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# Foregrounding in English relative clauses\*

ILSE DEPRAETERE

## Abstract

*The aim of this article is twofold: first, we want to delineate the defining criteria of the foreground. In order to list its necessary and sufficient characteristics, critical observations are made on the claim that the rule of foregrounding is an implicature and that foregrounding only occurs in past-tense main clauses. The issue whether it is (un)boundedness rather than (a)telicity that determines whether a situation belongs to the foreground is also dealt with.*

*The second aim of this paper is to find out whether foregrounding is possible in (non)restrictive relative clauses in English. Answering this question involves applying the criteria determined in part A to relative clauses. The observations made are based on corpus examples and on the results of an elicitation test.*

## 1. Introduction

The *foreground* of a narrative text is constituted by temporally ordered events that are narrated in the same linear order as they take place in the narrative world; it is a sequence of consecutive situations that make up the backbone of a story.

Most linguists agree that narrative time only moves forward in main clauses. Nonrestrictive relative clauses (NRRCs) are exceptional in this respect: the so-called continuative NRRCs (Jespersen 1961: 105) can be paraphrased by means of “and then (s)he ...” if the relative pronoun is replaced by a personal one:

- (1) a. She gave the letter to the clerk, *who copied it*.
- b. There was a movement behind them and Hugo, *who had*

disappeared for a moment, reappeared carrying a chair, *which he placed beside Andre* and invited him to be seated (LOB).<sup>1</sup>

In other words, this type of subclause appears to be a counterexample to the general rule that stipulates that foregrounding is restricted to main clauses. The situation referred to in a restrictive relative clause (RRC) may also be posterior to the main-clause situation:

- (2) a. Rummaging among the remains of our provisions I found a bottle *with which I made numerous marks* on the ground surrounding our tents and a few yards into the jungle, as far as I dared venture (LOB).
- b. General relief was expressed, but monsieur V (this was actually reported in the next issue) returned home and shot himself, leaving a note *which again left his household goods to the superintendent* (LOB).

However, one might wonder whether the similarity is complete. At first sight, the action seems to be pushed forward more assertively in the NRRC than in the RRC, which poses the problem, is reference to a posterior situation a sufficient condition for a situation to belong to the foreground? To answer this question we need to list the requirements a sentence must meet in order for the situation it refers to to be foregrounded.

Section 2 sketches the general theoretical background: it evaluates the characterizing features commonly attributed to the foreground, lays bare some definitional inaccuracies, and in this way determines the defining criteria of the foreground. Special attention is paid to the following issues:

1. Is the rule of foregrounding an implicature (section 2.2)?
2. Is it (un)boundedness rather than (a)telicity that determines whether a sentence belongs to the foreground (section 2.3)?
3. Is foregrounding restricted to sequences of past-tense sentences or can other tense-type sentences also refer to foregrounded situations (section 2.4)?
4. What is the relevance of the given/new distinction (section 2.6) and the syntactic status of the clause (section 2.5) to foregrounding?

In section 3, we apply the observations made to RCs. In particular, an answer is formulated to the following question: do posterior situations in English relative clauses (RCs) constitute foregrounded information? It will be shown that this question must be answered positively. The observations made are based on corpus examples from the London–Oslo–Bergen (LOB) corpus and the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) corpus and on the results of an elicitation test.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Defining the foreground of a text

### 2.1. *Movement of time in (a) discourse analysis and (b) studies about reference time (RT)*

a. The notions of *foreground* and *background* have been extensively discussed in the field of discourse analysis. It is examined how the movement of time is brought about in narratives, a narrative being "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred" (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 20). The foreground may be defined as the "linguistic material which charts the progress of a narrative through time, while the background is durative and descriptive material which serves to embellish and elaborate upon the foreground" (Ehrlich 1987: 363). The following examples, in which the foregrounded clauses are italicized, illustrate how the distinction should be understood:

- (3) a. [Dozing a little, Alleyn sat slumped forward in his seat] *A violent jerk woke him.* The train had slowed down. *He wiped the misty windowpane, shaded his eyes, and tried to look out into this new country.* The moon had risen. He saw arching hills, stumps of burnt trees, some misty whiteflowering scrub, and a lonely road. It was very remote and strange. ... *He turned to see Susan dab at her eyes with a handkerchief. She gave him a deprecatory smile* (Dry 1981: 234).
- b. *Nick opened the door and went into the room.* Ole Anderson was lying on the bed with all his clothes on. He had been a heavyweight prizefighter and he was too long for the bed. He lay with his head on two pillows. He did not look at Nick. "*What was it?*" he asked (Reinhart 1984: 783).

The three basic characteristics determining the foreground/background status of a sentence are said to be

1. Achievements/accomplishments (Vendler 1967) belong to the foreground, states/activities (Vendler 1967) belong to the background.
2. Main clauses carry the action forward, subclauses do not.
3. Events (common denominator for achievements and accomplishments) belong to the foreground only if the linear order in which they are reported coincides with the order in which the situations take place in the narrative world.<sup>3</sup>

The last characteristic stipulates that in *He arrived. He had gone fishing.*, the second situation does not belong to the foreground: although there is reference to a sequence of events, the linear order of the report (arriv-

ing — fishing) does not reflect the order in which the situations took place (fishing — arriving).

b. The principle of foregrounding is also dealt with — be it under somewhat different labels — in studies about RT. In one of its uses, *RT* indicates the situation or time that functions as position of evaluation for the interpretation of an utterance. The following examples from McCawley (1973) illustrate how RT should be understood:

- (4) The Lone Ranger broke the window<sub>*t*<sub>1</sub></sub> with the barrel of his gun, took<sub>*t*<sub>2</sub></sub> aim, and pulled<sub>*t*<sub>3</sub></sub> the trigger (McCawley 1973: 269).

