

Conclusion

This book had two objectives: first, to present a comprehensive discussion of the linguistic expression of temporal reference, and in particular of Tense, Aktionsart and Aspect as cohesive ties; and second, to put forward and test an innovative proposal regarding the role of these temporal cohesive ties in establishing temporal coherence at the discursive and cognitive levels. To meet these objectives, I have discussed existing accounts of Tense, Aktionsart and Aspect as constituents of the generic verbal forms known as *verbal tenses* (Chap. 1). Classical accounts of *verbal tenses* in English, French, Italian and Romanian (the simple past, the imperfect, the compound past and the simple present) provided by grammars have attempted to describe their meanings and contextual usages without discriminating between the sources of the temporal information these verbal tenses provide.

A review of the formal semantic-discursive and pragmatic accounts of verbal tenses and their role in the expression of temporal reference—that is the localization of eventualities with respect to S and to one another—lead to the conclusion that the relevance-theoretic distinction between conceptual and procedural types of information is an appropriate tool to describe the types of encoded meaning of Tense, Aktionsart and Aspect, and their contribution to the construction of the speaker's intended meaning (Chap. 2). Wilson and Sperber (1993/2012) proposed that conceptual information is accessible to consciousness, can be reflected on, and represents easily graspable concepts, whereas procedural information is inaccessible to consciousness, unavailable by way of conscious thought and resistant to conceptualization. Their proposal formed the basis for the interpretation of the results of several annotation experiments, in which the meanings of Tense, Aktionsart and Aspect were tested (Chap. 4). The results of these experiments clearly showed that two systematic patterns arise when participants are asked consciously to evaluate the contribution of verbal tenses to the interpretative process. The first is the ease of the task, and the high rate of inter-annotator agreement when dealing with the past/non-past distinction. The second is the greater difficulty of the task and lower rates when dealing with the temporal ordering of eventualities. Similar patterns were

found when participants deal with aspectual information. That is, aspectual information related to the actual realization of Aktionsart—i.e. boundedness—is easily accessible to consciousness, and results in high levels of inter-annotator agreement. In contrast, consciously identifying grammatical perfective or imperfective viewpoint is a more difficult task, and results in lower levels of inter-annotator agreement.

The data used in these experiments were mainly naturally occurring data originating from bilingual and monolingual translation corpora (Chap. 3). The cross-linguistic analysis of these corpora revealed several translation divergences for the English-French and French-English pairs of languages, of which the most demanding is the translation of the English Simple Past into French. The features tested in the annotation experiments carried out were exploited as possible factors to predict the verbal tense used to translate a Simple Past into French in a generalized mixed model. This multifactorial analysis of the data revealed that the different sources of temporal information in discourse are substantially correlated, and have significant interactions. Specifically, the occurrence of a verbal tense can be predicted according to the contextual values of the [\pm narrativity], [\pm boundedness] and [\pm perfectivity] features. For example, all combinations of features are possible for the English Simple Past. Nevertheless, two principal tendencies were observed. The first principal tendency is for perfective viewpoint to be associated with bounded situations in narrative contexts, whereas the second is for imperfective viewpoint to be associated with unbounded situations in non-narrative contexts. As for the French *Passé Composé/Passé Simple* and *Imparfait*, the best predictive model provides two statistically significant factors and one interaction: the procedural types of information encoded by Tense and by Aspect, and the interaction between Aktionsart and procedural information encoded by Tense (Chap. 4).

The new proposal regarding the role of these temporal cohesive ties in establishing temporal coherence at the discursive level consists of the *Highly Discriminatory* model of temporal reference, which discriminates between the categories and principles that play a role in determining temporal reference, regardless of the type of language explored—tensed, tenseless or mixed (Chap. 5). From the perspective of a pragmatic theory of human comprehension of language, temporal reference in discourse is established according to three components: Tense, Aktionsart and Aspect. The temporal coordinates S, R and E combine with the predicate's Aktionsart and contribute to the explication of the utterance, whereas the procedural information encoded by Tense and Aspect constrain the formulation of contextual hypotheses and implicated conclusions. The hearer makes use of all three components in order to recover the speaker's meaning—that is, her overtly intended content. Based on the experimental work described in Chap. 4, I have suggested a holistic interpretation of temporal information from various sources, and proposed that temporal coherence takes place both at the discursive and cognitive levels. In the discourse, one can identify *temporal cohesion* at the local level among temporal information from Tense, Aspect and Aktionsart, and *temporal coherence* at the global level (that is, between two utterances), which makes reference to temporal coherence relations.

