Accounting for durations
in West Germanic *since*-adverbials

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Time in Translation
UiL OTS, Utrecht University

Grote Taaldag, 2 February 2019

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Intro - why *since*-adverbials?

English *since* is considered to be a PERFECT-level adverbial, appearing only with compound tenses in the main clause. As its complement, it can have temporal expressions (1), discourse events (2), event-referring NPs (3), or clauses (4).[1]

(1) There *have been* hundreds of sightings of owls flying in every direction **since** sunrise.

(2) '**Since** then, I *have served* Lord Voldemort faithfully.'

(3) Harry *had*n't *had* a single letter **since** Hagrid's note.

(4) 'Ever **since** you mentioned Nicolas Flamel we'*ve been trying* to find out who he is.'

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[1] Unless mentioned otherwise, all examples stem from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and its translations.

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- Germanic languages differ in their use of the PERFECT (e.g. de Swart (2007), Schaden (2009), van der Klis et al. (2017)).
- Germanic languages differ in their use of SINCE. For English vs. German, see e.g. von Stechow (2002), Musan (2003), Schaden (2005). In this talk, we will review the data for German and add new data for Dutch.

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- Germanic languages differ in their use of SINCE. For English vs. German, see e.g. von Stechow (2002), Musan (2003), Schaden (2005). In this talk, we will review the data for German and add new data for Dutch.

- While a comparison with Romance languages (i.e. French *depuis* and Spanish *desde*) is also of interest, this is outside the scope of the current talk.

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Intro - why *since*-adverbials?

This leads to the following two research questions:

RQ1 [this talk] How do the Germanic languages differ in their use of SINCE?

RQ2 [coming soon] How can we model this variation, taking into account the cross-linguistic variation in the PERFECT?

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English *since* - states, bounded and unbounded

Next to the examples already given with reference to events, English *since* can also appear with states as its complement, see (5) and (6). While the former state has a clear right bound, the latter extends indefinitely.[2]

(5) Mr President, ever **since** *I have been a Member of the European Parliament*, I have had sleepless nights.

(6) While, **since** *the dawn of time*, the market has been the key forum for human interchange, it has never been perfect.

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English *since* - bare *since*

And a last occurrence of *since* is without complement (*bare since*, see (7)).[3] One could argue that a discourse marker like *then* here is covert.

  (7) (...) despite our saying at the time and *many times* **since**, "Never again!"

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[3]Example from the *Europarl* parallel corpus.

English *since* - distribution

We can summarize the distribution of *since* as follows:

type of complement	example(s)
localizing temporal expression	(1)
event (NP or clauses)	(3), (4)
state (bounded or unbounded)	(5), (6)
discourse marker	(2)
bare	(7)

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German *seit*

In general, German *seit* appears under the same circumstances: with a PERFECT in the main clause, and with temporal expressions discourse markers, events (see (8)) and states. German *seit* is **not** allowed bare.

(8)   a.   'I *have*n't *blushed* so much **since** Madam Pomfrey told me she liked my new earmuffs.'

b.   'So rot *bin* ich nicht mehr *geworden*, **seit** Madam Pomfrey mir gesagt hat, ihr gefielen meine neuen Ohrenschtzer.'

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German *seit* - durations

However, German *seit* is allowed with **durations** as well, where English would use *in/for* instead (see (9)). German also allows other measurement phrases as complement for *seit* (see (10) from Schaden (2005)).

(9)   a.   'I haven't eaten **for** nearly five hundred years.'

       b.   'Ich habe **seit** fast fünfhundert Jahren nichts mehr gegessen.'

(10)   Hans hat **seit**   100 km kein Wort gesagt.
        Hans has since 100 km no   word said

        'Hans hasn't said a word **for** 100 km.'

German *seit* - durations/tense

Furthermore, German *seit* is also compatible with the simple tenses: PRESENT in (11) and (12), PAST in (13).

(11) a. 'I've been out here **for** hours.'
      b. 'Ich *bin* schon **seit** Stunden hier draußen.'

