

Chapter VII

Verbal Aspect

Present Perfective Active Indicative and Subjunctive

Adverbs of Place

Verbal Aspect

We have already looked at verbal aspect briefly in Chapter V. However, as we begin to look at the perfective system of the Latin verb we will once again review the basic distinction between the two systems, the perfective and the imperfective. If this is all too confusing, don't worry too much. The simple translations given (e.g., *dico* 'I say', *vidit* 'he saw') will cover the vast majority of cases. These explanations are only to help the student understand the occasional difficulties in translation, and to make the seeming idiosyncrasies in later chapters more understandable.

Proto-Indo-European, a language spoken c. 5000 BC from which English and Latin are both descended, marked three aspects on its verbs. English (and Ancient Greek) retained all three, but Latin did not. The imperfective aspect is marked in English by the verbal auxiliary 'to be' (e.g., 'I am going', 'I was eating'). The Latin imperfective has three verb tenses:

- Imperfect (Chapter XII)
- Present (Chapter V)
- Future (Chapter XXIII)

The perfective aspect is marked in English by the verbal auxiliary 'to have'. The Latin perfective has three verb tenses:

- Pluperfect (Chapter XIX)
- Perfect (Chapter VII)
- Future Perfect (Chapter XIX)

English also retains the aorist aspect (from the Greek for 'unlimited' because the Greek aorist is not limited to a particular time frame; the same form can be used in the past, present, or future under certain circumstances). In English, the aorist either has no auxiliary or the auxiliary 'to do'. The Proto-Indo-European aorist mostly disappeared from Latin, its uses going to the imperfective system. However, in the past indicative the aorist eventually merged with the present perfective forming the perfect tense. It is for this reason that the perfect tense has so many irregular roots, some derive from the old perfective, but some derive from the old aorist. This also leads to some problems when an indicative sentence must be transformed into the subjunctive, as we shall see when we study Indirect Discourse (Chapter XXXVI).

Aspect itself is the relationship between the action of the sentence and the time at which it is occurring (called the Point of Reference). Imperfective actions are either ongoing or repetitive at the point of reference:

Progressive (On-Going)



Repetitive



Perfective actions are completed at the point of reference; they describe what happened, not what's happening:

Perfective (Completed)



Aorist actions describe acts seen as occurring at the exact moment of the point of reference, not extending before or after (punctual). The aorist is also used for general truths:

Punctual



General Truths



In the subjunctive mood (cf. Chapter IX) and the present and future indicative the verbs of the imperfective system are used for the aorist. In the past indicative the perfect is used for the aorist. The past aorist use of the perfect tense is often called the historical perfect and is equivalent to the English simple past or the preterite of the Romance Languages. When the perfect is used for truly completed actions it is called the primary perfect and is equivalent to the English and Romance present perfect. An understanding of these uses is important later on, but for right now it is sufficient to treat the Latin and English equivalents as complete analogues, even though there are some cases where this will not work.

It also must be borne in mind that the distinction between the perfect and the past imperfective (cf. Chapter XII) was growing lax in later Latin. Furthermore, often in the

Vulgate the perfect is used to translate the Hebrew perfective and the imperfect to translate the Hebrew imperfective, a method which sheds light on the Hebrew, but may obscure the meaning from those unfamiliar with Hebrew verbs. It may at times be necessary to translate the verb as if it were in the opposite aspect for a smooth translation, but this is only necessary when a more direct translation sounds like bad English. For the time being, however, our translations will follow the basic correspondence between the Latin and English imperfects and the Latin perfect with the English simple past (or less frequently the present perfect).

Present Perfective Active Indicative

The Present Perfective is formed from the Perfect stem. In the first, second, and fourth conjugations this stem is usually predictable, and only when it is irregular will it be given in the vocabulary. The third (including mixed verbs) has no predictable pattern for the formation of the perfect stem, and it is necessary to learn the first person singular present perfective indicative for each verb.

