Accounting for durations in West Germanic *since*-adverbials

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Time in Translation
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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) 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 *hadn’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.
Intro - why *since*-adverbials?

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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)).
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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.
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*?
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.

²Examples from the *Europarl* parallel corpus.
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!”

³Example from the *Europarl* parallel corpus.
We can summarize the distribution of *since* as follows:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>localizing temporal expression</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event (NP or clauses)</td>
<td>(3), (4)</td>
</tr>
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<td>state (bounded or unbounded)</td>
<td>(5), (6)</td>
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<td>discourse marker</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bare</td>
<td>(7)</td>
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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 haven’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 Ohreschützer.’
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.
To summarize, German \textit{seit} additionally occurs with the following complements:

<table>
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Musan (2003) classifies these as *Since-duration-adverbials*. She opposes this to the *Since-position-adverbials* we have seen in English *since* in (1) through (4).
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Musan (2003) classifies these as *SINCE*-duration-adverbials. She opposes this to the *SINCE*-position-adverbials we have seen in English *since* in (1) through (4).

Now, let’s see what Dutch *sinds* can do!
Dutch \textit{sinds}

Dutch \textit{sinds}, like German \textit{seit} and English \textit{since}, appears freely with events (14) and states:

(14) a. ‘I haven’t \textit{blushed} so much \textit{since} Madam Pomfrey told me she liked my new earmuffs.’

b. ‘Ik \textit{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.  
    *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.  
    *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.*
Dutch *sinds* - no durations in the **PRESENT**?

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.
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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\(^6\)Examples from *Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands.*
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 mostly requires special conditions: 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 vannacht (...) bij haar ouders afgeleverd.
The girl had been missing since 7 May, but was reunited with her parents tonight.

7Maybe (13) is an exception.
8Examples from Google searches.
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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(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.
## Taking stock

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

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bare</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duration adverbial</td>
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In this talk, we focused on variation in *duration adverbials* and *tense*. We consider variation in bare *since* a syntactic issue (possibly *ellipsis*).  

9As 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*. 
Taking stock

We conclude \textit{since} differs cross-linguistically in two main respects:

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  - Dutch \textit{sinds} allows durational phrases in the \textit{Present} with states and activities (with \textit{habitual} reading). In the \textit{Perfect}, only when there is focus on the \textit{consequent state}.

- Tense:
  - English does \textbf{not} allow \textit{since} in the simple tenses.
  - German \textit{seit} and Dutch \textit{sinds} appear with simple tenses too, although \textit{Past} requires special circumstances.
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*
Why current accounts will not yet work

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- use of Since with non-compound tenses
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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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- 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.
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!
Thanks!

Any questions?