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A cross-linguistic discourse analysis of the Perfect

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Abstract

Since Reichenbach (1947), the Present Perfect has been discussed in relation to the Simple Past. The Reichenbachian characterization E-R,S has led to the view that the English Present Perfect, with its restrictions on modification by time adverbials and its resistance to narrative structure is the Prototypical Perfect. If the Pluperfect is different, or if counterparts of the Present Perfect in other languages behave differently, that is because they are less Prototypical Perfects. In this paper, we argue that the most important cross-linguistic differences do not require a different sentential semantics, but should rather be explained in terms of different discourse level properties. We investigate Perfect constructions in four languages: English, French, Dutch and German. We argue that all four are Reichenbachian Perfects, and have very similar aspectual properties. Moreover, they introduce the same discourse configuration of Elaboration. However, they differ in the additional constraints imposed upon the possible relations between the event time E and other times or events in the sentence or the surrounding discourse. These differences imply that we can use a Present Perfect construction to tell a story in French and German, but not in English or Dutch.

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1. Semantics of the Perfect: temporal, aspectual and discourse properties

In this section, we define a cross-linguistic semantics and pragmatics of Perfect constructions. We focus on temporal structure in section 1.1, on aspectual properties in section 1.2, and on the discourse configuration introduced by the Perfect construction in section 1.3.

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1.1. *Semantic rules for the Perfect in English, French, Dutch and German*

In order to account for the relation between the Simple Past (SP) in (1a) and the Present Perfect (PP) (1b), Reichenbach (1947) proposes an analysis in terms of three points:

- (1) a. Sara left the party. E,R-S
b. Sara has left the party. E-R,S

In (1a) as well as in (1b), the event E of Sara's departure is located before the speech time S on the time axis. The main difference between the two sentences is that (1b) does not only look at the past, but maintains the importance of S. (1b) tells us that Sara left with the result that she is not at the party at the moment, whereas (1a) only reports the leaving. In order to capture this difference in perspective, Reichenbach (1947) introduces the notion of reference time R. In the case of the SP, R coincides with E, which yields the structure E,R-S: the event E coincides with (,) the reference time R, which precedes (-) the speech time S. For the PP, Reichenbach proposes the schema E-R,S, such that E precedes the reference time R, which coincides with the speech time S.

The Reichenbachian structure E-R,S has been used to explain various properties of the English Present Perfect. The observation that the PP is generally incompatible with adverbs that locate the event E in time (2a) has been related to the claim that locating time adverbials modify R, rather than E. Given that R coincides with S, we expect the Present Perfect to be compatible with deictic adverbials only, which seems to be confirmed by the contrast between (2a) and (2b)¹:

- (2) a. *Sara has left at six o'clock.
b. Sara has left this afternoon.

Furthermore, we expect the PP to be an inappropriate tense to tell a story, for narrative contexts require the perspective to shift to the sequence of events, rather than to stay at Boogaart (1999) uses the occurrence of a tense in a subordinate clause introduced by *when* as a criterion for narrative use. The observation that the PP cannot be used in this context (3a), whereas the SP can (3b) confirms that the former is not a Narrative tense, but the latter is²:

- (3) a. *When John has seen (PP) me, he has got (PP)/got (SP) frightened.
b. When John saw (SP) me, he got (SP) frightened.

At first sight, the fact that the Reichenbachian analysis of the English Present Perfect might be taken to explain the restrictions of this tense on locating time adverbials and its infelicitous use in narrative contexts is a nice result. However, the analysis raises problems for other cases. It is well known that the Pluperfect, which corresponds with the Reichenbachian structure E-R-S combines

¹ The sentence is not ungrammatical in all varieties of English, but most standard analyses of the Present Perfect are based on these grammaticality judgments.

² Of course, there is much more to say about the semantics and pragmatics of the English Present Perfect, but we are not in a position to provide a full literature review here. We refer the interested reader to Portner (2003) for a recent overview of relevant properties and analyses.

with locating time adverbials which can relate to either the reference time R or the event time E, cf. the ambiguous (4):

- (4) Sara had left at six o'clock
- a. At six o'clock, Sara had already left.
 - b. (At some point in time it became clear that) Sara had left at six o'clock.

According to Hornstein (1990), the ambiguity of (4) is the result of an attachment of the locating time adverbial at E (4a) or at R (4b). In this approach, it remains unclear why modification of E is blocked with the Present Perfect in (2a), though. Furthermore, it does not explain why the Past Perfect is easily used in narrative contexts such as *when*-clauses:

- (5) When John had crossed the street, he entered a shoe store.

Kamp and Reyle (1993:598–601) treat the Perfect as an aspect, rather than a tense (see section 1.2 below for details). They propose that the Pluperfect is ambiguous between a Perfect in the Past and a Past in the Past. Although this solves the problem of the Pluperfect, it implies that the success of the 'prototypical' interpretation of the Reichenbachian analysis is restricted to the Present Perfect, and does not extend to other Perfect tenses. Independent evidence in favor of the strong Reichenbachian interpretation might come from a cross-linguistic analysis of the Perfect. However, our study of the French, Dutch and German counterparts of the Present Perfect shows that these constructions do not pattern exactly like the English Present Perfect.

From a morpho-syntactic point of view, Perfect constructions in the four languages under consideration in this paper are rather similar, and involve a combination of the auxiliary (*have* or *be*) with a past participle. In French, this construction is called the *Passé Composé* (PC) (6b), in Dutch it is called the *Voltooid Tegenwoordige Tijd* (VTT) (6c), and in German the *Perfekt* (Perf) (6d), so we can provide the following translations of the English Present Perfect (PP) in (6a):

- (6)
- | | | |
|----|--------------------|---------------|
| a. | He has eaten. | [English PP] |
| b. | Il a mangé. | [French PC] |
| c. | Hij heeft gegeten. | [Dutch VTT] |
| d. | Er hat gegessen. | [German Perf] |

In all four languages, the Perfect construction contrasts with a Simple Past construction, called the *Imparfait* (IMP) in French (7b), the *Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd* (OVT) in Dutch (7c), the *Präteritum* (Prät) in German (7d).³ Again, we can illustrate with a set of translations from the English Simple Past sentence in (7a):

- (7)
- | | | |
|----|--------------|---------------|
| a. | He ate. | [English SP] |
| b. | Il mangeait. | [French IMP] |
| c. | Hij at. | [Dutch OVT] |
| d. | Er aß. | [German Prät] |

³ The Simple Past tense system in French is more complex, because there is a contrast between the Perfective *Passé Simple* ('il mangea') and the Imperfective *Imparfait* ('il mangeait'). There is an extensive literature on this contrast that we will ignore in this paper, because Camus does not use the *Passé Simple* in his novel *L'étranger*. For an overview of relevant issues, and an evaluation of the relations between *Passé Simple*, *Imparfait* and *Passé Composé* in modern French, see Verkuyl et al. (2004), Molendijk et al. (2004), and references therein. As we will see in sections 3 and 4, the Perfective/Imperfective contrast is not driving the translations.

The similarities between the morpho-syntactic paradigms cannot hide the fact that there are important differences in meaning and use between the Perfect and Simple Past forms in the four languages, which raise the question how they fit in with the Reichenbachian analysis outlined for English. With respect to the two main criteria of modification by time adverbials and narrative use as witnessed by the occurrence in narrative *when*-clauses, none of the three languages behaves like English. The three Perfect constructions other than the English PP all combine quite easily with locating time adverbials, as illustrated in (8b), (8c) and (8d), which are literal translations of (2a), repeated as (8a)⁴:

- (8) a. *Sara has left at six o'clock. [English]
b. Sara is om zes uur vertrokken. [Dutch]
c. Sara est partie à six heures. [French]
d. Sara ist um sechs Uhr abgefahren. [German]

Furthermore, the Dutch Present Perfect form blocks narrative use in *when*-clauses (9b), just like its English counterpart did in (3a), repeated here as (9a). However, the French PC (9c) and its German counterpart (9d) freely occur in subordinate clauses introduced by ‘when’, as witnessed by the well-formedness of the translations of (9a) in (9c) and (9d)⁵:

- (9) a. *When John has seen (PP) me, he has got (PP)/got (SP) frightened. [English]
b. *Toen Jan me heeft gezien (VTT) is hij bang geworden (VTT)/
werd (OVT) hij bang. [Dutch]
c. Quand Jean m’a vu (PC), il a eu peur (PC). [French]
d. Als Johan mich gesehen hat (Perf), hat er Angst bekommen (Perf). [German]

Of course, we can assume that Dutch, French and German are exceptional, and the English PP is the only tense that provides a perfect illustration of the Reichenbachian schema E-R,S. *Nerbonne (1985)* adopts an ambiguity analysis for the German Perfekt. Along similar lines, *Vet (1992, 1999, 2001)* proposes that the French PC is ambiguous or polysemous, and has both a Present Perfect and a Simple Past tense use. These proposals are similar to *Kamp and Reyle’s* analysis of the English Pluperfect. However, the ambiguity approach leaves Dutch as an intermediate case. The Dutch VTT allows modification by time adverbials, but in the standard language, it is not used for narration: does that mean that it qualifies as a Perfect or as a Simple Past tense? We conclude that an ambiguity or polysemy analysis is not as clearcut as it looks at first sight, and might not, in the end, be the best way to account for the semantic and pragmatic differences observed. In this paper, we therefore propose a radically different approach. On the one hand, we want to maintain the characterization of the English PP, the Dutch VTT, the German Perfekt and the French PC as Perfects that obey the Reichenbachian schema E-R,S. On the other hand, with *Löbner (2002)* we want to emphasize the relevance of the Narrative use of the French and German Perfect forms, that contrast with the more restricted discourse function of the English and Dutch Perfect constructions. Therefore, we work out an analysis in two parts.

⁴ French examples go back to *Vet (1980)* at least. For Dutch, this has been observed by *Boogaart (1999)*. For German, this has been pointed out by *Herweg (1990)*, *Klein (1999)* and *Musan (2002)*.

⁵ The relevance of this observation for German has been highlighted by *Löbner (2002)*. For Flemish speakers, the Dutch example (9b) may also be acceptable; for speakers of standard Dutch from the Netherlands, it is not.

We claim that all four Perfect constructions are instantiations of the Reichenbachian Perfect schema E-R,S, but the Dutch and English Perfects are subject to additional constraints. The English PP blocks any temporal relation whatsoever with the event time E. As a result, it does not allow modification by time adverbials (relation with another time) or a narrative use (relation with other events). The Dutch VTT resists temporal relations between E and other eventualities, but not other times. As a result, it allows modification by time adverbials, even though it cannot be used in narrative contexts. The French PC and the German Perfekt are not subject to any further constraints, which guarantees that they freely combine with time adverbials and can establish discourse relations with other events (and thus occur in narrative contexts). However, they remain Perfects in the sense that the event in the past is viewed from the speech time S, according to the Reichenbachian structure E-R,S. Accordingly, we propose the following semantic rules for the Perfect in English, Dutch, and French/German:

- (10) Semantics of the English PP
 - (i) E-R,S
 - (ii) $\neg E@X$ where @ is any temporal relation, and X is either an event or a moment other than R or S.
- (11) Semantics of the Dutch VTT
 - (i) E-R,S
 - (ii) $\neg E@X$ where @ is any temporal relation, and X is an event.
- (12) Semantics of the French PC and the German Perfekt
 - (i) E-R,S

These rules allow us to maintain the Reichenbachian schema for the Perfect in all four languages. They give a weak interpretation of the Reichenbachian analysis in which the restrictions on the English PP do not follow from the schema E-R,S itself, but are formulated as additional constraints on the Perfect construction. This allows counterparts of the Present Perfect in other languages to be less constrained Perfects.

Independent evidence in favor of this analysis comes from an analysis of the English, Dutch and French Pluperfect. For all three Pluperfect constructions, we can maintain the Reichenbachian schema E-R-S. Without any further constraints, we would then derive the properties of the English Pluperfect illustrated in (4) and (5) above. Thus, we do not need to posit an ambiguity between Perfect in the Past and Past in the Past. We will not elaborate this point, but concentrate on the cross-linguistic analysis of the Present Perfect.

The Reichenbachian schema of the Perfect focuses on the temporal location of the eventuality E, and of the reference time R, the time from which the eventuality is viewed. It does not say anything about the aspectual nature of the Perfect. The question whether the Perfect is a tense or an aspect has been much debated in the literature. In this paper we attempt to give an integrated analysis, under the assumption that the Perfect has both temporal and aspectual characteristics, just like many other tenses (e.g. the *Passé Simple* and *Imparfait*, cf. de Swart, 1998). Let us therefore turn to the aspectual nature of the Perfect.

