

SEMINAR 9 – EXPRESSING THE FUTURE

As mentioned before, English does not have any inflectional future tense, but there are several possibilities for expressing future time.

I. WILL / SHALL + INFINITIVE

- the most common way of expressing future time
- ‘will’ is used in all persons, ‘shall’ with a first person subject (i.e. I or we) especially in questions and in formal BrE, not in AmE!
- short forms: ‘ll, ‘ll not, won’t, shan’t (very rare), ‘shall’ has no short form

Uses of will / shall future

- a) to **predict events**, what we think will happen or invite prediction – we are simply giving information about the future

e.g. Tottenham will win on Sunday.

It will rain tomorrow.

Will house prices rise again next year?

I don’t know if I will see you next week.

He will be here in half an hour.

Will you need any help?

!the prediction can also refer to **the present**:

e.g. Don’t phone him now – he’ll be busy.

There’s somebody at the door. – That’ll be the postman.

!predicative will is common in clauses superordinate to conditional and temporal cl.:

e.g. You’ll feel better if you take this medicine.

I’ll tell him when I see him.

- b) ‘will’ is used to point to future time – we are not predicting anything:

- promise – I’ll buy you a bicycle for your birthday.
- request – Will you hold the door open for me?
- offer – Shall I get your coat for you?
- suggestion – Shall we go for a swim tomorrow?

- threat – Just wait – you *will regret* this.
- announcement of decision – I *ll phone* you tonight.

- c) **‘will’ is preferred to ‘going to’ in formal style** – when a formal style is required, particularly in written language

e.g. The wedding *will take place* at St Andrew’s on June 27th.

The reception *will be* at the Anchor Hotel.

- d) ‘will’ is used after certain verbs and phrases, usu. to express hopes or expectations – after *assume, be afraid, be sure, believe, doubt, expect, hope, suppose, think*

e.g. I hope she *ll get* the job she’s applied for. (*also she gets*)

- + when there is lack of certainty – with adverbs like *perhaps, possibly, probably, surely*

e.g. Ask him again. Perhaps he *ll change* his mind.

- e) when we express **volition**, ‘will’ is used esp. with the 1st and 2nd person to express intention, agreement, promise, threat

e.g. How soon will you announce your decision?

II. FUTURE PROGRESSIVE – will be +ing

- a) **st will be in progress at a particular future time**

e.g. This time tomorrow I *will be lying* on the beach.

At ten tomorrow I *ll be leaving* for London.

Good luck with the exam. I *ll be thinking* of you.

- b) sometimes the future progressive is used **to describe futurity only**, it has a ‘softening effect’ in comparison with ‘will’ (which may imply deliberate intention)

e.g. I *will work* on this tomorrow. (=intention, possibly a promise)

I *will be working* on this tomorrow. (=futurity)

- c) sometimes the future progressive sounds **more polite than will**, esp. in questions

e.g. When *will you finish* these letters? (boss to assistant)

When *will you be seeing* Mr. White? (assistant to boss)

!Sometimes, there really is a difference:

e.g. *Will you join* us for dinner? (invitation)

Will you be joining us for dinner? (futura)

Mary *won't pay* this bill. (she refuses to)

Mary *won't be paying* this bill. (futura)

- d) future progressive can be used like the present progressive to express **planned events**, particularly in connection with travel, st is fixed and decided or expected to happen in the normal course of events

e.g. *We'll be spending* the winter in Australia (= *we are spending*)

Professor Craig *will be giving* a lecture on Etruscan poetry tomorrow. (= *is giving*)

III. FUTURE PERFECT – will have done

- an action will already be completed by a certain time in the future

e.g. *I will have retired* by 2020. (= before or in 2020 my retirement will already be in the past).

I expect you *will have changed* your mind by tomorrow.

We will have been married a year on June 25th.

By next Christmas I *will have been* here for 8 years.

It's no use phoning – he *will have left* by now.

By this time next week I *will have been working* for this company for 5 years.

I'll have been teaching for 20 years this summer.

