

## Linguistic Principles of English Grammar, ENG 595G Handout: Mode in English Verbs (Supplement to Berk, ch. 3)

1. Most English verbs have five inflectional forms:

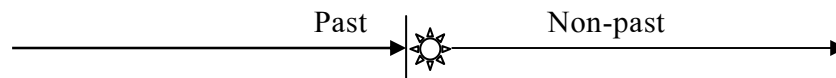
- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

We will see how these forms are deployed in clause and discourse structure throughout the rest of the course.

2. The function of tense is to "ground" the time of an event or situation relative to the time of utterance:



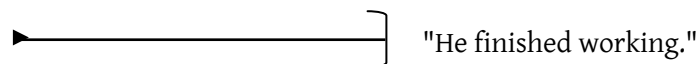
English grammaticalizes two "tenses":



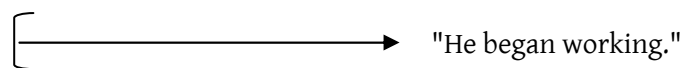
Futurity is expressed periphrastically, with modal auxiliaries such as "will" and "going to."

3. Aspect expresses the internal, temporal "shape" of an event or situation. Aspect interacts significantly with verb semantics, i.e., verbs have "inherent aspect" as well as grammatically expressed aspectual categories.

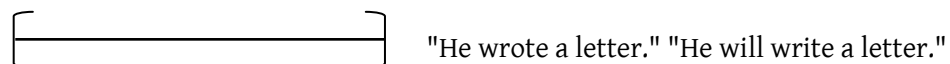
a. completive



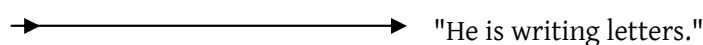
b. inceptive



c. perfective



d. progressive



e. iterative



f. punctual



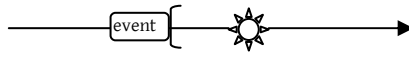
"He sneezed."

g. habitual



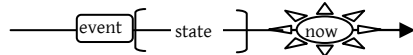
"He drinks."

i. (present) perfect



"I have seen that film."

j. (past) perfect



"I had entered a congested zone."

3. "Finiteness" refers to whether a verb phrase is fully inflected and capable of being integrated into discourse on its own. Berk says that finite verb phrases are those that "carry tense" (p. 105). This is a pretty good definition, however sometimes, there is no discernable tense marker in a verb phrase that nevertheless must be considered finite.

Underline the finite verb phrases and circle the non-finite verb phrases in the following excerpt:

Many ships and planes have disappeared in the small area known as the Bermuda Triangle. Most of them disappear without leaving any wreckage or bodies. Take the example of the British chartered passenger plane known as the "Star Tiger." The last message heard from the plane was "We expect to arrive on schedule." There was no further word. A year later, another plane disappeared in the middle of the Bermuda Triangle, with their last message being that the weather was fine and all was well.