

From Dutch to French:  
Advanced L2 French Past  
Tense Acquisition

*Du néerlandais au français :  
les temps verbaux en français  
langue seconde*

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## ABSTRACT

In the ongoing debate on aspectual (Domínguez et al., 2013; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018) and L1 influence (Domínguez et al., 2017) in L2 tense/aspect acquisition, English and Spanish have dominated as L1s and L2s. The present study turns to Dutch learners of L2 French. French has a Perfective/Imperfective distinction, like Spanish, but realises it by opposing a complex (*passé composé*) and simplex (*imparfait*) tense. Dutch also has a simplex/complex opposition but expresses a different distinction with it than French (Van der Klis et al. 2019, 2020).

The French translations by 15 Dutch students of French form the basis of the present study exploring aspectual influence (González & Quintana Hernández, 2018) and the presence of a default past tense (Salaberry, 1999, 2011) in L2 past tense productions. Language Related Episodes (LREs, Swain & Lapkin, 1998) from the pairwise discussions students had about their translations were studied to gain insight into the students' past tense choices.

Results reveal individual variation, with overuse of the *imparfait* or the *passé composé* by a number of students. Tense use indicates these advanced learners have a default past tense, though it is not general and differs between students. Additionally, while some students are sensitive to the durativity of the VP, others rely on the dynamicity or on neither aspectual distinction. LREs confirm L1 influence and the students' difficulties with the *passé composé/imparfait* opposition, while also highlighting that students consider aspectual features, temporal order, and the situational context when choosing past tenses, and do not rely on L1 verb form or intuition alone.

KEYWORDS: tense aspect acquisition; L1 influence; L2 acquisition; aspectual influence

## RÉSUMÉ

Dans le débat sur l'influence aspectuelle (Domínguez et al., 2013 ; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018) et de la L1 (Domínguez et al., 2017) sur l'acquisition du temps et de l'aspect en L2, l'anglais et

*l'espagnol ont dominé comme L1 et L2. La présente recherche tourne vers les apprenants néerlandais du français L2. Le français a la distinction Perfectif/Imperfectif comme l'espagnol, mais l'exprime avec un temps complexe (le passé composé) et un temps simple (l'imparfait). Le néerlandais a également une opposition complexe/simple mais l'utilise pour exprimer une autre distinction (Van der Klis et al., 2019, 2020).*

*Les traductions françaises de 15 étudiants néerlandais du français sont la base de la présente recherche sur l'influence aspectuelle (González & Quintana Hernández, 2018) et la présence d'un temps du passé standard (Salaberry, 1999). Les épisodes linguistiques (LRE, Swain & Lapkin, 1998) des discussions en binômes que les étudiants ont eues sur leurs traductions ont été étudiés pour mieux comprendre les choix des temps du passé des étudiants.*

*Les résultats relèvent de la variation individuelle, avec une surutilisation de l'imparfait et du passé composé par un nombre d'étudiants. L'usage des temps verbaux indique que ces apprenants avancés ont un temps du passé standard, mais que ce standard diffère d'un étudiant à l'autre. De plus, bien que certains étudiants sont sensibles aux distinctions duratif/terminatif ou statif/dynamique, d'autres ne s'appuient sur aucune opposition aspectuelle. Les LRE confirment l'influence de la L1 et les difficultés qu'ont les étudiants avec l'opposition passé composé/imparfait, mais indiquent également que les étudiants tiennent compte d'informations aspectuelles, de l'ordre temporel et du contexte quand ils choisissent un temps du passé et ne s'appuient pas uniquement sur la forme verbale dans la L1 ou leur intuition.*

*MOTS-CLÉS : acquisition temps et aspect ; influence de la L1 ; acquisition L2 ; influence aspectuelle*

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## From Dutch to French: Advanced L2 French Past Tense Acquisition

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the formulation of the Aspect Hypothesis by Andersen and Shirai (Andersen, 1991, 2002; Shirai & Andersen, 1995), research on the acquisition of tense and aspect has mostly focused on testing the Aspect Hypothesis in various language combinations and at varying proficiency levels. In more recent years, however, research has been moving away from the Aspect Hypothesis (see e.g. Clahsen et al., 2010; Diaubalick & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2016, 2019) and has been looking into L1 influence in the L2 acquisition of tense and aspect (see e.g. Amenós-Pons, Ahern, & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2017, 2019; Domínguez, Arche, & Myles, 2017; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018; Roberts & Liszka, 2013). In these and earlier studies, English and Spanish have dominated as L1 or L2. Studies on other language combinations can refine the hypotheses formulated previously. The current study looks into the acquisition of tense and aspect in L2 French by native speakers of Dutch. The French—Dutch language pair is an interesting one, as French has a Perfective/Imperfective distinction (similar to Spanish), but realizes this with the opposition between a complex (*passé composé*) and a simplex (*imparfait*) tense. Dutch has a complex/simplex tense opposition for reference to past events, but expresses a different distinction with it than French (Van der Klis, Le Bruyn, & De Swart, 2020; De Swart, 2007).

### 2. L2 TENSE—ASPECT LEARNING

The following section gives a brief overview of a number of hypotheses on the acquisition of tense and aspect in second language acquisition, starting with (a) the Aspect Hypothesis (AH, first dubbed ‘Defective Tense Hypothesis’ (Andersen, 1991), Andersen, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Shirai & Andersen, 1995), followed by (b) the Default Past Tense Hypothesis (McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 1999, 2011), and (c) studies on L1 influence (as put forward in Domínguez et al., 2017; Domínguez et al., 2013; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018;

Tavenier, 2018). Subsequently, studies on the L2 acquisition of French tense and aspect will be discussed. Lastly, a comparison will be made between the French and Dutch past tenses, contrasting how these are used.

### *2.1. Learning L2 Tense and Aspect*

The AH (Andersen, 1986, 2002; Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Shirai & Andersen, 1995) is a generalisation of the acquisition path of tense/aspect markings in learner language based on studies that have found L2 learners to be influenced by the aspectual class of a verb phrase (Vendler, 1957) in their acquisition of tense—aspect morphology. Following the AH, L2 learners start by using a perfective past marking on telic events and only at a later stage combine the perfective past with verbs of other aspectual classes. The imperfective marker will first appear on atelic events, but only after the perfective past marker is used, and will then extend to telic verbs. The progressive will first be used with activity verbs, then with telic verbs and will not overextend to statives (Andersen, 1991, 2002; Shirai & Andersen, 1995). Bardovi-Harlig (1998) confirmed the influence of lexical aspect on the acquisition of verb morphology in her study comparing the influence of lexical aspect and grounding. Additionally, she found the grounding of the verb phrase (VP) to also play an important role. Salaberry (2011) later studied the effects of lexical aspect and grounding as well and found that in L2 Spanish, the Preterit is the prototypical form used with telic events and in foreground events, and the Imperfect is the prototypical form with states and in background events.

Salaberry (1999, 2011) studied the productions of beginning to advanced English learners of Spanish in an oral film retell task (1999) and a forced-choice cloze type task (2011). The least advanced speakers show no influence of the AH on Spanish Preterit/Imperfect marking in the film retell task. Rather, they use the Preterit across all aspectual verb classes in the past tense. Salaberry argues then that the least advanced learners use a default past tense, the Preterit. This goes against the AH, as an extension of the Preterit to states is not predicted until advanced stages of acquisition. The more advanced learners

in the studies appear to show an increasing reliance on lexical aspect as their proficiency increases, as they mostly use the Preterit with telic events and the Imperfect with states. These findings go against the AH as well, as it is predicted that the more advanced learners also use Preterit and Imperfect markings on verbs in non-prototypical contexts. The more advanced learners in Salaberry's (1999, 2011) studies did not extend the Preterit to states and the Imperfect to telic events when this was required in the context. Domínguez et al. (2013), however, found that the beginning English learners of Spanish in their study used both the Preterit and the Imperfect equally on states, contrary to Salaberry's (1999, 2011) Default Past Tense Hypothesis.

Domínguez et al. (2017) studied the past tense productions of English L2 Spanish students in continuous, habitual, and perfective contexts. In English, a Simple Past can be used in all three contexts. In Spanish, however, the continuous and habitual contexts require the Imperfect, and the perfective contexts the Preterit. Domínguez et al. (2017) found evidence of L1 influence on the L2 Spanish tense system, as the learners appear to have linked the three uses of the English Simple Past to the Spanish Preterit, even though an Imperfect is required in continuous and habitual contexts.

