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PRESENT PERFECT: A SEMANTIC FRAMEWORK

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"... na frente de luta da ciência, lá onde o combate com o desconhecido se inicia ou progride, o pesquisador conserva um setor de combate realmente pequeno, mas é aí que ele pode contribuir com algo de insubstituível e único, sendo insubstituível no caráter único desta tarefa pessoal. Encontrou o seu posto, desempenha-o e, assim, consuma-se, *realiza-se plenamente a si mesmo.*"

Viktor E. Frankl (1989: 23)

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation sets out to build a semantic framework for the English present perfect capable of accounting for: [1] the opposition between the English present perfect and the simple past, [2] the classification of the English present perfect into the category of tense, [3] the ambiguity of the English present perfect with durational adverbs and [4] McCawley's primary readings of the present perfect (1971).

In chapter 1, the widespread notions of "indefiniteness" and "current relevance," used to characterize the opposition between the English present perfect and the simple past, are identified in five well-known grammar resource books utilized by EFL teachers. It is argued that these notions fail ultimately to characterize this opposition. In chapter 2, four tense theories are discussed in relation to the present perfect: [1] Reichenbach's (1948), [2] Bull's (1960), [3] Allen's (1967) and [4] Comrie's (1985). None of them, however, is found to be suitable to accommodate the present perfect comfortably. In consequence, the need of a new model is pointed out. In chapter 3, the "extended-now" interpretation of the present perfect is discussed in detail, and Declerck's tense model (1986) is presented as capable of accounting for it and for the opposition between the present perfect and the simple past. In chapter 4, a semantic model for the present perfect is developed, based on Declerck's (1986) tense model and Godoi's (1992) definitions of "Aspectual Classes" and "Aspect". It is argued that this model is capable of:

[1] offering a new semantic frame to analyze the ambiguity of the present perfect with durational adverbs;
[2] providing a new semantic interpretation for McCawley's primary readings (1971).

It is also argued in this chapter that the English present perfect is a "tense" and not a marker of "aspect" as claimed by Comrie (1976/1985). Finally, in chapter 5, we compare the English present perfect with Portuguese tenses and suggest some key concepts that, according to our analysis, are considered fundamental to an unequivocal understanding of this tense.

INTRODUCTION

Dowty (1979: 339), observes that, "aside from the progressive, no English tense has received more attention from linguists and yet eluded a convincing analysis so completely as the present perfect." Among the persistent and prominent problems in the description of the present perfect has been that of: [1] characterizing the difference in meaning between sentences in the present perfect and in the simple past, [2] accurately classifying the present perfect as "tense" or "aspect", [3] describing the ambiguity of the present perfect in sentences like: (I.1) *Max has lived in São Paulo for four years*, which is first interpreted, out of context, as implying that *Max* still lives there, but which could also be used to introduce *Max*, a former São Paulo resident to someone who wants to know more about the city, and [4] characterizing McCawley's primary readings of the present perfect (1971).

Present Perfect x Simple Past

Many descriptive efforts break down the opposition between sentences in the simple past such as (I.2) *he went* and sentences in the present perfect such as (I.3) *he has gone* into a variety of different subtypes according to an "indefiniteness" or a "current relevance" parameter. In chapters one and two, we argue that such classifications cannot provide a consistent contrast between the present perfect and the simple past, and, therefore, fail ultimately to have any explanatory power as theories.

The common element in the theories couched in the "indefiniteness parameter" is the claim that the present perfect locates events somewhere before the moment of speech, but without pointing to any particular occasion or subpart of the past. The time reference of the perfect is thus indefinite. The simple past, on the other hand, narrows down the temporal location of the prior event to some well-defined limits. In the course of the discussion in which we will question the validity of such assumptions, many inconsistencies will be pointed out. For instance, it will be observed that sentences containing adverbs believed to be completely indefinite by supporters of the

"indefiniteness parameter"[1], such as in the example below provided by Bryan (1936: 364-5), occur with the simple past, the so called "definite tense":

(I.4) *European civilization originated on the shores of the Mediterranean and* ***for long ages*** *existed only in the lands bordering upon this great inland sea.*

The "current relevance parameter", according to McCoard (1978: 31), has generated more versions of theories to explain the opposition between the present perfect and the simple past than any other that can be found in the literature. In spite of many differences, they all agree that the defining function of the perfect in English is to express the pastness of the event embodied in the lexical verb, together with a certain applicability, pertinence, or relevance of the said past event(s) to the context of the speech, the "now" of the speaker or writer. The simple past, in contrast, appears when the event in hand is past but lacks the connection of relevance to the present. But is this parameter more successful than the "indefiniteness" one? If not, is there a firm basis for Dowty's claim that:

"What McCoard has *not* ruled out, it seems to me, is the possibility that the perfect has as part of its meaning (or to be more exact, as part of its conventional implicature) a very, very general notion of 'current relevance'...?" (Dowty 1979:340)

Tense and Aspect

Although Bernard Comrie (1985:9) considers tense as a "grammaticalized expression of location in time", and therefore with an independent meaning, in discussing the interpretation of sequential events assigned to perfective past verbs in a narrative, to which the controversy of defining the categories of tense (and also aspect) in terms of their contextual functions applies, he argues that this sequencing is an

[1] cf. section 1.2

implicature, deducible from the context by "general conversational principles", and not part of the meaning of these forms. Comrie explains that if the sequence in focus was:

> "...indeed part of the meaning of the forms in question, it would mean that they should by definition be assigned to the category of tense, because sequencing is one way of locating situations in time (relative to other situations)." (Comrie 1985: 26)

Comrie emphasizes his opinion that the present perfect is not a tense but an aspect implying "current relevance":

> "The perfect is rather different from these aspects, since it tells us nothing directly about the situation in itself, but rather relates some state to a preceding situation."(Comrie 1976: 52)

Declerck (1986), however, observes that if current relevance were the all-important factor, we could not explain why we have to use the past tense in examples like:

(I.5) *I know what Tom is like. I (*have) spent my holidays with him two years ago.*

"There can be no doubt", says Declerck (1986: 311), "that there is current relevance here: if I know what Tom is like it is because I spent my holidays with him." In this way, he questions the validity of the "current relevance" parameter, as McCoard (1978) also had done in his dissertation on the present perfect.

Even denying the validity of "current relevance" though, can the English present perfect, which allows for so many interpretations, such as those pointed out by McCawley (1971): [1] continuative, [2] experiential, [3] resultative, be considered a tense? It seems that one of the major problems in classifying the present perfect as a "tense" or an "aspect" is that the very definition of the terms "tense" and "aspect" are not clear enough. The following definitions, quoted in Godoi (1992:8-11), exemplify the divergence among various definitions of aspect, as well as their vagueness:

Comrie:

a. "As the general definition of aspect, we may take the formulation that aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (1976: 3).

b. "Aspect is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation; one could state the difference as one between situation-internal time (aspect) and the situation-external time (tense)" (ibid., p.5)

Guillaume:

a. "L'aspect est une forme qui, dans le système même du verbe, dénote une opposition transcendant toutes les autres oppositions du système et capable ainsi de s'intégrer à chacun des termes entre lesquels se marquent les dites oppositions" (1929: 109).

b. "L'aspect est dans le système du verbe une distinction qui, sans rompre l'unité sémantique de ce dernier, le scinde en plusieurs termes différenciés, également aptes à prendre dans la conjugaison la marque du mode et du temps" (1963: 46).

Marin

"El apecto es la expresión de una acción en cuanto terminada o en progreso (perfectivo/imperfectivo). Aktionsart (modo de acción) sería la expresión de una acción en cuanto realizada de cierta manera: iterativa, durativa, etc." (1987: 268).

Rozental

"A categoria de aspecto verbal caracteriza a ação do ponto de vista de como esta ação se desenvolve no tempo, independentemente do momento de fala" (1984: 351).

Castilho

"O aspecto é a visão objetiva da relação entre o processo e o estado expressos pelo verbo e a idéia de duração e desenvolvimento. É a representação espacial do processo." (1968)

Given the abstractness and looseness of such definitions, which in fact have little value as systematizing parameters, it is not surprising that it turns out to be impossible to single objective features of events based on "aspect" which could relate to the speaker's use of the language. This situation makes Hoepelman's desperate comment still valid:

> "The problem is that... a clear understanding of what Aktionsarten and Aspects are is lacking. This makes it difficult to attack or defend the one or the other position, for one does not know what exactly one is attacking or defending." (Hoepelman 1978: 58)

McCoard, however, seems to refer to "aspect" as a well-defined category:

> "Another reason for typing the perfect as an aspect is simply that there is no other well-defined category into which it fits comfortably..." (McCoard 1978: 11)

Nevertheless, McCoard himself does nót provide a definition of "aspect", nor is it clear in his text to which "well defined" definition of "aspect" he is referring in this passage. It is very clear, however, that he criticizes Comrie's attempt to classify the present perfect as "aspect" when he quotes Ridjanocic (1969: 40):

> "...the English perfect fails what we believe should be the major test of an Aspectual category: it cannot be used in the same tense as another set of structures to refer to the same situation in the real world..." (In: McCoard, 1978: 10)

Moreover, at the end of the same paragraph McCoard states that:

"...we shall not refer to the English perfect as an Aspectual category: in this book, the perfect is not a marker of aspect." (McCoard 1978: 11)

This leaves no doubt about his disagreement with Comrie's classification. It is curious, however, that in the opinion of McCoard (1978: 17), the present perfect does not differ from the past tense in terms of time location: both tenses locate a situation as prior to the present moment, which is the same view as Comrie's. If the present perfect is not a marker of aspect (although McCoard (1978: 152) says it is a marker of inclusion), and does not differ from the past in terms of time location, then it should coincide in all respects with the simple past, which does not occur at all, or should be assigned to another category different from tense or aspect.

In relation to the definition of "tense", the situation is no less confusing. Jespersen (1931), for instance, built a tense system based on two points: a point of reference in which the speaker is located (it can be present, past or future) and the event which is localized as present, past or future in relation to that point of reference. Reichenbach (1948)[2], unlike Jespersen, built a tense system based on three points: "point of speech", "point of reference" and "point of event." And more recently, Comrie (1985) argued for a "mixed system" in which some tenses require just the "point of speech" and "the point of event" and other tenses require an additional point, "the point of reference".

Given such a variety of concepts and parameters developed by linguists in their attempt to build tense systems and define the category of aspect, it seems impossible to answer consistently the question proposed: "is the present perfect a tense or an aspect?", without sifting, sorting and filtering definitions and concepts in order to draw a useful conclusion. In this dissertation, after a discussion on concepts of "tense" and "aspect" in chapters three and four, we will introduce our own answer to the proposed question above, arguing for a new semantic interpretation of the present perfect.

[2] cf. section 2.2

The Ambiguity of the Present Perfect

The third topic which will be addressed in this dissertation is the "ambiguity of the present perfect." This is a subject recently reopened by Heny (1982) in response to Richards (1982): do perfect sentences with durational phrases have two distinct readings, depending on different scope relations of the perfect and adverbial operators? More generally, are there two semantically distinct frames of the perfect?

This issue is directly related to the notion of truth. There are, in fact, several distinguishable theories of truth that have been proposed by philosophers and they are all more or less controversial. Tarski's (1935) definition of the notion of truth is intended to capture and make more precise the conception of truth that is embodied in the so-called correspondence theory, according to which a proposition is true if, and only if, it denotes or refers to a state of affairs which actually exists in the world that the proposition purports to describe. An alternative way of putting this is to say that a proposition is true if it is in correspondence with reality and that a proposition is false if it is not. It will be observed that, under this interpretation of the term "truth", the truth of a proposition depends upon the existence or reality of something outside the language or system in which the proposition is formulated. A problem that faces us in applying the term "true" and "false" to declarative sentences of natural languages is that many sentences are ambiguous. What we are concerned with, therefore, is the truth or falsity of sentences under a given condition set. It is, in fact, the notion of truth-under-a-given-condition set which enables us to define ambiguity. For we can say that an ambiguous declarative sentence is one that might be true under one interpretation and false under another interpretation in some possible state of the universe and, thus that this sentence expresses two (or more) distinct propositions, and it is up to the linguist to account for this by locating the ambiguity either in the lexis of which the sentence is composed or in its syntactic structure.

Michaelis (1994), examining the primary readings of the present perfect as proposed by McCawley (1971), continuative, resultative, etc.(which is the fourth and last topic of our discussion), presents arguments in favor of the claim that the present perfect is polysemous "in much that same way that words may be polysemous: a single

form has several related meanings (Michaelis: 1994: 113)." Her analysis, however, goes against Dowty's claim that:

> "...if we are to account for the difference in preposability (in durational perfects), then there must be some syntactic difference in the two readings." (Dowty 1979: 343)

Our semantic model for the English present perfect will argue in favor of an ambiguity caused by the semantic frame of the sentences in focus, for a number of reasons which will be discussed in detail in chapters three and four.

From Research to Practice

Finally, in chapter 5, we compare the English present perfect with Portuguese tenses and propose some general principles to guide the presentation of the present perfect to Brazilian EFL students. Declerck (1986: 310-319) remarks that "the scheme for the present perfect appears to be very typical of English." And Comrie adds:

> "In discussing the perfect, it is important not to be misled into thinking that every form that is labeled 'perfect' in the grammar-book in fact expresses perfect meaning. Thus in Latin, for instance.....the so-called Perfect in fact covers both perfect and nonperfect meaning. The same is true of the Perfect (Compound Past) in many Romance languages, especially in their spoken forms..." (Comrie 1976: 53)

This is the case with the compound version of the present perfect in Portuguese which does not have the same properties as the English present perfect. If Brazilian EFL students fall into the temptation of literal translation, they will inevitably be led to wrong conclusions. This issue, however, will not be developed very deeply. This chapter is intended only to show a way of applying the research developed in this dissertation to the classroom, pointing out what we understand as essential in the teaching of the present perfect to Brazilian EFL students. In fact, there are very few linguists in Brazil who have attempted a deep study of Brazilian Portuguese tenses

which can be compared with the various types of the English present perfect. Ilari (1981), for example, discusses the uses of tenses in Brazilian Portuguese, without attempting, however, a full comparison with the English present perfect. Another example is Marques (1982), who analyses the English present perfect and compares it with Brazilian Portuguese tense forms, but within the narrow perspective of Bull (1960), which vitiates her analysis because of the problems in Bull's theory which will be discussed in chapter 2. For instance she states on in her dissertation:

> "Referindo-se novamente ao estudo de Bull, verifica-se que o presente perfeito é E(PP-V), isto é, o evento é anterior e tem relação ao eixo presente que é o momento da elocução." (Marques 1982:46)

What she does not consider, however, is that while the present perfect is on the same axis as the present tense, and the past perfect is in line with the past, the future perfect is on a different axis from the future, and the conditional perfect is separated from the conditional. This situation led McCoard (1978) to protest:

> "This asymmetry seems unjustified and suggests that Bull's tactic of separating all the 'axes' one from the other, to avoid a 'double-axis' problem, which Bull claims to exist in Reichenbach, brings a certain artificiality of its own. There is a complete blindness to certain connections that do hold between axes. This suggests indirectly that associating the simple past and the present perfect with different axes may be, at least in part, a misrepresentation. It is also curious that the + and – vectors apparently do not point at specific times, they only point away from their particular axes, while the 0 vector, in contrast, always has its own definite axis to point to." (McCoard 1978: 96)

This makes the perfect correspond to an event simultaneous with an indefinite time in the past and the simple past to an event simultaneous with a definite time in the past, which turns out to be a variation on the indefiniteness point of view, which, for reasons which will be explained in chapter 1, seems not to be a valid parameter for characterizing the opposition between the simple past and the present perfect.

Based on the cognitive assumption that students build new knowledge based on their previous knowledge (cf. Ellis 1986:37), which justifies, in our opinion, an explicit analysis of the syntactic form of the present perfect, some strategies for conveying the meaning of the present perfect as developed in this dissertation will also be suggested. Some may argue that the comparison of syntactic structures may be too heavy a task for the students and they may lose interest. This activity, however, does not need to be either heavy or boring if the students are mentally engaged in the process of learning and the teacher provides good activities, within a communicative framework. On the contrary, such activities may be an opportunity for the students to think explicitly about the syntactic structures and refine their interlanguage, a chance that very possibly they will not have outside the classroom. According to Willis (1987), although the grammar of any language is a very abstract and complex system, we should encourage learners to analyze it for themselves. Willis claims that this practice makes students feel they are not being told about language, but are being asked to work things out for themselves. It treats them as intelligent individuals who can think and solve problems. And Willis concludes:

> "If the students are encouraged to think critically about language and to draw conclusions for themselves about its structure and meaning, the grammar of English will not be sensed as a burden but as a challenge..." (Willis 1987: 17)

CHAPTER I

KEY NOTIONS IN DEFINITIONS OF THE PRESENT PERFECT

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the parameters of "definiteness" and "current relevance", very common in the literature to differentiate the present perfect from the simple past, are identified in five well-known grammar resource books and discussed at some length.

The five grammar resource books were chosen for their popularity among English teachers, according to an informal inquiry carried out in the main bookstores of Curitiba:

- Livraria do Chain
- Guerreiro & Guerreiro
- Livrarias Curitiba
- Livraria Ghignone

Since one of the objectives of this dissertation is to point out some difficulties students may have with the English present perfect in contrast with the simple past tense, it seems important to analyze the grammar sources from which English teachers most frequently get their definitions. The grammar resource books selected were:

[1] ALEXANDER, L.G. 1988. *Longman English Grammar.* London. Longman.

[2] BEAUMONT, D. 1993 *The Heinemann Elementary English Grammar - An Elementary Reference and Practice Book.* Heinemann.

[3] COBUILD. 1990. *English Grammar.* Collins. London.

[4] DIXSON, R. J. 1988. *Graded Exercises in English.* Regents Publishing Company, Inc. New York, NY, USA.

[5] SWAN, M. 1986. *Practical English Usage.* Oxford. Oxford University Press.

1.2 Definiteness

1.2.1 Presentation

In all the grammar resource books selected, there is a strong suggestion that the opposition between definite and indefinite time plays an important role in determining the choice between the present perfect and the simple past[3]. A learner of English, however, could wonder: "what is an indefinite time?" or "is definiteness a sufficient and necessary condition for the choice between the present perfect and the simple past?"

Actually, there are many questions related to the meaning of "definiteness", which have led to long and elaborate debates among linguists and philosophers. How do we know when to use the definite article and other markers of definiteness? What kinds of indefiniteness are there? This dissertation is not the place for a full exposition of the different questions about the issue, but let us consider some statements from the grammar resource books selected:

[1] You cannot use adjuncts which place the action at a definite time in the past with the present perfect. You cannot say: (1.1) *I have done it yesterday.* (Collins Cobuilt 5.34)

[2] Sentences using the present perfect tense never mention an exact time of action. If we wish to mention or imply an exact time for an action, we use the past tense: (1.2) *I called you yesterday.* (Graded Exercises in English p. 80)

[3] We use the past simple, not the present perfect, to talk about a definite past time e.g. *last week, yesterday, two years ago:* (1.3) *I played tennis yesterday.* (The Heinemann Elementary English Grammar p.107)

Yesterday is an adverb considered definite. Although it indisputably has bounds and is not likely to be confused with other days with respect to the moment of speech, it really stands for an entire set of times. According to McCoard's analysis (1978), events

[3]cf. Collins Cobuild 5.33, 5.34; Practical English Usage 495.3a, 3b; Longman English Grammar 9.23, 9.24.2, 9.26.1; Graded Exercises in English p.80; The Heinemann Elementary English Grammar p.107.

can be said to have happened *yesterday* if they happened at any of the subtimes (including subperiods as well as moments) which are within the limits of *yesterday*. In the example (1.4) *Did he call you yesterday?*, the time of calling is not understood as all and only the set of times constituting yesterday; rather it is equivalent to (1.5) *Did he call you sometime during yesterday?* In consequence of this, if we call *yesterday* a "definite" adverb, then it is definite not in the sense of affording us exact knowledge of the time(s) corresponding to the event of calling, but instead as a "definite frame" which is assigned to the time(s) of interest by the speaker.

If this argument is accepted, we can examine certain relations between temporal adverbs and the tenses they accompany, with a view to showing, following McCoard (1978), that definiteness is not an adequate criterion for separating the simple past from the present perfect. Unlike McCoard, however, we will argue that although definiteness is not an adequate criterion for separating the simple past from the present perfect, the fact that there are different restrictions in the use of certain types of adverbs with the present perfect and with the simple past indicates a different underlying semantic structure for each one of these tenses.

1.2.2 Adverbs

McCoard (1978) points out that the moment of speech itself is about as well-defined a time as we "normally" encounter. It is not permanently fixed in the way calendrical times like (1.6) *March 15, 1996* are, but then neither are expressions such as *yesterday* or *last week*, which are always among those classed as "definite."[4]

McCoard argues that if *last Friday* and *yesterday* represent definite times, then the period between them should also be definite: *from last Friday through yesterday*. And it should also, correspondingly, concur with the past, which it does. But if the moment of speech is definite, then *from last Friday up till right now* should be definite as well, yet such a phrase does not go with the past, but with the perfect, the so-called "indefinite past" tense:

[4] cf. Collins Cobuild, 1994: 5.33, 34

(1.7) (a) *From last Friday up till now, I have had nothing but problems.*

(b)**From last Friday up till now, I had nothing but problems.*

(In: McCoard 1978: 79)

And McCoard concludes:

> "Either we must make some specific distinction between two senses of 'definiteness', or we must admit that a separate descriptor is required, which may be quite independent of definiteness." (McCoard 1978: 79)

In addition, if we think of those adverbs which normally require the past and seem to exclude the perfect, an interesting fact can be observed:

(1.8) (a) *He played tennis two months ago.*

(b)* *He has played tennis two months ago.*

(c) *He played tennis last weekend.*

(d)* *He has played tennis last weekend.*

(e) *He played tennis just yesterday.*

(f)**He has played tennis just yesterday.*

All these adverbs can be combined, as McCoard (1978:80) observed, by taking them to be explicitly or implicitly subsumed in an overall period which extends (at least) up to the moment of speech, and the perfect is then possible:

(1.9) *He has played tennis two months ago, last weekend, and just yesterday (so far).*

The individual times remain as well-defined as they ever were; they are not somehow made "indefinite" individually. And in accordance with our earlier claim that the moment of speech is itself definite, the overall period cannot be considered "indefinite" either. Note that the overall period does not have to include the present. One can also choose to say:

(1.10) *He played tennis two months ago, last weekend, and just yesterday.*

Let us consider now the fact that adverbs like ***never, ever, always,*** which are considered "indefinite"[5], occur with both the present perfect and the simple past:

(1.11) (a) *She was never kissed in her youth.*

(b) *She 's never yet been kissed.*

According to McCoard (1978:80), if the past is definite, then *never* must be definite too. But if "past never" is definite, so is "perfect never," since the period *never-yet-so-far* is scarcely less well-defined. Evoking Dahl, one might say that the latter period is "open-ended" and therefore unbounded and indefinite:

> " A class of situations or a characterization of a situation is bounded if and only if it is an essential condition on the members of the class or an essential part of the characterization that a certain limit or end-state is attained." (Dahl 1985: 29)

"But *never yet*", says McCoard (1978: 80), "does not refer to future time, only to that part of time which comes up to now and, therefore, should be considered as definite as past never."

We should observe also, that many past-taking "definite" adverbs seem to be, in fact, entirely "indefinite". If we consider Bryan's example:

> *European civilization originated on the shores of the Mediterranean and for long ages existed only in the lands bordering upon this great inland sea.* (Bryan 1936: 364-5)

it seems unlikely that we are to understand *for long ages* to be referring to a period of time that has clear boundaries separating it from other periods, and that these boundaries are identifiable by the interlocutors (cf. McCoard: 1978). Yet, Bryan considers it to be definitely fixed.

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[5] cf. Practical English Usage 1989: 495.3a

According to Allen (1966: 155-156), one of the ways in which a noun phrase can be definite is by "referring back" to a previously mentioned thing. When the referents are different, the second noun phrase remains indefinite:

(1.12) *He saw a bear. She saw a (different) bear.*

If the bear is the same, we must definitize the second noun phrase:(1.13) *She saw the bear (too).* In the case of adverbs it is not as obligatory, but normally we would expect (1.14) *John left before five, and Bill left before five too* to become (1.15) *John left before five, and Bill left then too,* on the understanding that the actual times of departure were the same. This is typical of what Geis (1970) calls "instantive" adverbials. "Frame" adverbials, on the other hand, work differently. Comparing (1.16)*Richard left on Monday, and Mary left on Monday too* to (1.17) *Richard left on Monday, and Mary left then too,* she notices that Richard and Mary may have left at entirely different times—but both within the frame of "Monday." Geis proposes that *before five* has the underlying structure "at time x before five", but on Monday is represented with no underlying "at-phrase". *Then* will take the place of *before five* only on condition that the two times are the same, but this constraint does not apply to *on Monday*; it suffices that the two Mondays be the same. Since the speaker need not even know the actual times of Mary's and Richard's departures, we cannot claim that *then* refers to definite event-times. *Then* specifies only the outer limits of those event-times, that is, the "chunks" of time within which they fall.

McCoard points out that this is a rather different sense of definiteness than is applied ordinarily to nominal referents. He concludes that if *Monday* is definite, *yesterday* would also count as definite; and if the *yesterday-chunk* of time is definite, then surely the *today-chunk* is just as definite. Yet *today* can appear with the perfect:

(1.18) *Richard has left today, and Mary has left today too.*

McCoard observes that even a common statement like *I overslept this morning* is problematical:

"...if we concern ourselves about defining the time of the event, we can hardly say **At 9:01 this morning I overslept*; neither was the oversleeping a morning-long project. For that matter, this morning is but roughly defined: we must understand something like 'during that period of the morning which constitutes the gradual transition between on time and late, I slipped into the late part.' Then are we saying anything less definite in *I've overslept this morning?* We could argue that this is actually more definite in its time reference, since if the morning is not yet over (still 'now'), the possible time-frame of oversleeping is relatively less than the whole morning." (McCoard 1978: 84)

If definiteness of the containing time-chunk, that is, the "period within which", is what we mean when we talk about the definiteness of past-taking adverbs, then we must somehow count *today* and other moment of speech-including adverbs as exceptions. *On Monday* will normally go with the past, while *today* may freely go with the perfect. The definiteness characterization of adverbs does not tell us why this should be the case.

While on the subject of reference, McCoard (1978) proposes the following example in which the perfect seems to function anaphorically:

(1.19) *I've called up my brother several times, but he's been too drunk to talk every one of those times.*

If coreference is a sufficient condition of definiteness (which is generally agreed), then *he's been drunk* should count as a definite verb form. This conclusion is in keeping with Vlach:

"It has frequently been observed that clauses in the past tense are anaphoric in some sense, but the parallel claim for the perfect is less widely accepted. In fact the two forms are very similar in this respect. Both require an adverbial to locate the time of the reported eventuality, and in both cases this time is often not explicitly stated and must be supplied anaphorically. Past clauses and perfect clauses differ not in their ability to contain understood time adverbials, but only with respect to the type (XN

or non-XN) of possible adverbials." (Vlach 1993: 270)

Vlach's claims not only reinforce McCoard's opinion that there is no consistent difference between the simple past and the present perfect in terms of anaphora, but also support McCoard's conclusion that the present perfect should be seen:

"...as the marker of prior events which are nevertheless included within the overall period of the present, the 'extended now'." (McCoard, 178: 123)

According to Vlach (1993: 270), a past tense clause can pick up its temporal adverb from a present perfect antecedent. The "supposed asymmetry", using Vlach's terms, between past and present perfect depends partly on this observation, but, says Vlach (1993: 270), "consideration of many sentences strongly suggests that there is no difference other than the XN distinction." He proposes the analysis of the following sentences:

(1.20) (a) *Bill has arrived, but Mary didn't talk to him.*
(b) *Bill has arrived, but Mary hasn't talked to him.*
(c) *Bill arrived last night, but Mary hasn't talked to him.*
(d) *Bill arrived last night, but Mary didn't talk to him.*

Supposing for (1.20a), says Vlach (1993: 271), that the antecedent for the understood adverbial of the second clause comes from the first clause, and not from some previous discourse, the adverbial for the second clause of (1.20a) must be *when Bill arrived.* In (1.20b) the adverbial of the second clause is either *since Bill arrived* or something inferred from the previous discourse. In (1.20c) the adverbial of the second clause is *since Bill arrived.* The adverbial of the second clause of (1.20d) must be *last night* or *when Bill arrived.* In all these cases the possibilities are consistent with the idea that the available adverbials for the second clause are those that can straightforwardly be inferred from the events and adverbials of the first clause, given the XN[6]/non-XN restrictions for the present perfect and past. These restrictions, in our opinion, seem to

[6] McCoard's abbreviation for "Extended Now"

suggest different underlying semantic structures for each one of these tenses and not to be a function of Gricean pragmatic principles (Grice, 1975:45ff), as McCoard (1978: 47) claims. This subject will be developed more extensively in chapter three in which we propose differentiated temporal structures for the present perfect and for the simple past.

