The Perfect in dialogue: evidence from Dutch

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Abstract | We investigate the use of the PERFECT in dialogue in Dutch and – for comparison – report on data from Dutch narrative discourse as well as data from both registers in English. Our approach is corpus-based with data drawn from Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone and its translation to Dutch. Our data reveal that the Dutch PERFECT is sensitive to the dialogue/narrative discourse distinction and competes with the PAST in dialogue along the event/state distinction. This is in line with earlier findings by Boogaart (1999) and de Swart (2007) and lays the foundation for an analysis of the PERFECT in which we bridge the gap between the English/dialogue oriented literature (Portner 2003; Nishiyama & Koenig 2010) and the variationist/narrative discourse oriented literature (de Swart 2007; Schaden 2009).

Key-words | PERFECT, PAST, dialogue, narrative discourse, variation

1. Introduction

This paper is part of our larger enterprise to get to grips with the semantics and pragmatics of the so-called ‘have’ perfect, i.e. the perfect based on a transitive possessive construction (Dahl & Velupillai 2013). Typologically speaking, this type of perfect is rather rare and is by and large restricted to Western European languages. Examples from English, French and Dutch are given in (1):

(1) I have sung
J’ai chanté
Ik heb gezongen

English
French
Dutch

Both French and Dutch vary in the auxiliary that is used, have being the default but be being obligatory with a number of verbs/constructions. We will ignore this complication here and refer to the ‘have’ and ‘be’ perfect as PERFECT.

Our aim in this paper is to contribute to bridging the gap between two strands in the literature. The first is English oriented and focuses on the way the (English) PERFECT is used at the sentence level and in dialogue (e.g. Portner 2003; Nishiyama & Koenig 2010). The main goal of this literature has been to delimit the different uses of the PERFECT and to derive them in the theoretically most economical way, relying – among others – on compositional and pragmatic principles. Four readings that are standardly discussed are the resultative, existential, continuative and hot news readings. (2) illustrates the resultative reading:

(2) On our way downstairs he explained, "We’ve transferred her to our little mortuary."

The example in (2) is taken from the English translation of the novel L’Étranger by Camus, a novel that we have used in earlier work on the PERFECT (de Swart 2007; van der Klis et al. to appear). The director of a retirement home explains to the protagonist of the novel that the body of his deceased mother was taken to the mortuary of the home. The contribution of the PERFECT is to refer to the result state of being in the mortuary that follows the event of being transported there. Note the embedding of the PERFECT in reported speech.
The dialogue orientation in the English oriented literature is easily missed. We note though that Portner (2003) makes crucial use of conversational pragmatics when he states that the use of the **PERFECT** is only allowed when the proposition it contributes to is part of a complete or partial answer to the discourse topic at the time of utterance. He furthermore links the unacceptability of the **PERFECT** in English narrative discourse to the fact that individual events in a narrative – as opposed to the narrative as a whole – cannot have any particular relevance for an ongoing conversation. In a similar vein, much of the pragmatic reasoning underlying the analysis of Nishiyama & Koenig (2010) draws on formal theories of conversational pragmatics.

The second strand of literature we want to bring in looks into how the **PERFECT** varies across languages in narrative discourse (e.g. de Swart 2007; Schaden 2009). Schaden (2009) opposes languages like French and German to languages like English and Spanish, pointing out that the default tense in narrative discourse is the **PERFECT** in the former and the Simple Past (or Pretérito Perfecto Simple) in the latter. An example opposing French to English is given in (3). De Swart (2007) finds the same opposition as Schaden but adds Dutch as an in-between language. This in-between position is illustrated in (3) and (4).

(3) Le concierge a tourné le commutateur et j’ai été aveuglé par l’éclaboussement soudain de la lumière. Il m’a invité à me rendre au réfectoire pour dîner. Mais je n’avais pas faim. Il m’a offert alors d’apporter une tasse de café au lait. Comme j’aimais beaucoup le café au lait, j’ai accepté et il est revenu un moment après avec un plateau.

De concierge draaide de schakelaar om en ik werd verblind door de plotselinge uitbarsting van het licht. Hij nodigde mij uit mij naar de eetzaal te begeven voor het avondeten. Maar ik had geen honger. Daarna bood hij aan mij een kop koffie te brengen. Aangezien ik dol op koffie ben nam ik zijn aanbod aan, en een ogenblik later kwam hij terug met een blad.