The notion of temporal coherence is understood in cognitive terms, and understood as *cognitive temporal coherence* (Chap. 6). Following Hobbs (1979, 1985), Sanders et al. (1992, 1993) and Evers-Vermeul et al. (2017), I have argued that temporal relations are cognitively motivated for two reasons. Firstly, temporal relations affect both processing (Mandler 1986; Segal et al. 1991; Murray 1997; Grisot and Blochowiak 2015, 2017) and language acquisition (Clark 1971; Evers-Vermeul et al.'s 2017). Using online self-paced reading experiments and offline acceptability task experiments, I have shown that sequential chronological relations are processed equally quickly when they are implicitly expressed by the verbal tense alone (Passé Composé or Passé Simple) compared to when they are overtly marked by a temporal connective. However, offline data from acceptability experiments indicated that participants preferred the implicit versions to the explicit ones. As for the role of the verbal tense, no significant difference regarding the Passé Composé and Passé Simple was found. Furthermore, Mandler (1986) found that discourses in which time regresses (i.e. anti-chronological sequential relations) are costlier in terms of processing effort than discourses in which time progresses (i.e. chronological sequential relations).

Secondly, I have argued that the generic notion of *verbal tense* is not cognitively motivated, mainly because it is a generic notion used to refer indistinctively to its underlying temporal and aspectual categories. A cognitively motivated linguistic category is a category which plays a role in language processing, in the construction and the storage of mental representations. In particular, the linguistic categories triggering temporal relations (Tense, Aspect and Aktionsart), along with temporal connectives and temporal adverbials, are cognitively motivated themselves, as found by numerous experimental studies carried out in psychology, psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics. These studies have shown that Tense, Aspect and Aktionsart have an impact at the cognitive level. Research has shown that these categories are processed online, that they determine the construction of the ongoing and subsequent mental representations, that they influence the perception and memory of events, that they bias the interpretation of a series of events, and that they become dysfunctional in case of brain damage.

I have also linked the notion of temporal cognitive coherence to the coherence established within multithreaded mental representations which comprehenders build during language comprehension (Gernsbacher and Givón 1995; Graesser et al. 1997). Temporality is one of the dimensions of the constructed mental representations which the hearer monitors and shapes in a coherent manner during comprehension, making use of various linguistic cues (Tense, Aktionsart, Aspect, temporal connectives, temporal adverbials, etc.) and world knowledge. Phenomena like aspectual coercion and certain usages of verbal tenses, such as the *futural Passé Composé*, the *Présent Historique* or the *narrative Imparfait*, clearly indicate that comprehenders treat apparent linguistic inconsistencies in a coherent manner by deriving less frequent but completely plausible interpretations.

From the beginning, the research in this book had an applicative purpose, which was to improve the coherence of the results of statistical machine translation systems (the COMTIS and MODERN research projects). This this research was

successfully applied in the Natural Language Processing and Machine Translation fields (Chap. 7), and was implemented by Thomas Meyer, Andrei Popescu-Belis and Sharid Loáiciga. The natural language processing application is linked to the building of the MaxEnt classifier, which was trained on the human-annotated data with the [\pm narrativity] and [\pm boundedness] features (Chap. 4), and which used this learned information, alongside other syntactic and temporal features, to annotate raw data automatically with the same features. Since classifiers had good rates of accuracy, the resulting automatically annotated data were used to train statistical machine translation systems. Two statistical machine translations systems were built, one trained on data annotated with the [\pm narrativity] feature (Meyer et al. 2013; Meyer 2014) and the other trained on data annotated with the [\pm boundedness] feature (Loáiciga and Grisot 2016). The results of the systems which are aware of these two types of temporal information are significantly better than those of the systems which were not trained on the annotated data, in terms of choice of verb and of verbal tense.

This book therefore made a case for the role of Tense, Aktionsart and Aspect as cohesive ties encoding conceptual and/or procedural information expressing temporal reference at the sentential, inter-sentential and cognitive levels, and also opened up many new directions of study to explore in future work. In this research, I focused primarily on past time reference as is expressed by verbal tenses such as the simple past, the imperfect, the compound past, and the historical present. Sporadic discussions were included on present time reference. Further research should explore in more detail temporal reference to the present and the future, and refine the model put forward in this book. Additionally, other verbal tenses, such as the past perfect, the past and the present progressive will allow for a more precise account of the interaction between Tense and Aspect.