1.2. *The aspectual nature of the Perfect*

An aspectual definition of the Perfect has been proposed by Kamp and Reyle (1993), and has been adopted by de Swart (1998). This definition is tense neutral (it generalizes over the Present,

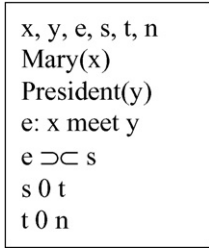


Fig. 1. DRS representation of ‘Mary has met the president’.

Past and Future Perfect), and it assumes that the Perfect operates on an eventuality e and introduces the result state s of that eventuality as immediately following e . It is the result state that is located in time by the tense operator (Present, Past or Future), so this analysis confirms that the perspective on the event reported in the Present Perfect remains at the speech time S . In this framework, the semantic structure of a sentence like (13a) is as given in (13b):

- (13) a. Mary has met the president.
- b. [PRES [PERF [Mary meet the president]]]
- c. DRT condition: $e \supset c s$

The Perfect is an extensional operator that operates on an eventuality e and introduces the result state s of that eventuality as immediately following e . In the semantic representation of Discourse Representation Theory (DRT), this is written as the condition $e \supset c s$ (13c). This means that e and s “abut”, i.e. they touch on the time axis (so there is no temporal “gap” between them), but they do not overlap. Both e and s are asserted, but it is the result state that is located in time by the tense operator, so this analysis confirms that the perspective on the event reported in the Present Perfect remains at the speech time, and thus respects the Reichenbachian analysis E-R,S.⁶ The representation of (13a) in DRT is spelled out in Fig. 1.

⁶ As an anonymous reviewer points out, there are problems with the notion of result state in view of examples such as (i) and (ii):

- (i) Jules César a conquis la Gaule entre 58 et 50 av. J.-C.
Julius Cesar has conquered Gaul between 58 and 50 before Christ.
- (ii) La voiture a frôlé le trottoir.
The car has grazed the sidewalk.

According to the reviewer, the result state of Gaul occupied by the Romans stopped 1500 years before the speech time, so that no result state holds at S for (i). Events of grazing do not leave traces, so that (ii) only refers to a past event, and does not assert any result state. I don’t think these examples invalidate the application of Kamp and Reyle’s analysis to French, Dutch and German, but obviously, the notion of result state is weaker in the narrative use of the *Passé Composé* than elsewhere, without disappearing altogether though. Unfortunately, limits of time and space do not permit me to address this issue here. The interested reader can consult Portner (2003) and references therein for extensive discussion of the notion of result state.

The same reviewer would also like to see an extension of the analysis to other Perfect forms, cf:

- (iii) Quand Pierre est rentré, Marie est sortie.
When Pierre has returned, Marie has left.
- (iv) Quand Pierre sera rentré, Marie sera sortie.
When Pierre will have returned, Marie will have left.

As the reviewer points out, (iii) can establish either a succession relation, or an overlap relation, whereas in (iv) there is only an overlap between two result states. An account of this contrast in my framework would require a definition of the discourse semantics of the future. Unfortunately, this is outside the scope of this paper.

It is quite clear from this interpretation that the Perfect maps a quantized event onto its consequent state. Without a final boundary on the event, there would be no consequent state, so the Perfect must presuppose a non-homogeneous eventuality (cf. Moens, 1987; Moens and Steedman, 1988). The combination of this property with the extensional nature of the Perfect (asserting both *e* and *s*), allows the Perfect in many languages to grammaticalize into a Perfective Simple Past (cf. Bybee et al., 1994). The Perfective Simple Past is generally described in terms of a bounded eventuality located in the past of the speech time (cf. Smith, 1991; de Swart, 1998). The diachronic development can thus be viewed as a shift in emphasis from the consequent state *s* to the underlying (quantized) event *e*. Support for this view is even found in English, where the Present Perfect is (just) a Perfect, but the Pluperfect can be used as a Perfect in the past, or a Past in the past (cf. Kamp and Reyle, 1993 and section 1.1 above). More support for this view is found in French. As we will argue below, the French Passé Composé is on its way to develop into a Perfective Simple Past. However, on the basis of its discourse semantics we will argue that it is not quite there yet: as long as it maintains the orientation towards S it qualifies as a Perfect (E-R,S), rather than as a simple past (E,R-S). It is possible that the German Perfekt is further advanced in its development (cf. the discussion in Löbner, 2002), but as we will see below, the translation of *L'étranger* reflects a discourse status of the Perfekt that remains very close to that of the French Passé Composé.

In view of the aspectual characterization of the Perfect as presupposing a quantized event, it is not surprising that special meaning effects arise when the Present Perfect is combined with non-quantized eventualities, i.e. processes (14a) or states (14b):

- (14) a. Mary has read poetry.
b. Mary has lived in Amsterdam.
c. [PRES [PERF [C_{he} [state/process]]]]

In both cases, it is easy to come up with a bounded portion of the process/state that provides the quantized eventuality. The Perfect then focuses on the consequent state of the bounded process/state, which makes the existential reading the most likely interpretation of the sentence: 'there has been an activity of reading poetry by Mary in the past, and it has ended some time before now'. We treat this special meaning effect as an instance of aspectual coercion, as indicated by the schematic structure in (14c). To my knowledge, Moens (1987) and Moens and Steedman (1988) are the first to define coercion in aspectual theory. They assume an aspectual network out of a number of aspectual categories and relations between them. A number of aspectual transitions are labelled as established 'routes' through the network. Some of these shifts are controlled by explicit aspectual operators. For instance, the change from event to consequent state requires the use of the Perfect, and the Progressive expresses the transition from a dynamic action to the state of that action in progress. Transitions for which a language has no explicit markers are free as long as the context supports the meaning effects associated with the aspectual change. Such transitions as inchoativity, habituality and bounding in English are then governed by a contextual reinterpretation process. Such reinterpretation processes have been called *coercion* after Pustejovsky (1995). The representation in (14c) contains an operator C_{he} that coerces the (homogeneous) state or process *h* into a quantized event *e*. Once the process/state has been presented as a quantized event, it is of the right aspectual type to be the input to the Perfect operator. de Swart (1998, 2003) works out an analysis of temporal structure using coercion operators in Discourse Representation theory, and we refer to those papers for further details on the formalism. In this paper, we focus on the consequences for discourse structure.

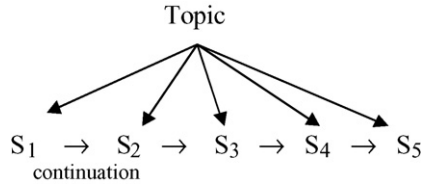


Fig. 2.

360
 361 The question that arises at this point is how the Reichenbachian structure E-R,S and the
 362 aspectual structure $e \supset \subset s$, in combination with the possibility of coercion, can be
 363 complemented with a discourse semantics of the Perfect. In section 1.3, we will argue that
 364 we need to appeal to a theory like Segmented Discourse Representation theory, which builds
 365 rhetorical structure, to define the discourse semantics of the Perfect.

1.3. The discourse semantics of the Perfect

366
 367 Analyses of the rhetorical structure of discourse within the framework of Segmented
 368 Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT) have been developed by Lascarides and Asher (1993)
 369 (for English) and by Asher et al. (1995) and Borillo et al. (2004) (for French). These authors argue
 370 that the temporal structure of a text is parasitic on its rhetorical structure. Verbal tenses give
 371 partial information about the temporal organization of a discourse, but usually they leave open
 372 several options. Rhetorical relations can be used to help select the intended temporal relation.

373 In the Reichenbachian view, the non-anaphoric nature of the Perfect is the result of its
 374 orientation towards the speech time S. In terms of SDRT, we can say that the Perfect creates an
 375 Elaboration structure in which the speech time S (or more generally: the larger utterance situation
 376 or writing context) provides the topic, and all sentences in the Perfect are elaborations of this
 377 topic. Typically, several sentences entertain an Elaboration relation with the Topic at hand, which
 378 leads to a relation of Continuation between these sentences. If we find a series of sentences in the
 379 Perfect, which elaborate a particular speech situation, the rhetorical relation between those
 380 sentences is the relation of Continuation. Fig. 2 captures the rhetorical structure of a sequence in
 381 the Perfect:

382 Continuation as it is defined in SDRT is a purely rhetorical relation, that does not have
 383 temporal implications in and of itself. The sentences $S_1 \dots S_n$ in the Perfect, thus describe a
 384 temporally unordered set of events. We can use the discourse relation of Elaboration to describe
 the structure of texts like (15) (English) and (16) (French)⁷:

385
 386 (15) Here then is a letter. You and I long since agreed that letters are nothing. Yours tell me
 387 what I knew already or could well imagine, and they frequently departed from the rule
 388 which we had laid down that a letter should consist principally of facts.

389 Here are my facts. The weather *has been* incomparable. There *have been* many
 390 parties on sea and on land. I leave all reunions which *have been abandoned* to
 391 conversation only and for which the host *has made* no plans for entertainment.

⁷ (13) is a passage from (the English translation of) a letter by Clodia Pulcher to the poet Catull, quoted by Weinrich (1973:74-75) in his discussion of the English Perfect. (14) Contains the opening sentences of Paul Valéry's story *La soirée avec M. Teste*; it is quoted by Weinrich (1973:77) in his discussion of the French Passé Composé.

- 391
392 (16) La bêtise n'est pas mon fort. J'ai vu beaucoup d'individus, j'ai pris ma part
393 d'entreprises diverses sans les aimer, j'ai mangé presque tous les jours, j'ai touché à des
394 femmes.
395 Stupidity is not my strong point. I have seen many individuals, I have taken part in
several activities that I didn't like, I have eaten almost every day, I have touched women.

396
397 The sentence 'Here are the facts' provides the topic of the Elaboration in (15). The series of
398 sentences in the Present Perfect that follows describes Elaborations of this topic. The topic of (16)
399 is *La bêtise n'est pas mon fort*. The series of sentences in the Passé Composé describes
400 Elaborations of this topic, and collects the events in an unordered set. Note that in both cases the
401 Topic is provided by a sentence in the Present tense, which confirms the orientation of the Perfect
402 towards the speech time.

403 Although Continuation does not necessarily induce temporal structure, it is not incompatible
404 with temporal relations between the events of the Elaboration. The English Present Perfect and
405 Dutch *Voltooid Tegenwoordige Tijd* do not allow temporal relations with other events (cf. section
406 1.1 above), so we cannot develop temporal structure by means of the Present Perfect or the VTT.
407 In contrast, we can use the French *Passé Composé* to tell a story, because these Perfect
408 constructions do not block temporal relations with other events. Accordingly, the relation of
409 Continuation between the Perfect sentences that elaborate a particular topic can get a temporal
410 dimension. In this perspective, temporal structure is not induced by the *Passé Composé*: it is 'just'
411 a Perfect that introduces a structure of Elaboration. However, the fact that it does not block
412 temporal structure is enough to open the possibility of narrative use. Accordingly, we formulate
the following discourse semantics of the *Passé Composé*:

- 414
415 (17) Rule for the interpretation of the French *Passé Composé*
416 (i) The *Passé Composé* respects the temporal structure E-R,S
417 (ii) The *Passé Composé* introduces a quantized event e into the discourse, and
418 a consequent state s , such that $e \supset \subset s$.
419 (iii) A sentence in the *Passé Composé* takes the speech time S (or the larger
420 utterance situation) as its Topic, and establishes a relation of Elaboration
421 with that topic.
422 (iv) Any temporal relation is possible between the events e and e' reported by
423 a Continuation of two sentences in the *Passé Composé*.

424
425 Clause (17i) states that the French *Passé Composé* has the Reichenbachian structure of a Perfect
426 (cf. section 1.1 above). Clause (17ii) states that the *Passé Composé* locates an event e on the time
427 axis (cf. section 1.2 above). Clause (17iii) states that the *Passé Composé* is a non-anaphoric tense.
428 In opposition to the *Passé Simple* and the *Imparfait* it does not look for a temporal antecedent in
429 the discourse, but it is oriented towards the speech time S. If all *Passé Composé* sentences
430 (of a fragment, e.g. a day) are oriented towards the same utterance situation as their Topic, they
431 maintain a relation of Continuation among them. The relation of Continuation is a rhetorical
432 relation that does not necessarily have temporal implications. However, Continuation leaves
433 open the possibility of a further temporal structuring (17iv).

