



# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

### Copyright and terms of use

**IIT Madras is the sole owner of the content available in this portal - [onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in](https://onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in) and the content is copyrighted to IIT Madras.**

- Learners may download copyrighted material for their use for the purpose of the online program only.
- Except as otherwise expressly permitted under copyright law, no use other than for the purpose of the online program is permitted.
- No copying, redistribution, retransmission, publication or exploitation, commercial or otherwise of material will be permitted without the express permission of IIT Madras.
- Learner acknowledges that he/she does not acquire any ownership rights by downloading copyrighted material.
- Learners may not modify, publish, transmit, participate in the transfer or sale, create derivative works, or in any way exploit, any of the content, in whole or in part.

**English – II (Advanced English)**  
**Professor Rajesh Kumar**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**What Makes a Sentence in English?**

Welcome to the class. Today, we are going to talk about sentences in English. It is important to understand the composition of a sentence. We are going to talk about what makes a sentence in English. We are going to look at the internal composition of sentences and through that we are going to work on learning different aspects of sentence construction in English.

I would like to add a footnote here that being consistent with our idea, the fundamental idea throughout this course, we are working on creating accuracy because once we gain certain competence in accuracy, in construction of a sentence in sound production system, that is our pronunciation, combining words together, and then making a sentence, that brings us to a level of accuracy in learning.

This gives us accurate sentences. This makes us, this helps us make accurate sentences in English. Once we attain that level, then we work on getting fluency, that is, how we use those sentences with a particular level of fluency; and finally, those two put together are going to give us confidence in speaking the language. With that we will be able to speak with proper compositions of accurate sentence structure and ideas combined together.

To reach that level it is important to look at how accuracy works and therefore, I wanted to draw your attention to construction of a sentence, and for that purpose we are going to discuss today what makes a sentence. Let us look at this in little bit detail, and we will look at the components of sentence further.

(Refer Slide Time: 3:05)



## Sentence

- Sub + (V) Pred
- Sentence = [Subject + Predicate]
  - Predicate = [Verb + Object(s), adjuncts/adverbs]
- Ramu likes Tamil movies.  
 Raju sleeps on the floor.
- Sub                      Pred



There are two parts of a sentence. A sentence, any sentence in English language, we can also say the same thing about any language, but today and in this context we are only about English as language. Any sentence in English language has got two parts. One is subject, the other is predicate. And it is very simple to understand the distinction between the two and the nature of the two as well.

Every predicate has verb in it, and objects in it, and adjunctions, adverbs in it. So, some people also say we need only two things; that one is subject plus verb. True. We just need to understand that in details. Sometimes, this verb is called predicate because we can say verb or predicate interchangeably; however, please understand there is a distinction between the two.

Predicate actually is something; predicate in a sentence is everything else other than the subject. This is the simplest way of understanding predicate. And why verbs are equated with predicates is because everything within the predicate is about the verb. We have objects in the verb, objects in the predicate. We know whether we will have an object or not depends on the nature of the verb. That is, if we have a transitive verb, we will have an object. If we do not have a transitive verb, we will not have an object. That is, one more time, transitive verbs, objects; intransitive verbs, no objects. And then when we have adjuncts or adverbs in a sentence, as you can tell by the name and verbs, such things add additional information about the verb. Therefore, what is the most important part of the predicate is the verb.

