Unifying the canonical, historical, and play-by-play present

Pranav Anand & Maziar Toosarvandani
University of California, Santa Cruz
{panand, mtoosarv}@ucsc.edu

September 6, 2016 – Sinn und Bedeutung 21

The canonical use of the present tense (CP) in English has two properties that seem reasonably clear:

- **Utterance Indexicality**
  The present tense is used for eventualities that overlap the time of utterance.

- **Stativity**
  Under an episodic interpretation, the present tense is only compatible with stative predicates (including derived ones).

(1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Susan owns the farm.</th>
<th>stative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. # Mary reads the newspaper.</td>
<td>accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended: ‘Mary is reading the newspaper now.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. # James plays the violin.</td>
<td>activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended: ‘James is playing the violin now.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Smith 1997:111)

Two uses of the present tense — often confused with one another — run counter to this orthodoxy: the play-by-play present (PbP) and the historical present (HP).

(2)

**Play-by-play present (PbP)**
(USA vs. New Zealand, 2015 Women’s Soccer Friendlies)
Commentator: Wambach leads it back and now Krieger has it. Tobin Heath goes far.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kqe9n7zvnnw, 1:40:55)

(3)

**Historical present (HP)**
I couldn’t believe it! Just as we arrived, up comes Ben and slaps me on the back as if we’re life-long friends. “Come on, old pal,” he says, “Let me buy you a drink!” I’m telling you, I nearly fainted on the spot.

(Quirk et al. 1985:181)

Neither of these uses exhibits Stativity: both are quite congenial with non-stative predicates. The HP also does not exhibit Utterance Indexicality.

**Our goal:** A unified semantics for the present tense that accounts for the properties of these disparate uses.

There have been previous attempts to derive one or the other with customized solutions:

- play-by-play present: Smith (1997)

We aim for a general theory that takes advantage of off-the-shelf technology: i) a bicontextual semantics for tense (Sharvit 2004, 2008), and ii) a version of Kamp and Reyle’s (1993) semantics for the past perfect.

An instrumental role will be played by a hitherto unnoticed contrast between the PbP and HP:

(4)

**Play-by-play present (cannot ‘anchor’ past perfect)**
Commentator: Federer serves. It’s long. He looks at the line. He yells in protest.

a. The judge had called a fault.

b. The judge has called a fault.

c. The judge called a fault.

(5)

**Historical present (can ‘anchor’ past perfect)**
Rumors of Berlusconi’s crimes swirl. His advisors confront him. He scoffs.

a. He had paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

b. He has paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

c. He paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

Our account in a nutshell:

- the present tense is indexical to the time of a context of assessment (Sharvit 2004, 2008)
- the past perfect is indexical to this context and to the context of utterance, cf. Kamp and Reyle (1993)
- the assessment context is chosen freely, subject to pragmatic considerations, cf. Schlenker (2004)

1 Extant accounts of the present tense

1.1 The canonical use

Both properties of the CP follow from standard treatments of the present tense in which it is sensitive to the time of the utterance context (u).

(6)

**A standard treatment of the present tense**

\[
\text{PRES}_{i}^{\text{u}} \text{ is defined iff } g(i) \subseteq \text{TIME}_{u}\]  

When defined, \( \text{PRES}_{i}^{\text{u}} = g(i) \)

In particular, Stativity follows with three assumptions:

- The utterance time, TIME_{u}, contains the reference time, g(i), as opposed to being contained in it (Kratzer 1998:101) or simply overlapping it (von Stechow 1995:365).
- Without progressive morphology, the present tense in English has perfective aspect (the eventuality is contained in the reference time) (Smith 1997:110, Giorgi and Pianesi 1997:163).

(7) Utterance Time Width (UTW)
\[ \text{TIME}(u) < \varepsilon \], where \( \varepsilon \) is the minimum size for an event

With UTW, \( \text{TIME}(u) \) — and hence \( g(i) \) — is too narrow to contain an entire event. Only stative predicates, which have the subinterval property, describe an eventuality that is small enough.

(8) The utterance time must be so narrow that even punctual events do not fit.

(a) # Bill wins the race.
    Intended: ‘Bill is winning/wins the race now.’

(b) # Sue coughs.
    Intended: ‘Sue is coughing/coughs (once) now.’

1.2 The play-by-play use

The PbP, by our definition, is used in the direct reporting of circumstances as they unfold. It can be found in sportscasting and in demonstrations (Palmer 1965:58, Leech 1971:2–3).

