THE TEMPORAL INTERPRETATION OF FREE RELATIVES IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN

Viorela-Valentina Dima

Abstract: Free relatives have been defined as types of relative clauses with a covert antecedent, which is semantically and syntactically active (de Vries 2002, GALR II:218), influencing the morphology of the *wh*-word which introduces the free relative. The aim of this paper is to take a closer look at the *semantic* properties of the covert antecedent and demonstrate that its temporal interpretation influences the choice of tense form that can surface in the relative clause.

1. Preliminaries

Researchers have argued that relative clauses behave partially differently with respect to Sequence of Tenses (SOT) from complement clauses. When embedded under a past matrix verb, past complement clauses (CCs) may obtain two temporal readings, whereas past relative clauses (RCs) may obtain three temporal readings, as illustrated in (1)-(2) below:

(1) John heard that Mary was pregnant. (Enç 1987, ex. 5)
   a. John heard that Mary had been pregnant at a previous time.
   b. John heard that Mary was pregnant at a simultanous time.
(2) We spoke to the man who was crying. (Enç 1987, ex. 16)
   a. We spoke to a man who had been crying at a previous time.
   b. We spoke to a man who was crying at a simultanous time.
   c. We spoke to a man who was crying at a later time.

As explicitly rendered in the (a)-(b) versions of the above sentences, shifted and simultaneous readings are available for both complement and RCs, with Mary's being pregnant before or at the moment John heard about her condition and the man crying before or at the time we spoke to him. However, (2c) points to the availability of yet another reading for the past tenses in RCs: the man was crying after we spoke to him. This third reading suggests that "the tense in the relative clause can be interpreted as though it is not embedded" (Enç 1987: 638).

Moreover, further asymmetries in temporal interpretation arise when the CCs and RCs contain a present tense. On the one hand, the CC in (3) below can only be interpreted with the embedded event holding at both the Speech Time (ST) and the matrix reference time (RT)[1]. On the other hand, the RCs in (4)-(5) below have a wider range of interpretations: a) the embedded event holds at both ST and the matrix RT, b) the embedded event holds only at ST, and c) the embedded event holds only at the matrix RT:

(3) John heard that Mary is pregnant. (Enç 1987, ex.11)
   a. John heard that Mary was pregnant when he heard it and she is still pregnant.
(4) In 1862, A. Lincoln said that he would free any slave that lives in the South. (Anand and Hacquard 2004, ex.1)
   a. In 1862, A. Lincoln said that he would free any slave that lived and still lives in the South.

[1] A situation when the embedded verb is said to obtain a Double Access Reading (DAR) – see a.o. Abusch (1997) and Giorgi and Pianesi (1997).

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

b. In 1862, A. Lincoln said that he would free any slave that didn't use to live in the South but now he/she does so.
c. In 1862, A. Lincoln said that he would free any slave that lived in the South, but no longer does so.

(5) Adam gave an ice-cream cone to a boy who is sitting outside. (Stowell 1995, ex. 7b)
a. Adam gave an ice-cream cone to a boy who was and is still sitting outside.
b. Adam gave an ice-cream cone to a boy who was not sitting outside but is now doing so.
c. Adam gave an ice-cream cone to a boy who was sitting outside, but is not now doing so.

Acknowledging the interpretative variations between CCs and RCs, researchers have tried to account for them within a unifying theory of tense – i.e. a theory that would also explain the similarities between the two types of subordinate clauses (SCs). The similarities refered to are: i) the shifted and simultaneous readings available for both CCs and RCs containing a past morpheme, ii) the availability of a DAR for both CCs and RCs containing a present morpheme[2].

The data we present in this paper are meant to provide further evidence in favour of the similarities between CCs and RCs as far as temporal interpretation is concerned. The sentences in (6)-(7) below point to another factor which influences the temporal readings of complement and relative SCs, namely the temporal interpretation of nominals. More explicitly, it appears that if the entity denoted by the nominal 'man' is temporally located in the past (i.e. it no longer exists), the CC in (6) may not contain a present tense morpheme. Similarly, if the entity denoted by the nominal 'billboard' is assigned a past RT, the RC in (7) cannot normally contain a past tense morpheme[3].

(6) They said no one liked /*likes the murdered man.
(7) [In 1916] The first outdoor advertising industry award was given for a billboard that promoted /*promotes outdoor advertising[4].

In what follows, we have chosen to illustrate RC facts with free relatives (FRs), which have been defined as RCs with a covert antecedent, which is semantically and syntactically active (de Vries 2002, GALR II: 218). In doing so, we would like to point out that the semantic contribution of the covert antecedent not only dictates whether the whole FR is interpreted as definite or indefinite[5], but it also influences the choice of tense form that can surface in the FR.