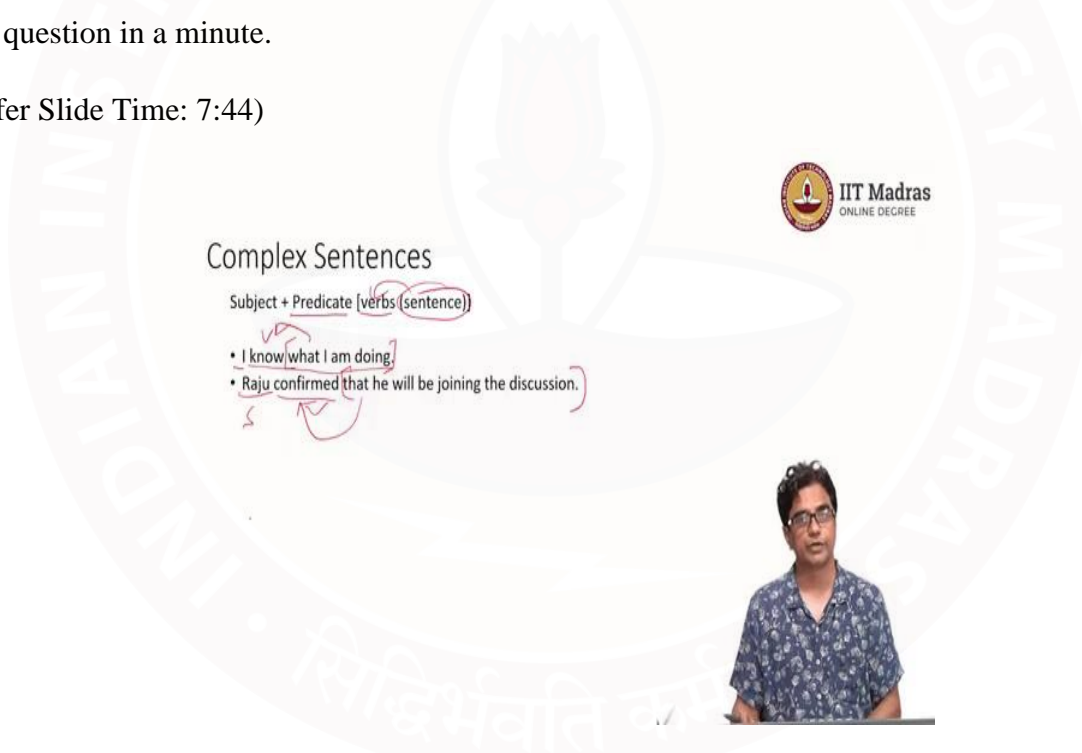
So, two parts, subjects and predicate, and within the predicate, verb as an important part. These are important things for us to understand. 'Ramu likes Tamil movies.' In the sentence

– ‘Raju sleeps on the floor.’ In a sentence like this ‘Ramu’ is the subject of the sentence, ‘Raju’ is the subject of the sentence and this whole thing under this line is called predicate.

In that predicate, ‘likes’ is a transitive verb, so ‘Tamil movies’ is the object of this verb ‘likes’; and ‘sleeps on the floor’ is the location, ‘sleep’ is an intransitive verb, so ‘on the floor’ is just a location, locational adverb. It is not an object. These two sentences tell you what we have described as sentence and what we have said about sentence, and these two sentences are examples of describing those facts, those components of sentences.

Next what we need to know is, at this point I want you to pause and think about more. So far, I have said a sentence has two things, subject and predicate. I want you to pause and think – is it really true that a sentence has nothing else than these two or does a sentence have something else in it that we are not discussing right now? Take a moment, think about this. It does not require you to think too much and you will come up with an answer. I will answer this question in a minute.

(Refer Slide Time: 7:44)



**Complex Sentences**

Subject + Predicate (verbs (sentence))

- I know what I am doing
- Raju confirmed that he will be joining the discussion.

When we look at a complex sentence, I want you to understand that a complex sentence is also essentially a simple sentence. In other words, it is just a sentence. The reason why a sentence becomes complex is because within the predicate of a sentence, a verb will have another sentence as the object of the verb. Such a sentence is called a complex sentence. So, we only need to know these basics through which language gets computed in our mind.

We are talking about the subconscious computation of components of sentence in our mind. Once we know these things, rest of it is fill in the blanks and we get a sentence. So, let us