McCawley writes,

*t*<sub>2</sub> contains implicit reference to *t*<sub>1</sub> (“shortly after *t*<sub>1</sub>”) and *t*<sub>3</sub> contains an implicit reference to *t*<sub>2</sub> (“shortly after *t*<sub>2</sub>”). If we in fact say that *t*<sub>1</sub> is the antecedent of *t*<sub>2</sub> and that *t*<sub>2</sub> is the antecedent of *t*<sub>3</sub>, then Langacker’s constraint [a pronoun must be preceded or commanded by its antecedent] explains why [4] is not equivalent to:

The Lone Ranger pulled the trigger, took aim, and broke the window with the barrel of his gun. (McCawley 1973: 269).

Various versions of a rule of RT-progression have been proposed: they are meant to explain why the RT is shifted in some cases, which results in a sequential reading. An event is said to trigger RT-progression, whereas a state or an activity does not; that is, when a state is introduced, we do not move the position at which we had arrived after processing the last sentence, whereas in the case of events, we move forward. Let us take an event<sub>1</sub>–state–event<sub>2</sub> sequence to illustrate the principle of RT-progression as it is formulated by for instance Partee (1984). The introduction of an event coincides with the introduction of a new reference point (position of evaluation) that lies just after event<sub>1</sub>. From this position we will evaluate the state which follows and event<sub>2</sub> (as states do not trigger RT-progression). The introduction of event<sub>2</sub> again coincides with the introduction of a new reference point, which lies after the event itself. Partee visualizes the principle as follows:

- (5) Jameson entered the room, shut the door carefully  

$$\begin{array}{ccc} e_1 & & e_2 \\ \text{and switched off the light. It was pitch dark around him,} & & \\ e_3 & & s_1 \\ \text{because the Venetian blinds were closed (Partee 1984: 254).} & & \\ & & s_2 \end{array}$$

$r_0 \ e_1 \ r_1 \ e_2 \ r_2 \ e_3 \ r_3 \ s_1 \ s_2 \ r_s$   
 $\cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot$

$e_1 \subseteq r_0$

$e_1 < r_1 < r_s$

$e_2 \subseteq r_1$

$e_2 < r_2 < r_s$

$e_3 \subseteq r_2$

$e_3 < r_3 < r_s$

$r_3 \subseteq s_1$

$r_3 \subseteq s_2$

$e_1$ : Jameson enter the room

...

$e_2$ : ...

“[ $e$  stands for *event*,  $r_0$  is the given past reference time and  $r_s$  is the present reference time]” (Partee 1984: 255).

The fact that a state includes the RT of the preceding situation but not necessarily the event that led to the introduction of the RT explains why a state need not overlap with the preceding event. The inchoative state *It was pitch dark around him* in Partee’s example is a case in point:  $s_1$  overlaps with  $r_3$  but not with  $e_3$ . Dowty’s (1986) and Nerbonne’s (1986)<sup>4</sup> versions of the rule of RT-progression differ slightly from Partee’s proposal. They argue that RT moves irrespective of the nature of the newly introduced situation; pragmatic knowledge will decide whether it overlaps with the preceding situation or not. In this way, examples with inchoative states can also be accounted for. In the discussion that follows, “shift of RT” and “foregrounding” refer to the same phenomenon.

c. Most of the above-mentioned characterizing features of the foreground-background distinction/rule of RT-progression have been challenged. The counterexamples are indeed numerous:

- (6) a. At the signal, everyone went to work at once. Mary searched the room for any of the items on the list that might be there. John went to the next door to do the same in Bill’s apartment. Susan organized the rest of the players to canvas the block (Dowty 1986: 58; the event clauses refer to simultaneous situations).
- b. The choir sang “Glory to God in the highest.” Margaret sang the recitative (Cooper 1986: 33; the event in the second sentence is anterior to that in the first).
- c. John went over the day’s perplexing events. Suddenly, he was

- fast asleep (Dowty 1986: 50; the inchoative situation follows an activity in the first clause).
- d. They lifted the minister from his bed. He *incited* the people to revolt (Vet and Molendijk 1986: 151; the activity precedes the event in the first clause).
  - e. The king was born, reigned, and died (Hataav 1989: 513; the activity in the second clause follows the event in the first clause).

## 2.2. Implicature status of rule of RT-progression/foregrounding

Declerck (1991a: 119), Dowty (1986: 58), and Nerbonne (1986: 91, 94) point out that “RT-progression”-like rules are conversational implicatures: the pragmatico-semantic meaning of an utterance may override the general rule that events refer to subsequent situations and states and activities overlap with the preceding situations. However, I do not believe that the so-called counterexamples given in (6) provide evidence for the claim that the rule of RT-progression/foregrounding is an implicature. As the temporal order follows from the semantics and pragmatics of the situations, there is no need to appeal to rules of implicated temporal order. There is indeed a discrepancy between the claim that the RT-progression rule is an implicature and the examples given to substantiate that claim, in which the pragmatics and semantics imply — almost without exception — a certain chronology (cf. Schopf 1991: 248–249). The following examples provide evidence to this effect; our knowledge of the world dictates the temporal interpretation:

- (7) a. John went to the door and knocked three times. The door opened slowly (Declerck 1991a: 124).

There is a logical<sup>5</sup> order between the situations: it is logical to move closer to a door before knocking on it and knocking on a door usually occurs before it is opened. A similar comment applies to the following example:

- (7) b. He moved to London and found a job there as a teacher. He courted a girl named Mary and married her (Declerck 1991a: 124).