In Chap. 6, I extended the domain of the linguistic expression of time by investigating the role of temporal connectives in the expression of chronological temporal relations. A second target for future investigation is therefore to examine implicit anti-chronological temporal relations and the connectives used to mark them overtly, such as *avant que* and *avant de* “before”, as well as connectives such as *quand* “when” which can be used for both synchronous and sequential temporal relations. The study of these fine-grained types of temporal relations and their overt marking using connectives is necessary for a more accurate comprehension of the role of temporality at the cognitive level. A future subject of study of the linguistic expression of time might include the contribution made by temporal adverbials—such as *yesterday*, *last year*, *tomorrow* or *in 2 weeks*—in determining temporal reference, for both the localization of eventualities with respect to the moment of speech S, and for establishing temporal relations. Last but not least, addressing Aspect as it is morphologically expressed in aspectual languages, such as Slavic languages, as well as aspectual particles, such as *-le* and *-guo* in Mandarin Chinese (Sun and Grisot, n.d.), will extend the *Highly Discriminatory* model of temporal reference put forward in this book (Chap. 5), and render it more accurate.

Another issue which requires further research is the relevance-theoretic conceptual/procedural distinction. This book has provided evidence that a linguistic

expression can encode both conceptual and procedural types of information, and that consciously evaluating these two types of information systematically results in high inter-annotator agreement rates for the former and moderate inter-annotator agreement rates for the latter (Chap. 4). This is the first attempt to propose a quantitative measure of encoded conceptual and procedural information. In Grisot (2017a), I apply this measure to purely pragmatic information in addition to conceptual and procedural information, and propose an interpretative scale of inter-annotator agreement rates measured with the K coefficient or with other similar coefficients. In particular, high inter-annotator agreement rates ($> 0.7 K$ values) indicate that the information dealt with in the experiment is conceptual, moderate rates ($0.4\text{--}0.7 K$ values) indicate that the information dealt with is procedural, and low inter-annotator agreement rates ($> 0.4 K$ values) indicate that the information dealt with is purely pragmatic. Further work needs to be done to control for other factors which might influence inter-annotator agreement rates, such as inter-individual variation, the formulation of annotation guidelines, the order of the items, the length of the items, etc. Additionally, further research is needed to validate the indicative thresholds for the K -like coefficients experimentally, and to complement this offline investigation with the online study of the cognitive operations involved when dealing with conceptual, procedural and pragmatic types of meaning.

To conclude, this book has presented new insights into the issue of temporal reference at both the discursive and cognitive levels, and has proven the importance of exploring language comprehension issues from an empirical, experimental and cognitive perspective in order to develop comprehensive pragmatic-cognitive models. This book has specific implications in the field of relevance-theoretic pragmatics with respect to the conceptual/procedural distinction, its empirical and experimental approach and to the possible dual nature of linguistic expressions. More generally, it indicates the need to adopt an empirical approach (both corpus-based and experimental data) for the purpose of formulating and validating theoretical pragmatic models, as well as to endorse methodologies and theoretical findings from different fields involving the study of language (semantics, pragmatics, psychology, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, contrastive linguistics, natural language processing and machine translation, to name but a few) in order to shed new light on issues about language.

Appendix: Description of the Corpora and Their Sources

Bilingual Data: Literature Register

1. *The portrait of Mr. W. H.*, O. Wilde, French translation by J. Gattgno, Editions Gallimard, 2000. Electronic version and bilingual alignment by C. Grisot.
2. *Sense and sensibility*, J. Austen, French translation available on <http://www.gutenberg.org/>. Bilingual alignment by C. Grisot. Retrived on 30-04-2011.
3. *Le petit prince*, A. St. Exupery. Available at http://srogers.com/books/little_prince/contents.asp. Bilingual alignment by C. Grisot. Retrived on 30-04-2011.
4. *Cinq semaines en ballon*, J. Verne, Ch. 1. Corpus built by the FORELL laborytory in collaboration with Philippe Rivière. Available at www.cabal.rezo.net. Retrived on 30-04-2011.
5. *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*, J. Verne, Ch. 1. Corpus built by the FORELL laborytory in collaboration with Philippe Rivière. Available at www.cabal.rezo.net. Retrived on 30-04-2011.