The caretaker turned the light-switch and I was blinded by the sudden blaze of light. He asked me if I wanted to go to the canteen to have some dinner. But I wasn’t hungry. He then offered to bring me a cup of white coffee. I’m very fond of white coffee, so I accepted and he came back a few minutes later with a tray.

(4) L’asile est à deux kilomètres du village. J’ai fait le chemin à pied. J’ai voulu voir maman tout de suite. Mais le concierge m’a dit qu’il fallait que je rencontre le directeur.

Het gesticht ligt twee kilometer buiten het dorp. Ik ben er te voet heen gegaan. Ik wilde moeder meteen zien. Maar de concierge zei mij dat ik mij eerst bij de directeur moest melden.

The home is just over a mile from the village. I walked it. I wanted to see mother straight away. But the caretaker told me I had to meet the warden.

Here and in the remainder of the paper we provide data from parallel corpora. Only where relevant shall we resort to the use of glosses or translations of our own making. The latter are signaled by single rather than double quotes. Examples (3) and (4) are taken from the same novel as (2) and from its translations into Dutch and English. In (3), French uses the **PERFECT** whereas Dutch and English resort to a Simple Past (or Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd). In (4), French and Dutch use the **PERFECT** and English selects the Simple Past. The opposition between (3) and (4) illustrates how Dutch comes out as a language that has a broader distribution of the **PERFECT** than English but a narrower one than French.

In order to build a bridge between the dialogue/English oriented literature and the narrative discourse/variationist literature we tackle the question what regulates the use of the **PERFECT** in...
dialogue in Dutch in comparison to English. In line with the narrative discourse/variationist literature, we focus on the division of labor between the PERFECT and the Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd (OVT)/Simple Past. Like English, Dutch does not have a perfective/imperfective distinction in its paradigm of past tenses. It differs from English in that it does not have a grammaticalized distinction between simple and continuous tenses either. This difference will not be explored in detail in this study as the Past Continuous is comparatively rare and typically appears in narrative discourse rather than in dialogue.¹

According to Boogaart (1999), the Dutch PERFECT cannot be used to render a sequence of events, the cornerstone of narrative discourse (see – among others – also Onrust, Verhagen & Doeve 1993; Daalder & Verhagen 1993; Clement 1997). This explains why the Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd is used in narrative discourse to suspend this orientation in favor of a link to previously introduced events. Data like (4) indicate that tense use in the Dutch translation of L’Étranger is more complex, but we will not develop this further in this paper.

For non-narrative discourse, Boogaart claims that the PERFECT is used as a perfective and that the PAST functions as its complement, i.e. as an imperfective. Here too, the intuitions might be more subtle (see – among others – the careful judgements in Haeseryn et al. 1997). As Boogaart’s claims are generally based on decontextualized examples, it is hard to assess their status. To remedy the situation, the focus of this paper will be on contextualized corpus data. As we will see, the quantitative data from the Harry Potter corpus provide support for Boogaart’s take on the narrative vs. non-narrative discourse distinction. The qualitative analysis is restricted to the dialogue data in view of our main goal, viz. defining the position of Dutch relative to the dialogue/English oriented literature.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we introduce our methodology, viz. that of a focused parallel corpus study. Section 3 presents the results and reveals that Dutch dialogue data are parallel to narrative discourse data in that the distribution of the Dutch PERFECT is overall broader than that of the English one. The division of labor between the PERFECT and the PAST in Dutch will turn out to be regulated by aspectuality. Section 4 discusses the results and concludes.

2. Methodology

In order to finetune the contrast between PAST and PERFECT in Dutch, we opt for an exploratory analysis on the basis of corpus data. We use a parallel corpus with English as the source language and a translation to Dutch to directly compare the distribution of the Dutch PERFECT to that of the English original. We discuss the potential danger of translation artefacts in Section 4.

2.1. The corpus

As a corpus, we opted for Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s stone (henceforth HP) and its Dutch translation. This choice is driven by several considerations. For the current study, the broader use of dialogue as compared to that in L’Étranger constitutes its main asset. For follow-up studies, the fact that HP is a recent novel with both narrative discourse and dialogue that has moreover been translated into a variety of typologically diverse languages make it a valuable resource for cross-linguistic comparison. Fictional dialogue is used here as a proxy for spontaneous conversation which enables us to compare PERFECT use across languages.

