

Verbs, tense, aspect, and mood

Jong-Bok Kim
jongbokkim@gmail.com

Kyung Hee University

March 13, 2007

Tense/Aspect

- One main difference between verbs and nouns: Verbs encode information about time
- The first verb in the VP always carry Tense:
 - (1) a. Janice was eating her Fruit Loops.
b. *He didn't wanted any juice.

Form values

- Distinction of verbs by form
 1. finite (tensed): past (preterite), 3rd-sing-present, plain present
 2. nonfinite (untensed): base, -ing (present participle, gerundive, progressive), -en(perfect participle, passive, perfect)
 - (2) a. MOVE: moves, moved, move, moving, moved
 - b. DRIVE: drives, drove, drive, driving, driven

Plain present vs. base

- Both are identical to the lexical base forms
- plain present is finite, whereas base isn't. This is checked by the substitution tests:
 - (3) a. They write to her.
b. Write to her.
c. It is vital that he write to her.
 - (4) a. They are kind to her.
b. Be kind to her.
c. It is vital that he be kind to her.

Tense vs. Aspect

- Distinction by meaning: Tense vs. Aspect
 1. Tense: the time point when an event occurred (past, present, future)
 - (5) wrote/writes/will write
 2. Aspect: the way an action is viewed in relation to the discourse (completion (perfect) and progressive (continuing))
 - (6) a. progressive: was writing, is writing, will be writing
 - b. perfect: had written, have written, will have written
 - c. perfect progressive: had been writing, has been writing, will have been writing

Present

- Present: immediate factuality (refers to action or state of affairs that is generally true), but not ongoing (?I go to bed now.)
 - (7) My cousin attends the University of Hawaii.
His poem explorers the tragic depths of the human psych.
They distribute them through an anonymous agency.
They deliver our mail at the side door.

Present

- (8) Habitual actions: He walks to school every day.
Timeless truths: Water freezes at 0 degrees centigrade.
indicating states: There is a large house on the corner
Temporal subordinate clause: After he finishes work, he will do the errands
Expresses future with future time adverbial: The concert starts after the reception.
Present action/event: Here comes the pitch; John swings and misses.
Present speech acts: I resign from the commission.
Narrative present: ... He hides behind a huge chair....
Performatives: I move that this meeting be adjourned.

Past

- Past: report states or single events in the past, refer to state of affairs that were generally true in the past.
 - (9) I finished my term paper.
He visited our university last year.
He walked the dog at noon
 - (10) past event: I attended a meeting of that committee last week.
past habitual: It snowed almost every weekend last winter.
past event but not present: Prof. Lee taught at Stanford for 2 years.
past state: He appeared to be a creative genius.
imaginative conditional: If I walked home from school, it would take all afternoon.
social distancing: Did you want to sit down and stay a while?
polite: I wanted to ask you for a favor

Future

- Future: strong predictions for future events
- (11)
- a. future action: Joel will take the bar exam next month
 - b. future habitual: After October, Judy will take the 7:30 train to Chicago every day
 - c. future events with some termination in sight: Nora will live in S.F. until she improves her English.
 - d. conditional: If you go, you will be sorry
- (12)
- a. I'm going to take my sister to the new jazz club.
 - b. The music starts at 9:00.
 - c. I'm having dinner at John's tomorrow night.

Progressive

- Ongoing and incomplete action
 - (13) We are studying now
She is building a garage.
They are fixing dinner.
 - (14) He is attending a meeting now.
Karen was washing her hair when the phone rang.
(interrupted or terminated)
He will be taking a test at 8 am tomorrow.

Progressive

- only dynamic or nonstative verbs
- (15) a. *She is believing in God.
b. *She is knowing algebra.
- (16) a. *I am desiring spaghetti.
b. *I am having a pickup truck.
c. *I am owning a sailboat.
d. *He is having cancer.
e. *Azra is seeming sad.
f. *Jordan is being tall
- (17) a. I am craving spaghetti.
b. I am having a baby.
c. He is having an asthma attack.
d. He is having dinner.
e. They are being noisy.
f. He is being obnoxious

Perfect

- The core meaning: completion

(18) a. Have you done your homework?

b. He had left before I arrived.

c. Mark will have finished all his chores by the time we get there

- Present Perfect:

(19) I have painted three walls [and I have one more to go].

I have spilled some juice [not it's staining the floor.]

Have you ever driven a sports car?

Susan has arrived.

Perfect

- Past Perfect:
 - (20) He had already left before I could offer him a ride.
If Sally had studied harder, she would have passed the exam.
- Future perfect:
 - (21) a. I will have finished all this word processing by 5 pm.
b. At the end of the summer the Blakes will have been marked for 10 years.
c. By the time Christmas arrives, we will have gotten our bonus.

Perfect Progressive

- (22) Burt has been going out with Alice.
Carol had been working hard, so her doctor told her to take a vacation.
On Christmas Eve we will have been living in the same house for 20 years.