Typology I: Solution to Homework for Lecture 9

(The questions marked with (*) are research questions you can use to deepen your understanding, the others could be exam questions.)

1. **Which points in time are relevant for distinguishing tenses according to Reichenbach?**

   According to Reichenbach the relevant points are

   - Speech time: point of time the expression is made
   - Event time: point/period of time the event happens
   - Reference time: point of time the event is referenced to

   What is the systematic difference between perfect and non-perfect tenses?

   The systematic difference of perfect and non-perfect tenses is the relation of reference time to event time: in non-perfect tenses reference time and event time coincide, whereas in perfect tenses the event time is temporally arranged before the reference time.

   *Explain the concrete difference between the English simple past and present perfect in this system, and illustrate it with an example.

   The simple past marks an event in the past that has no reference to the present point in time (speech time). E.g. example (a) describes a speaker's state in the past that is different to the current state. On the contrary, the present perfect is used to express an event in the past that has a reference to the current point in time. E.g. example (b) describes a speaker's state in the past that coincides with the current state.

   (a) Last summer I was in England.
   (b) I have never been to England.

2. **What is a remoteness distinction? What is the most frequent remoteness distinction in the languages of the world?**

   A remoteness distinction is present in a tense system which distinguishes a number of different temporal distances between event time and speech time. The most common distinction is a 2-level distinction (proximate and past) between events which happened on the same day ('hodiernal'), and events which happened one or more days ago.

   How can such a distinction be expressed in languages where it is not grammaticalized?

   Such a distinctions are usually expressed by temporal adverbials like 'this morning', 'yesterday', 'last Christmas', or German: 'eben', 'einst'.

3. **What is the main semantic distinction that is expressed by aspect marking?**

   Most commonly, the primary distinction of an aspect system will constrast:

- perfective: processes which considered as a whole, are completed, and (often) onetime
- imperfective: everything else, e.g. an ongoing process, a non-completed action, or a recurring event

What are progressive and habitual events? What do they have in common?

Progressive and habitual events are in general both imperfective. Progressive events are ongoing processes that are interruptible and often not completed. Habitual events are not necessarily ongoing processes, but rather frequently repeated events.

Give three example sentences describing imperfective events in English, where

- **one describes a habitual and progressive event,**
- **one describes a habitual but not progressive event, and**
- **one describes a progressive but not habitual event.**

Example (a) expresses the progressive nature of the event by the 'present progressive' form and the information of the temporal adverbial 'from 8 to midnight', and its habitual nature by the temporal quantifier 'every Monday'. Example (b) expresses the habitual and non-progressive nature of the event by a periphrastic construction based on the verb 'use to'. Example (c) marks the progressive type of event by the 'past progressive' form plus the interruption information; and the non-habitual nature of the event by the particle 'just' plus the context information about an unusual situation.

(a) The house band is playing every Monday from 8 to midnight.

(b) I used to go to school also on Saturdays.

(c) I was just driving home, when I realized that I left my keys at the office.

4. **What are the most important sub-types of modality?**

The most important sub-types are

- deontic: related to laws, rules or norms
- epistemic: related to the knowledge of the speaker
- buletic: related to wishes and desires
- dynamic: related to abilities

You have heard that modal verbs frequently have reduced morpho-syntactic properties. What does that mean? *Is that also the case in English? *Give examples to justify your point of view.

It typically means that modal verbs have less inflection than non-modal verbs have. This is also the case in English: the verbs 'can', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'must', 'shall', 'should', 'will' and 'would' do not have the regular third person singular marking ('-s'), and many of them have a periphrastic

(or at least dispreferred) past tense form. For instance, while 'could' is technically the past tense of 'can', the deontic or epistemic interpretation of 'could' is more prominent, which is why past tense of 'can' is very often expressed by alternative constructions, e.g. 'was/were able to', 'was/were allowed to'.