Bilingual Data: Journalistic Register

6. *News Commentaries*. Translation corpus built for the International Workshop on Spoken Language and Translation. Available at <http://iwslt2010.fbk.eu/node/34>. Retrived on 30-04-2011.
7. *Time Magazine*. Corpus built by the FORELL laborytory in collaboration with Philippe Rivière. Available at www.cabal.rezo.net. Retrived on 30-04-2011.
8. *Presseurop* Website. <http://www.presseurop.eu/fr>. Bilingual alignment by C. Grisot. Retrieved on 30-04-2011.
9. *Le monde diplomatique*. Corpus built by the FORELL laboratory in collaboration with Philippe Rivière. Available at www.cabal.rezo.net. Retrived on 30-04-2011.

Bilingual Data: Legislation and EuroParl Registers

10. *The JRC-Acquis Multilingual Parallel Corpus*. Built by J. Tiedemann (2009, 2012). Available at <http://opus.lingfil.uu.se/JRC-Acquis.php> Retrieved on 30-04-2011.
11. *EuConst Corpus*. Built by J. Tiedemann (2009). Available at <http://opus.lingfil.uu.se/EUconst.php> Retrieved on 30-04-2011.
12. *EuroParl Corpus*. Built by Philipp Koen (2005, 2012). Available at www.opus.lingfil.uu.se/ Retrieved on 30-04-2011.

Multilingual Data:

13. *Alice in Wonderland*, L. Carol (e-book). French translation by Henry Bué (e-book), Italian translation by Pietrocola-Rossetti (e-book), Romanian translation by Popescu Bogdan (e-book). Multilingual alignment by M. Costagliola and C. Grisot. Retrieved on 30-03-2013.
14. *Presseurop* Website. <http://www.presseurop.eu/fr>. Multilingual alignment by M. Costagliola and C. Grisot. Retrieved on 30-09-2013.
15. *EuConst Corpus*. Built by J. Tiedemann (2009). Available at <http://opus.lingfil.uu.se/EUconst.php> Retrieved on 30-09-2013.
16. *EuroParl Corpus*. Built by Philipp Koen (2005). Available at <http://www.statmt.org/europarl/>. Retrieved on 30-09-2013.

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Index

A

- Aktionsart, 3, 65, 159, 176, 214, 264
- Annotation experiments, 1, 35, 64, 65, 114, 138, 196, 207, 210, 211, 240, 274–280, 289, 290
- Aoristicization process, 17, 18, 26, 195, 206, 210, 215
- Automatic classification, 274–287

B

- Boundedness, 47, 48, 50–52, 63, 74, 97, 158–163, 167–170, 172–174, 177, 179, 203, 208–210, 214, 250, 253, 262, 264, 274–288, 290, 292

C

- Chinese, 53, 74, 176, 257, 258, 264, 267, 270–272, 287, 292
- Cognitive coherence relations, 291
- Compound past, 1, 2, 5, 12, 16–28, 35, 37, 39, 40, 42, 53, 97, 98, 101, 104, 131, 132, 134, 135, 155, 162, 173, 178, 180, 188, 190, 195–198, 204, 206, 208, 210, 211, 213, 215, 289, 292
- Conceptual meaning, 83, 88, 91, 140, 171, 186, 191, 204, 215
- Conscious evaluation of linguistic meaning, 84, 184
- Context, 3, 68, 123, 139, 174, 225, 274
- Conversational implicatures, 3, 72, 76, 77, 82, 83, 110, 191
- Cross-linguistic analysis, 118, 121–125, 127–130, 166, 200, 209, 290

D

- Discourse relations, 70, 103, 110, 115, 137, 139, 192, 218–221, 248, 261

E

- English, 1, 65, 115, 141, 176, 225, 264
- Ensuite, 17, 87, 209, 224
- Explicatures, 78, 81–84, 86, 87, 89, 90, 99, 100, 102, 109, 176–179, 184, 187, 193, 201, 203, 214, 290

F

- Formal semantics, 182
- French, 1, 73, 115, 141, 181, 226, 264
- Frequency, 3, 28, 117, 119, 120, 125, 126, 132–134, 138, 196, 206, 215

G

- Generalized mixed model, 166–172, 278, 290
- Grammatical aspect, 8, 44, 47, 50, 52, 61, 75, 98, 99, 164, 174, 192, 199, 200, 248, 251, 260, 266, 276–279
- Grice, H.P., 3, 65, 76, 77, 80–83, 180, 191, 224

H

- Highly discriminatory model, 109, 173–180, 290, 292
- Human annotation, 114, 275, 277, 278

