

## Take Home Quiz on Tense and Aspect

Linguistics 7430

Due in class on Tuesday, November 27, 2007

**Directions.** Two to three sentences will suffice to answer each of these questions (you may write your answers directly into this document).

1. **Basic questions.** Pick either A or B to answer.

A. **Type shifters vs. type selectors.** Use the concepts **Aktionsart**, **tense** and **grammatical aspect** to explain the difference between the imperfective ending in a Romance language of your choice and the English progressive construction. Now use the distinction that you've just developed to explain why we translate the French imperfective sentence *Elle avait de l'argent* (or its equivalent in another Romance language) as *She had money* and not *\*She was having money*.

B. **The event-state distinction.** Describe the difference between (1) tense and aspect **and** (2) events and states by using the 'pancake and plate' analogy. Remember that the plate equals reference time.

2. **Two questions about modals.** Pick either A or B to answer.

A. **Aspectual sensitivity in modals.** Briefly explain which reading the modal verb is most likely to have in (a-d), **deontic** (obligation) or **epistemic** (conclusion from evidence). If either reading is equally likely, note this. Make an aspectual generalization about when a deontic reading is preferred over an epistemic one, and vice versa.

- a) You must turn in your time sheet.
- b) You must live up in the mountains.
- c) You must have been up in the mountains.
- d) You must park across the street.

B. **Modals and reference time.** Outside of context, the following sentence is ambiguous with regard to the time denoted by *by then*: *The paramedics might have been there by then*. Explain the two readings using Reichenbach E and R points, inventing contexts as you see fit. Assume that the modal *might* is past tense. Is one of the two readings more compositional than the other, in terms of the meanings of the past-tense modal and the perfect infinitive?

3. **Aktionsart selection.** For each of the following examples, briefly explain the semantic interaction between the indicated grammatical construction and the verb's Aktionsart representation. Answering this question requires you to talk about semantic shifts that affect verbs' Aktionsart representations. These shifts include: addition of a component of temporal (or causal) representation, selection of a

component and iteration. Keep in mind that states before, during and after transitions are 'selectable'.

- a) **Resultative:** *Your soup is cooled.*
- b) **Progressive:** *The light is flashing.*
- c) **Punctual adverbial:** *I liked her instantly.*
- d) **Present tense:** *She visits often.*

4. **Relative tense.** Explain why the examples in (a-b) support Declerck's (1990) claim that the English past and present tenses have relative readings in addition to their absolute readings. How does stativity contribute to the relative readings here?

- A. On the other hand, there was Bill, who by then had announced that he **was** running for Congress.
- B. And finally when the body bags start mounting, they'll claim they **are** innocent and have been acting ethically and honestly all along.