434
435 We emphasize that the *Passé Composé* is not responsible for the temporal structure of the
436 discourse, because it is not an Anaphoric tense. The analysis of *L'étranger* developed by de Swart
437 and Molendijk (2002), and summarized in section 2 illustrates that the temporal structure of a
438 story told in the *Passé Composé* is driven by lexical semantics and pragmatic (rhetorical)

446 knowledge. In section 3, we will return to the cross-linguistic analysis by studying translations of
447 *L'étranger* into English, Dutch and German.⁸ The translation study will be shown to confirm the
448 very strict discourse semantics of English, the intermediate position of Dutch, and the relatively
449 free narrative use of the German Perfekt.
450

2. Telling a story in the Passé Composé

451 *de Swart and Molendijk (2002)* analyze the temporal structure of the first three chapters of
452 *L'étranger* by Albert Camus on the basis of the discourse semantics of the French Passé Composé
453 given in (17) above. This novel shocked the French readers when it first came out in 1942,
454 because the story was told in the Passé Composé, rather than the traditional literary tense, the
455 Passé Simple. Section 2.1 provides evidence from *L'étranger* in favor of the deictic character of
456 the Passé Composé. Section 2.2 describes the different temporal relations we find in this novel,
457 and section 2.3 describes how Camus achieves the temporal structure of narration in the absence
458 of a Narrative tense.
459

2.1. The deictic character of the Passé Composé

460 Telling a story in the Passé Composé has a very different 'flavor' from telling it in the Passé
461 Simple. In spoken language, the context always offers a clear indication of the utterance
462 situation, so it is easy to respect the deictic character of the Passé Composé, but in written texts it
463 calls up the atmosphere of letters or a diary ('journal intime'). *L'étranger* is no exception, and the
464 numerous examples of deictic adverbials in combination with the Passé Composé support the
465 view that the construction maintains its deictic character in this text⁹:

- 468 (18) **Aujourd'hui**, maman est morte. p. 9
469 Mother died (PC) **today**.
- 470 (19) (...) ce n'est pas de ma faute si on a enterré maman **hier** au lieu d'**aujourd'hui**. p. 33
471 But for one thing, it isn't my fault if they buried (PC) mother **yesterday**
472 instead of **today**, (...)
- 473 (20) **Aujourd'hui** j'ai beaucoup travaillé au bureau. p. 43
474 I worked (PC) hard at the office **today**.

475 Interestingly, the interpretation of the deictic adverbials reflects the fact that the speech time
476 moves forward with the story. Between the opening sentence (18) of the novel, and sentence (19),
477 2 days have passed: the mother dies on Thursday, she is buried on Friday, and on Saturday, the
478 protagonist Meursault pronounces (19). Two more days go by before he utters (20), for he is not

⁸ Camus' novel first appeared in 1942. In this paper, we use the following editions for reference:

Camus, A., 1957. *L'étranger*, collection Folio, Gallimard.

Camus, A., 1982. *The outsider*, Penguin Books. Translated from the French by Joseph Laredo.

Camus, A., 1998. *De vreemdeling*, De Bezige Bij. Translated from the French by Adriaan Morriën.

Camus, A., 1994. *Der Fremde*, Rowolt Taschenbuch Verlag. Translated from the French by Uli Aumüller.

⁹ Strictly speaking, we should first gloss the examples, and then translate them, but with the longer examples, this would take up a lot of space. Instead, we use the official English translation of *L'étranger*, and add information about the tense use of the French example (in particular PC for Passé Composé and IMP for Imparfait).

back to work until Monday. Given that the three occurrences of *aujourd'hui* refer to three different days on the time axis, narrative progress is at least partly achieved by moving the speech time forward. Thus, the examples in (18)–(20) allow us to maintain the Reichenbachian schema E-R,S for the French Passé Composé. In contrast, the Passé Simple, the Perfective Simple Past of French is incompatible with deictic adverbials, as pointed out by Kamp and Rohrer (1983) and Landeweerd (1998).

2.2. Temporal relations between sentences in the Passé Composé

The discourse semantics for the Passé Composé in (17) above claims that in principle any temporal relation can be established between two sentences in the Passé Composé: posteriority, overlap (simultaneity, inclusion), and temporal inversion. Our corpus research confirms that all these temporal structures occur.

2.2.1. Posteriority

- (21) Il *est sorti, est revenu, a disposé* des chaises. Sur l'une d'elles, il *a empilé* des tasses autour d'une cafetière. p. 18
He went (PC) in and out, arranging chairs. On one of them he stacked (PC) some cups round a coffee-pot.
- (22) La garde *s'est levée et s'est dirigée* vers la sortie. p. 14
The nurse stood up (PC) and went (PC) towards the door.

The posteriority expressed by examples like (21) and (22) is an important argument in favor of the treatment of the Passé Composé as a Narrative tense on a par with the Passé Simple (cf. Vet, 1992, 1999). But other temporal relations are possible as well.

2.2.2. Overlap (simultaneity, inclusion)

- (23) Mais *j'ai attendu* dans la cour, sous un platane. Je respirais l'odeur de la terre fraîche et je n'avais plus sommeil. *J'ai pensé* aux collègues du bureau. p. 23
But I waited (PC) in the courtyard, under a plane tree. I breathed (IMP) in the fresh smells of the earth, and I no longer felt (IMP) sleepy. I thought (PC) of my colleagues at the office.
- (24) Aujourd'hui *j'ai beaucoup travaillé* au bureau. Le patron *a été aimable*. Il *m'a demandé* si je n'étais pas trop fatigué et il *a voulu savoir* aussi l'âge de maman. p. 43
I worked (PC) hard at the office today. My boss was (PC) kind. He asked (PC) me if I wasn't (IMP) too tired and he also wanted (PC) to know how old mother was.

In (23), the protagonist Meursault is thinking of his colleagues while he is waiting in the courtyard. In (24), *être aimable* is included in or co-temporal with *travailler beaucoup*, just like the next two occurrences of the PC.

2.2.3. Temporal inversion

Note that the observation that two sentences in the Passé Composé can describe two simultaneous events is not necessarily an argument against the treatment of the Passé Composé as

a Perfective Past tense on a par with the Passé Simple. Kamp and Rohrer (1983) give the following example to demonstrate that two sentences in the Passé Simple can also describe simultaneous events, especially if they are elaborations of the same topic:

- (25) Marie chanta. Pierre l'accompagna au piano.
Marie sang (PS). Pierre accompanied (PS) her at the piano.

However, de Saussure (1996) and Molendijk and de Swart (1999) have pointed out that the Passé Simple blocks temporal inversion. This is where we find a clear difference between the two tenses, for this restriction does not apply to the Passé Composé. (26) is an important example of temporal inversion in *L'étranger*:

- (26) *J'ai pris* l'autobus à deux heures. Il faisait très chaud. *J'ai mangé* au restaurant, chez Céleste, comme d'habitude. Ils avaient tous beaucoup de peine pour moi et Céleste m'a dit: "On n'a qu'une mère". Quand je suis parti, ils m'ont accompagné à la porte. J'étais un peu étourdi parce qu'il a fallu que je monte chez Emmanuel pour lui emprunter une cravate noire et un brassard. Il a perdu son oncle, il y a quelques mois.
J'ai couru pour ne pas manquer le départ. (..) p. 10
I caught (PC) the two o'clock bus. It was (IMP) very hot. I ate (PC) at Céleste's restaurant, as usual. They all felt (IMP) very sorry for me and Céleste told (PC) me, "There's no one like a mother". When I left (PC), they came (PC) to the door with me. I was (IMP) in a bit of a daze because I had (PC) to go up to Emmanuel's place to borrow a black tie and armband. He lost (PC) his uncle, a few months ago.
I had to run for the bus. p. 10

- (27) Nous avons tous pris du café, servi par le concierge. Ensuite, je ne sais plus. *La nuit a passé*. Je me souviens qu'à un moment *j'ai ouvert* les yeux et *j'ai vu* que les vieillards dormaient tassés sur eux-mêmes, à l'exception d'un seul qui, le menton sur le dos de ses mains agrippées à la canne, me regardait fixement comme s'il n'attendait que mon réveil. Puis *j'ai encore dormi*. Je *me suis réveillé* parce que j'avais de plus en plus mal aux reins. Le jour glissait sur la verrière. pp. 21–22
The caretaker served (PC) us all some coffee. After that I don't know what happened. The night passed (PC). I remember opening (PC) my eyes at one point and seeing (PC) all the old people slumped forward in sleep, except for one old man who had his chin resting on the back of his hands, which were clasped to his walking-stick, and who was staring (IMP) at me intently as if he were just waiting (IMP) for me to wake up. Then I slept (IMP) some more. I woke (PC) up because the pain in my back was getting worse. The dawn was creeping (IMP) up over the glass roof.

- (28) *J'ai retourné* ma chaise et je *l'ai placée* comme celle du marchand de tabac parce que *j'ai trouvé* que c'était plus commode. p. 39
I turned (PC) my chair round like the tobacconist's because I found (PC) it more comfortable that way.

The explicative structure of (28) created by *parce que* can be treated in terms of causal inversion. (27) exemplifies an Elaboration structure, where a sequence of sentences elaborates on what happens during the night that passed. Such cases are fairly hard to find for the Passé Simple

(although cf. Molendijk and de Swart, 1999 for some possibilities), but otherwise these temporal inversion structures are familiar from English (cf. Lascarides and Asher, 1993). However, the temporal structure of (26) does not rely on either causality or subordination. There is no causal relation between *j'ai pris l'autobus* and *j'ai mangé au restaurant*. An Elaboration relation is not available either. If not for the sentence *j'ai couru pour ne pas manquer le départ*, which indicates an event leading up to the event of taking the bus, we wouldn't even know we have to go back in time. The connection between *j'ai pris l'autobus* and *j'ai mangé au restaurant* is thus not established in a direct way, but indirectly, via *j'ai couru pour ne pas manquer le départ*. We come back to this example after we have introduced the mechanisms that Camus exploits to create narrative structure with the Passé Composé.

The fact that we find progress in time, temporal overlap and temporal inversion in discourses in the Passé Composé confirms our claim that the Perfect introduces a rhetorical structure of Elaboration, and that any temporal relation is compatible with the relation of Continuation between two sentences in the Passé Composé taking part in that Elaboration structure. But if the verbal form does not induce temporal structure, the question arises how Camus manages to tell a story in the Passé Composé.

2.3. Telling a story in the Passé Composé

Telling a story involves putting a sequence of events in a temporal order. Assuming that narrativity is the basic feature of story telling, we should find out how Camus creates posteriority. In some cases, the temporal order of the events is announced before they happen. Thus, after the opening sentence of the novel (quoted in (18) above), the protagonist plans his journey to the old people's home using the Future tense (Fut) in (29).

(29) Je prendrai l'autobus à deux heures et j'arriverai dans l'après-midi. Ainsi, je pourrai veiller et je rentrerai demain soir. p. 9
I'll catch (Fut) the two o'clock bus and get (Fut) there in the afternoon. Then I can Keep (Fut) the vigil and I'll come back (Fut) tomorrow night.

In the following pages, the different events are reported in the Passé Composé when they actually happen.¹⁰ Other than prefiguration, Camus exploits temporal connectives, the lexical semantics of verbs and adverbials expressing time going by, the existence of temporal presuppositions and implications, and rhetorical structure to move on the story line, as shown in de Swart and Molendijk (2002).¹¹

2.3.1. Connectives

Camus frequently uses connectives like *puis*, *ensuite*, *un moment après* in his novel, as was already observed by Weinrich (1973:268):

¹⁰ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer, who drew my attention to this pre-figuration of the sequence of events.

¹¹ As an anonymous reviewer points out, similar devices are found in narrative texts based on the alternation between the Passé Simple and the Imparfait. Within the SDRT framework, the main claim is that rhetorical devices are used in environments where the temporal semantics of the tense form is underspecified. The Passé Simple is less underspecified than the Passé Composé, so the effects are stronger in Camus than in a classical novel like Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*, but indeed, they are attested with the Passé Simple as well. Borillo et al. (2004) and Molendijk et al. (2004) discuss several aspects of this issue. However, rhetorical devices do not necessarily work the same way with different tenses. For time adverbials, this is analyzed in section 4 below.

