

The distribution of (un)acceptable tense mismatches under TP ellipsis

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1 Introduction

Brucart (1987) and Murguía (2004) attribute the ungrammaticality of (1) to the hypothesis that TP ellipsis doesn't tolerate the tense morphology mismatch that the adverb *mañana* induces (we use a light grey font to indicate elided material).

- (1) * María leyó un libro ayer, y Elena [_{TP} leerá un libro] mañana.
María read.PST a book yesterday and Elena read.FUT a book tomorrow

But we know that other verbal morphology mismatches under ellipsis are very pervasive, so long as semantic parallelism is respected. How do we square (1) with this?

- (2) *Finiteness mismatch in VP ellipsis (not a deep anaphor, cf. Dagnac 2009)*
Matías quiere que vaya a su oficina, pero no puedo [_{VP} ir a su oficina].
Matías wants that go.SUBJ to his office but not can go.INF to his office
- (3) *Finiteness mismatch in sluicing (adapted from Merchant 2001)*
No cambié el neumático porque no sabía cómo [_{TP} cambiarlo].
not change.PST the tire because not knew how change.INF.CL
- (4) *Mood/modality mismatch in sluicing (adapted from Thoms 2013)*
A: ¡No le echas tanta sal al guiso!
not CL add.IMP so.much salt to.the stew
B: ¿Por qué [no debo echarle tanta sal al guiso]?
why not must add.CL so.much salt to.the stew

- (5) *Mood mismatch in polarity ellipsis*

Matías siempre deja la puerta abierta por mucho que le pidamos
Matías always leaves.IND the door open regardless how.much that CL request
que no [la deje abierta].
that not CL leave.SUBJ open

- (6) *Cleft-based sluicing (Rodrigues et al. 2009)*

Matías está hablando con alguien, pero no sé quién [es pro].
Matías is talking with someone but not know who is it

Additionally, tense mismatches under ellipsis are occasionally possible, contrary to Brucart's claim.

- (7) *Tense mismatch in habitual contexts (past-present, Saab 2014)*

Antes mi padre trabajaba aquí, y ahora yo también [_{TP} trabajo aquí].
in the past my father work.IMPF here and now I too work.PRS here

- (8) *Tense mismatch induced by sequence of tense over the ellipsis site (present-past)*

A: Al final, Susana no viene hoy.
in the end Susana not comes.PRS today
B: Pues estoy aquí porque creía que sí [venía hoy].
PRT I.am here because I.thought that yes was.coming today

- (9) *Tense mismatch induced by sequence of tense over the antecedent (past-present)*

A: Creía que Susana venía hoy.
I.thought that Susana was.coming today
B: Yo también lo creía, pero resulta que al final no [viene hoy].
I also CL thought but turns.out that in the end not comes.PRS today

(10) *Tense mismatch with episodic tenses (past-present)*

Scenario: Father gets ready to go out with friends for the second night in a row, implicitly forcing Wife to take care of their kids on her own. Furious Wife explodes:

¡Ya tuve que cuidar de los niños sola ayer! ¿Hoy también
 already have.PST to take.care of the kids alone yesterday today also
 [tengo que cuidar de los niños sola]?
 have.PRES to take.care of the kids alone

Antecedent	Ellipsis site	Status
habitual past	habitual present	✓
habitual present	habitual past	✓
present	SoT past	✓
SoT past	present	✓
episodic past	episodic present	✓
episodic past	episodic future	*

Table 1: Summary of (1)–(10)

Goal #1 We want to have a more refined version of this table; specifically, we want to understand under which circumstances tenses mismatches are licit.

Goal #2 We want to understand why this distribution obtains and, in doing so, figure out something interesting about both ellipsis and the representation of tense.

2 Towards a more refined version of Table 1

Tables 2 through 5 summarize the acceptability of various types of tense mismatches; the full example list is in Appendix 1. The items in the diagonal are irrelevant, as the antecedent and the elided verb have the same tense. The abbreviation *n.t.* (*not testable*) indicates cases where we can't force the desired verbal form in the ellipsis site.

Generalization 1: a mismatch involving a future tense (either in the antecedent or the ellipsis site) is invariably unacceptable.

Apparent counterexamples involve a present antecedent and an environment where the ellipsis site can be interpreted as containing a present tense with an extended-now reading.