The adverbial *there* in the second clause implies that finding a job happens after moving to London.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, it is a usual rule to court a girl before marrying her. Couper-Kuhlen (1987: 10) points out that in *Al went to New York. The others were there once too*, the second situation may hold after, before, or at the same time as the situation in the first

clause. However, she fails to notice that due to the presence of the adverbial *once* an interpretation in terms of anteriority will be preferred. Evidence for the implicature status of RT-progression rules can only be derived from examples in which the contents or pragmatics do not contribute at all to establishing a chronological order:

(8) a. She met the man of her life and got married.

The unmarked interpretation of this sentence that follows from the rule of RT-progression/foregrounding is that the meeting precedes the marriage. However, this temporal order is implicated, witness the fact that it can be cancelled:

(8) b. She met the man of her life and got married, but not in that order.

It is only examples such as (8) that justify the claim that RT-progression rules are implicatures.

The conclusion to be drawn is the following: the temporal order between situations can usually be derived from their semantics and pragmatics. Rules of RT-progression and foregrounding only need to be called upon if there are no clear indications to this effect. The temporal order is in that case implicated: events constitute a sequence, whereas states and activities overlap.

### 2.3. (A)telicity or (un)boundedness?

The above claim that the semantics and pragmatics of the situations determine the temporal order is only a partial truth. As stressed by, for example, Reinhart (1984), it is to a certain degree a choice on the part of the narrator whether a situation will be presented as belonging to the foreground. A particular situation may indeed be presented as for instance an activity (cf. [9b]) or as an event (cf. [9a]) or as an unbounded<sup>7</sup> state (cf. [10a]) or a bounded state (cf. [10b]). It will be clear that the temporal interpretation crucially depends on decisions of that kind:

- (9) a. He arrived on time. *She drew a picture of him.* He left again.
- b. He arrived on time. *She was drawing.* He left again.
- c. He arrived on time. *She was drawing a picture of him.* He left again.

In (9a), unlike in (9b) and (9c), the situation as it is represented in the second clause is part of a sequence. Similarly, in (10a), the speaker decides not to mention the length of time John waits for Mary. As a



result, the situation in the last clause in (10b) is likely to be understood as happening after that in the third clause, whereas in (10a), it occurs while John is waiting for Mary:

- (10) a. John arrived at 5 o'clock sharp. Mary was nowhere to be seen. *He waited for her* and called up one of her friends.  
 b. John arrived at 5 o'clock sharp. Mary was nowhere to be seen. *He waited for five minutes* and called up one of her friends.

In other words, it is not the extralinguistic situations as such that determine whether a particular situation precedes, follows, or coincides with another, but rather the semantics and pragmatics of the situation as it is represented in the sentence. The speaker himself plays an important role through his decision to use, for instance, either a progressive or a non-progressive form.<sup>8</sup>

The examples in (9) and (10) show that, in spite of the fact that most of the rules of RT-progression and foregrounding are formulated in terms of Aktionsart classes (achievement, accomplishment, state, activity), it is in fact (un)boundedness that is the decisive factor determining whether a situation belongs to the foreground or background. Before examining how this problem has been analyzed by others, it may be useful to briefly explain the concepts (*un*)boundedness and (*a*)telicity, introduced by Declerck (1991a) and analyzed in detail in Depraetere (1995). A sentence is bounded if it represents a situation as having reached a temporal boundary (Depraetere 1995: 3) (cf. [11]), otherwise it is unbounded (cf. [12]):

- (11) a. Sheila fainted (bounded telic).  
 b. She has lived in London before (bounded atelic).  
 c. She deliberately stayed on until 2 a.m., just to annoy her husband (bounded telic).  
 d. She swam from 1 till 1.30 p.m. (bounded telic or bounded atelic).  
 e. From that moment onwards, she distrusted him (bounded atelic).  
 (12) a. She is knitting a sweater (unbounded telic).  
 b. She lives on the corner of Russell Square (unbounded atelic).  
 c. She goes there every week (unbounded atelic).

A situation may be bounded to the left and unbounded to the right (cf. [11e]), it may be bounded to the right and unbounded to the the left (cf. [11b], [11c]), or it may be bounded on both sides (cf. [11a], [11d]). (Un)boundedness is not synonymous with (a)telicity (Aktionsart). A

sentence is telic if the situation is described as having an inherent (cf. [11a] and [12a]) or intended (cf. [11c], possible interpretation of [11d]) endpoint that has to be reached for the situation (as it is described in the clause) to be complete and beyond which it cannot continue (Depraetere 1995: 3). (A)telicity has to do with HAVING an endpoint, (un)boundedness has to do with REACHING a temporal boundary. The examples in (12) show that unboundedness does not entail that a progressive form is used: although a progressive form establishes an unbounded reading in most cases (cf. Depraetere 1995: 5 for exceptions), an unbounded sentence does not necessarily contain a progressive form (cf. [12b], [12c]).

Although foregrounding and RT-progression rules are mostly formulated in terms of the Vendlerian Aktionsart classes (i.e. [a]telicity), the question whether it is (a)telic situations rather than (un)bounded situations that trigger a shift of RT has not gone entirely unnoticed.

Couper-Kuhlen (1987: 16), for instance, argues that (a)telicity is too narrow a concept to account for all the examples containing foregrounded clauses. Her examples are intended to prove that “certain non-telic [atelic] predicates will also be understood to refer to events in succession in narration” (Couper-Kuhlen 1987: 16):

(13) The balloon popped. The child jumped (Couper-Kuhlen 1987: 16).

