Chapter 1

CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF TENSE AND ASPECT IN DUTCH AND SPANISH

1.1. Surveying the domain of investigation

Before embarking upon a theoretical analysis of tense and aspect, it is necessary to give a preparatory survey of the domain of investigation which is the base of this analysis. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to present a comparison between the Spanish and the Dutch systems expressing temporal and aspectual information. Aspect and tense are two dependent notions in the realm of temporality, and, as such, they need to be conjointly dealt with. The following introductory sections discuss the rationale behind the requirement of an adequate description of tense and aspect systems for the purposes of this thesis, and present an account of the intimate relationship between three notions that play a crucial role in the domain of investigation: tense, grammatical aspect and predicational aspect.

1.1.1. The requirement of a description of tense and aspect systems

Among the many grammatical difficulties encountered while learning and teaching Spanish as a foreign language, in particular for speakers of non-Romance languages, one finds the obligatory aspecual expression in the verbal morphology of the two simple past forms in Spanish (Rimmer 1996, Westfall and Foerster 1996) among others). Germanic languages do not exhibit the aspecual division between a past imperfective and a past perfective in their tense system. It is generally believed that the fact that this opposition is not grammaticalized in Germanic languages, is the cause of the difficulty. However, this deficiency is not enough to characterize the acquisitional problems behind the learning of the two past tenses in Spanish for Dutch speakers. Although this thesis focuses only on Dutch, the same is essentially true for other Germanic languages. Other linguistic factors appearing in either the source language or the target language will also need to be taken into account. A cross-linguistic analysis between Dutch and Spanish may point out which are the other linguistic factors that may also influence the intricacies behind the learning and teaching of the Spanish aspecual system.

Cross-linguistic research between languages is a very important tool for establishing general linguistic principles and for acquiring a deeper knowledge of the structure of such languages. This study supports the conviction that a cross-linguistic analysis needs to highlight both the correspondences and the differences between the two languages at stake. To successfully carry out a cross-linguistic analysis between the Spanish and Dutch temporal and aspectual systems, one needs to characterize them both with similar terms. Only then can the language systems be optimally compared. In the present cross-linguistic analysis, the correspondences between the two languages play as important a role as their differences. In
particular, the establishment of the correspondences and the differences will be achieved by comparing the Spanish and Dutch tense systems on the basis of the same sort of organizing principles. The present cross-linguistic analysis will help to understand specific choices made by a language that has a variety of morphological forms available, as opposed to a language where the system is simpler in this respect.

In the area of tense and aspect, evidence has been growing that there are significant cross-linguistic generalizations. To compare tense and aspect systems of certain languages is a challenging task; languages have developed different strategies to encode temporal-aspectual meanings expressed by their sentences. Focusing on the meaning and not on the form, may turn out to be a more straightforward strategy. Cross-linguistic interpretation of grammatical meaning as abstracted from grammatical form will be argued to lead to an efficient cross-linguistic analysis on tense and aspect.

By providing a sufficiently adequate description of Dutch and Spanish tense and aspect systems, regarding both form and meaning, the analysis introduced in the present thesis will serve as tool for understanding the intricacies behind the learning of grammatical aspect in second languages. At different stages of this book, the L1 (Dutch) and the interlanguage production will be compared to the target language (Spanish) by means of the analysis proposed in this chapter.

The present analysis on tense and aspect systems will be restricted mainly to sentential grammar. This implies that the uses of tense and aspect markers in cases where the meaning of the verbal morphology is clearly affected by other tensed forms in the rest of the discourse, are not systematically included in the analysis. Context plays an important role in the understanding of meanings and uses of aspectual morphology as observed by Silva-Corvalán (1983), among many others, who concludes that the meaning of the tensed verbal forms is in part constrained by the narrative context in which they occur. However, the present study is restricted to establish at the micro-level, so to say, what happens aspectually and temporally inside the sentence. A precise understanding of how tense and aspect interact within a sentence is a sine qua non condition, not yet obtained, for a better understanding of their roles in discourse. The present analysis is a contribution to a theory that aims to describe tense and aspect in an interlanguage sentence and how this sentence relates precisely to its translational equivalent in L1 and in the target language. In particular, the outcome of this theoretical analysis may contribute to a better understanding of how L2 learners manage to organize the temporal structuring of sentences in L2. The focus of the present research concerns the construction of complex temporal information in the sentential domain. At the beginning stages of language acquisition, second language learners make a distributional choice between the two simple past tenses in Spanish. The signalling of the relevance of the sentential aspectual information in this distribution will be the core of this theoretical analysis.
1.1.2. The interdependency of tense and aspect

Temporality is an essential feature of sentences in most languages and its grammatical expression through morphology is obligatory in many languages. The notion of temporality taken in a broad sense covers both temporal and aspectual linguistic elements.

Tense and aspect are often treated as a twin pair having complementary tasks: tense is said to provide the location of the eventuality\(^1\) described, aspect is taken as giving information either about the properties of the eventuality or the way the eventuality is presented. In Romance languages, both tense and aspect are overtly marked in verbal inflection, appearing together in the two simple past tense forms. Tense information is deictic in its essence because it is tied up with the position of the speaker in the real time of the discourse. Aspect, on the other hand, is a non-deictic grammatical device. It does not depend, as tense does, on the specific communicative situation to have a full semantic interpretation. It will be assumed here that aspect can define the temporal hosting domain of an eventuality from two basic perspectives: perfective or imperfective (Borik & González 2000). It is this characterization of aspect as providing perspective that makes its morphological actualisation interfere with other verbal categories, in this case tense, as tense provides a location in time, aspect offers a perspective from which this location can be looked at.

The boundaries between tense and aspect systems are not clear-cut, neither is the notion of aspect itself, as will be made clear shortly. Defining one of the two systems needs to profit from defining the other one. Without taking into account their mutual interaction, a description of the two systems will turn out to be incomplete. Moreover, from a language acquisition point of view, the acquisition of aspect needs to be discussed along with the acquisition of tense, most of all because the latter has been shown to develop in close collaboration with the former, in both L1 and L2 acquisition (Li & Shirai 2000).

To sum up, both aspect and tense will be considered here as two interrelated phenomena in the realm of constructing and interpreting temporal information.

1.1.3. Two sorts of aspect

The notion of aspect has been used informally so far to distinguish aspectual information from temporal information. To describe the interdependency of aspect and tense, aspect was taken to mean only what in the literature is generally called grammatical aspect or viewpoint aspect. The picture, however, is more complex than this: following recent proposals (Verkuyl 1997, Borik 2002, Krifka 1998, among others), a distinction will be made between what will be called predicational aspect and grammatical aspect.

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\(^1\) Eventuality is seen throughout this chapter as the global term embracing states, processes and events. An eventuality will be taken as the semantic value of a tenseless predication. The term situation will be used (informally) to denote a tensed eventuality. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the two, but precise definitions are not really necessary because the terms are used at the pre-theoretical level.
Predicational aspect is essentially the modern successor to the notion of Aktionsart as developed in the study of Slavic aspect. The problem with the notion of Aktionsart is that it was used to describe a lexical property of the verb. Nowadays, it has become clear that it is the verb and its arguments that provide the aspectual information about the aspectual nature of a predication. The old distinction between Aktionsart and grammatical aspect now returns as the distinction between predicational aspect (compositionally formed from the interaction between the verb and its arguments) and grammatical aspect. Grammatical aspect is said to express the perspective on the eventuality described. It is encoded in the verbal morphology of many languages (e.g. Spanish). Predicational aspect takes place at the level of phrase structure.

By distinguishing grammatical aspect and predicational aspect, one could speak about a tense-aspect triangle: tense, grammatical aspect and predicational aspect. As demonstrated below, each of the three phenomena has its own contribution to make to the expression of temporality within the sentence.

The relation between the three notions may become clearer with the help of examples. Consider (1a) below.

(1a) Peter drank a beer
(1b) PAST [Peter drink a beer]

The representation of (1a) given in (1b) expresses that the basic, first-level aspectual information comes from the tenseless predication, i.e. [Peter drink a beer]. In this sense, predicational aspect differs crucially from the temporality contributed by tense. The notion of completion, which is intuitively associated with (1a), is already there before tense is taken into account: the tenseless sentence expresses termination due to the choice of the verb and of the arguments. The tenseless predication in (1b) is terminative (cf. Verkuyl 1972, Krifka 1989 (who uses the term telic in this connection) and many others), because the information expressed by combining ‘a beer’ and ‘drink’ into a verb phrase ‘drink a beer’ and by combining this verb phrase and ‘Peter’ into ‘Peter drink a beer’, expresses something that presents itself as a unit, as something that can be discerned as complete when compared to the rest of the domain of discourse. To underline that the level of aspectual representation, corresponding to the tenseless part of a sentence, is in fact a predication, the aspectual information collected at that level, is called predicational aspect (Vet 1994). Some authors use the term ‘eventuality description’ in this connection (De Swart 1998).

Predicational aspect crucially concerns the information about the relationship between the verb and its arguments. If the speaker of example (1) had used as the direct object the mass noun ‘beer’, or the subject ‘nobody’ or the verb ‘want’,

(2a) Peter drank beer
(2b) PAST [Peter drink beer]
(2c) Nobody drank beer
In separating the tense operator PAST from the tenseless predication as in (2b), it is assumed that the aspectual value of a predication determined at this level of representation remains intact. Therefore, its value is taken as independent of any specific tense information. Of course, the tense operator has an effect on the predication, but it will not change its aspectual value. This picture seems to hold for Germanic languages like Dutch and English.

Nevertheless, in some languages, the connection between tense and aspect is more intimate than in Germanic languages. Spanish (like other Romance languages) has two inflectional forms for the past tense sentence (1a): ‘drank’ can be translated as either bebió or bebía (see examples (3) and (4)).

(3) Iñaki bebió una cerveza
PAST PERFECTIVE [Iñaki drank a beer]
‘Iñaki drank a beer’

(4) Iñaki bebía una cerveza
PAST IMPERFECTIVE [Iñaki drink a beer]
‘Iñaki drank/was drinking a beer’

The difference between the two past forms can only be understood by assuming that certain tense forms express aspectual information. This aspectual information is called grammatical aspect and is encoded at an intermediate level between the tenseless level where predicational aspect is determined and the past temporal level. In particular, grammatical aspect characterizes the domain in which the eventuality takes place either as perfective (as in (3)) or imperfective (as in (4)). For French, there are several proposals in which the scheme in (5) has been used to account for the different roles in the tense-aspect triangle (Vet 1994, de Swart 1998):

(5) TENSE [ASPECT [predication]]

The general idea connected with this scheme is that the lowest level of the eventuality description is taken as expressing predicational aspect, that the next step is provided by aspecual operators expressing perspective, that is, the perfective-imperfective distinction, and that the final step is the application of the tense operator. This scheme opens up the question of how the intermediate position of the aspect operator should be analysed: is it part of tense or does it have close ties to predicational aspect? This question will be discussed in detail below. At this stage, it suffices to point out that, for Spanish, scheme (5) seems to be called for: it will be assumed in the remainder of this chapter.