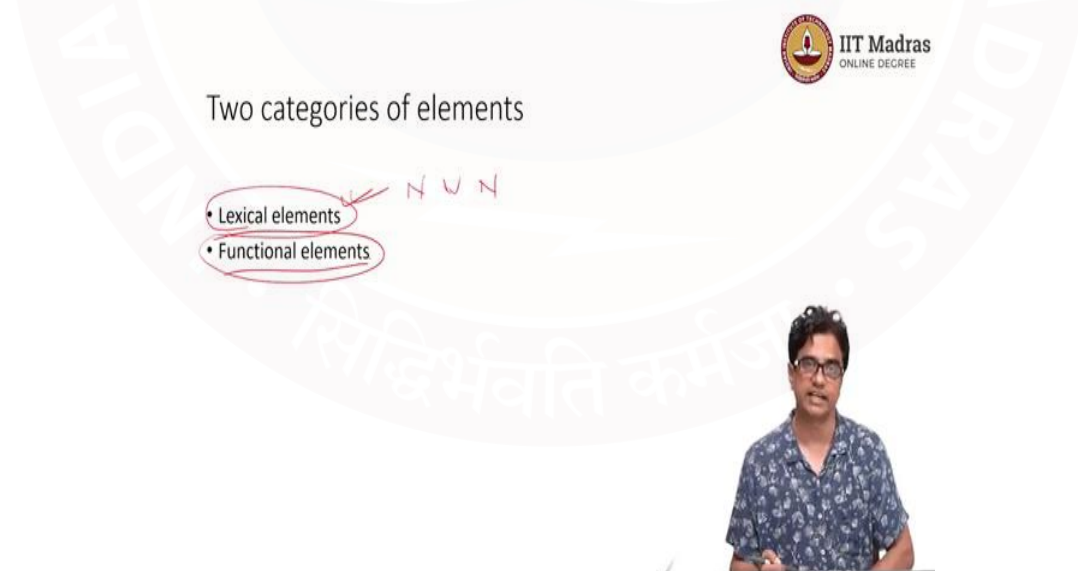
look at an example. When we say, “I know what I am doing”, it is an example of a complex sentence. Why? Because this has a subject ‘I’ and everything else in that subject, in that sentence is predicate.

‘Know’ is the verb of this sentence and what I am doing as a sentence is the object of this verb ‘no’. Therefore, this is a complex sentence. ‘Raju confirmed that he will be joining the discussion.’ ‘Raju’ is the subject, ‘confirmed’ is the verb and ‘that he will be joining the discussion’ is the object of the verb ‘confirmed’. You remember an object is something which answers the question ‘what’.

Raju confirmed what? Whatever is the answer of the sentence, answer of this ‘what’ is the object of the sentence. In this case ‘that he will be joining the discussion’ is the object of the verb ‘confirmed’. So, whether we have a simple sentence like this one ‘Raju likes Tamil movies’ or ‘Raju sleeps on the floor’ or a sentence like ‘I know what I am doing’ or ‘Raju confirmed that he will be joining the discussion’.

If we understand the basic composition of a sentence we are talking about, whether we talk about a simple sentence or a complex sentence, they are all sentences. Again important part for a sentence is to know its composition, its components.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:27)



Two categories of elements

- Lexical elements
- Functional elements

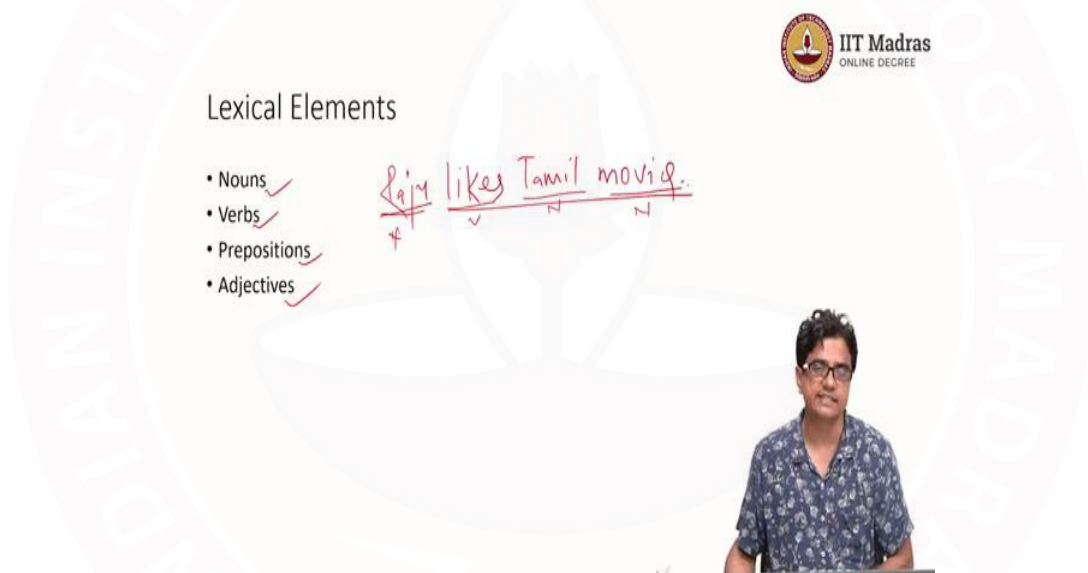
NUN

So, let us go back to our question – Does sentence have only two things, that is a subject and a predicate, or does it have more? At this time, I can answer it has more. Let us look at what is it that it has more. So, we are just going to add to our understanding of sentence based on what we know about it so far, that is subject and predicate.