The first clause is bounded telic. If the second clause is interpreted as a single action (bounded telic), there is reference to a sequence (cf. [13a]). However, the second clause could also refer to an iterative situation, in which case the child starts jumping as a result of the sudden explosion of the balloon; that is, the second situation is bounded to the left (cf. [13b]):

- (13) a. X X  
 b. X X——

A similar comment applies to the following example:

(14) The guide looked up at the sky. The tourists looked up at the sky (Couper-Kuhlen 1987: 16).

If the situations in (14) are interpreted as telic and bounded, there is reference to a sequence: the guide looks up at the sky and as a result all the tourists look up at the sky. The difference with the example in (13) is that, in the telic reading, the situations referred to in (14) are “punktuelle Veränderung[en]” (Schopf 1984: 241), that is, referring to an action plus a resulting state of affairs; those in (13) are “punktuelle[s] Ereignis[se]” (Schopf 1984: 243). The course of events in (14) could be represented as follows:

- (14) a. X——  
X——

In other words, on the bounded telic reading, the actions of looking up at the sky follow each other and the resulting states are simultaneous. When *look up at the sky* is interpreted as atelic and unbounded, the situations occur simultaneously (both the guide and the tourists are looking up at the sky).

- (14) b. ——  
——

In other words, Couper-Kuhlen's examples are not unequivocally bounded on both sides either.

Aristar Dry (1983) also touches upon the (un)boundedness–(a)telicity issue. When describing the factors that result in a situation being understood as foregrounded, Aristar Dry (1983) rejects the view expressed in an earlier article of hers (Dry 1981) that it is a change of state that triggers the movement of RT, it is “reference to sequenced temporal points which triggers the illusion of time movement; and [...] the points most often referred to are initial and final points of situations” (Aristar Dry 1983: 47).

Hatav's (1989) treatment of the problem is most clarifying: she explicitly points out that the Vendlerian classes do not suffice to define the foreground and argues that what are here called bounded atelic situations may be foregrounded or “located on the time line,” as she puts it. In her opinion, it is reference to the endpoint of a situation that determines whether a situation belongs to the foreground or not. She puts it as follows:

Situations have end points iff they are contained in their RT, 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 or (b) their duration is restricted by overt linguistic marking, for example, adverbials such as “for three hours” (Hatav 1989: 487).

The logical outcome of this approach is that bounded states or activities may also be foregrounded (1989: 487). Hatav illustrates her claim with examples from Biblical Hebrew, Russian, and French:

- (15) Quand on fut exténué, on fit la paix (Hatav 1989: 491).

The sentence means that peace could only be made once a certain stage had been reached, that is, when they were tired. This implies reference

to a point of transition: they no longer feel like fighting (= endpoint), they are tired (= initial point). *Fut extenué* refers to both to the moment when they became tired and the fact that they were tired. The situation could be represented as follows, “X” being the transitional moment when they become tired:

———— X ————

Depending on the point of view one assumes, the situation may be said to be bounded to the right (the period of feeling like fighting is over) or bounded to the left (the period of feeling tired has started). In other words, the example in (15) does not really differ from the inchoative state example in (6c); the situation in the first clause is not bounded on both sides. Even so, the fact that such situations may belong to the foreground (may trigger R-progression) can already be taken as an indication that the important criterion is indeed (un)boundedness rather than (a)telicity.

The above observations prove that foregrounding/movement of RT should be formulated in terms of (un)boundedness rather than (a)telicity or Vendlerian situation types. However, in the examples with which that claim has so far been substantiated the situations are not bounded “on both sides”; the states or activities in (13) to (15) are bounded to the left or to the right. The examples in (16) do contain bounded atelic situations and show that they may indeed belong to the foreground:

- (16) a. There was a small ivory push button beside the door marked “405.” I pushed it (...) and *waited for what seemed a long time*. Then the door opened noiselessly about a foot (Couper-Kuhlen 1989b: 15–16).
- b. He signed a contract with IBM, *for whom he worked for three years*.

Apart from showing that atelic bounded sentences may push the action forward, example (16a) again shows that the semantics and pragmatics of the clauses play a crucial role in determining whether narrative time moves forward or not. Even if *for what seemed a long time* is not added to the verb *waited*, our knowledge of the world will tell us that opening the door puts an end to the situation of waiting. In other words, any kind of situation in a main clause can move the narrative time if such a shift is dictated by our knowledge of the world. In any case, inchoative-state examples (i.e. examples that are bounded to the left), as in (17), also justify the conclusion that it is (un)boundedness rather than (a)telicity that is important for the foreground–background distinction:

- (17) Mr Darby slapped his forehead, then collected himself and opened the door again. *The brush man was smiling at him hesitantly* (Hinrichs 1986: 69–79).<sup>9</sup>

#### 2.4. *Foregrounding and tense*

It is striking that most of the discussions are based on past-tense sentences. The almost exclusive consideration of past-tense examples in the discourse discussions may be related to the topic of investigation, that is, narrative, which typically uses the narrative past or the historic present, as in the following example:

- (18) Suddenly the door swings open and a man rushes into the room. He snatches Maud's handbag from her hands and disappears through the French window. We were so flabbergasted that he was gone before any one of us reacted (Declerck 1991b: 89).

