

Atle Grønn, University of Oslo

Meaningless past, subjunctive and perfect in counterfactuals.

We will develop a feature system – with interpretable semantic features and uninterpretable morphological features – which can account for the presence of temporal and subjunctive morphology in counterfactuals when the morphology is semantically void.

Two key ingredients are necessary for such a system to work: We have temporal control from the modal in the matrix to the adjunct (if-clause), and we have a system for feature transmission under semantic binding (akin to sequence of tense). We extend the system to account also for the semantically void perfect in the if-clause of past counterfactuals.

The system was developed in joint unpublished work with Arnim von Stechow. Our ambition was to cover a wide range of Indo-European languages, notably English, German, Norwegian, French, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Russian, Ukrainian etc.