(10) a. (USA vs. New Zealand, 2015 Women’s Soccer Friendlies)
    Commentator: Wambach leads it back and now Krieger has it. Tobin Heath goes far.
    (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kqe9n7zvnnw, 1:40:55)

b. Demonstrator: Look, I take this card from the pack and place it under the handkerchief so.
    (Leech 1971:2)

There is a choice of aspect (Ferguson 1983:164):

- **simple present** (perfective): used to report a sequence of rapid, completed actions (e.g. in soccer or baseball)
- **present progressive**: used to report longer, more continuous actions (e.g. in boat racing or horse racing)

(11) (Men’s 8 Rowing Final, 2008 Olympics)
    Commentator: Now the job for the Canadian crew is to hang on to the lead they had at the halfway mark. They are breathing hard. They really are gulping in the air there. But they know that they’ve got a good lead there. They know they can finish, but Great Britain are moving very well[...]
    (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkP3P5ucR4U, 5:37)

The PbP always describes events that occur roughly at the time of utterance: it exhibits Utterance Indexicality. But it does not exhibit Stativity.

One intuitive solution:

“These sentences telescope time. We understand them punctually, suspending our knowledge of their normal duration” (Smith 1997:111).

In other words, in the PbP, durative predicates are coerced into describing an event — say, just their end point — that is small enough to fit inside the utterance time.

(12) There are a number of arguments that such coercion is not involved in the PbP:

- It is unexpected that achievement and semelfactive predicates are not possible with the CP.

(a) # Bill wins the race.
    Intended: ‘Bill is winning/wins the race now.’

(b) # Sue coughs.
    Intended: ‘Sue is coughing/coughs (once) now.’

Either punctual events (basic and coerced) can be contained inside the utterance time, or they cannot be.

- Accomplishments in the PbP should not exhibit an ambiguity with **almost**, as they do elsewhere (Dowty 1979:59). But they do.

(14) Commentator: Federer almost crosses the entire court.
    ‘Federer doesn’t start to cross the court.’
    ‘Federer starts to cross the court, but does not get to finish.’

- The coercion account cannot offer an explanation for why the past perfect is disallowed in play-by-play discourses.

    a. The judge had called a fault.
    b. The judge has called a fault.
    c. The judge called a fault.

By the time the past perfect sentence is uttered, the yelling event is in the past and should be able to anchor it.

(16) It is not enough to simply manipulate the event structure of predicates in the PbP: a proper treatment must say something about the event’s relation to other times in the context.
1.3 The historical use

What we call the HP is used to describe situations that have already taken place or are simply imagined. It makes them more “dramatic” as if “someone actually witness(es) the events as they are described” (Palmer 1965:39, Leech 1971:6–7, Close 1981:106).

(17) a. I couldn’t believe it! Just as we arrived, up comes Ben and slaps me on the back as if we’re life-long friends. “Come on, old pal;” he says, “Let me buy you a drink!” I’m telling you, I nearly fainted on the spot. (Quirk et al. 1985:181)

b. From the right, Willy Loman, the Salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases. The flute plays on. He hears, but is not aware of it. He is past sixty years of age, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down. (Miller, Death of a Salesman)

Assuming a typical utterance context, a standard treatment of the present tense is incompatible with the HP, since it does not exhibit Utterance Indextuality. But the HP could arise when the utterance context was improper.

In answering machine messages, the time coordinate of the context might pick out the time of listening (decoding), even though the speaker has not actually uttered (encoded) the message at that time (Predelli 2005).

(18) I am not here now. Leave a message.

Eckardt (2015:221–223) proposes that the HP makes use of an improper context (see also Bary 2016). At risk of oversimplifying, we can represent this as an operator that shifts just the time coordinate of the context:

(19) \[ [\text{HP}(\text{t})]_{\text{time}(\text{s}),\text{speaker}(\text{s})...} = \{ [0]_{\text{time}(\text{t}),\text{speaker}(\text{s})...}\} \text{.} \]

The time coordinate of the context identifies a past time \( t_i \), relative to which the present tense is interpreted. The speaker need not exist at \( t_i \).

(20) Fifty eight years ago to this day, on January 22, 1944, just as the Americans are about to invade Europe, the Germans attack Vercors. My grandfather tries to escape... (Schlenker 2004:298)

But if the HP simply involves an improper utterance context, it is mysterious why it can anchor the past perfect.

