

# GRAMATIKA 3

05 - Verbs – Tense, Aspect and Voice

# VERB PHRASE – structure vs. meaning

- FINITE vs. NON-FINITE verb phrase
  - **Finite** >> tense, aspect, voice, modality, negation
- STRUCTURE reflects SEMANTICS
  - E.G. PRESENT TENSE form: refers to present / past / future events
    - He goes there a lot.*
    - 'Well, he goes and makes a big noise!'*
    - Goalkeeper Čech goes to hospital tomorrow*
    - The train leaves tonight*
  - X**
  - FUTURE expressed in different ways: present simple / continuous, modal, semi-modal verbs

# TENSE

1/5

- Only **2 morphologically inflected TENSES:**      **PRESENT, PAST**
- Verbs not inflected at all:                      **IMPERATIVE, NON-FINITE CLAUSES**
- Marking for:    **MODALITY or TENSE (not both)**

**GRAMMATICAL TENSES** = combination of **TENSE (TIME)** + **ASPECT** (2 oppositions:  
**NON-PERFECTIVE vs. PERFECTIVE**, and **NON-PROGRESSIVE vs. PROGRESSIVE**)

*“Perfective aspect is first of all connected, not necessarily with the end of the denoted action, but with a certain time moment following the action”*

*“The most difficult for a Czech learner of English is to describe **actions in the past from the viewpoint of the moment of utterance**. It is because we are accustomed to describe actions in the past **according to their nature in the past** (tu knihu jsem četl, tu knihu jsem přečetl), but we do not take into account the **relation to the present moment**, i.e., whether we wish to convey the fact that we were reading the book in the past or whether we want to say that – as the consequence of reading the book – we know what it is about.”*

(A. Svoboda)

# TENSE

2/5

## PRESENT TENSE:

- 2 meanings: existing at present / habitual behavior

*I **want** a bar of chocolate.*

*I **think** you might be wrong.*

*Economists **fear** interest rate rise.*

(temporary state / persisting for longer)

*She's vegetarian but she **eats** chicken.*

*This is on one of those hikes that we **go** on.*

- Reporting on an ongoing action

*Here **comes** my sister.*

# TENSE

3/5

**PAST TENSE:** refers to past (fictional narrative, description)

- *The clock on the tower of St Michael-in-the-Moor **chimed** nine as he **came** onto the road. The milkman's van **was** on the green; Mrs Southworth from the Hall **was** at the pillar box, posting a letter. He **walked on** away from the green and the houses up the bit of the Jackley road from which Tace Way **turned off**.*
- Relating to present (+ stance):
  - ***Did** you **want** a cup of tea?*
  - *Hi Peggy this is Ellen at Sports Spectrum, um, I **wanted** to let you know we got your swimsuit in.*
- Hypothetical situation:
  - *If you **were** in the mood we could at least go. (subjunctive mood)*

# TENSE

4/5

## PRESENT for PAST / FUTURE:

- historic present (for past); speech act Vs (say)

*No. He **says**, are you going home tonight. He thought I was going home to my parents.*

*And the guy driving the truck **says**, no we can't; we've got an important meeting.*

*And the daughter **comes** home from school one day and **says**, mum I want to be like you. And then the mum **goes**, okay dear, I'll go out and get some stuff:*

- Present for future – with Adverbial of time, or temporal adverbial clause

*It's open day on Wednesday.*

*A new era begins for the bomb-damaged Ulster landmark when the curtain **goes** up on Jack and the Beanstalk in December.*

*Although production will continue for many years yet, I feel it is time to record what historical production data is available before records **are** lost and memories **fade**.*

# TENSE

5/5

## FUTURE:

- No formal future tense; future marked with: **modal / semi-modal V**
- **Going to** can be marked for tense (if past of BE):
  - projected future time dating from some point in the past;
  - reference to a situation that never actually took place

*I was going to be called Kate if I was a girl.*

*It was in the summer holidays and Matthew was going to start school.*

# ASPECT

1/3

- **TENSE** and **ASPECT**: time distinctions
- **ASPECT**: completion / lack of completion
  - **PERFECT**: states, events in the period leading to the specified time.
    - HAVE + -ED
  - **PROGRESSIVE**: states, events in progress (continuing at the time indicated)
    - BE + -ING

