CONTENTS

Chapter 1
THE PRESENT TENSE: SIMPLE OR CONTINUOUS / 9

Chapter 2
THE FUTURE AND THE WAYS OF EXPRESSING IT / 31

Chapter 3
THE PAST TENSE: SIMPLE OR CONTINUOUS / 55

Chapter 4
THE PERFECT: PRESENT AND PAST / 89

Chapter 5
REPORTED SPEECH AND THE SEQUENCE OF TENSES / 137

Chapter 6
THE PASSIVE / 159

Chapter 7
ADVERBS / 207

Appendix / 243

Glossary / 247

References / 253
CHAPTER 1
THE PRESENT TENSE: SIMPLE OR CONTINUOUS?

I. PRELIMINARIES

A. Read the following text, paying attention to the tenses used here:

I’m writing this down because I don’t ever want to forget the way it was. It doesn’t seem as if I could, now, but they all tell you things change. And I guess they’re right. Older people must have forgotten or they couldn’t be the way they are. They try to understand but they don’t seem able to know how. It sounds as if I were trying to run away from what I have to write down, but I’m not. I want to remember that summer, too, because it’s the last one I’ll ever have. Oh, when I’m an old man – thirty or forty – things may be all right again. But that’s a long time to wait and it won’t be the same.

(Stephen Vincent Benet - Too Early Spring)

B. The text is written taking the present tense as a point of reference.

i. Identify each tense used in the excerpt.

ii. The tenses that are used in the excerpt are mainly present. Identify the Simple Present Tense versus the Present Continuous Tense in the fragment. Can you list differences in meaning, looking at the way in which these tenses have been used?

iii. Try to change the tense of the predicates from Present Simple into Present Continuous. Indicate when this is possible / impossible.

II. EXPLANATIONS

1. Simple or Continuous?

In English all tenses have simple forms (also called nonprogressive) or continuous forms (also called progressive). A speaker can communicate situations taking place in the present by using either the Present Simple or the Present Continuous:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT SIMPLE</th>
<th>PRESENT CONTINUOUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb(=infinitive)+ -/-s</td>
<td>be + verb(=infinitive)+ -ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/you/we/they paint.</td>
<td>I am painting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she paints.</td>
<td>You/We/They are painting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He/She is painting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
John paints his house every year.
John își zugrăvește casa în fiecare an.

Besides the forms that are given above for the two tenses, we also remind readers the spelling rules that are associated with each of them:

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PRESENT SIMPLE</strong></th>
<th><strong>PRESENT CONTINUOUS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(–S FORMS)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(-ING FORMS)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Add –s for most verbs</td>
<td>1. Add –ing to the verbal form:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leap –leaps, manage-manages</td>
<td>paint –painting, scream –screaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Add –es for words that end in –ch, -s, -sh, -x, or –z</td>
<td>2. If the verb ends in –e, drop the final –e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pinch-pinches, pass-passes, wash-washes, vex-vxeses, buzz-buzzes</td>
<td>take – taking, choose – choosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When a verb ends in a consonant +-y, change the –y into –ie</td>
<td>3. Double the consonant in one-syllable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study-studies, cry-cries</td>
<td>words ending in a consonant (vowel-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, do not change –y to –ie when the</td>
<td>consonant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb ends in a vowel +-y</td>
<td>run – running, hop-hopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play-plays, say-says</td>
<td>However, do not double the consonant if the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There are some verbs that have slightly</td>
<td>verb ends in –x, -w, -y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different forms in the Simple Present. They</td>
<td>vex-vexing, sow-sowing, say-saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have to be learned as such.</td>
<td>4. If the verb ends in –y, keep the –y and add an –ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do-does, go-goes, have-has</td>
<td>obey-obeying, try-trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Remember that there is a class of verbs</td>
<td>5. If the verb ends in –ie, change the –ie to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that doesn’t take an –s in the third person</td>
<td>an –y before adding ---ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singular. These are called the modal verbs</td>
<td>die – dying, cry-crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and they do so because they have special</td>
<td>6. If the verb of two or more syllables ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>properties that distinguish them from other</td>
<td>in a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbs.</td>
<td>combination and the stress falls on the last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can (could), may (might), must, will</td>
<td>syllable, double the consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(would), shall (should)</td>
<td>submit - submitting, regret – regretting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTA BENE!
DO NOT EVER FORGET TO PLACE THE –S FOR THE THIRD PERSON SINGULAR IN THE SIMPLE PRESENT. THIS IS WHAT GRAMMATICALLY (=morphologically) MARKS THE THIRD PERSON AS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER PERSONS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food for thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider the following text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Identify and correct those Present Simple verb forms that should be in the third person singular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Some Present Continuous verb forms are misspelled. Identify them and correct them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shortly after her visit to H.G., Rebecca invites Anthony to meet her for tea at her London club, the Lansdowne. They have not met for some time and she is struck unfavourably by his appearance. At thirty he is still handsome in a bulky, fleshy sort of way, but today his cheeks seem unnaturally fat, almost swollen, and his hair need washing and cutting, as it is falling lankly forward over his forehead. His clothes look crumpled and grubby, no doubt because he is living away from home and Kitty’s housewifely care so much of the time. When they get on to the subject of H.G., and whether it was right to tell him he has an incurable cancer, his speech seems to her theatrical, inauthentic. He makes offensive remarks in a manner designed to make them seem compassionate, taking her hand and saying, ‘I don’t want to hurt you, Rac, I would rather do anything than that, but you shouldn’t involve yourself in H.G.’s welfare. The truth is, it’s a long time since you were the centre of his life.’ ‘I know that perfectly well,’ she say indignantly.  

