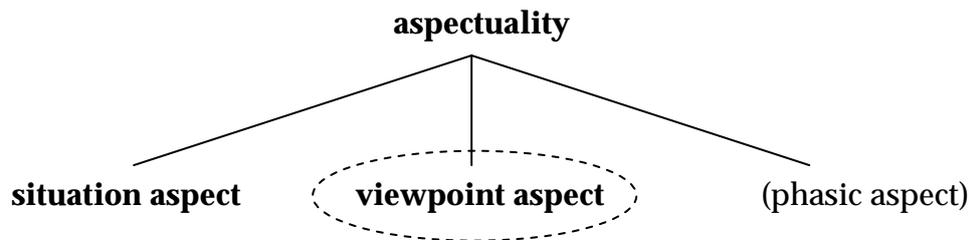Binnick, Robert I. (2006): "Aspect and Aspectuality". In: Bas Aarts & April McMahon (eds). *The Handbook of English Linguistics.* Malden, MA *et al.*: Blackwell Publishing, 244-268.

Aspect

a. *Types of aspect*

Aspectuality $\stackrel{\text{def}}{=}$ **internal** temporal structure of eventualities

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Form–function fit: Note that rarely there is a **1-to-1** fit between a form and only one semantic function (= 'meaning'). Rather, the common case seems to be a **1-to-many** fit:

> (1) *Progressive*
>   a. Tony<u>'s</u> eat<u>ing</u> spaghetti (right now).   *ongoing process*
>   b. They<u>'re</u> believ<u>ing</u> in god more and more (these days).   *state*
>   c. Susan<u>'s</u> perform<u>ing</u> before the Queen (next Tuesday).   *futurate*

The question then is whether we assume (*i*) semantically different, yet homonymous, lexical items (e.g. <PROG>*process*, <PROG>*state*, and <PROG>*future*) in LEX, or (*ii*) whether we assume **one core meaning** (e.g. processual <PROG>) that can be *syntactically* affected by **contextual factors** (e.g. adverbs: [Adv *next Tuesday*] tries to shift E to the future) **Ü type coercion**.

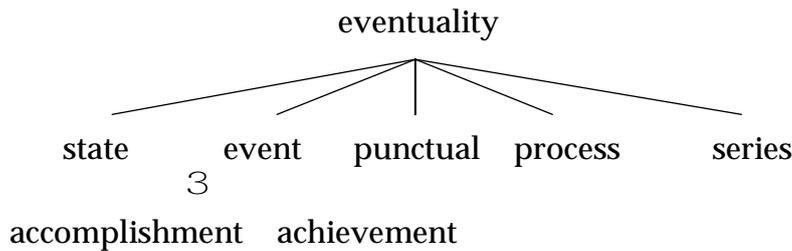b. *Situation aspect*

A.k.a. *lexical* aspect ® an inherent semantic property of the **lexical** (≠ functional!) category V

Situation aspect $\stackrel{\text{def}}{=}$ **type of eventuality** a given verb denotes:

The structure of an eventuality can comprise one or all of the following ingredients:
- **[** = beginning point
- **]** = end point
- *f* —––— = phases *or* ——— = state (*structure*)

Hierarchy of situation aspect

eventuality

state   event   punctual   process   series

3

accomplishment   achievement

Structure of eventualities

State:	——————	e.g. *exist, be, love, know*
Achievement:	]	e.g. *win, manage, finish*
Accomplishment:	[———————]	e.g. *draw, construct, make*
Process:	[———————	e.g. *increase, progress, grow*
Punctual:	[—]	e.g. *blink, sneeze, slap*
Series:	[[—] [—] [—]	e.g. *eat, whimper*

Properties of eventualities

Stativity: no internal temporal structure (no phases '————', no boundaries '[ ]', but with duration '————————') ® states [+stative] *vs.* rest [-stative]

Telicity: refers to the end point (with or without ']') ® **telic** [+telic]: event, punctual *vs.* **atelic** [-telic]: state, process, series)

Durativity: extension in time (with either phases '————' or enduring state '————————')   ® [+durative]: accomplishments, process, state, series *vs.* [-durative]: achievement, punctual

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Situation interacts with its syntactic context (adverbials, particles, viewpoint aspect,…), which can change its 'pure' meaning Ü type coercion!

(1) Susan read the book [*accomplishment*] ® Susan read the book <u>for a while</u> [*process*]

Re: Reichenbach (1947): **time *points*** (S, R, E) are without internal structure ® more adequate unit (at least for **E**): **time *intervals*** ® **overlap** instead of simultaneity! Thus, abstracting away from R, Reichenbach's representation for Engl. simple present, where E = S, is – as correctly pointed out by Anika – not really adequate because actually E ≠ S:

E (*habitual series*)

(1) *Simple present*
    Tony sees a shrink (every Friday).   ———— [[–] [–] [–] [–]]————→
                                                              S

So only *one portion of E* **overlaps** with S (**E ∘ S**), or S is a sub-interval of E. Note that nothing is said about the *boundaries* of E!

c. *Viewpoint aspect*

A.k.a. *grammatical* aspect ® the semantics of a **functional** (≠ lexical!) category Aux