For the temporal interpretation of the covert antecedent of a FR, we start from Musan's (1995: 12ff) theory of the temporal interpretation of nominal phrases (NPs), based on the

[2] For the exact details of these unifying tense proposals see Enç (1987), Stowell (1993, 1995), Ogihara (1989, 1994).
[3] For the RC in (7) to contain a present tense morpheme, one has to imagine a larger context in which the billboard which existed in 1916 still exists today. This DAR effect seems to be a counter –example for Anand and Hacquard's claim that the RC in their example rewritten below may refer to individuals living in the South at ST. However, this does not necessarily lead to the generalization that events in RCs cannot hold only at ST (without also holding at the matrix RT) – notice that Stowell's example rewritten below is not problematic: since there is nothing in the context to suggest that the entity denoted by the noun 'boy' has a past RT, the present tense morpheme inside the RC is perfectly acceptable, even under the ST-reading only:
(i) In 1862, A. Lincoln said that he would free any slave that lives in the South. (Anand and Hacquard 2004, ex.1).
(ii) Adam gave an ice-cream cone to a boy who is sitting outside. (Stowell 1995, ex. 7b.).
[4] http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/road/timeline-1910.htm.
[5] See a.o. Caponigro (2001, 2004), Grosu (2002), Giannakidou and Cheng (2006).

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

distinction between: the *predication time* of the nominal (i.e. "the time interval during which the predicate is asserted to hold of an individual") and the *time of existence of the individual* (i.e. "the time at which the individual [denoted by the nominal] exists").

As exemplified in (8)-(9) below, the *time of existence of the individual* is crucial for our analysis of the SOT phenomena present in English and Romanian FRs. More precisely, when the antecedent of the FR receives a past RT (i.e. the entity it denotes no longer exists) the FR may only contain a past tense morpheme, whereas if the antecedent of the FR receives a non-past time reference, a present tense morpheme is allowed in the FR, as evident from (8a)-(9a) and (8b)-(9b), respectively:

(8) a. I found it difficult to understand, why in our area, we destroyed what was /*is ours[6].
b. I had not a halfpenny to buy a sod of turf to warm a drink for my sick child till a neighbour gave me what is in the grate[7].
(9) a. Dar uite că a venit cel mai odios sistem şi a distrus ce era/ *este mai bun în România[8].
'But, you see, the most loathsome regime came and destroyed what was /*is best in Romania.'
b. Firma s-a ocupat şi ne-a oferit ce este mai bun la ora actuală [...][9].
'The firm got involved and offered us what is best at the moment.'

Concentrating on the temporal interpretation of the covert nominal head, the aim of this paper is to identify the factors that influence the SOT phenomena in English and Romanian Free Relatives. To reach this aim, section 2 presents the empirical data, section 3 presents an account of nominal temporal interpretation, whereas section 4 summarizes the findings of the current study.

2. Sequence of Tenses in Free Relative clauses – the data

The examples provided in this section are meant to illustrate the fact that Engllish and Romanian FRs can be either temporally dependent or independent from their matrix clauses (MCs). Roughly, temporal dependence arises when the covert antecedent has a past RT, whereas temporal independence is possible only when the covert antecedent has a non-past RT.

As regard temporal dependence (i.e. obligatory SOT), examples (8a)-(9a) above pointed to the fact that when the covert antecedent is temporally located in the past, the FR verb has to bear past morphology. This is true irrespective of the temporal relation that holds between the FR and its MC: simultaneity, anteriority or posteriority, as evident from (10a)-(11a), (10b)-(11b) and (10c)-(11c), respectively:

(10) a. [...] he killed what was /*is most precious to him.[10]
b. [...] he killed what had /*has been quite a popular and useful event which could have kept making him money[11].
c. A charming and funny waiter destroyed what was /*is going to be a dreadful lunch.[12]

[6] http://americanhistory.si.edu/Brown/reflections/topic.asp?p=3&s=&id=0.
[7] http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/history/poverty/killaloe_widows.htm.
[8] http://www.carcotasii.ro/carcomunitate/viewtopic.php?p=38694&sid=7ac5da9d339d2898729be89b8d 16b330. Since the English translation of the Romanian sentences contains a similar tense morpheme (i.e. English past for Romanian past, etc.), we have chosen not to gloss the Romanian examples.
[9] http://vama.weblog.ro/2004-07.html.
[10] http://wrt.syr.edu/670/downloads/KassamKiteRunner.pdf.
[11] http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=1714242006.
[12] http://www.eatability.com.au/au/melbourne/penang__coffee_house.htm.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

(11) a. [...] au deţinut puterea şi au ucis pe cine au poftit /*poftesc [...].[13]
'[they] held the power and killed whom they wanted / want [...].'
b. Americanii s-au folosit de ei şi i-au susţinut cât timp au distrus ce mai rămăsese /* a mai rămas funcţional.[14]
'The Americans used them and supported them as long as they destroyed what had /*has remained functional.'
c. Ceea ce urma /*urmează să fie o competiţie sportivă pasionantă [...] s-a transformat [...] într-o etapă tristă a Campionatului Naţional de Raliuri.[15]
'What was /*is going to be a captivating sports competition [...] turned [...] into a sad stage of the National Raly Championship.'