(David Lodge – *A Man of Parts*)

2. Frequently or right now?

The difference in form that we have underlined above between the Present Simple and the Present Continuous correlates with a difference in meaning. Let us examine the sentences above one more time:

(1) John paints his house *every year*.  
(FREQUENTLY)

(2) John is painting his house *now*.  
(RIGHT NOW)

It is very clear that the two tenses (*which are both present*) combine with different ways of seeing the present, as suggested by the time adverbials (the phrases that show the time taken as a point of reference for a situation – *every year, now*) present in the sentences. In sentence (1) the adverbial “every year” refers to a present interval, which includes several moments relevant for the present. The event occurs with a certain frequency in the present. During this interval, John can perform the event described, namely painting his house, several times. In sentence (2), the present that the speaker refers to points to a single moment in time and the event described by the sentence is taking place at the very moment when we speak.

The type of situation taking place in sentence (1) is called habitual, because it happens according to a habit: *John has the habit of painting his house every year.*
The continuous verbal form used in sentence (2) can be seen as an instance of the “continuous” (or “progressive”) aspect. Aspect (which is here marked grammatically by the combination of the auxiliary verb be with the –ing form of the lexical verb to paint) refers to the way in which the speaker views the internal make-up of a situation. The continuous/progressive aspect in sentence (2) refers to the fact that the situation is viewed as ongoing (compare this to (1) which is nonprogressive – the situation is not ongoing, but habitual, see Chapter 2, Section II, Subsection 4 for further details on habitual situations).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food for thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss the difference between the sentences where the event expressed is taking place as we speak and the habitual sentences, where the event is presented as repeated. Try to translate these sentences into Romanian. Does translation reflect the differences of meaning you previously identified?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Look! Kenny is killing that chicken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Kenny kills a chicken a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Pinocchio is dancing on stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Pinocchio dances for Stromboli every night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. “Are you talking to me?” the taxi driver asked him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The taxi driver talks to every customer he takes for a ride.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. In general or right now?

Let us look at two more sentences evincing a contrast between the two tenses:

(3) Fish swim but don’t get wet. (GENERALLY)

Peștii înoată dar nu se udă.

(4) Those fish are swimming towards me. (RIGHT NOW)

Peștii aceia înoată spre mine.

As in the case of the first two sentences, the sentence that contains the Present Continuous (4) refers to a situation that is taking place at the moment when we speak. It is a situation happening in front of our very eyes, which thus refers to something temporary.

The Present Simple in sentence (3) includes, just like sentence (1), more moments and not just a single moment (Generally – and not necessarily right now – fish swim and do not get wet). It is what we would call a general situation or a generic situation.