¹ These claims are based on an analysis of the corpus this study is based on. We only found 61 cases of Past Continuous in Corpus HP-A as opposed to 673 Simple Pasts. 52 occurred in the narrative discourse part. Details of Corpus HP-A are developed in Section 2.
2.2. Preparing the corpus

Given that we are after the division of labor between the PERFECT and the PAST in dialogue, we need to focus on the dialogue part of the corpus. To make this possible, we have performed a two-step operation on the corpus. The first step was to separate those parts of the corpus that occur between quotes from the others. We did this partly using an automated script and partly manually. In Section 3 we report on a quantitative analysis in the dialogue and narrative discourse parts of Chapters 1 and 17 to give a coarse-grained view of how dialogue and narrative discourse have a different impact on tense use. We refer to this dataset as Corpus HP-A. Chapter 1 is a more narrative discourse-oriented chapter whereas Chapter 17 is more dialogue-oriented. Prototypical examples of narrative discourse and dialogue from this corpus are given in Fragments 1 and 2:

Fragments 1: narrative discourse

Harry told them everything: Quirrell; the Mirror; the Stone and Voldemort. Ron and Hermione were a very good audience; they gasped in all the right places and, when Harry told them what was under Quirrell’s turban, Hermione screamed out loud.

Fragments 2: dialogue

'Just five minutes,' Harry pleaded.
'Absolutely not.'
'You let Professor Dumbledore in ...'
'Well, of course, that was the Headmaster, quite different. You need rest.'

Fragment 1 is a clear example of narrative discourse where the narrator reports on a sequence of interconnected events (told – gasped – told – screamed out). The state verbs were and was provide background to the narrative that unfolds in the discourse. Fragment 2 contains two VPs in the dialogue that refer to the PAST. We note that pleaded is outside the quotes and is consequently part of the narrative discourse part of Corpus HP-A.

The second preparatory step was motivated by our observation that characters also tell stories to each other and consequently sometimes enter a narrative discourse mode. The upshot of this is that we sometimes find mini-narrative discourses occurring between quotes.

To get the most focused dialogue dataset possible we therefore further zoomed in on the dialogue part of Corpus HP-A and separated mini-narrative discourses from the rest of the dialogue on the basis of the English original. This will prove instrumental in understanding the division of labor between the PAST and the PERFECT in Dutch.

We illustrate the existence of these mini-narrative discourses in Fragments 3 and 4:

Fragments 3: narrative discourse in dialogue

"Your friend Miss Granger accidentally knocked me over as she rushed to set fire to Snape at that Quidditch match. She broke my eye contact with you. Another few seconds and I'd have got you off that broom."

Fragments 4: narrative discourse in dialogue

"I brought Ron round - that took a while - and we were dashing up to the owlery to contact Dumbledore when we met him in the Entrance Hall. He already knew - he just said, "Harry’s gone after him, hasn’t he?" and hurtled off to the third floor."

We leave aside those steps that led us from the actual book and its translations to a verb-aligned digital parallel corpus.
Both Fragments 3 and 4 include a number of interconnected events (knocked over – rushed – broke | brought – were dashing up – met – said – hurtled off) and consequently straightforwardly qualify as instances of narrative discourse in the same way as Fragment 1. Because the operation of isolating mini-narrative discourses is sometimes subtle, we decided to limit it to a subpart of Corpus HP-A, viz. to dialogues in Chapter 17 that consisted of at least two turns. We refer to the pure dialogue dataset as Corpus HP-B and to the mini-narrative discourses within dialogue as Corpus HP-C.

2.3. Corpus size

As we indicated before, Corpus HP-A consists of Chapters 1 and 17 of HP with a division between narrative discourse and dialogue. The corpus consists of 1222 verb forms with 718 occurring in narrative discourse and 504 in dialogue. For Corpus HP-B and HP-C we focus on verb forms occurring in the Perfect or Past in English. Corpus HP-B is the pure dialogue corpus with 83 verbs. Corpus HP-C is its complement with mini-narrative discourses occurring in dialogue and consists of 44 verbs.

