THE SELECTIONAL RESTRICTIONS OF FRENCH PAST TENSES
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1. INTRODUCTION

In a very interesting article, de Swart (1998) proposes to analyze the French Imparfait and Passé Simple as aspectually sensitive tense operators. She adopts the theory of tense and aspect proposed by Kamp and Reyle (1993) according to whom the syntactic structure of a sentence is as in (1), with tense markers having scope over aspect markers (the Kleene star indicates zero, one or more operations), which in turn have scope over eventuality descriptions.

(1)   [Tense [Aspect* [eventuality description]]]

In the label "eventuality description", the term _eventuality_ generalizes over events, processes and states (the term _event_ is used for non-homogeneous, quantized eventualities, i.e., the telic eventualities corresponding to the vendlerian _accomplishments_ and _achievements_; _process_ covers homogeneous non stative eventualities, i.e., _activities_). An eventuality description stands for a set of eventualities. Aspectual operators are eventuality modifiers, which map sets of eventualities onto sets of eventualities of a possibly different type (see Moens 1987). Tense operators introduce closure over this set of eventualities and locate the eventuality in time.

De Swart proposes that, in French, the Passé Simple and the Imparfait are tense operators which are sensitive to the aspectual type of the eventuality description they combine with. Specifically, the Passé Simple selects for an event, while the Imparfait is felicitous only if it applies to a homogenous description, that is, a state or a process. Both operators introduce the condition $t<n$ into the discourse. The work of locating eventualities in the past is thus divided between the two tense operators as

follows: the Passé Simple is used exclusively with events; the Imparfait is used with states and processes. In a more recent article, De Swart and Molendijk (1999), adopting an ontology limited to states and events, describe the Imparfait as selecting for a state and the Passé Simple as selecting for an event. We may interpret de Swart's proposal as in (2) showing the Imparfait and the Passé Simple as temporal heads selecting for a unique argument of a given semantic type ("h" stands for "homogeneous eventuality" —alternatively, "state" if we follow de Swart and Molendijk 1999— and "e" for "event").

(2) a. IMP <h>

    b. PS <e>

In this article, we argue that, despite the appeal of this analysis, the idea that the Passé Simple and the Imparfait select the type of eventuality description they combine with is not correct. We show that the Passé Simple and the Imparfait select for any type of eventuality. But the Imparfait has an external argument which is a temporal referent of discourse. Thus, instead of (2), we propose (3) as the selectional restrictions of the French past morphemes (where "ev" stands for "eventuality").

(3) a. PS <ev>

    b. IMP < t, ev>

The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we review de Swart's proposal. Section 3 focuses on the Passé Simple. We first show that states and processes in the Passé Simple do not always behave like events, then suggest an alternative treatment. In section 4, we discuss facts showing that the Imparfait may combine with events without them being coerced into states or processes, and we propose a different analysis for the Imparfait.

2. DE SWART (1998)

The typical use of the Imparfait, that given in (4) below, has led a number of authors, among which Curat (1991), Martin (1971), Molendijk (1983), Nef (1986), Smith (1991) and Vet (1980:76-77), in line with traditional studies of this morpheme, to propose for it a semantic account similar to that proposed for the English progressive, with the difference that the interval of reference for the Imparfait is past. The Imparfait would be an aspectual operator.

(4) Quand sa soeur est entrée, Jean dessinait un cercle.

'When his sister came-PC in, John was drawing-IMP a circle.'

(PC = passé composé)

In essence it is proposed that the Imparfait denotes an unbounded eventuality, that is, an eventuality which is already started and susceptible to continue; in that sense, it carries an imperfective or unaccomplished aspect and is similar to a past progressive. By contrast, the Passé Simple would be a perfective morpheme, stating the completion of the eventuality described in the clause. But, as discussed in de Swart (1998), the fact that the Imparfait combines with a larger class of predicates than the English Progressive (e.g., it combines with states), and that it leads to a wider range of interpretations (e.g., it leads to a habitual interpretation) shows that the Imparfait and the Progressive are two different kinds of markers. Also, languages like Spanish and Portuguese have an Imperfective as well as a Progressive form and the two can be combined on the same verb, as shown in (5) (Comrie 1976: 23-32). This is not predicted if the Imparfait and the Progressive are the same kind of morpheme.

(5) Toda la tarde estuvieron entrando visitas.

'All the afternoon, visitors kept arriving.' (IMP+PROG)

To account for the Imparfait in French, de Swart provides an account close in spirit to that of Kamp (1981) and Kamp and Rohrer (1983). According to Kamp, the Passé Simple introduces an event in the discourse while the Imparfait introduces a state (see also Kamp and Reyle 1993). Events follow the last event introduced; states include it. The fragment of discourse in (6a), then, gives rise to the Discourse Representation Structure (DRS) illustrated in (6b) (where Kamp and Reyle 1993's notation is used).

(6)　a.　Pedro entra dans la cuisine. Marie faisait la vaisselle. (=Kamp 1981:46)

　　b.

n　e　t　　　　s　t'
t < n
e ⊆ t
e:　[P enter the kitchen]
t' < n
s O t'
e ⊆ s
s:　[M PROG(do the dishes)]
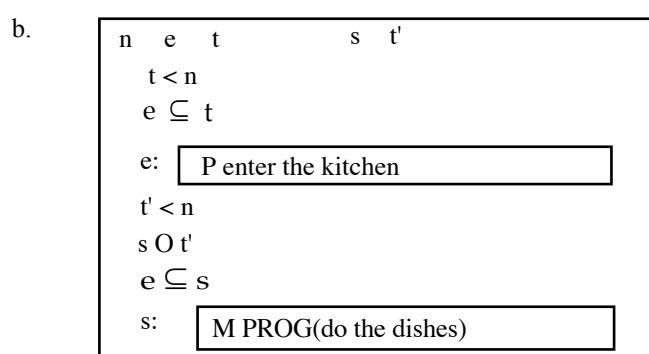
In de Swart's account, the Imparfait is not an *aspectual operator*, but a past *tense operator* which selects a homogeneous eventuality (i.e., a state or a process). It is thus an aspectually sensitive tense operator. It contrasts with the Progressive, viewed as an aspectual operator which operates on an event or process to yield a state (see Moens 1987).