Domínguez et al. (2013) studied oral productions and judgment data from English beginning to advanced learners of L2 Spanish. The beginning learners already used the Preterit and Imperfect equally on states. The advanced learners used the Preterit most on telic VPs, less on activities, and least on states, while the Imperfect occurred least on achievements, more on accomplishments and activities, and most on states. This suggests that, contra the AH, these English learners of Spanish are sensitive not to the (a)telicity of the VP, but to the dynamicity, opposing states to activities, accomplishments, and achievements. Furthermore, the intermediate and advanced learners showed no problems accepting the Imperfect and rejecting the Preterit in imperfect contexts in the judgment task. However, in one-time event contexts, they had trouble rejecting the Imperfect and accepting the Preterit if the verb was stative, showing furthermore that the English learners of Spanish



tested here are sensitive to the dynamicity of the verb even at the most advanced levels tested.

González and Quintana Hernández (2018) continued on the findings of Domínguez et al. (2013) regarding aspectual influence and Domínguez et al. (2017) regarding L1 influence, and studied the written productions of beginning to intermediate (CEFR A2 level) Dutch and English learners of L2 Spanish. González and Quintana Hernández (2018) show that the Dutch and English learners do not behave the same way in their production of Spanish Preterit and Imperfect forms and argue that this is a result of L1 influence. The English learners appear to base their past tense choice on the dynamicity of the VP, opposing states to achievements, accomplishments, and activities, similar to the learners in Domínguez et al. (2013). The Dutch learners, on the other hand, behave differently and appear to base their choice on the durativity of the VP, opposing states and activities to achievements and accomplishments. These findings suggest that L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds do not acquire all aspects of the L2 the same way and that transfer of L1 aspect influences L2 productions.

## 2.2. Learning L2 French Tense and Aspect

As mentioned previously, English and Spanish have dominated as the main languages under study in the investigation of L2 tense–aspect acquisition, with other languages remaining understudied, one of these being French. Ayoun (2013) studied the L2 French productions of English students at differing proficiency levels at an American university. The written production tasks showed that participants from all proficiency levels used a wide variety of verb forms to a high degree of accuracy. Izquierdo and Kihlstedt's (2019) study on beginning to intermediate Spanish learners of L2 French shows that, with respect to the acquisition of the *imparfait*, students appear to follow the predicted path of the AH.

Labeau (2005) included advanced learners in her study to investigate the predictions of the AH at the most advanced levels of L2 proficiency and final stages of L2 tense acquisition according to the AH. The study comprised a large number of tasks to elicit data from English

university students with intermediate to advanced L2 French proficiency. The written and oral film retell tasks showed that even the least advanced participants investigated already used the *passé composé* with lexically atelic and stative verbs and the *imparfait* with lexically perfective verbs, both predicted by the AH to only appear at the most advanced stages of L2 acquisition. Learners at all levels used the *passé composé* more with telic verbs. Labeau also observes that learners have “systematic difficulties in responding to the co-textual constraints [...] that modify the aspectual type of the VP and lead to a form other than the IMP [*imparfait*] being required” (p.85), i.e. that the *imparfait* being used with telic VPs at the less advanced levels is not due to advanced acquisition of French past tense morphology but to overuse of the *imparfait* in contexts where a different past tense form is required.

McManus (2013) reports on English and German beginning and advanced learners of French in their productions and judgments of *imparfait* and *passé composé* in habitual and one-time events in both telic and atelic contexts. The advanced participants appear to rely more on lexical aspect than the beginning learners, similar to Salaberry’s (1999, 2011) results and contra the AH, as it is predicted that the more advanced learners also use the *passé composé* and *imparfait* on VPs in non-prototypical contexts.

Tavenier (2018) performed an exploratory study on the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait* in monolingual Dutch students of L2 French at a Dutch university. In the study, students made a French translation of a Dutch text which was then analysed on the use of *passé composé* and *imparfait*. Tavenier compared the tense choices of the monolingual students against the tenses used in Camus’s original text and the translations made by two bilingual French/Dutch students, as well as the predicted tenses based on the aspectual class of the VPs. Tavenier’s results show that many learners use the *imparfait* in contexts where a *passé composé* is required but do not overextend the *passé composé* to contexts where the *imparfait* is required. These data show limited support for the AH, as it could only account for the *passé composé/imparfait* productions of a limited number of students. Tavenier indicates that half of the students appear to be influenced in their French past tense choices

by the tense form in the L1 (simplex or complex past tense). The results of the other half can be explained by aspectual influence: the bilingual and more advanced students of French use mainly the *imparfait* on states and activities and mainly the *passé composé* on achievements and accomplishments. Thus, Tavenier claims these students to be sensitive to the durative/terminative aspectual distinction. This is along the same lines as what has been reported on beginning—intermediate Dutch students of Spanish (González & Quintana Hernández, 2018).

McManus and Marsden (2019) studied the influence of explicit instruction on learners' L1 (English) in relation to the L2 (French) on appropriacy of use of the *imparfait* in habitual and ongoing contexts. Results show that students provided with explicit L1 and L2 instruction performed better on the immediate and delayed post-test on habitual and ongoing *imparfait* use. When provided with L2 instruction alone, students only showed improvements at the delayed post-test on ongoing *imparfait*. McManus and Marsden conclude, therefore, that providing explicit instruction on the L1 and L2 and their differences can help learners when dealing with more complex L1—L2 form—meaning mappings, such as habituality. This kind of explicit instruction might be applied in an even more focussed manner by first looking into why L2 learners choose a certain tense form over another. This information can then be used to address e.g. tense use in ongoing contexts even more explicitly in L2 instruction.

### 2.3. French and Dutch Past Tenses

French has three past tenses: the *passé simple*, *passé composé*, and *imparfait*, having perfective, perfect, and imperfective meaning respectively (Comrie, 1976). The *passé simple* and *imparfait* are both morphologically simplex tenses, whereas the *passé composé* is, as the name suggests, a complex tense. In written French, all three tenses are used, whereas in spoken French (as well as in most Dutch students' written productions), the *passé composé* and the *passé simple* are considered equivalents.

Dutch opposes the *voltooid tegenwoordige tijd (vtt)*, a morphologically complex tense, to

the *onvoltooid verleden tijd* (*ovt*), a morphologically simplex general past tense. The former expresses that the action or event reported on has finished before the reference time, whereas the latter expresses that an eventuality was taking place at a moment in the past, leaving unspecified whether the action is still continuing at the time of speech or has finished between the time of reference and the time of speech (Broekhuis, Corver, & Vos, 2015). Thus, in certain contexts, it is possible to use the *ovt* or the *vtt* to express the same meaning.

According to De Swart (2007), the Dutch perfect (the *vtt*) cannot be used in narrative sequences, while the French *passé composé* can. De Swart demonstrates this on the basis of Camus's *L'Étranger* and its Dutch translation and indeed finds that the *passé composé* used in narrative sequences is not translated by a *vtt* in Dutch. Van der Klis, Le Bruyn, and De Swart (2019, 2020) show that the majority of the *passé composé* contexts in *L'Étranger* is translated by an *ovt* in Dutch ( $N = 140$ ), whereas the *vtt* only translates a fraction of the *passé composé* ( $N = 18$ ). Most of the translations with a Dutch *ovt* are in narrative sequences, supporting De Swart (2007) that the Dutch *vtt* does not allow narrative use. The contexts in the *vtt* occur either in dialogue or at the beginning or the end of narrative sequences.

The findings presented in the preceding section pose an interesting starting point for a study on the L2 acquisition of French past tenses by Dutch learners. Firstly, the Dutch and French simplex/complex past tense forms do not express the same distinction. The French *passé composé/imparfait* distinction is one of perfect/imperfective (Comrie, 1976), whereas the Dutch *vtt/ovt* distinction is one of perfect/imperfect (Broekhuis et al., 2015). Secondly, there where a complex past tense is used in narrative sequences in French, it is not allowed in Dutch and the simplex *ovt* is required (Van der Klis et al., 2019, 2020; Le Bruyn, Van der Klis, & De Swart, 2019; De Swart, 2007). Furthermore, previous studies on L2 acquisition of past tense morphology have shown that English and Dutch learners apply past tense markings in Spanish and French following aspectual distinctions influenced by their L1 (Domínguez et al., 2013; Domínguez et al., 2017; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018; Tavenier, 2018), the Dutch appearing to rely on the durativity of the VP and the English on

dynamicity. Lastly, it has been argued that L2 learners have a default past tense, even at advanced levels (e.g. McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 1999, 2011). McManus and Marsden (2019) have argued that part of the L1 English influence in L2 French acquisition of the *imparfait* can be overcome by explicit instruction on L1 and L2 form—meaning pairings. Students might, however, have different reasons than their L1 alone for choosing one tense form over another.