Similar facts are exemplified in (12a-c)- (13a-c) below, for English and Romanian CCs. Irrespective of the temporal relation that holds between the CC and its MC (simultaniety, anteriority, posteriority), the past RT of a nominal inside the former or the latter triggers a past temporal morpheme for the subordinate verb:

(12) a. They said no one liked/*likes the murdered man.
b. He was carried before Jones and Jones turned him loose and said he had/ *has been appointed by Governor Holden to protect the Negro and he intended to do it. Soon thereafter I formed the Ku Klux Klan and was elected county organizer.[16]
c. Rajiv [1944-1991] said he would /*will secure Eelam for Prabhakaran.[17]
(13) a. Bunicii mi-au spus că le plăcea/*place Jana Gheorghiu.[18]
'My grandparents told me that they liked/*like Jana Gheorghiu.'
b. Într-o bună zi Domnul i-a apărut şi i-a spus că a fost ales încă dinaintea naşterii şi desemnat să devină prooroc.[19]
'One day, God appeared before him and told him he had been chosen even before his birth and meant to become a prophet.'
c. S-a spus că urma să devină soţia lui Dodi al-Fayed, care o ceruse chiar înainte de accident.[20]
'It has been said that she was going to become the wife of Dodi al-Fayed, who had proposed her just before the accident.'

More explicitly, in (12a) and (13a-c) the relevant nominal is inside the CC, whereas in (12b, c) the relevant nominal is inside the MC. On the one hand, a non-past tense morpheme appears to be banned if the object of someone's admiration is dead - i.e. the man in (12a), Jana Gheorghiu in (13a), or Princess Diana in (13c). On the other hand, as long as a past RT nominal in the MC affects the content of the CC, the latter can only contain a past morpheme, as in (12b, c).

For the sake of completion, we must mention the existence of contexts in which the FR may not contain a non-past morpheme even though the entity denoted by the covert antecedent is not located in the past. The past morpheme seems to be triggered by the

[13] http://www.fgmanu.net/atitudini.htm.
[14] http://ziua.net/f.php?data=2006-03-27&thread=196592&id=46366&ziua=48ba37f634e670a6b98596460865a.
[15] http://www.inforally.sibiul.ro/stiri-raliu-cnr-12-un_raliu_trist.html.
[16] http://www.rootsweb.com/~nccaswel/misc/confession.htm.
[17] http://www.expressindia.com/ie/daily/19971213/34750063.html.
[18] http://www.miribratu.com/blog/.
[19] http://www.dci.org.uk/romanian/rom-30.htm.
[20] http://www.adevarulonline.ro/articole/lady-di-era-ambitioasa-si-lipsita-de-scrupule/310045.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

following factors: (i) a stage-level predicate inside the FR, and (ii) a past temporal adverb contained in the FR, as exemplified in (14a)-(15a) and (14b)-(15b), respectively:

(14) a. Pugh liked what he saw in Athens.[21]
b. Progress in our understanding of these new particles was slow, [...] partly because the phenomena were so totally outside of what was then known.[22]
(15) a. Părintele era atât de supărat, încât nu mai era atent la ce îi spunea omul ăla.[23]
'The priest was so upset that he was no longer paying attention to what that man was telling him.'
b. Cine stătea atunci alături de el îl vedea cum degetele lui groase joacă pe cele câteva găuri ale țevii de lemn [...].[24]
'Who was then sitting next to him saw how his thick fingers were moving on the few holes of the wooden barrel.'

As regards temporal independence (i.e. optional SOT), the examples in (16)-(17) below are meant to show that when the entity denoted by the covert antecedent is not located in the past, a non-past morpheme is possible inside the FR. Firstly, when the FRs are simultaneous with their MCs, both English and Romanian allow for a present tense, as in (16a)-(17a). Secondly, when the FRs are anterior to their MCs, English allows for a present perfect morpheme, whereas the Romanian perfect compus 'am comandat' – although morphologically a past tense form – arises with its 'relative' value. More explicitly, the perfect compus has reading in which it parallels the English present perfect in that they both relate the time of the event to ST[25]. Thus, both the FRs in (16b)-(17b) obtain a DAR, indicating anteriority towards ST and towards the matrix RT. Thirdly, when the FRs are posterior to their MCs, the subordinate predication naturally surfaces with a present or future tense morpheme: a property holding at a moment posterior to the past RT provided by the matrix verb may hold at a present or future RT, unless otherwise stated by means of a past temporal adverbial.

(16) a. [...] Ernest was unfamiliar with the terms "search engine" or "portal". He simply knew what he does and what works for him, primarily typing in web site names.[26]
b. Glad to hear that Patrick finally found out what has been going on.[27]
c. Ask Washington State University physicist Mark Kuzyk, who in 2000 discovered what has become known as the Kuzyk Limit.[28]
(17) a. Puştiul mi-a arătat ce are de vanzare.[29]
'The kid showed me what he has for sale.'