1.3 Current Relevance

1.3.1 Presentation

A second concept, constantly presented as an important determiner of the choice between the present perfect and the simple past, is the "current relevance" of an action that happened or started happening in the past[7]. This concept had its origin in the 18th century with White (1761) and Pickbourn (1789) and was amplified by linguists such as Poutsma (1926), Jespersen (1931) and Zandvoort (1932) in the beginning of this century. We will argue, like McCoard (1978), that there is no consistent contrast between the present perfect and the simple past that we can seize hold of on the basis of relevance and, therefore, that current relevance fails ultimately to have any explanatory power to characterize the uses of the present perfect and the simple past. However, in order to account for some ambivalences in the meaning of the present perfect in respect to some types of relevance which do not occur with the simple past, we will differ from McCoard, who relies on purely pragmatic matters, by arguing that there are distinct semantic structures underlying the present perfect and the simple past which enable the speaker to choose one or other tense, according to the characteristics of the situation he wants to express.

1.3.2 Types of Current Relevance

McCoard (1978:32), quotes White to show that the "current relevance" point of view is not a recent concept:

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[7] cf. Collins Cobuild 5.35; Practical English Usage 493.2a, 2b, 495.1b; Longman English Grammar 9.23, 9.26.1; Graded Exercises in English p.80; The Heinemann Elementary English Grammar p.113

"We make use of the First Past Tense (= past), when we refer to actions long since past, and the performers of which have already left the present stage of life. In this view of it, it might be called the Historical tense. We also make use of it when we refer to the past acts of ourselves, or others not alive [sic!], when taken in a distant view, or unconnected with present proceedings. The Second Past Tense (= present perfect) is seldom used but with respect to persons now existing, and with respect to such acts of theirs, as have either been but very lately performed, or such at least as are taken into view as connected with their present proceedings." (White 1761:83-4)

White (1761:85) offers only a couple of examples, and discusses them only in terms of a recency/remoteness criterion. Quoting Shakespeare, (1.21) *"A beauty-waining and distressed widow. . . . Made prize and purchase of his wanton eyes,"* he explains:

Here *made*, the (past) of the verb *to make*, represents this conquest gain'd by the widow, as an event that had fallen out some considerable Time before: for had it happen'd but just then, whilst the speaker takes notice of it, or but a little while before that: hath made would have been the proper expression for it. (In: McCoard 1978: 33)

In his general description of the opposition between perfect and past, however, White (1761: 87) identifies three main characteristics of the present perfect (expanded by later scholars) which still can be found in current grammar books:

[a] Recent events:

(1.22) *The President has been assassinated (stated in a news program)*

Swan (1986: 494)

[b] Events pertaining to persons presently alive:

(1.23) *He has had a haircut.*

Beaumont (1993: 108)

[c] Events connected somehow with the present:

(1.24) *Utopia has declared war on Fantasia.*

Swan (1986: 494)

Jespersen (1931), who is one of the staunchest proponents of the CR point of view, generally lumps [b] and [c] together, but distinguishes them from a different variety, the "inclusive" principle:

> "The perfect . . . is itself a kind of present tense, and serves to connect the present time with the past. This is done in two ways: first the perfect is a retrospective present, which looks upon the present state as a result of what has happened in the past; and second the perfect is an inclusive present, which speaks of a state that is continued from the past into the present time." (Jespersen 1931: 47)

What Jespersen refers to as "retrospective present" is exemplified by:

(1.25) (a) *He has died.*

(b) *I've walked up from Haslemere.*

(c) *He has taken the matter so much to heart that he has remonstrated. . . .*

Jespersen says that these examples have in common the fact that they communicate something about the present, stemming from a prior event. Another term used by him is "retrospective perfect". An equivalent and currently more common term is "resultative perfect". Examples of Jespersen's inclusive present are:

(1.26) (a) *He has lived here for three years.*

(b) *He has been dead four days.*

(c) *Black falsehood has ineffaceably soiled her name.*

(d) *I have never seen my boy, since he was a tiny baby.*

(Jespersen 1931: 48)

All of these express an "action or state still . . . lasting at the time implied in the sentence" (Jespersen 1931:56). An equivalent term "continuous perfect" is used by McCoard (1978) instead of "inclusive present," and is considered the fourth CR principle:

[d] Events that continue to the present:

(1.27) *All my adult life I have waited for the emergence of a strong center party.*
Collins (1990: 251)

Jespersen (1931:70) also considers a number of examples in which "the perfect often seems to imply repetition," but makes no special category for them. Many of these contain an adverbial phrase based on the conjunction *when* and the striking thing about them is that the reading seems very strongly iterative:

> "In Anthony's great speech at Caesar's funeral...he generally uses the past, but says: 'He hath brought many captiues home to Rome (they are here still), Whose ransomes did the general coffers fill: Did this in Caesar seem ambitious? When that the poore haue cry'de, Caesar hath wept'-- this is probably in accordance with the rule...(repeated action with when), but some grammarians find fault with it. A little further down the 2nd citizen says: 'If thou consider rightly of the matter, Caesar ha's had great wrong'-- here, the preterit 'Caesar had great wrong' would have implied, on one particular occasion." (Jespersen 1931:67)

For the purpose of our analysis, we will follow McCoard in considering the iterative principle as the fifth characteristic of the present perfect, which supposedly would allow the speaker to differentiate it from the simple past:

[e] Iterative events:

(1.28) *She's attended classes regularly.*
Alexander (1988: 171)

Zandvoort (1932), after analyzing many examples with perfects, finally decided that the only crucial thing about all of them was that they contained a statement based on personal experience:

> "The perfect of experience may be said to constitute a genus, with an iterative and a non-iterative (or neutral) species, each with its several varieties." (Zandvoort 1932: 111)

This "genus" constitutes McCoard's (1978) sixth category:

[f] Events which are part of personal experience:

(1.29) *I've never had scarlet fever. (So I can still get it)*
Swan (1986: 493)

This list of six readings of the present perfect elaborated by McCoard (1978) seems to be large enough to encompass other lists of the same nature such as Comrie's (1976) and McCawley's (1971). Comrie (1976: 56-60) discusses four types of perfect:

[a] Perfect of result:

"In the perfect of result, a present state is referred to as being the result of some past situation: this is one of the clearest manifestations of the present relevance of a past situation."

This type corresponds to Jespersen's (1931) "retrospective perfect" which is represented in readings [b], [c] and [f] of McCoard's list.

[b] Experiential perfect:

"The experiential perfect indicates that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present."

This type corresponds to Zandvoort's (1932) "personal experience" or reading [f] in McCoard's list. Readings [b] and [c] of McCoard's list would also fit into this category.

[c] Perfect of persistent situation:

"One use of the English Perfect, indeed one that seems to be characteristic of English, is the use of the Perfect to describe a situation that started in the past but continues (persists) into the present..."

This type corresponds to reading [d] "Continuous perfect" in McCoard's list.

[d] Perfect of recent past:

"In many languages, the perfect may be used where the present relevance of the past situation referred to is simply one of temporal closeness, i.e. the past situation is very recent. In English....the perfect does not, of course, in general necessarily imply that the past situation is recent....However, while present relevance does not imply recentness, recentness may be a sufficient condition for present relevance."

This type corresponds roughly to reading [a] in McCoard's list. Note that Comrie (1976) does not discard the possibility of the use of the simple past with a recent past situation.

McCawley (1971) distinguishes three meanings for the present perfect:

[a] Universal/Continuative:

"A state obtains throughout an interval whose upper boundary is speech time."

This meaning corresponds to reading [d] of McCoard's list.

[b] Existential/Experiential:

"One or more events of a given type are arrayed within a present inclusive time

span."

This meaning corresponds to readings [b], [c], [f] of McCoard's list.

[c] Resultative:

"The result of a past event obtains now."

This meaning corresponds to readings [b] and [c] of McCoard's list.

Since McCoard's list seems to encompass other lists which deal with the meanings of the present perfect, let us examine in more detail each one of the categories of opposition between the present perfect and the simple past contained in it.

1.3.2.1 Recency Principle

The recency principle predicts that any past event that can be characterized by the speaker as recent will appear in the present perfect. An event not so characterized will appear in the past. Modern grammarians do not usually put too much emphasis on recency, since there are many examples not readily accommodated by it. Poutsma thinks of the recency opposition mainly in terms of the choice of specific adverbs which accompany either the perfect or the past, but not both:

> "The point of time denoted by *just* is understood to be so near the moment of speaking that it does not separate the action or state appreciably from the present. Hence it requires the predicate to be placed in the perfect." (Poutsma 1926:263)

But alongside his example (1.30) *Mrs. Long has just been here*, McCoard (1978:34) cites (1.31) *Mrs. Long was just here*, in modern American usage at least. Poutsma (ibid.) allows the past with *just now*, arguing that the space intervening between the time indicated by *just now* and the moment of speech is felt to be long enough to justify the use of the past. Usage is, however, more or less variable.

It is clear that Poutsma would like to be able to say that adverbs are categorized as recent or non-recent, and that these divisions are semantically natural, i.e. they correspond to actual differences in meaning along a scale of recency. It does not quite work out that way, however. The purported difference in time-sense between *just* and *just now* appears quite artificial, and the only clear evidence of a difference is the co-occurring verb forms themselves, which are at least partly "variable". It would be helpful if "nearness to the moment of speech" had some specific external indicator in the physical world, but this does not happen to be the case, as we can see from examples like(1.32) *just in this century has literacy become fairly widespread* (McCoard: 1978). Sorensen offers the following perspective:

> "It is no doubt true that a person who says that he has bought a car, especially when he says 'a new car', is more likely to be the owner of a car than one who says that he bought a car (at such and such a time). That, however, is because we are more inclined to use an identification of past time, and therefore a past, when the action took place some or a long time ago than when it took place in the immediate past; which, again, is to say that the perfect, as regards the point of the action, is statistically more of an immediate past than the past is." (Sorensen 1964:80)

According to McCoard (1978), the statistical tendency for (1.33) *I've bought a new car* to be interpreted as an act of the past recent enough for the new car to be presently in evidence, rather than as an expression of something done in the course of one's life - (1.34) *Have you ever bought a new car*? - is not to be confused with the semantic basis of verb-form choice. However, a semantic structure underlying the present perfect would have to account for the possibility of this ambiguous interpretation. This semantic structure will be developed in chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

1.3.2.2 Present Existence and Present Connection Principles

In evaluating the principles **[b] Events pertaining to persons presently alive** and **[c] Events connected somehow with the present**, which McCoard (1978) calls "present existence" and "present connection" respectively, it is important to note that

the perfects, according to Jespersen (1931), do not simply assert present states, but express the "transition" between a prior event and the consequent present state.

For instance, in the world of our normal experience, the relationship between *dying* and *being dead* is indeed a firm one, but it is not without exceptions. We can easily imagine cases of the dead miraculously (or scientifically) resurrected. "The point here", says McCoard, "is not a quibble about whether a person has really died at all if we find he is subsequently alive." It is that given an appropriate, and in these cases, extraordinary, context, the message (1.35) *he is dead* is not there, and consequently cannot be a specific contribution of the perfect form. According to McCoard, it is misleading to say that there is only a difference of "emphasis" between (1.36) *he has died* and (1.35) *he is dead*: the latter asserts only a present state, and normally implies a prior event; the former asserts only the prior event, and "suggests" the present state. A semantic model for the present perfect would have also to account for this "suggestion". Jespersen's view on the function of the past is not unexpected:

> "...the past refers to some time in the past without telling anything about its connection with the present moment. The question 'Have you finished?' refers to the present moment ('Are you through?'), while 'Did you finish?' asks about some definite portion of past time." (Jespersen 1931:60-1)

Apparently Jespersen does not believe an English speaker would ever say *Did you finish?* in any situation where he might also ask (1.37) *Are you through?* This seems, as McCoard (1978) remarks, "a dubious claim". But having identified the perfect with highly specific information about present resultant states, the past must embody the specific converse of that information, or at least lack positive indication that a certain state holds. We will see that Jespersen makes the stronger claim that the past actually implies the converse of what is implied by the perfect:

> "It is a natural consequence of the definition (of the past) that in speaking of dead people the past is necessary, except when reference is to the result as affecting the present day. Thus we may say: *'Newton has explained the movements of the moon'* (i.e. in a way that is still known or thought to be correct, while *'Newton explained*

the movements of the moon from the attraction of the earth' would imply that the explanation has since been given up). On the other hand, we must use the past in *'Newton believed in an omnipotent God,'* because we are not thinking of any effect his belief may have on the present age." (Jespersen 1931: 66)

Here we are given two options to base our tense-choice on: [1] we can use the past in talking about dead persons; [2] we can talk about the deceased in the perfect as long as the effect of their past deeds still holds, signaling, as Twaddell (1968:8) puts it, "a significant persistence of results, a continued truth value." Jespersen illustrates these options with a literary example:

"The difference between the reference to a dead man and to one still living is seen in the following quotation which must have been written between 1859, when Macaulay died, and 1881, when Carlyle died (note also Mr. before the latter name): ... *Macaulay did not impress the very soul of English feeling as Mr. Carlyle, for example, has done.*" (Jespersen 1931:66-7)

This is a very neat distinction, but, as pointed out by McCoard (1978: 39), it does not account for an amended version: (1.38)...*as the late Mr. Carlyle, for example, has done.* Apparently it is not required that Mr. Carlyle himself maintain a bodily existence, but only that he "continues" through personal influence, through his literary productions. Thus, where principle [b] is inadequate, we slip into principle [c].

Pickbourn (1789:33-4) reports the opinion of a "learned friend" that we may say, (1.39) *Cicero has written orations*; but we cannot say (1.40) *Cicero has written poems*. We suppose Cicero still existing, and speaking to us in his orations; but as the poems are lost, we cannot mention them in the same manner. In general, Pickbourn (1789) points out, the perfect may be applied whenever the action is connected with the present time, by the actual existence either of the author or of the work, though it may have been performed many centuries ago, but if neither the author nor the work now remains, it cannot be used.

The Ciceronian example and argument appear in nearly identical form in Dietrich:

"Cicero has written orations is possible because the orations still exist, and thus indirectly continue the period applicable to Cicero himself down to the present. On the other hand, we say Cicero wrote poems because the poems are lost and so do not provide the necessary connection with the present." (Dietrich 1955:192)

McCoard (1978) remarks that there is a certain plausibility to the argument, but it immediately runs into trouble with equally plausible examples such as (1.41) *All of Cicero's poems have been lost*, in which it may well be the case that it is the non-existence of the works that provides the connection with the present. We might be speaking about great writers and orators known to us only by name and reputation, for example. In regard to the past, we can see that (1.42) *My friend here, Max, wrote the speech you are now reading* does not deny the present existence of either Max or his speech. Nor, for that matter, would (1.43) *Cicero wrote poems* tell us, by itself, anything about the status of Cicero or his poems; we depend on external knowledge to supply these data.

Donaldson (1973:155-6) gives some examples which at first glance seem to support a "present-existence" criterion for tense choice. She posits a situation where one of the speaker's parents is dead but the other is still living. Then neither the past nor the perfect seems quite suitable:

(1.44) (a) *My parents have always been champions of civil rights.*
(b) *My parents were always champions of civil rights.*

The problem, as Donaldson puts it, is that the term my parents has "faulty reference," because one of its referents no longer exists. Or alternatively, the reference may fail because one of the parents has changed opinion on civil rights somewhere along the way. If the other one dies, then the set again becomes consistent. There are, in fact, any number of factors that can change to alter the existence of a specified set: the statement (1.45) *Bill's sisters were all blondes* does not necessarily require that Bill is now bereft of sisters; he may simply no longer have any blond sisters. Donaldson (1973) says the only requirement is that whatever the attribution, it must apply to all members

of the set, and cannot be mixed, e.g.(1.46) *half the sisters dead and half with gray hair* (Donaldson 1973: 158). Even this constraint may be too strong, however.

In all these examples we have been discussing, the underlying operative principle seems to be this:

> "...the use of the perfect reflects some reason for placing Cicero, Max, etc. and/or their poems, plays, etc. within a span of time conceptualized as extending right up to the present, as a past continuous to the present. It frequently happens that such a period is connected with individuals or objects still extant; one may say that, *ceteris paribus*, the time-span of the perfect will usually be specifically associated with the present existence of the entity or set within its field of reference. But this is only one kind of connection with the present, and it may be overridden by other factors." (McCoard 1978:41)

Let us return to the example about Newton, in which the perfect was supposed to imply that Newton's explanation is "still known or thought to be correct" by the speaker (the same example appears in Poutsma 1926:264):

(1.47) *Newton has explained the movements of the moon* (Jespersen 1931:66)

First we observe that if we were to apply principle [b], which specifies that something must "presently exist" for the perfect to be used, it would be impossible to identify this existence with any obvious surface constituent: it is presumably "Newton's explanation" that exists. The sense of "exists" is special, too, being roughly that of "presently valid." Now, even with these allowances:

> "...it appears that we are constraining the reading of the perfect/past opposition too strongly. Consider that someone who rejects all theories subsequent to that of Newton would then necessarily utilize the present perfect in speaking of Newton's work, assuming, of course, that he did not reject Newton as well. But this need not be the case. We can perfectly well say (1.48a)[8] *In the history of Science, Newton's*

[8] Numbers (1.48a) and (1.48b) were inserted by us.

theories have been of premier importance, though they have been superseded. Or with the past, (1.48b) *In the history of Science, Newton's theories were of premier importance, and many of his ideas are still considered valid.* (McCoard 1978: 41)"

According to McCoard, in the first version (1.48a), the past is "thought of", to use Jespersen's own words, as extending up to the speaker's present; in the second (1.48b), he is thinking of some sub-part of the past which is separate from the present, possibly something like *"in Newton's own time."* Working from these basic temporal contrasts, our inferential capacities set about generating various possible correlations: we may infer that the connection with or separation from the present regards the validity of a theory, or a person's life span, or perhaps a certain span of relevant history. Bryan offers these possibilities:

"If one were writing a life of Newton . . . the account of his explanations of the moon would be presented through the past tense, however valid the explanation might be today. If, on the other hand, one were making a survey of the achievements...of British scientists throughout a period extending from some point in the past up to the present, one might well use the perfect tense even if the explanation had lost its validity." (Bryan 1936:372)

Sorensen rejects the "present validity" explanation, but seems to cling to a kind of "present existence" idea:

"What is relevant, as regards the present moment, is not the result, but the movements of the moon....They belong to the present, since they still exist. And by a logical coup d'état, they are made the subjects of discourse...and thereby make the moment of speech a quasi-legitimate point of reference; quasi-legitimate, for although the movements of the moon could have been explained at any time, they could not have been explained by Newton, at any time between the zero point (the day when Newton was born) and the moment of speech." (Sorensen 1964:82)

Rather than defend the legitimateness of the perfect on the basis of the present existence of the moon and its movements, McCoard appeals to the more general conception that where there is reason to speak within a framework of past-to-present, the perfect is sufficiently justified. McCoard, however, does not make a correspondence between a situation which requires a "framework of past-to-present" with a possible semantic representation, characteristic of the present perfect tense, which would be capable of expressing such situations:

> "We shall claim in this work that the preterit and the present perfect are not, in fact, distinct in terms of tense or sequence: their distinctiveness lies elsewhere." (McCoard 1978:17)

Exactly where this "elsewhere" is McCoard does not state, and he uses rather vague expressions like "word-choice", "context" and "conversational implicatures" to justify his position. In this dissertation, a semantic model for the present perfect as a place for "this framework of past-to-present" will be discussed at some length in chapters three and four.

1.3.2.3 Continuity

The continuous perfect is often thought of as one type where current relevance has an indisputably concrete interpretation, and the opposition with the past is easily demonstrable. An example like (1.49) *I have lived here for ten years* is taken to mean that *"I still live here."* The *"living here"* continues right up to the moment of speech. In contrast,(1.50) *I lived here for ten years*, is supposed to imply that *"I no longer live here."* As McCoard (1978) points out, however, things are not as simple as they seem if we take the above examples within a certain context:

> "When we say,(1.51)[9] *I have lived here on and off for ten years* we are uncertain about whether the present is an *'on'* period or an *'off'* period. (McCoard 1978: 46)"

[9] Number (1.51) was inserted by us.

The same question attends (1.52) *I have lived here for a period as long as ten years*, responding to (1.53) *What's the longest you have ever lived here?* Twaddell (1968:8) gives the following example as clearly continuous:

(1.54) *My family has lived in this town since 1638.*

But Diver (1963:147) counters with:

(1.55) *My family has lived in this town, but not since 1638.*

And McCoard (1978) submits:

(1.56) *My family has lived in this town on and off since 1638.*

According to McCoard, on the past side: (1.57) *I lived here for ten years before I got to know my neighbor*, does nothing to inform us about the speaker's present domicile, and:

> "...if someone says simply *I have lived here*, we take him to be implying that he does not now live wherever *"here"* is, because if he were still living there, he should have expressed the situation as *I live here*. Where there is no apparent reason for him to involve a specifically past-to-present reference, he would not be expected to use the perfect. Where such a reason does present itself (as expressed, say, in *since 1934*), the perfect will be responsively utilized." (McCoard 1978: 48)

It is interesting to note here that in spite of identifying situations in which a past-to-present reference is involved, McCoard does not think of a semantic apparatus to cope with these situations, but throws all the burden of it onto unclear pragmatic devices which cannot account for the differences in use between the present perfect and the simple past.

The "first-choice" reading of (1.58a) *I have lived here since then*, according to McCoard (1978:46), will usually be that the speaker still lives "here." But, when other relevant information is added as in (1.58b) *I have lived here every winter since then*, we are no longer so sure that the speaker is in residence (though he certainly is *"here"*) since the time of speaking may not be winter. Again McCoard points out an ambiguity of interpretation of the present perfect, but does not offer a solution, other than obscure "pragmatic factors" guiding the speaker's choice between one or other interpretation.

Let us consider now the Stative analog of Jespersen's example *he has died*, namely *he has been dead*, which has all the basic indeterminacies of the former, as Sorensen observes:

> "If it were possible for a person to die more than once, we could certainly say, *'Angus has been dead twice, but right now he is immensely alive, owing to the unparalleled skill of Professor Rattray, the famous cardiologist'*. This, by the way, is not mere speculation, so far as I know." (Sorensen 1964:78)

"Normally, once dead is dead forever", says McCoard (1978: 37), "but if someday it changes, the normal inference will change". Precisely because the content of normal inference is independent of particular verbalizations, exactly the same ambivalence which attend the interpretation of (1.59) *he has died* attend the past counterparts:

> "It follows that if we were to say that 'has been dead' is an incomplete perfect, we would also have to say that 'was dead' and 'died' are incomplete pasts." (Sorensen 1964:7)

We noted in an earlier example, *I have lived here a good many years*, that the speaker may or may not be understood to be still resident here. The choice seemed to be between a reading of presently-continuous state, (1.60) *I've lived here a long time now*", and a reading of a vaguely remote episode in the past, (1.61) *I've experienced living here before for a good while*." Yet there are instances where the intended sense seems to be somewhere between the two, as Tregidgo shows:

"*He hath been dead for four days* could have been said of Lazarus either before or shortly after his resurrection. Similarly one can perfectly well say, for example: *I've been a teacher for ten years, but I've just been dismissed,* or *I've lived here all my life but now I'm going away.*" (Tregidgo 1974:102-3)

It is as if the recentness of the state's conclusion makes it not quite real, not quite established, as if the overall period is still thought of, by the speaker, as being only in the process of separation from the present, and so he retains the perfect. And McCoard concludes:

"This points up, once again, the essential subjectivity of the speaker's conceptualization of time periods which is at the root of the perfect/past choice." (McCoard 1978: 50)

Nevertheless, subjectivity must be supported by linguistic structures. If a language does not provide a linguistic basis from which the speaker's choice can be made, there will be no choice at all. Once again, the ambivalence of the present perfect and its distinct uses from the simple past point to different temporal structures, and not just to the speaker's subjectivity.

Curme goes too far in saying that:

"The passing of a single minute may make it impossible to employ the present perfect. A minute before 12 o'clock in the morning we may say *I have bought a new hat this morning.* A minute later this morning is gone for ever and we must say *I bought a new hat this morning,* for the morning belongs to the past." (Curme 1935:321)

Palmer also exaggerates when he writes:

"We may say *I've seen him three times today,* but *I saw him three times yesterday*

and *not *I've seen him three times yesterday.* Similarly *I've seen him this morning* is a possible utterance only if it is still morning; if the morning is over, the period of time indicated is wholly in the past and a present perfect form cannot be used." (Palmer 1968:75)

According to McCoard, it is true that we cannot say (1.62)**I've seen him yesterday* by itself; this is because yesterday is an adverb which cannot include the moment of speech. But *this morning* is not thus limited: (1.63) *I saw him this morning/ I've seen him this morning.* The combination *saw + this morning* most usually yields the understanding that the morning is not yet over. Yet, as McCoard argues, even these distinctions are not inviolable. The particular subdivisions of time important to the speaker may not be those most evident in the conventional calendar or time-table. To be able to express these "particular subdivisions", however, we insist that this "particular" speaker must have the support of a semantic framework which enables him to communicate his/her subjectivities, otherwise there would be no linguistic basis for any choice.

1.3.2.4 Experientiality

Zandvoort (1932), who was struck by the frequent iterativity of the perfect, accepted the resultative and the continuous types, but felt there was a third type to be recognized. It is interesting that, after analyzing many sentences, he turned to the notion of "personal experience," very broadly conceived, and abandoned the idea of iterativity as part of the meaning of the present perfect. Although he makes no direct comparison between the resultative and the experiential subtypes, it is possible that he viewed the resultative as expressing "concrete results" in the present, while the experiential connects the event with the present more abstractly "as part of the sum total of the writer's experience" (Zandvoort, 1932: 116). In fact, this sounds rather like a restatement of principle [c] that we talked about earlier. Just as we found [c] vague enough to encompass all the more explicit versions of current relevance, Zandvoort's experiential perfect seems to lack an identity of its own: experientials are those perfects which are not tagged as resultative or continuous. Nor does the experiential principle offer much

insight into the past opposition; would we want to say that any past event which the speaker refers to via the past has not entered into the sum total of his experience?

1.3.3 Problems with Past Non-Relevance

It has been noted in several places that a major difficulty with the current relevance approach is that it seems to require that the past be somehow lacking, or neutral, with regard to current relevance as compared to the perfect. When dealing with highly specific forms of relevance, the opposition is not reliable, since many past expressions involve the same intimations of consequences as their perfect counterparts; "when dealing with abstractions, the past is identified as the bearer of somehow 'irrelevant' information, which seems to go against the very nature of communication" (McCoard 1978: 56). We might argue together with Sorensen that nothing is irrelevant in the great chain of being:

> "Any past event, significant or negligible, is connected, or may at least be plausibly maintained to be connected, with the present, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, through its results or consequences, since whatever is the result of past events, and since whatever was cannot have vanished into thin air, leaving no trace whatsoever." (Sorensen 1964:79)

While Sorensen develops this and related ideas into a rejection of the CR point of view, Joos makes an effort to build a case for CR that avoids the paradox of irrelevance. He acknowledges:

> "A finite verb will hardly be used to specify an event unless there are effects; it is fair to say that language is not organized for entirely idle talk but is rather well adapted to mentioning things because they matter. Let us take it as axiomatic that the referent of a finite verb is regularly the cause of certain effects - unknown, perhaps, often unforeseen, but in any case not assumed to be non-existent - since otherwise the finite verb would be idle, otiose, and rather left unused." (Joos 1964:138)

In Joos's terms, the past does not deny events their consequences, but simply places both event and effect at more or less the same time in the past, and does not refer to them separately: they are thus in "current phase." The perfect, in contrast, focuses attention on the resultant component separately from the originating event. This is "perfect phase":

> "...the events designated by perfect verbs may be interesting in themselves, and may have simultaneous effects, but all that is now treated as uninteresting; the focus of attention is entirely on the delayed effects which remain uncertain until separately specified by other verbs. It is this focus of attention that determines what effects will figure as principal effects...the essential point here is that the meaning of perfect phase is that the principal effects of the event are out of phase with it... that the event is not mentioned for its own sake but for the sake of its consequences." (Joos 1964:140)

Joos illustrates with examples taken from Sybille Bedford's play, *The Trial of Dr. Adams*:

> "'*The Judge came on swiftly*' is the beginning of Trial, and the simultaneous effect is that he is seen to come, the immediate effect is that he is here, and later (perhaps delayed) effects can be taken for granted. The past here does not bother us about the present traces of the act of coming on. This stands in contrast to the series of perfects in: *The high-backed chair has been pulled, helped forward, the figure is seated, has bowed, and the hundred or so people who had gathered themselves at split notice to their feet rustle and subside into apportioned place.*" (Bedford 1964: 139)

Joos claims:

> "This is not simply a narration of events in sequence; instead, certain of them (is seated, rustle and subside) are presented as effects (or at least the possibility of their occurrence is an effect) of the earlier-in-time events stated in the perfect phase."

