Call for abstracts: Tense, aspect and mood categories across languages

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Abstract submission guidelines

We are inviting contributions of short abstracts for the workshop *Tense, aspect and mood categories across languages* to be proposed to the 52nd Annual Meeting of Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE) 2019 to be held at Leipzig University in Germany from August 21-24, 2019. Interested participants should write a provisional abstract (max. 300 words) with their name and affiliation and send to tamcalsle2019@gmail.com by November 9th, 2018. We will then submit a provisional list of workshop participants along with your abstracts by Nov. 20th to SLE for consideration, and let you know about the outcome. More information about the conference can be found here: <http://sle2019.eu/call-for-papers>.

Please share and spread the word to others who might be interested!

Workshop description

There is a proliferation of terms in the study of tense, aspect and modality (TAM). But it is not always clear what the relation between those terms is.

In some cases, several terms appear to refer to phenomena that are functionally very similar. This might be the case with continuous and progressive aspect, or irrealis, potential and hypothetical mood. In other cases, one category might be a special case of another category, for example habitual sentences are sometimes described as a special case of generic statements (Krifka et al. 1995) or, more generally, of imperfective aspect (Comrie 1976). We would like to bring together perspectives from language documentation and language-specific description, typology, formal and functional approaches to semantics and pragmatics, as well as syntax and morphology to discuss relations between TAM terms cross-linguistically.

We also welcome contributions that specifically address discrepancies between linguistic subdisciplines, or to state it from another perspective, how different linguistic frameworks might constrain or create more freedom in their approach to accounting for TAM semantic properties. For instance, typologists often come to different conclusions from formal semanticists when it comes to the classification of TAM categories. Typologists tend to assume that cross-linguistic differences in the distribution of particular TAM expressions are based on their lexical semantic definition. By contrast, in formal semantics some of these differences can be derived from various language-internal structures and processes, such as paradigmatic effects.

Examples for this include:

* English simple past has a discontinuous implicature in connection with stative verbs as in "Rose is in the hospital. She had trouble breathing" -- such an utterance implicates that Rose is now better able to breathe. Altshuler & Schwarzschild (2012) argue that this implicature is a result of the contrast of English simple past and simple present.

In some languages, such discontinuous interpretations are however not restricted to stative verbs. This has led Plungian & van der Auwera (2006) to diagnose a specific typological category of "discontinuous past". By contrast, Cable (2016) and von Prince (2017) have

argued that in those languages, too, the discontinuous interpretation is a result of the paradigm in which the past markers find themselves, rather than a function of their lexical meaning.

* The category of "iamitive aspect" has been introduced by Olsson (2013) and Dahl & Wälchli (2016) as similar to, but separate from, both perfect aspect and "already". One of its defining features is the change-of-state interpretation that iamitives show in connection with stative verbs, unlike Indo-European perfects. But more recent research argues that these interpretations may equally be expressed by perfect aspect (Krajinović 2018 for Nafsan) because of language-specific processes (also compare the analysis of "already" by Vander Klok & Matthewson (2015) for Javanese). This poses a general question of whether the different functions of perfect attested cross-linguistically can be explained by language-specific effects, and how different would these functions need to be to justify establishing a new typological gram.

* Languages that do not have obligatory tense marking are commonly categorized as tenseless. But Matthewson (2006) has argued that St'a't'imcets has a zero tense morpheme, which restricts the temporal reference of a clause to non-future tense. By contrast, Mucha (2012) argues for Hausa that it is genuinely tenseless and that temporal reference is determined by pragmatic defaults.

* This divide between sub-disciplines is also reflected in how modal meanings are categorized. Thus, the distinction between participant-internal and participant-external modalities, which is fundamental to typological studies of modality (e.g. Bybee et al. 1994, van der Auwera & Plungian 1998), is not reflected in the formal semantics discourse on modality (e.g. Portner 2009).

Independent from particular theoretical perspectives, there are many cases in which the relation between categories it not entirely clear, for example: How does iterativity relate to pluractionality? What is the relation between sequentiality, prospective aspect and perfect aspect, frequentatives and habituals, progressive and continuous aspect? What is the relation between "timitive", "avertive", "apprehensive" modality, also called "volitive of fear" (Vuillermet 2018)?

How many modal distinctions such as "deontic" and "circumstantial" do languages mark grammatically?

We invite contributions from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, including language documentation and description, typology, semantics and pragmatics, syntax, and morphology. We particularly welcome submissions on understudied or underdocumented languages. Possible topics for submission include:

* Descriptive case studies of a specific TAM marker or paradigm;

* Typological studies of the distribution of certain categories;

* Formal and functional approaches to specific TAM categories;

* Formal and functional approaches to the grammaticalization/diachrony of specific TAM categories;

* Interdisciplinary studies that compare different approaches.

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