### 3. THE PRESENT STUDY

Past literature has claimed that L2 learners show a default past tense in their productions in L2 Spanish (McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 1999, 2011). More recently, studies have argued that Dutch and English learners of Spanish are influenced by different aspectual features (durativity and dynamicity respectively) in their past tense productions in L2 Spanish (Domínguez et al., 2013; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018). Tavenier (2018) made an extension to L2 French acquisition and reported preliminary findings that suggest that Dutch learners also rely on the durativity of the VP in their French past tense production, similar to the Dutch learners of Spanish in González and Quintana Hernández (2018). As Comrie (1976), Corver et al. (2015), Van der Klis et al. (2019, 2020) and De Swart (2007) demonstrated, the French and Dutch past tense distinctions differ, which may lead to difficulties in the L2 French past tense acquisition by Dutch learners. McManus and Marsden (2019) argue that possible L1 influence resulting from differences like this can be overcome by explicit instruction.

The present study builds on the results reported in González and Quintana Hernández (2018) and Tavenier (2018), and sets out to investigate the L2 French productions of advanced Dutch learners of French in the final year(s) of their bachelor's degree of French. Next to the written productions used to study students' past tense choices, student discussions will be analysed in order to gain insight into the reasons why students choose a particular (past) tense form. The main questions this study seeks to answer are:

RQ1: Do Dutch learners of French indeed show the aspectual bias towards the durative/terminative aspectual distinction as proposed for L2 Spanish in González and Quintana Hernández (2018) and extended to L2 French by Tavenier (2018)?

RQ2: Do advanced Dutch learners of French show a Default Past Tense in their L2 French productions?

RQ3: What reasons do L1 Dutch advanced learners of French provide for their choice of past tense forms?

### 3.1. Methodology

*Participants.* Participants were 15 advanced Dutch monolingual learners of French in the second or third year of their bachelor degree in French at a Dutch university. Participants were between 19 and 22 years old (mean = 21) and were first exposed to French between the ages of 11 and 13 (mean = 12). Participants reported having had 6 to 11 years (mean = 8.5) of instruction in or on French. Two French/Dutch bilingual students also in the second and third year of their French degree were recruited to provide control data and completed only the translation task.

*Tasks.* The study comprised a number of tasks, namely a language background questionnaire and a French language cloze test (Tremblay, 2011), and the two main tasks: a translation and a pairwise discussion of the translation. The language background questionnaire and French language cloze test (Tremblay, 2011) were included to verify whether all students are indeed advanced learners of French.

To investigate the L2 productions of the learners of French, we constructed an L2 translation corpus of translations of the same narrative text by the participants. The translation task consisted of two excerpts from the Dutch translation of Camus's *L'Étranger* (631 words) that was to be translated back into French. A number of paragraphs preceding and following the excerpts to be translated were given to provide some context for the story. The excerpts contained 72 verbs in the *ovt* and 9 in the *vtt*. We opted for a translation task to maximise comparability between students. A translation task also gives us the control of

the source text and the tense forms used therein, unlike a free production or retell task.

The second main task was the pairwise discussion of the translations. With the recorded and annotated discussions, we aim to gain insight into the students' tense choices based on the Language Related Episodes (LREs, Swain & Lapkin, 1998) in the discussions. We did not opt for a collaborative translation task combined with think-aloud data, as a previous attempt at this offered limited results in terms of the amount of translated text and the number of LREs on tense choice. A think-aloud protocol during the actual translation task is not the most natural means of reflection while translating and would have placed an extra cognitive burden on the participants that may have interfered with the translation task (see e.g. Jääskeläinen, 2017). Therefore, we opted for a delayed retrospective pairwise discussion, in which students discussed their translations in pairs. The LREs from these discussions allow us to gain insight into what the participants thought while translating and what they base their tense choices on.

*Procedure.* The 15 students met in a classroom in which they usually had a seminar meeting and received a brief instruction on the tasks at hand. First, they filled out the paper-based language background questionnaire followed by the pen and paper cloze test (Tremblay, 2011). They were instructed to take the time they needed to finish the two forms, though all were done within 30 minutes. Following this they had a short break, after which students were instructed on the translation task. They were given a paper copy of the Dutch excerpt of Camus, with the text to be translated highlighted in boldface. Vocabulary help was provided for words or expressions students might not be familiar with to avoid lexical gaps limiting the students' ability to complete the translation. Students were then asked to read the text and make a French translation of the bolded parts on their laptops. They were instructed not to use any (online) resources such as dictionaries or spelling and grammar correction in their word processor while translating. Students had 45 minutes to translate as much as they could and were explicitly told that it was no problem if they did not finish translating the entire text.

Following the translation task, students had a short break after which 14 of the 15 students were randomly assigned into pairs for the discussions. Pairs met with one of the researchers in a classroom where the students sat opposite each other with a recording device in between. Students were asked to discuss the translation they had made and make improvements or changes. They could not see each other's translation. This was done to stimulate verbalisation of the students in their discussions in order to maximise the number of LREs. Students were given 45 minutes for the discussion and were told explicitly that they did not need to finish discussing the entire text.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

First, the cloze test and translations were evaluated to determine how the participants performed on the tasks. The cloze test was scored with the answer sheet provided by Tremblay (2011). The resulting scores ( $x$  out of 45) were then recalculated as a score out of 100. Accuracy of the participants' tense choices was evaluated on the basis of the translations of two bilingual students of French (reported in Tavenier, 2018) and Camus's original. Interrater reliability measures of these three translations show their choices of verb forms were highly similar (*Fleiss's Kappa* = .85, *s.e.* = .06, LCL = .74, UCL = .96). When scoring the participants' translations, we only considered those contexts (a) where Camus and the two bilinguals agreed, thus eliminating contexts where variation might show, and (b) that were translated with a past tense form (*imparfait*, *passé composé*, or *passé simple*). A translation was deemed correct if it was translated with a past tense form that corresponded to the form chosen by Camus and the bilinguals. All verbs in the *passé simple* ( $N = 17$ , all in a single student's translation) were recoded as *passé composé*, as the choice between these forms is mostly a stylistic one for the students. Tense scores were calculated using Cohen's Kappa for interrater reliability. This was done as Cohen's Kappa is deemed to be more robust than a percent agreement or percent correct answers per participant, as it takes into account the possibility of chance agreement.

To test RQ1, whether the Dutch students of French are sensitive to the



durative/terminative aspect of the VP as suggested by Tavenier (2018) and observed in Dutch learners of Spanish by González and Quintana Hernández (2018), the uses of past tense form were calculated and compared to the past tense forms predicted by the aspectual distinctions, durative/terminative and stative/dynamic. For these predictions, the two researchers independently coded each of the VPs in the dataset for aspect (achievement, accomplishment, activity, state). An interrater reliability measure of the coding shows high agreement between coders (*Cohen's Kappa* = .88). The cases where the two coders disagreed were discussed to reach agreement. Percent correspondence scores were then calculated for all of the students' translations compared to the tense forms predicted by the durative/terminative opposition as well as the stative/dynamic opposition. Durative VPs (states and activities) are predicted to be combined with the *imparfait* and terminative VPs (achievements and accomplishments) to receive the *passé composé*. Stative VPs are predicted to receive *imparfait* marking and dynamic VPs (activities, achievements, accomplishments) are predicted to be marked with the *passé composé*.

RQ2 was probed by looking at the participants' past tense use in each of the aspectual classes individually. For this, percent correspondence between the students' translations and the model translation on the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* were calculated as well as the total and the relative number of occurrences of the two past tense forms at both the group and at the individual level.

RQ3 was tested by first transcribing the recordings of the pairwise discussions and subsequently coding them for LREs relevant to the choice of past tense form in French using the NVivo 12 software package (2018). After a first round of coding, in which all LREs were extracted, the various grounds for choosing a certain tense form were annotated.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. The Translation Task

Figure 1 shows the results of the cloze test and the tense scores of the individual

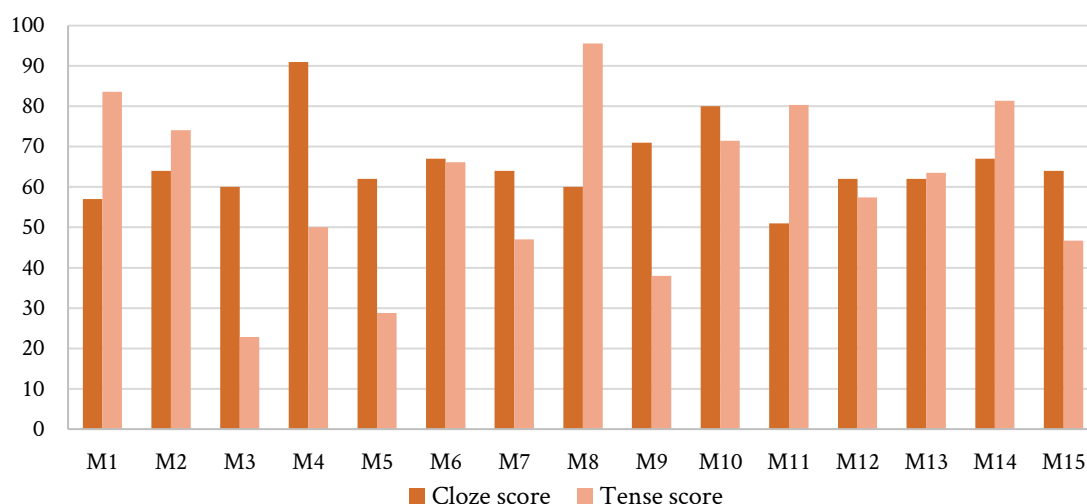


FIGURE 1

Cloze Scores and Tense Scores (Kappa of the Translations  $\times$  100) of the Monolingual Dutch Participants (1-15)

participants. On the cloze test, all students scored between 50% and 91%, with most above 60% (mean = 64%). This puts all participants in the same range as the graduate students/faculty in Tremblay (2011). This means that, although there appears to be some individual variation in proficiency level, all participants can be considered advanced learners of French.