		ANTECEDENT		
		PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
ELLIPSIS SITE	PAST	–	??	??
	PRESENT	✓	–	??
	FUTURE	?(?)	??	–

Table 2: Habitual antecedent, habitual ellipsis

		ANTECEDENT		
		PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
ELLIPSIS SITE	PAST	–	*	*
	PRESENT	✓	–	??
	FUTURE	n.t.	*?	–

Table 3: Episodic antecedent, episodic ellipsis

		ANTECEDENT		
		PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
ELLIPSIS SITE	PAST	–	*?	*
	PRESENT	(?)	–	*
	FUTURE	n.t.	n.t.	–

Table 4: Sequence-of-tense antecedent, episodic ellipsis

		ANTECEDENT		
		PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
ELLIPSIS SITE	PAST	–	✓	✓
	PRESENT	(?)	–	✓
	FUTURE	✓	n.t.	–

Table 5: Episodic antecedent, sequence-of-tense ellipsis

(11) ¿Cómo que hoy tienes que cuidar de los niños sola? ¡Pero si
 how.come that today have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone but PART
 mañana también [tienes que cuidar de los niños sola]!
 tomorrow also have.PRS that take.care of the kids alone

We can control for this effect by choosing a context that precludes an elided present.

(12) *Background: having fielded an ineligible player during the first leg of their Copa del Rey round, Real Madrid were threatened with disqualification. During the match, reporters started debating whether the second leg would ever get to be played.*

* Contactamos con el estadio Carranza, donde el Real Madrid y el Cádiz
 we.contact with the stadium Carranza where the Real Madrid and the Cádiz
 juegan en estos momentos; todavía no sabemos si dentro de dos semanas
 play.PRES in these moments still not know if within of two weeks
 también [jugarán].
 also play.FUT

Generalization 2: a past tense can antecede a present tense, but a present tense cannot antecede a past tense.

(13) *Tense mismatch with episodic tenses (past-present)*

Scenario: Father gets ready to go out with friends for the second night in a row, implicitly forcing Wife to take care of their kids on her own. Furious Wife explodes:

¡Ya tuve que cuidar de los niños sola ayer! ¿Hoy también
 already have.PST to take.care of the kids alone yesterday today also
 [tengo que cuidar de los niños sola]?
 have.PRES to take.care of the kids alone

(14) *Tense mismatch with episodic tenses (present-past)*

Scenario: same as above

* ¿Hoy tengo que cuidar de los niños sola? ¡Pero si ayer también
 today have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone but PART yesterday also
 [tuve que cuidar de los niños sola]!
 have.PAST that take.care of the kids alone

Generalization 3: the previous two generalizations lose their force if the tense of the ellipsis site is determined via a sequence of tense (Table 5); here, all mismatches are acceptable.

(15) *Tense mismatch induced by sequence of tense over the ellipsis site (present-past)*

A: Al final, Susana no viene hoy.
 in the end Susana not comes.PRES today
 B: Pues estoy aquí porque creía que sí [venía hoy].
 PRT I.am here because I.thought that yes was.coming today

(16) *Tense mismatch induced by sequence of tense over the ellipsis site (future-past)*

A: Al final, Susana no vendrá mañana.
 in the end Susana not comes.FUT tomorrow
 B: Pues estoy aquí porque creía que sí [venía hoy].
 PRT I.am here because I.thought that yes was.coming today

3 Some non-analyses

3.1 Ellipsis requires identity of formal features

This is effectively an extension of Chung's (2013) and Merchant's (2013) analysis of the ungrammaticality of voice mismatches under sluicing.

(17) a. * Someone took the trash out, but I don't know who by [it was taken out].
 b. * The trash was taken out, but I don't know who [took it out].

In the same way that (17) is ungrammatical due to mismatched [ACTIVE] and [PASSIVE] features, we could say that examples like (1) are ungrammatical due to mismatched [PRESENT] and [FUTURE] features.

Why we don't want to do this This analysis would predict that all tense mismatches would be unacceptable, failing to account for the fact that some are actually acceptable under well-defined circumstances.

3.2 Ellipsis requires semantic identity

Consider the definition of parallelism in Merchant (2001).

(18) An expression E can be elided if it is e -GIVEN; in turn E qualifies as e -GIVEN if it has a salient antecedent A and
 a. A entails the focus closure of E , and
 b. E entails the focus closure of A .
 where the focus closure of a expression requires raising it to type $\langle t \rangle$ and replacing traces and foci with \exists -bound variables.

