

Contemporary Grammar of English

Third Year 2020-2021

Asst. Prof. Mahdi Alasadi



First Semester

Week 5:

Lecture 8:

- Contrasts Expressed in the Verb Phrase**



Contrasts Expressed in the Verb Phrase



In addition to the contrasts of (Tense, Aspect, and Mood), the verb phrase is a theater for some other operations or constructions:

1. **Voice:** involving the active passive relation, as in:
 - Many critics disliked the movie. (SVO)
 - The movie was disliked (by many critics). (S V_{passive} (A))
2. **Yes/No Questions** requiring subject movement and the use of an auxiliary as operator:
 - Our team will play today? - Will your team play today?
3. **Negation:** converting a statement from assertion into non-assertion, it makes a similar use of operators:
 - Jennifer sang last night. - Jennifer didn't sing last night.
4. **Emphasis** which is frequently carried by the operator, as in:
 - Jennifer did sing last night!
5. **Imperatives**, as in:
 - Jump!
 - You jump! - Don't step inside. - Let's go to the movies.



Time VS Tense



How different the two notions of Time & Tense are?

The notion of time is universal of three divisions; past, present, and future. It is non-linguistic in the sense that it is independent of any particular language. Regardless of the language they speak, people all over the world agree that (what happens around the present moment is referred to as the present time), and that (whatever behind the present moment is referred to as past time), and (whatever ahead of the present moment is referred to as future time).

Tense on the other hand is a linguistic/grammatical device. It means the verb form or forms used to express certain time relations. Thus, one form indicates present time, another form indicates past time, and another construction indicates future time.

How many tenses does English have?



Aspect



Aspect, unlike tense, is not concerned with placing events on a time line. Rather, aspect is concerned with making distinctions about the kinds of actions that are described by verbs- whether they are/were still continuing (expressed by the progressive), or they are/were completed (expressed by the perfective). You can see in the chart below that the traditional 12 “tenses” are actually 12 combinations of tense and aspect.

THE TENSE-ASPECT COMBINATIONS IN ENGLISH				
Aspect → Tense ↓	Simple	Perfect	Progressive	Perfect Progressive
	∅	have + -en	be + -ing	have + -en be + -ing
Present	write/writes walk/walks	has/have written has/have walked	am/is/are writing am/is/are walking	has/have been writing has/have been walking
Past	wrote walked	had written had walked	was/were writing was/were walking	had been writing had been walking
Future	will write will walk	will have written will have walked	will be writing will be walking	will have been writing will have been walking



Mood



Mood is a grammatical term used to denote the forms that a verb takes to show what work it is doing (ex. Expressing a statement, a command, a wish.....etc), and the manner in which the action or state is thought of by the speaker. It shows a wide range of meanings, especially attitudes on the part of the speaker towards the factual content of the utterance (ex. Certainty, definiteness, vagueness, possibility, obligation, necessity....etc).

English sentences are said to display three main moods- *Indicative*, *Interrogative*, and *Imperative*- and two minor moods: *Exclamatory* and *Subjunctive*.

Four of the five moods have sentence type counterparts, but the *subjunctive* can be marked only by using a different form of the verb from the ordinarily called for.



Mood



The **indicative** mood is used to discuss real events in declarative (positive and negative) clauses. For example:

- She made the cake.
- She is not my sister.
- Today is Sunday.

The **imperative** expresses commands, prohibitions, and requests. For example:

- Eat your lunch.
- Don't disturb!
- Allow me to help!

The **interrogative** asks about a missing piece of information or seeks to confirm or refute the given proposition. For example:

- Why does he seem upset?
- Have you submitted your assignment?

The exclamatory mood conveys a strong emotion. For example:

- How disrespectful behavior it is!
- What a dismal weather it is!

The **subjunctive** mood is used rarely in English because the English language usually prefers to express meanings of **doubt, uncertainty, hypothetical states and likelihoods** with its range of central, semi- and marginal modal auxiliary verbs.



Meanings of the Present Tense



1. State present (Timeless):

With stative verb senses, the present is used without reference to specific time, i.e there is no inherent limitation on the extension of the state into the past and future (unless such a limitation is indicated by adverbials or other elements of the clause). The state/timeless present includes general timeless statements or the so-called 'eternal truths'. Scientific, mathematical, and geographical statements are examples of timeless present.

- Spiders have eight legs.
- Two and three make five.
- The Nile flows in Egypt.

2. Habitual present:

With dynamic verb senses, the simple present usually implies an inherently unrestricted time span. Habitual present resembles state present in being used for 'Timeless Statements'. It is a sign of habitual present that one can easily add a frequency adverbial to specify the frequency of repetition.

- Bill comes late everyday.
- We feed our cat on fish.

Meanings of the Present Tense



3. Instantaneous present:

Instantaneous present occurs when the verb refers to a single action began and completed approximately at the moment of speech. Because the instantaneous present implies that the event has little or no duration, it does not occur outside some rather restricted situations, such as:

- **Sport commentaries:** Ex. Mane passes to Salah.
- **Demonstrations:** Ex. I enclose a form of application.
- **Special exclamatory sentences:** Ex. Here comes the winner!
- **Performatives:** The verb in the performative is often a verb of speaking such as (request, advise, apologize.....) describing the speech act of which it is a part.
 - Ex. I advise you to withdraw.
 - Ex. I apologize.
 - Ex. I thank you for helping me.
 - Ex. I declare the meeting closed.



Progressive Aspect



As its name suggests, the **PROGRESSIVE ASPECT** (also sometimes called the **DURATIVE** or **CONTINUOUS** aspect) indicates a happening **IN PROGRESS** at a given time. Compare:

1. **Joan sings well.**
2. **Joan is singing well.**

These two sentences have the same tense, but different aspects. Notice the difference this makes to the meaning: *Joan sings well* refers to *Joan's* competence as a singer (that she has a good voice - a relatively permanent attribute); *Joan is singing well* refers to her performance on a particular occasion or during a particular season. The same formal contrast could be made for the past tense:

3. **Joan sang well.**
4. **Joan was singing well.**

But in this case, the semantic contrast is different: the simple past makes us see the event as a whole, while the past progressive makes us see it as an activity in progress. The different effect of the progressive in [1-2] and in [3-4] can be explained as follows:

Progressive Aspect



The meaning of the progressive can be separated into three components, not all of which need be present in a given instance:

- (a) the happening has DURATION
- (b) the happening has LIMITED duration
- (C) the happening is NOT NECESSARILY COMPLETE

The first two components add up to the concept of TEMPORARINESS. Thus in [2], the progressive signals that *Joan's singing* is a *temporary* rather than a *permanent* phenomenon; in [4], on the other hand, the progressive makes us see the event as enduring/happening over a period, rather than as happening all at once. In [2], the progressive 'shrinks' the time span of *sings*; in [4] it 'stretches out' the time span of *sang*. This difference arises because component (a) is distinctive for single events; whereas component (b) is distinctive for states and habits. The component of incompleteness (c) is distinctive chiefly in the case of certain types of dynamic verb meaning called CONCLUSIVE:

I read a novel yesterday evening. [i.e. the whole novel]

I was reading a novel yesterday evening. [i.e. there is no implication that I finished the novel in the course of the evening]