638 (30) J'ai dit au concierge, sans me retourner vers lui: "Il y a longtemps que vous êtes là?"
 639 *Immédiatement* il a répondu: "Cinq ans"—comme s'il avait attendu depuis toujours
 640 ma demande. *Ensuite* il a beaucoup bavardé. On l'aurait bien étonné en lui disant
 641 qu'il finirait concierge à l'asile de Marengo. Il avait soixante-quatre ans et il était
 642 parisien. *A ce moment* je l'ai interrompu: "Ah! Vous n'êtes pas d'ici?" *Puis* je
 643 me suis souvenu qu'avant de me conduire chez le directeur, il m'avait parlé de
 644 maman. pp. 15-16

647 Without turning around, I said (PC) to the caretaker, 'Have you been here long?'
 648 Straight away he answered (PC), 'Five years'—as if he'd been waiting (PQP) for
 646 me to ask all the time.

650 After that he chatted (PC) a lot. He'd have been very surprised if anyone had told
 651 him he'd end up as the caretaker of the Marengo home. He was (IMP) sixty-four
 652 and he came (IMP) from Paris. At that point I interrupted (PC) him, 'Oh, you're not
 649 from round here?' Then I remembered (PC) that he'd talked to me about mother.

653 If the Passé Composé is not inherently a Narrative tense, the frequent use of connectives can be
 654 explained by the need to indicate posteriority at the discourse level. As Weinrich (1973:268) puts
 655 it, they do not locate the event in them, but they induce narration; he calls them 'Adverbien der
 657 Erzählfolge'. We can interpret this in the framework of SDRT as follows. Bras et al. (2001, 2003)
 658 argue that *puis* is a rhetorical marker that introduces a relation of Narration:
 659

660 (31) $(\langle \tau, \alpha, \beta \rangle \wedge [puis] \beta) \rightarrow \text{Narration}(\alpha, \beta)$
 661 $\text{Narration}(\alpha, \beta) \rightarrow e_\alpha \supset C (\text{post}(e_\alpha) \prod \text{pre}(e_\beta)) \supset C e_\beta$

662 In words: if we add a sentence β introduced by *puis* to an already processed text structure τ that
 663 includes α , we obligatorily (\rightarrow) posit a rhetorical relation of Narration between the two sentences
 664 α and β . According to Lascarides and Asher (1993), the rhetorical relation of Narration
 665 obligatorily (\rightarrow) leads to succession in time. The definition of Narration implies that no
 666 'relevant' event intervenes between the two events e_β and e_α . This is important, because it
 667 means that *puis* moves to the next event (in a discrete structure), not to just any later time.
 668 Connectives like *puis*, *ensuite*, *un moment après*, etc. thus move the story forward.
 669

670 2.3.2. Time goes by

671 *L'étranger* is full of expressions that mark the passing of time. We find both adverbial (32) and
 672 verbal (33) expressions that indicate time going by:

673 (32) Nous sommes restés *un long moment* ainsi. p. 20
 674 We sat (PC) like this for quite some time.

675 (33) Nous avons tous pris du café, servi par le concierge. Ensuite, je ne sais plus.
 676 *La nuit a passé*. Je me souviens qu'à un moment j'ai ouvert les yeux et (..) p. 21
 677 The caretaker served (PC) us all some coffee. After that I don't know what happened.
 678 the night passed (PC). I remember opening (PC) my eyes at one point and (...).
 679

680 Moreover, Camus frequently locates events in time by means of indications of light or heat. Thus,
 681 the day of the funeral is structured in the following way, with (...) indicating the text in between
 682 the relevant passages:

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- (34) Le jour glissait sur la verrière. (...) Quand je suis sorti, le jour était complètement levé. (..) Le soleil était monté un peu plus dans le ciel: il commençait à chauffer mes pieds. (...) Le ciel était déjà plein de soleil.(...) J'étais surpris de la rapidité avec laquelle le soleil montait dans le ciel. pp. 22-28
The dawn was creeping (IMP) up over the glass roof. (...) When I went (PC) outside, it was (IMP) broad daylight. (...) The sun had risen (PQP) a little higher in the sky: it was beginning (IMP) to warm my feet up. (...) The sun was (IMP) already high in the sky. (...) I was (IMP) surprised how rapidly the sun was climbing (IMP) in the sky.

In combination with the deictic anchoring of the story [cf. (18)-(20) above], the fact that time passes means that the story time is moved forward.

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2.3.3. *Presuppositions and implications*

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Vet (1980) establishes a distinction between transitional and non-transitional verbs. A transitional verb describes the transition between two states. Temporal presuppositions and implications can be exploited to create narrative structure. In *L'étranger*, we often find references to the spatial location of the result state:

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- (35) Je me suis levé sans rien dire et il m'a précédé vers la porte. Dans l'escalier, il m'a expliqué (...). p. 12
I stood up (PC) without saying anything and he led (PC) the way to the door.
On our way downstairs he explained (PC) (...).

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An action like *précéder quelqu'un vers la porte* (35) implies that one comes closer to the door. The adverbial *dans l'escalier* refers to a location at the other side of the door. Given that movement takes time (Asher et al., 1995), we interpret *il m'a expliqué* as later in time. The notion of temporal implication is not restricted to movement verbs, as (36) illustrates:

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- (36) La garde est entrée à ce moment. Le soir était tombé brusquement. Très vite, la nuit s'était épaissie au-dessus de la verrière. Le concierge a tourné le commutateur et j'ai été aveuglé par l'éclaboussement soudain de la lumière. p. 17
The nurse came (PC) in at that point. Night had fallen (PQP) suddenly. The sky had darkened (PQP) rapidly above the glass roof. The caretaker turned (PC) the light-switch and I was (PC) blinded by the sudden blaze of light.

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The example in (37) shows that we can also exploit temporal presuppositions of transitional verbs to create a structure of temporal succession:

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- (37) Il a consulté un dossier et m'a dit: (...). J'ai dit: (...). Il a ajouté: (...). Le directeur m'a encore parlé. p. 11
He consulted (PC) a file and told (PC) me, (...) I said (PC), (...) He added (PC), (...) The warden spoke (PC) to me again.

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Both *ajouter* and *encore* in (37) presuppose that something has been said before, so the speaking events reported in these sentences must succeed one another. Just like in the movement cases, the temporal dimension of the presupposition is exploited to create narration.

2.3.4. Rhetorical structure

We argued that the Passé Composé induces a structure of Elaboration. Because the sentences within a particular fragment are all related to the same Topic (the utterance situation), there is always a relation of Continuation between the sentences within the fragment. Continuation can be supplemented with other rhetorical relations inducing temporal structure. Thus, sentences in the Passé Composé can be related by ‘strong’ Narration, if the rhetorical relation of Occasion holds between the two clauses:

$$(38) \langle \tau, \alpha, \beta \rangle \wedge \text{Occasion}(\alpha, \beta) > \text{Narration}(\alpha, \beta) \\ \text{Narration}(\alpha, \beta) \rightarrow e_\alpha \supset \supset (\text{post}(e_\alpha) \prod \text{pre}(e_\beta)) \supset \supset e_\beta$$

Occasion implies that a sequence of sentences reporting a series of events is coherent only if this sequence reflects a ‘natural’ order of events (cf. Moens, 1988; Glasbey, 1995; Asher, 1996). World knowledge allows us to see a natural order in sequences of the type question–answer, offer–acceptance/rejection, and in more complex structures of scripts and scenarios. The relation of Occasion allows us to (non-monotonically) infer a relation of Narration between the two sentences. The non-monotonic, default inference is indicated by the symbol $>$. Once we have non-monotonically inferred Narration, we necessarily have succession in time (cf. 31 above). Examples where Camus exploits Occasion are given in (39) and (40):

- (39) *Il m’a offert alors d’apporter une tasse de café au lait. Comme j’aime beaucoup le café au lait, j’ai accepté et (...)* p. 17
 He then offered (PC) to bring me a cup of white coffee. I’m (PR) very fond of white coffee, so I accepted (PC) and (...).
- (40) Je lui ai dit: “Comment?” Il a répété en montrant le ciel: “Ça tape.” J’ai dit: “Oui.” Un peu après il m’a demandé: “C’est votre mère qui est là?” J’ai encore dit: “Oui.” “Elle était vieille?” J’ai répondu: “Comme ça” parce que je ne savais pas le chiffre exact. p. 28
 I said (PC), ‘Pardon?’ He pointed (PC) up at the sky and repeated (PC), ‘Pretty hot.’; I said (PC) ‘Yes.’ A bit later, he asked (PC), ‘Is that your mother in there?’ Again I said (PC), ‘Yes.’ ‘Was she old?’ I answered (PC), ‘Fairly’, because I didn’t know (IMP) exactly.

An offer triggers a ‘natural’ response of either acceptance or rejection (39). (40) Exemplifies turn-taking and question–answer sequences.

The relation of Occasion is a ‘local’ relation between two actions or events. At a more global level, we can use the notion of script in a similar way. Scripts and scenarios have been defined as stereotypical sequences of actions. (41) illustrates the script of getting up in the morning: waking up, getting up, shaving, etc. (42) illustrates the dinner scenario, where shopping, cooking and eating occur in a natural order:

- (41) En me réveillant, j’ai compris pourquoi mon patron avait l’air mécontent quand je lui ai demandé mes deux jours de congé: c’est aujourd’hui Samedi. (...) J’ai eu de la peine à me lever parce que j’étais fatigué de ma journée d’hier. Pendant que je me rasais, je me suis demandé ce que j’allais faire et j’ai décidé d’aller me baigner. p. 34

When I woke up, I understood (PC) why my boss seemed (IMP) unhappy when I asked (PC) him for my two days off : today's a Saturday. (...) I had (PC) trouble getting up because I was (IMP) tired from the day before. While I was shaving (IMP), I wondered (PC) what to do with myself and I decided to go for a swim.

- (42) *J'ai pensé* alors qu'il fallait dîner. J'avais un peu mal au cou d'être resté longtemps appuyé sur le dos de ma chaise. Je *suis descendu* acheter du pain et des pâtes, *j'ai fait* ma cuisine et *j'ai mangé* debout. p. 41

I thought (PC) maybe I ought (IMP) to have some dinner. I had (IMP) a bit of a neck-ache from leaning on the back of my chair for so long. I went (PC) down to buy some bread and some pasta, I did (PC) my cooking and I ate (PC) standing up.

We conclude that it is possible to tell a story in the Passé Composé, because the temporal structure of the discourse is determined by the rhetorical structure of the discourse, which in turn depends on the connectives, the lexical semantics of verbs and adverbs, and world knowledge about the 'natural' order of events, as captured by the rhetorical relation of Occasion and the more global notions of scripts and scenarios. The fact that the Passé Composé does not impose restrictions on temporal relations, is not anaphoric, and is thus not an inherently Narrative tense in the way the Passé Simple has been characterized is not a barrier for its occurrence in narrative discourse, because Camus carefully exploits these other means of creating narration.

Telling a story does not only rely on posteriority relations, but also appeals to simultaneity (overlap) and inverse temporal order. Camus does not use time adverbials to go back in time, or to indicate simultaneity or temporal overlap. Although indications of the time of the day are frequent in *L'étranger*, they are exclusively used to indicate posteriority, and never indicate temporal overlap or inversion. The same is true for transitional verbs, where presuppositions could potentially be exploited to create an inverse temporal order, but we haven't found examples. These findings confirm that posteriority is really the main feature of narration. Camus mostly exploits world knowledge and rhetorical structure to express simultaneity and temporal inversion. An important example was (26), repeated here as (43):

- (43) *J'ai pris* l'autobus à deux heures. Il faisait très chaud. *J'ai mangé* au restaurant, chez Céleste, comme d'habitude. Ils avaient tous beaucoup de peine pour moi et Céleste m'a dit: "On n'a qu'une mère". Quand je suis parti, ils m'ont accompagné à la porte. J'étais un peu étourdi parce qu'il a fallu que je monte chez Emmanuel pour lui emprunter une cravate noire et un brassard. Il a perdu son oncle, il y a quelques mois. *J'ai couru* pour ne pas manquer le départ. (..) p. 10

I caught (PC) the two o'clock bus. It was (IMP) very hot. I ate (PC) at Céleste's restaurant, as usual. They all felt (IMP) very sorry for me and Céleste told (PC) me, "There's no one like a mother". When I left (PC), they came (PC) to the door with me. I was (IMP) in a bit of a daze because I had (PC) to go up to Emmanuel's place to borrow a black tie and armband. He lost (PC) his uncle, a few months ago.