When the Imparfait is constructed with an event (i.e., a (telic) non homogeneous eventuality), it is proposed that a process of aspectual coercion transforms it into a homogeneous eventuality in order to satisfy the selectional restriction of the Imparfait. Thus, in the past progressive exemplified in (7), the progressive operator transforms the event of *Mary reading a book* into the progressive state of the event being in progress, as illustrated in (8). The corresponding French Imparfait in (9) receives the structure in (10), where the implicit coercion operator C_{eh}, playing the same role as PROG in (8), is

introduced to satisfy the selectional restriction of the Imparfait, carrying the PAST tense (to make things clearer, the brackets are labeled with the type of situation they represent).

(7)   Mary was reading a book.

(8)   [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ PROG [$_{event}$ Mary read a book]]]

(9)   Marie lisait un livre.

(10)   [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(PROG)}$ [$_{event}$ Mary read a book]]]

Similarly, the Passé Simple would select for an event. When it is constructed with a state, as in (11), a coercion operator transforms this state into an event. Omitting the time adverb, the grammatical structure of (11) is claimed to be as in (12) (de Swart: 370).

(11)   (Soudain,) Jeanne sut la réponse.

       '(Suddenly,) Jeanne knew-PS the answer.'

(12)   [$_{event}$ PAST [$_{event}$ C$_{he(INCHO)}$ [$_{state}$ Jeanne know the answer]]]

In this account, coercion operators are syntactically and morphologically invisible aspectual operators. Their use is triggered by the need to resolve a conflict between the eventuality description and the aspectual constraint of the tense operator. Coercion operators come in various kinds for the various transitions that they can perform: C$_{eh}$ transforms an event into a homogeneous situation, C$_{he}$ transforms a homogeneous situation into an event, etc. The result of a coercion is not necessarily a unique type of interpretation. For example the result of applying C$_{eh}$ may be a progressive (PROG) or a habitual (HAB) state. The interpretation process is pragmatic, context-dependent. Similarly, C$_{he}$ may yield the value INCHO(ative), BOUND or ADD-PREP(aratory phase) according to the context. The context in (12) triggers the value INCHO of C$_{he}$. (In the examples, the value taken by the coercion operator in the context is indicated in parentheses.)

The analysis proposed by de Swart accounts for the fact that both the Passé Simple and the Imparfait encode temporal information (namely, $t < n$), since they are tense operators. It also accounts for the above-mentioned differences between the Progressive and the Imparfait, in particular for the fact that the Imparfait combines naturally with states (since it selects for a state), and for the fact that, when combined with an event predicate, the Imparfait may give rise to a habitual reading as well as to a progressive reading. Similarly, when combined with states, the Passé Simple gives rise to an inchoative reading or to a bounded state reading because it selects for an event. Finally, the analysis accounts for the possibility observed in some languages of combining an Imparfait and a Progressive on the same verb, since the Imparfait is viewed as a tense operator and the Progressive as an aspectual operator.

The analysis is elegant and convincing at first sight. However, we will provide examples which show that neither the Imparfait nor the Passé Simple are sensitive to the aspectual type of the predicate they combine with. We first examine the case of the Passé Simple, then that of the Imparfait.

3. THE PASSÉ SIMPLE

We will first show that the Passé Simple is neutral regarding the aspectual characteristics of the eventuality with which it is constructed, then, in section 3.2, we discuss our proposed analysis.

3.1 States and processes in the Passé Simple

In this section, we argue that states and processes in the Passé Simple do not behave like telic events in the discourse, contrary to what is predicted by the hypothesis that the Passé Simple selects for events and that states and processes may combine with the Passé Simple only if coerced into (telic) events. While (telic) events in the Passé Simple push the action forward, we show that an atelic clause in the Passé Simple, while interpreted as bounded, does not push the action forward unless other elements in the context force that interpretation. We therefore argue, following Depraetere (1995), that a situation may be presented as bounded in the past, but nevertheless as not having an inherent

endpoint; in that case, the situation is bounded and atelic.[1] The facts to be discussed also show that duration adverbials are not aspectual operators, contrary to what is proposed by de Swart.

Example (13) illustrates the well-known rhetorical rule that, unless the context makes clear that such is not a valid interpretation, a sequence of clauses describing events is interpreted as denoting a sequence of events, the order of mention being also the order of occurrence of the events (Lascarides and Ascher 1993). This is schematized in (14), where "<" indicates precedence. This is why events move the story line forward. On the other hand, a sequence of clauses describing states, as in (15), is interpreted as denoting contemporaneous states, as illustrated in (16), where "o" means "overlap".

(13)   John stopped$_{e1}$ working, removed$_{e2}$ his shoes, took$_{e3}$ his pipe, sat$_{e4}$ in a comfortable chair and read $_{e5}$ his newspaper.

(14)   e1 < e2 < e3 < e4 <e5

(15)   John felt$_{s1}$ tired, his head ached$_{s2}$, his eyes were$_{s3}$ sore, and he couldn't$_{s4}$ think clearly any more.

(16)   s1 o s2 o s3 o s4

This difference follows if a telic event includes in its description that of its final state; when it is introduced in a narrative, it sets the time cursor to a time following immediately the attainment of this final state; the next event is introduced at the position of the time cursor, and interpreted sequentially. ("Time cursor" is meant here as a pointer to the point in time at which the narrative has arrived.) A homogeneous eventuality does not set the time cursor to a time following it; the next state is introduced in the same temporal location as the preceding one.