IV. GOING TO future

- a) we talk about **plans, intentions; we have already decided to do st**

e.g. *I'm going to study* at the weekend.

We're going to buy a new car.

What *are you going to do* in summer?

We're going to get married.

But! When we decide to do st at the moment of speaking, we use 'will'

e.g. We're really lost. *I'll stop* and ask someone the way.

- b) we are referring to the **immediate future, the speaker sees signs of st that is about to happen** (there is some outside evidence) – the things are usually out of people's control – st is probable to happen

e.g. Look out, *we're going to crash.*

She's going to have a baby.

Look at the clouds. *It's going to rain.* (includes the present)

x *It will rain.* (pure future)

Look. That man *is going to fall* into the hole. (= not his intention – there is a hole, but he can't see it, so if noone tells him, he will fall into it)

V. PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

- the action is not only **planned or decided**, but also **arranged**, agreed with someone else, time and place have already been decided

e.g. *I'm taking* the children to the ZOO next Saturday.

I'm having dinner with Jane tomorrow.

What *are we having* for dinner?

What *are you doing* this evening?

- may also express **emphatic refusal**:

e.g. *I'm sorry, you're not taking* my car.

I'm certainly not washing your socks.

- often we avoid using verbs 'go' and 'come' with 'going to', the present progressive is preferred for reasons of style

e.g. *We're going* (to go) on holiday to Australia.

I'm going to come... = *I'm coming home* early this evening.

Going to

v.

Present progressive

- emphasizes the **idea of intention**
or **previous decision**

- emphasizes the idea of **fixed arrangement**

Are you going to do anything this weekend? v.

Are you doing anything this weekend?

(what has been decided)

(what has been arranged)

I'm going to clean the windows today.

v.

I'm seeing the doctor today.

I'm going to get a new job. (=I've decided to) v.

I'm getting a new job. (=already arranged)

VI. PRESENT SIMPLE

- is used in main clauses with time-position adverbials to suggest that a future event is certain to take place, the **event is fixed in advance**
e.g. The train *arrives* at 15.20.
The festival *takes place* from June 11th to 20th.
Tomorrow *is* Tuesday.
School *finishes* on 28th June.
- **in subordinate clauses – conditional and temporal**
e.g. Phone me when you *have* time.
What will you say if I *marry* the boss?
- **in temporal clauses** (after “when, after, until, as soon as”) we can also use **the present perfect** – st will be finished before st else happens:
e.g. Can I borrow the book when you *'ve finished?* (or finish)
I'll come as soon as *I've finished.* (or finish)
You'll feel better after you *'ve had* something to eat. (or have)
When *I've phoned* Kate, we can have dinner. (=after)
But! When I *phone* Kate this evening, I'll invite her to the party. (at the same time)!!

VI. Structure ‘be to’ (‘be about to’)

- refers to a future arrangement, plan, intention, schedules
e.g. Their daughter *is to be married* soon.
There *'s to be* an official enquiry.
You *'re to be* back by 10 o'clock.
You *'re not to tell* anybody about this.
- ‘be about to’ expressed **near** future, the event is close:
e.g. The train *is about to leave.*
I'm about to read your essay.
She *'s not about to complain.* (=she does not intend to)

VIII. Future in the past

- we say that st was still in the future as a certain past time
e.g. I knew she *would* arrive.

Something *was going to happen* that *was* to change the world.

Further notes:

- often there is very little difference – it depends on what the speaker wants to emphasize:
intention – What *are you going to do* next year?
certainty - What *are you doing* next year?
no certainty – What *will you do*?
- **stressed ‘will’** – expresses a strong intention:
e.g. I will stop smoking. I really will.
- **won’t** – is also used to refuse or talk about refusals
e.g. The car *won’t start*.
- **If + will in polite requests:**
e.g. *If you will come* this way, I’ll take you to the manager’s office. (‘would’ is even more polite)
- **If + will in object clauses:**
e.g. I don’t know **if** he **will come**. = an object clause, if = whether
I will tell him **if** he **comes**. = a conditional clause