I had to run for the bus. p. 10

We infer that the lunch takes place before the protagonist takes the bus, because he had to run for the two o'clock bus. We posit a relation of Occasion between the event of running and the event of taking the bus, and capture the structure of the sequence with the following axiom:

- (44) Inverse Occasion
 $\langle \tau, \alpha, \beta \rangle \wedge \text{Occasion}(\beta, \alpha) > \text{Narration}(\beta, \alpha)$

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860 Given that Narration implies temporal succession (cf. 31), Inverse Occasion narrates events in
861 the inverse temporal order. Narration implies that no ‘relevant’ event intervenes between the
862 two events e_{β} (of running) and e_{α} (of taking the bus). This allows the story to go back in time,
863 without going back to a ‘random’ earlier time. It also means that *j’ai mangé au restaurant*
864 cannot take place in between the running and the taking the bus. It cannot be set later either,
865 because the ‘habit’ refers to Meursault’s lunch with his friends, in the town where he works,
866 rather than the village where the bus takes him. Thus, there is no other interpretation but to
867 locate the lunch before the bus ride. The rhetorical relation of Continuation between the two
868 sentences *j’ai pris l’autobus à deux heures* and *j’ai mangé au restaurant comme d’habitude*
869 creates a fairly weak rhetorical relation of Continuation that is nevertheless sufficient to
870 maintain the coherence of the fragment, because the two sentences elaborate the same topic
871 (the day of the mother’s death).

872 From a conceptual point of view, Inverse Occasion is a rather strange rhetorical relation: we
873 do not usually tell stories in reverse order. However, examples like (42) suggest that we may
874 exploit the non-anaphoric nature of the Passé Composé and our knowledge of scripts and
875 ‘natural’ orders of events to construct the intended rhetorical structure after all. The fact that the
876 English Simple Past is quite free in the construction of temporal structure, but blocks Inverse
877 Occasion suggests that Inverse Occasion could be used as a criterion for characterizing a tense as
878 narrative or not.

879 We conclude that the French Passé Composé is well on its way to become a Perfective Past
880 tense, but it is not quite there yet. Its orientation towards the speech time makes it a Non-
881 anaphoric tense, which means that it is not in essence a Narrative tense. This confirms the
882 traditional view that the Reichenbachian schema E-R,S reflects that the Perfect is not meant
883 for narration. Although the Passé Composé is not blocked in narrative contexts, it can only be
884 used to tell a story if there is a clear deictic dimension. In spoken language, the connection
885 with the speech time is always available. In written language, the connection with the speech
886 time is only available in the context of a diary. It need not come as a surprise that we learn –
887 much later in the novel – that we are reading the memories of the protagonist of the events
888 preceding his murder trial. We claim that the Passé Composé remains a Perfect as long as it
889 maintains its deictic character. It is not until we start finding the Passé Composé as the
890 standard tense of written, narrative discourse, without the special ‘diary’ flavor that comes
891 with the deictic dimension, and probably without Inverse Occasion, that it can really be
892 characterized as a Perfective Simple Past. The diachronic development of the French language
893 has not reached that stage yet.

894 3. Discourse behavior of the Perfect in French, English, Dutch and German

895 3.1. The hypothesis

896 As far as the discourse behavior of the PC is concerned, we claim that any temporal relation
897 can be established between two sentences in the PC: posteriority, overlap/inclusion, temporal
898 inversion (cf. section 2.2). The main difference with its English and Dutch counterparts is that the
899 PC does not resist narration. As a consequence, the PC is a more liberal tense form than the PP or
900 the VTT, but it makes a temporal contribution that is much weaker than that of the ‘standard’
901 literary tense, the Passé Simple.

902 Given that the Dutch VTT and the English PP block temporal relations between eventualities,
903 they are incompatible with narrative structure. The English PP is even more restricted, because it

903 does not allow locating time adverbials. The cross-linguistic analysis developed in section 1
904 above makes straightforward predictions as to the tense forms used in translations of a French
905 story told in the PC. The English translation might use an occasional PP, e.g. in a sentence which
906 connects the events being told to the time of the telling of the story. But in general the SP will be
907 used to translate the PC, for the PP resists narration. The Dutch translation will use some VTTs,
908 especially in contexts which emphasize the deictic character of the French PC. The use of the
909 OVT is required in more narrative parts, where a sequence of events is related in a rhetorical
910 structure. If the German Perfekt is not subject to discursual constraints, and has basically the
911 same discourse semantics as the French Passé Composé, it should be the preferred translation of
912 the PC forms throughout. Präteritum forms may be used for the translation of Imparfait
913 sentences, that describe unbounded events, processes or states. These predictions are confirmed
914 by the Dutch, English and German translations that we have studied. In the following sections,
915 this will be worked out.
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3.2. Deictic adverbials and the Perfect

917 From observations made by de Swart and Molendijk (2002), we know that *L'étranger* contains
918 quite a few deictic adverbials of the type *aujourd'hui*, *hier*, etc., which confirm the claim that the
919 perspective of the PC is located at the speech time. Given that the French PC, the Dutch VTT and
920 the German Perfekt can establish temporal relations with other times, but the English PP cannot,
921 we predict that the Dutch and German translators maintains the Perfect construction when the
922 sentence contains a deictic adverbial, but the English translator does not. This prediction is
923 verified by the translations examined. The order of presentation of all the examples under
924 discussion in this section is: French original in (a), English translation in (b), Dutch translation in
925 (c), German translation in (d).

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928 (45) a. **Aujourd'hui**, maman est morte (PC). Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas (PR). J'ai
929 reçu un télégramme de l'asile (PC): (...) p. 9
930 b. Mother died **today** (SP). Or maybe yesterday, I don't know (PR). I had a telegram
931 from the home (SP): (...) p. 9
932 c. **Vandaag** is moeder gestorven (VTT). Of misschien gisteren, ik weet het niet (OTT).
933 Ik ontving een telegram uit het gesticht (OVT): (...) p. 63
934 d. **Heute** ist Mama gestorben (Perf). Vielleicht auch gestern, ich weiß (Präs) nicht.
935 I habe ein Telegramm von Heim bekommen (Perf). p. 7
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937 (45a) illustrates that the French PC is compatible with a deictic adverbial like *aujourd'hui*. The
938 English PP sometimes allows a deictic adverbial, but the time span needs to be shorter than a day,
939 so *today* requires the use of the SP in (45b). The Dutch VTT is compatible with the deictic
940 adverbial *vandaag*, so this makes it possible to have a translation that remains closer to the French
941 original. The alternation between PC and Présent in (45a) emphasizes the connection with the
942 moment of speech, and confirms that the perspective of the PC remains in the present. In the
943 English translation (45b) the alternation between SP and Present seems to indicate switching
944 perspectives. Although the opening sentence of the Dutch translation (45c) is in the VTT, which
945 is followed by a sentence in the Onvoltooid Tegenwoordige Tijd (OTT), the third sentence is in
946 the OVT, the standard Narrative Past tense in Dutch. The German translation in (45d) maintains
947 the Perfekt in both sentences. One of the few examples where we find a Present Perfect in the
948 English translation is given in (46):

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- (46) a. Ici le directeur a souri (PC). Il m'a dit (PC): (...) Et le fait est (PR) que la mort de Mme Meursault l'a beaucoup affecté (PC). (...) p. 24
b. Here the warden smiled (SP). He said (SP), (...) And the fact is (PR) that Mrs Meursault's death has affected (PP) him very badly. p. 18
c. Bij het noemen van die naam glimlachte (OVT) de directeur. Hij zei (OVT): (...) En het is (PR) een feit dat de dood van mevrouw Meursault hem erg heeft aangegrepen (VTT). p. 73
d. Hier hat der Heimleiter gelächelt (Perf). Er hat gesagt (Perf): (...) Und tatsächlich ist ihm Madame Meursaults Tod sehr nahegegangen (Perf). p. 19

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Usually, the PC in the French original is translated by means of the Simple Past in English. But the last sentence of the fragment in (46) is an exception. The construction *le fait est que* directly relates the event in the embedded clause to the speech time, and no temporal or rhetorical relations are established with events in the surrounding discourse. In such a case, the use of the Present Perfect is entirely appropriate in English, and fits in with the semantic rules proposed in section 1 above. For the same reasons, the Dutch VTT and the German Perfekt in (46c) and (46d) are equally good translations of the PC.

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3.3. Maintaining the aspectual nature of the original

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Camus uses the PC to report quantized events that took place in the past, or bounded states and processes. This use fits the view of the aspectual nature of the Perfect sketched in section 1.2 above. Open ended states and processes are reported in the IMP. (47a) and (48a) illustrate the standard alternation between PC and IMP in *L'étranger*:

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- (47) a. (...) j'ai regardé l'informière (PC) et j'ai vu (PC) qu'elle portait (IMP) sous les yeux un bandeau qui faisait le tour de la tête (IMP). A la hauteur du nez, le bandeau était plat (IMP). p. 15
b. (...) so I looked at the nurse (SP) and saw (SP) that she had a bandage round her head just below the eyes (SP). Where her nose should have been (COND), the bandage was flat (SP). p. 12
c. Omdat ik hem niet begreep (OVT) keek ik naar de verpleegster (OVT) en zag dat zij onder haar ogen een verband droeg (OVT), dat om haar hoofd was geknoopt (OVT). Ter hoogte van de neux was het verband vlak (OVT). Van haar gezicht was alleen maar dat witte verband te zien (OVT). p. 66/67
d. Weil ich nicht verstand (Prät), habe ich die Krankenschwester angeschaut (Perf) und habe gesehen (Perf), daß sie unter den Augen eine Binde trug (Prät), die um den ganzen Kopf ging (Prät). In Höhe der Nase war (Prät) die Binde platt. Man sah (Prät) nur das Weiß der Binde in ihrem Gesicht. p. 11
- (48) a. Je me suis réveillé (PC) parce que j'avais (IMP) de plus en plus mal aux reins. Le jour glissait (IMP) sur la verrière. pp. 21–22
b. I woke (SP) up because the pain in my back was getting (PPROG) worse. The dawn was creeping (PPROG) up over the glass roof. p. 17
c. Ik werd (OVT) wakker omdat mijn lendenen hoe langer hoe meer pijn begonnen (OVT) te doen. De dag schampte (OVT) langs het glazen dak. p. 71
d. Ich bin aufgewacht (Perf), weil mein Kreuz immer mehr schmerzte (Prät). Über dem Glasdach wurde (Prät) es hell. p. 17

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1029 The aspectual alternation between PC and IMP has a partial translation in the contrast between
1030 the English Simple Past and the Past Progressive (PProg) (48b). However, it has no translation in
1031 Dutch, where we always find the OVT, the Simple Past tense (47c and 48c). The German
1032 translation mirrors the PC/IMP alternation in the Perfekt/Präteritum alternation (47d, 48d).

1033 The aspectual alternation between PC and IMP is partially translated into English by means of
1034 the opposition between Simple Past and Past Progressive. We see an example in (48b), where the
1035 PC of the French original is translated with the Simple Past, and the two IMP sentences with the
1036 Past Progressive. However, the correspondence only works as long as the verbs in question are
1037 non-stative, that is, processlike or eventlike. Backgrounded states can be reported in the IMP in
1038 French, but the Progressive only applies to non-stative verbs, so they will be translated by means
1039 of the Simple Past (cf. 47b: *had* and *was*). If we assume with de Swart (1998) that the Simple Past
1040 is aspectually transparent, we can let lexical aspect do the work in those cases: the default
1041 interpretation of a stative sentence in the Simple Past is that of an unbounded state. Again,
1042 contextual reinterpretation can be triggered by rhetorical structure if necessary (cf. de Swart and
1043 Molendijk, 1999).

1044 Dutch does not have a grammaticalized Progressive (cf. de Swart, 2003), and neither does
1045 German. Instead of grammatical aspect, Dutch and German typically uses “lexical” aspect to
1046 convey the effect of the PC/IMP: sentences in the PC reflect quantized events, and are typically
1047 translated by dynamic, active, eventlike verbs; sentences in the IMP report unbounded states and
1048 processes, and are typically translated by stative, passive or processlike verb.¹² An eventlike verb
1049 can get an Imperfective or Progressive interpretation in the right context. We see this with
1050 *schampte* in (48c) and *wurde hell* in (48d) as the translation of *glissait*. Boogaart (1999) argues
1051 that the Dutch OVT can have both a Perfective and an Imperfective construction. In the
1052 framework developed by de Swart (1998) and de Swart and Molendijk (1999), we would rather
1053 say that the tense is aspectually transparent, in the sense that it lets the lexical aspect “shine
1054 through”, but that contextual reinterpretation can be triggered by rhetorical structure. The data in
1055 (47) and (48) suggest that this analysis extends to the German Präteritum. If the context makes it
1056 clear that an event needs to be presented as unbounded, or that a stative or process sentence gets a
1057 bounded or inchoative interpretation, we insert a coercion operator to satisfy the aspectual
1058 requirement on the rhetorical relation.