In the next sections, a detailed description of both the Dutch and the Spanish temporal and aspectual systems will be given. These descriptions will include the three components of the tense-aspect triangle: predicational aspect, grammatical aspect and tense. Extra attention will be given to how each language deals with its available components and how the notions interrelate in a sentential domain. The
emphasis will be on the interpretation of past tenses, in particular, on the differences and similarities in forms and meanings between the two languages at issue: Dutch and Spanish.

### 1.2. The tense system of Dutch and Spanish (Indicative conjugation)

The two tense systems characterized in the following sections have been traditionally presented as in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Dutch and Spanish Tense systems*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'works'</td>
<td>Onvoltooid tegenwoordige tijd (OTT)</td>
<td>werkt</td>
<td>Presente</td>
<td>trabaja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'has worked'</td>
<td>Voltooid tegenwoordige tijd (VTT)</td>
<td>heeft gewerkt</td>
<td>Pretérito perfecto</td>
<td>ha trabajado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'worked'</td>
<td>Onvoltooid verleden tijd (OVT)</td>
<td>werkte</td>
<td>Pretérito imperfecto</td>
<td>trabajaba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'had worked'</td>
<td>Voltooid verleden tijd (VVT)</td>
<td>had gewerkt</td>
<td>Pretérito indefinido</td>
<td>trabajó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pretérito pluscuamperfecto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'will work'</td>
<td>Onvoltooid tegenwoordige toekomende tijd (OTT)</td>
<td>zal werken</td>
<td>Futuro imperfecto</td>
<td>trabajaré</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'will have worked'</td>
<td>Voltooid tegenwoordige toekomende tijd (VTT)</td>
<td>zal gewerkt</td>
<td>Futuro perfecto</td>
<td>trabajado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'would work'</td>
<td>Onvoltooid verleden toekomende tijd (OVTT)</td>
<td>zou werken</td>
<td>Condicional simple o imperfecto</td>
<td>trabajaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'would have worked'</td>
<td>Voltooid verleden toekomende tijd (VVTT)</td>
<td>zou gewerkt</td>
<td>Condicional compuesto o perfecto</td>
<td>habria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this section, two tense theories that describe the systems in Table 1 are dealt with: Reichenbach’s temporal model (1947) and a binary approach traditionally applied to the Dutch temporal system (from as early as the 1860’s). Both systems will be applied to the Spanish and Dutch indicative conjugation. The purpose of the present section will be to investigate which of the approaches best describes the Spanish system. Special attention will be given to the terminological confusion behind the terms ‘perfect’ and ‘perfective’. It will be argued that the assumption of an independence of tense and aspect levels may provide a satisfactory solution. That is, it is possible to reduce the confusion by consistently treating the perfect as a tense form and the perfective as an aspectual form.

1.2.1. Reichenbach’s temporal model

A short description of Reichenbach’s model is necessary because his model has become a kind of standard, against which alternatives have to be defined. Reichenbach introduces three temporal units: E (event point), R (reference point) and S (speech point). The relations between these units -- that is, between E and R and between R and S -- are established at the same time. The relative positions of S and R account for the past, the present and the future (R<S, S,R and S>R), whereas the set of relations between E and R are characterized as anterior (E<R), present (E,R) and posterior (R<E). By adding up all positions and their relations in this 3x3 system, nine tenses show up (see Table 2 for examples of each tense form).

The reference point R plays a very important role in Reichenbach’s theory, as it behaves as the intermediate point between S and E. This means that there is no direct relation between the two latter. In other words, the time E cannot be located with respect to the time at which the speaker utters the sentence (S) without first locating it with respect to the reference time (R).

As has already been discerned in the literature, there are a number of empirically based objections to Reichenbach’s original system. Some of the most important ones are those of Comrie (1981, 1985) and Declerk (1991). An important objection is that Reichenbach’s model lacks the capability to describe the tensed form I would have V+ed, which appears in all Romance and Germanic languages. However, there is also a conceptual problem. Compositionality is one of the main principles of modern semantics. Due to its 3x3 set up, Reichenbach’s model is not compositional (see Verkuyl 2001 for discussion). The relationships between the three temporal units of Reichenbach (E, R, and S) are established at the same time and not on the basis of presence or absence of certain linguistic forms. This means, therefore, that the system does not provide a subsequent set of temporal operations, which would optimally lead to a compositional interpretation of the resulting temporal configuration, which is what modern semantics would prefer.

Reichenbach’s system as applied to Dutch results in Table 2 below (as given in Borik, González & Verkuyl 2003). An application of this system to Spanish is given in Table 5.

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2 The notion ‘point’ is used here in a loose way so as to make it possible to let a point in the system stand for a point in time but also for an interval.
Table 2 illustrates the main two objections to Reichenbach’s system: (a) the ‘voltoooid verleden toekomende tijd’ (VVTT) (ik zou gewerkt hebben ‘I would have worked’) does not have a cell assigned; (b) one and the same form (Ik zal werken, ‘I will work’) occupies the cells ‘simple future’, ‘present future’ and ‘future future’, whereas the cells ‘posterior past’ and ‘anterior future’ have three configurations. These objections show that there are some inconsistencies in the system (cf. Verkuyl & Leloux-Schuringa 1985 for a more detailed list of criticisms).

### 1.2.2. The binary approach

In an attempt to improve on the description of the English tense system in Reichenbach (1947), a temporal system based on a binary approach was developed by Te Winkel (1866). This system has been described in Verkuyl & Leloux-Schuringa (1985) as part of a comparison between four tense systems and recently modernized in Verkuyl (2001, 2002). In its present form, the binary system incorporates the virtues of Reichenbach’s system (1947), but may prove more effective because it provides solutions for the objections against a 3x3-approach and it adds a compositional element due to its binary set up.

The binary tense system is formed on the basis of Te Winkel’s three-layered system of oppositions: (i) Present versus Past, (ii) Synchronous versus Posterior and (iii) Completed versus Uncompleted. In other words, rather than having a 3x3 Reichenbachian design, the binary system has a 2x2x2 set up, correctly predicting
the eight Dutch and English tense forms. Every tense form is composed on the basis of a choice made at each of the three steps. The three oppositions will now be discussed in more detail on the basis of a modernized formal semantic make up:

The system of oppositions discussed here bases its foundations on translational synonymy by abstracting from the specific forms used in the different tense systems. In this way, morphologically rich tense systems of Romance languages can be related to synthetic periphrastic tense systems such as Dutch. In section 2.4., it will be illustrated how the Spanish forms can be analysed successfully with this temporal approach.

1) Present vs. Past

For the semantic representation of sentences expressing a Present Tense or a Past Tense the operators PRES and PAST will be used, respectively. They can be semantically interpreted as connecting the information expressed by a tenseless structure either to a point in the present domain of interpretation, or to a point in the past. The point of time introduced by the operator PAST can be seen as fulfilling the point of speech in the past. That is, PAST provides a sort of present in the past from which the rest of the tense information can be calculated. The opposition between Present and Past is primary with respect to the other two operative oppositions. In example (6), the tenseless structure \([\text{Joost slapen}]\) is connected to a point in the present domain, in example (7), to a point in the past domain.

(6) \(\text{Joost slaapt} \quad \text{PRES [Joost slapen]}\)
    ‘Joost sleeps’

(7) \(\text{Joost sliep} \quad \text{PAST [Joost slapen]}\)
    ‘Joost slept’

The primacy of this opposition is due to the fact that there is no tensed sentence without either a Present or a Past form. For instance, in the Dutch sentence in (8), the form of the future auxiliary \(zal\) is present as opposed to the past form \(zou\) in (9).

(8) \(\text{Mirjam zal komen}\)
    ‘Mirjam will come’

(9) \(\text{Mirjam zou komen}\)
    ‘Mirjam would come’

The future and the conditional in Dutch and in English are not primary tenses. One could argue that these forms in Spanish or any other Romance language are primary tenses, where due to the rich tense morphology, future and conditional forms are expressed as independent morphological forms. See examples (10) and (11).

(10) \((\text{Te digo que}) \text{ vendré mañana}\)
    ‘(I tell you that) I will come tomorrow’
One could argue here on the basis of the presence of two different morphemes -ré and -ría, that these verb forms (vendré and vendría) are morphologically neither present nor past. However, a closer look unveils that the temporal semantic opposition between the two forms points towards an understanding of (10) as related to the present and (11) as related to the past (as the verb form in the main sentence of each example already signifies). Vendré in (10) comprises the tense information of present + posterior, and vendría in (11) the tense information past + posterior. In terms of the ‘gram’ notion as proposed in Bybee & Dahl (1988), one may say that the auxiliaries zullen in Dutch and will in English on the one hand, and zou/would on the other hand, belong to the same gram as the Spanish morphemes -ré and -ría, respectively.

The main division made by PRES and PAST implies that apart from the Simple Present and the Simple Past, there are two sets of three tensed forms in the system that are identical except for their being a PRES-form or a PAST-form.

2) Synchronous – Posterior

A posterior verb form introduces an index positioned after the point introduced by PRES, or after the point introduced by PAST (see examples (8) and (9)). This opposition can be treated parsimoniously, in which case only one operator POST is introduced. The operator SYNCHR is not necessary. The thought behind this parsimonious treatment is that, ideally, if a description can be given without appealing to an abstract operator, no such operator should be included; operators are only there if there is some overt form to carry them.

The existence of the POST-operator means that the sense of future is not only associated with the utterance time, but also with a point located in the past which has been first introduced by the PAST-operator (see Ogihara (1996) for a similar treatment of the auxiliaries in English). In a binary system, future is made independent of the point of speech: it expresses simply posteriority. This can yield the temporal meaning of a future of the past (see (9)). The POST-operator allows the traditionally named conditional to be understood as a posterior past tense.

In Germanic languages, the operator is expressed periphrastically. For example, in Dutch, it is expressed by the presence of the auxiliary zullen, in English by the presence of will/shall, used either in present or in past tense (see examples (8) and (9) above).

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3 The decision to describe the system parsimoniously is practical: it suffices for the presentation of the binary tense system and there is no need to give the system in its full force. Apart from the practical side, one has to cope with the question of whether the SYNCHR-operator would express the absence of posteriority or the requirement of the presence of a point synchronous to another point. For discussion on this issue, see Verkuyl (2001).
3) Completed - Non-completed

This opposition amounts to the inverse of the previous one, that is, the synchronous-posterior opposition. The PERF-operator will be taken as providing a sense of anteriority.