*The Translations.* The Kappa scores of the individual translations show variation between students, with scores ranging from  $K = .23$  to  $K = .96$  (mean =  $.60$ ). Kappa scores of  $.40 - .60$  indicate moderate agreement,  $.60 - .80$  good agreement, and  $.80$  or higher very good agreement between a participant's individual translation and the model translation based on Camus and the two French/Dutch bilinguals. Table 1 shows the Kappa scores per participant. Three out of 15 participants have a Kappa lower than  $.40$ , 4 a Kappa of  $.40 - .60$ , and 8 have a Kappa of  $.60$  or higher. A Spearman's ranked correlation test shows no correlation between the scores on the cloze test and on the translation task ( $r_s(13) = -.22$ ,  $p = .438$ ), thus a higher level of general French proficiency does not necessarily translate to higher or lower performance in past tense choice.

Figure 2 shows the correspondence between the students' translations and the model

TABLE 1

Kappa Scores (With Standard Error) and Lower (LCL) and Upper (UCL) .95 Confidence Limits per Participant (M1-M15)

Participant	Kappa (s.e.)	LCL / UCL
M1	.84 (.08)	.68 / .99
M2	.74 (.09)	.56 / .92
M3	.23 (.16)	-.09 / .55
M4	.50 (.11)	.28 / .72
M5	.29 (.16)	-.03 / .61
M6	.66 (.11)	.45 / .88
M7	.47 (.13)	.22 / .72
M8	.96 (.04)	.87 / 1.0
M9	.38 (.15)	.09 / .66
M10	.71 (.09)	.53 / .90
M11	.80 (.08)	.64 / .97
M12	.57 (.16)	.27 / .88
M13	.63 (.13)	.39 / .88
M14	.81 (.08)	.66 / .97
M15	.47 (.12)	.24 / .70
MEAN	.60 (.06)	.49 / .72

translation on the *passé composé* and *imparfait* contexts. Five students (M8, M10, M11, M13, M14) show similar scores on both tenses, whereas others score higher on the *imparfait* than on the *passé composé* (M2, M3, M4, M7, M9, M15) or vice versa (M1, M5, M6, M12). In other words, two-thirds of the group underuses either the *imparfait* or the *passé composé*. In

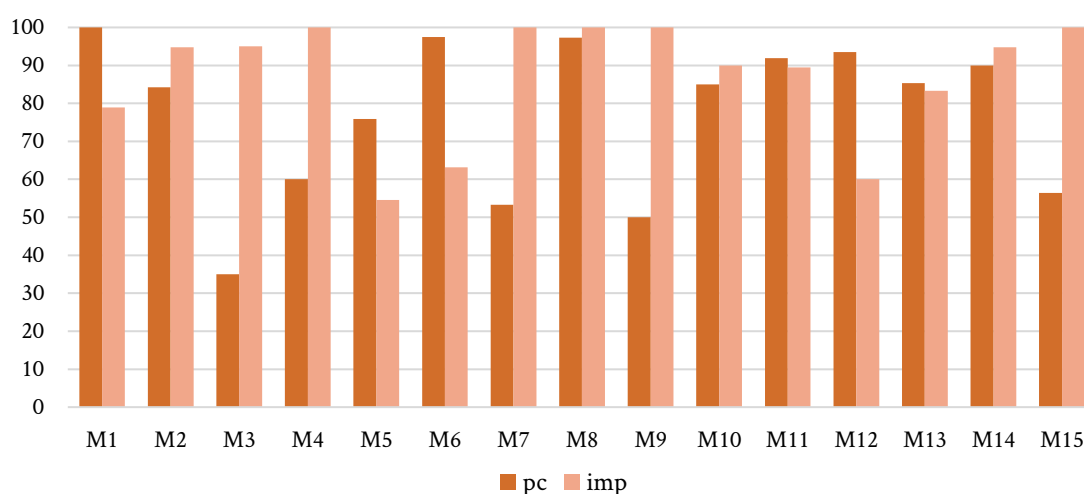


FIGURE 2

Percent Correspondence of *Passé Composé* (pc) and *Imparfait* (imp) Usage Between the Individual Participants' Translations and the Reference Translation

these cases, students actually overextend the *imparfait* to contexts in which the *passé composé* is the required form, or the *passé composé* to contexts in which the *imparfait* is required. This may suggest that (part of) the students have a default past tense.

*The Predictions of Durativity and Dynamicity.* The use of the *imparfait* and *passé composé* in the participants' individual translations are now compared to the predicted tenses based on the durativity and dynamicity of the VP, distinctions proposed to be at play in the L2 acquisition of Spanish and French by Dutch and English learners (Domínguez et al., 2013; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018; Tavenier, 2018). As a reminder, the prediction along the durative/terminative contrast has a durative VP (states and activities) marked with an *imparfait* and a terminative VP (accomplishments and achievements) with a *passé composé*. The stative/dynamic contrast would predict stative VPs to receive an *imparfait* and dynamic VPs (activities, accomplishments, and achievements) to receive a *passé composé*.

The mean correspondences between the translations and the predicted tenses following the durative/terminative contrast are 78% and 70% for the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* respectively. Along the stative/dynamic contrast, the mean correspondences with the predicted tenses are 71% and 87% for the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* respectively. Predictions based on the durativity of the VP appear better for the *passé composé* than for the *imparfait*, whereas the predictions based on the dynamicity of the VP appear to be better for the *imparfait* than for the *passé composé*. This suggests a closer look at the past tense use in each of the aspectual classes is needed, as the predictions of the two contrasts differ for the category of activity VPs.

Table 2 presents the past tense forms used in the VPs according to aspectual class. On the whole, students show a preference for either the *imparfait* or the *passé composé* when combining with stative (88% *imparfait*), accomplishment (77% *passé composé*) and achievement VPs (81% *passé composé*), a similar trend to the one observed in González and Quintana Hernández (2018). With activities, however, students' choices of past tense form are not that clear-cut, though the *passé composé* is used slightly more often ( $N = 82$ ) than the

*imparfait* ( $N = 75$ ). This division is, again, similar to the reported uses of Preterit and Imperfect in Dutch students' L2 Spanish in González and Quintana Hernández (2018).

TABLE 2

Number (and Percentage) of Occurrences of the *Passé Composé* (PC) and *Imparfait* (IMP) Forms per Aspectual Class in Total and per Participant

Participant	State		Activity		Accomplishment		Achievement	
	PC	IMP	PC	IMP	PC	IMP	PC	IMP
M1	4 (26.67)	11 (73.33)	9 (75.00)	3 (25.00)	21 (95.45)	1 (4.55)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M2	1 (6.67)	14 (93.33)	4 (36.36)	7 (63.64)	19 (90.48)	2 (9.52)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M3	1 (6.25)	15 (93.75)	2 (16.67)	10 (83.33)	7 (31.82)	15 (68.18)	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)
M4	0 (0.00)	16 (100.00)	6 (50.00)	6 (50.00)	11 (50.00)	11 (50.00)	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)
M5	4 (44.44)	5 (55.56)	5 (71.43)	2 (28.57)	14 (87.50)	2 (12.50)	2 (50.00)	2 (50.00)
M6	6 (40.00)	9 (60.00)	9 (75.00)	3 (25.00)	21 (95.45)	1 (4.55)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M7	0 (0.00)	15 (100.00)	3 (30.00)	7 (70.00)	10 (55.56)	8 (44.44)	1 (33.33)	2 (66.67)
M8	0 (0.00)	13 (100.00)	8 (72.73)	3 (27.27)	18 (94.74)	1 (5.26)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M9	0 (0.00)	12 (100.00)	2 (22.22)	7 (77.78)	10 (52.63)	9 (47.37)	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)
M10	1 (6.25)	15 (93.75)	8 (66.67)	4 (33.33)	18 (81.82)	4 (18.18)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M11	1 (6.67)	14 (93.33)	6 (54.55)	5 (45.45)	22 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	4 (80.00)	1 (20.00)
M12	4 (44.44)	5 (55.56)	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)	17 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M13	1 (10.00)	9 (90.00)	5 (71.43)	2 (28.57)	16 (80.00)	4 (20.00)	5 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
M14	1 (6.25)	15 (93.75)	7 (58.33)	5 (41.67)	20 (95.24)	1 (4.76)	4 (80.00)	1 (20.00)
M15	0 (0.00)	16 (100.00)	4 (33.33)	8 (66.67)	11 (52.38)	10 (47.62)	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)
TOTAL	24 (11.54)	184 (88.46)	82 (52.23)	75 (47.77)	235 (77.30)	69 (22.70)	58 (80.56)	14 (19.44)