(21) **Historical present (can ‘anchor’ past perfect)**

Rumors of Berlusconi’s crimes swirl. His advisors confront him. He scoffs.

a. He had paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

b. He has paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

c. He paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

If the past perfect describes an eventuality that precedes the time of the scoffing event, it must locate this time anterior to the time of the context.

(22) \( \text{pasting off} \quad \text{confronting scoffing} \quad \text{n} \)

But the time of the context overlaps the time of the scoffing event when the past perfect sentence is uttered.

For the HP, it is not enough to shift the time of the utterance context, as other tenses (e.g. past perfect) are sensitive to it.

1.4 How is the historical present different from free indirect discourse (FID)?

One might think that the HP is simply an instance of free indirect discourse (FID), a literary style used to directly represent the perspective of a character (Banfield 1982, Doron 1991, a.o.).

And, indeed, many cases of the HP feel like they are filtered through the lens of a protagonist:

(23) a. Creeping Christ? he thinks. What does he mean? His head turns sideways, his hair rests in his own vomit, the dog barks, Walter roars, and bells peal out across the water. He feels a sensation of movement, as if the filthy ground has become the Thames. It gives and sways beneath him; he lets out his breath, one great final gasp. You’ve done it this time, a voice tells Walter. But he closes his ears, or God closes them for him. He is pulled downstream, on a deep black tide. (Mantel, Wolf Hall)

b. She rejected one brush; she chose another. When would those children come? When would they all be off? she fidgeted. That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never gave; that man took. She, on the other hand, would be forced to give. (Woolf, To the Lighthouse)

However, FID necessarily reports the perspective of a character (Banfield 1982, Doron 1991).

(24) Context: Figaro sees Coutess Almaviva, who is wearing his wife’s clothes. Figaro froze in place. He couldn’t believe his eyes. His wife had swooned into the Count’s arms and was now kissing him passionately. (Doron 1991:54)

By contrast, there are uses of the HP that do not force reporting of a character’s perspective (i.e. definite descriptions that are not valid with respect to the protagonist).

(25) Oedipus is very happy. He is going to see his mother again tomorrow.

The HP cannot be reduced to FID, though the two can interact.

2 A proposal

We take expressions to be interpreted relative to two contexts: an utterance context \( (u) \) and an assessment context \( (a) \). Bicontextualism has been deployed in other empirical domains, including for FID (Doron 1991, Schlenker 2004, Sharvit 2004, Eckardt 2015) and future tense (MacFarlane 2003).

We largely adopt the bicontextual semantics for tense that Sharvit (2008:387–389) proposes to account for FID:

- Local pronouns are indexical to the utterance context, along with certain temporal expressions.

(26) a. \([1]^{\text{t} \in (a)} = \text{speaker}(u)\)

b. \([\text{you}]^{\text{t} \in (a)} = \text{addressee}(u)\)

(27) \([\text{forty years ago}]^{\text{t} \in (a)}(r) = 1 \text{ if } t \text{ is forty years before } \text{time}(u)\)
It does not seem as if temporal adverbials with \textit{ago} can be indexical to the context of assessment:

(28) I couldn’t believe it! Just as we arrived, up comes Ben and slaps me on the back as if we’re life-long friends.

a. \# \textit{Two years ago} he stole twenty dollars from me…

b. \textit{Two years before} he stole twenty dollars from me…

○ But tense and other temporal indexicals are sensitive to features of the assessment context.

(29)\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{a. } [\text{PRES}]^{\text{a}, \text{u}} \text{ is defined iff } g(i) \subseteq \text{TIME}(u). \text{ When defined, } [\text{PRES}]^{\text{a}, \text{u}} = g(i) \\
\text{b. } [\text{PAST}]^{\text{a}, \text{u}} \text{ is defined iff } g(i) < \text{TIME}(u). \text{ When defined, } [\text{PAST}]^{\text{a}, \text{u}} = g(i)
\end{array}
\]

(30)\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{a. } [\text{tonight}]^{\text{a}, \text{u}} = \text{the night of the day surrounding } \text{TIME}(u) \\
\text{b. } [\text{here}]^{\text{a}, \text{u}} = \text{LOCATION}(a)
\end{array}
\]

While Sharvit assumes that the two contexts are always identical in root contexts, we propose that the assessment context is \textit{freely chosen}, subject to pragmatic considerations, cf. Schlenker (2004).

In the CP, the assessment time does not diverge from the utterance time:

(31) \textit{Canonical present}

\[
\text{TIME}(u) = \text{TIME}(a)
\]

The other uses of the present tense arise when the assessment context stands in a different relation to the utterance context.

