

# Aspect

## Linguistics 5430

### Homework Assignment #5

Due: Tuesday, March 6, 2007

I. **Typological comparison.** What is the semantic distinction between the **imperfective** construction (as found in languages like French) and the **progressive** construction in English? In answering this question, you will probably want to talk about contrasts like the following:

- (a) Elle avait du fric.  
 She had **imperfective** some cash  
 'She had some cash.'
- (b) \*She was having some cash.

Even though (b) is odd, are there examples in which stative verbs like *have* appear in the progressive form? Describe the circumstances using the theory of **coercion** developed in De Swart's article and in class.

II. **Reference time.** The following sentence is ambiguous:

*Ira was in London yesterday.*

In one reading, Ira may have stayed in London for, say, a week—it just happens that he was there at the time of interest (yesterday). This time is known as *reference time*. In the other reading, yesterday exhausted the duration of Ira's stay in London. Describe this semantic difference in terms of the relationship between the situation and the (past-tense) reference time described as 'yesterday'.

III. **Iteration.** All of the following examples have been analyzed as involving iteration. Using whatever explanatory tools you'd like, differentiate among the various notions of iteration that are intuitively involved:

- (1) Brown bats become active at dusk.
- (2) Sue was blinking.
- (3) Myron dribbled the basketball.
- (4) The trees get shorter as you reach the timberline.
- (5) Dan does the *Times* crossword every Sunday.

IV. **Aspectual selection vs. coercion.** Following are attested examples in which two Latin verbs, *esse* ('to be') and *habere* ('to have') are combined with the PERFECTIVE past. Focus on those verb uses which are in boldface, and don't worry about verb mood.

- |     |                                |                             |                              |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| (i) | <i>Filium</i>                  | <i>habeo.</i>               | <i>Immo</i>                  |
|     | Son.ACC                        | have.1sg.indicative.present | Actually                     |
|     | <b>habui;</b>                  | nunc                        | habeam                       |
|     | have.1sg.indicative.perfective | now                         | have.1sg.subjunctive.present |
|     | <i>necne</i>                   | <i>incertum</i>             | <i>est.</i>                  |
|     | whether                        | uncertain                   | be.3sg.indicative.present    |

'I have a son, or rather I *had* one. Whether or not I have one now is uncertain.'  
(Terentius, *Heaut.* 93)

- (ii) ***Fuimus*** *Troes,* ***fuit*** *Illium.*  
Be.1pl.indicative.perfective Trojans.NOM, be.3sg.indicative.perfective Troy:NOM

'We *were* Trojans. There *was* Troy.' (Aeneas to fellow Trojans after the sack of Troy, Vergilius, *Aeneid* 2.325) **Note that this passage has been loosely translated to read: "We have ceased to be Trojans; Troy is no more."**

Explain what affect is being achieved in the two passages through the combination of the particular verb stem with the perfective inflection by using (a) Bickel's model of aspectual **selection** and then (b) De Swart's model of aspectual **coercion**. If one model is obviously easier to use than the other, comment on that.

V. ***Tense and aspect***. Briefly explain the difference between tense and aspect. Now describe two important **intersections** between the two systems, using any language that you'd like.