De Swart, following observations by Krifka (1989), Vet (1980), and Moens (1987), proposes that bounded processes are events. She also analyses duration adverbials as aspectual operators. For de

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[1] Depraetere (1995:15) claims that it is boundedness that pushes the action forward, but the facts discussed in this section suggest that this is not right.

Swart, FOR-phrases map states and processes into events by providing them with bounds; IN-phrases map events into events. In her analysis, then, (17) would have the structure in (18). Despite the FOR-phrase, (17) denotes a telic event resulting from applying FOR to an atelic clause.

(17)   Jeanne fut malade pendant trois jours.

   'Jeanne was-PS sick for three days.'

(18)   [$_{event}$ PAST [$_{event}$ FOR three days [$_{state}$Jeanne be sick]]]

Consider now the sequence in (19). It is only interpreted as Jeanne going to work despite being sick. It doesn't mean that Jeanne was sick *and then* went to work, an interpretation that is predicted to be available if (19) denoted a sequence of events.

(19)   Jeanne fut malade pendant trois jours. Elle alla travailler.

   'Jeanne was-PS sick for three days. She went-PS to work.'

The fact that the simultaneous interpretation obtains indicates that the duration adverbial *pendant trois jours* 'for three days' is not an aspectual operator converting a state or process into a telic event; it is a modifier which provides information on the duration of the state or process, without changing its aspectual type. This means that the structure of the first sentence in (19) should be as in (20) rather than as in (21) (the structure proposed by de Swart 1998:373 for a similar case but with a process verb).

(20)   [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ FOR three days [$_{state}$ Jeanne be sick]]]

(21)   [$_{event}$ PAST [$_{event}$ FOR three days [$_{state}$ Jeanne be sick]]]

Sentence (22) provides another kind of example of a state in the Passé Simple which does not update the reference time. In de Swart's analysis, illustrated in (23), the temporal clause should denote

an event (a coercion operator, having the same value as a FOR-phrase, applies to the static eventuality, converting it into a telic event compatible with the Passé Simple). But (22) does not mean that Anne got spots on her face as a result of having been sick; it only means that she got spots while being sick. If the state is replaced by an event, as in (24), the successive interpretation obtains.

(22)   Quand elle fut malade, Anne développa des boutons.

'When she was sick, Anne developed spots (on her face).'

(23)   [$_{event}$ PAST [$_{event}$ C$_{he(BOUND)}$ [$_{state}$Jeanne be sick]]]

(24)   Quand Pierre entra dans la pièce, Anne développa des boutons.

'When Pierre entered the room, Anne developed spots (on her face).'

We conclude that the first clause of (22) does not denote an event.

According to de Swart (1998:370), the value BOUND of the coercion operator is also appropriate in the first clause of (25) because Jeanne's life has a definite beginning point and endpoint. But again, the continuation in the Passé Simple does not have a sequential interpretation despite the fact that the state of *being a saint* is bounded in the past (and even though the sequential interpretation is plausible, since miracles may happen after a person's death). Similarly in (26) the episode of unhappiness is interpreted as coinciding with the summer time, and not as following it.

(25)   Jeanne d'Arc fut une sainte. Elle fit des miracles.

'Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) was-PS a saint. She performed-PS miracles.'

(26)   Ce fut le pire été de ma vie. Je fus malheureux comme jamais.

'It was-PS the worst summer of my life. I was-PS unhappy as (I had) never (been before).'

The same point can be made with processes. In (27), the eventuality description denotes a process, as shown by its compatibility with a duration adverbial. In de Swart's analysis, the duration adverbial

transforms this process into an event by providing it with bounds. This event is then compatible with the Passé Simple. If not constructed with a duration adverbial, the process is converted into an event by means of a coercion operation having a BOUND value, as shown in (28).

(27) 'Pierre dirigea la compagnie d'une main de fer (pendant des années).'

Pierre managed the company with a stong hand (for many years).

(28) [_event PAST [_event C_{he(BOUND)} [_process Pierre manage the company with a strong hand]]]

But the second sentence in (29) has a simultaneous interpretation (a little odd unless it is taken as the first of a list of examples of what Pierre did as a manager). Adding _pendant trois ans_ 'for three years' to the first sentence would not change this. Similarly, the sequence in (30) denotes simultaneous eventualities.

(29) Pierre dirigea la compagnie d'une main de fer. Il alla en Europe.

'Pierre managed-PS the company with a stong hand. He went-PS to Europe.'

(30) Pierre peignit pendant une heure. Ève lui prépara son souper.

'Pierre painted-PS for an hour. Eve prepared-PS his dinner.'

To summarize, states and processes in the Passé Simple do not in general push the action forward, and this is unexpected under an analysis in which states and processes are coerced into telic events in order to combine with the Passé Simple.

Consider finally (31) and (32). In (31), a sequential interpretation obtains despite the fact that the second verb denotes a process (removing the duration adverb _pendant une heure_ 'for an hour' maintains the sequential interpretation.) This example is a counterexample to the above observation that a process in the Passé Simple does not lead to a sequential interpretation. However, the sequential interpretation is not due to the tense marker because, as shown in (32), the sequential interpretation of

the second VP is retained when the verbs are in the Imparfait. (The meaning here is that of a habitual sequence of actions.).[2]

(31)   Paul alla à la piscine, nagea pendant une heure, se rhabilla et alla travailler.

'Paul went-PS to the pool, swam-PS for an hour, dressed-PS, and went-PS to work.'

(32)   Paul allait à la piscine, nageait pendant une heure, se rhabillait et allait travailler.

'Paul went-IMP to the pool, swam-IMP for an hour, dressed-IMP, and went-IMP to work.'