\subsection*{2.1 Deriving the noncanonical uses}
\textbf{The historical present}

Intuitively, the HP makes something in the past “the present.” For us, this straightforwardly means that this use of the present involves pragmatically setting the time of assessment to some time before \text{TIME}(u):

(32) \textit{Historical present}

\[
\text{TIME}(a) < \text{TIME}(u)
\]

Stativity for the CP arises from linking the assessment time to the utterance time, which must be very small. But if the assessment time is anterior, it can be wide enough for the reference time to contain a non-state.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{event} \\
\text{reference time } (g(i))
\end{array}
\]

(33)\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TIME}(u) \\
\text{a}
\end{array}
\]

The HP thus does not exhibit Stativity.

Since \text{TIME}(a) simply must precede \text{TIME}(u), this opens up the question of how the assessment time is chosen. We do not completely understand when or how this happens:

○ On the one hand, speakers seem able to move the context of assessment at will.

(34) Then all of a sudden everybody \textit{gets} involved and they \textit{made} a mess. So uh…this lady \textit{says}…uh this uh Bert, “Oh, my son’ll make them. He’s an electrician.” So he \textit{makes} them, and he \textit{charges} all the neighbors twenty dollars a set, and there I \textit{paid} three dollars. So I \textit{called} her a crook. And I \textit{called} her son a crook. So, they \textit{were} really mad at me.

(Schiffrin 1981:46)

○ On the other hand, there do seem to be constraints on what the context of assessment can be: it is hard to push it backwards.

(35) He looks at the ceiling.

a. \# Yesterday, a spider \textit{is} climbing there.

b. Yesterday, a spider \textit{was} climbing there.

\textbf{The play-by-play present}

Intuitively, the PbP describes an event that ends “at” the utterance time. There is some evidence that speakers wait until an event has terminated to report it (Mathon and Boulaki 2011).

We can capture this if the assessment time is pragmatically set so that it properly contains the utterance time:

(36) \textit{Play-by-play present}

\[
\text{TIME}(a) \supseteq \text{TIME}(u)
\]

The PbP does not exhibit Stativity, because \text{TIME}(a) can again be wide enough for the reference time to contain a non-state.

(37)\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{TIME}(u) \\
\text{a} \\
\text{u}
\end{array}
\]

In principle, the relation in (36) allows for the assessment time to continue after the utterance time. This would permit an event to be \textit{ongoing} during the utterance time.

But this does not seem intuitively how people use the PbP. There is a contrast between the simple present (for culminated events) and the present progressive (for ongoing ones):

(38) a. (USA vs. New Zealand, 2015 Women’s Soccer Friendlies)

Commentator: Wambach \textit{leads} it back and now Krieger \textit{has} it. Tobin Heath \textit{goes} far.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kqe9n7zvnnw, 1:40:55)

b. (Men’s 8 Rowing Final, 2008 Olympics)

Commentator: Now the job for the Canadian crew is to hang on to the lead they had at the halfway mark. They \textit{are breathing} hard. They really \textit{are gulping} in the air there. But they know that they’ve got a good lead there. They know they can finish, but Great Britain \textit{are moving} very well.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkP3P5ucR4U, 5:37)
thought originates," and a context of utterance (Schlenker (2004) also makes use of two contexts in his account of the HP: a context of thought (2.3 Another bicontextual account

In the end, the possible relations between the utterance and assessment times reduce to just the three that are attested.

2.3 Another bicontextual account

Schlenker proposes that in the HP, \( \theta \) is set to the actual context, while \( \nu \) is located elsewhere (in the past, in the thinker’s imagination, etc.)

(45) \textbf{Fifty eight years ago} to this day, on January 22, 1944, just as the Americans are about to invade Europe, the Germans attack Vercors. \textbf{My grandfather} tries to escape. … (Schlenker 2004:298)

This seems to get this example right, but there are a couple of issues:

○ On their face, certain temporal indexicals seem to be fixable by \( \nu \).

(46) Forty years ago today John Lennon is about to take to the stage at the Cavern. \textbf{Tonight} his life will change forever. (Schlenker 2004:296)

○ The context of utterance must be improper, since the speaker need not exist at the time of the events described in the HP. Consequently, this account does not explain its felicity with the past perfect (§1.3).

3 Accounting for the past perfect contrast

Why is the past perfect fine with the HP but bad with the PbP?