(Joos 1964:140)

Joos is evidently of the opinion that "delayed effects" are well-defined properties of the present which follow upon some event. *Is seated* is very likely an effect of a prior act of sitting down, to be sure. But now just what is the causal event associated with rustle and subside? Probably the judge's entrance and chair-taking. But such a relation is not spelled out in so many words, and remains much looser than the tie between sitting and being seated. This looseness may be what Joos is talking about when he says that "at least the possibility of occurrence" of some events is the effect of prior events. Here we have a vastly liberalized notion of cause and effect, however. If we start with the event *the figure has bowed*, we might expect to see the figure still bent over, or there may be some entirely nonphysical effect ("so now the others present can sit down"). Yet all that has actually been said is that prior to the moment of speech, the judged bowed; it does not tell us, in fact, whether or not the judge has since unbent! In spite of the perfect, we do not know for sure what the "principal effects" of the act are. This is just the opposite of the phrase *rustle and subside* which asserts events without pointing toward identifiable causes. Yet Joos insists:

> "The English perfect does not mean that the specified event occurred previous to some other event specified with the current phase (i.e. past or present tense.) That is a possible interpretation of it, but it is not what it means, just as many other kinds of utterances can be interpreted into messages that they do not intrinsically mean: 'How do you do?' meaning 'I'm pleased to meet you' but interpretable as an inquiry about health. The previous occurrence is at most a connotation of the perfect phase; its denotation indeed contradicts that by telling us that the event presented in the perfect phase is not being presented for its own sake but only as a means to a separate end, and its denotation positively is that we must look elsewhere for the important message." (Joos 1964: 140)

According to McCoard (1978), Joos has got things the wrong way round here. (1.64) *How do you do*?, *How goes it*? and the like, elicit the respondent's state of being

in virtue of their form, but they are normally interpreted instead as social gestures. Other questions, e.g. (1.65) *How do you like it here*?, have only their literal function. A statement like (1.66) *You have seen the Cheshire reports*, which according to Joos (1964:14) "is not a past-tense message," may in fact have a virtually unlimited number of effects or relevances in the present, among them:

(1.67) (a). . . *so you know what the reports say*
(b). . . *so I won't have to hunt them up for you again*
(c). . . *so you know how voluminous they are*
(d). . . *so you're certainly better informed than I am*

But the only question we have a firm answer to has to do with your seeing certain reports at some prior time. Somewhat confusingly, Joos allows that:

> "...if the later effects of an event are of great interest, that does not in itself require that precedent event to be presented in the perfect phase; it may be enough for the addressee to know that it did take place, and when later another, thus prepared-for event comes along, he can make the connection himself...." (Joos 1964: 142)

Apparently the perfect is marked for "present effect," while the past is simply unmarked for this meaning. But notice now that the fact of an "important" present effect or relevance is insufficient to predict the form of the verb. Moreover, it makes the perfect and past free alternates, at least partly:

> "...the perfect marking seems to be not an abstract element *have*, but rather the mere insertion of completed words *have, has, had*, into completed verbs; for example, 'They have shot President Kennedy' seems to be 'They shot President Kennedy'...plus an extra *have* too pedantic for such an occasion, that is, too frivolous." (ibid.:146)

As Dubois (1972:23) points out, Mrs. Kennedy's immediate reaction to the murder was:

(1.68) *Oh, my God, they have shot my husband!*

Here, rendered in the present perfect, is an event worthy of mention for its own sake, if any event ever has been; and it is to be hoped that Joos would not accuse Mrs. Kennedy of pedantry and frivolity in these circumstances. Other aspects of Joos's analysis remain open to question, of which we will just mention a couple. He considers the fact that the perfect "cannot be used for narration" as in (1.69)**I have seen him yesterday* to be evidence of the exclusively present denotation of the perfect (Joos 1964:145). But (1.70) *wouldn't I have seen him recently* counts as narrative, unless we let "narrative" mean "couched in the past" (as Weinrich 1964, 1970 does). Besides, if the perfect is really a present tense, then why does a perfect-accompanying adverb like "recently" not go with the simple present (1.71) **I see him recently*? And if the past and perfect are so closely interchangeable, how is it that they are placed in completely different grammatical categories: the past as "remote tense" (Joos 1964:121) and the perfect as "perfect phase, not a tense in any sense of the term, however loose"? (Joos 1964: 145)

For Comrie (1985:78), the present perfect is a tense that "in terms of location in time....is not distinct from the past". This does not mean that the past tense does not differ from the present perfect at all, only that this difference is exclusively one of aspect, since the perfect implies "current relevance", whereas the past does not. But, as we have seen, concrete versions of current relevance are applicable to no more than a subset of examples with the perfect. We have seen that the past is supposed to represent "current non-relevance," yet here again, the attempt to pin this notion to any of the more literal interpretations runs into problems. Although Jespersen made much of the past/perfect opposition as it relates to a contrast between living and dead personages, it remains unavoidably true that (1.72) *he died* offers, in the normal run of things, just as firm a communication about the subject's present state of demise as does *he has died.* Principle (b), "present existence," obviously fails; but is principle (c) any more successful?

Maurice is puzzled that:

"The world war (W.W.I) is over; it lies completely in the past; but can anyone deny that its results are still felt as present? And yet we cannot say: '*The war that has taken place in 1914-1918*'." (Maurice 1935:323)

Despite accepting that the events of the war were of such import that the fabric of the modern world would even now be materially changed in their absence, we still cannot produce the perfect in the above example. In a similar vein, Dietrich observes that:

"...we generally say Gutenberg discovered the art of printing, despite the fact that there is hardly any other event of the past which as far as objective consequences or effects, so undeniably extends into the present. (Dietrich 1955: 195)"

If current relevance is really what it is supposed to be, we should have no problem with (1.73) **I have been born in 1960*, since the speaker's own birth would undeniably count as relevant to him. Most views of current relevance are more sophisticated in that they attempt to deal with "relative relevance" to the particular occasion of utterance. Yet it is true that:

"...even great real-world relevance, however defined, is not by itself sufficient to promote many examples to acceptability. There is no external measure of relevance, no absolute significance, which requires the perfect." (McCoard 1978: 44)

We maintain, like McCoard, that the key is whether or not the speaker chooses to include a prior event within the compass of his "extended present." As long as we insist, unlike McCoard, on the need for a semantic structure which makes the speaker's choice possible.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSION OF SOME THEORIES OF TENSE

2.1 Introduction

Thus far, we have been establishing certain difficulties, in terms of indefiniteness and current relevance, with definitions of the present perfect as they appear in some grammar reference books. Most theorists of the so called "ID (McCoard's abbreviation for "Indefinite Past") point of view" in relation to the present perfect, simply use a definiteness parameter within an entire matrix of tense-features, where it may reflect certain properties of the way tenses provide each other with "reference points" in the establishment of event-sequences. This does not mean, however, that ID adepts have been blind to the problems of reconciling the definiteness parameter with adverbial cooccurrences; Allen (1966:157) observes in a footnote:

> "A peculiar use of *have* in verb-clusters referring to times that are not really 'indefinite' is to be found in its use with the middle adverb *just*, as in *I've just seen Mr. Puddleditch*. Some form of *have* seems also to be almost obligatory with certain time-expressions like *by now*, *by then*, *since two years ago*, etc. *Have* is regularly used with *already* when it means 'at some unidentified time before now' (but the use of the past with *already* seems to be increasing in the United States)."

Another important issue, according to McCoard (1978), which concerns indefiniteness of the past as well as the current relevance of events as parameters to characterize the present perfect, is the place of definiteness and current relevance oppositions within full-blown models of the English tense system. In this chapter, one tense model which adopts the current relevance parameter - Comrie's (1985) - and three tense models which adopt the definiteness parameter to characterize the present perfect - Reichenbach's (1947), Bull's (1960) and Allen's(1966) - will be discussed. Reichenbach's model (1947) will be presented first since it is considered the most influential of these various attempts at making explicit and formalizing the precise

relation between time and the use of the tenses in English. This presentation will be followed by a discussion of Comrie's model (1985). Although it is based on the idea of current relevance view of the present perfect and breaks the chronological order, we think it is important to present this tense system right after Reichenbach's in order to show how it has developed from Comrie's criticism of it and how it ultimately creates a number of new problems. After the discussion of Comrie's tense model, the other two models which follow the definiteness parameter will be presented chronologically: Bull's (1960) and Allen's (1966).

These models largely grow out of attempts to establish what possible temporal relationships between events there are, and then to map these relationships onto the actually occurring forms of English. The perfect gets analyzed within the entire set of available verb forms, though some authors claim some ambivalence as to whether it is a "real tense" like the past, the present, etc.(as Comrie (1985), does).

The problem, however, related to those who favor the idea of an indefinite factor and those who resort to the idea of a current relevance factor is whether such approaches are successful.

2.2 Reichenbach's Tense-Formulas (1947)

Reichenbach (1947: 288-298) develops a system in which there are three elements involved in the description of the tenses: a "point of speech", an "event", and a "reference point". The way in which these three are interrelated is illustrated with the help of the past perfect:

> "Let us call the time point of the token the point of speech....From a sentence like *'Peter had gone'* we see that the time order expressed in the tense does not concern one event, but two events, whose positions are determined with respect to the point of speech. We shall call these time points the *point of the event* and the *point of reference*. In the example the point of the event is the time when Peter went; the point of reference is a time between this point and the point of speech. In an individual sentence like the one given it is not clear which time point is used as the point of reference. This determination is rather given by the context of speech."

(Reichenbach, 1947: 288).

It is not hard to see how the past perfect "goes back" two levels or degrees from the present: it points to time which is before a time before now, "at some time in the past, Peter had already gone." Reichenbach then goes on to claim that these three points are relevant to every one of the tenses, not just to tenses such as the past perfect or the future perfect:

> "In some tenses, two of the three points are simultaneous. Thus, in the past, the point of the event and the point of reference are simultaneous, and both are before the point of speech....This distinguishes the past from the present perfect. In the statement 'I have seen Charles' the event is also before the point of speech, but it is referred to a point simultaneous with the point of speech; i.e., the points of speech and reference coincide....We see that we need three time points even for the distinction of tenses which, in a superficial consideration, seem to concern only two time points. The difficulties which grammar books have in explaining the meanings of the different tenses originate from the fact that they do not recognize the three-place structure of the time determination given in the tenses." (Reichenbach 1947: 289-290)

In Reichenbach's graphic representation:

E - point of the event
R - point of reference
S - point of speech

Time is ordered left-to-right from past to present across dashes, while commas represent simultaneity:

(2.1) (a) *I see John.* S,R,E

(b) *I saw John.* R,E—S

(c) *I have seen John.* E—S,R

(d) *I had seen John.* E—R—S

Reichenbach (ibid.:294) says that when *temporal determiners* are added, they apply not to the event, but to the reference point of the verb phrase. This is necessary to provide for the correct adverb cooccurrences, as:

(2.2) (a) *Now I see John.*

(b) *Now I have seen John.*

(c) *I saw John yesterday.*

(d) *I had seen John yesterday.*

Since only the reference point takes temporal determiners, whenever event point and reference point are not simultaneous, the event cannot be determined. When they are simultaneous, the event can be determined by association with the reference point, which is directly determined. Here we see how Reichenbach fits in with *indefinite past theorists*: the perfect can never be determined, while the past can. The distinction applies not only to past events, but to future ones too. (2.3) *Now I shall go* is identified as S,R—E while (2.4) *I shall go tomorrow* is S—R,E (Reichenbach, 1947:295). This may be compared with Allen's suggestion:

> "The difference between these two sentences (just given) seems to be primarily the difference between reference to a non-identified time in the future and reference to an identified time in the future. In other words, English does not distinguish formally between a definite future and an indefinite future as it does between a definite past and an indefinite past." (Allen 1966:158)

It is unfortunate for this neat dichotomy, observes McCoard (1978: 90), that we can say things like (2.5) *Now I shall go tomorrow, for sure*, which would seem to be both definite and indefinite. Another thing we notice right away is that with the three independent components S, R, and E to work with, it is possible to construct a number of rather strange formulas for which we would not expect any grammatical realization.

An example would be S,E—R (speech and event points coinciding, but reference point in the future), in contrast with S—E—R (event will take place before some future reference, but subsequent to speaking) and with E—S—R (event is in speaker's past, but the reference point lies in the future). All of these meanings are in fact realized by the future perfect (Reichenbach's term is "anterior future"). In a similar manner, the "posterior past" (there seems to be no standard traditional term) as in (2.6) *(he said) he would come* stands for any of R—S,E or R—E—S or R—S—E. To register these differences in English we must resort to adverbial supplements:

(2.7) (a) *(He said) he would come now. (i.e., as I say this.)*
(b) *(He said) he would come before now.*
(c) *(He said) he would come after now.*

In McCoard's opinion (1978: 91), the problem here is that Reichenbach's model makes it appear to be an accident that English has no set of grammatical forms to express just these distinctions, but, in fact, it seems that the set of point-orderings implies a systematic richness which outstrips the actual resources of natural languages (cf. Comrie, 1976: 26). Since the system is not internally constrained to reflect the limits of temporal specification in natural language grammars, we may question also whether the posited distinction between present perfect and past is "natural" or arbitrary.

Moreover, Reichenbach's example (2.8) *I had seen John yesterday* (Reichenbach 1947: 288) represents a type which is often ambiguous in the reading of the adverb; this comes out more clearly if we consider (2.9) *John had left at three*, where "at three" can be understood either as the time of John's departure, or a time at which it was observed that John had already left. The first reading, which is probably more common, seems to require the formula E,R_2--R_1—S, containing two reference points, if we are to maintain the parallel with (2.10) *John left at three*, and the requirement that adverbs apply only to reference points (cf. chapter 3 section 3.6.3). In a case like (2.11) *I was sure he would have received the letter by last Tuesday at the latest*, it looks as if we again need two reference points R_1—E—R_2--S to reflect the relations:

(a) the present, (S):	*it is the case that*
(b) the past with respect to the present, (R_1):	*I was sure that*
(c) the future with respect to the past point,(R_2):	*he would*
(d) the past with respect to that future point,(E):	*have received*

The same number of points are embodied in (2.12) *I shall have been going to see John*, an example supplied by Prior (1967:13) with the formula S--R2--E—R1. A possibly more comprehensible example of this formula would be:

(2.13) *If he makes another appointment, John will have been going to see the doctor three times, but he hasn't actually shown up yet.* (McCoard 1978: 91)

To Prior, such examples point to the artificiality of distinguishing the speech-point from other reference-points:

> "It becomes unnecessary and misleading to make such a sharp distinction between the point or points of reference and the point of speech; the point of speech is just the first point of reference." (Prior 1967: 13)

If this is granted, then Reichenbach's manner of distinguishing the past from the present perfect becomes suspect. Could we speak of the "simultaneity" of the point of speech with some other reference point, except as an artifact of description? Pastness and futurity are always relative to a point of reference, whatever it is. The only remaining distinction between past and perfect is whether or not the event time "E" is "simultaneous" with another time "R" which lies before "R", the moment of speech, i.e. in the past. If no R2 is involved, then we have the perfect. But even this difference is dubious. Reichenbach has not stipulated that events expressed in the perfect tense do not occur at a time prior to the speech event; indeed this would be nonsense, and McCoard remarks that:

"Every event is simultaneous with some time; to happen means to become present at some time." (McCoard 1978:92)

In fact, this is in keeping with Dahl (1985), who points out a problem in connection with such sentences as (2.14) *When I arrived, Peter had tried to phone me twice during the preceding week:*

"R here must be the time when I arrived, and E - or rather the E's - are the time points when Peter tried to phone me. But we see that there is nothing in Reichenbach's scheme that corresponds to the time referred to by *during the preceding week.* The function of that phrase could be said to be to specify a *temporal frame* for the E points, that is, a time period within which they are located." (Dahl 1985:30)

Hence, the lack of an R2 with the perfect must not be taken literally to refer to an objective lack of a moment of realization. Instead, it makes sense only if interpreted in an indirect sense to mean simultaneous with a time not singled out in the discourse from other times. But this is quite different from simply talking about the differential ordering of three points of reference, S, E, and R, on which Reichenbach relies.

2.3 Comrie's Theory of Tense (1985)

Comrie (1976, 1985) criticizes Reichenbach's tense system as follows:

[1] He pointed out as a weakness of the system that it generates more possibilities than are actually to be found in natural language (cf. Comrie 1976: 26). For example, Reichenbach (1947) provides for three different future perfect tenses (corresponding to the configurations "S-E-R", "S,E-R" and "E-S-R"), but no language appears to have these three different tenses. The same overcapacity is observed in connection with the three tenses corresponding to the English future, and in connection with the three tenses corresponding to the English conditional (cf. section 2.2).

[2] Comrie (1985: 64) claims that situations described by one of the "absolute tenses" (i.e. the past, present or future tense) are simply located prior to, simultaneous with, or posterior to the moment of speech, and that the notion of reference point is therefore not needed for the characterization of these absolute tenses.

[3] For the above claim to be tenable it is necessary for Comrie (1985) to make a further claim, viz. that "in terms of location in time (...) the perfect is not distinct from the past" (Comrie 1985: 78). Comrie thus rejects Reichenbach's analysis in which the past tense involves a past point of reference, whereas the present perfect involves a reference point that coincides with the point of speech. According to Comrie, both tenses just locate a situation as prior to the present moment and do not involve a reference point at all. This does not mean that the past tense does not differ from the present perfect at all, only that this difference is exclusively one of aspect (since the perfect implies **"current relevance"**, whereas the past does not): "however perfect differs from past, it is not in terms of time location" (Comrie 1985: 78).

These points of criticism led Comrie (1985) to propose a theory of tenses that is radically different from Reichenbach's. In this theory, all that we need for representing what he calls "absolute tenses" is two time points (the time of speech [S] and the time of the event [E]) and three relations (simultaneity, anteriority and posteriority):

Absolute Tenses	Meaning	Representation
present tense	E simul S	[E , S]
past tense	E before S	[E – S]
future tense	E after S	[S – E]

For the representation of the other tenses one more time point is necessary, viz. the reference point [R]:

Relative Tenses	Meaning	Representation
pluperfect	E before R before S	[E – R – S]
future perfect	E before R after S	[S – E – R]
future in the future	E after R after S	[S – R – E]
conditional	E after R before S	[R – E – S]

For more complicated instances of location in time several reference points can be provided for. For example:

Tense	Meaning	Representation
Conditional perfect	E before R, after R, before S	{[R – S] – [E – R]}

This system is extremely simple, yet it remedies the most obvious shortcomings of Reichenbach's analysis (1947). It allows for the possibility that more than one reference point is necessary. It also obviates the problem of overcapacity of the system: whereas Reichenbach's system generates three future perfect tenses (because the point of the event can be posterior to, simultaneous with, or anterior to the point of speech), Comrie's system needs to generate only one future perfect tense: the future perfect implies no more than that E precedes R and that R follows S. Whether the situation (E) referred to actually precedes, follows, or coincides with the point of speech is immaterial to the meaning of the future perfect tense. The same point can be made in connection with the future tense and the conditional tense.

In spite of this, the theory still raises some problems. The following points of criticism immediately suggest themselves:

[1] As we have noted in section 2.2, Prior objects to Reichenbach's analysis (1947), saying that it is:

"...unnecessary and misleading to make such a sharp distinction between the point

or points of reference and the point of speech since the point of speech is just the first point of reference and pastness and futurity are *always* relative to *some* point of reference". (Prior 1967: 13)

It goes without saying that this criticism is also applicable to Comrie's analysis (1976). In fact, it is even more pertinent to Comrie's theory than to Reichenbach's (1947), since Comrie denies that some of the tenses (viz. the "absolute" ones) have a reference point at all.

[2] The view that the point of speech is not a point of reference makes it necessary for Comrie (1985) to reject Reichenbach's (1947) (intuitively attractive) view that the present perfect locates a situation in time relative to a reference point which coincides with the present moment. The argumentation runs as follows:

"If one were to provide an analysis of the perfect analogous to that of the pluperfect and the future perfect, then one would say that the reference point for the perfect is simultaneous with the present moment, rather than being before the present moment (as for the pluperfect) or after the present moment (as for the future perfect). The situation in question would then be located in time prior to this reference point. In terms of location in time, however, this would give precisely the same result as the past, which also locates a situation as prior to the present moment. Thus, however perfect differs from past, it is not in terms of time location." (Comrie 1985: 78)

We could point out here that this conclusion does not appear to be in keeping with the fact that the two tenses collocate with different kinds of time adverbials (compare (2.15) *I have now read two novels and I saw him yesterday* and (2.16)**I have seen him yesterday* and (2.17)**I read two novels now).* More importantly, however, whatever the value of Comrie's argument, it certainly does not prove that analyzing the perfect as representing a situation as anterior to a point of reference (which is the point of speech) is wrong. In other words, there is no evidence whatever for the claim that the point of speech does not act as a point of reference. As regards this, we might as well subscribe to Reichenbach's principle (1947) that every tense involves a point of

reference and to Prior's claim (1967) that the primary reference point is the point of speech. And if we subscribe to these views, the conclusion must be that the past and the present perfect do differ in the way they locate a situation in time (since the reference point for the past tense is certainly not the point of speech).

There are a number of observations that support this conclusion. Comrie (1985) claims that the two tenses differ only in aspect (presence or absence of "current relevance"), not in the way they locate a situation in time. Declerck (1986), however, remarks that:

> "...if current relevance were the all-important factor, we could not explain why we have to use the past tense in examples like: *I know what Tom is like. I (*have) spent my holidays with him two years ago.* There can be no doubt that there is current relevance here: if I know what Tom is like it is *because* I spent my holidays with him. Still, we have to use the past tense, apparently because the situation is located at a time which wholly precedes the present. (Note that the perfect would have to be used if we used *for the last two years* instead of *two years ago.*)" (Declerck 1986: 310,11)

This means that the primary factor determining the use of the perfect and the past is not the presence or absence of the idea of current relevance, but rather the way in which the situation is located in time. This conclusion is further corroborated by the observation made by Declerck that:

> "...the past reference point necessary to account for the past perfect can be established by the past tense, but not by the present perfect (e.g. *I had left before Tom (*has) arrived*). Obviously, the present perfect cannot locate a situation in time in the same way as the past tense does." (Declerck 1986: 311)

Another serious objection to Comrie's treatment of the present perfect is that, in examples like (2.18) *I have not visited him since my car has been out of order,* the present perfect locates the situation as simultaneous with a time which does not wholly lie before the present moment but rather includes it. The past tense, by contrast, involves

reference to a time which does not last up to the moment of speaking. Comrie's claim (1985: 78) that "both tenses do not differ in the way they locate a situation in time, since they both locate it before the present moment", is thus incorrect. (The representation "E before S" which Comrie argues for the past tense does not fit the present perfect, since Comrie states explicitly (1985: 122) that "before" is to be interpreted as "wholly before.")

[3] When dealing with the "relative" tenses, Comrie repeatedly notes that time adverbials have the function of establishing a reference point:

> "Often, the reference point is given by a time adverbial (...) In the next example (...) for the text to make sense *at ten o'clock* must be interpreted as the reference point prior to which John had left: *Mary came to visit John at 10 o'clock; but John had already left at ten o'clock.*" (Comrie 1985: 65-66)

However, if it is true that *at ten o'clock* establishes a past reference point and that the past perfect *had already left* represents a situation as prior to this reference point, it seems logical to hold the view that *at ten o'clock* also serves as a reference point for the location in time effected by the past tense, i.e. that *came* represents a situation as simultaneous with this past reference point. This analysis would have the additional advantage of explaining why the past tense, and not the present perfect, can collocate with adverbials like *at ten o'clock, yesterday,* etc., i.e. with adverbials that establish a past reference point. (The claim that the present perfect locates a situation relative to a reference time which coincides (at least partly) with the point of speech would automatically explain why this tense cannot collocate with such adverbials.)

[4] As noted above, Reichenbach's theory (1947) cannot deal with sentences like (2.14) *When I arrived, Peter had tried to phone me twice during the preceding week* (Dahl 1985:30) because it provides for no element corresponding to the time referred to by *during the preceding week.* Exactly the same objection can be raised against Comrie's theory (1976). When we look at the sentence in question, we ascertain that, apart from S

(the moment of speech), it refers to three different times: the time of my arrival, the times when Peter tried to phone me and the time referred to *by during the preceding week*. Comrie's analysis of the past perfect ("E before R before S") provides for only two time-points besides S. Since R is obviously the time of my arrival and E would seem to be the times when Peter tried to phone me, Comrie's theory fails to provide for the time referred to by *during the preceding week*, i.e. the time relative to which E is located.

[5] According to Comrie, the past tense can be represented simply as "E before S". In this representation, "E" is the "time point or interval which is occupied by the situation to be located in time" (1985: 122). The relation "before" is defined as "wholly before":

> "...on the time line an interval X is before an interval Y (X before Y) if and only if each time point within X is to the left of each point within Y." (Comrie 1985: 122-123)

Given these specifications, the representation "E before S" must necessarily mean that the situation referred to is located exclusively in the past, i.e. is no longer continuing at the moment of speech. Although many grammar books do claim that this is the meaning of the past tense, the inference that the situation no longer holds at the time of speech is actually no more than an "invited" inference. Interestingly, Comrie himself notes this in another section of his book (without noticing that it vitiates his analysis):

> "It should also be noted that use of the past tense only locates the situation in the past, without saying anything about whether that situation continues to the present or into the future, although there is often a conversational implicature that it does not continue to or beyond the present.....Thus, English *John was eating his lunch (when I looked into his room)*.....says nothing about whether the situation still continues at the present moment or not." (Comrie 1985: 41-42)

The observation made here by Comrie can be accounted for if we assume that what is located completely before the point of speech is not "E" (the time of the situation) but some reference time. The past tense can then be taken to represent the situation as holding at (i.e. as being simultaneous with) this reference time. This theory provides an adequate analysis of the past tense if we define this relationship of simultaneity as meaning that the reference time and the time of the situation overlap either completely or partly. In the latter case part of the situation may precede the reference time or follow it (including the possibility that the situation continues to the present or into the future). In other words, the past tense does not simply locate the time of the situation before the moment of speech. Rather, it relates the time of the situation to some reference time and locates this reference time before the moment of speech. We therefore need a representation that is more complex than Comrie's "E before S".

In fairness, it should be noted that the validity of this criticism depends on the particular interpretation that we have assigned to the meaning of "E". Comrie (1985: 122) defines E as the "moment of event", adding that this "moment" can be "a point or an interval of time longer than a point" and that the term "event" is here meant to refer to "situations in general". "E" thus stands for the "time of the situation" and is said to be the "time point or interval which is occupied by the situation to be located in time" (1985: 122). This can be interpreted as meaning that "E" is the point or interval of time that is taken up by the situation on the time axis (i.e. the time through which the situation lasts). It is on this interpretation that representations like "E before S" (for the past tense) and "E after S" (for the future tense) have been shown to be deficient.

However, other references to "E" seem to suggest that Comrie perhaps assigns a different interpretation to the notion "time of the situation". Comrie (1985: 122) says that "E" is "the time at which the situation is located", which would seem to mean that the concept "time of the situation" ought to be interpreted as denoting the time (indicated by a time adverbial or by the context) with which the situation is said to be simultaneous. However, this interpretation leads to the same conclusion as the first, viz. that three times are involved in the description of the past (or future) tense: the time that the situation takes up on the time axis, the time (indicated by an adverbial or by the context) at which the situation is located (i.e. with which the situation is said to be "simultaneous" in one of the senses mentioned above), and the point of speech. This

means that the representation of the past tense must be something like "X simul Y before S", in which X is the "time of the situation" (in the former sense) and "Y" is the time relative to which "X" is located as simultaneous. In other words, the notion of "reference point" (viz. "Y"), which in any case plays a role in the description of the past perfect and future perfect, must be introduced again in the representation of the past and the future.

There is other evidence leading to this conclusion. Consider, for example, a sentence such as (2.19) *I went to see John at 5 o'clock, but he had already left.* If we assume, like Comrie (1985), that *at 5 o'clock* establishes a reference point and that the past perfect *had left* locates a situation prior to this reference point, then it is only natural to assume that the past tense *bent to see* locates a situation as simultaneous with this reference point. In fact, this conclusion is inevitable: if the past tense just located the situation before the time of speech and did not locate it as simultaneous with the reference point established by *at 5 o'clock,* then the above example would not necessarily mean that *at 5 o'clock* was the time that *I went to see John.* The assumption of a reference point for the past tense also proves necessary if we want to explain the difference in meaning between e.g.(2.20)(a) *At 5 o'clock I went into the church* and (b) *At 5 o'clock the procession was going into the church.* The difference between the past and the progressive here concerns **the way in which the situation is located relative to the reference point**: in the former sentence the situation and the reference point are simultaneous in the sense of "commensurate"; in the latter sentence the progressive represents the reference point **as being included in the longer timespan during which the situation lasts** (cf. Declerck 1986 and Godoi 1992).

Another argument showing the necessity of some reference time is provided by sentences like (2.21) *The balloon burst when we were looking at it.* If we assume that the only times involved in the use of the past tense are the time of the situation and the time of utterance, we get into difficulties, for neither of these times can be the time specified by the temporal clause. The temporal clause cannot define the time of the situation, since the latter is punctual[10] whereas the clause refers to a timespan. There is no problem, however, if we assume that the time of the situation is located relative to

[10] Although the time of utterance takes some time, in the analisis of tense it is seen as a point (cf. Comrie 1985: 37)

some time of reference, for the temporal clause can then be taken to specify the time of reference.

A final argument to the same effect can be found in Comrie's own treatment of nonfinite clauses:

> "With the English non-finite verb forms, it seems in general clear that they have basically relative time reference, i.e. time reference defined relative to some deictic center established by the context, so that the primary interpretation of *those sitting on the benches were asked to leave* is as *those who were (at that time) sitting on the benches were asked to leave*." (Comrie 1985: 21-22)

If we assume that the use of a past tense *(were asked)* creates a past reference point relative to which the situation expressed by the nonfinite clause is located, then we must assume that exactly the same thing happens when we use a finite clause *(who were sitting)* instead of the participial clause. That is, the past tense *(were sitting)* must also be taken to represent a situation as simultaneous with a past point of reference.

