

**Some pragmatic reasons for semantic temporal mismatches.**

It's a trivial fact that tenses can be interpreted as to refer to times other than what their semantics encodes. The present tense has, across languages, such a variety of possible temporal references that it has been considered 'vacuous' (Sauerland 2002, based on presupposition entailments, contradicted by Thomas 2015). Past tenses can have future time reference, future tenses can have present reference, depending upon collocations and contextual elements. Similarly, the (grammatical) aspect normally attached to a tense can be canceled in specific occurrences, such as when the English progressive is forced with a stative VP, or when a Romance imperfective combines with achievements or temporal ordering connectives. However, it would be simplistic to assume that contextual requirements merely overcome semantic features when needed for reasons of coherence or relevance. The semantics of the procedural expression does impose subtle restrictions to such pragmatic processes.

In this paper, we begin by arguing that the type of pragmatic enrichment that takes place in such cases systematically exploits conceptual features encoded by the grammatical item. However these features are more or less specific. We will argue that less specific features, such as the notion of past, present or future tense, open to a wider potential of interpretations which can be available regardless of a particular morpheme; for example, epistemic necessity with Future tense is available in a number of languages and does not depend upon a specific morpheme (if it is available with the simple Future tense, they will be available as well with other Future tenses). Conversely, the more specific the feature, the more a pragmatic enrichment resolving a mismatch is tied to a specific expression. (Grammatical) aspect, we argue, is more specific to specific tenses than time and therefore is more deeply encoded by specific temporal morphemes (tenses). As a result, the Imperfect past in French and more generally in Romance licenses specific enrichments, such as irrealis, that are not systematically licensed by other imperfective tenses, and which are tied to the specific internal structure or representations that is encoded by these tenses, which is more specific than simply 'imperfective aspect'. Dynamic aspect, which is one other such more specific aspect than imperfective, and which is coded by English progressive tenses, does not licence similar enrichments.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, we address the issue of why such mismatches do occur at all in conversation. Why would one prefer to use, for example, a composed past tense with a future adverb in French ('J'ai bientôt fini') rather than an anterior future tense, which in the end provides the exact same temporal reference but without any mismatch ('J'aurai bientôt fini')? Our answer is that the surplus of processing involved by the semantic mismatch in such case is compensated by a surplus in meaning (or 'cognitive effect') that is only attainable by such means. We suggest that, at least for a number of cases where tenses are involved, this element of meaning has to do with perspectival representations of situations (de Saussure 2013) and possibly weak modal implicatures relevant in the conversation.