2. The semantic domain of the tense and the aspect

2.1 What is the tense? What does it mean to the use of the verb?

2.2 What is the aspect?
When we look at an action, an event, or a state of the verb, what do we “know” about the verb in question? For instance, when we see a dog “play” with a boy in the park, how many different “meanings” can this verb “play” represent considering all situations possible? Explain.

2.3 How to define the domain of each aspect specifically?

A. The progressive

The fundamental features required for the progressive form:

- Time or act that intercepts
- Progressive act

The five meanings related to the progressive aspect

(1)

**Examples:**
1.1 The assistant *is still typing* the paper.
1.2 Look. The boy *is still playing* the violin over there.
1.3 The suspect was taking a shower when the policemen broke into the house.
1.4 While we were having a good time, the children were doing their homework.
1.5 When you get here tomorrow, we will be working in the lab.
1.6 Everyone will be dancing, drinking, or singing if you get here at seven p.m.

(2)

Past  >  >  >  >  >  Future

momentary act

Examples:
2.1 Who is knocking?
2.2 The monster is shaking the bridge.
2.3 The lamp was still waving when I walked into the office.
2.4 If you get here at sunset, the frogs will be jumping around our backyard.
2.5

(3)

Past  >  >  >  >  >  Future

Old state  
New state
A transitional event

Examples:
3.1 The old man is dying.
3.2 John is leaving for New York (soon/tomorrow).
3.3 When the doctor got there, the patient was dying.
3.4

(?)
3.5 When you finish this project, I will be retiring.
Cf. When you finish this project, I will have retired.

(4) Extended meanings based on the basic feature of the progressive aspect

Examples:
4.1 Mary is wearing shorts today; this doesn’t happen very often.
4.2 I’m teaching English right now, but I don’t like this job very much.
4.3 He was staying with his uncle at that moment.

(5) When passion or strong interest is involved

Examples:
5.1 The baby is always crying.
5.2 My boss is always complaining.

B. The perfect

The perfect form entails the following features:

(1) The perfect form must indicate an action, an event, or a state that starts at time 1 ($T_1$) and ends at time 2 ($T_2$).

(2) The information focus (of the action, the event, or the state) must be at $T_2$.

(3) $T_2$ determines the tense of the verb phrase.

(4) Anything out of the domain between $T_1$ and $T_2$ is not represented in the form of the perfect.

There are four fundamental meanings related to the perfect aspect

(6) **Resultative (conclusive verbs are required)**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Past} & T_1 & T_2 & \text{Future} \\
\text{old state} & \text{new state} & \text{(result)} & (\text{What happened at } T_1)
\end{array}
\]

**Examples:**
6.1 John has left; I’m afraid you’ll have to come back tomorrow.
6.2 He has forgotten his glasses today (so he can’t read the contract).
6.3 The train had left when John got to the station. (John missed the train.)
6.4
6.5 By the time you graduate from college, I will have retired.
6.6

**Consider:**
(?) 6.7 John has left two hours ago, but he is in the office now.
(?) 6.8 When have you done this?
(?) 6.9 This person has died.
(?) 6.10 I have learned English for almost ten years.

(7) **Continuative (nonconclusive verbs are required)**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Past} & T_1 & T_2 & \text{Future} \\
\text{(A)} & \text{(B)} & \\
\end{array}
\]

(A) Referring to an action or an event or a state that starts at a specific $T_1$
(B) Referring to an action, an event, or a state that starts at a vague $T_1$
Examples:

7.1 I have worked in this company for about ten years.
7.2 We’ve lived in this town since we were born.
7.3 The weather has changed a lot in the past two decades.
7.4 We had lived in that house for 30 years before when he tore it down.
7.5 She had not waited long before she was pushed into the surgery.
7.6 By the end of this month, I will have stayed here for ten solid years.

Consider (?) 7.7 I have repaired this car for ten hours.
(?) 7.8 I have walked on the beach.

(8) Cumulative/experiential

(What happened before T2)

Examples:

8.1 I have never been to Japan.
8.2 Have you ever seen that sign before?
8.3 How much have you done?
8.4 How many projects have you completed so far?
8.5 I had never seen this person before last night.
8.6
8.7 You will have visited there ten times if you come with us next week.
8.8

(9) Perfect of the recent past (Comrie, 1976)

Examples:

9.1 We have recently learned that the match is to be postponed.
9.2 John has just arrived.
9.3 They had just left when we got there.

C. The perfect progressive

(10) Emphasizing the continuing actions or on-going events

Examples:

10.1 We have been walking for about ten miles.
10.2 We had been corresponding quite constantly before we met.
   Cf. We had been corresponding quite constantly before he died.
10.3
10.4 By the time you have money to buy me a house, I will have been staying in this lousy apartment for half of my life.
10.5
If the verbs that suggest potential conclusions have to be treated as “process” rather than as an “accomplishment,” the progressive form can be considered. Then the elements of $T_1$ & $T_2$ can be involved, and the perfect can be applied.

