

Time in News Stories

1. (Please see references for the article's url)
- 2.

<i>Sentence number</i>		<i>Time structure</i>
	The Independent (London) - April 29, 2008 Tuesday (Fourth Edition)	
	Hair to make international comeback at Old Trafford	
	BYLINE: Angus Fraser	
	SECTION: SPORT; Pg. 46	
	LENGTH: 363 words	
S1	Darrell Hair will resume his career as an international umpire on 23 May when he officiates in the second Test between England and New Zealand, at Old Trafford.	0
S2	The International Cricket Council removed Hair from matches involving full-member nations after he wrongly accused Inzamam-ul-Haq, the Pakistan captain, of ball tampering at The Oval in 2006.	-6 -7
S3	Hair took the ICC to court in October 2007, claiming racial discrimination, only to withdraw the claim seven days in to the tribunal.	-5 -4
S4	He then went on a six-month rehabilitation course before being reinstated by the ICC in March.	-3 -2
S5	Hair was one of the first officials to call Muttiah Muralitharan for throwing and Asian teams have accused him of bias against them.	-9 -8
S6	His contract with the ICC runs until March 2009.	+1
S7	Pakistan have stated that they do not want him to stand in any of their matches.	-1
S8	Harbhajan Singh has been banned from the rest of the Indian Premier League following an altercation with Sri Sreesanth, his India team-mate.	0 -2
S9	The off-spinner was found guilty of slapping Sreesanth at the end of Mumbai Indians' match against Kings XI Punjab on Friday.	-1 -2
S10	Harbhajan offered an apology at the end of his hearing and the pair embraced.	+1
S11	The spinner will not appeal against his ban, and he will only be paid for the two games he played.	+2 -3
S12	He stands to lose earnings of around \$500,000 (£251,000)	+2
S13	The IPL and the effects it could have on English cricket will be the hottest topic of discussion at Lord's today when officials of the 18 first-class counties gather for the England and Wales Cricket Board's Annual General Meeting.	0
S14	The accounts of the 2007-08 season will be signed off but the chief executives and chairmen will be more interested in how the ECB react to what is taking place in India.	0 -1
S15	Very little is likely to change before 2010.	+4
S16	The ECB's broadcasting deal with Sky does not finish until the end of the 2009 season, in which England will host the Twenty20 World Cup and play Australia in the Ashes.	+3 +2
S17	Twenty20 cricket is sure to play a larger part in the county season, however.	+1
S18	Whether an English Premier League is played by city-based franchises, regional sides or by the counties plus a few extra teams is under discussion.	+1 0

3. Time expressions in the Darrell Hair story:

Sentence number	Story time	Time expression
S1	0	on 23 May
S2	-7	after he wrongly accused Inzamam-ul-Haq ... in 2006
S3	-5	in October 2007
	-4	seven days in to the tribunal
S4	-2	before being reinstated ... in March
S6	+1	until March 2009

Time expressions in the Harbhajan Singh story:

Sentence number	Story time	Time expression
S9	-2	at the end of Mumbai Indians' match ... on Friday
S10	+1	at the end of his hearing

Time expressions in the England and Wales Cricket Board's Annual General Meeting story:

Sentence number	Story time	Time expression
S13	0	today
S15	+4	before 2010
S16	+3	until the end of the 2009 season
S17	+1	in the county season

4. The first difficulty I encountered with mapping out how time is structured in the story in answer to question 2 was the issue of how the sentences of the article ought to be laid out in my table. Allan Bell asserts that 'each news sentence is usually also its own paragraph' (2007, p. 89), but although this is the case for the example in Figure 3.1 (p. 82), it isn't so for Angus Fraser's article in *The Independent*. In his article, none of the sentences stand on their own, but come in (mainly) pairs to form paragraphs. Because of this, sentences may begin in the middle of a line – one sentence (S6) in fact existing entirely in the middle of a line, with the next sentence beginning after it on the same line – thus making it difficult to satisfactorily label them in the 'Sentence number' column. To solve the problem I merely edited the original article so that all sentences begin on a new line, with new paragraphs being indicated, as previously, by a preceding blank line.

The second difficulty I encountered was with regard to the story itself. Or, rather, to the fact that there seemed to be three of them, separate and unconnectable. I found that my designated time zero for the first portion of the article (S1 to S7) would be completely irrelevant to the second and final portions (S8-S12 and S13-S18 respectively). With this discrepancy to resolve, I decided that the best solution was to split my analysis into three portions, have three separate time zeros for the three stories, and to structure the time accordingly. In doing this for question 2, it then followed that I did the same for question 3. Another solution may have been simply to keep time zero as the time of the leading event of the leading story, and to structure all of the other events in the article around that – such that, for example, the entire middle portion of the article about Harbhajan Singh's hearing would be in negative time, since it all occurred before the date set for the resumption of Darrell Hair's international umpiring career – but since the two events, and the third, were so disconnected,

I felt that such an analysis would be illogical, and that the solution I had devised was the least undesirable.