[21] http://uga.rivals.com/barrier_noentry.asp?sid=&script=/content.asp&cid=673492&fid=&tid=&mid=.
[22] http://cerncourier.com/main/article/41/4/18.
[23] http://www.scribd.com/doc/43518/Danion-Vasile-Jurnalul-convertirii-De-la-zeia-morii-la-Impria-vieii.
[24] http://www.scribd.com/doc/36447/Marin-Preda-Morometii-Volumul-II.
[25] Romanian grammarians (see a.o. Crăiniceanu 1997, GLR 1966, vol. I: 238 - 239) point to the fact that the Perfect compus can exhibit two types of values in given contexts:
(i) 'relative' values – equivalent to the values of the English Present Perfect Simple and Present Perfect Continuous,
(ii) 'absolute' values – equivalent to the English Past Tense Simple.
For an overview of the relative values of the Romanian Perfect compus, see Dima (2006).
[26] http://www.webuse.umd.edu/sketches/sketch-Ernest.htm.
[27] http://www.drrobinscorpio.com/2007/04/no_more_lies.html.
[28] http://researchnews.wsu.edu/physical/69.html.
[29] http://www.romanialibera.com/articole/articol.php?step=articol&id=8.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

b. Mie mi-a plăcut ce am comandat până acum, produsele au fost exact pe măsura aşteptărilor.[30]
'I liked what I have ordered so far, the products were exactly as I espected them to be.'
c. Totul a început în urmă cu 12 ani când s-au pus bazele a ceea ce este astăzi Consiliul Național al Cercetării Ştiințifice din Învățământul Superior.[31]
'It all began 12 years ago when what is today The National University Research Council was created.'

The data presented so far have pointed to an independent temporal interpretation of FRs only when the covert antecedent has a non-past RT. The examples in (18)-(19) below are apparently problematic since the covert antecedents clearly have a past RT, yet the FRs allow for an independent temporal reading. Apparently, the past localization of the covert antecedent arises from its being affected by the matrix event, similarly to the examples in (10)-(11) above. However, in (18)-(19) below the antecedent is perceived as somehow still *presently* relevant for the speaker –as i) it is still pursued by or discussed by a present entity, as in (18a.,b.), ii) it is still perceived as pure and perfect in the present, as in (18c), or iii) the entire FR denotes a generical nominal, as in (19) where *ce*/*what* stands for a generic notion such as 'friendship' or 'confidence in people'[32].

(18) a. He found what you're looking for. He killed what you're looking for, FBI.[33]
b. The Public Citizen rep noted the irony of the notion that this TV-driven factor destroyed what is constantly referred to as the gold standard for Internet campaigning.[34]
c. Ze' wrestles with the fact that he killed what he perceives as a pure and perfect being, and in an unaccustomed turn actually shows regret for his actions.[35]
(19) Ruşine să le fie că au distrus ce este mai preţios pe această lume.[36]
'Shame on them beacause they have destroyed what is most precious in this world.'

To sum up, the aim of the current section has been to examine the factors that influence the SOT phenomena in English and Romanian Free Relatives. We have noticed that when the matrix clause verb is attached a past tense morpheme, the tense form in the English and Romanian FRs is restricted by: (i) the temporal interpretation of the covert antecedent, (ii) the type of predicate inside the FR (i.e. whether it is a stage-level predicate or not), and (iii) a past temporal adverbial contained in the FR.

3. Towards an account of nominal temporal interpretation

From the three factors identified above, we would like to have a closer look at the temporal interpretation of the covert nominal antecedent. In section 1 we briefly mentioned Musan's (1995) semantic theory of the temporal interpretation of NPs, based on the distinction

[30] http://www.fungift.ro/magazin-online-cadouri/pages_.php?pageid=18&id=29&js=n.
[31] http://ww.cncsis.ro/CNCSIS9/1_RAPORT_CNCSIS.pdf.
[32] I thank the audience at the 9th Annual Conference of the English Department, University of Bucharest, May 31- June 2, 2007 for helping me better understand this point.
[33] http://www.insidethex.co.uk/transcrp/scrp118.htm.
[34] http://www.personaldemocracy.com/taxonomy/term/43?page=1.
[35] http://www.horror-wood.com/possess_corpse.htm.
[36] http: //72.14.221.104/search?q=cache:u5h4vlfeAmQJ:www.domnuleprimar.ro/.656-De-ce-Dle-Primar-continuati-campania-de-distrugere-a-spatiilor-verzi-din.a.html+%22distrus+ce+este%22hl=ro&ct=clnk&cd=3&client.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

between the *predication time* of the nominal and the *time of existence of the individual*. What we would like to attempt in this section is to add a *syntactic* perspective on the notion of nominal temporality.