[6] There is a similar problem in connection with Comrie's representation of the present tense ("E simul S"). At various places in the book (e.g. 1985: 2, 36, 37) he states explicitly that "S" is a "point in time", i.e. that "S" is not a timespan. On page 37 he discusses a couple of cases in which "there is literal coincidence between the time location of a situation and the present moment", but concludes that "a more characteristic use of the present tense is in referring to situations which occupy a much longer period of time than the present moment, but which nonetheless include the present moment within them." Now, the relation "simul" is defined as follows:

> "*X simul Y* means that each time point in *X* is also in Y and vice versa. *Simul* is, of course, a symmetrical relation, i.e. *X simul Y* is equivalent to *Y simul X*" (Comrie 1985: 123).

If we combine this definition of "simul" with the claim that "S" is punctual (nondurative), then the representation "E simul S" which Comrie proposes for the present tense must imply that "E" (the time of the situation) cannot be a timespan, i.e. that only punctual situations can be referred to by the present tense. This is, of course, incompatible with Comrie's own observation that the present tense can be:

> "...used to speak of states and processes which hold at the present moment, but which began before the present moment and may well continue beyond the present moment, as in *the Eiffel Tower stands in Paris* and *the author is working on chapter two*" (Comrie 1985: 37).

Here too, the solution to the problem is to be found in the introduction of a reference time: a sentence in the present tense says that a particular situation holds at a time which is simultaneous with the moment of speech. That the situation may also have held in the past and may continue to hold in the future is immaterial to this.

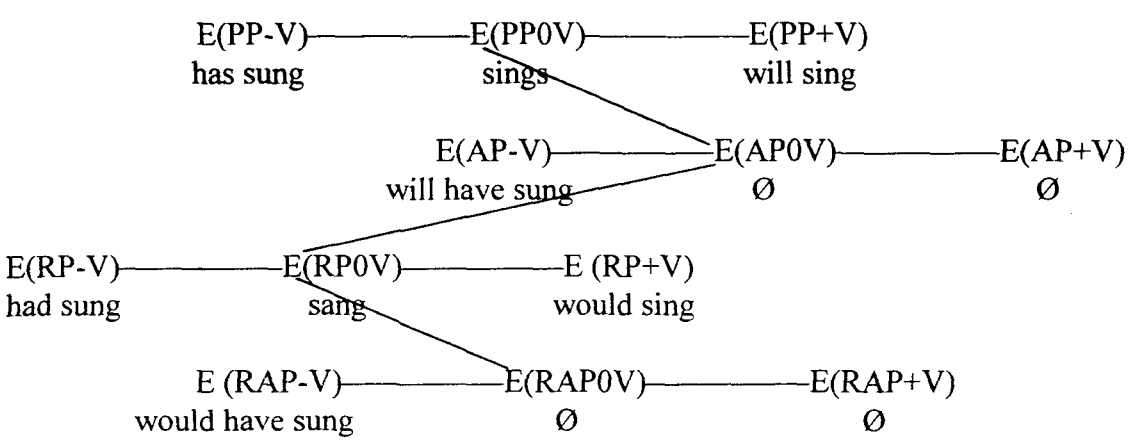
This conclusion remains unaffected if we do not interpret "E" as the portion of time taken up by the situation on the time axis but rather as the time at which the situation is located. (As we have seen, it is not quite clear from Comrie's formulations which of these interpretations is meant.) When we say that a situation is "located at time X", what we mean is that it is located as simultaneous with that time (cf. Prior 1967: 15). This naturally means that "X" is the reference time relative to which the situation is located. In other words, the present tense is no exception to the rule that every tense involves at least one reference point. We will say that the present tense locates a situation as simultaneous with a reference time, which is itself located as simultaneous with the point of speech. In a sentence like (2.22) *At present he is on the dole,* the reference time is defined by the time adverbial. Notice that, since *at present* refers to a timespan, whereas the point of speech is by definition punctual, we cannot adopt Comrie's definition of "simul" (according to which "X simul Y" means that "each point in X is also in Y and vice versa" (1985: 123). In the theory proposed by Declerck (1986), which we will analyze in chapter three, "simul" indicates either complete or partial overlapping.

2.4 Bull's Model (1960)

Let us follow McCoard (1978) in his criticism of Bull (1960). According to McCoard, Bull presents an attempt to build a system of tense analysis which will reflect the actual range of ordering relationships among events which are found in human languages. To the familiar past, present, and future reference-points, which Bull terms "axes," he adds a separate axis for events which were anticipated at a past time, i.e. were future at a past time:

> "If RP (Retrospective Point) can be recalled at PP (Prime Point) and if AP (Anticipated Point) can be anticipated from PP, then total recall would be impossible unless one could remember at PP that he once anticipated an axis from RP. This retrospective anticipated axis, which will be symbolized as RAP, is the fourth axis needed to complete the hypothetical tense system." (Bull 1960: 23)

Given these four axes, an event can be located by means of a "vector" from one of the axes; a vector is an ordering relationship with respect to an axis, viz. anterior, simultaneous, or posterior, represented as -V, 0V, and +V respectively. With E standing for an event, the tenses are laid out schematically as:



It is to be noted, says McCoard (1978: 93), that Bull does not place all the axes in relation to each other on the same time-line:

"It is true that RP, which is recalled, is always anterior to PP, while AP, which is anticipated at PP, is always posterior to PP and, therefore, to RP. These three axes are, then, serial and sequent and may be identified with the three concepts of order. This identification, nevertheless, is fallacious. It is based on the assumption that a system containing only three factors can be used to describe a system containing four. RAP, obviously, cannot be explained in terms of a direct relationship to PP . . . RAP may be anterior to PP, actually identical with PP, or posterior to PP. The vector system can be understood only by returning to the axiom that events, like points on a line in space, can be meaningfully organized only in terms of one axis of orientation at a time. In recollection, the act of recalling is PP and the event recalled is oriented directly to PP. If the recalled event, however, is actually an event which was once PP but is now RP, then it serves in recollection as the prime axis of orientation around which all possible events are now organized. The abstract fact that an event posterior to RP may be anterior to PP is now totally irrelevant....All this means, to be brief, that the position of RAP relative to PP cannot be defined. Once the speaker has moved from PP to RP in recollection, PP ceases to be a relevant entity." (Bull 1960: 23-4)

First of all, remarks McCoard (1978: 94), the statement "once the speaker has moved from PP to RP in recollection, PP ceases to be a relevant entity" seems to be too strong, for in fact the forms which the speaker uses in "moving from" PP to RP do mark the "trip". They indicate that:

"...the retrospective reference point is retrospective with respect to another point, namely the PP. The only way PP could be entirely eliminated would be to simply couch statements in nontensed form. Ordinarily, *he said he would go* and *he said he will go* are understood to be different reports. Bull is quite right that *would go* only indicates posteriority to the past reference (*said*), without positively indicating posteriority to the present reference as well. But some vestige of the present reference still appears in the very fact of choosing the "back-shifted" *would* for an original will." (McCoard 1978: 95)

Another criticism is that there are problems concerning Bull's choice of a structural slot for a given form. Let us follow McCoard's reasoning:

> "The form *will sing* is put only in the E(PP+V) slot, but I do not see why it could not justifiably be put in the E(AP0V) slot, which stands empty. Of course, this would destroy the separateness of axes, but it is not clear that complete separation is desirable anyway, as we have noted. Similarly, *would sing* would go in both E(RP+V) and E(RAP0V). In this way, we would at least reduce the oddity of having two axes (AP and RAP) where there is never any verb form to fill two of the three slots, including the 'prime' slots AP0V and RAP0V. Despite Bull's attempt to avoid the consequences of Reichenbach's overrich symbolism, some of the same excess appears in Bull's unfilled slots." (ibid.)

A related problem is that, given that Bull has included a "compound" axis RAP, we can also imagine an axis defined as ARP (Anticipated Retrospective Point), i.e. a point that will be looked back on (viewed retrospectively) at some time in the future. Bull's system does not rule out an ARP axis; it merely does not happen to include it.

McCoard also points out that while *has sung* is on the same axis as *sings*, and *had sung* is in line with *sang*, the form *will have sung* is on a different axis from *will sing*, and *would have sung* is separated from *would sing*. For him, this asymmetry seems unjustified.

Bull's schema, continues McCoard (1978: 95), makes *had sung* realize only E(RP-V). But the past perfect is also generated by "back-shifting" or embedding pasts in the past: (2.23) *Marsha graduated last Friday* becomes, via second-hand report, (2.24) *I was told Marsha had graduated the Friday before*. This would make it E(RRP0V), the axis being a point viewed retrospectively from a point viewed retrospectively from the present. Furthermore, even original past perfects sometimes appear in back-shifted contexts, and we have to decide whether to identify an underlying third level of pastness (RRRP), or to provide for "wiping out" such distinctions at the time of embedding.

With all the above criticisms McCoard wants to suggest that Bull's tactic of separating all the axes from one another brings with it a certain artificiality. There is a

"complete blindness", to use McCoard's terms, to certain connections that do hold between axes. This suggests indirectly that Bull's analysis in which the present perfect and the simple past are located in different axes may be, at least in part, a misrepresentation.

In relation to the distinction between the present perfect and the simple past, it is important to note that Bull's + and - vectors apparently do not point at specific times, they only point away from their particular axes. The 0 vector, in contrast, always has its own definite axis to point to. It seems, however, that the functions:

> "... 'prior to the present' and 'at a past time' are entirely equivalent, unless we bring in factors like the definiteness of the 'prior' and 'past' times. It would, of course, be possible to argue that the two functions express different assertions, as CR adepts did, and are only implicationally equivalent. Since Bull does not attempt this, we will not take him in this line." (McCoard 1978: 96)

For this reason, McCoard classifies Bull's system as a variation of the ID point of view, which by the reasons discussed in chapter 1, cannot be used consistently to differentiate the present perfect from the simple past. According to McCoard:

> "The terminology in Bull's analysis is different from Reichenbach, but the result is much the same, in at least this particular regard." (McCoard 1978: 96)

2.5 Allen's "Definite Past" Argument (1966)

Allen, provides an argument for characterizing the past as a "definite past" independently of a direct comparison with the perfect. The argument is based on his analysis of the way subordinate clauses relate to their superordinate clauses within a temporal hierarchy. Allen's basic schema of tenses is strongly reminiscent of Bull's (1960), except that it rejects the future from the ranks of major reference points, Bull's axes, on the grounds that it is not very well integrated into the verb system, and is also rare in the corpus Allen works from. What Bull called an "axis," Allen calls a "time-

reference": they are "past" and "present"; what Bull called a "vector," Allen terms a "time-relationship-reference": these are "earlier time, same time, and later time":

> "The distinction between time-reference and time-relationship-reference is crucial: verb forms expressing time-relationship are not to be construed as referring to any specific time except in so far as the time-relationship which they show with reference to an identified time 'places' them in time. The significance of this may be seen from a sentence like Tom said that he would come some time next week where the time expression next week shows that Tom's coming will take place after the moment of coding; the verb-cluster does not show this, it indicates only that the time of the coming is later than the time of Tom's speaking." (Allen 1966: 165)

Let us follow McCoard's footsteps again. The reasoning is sufficiently familiar from his criticism of Bull. Allen argues that:

> "The time-relationship signaled by an included verb-cluster is relationship not to the point of orientation but to the point of reference: that is, to the time expressed by the verb-cluster on the next higher (i.e. superordinate) level. Thus in the example, I had it wrapped in tissue paper because she had promised me that she wouldn't eat it till we got home, had promised gives the time-relationship "earlier to" the act expressed by wrapped in the main clause, and wouldn't eat renders futurity with respect to the time of had promised but not with respect to wrapped or the moment of coding, and finally got ties with the event of eating, whenever *that* is." (Allen 1966: 166, 8)

Thus **included pasts** signal a "same time" relationship with respect to a higher verb-cluster containing a "preterital element", either *Ved*, *had Ved*, or *would V*. **Included presents** mark "same time" with respect to higher verb-clusters containing *V* (present), *has Ved*, or *will V*, as in:

(2.25) (a) *I resent it when he begs.*

(b) *I've always given him money when he asks.*

(c) *I'll tell him when he comes.*

McCoard (1978: 98) points out that Allen keeps "past" and "present" as independent systems because it is necessary to maintain the principle that tenses in embedded clauses are "blind" to temporal references beyond their own immediate syntactic contexts. For Allen, as exemplified above, past and present perfect relate to differing orientations, viz. "same as past" versus "earlier than now". To evaluate this arrangement, McCoard scrutinizes several sets of closely-related examples Allen gives in support of his model of tense relationships. Examples (2.26a to 2.26t) are in McCoard (1978: 98, 99, 100, 101, 102). Let us first consider:

(2.26) (a) *Percy said that he had listened to the radio while he ate supper.*

(b) *Percy said that he always listened to the radio while he ate supper.*

(c) *Percy said that he was listening to the radio while he ate supper.*

In each case, as pointed out by McCoard, the time of *ate* is understood to be simultaneous with that which is referred to by the verb in the next higher clause. In (2.26a), *had listened* refers to an event which preceded the event of saying; so does *ate*. In (2.26b), *ate* is simultaneous with the past reference of *listened*; and *would listen* in (2.26c) provides the "future from a past viewpoint" which is shared by *ate*. A similar relationship is evidenced by present tenses:

(2.26) (d) *Percy usually listens to the radio after he has eaten supper.*

(e) *But tonight he will go to bed after he has eaten supper.*

(f) *He will listen to the radio while he eats supper, instead.*

Separation of the past and present orientation systems, according to Allen, is what prevents the generation of anomalies like:

(2.26) (g) **Percy said that he had listened to the radio while he eats supper.*

(h) **Percy usually listens to the radio after he ate supper.*

parallel to (2.26a) and (2.26d), respectively. McCoard, however, counter-arguments:

> "...if we posit that there is only one basic orientation point, namely the moment of speech, and that the past is then defined as 'earlier than the moment of speech', the past becomes an exception to Allen's tense-embedding hypothesis: each past in an embedded series would necessarily refer to a time before the moment of speech, which is not always true (cf. *She had promised me that she wouldn't eat it till we got home*, where *got* may not yet have happened); the 'earlier' relation would be referring to a specific time; furthermore, with this system, pasts would not assert a same-time-relation among the various events expressed in the past, which Allen sees as a major function of the past." (McCoard 1978: 99)

This "same-time-relation" function, according to McCoard, also rules out the alternative of regarding the past as simply marking an "earlier" time-relationship-reference with variable orientation, since embedded pasts would then denote a sequence of progressively more remote events, each in turn prior to the event in the next higher clause. In sentence (2.26b) above, *ate* is not past with respect to *listened.* Moreover, since *ate* and *listened* are understood to refer to the same time, it is not sufficient to identify both events as lying "somewhere before" the moment of speech; **we need to be able to represent their simultaneity in the grammatical model**, and this requires at least that the event-times be identified, that is, definite. The simultaneity in (2.26d), on the other hand, is not between *listening* and *eating*, but between *listening* and *having eaten supper*. The present perfect works like a present tense in this regard, and is consequently defined as a marker of "time earlier than the moment of speech" (Allen 1966:159). The perfect is thus one of the time-relationship markers which Allen says "are not to be construed as referring to any specific time" outside their own orientation-point. From this, it is clear that we have a characteristically ID sort of relationship between the past and the perfect.

According to McCoard, if the perfect can never point to or refer to a definite time, being only a marker of "earlier than" time relationship, then it is theoretically incapable of permitting a past in any sentence embedded beneath it. We should be unable to produce (2.27) *I've often stayed up as late as I wanted* and many others like it. Allen admits this is not accounted for:

> "...we would expect the present to signal the same time as the time of either have/has or will (defined only as 'time later than moment of coding')... But re-reference to an indefinite time signaled by have or has is expressed by means of (the past), so that 'same time' as the time of have or has is signaled by a past verb form, not by (the present)..." (Allen 1966:168)

There are other points, remarks McCoard, which escape Allen's notice. It is possible to say:

(2.26) (i) *Percy said that he had listened to the radio while he had eaten supper.* (m)

with little, if any, difference in meaning from (2.26a) above. In Allen's theory, (2.26i):

> "...should mean 'the time after Percy's listening to the radio was also the time after his eating supper.' This paraphrase fails to assert that the times of the respective events of listening and eating were the same, which is the actual message of (m), and of (a)." (McCoard 1978: 101)

Notice also, remarks McCoard, that we can reverse the tenses in (2.26a) to produce an example that is tolerable, though slightly odd:

(2.26) (j) *Percy said that while he ate supper, he had listened to the radio.* (n)

which again is interpreted like (2.26a), though *had listened* should refer to an event preceding *ate*, according to Allen.

McCoard thinks the general problem is that Allen ignores the role of conjunctions and other elements in the structuring of temporal relationships, placing the entire burden on the fact of embedding itself (cf. Godoi 1992: 211- 225). It is revealing, continues McCoard, to alter his examples (2.26a,b,c) by replacing *while* with *even though*, which allows a "simultaneous" reading, but does not perform very well as a substitute:

(2.26) (k) ?*Percy said that he had listened to the radio even though he ate supper.* (p)

(l) ?*Percy said that he always listened to the radio even though he ate supper.* (q)

(m) **Percy said that he would listen to the radio even though he ate supper.* (r)

(2.26k) is improved by changing *he ate* to *he was eating*; (2.26l) works better with that, or with *he would be eating*; similarly with (2.26i).The only point being made here is that if the sequence of verb forms were entirely rationalized by Allen's principle, we should not have to worry about such changes at all. When we compare other conjunctions, we see that Allen's argument also makes (2.26d), repeated here for convenience, entirely equivalent to (2.26n), but then leaves (2.26o) entirely different:

(2.36) (d) *Percy usually listens to the radio after he has eaten supper.*

(n) *Percy usually listens to the radio when he has eaten supper.* (s)

(o) *Percy usually listens to the radio before he has eaten supper.* (t)

Moreover, if we say (2.28) *When I sleep soundly, I usually snore*, we normally understand the sleeping and snoring to be going on at the same time. But if we say (2.29) *When I sleep soundly, I do my work better*, we think of the sleeping and working as alternating. This difference is not accommodated by Allen's theory.

The purpose of the above discussion has been to see if Allen's theory of tense-sequencing:

"...provided support for an ID model of the perfect/past opposition that was independent of direct semantic comparisons such as made by the ID theorists... If tense-sequencing had proved to work out as Allen intended, we would have been forced to admit that there was some sense to the ID analysis after all... However, we have found a number of deficiencies in Allen's explanation....hence we judge that Allen has not substantiated an ID interpretation of tense." (McCoard 1978: 102)

CHAPTER 3

THE EXTENDED-NOW INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESENT PERFECT

3.1 Introduction

Having concluded in chapter 2 that none of the tense models discussed were able to account for the difference between the present perfect and the simple past, in this chapter we will consider in more detail the "extended-now" concept. We will show that the tense model proposed by Declerck (1986) seems to overcome the limitations of the models discussed in chapter 2 in that it is capable of accommodating an XN (McCoard's abbreviation for "Extended Now") interpretation of the present perfect satisfactorily, thereby , providing a solution to the problem of the opposition between the present perfect and the simple past. Finally, Declerck's (1986) model suggests that the various readings of the present perfect are much more related to its semantic frame than to "contextual influences", as claimed by McCoard (1978: 151).

3.2 Early Extended-Now (XN) Concept Seeds

It is important to note that Pickbourn (1789), an early scholar who seems to have considered just about every theoretical issue relating to the past/perfect contrast, when discussing the question of indefiniteness of the present perfect virtually equates "indefinite" with "included in present time," and "definite" with "excluded from the present":

> "*I have written*...evidently belongs to present tense. We do not say, *I have written yesterday* or *I have written the first of August*; but we say *I wrote yesterday, I wrote the first of August*. This tense (the perfect) may properly be called the present perfect, or perfect indefinite. It always expresses a perfect or completed action; but an action that has been completed or perfected in the present time, i.e. in the present

day, the present year, the present age, etc. If we speak of the present century, we say, *philosophers have made great discoveries in the present century*; but if we speak of the last century, we say, *philosophers made great discoveries in the last century*." (Pickbourn 1789: 31)

A bit later he concedes that the very recent past is not strictly speaking indefinite, but the "present period" characterization still holds:

"...in one case it (the perfect) is definite with respect to time, i.e. when it signifies a thing done in the point of time preceding the present instant; as *I have just now written a letter*. But in all other cases it is, with respect to time, indefinite; for it only limits the action to a period of time, some of which is not yet expired, without referring to any particular part of that period. For, if I only say, *Dr. Priestly has published an English grammar*, I do not thereby ascertain whether he published it yesterday or thirty years ago." (Pickbourn 1789: 32)

Pickbourn's observations seem to be in keeping with an example by Mätzner (1892: 94), (3.1) *I saw the man today*. McCoard (1978: 125) comments that the period defined as "today", to which the speaker certainly "belongs", may be subdivided mentally into various subparts to which the speaker is attending ("earlier today," "during the lunch hour", etc.). A similar understanding is expressed by Brinkmann (1906: 724), who identifies the past with the past "closed off from the time of the speaker," thus separated from the speaker's present by a "time gap" (*Zeitlücke*). Even where there is no explicit adverb, he says, the choice of the past:

"...tacitly presupposes an opposition between the present and the time of the act, and thereby conflicts with the view that the act belongs to the speaker's present....It is not a question of such external matters as today and yesterday, but of the manner in which the speaker conceives the event. If we're dealing with a fact which the speaker holds in mind as vividly as if it had only just happened, as if it occurred in

the time he can call 'present' or 'most recent past', then the perfect is used, regardless of whether it happened today, yesterday, or the day before." (Brinkmann 1906: 725, 728)

3.3 Bryan's Strict XN Theory (1936)

Bryan (1936), according to McCoard, was the first linguist who clearly delineated the notion of the inclusion of the present moment as a typical characteristic of the present perfect. Bryan's version of the past/perfect opposition is stripped to the bare bone:

"The past tense represents an action or state as having occurred or having existed at a past moment or during a past period of time that is definitely separated from the actual present moment of speaking or writing.....the perfect tense merely includes an action or state within certain limits of time, and as a tense form it seems to me to do no more than this." (Bryan 1936: 363, 367)

The "limits of time" involved are those of:

"...a period which began in the past and extends up to or into the present. The terminus 'a quo' of this period of time may be made any point, however near or however remote, preceding the present; the terminus 'ad quem' is always the present moment of speaking or writing. That is, from the point of view of the present the speaker looks back upon some continuous stretch of the past and within this he places the action or state. This period of past time may be momentary, as in 'The messenger has just arrived'; or it may be of considerable extent as in 'The old house has been left untenanted for many years'; or it may include all past time, as in Shakespeare's 'Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love'." (Bryan 1936: 366)

It is interesting that Dietrich, one of the few who acknowledge Bryan (1936), argues in favor of the resultative reading of the present perfect:

"...the point of departure is the present situation...the event causally associated with this situation is identified as having happened sometime before the present." (Dietrich 1955: 186)

But this means that the existence of a present state somehow predicts that the causal act will be expressed in the perfect, which is not always the case. McCoard (1978) exemplifies:

"...given that 'I am missing my umbrella', I must say 'I have lost my umbrella.' Obviously, we might just as well say 'Darn, I guess I lost it somewhere.' The act of observing the present state does not force us to use the perfect; indeed if this were so, the perfect would be operating on a very different basis from the other verb forms, it would be used specifically to communicate that the present state had somehow automatically pinpointed the causal event and induced the speaker to use the perfect." (McCoard 1978: 127)

Bryan's XN theory for the present perfect, however, does not define this "reference time" which is said to extend to the moment of speech, nor does it analyse the present perfect in terms of its structure in order to locate the element in it which causes the extension of this reference time, ignoring the question of whether this effect belongs to the present perfect itself or whether it is a consequence of contextual matters. This looseness in Bryan's theory led to different accounts of the XN interpretation, as can be noted in McCoard (1978), Dowty (1979) and Declerck (1986).

3.4 McCoard's Version of the XN Interpretation (1978)

McCoard assumes the general correctness of the XN approach only while laying emphasis:

" ...on the myriad of contextual influences as the source of the more specific meanings identified with various subvarieties of the perfect..." (McCoard 1978:

151)

These "contextual influences", however, are not explored, and remain without an explanation, as if McCoard felt overwhelmed by the number ("myriad") of them. However, when it comes to categorizing the perfect in opposition to the preterite and other related forms, McCoard sets up the concept of "inclusion" which the present perfect would supposedly mark, in opposition to a "negative inclusion" which the simple past would indicate:

" The perfect will indicate positive inclusion, the preterit negative inclusion (i.e. exclusion)" (McCoard 1978: 152)

McCoard's position, however, is rather curious. Let us consider the following statements:

[1] "We shall claim in this work that the preterit and the present perfect are not, in fact, distinct in terms of tense or sequence: their distinctiveness lies elsewhere." (1978: 17)

[2] "...we shall not refer to the English perfect as an Aspectual category: in this book, the perfect is not a marker of aspect." (1978: 11)

Since the present perfect is not a marker of aspect, although it is a possible marker of inclusion, and does not differ from the past in terms of time location, it should coincide completely with the simple past, which is not the case, or be assigned to a new category. However, McCoard does not risk fitting the present perfect into any existing category, nor creates a new one to fill in the gap, only states vaguely that in relation to the opposition to other categories:

"...it remains possible that inclusion is one of the factors, at least"(McCoard 1978: 153)

What is clear from McCoard's (1978) discussion of the present perfect is that: [1] the present perfect is not a tense by itself, since it coincides with the simple past in terms of location in time, [2] it is not a marker of aspect either, although it possibly marks a category of "inclusion" and [3] the XN approach to the present perfect is valid only with "emphasis" on the "myriad" of contextual influences as the source of the more specific meanings. With this sort of definition, however, nothing is left but a very broad XN concept enveloped in pragmatic matters and mystery.

3.5 Dowty's Version of the XN Interpretation (1979)

Dowty (1979) bases his analysis of the present perfect on McCoard's Extended-Now Theory. Like McCoard (1978), Dowty (1979) sees the current relevance and indefinite factors as belonging to a theory of pragmatics of discourse, although unlike McCoard he admits:

> "...the possibility that the perfect has as part of its meaning (or to be more exact, as part of its conventional implicature) a very, very general notion of 'current relevance'....say roughly, the event described has some relevance or other to the present context, the nature of which is to be inferred entirely from contextual factors." (Dowty 1979: 340)

Dowty prefers, however, not to explore the present perfect in terms of this "very, very general notion of current relevance":

> "Fortunately, there is yet another way that the present perfect distinguishes itself from the simple past, a way which is far more concrete than 'present relevance'..... This is the difference in the time adverbials that are allowed by the two tenses." (Dowty 1979: 340)

Examining McCoard's list of adverbials (1978: 135), transcribed below, Dowty (1979) considers that the overlapping distribution , column 2, could be accounted for by the theory that the present perfect is a past tense embedded within a present tense (cf.

Bach, 1967; McCawley, 1971; McCoard, 1978), however with serious restrictions since "only some of the adverbials in the third column (and none in the second) can be successfully used with the present tense itself."

Occur with simple past but not with perfect	Occur with either simple past or with perfect	Occur with perfect but not with simple past
long ago	long since	at present
five years ago	in the past	up till now
once (formerly)	once (one time)	so far
the other day	today	as yet
those days	in my life	during these last five years
last night	for three years	herewith
in 1900	recently	lately
at 3:00	just now	since the war
after the war	often	before now
no longer	always	by now
	never	
	already	
	before	

Table 3.1: McCoard's list of adverbials (1978: 135)

For this reason, Dowty adopts the Extended-Now Theory:

"This is the view that the perfect serves to locate an event within a period of time that began in the past and extends up to the present moment, while the simple past specifies that an event occurred at a past time that is separated from the present by some interval." (Dowty 1979: 341)

Based on this theory, Dowty (1979: 342) defines the predicate of times[11] "PAST" in opposition to predicate of times "XN[12]" as follows:

"PAST (t) is true at $[w,i]$ iff there exists an interval i' such that
(the time denoted by) $t < i' < i$

[11] A sentence operator of time.
[12] McCoard's abbreviation for "Extended-Now"

XN (t) is true at [w,i] iff i is a final subinterval of the interval denoted by t"

In Dowty's analysis, however, the relation between the XN interval in which an event occurs and the time of the event itself is not clear and may generate criticisms like those of Michaelis (1994) when analyzing the examples:

(3.2) (a) *I have willed my fortune to Greenpeace.*
(b) *I willed my fortune to Greenpeace.*

She protests that there seems to be no reason to presume that (3.2a) expresses an event proposition which is true somewhere within an interval whose upper boundary is now, while (3.2b) does not. Michaelis (1994), in defense of her position, argues that adverbs denoting a general present-contiguous past interval cannot be used with (3.2a), fact that she interprets as evidence against the XN theory. In reality, it seems that Dowty's interpretation of the XN theory does not offer a way out of Michaelis' criticism, which will be analyzed in more details in chapter four.

3.6 Declerck's Version of the XN Interpretation (1986)

Since our main concern is the analysis of the present perfect, we will not develop Declerck's tense model in all its details, but just in the concepts that are directly or indirectly related to the present perfect.

