

Verb tense in the news: past simple vs present perfect

The billionaire Paul Allen who cofounded microsoft with Bill Gates has died from cancer aged 65. He was a major benefactor, funding libraries, universities and medical research. He had been struggling with cancer for some years.

This is a typical pattern in (breaking) news discourse: the news presenter begins using the present perfect tense for a recent past event without mentioning when it happened. This makes the event relevant now. The presenter then switches to the past simple to continue the story. Note here the use in the third sentence of the past perfect: the 'past in the past' : «He had been struggling with cancer for some years [before he died]»

Asking questions

What is unnatural about the questions on the next slide?

Which is the maternal mortality rate in developed countries?

Which are the main reasons for deaths in childbirth?

What are the indicators that show pregnancy is more dangerous in poor countries?

1) We use *which*:

when there is a choice between two or more [known] options:

Which team [of two] won the match?

when the questioner knows the answer, e.g. in quiz shows or exams:

Which American politician was assassinated in 1962?

2) We use *what* when the range of options for answers is open:

What were the causes of World War 1?

3) Sometimes, either *which* or *what* can be used:

Which / what European countries have you visited?

The number of options is limited, but there are several. NB however:

What countries have you visited?

Here, *what* is more natural, because the number of options is vast

~~Which~~ is the maternal mortality rate in developed countries?

What is ...

~~Which~~ are the main reasons for deaths in childbirth?

What are ...

[What are the indicators that] show pregnancy is more dangerous in poor countries?

Which / What indicators show ...

Which or what?

What / which European country has the highest living standards?

What / which languages do you speak?

What / which UN Secretary General died in a plane crash?

What / which hand did he break in the accident?

Correct Q 1 and re-write Q 2 so that it is more meaningful:

Q1 Why the risks of maternal death are not well known?

Q2 Why is childbirth different in the world?

Correct Q 1 and re-write Q 2 so that it is more meaningful:

Q1 Why ARE the risks of maternal death are not well known?

Q2 Why is childbirth different in the world?

[childbirth – the physical act of giving birth – happens all over the world in much the same way, i.e. the mother goes into labour, and pushes the baby out, so this seems a somewhat meaningless question, we need something a little more specific]



Why does the maternal death rate vary in different parts of the world?

How do the conditions of childbirth vary in different parts of the world?

You are going to ask for information to compile a short report on the society, economy and international relations of a country, X.

Write down questions you would ask about:

The population. The literacy rate. Agricultural produce. Industries

Natural resources Exports and imports. Key trading partners

International disputes X is involved in

Eg: What agricultural products does X grow? What are X's main exports? Who does X mostly trade with? What is the literacy rate? What are the main industries? etc

Invece and instead: similar but not always used in the same way

Instead / by contrast. Instead is often translated - and sometimes wrongly - for Italian 'invece', which has more meanings than instead.

Instead substitutes one thing for another:

Instead of raising taxes, the government increased public spending (invece di ..)

and so does 'invece':

Invece di aumentare le tasse, il governo ha aumentato la spesa pubblica

Invece is also used to simply *contrast* one thing with another:

*Un papa dall'America Latina sembra improbabile; un candidato europeo **invece** ha maggiori probabilità di essere eletto*

But **instead** is not typically used in this sense. We use other expressions, e.g. *by contrast / while / whereas / however*:

A pope from Latin America seems unlikely. By contrast, a candidate from Europe has a higher chance of being elected. ('invece' here is contrastive ..)

Importantly, note that *invece* is sometimes **redundant** for purposes of English translation ...

Now translate:

Il clima nell'ovest del paese è piuttosto asciutto; nell'est, ***invece***, è piovoso.

Il capitolo 3 è ***invece*** interamente dedicato all'azione economica dei migranti egiziani

Truffa milionaria ai commercianti; sgominata banda di finti stocchisti: scatole vuote ***invece di*** scarpe

Proseguendo così, ***invece***, si andrà alla catastrofe. Il solo modo di non restare sotto le macerie è avviare una "transizione" verso un'altra organizzazione sociale.

Il clima nell'ovest del paese è piuttosto asciutto; nell'est, **invece**, è piovoso.

While the climate in the west of the country is rather dry, in the east it is rainy.

Il capitolo 3 è **invece** interamente dedicato all'azione economica dei migranti egiziani

Chapter 3 is entirely concerned with the economic activity of Egyptian migrants

Truffa milionaria ai commercianti; sgominata banda di finti stocchisti: scatole vuote **invece di** scarpe

Revealed: traders targeted by fake wholesalers in multi-million euro fraud. Empty boxes instead of shoes.

Proseguendo così, **invece**, si andrà alla catastrofe. Il solo modo è avviare una "transizione" verso un'altra organizzazione sociale.

To continue in this way, however, will only lead to catastrophe. The only way forward is to launch a transition towards a new organization of society.

Acronyms or abbreviations in IR

USA

The USA is currently planning a ..

UN

The UN has its headquarters in ..

USSR

The USSR broke up in the early 1990s

FAO

NATO

*NATO recently conducted military exercises in the
Baltic states*

UDHR

OPEC

OPEC is likely to recommend increases in oil prices

HABITAT

HABITAT is the UN human settlement programme

Rule

Organisations which are referred to with an abbreviation, where each initial letter is enunciated in spoken English, take the definite article:

The UN - the U N (you en)

Organisations which are referred to as acronyms, where the first letters of each component word together make a WORD, do not take the definite article:

NATO is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Nato's headquarters is in Brussels, Belgium.