So, there are all those things subject and predicate, we can put them in two categories again. Some of these elements of a sentence, they are called lexical elements and some elements are called functional elements. So, subject and adverbs, the kind of categories that we have seen, they are all part of lexical elements. So, we have noun as a subject, we have a verb in the predicate and we have another noun as the object of the verb, these are all lexical items.

Lexical items simply means, lexical elements or lexical items simply means things like nouns, verbs, adjectives, et cetera. We are going to see that. There is something else which is called functional elements in a sentence and we want to draw our attention to that part in little bit more detail today. So, let us look at these two categories, that is, lexical elements and function elements for building our understanding about a sentence in little bit more detail.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:11)



The slide is titled "Lexical Elements" and features a list of parts of speech with checkmarks next to them: Nouns, Verbs, Prepositions, and Adjectives. To the right of the list, the sentence "Raju likes Tamil movies." is handwritten in red ink. Underneath each word in the sentence, there is a small letter indicating its part of speech: "R" for Raju, "V" for likes, "N" for Tamil, and "N" for movies. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small video inset of a man with glasses and a blue patterned shirt, who appears to be the lecturer.

So, what are the lexical elements? Just now I talked about it, in nouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives and many more, they are all lexical elements in a sentence. So, if we take a sentence like 'Raju likes Tamil movies', in a sentence like this 'Raju' is a noun, this is a lexical element; 'like' is a verb, this is a lexical element; 'Tamil' is a noun, 'movies' is also noun, these are lexical elements.

But do these elements alone make a sentence? We have a subject here, and we have this as the predicate. Are these things enough for a sentence? The answer is no. Let us deal with, let us discuss what else do we see in a sentence.



(Refer Slide Time: 13:21)



### Functional Elements

- Agreement (S + V)
- Tense —
- Aspect —
- Modality
- Negation



We have functional elements are responsible for making of a sentence, or subconscious computation in a sentence. What are those functional elements? We have things like agreement, which is popularly known as agreement between subject and the verb. Remember in a sentence like 'Raju likes Tamil movies', other than the subject and the verb, and the predicate, there is something that connects the two. That element which connects the two is little bit invisible. It does not directly attract our attention.

That underlying, sort of invisible thing, is what connects the two parts and that is broadly speaking component of functional category and what we specifically know as agreement. So, agreement is one. Then we have tense. We have aspect. These are the functional elements of a sentence. We have more like modality, negation, et cetera as function elements in the sentence. So, all these things in parts or total are responsible for making of a sentence.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:57)



### Agreement

1. **Person**
  - I - I
  - II - You
  - III - He/she/it
2. **Number**
  - SG - One
  - PL - More than one
3. **Gender (Natural/Grammatical)**
  - Masculine
  - Feminine

We

You (S/P)

They

Handwritten notes:

He/she/it → m/f


One → I

More than one → III

Gender examples:

He likes T M

She likes T M



So, how does agreement work? There are three things in agreement which are important, one is 'person', the other is 'number' and the third is 'gender'. So, 1, 2, 3, things are important. We find these things in a sentence. We find things like, when we go into the details of understanding person, for understanding a sentence in English we need to look at these, first person, second person, third person.

Let us see examples of that. 'I' is an example of first person, 'you' is an example of second person, and 'he' is an example of third person. Let us understand the underlying cognition of a sentence. Speaker is the first person. The person we are speaking with is the second person, that is you; and the person we are speaking about is the third person. So, in singular we have 'I', as plural we have 'we'.

For second person, for both singular and plural we have 'you', that is, 'you' can be used for one and more than one. 'He/she/it' these are examples of third person, as you see here. But it is only in third person that we see little difference of gender; 'he' is used for masculine, and 'she' for feminine. 'It' does not have any specified gender on it. Some people call it neutral gender or neuter gender but it does not have any on it.