(47) \textbf{Historical present (can ‘anchor’ past perfect)}

Rumors of Berlusconi’s crimes swirl. His advisors confront him. He scoffs.

a. He \textbf{had paid} off the prostitute for her silence already.

b. He \textbf{has paid} off the prostitute for her silence already.

c. He \textbf{paid} off the prostitute for her silence already.

(48) \textbf{Play-by-play present (cannot ‘anchor’ past perfect)}

Commentator: Federer serves. It’s long. He looks at the line. He yells in protest.

a. # The judge \textbf{had called} a fault.

b. The judge \textbf{has called} a fault.

c. The judge \textbf{called} a fault.

Significantly, the past perfect is also bad with the CP:

(49) \textbf{Canonical present (cannot ‘anchor’ past perfect)}

Trump isn’t listening to his new campaign manager.

a. # She \textbf{had let} him down.

b. She \textbf{has let} him down.

c. She \textbf{let} him down.

We suggest that this commonality between the PbP and CP is not accidental: both involve an assessment time that overlaps the utterance time.

Only in the HP can the assessment time serve as a \textit{perspective point} (Kamp and Reyle 1993) independent of the utterance time.

This suggests that there is an additional constraint at work: the Upper Limit Constraint (Abusch 1997).

\[ \max\{1 : t \in \text{TIME}(a)\} = \max\{1 : t \in \text{TIME}(a)\} \]

If no part of the assessment time can follow the utterance time, then events will always have terminated by the utterance time in the PbP.

2.2 What other relations are possible?

One salient question is what other temporal relations between the utterance and assessment contexts are possible. There are eight relations one might imagine: \(<, >, =, \subseteq, \supseteq, \supset, \subset, \varnothing>.

(40) a. \text{TIME}(a) < \text{TIME}(a): \text{historical present}

b. \text{TIME}(a) > \text{TIME}(a): \text{forbidden by the bicontextual ULC (39)}

c. \text{TIME}(a) = \text{TIME}(a): \text{canonical present}

\text{TIME}(a) \subseteq \text{TIME}(a): \text{difficult to distinguish from } \text{TIME}(a) = \text{TIME}(a), \text{given UTW (7)}

\text{TIME}(a) \supseteq \text{TIME}(a): \text{difficult to distinguish from } \text{TIME}(a) = \text{TIME}(a), \text{given UTW (7)}

d. \text{TIME}(a) \supset \text{TIME}(a): \text{play-by-play}

\text{TIME}(a) \supset \text{TIME}(a): \text{difficult to distinguish from } \text{TIME}(a) \supset \text{TIME}(a)

\text{TIME}(a) \sqsupset \text{TIME}(a): \text{identical to } \text{TIME}(a) \supset \text{TIME}(a), \text{given the bicontextual ULC (39)}

In the end, the possible relations between the utterance and assessment times reduce to just the three that are attested.
3.1 Perspective in the past perfect

Kamp and Reyle (1993) propose that the past perfect can encode a Reichenbachian pluperfect, locating the reference time anterior to a salient past “perspective point.”

(50) Fred arrived at 10. He had got up at 5; he had taken a long shower, had got dressed and had eaten a leisurely breakfast. He had left the house at 6:30. (Kamp and Reyle 1993:594)

In narrative flashbacks, a sequence of past perfect sentences is interpreted as forward moving. Each sentence’s reference time advances, though they are all anterior to the same perspective point.

(51) getting up showering dressing eating leaving arriving

For Kamp and Reyle, past perfect morphology is compatible with a combination of two semantic features, which require the reference time to precede a perspective point that precedes the utterance time.

(52) a. +PAST: p < TIME(a)
   b. past: g(i) < p
   (Kamp and Reyle 1993:601)

3.2 Incorporating the perspective point

We translate Kamp and Reyle’s framework into our own by equating p and TIME(a):

(53) Past perfect in a bicontextual framework
   a. TIME(a) < TIME(a)
   b. g(i) < TIME(a)

It is clear, then, why the past perfect is not compatible with the CP and PbP. Its requirements contradict their pragmatic settings for the assessment time:

(54) Canonical present
    TIME(a) = TIME(a)
(55) Play-by-play present
    TIME(a) ≥ TIME(a)

Thus, only the HP, which locates TIME(a) before TIME(a), allows the past perfect.

3.3 Equivalence with the simple past and present perfect

After HP sentences, the simple past and present perfect seem, intuitively, to describe the same event as the past perfect:

(56) Rumors of Berlusconi’s crimes swirl. His advisors confront him. He scoffs.
   a. He had paid off the prostitute for her silence already.
   b. He has paid off the prostitute for her silence already.
   c. He paid off the prostitute for her silence already.