3.6.1 Preliminary Notions

Before starting the argument proper it is important to make two remarks in connection with the model developed by Declerck (1986):

[1] According to Declerck, the word "tense" is used with different meanings in the linguistic literature. Some linguists (e.g. Smith: 1978) hold that English has only two tenses, viz. the past tense and the present tense. Others distinguish a wider array of tenses, maximally including the **present tense, the past tense, the future tense, the**

present perfect, the past perfect, the future perfect, the conditional and the conditional perfect. Like Reichenbach (1947) and Comrie (1985), Declerck adopts the latter convention and points out two good reasons for this:

> "First of all, even if one assumes that a general theory of tense can distinguish only two tenses in English, one needs the eight above labels as names for different kinds of verb forms. (It would be rather inconvenient if we had only the label 'past tense' to refer to such different verb forms as *came, had come, would come and would have come*.) More importantly, however, it will be argued that the distinction of eight tenses in English is also warranted from a theoretical point of view, since each of them corresponds to a different temporal scheme. As noted above, Reichenbach defends this point of view, and Comrie also does, except for the fact that he (Comrie)[13] assumes the same temporal scheme for the present perfect as for the past tense." (Declerck 1986: 317)

[2] Declerck remarks that the temporal schemata that he proposes are those that hold for the tenses in English, adding:

> "It's not claimed that these schemata are universal. Although some of them (e.g. the scheme for the present tense) are no doubt also valid for many, if not all, languages, some schemata may have a less universal character, and at least one, viz. **the scheme for the present perfect, appears to be very typical of English**[14]. The basic temporal meaning of the English present perfect differs from that of its counterpart even in cognate languages like Dutch and German." (Declerck 1986: 318)

3.6.2 Basic Concepts

Let us begin by concentrating on the notion of "reference point" as interpreted by Declerck (1986). Declerck points out that what is striking in Reichenbach (1947),

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[13] This parenthesis was included by us.
[14] This bold print was inserted by us.

Comrie (1985), and many other treatments of tense (for example Dowty (1979)), is that this notion never receives an adequate technical definition. The idea is introduced in informal terms in the description of a particular tense (usually the past perfect) and it is apparently left to the reader to deduce a definition. From the examples and comments in Reichenbach (1947) and Comrie (1985), the reference point seems to be the time relative to which the situation (or the time of the situation) is located. In other words, a particular tense may locate the time of a situation as simultaneous with, prior to, or posterior to a particular time, which is the "time of reference" or "reference point". This means that the "time of reference" is "the time pointed from" rather than "the time pointed to". On the other hand, it is mostly pointed out that the time of reference can be established by a time adverbial and/or by a verb form in the context. In that sense the reference time is a "time pointed to". Declerck concludes:

> "So, the term 'reference time' will mean 'time referred from' in one context and 'time referred to' in another. In order to avoid confusion, the unambiguous labels 'time referred to' (henceforth: TR) and 'time of orientation' (henceforth: TO) will be adopted in this section. The latter term indicates the time to which a situation is related: whenever we use a tense to describe a situation, this situation is located relative to a TO. This clear distinction between the notions TR and TO does not mean that the two are mutually exclusive. In a sentence like *When we left at five John had already left* the time which serves as TO for the use of the past perfect is at the same time TR because it is referred to by the time adverbial at five." (Declerck 1986: 320)

Apart from the notions **TR** and **TO**, Declerck (1986: 321) remarks that we also need **TS** and **TU**:

TS = "time of the situation", i.e. for the time that the situation lasts (i.e. the portion of the time axis taken up by the situation).

TU = "time of utterance" (i.e. the time of speech).

In Declerck's analysis, whereas TU is punctual (and is thus represented by a point, not by a longer section of the time line), the other times (TR, TO and TS) can in principle be points or longer timespans. The "time of utterance", in fact, takes some time on the time line, but this does not affect Declerck's system, since it is seen as a unit.

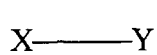
3.6.3 The Past Perfect

Given the above notions, let us examine now the somewhat complicated example proposed by Declerck (1986: 321):

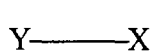
(3.3) *John left at five o'clock after the others had left at four.*

In this sentence two situations are referred to, and both are located precisely in time: **the others left at four** and **John left at five**. This means that TS_1 (the time taken up by the departure of the others) is located as simultaneous with TR_1 (four o'clock), while TS_2 (the time taken up by John's departure) is located as simultaneous with TR_2 (five o'clock). Declerck (1986) adopts the convention of representing simultaneity between two times (X and Y) as in scheme 3.1, while anteriority as in scheme 3.2 and posteriority as in scheme 3.3.

(X at Y)
Scheme 3.1



(X before Y)
Scheme 3.2

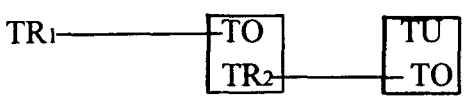


(X after Y)
Scheme 3.3

Using this convention, Declerck (1986) represents the temporal relation between TS_1 and TR_1 and that between TS_2 and TR_2 as in scheme 3.4. below:

Scheme 3.4

Now, whenever a speaker refers to a time, he does so from a particular temporal point of view. That is, any TR is related to a TO in terms of simultaneity, anteriority or posteriority. In the sentence under discussion, both TR_1 and TR_2 are thus related to a TO. The TO to which TR_1 is related is TR_2; the TO to which TR_2 is related is TU. This can be schematically represented as in scheme 3.5.:



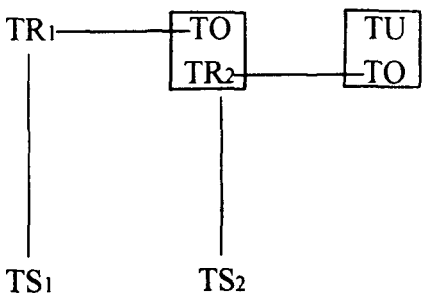
Scheme 3.5

Declerck (1986: 322) points out that scheme 3.5 conveys the following information:

[a] that both TR_1 and TR_2 are located prior to a TO;
[b] that the TO to which TR_1 is related is TR_2;
[c] that the TO to which TR_2 is related is TU.

It is important to note that one and the same time can be the TR of one relation and the TO of another. To represent this, the symbols TR and TO are put in a single box. **Boxed-in elements are thus taken to refer to the same time.**

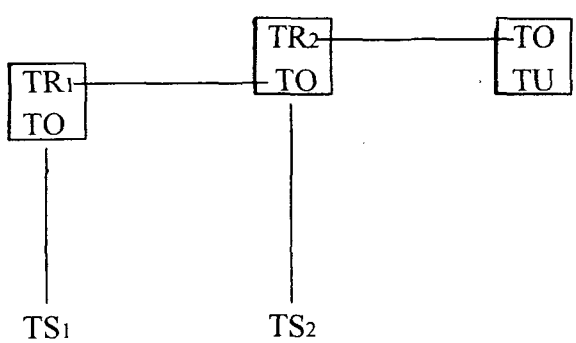
The information in scheme 3.5 can be combined with that provided in scheme 3.4. The result is scheme 3.6, which is taken to represent the temporal relations expressed in the sentence under discussion:



Scheme 3.6

According to scheme 3.6, the configuration TS_1 at TR_1 (realized as *the others had left at four*) is represented as anterior to the configuration TS_2 at TR_2 (realized as *John left at five*), which is itself represented as anterior to TU. Scheme 3.6, therefore, adequately represents the idea that the past tense expresses past time, whereas the past perfect expresses past-in-the-past (i.e. what is past with respect to a past TO).

According to Declerck (1986: 323), scheme 3.6 should still be improved. Since any time referred to is assumed to be related to some TO we must also indicate that TR_1 is the TO to which TS_1 is related and that TR_2 is the TO to which TS_2 is related. This yields the scheme represented below:



Scheme 3.7

According to Declerck, scheme 3.7 is fully satisfactory, as it makes clear that:

[a] TU is the TO to which TR_2 *(at five)* is related (i.e. *at five* denotes a time that lies in the past with respect to the moment of speech);

[b] TS_2 *(John left)* is located as **simultaneous with** TR_2 (i.e. the situation is represented as happening at five). TR_2 is thus the TO to which TS_2 is related;

[c] TR_2 is also the TO to which TR_1 *(at four)* is related: TR_1 is represented as anterior to TR_2;

[d] TR_1 is the TO to which TS_1 *(the others had left)* is related: TS_1 is represented as **simultaneous with** (i.e. happening at) TR_1.

It seems curious, however, that Declerck refers to the relationship between a TS and its TR in the same terms as the relationship between a TR and another TR, because as claimed by Prior (1967: 15) apud McCoard:

> "...every event is **simultaneous**[15] with some time; to happen means to become present at some time" (McCoard 1978: 92)

This means, in our opinion, that unlike the relation between a TR and its TO, which can be of anteriority, simultaneity or posteriority, the relation between a TS and its TR (which Declerck (1986) also labels as "TO" of that TS) must be a relation of **simultaneity**. Otherwise, we would incur the same multiplicity of verb forms which Jespersen's and Reichenbach's systems are accused of. Moreover, it is our opinion that this distinction is fundamental to answer Michaelis' (1994) criticism of the XN theory (mentioned at the end of last section). We will return to this issue in chapter four.

The relation "**simultaneous with**" which holds between a TS and its TO (TR), must not be assigned the strict definition according to which any point in TS must also

[15] This bold print was inserted by us.

be in TO and vice versa. Rather, "**TS simul TO**" means, according to Declerck (1986: 326), that the two times coincide in one of the following ways:

[a] both occupy the same point of the time line, as in:

(3.4) *At that moment a shot was fired*;

[b] both occupy (roughly) the same section of the time line as in:

(3.5) *I was in London yesterday*;

[c] the section occupied by TS is part of the section occupied by TO as in:

(3.6) *I left yesterday*;

[d] the section occupied by TO is part of the section occupied by TS as in:

(3.7) *I was at home at four o'clock.*

In [d] TS extends beyond TO and there is nothing to prevent it from extending even to the present or into the future. The problem noted in connection with Comrie's system (viz. that it is not correct to state that the past tense represents TS as (wholly) anterior to TU) is thus obviated here: what lies wholly in the past is not TS itself but the TO to which it is related. This relationship is of such a kind that TS may continue well beyond TO and even include the present and part of the future.

Let us continue the development of Declerck's (1986) tense model. In example (3.3) *John left at five o'clock after the others had left at four*, TR_1 and TR_2 are established by the time adverbials *at four* and *at five*. Declerck (1986: 323), however, notes that a past perfect or a past tense can also be used without an accompanying adverbial of time, as in:

(3.8) *The others had left before John left.*

In that case TR_1 and TR_2 are no longer established in the sentence itself. TR_2 will then have to be established by the context (i.e. the sentence requires a context referring to the past). TR_1 may then not be established at all, which means that there

may be no "time referred to" in the strict sense of the term. However, even in that case the use of the past perfect implies that TS, *(the others had left)* is located at some (unidentified) TO and that this TO is itself located anterior to the TO that is formed by TR_2. Declerck, therefore concludes:

> "....if there is no adverbial establishing TR_1 we might wish to replace the label 'time referred to' by some other symbol denoting a time that is not identified in the discourse, but the whole of the scheme remains unaffected. (For ease of reference the label 'TR' will be used even if the time is not 'referred to' in the sense of 'specified'.)" (Declerck 1986: 324)

This is in accordance with the view argued in Katz that:

> "...a sentence does not temporally relate the things it is about to one another directly. Rather, it first relates them each to **a fixed reference point** and then relates them to one another indirectly by virtue of their relations to **the reference point**". (Katz 1972: 34)

In fact, in Declerck's schemes, there is no direct temporal relation between different TSs. Each TS is located relative to a TO, and these are related to each other.

Declerck claims that one of the major advantages of a scheme such as scheme 3.7 is that it makes clear the different roles played by tenses and time adverbials. The tenses are used in defining where the situations and their respective TOs are located in relation to another TO (cf. Godoi: 1992); the time adverbials do not specify the times of the situations but establish the TOs relative to which the TSs are located. Declerck thus concludes:

> "...in *The boys were at home at five o'clock* the time adverbial *at five o'clock* specifies not the TS (i.e. the section of the time line occupied by the situation) but the TO relative to which the TS is located. (Note that in this case, TS may have a much longer duration than TO)." (Declerck 1986: 324)

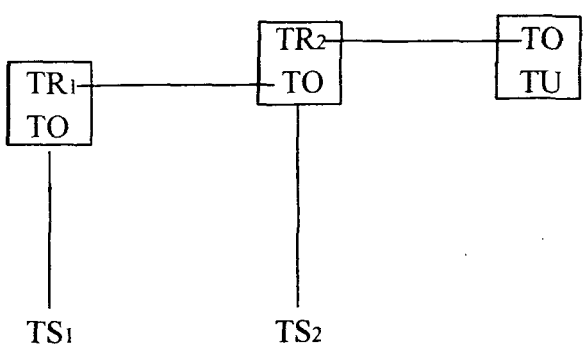
This means that Declerck's analysis concurs with Reichenbach's claim that:

"...when a time determination is added, such as is given by words like *now* or *yesterday*, or by a nonreflexive symbol like *November 7, 1944*, it is referred, not to the event, but to the reference point of the sentence. We say *I met him yesterday*; that the word *yesterday* refers here to the event obtains only because the points of reference and of event coincide". (Reichenbach 1947: 294)

Klein (1992), however, claims that past-perfect sentences like (3.9a,b) below are ambiguous as to whether an adverbial expression modifies E or R. In (3.9a), according to Klein, *at two* describes R. In (3.9b), *at two* modifies E, while R is *three o'clock*:

(3.9) (a) *[Yesterday, the mail arrived at two.] I had (already) left at two.*
(b) *[Yesterday, the mail arrived at three.] I had left at two.*

To offer an answer to Klein's objection, we may argue, following Declerck (1986: 324), that if a time adverbial is used in a clause where the tense presupposes more than one TR, as the past perfect does (cf. scheme 3.7 repeated below), we can expect that the time adverbial can be interpreted as establishing any one of these TRs. Therefore in "*I had left at two*" (Klein:1992), *at two* can establish either TR_2 (a time before which I had already left) or TR_1 (the time at which I had left). "Any time adverbial," remarks Declerck (1986: 328), "can always be applied to every TR in the system", except in one case, which will be discussed later.



Scheme 3.7

Declerck admits, however, that apart from the so-called ***"time-when"*** adverbials, i.e. adverbials denoting the time at which a situation is said to hold true (e.g. *yesterday, at 3 o'clock,* etc.):

> "...there also are adverbials referring to the beginning or/and end of a period (e.g. *since 1970, from two o'clock until four, until now*) and adverbials that denote nothing but duration (e.g. *for two hours, all day long*). It is necessary to examine whether these two types also fit into the system." (Declerck 1986: 357)

According to Declerck, the purely "***durational adverbs***" define the duration of **TS**, not of TR, which goes against Reichenbach's (1947: 294) claim. In (3.10) *I worked for two hours*:

> "...the adverbial defines the duration of my working; the TR at which I worked is not identified, so its duration is not indicated either. The same is true in the perfect tenses, although there is often an **implicature**[16] that the period indicated lasts up to the TO (so that the duration adverbial ultimately also indicates the time of the situation and the TR with which it is simultaneous)." (Declerck 1986: 357)

Thus, (3.11) *I have lived in Paris for five years* can be interpreted in two ways. The first reading, on which *for five years* expresses no more than duration (and therefore tells us nothing about TR), is that somewhere in the course of my life there has been a period of five years during which I lived in Paris. This interpretation can be enforced by the addition of a clause like *but now I am living in London.* The second reading is that *for five years* indicates a period that reaches up to now (cf. McCoard, 1978: 46; Dowty, 1979: 343). This interpretation is brought to the fore when we use a progressive form (*have been living*) because the progressive refers to the middle of a situation, i.e. represents the situation as not yet completed at TO. There appears to be an implicature

[16] This bold print was inserted by us.

that the second reading will be the more prominent of the two if it is allowed by the context.

When a durational adverbial is interpreted as indicating a period up to (and including) the TO, it serves the same function as adverbials of the type *since 1956, from 2 o'clock to 7, until World War II.* Adverbials like these refer to at least one of the two boundaries (beginning and end) of a period, and may therefore be called "***boundary adverbials***". Although they would seem to indicate both time and duration, they are primarily time adverbials. Those that refer to both the beginning and ending-point of a period naturally also specify the duration of the timespan. Those that refer to the beginning only (e.g. *since 1950, from then onwards*) indirectly also do this, because they will normally be interpreted as indicating a TR that continues up to the TO. However, those that refer to the end only (e.g. *until 1950)* do not specify any duration (except if they collocate with a future tense, in which case TU is interpreted as indicating the beginning of the period). "Boundary adverbials" will therefore be taken to specify the TR at which the situation is located, not the time of the situation itself. This is in keeping with the fact that the TS need not be interpreted as covering exactly the same timespan as the period specified as TR. In (3.12a) *I have met him once since 1950* and (3.12b) *I had met him once between 1940 and 1950,* the duration of TS is much shorter than that of the period (TR) relative to which it is located. In such examples, the boundary adverbial behaves exactly like a "time-when" adverbial such as *in 1950* or *the day before*. On the other hand, there does appear to be a conversational implicature seeing to it that, if the situation is a durative one, its duration will normally be interpreted as being the same as that indicated by the boundary adverbial. Thus, in (3.13a) *I have lived in London since 1950,* the normal interpretation is that the duration of the situation of my living in London is commensurate with the duration of the period denoted *by since 1950* (and up to now). However, this interpretation merely results from an implicature and can therefore be ruled out by the context, as in (3.13b) *I have lived in London since 1950, but only for a couple of years.* Declerck's conclusion is that time adverbials of the ***boundary type*** serve the same function as ***time-when*** adverbials: they establish the TR relative to which TS is located as simultaneous. Remember that TR may be a point or a timespan and that "simultaneous with" allows for the possibility that TR and TS only partly overlap with each other. Purely ***durational adverbials***, on the

other hand, refer to TS, not to TR. For this reason they can easily cooccur with time adverbials, as in (3.14) *I worked (for) fourteen hours yesterday.* It goes without saying that this is further evidence for the claim that, in the representations of the tenses, a distinction must be made between a TS and a TR relative to which the TS is located as simultaneous. A system like Comrie's, in which this distinction is not made, is clearly unsatisfactory.

It is also important to note that Declerck (1986: 324) claims that the use of a tense relates to describing a situation and not to establishing a TR. Considering the example (3.15) *John had already left when the others arrived*, Declerck points out that we do not know when John left (or, more correctly, what is the time -"TO"- to which the time of the situation of John leaving is related). The past perfect of course implies that there is a TO, but it does not identify it. Time adverbials, on the other hand, do identify TOs.

Before going on, it is good to bear in mind that Declerck remarks that the temporal schemata that he proposes are meant to account for the "basic temporal" uses of the tenses only. According to Declerck, the past perfect has several "nontemporal" or "special" uses. Let us consider the following examples:

(3.16) (a) *Bill had seen me before I saw him.*

(b) *Bill saw me before I saw him.*

(c) *Bill saw me before I had seen him.*

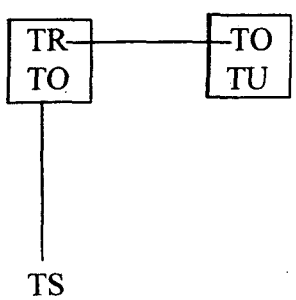
(In: Declerck 1986: 325)

Declerck explains sentence (3.16a) as being an example of the "basic temporal" use of the past perfect: *had seen* refers to a situation that is represented as prior to the situation referred by *saw*. Sentence (3.16b) illustrates the fact that, when there is a clause introduced by *before or after,* the past perfect is often replaced by a past tense because the anteriority relation is already signaled by the conjunction. That is, the past tense in the head clause results from tense simplification and therefore represents a "special" use of the past tense. In (3.16c) it is the past perfect *had seen* that is not in keeping with the normal temporal meaning of the tense: here the past perfect refers to a situation that is not anterior to the one referred to by the past tense of the head clause.

Sentences of this type have been examined in Declerck (1979a), where it is argued that the past perfect is used as a modal form expressing "irrealis". The meaning of (3.16c) is something like "Bill saw me at a time when I had not yet seen him". The past perfect thus fails to represent the situation as factual, and we can easily find it in contexts that suggest that the situation did not hold at all (e.g. 3.17 *I concealed myself before Bill had seen me*). In sum, (3.16b) and (3.16c) are instances of a "special temporal" use and a modal use of a tense respectively, and are therefore not counterexamples to the temporal scheme that has been proposed for the basic temporal use of the past perfect.

3.6.4 The Simple Past

If scheme 3.7 represents the structure of the past perfect, the structure of the past tense can be shown to be a subpart of this, as in scheme 3.8.:



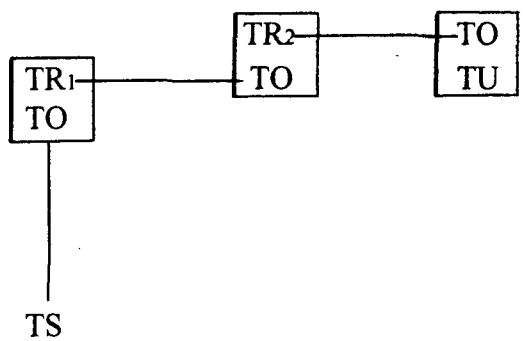
Scheme 3.8

This representation of the past tense is in keeping with the view that the use of a past tense does not exclude the "situation referred to" from extending to the present or into the future (cf. McCoard, 1978: 45-51). Declerck thus concludes:

> "*John was in London yesterday* says nothing about whether John still is in London today nor about where he will be tomorrow." (Declerck 1986: 326)

Declerck's representation accounts for this for it does not locate TS (the time that John is in London) as anterior to TU (and hence as lying wholly in the past). Rather, it represents TS as "**simultaneous**" with a past TO (established by *yesterday*).

Declerck makes a further observation on the past tense. In some cases the past tense is accompanied by adverbials establishing more than one TR. Consider, for example, (3.18) *I did it the day before yesterday.* The representation of the temporal structure is shown in scheme 3.9:



Scheme 3.9

The TR2 which is located before TU is *yesterday.* TR1, which is located before TR2, is *the day before yesterday.* TS is located as simultaneous with TR1, not TR2. A similar example is (3.19) *It happened a fortnight ago from yesterday,* and we can even get instances with more times referred to, such as (3.20a) *I did it the day before the last Sunday before Christmas.* Scheme 3.9, however, would seem to be closer to the representation of the past perfect than to that of the past tense. Yet we normally say (3.21a) *I did it the day before yesterday* and not (3.21b) *I had done it the before yesterday* (unless we mean to locate the situation at a time prior to the day before yesterday). This means that, as far as the use of the tenses is concerned, complex adverbials that denote several times and state a temporal relation between them can establish only one TR. This principle has also been observed by Smith (1978: 48), who writes that "complex time adverbials are single units in temporal interpretation". So, an adverbial like *the day before yesterday* is felt to establish a single TR. If it is accompanied by a past tense, it establishes the one TR that is present in scheme 3.8 (i.e. the one which TS is **simultaneous** with). If it is accompanied by a past perfect, it can establish either of the TRs that occur in scheme 3.7. This accounts for the fact that

(3.22) *I had left the day before yesterday* can receive two interpretations: either the day before yesterday was the TO (= TR_2) prior to which I had left, or it was the time at which I left (= TR_1), as noted before in relation to Klein's objection. As a conclusion, Declerck (1986: 328) observes that:

> "...not all TRs and temporal relations expressed in a clause need be relevant to the selection of the tense of the clause. We can imagine complex adverbials like *the day after the last Sunday before Easter*. Even such an adverbial, which involves three TRs and two temporal relations, ultimately serves to specify a single TR. And this TR is the only one that is relevant to the selection of the tense of the accompanying verb."

Declerck, however, points out one type of exception to this rule. It is possible, says Declerck (1986), that one of the TRs involved in the temporal relation expressed by the adverbial is not overtly indicated in the adverbial itself but must be identified from the context. Consider, for example, an adverbial like *the day before*. Whereas *the day before yesterday* ultimately does no more than establish a single TR, *the day before* establishes one TR and implies the existence of another. In the latter case the TR established by the adverbial (i.e. the TR with which TS is simultaneous) is only one of the two TRs involved. And since the relation between them is one of anteriority, the temporal scheme that is realized is that of the past perfect, not of the past, and we should therefore expect *the day before* to collocate with the former tense. Needless to say, this expectation is borne out, for we say (3.23) *I had done it the day before* rather than (3.24) *I did it the day before*.

However, apart from the above kind of exception, it does appear to be the case that complex adverbials indicate only one TR relevant to the use of the tense. This is also clear from examples like (3.25) *He was born at 7 o'clock on Christmas Day, 1977*, where we have a complex adverbial of a different type. In this case the complex adverbial consists of several indications of time, which identify the same time (viz. the TR relative to which TS is located as simultaneous) with different degrees of preciseness. As far as the temporal relations are concerned that are relevant to the use of

the tenses, the different adverbials clearly establish a single TR (Smith (1978: 48) makes the same point).

According to Declerck (1986: 329), the above discussion of the past perfect and the past tense has revealed a number of basic principles:

[1] Irrespective of whether the tense is an "absolute" one (in Comrie's sense) or a "relative" one, TS is never directly related to TU. Rather, it stands in a relationship of simultaneity with a TO which may be referred to by an adverbial and which is itself related to a TO. The latter TO may be TU or may be related to TU via one or more further TOs.

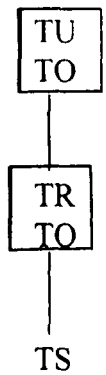
[2] Time adverbials of the ***boundary type*** serve the same function as ***time-when*** adverbials: they establish the TR relative to which TS is located as simultaneous. ***Durational adverbials***, on the other hand, refer to TS, not to TR.

[3] If the tense is such that several TRs are involved, the time adverbial can be interpreted as referring to any one of them. However, Declerck (1986: 356) notes an exception to this rule, which will be discussed in section 3.6.7.1.

[4] As far as the use of the tenses is concerned, only one TR is established by two or more time adverbials in the same clause.

3.6.5 The Simple Present

On the basis of these principles Declerck represents the other tenses. In this dissertation we will follow Declerck's analysis of just one more tense, apart from the present perfect itself: the present tense, since the perfect is identified by Jespersen (1931: 47) as a "kind of present tense." The present tense, according to Declerck (1986: 329), offers the simplest scheme:



Scheme 3.10

The present tense, in scheme 3.10, represents a situation as simultaneous with a TR which is itself simultaneous with TU. This is the case of the example offered by Declerck (1986: 330):

(3.26) *John is here today.*

The TR is indicated by *today*. As noted by Comrie (1985: 2, 36, 37), TU is by definition punctual (nondurative). TR, on the other hand, may be a longer timespan (e.g. today). This is in keeping with Declerck's definition of "**simul**": when we say that TR is simultaneous with TU, this does not mean that TR has to be punctual too. Similarly, the statement that TS is located as simultaneous with TR does not mean that the two must take up exactly the same portion of the time axis. The present tense in the example (3.26) *John is here today* does not exclude the possibility that John was here yesterday too, nor that he may remain here for some time in the future. That is, for the simultaneity relation to hold it is sufficient that one time partially overlaps the other.

The above remarks, according to Declerck, make it clear that we need all three times (TU, TR and TS) in the description of the present tense. TR is necessary as an intermediary between TU and TS because it is the time indicated by *today*. Like other time adverbials that are "shifters" (Jakobson: 1957), such as *yesterday and tomorrow, today* locates a timespan relative to TU. And, as is the case in sentences with *yesterday and tomorrow,* TS is located relative to this timespan. Declerck's analysis of the present tense is, therefore, in keeping with the general principles that have been pointed out above. Moreover, it explains why the three times in question (TU, TR and TS) may be

different times in the sense that they may take up three different portions of the time axis. In the example (3.26) *John is here today,* TS (the time of John's being here) may be longer than TR (today), and this in its turn is longer than TU.

3.6.6 The Present Perfect

As noted before, in the opinion of Comrie (1981, 1985), the present perfect does not differ from the past tense in terms of time location: both tenses locate a situation as prior to the present moment. The difference between the two is rather one of aspect: the present perfect implies "current relevance", the past tense does not. This means that Comrie's analysis of the perfect runs counter to Reichenbach's. The latter holds that the perfect involves the present moment as reference point, whereas the reference point involved in the use of the past tense coincides with the time of the past situation.

Declerck's theory (1986) will differ from Comrie's (1985) in that it does not consider the two tenses as locating situations in time in exactly the same way. As noted by Comrie himself (1985: 78-79), "adverbial indications of definite past time require the past tense". The present perfect, remarks Declerck:

> "...can cooccur with time adverbials only if the time of the situation is located relative to a time that extends from the past to the present. Thus, the present perfect can be used with such adverbials as *lately, this afternoon, since 1960,* etc. Adverbials like *in the past, for some time,* etc. are interpreted as denoting a period up to now when accompanied by a present perfect. An adverbial such as *at some time* can collocate with the perfect in the sense of 'at some time in a period up to now'. Even adverbials like *at 2 o'clock* are possible, but in that case too there is reference to a period extending to TU." (Declerck 1986: 346)

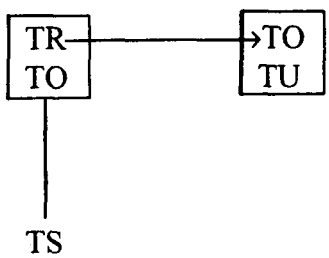
As noted by Comrie (1985: 79), (3.27) *I have arrived at two o'clock* means "there has been at least one instance in my life when I arrived at two o'clock". All this suggests, according to Declerck, that the present perfect does not locate a situation in time in the same way as the past tense does. Whereas the past locates TS at a TR that

lies wholly before TU, the present perfect locates TS at a TR that reaches from the past up to TU. The relation between TR and TU is thus no longer of the type "X (wholly) before Y", but rather of the type "X before-and-up to Y". The latter relation can be represented as shown in scheme 3.11 below:

X——————→Y

Scheme 3.11

The scheme of the present perfect then looks as is shown in scheme 3.12:



Scheme 3.12

It should be noted that this is different from what Declerck has observed in connection with the past tense, which leaves open the possibility that TS extends beyond TR and up to TU, but does express that TR is completely before TU. In scheme 3.12 it is TR itself which extends up to TU. As for the TS that is located relative to it, it may also extend to the present (as in (3.28) *I have lived here since 1950*) or it may not do so (as in (3.29) *I have seen him lately* or *I have been there twice*). It is this difference between the present perfect and the past tense which accounts for the fact that, in the theory that holds that the only relevant distinction in tense is that between past and present, the present perfect counts as a present tense whereas the past tense self-evidently does not. Thus, Banfield (1982: 265) notes that "in the case of the present perfect, despite the reference to a past time, the tense is present and retains a reference to the speaker and the moment of the utterance".