Existing research shows that there has been a lot of discussion about a second sense contributed by PERF. Some scholars take the position that the focus in a sentence with the operator PERF is a part of the period that follows the end of the situation described, the focus is thus on the result of the eventuality (Moens & Steedman 1987, Kamp & Reyle 1993, among many others). This line of thought will be followed in the present analysis, without a commitment to the position that the expression of a result is part of the meaning of PERF or simply implied by it (as in Depraetere 1998, Verkuyl 2002).

There is a direct correspondence between the verbal compound forms and the simple ones in Romance and Germanic languages. The verbal compound forms composed with the auxiliary hebben ('have') contribute to the denotation of all simple verbal forms the indication of precedence or anteriority.

(12) I read
    PRES [I read]
(13) I have read
    PRES (PERF) [I read]

In Dutch, the operator PERF is visible in the form of an auxiliary hebben and in English, in the form of the auxiliary have. The operator PERF in Dutch shows in the compound verbal forms in the system, only when the conjugated auxiliary hebben appears. The tense inflection of the auxiliary expresses the temporal point (either present or past) with regard to which the compound form is delimited. For the purpose of this investigation, IMP as an operator is superfluous for the following reasons. First, there is no overt form marking all imperfect-non-complete verbal meanings. Second, if a verbal form is unmarked as far as its completeness is concerned, that already signifies a non-complete temporal meaning, therefore IMP. Again, as the SYNCH-operator, the IMP-operator is seen as being superfluous and therefore unnecessary for the system to function.

The system also allows for the combination of POST and PERF operators, as shown in (14) and (15). It is this sort of combinations that gives this theory its compositional taste.

(14) Sannie zal een wedstrijd gespeeld hebben
    PRES (POST) (PERF) [Sannie play a game]
    ‘Sannie will have played a game’
(15) Sannie zou een wedstrijd gespeeld hebben
    PAST (POST) (PERF) [Sannie play a game]
    ‘Sannie would have played a game’
Table 3 represents the possible combinations of operators, which make up the complete Dutch temporal system.

**Table 3**  
*Dutch temporal forms according to the binary system*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE 8 DUTCH TENSE FORMS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRES 1a) Ik schrijf een brief</td>
<td>&quot;I write a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES(PRES) 1b) Ik schreef een brief</td>
<td>&quot;I wrote a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES(POST) 2a) Ik zal een brief schrijven</td>
<td>&quot;I will write a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES(PERF) 3a) Ik heb een brief geschreven</td>
<td>&quot;I have written a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES(PERF)(PERF) 4a) Ik zal een brief geschreven hebben</td>
<td>&quot;I will have written a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST 1b) Ik schreef een brief</td>
<td>&quot;I wrote a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST(POST) 2b) Ik zou een brief schrijven</td>
<td>&quot;I would write a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST(PERF) 3b) Ik had een brief geschreven</td>
<td>&quot;I had written a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAST(PERF)(PERF) 4b) Ik zou een brief geschreven hebben</td>
<td>&quot;I would have written a letter&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main advantages of this binary temporal analysis are the following. First of all, the binary system is completely compositional: all eight Dutch tense forms can be derived compositionally as a result of a subsequent application of the operators to a tenseless predication\(^5\). Secondly, at least in Germanic languages, there is no need for a tripartition between present-past-future, but only the basic opposition between Past and Present remains. The primacy of the Present-Past opposition becomes obvious since, as observed earlier, it is the only opposition that needs both operators to always function in the system and also the one that always applies. It has already been pointed out that in Germanic languages there is no separate inflectional affix marking the future. From the point of view of morphology, there is only the past tense marking and a present tense conjugation. Thirdly, richer and poorer tense systems can also be described by this system.

In the remainder of this section, the third claim will be partly elaborated: the binary system should have the potential to expand in order to capture the verb systems of languages having more than eight forms, or shrink in order to account for the languages with less than eight forms\(^6\). By applying this temporal analysis to Spanish, it should extend itself to cover the ten indicative forms that the Spanish language contains.

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\(^{\text{5}}\) Verkuyl (2001) uses the formalism of lambda-abstraction for the derivation of the tense forms. The operators are therefore seen as lambda-functions taking their appropriate values.

\(^{\text{6}}\) Borik, González & Verkuyl (2002) present a tentative application of this theory to the poor tense system of Russian.
1.2.3. The Spanish Temporal system

The modern literature dealing with the temporal system of the Spanish language has mainly used the Reichenbachian analysis as a description model. A contemporary application of Reichenbach system to the Spanish language is found in Carrasco (1998). Table 4 below is taken from this work, where Carrasco (1998: 158) exemplifies the Reichenbachian system with the Spanish indicative conjugation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>Nomenclature</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Spanish nomenclature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| E-R-S       | Anterior past | había trabajado  
‘had worked’ | Pretérito pluscuamperfecto |
| E,R-S       | Simple past   | trabajó, trabajaba  
‘worked’ | Pretérito perfecto simple  
Pretérito imperfecto |
| R-E-S       | Posterior past| trabajaría  
‘would work’ | Condicional |
| R-S,E       |              |         |                      |
| R-S-E       |              |         |                      |
| E-S,R       | Anterior present | he trabajado  
‘have worked’ | Pretérito perfecto compuesto  
Presente |
| S,R,E       | Simple present | trabaja  
‘works’ | Presente |
| S,R-E       | Posterior present | trabajará  
‘will work’ | Futuro |
| S-E-R       | Anterior future | habré trabajado  
‘will have worked’ | Futuro perfecto |
| S-E-R       |              |         |                      |
| S-R,E       | Simple future | trabajará  
‘will work’ | Futuro |
| S-R-E       | Posterior future |         |                      |

Carrasco (1998) points out some empirical problems for the application of this system to the Spanish language. The most important of them is the fact that there is a Spanish verbal form, the conditional perfect (habría trabajado), which does not have a temporal structure, just as its English or Dutch counterpart (I would have worked, Ik zou gewerkt hebben).

The proposal of a system regulated by temporal operators may provide a better description and an explanation of the systematic organization of the Spanish indicative tense paradigm. Table 5 adapts Table 4 into the matrix already given for Dutch in Table 3. In this way, the comparison between the temporal systems according to a Reichenbachian analysis of the two languages is facilitated.
Table 5  
*Reichenbach’s matrix for Spanish*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>R&lt;S</strong></td>
<td>Anterior Past (Past Perfect)</td>
<td>Anterior Present (Present Perfect)</td>
<td>Anterior Future (Future Perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-R-S</td>
<td>E-R,S</td>
<td>E-S-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘había trabajado’</td>
<td>‘ha trabajado’</td>
<td>‘habrá trabajado’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E&lt;R</strong></td>
<td>Simple Past</td>
<td>Simple Present</td>
<td>Simple Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E,R</td>
<td>E,R,S</td>
<td>S-E,R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘trabajaba’</td>
<td>‘trabaja’</td>
<td>‘trabajará’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘worked’</td>
<td>‘works’</td>
<td>‘will work’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R&lt;E</strong></td>
<td>Posterior Past (Past Future)</td>
<td>Posterior Present (Present Future)</td>
<td>Posterior Future (Future Future)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R-E-S</td>
<td>S,R-E</td>
<td>S-R-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘trabajaría’</td>
<td>‘trabajará’</td>
<td>‘trabajará’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘would work’</td>
<td>‘will work’</td>
<td>‘will work’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 5 and 6 present the Spanish tense forms from two perspectives. Table 5 illustrates the matrix on Spanish Indicative verb forms according to Reichenbach’s proposal; Table 6 presents an application of the system of operators assigned to the Dutch temporal verb forms to the Spanish conjugation.
Table 6  Spanish indicative tense system according to the binary system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Spanish Indicative Tense System (Pronunciation)</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Pretérito imperfecto</td>
<td>Pretérito imperfecto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretérito perfecto simple</td>
<td>Pretérito perfecto simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Pretérito anterior</td>
<td>Pretérito anterior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicative forms of the Spanish verbal paradigm can be characterised in the same way as the Dutch tense system: as a combination of operators. The only difference is that in the darkened cells, instead of one form, there are two forms. The form doubling in the PAST cell 1b and in the PAST (PERF) cell 3b will be discussed shortly.
1) Present versus Past

Comparable to the Dutch forms, Present tense forms in Spanish connect the information expressed by the tenseless predication with a point in the present; Past tense forms with a point in the past.

However, there are two simple past forms in the Spanish table above. Roca Pons (1960) already pointed out that “from a temporal point of view, it is evident that there is no difference whatsoever between the imperfective and the perfective as far as its distance with the present is concerned”7. Silva-Corvalán (1983:233) states: “segmentation of anteriority is not a meaning which is preterit (past perfective8) specific”, which means that anteriority is shared with the imperfective form. The difference between these forms is aspectual, not temporal. This is why a temporal system does not need to describe the meaning differences between them in terms of different cells in the system.

2) Synchronous-Posterior

At first sight, all arguments are in favour of a description of the future and the conditional in Spanish as primary tenses. In fact, this is the leading position in traditional grammar. Its rich verbal morphology allows Spanish to express a future and a conditional forms (recall vendré, ‘I will come’, vendría, ‘I would come’) without having to appeal to auxiliary forms. However, as observed earlier, it is possible to analyse the tense morphemes in terms of the operators PRES (POST) and PAST (POST), respectively. The presence of the operator POST in Spanish associates its future not only with the present time (operated by PRES, see example (16)), but also with a point located in the past introduced by the PAST operator (as in (17)).

(16) (Digo que) vendré a las ocho
    ‘(I say that) I will come at eight’

(17) (Dije que) vendría a las ocho
    ‘(I said that) I would come at eight’

The notion of gram (Bybee & Dahl 1988) enables this system to analyse these forms in the same way as their counterparts in Dutch; that is, with the support of the POST operator (like cells 2a and 2b in Table 6).

3) Completed versus Non-completed

All simple forms in Table 6 are characterized and distinguished by not employing the PERF operator. Until now it matches the Germanic table exemplified by Dutch sentences (Table 2). Verb forms that are not provided by a sense of anteriority in Spanish are simple, while those forms that focus on the result of the eventuality described, make use of an auxiliary to carry the inflections. The auxiliary form adds

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7 Own translation
8 Own terminology
temporal positioning, whereas the participle adds the verbal semantic information. Together they express the idea of completion at the temporal level.

The PAST (PERF) cell 3b is, again, like the PAST cell 1b, occupied not by one, but by two verbal forms. The rationale behind this positioning of tenses is the same as the one found between the perfective and the imperfective simple forms. The difference between the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’ (past perfect imperfective) in cell 3b and the ‘pretérito anterior’ (past perfective) in cell 3b”, both examples from Table 6, is also to be taken as being of an aspectual nature.

