

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 | English |
| | J' ai chanté | French |
| | Ik heb gezongen | 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'aime 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 We henceforth refer to the Dutch OVT and the English Simple Past as PAST.

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 & Døve 1993; Daalder & Verhagen 1993; Clement 1997). This explains why the Onvoltooid Verleden Tijd is used in (3). Boogaart links this to the present orientation of the PERFECT and the need for an event 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 corpus²

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:

Fragment 1: narrative discourse

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

Fragment 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:

Fragment 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."

Fragment 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."

² 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.³

	English (original)		Dutch	
	PERFECT	PAST	PERFECT	PAST
Narrative Discourse	0	600	0	648
Dialogue	41	163	81	119

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.

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.

	PERFECT in Dutch		PAST in Dutch	
	Events	States	Events	States
PAST in English (original)	29	1	0	39
PERFECT in English (original)	10	3	0	1

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 PAST with state verbs, although some PERFECT forms are attested in both languages. Dutch displays a clear preference for the PERFECT with event verbs, whether the source was a PAST or a PERFECT. (5) and (6) show how PAST sentences implying event VPs like ‘to leave’ are rendered with the PERFECT in Dutch whereas state VPs like ‘to hate each other’ maintain the PAST:

(5) Event

“Hij **heeft** Krinkel in de steek **gelaten**.” PERFECT

“He **left** Quirrel to die?”

(6) State

“Ze **hadden** inderdaad een vrij gigantische hekel aan elkaar.” PAST
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>PAST and event>PERFECT are so clear-cut despite the fact that we know there is no *a priori* incompatibility between events and the PAST nor between states and the PERFECT.

3.2.1. Events in the PAST

(7) forms a minimal pair with (5) and shows that changing the PERFECT to a PAST on events does not lead to ungrammaticality:

(7) Event

“Hij **liet** Krinkel in de steek.” PAST

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 PAST gets selected – independently of aspectual class:

Fragment 1 (Dutch)

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

Whether we deal with an event verb like *snakken* (‘to gasp’) or a state verb like *zijn* (‘to be’), Dutch consistently follows English in selecting the PAST rather than the 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 PLUPERFECT to render ‘what **was** under Quirrel’s turban’. This state verb could also have been rendered with the 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**.” PERFECT

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 jaartje wel **geweest**.” PERFECT

It is me the year quite been

'It's **been** quite the year.'

(10) “Jullie **hebben** bijna een kwartier de tijd **gehad**, wegwezen!” PERFECT

you have almost a quarter_of_an_hour the time had out

'You **have had** time [to spend with your friend] for almost a quarter of an hour, 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

a state that no longer holds is beyond the scope of this paper, but we suggest that it should cover both Dutch and English.

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?” PRESENT

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 clearcut. 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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