3. Results

3.1. Corpus HP-A

Table 1 summarizes the quantitative results of Corpus HP-A. We present the (raw) frequencies of the use of the Perfect in the Past in English and Dutch with a division between narrative discourse and dialogue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English (original)</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Discourse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Perfect vs. Past in Corpus HP-A with a division between narrative discourse and dialogue*

The data in Table 1 reveal that there are clear contrasts between dialogue and narrative discourse as well as between English and Dutch. First, we find no Perfect form in narrative discourse in either language, so the Perfect is restricted to dialogue in both English and Dutch. This may explain why the English oriented literature focuses on sentence-level semantics and dialogue. Second, the Dutch dataset displays twice the number of Perfects, suggesting that Dutch has a broader distribution of the Perfect in dialogue than English.

3.2. Corpus HP-B

Preliminary inspection of Corpus HP-B and Corpus HP-C revealed that the two are fundamentally different in tense use. Corpus HP-B shows an alternation between Past and Perfect in Dutch whereas Corpus HP-C is uniformly Past. We zoom in on Corpus HP-B but briefly return to Corpus HP-C below.

Two splits allow us to present the data from Corpus HP-B in an insightful and straightforward way. The first is based on tense use in English (Past vs. Perfect), the second on the VP’s aspectual class in Dutch (states vs. events). Table 2 summarizes the results.

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3 The numbers are based on all verbs used in Corpus HP-A. The fact that the sum of Perfects and Pasts in English does not equal the sum of Perfects and Pasts in Dutch suggests that some Dutch Perfects and Pasts are the translation of other tenses in English.
Table 2: Tense use in Dutch in Corpus HP-B with a primary split based on tense use in English and a secondary split based on aspectual class in Dutch

Both English and Dutch tend to use the \textsc{past} with state verbs, although some \textsc{perfect} forms are attested in both languages. Dutch displays a clear preference for the \textsc{perfect} with event verbs, whether the source was a \textsc{past} or a \textsc{perfect}. (5) and (6) show how \textsc{past} sentences implying event VPs like ‘to leave’ are rendered with the \textsc{perfect} in Dutch whereas state VPs like ‘to hate each other’ maintain the \textsc{past}:

(5) Event

“Hij heeft Krinkel in de steek gelaten.”

“He left Quirrel to die?”

(6) State

“Ze hadden inderdaad een vrij gigantische hekel aan elkaar.”

they had indeed a fairly gigantic hatred at each other

“Well, they did rather detest each other.”

In the remainder of this section we address the question why the Dutch mappings state>\textsc{past} and event>\textsc{perfect} are so clear-cut despite the fact that we know there is no \textit{a priori} incompatibility between events and the \textsc{past} nor between states and the \textsc{perfect}.

3.2.1. Events in the \textsc{past}

(7) forms a minimal pair with (5) and shows that changing the \textsc{perfect} to a \textsc{past} on events does not lead to ungrammaticality:

(7) Event

“Hij liet Krinkel in de steek.”

In contrast to (5), the made up example (7) reads as something that could come from the narrative discourse part of the HP corpus (HP-A). As we can see in the Dutch translation of narrative discourse Fragment 1, the \textsc{past} gets selected – independently of aspectual class:

\textit{Fragment 1 (Dutch)}

Harry \textit{vertelde} alles: over Krinkel, de spiegel, de Steen en Voldemort. Ron en Hermelien \textit{waren} goede luisteraars; ze \textit{snakten} op precies de juiste momenten naar adem en toen Harry \textit{vertelde} wat er onder Krinkels tulband \textit{had gezeten}, gilde Hermelien het uit.