Nowadays, the distinction between these last two forms is obsolete. The ‘pretérito anterior’ is, in current Spanish, a literary form, the use of which, therefore, is very limited and restricted to the written language. The past perfective (‘pretérito anterior’, example in cell 3b” in Table 6)) indicates that the eventuality is immediately anterior to another eventuality in the past; that is, it expresses a past situation, anterior to another one also in the past, (as in (18)). The feature that has traditionally characterized the ‘pretérito anterior’ is the power to mark an immediate precedence of some situation with respect to a point in the past. In the regular use of language, however, it is usually replaced either by the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’ (past perfect imperfective, Table 6, cell 3b”) or by the ‘pretérito perfecto simple’ (past perfective, Table 6, cell 1b”).

(18) En cuanto hubo terminado de hablar, se marchó
As soon as have+3rdP+PAST+PERFECTIVE finished of to talk, self leave+3rdP+PAST+PERFECTIVE
‘As soon as he had finished talking, he left’

It seems as if the Spanish language finds it no longer necessary to mark a form both with perfect tense and perfective aspect and that it prefers to replace it either by a past perfective or a past perfect. As long as the form is in past tense, it seems sufficient to mark it either as perfect or perfective, rather than as perfect perfective.

The question of whether the differences between perfective and imperfective are temporal or aspectual has attracted much discussion. The idea that the difference is temporal, has already been proposed by Bello (1847). Bello defined the imperfective form as a co-preterit, treating it as a present in the past. Therefore, the imperfective form, in Bello’s theory, has its own temporal characteristics. The differences between the two past tense forms in cells 1b’ and 1b” of Table 6 can be accounted for by taking them as aspectual differences.

Treating the perfective as an aspectual marker makes it possible to deal with the perfect as a temporal marker. This point will be discussed in detail in the next section. The aspectual description of the two past tenses of cell 1b in Spanish is, in essence, in accordance with García Fernández (1998). It will be shown that the past imperfective in 1b’ is best characterized as a combination of past tense and imperfective aspect and the past perfective in 1b” as a combination of past tense and perfective aspect. Perfective aspect and imperfective aspect will be defined in section 1.3.2.1.

To sum up, a system of oppositions has been applied to the Spanish temporal indicative system. It has been shown that the analysis used for Dutch does not really
need any additional assumptions or tools in order to be extended to cover the ten indicative tense forms of Spanish. Actually, the Spanish indicative conjugation can also be represented with an eight-tense-form system if the two additional verbal manifestations are taken as only adding aspectual information. The aspectual information expressed by the four tense forms in 1b and 3b does not have to be dealt with as part of a temporal system as long as the perfective and imperfective forms are independently treated in an aspectual analysis that complements what is expressed by the tense forms, on the basis of expressing strictly tense information.

1.2.4. Perfective versus Perfect

In this subsection, the perfective and perfect meanings and their manifestations in language will be briefly described in order to separate tense information from aspectual information more clearly. First, the present perfect in cell 3a and the past perfective forms in 1b' will be compared; second, the function of the present perfect in Dutch will be described; and finally, the past perfective in cell 1b'' and the past perfect(s) in 3b will be contrasted.

1.2.4.1. Differences in functions

Lyons (1977) points out that the dividing line between tense and aspect is not always clear, more particularly because anteriority (marked by the perfect tense) usually goes together with completion (marked by the perfective aspect). In a way, following this analysis, it could be proposed that a perfect tense form actually marks completion, but at the temporal level. Therefore, both notions (perfect and perfective) can be kept apart as long as a distinction in terms of different levels of completion is taken as a guide. In the present analysis, the idea of completion rendered by the perfect tense form in cells 3a and 3b will be taken as temporal: they express that in a period of time either in the present (in cell 3a) or in the past (in cell 3b) the eventuality has already taken place. The completion expressed by the perfective forms in cell 1b'' and 3b'' is aspectual, along the lines discussed in section 1.3. It is therefore non-deictic. Its meaning does not depend on the situation in which it is used; one knows that the eventuality is in the past because of the tense part of the morphological information, not because it is perfective.

The imperfective forms in 1b’ and 3’ also have a past tense. As discussed above, this means that in the past a hosting domain is given having an open end. In this respect, they are different from the perfective aspect, which characterizes the hosting domain in which the eventuality takes place as complete, as closed off. Both forms (perfective and imperfective) place the eventuality in a unit of time not compatible with the present (because of the PAST operator). In other words, perfect marking in cell 1a is a grammatical device the main function of which is to mark completion at a temporal level (by anteriority, that is), whereas perfective marking in cell 1b'' is a grammatical device the main function of which is to mark

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9 Comrie (1976) considers the perfect as an aspect.
10 In Russian, the temporal system allows for morphologically present perfectives, which proves that ‘perfective’ does not necessarily have to always be linked to pastness.
completion at a higher level. Note that this way of treating the opposition between perfective and imperfective comes close to what is expressed by it in Slavic languages (Borik 2002).

In 1931, La Real Academia Española (the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE)) reflected on the terminological problem of considering the perfective in cell 1b” of Table 6 as a perfect form (also see Rojo 1988)\(^{11}\). Spanish distinguishes the perfect verb forms from the non-perfect ones (like Dutch or English), and has two parallel complete series of tenses to express them: the perfect and the imperfect. The correspondence cannot be more exact: every simple tense or imperfect verb form corresponds in a one to one way to one compound tense or perfect form. This is exemplified in Table 6: each of the four cells in the first half of the table has a perfect correspondent in the second half. To treat the past perfective as a past perfect form would completely break the system because it would be a simple form but yet perfect in meaning. By doing so, however, it would not be possible to oppose the past perfective (‘pretérito perfecto simple’) in 1b” to its compound correspondent (‘pretérito anterior’, or past perfect perfective) in 3b”. Because of this, the Academia resorted to considering the past perfective in 1b” a ‘pretérito indefinido’ (indefinite past), basing this nomenclature on the fact that it expresses sometimes the eventuality as incipient, and sometimes as finished. This explains the differences in terminology between Table 1 and Table 6 (‘pretérito indefinido’ versus ‘pretérito perfecto simple’)\(^{12}\).

To solve the disputed point of whether the perfective forms should be treated as perfect or not, the following proposal is suggested: the temporal system does not have to deal with the perfective-imperfective distinction. It only needs to state that, in Spanish, they are both past tense. In this way, the ‘pretérito perfecto simple’ of 1b”, Table 6, can still be referred to as “perfective”, which is the adequate term to compare its aspectual meaning to the imperfective form in 1b’, without interfering with the perfect forms. The new nomenclature for the two past tenses that will be proposed in this thesis is ‘pretérito perfectivo’ versus ‘pretérito imperfectivo’\(^{13}\).

To see the difference between perfective and perfect more in detail, it is important to see that the past perfective in 1b” places the period of time when the eventuality took place in the non-present, whereas the present perfect in cell 3a informs that in a period of time taken as the extended present, the eventuality has already taken place. Such a characterization captures the similarities in meaning.

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11 American literature on aspect (Slabakova 1999, Andersen 1991, Shirai 2000 among many others) insists on calling the past perfective “preterit”; however, this term will not be used because it is not only incorrect but also confusing. “Preterit” just means past; the imperfective is therefore also a preterit form. Bello (1847) used the term ‘pretérito’ for the perfective too, but together with ‘co-pretérito’ for the imperfective. To use one of these terms without the other is to take it out of context; calling one ‘preterit’ and the other one ‘imperfect’ looses the link that unites both past tenses.

12 Boogaart (1998:12) also discusses the possible double interpretation of the past perfective: “A perfective past presents a bounded situation occurring before the point of speech. This characterization is vague in the sense that it does not specify which bound of the situation is concerned: the left bound (starting point) the right bound (end point) or both bounds at the same time”.

13 Another important reason to keep calling the distinction between the two simple past tenses perfective versus imperfective is because of its striking similarities with the perfective-imperfective aspectual meanings in Russian (see Borik & González 2000).
between both verbal forms but highlights the temporal differences between present in 3a and past in 1b”. The following sentences exemplify this opposition:

(19) He leído una novela de Delibes
    Have+1P+PRES read a novel of Delibes
    ‘I have read a novel by Delibes’

(20) Leí una novela de Delibes
    Read+1P+PAST+PERFECTIVE a novel of Delibes
    ‘I read a novel by Delibes’

Sentence (19) expresses by PRES a present tense and locates by PERF the eventuality in a point anterior to the point of speech S, as in cell 3a of Table 6. The interaction of the two operators expresses that at some point in the past the semantic object denoted by the terminative predication [leer una novela de Delibes] (‘read a novel by Delibes’) was finished. Due to the present operator, the result of the event is automatically given as holding at S.

Sentence (20), on the other hand, expresses by PAST that at some point in the past I read a novel written by Delibes. The use of the past operator leads back to a point where the focus is on the event itself, as in cell 1b” of Table 6. The aspect of this verbal form is perfective because the period of time when the eventuality took place is represented as closed off, as complete.

Summing up, the perfect emphasizes that an eventuality, seen from the present, already took place and is located before a certain point of reference, the perfective only characterizes a past period of time as a closed domain in which the eventuality took place.

Examples in (21) and (22) show that durative predications behave exactly the same as the terminative predications in (19) and (20). The difference between them is exactly the same as between (19) and (20): in (21) the verb is temporally marked as perfect, in (22) the verb is aspectually marked as perfective.

(21) He leído novelas de Delibes
    Have+1P+PRES read novels of Delibes
    ‘I have read novels by Delibes’

(22) Leí novelas de Delibes
    Read+1P+PAST+PERFECTIVE novels of Delibes
    ‘I read novels by Delibes’

Whether the predication in the sentence is terminative or durative does not influence any of these two grammatical levels of completion (temporal or aspectual). In (19), the sentence conveys completion both at the temporal level (perfect marking) and at the predicational level (terminative). Sentence (20) conveys completion at the asprctual level (perfective marking) and at the predicational level (terminative). In example (21) the sentence conveys completion only at the temporal level in terms of the anteriority relation between the eventuality and a certain point of reference, and finally, example (22) conveys completion only at the asprctual level, where the
hosting domain is part of the information about the eventuality as part of the discourse information.

1.2.4.2. Present Perfect versus Past Perfective

The established nomenclature of past perfective on the one hand and present perfect on the other hand, already indicates the crucial difference between them. A present perfect makes a claim involving the present; a perfective past makes a claim with the past as harbouring the central point of calculating the location of the eventuality.

An important morphological characteristic of the present perfect is that the auxiliary verb is actually in the present form. Nevertheless, the temporal interpretation of sentences with present perfect verb forms remains unambiguously that the eventuality referred to takes place in the past. To understand the temporal and interpretational differences between present perfect and perfective on the one hand and past perfect and perfective on the other, the verbal morphology may give a simple clue. The verbal inflection of the perfective form in cell 1b'' of Table 6 is past, whereas the verbal inflection of the perfect is present in 3a. However, in both cases, the eventuality is placed in a past time domain. The difference is that the temporal domain determined by the perfective past in 1b'' does not include the present, whereas the temporal domain determined by the present perfect does, as indicated by the form of the auxiliary verb.

