

Advanced Syntax
lecture course
handout 3

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Functional layers surrounding the verb

Aspectual auxiliaries (functionally underspecified [-N, +V] constituents)

What is the status of *have* and *be* in passive, perfect and progressive sentences?
These meanings always appear together with a specific verb form (*-ing, -ed*). Where does meaning come from?

1. From the auxiliary.
2. From the ending on the verb.
3. From the combination of the two.

- (1) *We felt [the earth moving]*
- (2) *They heard [the names read out]*

Why do the auxiliaries appear in the sentence? As a dummy form (similarly to *do*).
Why are dummy forms needed? If they have no contribution to the meaning of the sentence, what do they do?

- (3) *Paul arrived.*
- (4) *Paul did not arrive.*

the negative particle *not*: a negative (light verbal) head.

The Head Movement Constraint (HMC): the movement of a head cannot skip an intervening head position/a head must move to the nearest head position.

Dummy *do* appears to support the bound tense-marker.

There is no negation in (1), (2), no HMC violation.

English morphology: isolating language! no word can bear more than one overt inflectional morpheme, if the clause expresses something else besides passive/perfect/progressive (and in most of the structures at least tense is expressed), we need the insertion of a dummy auxiliary (defined by the inflectional ending: *-ing* requires *be*, perfect/progressive require *have*)

Structure: inflectional endings in a light verbal head position (the aspectual/passive light verb). The auxiliaries appear when/where they are needed.

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|---|-------------------------------|
| (5) <i>The play was written.</i> | past, passive |
| (6) <i>The play has been written.</i> | present, perfect, passive |
| (7) <i>He had been running.</i> | past, perfect, progressive |
| (8) <i>The windows have been being cleaned for hours.</i> | present, perfect, progr, pass |
| (9) <i>The windows have (not) been being cleaned for hours.</i> | |

Reading: BESE, pp. 197-202.