Session 3 Temporal reference in narratives
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Global question: assuming a comparable knowledge base concerning the events presented in the film, what factors are imposed by language structure at the level of global planning when re-narrating the content of the film ?

1. Introduction
Speakers' task
Sequencing principles form the underlying structure of a narrative. Speakers are asked to provide an answer to *what happened (to x) at t*n? *what happened (to x) at t1? what happened (to x) at t*2? *what happened (to x) at t*n?. In the process of planning the speaker must select information from his knowledge base which fits the mould *what happen,* present the event under a perspective and link selected events in sequence.

Grammatical feature
Impact of +/- ongoing aspect with respect to event selection, perspective taking on events and linking.

Variables: crosslinguistic comparison of patterns of event construal (bounded *vs* unbounded events, holistic *vs* ongoing aspect *vs* phasal decomposition) and temporal *vs* causal dominant linkage.

Elicitation task: Renarration of a silent film featuring a sandman's desperate quest for water which takes him from one hostile world to another elicited by *what happened to the little creature/sandman?*

Data base three groups (n= 20 per group) of native speakers of German L1, English L1, French L1 and two groups of advanced learners of English with German and French as source languages.

Contrast progressive form and present form (English) *vs* no grammatical distinction of this form in German and French
With ongoing aspect the reference point is 'now you see' as expressed by *be + -ing*. The time about which you talk (topic time) is fully included in the time during which the action lasts**.**
Ex 1   *and he's walking through this area*
            and he hears the drip again
            and sees this moist area on this piece of paper
            so he gets excited
            and he runs over

Time interval for 'walking through this area' may continue during interval which holds for 'hears the drip', 'sees this most area', and 'gets excited'

In German and French with the present tense form to construe unambiguous meaning requires extra information delivered by arguments, adjuncts, text structure and global context.

Ex 2   *Il boit* 'he is a drunk'

Il boit du café le matin 'he drinks coffee in the morning'

Il boit son café et sort 'he drinks up his cup of coffee and leaves'

2. Underlying frame of reference and associated perspectives in L1s

L1 English Two patterns of deictic organization

- Reference point 'now you see' as expressed by *be + -ing*

Ex. 3   *and this piece of paper is coming straight for him*

Embedded actions which happen while paper coming straight for him

and he's scared
and he jumps on his knees
and the paper misses him

- Explicit 'then you see'

Ex. 4   *and **you see** a form in the sand*
and there's a bottle lying near to the form
***and then you see** an eye*
an eye opens
***and then** a figure stands up*
*and **you realize***
it's some sort of animal or person
he reaches out (...) for a bottle
that's lying near to him
and lifts up the bottle
and tries to get something out of it (...)
***and then you hear** the sound of water dripping / one drop*
and the figure tries to find the drop
***and then** as the figure starts to dig*
the sand starts to flow downwards

Time-event relations in English film retellings

English speakers follow a deictic frame of reference whereby events are explicitly presented as witnessed (*then you see, then you see NP Ving*) or implicitly as deictic point reference (Be + -Ing). The time span that the speaker views as 'now' paraphrased as 'it is now the case that x is happening' covers a set of events coded in the present that are hooked up to this point of reference. All types of situations bounded and unbounded, and ongoing events (expressed by the progressive) may form a part of the sequence. **Thus we can say that the temporal frame is structured so as to allow the incorporation of ongoing events into the narrative sequence.**

L1 German shift in time

Ex. 5   *und wacht **dann** so langsam auf* 'and wakes then slowly up'

und schaut sich um 'and looks around'
*und sieht **dann** die flasche vor sich liegen* 'and sees then the bottle lying in front of him'
nimmt die flasche 'takes the bottle'
und guckt 'and looks'
ob da wasser drin ist 'if there is water in it'
***dann** steht er so langsam auf* 'then he gets slowly up'
und kniet so 'and kneels down'
und guckt sich um 'and looks around'
*und **dann** donnert es plötzlich* 'and then there is suddenly thunder'
und er hört 'and he hears'
wie wassertropfen in den sand fallen 'how water drops fall in the sand'

Time-event relations in German film retellings
In German narrative events are temporally linked as shifts on a time line that relate to the right boundary of the preceding event. The preferred option for the narrative sequence centers on events that have reached some point of completion (inherent change in state or bounded events) which is brought about by an animate agent. The reference point is given by the endpoint of the preceding event in the temporal chain (its right boundary).