Whether we deal with an event verb like \textit{snakken} (‘to gasp’) or a state verb like \textit{zijn} (‘to be’), Dutch consistently follows English in selecting the \textsc{past} rather than the \textsc{perfect} in Fragment 1. The only difference between the Dutch and the English fragment in terms of tense choice is that the translator opts for the \textsc{pluperfect} to render ‘what \textit{was} under Quirrel’s turban’. This state verb could also have been rendered with the \textsc{past}.
Further support for the claim that changing *PERFECTs* on events to *PASTs* signals that the event is to be considered part of a narrative discourse comes from Corpus HP-C. Corpus HP-C consists of the mini-narrative discourses that we removed from the dialogues in Corpus HP-B. Similarly to the narrative discourse part of Corpus HP-A we find that it consistently uses the *PAST* both for events and states. The Dutch translation of the narration in dialogue Fragment 4 illustrates:

**Fragment 4 (Dutch)**

"Eerst moest ik Ron bijbrengen - dat duurde een tijdje - en we waren net op weg naar de Uilenvleugel om Perkamentus op de hoogte te brengen toen we hem tegenkwamen in de hal. Hij wist alles al. Hij zei alleen: "Harry is achter hem aan, hè?" en rende direct naar de derde verdieping."

Focusing on those VPs that have the same aspectual class in English and Dutch, we find that state verbs like *zijn* ('to be') and *weten* ('to know') as well as event verbs like *tegenkomen* ('to meet') and *rennen naar* ('hurtle off to') indiscriminately select the *PAST*.

In sum, event verbs are grammatical in both *PAST* and *PERFECT* in Dutch. In our dataset, Dutch event verbs show up in the *PAST* in sequences of events, both in narrative discourse (Corpus HP-A) and mini-narrative discourses within dialogue (Corpus HP-C), but event verbs take the *PERFECT* in pure dialogue (Corpus HP-B).

### 3.2.2. States in the *PERFECT*

Dutch state verbs in Corpus HP-B typically appear in the *PAST*, as observed in (6). However, (8) shows that changing the *PAST* to a *PERFECT* on states does not lead to ungrammaticality.

(8) State

"Ze hebben inderdaad een vrij gigantische hekel aan elkaar gehad."

We claim that changing the *PAST* to *PERFECT* maintains that a state held at some point in the past but adds that this state no longer holds at the point of speech. The added end of state dimension shows how the *PERFECT* focuses on eventualities that have reached an endpoint before the speech time. Given that events have intrinsic endpoints they automatically qualify for *PERFECT* use in dialogue, and this is arguably why we find all events to go with the *PERFECT* in Dutch. States are different, and although they will generally be rendered in the *PAST*, the *PERFECT* is appropriate when the speaker wants to convey that a state no longer holds. The *PERFECT* use with the state verbs in examples (9) and (10) illustrates:

(9) "Het is me het jaar wel geweest."

'It's been quite the year.'

(10) "Jullie hebben bijna een kwartier de tijd gehad, wegwezen!"

'You have almost a quarter of an hour the time had out'

(9) is uttered by the headmaster at the end of the school year to convey that an exciting year has just come to an end. (10) is uttered to indicate that the time for the visit is up. Note that the Dutch translator selects the *PERFECT* in (9) and (10) in contexts where the English original also contains a *PERFECT*. The literature on the English *PERFECT* suggests a strong focus on current relevance, and emphasizes the point of speech orientation of the *PERFECT*. A full-fledged analysis of *PERFECT* use with...
3.2.3. A note on the continuous PERFECT in English and its translation in Dutch

So far, we have seen that Dutch and English behave alike in contexts where a state has ceased to hold. In this section, we show that they differ with states that have begun and continue to hold at the time of speech. This configuration gives rise to the so-called continuous PERFECT in English. Corpus HP-B displays the example in (11), which reports a question Harry asks when he wakes up in the hospital wing:

(11) "How long have I been in here?"

The Dutch PERFECT does not allow this continuative use, and the Dutch translator selects the PRESENT in (12) to render (11):

(12) "Hoe lang lig ik hier al?"

The fact that Harry is still in the hospital wing is incompatible with the endpoint analysis, so this explains the ungrammaticality of the Dutch PERFECT in (12). At the same time, how long requires the PERFECT in (11), and English cannot use the PRESENT to measure the duration of a state that has begun.

The continuous PERFECT is not always rendered by a PRESENT in Dutch, it may also lead to a PAST, as we see in (13).

(13) "Ronald Wemel en juffrouw Griffel zullen opgelucht zijn dat je eindelijk bent bijgekomen, want ze maakten zich grote zorgen."

"Mr Ronald Weasley and Miss Granger will be most relieved you have come round, they have been extremely worried."

By using the PAST in (13) rather than the PERFECT, the speaker conveys that the worrying started in the past, yet avoids making the claim that the worrying is over.