Why we don't want to do this This approach entails that the asymmetry between acceptable and unacceptable tense mismatches reflects whether tenses are treated as variables/foci or not, respectively. Specifically, we want this to happen in (10), but not in (1). We see no non-*ad hoc* way of ensuring that things go this way. A similar concern affects AnderBois's (2011) identity condition, which is defined over inquisitive rather than truth-conditional entailments.

3.3 Tense mismatches are a type of sloppy identity

Partee (1973) and Kratzer (1998) propose that tenses should be treated in the same way as pronouns. If so, we could say that tense mismatches are formally analogous to sloppy pronominal anaphora (this was the proposal that we defended in the abstract).

Why we don't want to do this Sloppy identity requires the following LF configuration, where both the antecedent and the ellipsis site contain a variable bound by a lambda associated (respectively) to the correlate and the remnant.

(19) correlate $\lambda_1 [A \dots x_1 \dots]$... remnant $\lambda_2 [E \dots x_2 \dots]$

(20) Jack loves his_i, and Sally did too.

- a. Jack $\lambda_1 [A \ t_1 \text{ loves his}_i \text{ mother}]$ and Sally $\lambda_2 [E \ t_2 \text{ loves his}_i \text{ mother}]$ [strict]
- b. Jack $\lambda_1 [A \ t_1 \text{ loves } x_1 \text{ mother}]$ and Sally $\lambda_2 [E \ t_2 \text{ loves } x_2 \text{ mother}]$ [sloppy]

Here we encounter a variation of the same problem as above: accounting for the asymmetry between (1) and (10) requires ensuring that the tenses in both the antecedent and the anaphor can be treated as variables in the latter but not so in the former. Again as above, we see no non-*ad hoc* way of ensuring that this divide obtains.

3.4 These ellipses are deep anaphors, parallelism is computed differently

If we say that these ellipses are deep anaphors, then they don't have to be formally parallel to their antecedents; there only needs to be some salient antecedent (whether linguistic or not) from which the meaning of the ellipsis site can be recovered.

Why we don't want to do this Because these ellipses are demonstrably not deep anaphors. For one, they allow extraction from within them, which is the hallmark of surface anaphors.

(21) Ayer tuve que pasarme todo el día rellenando formularios. Hoy
yesterday had.PAST that spend all the day filling.out forms today
también [tengo que pasarme todo el día rellenando formularios], y ni
also have.PRES that spend all the day filling.out forms and not
siquiera sé en qué oficina [tengo que pasarme todo el día rellenando
even know in which office have.PRES that spend all the day filling.out
formularios].
forms

(22) En la década de los 70, los niños comían al menos una manzana cada día.
in the decade of the 70s the children ate.IMPF at least one apple each day
Hoy en día, no sé cuantas_i [comen los niños t_i cada día].
nowadays not know how.many eat.PRES the children each day

4 Towards a solution: accommodation of isomorphic antecedents

4.1 Background

Thoms (2014) proposes the following parallelism condition on ellipsis.

(23) *Parallelism condition on ellipsis*: an expression E can be elided if it is LF-equivalent to either a salient antecedent A or an accommodated antecedent A .

In turn, the notion of *accommodated antecedent* is defined by reference to Katzir's (2007) theory of calculation of focal and scalar alternatives.

(24) *Structural accommodation*: an accommodated antecedent A' is any LF such that A' can be derived from the LF of A by recursive application of the following operations.

- a. *Deletion*: remove a node from the tree.
- b. *Contraction*: remove an edge and identify its nodes.
- c. *Substitution*: replace a terminal node with an alternative from a defined source.

Given an antecedent A , use $Ad(A)$ to refer to the set of accommodated antecedents $\{A'_1, A'_2, \dots, A'_n\}$ that can be derived from A via (recursive) application of Deletion, Contraction, and Substitution. Demonstrably, $Ad(A)$ satisfies the following property.

(25) All members of $Ad(A)$ are at most as structurally complex as A (this follows from the fact that you can remove and replace nodes, but can't add new ones).

Assume that this parallelism condition is correct: if so, it follows that tense mismatches will be possible only when E is a member of $Ad(A)$.