The paying off event is anterior to the assessment time, satisfying the requirements of the past perfect. Those of the past tense are also met.

(57) PRET: \( t_{a.} = g(i) \) is defined iff \( g(i) < \text{TIME}(a) \). When defined, \( g(i) = g(i) \)

For the present perfect, something similar happens. Concretely, we assume it encodes the combination of present tense and a (roughly Parsonian) perfect aspect, which describes the post-state of some eventuality.

(58) a. PRET: \( t_{a.} = g(i) \) is defined iff \( g(i) \subseteq \text{TIME}(a) \). When defined, \( g(i) = g(i) \)
   b. PERF VP: \( (t_{a.} = g(i)) = 1 \) iff \( \exists e_1 \exists e_2 (\text{VP:} = e_1) \land \text{STATE}(e_1, e_2) \land T(e_2) \)

The present perfect, then, also locates the paying off event before the assessment time.

The differences between the past perfect, present perfect, and simple past are leveled when the assessment time and utterance time are decoupled, as in discourses with the HP.

4 Conclusion and future directions

We have combined three existing ideas in the literature:

- a bicontextual analysis of tense, used originally for FID (Sharvit 2004, 2008)

This allows us to directly predict:

- the felicity of present tense in the CP, PbP, and HP uses
- why the PbP and HP do not exhibit Stativity, but the CP does
- why the HP allows past perfect, but the PbP and CP do not

Importantly, we can get all of this without appealing to any special mechanisms, beyond the idea that pragmatics controls when the time of the assessment diverges from the time of utterance.

More generally, we have proposed that three diverse cases of temporal perspectival shift — FID, past perfect anchoring, and the HP — can be given a unified account as a shift in the same indexical coordinate, \( \text{TIME}(a) \).
4.1 Future uses

We have used the ULC to eliminate assessment times following the utterance time. However, there are cases where this is violated.

While the HP can cooccur with FID (Eckardt 2015:221–227), they do not appear to interact freely.

But she uses the assessment context quite differently in her account of FID:

We adopt Sharvit’s (2004, 2008) bicontextual semantics for tense to derive noncanonical uses of the present tense.

4.3 FID and the historical present, again

While this is a futurate in English (with a scheduled interpretation), the German just expresses probability. It may be that the present tense can impose different restrictions on TIME(a) and TIME(b) across languages.

4.2 Narrative progression

The HP licenses narrative progression for eventives, just as the simple past does:


What these pragmatic principles are and how to integrate them with the various tenses is a subject for future research.

FID in the HP

FID can occur inside a narrative in the HP, with this use of the present continuing throughout it (Eckardt 2015:221).

Louise places the parcel on the kitchen table. She can’t wait to open it. Who could have sent it? What does it contain? How shiny the wrapping paper is! The sender certainly must be rich. Today seems to be her lucky day.

This is actually easy to derive in Sharvit’s semantics for FID, pace Eckardt (2015:221–224) and Bary (2016).

In the HP, the assessment context is not identical to the utterance context, so these contexts reflect Louise’s past or imaginary beliefs.

The FID operator in the present tense quantifies over contexts that are compatible with what Louise believes at the time of the assessment context.

In HP, the assessment context is not identical to the utterance context, so these contexts reflect Louise’s past or imaginary beliefs.

HP inside FID

Is it possible to shift into the HP inside an FID context? It is not easy to show, but perhaps not.

Mary ran, stumbling, down the steps of the station. She was going to miss her train, she thought. How had she gotten here? She had been responsible and thought of everything.

Under Sharvit’s account, a non-double-access present tense should in principle be possible in past FID, yielding a simultaneous reading like that available for a bound past tense. She argues that in such cases a preference for the bound past (based on a preference for de se pronouns) trumps the present tense (Sharvit 2008:388). The same should apply to the HP as well.

While the assessment context is not identical to the utterance context, so these contexts reflect Louise’s past or imaginary beliefs.

Mary ran, stumbling, down the steps of the station. She was going to miss her train, she thought. How had she gotten here? She had been responsible and thought of everything.

Under Sharvit’s account, a non-double-access present tense should in principle be possible in past FID, yielding a simultaneous reading like that available for a bound past tense. She argues that in such cases a preference for the bound past (based on a preference for de se pronouns) trumps the present tense (Sharvit 2008:388). The same should apply to the HP as well.
References