Below there is a list of temporal and aspectual information each verb form conveys:

Past Perfective form in 1b'':

- [PERFECTIVE] Presents the hosting domain as closed off (aspect description)
- [PAST] Selects a point S' before S as the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)

Present Perfect in 3a:

- [PRES] Makes the moment of speech the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)
- [PERF] Provides a sense of anteriority (tense description)

The following sentences exemplify the differences between forms:

(23a) La semana pasada fuimos dos veces al cine
    ‘Last week we went twice to the cinema’

(23b) Esta semana fuimos dos veces al cine
    ‘This week we went twice to the cinema’

---

14 Present as an utterance/speech time.
This week we have gone twice to the cinema
‘This week we have gone twice to the cinema’

‘Last week we have gone twice to the cinema’

The sentence in (23a) contains the past perfective form of the verb ‘to go’: *fuimos* (‘we went’). The sentence is fully grammatical because the adverbial phrase *la semana pasada*, ‘last week’, covers a closed off period in the past. On the other hand, the sentence in example (23b) sounds odd, as the adverbial phrase *esta semana*, ‘this week’, denotes a temporal period that includes the moment of speech. Therefore, the perfective marker is incompatible with the fact that the temporal domain hosting the eventuality is still relevant. Sentences (23c) and (23d) illustrate the opposite phenomena. The sentence in (23c) is fine as it contains a perfect marking and the relevant time domain is still valid at the moment of speech. The sentence in (23d) is odd because the verb is in the perfect tense but the period of time hosting the eventuality lies entirely in the past and therefore is no longer available at the moment of speech.

Thus, the relevant difference in the interpretation of perfective and perfect is whether the temporal domain exemplified in these sentences includes the present or not. It seems that the present perfect form needs to operate on predications whose hosting past temporal domain is still valid for the present. Moreover, this periphrastic form focusses on the results of the eventuality. This means that what is emphasized is not the end of the period that hosts the eventuality, but a piece of the period that follows the end of such eventuality.

In other words, the present perfect in Spanish presents an eventuality that is still relevant in the extended present, that is to say, in a period of time that the speaker still considers relevant. The past perfective presents an eventuality that is hosted in a period of time that the speaker considers a non-current plane, seen from a past perspective.

**1.2.4.3. Dutch Present Perfect: a Perfective?**

In Dutch, the verbal category labelled present perfect is sometimes used to express not only the semantic notion of present perfect but also the semantic notion of past perfective.

Bybee & Dahl (1988) pointed out that expressions with perfect markings could semantically develop to become first perfectives and finally pasts. For instance, in spoken French, the first step (perfect also accommodating perfective) has already happened, where the perfect marking can also be considered as a perfective marker. The form of the present perfect has been reported to follow a semantic path that starts with perfect meaning and finishes with perfective meaning (Bybee & Dahl 1988) 15. In Dutch, the same phenomenon seems to take place. This

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means that the sense of relevance in the current moment of the perfect may disappear altogether, allowing for sentences such as (24b) and (24c), where the temporal domain hosting the eventuality covers a closed off period in the past ('yesterday’, and ‘last month’, respectively):

(24a)  Vanochtend ben ik om 7 uur opgestaan  
      This morning be+1²⁰°P+PRES I at 7 hour got up  
      ‘This morning I got up at 7 o’clock’

(24b)  Gisteren ben ik om 7 uur opgestaan¹⁶  
      Yesterday be+1²⁰°P+PRES I at 7 hour got up  
      ‘Yesterday I got up at 7 o’clock’

(24c)  Afgelopen maand ben ik elke dag om 7 uur opgestaan  
      Last month be+1²⁰°P+PRES I every day at 7 hour got up  
      ‘Last month I got up every day at 7 o’clock’

The English temporal system, on the other hand, very often uses its simple past to mark perfectivity (see examples in (25)). Therefore, there is no need for the present perfect in English to take the role of the perfective. The Dutch Simple Past behaves differently (see van Hout 1996 for discussion).

(25a)  This morning I woke up at 7 o’clock  
(25b)  ??This morning I have woken up at 7 o’clock  
(25c)  Yesterday I woke up at 7 o’clock  
(25d)  *Yesterday I have woken up at 7 o’clock  
(25e)  Last month I woke up every day at 7 o’clock  
(25f)  *Last month I have woken up every day at 7 o’clock

Although the simple past in English and in Dutch allow for both perfective and imperfective readings, the instances in which they are unambiguously interpreted as either perfective or imperfective are not the same. The simple past in English seems to often convey a perfective reading, also in cases where in Dutch an imperfective reading is more prominent (Boogaart 1998). For instance, the Dutch counterpart of she walked; ze wandelde, which has a perfective reading in English, is imperfective in Dutch. This is probably why the present perfect in Dutch is developing towards also being interpreted as being a perfective marker, as its other past tense (the simple past) has more often than not as default reading the imperfective aspect (mostly in durative sentences).

¹⁶ (24b’) Gisteren stond ik om 7 uur op. This sentence is also possible, however, the interesting fact of the Dutch language is that also allows (24b); more naturally than its single past counterpart.
1.2.4.4. Past Perfective versus Past Perfect

In Spanish, the past perfective (‘pretérito perfecto simple’) in 1b’’ of Table 6 and the past perfect (‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’) in 3b’ are both past tenses. Again, as in the case of the present perfect and the past perfective, there is a meaning analogy that has developed into terminological confusion. The past perfect and the past perfective are temporally related, but there is an aspectual meaning difference that can only be observed when taking both the grammatical aspect level and the temporal level into account. The opposition described now is the one between the perfective escribí (write+1stP+PAST+PERFECTIVE) and the past perfect había escrito (have+1stP+PAST+PERFECT+IMPERFECTIVE written).

Below there is a list of temporal and aspectual information each verb form contains:

**Past Perfective in 1b’’:**

PERFECTIVE  Presents the hosting domain as closed off (aspect description)

PAST  Selects a point S’ before S as the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)

**Past Perfect in 3b’:**

PAST  Selects a point S’ before S as the centre from which the position of the eventuality is calculated (tense description)

PERF  Provides a sense of anteriority (tense description)

IMPERFECTIVE  Presents the hosting domain as open (aspect description)

The next pair of sentences exemplifies the uses of these two verb forms:

(26) Ángela había escrito una carta cuando se apagaron las luces
    ‘Ángela had written a letter when the lights went off’

(27) Ángela escribió una carta a Esther el verano pasado
    ‘Ángela wrote a letter to Esther last summer’

These examples show the differences in meaning between the past perfective and the past perfect imperfective. Sentence (26) needs another tense form to which the form in the main sentence can be temporally anchored (se apagaron). Sentence (27), with the perfective, does not seem to need extra verb forms to fully function and give a temporal meaning to the sentence.

The past perfective simply informs that the eventuality took place in the past and that the period of time that hosts the eventuality is closed off. The closure of the period that hosts the eventuality is, in this analysis, an identifying characteristic of the perfective aspect. On the other hand, the past perfect imperfective informs that
the eventuality is located in a hosting temporal domain in the past with no right bound of a domain closing it off. It provides the sense of anteriority given by the auxiliary ‘have’, focussing on the result of the eventuality. Moreover, the past perfect imperfective encompasses an imperfective aspect meaning, formally expressed by the imperfective past tense inflection on the auxiliary. Its imperfective sense indicates that the hosting domain in the past is not closed off. Two characteristics of the past perfect imperfective seem to contradict each other. First, the indication that the imperfective reading leaves the end of the hosting domain open and, second, the fact that the perfect pushes the verb to focus on the result of the eventuality. How can the completion of an eventuality be established if the period of time in which this eventuality is hosted does not seem to have an end? A plausible answer is this: an extra clause is needed, a subordinate clause (as in (26)), which provides a temporal boundary for the hosting past domain, so that the result asked by the perfect is fulfilled.

In other words, to fully understand sentence (26), additional temporal specification is needed to close the time domain in which the eventuality is hosted. In this sentence, the additional temporal specification is given by a subordinate clause. The adverb *ya* (‘already’) would also work. In sentence (27), on the other hand, the perfective verbal inflection itself gives all the information needed to close the temporal domain where the eventuality is hosted.

The past perfective and the past perfect are then similar in that both take place in the past. However, the perfective on its own does not only provide a reference bound marking the beginning of the temporal interval in which the eventuality is located, but also an aspectual anchoring point marking the end of the temporal interval. The past perfect, on the other hand, needs both indices (because of the perfect), but, due to the imperfective nature of the auxiliary, it can only offer the beginning bound on its own. The second closing bound is supplied by some extra information in the sentence, as in (26).

Formally, the past perfect in Spanish is more exhaustive with respect to tense, since two operators apply compositionally, the *PERF* and the *PAST*. It is also an imperfective form, as the auxiliary is not only marked temporally by the past inflection but also by the imperfective inflection. The perfective is only temporally marked once as past.

To sum up, a description of the Dutch temporal system in terms of temporal operators (*PRES, PAST, POST* and *PERF*) has been argued to be adequate. The same system of operators when applied to Spanish successfully accounts for all verb forms in the indicative conjugation. However, the distinction between two pairs of forms, the ‘pretérito perfecto simple’ versus the ‘pretérito imperfecto’ in the cells 1b’ and 1b’’ in Table 6 and the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’ versus the ‘pretérito anterior’ in 3b’ and 3b’’ cannot be accounted for in a strictly temporal analysis. In order to find some solution to this descriptive problem, a more in-depth analysis of the Spanish aspectual system is called for. It will be argued in the next section that the hosting domain in which the eventuality takes place can only be characterized in terms of aspectual perspective, that is, with the intervention of grammatical aspect.
1.3. Aspect

In this section, the remaining two components of the tense-aspect triangle will be discussed in more detail: predicational aspect and grammatical aspect. Both of them are aspectual notions, but they work at different levels: predicational aspect works at a tenseless level, grammatical aspect manifests itself through verbal inflectional morphology or by the presence of certain auxiliaries, and is therefore closer to the tense level. Predicational aspect is responsible for defining the tenseless predication as terminative or durative\(^\text{17}\); grammatical aspect characterizes the temporal domain hosting this eventuality in the past as perfective (closed at the right-hand side) or imperfective (open at the right-hand side). In the case of Spanish, morphological linguistic devices mark the aspectual distinctions of grammatical aspect in the temporal conjugation of all verbs. Both types of aspect may affect each other very subtly, in such a way that combinations of the formal markers of predicational aspect and grammatical aspect determine the aspectual meaning of the whole sentence. The ways in which these notions affect each other also vary among languages. Not only can languages differ in the way they let aspectual information interact with their tense systems, but also in their aspectual encoding. The focus of the present description of aspectual systems is on both grammatical and predicational aspect. One of the theoretical aims is to get more background on the contribution of the tenseless predication to the temporal structure in which it interacts with tense. It will be shown that although grammatical aspect and predicational aspect are two distinct linguistic categories, it is almost impossible to entirely exclude one from the discussion of the other.

