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Languages without overt tense paradigms *can* always be analyzed as possessing covert tense morphemes; the question is whether they *should* be. Ideally, the answer is based on empirical evidence. In this talk I argue that a fruitful way to shed light on the question is to examine cross-linguistic variation among superficially tenseless languages. I present four case studies of languages which differ in the interpretive possibilities they allow for superficially tenseless clauses: Gitksan (Tsimshianic; Johannsdóttir and Matthewson 2007, Matthewson 2013), Blackfoot (Algonquian; Reis Silva and Matthewson 2008), Javanese (Austronesian; Chen et al. 2017) and Atayal (Austronesian; Chen et al. 2017, Chen in prep.).

These case studies support two conclusions. First, empirical evidence exists for covert tense in each of the four languages, but it is of a different nature in each language. Second, while tenseless analyses could be given for each individual language, it is difficult to see how the additional assumptions necessary to derive the facts can either generalize across languages, or be parameterized. This small cross-linguistic survey therefore leads me to propose that the evidence against truly tenseless languages is mounting.