### NOTA BENE!

Generic sentences can either:

a. refer to a state which is true at all times (universally true) in the existence of the entity the sentence refers to:

One and one is two.

Unu și cu unu fac doi.
The sun sets in the west.
Soarele apune in vest.

b. have predicates that refer to typical characteristics of a kind/species. The sentences below refer to “lions” as a species:

Lions are ferocious animals.
Leii sunt animale feroce.

The lion is a ferocious animal.
Leul este un animal feroce.

The main difference between the Present Simple and the Present Continuous thus refers to the fact that the Present Simple Tense represents a more inclusive notion of the present that can encompass more that a single moment and often does so, representing frequent processes called habitual situations (sentence 1) or general situations called generic situations (sentence 3). The Present Continuous always refers to a process taking place (or unfolding) at the moment when we speak and at that moment only. The Present Continuous does not usually express generic and habitual sentences.

Let’s generalize!
While the Simple Present Tense can express generic or habitual situations, the Present Continuous tense can express situations unfolding at the moment NOW.

Food for thought
Discuss the difference between the sentences where the event expressed is taking place as we speak and the habitual sentences, where the event is presented as repeated. Try to translate these sentences into Romanian. Does translation reflect the differences of meaning you previously identified?

a. The hunters are shooting ducks.
b. Hunters shoot ducks in autumn.

a. Stop skating on that lake! The ice is melting.
b. Ice melts when the sun shines.

a. They are gathering herbs for tea.
b. A rolling stone gathers no moss.

4. Instantaneous or Continuous?

Let’s examine one more group of sentences:

(5) I place my hat on the table. (RIGHT NOW)
(I want to make a demonstration and I do this thing in an instant in order to be able to show you something else.)

(6) I’m placing my hat on the table. (RIGHT NOW)
(I’m in the middle of doing this. While I’m doing this, somebody else comes in.)
The Romanian translation of both sentences Țini pun pălăria pe masă does not capture the difference in meaning between these two sentences. As you can see, speakers can use not only the Present Continuous to refer to a single instant (RIGHT NOW), but also the Simple Present Tense.

Here, both sentences refer to the moment NOW, right as we speak, however there is a difference between them. While sentence (6) refers to a situation taking place, so to an action whose end (or outcome) we are not able to see yet, sentence (5) refers to a special situation: the speaker performs the act in a single instant; the situation is PUNCTUAL, it lasts no longer than a moment. In this instant, we are able to see the whole action (and its outcome), not just part of it. This is one of the special situations, when the Simple Present can refer to a single instant, not to general or frequent actions.

This use of the Present Simple is special (stylistic use), because the speaker wants to present the situation differently (in a marked way), in order to indicate a sequence of fast, PUNCTUAL situations taking place in the sentence. There are several special contexts that require such a use: demonstrations of many kinds or (sports) commentaries.

Let’s give one more example which describes a wrestling match:

(7) Bobby Blaze punches Little Guido. Little Guido runs into the ropes. Bobby Blaze is met with a mixture of cheers and boos.

Bobby Pălălaie îi aplică o lovitură Micului Guido. Micul Guido se duce în corzi. Bobby Pălălaie e întâmpinat cu un amestec de urale și huiduieli.

The speaker, a sports commentator, is talking about the match using the Simple Present, because he/she wants to describe a sequence of fast events that are happening.

Try to transpose the match into the Present Continuous. The effect is obviously different, resembling a slow motion film. Make more comments about the use of the Present Continuous in this case!

NOTA BENE!
There is a special kind of situation whose duration is represented as if it were punctual. This situation is seen by certain grammarians as a subtype of the instantaneous value and is called PERFORMATIVE – because its performance coincides with its uttering, that is saying this amounts to doing this:

a. I quit!
   Demisionez!

b. I bet I know you!
   Pariez că te cunosc!

c. I pronounce you husband and wife!
   Vă declar soț și soție!

Let’s generalize!
*The Present Simple Tense can refer to instantaneous situations - punctual situations that are completed in a single instant. The Present Continuous refers to situations unfolding at a moment in the present.*
**Food for thought**
Consider the following pairs of sentences and comment on the values expressed by the tenses employed in each sentence:

a. Watch that! That player is scoring a goal!
b. Beckham takes the ball. He shoots and he misses. He shoots again and he scores a goal!

da. Watch me now! I take three quick steps to the left, then three quick steps to the right. This is how you dance swing!
b. I can see he’s taking some steps to his right, but I can’t see whether he’s dancing swing or quickstep.