Researchers of a variety of languages such as St'át'imcets, Halkomelem, Guaraní, Somali, etc., have highlighted the existence of so-called 'nominal tense affixes', which are said to affect the temporal interpretation of nominals in a way similar to the way in which verbal tense affixes affect the temporal interpretation of the verbal constellation (i.e. the verb and its adverbial modifiers)[37]. For example, the utterances in (20a, b) contain nominal temporal affixes which are the same or different from verbal temporal affixes, respectively.

(20) a. ´ewe-lh kw'´etslexw the-l s´ɪ:l-´a:-lh
NEG be-PST see the(f)-my grandparent-PST
'He didn't see his late grandmother.'(Halkomelem, Sadler and Nordlinger 2001, ex. 29)
b. thepi di-ma e-pidena eta-miki- i-nuku
to water 3SG NF-throw CAUS-REM P REP eagle-NOM PST-NF-TOP NON A/S
He threw the remains of the eagle (lit. what used to be the eagle) into water. (Tariana, Sadler and Nordlinger 2001, ex. 5)

Moreover, the temporal interpretation of nominals in such languages can be dependent on or independent from the temporal interpretation of the verbal predicate inside the same sentence. Thus, the St'át'imcets utterance in (21a.) can only mean 'The (past) president was powerful' (with both the nominal entity and the verbal event located in the past), whereas the Somali utterances in (21b.,c.) show that in this language a past verbal morpheme can co-occur with either a past tensed definite article 'ii', or with a non-past tensed definite article 'a', respectively (which allows for independent nominal temporal interpretation):

(21) a. á7xa7 [ni kel7áqsten-s-a ti US-a]
strong DET ABSENT chief-3SG.POSS-DET DET US-DET (St'át'imcets, Demirdache 1996, ex. 9a)
b. bandh´ig-gii m´aad daawatay?
exhibition-DET M PST Q 2S see.PST
'Have you seen the exhibition?' (closed at UT) (Somali, Lecarme 1999: 13)[38]
c. bandh´ig-ga m´aad daawatay?
exhibition-DET M Q 2S see PST
'Have you seen the exhibition?' (still running at UT) (Somali, Lecarme 1999: 13)[39]

In order to account for such data, various theories have been proposed. Firstly, the *Tense on D^0 hypothesis* was proposed by Wiltschko (2003), who argued that the temporal interpretations of tense inflected nominals in Halkomelem arise from the presence of an uninterpretable T feature on the D heads of the respective nominals. This theory was discussed and dismissed in Matthewson (2005) for a variety of language-internal reasons. Secondly, the *DP-internal TP hypothesis* was proposed by Lecarme (1996, etc.), who argued

[37] See a.o. Demirdache (1996), Lecarme (1996 and subsequent work), Matthewson (2002, 2005), Nordlinger and Sadler (2000 and subsequent work), Sadler and Nordlinger (2001), Tonhauser (2005 and subsequent work), Wiltschko (2003).
[38] Apud Sadler and Nordlinger (2001, ex. 58).
[39] Apud Sadler and Nordlinger (2001, ex. 59).

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

that Somali NPs contain a tense chain, consisting of D-T-N, similar to the verbal tense chains, consisting of C-T-Asp-V. However, if one adopts such a theory for DPs, one is forced to cross-linguistically admit the existence of tense phrases inside APs and PPs, which would give rise to an undesired proliferation of tense phrases[40]. Thirdly, the *theory of an aspect-based temporal interpretation of nominals* was put forth by Tonhauser (2006, etc.) who argued that cross-linguistically, nominals get temporally interpreted via their aspectual features. For details of each proposal the reader is referred to the studies mentioned; the theory we would lilke to advocate for is Tonhauser's theory, which we briefly summarize below.

According to Tonhauser (2006: 31-38), the same semantic and syntactic criteria can be used to check whether nominal inflections (such as the ones found in Guaraní) and English temporal adjectives 'former' and 'future' encode the same types of meanings:

(i) grammatical aspect markers, but not tenses, may show restrictions with members of particular semantic classes - among other things, 'kue' (the Guaraní past nominal inflection) is not acceptable with relational nouns, which produce lifetime effects, as in (22a.), not even in examples where the relation is contextually construed as a stage-level one. The English 'former' is less restricted: it can modify relational nouns, but it can only refer to past stages of the respective entities, as evident from (22b.)