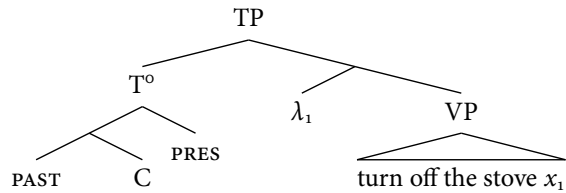
4.2 Background on the LF of tense

Additionally, we are going to follow von Stechow (2009) in treating the present as a PRES operator on T^0 , which returns the utterance time (we abbreviate this meaning as *now*). Crucially, the operator PAST is not in complementary distribution with PRES; rather, PAST is a function that takes PRES as an argument and shifts the output of PRES backwards (here we follow von Stechow in assuming that PAST comes with a contextual restrictor C , although this will not be important in our analysis of tense mismatches).

- (26) a. $\llbracket \text{PRES} \rrbracket^s = \text{now}$
 b. $\llbracket \text{PAST} \rrbracket^s = \lambda C. \lambda t. \lambda P. \exists t [C(t) \wedge t < \text{now} \wedge P(t)]$

Consider, in this light, the classical example of Partee (1973), on the assumption that VP can be treated as a property of times.

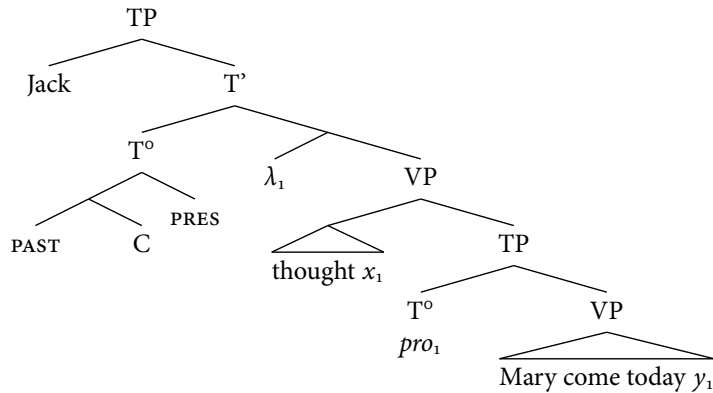
(27) I didn't turn off the stove.



- (28) $\llbracket \text{TP} \rrbracket^s = \neg [\exists t \subseteq t_s \wedge \text{turnoff}(\text{stove}, l)(t_s)]$
 [= there is no instant t in the contextually salient interval $t_s < \text{now}$ such that I turned the stove at t]

One advantage of this approach is that sequence-of-tense effects can be captured by replacing the tense operator by a variable pro_T bound by a higher tense operator.

(29) Jack thought that Mary was coming today.

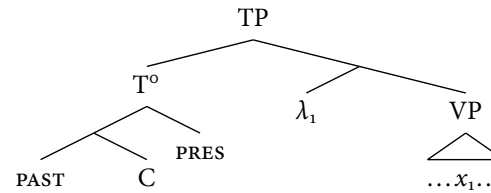


And the future? We will get back to that.

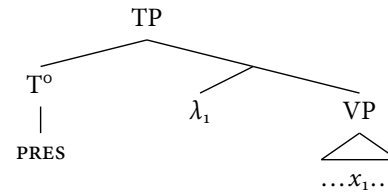
4.3 Deriving the distribution of tense mismatches (I)

If the past has a more complex LF than the present, it is possible to derive (by deletion of PAST and C) an accommodated antecedent A' that is LF-equivalent to a present-tense ellipsis site.

(30) Actual antecedent A

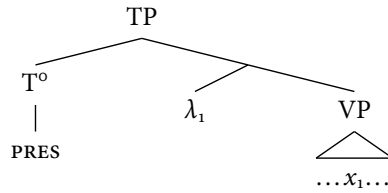


(31) Accommodated antecedent A': LF-equivalent to a present-tense E



In contrast, a present tense can't antecede a past tense because we can't add the required PAST and C morphemes.

(32) Actual antecedent A: can't derive an A' LF-equivalent to a past-tense E



Bonus The same reasoning captures the historical-present paradigm of Saab (2014). First, the non-elliptical baseline. If speaker A uses a historical present, B cannot reply with another historical present (with exceptions; in general, a historical present follow-up is possible if it is part of the same narrative); instead, B must use a past.