This pair of sentences shows that the sequential interpretation is independent of the tense used. We assume that it follows from rhetorical rules of interpretation of the type discussed in Lascarides and Ascher (1993), Moeschler (1998:52-53) and Irandoust (1998:65 ff.)

3.2 The Passé Simple as a true past tense

The facts just discussed suggest that the Passé Simple selects an eventuality (ev) without regards to its type. We assume that the Passé Simple introduces in the discourse the eventuality that is its argument, locates it in the past, and provides existential closure on it. It introduces in the discourse the conditions $ev =_t t_{ev}$ and $t_{ev} < n$, where t_{ev} is a discourse referent corresponding to the duration of the eventuality in question.[3] For example, sentence (33a) would be interpreted as in (33b).
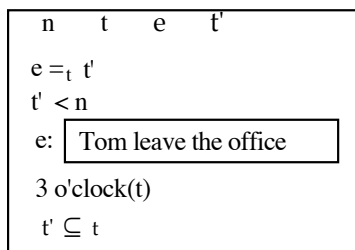
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[2] Similarly, in the English translation of the examples, the sequential interpretation obtains with the "aspectually neutral" Simple Past.

[3] I use the abbreviation ev for "eventuality" in order not to confuse it with e for "event", a subtype of eventuality. The notation $ev =_t t$ is introduced by de Swart and Molendijk (1999:15 and note 6) to denote the time at which an eventuality holds. It is defined as the conjunction of $ev \subseteq t$ and $t \subseteq ev$, where $\subseteq$ denotes temporal inclusion.

(33) a.   Paul quitta le bureau à trois heures.

'Paul left-PS the office at three o'clock'

b.

$$
\begin{array}{|l|}
\hline
\text{n} \quad \text{t} \quad \text{e} \quad \text{t'} \\
\hline
e =_t t' \\
t' < n \\
e: \boxed{\text{Tom leave the office}} \\
3 \text{ o'clock}(t) \\
t' \subseteq t \\
\hline
\end{array}
$$

We suggest that the Passé Simple picks up the maximal eventuality of the relevant type (*Max(ev)*). Since the Passé Simple provides existential closure over a maximal eventuality of the type described by the clause and locates it at a time preceding the time of speech, it follows that the eventualities it combines with are interpreted as completed, or bounded. Thus, the fact that sentence (34) denotes the whole episode of sickness of Anne distinguishes the French Passé Simple from the English Simple Past. While the English sentence may be interpreted imperfectively, the French sentence is only interpreted as describing a sudden incident that took place at two o'clock.

(34) Anne fut malade à deux heures.

'Ann was-PS sick at two o'clock.'

Compare now (35) with (36). Sentence (35) refers to the whole episode of sickness of Jeanne, while (36) has an inchoative meaning. For de Swart, in (36), a coercion operator with an inchoative value is introduced in order to satisfy the selectional restriction of the Passé Simple, as illustrated in (37).

(35) Jeanne fut malade pendant trois jours.

'Jeanne was-PS sick for three days.'

(36) Soudain, Jeanne fut malade.

'Suddenly, Jeanne was-PS sick.'

(37) [$_{event}$ PAST [$_{event}$ C$_{he(INCHO)}$ [$_{state}$ Jeanne be sick]]]

But notice that the clause *Jeanne fut malade* is coerced into an inchoative event in the context of the adverb *soudain*, but not in the context of *pendant trois jours* (35), which, as we saw earlier (cf. example 19), does not behave like a telic event. This strongly suggests that the coercion is triggered by the adverb itself, and not by the tense. To account for that, we assume a process of aspectual transition triggered by a conflict between the aspectual character of the eventuality description and some other element in the context, as in Moens (1987). For Moens (1987:44ff.), aspectual transitions are free as long as the context supports the meaning effects associated with the change, provided the language has no explicit operator for that change. In other words, the structure of (36) is as in (38), where the transition effected by the implicit inchoative operator applies to the tensed clause in order to make it compatible with the aspectual requirement of the adverb.

(38) [$_{event}$ suddenly [$_{event}$ C$_{he(INCHO)}$ [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ Jeanne be sick]]]

That the coercion is due to the adverb is confirmed by the fact that sentence (36) may appear in the Imparfait while keeping an inchoative interpretation. The third clause in (39) is interpreted as in (40). A habitual operator, triggered by the meaning of the first sentence, applies globally to the second sentence to yield a habitual state consisting of a series of events. The second of these events is the sudden incident of sickness of Jeanne.

(39) Les choses se passaient toujours de la même façon. On commençait à manger, *soudain, Jeanne était malade.*

'It was-IMP always the same routine. We started-IMP to eat, suddenly Jeanne was-IMP sick.'

(40) [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [...] [$_{event}$ suddenly [$_{event}$ C$_{he(INCHO)}$ [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ Jeanne be sick]]]]]

To summarize this section, it has been shown that atelic eventualities in the Passé Simple are interpreted as bounded in the past, but, nevertheless they do not function like telic events in the discourse; in particular, when followed by an event, they do not (in general) give rise to a sequence of events interpretation. We proposed that the Passé Simple is a past tense which introduces in the discourse a maximal eventuality of the type described in the clause, locates it in the past and provides closure on it. The Passé Simple is aspectually neutral in that it may combine with homogeneous eventualities as well as with events. When it combines with a state or a process, the requirement to pick up the maximal eventuality of the relevant type gives rise to the fact that eventualities in the Passé Simple are interpreted as bounded.

4. THE IMPARFAIT

We now turn to the Imparfait, and we show that, like that Passé Simple, it is aspectually neutral in its selectional restrictions. In section 4.2, we spell-out our analysis.

4.1 Events in the imparfait

In this section, we introduce two kinds of facts showing that the Imparfait does not select for a homogeneous eventuality: 1) examples where an event in the Imparfait is interpreted as accomplished and 2) habitual sequences of events.