1059 A further complication for the English translator is that the French Imparfait can have a
1060 habitual interpretation, whereas this is not the case for the English Progressive. Habitual
1061 Imparfaites in *L'étranger* are regularly translated by the construction *used to* (49b) or by the
1062 Simple Past, sometimes in combination with a quantificational adverb like *often* or *usually* (50b).
1063 Given that Dutch does not have a construction comparable to *used to*, it uses the OVT in all cases.
1064 The German Präteritum is used to translate the habitual use of the Imparfait in (49d, 50d), just
1065 like in Dutch. Unlike the Dutch translation, the German translation maintains the alternation of
the French original, because the Passé Composé translates as the Perfekt.

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1067 (49) a. Ici le directeur a souri (PC). Il m'a dit (PC): « Vous comprenez (PR), c'est (PR)
1068 un sentiment un peu puéril. Mais lui et votre mère ne se quittaient (IMP) guère.
1069 A l'asile, on les plaisantait (IMP), on disait (IMP) à Pérez: « C'est (PR) votre
1070 fiancée. » Lui riait (IMP). Ça leur faisait (IMP) plaisir. p. 24
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1074 ¹² Strictly speaking, situation type is not lexical, but is determined at the level of predicate-argument structure, as was
1075 first observed by Verkuyl (1972). For the purposes of this paper, the simplification is harmless.

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- b. Here the warden smiled (SP). He said (SP), ‘I know it’s rather childish. But he and your mother were (SP) almost inseparable. Here at the home they used to (USED TO) tease them and tell Pérez, “She is (PR) your fiancée.” He used to (USED TO) laugh. They enjoyed (SP) it. p. 18
- c. Bij het noemen van die naam glimlachte (OVT) de directeur. Hij zei (OVT): ‘Het is (OTT) natuurlijk maar kinderspel. Maar hij en uw moeder waren (OVT) bijna altijd bij elkaar. In het gesticht plaagde (OVT) men hen, men zei (OVT) tegen Pérez: ‘Daar is (OTT) je verloofde.’ En dan lachte (OVT) hij. Daar hadden (OVT) ze plezier in. p. 73
- d. Hier hat der Heimleiter gelächelt (Perf). Er hat gesagt (Perf): ‘Sie müssen wissen, es ist ein etwas kindisches Gefühl. Aber er und Ihre Mutter waren (Prät) fast unzertrennlich. Im Heim hat man sie geneckt (Perf), man sagte (Prät) zu Pérez : ‘Das ist Ihre Braut.’ Er lachte (Prät). Das machte (Prät) ihnen Spaß. p. 19
- (50) a. En principe, les pensionnaires ne devaient (IMP) pas assister aux enterrements. Il les laissait (IMP) seulement veiller. p. 24
- b. Usually the inmates weren’t (SP) allowed to attend funerals. He only let (SP) them keep the vigil. p. 18
- c. In beginsel mochten (OVT) de verpleegden de begrafenis niet bijwonen. Hij liet (OVT) hen alleen waken. p. 72
- d. Im Prinzip dürften die Heimbewohner nicht an den Beerdigungen teilnehmen (Prät). Er ließe sie nur die Totenwache halten (Prät). p. 18

The examples in (45)–(50) represent the default case in which the French original uses an eventlike or bounded predicate in the PC and a state/process/habit in the IMP. The English translation achieves the same result by a combination of lexical semantics and grammatical means such as the Progressive and the *used to* construction. The Dutch translation appeals to lexical semantics in all cases where it can only use the OVT. In the German translation, the alternation between Perfekt and Präteritum mirrors the event/state contrast.

In cases where the French original obtains the quantized effect of the sentence in the PC by means of coercion of an inherently homogeneous predicate (a state or a process), the English and Dutch translators are faced with a problem. If the English SP is indeed aspectually transparent, it cannot be a trigger for coercion. de Swart (1998, 2003) argues that coercion does not apply at random, but must be triggered by a lexical or grammatical operator. So in the absence of a counterpart to the PC, English has to adopt a different strategy. One option for the English translator is to create the quantized effect by using a time adverbial that imposes boundaries on the homogeneous state/process. This strategy is close to the original PC, the only difference being that the PC implicitly imposes boundaries, whereas the time adverbial makes them explicit. The following example illustrates this translation strategy:

- (51) a. Nous avons tous pris du café, servi par le concierge (PC). Ensuite, je ne sais plus (PR). La nuit a passé (PC). Je me souviens (PC) qu’à un certain moment j’ai ouvert les yeux (PC) et j’ai vu (PC) que les vieillards dormaient (IMP) (...). Puis j’ai encore dormi (PC). p. 21
- b. The caretaker served us all some coffee (SP). After that I don’t know (PR) what happened (SP). The night passed (SP). I remember (PR) opening my eyes at one point and seeing all the old people slumped forward in sleep (SP) (...). Then I slept some more (SP). p. 17

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- c. Wij dronken allen koffie (OVT) die door de conciërge was rondgediend (OVT). Van hetgeen daarna gebeurde (OVT) weet ik niets meer (OTT). De nacht ging voorbij (OVT). Ik herinner mij (OVT) dat ik op een gegeven ogenblik mijn ogen opendeed (OVT) en zag (OVT) dat de oude mensen sliepen (OVT) (...). Daarna heb ik weer geslapen (VTT). p. 71
- d. Wir haben alle den vom Pforter ausgeschenkten Kaffee getrunken (Perf). Was dann war (Prät), weiß (Präs) ich nicht mehr. Die Nacht verging (Prät). Ich erinnere mich (Präs), dass ich irgendetwas die Augen aufgemacht habe (Perf) und gesehen habe (Perf) dass die alten Leute in sich zusammengesunken schliefen (Prät) (...). Dann habe ich wieder geschlafen (Perf). p. 16/7

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The SP form *slept* would have an unbounded character, and is therefore not appropriate as the translation of a sentence in the PC. A Simple Past is not impossible if we use adverbials to indicate the bounded character of the nap, as in (51b): *Then I slept some more*. The Dutch and German translations maintain the quantized character of the French original by the use of the VTT and the Perfekt (51c, d). Obviously, this option is not available to the English translator.

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As an alternative, the English translator can look for a dynamic verb which conveys roughly the same meaning as the coerced state/process in the French original. This strategy typically leads to a somewhat more liberal translation, as illustrated in (52):

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- (52) a. L'asile est à deux kilomètres du village (PR). J'ai fait le chemin à pied (PC). J'ai voulu voir maman tout de suite (PC). Mais le concierge m'a dit qu'il fallait que je rencontre le directeur (PC). Comme il était occupé (IMP), j'ai attendu un peu (PC). Pendant tout ce temps, le concierge a parlé (PC) et ensuite, j'ai vu le directeur (PC): il m'a reçu dans son bureau (PC). C'est un petit vieux, avec la Légion d'honneur (PR). (...) p. 11
- b. The home is just over a mile from the village (PR). I walked it (SP). I wanted to see mother straight away (SP). But the caretaker told me I had to meet the warden (SP). He was busy (SP), so I waited a bit (SP). The caretaker talked the whole time (SP) and then he showed me into the warden's office (SP). He was a small, elderly man with the Legion of Honour (SP). (...) p. 10
- c. Het gesticht ligt twee kilometer buiten het dorp (OTT). Ik ben er te voet heengegaan (VTT). Ik wilde moeder meteen zien (OVT). Maar de conciërge zei mij dat ik mij eerst bij de directeur moest melden (OVT). Omdat hij bezet was (OVT) moest ik even wachten (OVT). Al die tijd bleef de conciërge praten (OVT), en daarna ben ik bij de directeur geweest (VTT); hij ontving mij in zijn kantoor (OVT). Het is een kleine oude man, met het legioen van eer in zijn knoopsgat (OTT). (...) p. 64
- d. Das Heim ist (Präs) zwei Kilometer vom Dorf entfernt. Ich bin zu Fuß hingegangen (Perf). Ich wollte (Prät) sofort zu Mama. Aber der Pfortner hat gesagt (Perf), ich müßte erst den Heimleiter sprechen. Da der beschäftigt war (Prät), habe ich ein wenig gewartet (Perf). Während dieser ganzen Zeit hat der Pfortner geredet (Perf), und dann habe ich den Heimleiter zu Gesicht bekommen (Perf): er hat mich in seinem Büro empfangen (Perf). Es war (Prät) ein kleiner Alter, mit einem Orden der Ehrenlegion. p. 8

The most literal translation of *il m'a reçu dans son bureau* (52a) would be something like *he received me in his office*. However, the translator opts for a clearly dynamic and quantized verb: *he showed me into the warden's office* (52b).

In principle, the Dutch translator has the same possibilities as the English translator when faced with a sentence in the PC that owes its quantized character to coercion. In practice, we frequently find a switch to the VTT in such cases. In (51) and (52) the choice of the Dutch translator for the VTT in the middle of a series of OVTs is clearly motivated by an attempt to maintain the bounded event character of the French original. Where the English translator in (51b) inserts a bounding time adverbial to reflect the quantized character of the sentence, the Dutch translator switches to the VTT after a series of OVTs: *Daarna heb ik weer geslapen* (51c). The OVT form *sliep* would describe an unbounded process, but the Perfect imposes boundaries on this process, just like the PC does in the French original, and the Perfekt in the German translation. The case of *en daarna ben ik bij de directeur geweest* in (52c) works in the same way. The translator uses a stative verb, namely *zijn* ('to be'). But a sentence with *zijn* in the OVT reports an unbounded state that holds at some point in time in the past. The VTT allows the translator to give the state a bounded character, just like its French counterpart *j'ai vu le directeur* (52a), and the German Perfekt in (52d). For the Dutch translator, the occasional switch to the VTT helps to capture the contextual meaning effect.

It seems that the occasional VTT in Dutch plays a double role. On the one hand, as we have just seen, the Dutch VTT emphasizes the bounded character of the eventuality, and provides a translation that remains as close as possible to the French original. On the other hand, the VTT maintains contact with the speech time, just like the French original, even though the whole story cannot be told in the VTT. This is particularly clear in (52). The French original (52a) displays an alternation between PC (for the main events happening), IMP (for background and statives) and PR (for statements which are still true at the moment the protagonist relates the story). The English translation (52b) translates all PCs and IMPs with SPs. Out of the two sentences in the PR in the French original, one is translated with a Present, and the other one with a (stative) SP. The first one, the first sentence of the new paragraph provides general information about the geographical location of the home, and is translated with a PR. The second one, the description of the warden, is related in the PR in French, but is translated with a (stative) SP in English. The choice for a sequence of tense ("consecutio temporum") construction rather than a Present implies that the translator maintains the perspective of the storyline, and the warden does not really come "alive" outside the context of the story. As a result, the atmosphere of the novel is quite changed: the series of events becomes "just a story" instead of the alienating, disconnected set of events it is in the French original. The Dutch translation (52c) tries to steer a middle course between the French original and the English text. The sequence of OVTs tends to establish a narrative storyline, but this storyline is broken at regular intervals by a switch of the perspective back to the present, by means of either the OTT or the VTT. Thus the disconnectedness of the source text is much more respected. The German translation of the PC *j'ai voulu* by the Präteritum *wollte*, and of the Présent *c'est* by the Präteritum *war* in (52d) creates more narrative structure in the translation than in the original. We have no explanation for this, and take it to be the translator's choice for this particular example.

3.4. Temporal structure in the original and in the translation

The switch between OVT and VTT leads the Dutch translator to make parts of the temporal structure explicit which remain hidden in the French original. A prime example is the temporal inversion case in (26), repeated here as (53a):

(53) a. J'ai pris l'autobus à deux heures (PC). Il faisait très chaud (IMP). J'ai mangé au restaurant, chez Céleste, comme d'habitude (PC). Ils avaient tous beaucoup de peine pour moi (IMP) et Céleste m'a dit (PC): "On n'a qu'une mère" (PR). Quand je suis parti (PC), ils m'ont accompagnés à la porte (PC). J'étais un peu étourdi (IMP) parce qu'il a fallu (PC) que je monte chez Emmanuel pour lui emprunter une cravate noire et un brassard. Il a perdu son oncle, il y a quelques mois (PC).

J'ai couru pour ne pas manquer le départ (PC). p. 10

b. I caught the two o'clock bus (SP). It was very hot (SP). I ate at Céleste's restaurant, as usual (SP). They all felt very sorry for me (SP) and Céleste told me (SP), "There's no one like a mother" (PR). When I left (SP), they came to the door with me (SP). I was in a bit of a daze (SP) because I had to go up to Emmanuel's place to borrow a black tie and armband (SP). He lost his uncle, a few months ago (SP).

