

**Philippe De Brabanter, Mikhail Kissine, Saghie Sharifzadeh (eds.), *Future Times, Future Tenses*, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 296, £ 65.00, ISBN 9780199679157**

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The *Oxford Studies in Language and Thought* is a series the main aim of which is to analyse representations of time encoded within natural languages. The second volume of the series, *Future Time, Future Tenses*, concerns the notion of future and intersects several fields such as philosophy, semantics, epistemology and linguistics. The book comprises an introduction and ten papers, each of which can be read as an autonomous contribution.

Stojanovic's *Talking About the Future: Unsettled Truth and Assertion* focuses on the problem of asserting future contingents. Stojanovic defends Open Future semantics, according to which future tensed statements are evaluated with respect to the moment of utterance, *m*, and a possible future of *m*. The author believes that there is no privileged future among those which are possible at a given moment. But as Open Future semantics must identify a possible future, in order to compute the truth-value of a statement used at a certain moment, it follows that future contingents cannot be evaluated and thus lack truth-values. Although Open Future semantics satisfies several *desiderata*, such as distinguishing settled truth from plain truth, it does present diverse problems as regards the rational assertability of tensed statements. First, Stojanovic poses a normative question: "What conditions must an assertion of a future tensed statement fulfill in order to be rationally warranted?" (p.38). Second, the author points out that the norms proposed in the literature to explain the rationality of assertions cannot give a satisfactory answer to the above question. The truth norm and the knowledge norm – which claim that one should assert what is true or what one knows - produce the undesired result that future contingents should never be asserted. The belief norm - assert only what you believe - may leave room for assertions of irrational but believed future-directed contents. The negative outcome is that our best semantics for future contingents does not fit in very well with our theories of rational assertability, and more work must be done to fill this gap.

Del Prete's *The Interpretation of Indefinites in Future Tensed Sentences* studies the semantics of the English auxiliary 'will'. The author notes that a sentence such as "John will marry an Italian woman, but no-one in particular" sounds contradictory. The first conjunct requires the existence of a specific woman to be true, whereas the second is the negation of that requirement. This suggests that 'will' should be treated as an operator with the sole role of shifting the moment of evaluation forward. But if in "Mary will marry a rich man, he should be a banker", we read 'will' teleologically, we obtain a sentence which does not require a single man for its truth. It would also be a case of modal subordination: the domain of the bouletic alternatives on which 'should' quantifies over is introduced by 'will'. Del Prete argues that, although 'will' shifts the time of evaluation forward, pragmatic reasons suggest that a will-sentence is true at a context iff it is true at each future alternative available in that context. This strategy predicts that "John will marry an Italian woman, but no-one in particular" is false at every possible future of every context. Nonetheless, it allows us to capture the modal subordination exemplified by the teleological reading of 'will' given in the second example above.

Copley's *Causal Chains for Futurates* proposes an account for futurates such as "I am going to make the coffee". The author's main point is that a sentence is a futurate only if it presupposes a plan directed by an agent. In particular, a plan is a state which causes the event denoted by the verb phrase in the sentence. These presuppositions are useful in distinguishing futurates from progressives, the truth-values of which do not depend on the future. "The pin is falling" cannot be read as a futurate, even if it is a progressive, precisely because it does not presuppose any plan chosen by any agent. Conversely, a futurate such as "I am going to make the coffee" requires a plan directed by someone. Although this proposal must be slightly enriched to account for natural futurates (pp.76-77), Copley argues that the presuppositions carried by a futurate have important semantic consequences. In the author's view, "I am going to make the coffee" is true at a context of use  $c$  iff at  $c$  there is an ongoing plan  $s$ , a director of  $s$  - namely, the denotation of "I" - and  $s$  causes the making of the coffee at a time which is later than that of  $c$ . One of the virtues of this treatment is that it helps to overcome some counterintuitive results affecting the standard semantic account of futurates (p.78).

Weist's *Futural Temporal Reference in Child Language* aims to establish how children acquire the ability to use morphological structures referring to the future. The research is cross-linguistic, and is mostly based on data from CHILDES. The author stresses that a child's ability to refer to the future emerges from three to four years old, but the use of the potential morphology to express that reference is acquired at an even younger age. However, the data indicate that, before the age of three, children probably use the future reference morphology to express deontic modalities. Therefore, the skills required to express future reference are acquired later than those to convey obligations and volitions. The author also argues against one quite well-accredited hypothesis in linguistics: the idea that mastery of future tenses is acquired after that of past tenses. This would reflect that "future thinking requires more de-centration (i.e., thinking outside of the immediate perceptual environment) than the past thinking" (p.112). The cross-linguistic method adopted by the author shows that, if the use of past tenses is learned before that of future tenses among English speakers, there are several languages in which quite the opposite occurs. There is therefore room to doubt the asymmetry between future and past thinking.