'They' likewise you do not see any gender on that, it is just a plural of third person. When we look at number, there are only two numbers. So three persons, two numbers. Singular, one, plural, more than 1. Straightforward. Gender, only 2, either masculine or feminine. We just need to keep these things in mind. In English we do not see gender as masculine or feminine, participating grammatically in the language.



Which simply means, when we say things like ‘Raju likes Tamil movies’ or we say ‘Sarita likes Tamil movies’, we do not see any impact of gender ‘Raju’ is masculine, ‘Sarita’ is feminine, we do not see any impact of masculine or feminine gender in the grammar of the predicate. Therefore, we say no grammatical implication of gender. Only number and person participate in agreement in English.

I want you to underline this part ‘only number and person participate in the agreement in English’, which is also sometimes visible and sometimes not visible. That is the story of agreement. I want you to take any 5 sentences, very simple sentences . You can also, you do not have to work on Discourse at this time, you can simply write disconnected 5 simple sentences in English or for that matter, now you can even write complex sentences. You do a dissection of try identifying a subject, try identifying a verb in a sentence.

First you identify the whole sentence. Then try identifying subject in the sentence, identifying the verb in the sentence. Then identify is the verb transitive or intransitive, then see if it is a transitive verb, what is the object of that verb? So, please try to look at every component of a sentence. I underline one more time, this is an important part of exercise for reaching grammaticality, for reaching accuracy in English.

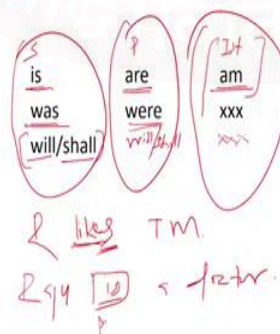
Start with 5 sentences and then you can go for more. Then you have, thus, you will get a label for every part of a sentence. Then check agreement. What are the markers of agreement in that sentence? How does it work? Do you see first person, second person, third person? Can you identify them? Do you see singular, plural in them? Check these parts.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:24)



### Tense (Time)

- Present:
- Past:
- Future:



The second part of the functional category is tense and this is one thing which we need to look at in details. Tense is another word for time. There are three parts, present, past and future. In a very simple way, 'is' this is a marker of present tense. 'are' is also a marker of a present tense, but 'is' is singular, this is plural. 'am' is a special category for first person. This does not have any singular or plural, just for first person.

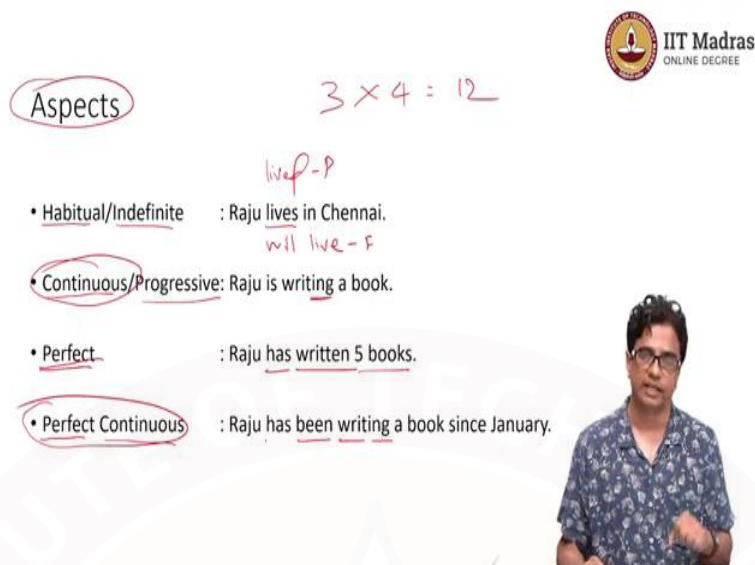
In past tense we have 'was' and 'were'. 'was' for singular agreement, 'were' for plural agreement. And in future we have 'will' and 'shall' as markers and they both work for singular and plural both. We do not see any gender marking on tense, we only see number marking on tense. This is how we look at tense in the sentence.

Hang on to that, we will describe more little later. But these are some of the obvious markers of tense in a sentence, particularly and for the first person, tense marker comes only in present tense, not for past tense or for future tense. So, we are going to see the implications of that in making of a sentence. When there is no verb indicating any action, these are the tense markers. When you have a verb in a sentence, then the verb hosts the tense and these things do not surface normally in a sentence.