This representation of the perfect seems to fit in nicely with the "extended now" analysis of the perfect advocated by McCoard (1978). It also concurs with an "indefinite past" analysis to the extent that it explains why the present perfect cannot be accompanied by adverbials referring to some "definite time" in the past: if the TR at which TS is located is identified as being such that TU is not part of it, then the

conditions for using the present perfect are not satisfied, since the present perfect requires that TR should include TU. On the other hand, the analysis seems to be able to account for the use of the perfect with adverbial indications of recent past such as *just* or *this minute,* since we can assume that the (very) recent past can be considered as part of the present in the extended sense (cf. Poutsma 1926: 263). Of course, the use of the perfect in such cases is highly conventionalized: British English uses the perfect with *just* and the past with the synonymous *just now;* American English uses the past tense in both cases (cf. McCoard 1978: 45).

Declerck's analysis of the present perfect also accounts for the distribution of time adverbials over the past tense and the present perfect. Adverbials that establish a TR not including TU require the use of the past tense. Adverbials establishing a TR reaching up to (and including) TU trigger the use of the present perfect. According to Declerck (1986: 348), however, there are a couple of adverbials that deserve some special comment:

[1] A question beginning with *when* must normally be in the past tense rather than in the present perfect. We say *When did it happen?* and not (3.30)**When has it happened?* (except on a habitual interpretation). This is in keeping with Declerck's analysis. Nonhabitual *when* is always interpreted as referring to an interval of time that does not include TU. Otherwise we use *since when* (or *for how long*?). The use of the past tense with *when* and of the perfect with *since when* is thus predictable.

[2] Comrie (1979: 30) notes that the use of *long since* (as in *I have long since given up smoking)* as a "potential counterexample" to the rule that time adverbials accompanying a present perfect cannot exclude TU from their reference. However, it does not seem that *long since* is an exception. *Since* refers to a period starting at a certain time in the past (contextually identified) and reaching up to some TO. This TO may be TU, in which case all conditions for using the present perfect are satisfied. The interpretation is that the time of my giving up smoking is located as simultaneous with this period. "Simultaneous with" will here receive the interpretation "at some time in the course of", which is one of its usual interpretations. The addition of *long* just means

that this unidentified time in the period indicated does not lie close to TU. This does not in any way interfere with the conditions for using the present perfect.

[3] An adverbial like *until now* can be used both with the past tense - (3.31) *I lived in the country until now* - and with the present perfect - (3.32) *I have lived in the country until now*. This follows simply from the fact that *until now* can mean both "up to, but not including, TU" and "up to and including TU". As predicted by the theory, the past tense suggests that I have now stopped living in the country whereas the present perfect implies that I still do.

In sum, the analysis advocated here claims that the difference between past and perfect lies basically in the different meanings of the "before" relation between TR and TU, and therefore in how they locate a situation in time. This runs counter to the view that the basic difference between the two tenses is one of aspect (viz. the absence or presence of an implication of current relevance). This is confirmed by the fact that current relevance can also be implied in sentences that make use of the past tense (cf. McCoard 1978: 56-60).

The conclusion, then, is that, contrary to what is claimed by Comrie, the present perfect does differ from the past tense in the way it locates a situation in time. The past tense locates a situation relative to a TR which lies entirely in the past while the present perfect locates a situation relative to a TR which starts in the past and reaches up to TU.

3.6.7 Refinements to the Schemata Presented

It is clear, then, that there are two kinds of "before" relation: "wholly before" and "before and up to". The question that now arises is whether the same two possibilities do not show up in other tenses involving a "before" relation. Declerck (1986: 351) provides the following example:

(3.33) *When I visited John, he had been ill for three weeks.*

In Comrie's system, according to Declerck, the past perfect involves the relation "E before R", and "before" is defined exclusively in terms of "wholly before". It is now clear that such an analysis is defective. An adequate theory must start from the observations that "before" generally allows the two interpretations and that both can be expressed by the past perfect, and that the two are distributed over two different tenses (past and present perfect) when the relevant TO is the time of utterance.

This means that suitable symbols will have to be introduced in order to capture the different meanings of "before". Declerck (1986: 351) proposes that we should use the notation in scheme 3.13(a) to represent "wholly before" and that in scheme 3.13(b) to represent "before and up to". The notation shown in scheme 3.13(c) can then be used to cover the two possibilities at once, i.e. 3.13(c) shows a "before" relation that can be interpreted in both ways:

(a) TR——————— TO

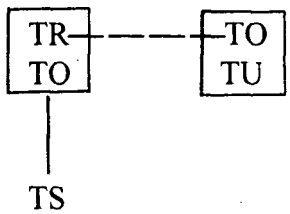
(b) TR——————→TO

(c) TR——————TO

Scheme 3.13

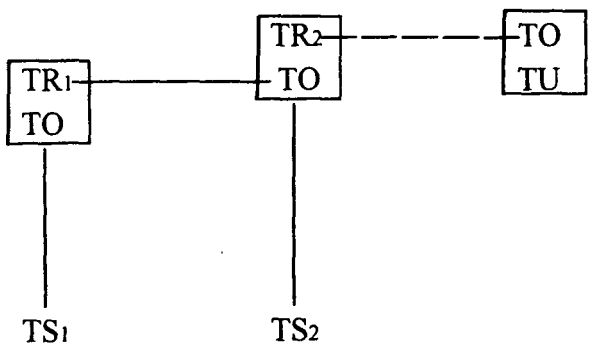
The scheme of the past tense (scheme 3.8), therefore, must be adapted: the relation between TR and TU must be as shown in scheme 3.13(a). Since the scheme of the past tense forms part of the representations of the past perfect, this scheme will also have to be adapted in such a way that the relation between the relevant TR and TU is in terms of "wholly before". Instead of schemes 3.8 and 3.7 we must now have schemes 3.14 and 3.15:

Past tense



Scheme 3.14

Past perfect



Scheme 3.15

Declerck remarks that the observation that the relation "TR before TO" may have two different meanings naturally makes one wonder if the same could also be true of the relation "TR after TO". Comrie (1985: 123) again appears to deny this. He claims that "X *after* Y" means that each time point within X is to the right of each time point in Y. We may wonder, however, if there is not a second interpretation, in which "after Y" means "from Y onwards". This reading would be the exact counterpart of the interpretation in which "before Y" means "before and up to Y". But this is a question that Declerck (1986) leaves for future investigation.

3.6.7.1 Exception

Now that it has been pointed out that "TR before TO" must mean "TR before and including TO" with the present perfect, we can return to a remark made earlier in this chapter. When summing up the characteristics of the scheme assigned to the past perfect, Declerck (1986: 329) made the generalization (number 3 in our list) that in the scheme of any tense any one of the TRs can be taken to be referred to by the time

adverbial used in the sentence. Now we are in a position to note that there is an exception to this rule. The exceptional case is exemplified by sentences like the following:

(3.34) (a) *When I came back, Mary had written me two letters.*

(b) *The cathedral restoration fund has today collected fifty thousand pounds.*

(c) *When you reach the capital you will already have lost many of your men.*

In none of these sentences can the time adverbial be taken to refer to TR_1 (i.e. to the TR relative to which the TS is located). The adverbial clearly refers to TR_2 (the time prior to which TR_1 is located). In each case the relevant "before" relation is one of "before and including", so that the time adverbial actually refers to the (perhaps provisional) ending-point of a period. The reason why it is impossible to interpret the time adverbial as referring to TR_1 (i.e. as referring to the whole of the period lasting up to TR_2) is that this interpretation is incompatible with the kind of situation that is referred to. Situations like writing letters, collecting money or losing men are "cumulative", i.e. they are such that an increasing number of the entities that make up the set referred to by the object NP get involved in the situation as the latter proceeds in time (see Declerck: 1979b). Specification of that number, observes Declerck:

> "...is of course only possible if the situation is considered to have reached a terminal point. When we say that we have collected 50,000 pounds, this can only mean that this is the sum that we have collected up to a certain (provisional or definitive) ending-point. Since a sentence referring to such a measured cumulative situation thus requires **(explicit or implicit) reference to the terminal point of a period, a time adverbial occurring in it can easily be taken to establish that ending-point**[17]."(Declerck 1986: 356)

[17] This bold pring was inserted by us.

3.6.8 The Present Perfect Compared with the Simple Past

Declerck's (1986) tense model shows that the difference between the present perfect and the simple past is the TR. While in the former the TR extends up to the TU, involving it, in the latter the TR is located "wholly before" the TU. Its semantic frame, in our opinion, justifies the use of the present perfect in "hot news" (McCawley: 1971) or in other situations closely related to the moment of speech. In this way, we may conclude with Declerck (1986) that the present perfect:

> "...obviously, cannot locate a situation in time in the same way as the past tense does. Comrie's (1985) claim that both tenses do not differ in the way they locate a situation in time, since they both locate it before the present moment, is thus incorrect."(Declerck 1986: 311)

Declerck's theory of tense, therefore, assigns to the present perfect an analysis which does not coincide with that of the past tense. However, if we think of the various readings of the present perfect as proposed by McCawley (1971) and the ambiguity of the present perfect with durational adverbs, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4, it seems that the analysis proposed by Declerck (1986) fails to account for them. In our opinion, therefore, Declerck (1986) did not rule out the possibility of categorizing the present perfect as a tense which at the same time marks aspect, in Comrie's (1976) sense of the term[18] (cf. Dowty 1979: 340).

[18] "Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:3)

CHAPTER 4

A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT PERFECT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter has two aims: firstly, to suggest an answer to the question posed by Heny (1982), in response to Richards (1982), as to whether there are two semantically distinct frames of the present perfect with "durational phrases"[19]; secondly, to propose a semantic frame for the several readings of the present perfect as suggested by McCawley (1971):

[1] Universal/continuative

[2] Existential/experiential

[3] Resultative

We begin by analyzing two different points of view, those of Mittwoch (1988) and Michaelis (1994). Mittwoch proposes a solution for the ambiguity of the present perfect based on formal semantics, while Michaelis tries to explain the different meanings of the present perfect by utilizing discourse-pragmatic principles. After pointing out some limitations of both explanations, we start to construct a new semantic framework. To do so, Zeno Vendler's (1967) aspectual classes of verbs are modified according to Godoi (1992), whose concept of aspect is introduced then in contrast to Comrie's (1976). Based on these concepts, and couched in Declerck's temporal schemata, as developed in chapter 3, we then propose a semantic analysis of the main meanings of the present perfect.

[19] "Durational phrases" in this dissertation is understood as "durational adverbs".

4.2 The Ambiguity of the English Present Perfect

4.2.1 Mittwoch (1988)

Mittwoch (1988) addresses a number of interlocking problems concerning English aspect (understood as Comrie's definition of aspect[20]). Her starting point is a question reopened by Heny (1982) in response to Richards (1982): do perfect sentences with durational phrases have two distinct readings, depending on different scope relations of the perfect and adverbial operators? More generally, are there two semantically distinct uses of the perfect? In section 1 of her article, Mittwoch argues for an affirmative answer to these questions.

In order to discuss the perfect with durational phrases, Mittwoch adopts, like Richards and Heny (1982), the Extended-Now (XN) theory of the perfect (cf. McCoard: 1978). This theory states that the perfect serves to locate some event within an interval stretching back in time from a given reference time, as discussed in the preceding chapters; for a (non-embedded) present tense sentence the reference time is the time of utterance. Considering the following sentence:

(4.1) *Sam has been in Boston for 20 minutes.* (Richards: 75, Heny: 138)

Mittwoch observes that it can mean that there has been a twenty-minute period in the relevant XN interval during which Sam was in Boston. It can also be used, more naturally in fact, to imply that the twenty-minute period extends up to the moment of utterance, with the further implication that Sam is still in Boston. In that case the twenty-minute period is in fact coextensive with the XN interval implied by the perfect. According to Mittwoch, such an interpretation is made explicit by the addition of *the last*:

(4.2) *Sam has been in Boston for the last 20 minutes.*

[20] "Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:3)

The problem is whether the second use represents a logically distinct reading of (1) or whether (1) has only the first reading, the second being merely compatible with this reading, a limiting case of it, that may in certain contexts be inferred by general conversational principles.

Mittwoch points out that Dowty (1979), Bennett and Partee (1972) and Richards (1982) opt for the view that (4.1) is genuinely ambiguous and account for this ambiguity by means of the relative scope of the perfect operator *have* and the durational adverbial *for 20 minutes*. In the first reading *have* has wider scope than the adverbial, in the second it is within the scope of the adverbial:

(4.3) Pres (w,i) [Have [For 20 minutes (Sam be in Boston)]]

(4.4) Pres (w,i) [For 20 minutes [Have (Sam be in Boston)]]

Declerck (1986), analyzing sentences like (4.1), as noted in the last chapter, proposes that *durational adverbs* define the duration of **TS** (time of the situation). The TR (time of reference) at which the TS happens is **not identified**, so its duration is not indicated either. In the present perfect, however, there is often an **implicature** that the *durational adverbial* also indicates the TR, so that the period indicated lasts up to the TU (time of utterance), since the TR of the present perfect extends up to the moment of speech. Thus, (4.1) *Sam has been in Boston for 20 minutes* (Richards: 75, Heny: 138) can be interpreted in two ways. The first reading, on which *for 20 minutes* expresses no more than duration (and therefore tells us nothing about TR), is that somewhere in the course of Sam's life there has been a period of 20 minutes during which he was in Boston. The second reading is that *for 20 minutes* indicates not only that the event lasted *20 minutes*, but also that these *20 minutes* refer to a period that reaches up to now. According to Declerck, the second reading will be the most prominent of the two if it is allowed by the context.

Neither Mittwoch's interpretation nor Declerck's seem to tell the whole story, however. It is somewhat curious to realize that (4.5) *Sam has lived here,* with adverbial supplements, yields to the possibility of the two readings commented above, while (4.6) *Sam has been fired* does not allow a second reading. It indicates, in our opinion, that

there are more elements involved in the possibility of an ambiguous interpretation of the present perfect with durational adverbs than those represented in Mittwoch's solution as well as in Declerck's. We will return to this issue in section 4.4.1.

4.2.2 Michaelis (1994)

Michaelis (1994) follows, unlike Mittwoch, a discourse-pragmatic tradition in the analysis of the ambiguity of the present perfect. In her article she examines the primary readings of the English present perfect as distinguished by McCawley (1971). She exemplifies and paraphrases them in (1):

(4.7) (a) *We've been sitting in traffic for an hour.* (universal/continuative)
A state obtains throughout an interval whose upper boundary is speech time.

(b) *We've had this argument before.* (existential/experiential)
One or more events of a given type are arrayed within a present inclusive time span.

(c) *The persons responsible have been fired.* (resultative)
The result of a past event obtains now.

In her analysis Michaelis rejects the compositional semantic account offered by Klein (1992) in which the meanings of past, present, and future perfects are reducible to the semantic contribution of the particular auxiliary tense and the anteriority relation expressed by the participle. Following Richards (1982:101) she argues that certain grammatical characteristics of the present perfect cannot be componentially explained from a semantic point of view. One such characteristic is the "constraint barring definite time adverbs" (cf. Michaelis 1994:113), exemplified in (4.8a):

(4.8) (a) *Harry has joined the navy (*in 1960).*

(b) *[It was 1972.] Harry had joined the navy in 1960.*

She argues that if there was an anteriority relation expressed by the participle, then the "definite" time adverbial "*in 1960*" should be acceptable. To support this

observation, Michaelis compares sentence (4.8a) with sentence (4.8b) and points out that the constraint barring "definite" time adverbs does not characterize the past perfect, so why should it characterize the present perfect? She argues as if the past perfect and the present perfect, just by the fact of being perfect tenses, were perfectly parallel in their semantic structure, which is not the case, as we saw in chapter 3.

To explain the difference between (4.8a) and (4.8b), Michaelis also rejects Binnick's explanation:

> "...since the reference time of the present perfect is the present, and since reference time is the time of adverbial reference, the past time reference supplied by the temporal adverbial *in 1960* is excluded, because this adverbial does not describe R." (Binnick 1991: 52)

According to Michaelis, Klein's analysis of the past perfect undermines the foundation of this argument, by demonstrating that reference time cannot be regarded as the sole time of adverbial reference for the perfect. Klein, as discussed in chapter 3, observes that past-perfect sentences like (4.9a,b) below are ambiguous as to whether an adverbial expression modifies E or R. According to Klein, in (4.9a), *at two* describes R, and in (4.9b) *at two* modifies E, while R is three o'clock: "Why then should the formally parallel present perfect forbid modification of E, asks Michaelis?" (Michaelis 1994: 114)

(4.9) (a) *[Yesterday, the mail arrived at two.] I had (already) left at two.*
(b) *[Yesterday, the mail arrived at three.] I had left at two.*

However, Michaelis does not take into consideration the fact that the past perfect generates two times of reference, as explained in the last chapter. Since the adverbials apply to any time of reference of the sentence (cf. Declerck 1986: 329), the ambiguity referred to can be predicted. In the case of the present perfect, there is only one time of reference, which includes the time of utterance (cf. Declerck 1986: 347), not allowing the type of ambiguity discussed by Klein (1992). Observe that the adverbials in Klein's examples are not durational, and therefore refer to TR (cf. Declerck 1986: 358). If we

restate Binnick's argument (1991) considering the time of reference as a period of time and not a point, as discussed in chapter 3, it seems that it accounts perfectly well for Michaelis' "constraint barring definite time adverbs":

> "...since the reference time of the present perfect **includes** the present, and since **time-when adverbials refer to TR** (cf. Declerck, 1986: 358), the past time reference supplied by the temporal adverbial *in 1960* is excluded, because this adverbial **does not include present time**."

Michaelis also rejects Richards' "extended now" view of the present perfect. According to her, the truth-condition definition of the present perfect given by him[21] while a useful point of departure, is inadequate. She argues that definitions of past[22] and present perfect do not capture the meaning difference seen in contrasting pairs like the one below:

(4.10) (a) *I have willed my fortune to Greenpeace.*
(b) *I willed my fortune to Greenpeace.*

Michaelis says that:

> "There seems to be no reason to presume that (4.10a) expresses an event proposition which is true somewhere within an interval whose upper boundary is now, while (4.10b) does not....Richards' definition of the present perfect does not capture the fact that sentences like (4.10a) are interpreted in a way that makes them **synonymous**[23] with sentences like (4.10b): a single event occurred at some point prior to now." (Michaelis 1994: 112)

---

[21] *Have* (A) is true in M relative to (w,i) iff there is a subinterval j of i such that A is true in M relative to (w,j) (Richards: 1982)

[22] *Past* (A) is true relative to i iff there is an interval j earlier than i such that A is true relative to j. (Richards: 1982)

[23] This bold print was inserted by us.

Michaelis' remarks, however, do not seem to be in keeping with the fact that the two tenses (present perfect and past tense) collocate with different kinds of time adverbials and thus cannot be seen as "synonymous":

(4.11) (a) *I have now willed my fortune to Greenpeace.*

(b) **I willed my fortune to Greenpeace now.*

(4.12) (a) **I have willed my fortune to Greenpeace in 1994.*

(b) *I willed my fortune to Greenpeace in 1994.*

Moreover, her observations certainly do not prove that analyzing the perfect as representing a situation within a time of reference which extends up to a point of orientation (which is the point of speech) is wrong. In other words, there is no evidence whatever for the claim that the point of speech cannot act as a point of orientation for an extended time of reference. As regards this, we might as well subscribe to Reichenbach's principle that every tense involves a point of reference and to Prior's (1967) claim that the primary reference point is the point of speech. And if we subscribe to these views, the conclusion must be that the simple past and the present perfect do differ in the way they locate a situation in time (since the reference time for the past tense is certainly located wholly before the point of speech).

Let us comment on two observations to support this conclusion. First, when Declerck discusses example (4.13) below:

(4.13) *I know what Tom is like. I (*have) spent my holidays with him two years ago.*

he notices that:

> "...even though there is no doubt that there is current relevance here if I know what Tom is like it is because I spent my holidays with him. We have to use the past tense apparently because the situation is located at a time which wholly precedes the present. Note that the perfect would have to be utilized if we used *for the last two years* instead of *two years ago.* This means that the primary factor determining

the use of the perfect and the past is the way in which the situation is located in time." (Declerck 1986: 311)

Second, if we observe, following Declerck (1986: 311) that the past reference point necessary to account for the past perfect can be established by the past tense, but not by the present perfect as in:

(4.14) *I had left before Tom (*has) arrived.*

our conclusion must be that the present perfect cannot locate a situation in time in the same way as the past tense does. This leads us to reject Michaelis' claim (1994: 112) that in sentences (6a) and (6b) the simple past and the present perfect are "synonymous."

Once we have verified that Binnick's argument (1991) seems to be valid with certain adaptations and that the simple past differs from the present perfect in terms of locating a situation in time, Michaelis' conclusion that:

> "...the present perfect form is **polysemous in much that same way that words may be polysemous**: a single form has several related meanings." (Michaelis 1994: 113)

seems very suspicious because it does not account for the fact that the "continuative" reading of the present perfect can be interpreted as perfective or imperfective (cf. Mittwoch: 1988), while the other two readings, "experiential" and "resultative" cannot. Since we argued for a semantic structure differentiating the present perfect from other tenses, it is possible that the ambiguity of the "continuative" reading is a result of an interaction of this structure with another element of the sentence. We will return to this matter later on in this chapter.

4.3 Building a New Semantic Framework

4.3.1 Comrie (1976)

Comrie (1976) discusses the term "aspect" and the concepts related to this category. He presents short descriptions of some approaches, exemplifying the concepts through data gathered from a large number of languages. As a general definition of aspect, Comrie (1976:3) takes the formulation that "aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation". From this definition, Comrie defines perfective and imperfective aspects:

> "...perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a **single whole**[24], without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation; while the imperfective pays essential attention to the internal structure of the situation." (Comrie 1976: 16)

The notion of a single whole to describe the perfective aspect was criticized by Dahl (1985: 73-9) who observes that this characteristic does not fit completely even to those languages in which the notion of "whole" as opposed to "phases" comes close to the description of the opposition between perfectivity and imperfectivity. Unfortunately, though, he does not go further into the issue and in the end also adopts the notion of a "global view" to define perfectivity.

Godoi (1992: 174) criticizes the above concept of "global view" to describe perfectivity. She points out that this notion does not explain sentences which express the beginning of a situation located in the past such as:

(4.15) *O nenê dormiu e aí conseguimos descansar um pouco.* (Godoi 1992: 174)

Sentences intuitively felt as perfective such as (4.16) below would also remain unaccounted for since the concept of "globality" as proposed by Comrie cannot apply to them:

[24] This bold print was inserted by us.

(4.16) *Ele falou comigo várias vezes.* (Godoi 1992: 174)

As far as the present perfect is concerned, as already discussed in chapter 3, Comrie classifies it as an aspect of the past tense, which Declerck (1986) rejects vehemently, proving that the present perfect actually locates a situation in time differently from the past tense.

4.3.2 Vendler (1967)

According to Vendler, considerations involving the concept of time are not limited merely to the

> "...obvious discrimination between past, present, and future; there is another, a more subtle dependence on that concept: the use of a verb may also suggest the particular way in which that verb presupposes and involves the notion of time." (Vendler 1967: 97)

This "particular way" is identified by Vendler in the form of four "**verbal categories**" based on their cooccurrence and/or entailment features with other verbs, tenses and time adverbials. The four categories are:

[1] States ("know", "have", "love"): last for a period of time; involve time instants in an indefinite and nonunique sense.

[2] Achievements ("die", "discover", "reach the mountain top"): occur at a single moment; involve unique and definite time instants.

[3] Accomplishments ("kill a rat", "write a letter", "eat an apple"): imply the notion of unique and definite time periods. According to Kenny (1963), the meaning of an Accomplishment invariably involves the coming about of a particular state of affairs.

[4] Activities ("walk", "ride a bicycle", "push a cart"): call for periods of time that are not unique or definite. They involve homogeneous action.

These categorial memberships of different verbs are determined according to certain tests. For example, Vendler proposes the following test to distinguish Accomplishments from Activities:

" If it is true that someone is running or pushing a cart now, then even if he stops in the next moment it will be still true that he did run or did push a cart. On the other hand, even if it is true that someone is drawing a circle or is running a mile now, if he stops in the next moment it may not be true that he did draw a circle or did run a mile." (Vendler 1967:100)

In other words, *draw a circle* counts as an Accomplishment because (4.17) *John was drawing a circle* does not entail (4.18) *John drew a circle.* While *push a cart* counts as an Activity because *John was pushing a cart* does seem to entail *John pushed a cart.* This test, however, contradicts Kenny's (1963) assumption that the meaning of an Accomplishment invariably involves the coming about of a particular state of affairs, since this entailment fails when the Accomplishment appears in a progressive tense. This is what Dowty (1979) calls the "imperfective paradox". This is a problem that must be solved if one wishes to take the aspectual classes seriously as part of the meaning of a sentence (cf. Godoi 1992).

Furthermore, Dowty (1979: 60) notices that an Activity verb describing movement behaves like an Accomplishment verb if it occurs with either a locative of destination or with an adverb of extent as in:

(4.19) (a) *John walked (a mile).*

(b) *John walked (to the park).*

Even when a locative or extent phrase is not present, remarks Dowty, it is possible to assign an Accomplishment reading to an Activity verb in the proper context:

"Thus if I know (and the addressee knows) that John is in the habit of swimming a specific distance every day (to prepare himself for a swimming race perhaps), then I can assert that today John swam in an hour, or that he finished swimming early, or that on Tuesday he stopped, but did not finish swimming." (Dowty 1979: 61)

It is also interesting to note that the sentences proposed to exemplify Accomplishments and Achievements are always couched in the past as if the tense itself were part of their meanings:

Vendler (1967: 106):

Accomplishments:

A was drawing a circle at t means that *t* is on the time stretch in which *A* ***drew*** that circle.

Achievements:

A ***won*** *a race between* t_1 *to* t_2 means that *the* time instant at which *A* **won** that race is between t_1 and t_2.

Dowty (1979: 56, 58):

Accomplishments:

(4.20) *John* ***painted*** *a picture in an hour.*

Achievements:

(4.21) *John* ***noticed*** *the painting in a few minutes.*

Thus a question about Vendler's (1967) categories is: what are they categories of? Are they categories of tenses, verbs, verb phrases or sentences?

Finally, Vendler (1967:104) proposes a test to distinguish States and Achievements from the other two categories. States and Achievements, according to him, cannot occur in the progressive, but Activities and Accomplishments can, as exemplified below:

(4.22) a.**John is knowing the answer* -State

b.**John is reaching the top* -Achievement

This test, however, is problematic in Portuguese since "Stative" verbs are perfectly acceptable in the progressive form:

(4.23) *Carlos está* ***sabendo*** *a resposta* - State

Sílvia está ***querendo*** *tomar sorvete* - State

Unless we consider "sabendo" and "querendo" as non-statives, which aggravates the problem of the instability of the aspectual classes of verbs, already noted by Vendler (1967: 118, 120).

4.3.3 Shi (1990)

Shi (1990) proposes, following Smith (1985), that States and Actions are two verbal types encoding two primitive situation types State and Action. If a verb can occur in the progressive it is an Action; otherwise it is a State. Accomplishment and Achievement encompass both State and Action, in that they both describe some causative Action of an agent and resultative change of state in the patient. Accomplishment and Achievement differ in that with the former, the direct object undergoes a change of state while it is the subject that changes state with the latter.

With this new classification, Dowty's "imperfective paradox" persists, unless the progressive form of a verb is considered responsible for a change from Accomplishment to Achievement. But Dowty remarks:

> "....I know of absolutely no evidence from English syntax that the progressive tense in Accomplishments such as *John was drawing a circle* is a different tense operator from the progressive in Activities such as in John *was pushing a cart*." (Dowty 1979: 134)

The problem with the progressive test to differentiate States from Activities also remains unsolved for languages like Portuguese and, like the examples of

Accomplishments and Achievements provided by Vendler (1967) and Dowty (1979), the examples given by Shi (1990) for these two categories are also in the past, thus suggesting that these two categories are firmly linked with the past tense:

(4.24) (a) Accomplishment: *John killed a horse in an hour.*

(b) Achievement: *John reached the mountain top at 3 o'clock.*

Another issue discussed by Shi is the concept of "boundness". Boundness is considered by Shi as an inherent aspectual **property of sentences**. Following Dahl (1985), Shi defines boundness thus:

> "A **class of situations** or a characterization of a situation, i.e. **a sentence**[25], is bounded if and only if it is an essential condition on the members of the class or an essential part of the characterization that a certain limit is attained." (Shi 1990: 59)

Follows from this definition that the fact that Accomplishments and Achievements can occur with "for an hour" when their NP arguments are unbounded is **not because unbounded NP arguments of Accomplishments and Achievements change the inherent aspectual properties of these "verbs"**, as has been suggested by some researchers (e.g. Verkuyl: 1972; Dowty: 1979 and Smith: 1985), but because when the NP arguments of these verbs are unbounded, the **whole sentence** becomes unbounded, hence their cooccurrence capability with "for an hour" but not with "in an hour". For sentences whose main verbs are Accomplishments, boundness is achieved if the direct object of the verb is bounded. In the case of Achievements, the sentences are bounded if the subject of the verb is bounded.