I had to run for the bus. p. 10

c. Ik heb de autobus van twee uur genomen (VTT). Het was erg warm (OVT). Ik heb in het restaurant, bij Céleste, gegeten zoals gewoonlijk (VTT). Zij hadden allen erg met mij te doen (OVT), en Celeste zei tegen mij (OVT): "Je hebt maar één moeder". Toen ik wegging (OVT) brachten ze mij tot aan de deur (OVT). Ik was een beetje versuft (OVT), omdat ik bij Emmanuel een zwarte das en een rouwband moest gaan lenen (OVT). Hij heeft zijn oom een paar maanden geleden verloren (VTT).

Ik zette het op een lopen om de bus niet te missen (OVT). p. 64

d. Ich habe den Bus um zwei genommen (Perf). Es war sehr heiß. Ich habe im Restaurant von Céleste gegessen (Perf), wie gewöhnlich. Sie hatten (Prät) alle viel Mitgefühl mit mir, und Céleste hat gesagt (Perf): 'Man hat nur eine Mutter.' Als ich gegangen bin (Perf), haben sie mich zur Tür begleitet (Perf). Ich war (Prät) etwas abgelenkt, weil ich noch zu Emmanuel hinauf mußte (Prät), um mir einen schwarzen Schlips und eine Trauerbinde von ihm zu borgen. Er hat vor ein paar Monaten seinen Onkel verloren (Perf).

Ich bin gelaufen (Perf), um den Bus nicht zu verpassen. p. 7/8

As we have shown in section 2 above, this fragment is interesting, because it illustrates that the French Passé Composé is compatible with temporal inversion in the absence of causal structure or a structure of elaboration. In fact, the fragment contains two cases of temporal inversion: the lunch in the restaurant precedes the event of taking the bus, and Emmanuel's loss of his uncle precedes the events in the restaurant. In the Dutch translation (53c), the VTT is used in both cases to "flag" the change in temporal structure, whereas the intervening sentences use the narrative OVT. As a result, the event of eating in the restaurant is not connected to the taking of the bus in a narrative sequence, and the reader will have to calculate their temporal connection by other means (in this case: world knowledge that lunch is earlier than two o'clock, and the Inverse Occasion relation between running for the bus and the event of taking the bus). In the second case, the deictic adverbial *een paar maanden geleden* triggers the VTT, and allows us to calculate the time of the loss from the utterance time, rather than from the previous event. The alternation between VTT and OVT makes the change in temporal structure (from non-sequence to narration, back to non-sequence) explicit in a way that the French original does not, because it uses the PC throughout. As a result, the translator captures the temporal structure, but not the "confused" presentation of the sequence of events in the French original. The gain in clarity correlates with a loss of literary effect, but the translator carefully exploits the possibilities of the Dutch tense system.

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1300 **Lascarides and Asher (1993)** argue that the English Simple Past licenses temporal inversion
1301 only if there is a causal connection between the two events. General world knowledge does not
1302 establish a causal connection between catching the bus and eating in a restaurant, so an inverted
1303 reading should not be allowed here. At this point the question arises whether **Lascarides and Asher**
1304 **(1993)** are on the wrong track, or the translation fails. When I showed the fragment to a native
1305 speaker (and a professional translator), he indicated that the protagonist must have eaten after the
1306 bus ride. When I pointed to the first sentence of the next paragraph, he suggested that it was another
1307 bus. When I explained the meaning of the French original, he insisted that such a reading was not
1308 available in the English version. We may conclude that the first temporal inversion is not very
1309 obvious in the English translation. A Pluperfect might have worked better in this context, but we can
1310 hardly blame the translator given that he is severely restricted by the English tense system. As far as
1311 the loss of the uncle is concerned, we obtain the intended temporal inversion because of the
1312 presence of the time adverbial *a few months ago*. **de Swart (1999)** argues that locating time adverbials
1313 can be anchored anywhere on the time axis, and are not necessarily later in time than the last
1314 event of the discourse (as **Kamp and Reyle, 1993** assume). This feature of locating time adverbials is
1315 clearly exploited by the English translator to obtain the intended temporal inversion structure.

1316 The German translation mirrors the PC/IMP alternation in the Perfekt/Präteritum contrast, and
1317 remains as close as possible to the (deliberately) incoherent story telling of the original. The fact
1318 that Inverse Occasion is possible for the Perfekt suggests that the German Perfect has
1319 approximately the same discourse semantics as the French PC.

1320 3.5. Conclusion

1321 We conclude that the contrastive analysis of the Perfect in combination with the aspectual
1322 analysis of the Perfect makes the correct predictions for the translation of *L'étranger* into Dutch,
1323 German and English. The English translation makes exclusive use of the Simple Past, and uses
1324 the transparency of this tense as a way to account for the PC/IMP alternation in the French
1325 original. In cases where the French sentence in the PC owes its quantized character to coercion,
1326 the English translator uses bounding time adverbials or a more dynamic, eventlike verb to obtain
1327 the quantized meaning effect. The Dutch translator has the same two possibilities, but in addition
1328 he can opt for a switch to the VTT in the middle of a series of OVTs. Even though the restrictions
1329 on the narrative use of the Dutch VTT make it impossible to tell the whole story in the VTT, the
1330 occasional VTT preserved the quantized character of the Perfect, and is exploited by the
1331 translator for cases in which coercion of a stative/processlike verb is required. At a more global
1332 level, the occasional VTT allows the Dutch translator to preserve the fragmented character of the
1333 original story much more than the English translation, which tells us “just a story” in the simple
1334 past. The German translator adopts the discourse semantics proposed for the PC, and proposes an
1335 almost perfect mirroring of the PC/IMP contrast in the Perfekt/Präteritum alternation. The study
1336 of this text weakens **Löbner's (2002)** conclusion that the German Perfekt has developed into a
1337 Past tense that has both Perfective and Imperfective interpretations at the discourse level. At least
1338 in the variety of German used by the translator of Camus, this is not the case: all instances of the
1339 French Imparfait are translated by means of a Präteritum. However, my informants in southern
1340 Germany (Konstanz) pointed out that most if not all of the Präteritum forms used by the translator
1341 could just as well have been Perfekt forms. If dialectal variation is involved, my findings are not
1342 incompatible with **Löbner's** data. However, I had only one (published) German translation of
1343 *L'étranger*, so I could not control for dialectal differences. A more fine-grained study of discourse
1344 use of the Perfekt is required to evaluate the situation across stricter and more liberal varieties of

German. At least the findings reported here confirm the sentential and discourse semantic rules we proposed for the Perfect in the four languages under discussion in section 1.

4. Time adverbials in translation

4.1. The hypothesis

As pointed out in section 2 above, the claim that the French PC is not a Narrative tense, even though it does not resist narration means that temporal structure is not induced by the verb, but comes from the lexical semantics of the expressions used, from the rhetorical structure of the text, and from world knowledge. One of the linguistic means exploited by Camus is the use of time adverbials that indicate progress in time (*puis, ensuite, un moment après*). The German translation is close enough to the French original that we do not expect to find relevant differences. Indeed, we did not find any, and so we skip the German examples in this section. Given that the English translation makes exclusive use of the SP, and the Dutch one predominantly uses the OVT, we might expect the English and Dutch translations to make less use of means that impose temporal structure, such as time adverbials, because the SP and the OVT are the normal Narrative tenses of the language, and wouldn't need support from other mechanisms to move time forward. This prediction was not borne out by the translations examined, and we discuss our findings here.

4.2. Presence/absence of time adverbials in French, English and Dutch

In the overwhelming majority of the cases, the time adverbial is simply translated, both in English and in Dutch. An example is given in (54):

- (54) a. Comme il était occupé, j'ai attendu un peu. Pendant tout ce temps, le concierge a parlé et **ensuite**, j'ai vu le directeur: il m'a reçu dans son bureau. C'est un petit vieux, avec la Légion d'honneur. Il m'a regardé de ses yeux clairs. **Puis** il m'a serré la main qu'il a gardée si longtemps que je ne savais trop comment la retirer. p. 11
- b. He was busy, so I waited a bit. The caretaker talked the whole time and **then** he showed me into the warden's office. He was a small, elderly man with the Legion of Honour. He looked at me with his bright eyes. **Then** he shook my hand and held it for so long that I didn't quite know how to take it back again. p. 10
- c. Omdat hij bezet was moest ik even wachten. Al die tijd bleef de concierge praten, en **daarna** ben ik bij de directeur geweest; hij ontving mij in zijn kantoor. Het is een kleine oude man, met het legioen van eer in zijn knoops gat. Hij zag mij met zijn heldere ogen aan. **Daarna** schudde hij mij de hand, die hij zo lang vasthield dat ik niet meer wist hoe ik haar terug moest trekken. p. 64

In a very small number of cases, the time adverbial in the French original is not translated in the Dutch or the English text. An example of each case is given in (55) and (56):

- (55) a. La garde s'est levée et s'est dirigée vers la sortie. **A ce moment**, le concierge m'a dit: (...) p. 14
- b. The nurse stood up and went towards the door. **At that point** the caretaker said to me, (...) p. 12
- c. De verpleegster stond op en begaf zich naar de deur. De concierge zei: (...) p. 66

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- (56) a. **Peu après**, avec les tramways plus rares et la nuit déjà noire au-dessus des arbres et des lampes, le quartier s'est vidé insensiblement, jusqu'à ce que le premier chat traverse lentement la rue de nouveau déserte. J'ai pensé **alors** qu'il fallait dîner. p. 41
- b. **Soon afterwards**, as the trams became fewer and the sky blackened above the trees and the lamps, the people gradually disappeared, until the street was deserted again and the first cat walked slowly across it. I thought maybe I ought to have some dinner. p. 28
- c. **Kort daarna**, toen er minder trams reden en de nacht reeds donker boven de bomen en de lantarens hing, werd het in te buurt onmerkbaar leger, totdat de eerste kat langzaam de opnieuw verlaten straat overstak. Ik dacht **toen** dat het tijd werd om te gaan eten. p. 83

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However, these cases are rare, and we did not find any examples where the Dutch and the English translator left out the same time adverbial of the original. We take this to be sufficient proof that there is no systematic dropping of time adverbials, and cannot conclude that the translator leaves out the time adverbial because the Dutch or English tense system does not require it. What seems even more strange is that we find cases where the translator inserts a time adverbial that was not there in the French original. Examples are in (57) through (59):

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- (57) a. Il m'a regardé de ses yeux clairs. **Puis** il m'a serré la main qu'il a gardée si longtemps que je ne savais trop comment la retirer. Il a consulté un dossier et m'a dit: (...) p. 11
- b. He looked at me with his bright eyes. **Then** he shook my hand and held it for so long that I didn't quite know how to take it back again. He consulted a file and (..) p. 10
- c. Hij zag mij met zijn heldere ogen aan. **Daarna** schudde hij mij de hand, die hij zo lang vasthield dat ik niet meer wist hoe ik haar terug moest trekken. **Vervolgens** keek hij in een map en zei: (...). p. 64
- (58) a. Nous sommes restés silencieux assez longtemps. Le directeur s'est levé et a regardé par la fenêtre de son bureau. p. 24
- b. We sat in silence for quite a long time. **Then** the warden got up and looked out of the office window. p. 18
- c. Een tamelijk lange poos bleven wij zitten zonder iets te zeggen. **Daarna** stond de directeur op en keek door het raam van zijn werkkamer. p. 73
- (59) a. Quand nous sommes arrivés, le prêtre s'est relevé. Il m'a appelé "mon fils" et m'a dit quelques mots. Il est entré; je l'ai suivi. p. 25
- b. As we approached, the priest straightened up. He said a few words to me, addressing me as "my son". He went inside; I followed. p. 19
- c. Toen wij er aankwamen richtte de pastoor zich op. Hij zei "mijn jongen" tegen mij en sprak enkele woorden tegen mij. **Daarna** ging hij naar binnen en ik volgde hem. p. 73

We conclude that there is no evidence for our hypothesis that English and Dutch use fewer time adverbials because the narrative force of the SP and the OVT is stronger than that of the PC. There are several ways in which we can explain these findings.

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1472 One straightforward explanation of the facts is that our initial hypothesis about the PC was
1473 wrong. If the narrative force of the PC is not substantially weaker than that of the SP or the OVT,
1474 there is no reason to expect time adverbials that played a role in the French original to disappear in
1475 the Dutch and English translation. However, that would mean we lose all the insights from the cross-
1476 linguistic discourse analysis of section 3. So for the time being, we reject this explanation in an
1477 effort to maintain the results obtained so far. But we recognize that the issue of the time adverbials is
1478 a serious threat to our analysis.