However, the exclusive focus on past-tense examples in the RT discussions cannot be justified by an intrinsic reason, as RT is important for any sentence type.<sup>10</sup> Couper-Kuhlen (1989a) argues that “other tenses in sequence (including Past Perfect, Future and Present) can be used equally well as the Past to represent a chain of events iconically” (1989a: 12), a claim she illustrates with the following sequences of past-perfect and future-tense sentences (cf. also Dowty 1986: 57–58):

- (19) a. While we were talking about it, a pair of plain-clothes men brought in the red-faced bird who had stopped the slug I had missed Whisper with. It *had broken* a rib for him, and he *had taken* a back-door sneak while the rest of us were busy. Noonan's men *had picked* him up in a doctor's office (Couper-Kuhlen 1987: 24).
- b. (...) You'll *be disappointed* first. Then, without being able to say how or when it happened, you'll *find* you've forgotten your disappointment, and the first thing you know you'll *be telling* her your life's story, and all your troubles and hopes ... (Couper-Kuhlen 1989a: 11–12).

However, although the situations in Couper-Kuhlen's examples clearly follow each other, in the past-perfect example, the situations do not seem to belong to the foreground in the way the past-tense sentences in (20) (or the present-tense sentences in [18]) do:

- (20) John went to the door and knocked three times. The door opened slowly (Declerck 1991a: 124).

Although intuitively, the distinguishing quality of the sentences that are “genuinely” foregrounded can easily be appreciated, it is difficult to pin down their characterizing “assertiveness”; that is, the situations are described as though they are taking place before one’s eyes. To capture this idea, one might say that the foregrounded situation typically takes place in the narrative present, that is, the here-and-now of the fictional or narrated world. The following definitions of foreground (rather implicitly) refer to this requirement:

The foreground of a narrative consists of the sequence of temporally ordered clauses in which the “NARRATIVE EVENTS” of the story (...) are set forth (...). Backgrounded clauses are not “on the time line,” i.e. they are not ordered with respect to one another (...) (Fleischman 1985: 857; emphasis added).

It is evidently a universal of narrative discourse that in any extended text an overt distinction is made between the language of the ACTUAL STORY LINE and the language of supportive material which does not itself narrate the main events. I refer to the former — the parts of the narrative which relate events belonging to the skeletal structure of the discourse — as FOREGROUND and the latter as BACKGROUND (Hopper 1979: 213; emphasis added).

Although it is not made explicit what is meant exactly by *narrative events* or *actual story line*,<sup>11</sup> in my opinion, this is the direction in which the extra condition for what is “prototypically” understood under the label *foregrounding* has to be looked for. Aristar Dry (1983) refers to Sternberg (1978), who defines the time line as “the reflection of the narrative’s normal ratio of reading time to represented time” (Aristar Dry 1983: 21). A definition along these lines entails that the situations referred to cannot take up a long time if they are to be on the time line. Aristar Dry illustrates her definition with the following examples, the situations in (21a) being on the time line, those in (21b) off the time line:

- (21) a. Mary pressed her lips together and looked across at John (Aristar Dry 1983: 21).  
 b. Mary kept house for John until she grew feeble; then she moved in with her daughter (Aristar Dry 1983: 21).

I would not go as far as claiming that a situation can only be part of the foreground provided the time needed to read the sentence coincides more or less with the time taken up by the situations in question. However, Aristar Dry’s approach is illuminating in that she reserves the possibility of foregrounding to situations that belong to the narrative present, or as she puts it, “situations that are on the time line” — be it a rather restricted notion of what constitutes the time line. From now onward, *time line* should be understood to mean *narrative present*.

Although bounded situations referred to in the narrative present or past tense push the action forward more “assertively” (or to put it more accurately, more “prototypically”) than the corresponding sentences in the past perfect, the use of the past/present tense as such is not a necessary condition for foregrounding. In other words, the use of relative tenses, which grammaticalize the temporal relations between situations, does not as such exclude the possibility of foregrounding. In example (19a), for instance, the past-perfect sentences all indicate anteriority with respect to the same time of orientation; it is not the case that each situation is represented as anterior to the situation mentioned before, which is the case in (22):

- (22) He had said on Friday he had met the day before the actress who had been given a prize for her performance in “Steel.”

As was stipulated in connection with characteristic 3 of the foreground, it is the use of a “directly bound”<sup>12</sup> past-perfect sentence that rules out the foregrounding option, as these do not meet the requirement that the order in which the situations are reported should coincide with the order in which they take place in the narrative world. In sequences of the type given in (19a), which Declerck (1991a) calls “indirectly bound” past-perfect sentences, there may be reference to foregrounded situations. In other words, foregrounding requires (1) a sequence of sentences in which absolute tenses are used, that is, tenses that all relate a situation to the time of the utterance (be it a sequence of past-tense, present-tense, or future-tense sentences) or (2) a set of indirectly bound past-perfect sentences in which there is reference to a sequence (cf. example [19a]). This generalization should still be somewhat modified because a sequence of sentences with a present perfect, which may also be considered as an absolute tense, cannot establish a foregrounded reading. As has already been pointed out by, for example, Declerck (1991a: 131–132), Dušková (1974: 70), and Haegeman (1989: 310), the present perfect differs from the past tense as regards the temporal interpretation triggered by the relevant forms (sequence vs. absence of sequence) (cf. section 3.6 for evidence from the elicitation test to this effect):

- (23) a. I’ve read, I’ve listened to the radio, I’ve watched TV — but I haven’t enjoyed anything so much as just sitting and doing nothing (Dušková 1974: 70).  
 b. He hasn’t finished his Ph.D. and he has lost his job (cf. ‘He didn’t finish his Ph.D. and he lost his job’) (Haegeman 1989: 310).

The observations in this section indicate that it will be necessary to set

up some sort of “gradient of foregroundingness,” with particular situations being more prototypically foregrounded than others.

