



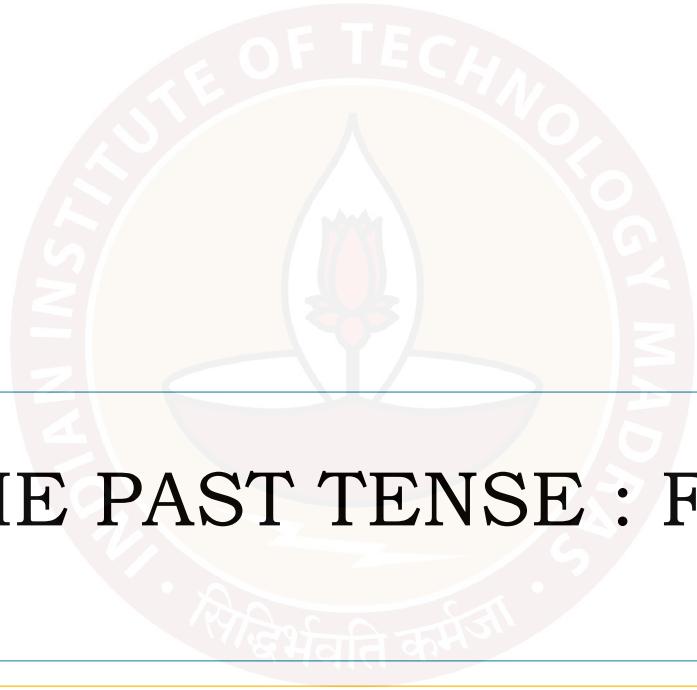
# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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# THE PAST TENSE : Forms and Meanings

Lida Paul

# Simple Past tense

- ▶ It is the most commonly used tense to refer to past time.
- ▶ It signifies two major points with respect to the time of the action.
  - i) The event is in the past.
  - ii) The event is finished.

Eg. She returned from the conference yesterday.



## continued

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- ▶ The use of simple past tense is also common in fictional narration to describe events and states as imagined in the past.
- ▶ Eg. *One evening after dark a young man prowled among these crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he rested his lean hand baggage upon the step and wiped the dust from his hatband and forehead. The bell sounded faint and far away in some remote, hollow depths.*  
- O.Henry ,The Furnished Room



# Structure of simple past tense

- i) She arranged her clothes in the wardrobe. (Affirmative sentence)
- ii) She did not finish her work on time. (Negative sentence)
- iii) Did you go to/ not go to college today? (Interrogative sentence)
- iv) For interrogative sentences with the wh-words,  
What did he eat?



# Perfect Aspect in the past

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- ▶ It signifies
  - i) A past state of action in relation to the previous past
  - ii) Past before past or the embedded past

Eg. She had returned from the conference before the semester began.



# Structure of the past perfect tense

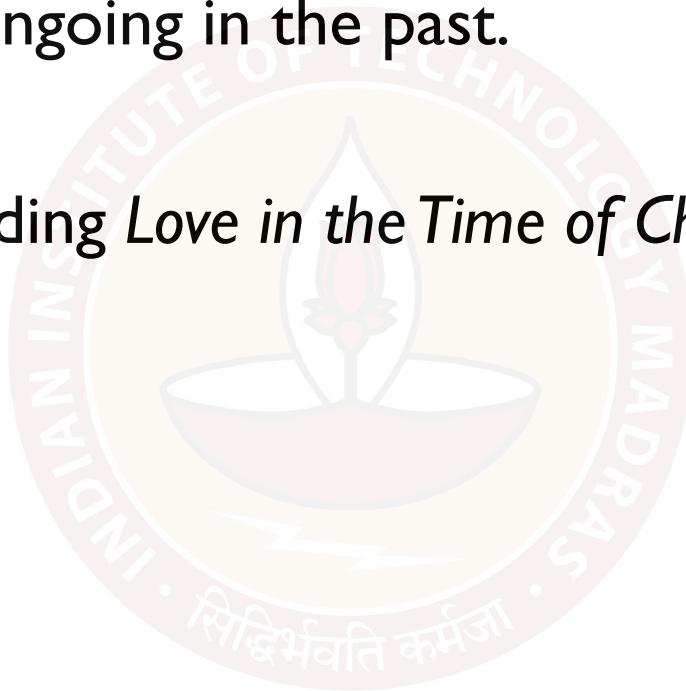
- i) She had returned from the conference. (Affirmative sentence)
- ii) The college had not given the permission to participate in the event. (Negative sentence)
- iii) They had reached home before the parcel arrived. (Plural subject)



# Progressive Aspect in the past

- ▶ The progressive aspect in the past is used to convey that an action was ongoing in the past.

Eg. Kapil was reading *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Marquez.



# Structure of Past progressive tense

- i) She was walking back to her lab. (Affirmative sentence)
- ii) They were talking about the cultural fest to be held next month. (Plural subject)
- iii) She was/ They were not living in France back then.



# Past perfect progressive

- ▶ It is formed by adding the progressive form to the past perfect.
- ▶ It conveys the meaning that a past embedded action was in progress.

Eg. She had been writing a book on climate change before she published her recent work.

- ▶ Certain verbs like enjoy, appreciate, love, understand, and a few others that are indicative of mental processes more commonly use the simple aspect than the progressive.



# Structure of the past perfect progressive tense

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- i) She had been knitting the quilt for the baby before the family arrived for Christmas. ?(Affirmative sentence)
  
- ii) Maya had not been working from the office. (negative sentence)
  
- iii) The students had not been responding positively to the classes. (Plural subject)

