# Situations- II

HUL 243

14th Oct 2024

Recap

- Discussed situation types: achievement, accomplishment and activity
- Situation types expressed by verbs
- How these are distinguished: use of progressive, adverbial *for-expressions*

- Tense is the linguistic device to express time relations
- English has three basic tenses:-
    - She saw me (past)
    - She will see me (future)
    - She sees me (present)
- Generally, the reference point for the tense system is **act of speaking**

- The reference to past and future is taken at the time of speaking

past   present   future

act of speaking

saw   *see*   *will see*
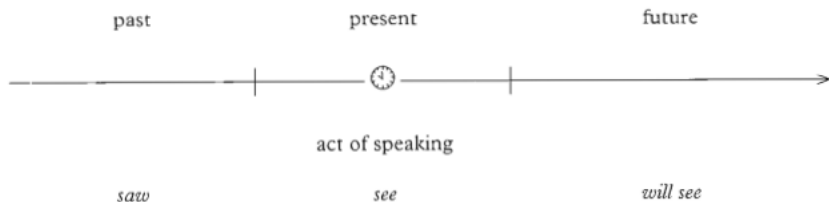
- Note that tense can be expressed via a bound morpheme on the verb
- It may also be expressed periphrastically i.e. via a phrase
  - ► She play**ed** tennis (bound)
  - ► She **will play** tennis (periphrastic)
  - ► She play**s** tennis (bound)

- In Chinese, there are no bound morphemes for coveying tense- this can be done only periphrastically
- It is possible to have sentences without periphrastic tense markers that convey time

(1)   Ta dai   ni   qu nail   ?
      ta take you go where ?
      Where did he take you ?

(2)   Zhangsan dapuo yi-ge   huaping
      Zhangsan break one-cl vase
      Zhangsan broke a vase

- Chinese poetry exploits this 'timeless' quality in its poetry
- A direct translation has no verbs in 4 out of the 5 lines

Autumn Thoughts by Ma Zhiyuan – literal translation

Dried vines, old tree, evening crows
Small bridge, running water, people homes
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A more appealing translation ..

Withered wisteria, old tree, darkling crows
Little bridge over flowing water by someone's house
Emaciated horse on an ancient road in the western wind
Evening sun setting in the west
Broken-hearted man on the horizon.

More on Tense

- Tense does not generally tell us about the *duration* of time.
- E.g. the following sentences are in the present tense- but are really intervals including the present moment– the length of these intervals varies
  - He is hungry
  - Smoking kills
  - That is amazing!
  - Brown defends the freedom of the press in his novel

More on tense

- The past tense refers to a time in the past, without telling us about its connection to the present
- e.g. *Did you finish* ?
- If we wish to refer to a past time periphrastically, then we can use adverbs like *yesterday* and *last year*

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- Other examples: *Have you read Shakespeare's sonnets ?* - implies that as of this current moment, you either read the sonnets or not
- On the other hand, if you were referring to a literature course taken by your friend, you may ask –in the past tense – *Did you read Shakespeare's sonnets ?*

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- Note that it's possible to combine both complex tenses: *I have been waiting since afternoon* is present perfect progressive

Difference between the two sentences?

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- In the second case, the action is complete- and the sentence is known to have perfective aspect
- Aspect is not explicitly marked on the verb in English -it is not grammaticalized, but this is the case with languages like Spanish and Russian

- Examine the story below and answer the question

Those people, not one of them realized I was not human. They looked at me and they pretended I was someone called Sister Mary. Maybe they really thought I was Sister Mary.
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The story you're describing has layers of interpretation depending on your perspective, which makes it fascinating. If the people around you genuinely believed you were Sister Mary, then in their reality, you took on that role. However, from your perspective, if you knew you were not Sister Mary, then you were playing a role without fully embodying her identity.

You weren't Sister Mary, but you represented her in the context of how others perceived you. This kind of narrative touches on themes of identity, perception, and the nature of reality. The experience of "being" Sister Mary can be real in the eyes of others, while not being true in your own sense of self.

What do you think? Was your experience of the situation in conflict with how they perceived you?

- Verbs such as realize are factive : explaining a true event that is realized in the complement
- Of course, the negation of these implies that the event is not true (occurrence of both these verbs implies that
- The verb *thought* is relatively neutral-: replacing the sentence with *Maybe they really believed I was Sister Mary* yielded a much better response from ChatGPT

Evidentiality

- How does a speaker communicate an attitude towards the *source of information*?
- E.g. a simple sentence like *She was rich* can be compared with the following:-
    - I saw that she was rich
    - I read that she was rich
    - She was rich, so they say
    - I'm told she was rich
    - Apparently she was rich
    - She was rich, it seems
    - Allegedly she was rich
- Such qualifications allow a speaker to say whether the statement relies on first hand knowledge, was acquired from another source or whether such a source was reliable

Evidentiality

- Some languages mark this information using a morpheme
- For example, Makah (an indigenous language of N. America) will use the following suffixes:
  - ▶ direct experience: zero marking
  - ▶ inference from physical evidence: -pi:t
  - ▶ auditory source: - 'qadi
  - ▶ quotative: - wa:t

- The morpheme marking of evidentiality shows that in some languages, this must be obligatorily expressed, but in others it is optional.
- E.g. the Jaqi languages spoken in Peru, Bolivia and Chile, accuracy on the part of the speaker is important with respect to their public reputation
- Hence, they must use the evidential marker obligatorily in their speech

Modality

- Modality is a cover term for devices which allow speakers to express degrees of commitment to or belief in a proposition
- Unlike evidentiality which focuses on the source of information– modality marks the degree of confidence in a statement
- Noah has gone to the airport (S)
- Modal systems allow speakers to show strong or weak commitment to the factuality of statements
- In the examples below, this is done via an adjective or adverb of modality
  - It is certain that S
  - It is probable that S
  - It is likely that S
  - It is possible that S

Modal auxiliaries

- She has left by now
  - She must have left by now
  - She might have left by now
  - She could have left by now
  - She needn't have left by now
  - She couldn't have left by now
- These types of verbs are **modal verbs**
- All of these signal degrees of knowledge that the speaker has : express epistemic modality

- It is also possible to use modal verbs to signal obligation, responsibility and permission: these are **deontic** modals
- You can drive this car :- you are able to drive this car OR You have my permission to drive this car
- Modals of obligation (in decreasing order of strength)
  - ▶ You must drive this car
  - ▶ You should drive this car
  - ▶ You need to drive this car
  - ▶ You ought to drive this car
- Modals of permission (in decreasing order of strength)
  - ▶ You can drive this car
  - ▶ You could drive this car
  - ▶ You might drive this car

- Legal documents in particular contain examples of deontic modality: e.g. *lessee* **shall** *pay lessor annual base rent in the amount of one hundred dollars* etc.
- The modal auxiliary *shall* tells us that the lessee is obliged to pay something to the lessor
- To automatically process legal documents, and summarize the obligations, entitlements, prohibitions of a contracting party, understanding deontic modals is important