#### 4.2. Pairwise Discussions

In the pairwise discussions following the translation task, students discussed their translations in Dutch. In these discussions, student pairs produced between 9 and 64 LREs on past tense choices (total = 253, mean = 37). While the reasons given by the students during the pairwise discussions were coded individually, Figure 3 groups them into more general categories. Students refer to the duration of an event being either long or short ( $N = 72$ ), the function of the VP being a description of the scene or a state a character is in ( $N = 20$ ), therefore requiring the *passé composé* or *imparfait*. While intuition or a certain tense 'sounding better' in a given context are often cited as reasons for choosing a certain past

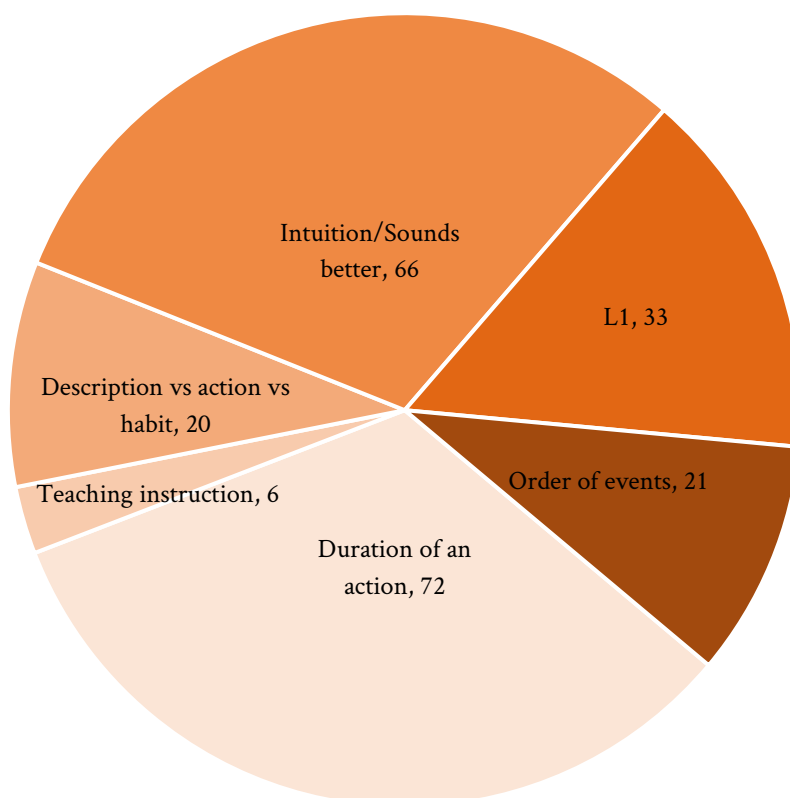


FIGURE 3  
LREs Grouped by Type of Argument for Tense Choices in Pairwise Discussions

tense form ( $N = 66$ ), 74% of the LREs constitute more thorough reasons supporting a certain tense choice. In all discussions, participants mentioned at least once ( $N = 44$ ) finding the choice of tenses hard, either in general or in relation to the translation task at hand.

In the first LRE of the discussion between M4 and M8, M8 already acknowledges finding the choice of the past tense form hard in the VP at hand in (1a). Later on again, M8 states finding it a difficult choice, but this time more generally in (1b). ‘When I think about it and reason it through’ also shows that the student does deliberate her/his tense choice, even though s/he does not give an elaboration on what s/he actually does when thinking it through.

(1) Past Tense Choices are Difficult

a. From M8&M4 (1)

*M8: ‘Ik zette het op een lopen om de bus niet te missen.’ Ik heb gewoon geschreven ‘j’ai couru’ maar ik vond hem wel lastig, want hij was het aan het doen en dan begin ik altijd te twijfelen want het is een actie, dat het dan misschien een imparfait wordt. Wat had jij daar?’ [M8&M4.1]*

‘Ik zette het op een lopen om de bus niet te missen’ [I started<sub>past, simplex</sub> running to not miss the bus]. I just wrote ‘j’ai couru’ [I ran<sub>passé composé</sub>] but I found it a difficult one, because he was doing it and then I always start doubting, because it is an action, that maybe it should be an imparfait. What did you have there?

b. From M8&M4 (57)

*M8: Oké. Wat ik ook heel moeilijk vond, dat vond ik in de hele tekst, daarna komt dat ‘en mij vroeg’ maar altijd als er in zulke teksten dan staat zo van ‘die me vroeg, die me zei, die zei ditendit’ dan krijg ik in m’n hoofd dat ik imparfait moet gebruiken. Terwijl, als ik nadenk, het redeneer, denk ik, nee ik moet een passé composé gebruiken. Dus ik heb gedaan ‘et m’a demandé’, ‘hij vroeg mij’, dat deed ie, dat is eigenlijk ook een actie dat hij mij dat vroeg, hij was niet bezig met mij aan het vragen. Wat had jij daar? [M8&M4.57]*

Okay, what I also found really difficult, that was throughout the text, then it says ‘en mij vroeg’ [and asked<sub>past, simplex</sub> me] but always when it says ‘who asked me, who told me, who said so-and-so’ in texts like this I get this idea that I should use the imparfait. But, when I think about it and reason it through, I think, no I should use a passé composé. So I have ‘et m’a demandé’ [and asked<sub>passé composé</sub> me], ‘hij vroeg mij’ [he asked<sub>past, simplex</sub> me], that’s what he did, that is sort of an action that he asked me that, he was not in the process of asking me. What did you have there?

Students also (directly or indirectly) acknowledge influence from their L1 when deciding between the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*. (2) is an example where M3 explicitly says s/he often follows what is done in the source text when it comes to choosing a simplex or complex past tense form (119). S/he also explicitly refers back to the Dutch source text when discussing her/his translation choice (114) to see whether a simplex or complex form is used in Dutch. The translation data of M3 also show her/his reliance on the Dutch past tense forms throughout the text.

(2) Influence from L1 Dutch: From M3&M2 (112—119)

*M2: ‘Il m’a regardé de ses yeux clairs.’ [M3&M2.112]*

‘Il m’a regardé de ses yeux clairs’ [He looked<sub>passé composé</sub> at me with his clear eyes].

*M3: Nee. Ik heb ‘il me regardait.’ [M3&M2.113]*

No, I have ‘il me regardait’ [He looked<sub>imparfait</sub> at me].

*M2: Even kijken wat er in het Nederlands staat. ‘Hij zag mij met zijn heldere ogen aan.’ [M3&M2.114]*

Let’s see what it says in Dutch. ‘Hij zag mij met zijn heldere ogen aan.’ [‘He looked<sub>past, simplex</sub> at me with his clear eyes.’]

*M3: Ja, dat is een gekke zin. [M3&M2.115]*

Yeah, that’s a strange sentence.

M2: *Ja, is dat zo van, ik kijk even of ik blijf kijken enzo. [M3&M2.116]*

Yes, is it like, I look but only an instant, or do I keep looking?

M3: *Ik denk dat hij indringend maar niet heel lang ofzo, en dat 'il m'a regardé.' [M3&M2.117]*

I think he looked intensely but not for very long, and that 'il m'a regardé' [he looked<sub>passé composé</sub> at me].

M2: *In het Nederlands zou ik het niet eens snappen. [M3&M2.118]*

In Dutch I wouldn't even understand it.

M3: *Ja ik volg wel vaak het Nederlands. Als er in het Nederlands zeg maar 'heb gedaan' staat, doe ik het vaak in het Frans ook, maar het is niet altijd oké. [...] [M3&M2.119]*

Yeah I often follow what it says in Dutch, when in Dutch it says, like, 'heb gedaan' [have done<sub>past,complex</sub>], I also do that in French but it's not always, correct.