- (33) A: ¡Adivina qué me pasó ayer! Estoy en el bar y veo
 guess what CL happened yesterday am.PRES at the bar and see.PRES
 a Susana besandose con Matías
 DOM Susana kissing with Matías
- B: * ¡Qué casualidad! Yo también estoy en el bar.
 what coincidence I also am.PRES at the bar
- B': ¡Qué casualidad! Yo también estaba en el bar
 what coincidence I also was.IMPf at the bar

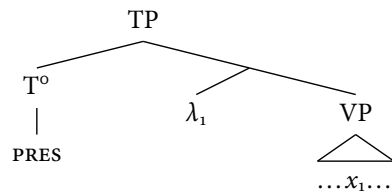
Saab observes that the historical present cannot be taken as an ellipsis antecedent. Example (B) is ungrammatical for the same reason as (B), and (B') is ungrammatical because an antecedent with a formal present cannot accommodate an A' with a past tense, just as above.

- (34) A: ¡Adivina qué me pasó ayer! Estoy en el bar y veo
 guess what CL happened yesterday am.PRES at the bar and see.PRES
 a Susana besandose con Matías
 DOM Susana kissing with Matías
- B: * ¡Qué casualidad! Yo también [estoy en el bar]
 what coincidence I also am.PRES at the bar
- B': * ¡Qué casualidad! Yo también [estaba en el bar]
 what coincidence I also was.IMPf at the bar

4.4 Deriving the distribution of tense mismatches (II)

The cases where the antecedent is part of a sequence of tense also fall under this system. Assuming that the lower tense is a variable (see above), we can create an A' by substituting the relevant nodes with a variable.

- (35) Actual antecedent A: a [PRES → pro] substitution creates an appropriate A'



Because anything can be substituted by a *pro*, we correctly predict that elided sequences of tense will allow tense mismatches much more freely than habituals or episodics.

4.5 The future

The future is not really a tense, it is a modal; as such, mismatches involving the future need more assumptions. We begin by noting that, independently of tense mismatches, a modal sentence cannot precede a non-modal one. To enforce a non-modal reading of the ellipsis site, we add a continuation that denies the modal meaning.

- (36) Este semestre debo enseñar sintaxis, y Matías también [enseña sintaxis], # a pesar
 this semester must teach syntax and Matías also teaches syntax despite
 de que no es su obligación.
 of that not is his duty
- (37) Scenario: spectators at a road race trying to figure out which of their friends are running
- ¿Crees que Matías puede estar corriendo?
 think that Matías might be running
 - Gabriel sí [está corriendo]. # ¡Mira, por ahí viene!
 Gabriel yes is running look over there comes

We need to say that an antecedent containing a future (*qua* a type of modal) cannot license a non-modal accommodated antecedent. This doesn't follow from Thoms's (2014) system unless we make additional assumptions about the LF representation of modals. We haven't figured this out yet.

5 Conclusions and outlook

First The distribution of tense mismatches is surprisingly hard to account for! Standard parallelism conditions fail to account for the observed patterns.

Second Currently, we need something along the lines of Thoms (2014), where the range of possible mismatched antecedents is defined in terms of structurally-defined LF alternatives. This gives us more coverage than standard accounts, but it doesn't cover everything. We still can't account for the fact that mismatches involving the future are invariably ungrammatical, unless the tense of the ellipsis site is determined via a sequence of tense.

Third But how much do we need to worry about this? We already know that Thoms' system alone is not sufficient. Even without considering tense mismatches, it makes incorrect predictions—for example, it predicts that pseudosluicing should not exist, and it predicts that voice mismatches under VP ellipsis should be invariably ungrammatical. At this point, our hope is that whatever extensions Thoms' system needs on independent grounds will be sufficient to cover the cases involving modals and the future.

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Appendix 1: tense mismatch examples

General note: in each example, the parentheses delimit the domain of ellipsis, and any grammaticality marks inside the parentheses indicate the acceptability of the elliptical version. The non-elliptical versions are invariably acceptable, which suggests that the unacceptability of the pertinent ellipsis is in fact an ellipsis effect.

Habituals (Table 2)

(38) Past (imperfect) antecedent

De joven, mi padre iba a San Mamés todos los domingos.
 as youth my father go.IMP to San Mamés all the Sundays

- a. Hoy en día, mi hijo también (va a San Mamés todos los domingos).
 nowadays my son also go.PRES to San Mamés all the Sundays.
- b. En el futuro, mi hijo también (??) irá a San Mamés todos los domingos).
 in the future my son also go.FUT to San Mamés all the Sundays.