4.1.1. Accomplished events.

Examples (41)-(45) illustrate clauses where the Imparfait combines with a telic event, without taking on a progressive or habitual interpretation. In these sentences, the events in the Imparfait cover

a small portion of the time of reference denoted by the time adverb. This is not predicted if a clause in the Imparfait denotes a homogeneous eventuality.

(41)   Le lendemain, Tom partait pour Paris.

       'The next day, Tom left-IMP for Paris.'

(42)   Un an plus tard, l'ancien président réapparaissait soudainement, sans donner d'explications (pour sa disparition).

       'A year later, the former president reappeared-IMP suddenly, without giving any explanation (for his disappearance).'

(43)   En 1492, Christophe Colomb découvrait l'Amérique.

       'In 1492, Columbus discovered-IMP America.'

(44)   Les iraniens s'en prennent maintenant aux intérêts américains. Hier, deux banques américaines étaient saccagées.   (Ducrot 1979: 9)

       'The Iranians are now attacking American interests. Yesterday, two american banks were ransacked-IMP. '

(45)   Idiot que je suis! L'année dernière j'achetais un appareil photo dont je n'avais nul besoin, et, cette année, je n'ai même pas de quoi me payer le cinéma.   (Ducrot 1979: 9)

       'What an idiot I am ! Last year I bought-IMP a camera for which I had no need, and this year, I don't even have enough money to go to the theater.'

The Imparfait "*narratif*" (or "*de rupture*") illustrated in (41) and (42) is often ignored in formal accounts of the Imparfait, perhaps because it is felt to be rare and exceptional. When such a sentence occurs at the end of a chapter or novel it denotes an abrupt change with respect to a preceding state of affairs. But, as examples (43) to (45) illustrate, the Imparfait combines with a completed event in different types of contexts, and not only in the context illustrated with the Imparfait "narratif". The

last two examples are from Ducrot (1979), example (45) being from a newspaper article. (See Molendijk 1990 :202 ff. and Tasmowski-De Ryck1985 for further examples.) Among the few people who discuss such examples in a formal framework, Smith (1991:277, 279) and Gosselin (1996:126-127 and 200-201), in order to retain the idea that the Imparfait is similar to a Past Progressive, rely on some kind of pragmatic coercion. They suggest, borrowing the idea from some remarks by Ducrot (1979), that the events are pragmatically extended to cover the totality of the time of reference. But we would expect pragmatic rules of interpretation to apply similarly in all languages. If the Imparfait could be analyzed as denoting an imperfective, unbounded, eventuality, and if examples (41)-(45) could be explained away by some kind of pragmatic extension of the event to cover the reference time, one would expect the same pragmatic extension to be found with the English Progressive. This is not the case: the translations of the examples require a Simple Past, and not a Past Progressive. Furthermore, the idea of pragmatic expansion of the event fails in examples (41)-(45): the events described in these sentences are interpreted as bounded within a proper subinterval of the interval denoted by the preceding adverbial; they are not interpreted —pragmatically or metaphorically— as extending temporally throughout the whole interval of reference. Nothing suggests, for example, that the interval of time taken by the departure of Tom in (41) or the disappearance of the former president in (42) covered the totality of the interval of reference. On the contrary, the punctual adverb *soudainement* 'suddenly' in (42) is incompatible with this account.
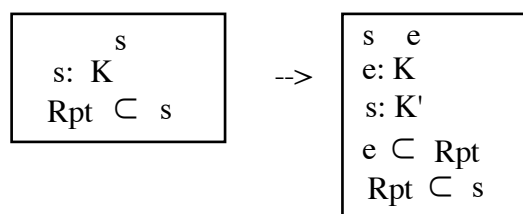
In (41)-(45), the whole event is asserted, including the end and the Imparfait could be replaced by the Passé Simple without changing the situation to which they apply truthfully (Guenthner, Hoepelman and Rohrer 1978:33, Tasmowski-de Rijk 1985). For example, (46) below is not synonymous with (48), featuring a Past Progressive. While (48) can be felicitously followed by (49), (47) is not a proper continuation of (46), because (46) states that the person died within the interval. The death is presented as a perfective, accomplished event properly included in the time of reference.

(46)   Trois jours plus tard, il mourait.

(47)   #Il appela sa femme à son chevet et lui demanda de prendre soin de ses fils.

(48)   Three days later, he was dying.

(49)   He called his wife to his bedside and told her to take good care of his sons.

To account for this type of use, Reyle (1987:99-101) proposes rule (50), to be interpreted as follows: if a clause gives rise to the DRS on the left, considered as the normal DRS for a verb in the Imparfait (see (6)), it can also give rise to the DRS on the right, in which the event described by the clause in the Imparfait is included in the time of reference; this reference point is, in turn, included in a state.

(50)   Reyle (1987: 101)

$$
\begin{array}{|l|}
\hline
\quad\quad s \\
s:\ K \\
Rpt \subset s \\
\hline
\end{array}
\ \longrightarrow\
\begin{array}{|l|}
\hline
s \quad e \\
e:\ K \\
s:\ K' \\
e \subset Rpt \\
Rpt \subset s \\
\hline
\end{array}
$$

The problem with this account is that the rule seems created in an ad hoc fashion to account for this use of the Imparfait, and the theoretical motivations for it are not clearly identified. It is also not clear how a tense can introduce two discourse referents, a state and an event, and how the state is to be interpreted in this context.

As a last example, (51) shows that the Imparfait "de rupture" can be used with a sequence of events. The two events in (51) are interpreted as following one another within the time denoted by the adverb _le lendemain_ 'the next day'.

(51) Le lendemain, Jean donnait sa démission et partait pour Paris.

'The next day, John resigned-IMP and left-IMP for Paris.'

This shows that these events are not coerced into unbounded states or processes in order to be combined with the Imparfait. Otherwise, we would expect a simultaneous interpretation.