*We **have written** to her, but she has ignored our letters.*

*He **had seen** him picking purses.*

*No, she's **going** by train.*

*That's why I **was thinking** I might hang onto the Volvo.*

- **Present + Perfect**: situation began some time in the past and continues up to the present with possible implication of continuation into the future

*But now, she's **gone** on holiday for a whole month.*

- **Past + Perfect**: refers to a time earlier than some specified past time

*Widow Lilian Boyes, 70, **had** earlier **pleaded** with doctors to "finish her off".*

# ASPECT

2/3

- **Progressive** + ... : situations or activities that are in progress at some point in time.

## CORPUS FINDINGS AND STATISTICS:

- 90 % of all VPs unmarked for aspect
- 5-10 % PERFECT aspect (depending on register)
- Most phrases marked for aspect are in the present tense
- < 0.5 % of all VPs PRESENT / PAST + PERFECT + PROGRESSIVE
- PROGRESSIVE in use for 500 years
- American English: often uses PAST instead of PRESENT + PERFECT

*A: Hey, **did** you **read** through this yet?*

*B: No not yet I **didn't**. I **didn't get** a chance.*

# ASPECT

3/3

Verbs that occur with the present perfect aspect over 40 times per million words in at least one register; occurrences per million words

over 1,000    over 500    over 200    over 100  
over 40    over 20

HAVE +	CONV	FICT	NEWS	ACAD
<i>been</i>	over 1,000	over 500	over 200	over 100
<i>had</i>	over 100	over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>got</i>	over 1,000	over 20	over 40	
<i>gone</i>	over 500	over 20	over 40	
<i>done</i>	over 100	over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>made</i>	over 20	over 20	over 200	over 20
<i>seen</i>	over 20	over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>come</i>	over 20	over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>said</i>	over 20	over 20	over 40	
<i>taken</i>	over 20	over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>become</i>		over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>given</i>		over 20	over 40	over 20
<i>shown</i>			over 40	over 100
<i>thought</i>	over 20	over 20		
<i>called</i>	over 20		over 40	
<i>put</i>	over 20		over 40	
<i>lost</i>			over 40	
<i>won</i>			over 40	

“Experiments have shown, however, that plants can obtain their nutrients at sufficient rates to maintain rapid growth.”

HAVE(HAS) GOT : marks possession !

ADVERBIALS with past / perfect aspect?

# PRESENT PERFECT vs. PAST SIMPLE ADVERBIALS

- **PAST:**

- then:

- *He picked up Sammler's dark glasses and returned them to his nose. He [**then**] unfolded and mounted his own, circular, of gentian violet gently banded with the lovely Dior gold. [**Then**] he departed.*

- in, during, throughout, for ... delimitation of a period:

- *in 1981; **during** the fall of 1988; **throughout** this period; **for** X [time units]*

- **PRESENT PERFECT:**

- already, since (indicating duration, rarely the end ) ... also now (marking a contrast between present and past)

- *Turbojets have **now** been superseded by turbofans.*

# VERBAL VOICE - ACTIVE / PASSIVE

- **ACTIVE:** Subject = agent (does the action of the V)
  - John cooked the food last night. >> The food was cooked last night.
- **PASSIVE:** BE (same tense as in Active) + past participle

***Task:*** transform to passive:

*We keep the butter here.*

*They broke the window.*

*People have seen wolves in the streets.*

# PASSIVE 1/2

- **PROGRESSIVE ASPECT** – mostly restricted to PAST / PRESENT
- *Give, bring* : 2 possible ways of forming PASSIVE
- **V followed by PP** and **phrasal V** can also be transformed:

**Task:** transform to passive:

*Tom gave me a pen.*

*Nobody has slept in the bed.*

*Somebody has not put out the cigarette.*

# PASSIVE 2/2

- We use PASSIVE VOICE when:
  - The **doer** of the action **backgrounded**: obvious / unknown / general
  - **Action more important** than who/what does it.
  - **Psychological reasons**: e.g. we do not wish to be the bearers of unpleasant news