(12) a. 'This is the best team Gryffindor's had **in** years.'
      b. 'Dies *ist* die beste Mannschaft von Gryffindor **seit** Jahren.'

(13) a. Harry had the best morning he'd had **in** a long time.
      b. Es *war* Harrys bester Morgen **seit** langem.

German *seit* - distribution

To summarize, German *seit* additionally occurs with the following complements:

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Now, let's see what Dutch *sinds* can do!

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Dutch *sinds*

Dutch *sinds*, like German *seit* and English *since*, appears freely
with events (14) and states:

(14)   a.   'I *have*n't *blushed* so much **since** Madam
         Pomfrey told me she liked my new earmuffs.'

       b.   'Ik *heb* niet meer zo *gebloosd* **sinds** madame Plijster
         zei dat ze mijn nieuwe oorwarmers zo mooi vond.'

Dutch *sinds* - reviewing German durations

As we have seen, German *seit*, is fine with durations as its complement, both in PRESENT and PERFECT tense. Let's use (15) from von Stechow (2002) as running example.

(15)   a. Ich warte **seit** drei Stunden auf dich.
             I   wait since three hours   on you

        b. Ich habe (jetzt) **seit** drei Stunden auf dich
             I   have (now) since three hours   on you
             gewartet.
             waited
             'I have been waiting for you **for** three hours.'

Dutch *sinds* - no durations allowed?

When we add Dutch into the mix, we see that the picture becomes less clear. In Dutch, (15a) needs *nu* 'now' (or *al* 'already') rather than *sinds*, see (16a). For (15b), Dutch can use a **bare** duration, as in (16b) below. Optionally, this can include *nu* 'now' (or again *al* 'already').

(16)   a. Ik wacht ***(nu)** / ***sinds** drie uur op je.
           I wait   now   / since   three hour on you

      b. Ik heb **(nu)** / ***sinds** drie uur op je
           I have now / since   three hour on you
           gewacht.
           waited

          'I have been waiting for you **for** three hours (now)'

Dutch *sinds* - durations allowed!

But with states, like in (17), Dutch *sinds* allows a duration. With activities, like in (18), this is also allowed, but we get a strongly **habitual** reading.

(17) **Sinds** een dag of twee / vlinders   in mijn hoofd.[4]
     since   a   day or two / butterflies in my   head

'For a day or two now, I have butterflies in my head.'

(18) Ik volg **sinds** drie maanden Nederlandse les.[5]
     I follow since three months Dutch   lesson

'I have been following Dutch lessons for three months.'

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[4]Opening lyrics to *Doe Maar*'s song *32 jaar*.
[5]From *Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands*.

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Dutch *sinds* - no durations in the PERFECT?

From the examples above, in Dutch, SINCE-duration-adverbials seem limited to the PRESENT, and require a stative or habitual reading. Recall however that German allows *seit* in the PERFECT as well. Dutch in general does not like that, see (19) and (20).

(19) * Ik heb **sinds** een dag of twee vlinders in mijn hoofd gehad.

(20) * Ik heb **sinds** drie maanden Nederlandse les gevolgd.

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Dutch *sinds* - durations in the PERFECT!

However, if there is strong focus on the **consequent state** (see e.g. Moens & Steedman (1988)), as in (21) and (22), Dutch allows *sinds* + duration with a PERFECT:[6]

(21) Zij hebben **sinds** twee weken alle werkzaamheden
      they have   since two weeks all activities
      gestaakt.
      ceased

      'They ceased all activities two weeks ago.'

(22) De krant   heeft **sinds** twee jaar vier
      the newspaper has   since two years four
      verslaggevers op onderzoeksprojecten gezet.
      reporters   on research projects   put

      'The newspaper has put four reporters on research projects for two years.'