In relation to the definition of aspect, Shi maintains Comrie's definition of: "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976: 3) and, following Dowty (1979) and Johnson (1981), analyzes aspect in terms of two components: "aspectual class" and "aspectual forms". **Aspectual class** refers to the boundness of sentences and **aspectual forms**, i.e. the aspectual particles of inflections in

[25] This bold print was inserted by us.

a language, serve to indicate from which point on the time axis a particular situation is referred to. Based on these definitions, Shi observes that:

> "...perfectivity simply refers to bounded situations viewed as relatively anterior to the reference point on the time axis, i.e. the Reference Time. If, however, the terminal boundary of a situation is not available, as in the case of an unbounded situation, then the anteriority viewpoint refers to the initial boundary of the situation." (Shi 1990: 62)

Shi's analysis, in our opinion, is very relevant in the sense that it alleviates the semantic burden of the verb or verb phrases, placing it on the sentence, and offers a definition of aspect, at least partly related to the notion of boundness.

4.3.4 Hatav (1989)

Hatav (1989) deals with the definition of sequential clauses, with particular attention to Stativities. She proposes a semantic theory, centered on the notion of end points:

> "Situations have end points iff they are contained in their reference time, and only such situations can appear on the time line. Events are always contained in their R-time and hence are always candidates for the time line, but States are contained in it only when:
>
> [a] they are interpreted as inchoatives
>
> [b] their duration is restricted by overt linguistic marking, for example, adverbials such as 'for three hours'.
>
> When States are contained in their reference time, that is, have end points, they too may appear in sequence." (Hatav 1989: 487)

According to Hatav, therefore, a sequence relation holds between a, b, and c iff the first point of b's R-time is located after the final point of a's, and, in turn, the first point of c's R-time is located after the final point of b's R-time. The situations

composing the sequence are necessarily included in their (separate) R-times, which means that they may not continue beyond their respective R-times. In other words, the duration of the situation must be restricted in order to be contained in its R-time. Hatav labels such situations as having the EP property, which is defined below:

> "A situation *S* has EPs iff all subintervals of *S* are included in its reference time *R*. EPs = the first and last time units *t* at which *S* is true."(Hatav 1989: 493)

The sentences below exemplify the occurrence of "situations" (understood as Statives or Activities) in sequence and thus included in their reference time:

(4.25) *He lived in Moscow for three years and moved to Leningrad.* (Forsyth 1970: 12)

(4.26) *He was in hospital for six months, then returned to the front and fought till the end of the war.* (Forsyth 1970: 63)

(4.27) *After sleeping the whole morning, Ana Célia jogged for half an hour and took a refreshing shower.*

According to Hatav, Hinrichs (1982) and Partee (1984) cannot account for the States (and the Activities) in sequence on the time line because they argue that States and Activities always contain their R-time. However, Hatav claims that:

> "States and Activities do not always contain their R-time. In fact they can bear three different kinds of relations to their R-time. They can contain it, be contained in it, or coincide with it (as having exactly the same interval)." (Hatav 1989: 494)

She illustrates as follows:

(4.28) S contains R:

A: *Why didn't you come to my party yesterday?*

B: ***I was sick yesterday****; you know I have been sick for the last three weeks, and, unfortunately, I have not recovered yet.*

(4.29) S is contained by R:

I was sick yesterday*, but my friend came and gave me a pill, and by midday I was feeling well.*

(4.30) S coincides with R:

I was sick yesterday*, all day long, but after a good night's sleep I got up in the morning feeling better than ever.*

Having defined the EP property, Hatav, observes that Accomplishments and Achievements are always contained in their R-time, while States and Activities **may** also contain theirs. This difference, she argues, is due to the fact that Accomplishments and Achievements are restricted, by definition, to one single interval, while for States (and Activities) the number of intervals is not limited.

4.3.5 Godoi (1992)

4.3.5.1 Aspect

As opposed to Comrie who sees aspect as "not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation" (Comrie; 1976: 5), Godoi (1992) defines it as "**the relation between the time of reference (understood as a period) and the time of the situation (i.e. the time that the event takes up on the time axis)**". This relation presents two possibilities:

> "[a] o tempo de referência inclui o tempo de evento e a situação terá as 'pontas', será 'fechada';
>
> [b] o tempo de evento inclui o tempo de referência e a situação não terá 'pontas', será 'aberta'." (Godoi 1992: 208)

Based on this definition of aspect, which uses the EP property as defined by Hatav (1989), Godoi (1992: 209) distinguishes two types of aspect:

[1] **Perfective aspect:**

[1.1] TS $\subset$ TR

[1.2] TS $\subseteq$ TR (inclusão imprópria)

[2] **Imperfective aspect:**

[2.1] TR $\subset$ TS

[2.2] TR $\subseteq$ TS (inclusão imprópria)

According to Godoi, cases [1.1], [1.2] and [2.2] will have end points. In case [2.1] the situation will lack the end points, characterizing an open situation.

At this juncture, it is interesting to recall a question raised by McCoard (1978: 80), and discussed in chapter 1. When McCoard is analyzing adverbs like *never*, which is seen in the literature as indefinite, he provides two sentences:

(4.31) (a) *I never learned how to swim in my youth.*

(b) *I have never yet learned how to swim.*

His intention is to question the validity of the "indefinite time parameter" in differentiating the present perfect from the past tense, in which, in our opinion, he succeeds perfectly. However, in the second part of his argument, McCoard remarks:

> "....But if 'preterite never' is definite, so is 'perfect never', since as we argued, **the period never-yet-so-far** is scarcely less well-defined. One might say that the latter period is 'open-ended' and therefore unbounded and indefinite. But ***never yet*** does not refer to future time, only to **that part of time which comes up to now**." (McCoard 1978: 80)

In fact, if we apply Godoi's aspect system to a sentence in the present perfect in which the time of the situation coincides with its extended-now TR, a curious thing happens. Let us examine the following example:

(4.32) *Mr. Kenny has lived in Curitiba for three years now.*

In this sentence TS = (XN)TR (in which (XN)TR means that the TR extends up to and includes the TU), which in Godoi's analysis (1992) could be represented as either TS $\subseteq$ (XN)TR or (XN)TR $\subseteq$ TS ("inclusão imprópria"). As seen above, Godoi also claims that "inclusão imprópria" has "end points", which is in keeping with the observation that Mr. Kenny started living in Curitiba **three years ago** (start point) and has been living in Curitiba up to **now** (end point), and therefore it is not unbounded (cf. McCoard 1978: 80 and Declerck 1986: 356). When this situation happens, however, the form (XN)TR $\subseteq$ TS is the only one that occurs in English, constituting the so called continuative reading of the present perfect. It seems that TS $\subseteq$ (XN)TR does not happen with the English present perfect owing to a semantic barrier in English which does not allow a perfective reading when the TR of a situation is simultaneous with TU.

4.3.5.2 Aspectual Classes of Verbs

Godoi points out that Guenthner, Hoepelman & Rohrer (1978) propose the new parameter of "gradual becoming" instead of Dowty's "change of state" (1979) in order to capture the differences among the aspectual classes of verbs and avoid the problems, discussed earlier in this chapter, with Vendler's classification. In this way, Accomplishment would be represented as: $\Delta\phi \rightarrow \phi$, i.e., the gradual development (indicated by $\Delta\phi$, in which Δ is the operator of changing) results in a State (ϕ). The State would be represented as: $\phi \rightarrow \phi$ in which ϕ remains constant in a given period of time. The Activity would be: $\Delta\phi \rightarrow \Delta\phi$, i.e. an on-going change remains as an on-going change through the period of time considered and the Achievement would be represented as: $\neg\phi \rightarrow \phi$, meaning an instant change.

Godoi (1992: 164) remarks, however, that even with the inclusion of the concept of "gradual change" many problems remain unsolved, especially the "imperfective paradox", which involve "Accomplishments" and "Achievements" according to Dowty (1977). As noted before, Dowty remarks that the analysis of Accomplishments in terms of "become-sentences" was motivated (on the semantic side) by the need to capture the meaning of an Accomplishment verb phrase, which invariably involves the coming about of a particular state of affairs:

> "Yet it is just this entailment that such a result-state comes about that fails when the Accomplishment verb phrase appears in a progressive tense. In other words, the problem is to give an account of how 'John was drawing a circle' entails that John was engaged in a bringing-a-circle-into-existence Activity but does not entail that he brought a circle into existence. This is the 'imperfective paradox'." (Dowty 1977: 133)

According to Dowty (1977), the "imperfective paradox" also holds for "Achievement terms", since VPs like *fall off a table* are "Achievement terms" Vendler's sense, and when in the progressive form do not entail the final state of being *fallen off the table*.

Declerck (1979), discussing the "imperfective paradox", remarks that Vendler's distinction between "Accomplishment terms" and "Activity terms" (or between "bounded" and "unbounded" expressions, applies primarily to situations rather than to linguistic expressions. It follows that the only kind of linguistic expressions to which the bounded/unbounded distinction is applicable are linguistic propositions: propositions are, indeed, the logico-linguistic correlates of situations (cf. Zydatiss 1976: 42). This is in keeping with the findings of Verkuyl (1972), who has shown that the (un)bounded nature of a sentence may depend not only on the verb, but also on most of the nominal constituents (Subject NP, Indirect Object NP, etc.). Shi (1989) also comes to the same conclusion. The following sentences, taken from Declerck (1979: 268), illustrate this point:

(4.33) (a) *John ate an ounce of cheese (in an hour). (bounded)*

(b) *John ate cheese (for hours). (unbounded)*

(4.34) (a) *(For hours) water ran out of the tap. (unbounded)*

(b) *A liter of water ran out of the tap (in an hour). (bounded)*

(4.35) (a) *John drew a circle on the floor (in an hour). (bounded)*

(b) *(For hours) little girls (came and) drew a circle on the floor. (unbounded)*

These observations and examples lead Declerck to conclude that Dowty's initial assumption that VPs like *draw a circle* are "Accomplishment" VPs is false (the same can be said of the VPs like *fall off the table* classified by Dowty as "Achievement" VP): the "Accomplishment/Activity" distinction applies not to VPs but to situations, and VPs like *draw a circle* can occur in unbounded as well as bounded propositions. In this way, says Declerck:

> "...the 'imperfective paradox', as formulated by Dowty, is the problem of how it is possible that we can use an 'Accomplishment VP' like *draw a circle* in a sentence in the progressive, which implies that the result-state did not necessarily come about." (Declerck 1979: 271)

And he offers the following answer:

> "....a sentence like *John was drawing a circle* does not involve a bounded VP: as we have observed, the bounded/unbounded distinction applies not to VPs but rather to linguistic propositions and the sentence above is an unbounded proposition. This means that, from a linguistic point of view, the problem of the 'imperfective paradox' simply does not arise..." (Declerck 1979: 271)

Godoi (1992), in accordance with Declerck's conclusion (1979), proposes that the aspectual classes refer only to **situations** (cf. Shi 1990:62) and a situation is **necessarily** located in time (cf. McCoard 1978: 92) and that therefore:

> "....trabalhar com as classes Aspectuais isoladas, listando-as no infinitivo (cf. Vendler, Dowty, Dahl, entre outros) ou apresentando-as num único tempo torna-se um exercício encerrado numa espécie de círculo vicioso.....Assim, a classe Aspectual poderá ser determinada apenas quando se trata de uma *situação* que tem seus TU, TS e TR, e não é possível determiná-la sem ambigüidades se tratando de verbos, SVs ou sentenças atemporais." (Godoi 1992: 164-169).

According to Godoi, to affirm that an Accomplishment represents a gradual development that results in a state is possible only when a situation located in the past has "end points", i.e. is a concluded situation. Achievements, also involving the notion of change, although an instantive change, are, in the same way, possible only when the situation is completed in the past. Otherwise there is no way to deduce any completion entailed in these two categories.

Based on the above discussion, Godoi (1992: 166,167) proposes new definitions for Accomplishments and Achievements:

[1] Accomplishment:

$$\boxed{P}\ (H' \quad \Delta\phi \rightarrow \phi)$$

$\boxed{P}$ Past Operator (= necessarily in the past)
H'- An Operator for an interval up to now, but not including TU

[2] Achievement:

$$\boxed{P}\ (H' \quad \neg\phi \rightarrow \phi)$$

Summarizing the representations of the aspectual classes, according to Godoi, we would have:

Aspectual Class	Representation
States	$\phi \rightarrow \phi$
Activities	$\Delta\phi \rightarrow \Delta\phi$
Accomplishments	P (H' $\Delta\phi \rightarrow \phi$)
Achievements	P (H' $\neg\phi \rightarrow \phi$)

It is interesting to note that, with this classification, there seems to be two types of Activities, those which have the possibility of becoming Accomplishments and those which lack this possibility as exemplified below:

[1] In (4.36) *I'm writing a letter*, there is the possibility that I finish writing the letter and then say: (4.37) *I wrote a letter*, which is an Accomplishment.

[2] In (4.38) *I'm running*, when I finish running I can say: *I ran*, which is an Activity with EPs.

According to Godoi (1992: 209), all aspectual classes (i.e. States, Activities, Achievements and Accomplishments) may have the perfective aspect (TS $\subset$ TR & TS $\subseteq$ TR):

(4.39) (a) *Rita lived with her Grandmother in 1985.* - State
(b) *Peter swam with his friends on Saturday.* - Activity
(c) *Marc won the science contest.* - Achievement
(d) *Ann decorated a Christmas tree with origami.* - Accomplishment

The imperfective aspect (TR $\subset$ TS & TR $\subseteq$ TS), is possible only for **States** and **Activities** because of the **distributive property**, i.e. the property which states that if a situation is interrupted at any moment "t" in which the situation was happening, it can be said that the situation happened (cf. Vendler 1967: 100).

4.4 A Semantic Analysis of the Present Perfect

In this section, based on the concepts of tense as developed in chapter 3 and the concepts of aspect and aspectual classes as defined above, we will analyze the ambiguity of the English present perfect with durational adverbs and the readings of the present perfect as distinguished by McCawley (1971).

4.4.1. The Ambiguity of the Present Perfect with Durational Adverbs

Let us return now to the problem posed by Heny (1982) and Richards (1982) concerning the ambiguity of the present perfect with durational phrases. When analyzing the sentence (4.1) *Sam has been in Boston for 20 minutes* in section 4.2.1, one of the solutions proposed was Declerck's (1986), in which the durational adverb *for 20 minutes* refers to the time of the situation and not to the time of reference, which for the present perfect extends up to the moment of speech and includes it. In this way, there is, according to Declerck, the possibility of two readings: [1] TS included in a longer TR or [2] TR understood (by contextual matters[26]) as coinciding with TS, generating the continuative reading (McCawley: 1971). We also said that this interpretation seemed to be incomplete, since it could not account for the fact that in the sentence (4.6) *Sam has been fired* the continuative reading is not possible.

Based on the concepts of aspect and aspectual classes developed above and on the XN theory for the present perfect as discussed in chapter 3, we propose the following analysis:

(4.1) *Sam has been in Boston for 20 minutes.*

[26] Cf. Declerck 1986: 357.

[1] The TR of the present perfect extends up to and includes TU (cf. Declerck: 1986).

[2] The durational adverb *for 20 minutes* refers to TS, and thus does not say anything about TR (cf. Declerck: 1986).

[3] The situation is Stative, and thus allows for a perfective reading in which TS $\subset$ (XN)TR[27] (since TS $\subseteq$ (XN)TR cannot happen in the English present perfect, as discussed before), and an imperfective reading in which (XN)TR $\subseteq$ TS (since the situation up to **now** has EPs, as discussed in section 4.3.5.1). In the perfective reading, therefore, *20 minutes* $\subset$ (XN)TR and in the imperfective reading (XN)TR $\subseteq$ *20 minutes*. *20 minutes* in a continuative reading, in our analysis, is thus understood to coincide with TR not because of "implicature" as claimed by Declerck (1986:357), but because of its semantic frame.

[4] Therefore, the two possible readings are [4.1] **perfective aspect** (somewhere in the course of Sam's life there has been a period of 20 minutes during which he was in Boston) and [4.2] **imperfective aspect**, in which *for 20 minutes* indicates not only that the event lasted *20 minutes*, but also that these *20 minutes* reach up to now.

In this way we argue that there are two distinct semantic frames for the two readings of the present perfect with durational phrases, one being distinct from the other in **aspect**.

Before returning to the solutions proposed by Declerck (1986) and Mittwoch (1988) for the present perfect with durational adverbs, discussed in section 4.2.1, let us recall that McCoard, when discussing the same subject, calls attention to the following point:

"It is somewhat curious to realize that the most likely, 'neutral' interpretation of

[27] The (XN) in front of the TR indicates that the TR reaches up to the TU and involves it (cf. Declerck: 1986)

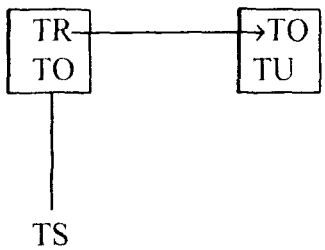
I've lived here, without adverbial supplements, involves the inference that the speaker is *not* presently living here." (McCoard 1978: 46)

However, we may add to that comment that (4.40) *I've broken my nose*, even with adverbial supplements, cannot involve any other inference, except that somewhere in the past it happened. The question is: what is in (4.5) *I've lived here* that, with adverbial supplements, allows an ambiguous reading? It cannot be the adverbial supplements themselves, because they are not present. Or the other way round: Why cannot sentences like (4.40) *I've broken my nose* or (4.6) *Sam has been fired* (as proposed in section 4.2.1) have a continuative reading? This is the reason why in section 4.2.1 we said that both Mittwoch's and Declerck's analyses were somewhat incomplete: focusing on the durational adverbs, neither explanations can account for the "potential" of some sentences in the present perfect, without durational adverbs, of becoming ambiguous. According to the analysis proposed above, we claim that the possibility of the ambiguity with a sentence in the present perfect lies in three factors:

[1] the XN time of reference of the present perfect;
[2] the aspectual class to which the situation involved in the present perfect belongs;
[3] the aspects which are compatible with the aspectual class of the situation.

Sentences (4.6) *Sam has been fired* and (4.40) *I've broken my* nose, thus, are different from (4.5) *I've lived here* in that (4.6) and (4.40) are Achievements, which must be in the perfective aspect (cf. Godoi: 1992), while (4.5) is a State, which may occur in both perfective and imperfective aspects, generating an ambiguous reading.

The following scheme and comments illustrate and summarize the different elements discussed so far:



Scheme 4.1

Temporal relationship:

TR——→TU : Extended-Now

Aspectual relationship:

TR x TS

(a) Perfective: TS ⊂ (XN)TR

May occur with all aspectual classes:

(4.41) (a) *Linda has lived in London* (but now she is living in New York) - Stative

(b) *Peter has solved a Math test* - Accomplishment

(c) *Robert has won the race* - Achievement

(d) *Ann has run* - Activity

(b) Imperfective: (XN)TR ⊆ TS

May occur only with Statives and Activities:

(4.42) (a) *Rusty has lived in London for 3 years (now)* - Stative

(b) *Sarah has worked a lot (lately)* - Activity

When Statives and Activities appear with the present perfect, therefore, we have the possibility of an ambiguous reading of the sentence, since their perfective and imperfective aspects occur in only one form: *have + past participle*.

4.4.2 A Semantic Interpretation of McCawley's Readings

Based on the concepts above, let us examine now the three primary readings of the present perfect distinguished by McCawley (1971):

[1] Universal/Continuative - A situation persists throughout an interval whose upper boundary is speech time.

(4.43) *All my adult life I have waited for the emergence of a strong center party.*

[2] Existential/Experiential - One situation is located in the past within a present-inclusive time span. The situation may be repeated (iterativity).

(4.44) (a) *He has written a letter today.*

(b) *I've written six letters today.*

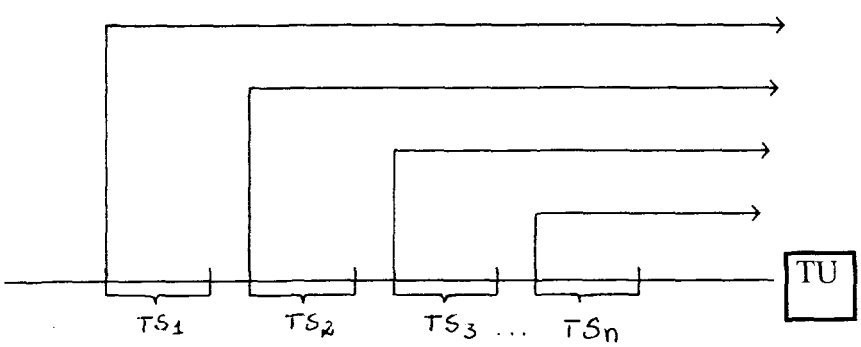
[3] Resultative - The result of a past situation obtains now.

(4.44) *He has had a haircut* - (Result: His hair is shorter now.)

Reading [1] is the ambiguous reading analyzed in the last section. In the perfective aspect it seems to overlap with a non-iterative reading of [2] and with reading [3], for any situation that happened in the present perfect in the perfective aspect (as well as in the past) can be said to have a result in the present. Readings [2] non-iterative and [3], in which all aspectual classes may occur since the aspectual form involved is TS $\subset$ (XN)TR, seem to have the same semantic frame. Let us concentrate in this section, therefore, on reading [2] when it is "iterative." McCoard, in relation to iterativity, observes that:

"...when the sentence '*I have lived here since then*' is placed in a context of separate occasions, such as *Whenever I am on vacation, Whenever I can afford it*, and so on, the 'first-choice' reading changes dramatically to an 'iterative' sense. Regardless of how this is effected by the interaction of *when* or other contextual elements, the iterativity is **neither a property of the perfect alone**[28], nor is it strictly in opposition to the past. (McCoard 1978: 49)

We agree with McCoard when he says that iterativity is not "a property of the perfect alone". In our analysis, however, we will consider the influence of the aspectual classes on the iterativity that happens with the present perfect, in order to check whether it differs semantically from the other readings being analyzed in this section. As characterized by McCawley (1971), iterativity consists of a number of repetitions of a certain **situation in the past**. In the case of the present perfect it means that each one of the repeated situations will have its EPs within the extended now time of reference as shown in the scheme below:



Scheme 4.2

All aspectual classes, therefore, may occur in an iterative reading. It is interesting to observe the following examples, however:

(4.45) (a) *Karen has lived in Italy for five years now.*

(b) *Karen has eaten apples for five years now.*

(c) *Karen has won the New York Marathon for five years now.*

[28]This bold print was inserted by us.

In (4.45a) the situation involved is a State and, as analyzed before, allows for the imperfective aspect and the continuative reading. In (4.45b) the situation involved is an accomplishment, which like (4.45c), which is an achievement, must be in the perfective aspect and have EPs, not allowing a continuative reading. When durational adverbials are used with accomplishments or achievements, the result is an iterative reading.

Now we are in a position to offer an answer to the question posed by Michaelis (1984), as to whether McCawley's primary readings have different semantic frames. We propose that:

[1] McCawley's continuative reading may involve only States or Activities and they have the possibility of an ambiguous interpretation in respect to aspect, as analyzed in the last section.

[2] Non-iterative Existential and the Resultative readings may involve any of the four aspectual classes and will always occur in the perfective aspect.

[3] An iterative Existential reading may also involve any aspectual class in the perfective aspect and **each repetition** of the situation is "immersed" in the extended-now TR of the present perfect.

We argue, therefore, that there are three different semantic frames for the readings proposed by McCawley (1971) and reject Michaelis' (1994:113) claim that the different readings are due to "a polysemy similar to that which may be found in words."

4.4.3 Categorizing the Present Perfect

We may begin by asking what elements are involved in a "tense". The answer, based on Declerck's (1986) tense model and Godoi's (1992) aspect model discussed above, would be:

[1] **TU**, **TR** and **TS** (cf. Reichenbach: 1947; Declerck: 1986; Godoi: 1992).

[2] Temporal relationship expressed by the relations of anteriority, simultaneity or posteriority between the **TU** and the **TR** involved (cf. Declerck: 1986; Godoi: 1992).

[3] Aspectual relationship: perfectivity or imperfectivity, depending on the relation between the **TR** and the **TS** involved (cf. Godoi: 1992).

In the present perfect, as well as in the simple past, these elements occur. [2] and [3] are responsible for the differences between these tenses, and not just [2] as suggested in Declerck's tense model. Moreover, the aspectual relationship is the element which was missing in Declerck's (1986) analysis of the present perfect to enable it to offer a semantic frame for the different readings of the present perfect, without resorting to the idea of "current relevance" or "indefiniteness" of an action which occurred in the past.

These three elements interact in a unique way in each tense, defining its properties. Since the present perfect has all three elements and they interact in a unique way, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4, we believe that there are solid grounds for categorizing the present perfect as a "tense" and not as "aspect" (Comrie: 1976/1985) or a marker of "inclusion" (McCoard 1976: 152).

CHAPTER 5

FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

This chapter is intended only to show a way of applying the research developed in this dissertation to the classroom, pointing out what we understand as essential in the teaching of the present perfect to Brazilian EFL students. To do so, we include four sections: research and teaching, language analysis versus language use, the English present perfect compared with Portuguese tenses and presentation of the present perfect.

In the first section, we comment on three ways in which we believe research can be useful for classroom teachers. In the second section, since we believe that the communicative approach is the best one available today, we set out to identify some misconceptions about it, and thus to clarify our position in relation to it. Given this framework, in the third section, we compare, although superficially, the English present perfect with Portuguese tenses, using the semantic frames proposed in this dissertation. And finally in the fourth section, we present the elements that we believe essential to a good understanding of the present perfect.

5.1 Research and Teaching

Few people would deny the importance of applying research findings to classroom practice, although it is not always clear in what ways such research, often full of technical jargon, can be of immediate use to the teacher. In fact, for teachers to be able to make more appropriate use of researchers' experience, research papers should be seen as sources of information, inspiration, and support.

The most typical way in which research has served the practice of teaching is by providing information. The journals are full of descriptions of how teaching and learning worked under various conditions and in various settings. Most of this information, however, is presented at a general level, having been derived from the averaging of many observations of individuals or classes, and pertains to specific questions or hypotheses formed by the researchers. In terms of information, therefore, the vast bulk of the research literature will, in many cases, be of little practical use to a

particular teacher, unless it is used as a kind of encyclopedia that teachers consult for information as they need it, with their own specific questions in mind, and with a clear sense of the applicability of that information to their particular situation.

A second way in which research can serve practice is by providing inspiration. By inspiration is meant a picture of how teaching could be different, could be better, could become the ideal teaching and learning each teacher once imagined. As Clark observed:

> "We need some imaginative stimulus, some not impossible ideal such as may shape vague hope, and transform it into effective desire, to carry us year after year, without disgust, through the routine-work which is so large a part of life." (Clark 1986: 41)

Finally, research can serve practicing teachers by providing them with support for what they are already doing well. Research is often seen exclusively as a force for change. Usually, a call for change implies that what has gone before is faulty, inefficient, or inadequate to the task. However, in many cases, research gives theoretical support to what classroom teachers have been doing for a long time. At the same time, teaching is an isolating and potentially lonely profession in which individual teachers rarely have the time or opportunity to learn about and discuss how their own teaching compares with that of others. While research reports are certainly not a substitute for professional dialogue among teachers, they can provide both evidence for and explanations of why good teaching works as it does (cf. Doyle: 1983).

With this perspective in mind, and based on the analysis of the present perfect proposed in this dissertation, in this chapter we will strive to present some recommendations which hopefully will be useful as a frame to inspire the development of practical activities. However, before the recommendations, we would like to expand on the topic of language analysis versus language use because it is directly related to grammar issues and is a topic widely debated in the EFL literature.

5.2 Language Analysis x Language Use

According to Celce-Murcia (1979), second language educators have alternated over the years between favoring teaching approaches which focus on having students analyze language in order to learn it and those which encourage students to use language in order to acquire it. Earlier this century, this distinctive pattern was observable in the shift from the analytic grammar-translation approach to the use-oriented direct method. Although the character of the field is somewhat more heterogeneous today, a recent example of the shift, this time in the opposite direction, is the loss of popularity of the Chomsky-inspired cognitive code approach, in which analyzing structures and applying rules were common practices, and the rise in popularity of more communicative approaches which emphasize language use over rules of language usage (cf. Widdowson: 1988). In fact, the Communicative Approach, one of the most popular approaches today, devotes a significant amount of classroom time to promoting communication among students (cf. Larsen-Freeman: 1986). Despite the popularity such approach now enjoys, it seems that there are still a number of misconceptions about what it involves.

5.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

For some time now, there have been recurrent attempts to take stock of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and to identify its characteristic features (e.g. Richards and Rodgers: 1986); and in areas such as teacher training the principles of CLT are largely treated as clearly understood and accepted (see, for example, Harmer: 1991[29]).