The first and fourth conjugations add -av- (e.g., amávi) and -iv- (e.g., audívi) respectively to the imperfective stem to form the perfect. The second conjugation adds -u- (e.g., appáruí). The following are the perfect stems of verbs already learned that do not follow these patterns¹:

| Imperfective Stem | Perfective Stem |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| accíp- | accép- |
| ascénd- | ascénd- |
| cád- | cécid- |
| constítu- | constítu- |
| descénd- | descénd- |
| díc- | díx- |
| dá- (do, dare) | déd- |
| és- (sum, esse) | fú- |
| fác- | féc- |
| invéni- | invén- |
| mítt- | mís- |
| percút- | percúss- |
| pón- | pósu- |
| præcíp- | præcép- |
| respónde- | respónd- |
| sáp- | sapív- |
| scríb- | scríps- |
| súrg- | surréx- |

¹ Note that while most of these verbs are third conjugation, a few are not. Pay special attention to these verbs, as their imperfective system is formed regularly.

| | |
|-------|---------|
| trád- | trádid- |
| vád- | vás- |
| véni- | vén- |
| víde- | víd- |
| vív- | víx- |

As you can see, the perfect stem may be formed by addition of -iv- (which is regular in the first and second declensions), the addition of -s-, a “reduplication” of part of the imperfective root, or the perfect stem may be identical to the imperfect stem (sometimes suffering a vowel change or the loss of the “thematic vowel”). There are also some verbs which have an -n- in the imperfect, but lose it in the perfect. While these patterns may be helpful, there is no way to predict to which pattern a verb will belong.

To form the present perfective indicative active the following endings are added to the perfect stem.

| | |
|-------|--------|
| -i | -imus |
| -ísti | -itis |
| -it | -érunt |

There are no irregular verbs in the perfect system. So long as you know the perfect stem, these endings will always be used for the present perfective.

Adverbs of Place

Latin, like English, has adverbs to describe location, as well as motion to and from. However, unlike modern English, these three uses have different forms. Shakespearean English retained the distinction which Latin also retains, but it has dropped out of modern English. Below is a table with the Latin adverbs of place, and their archaic English equivalents:

| | in | to | from |
|---------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ‘which’ | ubi ‘where’ | quo ‘whither’ | unde ‘whence’ |
| ‘this’ | hic ‘here’ | huc ‘hither’ | hinc ‘hence’ |
| ‘that’ | istic ‘there’ | istuc ‘thither’ | istinc ‘thence’ |
| ‘that’ | illic ‘there’ | illuc ‘thither’ | illinc ‘thence’ |

Of these forms, those in *ist-* are very rare even in Classical usage, and do not appear in the Vulgate. *illinc* is also absent from the Vulgate, but the other forms occur routinely.

Vocabulary

Nouns

mandátum, mandáti (n)- commandment

sábbatum, sábbati (n)- Sabbath
signum, signi (n)- sign
tabernáculum, tabernáculi (n)- tent, tabernacle (i.e., the tent housing the Ark)
templum, templi (n)-temple
vinum, vini (n)- wine

Verb

cóngrego, congregáre- to gather together
juro, juráre- to swear
gigno, gígnere, genui, genitum- to beget, to bring forth

Adverb

cras- tomorrow
heri- yesterday
hodie- today
jam- already

Conjunction

idcírco- therefore

Exercises

I. Translate into English:

- i. Dóminus David jurávit: “Fílium gignit², et rex erit”.
- ii. Quia heri sábbatum erat, idcírco congregávimus.
- iii. Constituit Deus Levítas super tabernáculum arcæ.
- iv. Hodie signum vobis dat Deus.

II. Translate into Latin:

- i. Mary begot a son, and called His name (*nomen*) Jesus³.
- ii. I have said to Judah: “you are a son to me”.
- iii. Tomorrow I will be in Syria.
- iv. I have prayed to God for you, Peter.

III. Compose at least 5 original Latin sentences containing the following words and grammatical constructions, and give English equivalents.

Words: *vinum, templum, cóngrego, jam*

Grammar: *two adverbs of place; present perfect active indicative*

² Present for the future. Translate by the English future tense.

³ This is the Biblical idiom for “to name”.