1.3.1. Atemporal aspectual information

Verkuyl (1972) observed that, aspectually speaking, some sentences in Dutch and in English behave similarly to their Russian equivalents in spite of the fact that Germanic languages do not have morphological means to express grammatical aspect. To illustrate the similarities in aspectual meanings between a language with grammatical aspect marking and a language lacking it, Spanish will be given as the language expressing grammatical aspect. In order to remain consistent with the rest of the chapter, Spanish will take the place of Russian in Verkuyl’s analysis\(^\text{18}\).

\(28\)a) Víctor leía poesía
   \(\text{Victor read+3P+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE poetry}
\)  
   ‘Victor read/was reading poetry’

\(28\)b) Víctor leyó una poesía
   \(\text{Victor read+3P+PAST+PERFECTIVE a poem.}
\)  
   ‘Victor read a poem’

\(^{17}\) The term Aktionsart is not used here because it refers uniquely to the mode of action of the verb, while it is being proposed that what offers aspectual information is the verb and its arguments, that is, the whole predication.

\(^{18}\) For a description of similarities between the Spanish and the Russian aspectual systems, see Borik & González (2001).
The English sentences in (28c) and (28d), express aspectual information, without marking grammatical aspect morphologically or by means of an auxiliary. In (28c), this information states that the tenseless predication [‘Víctor read poetry’] is durative, which means that it expresses no endpoint. The process of reading poetry does not contain a point in time that marks an ending of the eventuality. On the other hand, the tenseless predication in (28d), [‘Víctor read a poem’], is terminative, as it expresses that there is a necessary moment in time at which the eventuality will reach its end, the point at which one can say that a poem has been read. Moreover, although this information may be similar to the aspectual information given by the verbal morphology (grammatical aspect), it should not be confused with it, as both aspects can interact, yielding not only sentences like (28a) (imperfective-durative) and (28b) (perfective-terminative), but also (28e) (perfective-durative) and (28f) (perfective-terminative):

(28e) Víctor leyó poesía
    Victor +3rdP +PAST +PERFECTIVE poetry
    ‘Víctor read poetry’

(28f) Víctor leía una poesía
    Victor +3rdP +PAST +IMPERFECTIVE a poem
    ‘Víctor read/was reading a poem’

Examples (28e) and (28f) demonstrate that, on the one hand, a durative predication, such as [‘Víctor read poetry’] can also occur with perfective marking (as in (28e)). On the other hand, a terminative predication, such as [‘Víctor read a poem’] allows for imperfective marking (as in (28f)). In section 1.3.1.1., a particular analysis of the atemporal aspectual information will be given, exemplified with Dutch and Spanish sentences. In section 1.3.3., some potential semantic incompatibilities will be reported and illustrated.

1.3.1.1. Predicational aspect

Table 7 shows the combination of past tense forms with both durative and terminative predications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dutch simple past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Onvoltooid Verleden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Imperfect Past)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durative</td>
<td>1 Edo zong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Edo zong’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminative</td>
<td>2 Edo zong een lied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Edo sang a song’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Durativity and terminativity are the two aspektual values characterizing predicational aspect and recognized at the tenseless level of the bare eventuality. The basic principle at this level of representation is the so-called Plus Principle (Verkuyl 1993), which governs the compositional procedure by which the dynamicity of a verb together with certain quantificational restrictions on the denotation of its arguments yields a compositionally formed terminative aspect. All other cases are durative. The terminativity of the predication of cell 2 in Table 7 is due to two factors: the verb is taken to expresses progress in time and the arguments of the verb to denote restricted quantities. The second restriction is absent in cell 1 in Table 7, because there is not an internal argument that could make the predication terminative. Other types of sentences with predications expressing durativity are those where the internal argument is a bare plural as in (29), since it fails to specify a restricted quantity, and those sentences where the verb has a stative nature, as in (30).

(29) Edo zong liederen
    ‘Edo sang songs’

(30) Edo haatte dat liedje
    ‘Edo hated that song’

The Plus Principle turns out to be a useful tool for drawing attention to the contribution of the predication as a whole to aspektual information: it expresses the requirement that all atomic entities involved in the aspektual composition at this level have to have a positive value in order to derive a terminative predication.

Following the compositional procedure adopted in Verkuyl (1993), the terminativity of the tenseless [‘Edo sing a song’] is obtained in two steps. Firstly, the verb and its internal argument are combined into a VP. Secondly, the VP and the external argument are put together into an S. To mark the non-stative nature of verbs like ‘write’, ‘eat’, ‘hit’, ‘grow’, etc. (as opposed to stative verbs like ‘hate’, ‘love’, ‘want’, ‘hang’), a verbal semantic feature called [±ADDTO] can be used as expressing the contribution of the verb to the aspektuality at lexical level. Its plus-value expresses the dynamicity of the verb, as it refers to something going on in time. For stative verbs, the value of the feature is negative. The aspektual contribution of the NP can be described in terms of an NP-feature [±SQA], where SQA stands for ‘Specified Quantity of A’, where ‘A’ is the denotation of the Noun of the NP. Its plus-value expresses the quantification and delimitation of the arguments. Thus, NPs like ‘a letter’, ‘three sandwiches’, ‘some whisky’, ‘five acres of land’, etc. are labelled [±SQA], whereas NPs like ‘sandwiches’, ‘whisky’, etc. are [±SQA]. The term Specified Quantity generalizes over count and mass. The sentences in (31) show this feature notation for different predications:

19 In a sentence such as ‘no-one ate an apple’, the denotation of the external aspect is [±SQA], which also yields a compositionally formed durative aspect. Examples involving a [±SQA] external argument are not analysed here. This is a result or consequence of the fact that there is an asymmetry between the internal and the external argument; the verb and its internal arguments have closer ties as far as aspektual structure is concerned.
Events, Processes and States are aspectual classes. States and processes are both
durative predications and, from now on, will be treated as belonging together to the
durative type of predications. One minus value suffices to make a sentence durative.
Terminativity is, therefore, the marked case.

Temporal domains can be specified by temporal adverbs like ‘yesterday’, ‘in
the summer’ or ‘in 1998’. They are purely temporal, that is, they do not relate to the
aspectual characteristics of a predicate or VP. As observed earlier, these aspectual
characteristics are atemporal, and are determined irrespective of the relation of an
eventuality to its hosting temporal domain21.

Predicational aspect works exactly the same in Dutch and in Spanish, which
means that the Plus Principle applies to Spanish resulting in the same aspectual
values as in Dutch:

(32a) Nuria comía22 un trozo de tarta
+ SQA  + ADD-TO  + SQA  => EVENT  Terminative
‘Nuria ate a piece of cake’
(32b) Nuria comía tarta
+ SQA  + ADD-TO  - SQA  => PROCESS
‘Nuria ate cake’
(32c) Nuria quería un trozo de tarta
+ SQA  - ADD-TO  + SQA  => STATE20
‘Nuria wanted a piece of cake’

There are two aspectual tests that display the semantic differences between durative
and terminative predications. Their application also proves that predicational aspect
works the same way in both Spanish and Dutch. The tests involve, on the one hand,
adverbial phrases expressing duration (the ‘for an hour’ test) and, on the other, the
adverbial phrases requiring some sort of termination of the eventuality (the ‘in an

20 The individual interaction of events, processes and states with perfective and imperfective verb forms is
given in Chapter 2. The distinction between processes and states in SLA does not seem to be relevant;
therefore, it will not be further examined here.
21 Hereby, the idea developed in Verkuyl (1993 and elsewhere) about the atemporal nature of the
durative/terminative aspectual distinction is maintained.
22 The verb is imperfective here, however, this does not influence the predicational aspect; these
sentences with perfective forms would display basically the same characteristics.
CHAPTER 1

The verbs in (33) to (38) are all perfective forms, which does not interfere with the ‘in an hour’ versus ‘the whole day’ end-point interpretation.

(33a) Gisteren heb ik 10 kilometer gelopen
(33b) Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros

‘Yesterday I ran 10 kilometres’

(34a) Gisteren heb ik in een uur 10 kilometer gelopen
(34b) Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros en una hora

‘Yesterday I ran 10 kilometres in one hour’

(35a) *Gisteren heb ik de hele dag 10 kilometer gelopen
(35b) *Ayer corrí 10 kilómetros todo el día

‘Yesterday I ran 10 kilometres the whole day’

(36a) Gisteren heb ik gelopen
(36b) Ayer corri

‘Yesterday I ran’

(37a) *Gisteren heb ik in een uur gelopen
(37b) *Ayer corri en una hora

‘Yesterday I ran in an hour’

(38a) Gisteren heb ik de hele dag gelopen
(38b) Ayer corri todo el día

‘Yesterday I ran the whole day’

Sentences (34a) and (34b) are grammatical because they contain a terminative predication, and terminative predications are compatible with adverbial phrases pertaining to domains that harbour terminative predications, and not durative predications. However, sentences (35a) and (35b) are ungrammatical, because the terminative tenseless predications in both sentences do not accept a durational adverbial of the type ‘the whole day’. Terminative predications ask for a domain in which something can be located and they do not want some constituent which expresses durational measurement. Predications such as those in (37) and (38) are durative. Durative predications only allow for durative adverbials because the essence of a durative predication seems to be that it pertains to something having a duration that can be measured. This is why sentences (37a) and (37b) are ungrammatical, while (38a) and (38b) are grammatical. The relation between durative and terminative predications and durational adverbials appears to be quite constant in languages. Moreover, the form of the verb, perfective in the case of the Spanish sentences (37) and (38), does not interfere with the terminative-durative predicational aspect: the compatibility or incompatibility of predicational aspect with adverbials does not concern the perfective form.

The next section will explore grammatical aspect in Spanish. In section 1.3.2., a description of the Spanish aspectual system will be presented, followed, in section 1.3.2.1., by a discussion of the different readings of the imperfective. Section 1.3.3. explores the strategies that the Spanish language employs in expressing terminativity.

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23 The translation is the same for both the Dutch and the Spanish sentence.
at the predicational level with an uncompleted temporal domain in the past, and expressing durativity at the predicational level with a completed temporal domain in the past.

1.3.2. Grammatical Aspect in Spanish

In Spanish, grammatical aspect is morphologically marked in a systematic way by means of specific morphemes: it is visible in the alternation of aspects in the past, since the morphological encoding of grammatical aspect is only obligatory in the past tense (imperfective-perfective). The perfective-imperfective distinction in Spanish is inflectional, where every verb has both a perfective and an imperfective past form.