Trondhejem's *Markers of Futurity and Aspects in West Greenlandic* argues that West Greenlandic is a tensed language, with tenses morphologically marked by ten particular affixes. The author shows that the morphology of these tenses is such that a verbal stem may be followed by an affix. When this is done, an inflection must be added to specify the person, the mood and the number of the verb. In this kind of construction, there is no affix for the present tense, and past tense affixes are entirely optional. Instead, in order to obtain the future tense, one is obliged to attach one of its markers to a verbal stem, that is, one of the affixes identified by the author (p.125).

In *Future Tense, Prospective Aspects and Irrealis Mood*, Jendraschek claims that 'tense' is a problematic label for classifying the morphological items marking future reference. Analysis of Turkish, Basque and Iatmul reveals that these languages contain future markers which are semantically and morphologically similar to aspectual or modal ones. For instance, the Turkish affixes '-er' and '-ecek' are multifunctional: both are used to express both future time references and aspects: '-er' identifies a dispositive aspect, and

‘-eck’ a prospective one (p.140). Similarly, the Basque morphology for talking about the future involves constructions in which prospective markers occur; in Iatmul the affixes to be added to a verbal stem to obtain a future reference are mainly used to express modal or counterfactual information. The features of the languages analysed so far suggest that future time reference may not always have a morphological counterpart involving tenses. Rather, it can be established by a conventional inference made in appropriate contexts (p.162).

Błaszczak, Jabłońska, Klimck-Jamkowska and Migdalski’s paper, *The Riddle of Future Tense in Polish*, analyses how future time reference is obtained in Polish. The authors describe two constructions: a present-tense form of a perfective verb (the simple future), the auxiliary ‘*będzie*’ with an imperfective lexical verb in the form of an infinitive or an l-participle (periphrastic future) (p.202). Both constructions are monoclausal and provide a combination of the present tense with a perfective aspect. The authors show that, in both forms, the perfective aspect shifts the time of evaluation to the future. However, the main difference between simple and periphrastic futures does not lie in their morphological or grammatical structures, but must be identified in the kind of contexts in which they are commonly used. The simple future is more likely to be used in contexts in which a unbounded future eventuality - that is, a preventable future event - becomes salient, whereas the periphrastic future normally refers to a settled future fact.

In her *On Future in Commands*, Aikhenvald examines a vast variety of languages in order to detect the relationships between imperatives and future tenses. The author notes that, although commands naturally seem to involve future reference, several languages distinguish two kinds of imperatives. One is the immediate command, according to which the execution of the command must be instantaneous with the moment it is uttered. The other is the delayed imperative, which refer to a situation in which an action is ordered to occur at some time after the command has been given. The author analyses how the latter kind of command interacts with other grammatical categories, also showing several pragmatic consequences which its uses might have.

In *Evidential Future: the Case of Spanish*, Escandell-Vidal collects several data about how inflected future tenses are used in everyday spoken Spanish. The data show that, without a

context, it is impossible to establish whether the truth-value of a future tensed sentence is a function of a moment later than that of its utterance. In addition, future reference is expressed periphrastically, and children develop the mastery of future reference only after having learned how to use inflected future tenses for expressing conjectures. The author concludes that the default interpretation of Spanish future tenses should not refer to future times. Future time reference is a context-dependent feature. The author also suggests that the default interpretation of a Spanish sentence in which a future tense occurs is an evidential one: “the future tense is specialized in encoding that the source of propositional content is presented as an intuitive inference of the speaker” (p.245).

In his *Future Reference and Current Relevance with the French Composed Past*, De Saussure analyses the French composed past and its main interpretations when it is used to describe a state of affairs which is past with respect to one moment later than that of its utterance.

In conclusion, the volume offers several insights into the semantic problems raised by future contingents, will-sentences and futurates. It also shows how the interpretation of future tense markers may differ in different languages: some have a privileged default epistemic reading; others appear to indicate a temporal interpretation. In addition, even when future tense markers are intended to refer to the future, they may have a modal strength which depends on the context of use.