(22) a. *Pe sy-kue o- ˜ne-comporta i-sy-cha.
that mother-KUE A3-JE-act 3-mother-like
Intended: 'The ex-mother/one who played mother acted like her mother.' (Guaraní, Tonhauser 2006, ex. 31)
b. 'My current mother is quite alright but my former mother was a dragon.' (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 27a)

(ii) grammatical aspect markers, but not tenses, mau co-occur - the Guaraní *ra* (= future) and *kue* (= past)', as well as the English 'former' and 'future' temporal adjectives can modify the same nominal without leading to ungrammaticality[41]:

(23) a. A-hecha pa'i-rã-ngue-pe.
I-see priest-RA-KUE-PE
'I am seeing the former future priest.'(Guaraní, Tonhauser 2006, ex. 91)
b. Someone who could be desribed as a "former future leader" is the young prime minister of Hesse, Roland Koch, but his chances have been destroyed in the secret funds affair and many people expect him to lose his position in the scandal-hit state soon. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 30a)

[40] Consider, for example, contexts such as (i)-(ii) below in which the same temporal affix 'elh' =past which attaches to nouns also attaches to adjectives or prepositions:
(i) híkw-elh te lálém-s tl' Mali (Halkomelem, Wiltschko 2003, ex. 51a)
big-past det house-3poss det.obl Mary
'Mary's house was big.'
(ii) stetís-elh te stó:lo (Halkomelem, Wiltschko 2003, ex. 53a)
near- past det river
'was near the river'

[41] Similar data have been described by Nordlinger and Sadler (2003b.) for Tariana. To describe such co-occurrence phenomena the two linguists use the term "tense stacking" which we consider inappropriate as the respective morphemes are not tense but aspectual markers.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

(iii) grammatical aspect markers, but not tenses, may encode a state change: e.g. *kue*/ 'former' are markers of "terminative grammatical aspect" as they refer to past stages of the entities denoted by the nominals they modify, which is apparent from the ungrammaticality of the contexts which assert that the respective former lawyer or wives are lawyer and wives at present – (24b), (25a):

(24) a. Kuehe a-hecha pete˜I abogado-kue-pe.
yesterday I-see one lawyer-KUE-PE
'Yesterday I saw a former lawyer.'
b. *A-hecha ramo-guare ha'e abogado gueteri.
I-see COND he lawyer still
'When I saw him he was still a lawyer.' (Guaraní, Tonhauser to appear, ex. 5a, b)
(25) a.* This is my former wife and we are still married. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 31b)
b. Peter Hoyle is a former and present Ukiah policeman. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 37)

(iv) tenses, but not grammatical aspects, restrict the time of evaluation - if 'former'/ 'future' were tense markers, we would expect them to restrict the time at which a noun phrase can be interpreted to a time in the past/future of the perspective time (realized as the utterance time, or the time provided by a matrix clause). However, the perspective time of 'former'is not fixed: it is the utterance time or the time provided by the matrix clause in (26a), the utterance time in (26b), the time provided by the matrix clause (26c). The same is true for the Guaraní examples in (27) below – although the nominals are both marked with *kue* (with the variant *gue*), (27a) is interpreted at the perspective time provided by the when clause (i.e. 'the place I am at now will be a former place when I go'), whereas (27b) is interpreted at the utterance time (i.e. 'the one who is now a former priest was born in 1960').

(26) a. My former mother-in-law still grieves more than I do and Michael died 14 years ago on September 3rd. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 33a)
b. For instance, my former mother-in-law drove me to all my o.b. appointments. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 33b)
c. After his divorce, John will say that his former mother-in-law never treated him right. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 34)
(27) a. Che a-ha ramo nde re-ju che renda-gue-pe.
I I-go COND you you-come my place-KUE-PE
'When I go, you come to my former place (i.e., the place that I am at now).'
b. Pe pa'i-kue h-e˜noi 1960-pe.
that priest-KUE he-born 1960-PE
'That ex-priest was born in 1960.' (Guaraní, Tonhauser to appear, ex. 27a, b)

(v) tenses, but not grammatical aspects, are anaphoric - even in contexts which could favour the anaphoric intepretation of Guaraní *kue*/*ra*, such as (28a, b) below, they are still interpreted relative to the utterance time. Thus, Tonhauser's Guaraní consultants informed her that although it si more plausible for a doctor than for a former doctor to heal someone, and for a lawyer rather than a future lawyer to help someone with their legal problems, still the individuals denoted by the respective nominals are perceived as not having the 'doctor'/ 'lawyer' quality at the time denoted by the temporal adverbials 'last year'/ 'next year' (when the treatment and legal advice are supposed to take place), as expected under a reading anaphoric to the respective times. Similarly, the preferred readings of the English sentences in

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

(29) utterred without a discourse context are the ones for which the 'former'/ 'future' are interpreted at the utterance time, and not at the time supplied by the temporal adverbials in the respective sentences.