For example, when we say, we use the same sentence for simplicity, 'Raju likes Tamil movies', here we see some marking. Now is this the marking of tense or agreement? I want you to take a moment to think about this. But we can say, so for this verb 'like', it works in a different way; but if we say, 'Raju is a doctor.'

Now, in this sentence there is no action verb like 'liking', so in that case you have 'is' as the present tense marker. That is how tense works. Like I said we will elaborate on that. Right now, I only want you to get the gist of what we are describing so that when we look at the 5 sentences, any random sentence, check whether your sentence has tense on it or not.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:45)



**Aspects**

$3 \times 4 = 12$

- Habitual/Indefinite : Raju lives in Chennai. live-P
- Continuous/Progressive: Raju is writing a book. will live-F
- Perfect : Raju has written 5 books.
- Perfect Continuous : Raju has been writing a book since January.

Next is 'aspects'. This is another type of functional category in a sentence. So, remember we are still talking about components of a sentence. We will get into the details of these things one by one, but components of sentence like subject and predicate can be divided into two categories, lexical categories and functional categories.

We are looking at function categories where we saw agreement and now we are looking at, we saw tense, and now we are looking at aspects. There are 4 different types of aspects. Please look at the names of these things and see how they work. I am just going to briefly introduce them to you so that you get a sense of what we mean by aspects. These things are called complicated, people usually do not pay attention to that.

But once you pay attention to them, you feel like they are straightforward, simple looking, straightforward stuff which you understand once and it stays with forever without any difficulty, and enables you to produce grammatical sentences with total understanding of internal composition of a sentence, which will also naturally give confidence about your own speech and understanding on top of that.

So, look at it. There are 4 aspects; one is called habitual or indefinite. The other is called continuous or progressive. Third one is called perfect and fourth one is called perfect continuous. So, first of all, what is aspect? Aspect is condition of the action, nature of the action that the verb denotes. So, when we say 'Raju lives in Chennai'. Look at this is a verb 'live'. This is an example of indefinite aspect or habitual aspect.

So, what it means is this sentence is in habitual or indefinite aspect because the living of Raju in Chennai is not one time activity; it is a regular, indefinite thing. We get a sense of indefiniteness about living, of Raju in Chennai. When we say 'Raju is writing a book', this is '-ing' as the marking on the verb gives us the continuity aspect of writing. That Raju is in the process of writing a book. So this is, this verb has continuous aspect on it because it says, it talks about the nature of action which is in progress, in continuity.

'Raju has written a book'. When you read this sentence, it gives you a sense of completion about writing of book. Raju has written 5 books, but all those books are complete now. Whenever we say this sentence, we mean it is complete, that is there is a sense of completion in the verb employed, therefore it is called perfect.

So, look at it, it has 'Raju has written', so this is called perfect. It is special nature of human language that we can talk about something which happened, which is finished but still, we can talk about the sense of continuity in that. So, when we say 'Raju has been writing a book since January', look at this writing '-ing' part and this 'been' part, it gives a sense of perfection leading, continuity leading towards perfection. This is called perfect continuous.

Now, when we describe these four aspects, each one of these aspects can be associated with all three tenses. So, look at that. Three tenses into four aspects can give you 12 different types of sentences. And all these are examples of let us say present habitual, present continuous, present perfect and present perfect continuous. Likewise you can get an example of these things in past and in future. So, what will be a sentence like that in past?

'Raju lived in Chennai'. So, if you say 'lived' or you say 'will live in Chennai', so this is past, this is future. Same way you can say, 'Raju was writing a book'. In this case we are talking about some action that was in continuity in past time. Look at the nature of human language and the kinds of things we can talk about through human language. So, denoting continuity in the past time, 'Raju had written 5 books'. Little while ago, Raju has finished writing 5 books.