(39) Present antecedent

Hoy en día, mi padre va a San Mamés todos los domingos.
 nowadays my father go.PRES to San Mamés all the Sundays

- a. En su día, mi abuelo también (??) iba a San Mamés todos los domingos).
 in his day my granddad also go.IMP to San Mamés all the Sundays.
- b. En el futuro, mi hijo también (??) irá a San Mamés todos los domingos).
 in the future my son also go.FUT to San Mamés all the Sundays.

(40) Future antecedent

En el futuro, mi hijo irá a San Mamés todos los domingos.
 in the future my son go.FUT to San Mamés all the Sundays

- a. En su día, mi abuelo también (??) iba a San Mamés todos los domingos).
 in his day my granddad also go.IMP to San Mamés all the Sundays.
- b. Hoy en día, mi padre también (??) va a San Mamés todos los domingos).
 nowadays my father also go.PRES to San Mamés all the Sundays.

Episodics (Table 3)

(41) Past antecedent

Anteayer ya tuviste que cuidar de los niños sola.
 two.days.ago already had.PST that take.care of the kids alone

- a. ¿Hoy también (tienes que cuidar de los niños sola)?
 today also have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone
- b. ¿Mañana también (tienes que cuidar de los niños sola)?
 tomorrow also have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone
 [An extended-now present is possible here, but see (12)]

(42) *Present antecedent*

¿Hoy tienes que cuidar de los niños sola?
today have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone

- a. ¡Pero si ayer también (* tuviste que cuidar de los niños sola)!
but PRT yesterday also had.PAST that take.care of the kids alone
- b. ¡Pero si mañana también (tienes que cuidar de los niños sola)?
but PRT tomorrow also have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone
[An extended-now present is possible here, but see (12)]

(43) *Future antecedent*

¿Mañana tendrás que cuidar de los niños sola?
tomorrow have.FUT that take.care of the kids alone

- a. ¡Pero si ayer también (* tuviste que cuidar de los niños sola)!
but PRT yesterday also had.PAST that take.care of the kids alone
- b. ¡Pero si hoy también (?? tienes que cuidar de los niños sola)?
but PRT today also have.PRES that take.care of the kids alone

Sequence of tense antecedent, episodic ellipsis site (Table 4)

(44) *Past (imperfect) antecedent*

Pedro creía que Susana tenía que venir ayer.
Pedro thought that Susana had.IMPF that come yesterday

- a. Al final resulta que ahora también (? tiene que venir).
in.the end turns.out that now also has.PRES that come
- b. Al final resulta que mañana también (? tiene que venir).
in.the end turns.out that tomorrow also has.PRES that come
[an extended-now present is possible here]

(45) *Present antecedent*

Pedro cree que Susana tiene que venir ahora.
Pedro thinks that Susana has.PRES that come now

- a. El pobre no sabe que ayer también (?* tuvo que venir).
the guy not knows that yesterday also had.PAST that come
- b. El pobre no sabe que mañana también (tiene que venir).
the guy not knows that tomorrow also has.PRES that come
[an extended-now present is possible here]

(46) *Future antecedent*

Al oír las noticias, Pedro creerá que Susana tendrá que venir mañana.
upon hear the news Pedro think.FUT that Susana has.FUT that come tomorrow

- a. El pobre no sabe que ayer también (* tuvo que venir).
the guy not knows that yesterday also had.PAST that come
- b. El pobre no sabe que ahora mismo también (tiene que venir).
the guy not knows that now INTSF also has.PRES that come

Episodic ellipsis site, sequence of tense antecedente (Table 5)

(47) *Past (imperfect) antecedent*

Susana tenía que venir ayer.
Susana had.IMPF that come yesterday

- a. Pedro cree que ahora también (tiene que venir).
Pedro thinks that now also has.PRES that come
- b. Pedro cree que mañana también (tiene que venir).
Pedro thinks that tomorrow also has.PRES that come
[uninformative because of the extended-now use of the present]

(48) *Present antecedent*

Susana tiene que venir hoy.
Susana has.PRES that come today

- a. Pedro creía que ayer también (tenía que venir).
Pedro thinks that yesterday also had.PAST that come
- b. Pedro cree que mañana también (tiene que venir).
Pedro thinks that tomorrow also has.PRES that come
[uninformative because of the extended-now use of the present]

(49) *Future antecedent*

Susana tendrá que venir mañana.
Susana has.FUTURE that come today

- a. Pedro creía que ayer también (tenía que venir).
Pedro thinks that yesterday also had.PAST that come
- b. Pedro cree que ahora también (tiene que venir).
Pedro thinks that now also has.PRES that come