### 2.5. *Effect of syntactic subordination*

As Couper-Kuhlen sees it, it is Partee’s (1984) notion of *current reference time*, which can only be updated by main-clause events (i.e. main-clause telic bounded situations), that provides the key to the definition of the foreground. Foregrounded situations are indeed usually said to occur only in main clauses (cf. Labov and Waletzky 1967), narrative temporal clauses (cf. e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 1989a; Declerck 1991a: 145–148) being the only exceptions referred to. However, it remains to be seen whether main-clause status is a necessary condition to being called foregrounded. In some cases, this stipulation appears to be a somewhat “accidental” definitional necessity in the sense that it results from the fact that the examples that first come to mind or that are most commonly found in texts or narration happen to be main clauses. In my opinion, the effect of the syntactic status of the clause is comparable to that of the tense used. “Assertive” or “prototypical” foregrounding is indeed reserved for bounded situations presented in a main clause or a subclause that has loose bonds with the main clause, or that, in terms of Quirk et al. (1985: 1070), has a disjunct reading (e.g. a NRRC or a narrative time clause). However, this is again no necessary condition for foregrounding. As will be shown in section 3, RRCs as well can refer to a situation that follows the main-clause situation and can therefore represent foregrounded information.

### 2.6. *Effect of given/new information*

Other endeavors to capture the difference between “assertive foregrounding” on the one hand and “nonassertive foregrounding” and backgrounding on the other hinge on the status of the information in the clauses in terms of given and new. Various linguists have argued that the foreground encodes new information whereas the background indicates given information or presupposed information (cf. e.g. Aristar Dry 1983: 33; Eisterhold 1986: 127–173; Fleischman 1985: 859; Hopper 1979: 215). The fact that subclauses are considered to be presupposed explains why it is only main clauses that can belong to the foreground (cf. e.g. Reinhart 1984: 796). However, whereas it is no doubt true that a foregrounded main clause is likely to contain an element that constitutes



given information, followed by new information, the equation background–old information, foreground–new information is not adequate (cf. Givón 1987). Givón gives the following examples:

- (24) a. Because John left, Mary left too (Givón 1987: 176).  
 b. If John leaves, Mary will leave too (Givón 1987: 176).

Whereas the SC (subclause) information in (24a) is commonly assumed to be presupposed, that in (24b) is not. Still, “there is some intuitive sense, expressed by linguists over the years (...), in which both adverbial clauses in [24] are equally ‘background.’ But whatever that sense is, it could not correspond to the notion of ‘presupposition’” (Givón 1987: 176). In other words, the foreground/background distinction cannot be solely defined in terms of the presentation of old or new information.

The topic touched upon in this section is more intricate than the above treatment suggest. Confusion arises from the fact that in some articles dealing with foregrounding, the given–new distinction applies to the level of the discourse and complex sentences (as in the examples in [24]); in others, it is related to the information structure at clause level (cf. e.g. Aristar Dry’s comments on [26] and [27]). However, as the observation that foregrounded information is not necessarily new suffices for the issue at stake in this paper, we will not discuss this topic in more detail.

### 2.7. *Definition of foregrounding*

As I see it, the distinguishing feature of the foreground (i.e. the necessary and sufficient condition) is reference to a sequence of chronologically ordered bounded situations whose sequence is reflected in the linear order in which they are reported. This approach implies (a) that a set of past-perfect sentences may also belong to the foreground and (b) that situations presented in a subclause can be foregrounded provided they are posterior to the main-clause situation (where the linear order between the clauses is main clause–subclause) or anterior to the main-clause situation (where the linear order is subclause–main clause). A particular sequence of sentences will be apprehended as “prototypically foregrounded” if, apart from referring to a set of chronologically ordered situations, the sentences are past-tense (or historic present) main clauses (or “disjunct” subclauses). In other words, a distinction should be made between situations that happen in the narrative present (i.e. they are “on the time line”) and those that do not. The former will belong to the foreground provided they are represented as bounded. The background is constituted by unbounded situations that are on the time line and

bounded situations that are off the time line. Bounded situations of the latter type may also be chronologically ordered (cf. e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 1987, 1989b). However, as the events do not belong to the narrative present time, they are less “prototypically” foregrounded. It will be clear that *narrative present* is to be taken in a broad sense so as to cover the “present” of the events reported in newspaper articles as well; it is the “here-and-now” of the fictional or reported world. Reference to a sequence is the distinguishing feature of the foreground, the syntactic status and the tense used being two factors that enhance the foregrounded character but are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions. The following scheme may be helpful with respect to visualizing the different “degrees of prototypicality” (or “layers of foregrounding,” as Reinhart [1984] calls them) that may be distinguished with respect to foregrounding. The more “+ prototypical” characteristics a particular sentence referring to a posterior situation has, the more prototypically foregrounded it will be, a less prototypical example being, for example, a sequence of past-perfect bounded atelic sentences, of which the second is a SC:

- (1) + prototypical: narrative present tense, past tense, future tense  
 – prototypical: past perfect
- (2) + prototypical: bounded telic  
 – prototypical: bounded atelic (cf. section 3.7)
- (3) + prototypical: main clause, subclause with loose bonds with the main clause  
 – prototypical: subclause with tight bonds with the main clause

### 3. Foregrounding in RCs

This section first offers a survey of how the issue of foregrounding in RCs has been addressed by other linguists (3.1). In section 3.2, corpus examples are given that prove that RCs may refer to foregrounded situations. It is then shown that foregrounding possibilities differ in RRCs and NRRCs (section 3.3), the constraints on foregrounding in RRCs being explained in section 3.4.