4.1.2.   Habitual sequences of events.

Consider the following example:

(52) À 5 heures, Jean cessait$_{e1}$ tout travail intellectuel, retirait$_{e2}$ ses chaussures, prenait$_{e3}$ sa pipe, s'enfonçait$_{e4}$ dans un bon fauteuil et lisait$_{e5}$ son journal.

'At 5 o'clock, Jean stopped-IMP all intellectual work, removed-IMP his shoes, took-IMP

his pipe, sat-IMP in a good seat and read-IMP his paper.'

Sentence (52) describes a habitual situation. In de Swart's analysis the habitual reading is introduced by an implicit coercion operator applying before the verb combines with the Imparfait, viewed as a PAST tense, in order to make the eventuality compatible with the selectional restriction of the Imparfait. This analysis predicts that the reading of (52) should be as in (53), that is, as a list of habitual states. If so, these states should be interpreted as simultaneous and the order of mention would not matter.

(53) [AT 5 o'clock [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [$_{event}$ e1]]] + [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [$_{event}$ e2]]] + [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [$_{event}$ e3]]] + [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [$_{event}$ e4]]] + [$_{state}$ PAST [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [$_{event}$ e5]]]]

This is not the case. The interpretation of (52) is as in (54), where the eventualities are interpreted as a sequence of events, the habit being formed by this whole sequence of actions. If one event is missing or realized sooner or later, the sequence does not fit the habit (see Gosselin 1999:20 and 30 for a similar observation).

(54) [state HAB for every day included in the implicit reference time [at 5 o'clock [event [e1]] + [event [e2]] + [event [e3]] + [event [e4]] + [event [e5]]]]

This shows that the events denoted by the clauses in the Imparfait have not been coerced into states before being combined with the Imparfait. The implicit habitual operator applies after the tense combines with the eventuality. In fact, it applies on the whole sequence of events.

To analyze the Imparfait as encoding simultaneously a PAST tense operator and an aspectual operator transforming an eventuality into a progressive or habitual state, as in more traditional accounts, would not avoid the problem. In this hypothesis also, one would expect the sequence of Imparfaits in (52) to be interpreted as a sequence of states, which they are not. This is illustrated in (55) where the interpretation of the Imparfait is encoded as PAST-HAB.

(55) [at 5 o'clock [state PAST-HAB [event e1]] + [state PAST-HAB [event e2]] + [state PAST-HAB [event e3]] + [state PAST-HAB [event e4]] + [state PAST-HAB [event e5]]]

In other words, the fact that a series of event descriptions in the Imparfait may be interpreted as denoting a sequence of events shows that event descriptions are not coerced into homogeneous eventualities in order to satisfy the selectional restrictions of the Imparfait.

To summarize, it has been argued that the Imparfait neither selects a homogeneous eventuality nor changes the aspectual class of the eventuality description it combines with. Nevertheless, clauses in

the Imparfait do not move the story line forward, as shown in (56) below, where the event in the Passé Simple in the second sentence is interpreted as simultaneous with the eventuality denoted by the first sentence.

(56) Luc lisait un livre. Jean entra dans la pièce.

'Luc was reading-IMP a book. Jean entered-PS the room.'

This property of clauses in the Imparfait must be accounted for. We suggest below that the event denoted by the eventuality description is interpreted at a level of discourse distinct from that giving rise to the apparently stative interpretation of the sentence in the Imparfait.

4.2 The Imparfait as a predicator on (past) times

The facts discussed above show that an account for the imparfait should not make reference to the aspectual type of the eventuality description it combines with. We suggest that a clause in the Imparfait provides a predication on a temporal referent of discourse. While the Passé Simple simply combines with an eventuality description, the Imparfait selects an eventuality description as internal argument and applies the eventuality description to a subject of predication which is a past temporal referent. This is illustrated schematically in (57)-(58).

(57) PS <ev>

(58) IMP < t, ev>

Assuming (58), the structure of a clause in the Imparfait is as in (59), where the eventuality description is the internal argument of the Imparfait and the temporal referent, its subject of predication.

(59) [Temporal referent [$_{Tense}$ IMP [eventuality description]]]

Thus, the structure of (60a) is as in (60b), where the sentence adverb provides the temporal referent of discourse for the Imparfait.
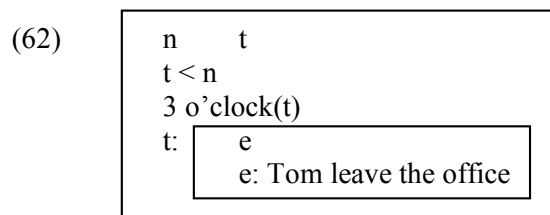
(60) a. *À trois heures*, Tom quittait le bureau.

'At three o'clock, Tom left-IMP the office.'

b. [3 o'clock [$_{event}$ IMP [$_{event}$ Tom leave the office]]]

This allows us to spell-out our proposal for the interpretation of a clause in the Imparfait. Let us suppose that the instructions attached to the Imparfait are the following:

(61) a. Introduce a temporal referent of discourse t in the discourse model, with the condition that t<n.

b. Pick an accessible temporal discourse referent t' and add the condition t = t'.

– If there is a time-denoting sentence adverb α in the clause, introducing the condition $\alpha(t')$, t' is the most accessible temporal discourse referent.

– If there is no time-denoting sentence adverb in the clause, pick as t' the reference point in the narrative (typically the time of the last event mentioned).

[If no appropriate temporal referent is available, posit one by accommodation.]

c. Create a substructure γ in the discourse containing the eventuality description of the clause in the Imparfait.

d. Add on t condition γ .

