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### *What Counts as a Tense: Nonfinite Past*

The distinction between finite and non-finite clauses has sometimes been equated with a distinction between "tensed" and "tenseless" clauses, based on the assumption that true tenses only reside in finite clauses. In this talk I will defend the view that non-finite clauses may also harbor tenses; my argument will be based mainly, though not entirely, on the non-finite past tense, as in (1) and (2):

- (1) Jack believes Bill to have left.
- (2) Frank must have left.

What I am calling non-finite past (have + past participle) is usually assumed to be an aspect, rather than a tense--namely, the non-finite perfect. Nevertheless I will try to make a case that the non-finite perfect behaves too much like a run-of-the-mill past tense to be dismissed as a mere aspect. My arguments will be based in large part on a systematic comparison between the English non-finite have+ past participle and the English finite preterit past.

The problem of differentiating between past "tense" and perfect "aspect" is symptomatic of a more general problem, namely that there is no general agreement on what counts as a "tense;" nor, for that matter, is there general agreement on what counts as an "aspect." Linguists and philosophers have advanced numerous conflicting proposals, based on a variety of morpho-syntactic and semantic criteria. Some people claim that tenses are temporal analogs of pronouns, i.e. referential expressions that denote times. Others claim that tenses are temporal ordering predicates, like *before*, *during*, and *after*.

For the proverbial person-in-the-street, there are three tenses: present, past, and future. But some linguists have claimed that there is only one true tense (past), or, alternatively, two tenses (past and present), where the future is treated as a type of modal. Others have sought to expand the set of tenses beyond the traditional three, encompassing distinctions between relative tenses and absolute (or indexical) tenses, and/or between definite tenses and indefinite tenses. There are also "fake" tenses, such as the 'simultaneous' past found in sequence-of-tense (SOT) languages. Further distinctions have been drawn for particular languages with tense systems that incorporate distinctions based on temporal distance.

The same theoretical anarchy is true of aspects: some people maintain that there are just two aspects (perfective and imperfective); others include aspects such as the progressive, the habitual, and the perfect. Unsurprisingly, the problem is exacerbated by cross-linguistic variation. I believe that many disagreements are fundamentally terminological, and we might all be better off if we were to abandon the terms "tense" and "aspect" entirely, and focus instead on the semantic "atoms" that tense and aspect constructions are composed of.

Among other things, I will show that many, though not all, of the salient properties of the finite past tense in English are shared by the non-finite *have* + past participle. Among other things, I will argue that certain interpretations of modal and raising constructions actually involve a non-finite analog of finite sequence of tense. I will also examine the interpretation of finite and non-finite past tenses in certain types of ellipsis constructions.