sentence or by the situation in which it is uttered. Both English and Spanish use this device when referring to historical events, as in the sentences,

"Mohammed then escapes from Mecca and hides in Medina", and
"Entonces, Mahomed huye de Mecca, y se esconde en Medina".

Spanish can also use the situation as a device for expressing PAST when there is a sense of vital immediacy. For example, if an old lady tripped and started to fall to the ground, but I caught her before she fell, I might say to her,

"Si no te veo a tiempo, te caes",

which would translate literally into English as,

"If I don't see you in time, you fall".

Since neither Spanish nor English use the lexical content of the verb as a device for expressing PAST, that leaves a total of three devices by which this concept may be expressed in Spanish and English: tense inflections, adverbials, and context/situation.

PRESENT

It was mentioned earlier that of each pair of opposing temporal concepts, the tense inflection device could only be used with one temporal concept within the pair. Since within the pair PAST vs. PRESENT there exists an inflectional morpheme
for expressing PAST, that means that no such inflectional morpheme exists for expressing PRESENT. Because of this, and also because neither English nor Spanish can express this concept by the lexical content of the verb, there remain only two devices which can by used to express PRESENT: adverbials and context/situation.

Sentences in which the temporal concept PRESENT is expressed by means of an adverbial indicating a present time period are the following:

"In the 20th century, we don't have to work twelve hours a day to make a living."
"En el siglo 20, no tenemos que trabajar doce horas al día para ganarse la vida."

"I have a fever today."
"Hoy tengo fiebre."

Sentences in which the temporal concept PRESENT is expressed using the context/situational device are the following:

"He is right here."
"Está aquí mismo."

"I am doing my homework."
"Estoy haciendo los deberes."

POSTERIOR

Within the conceptual pair POSTERIOR vs. SIMULTANEOUS, the temporal concept POSTERIOR is the one which can use tense inflection as a device for marking itself. The inflectional

In this pair of sentences, the verb morpheme serves to mark the concept PROGRESSIVE; whereas, the concept PRESENT is marked by the situation.
morpheme "will" is the one used in English to express this temporal concept; whereas in Spanish, the inflectional morpheme is "-r-". This means of expressing the concept POSTERIOR is exemplified in the following sentences:

"He will spend all the money."
"Gastará todo el dinero."

"You will not speak with her."
"No hablarás con ella."

One may combine the POSTERIOR tense inflection with adverbials which indicate the concept POSTERIOR, as in the sentences,

"They will leave tomorrow at six",  
"Saldrán mañana a las seis".

but in these sentences, tense inflection is still the primary means of indicating the POSTERIOR concept.

In Spanish, when the POSTERIOR inflection is coupled with an adverbial or context/situational device expressing the concept SIMULTANEOUS, then the sentence expresses what is referred to as "future of probability", an example of which is the sentence,

"María tendrá veinte años",
which would literally translate into English as,

"María will be twenty years old",
which really means,

"María must be twenty years old".
(She is probably twenty years old.)

When the sentence leaves out the POSTERIOR inflection, and expresses this concept by adverbials alone, certain shades of meaning are conveyed, as in the sentences,
"He leaves tomorrow for Africa", and "Sale mañana para África", in which the likelihood of the event's being carried out is greater. So the above sentences indicate that his leaving for Africa is a matter of course, and the fact that the action has not yet been carried out is almost inconsequential.

English may combine an adverbial indicating the concept POSTERIOR with a tense inflection for PROGRESSIVE to indicate the concept POSTERIOR, as in the sentence,

"She is getting married tomorrow".

This would translate literally into Spanish as,

"Se está casando mañana",
a sentence which is ungrammatical in Spanish.

Spanish, on the other hand, may express the concept POSTERIOR by adverbials alone in cases where this would not be possible in English. An example of this is,

"Luego terminamos el trabajo",

which would translate literally into English as,

"Later on we finish the work".

Both English and Spanish may use the context/situational device to express the concept POSTERIOR. When this concept is used, it adds the idea of vital immediacy to the sentence, as in,

"If you open your mouth, you're dead",
and "Si abres la boca, estás muerto".

Neither English nor Spanish can use the lexical content of the verb as a means for expressing the concept POSTERIOR.
Tense inflection is a device which cannot be used to mark the concept SIMULTANEOUS in English and Spanish sentences. Since the lexical content of the verb cannot be used as such a device either, that leaves only two devices for marking the concept SIMULTANEOUS: adverbials and context/situation.

Examples of English and Spanish sentences which use adverbials in indicating the temporal concept SIMULTANEOUS are the following:

"At that time, he was merely a child."
"Para entonces, no era más que un niño."

"At this moment, I am speaking with you."
"En este momento, estoy hablando contigo."