Thus, a sentence in the Imparfait is true if the eventuality description is a member of the set of eventualities characteristic of t. In this analysis, the Imparfait does not push forward the narrative's action because the eventuality descriptions in the Imparfait do not introduce event or state referents in

the main discourse; they are introduced in a subordinate structure and serve to add a condition on an existing temporal referent. For example, (60a) gives rise to the partial DRS in (62). The time adverbial *à trois heures* 'at three o'clock' introduces in the discourse a temporal referent of discourse with the condition that it be *3 o'clock*. The clause in the Imparfait adds a condition on this referent, namely that the time denoted by it be characterized by the fact that Tom left the office.

(62)

```
+---------------------------------------+
| n       t                             |
| t < n                                 |
| 3 o'clock(t)                          |
| t: +-------------------------------+  |
|    | e                             |  |
|    | e: Tom leave the office       |  |
|    +-------------------------------+  |
+---------------------------------------+
```

In our proposal, sentence adverbials provide an appropriate temporal referent serving as subject of predication for a clause in the Imparfait, but not VP adverbs. A VP adverb is part of the eventuality description and does not constitute a proper temporal referent for the Imparfait. This is why (63) is odd; it becomes natural if a pause is inserted before the adverb (transforming it into a sentence adverb) or if a proper sentence adverbial is provided, like in (64), which has the habitual interpretation in (65). The habitual operator is an implicit coercion operator which allows the eventuality *Tom quittait le bureau à trois heures* to be interpreted as characteristic of *le mois dernier*.

(63)   #Tom quittait le bureau *à trois heures*.

   'Tom left-IMP the office att three o'clock.'

(64)   *Le mois dernier*, Tom quittait le bureau à trois heures.

   'Last month, Tom left the office at three o'clock.'

(65)   [Last month [$_{state}$ C$_{eh(HAB)}$ [$_{event}$ IMP [$_{event}$ Tom leave the office at three o'clock]]]]

Not all sentences in the imparfait contain an overt temporal adverb. In (61b), the clause in the Imparfait functions like a clause containing a pronoun, which picks an accessible referent of discourse and adds to it the condition denoted by the clause in which it figures. For example in (66), the temporal referent is a null pronominal which takes its reference in the most accessible temporal referent in the discourse (in a narrative, typically the reference point).

(66)   Pedro entra dans la cuisine. Marie faisait la vaisselle. (=6a)

       'Pedro entered-PS the kitchen. Mary was doing-IMP the dishes.'

(67)   [*pro* [IMP [Mary do the dishes]]]

As shown in section 4.1, any type of eventuality may be constructed with the Imparfait. The most unmarked case is when the whole duration of the interval of time denoted by a temporal referent is covered by an ongoing state or process. This is a holistic effect stemming from the fact that a clause in the Imparfait denotes a property of a specific interval of time; it is natural to assume that the interval is completely affected by this property.

Bounded events, like the accomplishment in (68), are transformed into their progressive state when the context requires it, as shown in (69). This transition is free because French has no overt progressive operator.

(68)   À trois heures, Tom lisait *Guerre et Paix*.

       'At three o'clock, Tom read-IMP *War and Peace*.' (= was reading)

(69)   [At three o'clock, [$_{state}$ $C_{eh(PROG)}$ [$_{event}$ IMP [$_{event}$ Tom read War and Peace]]]]

The cases where the Imparfait introduces an event that is a proper subpart of the time of reference, as in (41)-(45), follow from what Kleiber (1994 :154-155) calls the *Principle of integrated metonymy*

which states that certain characteristics of certain parts may characterize the whole. Kleiber illustrates this principle with the following example, which may be uttered if a glass of water has been spilled on the floor and only a small portion of the floor is wet:

(70)   Le carrelage est mouillé.

'The tile-flooring is wet.'

Applied to the Imparfait, this principle states that it is possible in some discursive contexts to use an event occupying part of an interval to globally qualify the interval, provided that the event is sensed as sufficiently important to characterize the whole interval of reference. This, we suggest, is what happens in (41)-(45).

Let us now contrast, the Imparfait "de rupture" in (41), repeated below as (71), with the Passé Simple in (72).

(71)   Le lendemain, Tom partait pour Paris.

'The next morning, Tom left-IMP for Paris.'

(72)   Le lendemain, Tom partit pour Paris.

'The next morning, Tom left-PS for Paris.'

The two sentences are very close in meaning. In the present proposal, the main difference between the two is that the Passé Simple introduces an eventuality in the main discourse structure, while the Imparfait introduces the eventuality description into a substructure adding a condition on an existing temporal referent. Thus, sentence (71) differs from (72) in the following way. With (72), one asserts the existence of an event of leaving by Tom, and the adverb is a modifier locating the event. With (71), one states that the time denoted by the adverb has been characterized by some memorable event, namely that Tom left. This is why sentences like (71) are often used in novels to mark the end of an

episode: the use of the Imparfait signals that the time denoted by the adverbial is a turning point in the narrative, as it is marked (characterized) by an event which has a profound effect on the life of the protagonists.

Example (44), repeated below as (73), has given rise to a variety of interpretations. Here again, the Imparfait could easily be replaced by a Passé Composé without change in truth conditions, as shown in (74) (the Passé Simple would not be possible here because the clause is related to the time of speech through the adverb *maintenant* 'now'). However, the Imparfait adds an argumentative value to the clause.

(73)   Les iraniens s'en prennent maintenant aux intérêts américains. Hier, deux banques américaines

       étaient saccagées.   (Ducrot 1979: 9)

       'The Iranians are now attacking American interests. Yesterday, two american banks were ransacked-IMP.'

(74)   Les iraniens s'en prennent maintenant aux intérêts américains. Hier, deux banques américaines

       ont été saccagées.

