

Reading: Demirdache, H., M.Uribe-Etxebarria (2000). The primitives of temporal relations. In: R. Martin, D. Michaels, J. Uriagereka (eds.), *Step by Step: Essays on Minimalist Syntax in Honor of Howard Lasnik*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 157-186.

From Reichenbach's theory to Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria's framework

1. Tense and Aspect

a) Tense and Aspect are spatiotemporal predicates which order two temporal arguments.

b) The temporal arguments are: the Event Time (EV-T), the Assertion Time (AST-T) and the Utterance Time (UT-T).

c) Defined in terms of a basic semantic opposition: +/-central coincidence in the location of the Figure with respect to the Ground (Hale 1984).

(1) a. Central coincidence. The cat (Figure) is in the box (G).

b. Noncentral coincidence. The cat (F) is out of the box (G).

- Why do Tense and Aspect express ordering relations between time spans?

d) The notion of central versus noncentral coincidence 'constraints the number of logically possible temporal relations (...) in natural languages by restricting the topological relations that Tenses and Aspects establish between their temporal arguments to three basic relations' (157-58).

(2) a. [+ central coincidence]: F WITHIN G [//]

b. [- central coincidence]: F BEFORE G // []

F AFTER G [] //]

2. The Phrase Structure of Tense and Aspect

Zagona (1990): Tense is a head that projects a maximal projection (TP) taking 2 time-denoting arguments. Its external argument is a REF-T (typically, the UT-T). Its internal argument is the EV-T.

Stowell (1993): Tense is a two-place predicate of temporal ordering.

Klein (1995): Tense relates the AST-T to the UT-T

Aspect relates the EV-T to the AST-T

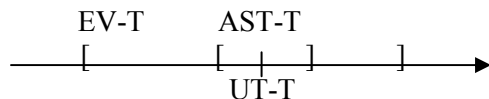
Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria: Aspect, just like Tense, is a dyadic predicate, taking time-denoting phrases as arguments, and projecting its temporal argument structure in the syntax.

- Why does not Tense order the Event Time with respect to the Speech time?
- What is the contribution of Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria?

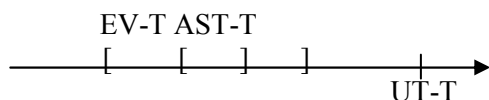
3. The Progressive

- The progressive is a spatiotemporal predicate with the meaning of WITHIN.
- Progressive Aspect orders ‘the AST-T WITHIN the EV-T. It thus picks out a time contained WITHIN the interval defined by the EV-T’ (166), cf. (3).

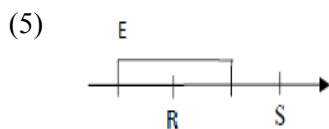
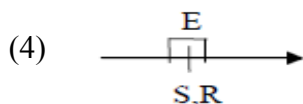
(3) a. Henry is building a house.



b. Henry was building a house.



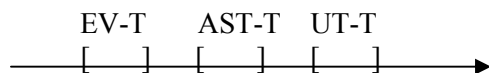
- Which are the advantages of this analysis with respect to Reichenbach’s (1947) temporal configurations based on time points and not time intervals, cf. (4) and (5)?



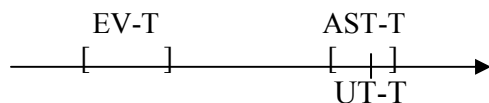
4. The Perfect

- Perfect Aspect is a spatiotemporal predicate with the meaning of AFTER.
- It orders ‘the AST-T AFTER the EV-T: it thus picks out a time AFTER the interval defined by the EV-T’ (168), cf. (6).

(6) a. Henry had built a house.

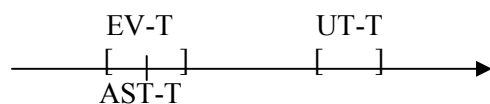


b. Henry has built a house.



- ‘This analysis captures the idea that the Perfect acts like a Past Tense: it locates the EV-T in the past with respect to a reference time (our AST-T) by ordering the AST-T AFTER the EV-T’ (169), cf. (7).

(7) Henry built a house.



- Are there truth conditional differences between (6a) and (7) if both order a spatiotemporal predicate with the meaning of AFTER?
- Why perfect has the meaning of AFTER and not BEFORE?