In sum, Table 2 shows that states appear more frequently in the PAST than in the PERFECT in both English and Dutch dialogue. The options in Dutch are even more limited, because this language does not allow the continuative use of the PERFECT.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The results presented in Section 3 provide a clear picture of the division of labor between the PAST and the PERFECT in narrative discourse and dialogue. According to Boogaart (1999) and de Swart (2007), neither English nor Dutch can fully rely on the PERFECT for narration. In line with this claim, PERFECT forms in both languages are exclusively found in pure dialogue (Corpus HP-B), and are missing in both narrative discourse (Corpus HP-A) as well as narrative fragments in dialogue (Corpus HP-C). These findings also help to understand why the literature on the English PERFECT has focused on sentence-level semantics and dialogue use.

In pure dialogue, the Dutch PERFECT has a broader distribution than its English counterpart. A further annotation at the aspectual level reveals that all event verbs in Dutch dialogue appear in the PERFECT, whereas most state verbs take the PAST. We suggest that the Dutch PERFECT conveys that an endpoint has been reached, and the eventuality no longer holds at the speech time. Under this analysis, event verbs automatically qualify for PERFECT use in dialogue, because they inherently specify an endpoint. Dutch state verbs tend to appear in the PAST in both narrative discourse and dialogue. In line with the
endpoint analysis, we find Perfect use in pure dialogue in contexts like (9) and (10), where the state no longer holds.

An analysis of the intricacies of the English continuous Perfect in (11) and (13), and the choice between Past and Present in their Dutch translations is beyond the scope of this paper. Although examples of the continuous Perfect are only attested in the dialogue part of the corpus, we do not think that the distinction between narrative discourse and dialogue is relevant for the cross-linguistic differences. Rather, we hypothesize that the contrasts reveal a distribution of labor between tense forms that needs to be addressed at the sentence-level grammar of the two languages.

We acknowledge the limits of corpus research in general and our corpus in particular. We consequently stress the preliminary character of our findings and the need to triangulate the results through different data gathering methods. We do want to highlight three important features of our study. First, the fact that our findings are in line with Boogaart’s distinction between narrative and non-narrative discourse provides a first step towards triangulation. We note though that the claims we make about our data are limited to dialogue and do not extend to non-narrative discourse in general. The second feature of our study is that our qualitative results are based on a carefully crafted subcorpus allowing us a great deal of control of the variables at play. This is probably the reason why our results are particularly cutclear. The third and final feature is that we have consistently created minimal pairs of Perfect and Past contexts allowing us to check for optionality in translation as well as for artefacts stemming from translation or relying on written fictional dialogue. We have not encountered any context where the translation diverged from what we thought was a good Dutch narrative discourse/dialogue.

A reviewer noted that there would have been a danger of circularity if we had decided on the distinction between (mini-)narrative discourse and dialogue on the basis of the Dutch version of HP. We agree with the reviewer: given that we claim that tense use is dependent on this distinction, a categorization of the contexts into (mini-)narrative discourse and dialogue on the basis of the Dutch version could have been influenced by the tenses used in the contexts. This is where parallel corpora come in handy. Rather than performing the categorization of the contexts on the basis of the Dutch version, we did so on the basis of the English original. This procedure is known as annotation projection whereby an annotation based on one of the languages in a parallel corpus is projected onto the other languages (e.g. Yarowski et al. 2001; Hwa et al. 2002; Friedrich & Gateva 2017). The original goal of annotation projection within parallel corpus research has been to save costs and the procedure is not without pitfalls. In our case, annotation projection does come in handy as it avoids the circularity that would have been lurking around the corner if we had categorized contexts into (mini-)narrative discourse and dialogue on the basis of the Dutch version.

In our introduction we promised a contribution to building a bridge between the dialogue/English oriented literature and the narrative discourse/variationist oriented literature on the Perfect. We are confident that our focused parallel corpus study on the Dutch and English Perfect has done exactly this. We admit that the bridge is still under construction but this has more to do with the follow-up questions our results raise than with the actual insights they have generated. The relevance of the dialogue vs. narrative discourse distinction and of the state vs. event distinction that Boogaart exploited mainly to understand the Past lead to interesting new avenues for research on the Perfect as well, in Dutch, English and beyond.

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