I

Imparfait, 5, 69, 121, 141, 179, 260, 273
 Imperfect, 1, 76, 132, 155, 188, 218, 274
 Imperfectul, 2, 8, 15, 132, 152–153, 197, 207
 Imperfetto, 2, 5, 8, 10–13, 57, 131, 132,
 150–151, 197, 207
 Inter-annotator agreement, 137–140, 144, 148,
 149, 154, 155, 158, 159, 161, 171, 186,
 192, 195, 250, 254, 278, 289, 290, 293
 Italian, 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20, 26, 27,
 31–33, 35, 41, 42, 44, 47, 53, 57, 58,
 63, 64, 89, 117, 130–133, 135, 143,
 150, 151, 153, 171, 173, 176, 190,
 195–198, 203, 204, 206–208, 210, 211,
 213–215, 224, 284, 289

K

Kappa coefficient, 139

M

Machine translation, 62, 111, 112, 114, 116,
 117, 121, 135, 174, 180, 262
 Maximum entropy (MaxEnt) classifier, 270,
 276, 277, 279, 281, 292
 Mental representations, 68, 70, 88, 89, 91, 98,
 178–180, 183, 202, 215, 218, 219, 221,
 223, 225, 248–254, 259–262, 291
 Monolingual analysis, 118–121, 125–127

N

Narrativity, 141, 173, 240, 272
 Natural language processing, 62, 111, 112,
 114–116, 174
 Neurolinguistics, 190, 251, 254, 258, 261,
 263, 271, 291, 293

O

Offline acceptability tasks, 1, 235, 239, 291

P

Passato Prossimo, 2, 5, 20, 21, 23, 24, 41, 131,
 132, 150–151, 206, 207, 210
 Passé Composé, 2, 4, 10, 14, 16, 18, 19,
 21–23, 37, 39, 69, 96, 97, 104, 107,
 121–129, 132, 134, 141, 147–149,

155–157, 159, 160, 162, 165–167, 170,
 190, 192, 194–197, 204–210, 212–214,
 224, 229, 230, 232–244, 246–248, 261,
 273, 284–286, 290, 291
 Passé Simple, 4, 69, 122, 141, 178, 224, 273
 Perfectul Compus, 2, 6, 16, 24–27, 50–51,
 131, 132, 152–153, 197, 206, 207,
 210, 211
 Perfectul Simplu, 2, 6, 26, 132, 152–153, 197,
 207, 213
 Pragmatic features, 35, 107, 205, 206
 Procedural meaning, 14, 84, 90, 91, 97, 98,
 140, 171, 186, 230, 248
 Processing instructions, 221, 231, 232, 251,
 260, 262
 Psycholinguistics, 68, 221, 248–251, 259, 263,
 271, 291, 293
Puis, 224, 226–230, 232, 240–249, 261

R

Relevance Theory, 68, 78–80, 82, 84, 94, 101,
 105, 109, 111, 176, 178, 180, 182, 183,
 200, 202
 Romanian, 1, 117, 143, 173, 284

S

Self-paced reading tasks, 212
 simple past, 1, 66, 117, 141, 173, 265
 Situation model, 221, 226, 259
 Source language, 62, 112, 114–117, 124, 130,
 149, 150, 152, 167, 170, 268, 273

T

Target language, 62, 115, 117, 118, 121, 123,
 124, 127–128, 130–132, 134, 135, 142,
 149, 159, 162, 164, 167, 169–172, 190,
 194, 196–198, 204, 206, 268–272, 278,
 286–288
 Temporal cognitive coherence, 291
 Temporal cohesion, 62, 109, 170, 215,
 249–259, 263–274
 Temporal connectives, 27, 88, 93, 157, 173,
 179, 193, 214, 215, 222–232, 235,
 238, 249, 260, 261, 276, 278,
 291, 292
 Temporal reference, 1–64, 174–176, 178–180,
 187, 190, 191, 193, 198, 203, 214, 257,

- 259, 260, 262–264, 267, 271, 272, 275,
284, 287, 289, 290, 292, 293
- Tense, 1, 65, 117, 141, 173, 223, 263
- Tertium comparationis*, 64, 113, 203
- Then*, 12, 16, 23, 27, 38, 39, 42, 45, 57, 62, 68,
75, 76, 87, 103, 106, 107, 113, 130,
144, 145, 154, 155, 157, 183, 184, 191,
193–195, 209, 217, 226, 228, 248, 260
- Translation corpus, 145, 150, 152, 164,
208, 277
- Translation divergences, 118, 121–124,
127–130, 132–135, 173, 290
- V**
- Verbal tenses, 1, 65, 117, 140, 173, 222, 264