In the first pair of sentences, his being a child was simultaneous to some period of time in the past. In the second pair of sentences, my speaking with you is simultaneous to the present moment.

English and Spanish may also use the context/situational device as a means for expressing the concept SIMULTANEOUS. Examples of this are the sentences,

"I am here",
"Estoy aquí",

in which my being here is simultaneous to my saying so.

PERFECTED

Of the two concepts within the conceptual pair PERFECTED vs. NOT-PERFECTED, the concept PERFECTED is the one which may
be expressed by means of tense inflection. In English, the tense inflection consists of a form of the word "have" plus the suffix "-ed" added on to the following verbal word. The Spanish tense inflection is very similar, as it consists of a form of the word "haber" plus the suffix "-ido" (or its allomorph "-iendo"). This is evidenced in sentences such as,

"By the time we returned, he had finished his homework", and "Al regresar nosotros, había terminado con los deberes".

However, the extent to which tense inflection is used to express the concept PERFECTED varies greatly between English and Spanish. Whereas English uses the device with great frequency, Spanish tends to avoid this particular device for expressing PERFECTED. Spanish prefers to use either the adverbial or the context/situational device.

An example of how Spanish might use an adverbial instead of tense inflection is the sentence,

"Terminó con los deberes antes de regresar nosotros", which could be translated into English as,

"He finished his homework before we returned".

In both cases, his finishing his homework is completed prior to our returning, and both actions take place in the same (past) time period. However, English cannot always depend solely on the adverbial to express PERFECTED in those cases in which Spanish can, as we see in the sentence,

"Desde hace mucho, quiero hablar contigo", which translates literally into English as,
"For a long time, I want to speak with you", where the English sentence should be,
"For a long time, I have wanted to speak with you".
Spanish can also use context/situational devices to express this concept where English cannot. For example, the sentence,
"Son tres veces que te veo en aquel lugar",
would translate literally into English as,
"They are three times that I see you in that place",
though the correct translation would be,
"I have seen you in that place three times".

NOT-PERFECTED

Since the concept PERFECTED can be expressed by tense inflection, it follows that the concept NOT-PERFECTED cannot be expressed by this means. And since NOT-PERFECTED cannot be expressed lexically, either, there remain only two devices by which this concept may be expressed: adverbials and context/situation. Examples of sentences in which adverbials express the concept NOT-PERFECTED (that is, sentences in which the state or action of the main verb is not viewed in relation to some other event OR in the same time period as that other event) are the following:

"He finished his homework hours ago."
"Terminó con los deberes hace horas."

These sentences contain the concept NOT-PERFECTED because, although they are set in relation to some event (that is, the very
utterance of the sentence), the action of the main verb does not take place within a time period which also includes that event.

Sentences in which this concept is expressed by means of a context/situational device are the following:

"I saw you in that place three times."
"Fueron tres veces que te vi en aquel lugar."

These sentences contain the concept NOT-PERFECTED because my seeing you three times does not occur in the same time period as the event of my saying so.

**PROGRESSIVE**

Within the conceptual pair PROGRESSIVE vs. NOT-PROGRESSIVE, PROGRESSIVE is the concept which can be expressed by means of tense inflection. In English, the inflection consists of a form of the verb "be" plus the morpheme "-ing" added to the end of the next verbal word. In Spanish, the tense inflection consists of a form of the verb "estar" plus the morpheme "-iendo" (and its allomorph "-ando") added to the end of the next verbal word. Examples of sentences in which the concept PROGRESSIVE (that is, the idea of the action's being temporary) is expressed by tense inflection are the following:

"Jon is working at the factory."
"Jon está trabajando en la fábrica."

"He is being very courteous."
"Está siendo muy cortés."

"The U.S. is having economic problems."
"Los EE.UU. está sufriendo de problemas económicas."
Although these sentences may include adverbials, as in,
  "Jon is working at the factory this summer",
and  "Jon está trabajando en la fábrica este verano",
the main device for expressing the PROGRESSIVE concept is
tense inflection.

This concept can be expressed by context/situation, as in
  "He finished his homework",
and  "Terminó con los deberes",
all of which express an action which was temporary—that is, not habitual.

This concept cannot be expressed by the lexical content
of the verb.

NOT-PROGRESSIVE

The concept NOT-PROGRESSIVE is the member of the concep-
tual pair PROGRESSIVE vs. NOT-PROGRESSIVE which cannot be ex-
pressed using tense inflections. This concept can be expressed
by using adverbials or by using the context/situational device.
Sentences in which this concept is expressed by using adver-
bials are the following:

"Jon works at the factory every summer."
"Jon trabaja en la fábrica todos los veranos."

"They never eat breakfast."
"No toman nunca el desayuno."