**Food for thought**
Consider the following pairs of sentences. Discuss the difference in meaning between the two pairs, identifying the PERFORMATIVE sentence.

a. I declare war!
b. I can’t talk to you right now, I’m just declaring war…
a. I promise I won’t disappoint you!
b. I have the feeling I’m just promising something, but I don’t know what it is!

a. I win!
b. He is so upset to see I’m winning!

a. I spit on your grave!
b. Do you think the cat could have swallowed a bone? He is spitting and coughing!

5. Using the Present to talk about the Past

Let’s take a look at another function of the present tense:

You have seen that the Simple Present is used to refer to habitual, generic and instantaneous situations taking place in a present interval. The Present Continuous is used to refer to situations unfolding in the present, right as we speak. In special situations, speakers can use both present tenses together to refer to situations taking place in the past:

(8) A man visits his aunt in the nursing home. It turns out that she is taking a nap, so he just sits down in a chair in her room, flips through a few magazines, and munches on some peanuts sitting in a bowl on the table. Eventually, the aunt wakes up, and her nephew realizes he's absentmindedly finished the entire bowl. “I’m so sorry, auntie, I’ve eaten all of your peanuts!” “That’s okay, dearie,” the aunt replies. “After I’ve sucked the chocolate off, I don’t care for them anyway.”

Un tip își vizitează mătușa într-o casă de bătrâni. Află că de fapt ea tocmai trăgea un pui de somn și se așează pe un scaun în camera ei, răsfoiește vreo două reviste și roșnice câteva alune dintr-un castron de pe masă. Până la urmă, mătușa se trezește și nepotul își dă seama că din greșeală a mâncat toate alunele.
- Îmi pare rău, mătușică, ți-am mâncat toate alunele!
You have seen that the text above is intended as a joke (in rather bad taste…). It is also a narrative in the present. The speaker uses the present in English in the same way as he would use it in Romanian. You notice that in both English and Romanian, the use of the past tense is possible. Why does then the speaker use the present tense? If you look at the text, the answer is easy. Since the text is not something serious but something that one would utter in a pub while drinking a beer, it is plain that the speaker is close to his listeners. A lack of social distance may be reflected by a lack of distance in time and space and the present is closer in time than the past. So, the speaker chooses to use the present in order to feel closer to his listeners. He could have also used the past with no problems. However the present tense is more colloquial when referring to the past than the past tense itself. It is used for more colourful narratives.

Notice that the speaker uses both the Simple Present and the Present Tense Continuous when referring to the past. However, the contrast between simple and continuous is kept, as the two tenses do not refer to the same type of situation:

It turns out that she is taking a nap, so he just sits down in a chair in her room, flips through a few magazines, and munches on some peanuts sitting in a bowl on the table.

Food for thought

Turn the whole story in the past tense. You will see that the only difference between the story in the present and the story in the past can be found in the style that the speaker uses. Think about the stories and articles in the English books and newspapers you’ve read. What tense do the authors use?

It is interesting to see that the guy in the story performs several actions while his aunt is taking a nap. So the Present Simple is used for a series of situations in a rapid succession, while the Present Continuous is used to describe a situation that unfolds, in the background of something else or, better say, as a frame around something else. It is a situation already taking place when our character in the story comes for a visit and it is still going on when the guy sits down or munches on peanuts. As you can see, the processes in the Simple Present take place and are completed before the situation in the Present Continuous is finished.

Let’s generalize!

The present tenses can be used for a narrative in the present instead of the past tense, thus creating a difference in style. The contrast between the Present Simple and the Present Continuous is kept: the Present Continuous refers to a situation unfolding in the past (not in the present this time) and the Present Simple refers to situations we see as already completed (as in the case of the instantaneous present above). The Present Continuous represents a frame around the Present Simple Tense: several situations in the Simple Present are completed while the continuous situation is taking place. This value is the past or narrative value.