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Dutch *sinds* and German *seit* - also in Past tense

English *since* only appears in compound tenses. Dutch *sinds* and German *seit* however are fine in the simple tenses. Before, we have seen some examples in the Present. In the Past this mostlyrequires special conditions:[7] e.g. deceased individuals (see (23)), missing persons (that have since been found, see (24)) or persons being fired.[8]

(23) Maria war **seit** 25 Jahren glücklich mit Partner.
      Mary was since 25 years happy with partner
      Mary had been happy with her partner for 25 years.

(24) Het meisje was **sinds** 7 mei vermist, maar werd
      the girl was since 7 May lost, but was
      vannacht (...) bij haar ouders afgeleverd.
      tonight (...) with her parents brought.
      The girl had been missing since 7 May,
      but was reunited with her parents tonight.

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[7] Maybe (13) is an exception.
[8] Examples from Google searches.

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Dutch *sinds* and German *seit* - lifetime effects

These observations seem related to *lifetime effects* that we have in the English PERFECT (e.g. Chomsky (1970), Inoue (1979)):

(25)   a.   Princeton has been visited by Einstein.

        b. # Einstein has visited Princeton.

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Dutch *sinds* and German *seit* - lifetime effects

These observations seem related to *lifetime effects* that we have
in the English PERFECT (e.g. Chomsky (1970), Inoue (1979)):

(26) a.   Princeton has been visited by Einstein.
      b. # Einstein has visited Princeton.

However, I have yet to find clear examples of English *since* with
a *simple past*: I did not find examples in the British National
Corpus.

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Taking stock

The previous slides lead to the following cross-linguistic characterization of SINCE-complements:

type of complement	English	German	Dutch
localizing temporal expression	✓	✓	✓
event (NP or clauses)	✓	✓	✓
state (bounded or unbounded)	✓	✓	✓
discourse marker	✓	✓	✓
bare	✓	*	*
duration adverbial	*	✓	✓/ *[9]
non-compound tenses	*	✓	✓

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[9]As we saw, limitations in both PRESENT and PERFECT.

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bare	✓	*	*
duration adverbial	*	✓	✓ / *[9]
non-compound tenses	*	✓	✓

In this talk, we focused on variation in *duration adverbials* and *tense*. We consider variation in bare SINCE a syntactic issue (possibly *ellipsis*).

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[9]As we saw, limitations in both PRESENT and PERFECT.

Taking stock

We conclude SINCE differs cross-linguistically in two main respects:

- ▶ Durational phrases:
  - English *since* does **not** appear with durational phrases.
  - German *seit* does allow these, both in PRESENT and PERFECT (no clear restrictions).
  - Dutch *sinds* allows durational phrases in the PRESENT with states and activities (with *habitual* reading). In the PERFECT, only when there is focus on the *consequent state*.

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- Tense:
  - English does **not** allow *since* in the simple tenses.
  - German *seit* and Dutch *sinds* appear with simple tenses too, although PAST requires special circumstances.

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Why current accounts will not yet work

There is cross-linguistic **variation** in:

- use of SINCE with durational expressions
- use of SINCE with non-compound tenses
- use of the PERFECT

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... but there is **no** variation in use of SINCE with event expressions.

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Thus, analyses of English that solely see *since* as a placing a bound on the *perfect time span* (von Fintel and Iatridou, 2017) will not work for German and Dutch.

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Why current accounts will not yet work

There is cross-linguistic **variation** in:

- use of Since with durational expressions
- use of Since with non-compound tenses
- use of the Perfect

... but there is **no** variation in use of Since with event expressions.

Thus, analyses of English that solely see *since* as a placing a bound on the *perfect time span* (von Fintel and Iatridou, 2017) will not work for German and Dutch.

Also, comparative analyses of German and English (von Stechow (2002), Musan (2003), Schaden (2005)) fail to account for the "middle position" of Dutch with respect to durations.

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My to-do list

In my perspective: semantics of SINCE is stable across languages, and difference in use could be explained by cross-linguistic differences the semantics of tense, especially that of the PERFECT.

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So... some work to do! Stay tuned!

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Thanks!

Any questions?