Spanish, as compared to other Romance languages, is the neo-Latin language that has achieved the most vital conservation of aspectual information in the verb form. As discussed earlier, grammatical aspect concerns the characterization of the completion of the temporal domain in which an eventuality is hosted in the past. If the domain is characterized as closed off, the perfective aspect results, whereas if the domain can be characterized as not necessarily complete or closed off, then the imperfective is called for. Grammatical aspect is not a strict temporal notion, as it is not deictic. It merely modifies in some way a domain in the past in which the eventuality is located as to its being bounded or not, so that information can be obtained about the way which the eventuality is presented.

There is not a clear well-defined relationship between the Dutch simple past tense form and the Spanish past tense forms. Spanish has two forms, both of them introducing aspectual as well as temporal information together with the verb form itself. Table 8 provides examples of terminative and durative predications and shows how they interact with the two Spanish simple past tenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8 Spanish simple pasts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretérito Imperfectivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Past Imperfective)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1a) Raul cantaba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raul sang+IMPERFECTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2a) Raul cantaba una canción</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raul sang+IMPERFECTIVE a song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Put very simply, the imperfective forms in the cells 1a and 2a in Table 8 imply that the period of time hosting the eventuality described by the predication is of an incomplete nature (it does not have a right bound), whereas the perfective forms in 1b and 2b in Table 8 imply that the domain hosting the eventuality described by the predication is closed off. This causes the process of Raul singing in cell 1b to be presented as bounded. In this sense, there are two sorts of completion in 2b. One is expressed by the terminative nature of the predication; the other is the completion of the domain in which the eventuality is hosted. The difference between imperfective
and perfective taken in this sense is not stated in terms of the temporal location of
the eventuality itself, which is, in both cases, the past tense, nor in terms of the
aspeсtual properties of the eventuality. What matters here is the characterization of
the temporal domain where the eventuality takes place. In Table 7, containing Dutch
examples, the characterization of the temporal domain, that is, grammatical aspect,
is lacking. The Dutch sentences in Table 7 only show, on the one hand, the aspeсtual
properties of the eventuality, and, on the other hand, the past location of the
eventuality.

1.3.2.1. Imperfective forms

It is a characteristic of the imperfective to focus on open situations and not to
provide information about its ending. Through the perspective of the imperfective
form, only an internal part of the eventuality (or, in the case of habituality, part of a
series of similar eventualities) can be seen. It leaves open the temporal domain
hosting the eventuality, which means that there is no information given as to when
the period of time is closed off or whether the eventuality goes on. On the other
hand, with the perfective, the temporal domain of the situation coincides with that of
the situation itself, which means that a closed off temporal domain hosts the
eventuality. In this way, one can see the basis for the translational equivalence
between Dutch and Spanish forms.

The imperfective has three different readings, according to mainly pragmatic
and discursive reasons:

1. Episodic/background reading
2. Habitual/repetitive reading
3. Progressive/ongoing reading

A verb form that takes the imperfective morphology conveys on its own a lack of
information as to when the period of time hosting the eventuality is closed off. But it
does not notify the particular imperfective reading the sentence carries. In order to
distinguish among the three readings, one needs to search outside the sentence, as
the responsible elements are either adverbials or contextual clues in the narrative.

a) The imperfective form has an episodic reading when the eventuality
described by predication is in the background, for example as part of a
description, at the beginning of a story:

(39) Ayer Mercè cantaba una canción porque estaba contenta
Yesterday Mercè sing+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE one song because be+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE happy
‘Yesterday Mercè sang a song because she was happy’

b) An imperfective form has a habitual or repetitive meaning when the
eventuality described by the predication occurs more than once in the past:
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(40) Mercè cantaba canciones cada domingo
Mercè sing+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE songs every Sunday
‘Mercè sang songs every Sunday’

c) The imperfective form expressing progressivity\(^{24}\) has the property of focusing on the rolling status of the eventuality. Moreover, it has to be supported by another tensed clause for the sentence where it occurs to fully function:

(41) Mercè cantaba cuando me la encontré
Mercè sing+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE when me her find+1stP+PAST+PERFECTIVE
‘Mercè was singing when I found her’

It should be noted that the Spanish language also has the means to express progressivity with a verbal periphrasis, like in English or, in a way, in Dutch:

(42) Mercè estaba cantando cuando me la encontré
Mercè be+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE singing when me her find+1stP+PAST+PERFECTIVE
‘Mercè was singing when I found her’

These data show that imperfectivity cannot be treated as identical to what is expressed by a progressive form in English.

What is the difference between the imperfective form expressing progressivity and the progressive verbal periphrasis in Spanish? To answer this question, one needs to find out first if there is a meaning that the progressive periphrasis has that the imperfective form does not express. Both sentences make use of the imperfective inflection, either on the auxiliary form, as in (42), or on the main verb, as in (41). Thus, it seems that the difference between these two sentences is not due to a different aspectual form, because both sentences accept the imperfective inflection.

The difference seems to have to do with the placement of the imperfective inflection. If the inflection is found together with the main verb, such as in (41), then the sentence acquires a straightforward imperfective meaning, where the temporal domain hosting the predication is not given as complete. This is compatible with all imperfective readings. On the other hand, if the speaker chooses to place the inflection in the auxiliary verb, as in (42), then the main verb needs to take the gerundive inflection, which brings out an “action in progress” meaning. Both of these sentences imply that the time domain where the eventuality is taking place is not given as completed, the difference is that when the speaker chooses the periphrasis, s/he emphasizes the progression of the eventuality itself. However, the auxiliary in the progressive periphrasis can also take perfective morphology:

---

\(^{24}\) The imperfective past expressing progressivity may be regarded, in some particular contexts, as less natural than the progressive periphrasis.
(43a) Mercè estuvo cantando canciones
Mercè be+3rdP+PAST+PERFECTIVE singing songs
‘Mercè was singing songs’

In sentence (43), there is also a progressive periphrasis (be+V-ing) but the aspectual inflection on the auxiliary verb is perfective. This sentence shows that a progressive meaning does not necessarily require imperfective morphology. What this sentence expresses is that there is an eventuality, hosted in a past temporal domain, described as progressive, but the temporal domain where the eventuality is placed is closed off, as this is what perfective aspect requires. In this sense, it corresponds to what is expressed in cell (1b) of Table 8. The progressive with imperfective has to be supported by another tensed clause for the sentence where it occurs to fully function (see sentence (41)). The progressive with perfective does not (see sentence (43)). This means that the progressive in itself does not need a second reference point, this is necessary only when it is accompanied by an imperfective reading. What is more, sentence (43) with an extra tensed clause, as in (43b), is ungrammatical:

(43b) * Mercè estuvo cantando canciones cuando me la encontré
Mercè was singing songs when I found her

A sentence such as (43a) has therefore the characteristics of a perfective form but adds to its meaning the progression of the event it contains.

1.3.3. Aspectual incongruence. Incompatibilities?

In general terms, both aspectual levels (grammatical and predicational) interact without influencing each other. The following sentences illustrate that it is possible to obtain, in (44), a sentence with perfective marking and a terminative predication; in (45), a sentence with perfective marking and a durative predication; in (46), a sentence with imperfective marking and a terminative predication, and finally in (47), a sentence with imperfective marking and a durative predication.

(44) Ayer leí dos artículos en media hora.
Yesterday read+1stP+PAST+PERFECTIVE two articles in half hour
‘Yesterday I read two articles in half an hour’

(45) Ayer comí porquerías todo el día.
Yesterday eat+1stP+PAST+PERFECTIVE junk food the whole day
‘Yesterday I ate junk food the whole day’

(46) Cada mañana Víctor compraba el periódico.
Every morning Victor buy+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE the newspaper
‘Every morning Victor bought the newspaper’
Every morning Víctor bought cakes

All these sentences are grammatical, which indicates that the two levels of aspectual representation interact without transforming internal values in those languages where the distinction perfective-imperfective is formally present.

Hence, aspect needs to deal simultaneously with the characterization of the predication and with the question of whether the period of time in which the predication is situated is left as open or closed off. This task of dealing with two aspectual levels may lead to aspectual combinations within sentences, which may look like incompatibilities. This is the case in sentences (45) and (46), as the senses of completion of the sentence and the predication it contains are reversed.

The possible incompatibilities with imperfective verbal forms are reviewed first. The combination of imperfective marking and a durative predication, as the more natural combination of two incomplete levels, does not present any complications. That is, a sentence that features an imperfective form, implying that the temporal domain hosting the described eventuality is not complete does not conflict with the fact that the eventuality is durative. Both aspectual levels are defined as non-complete (sentence (47)). However, sentences with an imperfective form but with compositionally formed terminative aspect can create a problem, as in sentence (46). For convenience, the sentences given above as (40), (41), and (42) will be repeated here:

(48) Mercè cantaba una canción cada Domingo = Habitual
‘Mercè sang a song every Sunday’

(49) Ayer Mercè cantaba una canción porque estaba contenta = Episodic
‘Yesterday Mercè sang a song because she was happy’

(50) Mercè cantaba una canción cuando me la encontré = Progressive
‘Mercè was singing a song when I found her’

A range of completion values at the predication level can be traced between the three imperfective readings. In sentence (48), only the tenseless predication in Mercè cantaba una canción, with habitual reading, can be understood as terminative, since the eventuality of singing a song occurs several times but each time the eventuality is complete, it becomes, so to speak, an accumulation of terminative eventualities. Sentence (49) is not incompatible with whether in reality Mercè finished singing that one song. However, this information is not given by the sentence itself. Finally, sentence (50) cannot express a terminative reading due to the presence of the when-clause and hence the sentence becomes durative: the imperfective form of the verb overrules and modifies the tenseless terminative meaning given by the internal structure of the verb and its arguments by preventing the whole predication from being actualised in real time. To be able to still consider this sentence with a progressive meaning as containing a terminative predication, the progressive could be understood as making a commitment to the process part of the
event. In this way, the predication keeps its tenseless terminative value; but the focus is on its progress in real time, not on its termination or completion.

Imperfectivity, whether it is traditionally a property of a tense system or an aspect system, can be given a uniform analysis based on the notion of an incomplete temporal domain. The range of available interpretations is absolutely the same in the case of terminative and durative sentences in the imperfective. This points to the fact that imperfectivity is ‘stronger’ in the sense that it is able to override the terminative/durative distinction. A terminative predication together with the progressive reading of the imperfective is the only case where the two aspectual levels may not work independently. However, this problem is solved if the reading of progressivity is understood as focussing on the progress of the event rather than on its being presented as complete.