(28) a. Ambue ary-pe peteī doytor-kue o-mo-nguera īn-angiru-pe i-mba'asy.
other year-PE one doctor-KUE he-CS-healthy his-friend-PE his-sickness
'Last year, an ex-doctor healed his friend's sickness.'
b. Ambue ary-pe peteī abogado-rã oi-pytyvo-ta i-sosio-pe i-problema
other year-PE one lawyer-RA he-help-TA his-friend-PE his-problem
ley-ndive-gua-pe.
law-with-for-PE
'Next year a future lawyer will help his friend with his law problems.'(Guaraní, Tonnhauser to appear: ex. 30a, 31a)
(29) a. In 1980 my former mother-in-law bought a house. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 35)
b. In 2010, my future mother-in-law will buy a house. (Tonhauser 2006, ex. 45)

Based on the five criteria above, Tonhauser reaches the conclusion that both the temporal adjectives in English and the so-called nomnal temporal affixes are – in fact – aspectual markers[42]. In support of her proposal, we notice that the respective inflections and adjectives provide similar information as the temporal adverbials in the sentences below:

(30) a. [...] last year's president was not as interested in the club.[43]
b. Pentru funcția de preşedinte al asociației au fost doi candidați, preşedintele de anul trecut, acum student în anul I la Master [...].[44]
'For the position of president of association there were two candidates, last year's president, now first year Master student [...].'

In (30a, b) above, 'last year's president' is interpreted as the person who was president last year, indicating the nominals' predication time, and not the time of existence of the individual denoted by the nominal. Contra Lecarme (1996, etc.), and in line with Tonhauser (2006, etc.), we consider that 'last year's'/ 'former'/ 'future' and the so-called nominal tense affixes do not specify the nominals' reference time (or the time of existence of the entities denoted by the respective nouns), but the nominals' equivalent of the verbal event time (i.e. the nominal's predication time). Moreover, the nominal's reference time is obtained contextually: (i) if the NP is 'affected' by the event described by the VP it may acquire a past RT, whereas if it is 'effected' by the event described by the VP it may acquire a non-past RT; (ii) a past temporal adverbial locating the RT of the VP in a remote period in the past (such as a few centuries ago) will most probably assign a past RT to the participants in that event, as - according to background knowledge - it is hard to believe someone who lived a hundred years ago may still be alive today.

[42] Furthermore, assuming the existence of a DP-internal AspP is also consistent with studies on nominalizations. See a.o. Cornilescu (2004b.).
[43] http://www.thejambar.com/home/index.cfm?event=displayArticlePrinterFriendly&uStory_id=ac8c5f64-54ba-4ea2-96e3-4c3b01c28d56.
[44] http://www.opiniastudenteasca.ro/cgi-bin/forum/YaBB.pl?board=aaa;action=display;num=1130405357.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

4. Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to take a closer look at the factors which influence the temporal interpretation of free relatives in English and Romanian. As a preamble, section 1 offered a review of the SOT phenomena as manifest in RCs versus CCs, presenting some of the similarities and differences between the two types of subordinates, as far as temporality is concerned. Section 2 presented the data regarding free relatives and, among other factors, pointed to the importance of the temporal localization of nominals in both FRs and CCs. Section 3 tried to offer a glimpse of the syntactic mechanisms that underlie the temporal semantics of nominals, arguing in favour of the aspect-based theory proposed by Tonhauser (2006 etc.), which was seen to hold cross-linguistically.

Viorela-Valentina DIMA
Assistant professor
Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies
viorelaval@yahoo.co.uk

References

Abusch, D. (1997). Sequence of tenses and temporal *de* re. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 20 (1): 1-50.

Anand, P. and Hacquard, V. (2004). When the present is all in the past. Chronos VI, 22-24 September 2004, University of Geneva.

Caponigro, I. (2001). On the semantics of indefinite free relatives. In M. van Koppen, J. Sio, and M. de Vos (eds.), *Proceedings of ConSOLE X*, 49-62. Leiden: SOLE.

Caponigro, I. (2004). The semantic contribution of wh-words and type shifts: evidence from free relatives crosslinguistically. In R. B. Young (ed.), *Proceedings from Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) XIV*, 38-55. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications, Cornell University.

Cornilescu, A. (2004a). *Complementation in English*. Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.

Cornilescu, A. (2004b). On aspect and case: Investigating Romanian nominalizations. In J. Guéron and J. Lecarme (eds.), *The Syntax of Time*, 75-114. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Crăiniceanu, I. (1997). *The Category of Aspect in English and Romanian with Special Reference to the Progressive Aspect*. Craiova: Editura Universităţii din Craiova.

Demirdache, H. (1996). *The chief of the United States* sentences in St'át'imcets (Lillooet Salish). A cross-linguistic asymmetry in the temporal interpretation of DPs. Ms.

Dima, V.V. (2006). The temporal-aspectual values of the English and Romanian present indicative tenses. Paper presented at the Symposium Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, The Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest, 15 December 2006.

Enç, M. (1987). Anchoring conditions for tense. *Linguistic Inquiry* 18 (4): 633-657.

GALR – *Gramatica limbii române*. 2005. Vol. II, *Enunţul*. Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române.

Giannakidou, A. and Cheng, L. (2006). (In)Definiteness, polarity, and the role of wh-morphology in free choice. *Journal of Semantics* 23 (1): 135–183.