Regarding (73), Ducrot (1979:9) states that the preceding day *is characterized in relation with a preceding time* when American interests were better respected. Berthonneau and Kleiber (1993:69) propose a "meronomic" account in which the clause in the Imparfait is *a part of* the past situation implicated by the first clause. Vet (1999:71-72) criticizes both accounts and proposes that the Imparfait requires a *discursive topic* which is not necessarily temporal. For him, the discursive topic for the Imparfait is the first clause, and the Imparfait signals a close textual relation with it, in this case, an argumentative relation: "I am saying that because yesterday…". In the account proposed here, the second clause is to be interpreted as saying that *yesterday was characterized by acts of vandalism against American interests*. The clause takes on an argumentative value because the events

characterizing *yesterday* make it possible to present that day as setting the beginning of a new era (continuing *now*) in which American interests are not respected. (The clause in the Passé Composé in (74) differs in that the acts of vandalism are simply localized within *yesterday* instead of being presented as characterizing that day.)

We now turn to the case of sequences of events. We have shown that, in a habitual context like (52) repeated here as (75), the event clauses in the Imparfait are interpreted sequentially. Example (51), repeated as (76), shows that the same is possible in non habitual sentences.

(75) À 5 heures, Jean cessait tout travail intellectuel, retirait ses chaussures, prenait sa pipe, s'enfonçait dans un bon fauteuil et lisait son journal.
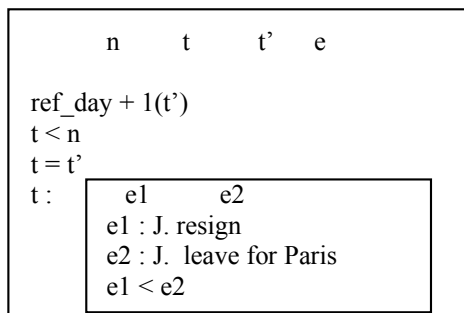
At 5 o'clock, Jean stopped all intellectual work, removed his shoes, took his pipe, sat in a good seat and read his paper.

(76) Le lendemain, Jean donnait sa démission et partait pour Paris.

The next day, John resigned-IMP and left-IMP for Paris.

We suggest that in these cases the events in the Imparfait are introduced in the same subordinate discourse structure. Within the substructure, the events are interpreted sequentially following general rhetorical rules. The sequence of events does not affect the narrative line in the main discourse because in the main structure, the substructure adds a condition on a temporal referent, in this case a complex condition. Thus, (76) gives rise to the partial schematic DRS in (77).

(77) Le lendemain, Jean donnait sa démission et partait pour Paris
　　　'The next day, John resigned-IMP and left-IMP for Paris.'

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           n     t      t'     e               │
│                                               │
│ ref_day + 1(t')                               │
│ t < n                                         │
│ t = t'                                        │
│ t :   ┌──────────────────────────┐            │
│       │    e1       e2            │            │
│       │ e1 : J. resign            │            │
│       │ e2 : J.  leave for Paris  │            │
│       │ e1 < e2                   │            │
│       └──────────────────────────┘            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Similarly for (75), where a habitual operator is added to allow the sequence of events to be interpreted as characteristic of a wider time interval.

This analysis, accounts for both the sequential interpretation of events in the Imparfait and the stative character of a sentence in the Imparfait. A clause in the Imparfait has a stative character because it predicates a (stative) property of a temporal discourse referent.

5.　　CONCLUSION

In this article, we have argued against the hypothesis that the Imparfait selects for a homogeneous eventuality and the Passé Simple for an event. We showed that neither the Imparfait nor the Passé Simple are selective with regards to the aspectual situation they combine with, and they do not inherently operate on a situation type to yield another situation type. Events constructed with the Imparfait are not necessarily coerced or transformed into states or processes. States and processes constructed with the Passé Simple are not necessarily coerced or transformed into events. That aspectual transitions happen with these tenses is to be attributed to some factor other than a specialization of the tenses for a specific type of eventuality.

We proposed that the Passé Simple is a true past tense which introduces a maximal eventuality of a given type in the discourse and localizes it in the past. Rhetorical relations determine how the eventuality is interpreted in context. In a narrative, the unmarked case is that an event follows the last

event introduced. But when a state or process follows an event, the general rule is a simultaneous interpretation.

The Imparfait selects for an eventuality as internal argument and for a (past) temporal referent of discourse as external argument. Its role is to introduce the eventuality as a condition on the temporal referent. The temporal referent which is the subject of predication of a clause in the Imparfait is an overt or covert sentence adverb (except perhaps in individual-level predications on an individual no longer in existence, where the subject may provide the temporal referent). If covert, it functions as a pronominal taking its reference in an accessible temporal referent of discourse, generally the last one introduced. In some cases, a temporal referent is introduced into the discourse by accommodation, in order to lead to a coherent interpretation.

We have shown that the aspectual transitions observed in the interpretations of clauses in the Imparfait and in the Passé Simple, are not due to the tenses *per se*. They are brought about by the need to construct a coherent interpretation, given the context and the semantic contribution of the tense. Rhetorical rules of interpretation play a major role in determining the preferred interpretation of a clause in context.

The analysis proposed for the Imparfait accounts in a unified way for a wide range of facts. As it is, however, it does not account for the use of the Imparfait in conditional or counterfactual contexts (e.g., *Si tu gagnais le prix, tu démissionnerais.* 'If you win-IMP the price, you would resign-COND'). This is so because we have assumed that the time of reference for the Imparfait is specified as preceding "now". If this condition is relaxed, the proposed account opens the way for a more comprehensive account of the Imparfait. The development of this more comprehensive account is beyond the scope of this article, but it relies on the idea that the Imparfait could take as subject of predication, not only a time preceding "now", but alternatively a time of reference belonging to a different world. In both cases, the Imparfait would introduce a condition on this time. Thus, the idea

that the Imparfait introduces a condition on a temporal referent of discourse goes much beyond the typical use of the Imparfait as describing an ongoing situation in the past; its paves the way for the development of a unified analysis of all uses of the Imparfait.

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