#### 3.1. *Other works on foregrounding in RCs*

The question whether or not RCs can belong to the foreground has hardly received any attention. It follows from the generally accepted characterization of the foreground that the subordinate status of RCs

should prevent them from pushing the action forward (cf. characteristic 2). Narrative temporal clauses (cf. e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 1989a; Declerck 1991a: 145–148) appear to be the only exceptions to the general rule that foregrounding is restricted to main-clause situations. Reinhart (1984) and Aristar Dry (1983) are the only two publications that touch upon the question whether (N)RRCs can belong to the foreground. Reinhart argues that RCs, no matter whether they are restrictive or nonrestrictive, never indicate foregrounded information. She illustrates her claim with the following examples:

- (25) a. The man who stole Rosa's dog beat him (Reinhart 1984: 796).  
 b. Israel said "Goldman likes ancient music too," and Eliezra, who was playing with her glasses, said "but I don't like him." Israel gazed again at her neck and arms which he knew so well from Goldman's photographs. Goldman used to take pictures of her in all possible positions, standing, undressing, or lying naked on the sofa, and from time to time he would show these pictures to Israel who got upset by Eliezra's last words ... (J. Shabtai, cited in Reinhart 1984: 796–797).

In Reinhart's opinion, "something has gone wrong" (Reinhart 1984: 797) in the last clause in (25b) in the sense that the "information, which does belong to the time axis, is reported in a relative clause, while a relative clause usually signals material not belonging to the foreground" (Reinhart 1984: 797). As the information in the NRRC refers to the next step in the series of events that is described, there is no reason why the NRRC should be denied the foregrounding status.

Aristar Dry (1983) does not share Reinhart's view. However, she points out that only a particular type of RC can trigger time movement, namely RCs that modify nouns in object position:

- (26) a. The old man returned with a few lumps of coal, which he placed here and there on the fire (Aristar Dry 1983: 36).  
 b. The old man ... returned with two candlesticks which he thrust one after the other into the fire and carried to the table (Aristar Dry 1983: 36).  
 c. He extended his hand, which Little Chandler took (Aristar Dry 1983: 36).  
 d. He made a circle in the air with his arms and paused. Everyone laughed or smiled at Aunt Kate and Aunt Julie and Mary Jane who all turned crimson with pleasure. Gabriel went on more boldly ... (Aristar Dry 1983: 36).  
 e. She seemed to be somewhat disappointed at my refusal and

went on quietly to the sofa, where she sat down behind her sister (Aristar Dry 1983: 36).

Aristar Dry argues that this is not surprising: the object position is typically reserved for the communication of new information and therefore conforms to the traditional informational pattern associated with foregrounding, that is, foregrounded clauses provide new information. As Aristar Dry puts it, a RRC embedded in a NP in subject position, “communicates presuppositional material that is likely to be anaphoric in the discourse” (Aristar Dry 1983: 51):

- (27) a. The man who walked up to him offered him a cigar (Aristar Dry 1983: 51).

However, she adds that this line of reasoning fails to explain why it is possible for NRRCs embedded in a NP in subject position to belong to the foreground:

- (27) b. The man, who walked up to him gracefully, like a dancer walking, offered him a cigar (Aristar Dry 1983: 51).

I do not agree with Aristar Dry when she claims that the RRC situation in (27a) is not foregrounded: the situation in the RC precedes that in the main clause. As there is reference to a sequence of bounded situations that are narrated in the order in which they occur, there seems to be no reason not to consider the RRC information as foregrounded.

### 3.2. *Corpus evidence*

It is not hard to find examples in which the RC situation follows the main-clause situation. The kind of NRRC traditionally labelled *continua-tive* (Jespersen 1961: 105) typically establishes a foregrounded reading.<sup>13</sup>

- (28) a. The first time he was shot in the hand as he chased the robbers outside. The second time he identified two robbers, *who were arrested and charged* (WSJ).  
 b. Before that, he was an executive with a manufacturing concern. At Continental he cut money-losing operations, *which helped produce a modest profit in this year’s second quarter* (WSJ).  
 c. So Brooks gave the dirty work to Coin Wrap Inc., *which came up with an unusual solution* (WSJ).

The above clauses answer all but one of the typical characteristics of the “prototypical” foreground: (a) they are bounded situations, (b) they

happen in the narrative present, and (c) the situation the subclause refers to is posterior to the main-clause situation (this order is reflected in the linear order of the clauses). The only deviant feature is that they are subclauses. However, syntactic status is not a necessary distinguishing criterion of the foreground; subclauses should not be denied foregrounded status a priori. RRC situations may also be posterior to the main-clause situation and may accordingly be said to be foregrounded:

- (29) a. That goal was just the tonic Wolves needed, and in the sixty-third minute Murray, capping a slick combined move, made the score 3-1. Three minutes from the end a typical bit of Woosnam Soccer technique laid on a ball *from which Sealey scored West Ham's second goal* (LOB).
- b. A search was made, but she was not found until she was seen walking towards her home having come off the afternoon train from Carlisle. Interviewed, Dixon made a statement *which was put in as evidence* and the Constable alleged that he had a clear conscience (LOB).
- c. A writer who had dinner with Dickens says the menu was Whitstable oysters, a brown sole, a baked leg of mutton with oyster & veal stuffing and a gin punch. The same man went to see Carlyle, and, after mentioning that he had dined with Longfellow told the sage a very funny story *which made Carlyle absolutely laugh*; but all the Chelsea philosopher did in return was to ask if his guest would have a cup of tea! (LOB).