Giorgi, A. and Pianesi, F. (1997). *Tense and Aspect. From Semantics to Morphosyntax*. New York: Oxford University Press.

GLR - *Gramatica limbii române*, 2nd edition. 1966. Bucharest: Editura Academiei.

Grosu, A. (2002). Strange Relatives at the interface of two millennia. *Glot International* 6: 145-167.

Lecarme, J. (1996). Tense in the nominal system: The Somali DP. In J. Lecarme, J. Lowestamm and U. Shlonsky (eds.), *Studies in Afroasiatic Grammar, Papers from the 2nd Conference on Afroasiatic Languages, Sophia Antipolis 1994*, 159-178. The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics.

Lecarme, J. (1999). Nominal tense and tense theory. In F. Corblin, J-M. Marandin and C. Dobrovie-Sorin (eds.), *Empirical Issues in Formal Syntax and Semantics 2, Selected Papers from 'Colloque de Syntaxe et Sémantique de Paris 7'*, 333-354. The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics.

Lecarme, J. (2003). Nominal tense and evidentiality. In J. Guéron and L. Tasmowski (eds.), *Temps et point de vue. Tense and Point of View*, 277-299. Paris: Université Paris X.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)

Lecarme, J. 2004. Tense in nominals. In J. Guéron and J. Lecarme (eds.) *The Syntax of Time*, 440-475. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Matthewson, L. 2002. Tense in St'at'imcets and in Universal Grammar. In C. Gillon, N. Sawai, and R. Wojdak (eds.), *Papers for the 37th International Conference on Salish and Neighbouring Languages*, vol. 9 of *The University of British Columbia Working Papers in Linguistics*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.

Matthewson, L. (2005). On the asbsence of tense on determiners. *Lingua* 115: 1697-1735.

Musan, R. (1995). On the Temporal Interpretation of Noun Phrases, PhD dissertation, MIT.

Nordlinger, R. and L. Sadler. (2000). Tense as a nominal category. In M. Butt, and T. Holloway King (eds.), *Proceedings of LFG00 Conference*, University of California, Berkeley. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, http://www-csli.stanford.edu-publications-.

Nordlinger, R. and Sadler, L. (2003a). Finite noun phrases, available online at http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~louisa/newpapers/finitefinal.pdf.

Nordlinger, R. and Sadler, L. (2003b). The syntax and semantics of tensed nominals. In M. Butt, and T. Holloway King (eds.), *Proceedings of LFG03 Conference*, State University of New York at Albany. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, http://www-csli.stanford.edu-publications-.

Nordlinger, R. and Sadler, L. (2004a). Nominal tense in cross-linguistic perspective. *Language* 80 (4): 776–806.

Nordlinger, R. and Sadler, L. (2004b). Tense beyond the verb: Encoding clausal tense/aspect/mood on nominal dependents. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 22 (3): 597-641.

Ogihara, T. (1989). Temporal Reference in English and Japanese. PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin. [Distributed in 1992 by Indiana University Linguistics Club.]

Ogihara, T. (1994). Adverbs of quantification and sequence-of-tense phenomena. In *Proceedings from Semantics and Linguistic Theory IV (SALT4)*, 251-267. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications, Cornell University.

Sadler, L. and Nordlinger, R. (2001). Nominal tense with nominal scope: A preliminary sketch. In *Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG)*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Online Publications.

Smith, C. (1997). *The Parameter of Aspect*, second edition. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Smith, C. (2004). The domain of tense. In J. Guéron and J. Lecarme (eds.), *The Syntax of Time*, 597-619. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stowell, T. (1993). The syntax of tense. Ms., UCLA.

Stowell, T. (1995). What is the meaning of the present and past tenses?. In P. Bertinetto, V. Bianchi, J. Higginbotham, and M. Squartini (eds.), *Temporal Reference, Aspect, and Actionality*, vol. 1, *Semantic and Syntactic Perspectives*, 381-396. Torino: Rosenberg and Sellier.

Tonhauser, J. (2005). Towards an understanding of the meaning of nominal tense. In E. Maier, C. Bary, and J. Huitink (eds.), *Proceedings of the 9th Sinn und Bedeutung Conference*, 475-488. Nijmegen: Nijmegen Center for Semantics.

Tonhauser, J. (2006). The Temporal Semantics of Noun Phrases: Evidence from Guaraní. PhD dissertation, Stanford University.

Tonhauser, J. (to appear). What is nominal tense? A case study of Paraguayan Guaraní. In *Proceedings of Semantics of Under-Represented Languages in the Americas (SULA) III*. University of Massachusetts, Amherst: Graduate Linguistics Student Association Publications. Available online at http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~judith/Tonhauser-SULA3.pdf

de Vries, M. (2002). *The Syntax of Relativization*. Utrecht: LOT.

Wiltschko, M. (2003). On the interpretability of tense on D and its consequences for case theory. *Lingua* 113: 659–696.

BDD-A9751 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 12:54:14 UTC)