L1 French temporal and causal frame of reference
Ex. 6   *donc il se lève* 'so he gets up'
il se met à creuser autour de lui dans ce sable 'and starts to dig around the sand'
et puis en creusant autour de lui 'and by digging'
il forme comme une espèce d'entonnoir 'he forms a sort of funnel'
et il est aspiré à l'intérieur de ce sable 'he is aspirated inside this sand'
et il disparaît au fond du sable au fond du trou 'and diappears in the bottom of the hole'

Ex. 7   *et il aperçoit un endroit humide* 'and <u>he</u> perceives a humid spot'
***donc** il s'en approche* '**so** <u>he</u> approaches it'
il commence à tâter '<u>he</u> starts to tap'
il sent que c'est humide '<u>he</u> feels that it is humid'
*et **donc** il lève ses mains vers le ciel* 'and **so** <u>he</u> lifts his hands towards the sky'

Time-event relations in French film retellings
 The narrative sequence centers on a temporal and causal frame of reference that incorporates a relatively high number of bounded events and predicates expressing intentions, goal, reactions, perceptive and cognitive events reflecting the viewpoint of the protagonist or of the narrator as interpreter. This gives a 'two-layered' form of macrostructural organization based on temporal shift or causal with both the narrator as well as the protagonist establishing coherence between events.

2. Underlying frame of reference and associated perspectives in L2s

Time-event relations in German L1 English L2 film retellings

Ex. 8   **and then** he hears water drop
and tries to localise
where it comes from

and then he starts digging in the sand
and as he digs in the sand
suddenly the sand starts moving underneath him
and forms a hole
and then he falls into that hole

Time-event relations in French L1-English L2 film retellings

Ex. 9   *and then suddenly you can hear water dripping*
and he thinks
that there is water underneath
and he starts digging for water madly
and then (at) once *there's a hole in the sand*
and the hole gets bigger and bigger
the sand slides down
and he gets caught

Percentages of events in the narrative sequence having reached a point of completion

Table 1 Bounded vs. Unbounded events

	L1 English	L1 French	L1 German	L1 German L2 English	L1 French L2 English
Bounded	27.4 %	48.6 %	51.4 %	34.4 %	43.2 %
Unbounded	44.7 %	29.2 %	20.2 %	33.9 %	30.1 %

Percentages do not include utterances with inchoative aspect *he starts*, modal *he wants,* and states

Table 2 Linkage and the role of temporal versus causal relations

	L1 English	L1 French	L1 German	L1 German L2 English	L1 French L2 English
Temporal	61.8 %	33.1 %	91.1 %	66.7%	40.5%
Causal	38.1 %	66.8 %	8.9 %	32.2%	59.5%

French and German learners construct a frame of reference based on temporal shift as in their respective L1s but percentages of temporal versus causal relations shows that German learners have recognized the role of causal over temporal relations in linking utterances as compared to the role of cause in German. This is not the case for French learners who have not yet acquired the target language principles, given the number of causal relations.

3. Ongoingness in learners' narratives
In English L1 there are strict constraints in switching from bounded events (simple tense) to ongoing events within an event sequence. Transition is typically mediated by reference to a state *A pile of stone pushes him up out of the ground <u>and he is on the top of the hill</u> and he is looking down* or by the narrator 'you see' *A pile of stone pushes him up out of*

the ground and <u>you see</u> him looking around.
 In the two following examples of learner narratives the ongoing events do not have an appropriate anchor given the fact that the two previous events form a sequence.

Ex. 10 L1French–L2English
    and as he is walking
    there are rocks emerging from the floor around him
    and as he keeps on walking
    one of these big piles of rock rises up under his feet
    so he ends up at the summit of the rocks
    <u>and he is just trying to look around</u>
    to see what's happening

Ex. 11 L1German–L2English
    at first he is little bit amazed
    but after a few seconds he gets up
    and is <u>looking around</u>

Discussion on the role of ongoingness and time event relations
Options in time event construal show a correlation between restriction to the present tense (which goes with temporal shift, predominance of boundedness and specification of components) and the progressive form (which goes with inclusion strategy, coding with -Ing forms and unboundedness). This confirms the prominent role played by obligatory linguistic categories: available grammatical categories not only create meanings but also guide the attention of the speakers as suggests choices observed in the English retellings. We postulate that the aspectual grammaticised distinctions provided by the –Ing forms influences the way events are **selected**, **conceptualized and organized.**

Adult native speakers have gradually learned how to accommodate the requirements of a communicative task (establish a sequence of events) with the specific grammatical structure of their language. In this process they have derived guidelines/principles that determine choices made in information structure at all levels of text construction.

Hurdles in L2
Because of their multidimensional complexity and the level in which these principles operate in the production process, language learners tend to maintain the basic selection patterns of their source language (temporal/causal shift).

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