Hierarchy of viewpoint aspect

<div align="center">

viewpoint aspect

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perfective aspect   imperfective aspect

ვ

habitual aspect   continuous aspect

</div>

What does viewpoint aspect do (semantic function)? – It takes an eventuality, focuses on one portion of it (*bold*), thus turning it into another type of eventuality (*type transformers/coercers*)**.**

Structure of viewpoint aspects

Perfective:	**[————————]** a	O	*single, complete whole*	*[external view]*
Continuous:	[————————] a	————	*incomplete, in progress*	*[internal view]*
Habitual:	[[—] [—] [—]] a	– – –	*incomplete, series*	*[internal view]*

I drew a picture.   ⟹   **I was drawing a picture.**

Q: Do **simple tenses** mark aspect? Is *habitual aspect* really explicitly (morphologically) marked? – It seems to be *situation aspect* that determines the default aspectual interpretation of a simple tense ® *neutral aspect.*

(2) *Simple past*
   a. Mr. Blandings <u>built</u> his dream house.   *complete (accomplishment)*
   b. The children played.   *process*
   c. John was hungry.   *incomplete (state)*

Perfect (≠ perfective!): category **in-between aspect and tense**

· Aspect? Contrary to many accounts (cf. "3.3 *Perfect <u>aspect</u>*"), the perfect is probably **not an aspect**: ASPECT refers to the *internal temporal structure of E*, but perfect expresses the E-external relation of E to S (via R, i.e. E–R,S)! Moreover, perfect is **compatible with**

progressive *aspect*, something that shouldn't be possible if both perfect and aspect belonged to the category of aspect!

(3)   John <u>has</u> <u>been</u> swimm<u>ing</u> all afternoon.

· Tense? Obviously, the perfect is not just an alternative simple past tense, but has an additional **present-related flavour** (*Gegenwartsbezug*). Indicative of this is the **present perfect puzzle** (Klein 1992): The English present perfect is incompatible with past adverbs (which refer to E):

(4)   *John has swum <u>yesterday</u>.

More on the perfect, esp. on its interaction with context, in session #06!

Retrospective: Some view the present perfect as a retrospective category: an event E anterior to S is viewed from the perspective of R = S. The mirror image of the perfect would then be S,R–E, i.e. an event E posterior to S viewed from R = S – **prospective**:

(5) a. Watch out, you're <u>going to</u>/<u>about to</u> fall from the cliff!   —S,R——E——→
    b. *Watch out you'<u>ll</u> fall from the cliff!   —S——R,E——→

d. *Aspectual interaction*

Types of viewpoint and situation aspect interact and restrict one another in predictable ways! **Take the simple present**: with statives it denotes a **current eventuality** (this also holds for perfect/progressive):

(6) John is tall.

With eventives/processuals, it has habitual or generic meaning:

(7) Susan visits her mother (every Sunday).
(8) Lions eat meat (everyone knows that).

Or take the **combination of statives with progressive aspect**: properties of people/things (i.e. states) are turned into intentional behaviour (i.e. processes):

(9) You'<u>re</u> be<u>ing</u> freakin' rude! (= You're behaving in a rude way)

There are not two lexical items <BE>, but the *context* (progressive aspect) coerces a different interpretation (cf. above)!
   Or take the *imperfective paradox*: A verb like *build* is inherently telic – its situation aspect is **accomplishment** (process + end point). **Progressive** aspect, however, cancels the accomplishment (end point) reading, and turns E into a pure process:

(10) a. Susan built a kayak (yesterday).   ® *the kayak is finished*
    b. Susan <u>was</u> build<u>ing</u> a kayak (when…).   ® *the kayak is unfinished*

e. *Aspectuality and categories*

Note that in this course we're ultimately dealing with verbal **functional**, or grammatical, **morphology** (either bound, i.e. inflectional affixes, or free, i.e. auxiliaries) [**Ù** *left column*]. There're are also other means of indicating grammatical categories like ASPECT: **semi-functional constructions** ('construction' = more than one lexical element), which are often **lexically complex periphrases** comprising (semantically and morphologically) simplex verbs like *be*, *have*, *get*, etc., and prepositions [**Ù** *middle column*], or **lexical elements**, mostly **adverbials** (adverbs, prepositional phrases), but also particles (e.g. *eat <u>up</u>*, *up* adding an end point to the series denoted by *eat*) [**Ù** *right column*].

	functional	**semi-functional**	**lexical**
futurate	*will*	*be about to*	[Adv *next week*]
deontic modality	*must*	*be to*	[Adv *necessarily*]
habitual aspect	SIMPLE	*used to*	[Adv *every X*]
inceptive aspect	–	*begin/start to*	?
terminative aspect	–	*stop/cease to*	[Adv *finally*]
progressive aspect	*be V-ing*	*continue/keep*	[Adv *in the process of*] [Adv *while*]

Note that semi-functional constructions consist of *lexical items* – thus they should be properly classified as *lexical* –, but the composition of LIs at hand yields a functional meaning – thus, *semi-functional* (you could also label them *semi-lexical*): e.g. *be* denotes existence and *about* a reference relation, but their composition *be about (to do sth.)* yields an **aspectual interpretation**, namely **imminent prospectivity** (futurate).