Sentences in which the NOT-PROGRESSIVE (not temporary) concept
is expressed by means of the context/situational device are
the following:

"He is very courteous."
"Es muy cortés."
"Bangladesh has economic problems because it lacks natural resources."
"Bangladesh sufre de problemas económicas porque le hacen falta los recursos naturales."

The concept NOT-PROGRESSIVE cannot be expressed by means of the lexical content of the verb.

**IMPERFECT**

The conceptual pair IMPERFECT vs. PRETERITE works a little differently from the other conceptual pairs. English assigns a tense inflection to the concept IMPERFECT, leaving the concept PRETERITE to be expressed by other means. First let's deal with IMPERFECT. The English tense inflection is the same as that for PROGRESSIVE. In other words, it consists of a form of the verb "be" plus the suffix "-ing" added to the end of the next verbal word. Some English sentences which express the concept IMPERFECT primarily by tense inflection are the following:

"Ted was eating breakfast all morning."
"She is studying biology at Stanford."

English and Spanish can both use adverbials in expressing the concept IMPERFECT, as in the sentences,

"She studied biology for many years",
and
"Estudiaba biología durante muchos años".

And both English and Spanish can use context/situation as a device for expressing this concept, as in the sentences,

"She studied biology at Stanford",
and
"Estudiaba biología en Stanford".
Spanish and English may also express this concept by means of lexical content of the verb. Certain verbs, such as have/tener, see/ver, hear/oir, and want/querer are inherently imperfect, and consequently sentences containing these verbs do not require any other devices for expressing IMPERFECT.*

Sentences in which the concept IMPERFECT is expressed by the lexical content of the verb are,

"She had many friends",
and "Tenía muchos amigos",
and "I see the man you're referring to",
and "Veo al hombre a quien refieres".

**PRETERITE**

Spanish, while lacking a tense inflection for IMPERFECT, has a tense inflection for PRETERITE, but it only functions in combination with the concept PAST. This inflection consists basically of removing the "-a-" from the PAST inflection "-ía-" (or the "-aba-" from the PAST allomorph "-aba-"), and the replacing these with an accent mark and the appropriate person/number suffix (see note, page 11). English, on the other hand, can only mark PRETERITE by non-inflectional means. Some Spanish sentences in which tense inflection is used to signal PRETERITE are the following:

"Gastó todo el dinero."
"Hoy recibí tres cartas."

* In sentences like "I am hearing strange noises", the inflection be/ing denotes the PROGRESSIVE (temporary) concept.
Both English and Spanish may express this concept by adverbials alone, as in,

"He had seen it before",
and
"Lo había visto antes".

Both English and Spanish may also express this concept by means of a context/situational device, as in,

"He had seen it",
and
"Lo había visto".

There do not seem to be any English or Spanish verbs which are inherently preterite, so this concept cannot be expressed by the lexical content of the verb.

Now, in all of the sentences I have been giving to exemplify the various temporal concepts, I have for the most part been ignoring the fact that each of these sentences actually expresses five temporal concepts—one from each pair of opposing concepts. At this point, I feel that it is necessary to examine a couple of the sentences I have given above, and discuss how these sentences express five temporal concepts.

The first sentence I will discuss is,

"Bob is studying his biology right now".

This sentence contains the concept PRESENT (as opposed to PAST), because Bob's studying takes place in a time period (now) which includes the present moment. The sentence also expresses the concept SIMULTANEOUS (as opposed to POSTERIOR), because Bob's studying is simultaneous to someone uttering the statement that he is studying. The action is NOT-PERFECTED (as opposed to PERFECTED), because the action was not carried out
prior to some given event. The sentence contains the concept PROGRESSIVE (as opposed to NOT-PROGRESSIVE), ince the act of his studying his biology is only temporary—that is, it is not viewed in this case as being repeated, habitual, or the natural state of affairs. The action of the verb is IMPERFECT (as opposed to PRETERITE), because Bob's studying is not totally encompassed by the time period "now" and consequently the beginning and end of the action are neither clear nor important to the meaning of the sentence.

In the sentence,

"By the time we returned, he had finished his homework",

the verb of the main clause expresses the concept PAST, because his finishing his homework was related to some past time period. His finishing his homework occurred SIMULTANEOUS to (as opposed to POSTERIOR to) that same past time period. The action was PERFECTED prior to our returning (which is related to that same past time period). The action is a temporary or PROGRESSIVE one, because it is not viewed as being repetitious, habitual, or the natural state of affairs, but rather temporary. The action expresses the temporal concept PRETERITE, because the finishing of the homework was a momentary, bounded event, whose limits—thought not known—do clearly exist.

So, we see that every sentence in English and Spanish expresses five temporal concepts, using a variety of different devices.