The third difficulty I had was judging the level of detail required in my analyses. For example, will it suffice in question 2 to assign only one time for the (arguably) two events in S10; and would it be wiser to divide the events in S16 (England hosting the Twenty20 World Cup and playing Australia in the Ashes) into two separate times? A similar question can be asked of the time expressions in question 3. I suppose I resolved these issues by aiming for high detail, but allowed myself to exercise discretion where I deemed the level of detail to be inappropriate.

5. In the Darrell Hair story the real time chronology of events correlates with the time structure as represented in the story in some parts, but not in others. It doesn't correlate at all in the first paragraph of the story, where we begin at time zero and are then immediately taken back into the past to explain the incidents leading up to the resumption of Darrell Hair's career at time zero, describing first his accusation of Inzamam-ul-Haq, and then the preceding action of which he was accusing the cricketer. We are going steadily back into the past. In the second paragraph, however, the real time chronology of events correlates precisely with the time structure as represented in the story. The events are told in the order in which they happened, with no diversions and no back-story. The paragraph is bringing us from the past events described in the first paragraph, steadily closer to the time of the leading story. The third paragraph then takes us right back into the past, further than we went in the first (although knowledge outside of this story, which the reader may or may not happen to possess, is needed to be aware of this), to give us some background information about Hair's past and his apparent relationship with Asian cricketers. Finally in sentence six the most futural event of the story is mentioned, and then we are brought back into the ongoing near past with the knowledge provided in sentence seven.

The time structure as represented in the Harbhajan Singh story has a slightly more complicated relationship with the real time chronology of events. Whereas the Darrell Hair story is based primarily in negative time (i.e. the time before the events of its time zero), this story depicts a series of very closely occurring events in and around time zero, weaving from negative time, into positive time, with a short excursion into negative time (for 'the two games he played') and finishing in positive time. Information is reiterated and explained in negative time, and outcomes of the main events are explained, naturally, in positive time.

The simplest time structure to explain is that represented in the third story, where two reverse chronological waves can be identified. The first paragraph begins at time zero, as the others, and with the final words of its second sentence alludes gently back to ongoing events that began in the near past (viz. the Indian Premier League). With the second paragraph we are taken to the furthest future of the entire article, notions of the year 2010, and then a second, larger, wave brings us back through the years until we are right back to the present with the discussions of those attending the annual general meeting. Overall, this story is much more concerned with the future than the previous stories. Indeed, if the three stories are taken as large blocks, and have noted their tendencies to describe past, present or future events, it can be argued that, contrary to Allan Bell's argument that 'news stories ... are seldom if ever told in chronological order', this article by Angus Fraser is told in chronological order, and does tend to look from the past into the future.

6. Notwithstanding my previous observation, Bell's argument is borne out clearly in this article. As my analysis shows, time does not flow in one direction, from the past, through the present, to the future,

but 'cycles through events taking us further back in time' (p. 86), explaining and elucidating those events until the entire story is known. I think this beginning in the present and cycling back in time may possibly be a product of the speed with which the news is expected to be communicated. If, for example, a person was an avid reader of the news, but found themselves with very little time to do so, it could be possible for them to read only the opening sentence of a news story, learn about the most recent events of an ongoing story, and their memories of previous news stories will enable them to understand and put these events into context without their having to read the entire story.

However, although Angus Fraser will no doubt be aware of this continuation of news stories and the notion of a story's life cycle, he subverts the reader's ability to simply read the opening sentence and then put the pieces together, as it were, because the article is not only about one event. If the reader were to do as I suggested, (s)he would inevitably miss out on the events of two entire stories.

One possible way to avoid such an occurrence would be to give a quick list of the contents of the article at the beginning before the first story, but this would mean eating in to the journalist's allotted word count, as well as creating more for the reader to read and repeating, albeit in very slight detail, material that will occur later in the article. Overall, I understand that time is of the essence in news English (the short sentences, incidentally, illustrating this equally as well as the rest), and that deadlines, journalistic competition and the general fast pace of modern life make concision and speed absolutely necessary.

References

Bell, A. (2007) 'Text, time and technology in news English' in Goodman, S., Graddol, D. and Lillis, T. (eds) *Redesigning English*, London, Routledge/Milton Keynes, The Open University

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