The LREs in (3) are a number of examples of the explanations for past tense choices given by the students. In both (3a) and (3b), students refer to the duration of an action or event that is being described, the most-cited argument (see Figure 3). (3a) is an example from the discussion between M9 and M10, where M10 explains in (785) why s/he had chosen a *passé composé* as opposed to the *imparfait* that M9 went for, namely that the act of looking at someone lasts supposedly only for a very short moment in this context, which is reinforced by the expression *au bout d'un moment* (after a while). M15 argues that the duration of answering is different for a yes/no answer than for one of full sentences (3b). This is why s/he chose a *passé composé* to translate 'I said yes' ('j'ai répondu par oui') and an *imparfait* for 'et il disait' followed by three sentences of direct speech. Both M10 and M15 argue here that when the action or event described by the VP is short, the *passé composé* is the required form.

In (3c), M1 calls on teaching instruction, cited explicitly only six times in all discussions, for her/his choice of the *passé composé*. S/he refers to a faculty member (267) who mentioned during a class that Dutch students use the *imparfait* too much in a written assignment where the *passé composé* should be used, which made M1 wary about when to use the *imparfait* and when the *passé composé*. M15 refers to the chronological order of events in (3d). S/he explains using a *passé composé* because it refers to an action (the reading of the file of the protagonist's mother) that took place in the past and is not ongoing still. (3e) is part of the discussion on



the VP *se lever* (to get up). M2 argues here that, in the context, the getting up from a chair of a nurse is something that takes places instantly and not something that lasts a long time, therefore making the *passé composé* the required form instead of M3's *imparfait*.

### (3) Explanations for Past Tense Choices

#### a. From M10&M9 (783—787): Duration

M10: *Oké, 'au bout d'un moment, il m'a regardé et il m'a demandé pourquoi pas ?' [M10&M9.783]*

Okay, 'au bout d'un moment, il m'a regardé et il m'a demandé pourquoi pas ?' [after a while, he looked<sub>passé composé</sub> at me and asked<sub>passé composé</sub> me why not?].

M9: *Ooh, ja, ik had 'au bout d'un moment, il me regardait et disait pourquoi pas ?' [M10&M9.784]*

Ooh, yes, I had 'au bout d'un moment, il me regardait et disait pourquoi pas ?' [after a while, he looked<sub>imparfait</sub> at me and asked<sub>imparfait</sub> me why not?].

M10: *Hm, ja ik dacht, omdat het weer één zo'n moment is. [M10&M9.785]*

Hmm, yeah I thought, because it's a single moment again.

M9: *Ja. [M10&M9.786]*

Yeah.

M10: *'Au bout d'un moment.'* [M10&M9.787]

'Au bout d'un moment' [after a while].

#### b. From M15&M5 (83): Duration

M15: *Of misschien is er ook nog een verschil in, want hier gaat het alleen om het antwoorden van 'ja' en verderop gaat het bijvoorbeeld over het antwoorden van hele zinnen. En dan ben je natuurlijk wel langer aan het woord. En of je dan imparfait gebruikt. Want ik heb hier inderdaad 'j'ai répondu par oui'. Maar later heb ik heel vaak, bijvoorbeeld hier over dat dossier, 'et disait: il y a trois ans que' en dan begint een, nou ja, een paar zinnen. [M15&M5.83]*

Or maybe there's also a difference, because here it's about answering 'yes' and later on it's about for example answering with full sentences. And then, of course, you speak for a longer period of time. And if then you use the imparfait. Because here I do have 'j'ai répondu par oui' [I answered<sub>passé composé</sub> yes]. But later on I often have, like here about that file, 'et disait: il y a trois ans que' [and said<sub>imparfait</sub>: it has been three years since] and then there's, well, a few sentences.

#### c. From M1&M7 (263—267): Teaching instruction

M1: *En dan, 'le concierge a dit'. [M1&M7.263]*

And then 'le concierge a dit' [the caretaker said<sub>passé composé</sub>].

M7: *'Il disait.'* [M1&M7.264]

'Il disait.' [he said<sub>imparfait</sub>]

M1: *'Disait'. Ja, ik vind 'disait' ook fijner klinken maar. [M1&M7.265]*

'Disait' [said<sub>imparfait</sub>]. Yes I also think *disait* [said<sub>imparfait</sub>] sounds better but.

M7: *Ja. [M1&M7.266]*

Yes.

M1: *Het is [teacher's name] die in mijn hoofd zit. [M1&M7.267]*

It's my teacher who's in my head.

d. From M15&M5 (326—327): Ongoing or Terminated

M15: *En dan, vervolgens heb ik 'J'ai lu le dossier de votre mère'. Dat is, ik heb hier passé composé, omdat die dat dus al eerder heeft gedaan en dat is een voltooide actie. Snap je? Die actie loopt niet meer. Hij is niet nog meer aan het lezen. [M15&M5.326]*

And then I have 'J'ai lu le dossier de votre mère' [I read<sub>passé composé</sub> your mother's file]. That is, I have a passé composé here, because he already did that previously and that's a completed action. Get it? That action is not still going on, he is not still reading.

M5: *Ja, ik had 'J'ai lis [sic] le dossier de votre mère'. [M15&M5.327]*

Yes, I had 'J'ai lis [sic] le dossier de votre mère' [I read<sub>passé composé</sub> your mother's file].

e. From M2&M3 (369—372): Type of Action

M2: *En ik heb 's'est levée'. [M3&M2.369]*

And I have 's'est levée' [got<sub>passé composé</sub> up].

M3: *Ja ik heb dus imparfait dan heb je nergens last van. [M3&M2.370]*

Yes, so I have the imparfait so that [the spelling of the past participle] is not a problem here.

M2: *Ja maar je staat op, dat is toch in een moment. [M3&M2.371]*

Yeah but you get up, that is in a single moment, right.

M3: *Ja dat is ook zeker zo, 's'est levée'. [M3&M2.372]*

Yes you're right, 's'est levée' [she got<sub>passé composé</sub> up].

## 5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The cloze scores indicate that all students can be considered advanced learners of French. However, both the kappa scores and the correspondence of *passé composé* and *imparfait* forms with the reference translation show there is individual variation on the translation task. Three students score low to very low on tense choice accuracy, whereas 4 students have a moderate score, and 8 students score high to very high. The French/Dutch bilingual students reported in Tavenier (2018) have a high correspondence with Camus in their tense choices. This shows that the (lower) scores of the monolingual students are not merely a translation effect, rather indicates an actual point of difficulty for the monolingual Dutch students.

The Dutch students use both the *imparfait* and the *passé composé* in their translations. In total, the *passé composé* ( $N = 399$ ) is used more often than the *imparfait* ( $N = 342$ ). On an individual level, 10 students use mostly the *passé composé* in their translations (66% of VPs)

and 5 students use mostly the *imparfait* (69% of VPs). This suggests that the advanced learners of French tested here have a default past tense. However, the group default of the *passé composé* cannot be counted as the default for all individual students, as a third appears to have the *imparfait* as default. The variation on past tense performance between students indicates that, while the group is homogeneous regarding general French language proficiency, not all students tested here are at the same level as far as L2 French past tense acquisition is concerned.

Regarding the influence of aspectual features in the L2 past tense production of advanced Dutch learners of French, there appears to be a general tendency similar to the one observed in the beginning-intermediate Dutch learners of Spanish in González and Quintana Hernández (2018). In their study, the Dutch learners used the Imperfect most on durative VPs, while the Preterit occurred most with terminative VPs. Looking at the verb forms in the individual aspectual classes in González and Quintana Hernández (2018), however, reveals that the Preterit is used more than the Imperfect in achievements, accomplishments, and activities, while the Imperfect is most-used only with states. The present results reflect that group tendency for advanced Dutch learners of French, with states being translated mostly with the *imparfait*, and activities, accomplishments, and achievements mostly with the *passé composé*.

However, González and Quintana Hernández (2018) had students perform a written film retell task, which results in texts of varying length and structure, and subsequently aggregated the participants' data. This allows interpretation of the group tendencies. While the tendencies of the aggregate data in the present study are similar to those of González and Quintana Hernández (2018), using translations of the same source text also permits investigation of an individual participant's tense choices. The tense choices can also be compared between participants, as the individual VPs in the translations can be considered the same across all students.

The individual translations show that the past tense choices of the individual

participants across aspectual classes generally reflect the group tendency in the stative, accomplishment, and achievement VPs. On the activity VPs, there is variation between the students' past tense choices. Overall there is a 52%/48%-split in the *passé composé*/*imparfait* distribution here. Roughly a third of the students, however, appears to prefer the *passé composé* (M1, M5, M6, M8, M10, M13), a third the *imparfait* (M2, M3, M7, M9, M15), and a final third uses both tenses more or less equally with activities (M4, M11, M12, M14). Based on these individual results, it is difficult to argue that all participants are sensitive to either the durative/terminative or the stative/dynamic contrast. Rather, these results suggest that not all Dutch students of French are equal in this regard, and that part of the students appears to be sensitive to the durativity or the dynamicity of the VP, while the other students do not appear to be sensitive to either contrast at this stage of L2 past tense acquisition.