Examples:  
10.6 We have been writing this letter for several hours.  
10.7 She has been preparing for the feast all day today.  
10.8 She had been trying to open the door when/before we brought her the key.  
10.9

Consider: ?10.10  These students have learned English for about ten years, but they still have a hard time apply this language to the real situation.

Compare: ?10.11 The old guy has died for about two hours.  
?10.12 The boy has written these words for almost two hours.

(11) Emphasizing that the actions have been continuing right before the “result” is produced

Examples:  
11.1 We have been walking all the way up here; that’s why we are so tired now.  
11.2 We had been corresponding quite constantly; that’s why I knew where she was.  
11.3

D: The simple form

Examples:  
12.1 The earth revolves around the sun.  
12.2 Two times two is four.  
12.3  
12.4  
12.5  
12.6
(13)

![Past — Future](center)

**Examples:**

13.1 The earth was believed to be flat before the scientist found the truth.
13.2 My brother played the piano when he was a child.
13.3
13.4 I think I will walk to my office if I can rent a house near the office.
13.5
13.6 I go to work by bus because I don’t have a car and I don’t feel safe to ride a motorbike.

(14) **Demonstrating or others such as historical facts.**

**Examples:**

14.1 The suspect is pointing a gun to the hostage calmly when the director crawls into the house.
14.2 I sift the flour, salt, and baking powder into a bowl. I mix them well. Then I break the eggs into a cup . . .
14.3 John is an English boy. He lives in London. He gets up at seven o’clock every morning, has breakfast at half past seven . . .
14.4 Green passes the ball to Brown. Brown passes it to Black who heads it past the goalkeeper and scores!

Try to fill in the blanks with the verb forms that make the best meaning of the paragraph:

By the time this course ends, I ________ (be) here for nine months.
The last month left ____________ (pass) swiftly. If I ______ (do) well in the final examination, I ____________ (graduate) in June. Then I ________ (try) to stay a little longer to see if I ________ (find) a job because I really like the place.
E. Some verbs that do not appear in progressive form.

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3. Exercise

1. Compare the following expressions:

1.1 John is leaving for New York tomorrow.
1.2 John leaves for New York at noon tomorrow.
1.3 John will leave here sooner or later.

2. My sister has written the letter for hours.

3. Fill in the blanks with verb phrases that make the whole passage meaningful and grammatical.

Part A.

My community __________ (have) a trash recycling program for nearly a decade; consequently, I always __________ (separate) my trash into recyclable categories. Because glass and metal do not decompose rapidly, recycling these materials __________ (reduce) the amount of solid waste at
our trash dumps. At 7 p.m. last night, when I took a walk around my neighborhood, I ________ (see) a large number of people ________ (throw) away trash that could easily be recycled. However, I ________ (learn) that some people think that recycling trash ________ (be) too much work. For instance, when I ________ (talk) to my neighbor, she ________ (tell) me that sorting her trash ________ (be) too much trouble.

Part B.

Historically, although the children of immigrants may have grown up bilingual and bicultural, many ________ (not pass) on much of their parents’ language or culture to their own children. Thus, many grandchildren of immigrants do not speak the language of the old country and ________ (be) “American” by culture. However, in some parts of the country with established communities that ________ (share) a common language of culture, bilingualism and biculturalism ________ (continue). This is particularly true in communities where new immigrants ________ (still arrive). In general, cultural pluralism is more accepted in the United States today than it ________ (be) in the first half of the 20th century, and many of the school systems ________ (develop) bilingual programs. and multicultural curricula....

At the close of the 20th century, there seems to be a rise in the consciousness of ethnic groups around the world, and a sense of pride in what makes them unique. This ________ (occur) in the United States among many different groups, and in some cases it ________ (result) in new names to symbolize each group’s identity. In the United States, people ________ (become) very sensitive to the language used to describe these groups, and they try to be “politically correct.” For example, many black Americans, particularly young people, prefer the term African-American instead of black, to identify with their African heritage.
Part C.

While walking through a graveyard in Vienna, a tourist heard music coming from a gravesite. The headstone read: ‘Ludwig van Beethoven, 1770-1827.’ The man listened for a few moments before recognizing the music as the Ninth Symphony being played backward. Puzzled, the man left the graveyard and persuaded a friend to return with him. By the time they arrived at the grave, the music changed. This time it was the Seventh Symphony, but like the previous piece, it was played backward. Curious, the men agreed to consult a music scholar. When the two men returned to the grave with the expert, the Fifth Symphony was playing. Again it was backward.

Naturally, word got around about the strange happenings at Beethoven’s grave, and the next day a large crowd gathered and was listening to the Second Symphony being played backward.

Just then, the graveyard’s caretaker ambled up to the group. Someone in the crowd asked him if he had an explanation for the music.

“Don’t you get it!” the caretaker said incredulously. “He decomposed!”