In spite of this apparent unanimity, however, there still appears to be a fair amount of confusion among many teachers over what exactly CLT is. There is general

[29] Interestingly, Harmer rejects the term "communicative" for the approach outlined in his book. He prefers to call it a "balanced activities approach", because of the inclusion of controlled, non-communicative activities as an integral part of learning. However, since the approach takes communicative activities as the point towards which the other activities are designed to lead, there seems no reason not to accept Littlewood's (1992) term "pre-communicative" for the controlled activities and to keep "communicative approach" as the general term.

agreement at the more abstract end that CLT involves an emphasis on communicating by means of the foreign language (the way in which this idea is expressed tends, as here, to be so vague as to make it difficult to disagree with); and, at the practical classroom end, CLT is strongly associated with a number of particular activity types such as problem-solving and pairwork. But in the middle ground, the area where theory meets practice, things become less certain. For example, what exactly does CLT set out to teach? Is there such a thing as a communicative language syllabus? If so, what does it consist of? Is it simply a notional-functional syllabus under a new name? Or does CLT only exist as a methodological approach, a way of helping learners to practice the skills needed to put their knowledge of the foreign language into use?

In talking with EFL teachers, one is constantly surprised by the very disparate perceptions that they have of CLT. There are, possibly, a number of reasons for the confusion, not least the fact that CLT has developed extremely rapidly over the past fifteen or so years and has now moved a considerable distance from its original practices (though without substantially changing its original principles).

A practical form of CLT has emerged, not only in the writings of applied linguists such as Littlewood (1992) and McDonough & Shaw (1993) but, perhaps more importantly, in mainstream language textbooks, such as the *Headway series* (Soars & Soars: 1992) and the *New Cambridge Course* (Swan & Walter: 1991), which represent good contemporary practice. However, certain misconceptions about CLT continue to survive, making it more difficult for many teachers to see clearly what is happening and to identify the useful innovations that CLT has brought.

The first misconception we want to comment on is: **CLT means not teaching grammar**. In our opinion, this is the most persistent and most damaging misconception. It must be admitted, however, that there are good reasons for its existence. There have been a number of applied linguists who have argued strongly and in theoretically persuasive terms that explicit grammar teaching should be avoided. One line of argument is that grammar teaching is impossible because the knowledge that a speaker needs in order to use a language is simply too complex (Prabhu, 1987). Another line is that grammar teaching is unnecessary because the knowledge is of a kind which cannot be passed on in the form of statable rules but can only be acquired unconsciously through exposure to the language (Krashen, 1988).

For many teachers, the effects of these ideas have been felt through their practical application in language textbooks and syllabuses. In the early days of CLT, pioneering textbooks such as *Functions of English* (Jones: 1976) included no explicit teaching of grammar (although this book) was aimed at students who had typically already been through a more conventional grammar-based course). Syllabuses were developed (and are still in force in many places) which expressed the teaching aims purely or predominantly in terms of what the learners would learn to do ("make a telephone call to book a hotel room"; "scan a written text to extract specific information"), and which ignored or minimized the underlying knowledge of the language that they would need to actually perform those tasks.

The exclusion of explicit attention to grammar, however, was never a necessary part of CLT (cf. Castaños 1989: 17). It is certainly understandable that there was a reaction against the heavy emphasis on structure at the expense of natural communication. But there have always been theorists and teachers pointing out that grammar is necessary for communication to take place efficiently, even though their voices may for a time have been drowned out in the noise of learners busily practicing in pairs. This is such self-evident common sense that, from the vantage-point of the present, it seems odd that it should ever have been seriously questioned.

Of course, that still leaves the question of how the learners learn the necessary grammar. In the consensus view of CLT that was mentioned before, it is now fully accepted that an appropriate amount of class time should be devoted to grammar. However, this has not meant a simple return to a traditional treatment of grammar rules. The view that grammar is too complex to be taught in that over-simplifying way has had an influence; and the focus has now moved away from the teacher *covering* grammar to the learners *discovering grammar*, although a *deductive tactic*, in certain situations, may be necessary, as we will suggest in section 5.4.1 (Inductive versus Deductive presentation).

Wherever possible, the learners are first exposed to new language in a comprehensible context, so that they are able to understand its function and meaning. Only then is their attention turned to examining the grammatical forms that have been used to convey that meaning. The discussion of grammar is explicit, but it is the learners who are doing most of the discussing, working out , with guidance from the teacher, as

much of their own knowledge of the language as can easily and usefully be expressed (cf. Brumfit: 1985). Behind this strategy lies the recognition that the learners may well have "understood" more about the language than they, or the teacher, can put into words. If the new language were introduced in the form of an apparently all-embracing (but actually very incomplete) rule from the teacher, this would convey the unspoken message that the learners had nothing further to understand about the language point and simply needed to practice it. If, on the other hand, the talking about grammar is postponed until the learners themselves can contribute by bringing to light what they already "know" in some sense, the unspoken message is that the process of acquiring the new knowledge is one which takes place in them and which they have some control over. Indeed, with the recent emphasis on training learners to learn efficiently, this message is likely to be explicitly discussed.

This "retrospective" approach to grammar is a natural development from the original CLT emphasis on viewing language as a system for communication; and it also takes into account the fact that learning is likely to be more efficient if the learners have an opportunity to talk about what they are learning. Ellis (1992) argues that looking explicitly at grammar may well not lead immediately to learning, but that it will facilitate learning at a later stage when the learner is ready (in some way that is not yet understood) to internalize the new information about the language. The retrospective approach also has the advantage that, if the lesson is conducted in English, it encourages the learners to communicate fairly naturally about a subject that is important to what they are doing: the language itself.

The second misconception is: **CLT means teaching only speaking**. Again, there are reasons why this misconception is fairly widespread. CLT was influenced, as earlier approaches had been, by the general movement in linguistics towards seeing the spoken language as primary. In addition, a focus on encouraging learners to communicate leads naturally towards thinking about what they will need to communicate about and for (this is part of the wider tendency in CLT to look beyond the classroom). For many learners, the main uses that they are likely to make of the language are oral: getting around in the foreign country if they visit it, talking to visitors from that country, etc. Even if they are unlikely in reality to use the language outside the classroom, learners are often willing to suspend their disbelief and act as if they might

need the language for personal contacts[30]. Therefore, the emphasis is likely to be on speaking and listening skills.

A further reason for this misconception is that CLT stresses the need for the learners to have sufficient practice, of an appropriate kind. This is often translated, especially by teacher trainers, into the principle that TTT (Teacher-Talking-Time) is to be reduced and STT (Student-Talking-Time) is to be maximized. Students are therefore put into pairs and told to talk to their partners. The slogan "TTT bad, STT good" almost certainly represents a useful goal for most teachers (though perhaps rarely attained). However, it is also important to recognize that communication does not only take place through speech: and also that it is not only the speaker (or writer) who is communicating. Communication through language happens in both the written and spoken medium; and it involves at least two people. Learners reading a text silently to themselves are taking part in communication (assuming that the text has something of relevance to those particular readers) just as much as someone talking to their partner.

CLT involves encouraging learners to take part in - and reflect on - communication in as many different contexts as possible (and as many as necessary, not only for their future language-using needs but also for their present language-learning needs). Perhaps rather than Student-Talking-Time we should be thinking about the broader concept of Student-Communicating-Time (or even just Student-Time, to include necessary periods of silent reflection undistracted by talk from teacher or partner).

A third misconception is: **CLT means pairwork, which means role-play**. The misconception here is not so much in the emphasis on pairwork itself as in the narrowness of the second assumption concerning the ways in which pairwork is used. One of the constant themes of CLT is that learners need to be given some degree of control over their learning (since language is a system of choices, the learners must be

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[30] An alternative approach to setting up goals for language learning is to hold out as the final destination some kind of abstract mastery of the language (perhaps with a structure-oriented examination as the final validation). This runs counter to basic principles of CLT because it treats the language merely as a classroom-bound object of study, a pedagogic dead-end. Another alternative, which does provide an outside, authentically communicative goal, is to teach the language as a means of preparing to read literature. This is still accepted as the main aim in many university courses in particular. However, it represents a demoralisingly difficult and remote goal for a great many learners. Conversation has the advantage that it is possible to take part in it reasonably successfully at many levels, including elementary.

given the opportunity to learn how to make choices). Looking back, again with hindsight, at popular textbooks of even the fairly recent past, such as *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* (O'Neill & Kingsbury: 1973) from the 1970s, it is immediately noticeable that the content of what is said by the learners is controlled at every point by the book: make a question using these prompts; answer these questions about the text; read this dialogue; and so on. Even when pairwork is used, the learners never choose what to say, they simply work out how to say what they are told to say[31].

The use of pairwork is a physical signal of control and choice passing, to some extent, to the learners; but that needs to be complemented by real choice - which role-play, particularly at simpler levels, may not encourage as much as other uses of pairwork. It is helpful to start from considering how learners working together can actually help each other. They can provide each other with a relatively safe opportunity to try out ideas before launching them in public: this may well lead to more developed ideas and therefore greater confidence and more effective communication. They can also provide knowledge and skills which may complement those of their partners: this can lead to greater success in undertaking tasks.

Instead of just seeing pairwork as a useful follow-up, a way of getting everyone practicing at the same time after a new language point has been introduced, we can see it as a potential preliminary stage to any contribution from the learners. They can work together to do a grammatical exercise, or to solve a problem, or to analyze the new language structures in a text, or to prepare a questionnaire for other members of the class, or to agree on the opinion they want to present to the class. Once pairwork is seen as a preparation as well as (or more than) an end-point, the range of possibilities increases dramatically. It is less a question of "When in my lesson do I get to the freer practice stage so that I can fit in a role-play in pairs?" and more a question of "Is there any reason why I can't use pairwork as part of whatever I'm planning to do now?" (Of course, one reason for not using it may be simply variety - even the best techniques can be overused).

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[31] It is worth noting that this is essentially no different from the way in which translation is used in the grammar-translation method: the sentence or text to be translated provides the content, and learner and teacher only have to worry about how to express that content. This control of content simplifies the teacher's task, of course, in that s/he does not need to judge - or respond to - the appropriacy, interest, relevance, etc. of what the learners say, but only whether the responses are grammatically correct or not.

Finally, a fourth misconception that we would like to discuss is: **CLT means expecting too much from the teacher**. It is perhaps cheating to label this a misconception, since there is a great deal of truth in the argument - voiced most persuasively by Medgyes (1986) - that CLT places greater demands on the teacher than certain other widely-used approaches. Lessons do tend to be less predictable; teachers do have to be ready to listen to what learners say and not just how they say it, and to interact with learners in as "natural" a way as possible; they do have to use a wider range of management skills than in the traditional teacher-dominated classroom. In addition, non-native speakers of English probably do need a higher level of language proficiency - or rather, a different balance of proficiency - to be able to communicate with ease, and to cope with discussing a broader range of facts about language use than they are accustomed to. Perhaps most importantly, teachers may have to bring to light deeply-buried preconceptions about language teaching (mostly based on their own experiences at school as recipients of language teaching), and to compare them openly with alternative possibilities that have less of the appeal of familiarity but perhaps make better pedagogic sense.

In some ways, there is no answer to these points. It is certainly difficult, for example, to ignore the charge that CLT is an approach developed by and for native speaker teachers. Nevertheless, the label of misconception is perhaps valid for two reasons. First, the points are presented as defects of CLT, as reasons for rejecting it, but they can equally well be presented as reasons for embracing CLT. Teachers have the opportunity to re-evaluate their beliefs and practices; they have an incentive to develop their skills; they are encouraged to enjoy themselves in their work, to avoid dull repetition of the same predictable set of materials, activities and answers year in, year out. This view may seem unduly optimistic to some, but there seems no reason to assume that the majority of teachers do not welcome such opportunities, if they are seen as opportunities. Secondly, the extent of the demands can easily be exaggerated. Indeed, this misconception may sometimes be fostered by teachers who may have other reasons for not wishing to change their current practices. Even Medgyes (1986), in order to make his point more forcefully, ends up by describing as the CLT norm an unrealistically superhuman teacher that few CLT teachers would recognize. It can, admittedly, be difficult to use a communicative approach if one is obliged to use

resolutely uncommunicative materials; but that is increasingly not the case. Many textbooks now provide very practical, straightforward CLT guidelines and activities which place few demands on the teacher beyond a willingness to try them out with enough conviction.

If the pattern alluded to earlier is perpetuated, then one would expect CLT approaches to be challenged. Indeed, there are already signs that this is happening. As Eskey points out with exasperation:

> "We used to believe that if students learned the form, communication would somehow take care of itself. Now we seem to believe that if students somehow learn to communicate, mastery of the forms will take care of itself." (Eskey 1983: 319)

The problem, as Eskey (1983) suggests, is that form does not take care of itself, at least not for many learners and not in the most efficacious manner possible. Indeed, researcher Pienemann (1984) concludes that "giving up the instruction of syntax is to allow for the fossilization of interlanguage in simplified form" (1984: 209). Thus, while comprehensible input may be necessary and sufficient for untutored second language acquisition, it does not necessarily follow that instruction should be limited to what is necessary and sufficient. Surely the motivation for language instruction is not simply to supply what is minimally necessary for learning to take place, but rather to create the optimal conditions for effective and efficient L2 pedagogy (cf. Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1990).

Whereas opponents of a language-analytic approach have usually equated the teaching of grammar with the teaching of explicit linguistic rules, we submit that whether or not the students are provided with explicit rules is really irrelevant to what it means to teach grammar. Neither should the teaching of grammar require a focus on form or structure alone. Communicative competence should be seen to subsume linguistic competence, not to replace it. In our opinion, linguistic accuracy is as much a part of communicative competence as being able to get one's meaning across or to communicate in a socio-linguistically appropriate manner. Thus, a more satisfactory characterization of teaching grammar, in tune with the above assumptions, is that

teaching grammar means enabling language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully and appropriately.

CLT, however, is by no means the final answer, but whatever innovations take place, they will do so against the background of the changes brought about by CLT and will need to accommodate or explicitly reject those changes. Certain of the changes, however, are too important to lose: the concern with the world beyond the classroom, the concern with the learner as an individual and the view of language as structured to carry out the functions we want it to perform (cf. Rall, 1989).

5.2.2 Learning Strategies (Focus on Procedures)

Corder (1988) remarks that teaching is a matter of "providing the learner with the **right data at the right time** and **teaching the student how to learn**". Helping students how to learn and to take on responsibility for their own learning is considered by many teachers to be an integral part of education. In fact, many teachers agree that the most efficient procedure is to encourage learners to think for themselves, i.e. to analyze the grammar of English for themselves. In this way, students are encouraged to think critically about language and to draw conclusions for themselves about its structure and meaning (cf. Canning: 1991). A uniform methodology of presentation may actually inhibit this sort of critical thought. By giving students samples of language which they are required to process simply according to teacher guidance we are exaggerating their dependence on the teacher, instead of encouraging them to do things for themselves. When students begin to discover things for themselves it is enormously exciting, and therefore enormously motivating.

Learning to learn, therefore, is an umbrella term for a wide variety of activities designed to develop learning strategies. It is primarily concerned with the process of learning and aims to focus pupils' attention on how they learn in addition to what they learn. It takes into account that different learners have different ways of learning and different preferences regarding activities and learning materials. It therefore aims to develop self-awareness and gradually lead pupils to a conscious development of their own learning strategies, so that they can become more effective and independent learners. Many of these strategies can be applied to whatever subject a pupil is learning

and, although difficult to isolate, can be broadly classified as suggested by Gail Ellis (1992: 7):

[1] Planning for learning, hypothesizing, self-assessment and monitoring. These involve learners in reflecting on the learning process and are referred to as metacognitive strategies.

[2] Sorting, classifying, comparing, matching, predicting, developing an awareness of visual and audio clues as aids to meaning, repeating, using a class library or dictionary. These involve learners in doing things with the language and their learning materials and are referred to as cognitive strategies. They relate to specific activities in specific skills areas such as listening for specific information, sorting words into groups and so on.

[3] Collaborating, peer-correction, which involve learners in cooperating together in language learning activities, and are referred to as "social mediation strategies" (cf. Cohen: 1986). Opportunities for developing these are usually set up through pair or group work activities and project work.

Ellis (1992) remarks that many materials for young learners include activities which develop cognitive strategies but few provide opportunities for reflection either before or after an activity. It is in this area that teachers need to supplement their materials. Much of the reported failure of learning strategies being transferred to new tasks is due to not combining metacognitive information with a cognitive approach. For example, in order to get children to learn a group of new words the teacher might ask them to sort them into groups (the cognitive strategy of sorting). However, there is little point in children doing this if they do not realize why they are doing it. In other words, the reflective dimension (the metacognitive strategy of deciding how to tackle the task and evaluating it afterwards) is missing. In addition, some children may find other strategies more effective, such as associating words with pictorial images, repeating words, copying words and so on.

A possible beneficial effect of learning to learn, which can be empirically observed, is increased motivation, and a more questioning, active and personal involvement of the learners. Developing curiosity and positive attitudes towards foreign language learning in young learners is particularly important. Most are learning a foreign language for the first time, and early foreign language learning aims to provide them with a positive experience and the desire to continue. Early foreign language learning also aims to prepare pupils for the more formal and exam-orientated courses in secondary school. Learning to learn provides the basic learning tools for this.

Most teachers develop some, if not all, of the strategies described above with their pupils. However, they may not always do this in a systematic or overt and explicit way so that pupils are made aware of what they are doing and why. Furthermore, when focusing on learning to learn for young learners, for whom school and learning are central in their lives, it is particularly important that strategies are demonstrated with transfer in mind. This will help pupils see how certain strategies can be used with different tasks or subjects. For example, a self-testing strategy using two-sided cards can be used for practicing English vocabulary, times tables or countries and their capitals. In fact, virtually any class activity may be used for learning to learn. All that is necessary is to focus upon the learning process aspect of an experience, which always exists side by side with the content.

The teacher, therefore, plays a central role in this process. As observed by Evertson (1985: 55):

> "The teacher is expected to elicit work from students. Students in all subjects and activities must engage mentally in directed activities which are believed to produce learning..."

Children can be given opportunities to reflect on different strategies but they will rarely learn to use them spontaneously unless they are prompted by their teacher. The teacher needs to take on a guiding and questioning role, often necessitating the use of the learners' mother tongue, to encourage them to reflect on their basic assumptions

about learning. By doing this, they will model the types of questions about learning that pupils will gradually learn to ask themselves (cf. Brophy: 1979).

In view of the importance of being explicit about learning to learn, it is useful for teachers when planning a lesson to consider what the learner training focus is going to be. This can range from sharing information with pupils about objectives and activities, providing opportunities to work independently of the teacher through pair or group work, allowing pupils to choose from a selection of tasks and materials for part of a lesson, to direct strategy training such as predicting or reviewing and so on. This advance planning will enable teachers to think about how best to integrate and carry out the learner training objectives with a particular class.

A good way to begin is through self-assessment. This provides opportunities for both reflection and experimentation. Many course materials for young learners now incorporate simple instruments such as charts, checklists or questionnaires for this purpose. Self-assessment enables children to monitor and perceive their progress so that all learners have a sense of achievement, to identify those points that need more practice, and those that need less. In this way, it enables them to plan their own work.

Self-assessment can take different forms depending on when it is done during the learning period. For example, global self-assessment can take place at the beginning, middle or end of a study period to clarify expectations and attitudes as well as to chart progress. Specific self-assessment can be done at any time through a period of study to develop awareness of what is being learned and how it is being learned. It can include, for example, self-testing, self-correcting, self-rating, self-questioning and reviewing so that pupils can identify their strong and weak points and decide what to do next. An example of specific self-assessment which encourages pupils to review their work and to ascertain what they do or do not remember about the previous lesson is to ask questions such as:

- What did we do last lesson?
- What did you learn last lesson?

Similarly, to review a lesson and to delve further the teacher could ask questions like those below, suggested by Gail Ellis (1992: 8). They encourage pupils to reflect on

both the content and methodology of a lesson, thereby identifying their preferred materials and activities and developing an awareness of individual differences:

- What did you learn today?
- Did you enjoy this unit/topic/story? Why/Why not?
- Did you enjoy this activity? Why/Why not?
- Was it useful? Why/Why not?
- How well did you do? Why?

According to our experience, students' comments may initially be monosyllabic and vague. Comments could even be recorded and listened to afterwards but this will depend on time available. Gradually students can be given a few minutes to reflect silently on these questions. Answers to these questions provide the teacher with valuable information and rapidly encourage more dialogue between students and teachers not only on what is learned, but also on how the content is learned by the students.

5.3 The English Present Perfect Compared with Portuguese Tenses

Since a natural tendency of second language learners is to resort to the parameters they are familiar with in their mother tongues, it is interesting to examine how the English present perfect can be compared with Portuguese tenses, in order to understand possible difficulties EFL Brazilian learners may have. Let us consider the following examples:

(5.1) *Jonathan has had a hair cut.*
Jonathan ***cortou*** *o cabelo.*

(5.2) *Jonathan has lived in London, but now he lives in Curitiba.*
Jonathan ***morou*** *em Londres, mas agora ele mora em Curitiba.*

(5.3) *Jonathan has lived in Curitiba for three years now.*
Jonathan ***mora/está morando*** *em Curitiba há três anos agora.*

(5.4) *Jonathan has eaten an apple a day since his youth.*
Jonathan ***tem comido*** *uma maçã por dia desde sua juventude.*

We can notice in these examples that the present perfect can be understood in three ways in Portuguese:

[1] past;
[2] present;
[3] compound form (present of "ter" + past participle of the main verb).

Notice that the situation in [1] has "EPs" while situations in [2] and [3] do not have "Eps". This plurality indicates that there is no "one" form in Portuguese which translates the extended-now structure of the English present perfect and the meaning conveyed by its combination with the aspectual classes. Based on the principles discussed in chapter 4, we propose, in chart 5.1 below, a possible correspondence between the English present perfect and Portuguese tenses:

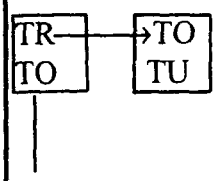
Temporal Relationship	Aspectual Relationship	Aspectual Classes	Portuguese Tenses
TR→ TU: XN	Perfective TS ⊂ TR	Accomplishments Achievements Activities States	Passado
	Imperfective (XN)TR ⊆ TS	States Activities	Presente ou Tempo Composto: pres."ter"+ part.pass.

Chart 5.1

Since all the possibilities in Portuguese shown in chart 5.1, are implicit in just one semantic frame in English, the problem a Brazilian learner has to face is multiple:

[1] Even when the English present perfect is understood as the "pretérito perfeito" in Portuguese, the sentence in English cannot cooccur with time adverbials which exclude the time of utterance. With the Portuguese "pretérito perfeito", this would be perfectly possible.

[2] Since there are two aspectual possibilities utilizing the same tense form, the student has to understand when to interpret a sentence in the present perfect as perfective or as imperfective.

[3] With States and Activities, there is the problem of ambiguity analyzed in chapter 4. The student will have to learn how to interpret such sentences.

5.4 Presentation of the Present Perfect (Focus on Analysis)

Before we suggest some topics we consider fundamental for the presentation of the present perfect, let us consider the issue of inductive versus deductive presentation, which has been the focus of many divergent opinions in the literature.

5.4.1 Inductive x Deductive Presentation

A choice teachers have to face is whether to work inductively or deductively during the presentation of a grammar point. An inductive activity is one in which the students infer the rule from a set of examples. For instance, students might induce the subject-auxiliary inversion rule in forming yes-no questions, after having been exposed to a number of such questions. In a deductive activity, on the other hand, the students are given the rule and they apply it to examples. If one has chosen an inductive approach in a given lesson, a further option exists: whether or not to have students explicitly state the rule.

There are many times when an inductive approach in presenting a grammar structure is desirable, because by using such an approach one is nurturing within the students a learning process through which they can arrive at their own generalizations. At other times, when one's students have a particular cognitive style that is not well suited for language analysis or when a particular linguistic rule is rather convoluted, it may make more sense to present a grammar structure deductively. Frequently students request rules and report that they find them helpful. Moreover, stating a rule explicitly can often bring about linguistic insights in a more efficacious manner, as long as the rule is not oversimplified or so metalinguistically obtuse that students must struggle harder to understand the rule than to apply it implicitly. Indeed, one takes comfort from Corder's (1988) sensible observations:

> " What little we know about the psychological process of second language learning, either from theory or from practical experience, suggests that a combination of induction and deduction produces the best result.... Learning is seen as fundamentally an inductive process but one which can be controlled and facilitated by descriptions and explanations given at the appropriate moment and formulated in

a way which is appropriate to the maturity, knowledge, and sophistication of the learner. The old controversy about whether one should provide the rule first and then the examples, or vice versa, is now seen to be merely a matter of tactics to which no categorical answer can be given" (Corder, 1973, in Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988, p.133).

What we must bear in mind, whatever our choice is, is that what we are trying to bring about in the learner is a knowledge of the rules which can be used in communicative situations, and not knowledge of the rules for its own sake.

5.4.2 Key Notions about the Present Perfect

Keeping in mind all the remarks made about the issue of language analysis versus language use and about an inductive versus a deductive presentation, let us proceed to the recommendations about the semantic frame of the English present perfect we feel to be fundamental for a good understanding of this English tense.

Unfortunately, the view of the English present perfect as defended in this dissertation is not common in the literature, and, therefore, its application in the classroom is not well developed in terms of communicative activities. The recommendations that follow are **not** intended to fill in this gap. They are just some general guidelines that hopefully may serve as inspiration for future research in applied linguistics.

To present the present perfect, in our opinion, basically two questions need to be answered:

[1] How is the present perfect formed?
[2] What does the present perfect mean?

Question [1] can be answered straightforwardly:

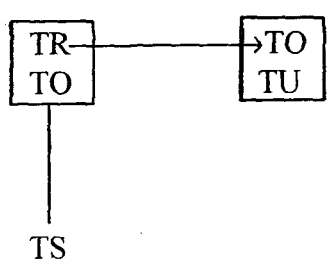
Have + 3rd column of the verb that follows.

Question number [2], however, needs a more elaborate answer. In order to explain the semantic framework of the present perfect, the concepts involved in it must, in some way (inductively or deductively), be understood. These concepts, as discussed in the preceding chapters, are:

[a] Elements involved in any tense: TU, TR and TS;
[b] Temporal Relation: TU x TR;
[c] Aspect: TR x TS;
[d] Aspectual classes: States, Activities, Accomplishments and Achievements.

These elements, presented and practiced within a communicative framework, without complicated linguistic jargons, in our opinion, would be a must to the students' comprehension of the multiple facets of the English present perfect as shown in chart 5.1. Depending on the age of the students, Fig.5.3. below may be useful, if well exploited, in order to make them visualize schematically the XN time of reference of the present perfect:

Present Perfect



The ambiguity that occurs when the aspectual class involved is a State or an Activity should also be discussed explicitly or made clear through examples.

Finally, it is important to observe that dubious expressions such as "indefinite past", "current relevance" or "past viewed from the present" should be avoided in the presentation of the present perfect because they have no explanatory value and may create much confusion, especially in contrast with the simple past.

CHAPTER 6

FINAL COMMENTS

Let us recall now the objectives of this dissertation and briefly comment on the solutions proposed:

[1] to characterize the opposition between the English present perfect and the simple past;
[2] to classify the English present perfect into the category of tense;
[3] to analyze the ambiguity of the English present perfect with durational adverbs;
[4] to analyze McCawley's primary readings of the present perfect (1971).

After rejecting "definiteness" and "current relevance" as parameters to distinguish the present perfect from the simple past, following McCoard (1978), we presented, in chapter 3, Declerck's theory of tense and claimed that his interpretation of the XN-theory within his model of tense is capable of differentiating the present perfect from the simple past. Declerck's (1986) observation that the present perfect locates a situation in time differently from the simple past, contrary to Comrie's claim (1976), led us to conclude that the present perfect is a tense, but the possibility of its also being an aspect, according to Comrie's (1976) definition, was not discarded, especially because Declerck's theory of tense alone is not capable of accounting for the multiplicity of readings of the present perfect.

We then proceeded to the analysis of the ambiguity of the English present perfect with durational adverbs, as posed by Heny (1982) and Richards (1982), and concluded that it is a "true" semantic ambiguity (cf. Dowty 1979: 343). To account for this ambiguity we defined the concepts of aspect and aspectual classes, following Godoi (1992), and analyzed their behavior in the tense schemata for the present perfect developed by Declerck (1986).

Based on the same elements, i.e. Declerck's tense schemata, aspect and aspectual classes (Godoi: 1992), we proposed a semantic interpretation of the present perfect with

durational adverbs and of the primary readings of the present perfect as distinguished by McCawley (1971). We reached the conclusion that in the readings proposed by McCawley (1971) there are three semantically distinct frames and, therefore, rejected Michaelis' analysis (1994), in which she claims that the referred readings are "a non-syntactic ambiguity."

Having proposed a semantic frame for the different readings of the present perfect with elements that are present in any tense, we concluded that the present perfect is a real "tense" and not aspect as claimed by Comrie (1976). Moreover, we claimed that the aspectual relationship as defined by Godoi (1992) is the element that was missing in Declerck's model in order to explain the several readings of the present perfect and define it as a "tense."

In relation to the definitions of the categories of "tense" and "aspect", we concluded that they do not hold an "either/or" relationship, but that they must coexist since the latter is part of the former.

Finally, in chapter 5, based on the analysis of the present perfect developed in this dissertation, we proposed a frame for future research in applied linguistics, suggesting some key elements to be taken into account when the aim of a lesson is the presentation of the present perfect.

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