In the pairwise discussions, all students acknowledged finding the task of choosing between the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* difficult when writing in French in general or in the translation task specifically. Students also recognised being influenced by the, simplex or complex, past tense form used in the Dutch source text when deciding between the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*. Furthermore, the discussions reveal that students partly base their choice on whether or not, in the context of the story to be translated, the VP describes something that had already taken place or is still going on, e.g. reading a file in (3d). Students also take into account whether a VP is punctual or not, e.g. getting up in (3e) (achievement), asking a short question in (3a) (accomplishment), or giving a short answer versus giving an answer of a few sentences (3b). While not all participants give similar grounds for choosing a certain past tense form, it is clear that they do not base their choices on intuition alone, and that there is conscious deliberation on why one or the other past tense form should be used. Interesting to note is that there are but 6 explicit mentions by only three participants of previous teaching instruction regarding the use of the *passé composé* and the *imparfait*. Other students do appear to invoke rules they have learned (e.g. the VP is an

accomplishment and has terminated in the past, thus it requires a *passé composé*), yet do not explicitly mention it being a rule they have been taught.

While only being a small-scale study, the present study shows that while the monolingual Dutch participants tested here can all be considered advanced learners of French based on a general language proficiency test (Tremblay, 2011), their performance on past tense choice in a translation task shows variation, with a number of students scoring low or very low on tense choice accuracy. Overall, the *imparfait* was overused by a number of students in contexts where Dutch uses a simplex tense and French requires a *passé composé*. Other students overused the *passé composé* in contexts where the *imparfait* was required. The contrast with the bilinguals who mostly agreed with Camus (Tavenier, 2018) in their choice of tense forms shows that this is not a mere translation effect.

Domínguez et al. (2013) and González and Quintana Hernández (2018) found English learners of Spanish to be influenced by the dynamicity of the VP in their L2 past tense productions. González and Quintana Hernández (2018) extended their study to Dutch learners of Spanish and Tavenier (2018) studied Dutch learners of French. They found that the Dutch learners of both Spanish and French appeared to be influenced by the durativity of the VP in their L2 past tense productions. In the present study, the general tendency of the advanced Dutch learners of French in their distribution of past tense forms across aspectual classes on the whole is similar to that observed by González and Quintana Hernández (2018).

The design of the present study, however, permits to look past the group tendencies and into the individual translations and compare the individual translations of participants. This reveals variation between participants in the class of activity VPs, where there is an even three-way split between a preference for the *imparfait*, preference for the *passé composé*, or a more or less equal use of both tenses. This means that the sensitivity to the durativity or dynamicity of the VP, as described for beginning to intermediate Dutch and English learners of Spanish (Domínguez et al., 2013; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018), does

not appear to be present across Dutch monolinguals at advanced stages of L2 French acquisition. These results also show that, while the group tendency might be pointing towards a preference for the *passé composé* in activity VPs, it is valuable to be able to look into the data of individual participants as well, as the picture painted by the aggregate data does not necessarily reflect individual past tense choices. This is one of the reasons why having participants translate the same source text is an interesting and useful way of approaching TA acquisition research.

Salaberry (1999, 2011) and McManus (2013), among others, have observed that learners appear to have a default past tense at beginning and advanced stages of their L2 acquisition respectively. The present results suggest that the advanced learners of French have the *passé composé* as the default with accomplishments and achievements, and the *imparfait* as default in states. Based on the individual translations, a third of the students appears to have the *imparfait* as the default past tense on activity VPs, and two-thirds the *passé composé*.

The LREs from the pairwise discussions confirm the role of L1 influence as indicated by Tavenier (2018) and the learners' struggle with the difference in distribution between the *passé composé/imparfait* and the *vtt/ovt*. The reasons students give that are not based on intuition show that they mainly take into account whether (a) an action or event is instantaneous or lasts for a while, (b) whether an action or event has fully taken place at the time of utterance or is still going on, and (c) whether this action or event is simultaneous with, preceding, or following another (set of) action(s) that is going on or has already finished. This shows that, while students do consciously deliberate their tense choice, the *passé composé/imparfait* contrast is a real trouble-spot for Dutch learners of French, even though it is a recurring subject from secondary education through university instruction.

The present study is a promising exploration into the possibilities of applying a combined translation methodology and LREs from pairwise discussions in second language acquisition research. The translation task allows for studying group tendencies in larger

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student samples, while simultaneously allowing for the comparison of participants' individual translations, as they are translations of the same source text. The LREs provide an initial insight into why participants made the (tense) choices they made, which can serve as a starting point for further investigation of the influence of instruction on what students actually do when writing/speaking in the L2. Combining the translation and LRE methodology with eye-tracking and/or keystroke data could further supplement the knowledge of why (advanced) L2 learners make the choices they make when translating or writing a text in their L2. This knowledge can subsequently be applied in the further development and refining of instruction materials.

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## RÉSUMÉ FRANÇAIS

**Du néerlandais au français : Les temps verbaux en français langue seconde**

## 1. L'ACQUISITION DU TEMPS ET DE L'ASPECT EN L2

Dans la recherche sur l'acquisition du temps et de l'aspect en L2, l'Hypothèse de l'Aspect (« *Aspect Hypothesis* », AH), a influencé le champ de recherche depuis sa formulation par Andersen et Shirai (Andersen, 1986, 1991, 2002 ; Shirai & Andersen, 1995). Plus récemment, on s'est éloigné de l'AH (cf. Clahsen et al., 2010 ; Diaubalick & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2016, 2019) et les recherches se sont focalisées entre autre sur la présence d'un temps du passé standard (« *Default Past Tense Hypothesis* », DPTH, cf. McManus, 2013 ; Salaberry, 1999, 2011) et l'influence de la langue primaire (L1) sur l'acquisition du temps et de l'aspect dans la L2 (cf. Domínguez, Arche & Myles, 2017 ; González & Quintana Hernández, 2018 ; Tavenier, 2018).

Les étudiants anglophones de français dans Labeau (2005) utilisent le passé composé et l'imparfait avec des verbes lexicalement perfectifs, atéliques et statiques, ce qui indiquerait une maîtrise approfondie de la morphologie des temps du passé en français. Pourtant, ceci n'est pas le cas, car les apprenants de première année surutilisent l'imparfait dans des contextes où un autre temps du passé est requis. Salaberry (1999, 2011) et McManus (2013), entre autres, ont constaté que des apprenants L2 débutants et avancés recourent à un temps du passé standard. Domínguez et al. (2017) ont trouvé que des apprenants anglophones de l'espagnol sont influencés par la L1 dans des contextes perfectifs, habituels et continus. Domínguez et al. (2013) concluent que des apprenants anglophones de l'espagnol sont influencés non pas par la télicité du verbe mais par la dimension aspectuelle statif/dynamique, qui oppose les verbes d'état aux verbes d'achèvement, d'accomplissement et d'activité.

González et Quintana Hernández (2018) démontrent que les apprenants anglais de l'espagnol suivent les tendances indiquées par Domínguez et al. (2013) et semblent baser

leurs choix entre l'Imparfait et le Prétérit sur la dimension statif/dynamique. Par contre, les apprenants néerlandais de l'espagnol semblent baser leurs choix des temps du passé sur la dimension duratif/terminatif, qui oppose les verbes d'état et d'activité aux verbes d'achèvement et d'accomplissement. L'étude préliminaire de Tavenier (2018) montre qu'une partie d'un groupe d'étudiants universitaires néerlandophones du français L2 semble choisir le temps du verbe en fonction de l'aspect du syntagme verbal comparable aux apprenants néerlandophones dans González et Quintana Hernández (2018) : ils utilisent un imparfait pour les syntagmes duratifs et un passé composé pour les syntagmes terminatifs. Les autres étudiants de Tavenier sont influencés par la forme morphologique du verbe dans la L1.

## 2. LES TEMPS DU PASSÉ EN FRANÇAIS ET EN NÉERLANDAIS

En français parlé, et dans le français écrit de la plupart des étudiants de français L2, le passé composé (PC), un temps verbal morphologiquement complexe au parfait, s'oppose à l'imparfait (IMP), une forme imperfective et morphologiquement simple (Comrie, 1976). Le néerlandais utilise également un temps simple (le *onvoltooid verleden tijd*, OVT) et complexe (le *voltooid tegenwoordige tijd*, VTT) pour référer à des événements du passé, mais l'opposition est différente que celle du français. Le VTT ne s'utilise pas dans des contextes de narration où l'on peut utiliser un PC en français (Van der Klis, Le Bruyn & De Swart, 2019, 2020 ; De Swart, 2007).