1479 We can try to explain the problem away by blaming the translator for staying too close to the
1480 French original. By maintaining all the time adverbials, he or she would not respect the rules for the
1481 temporal structure of the discourse associated with the English SP and the Dutch OVT. Although
1482 this is a possibility that cannot be totally excluded, we do not like this explanation any better than the
1483 first one. One reason is that neither the Dutch nor the English translation gives us the impression of
1484 being “bad” or lacking “fluency”. Although the differences in the tense system make that the
1485 English and Dutch texts reflect a slightly different atmosphere than the French original, native
1486 speakers don’t experience the texts as artificial or badly phrased. For the time being then, we also
1487 reject this hypothesis. Note that, in a weaker form, this hypothesis criticizes our methodology of
1488 developing a contrastive analysis on the basis of translations. This point is well taken, and ideally
1489 our study should be complemented with translations of Dutch or English texts into the French PC
1490 and with other types of comparative corpus studies of the actual use of time adverbials at the
1491 discourse level in the three languages. However, these results are not available as yet.

1492 The third and most subtle explanation of our findings is the one we will explore in more detail
1493 in section 4.3. We suggest that time adverbials are necessary, or at least useful in all three
1494 languages, but they play a different role in each of the languages at hand, because the interaction
1495 of the time adverbial with the tense system is a specific one in each language. Accordingly, the
1496 translator preserves the time adverbial in the source text to create an equivalent, but maybe
1497 slightly different temporal structure in the target text, and may even feel the need to insert a time
1498 adverbial where there was none in the original.

1499 4.3. *Differentiation in the role of time adverbials*

1500 We find roughly three instantiations of the hypothesis that time adverbials can play different
1501 roles in English/Dutch from the one they play in French on the basis of our corpus.

1502 4.3.1. *Distance in time*

1503 In the first case, the time adverbial is in principle indispensable in the French original, and
1504 dispensable in the Dutch or English translation, but the presence of the time adverbial underlines the
1505 distance in time between the two events. This allows the translator to maintain as much as possible
1506 the fragmented, disconnected series of events that characterizes the French original. The following
is an example:

- 1508 (60) a. Le concierge s’est penché vers elle, lui a parlé, mais elle a secoué la tête, a
1509 bredouillé quelque chose, et a continué de pleurer avec la même régularité. Le
1510 concierge est venu **alors** de mon côté. Il s’est assis près de moi. **Après un assez**
1511 **long moment**, il m’a renseigné sans me regarder: (...) p. 20
1512 b. The caretaker leant over and spoke to her, but she shook her head, mumbled
1513 something and went on sobbing with the same regularity as before. The caretaker
1514 **then** moved around to my side and sat down next to me. He was silent for quite
1515 a long time. **Then**, without looking at me, he explained (...) p. 16
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- c. De concierge boog zich naar haar toe, praatte tegen haar, maar zij schudde het hoofd, mompelde iets en zette met dezelfde regelmaat haar gesnik voort. **Daarna** kwam de concierge naast mij staan. Hij nam naast mij plaats. **Na geruime tijd** lichtte hij mij in, zonder mij aan te zien: (...)
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Time adverbials overrule the current reference time and introduce a new reference time (Kamp and Reyle, 1993; de Swart, 1999). According to de Swart (1999), this leads to a “break” in narrative structure. Instead of letting the story “tell itself”, the frequent use of time adverbials forces us to jump from one reference time to the next. It is quite conceivable that the translators have intentionally kept as many as possible of the time adverbials in the French original in order to emphasize the lack of narrative character of the novel. After all, a story told in the PC does not “tell itself”, because the PC is not inherently a Narrative tense. Camus uses scenarios and strong rhetorical relations to create bits and pieces of narrative discourse, but the alienating nature of the novel is mostly due to the fact that the PC induces this fragmented, disconnected series of events, as has been pointed out by Weinrich (1973:268–269). In our analysis, this follows from the rhetorical structure of Elaboration created by the Perfect. The Dutch and English translations have difficulty preserving the character of the French original, because they cannot tell the story in the Perfect, and need to resort to inherently Narrative tenses like the OVT and the SP. Maintaining the time adverbials in the translation is one way of disrupting the overly strong narrative flavor of these tenses. This claim is confirmed by the observation that time adverbials that are left out in the translation create more “fluent”, more “narrative” bits of text, as illustrated by (55) and (56) above, because the current reference time is not reset between the two sentences.

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4.3.2. Temporal and argumentative role of time adverbials

In the second case, the time adverbial plays a temporal role in the French original, but a more argumentative, rhetorical role in the English/Dutch translation. The following is an example:

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- (61) a. J’ai demandé deux jours de congé à mon patron et il ne pouvait pas me les refuser avec une excuse pareille. Mais il n’avait pas l’air content. Je lui ai même dit: “Ce n’est pas de ma faute.” Il n’a pas répondu. J’ai pensé **alors** que je n’aurais pas dû lui dire cela. p. 9
- b. I asked my boss for two days off and he couldn’t refuse under the circumstances. But he didn’t seem pleased. I even said, “It’s not my fault.” He didn’t answer. **Then** I thought maybe I shouldn’t have said that. p. 9
- c. Ik heb twee dagen vrij gevraagd aan mijn baas; die kon hij mij niet weigeren met een zo geldige reden. Maar hij was er niets mee ingenomen. Ik zei zelfs tegen hem: “Het is mijn schuld niet.” Maar hij gaf geen antwoord. **Toen** bedacht ik dat ik hem dat niet had moeten zeggen. p. 63

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The time adverbial *alors* in (61a) has both a temporal and an argumentative flavor. In the Dutch and English translations, the temporal value has almost disappeared in favor of the argumentative flavor: the proposition follows as a logical next step in the argumentation, rather than as the next event in a temporal order. The difference is a matter of degree, so the observation is a subtle one. However, the fact that (56) above is an example where the English translator left out the *alors* of the French original in a context very similar to the one in (61) suggests that the adverbial is indeed not necessary for the temporal structure of the English text. The Dutch translator maintains the

adverbial, but again, the rhetorical, argumentative value of the expression *toen* is predominant in (61c).

4.3.3. Interaction of tense system and time adverbials

In the third case, the time adverbial is necessary in the French original for the temporal unfolding of the story. It is also necessary in the Dutch/English translation, but for a different reason, because of a different interaction between tense and time adverbial. The following is an example:

- (62) a. Il m’a regardé de ses yeux clairs. **Puis** il m’a serré la main qu’il a gardée si longtemps que je ne savais trop comment la retirer. p. 11
- b. He looked at me with his bright eyes. **Then** he shook my hand and held it for so long that I didn’t quite know how to take it back again. p. 10
- c. Hij zag mij met zijn heldere ogen aan. **Daarna** schudde hij mij de hand, die hij zo lang vasthield dat ik niet meer wist hoe ik haar terug moest trekken. p. 64

Puis in the French original (62a) forces a relation of narration between two quantized events (cf. 31). The English and Dutch translations *looked at me* and *zag mij aan* are not necessarily bounded in character, because their lexical aspect indicates a process, and there is no grammatical aspect imposing boundaries. As a result, the temporal relation between the two sentences would be overlap. Insertion of an adverbial *then* or *daarna* forces the succession reading, and allows the activity in the first sentence to be interpreted as a process which takes the next event as its right boundary. The role *then* and *daarna* play in this context is reminiscent of the role *puis* plays in sequences of the type P₁IMP *puis* P₂PS, as discussed by Bras et al. (2001). They point out that *puis* imposes a right boundary to the inherently unbounded situation described by the sentence in the Imparfait. As such, *puis* is indispensable in such contexts. If *then* and *daarna* have the same bounding role in contexts like (62b) and (62c), we can defend the view that they are indispensable in the English and Dutch translations, but they fulfill different role than *puis* in the French original.

This analysis is confirmed by the observation that some cases in which the translation has inserted time adverbials where they were absent in the French original are of this type. An example is (58), repeated here as (63):

- (63) a. Nous sommes restés silencieux assez longtemps. Le directeur s’est levé et a regardé par la fenêtre de son bureau. p. 24
- b. We sat in silence for quite a long time. **Then** the warden got up and looked out of the office window. p. 18
- c. Een tamelijk lange poos bleven wij zitten zonder iets te zeggen. **Daarna** stond de directeur op en keek door het raam van zijn werkkamer. p. 73

The PC indicates the bounded nature of the process in (63a), and *assez longtemps* measures the length of this process. Although there is no explicit temporal relation established between the two sentences, we can assume temporal succession because of the contrast between sitting in silence and getting up. The two activities are incompatible, so they cannot be true at the same time, and we infer that the getting up follows the sitting in silence. Both the English and the Dutch translation in (63b, c) insert a time adverbial which makes the temporal relation of succession explicit. Clearly, the presence of the measurement phrases *for quite a long time* and *een tamelijk*

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1633 *lange poos* is not sufficient to interpret the first sentence as denoting a quantized event. They still
1634 have the flavor of an unbounded process, and the transparency of the SP and the OVT leaves it at
1635 that. In order to impose a right boundary on this process, the translators introduce time adverbials
1636 which force succession in time.

1637 4.4. Conclusion

1638 We conclude that there are good reasons why the time adverbials Camus introduced to force
1639 progress in time are maintained in the English and Dutch translations, even though these texts do
1640 not narrate the story in the Present Perfect form. The first and most important function of the time
1641 adverbials in combination with the English Simple Past and the Dutch OVT is to disrupt the
1642 narrative character by jumping from one reference time to the next. Two other functions are to
1643 support the argumentative force of the text, and to introduce boundedness in cases where lexical
1644 aspect does not provide that. So the time adverbials are needed in the translations, even though
1645 they may have different functions than in the source text.

1646 5. Conclusion

1647 In this paper, we have defended the idea that an appropriate cross-linguistic analysis of
1648 Perfect constructions can only be established if we take the discourse level into account. The
1649 Reichenbachian structure E-R,S needs to be complemented with an aspectual dimension, and
1650 with a rhetorical analysis in which the Perfect establishes a structure of Elaboration, where
1651 the speech time (or the utterance situation more generally) provides the topic. The
1652 Elaboration structure implies that the sentences in the Present Perfect are connected by means
1653 of the rhetorical relation of Continuation. If the eventualities reported in the Perfect are free to
1654 enter temporal relations with other times and events, narrative use becomes possible, as in
1655 French and German. If the eventualities cannot enter temporal relations at all (as in English)
1656 or block rhetorical relations with other events (as in Dutch), discourse use is much more
1657 restricted.

1658 We carried out a discourse analysis of the French *Passé Composé* to support our view that even
1659 this very liberal Perfect construction is not an inherently Narrative tense, because it maintains its
1660 orientation towards the speech time. A study of the first two chapters of Camus' novel *L'étranger*
1661 shows that temporal structure is the result of connectives, lexical information contributed by
1662 adverbs and verbs, presuppositions and implicatures, and rhetorical structure (Occasion, scripts/
1663 scenarios).

1664 The cross-linguistic analysis of Perfect constructions was put to the test by the study of
1665 English, Dutch and German translations of *L'étranger*. The alternation between the *Passé*
1666 *Composé* and the *Imparfait* finds a partial translation in the contrast between Simple Past and Past
1667 Progressive in English. Although, as predicted, the Dutch translation is somewhat more liberal in
1668 its use of the Perfect than English, it mostly tells the story in the Simple Past tense. In the German
1669 translation, the alternation between *Perfekt* and *Präteritum* mirrors the contrast between *Passé*
1670 *Composé* and *Imparfait*, even though the *Präteritum* is obviously not an Imperfective tense form
1671 like the *Imparfait*. We expected that the Dutch and English translations would make less use of
1672 time adverbials, because they use inherently Narrative tenses, which should not require extensive
1673 use of time adverbials. This hypothesis was not verified by the translations we consulted, and we
1674 developed an explanation for our findings in terms of the different functions a time adverbial
1675 plays in the interaction with the tense and aspect system in each language.

1675
1676 Of course, a full analysis of the *Passé Composé*, and its counterparts in English, Dutch and
1677 German would require the study of other materials besides the text and translations of just one
1678 novel. We are fully aware of the limitations of our corpus, but we hope this paper provides a good
1679 starting point for such a broad empirical study. All in all we conclude with Kamp and Rohrer's
1680 seminal (1983) paper that a dynamic, discourse oriented study of different tense forms adds a new
1681 dimension to our understanding of natural language.

Uncited reference

1682 Anagnostopoulou et al. (2001).
1683

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