The present approach suggests that an adequate analysis of the imperfective value of grammatical aspect cannot be given in terms of an eventuality description, whether it concerns the part/whole relation (as in the progressive reading of the imperfective) or its durative vs. terminative character. As argued, such an analysis should be adopted in terms of a characterization of the temporal domain, hosting an eventuality.

The perfective form allows for the other type of the so-called aspectual incompatibilities. The combination of perfective and terminative aspectual values, as the more natural combination of two complete levels, does not give a problem (as shown in sentence (44)). The other combination with the perfective, that is, a perfective verbal form and durative predication, in sentence (45), repeated here for convenience, may be considered problematic for the idea of independency of aspectual levels.

(51) Ayer comí porquerías todo el día

Yesterday eat+1P+PAST+PERFECTIVE junk food whole the day
‘Yesterday I ate junk food the whole day’

One could say that intuition would direct the predication [‘I eat junk food’] towards expressing an end point in this sentence, because of the perfective marker, although the Plus Principle should characterize it as a durative predication. However, the eating of junk food by someone is known to end not because it becomes a terminative predication, but because the period of time when the durative predication takes place is closed (requirement of the perfective form). Sentence (51) does, therefore, not create a problem for the idea of independence of aspectual levels either.

Another problematic case may be found in those sentences with [-ADD-TO] verbs (statives):

(52) Laura estuvo enferma

Laura be+3P+PAST+PERFECTIVE sick
‘Laura was sick’
There is nothing wrong, however, in affirming in (52) that [estar enferma] (‘be sick’) is a durative predication and that the domain accommodating the state is complete and closed off, as in cell (1b) of Table 8. There is, again, no real incompatibility of aspectual meanings. On the contrary, grammatical aspect seems to determine the amount of information given about an eventuality in terms of the domain hosting it. It can be concluded that none of the perfective durative combinations is a problem for a two-level aspectual description analysis.25 Nevertheless, there are ungrammatical cases with some types of predications and the perfective form. They turn out to be pragmatic incompatibilities. Permanent predications such as that in (53a) express qualities that cannot be subjected to variation (c.f. García Fernández 1999). They cannot be modified neither by adverbial complements (53b), nor by temporal subordinated sentences as in (53c), nor can they appear with the perfective (53d). But they are grammatical with the imperfective (53e).

(53a) [Luis to be from Barcelona]
(53b) * Luis was from Barcelona since a couple of months
(53c) * Luis was from Barcelona since she was born
(53d) * Luis fue de Barcelona
   Luis be+3rdP+PAST+PERFECTIVE from Barcelona
   ‘Luis was from Barcelona’
(53e) Luis era de Barcelona
   Luis be+3rdP+PAST+IMPERFECTIVE from Barcelona
   ‘Luis was from Barcelona’

This semantic incompatibility emerges also with the present perfect, as it is shown in (53f).

(53f) *Luis ha sido de Barcelona
   ‘Luis has been from Barcelona’

Sentence (53f) exemplifies that the incompatibility is not aspectual in nature, but pragmatic, as the predication is not only incompatible with the perfective aspectual marker, but also with the perfect temporal marker.

1.4. Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, it was argued that a theory of aspect should be able to explain not only the distinction between the different linguistic strategies that languages use to encode aspectual information, but also the links between the strategies. To be able to explain how aspect works cross-linguistically, a tense system is also of crucial importance, as different languages express different aspectual notions by means of different temporal forms available in their tense system.

25 For another theoretical standpoint on the interaction of the two aspectual levels, see de Swart (1998). De Swart describes what she calls aspectual shifts and coercion, proposing the idea that perfectives only describe events; imperfectives only states and processes.
The schema in (5) (repeated here in (54) for convenience) plays a crucial role in the present temporal-aspectual system of the Spanish language.

(54) \[\text{TENSE \ [\text{ASPECT \ [\text{predication}]\]}}\]

It is not only predicational aspect and grammatical aspect that express completion information; the tense system also adds this sort of information too.

The temporal-aspectual description of the Spanish language given in this chapter assumes a separation of three levels of temporal/aspectual information, each of them contributing its own particular interpretation of the semantic notion ‘completion’:

- An interpretation at the predicational aspect level (terminative versus durative predications);
- An interpretation at the grammatical aspect level (perfective versus imperfective forms);
- An interpretation in the temporal level (perfect versus imperfect forms).

The interactions among the three planes of completion interpretation have been presented as constituting a complete aspectual system of the Spanish and Dutch languages. The analysis of each of its parts in different languages has established, for the purposes of this thesis, a complete cross-linguistic description of aspectual phenomena. As shown, the perfect forms allow for a complementary perfective behaviour in languages that do not formally contain a perfective-imperfective division at the level of grammatical aspect. Moreover, in those languages where grammatical aspect is present in the tense system, the temporal forms containing the operator (PERF) may either take over the values of the perfective, as in spoken French, or the perfect may become superfluous when appearing together with a perfective marker. Or the other way around, the perfective may become superfluous when appearing together with the perfect. This has been demonstrated for the Spanish past perfect perfective, the ‘pretérito anterior’, which is no longer used, and has been replaced by either the simple past perfective form or the ‘pretérito pluscuamperfecto’, the past perfect form (for a discussion, see section 1.2.3. in this chapter).

The unique behaviour of each of the two focused simple past forms in Spanish (the imperfective and the perfective), in the tense system and in the aspectual system proposed in this chapter suggests that the past form creating some empirical and theoretical complications for the temporal analysis is the perfective past. In addition, the simple past form that deserves special treatment when developing an aspectual analysis of the simple past pair is the imperfective past. This asymmetrical behaviour of the grammatical aspect forms at different aspecto-temporal levels turns out to have the following implications:

(a) Aspectually, the extensive unmarked form is the perfective;
(b) Temporally, the past imperfective is the unmarked form.
In other words, for the perfective simple past, its aspectual properties could be seen as dominant, more salient, relative to its temporal properties; the perfective form is therefore seen as the default aspect. This means that for the perfective form, the aspectual meaning of completion dominates the temporal meaning of pastness. On the other hand, for the imperfective form, the temporal meaning of pastness dominates the aspectual meaning of incompletion (this idea is further developed in Bosque (1991)). This may have repercussions on the learning of these particular forms in L2. It may be that the learners use the perfective form therefore to mark aspect and the imperfective form to mark tense.

The present cross-linguistic theoretical analysis aimed at contributing to both a theory on the acquisition of aspect in second languages and to a didactic approach to the teaching of the two grammatical aspectual forms. A description of forms and uses of the two grammatical aspect forms in Spanish, perfective and imperfective, is obviously a requirement to understand how aspect works in this particular language. Moreover, it may also contribute to the understanding of the intricacies behind its problematic learning as a L2. Therefore, to reach an understanding of both Spanish L1 and Spanish L2 aspectual intricacies, a description of the Spanish grammatical aspect as given above was necessary.

Yet, for acquisition and didactic directions, mastering only the Spanish grammatical aspect system does not suffice. The learner’s L1 must also be analysed to have a more complete aspectual picture of interlanguage production. The language with which Spanish has been cross-linguistically analysed is Dutch, which does not formally have grammatical aspect markers. However, Dutch marks completion in other ways, at other levels of interpretation: at the temporal level (perfect versus imperfect tense forms) and at the predicational aspect level (terminative versus durative predications). To report on the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish, proper descriptions of the Dutch temporal and predicational systems are required. Only then will an identification of how Dutch speakers mark completion in their L1 be achieved. This means that the required analysis must also contain a description of the temporal system in Dutch, on the one hand, and a description of predicational aspect in Dutch, on the other hand, as given above. However, Spanish has also a full-fledged temporal system and identifiable predicational aspect. Accordingly, a description of the other two levels of completion in Spanish was required, that is, a description of the temporal system in Spanish and a description of the predicational aspect in Spanish must also be presented.

Once the three levels of completion representation have been recognized and presented, it is necessary to compare the means each language has to convey completion meanings: at the tense level and at the predicational aspect level for Dutch; at the tense level, at the grammatical aspect level and at the predicational aspect level in Spanish.

This is what this chapter has tried to accomplish. In order to help the understanding of the interlanguage of Dutch L2 learners of Spanish, an appropriate description of the temporal and aspectual systems of both languages has been provided.
1.5. Application of this analysis to L2

In order to prepare on what can be expected, a brief characterization of the content of the three following chapters will be given in view of the wish to connect the present chapter to each of the following three.

Chapter 2 will try to answer the question of whether native speakers of Spanish are influenced by the predicational aspect level when making use of the two simple past forms. Understanding how the intuitions of L1 speakers work over grammatical aspect, may also contribute to the comprehension of the problematic issues behind its learning. Spanish native speakers fill in a questionnaire where their intuitions are requested about a number of sentences with past tense markers. There are two possible answers to each sentence. They may give a sentence as acceptable or as non-acceptable. They can accept the perfective, on the one hand, only when it appears with terminative predications or they can accept the imperfective, on the other hand, when it appears with durative predications. It is also possible that the predicational aspect hosted by the sentence does not influence their decision on whether the sentences are grammatical. An analysis of the answers of the natives will show whether it is the case that Spanish native speakers rely on the aspectual information of the predication in order to make a choice between perfective and imperfective forms. Or on the contrary, whether the predication in itself does not give the information as to which aspectual form the verb needs to take. Results will point to either independency or interference of completion levels in native language.

Chapter 3 contains a second language acquisition study. This study tries to contribute to the ongoing debate of whether the atemporal information of a sentence interferes with the distribution of the two Spanish past tenses in interlanguage. All participants will write a number of compositions, where they narrate different personal experiences that occurred in the past. Each verb form on the one hand and each predication on the other hand will be cross-analysed and conclusions will be drawn according to the findings. The aim of the test is to find out whether inherent aspectual information influences Dutch learners of Spanish in their choice of grammatical aspect. More specifically, results will indicate whether it is the verb itself alone as a lexical unit that interferes with the choice of grammatical aspect (as often assumed in the literature), or the compositionally formed predicational aspect hosted in the sentence.

Chapter 4 tries to find an answer to the question of whether overtly instructing the independency of aspectual levels to Dutch learners of Spanish facilitates the acquisitional path. An experimental instruction will be put to the test. This instruction will focus on the similarities between Dutch and Spanish predicational systems and the differences between predicational and grammatical aspect in Spanish. Two methods of data collection will take place: compositions and standardised tests. Students will be tested before and after the instruction. The results of the study provide an answer to the question of whether showing the differences between levels will allow the learner to understand the intrinsic meaning
of the two past tenses in Spanish. Thus, the experimental instruction given to the students of the study described in Chapter 4 is tested in order to see whether it affects positively or negatively their performance after receiving the instruction.

In Chapter 5, a description and discussion of the findings at each language plane (theoretical, acquisitional, methodological) will be given. Observed contradictions between the theoretical expectations and the empirical findings will also be dealt with and possible directions for further research are outlined.