

## Tense and Aspect

Veranstaltungsart: Proseminar (Aufbaumodul Linguistics)  
Zeit: Mi. 8:15 - 9:45 Uhr  
Raum: Ernst-Abbe-Platz 8, SR 601

### Course description

*Tense* and *aspect* are the most important grammatical categories for expressing time and temporal relations in English. At the same time, their intricate semantics make them one of the most involved and notoriously difficult areas of English grammar. Proceeding from these observations, the objectives of this seminar are two-fold: first, the course aims at developing a sound understanding of the phenomena of tense and aspect by systematically covering the relevant forms and their meanings (including discourse-pragmatic functions); secondly, it will introduce students to the methodological procedures of grammatical description and analysis, enabling them to write their own research paper at the end of the term.

The requirements for full credits include regular attendance and active class participation, weekly readings and smaller assignments, as well as a research paper investigating more closely one of the topics we will discuss in class.

### Requirements

Regular attendance and class participation  
Presenting minutes (a max. five-minute summary of the preceding class) once  
Smaller homework assignments throughout the semester  
Surprise quiz  
Term paper

The lion's share of your final grade will be based on the term paper (roughly 70%).

### Readings

Excerpts from the following books will be the obligatory reading basis for the course (see syllabus for details). Master copies are available from a seminar folder in the rack next to office 606 (in the department).

COMRIE, Bernard (1985). *Tense*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

COMRIE, Bernard (1976). *Aspect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HUDDLESTON, Rodney and Geoffrey K. PULLUM (2002). *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LAKOFF, George and Mark JOHNSON (1999). *Philosophy and the Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

QUIRK, Randolph et al. (1992). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Longman.

WEINRICH, Harald (2001). *Tempus. Besprochene und erzählte Welt*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart etc: Kohlhammer.

During the semester, the reader may be supplemented by some further articles and suggested readings.

## Course programme (syllabus)

DATE	TOPIC	PREPARATORY READING (obligatory!)
1 19.4.	<b>Introduction</b> <i>What's the problem anyway? A kick-off exercise.</i>	
2 26.4.	<b>Preliminaries:</b> basic terms and notions <i>The concept of time; the categories of tense and aspect; deixis; tense distinctions and temporal relations.</i>	Comrie 1985: 2-18. Huddleston 2002: 115-118 (§ 3.1).
3 03.05.	The English tense system (I): <b>Absolute tenses</b> <i>Present tense</i> <i>Ways of referring to the future, the problem of 'future tense', development of future markers</i>	Quirk et al. 1992: 175-183 (§§ 4.2-4.10) and 213-219 (§§ 4.41-4.48)
4 10.05.	<i>Past tense (Simple Past): polyfunctionality, reported (indirect) speech and modal meanings.</i>	Comrie 1985: 41-43 Quirk et al. 1992: 183-188 (§§ 4.11-4.16)
5 17.05.	The English tense system (II): <b>Relative tense and temporal adverbials</b> <i>Interpretation of relative tense forms</i> <i>Lexical adverbials and temporal clauses.</i>	Comrie 1985: 56-64 Huddleston 2002: 159-162 (§ 7)
6 24.05.	The English tense system (III): <b>Absolute-relative tense</b> <i>Past, present and future perfect.</i>	Comrie 1985: 64-77 Huddleston 2002: 143-146 (§§5.3.2-5.3.4) OED: etymology of <i>have</i>
7 31.05.	<b>Aspectuality (I)</b> <i>Lexicalisation versus grammaticalisation</i> <i>Imperfective and perfective aspectuality</i> <i>Grammatical aspect: The English Progressive</i>	Comrie 1976: 1-5 and 24-26 Huddleston 2002: 124-127 (§§ 3.2.5-4.1) and 162-172 (§ 8).
8 07.06.	<b>Aspectuality (II)</b> <i>Aspectual types (situation types)</i>	Huddleston 2002: 118-124 (§3.2.1-3.2.4) (recommended: Comrie 1976: ch.2)
9 14.06.	<b>Interim summary and application</b> <i>Tense or aspect – where does the Perfect go?</i>	<i>Hand in a bibliography on the Perfect.</i>
10 21.06.	A look beyond English: <b>Tense and aspect systems in the languages of the world</b>	
11 28.06.	<b>A cognitive linguistics perspective</b> <i>How do we conceptualise and talk about time?</i>	Lakoff and Johnson 1999: ch.10 (excerpts)
12 05.07.	<b>Tense and aspect in discourse</b> <i>How do tense and aspect contribute to our understanding and interpretation of texts?</i>	Weinrich 2001 (excerpts)
13 12.07.	Joker session	TBA (to be announced)
14 19.07.	<b>Wrap-up</b> (summary and conclusion) <i>How to write a term paper in linguistics (methodological issues)</i>	Bring to class: (a) any remaining questions (b) a possible term paper topic