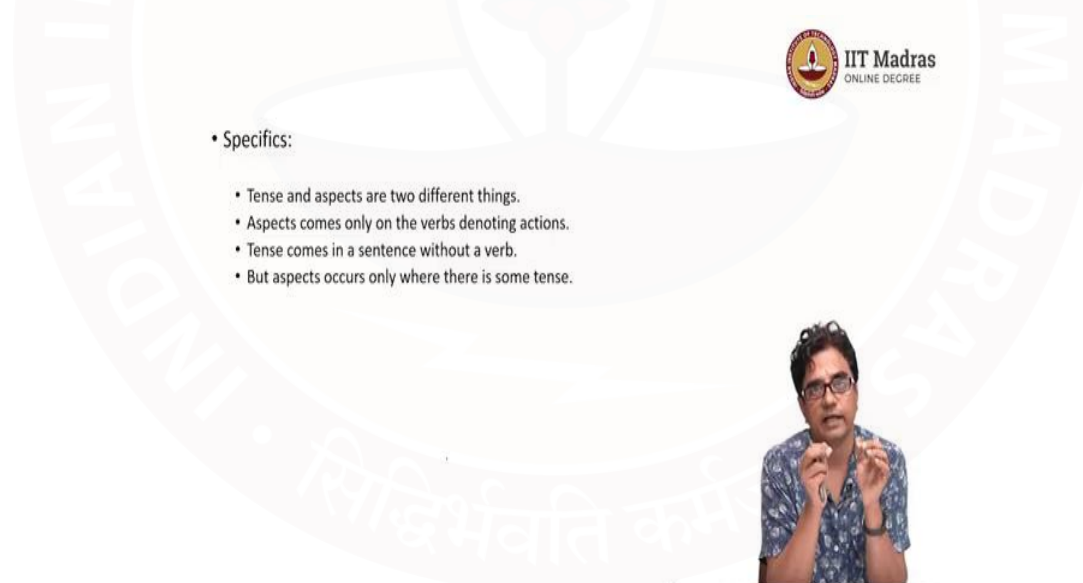
So when you compare 'has written 5 books' or 'had written 5 books' you see present perfect and the distinction between present perfect and past perfect. Then you say 'Raju has been writing a book since January', it is in present perfect continuous. Same way if you say 'Raju had been writing a book since January', 'Raju had been writing a book', that will be past perfect continuous.

Now, likewise you can do the same repeat of 4 set of sentences for future tense. I am purposely not giving you those examples because I take a break here and ask you to write a set of all 12 sentences for yourself and see the nature of verbs in these 4 different aspects along with different tenses. And think about each one of those sentences for a minute or two and see what that gives you.

You will get to learn a wonderful and miraculous underlying system through which we can talk about all kinds of time and nature of the verb. That is the purpose of describing tense with aspect. Now, going back, when we look at agreement system, when we look at tense, and when we look at aspect, all these three elements are part of functional category in a sentence which we do not usually see through naked eyes.

And all these three things are sometimes visible, sometimes not so visible in English sentences and therefore they are called functional elements in a sentence. So, lexical elements and function elements together help us combine, compute a grammatically accurate sentence which can give us fluency in turn. So, what do we see through this?

(Refer Slide Time: 32:12)



The slide features the IIT Madras Online Degree logo in the top right corner. The main content is a list of specific points under the heading '• Specifics:'. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a man with glasses speaking.

- Specifics:
  - Tense and aspects are two different things.
  - Aspects comes only on the verbs denoting actions.
  - Tense comes in a sentence without a verb.
  - But aspects occurs only where there is some tense.

Tense and aspects are two different things. We looked at agreement, tense and aspects. All three things are three different kinds of things, but they all play a role in making of a sentence. Aspect comes only when the verb, you have a verb denoting action in a sentence, like when we say 'Raju is a doctor', in this sentence there is no verb denoting any action. So there will be no question of any habitual thing, indefinite thing or continuous thing or perfect.

This is a simple statement. So, aspect comes only when we are going to talk about the nature of the verb, that is, nature of the action. And tense comes in a sentence without a verb too. Therefore we need to understand the tense and aspects are two separate things but aspects occur only when there is some kind of tense.

So, when you look at all the 12 types of sentence, when you look at the interplay of agreement, tense and aspects together as part of the functional category, you get to really see the larger picture of how a sentence is composed, computed in human subconscious. With these examples, at three different stages that I have described, take a pause, please spend some time with these things and see the impact of these things in helping you get accurate and grammatical sentences in English.

Thank you so much for your attention, looking forward to having a fruitful discussion with you about these three aspects, these three components of a sentence in making of a sentence. Thank you so much!