## 3. LA PRÉSENTE RECHERCHE

Compte tenu des résultats des recherches précédentes, la présente recherche vise à déterminer (a) si les apprenants néerlandais du français L2 ont le même biais aspectuel que les apprenants néerlandais de l'espagnol (González & Quintana Hernández, 2018) comme proposé par Tavenier (2018), (b) s'ils ont un temps du passé standard et (c) quelles raisons ils donnent pour leurs choix des temps verbaux.

La présente recherche comprenait 15 participants, des étudiants néerlandais en seconde ou troisième année de leurs études de français à une université néerlandaise. Il y avait deux

tâches principales, ainsi que deux tâches secondaires. Les tâches secondaires consistaient en un questionnaire sur l'histoire linguistique des participants et d'un test de texte à trous (« *cloze test* », Tremblay, 2011) pour déterminer le niveau linguistique des participants. La première tâche principale était la traduction individuelle d'un texte néerlandais en français (deux extraits de la traduction néerlandaise de *L'Étranger* de Camus) pour pouvoir étudier et comparer l'usage des temps verbaux en français et déterminer si l'influence aspectuelle joue un rôle dans les choix des étudiants. Par rapport à une tâche de production libre, une tâche de traduction individuelle permet de comparer les traductions des participants ainsi qu'avoir le contrôle sur le texte source et les formes verbales qui y sont utilisées. Selon la dimension duratif/terminatif, les syntagmes verbaux duratifs recevront un IMP et les syntagmes terminatifs un PC. Les syntagmes statifs recevront un IMP et les syntagmes dynamiques un PC. La seconde tâche principale consistait en la discussion en binômes des traductions réalisées. Les transcriptions ont été codées pour extraire les épisodes linguistiques liés au choix des temps verbaux (« *Language Related Episodes* », LRE, Swain & Lapkin, 1998), afin d'obtenir un aperçu des raisons données par les étudiants pour leurs choix des temps du passé en français.

#### 4. LES RÉSULTATS

Les scores du cloze test (Tremblay, 2011) indiquent que les étudiants sont, en effet, des apprenants avancés du français. Trois étudiants ont un score bas ou très bas de temps verbaux, 4 un score moyen et 8 un score (très) élevé. Cependant, il n'y a pas de corrélation entre le niveau linguistique général et la compétence au niveau du choix des temps verbaux. De plus, un tiers des étudiants utilise le PC dans des contextes où l'IMP est la forme attendue et un tiers utilise l'IMP dans des contextes où le PC est la forme attendue. Ceci pourrait indiquer la présence d'un temps du passé standard pour (une partie de) ces étudiants.

##### 4.1. Les prédictions d'influence aspectuelle

Les correspondances des traductions aux prédictions selon les oppositions aspectuelles

duratif/terminatif et statif/dynamique montrent que la prédiction selon une des deux oppositions n'est pas meilleure que l'autre. Pour l'opposition duratif/terminatif, les prédictions sont meilleures pour les syntagmes verbaux terminatifs que pour les syntagmes duratifs et pour l'opposition statif/dynamique les prédictions sont meilleures pour les syntagmes statifs que pour les syntagmes dynamiques. Le choix des temps verbaux est donc relativement stable d'un étudiant à l'autre pour les verbes d'état, d'achèvement et d'accomplissement, où respectivement 12%, 81% et 77% des verbes est au PC et le reste à l'IMP. Dans la catégorie des verbes d'activité, le PC est utilisé légèrement plus (52% des verbes) que l'IMP (48%). La distribution des temps verbaux au niveau du groupe vue ici est comparable à celle du Prétérit et de l'Imparfait par des apprenants néerlandais de l'espagnol observée par González et Quintana Hernández (2018).

#### 4.2. *Les discussions en binômes*

Les étudiants ont discuté leurs traductions en binômes en néerlandais et ont produit entre 9 et 64 LRE relatif aux choix des temps verbaux (253 LRE en total, moyennant 37 par discussion). Les étudiants indiquent trouver difficile le choix des temps verbaux ( $N = 44$ ), de choisir en fonction de leur intuition ou ce qui 'sonne mieux' dans un contexte ( $N = 66$ ) et d'être influencés par la forme morphologique du verbe néerlandais ( $N = 33$ ). Dans 74% des cas, les étudiants donnent des raisons plus élaborées pour avoir choisi un temps plutôt qu'un autre. On se base entre autres sur la durée de l'événement, l'ordre de l'événement dans une suite d'événements, le fait qu'un événement est terminé ou non dans le contexte de l'histoire et le fait qu'un événement est ponctuel ou non. Il y a également certains étudiants qui réfèrent explicitement à leur enseignement antérieur, invoquant des cours précédents, ou implicitement, invoquant de façon indirecte des règles qu'ils ont apprises.

## 5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Les scores du cloze test (Tremblay, 2011) indiquent que les étudiants sont tous des apprenants avancés du français. Pourtant, les scores des choix des temps verbaux et la

correspondance avec la traduction de référence montrent de la variation individuelle sur la tâche de traduction ; 3/15 étudiants ont un score bas ou très bas, 4/15 un score moyen et 8/15 un score élevé à très élevé. Le fait que les traductions de deux étudiants bilingues français/néerlandais correspondent fortement au texte de Camus (Tavenier, 2018) indique que les scores moins élevés des étudiants néerlandais ne sont pas le résultat d'un simple effet de traduction mais signalent un vrai point de difficulté.

La distribution des temps du passé est comparable à la tendance observé par González et Quintana Hernández (2018). Pourtant, la méthode de la présente recherche permet d'étudier les traductions individuelles des étudiants, ce qui révèle que les résultats individuels ne soutiennent pas un biais aspectuel général, car la variation entre les étudiants est considérable dans la catégorie des activités. Un tiers des étudiants préfère le PC, un tiers préfère l'IMP et encore un tiers utilise les deux temps de façon plus ou moins comparable avec les activités. Il est donc difficile de maintenir que les apprenants néerlandais du français ont un biais aspectuel selon soit la dimension statif/dynamique soit duratif/terminatif. Les résultats suggèrent plutôt que les étudiants ne sont pas égaux à cet égard et que certains sont sensibles à une des deux dimensions aspectuelles, alors que d'autres ne le sont pas.

Concernant la DPTH (McManus, 2013 ; Salaberry, 1999, 2011), les étudiants néerlandais du français utilisent le PC ( $N = 399$ ) plus souvent que l'IMP ( $N = 342$ ) dans le total des traductions, ce qui suggère que le PC est le temps du passé standard pour ces étudiants. Pourtant, au niveau individuel, 10 étudiants utilisent le PC le plus dans leurs traductions (dans 66% des syntagmes verbaux) et 5 étudiants utilisent l'IMP le plus (dans 69% des syntagmes verbaux). Les étudiants avancés du français ont, en effet, un temps du passé standard. Pour un tiers, c'est l'IMP et pour deux tiers c'est le PC.

Dans les discussions en binômes, les étudiants reconnaissent trouver difficile de choisir entre le PC et l'IMP quand ils écrivent en français et qu'ils sont influencés par la forme du verbe néerlandais, simple ou complexe, dans leurs choix. Les étudiants se demandent s'il s'agit d'un événement en cours ou terminé, d'une habitude, d'une suite d'événements ou



d'événements simultanés, si l'événement est un achèvement ou un accomplissement. Ils se basent donc également sur des informations aspectuelles et des règles apprises, bien qu'implicitement.

Pour conclure, bien que tous les participants sont des apprenants avancés du français, il existe de grandes différences individuelles dans les choix des temps verbaux. Le contraste avec les bilingues rapportés dans Tavenier (2018), qui sont pour la plupart d'accord avec Camus, montre que nous n'avons pas affaire à un artefact méthodologique. La tendance générale concernant l'utilisation de l'IMP et du PC dans les différentes classes aspectuelles reflète la tendance rapportée par González et Quintana Hernández (2018). Pourtant, la méthode de la présente recherche permet l'évaluation des productions individuelles, ce qui montre qu'il y a de la variation individuelle dans les verbes d'activité. Bien que la moyenne du groupe indique un biais aspectuel, les étudiants étudiés ici ne sont pas tous influencés par l'opposition duratif/terminatif ou statif/dynamique. L'usage des temps du passé indique que deux tiers des étudiants ont le PC comme temps du passé standard, tandis que c'est l'IMP pour l'autre tiers. Finalement, les LRE confirment l'influence de la L1, comme indiquée par Tavenier (2018), et la difficulté qu'ont les étudiants avec les distributions différentes des temps du passé français et néerlandais. Les raisons que donnent les étudiants pour choisir le PC ou l'IMP montrent que le contraste PC/IMP est un point difficile pour les étudiants néerlandophones, même s'il s'agit d'un sujet récurrent depuis l'enseignement secondaire jusqu'à l'enseignement universitaire.