### 3.3. Restriction on foregrounding in RRCs

However, there appears to be a constraint on the possibility of RRCs to represent foregrounded information. Some of the RRCs that represent foregrounded information when couched in an indefinite NP no longer do so when they are embedded in definite NPs: in the latter case the situation is represented as anterior rather than posterior to the main clause situation (cf. [30b]); in some cases, this preferred anteriority interpretation results in an anomalous sentence (cf. [31b]):

- (30) a. Rummaging among the remains of our provisions I found a bottle *with which I made numerous marks* on the ground surrounding our tents and a few yards into the jungle, as far as I dared venture (LOB).
- b. Rummaging among the remains of our provisions I found

the bottle with which I made numerous marks on the ground surrounding our tents and a few yards into the jungle, as far as I dared venture.

- (31) a. General relief was expressed, but monsieur V (this was actually reported in the next issue) returned home and shot himself, leaving a note *which again left his household goods to the superintendent* (LOB).
- b. ??General relief was expressed, but monsieur V (this was actually reported in the next issue) returned home and shot himself, leaving the note *which again left his household goods to the superintendent*.

Most of the examples at my disposal are of the type illustrated in (30). The unmarked interpretation suggested by the semantics and pragmatics of the sentences is that the RC situation is posterior to the main-clause situation, although the anteriority reading is not ruled out altogether. When the RC is embedded in a definite NP, the latter interpretation is preferred. The acceptability of the sentence in (31b) is questionable because there is a clash between the posteriority reading that follows from the semantics and pragmatics of the clauses (cf. [31a]) and the fact that the definite NP tries to impose an interpretation whereby the RRC information is anterior to that in the main clause (cf. section 3.5). Still, there are a number of cases in which RRCs in definite NPs can contain foregrounded situations:

1. if the RRC precedes the main clause:

- (32) a. Investors in stock funds didn't panic the weekend after mid-October's 190-point market plunge. *Those who left stock funds simply switched into money market funds* (adapted from WSJ).<sup>14</sup>
- b. A simple enough question. But *the passengers who heard it* turned to see who asked it (LOB).
- c. Parents were asked whether they expected the school to guide their child's behaviour as well as teach "school subjects," and *those who answered "Yes"* were asked to state what kinds of behaviour they expected the school to encourage (LOB).

2. if the semantics and pragmatics of the situations are not compatible with an anterior reading of the RRC:

- (33) a. Three minutes from the end a typical bit of Woosnam Soccer technique laid on the ball from *which Sealey scored West Ham's second goal* (adapted from LOB) (cf. [29a]).
- b. A search was made, but she was not found until she was seen

- walking towards her home having come off the afternoon train from Carlisle. Interviewed, Dixon made the statement *which was put in as evidence* and the Constable alleged that he had a clear conscience (adapted from LOB) (cf. [29b]).
- c. Police leave has been cancelled and secret plans prepared to deal with the mass sit-down rally planned for Sunday in Parliament Square by the Committee of 100, the anti-nuclear arms group. It was Mr Butler who authorized *the action which ended YESTERDAY in 32 members of the Committee of 100 being imprisoned for inciting a breach of the peace* (adapted from LOB).<sup>15</sup>
  - d. He was throughout in close touch with those who conducted *the negotiations which ULTIMATELY led to the issue of the Balfour Declaration of 2ND NOVEMBER, 1917* (LOB).
  - e. Fair wages were those “generally accepted as current.” Trade unionists, however, agitated for many years for *the change which was FINALLY accepted in the revision of 1909* (LOB).

Even if the sentences do not contain an adverbial that explicitly indicates the temporal relations (cf. [33a] and [33b]), the order between the situations can still be retrieved from the semantics of the sentence.

3. if the status of the RC is not unequivocally restrictive (i.e. although the antecedent is one that typically combines with a NRRC, this interpretation is not supported by the presence of a comma between the antecedent and the RC):

- (34) The table of drink bottles came down. They ended against THE RECORD-PLAYER *which tottered but did not fall*, releasing a confetti of gramophone discs on them (LOB).

### 3.4. Comparison RRC–NRRC

In NRRCs the (in)definiteness of the NP does not affect the foregrounding possibilities:

- (35) a. Frankfurt prices fell across the board amid continued rumors the Bundesbank will call for an emergency meeting Thursday to raise interest rates. Earlier in the day, a central bank spokesman denied the rumor (certain rumors), which unsettled some financial markets in Europe (adapted from WSJ).<sup>16</sup>

- b. The second time he identified two (the) robbers, who were arrested and charged (adapted from WSJ — cf. [28a]).

No matter whether the antecedent is definite or indefinite, the NRRC is understood as referring to a posterior situation.

The following examples, which were presented to 63 native speakers of English, prove that definite RRCs and NRRCs differ in terms of the unmarked temporal order they establish. The informants had to indicate whether they thought the second-mentioned situation followed the first (1-2, posteriority reading), or preceded the first (2-1, anteriority reading) or whether both orders were possible with a preference for a particular sequence:

- |         |  |           |
|---------|--|-----------|
| (36) a. | John fell in love with the girl who won a beauty contest.  |           |
|         | Posteriority 1-2   | 6%        |
|         | 1-2 (2-1)  | 11%       |
|         |  | Total 17% |
|         | Anteriority 2-1  | 64%       |
|         | 2-1 (1-2)  | 19%       |
|         |  | Total 83% |
| b.      | John fell in love with Mathilde, who won a beauty contest. |           |
|         | Posteriority 1-2   | 25%       |
|         | 1-2 (2-1)  | 39%       |
|         |  | Total 64% |
|         | Anteriority 2-1  | 16%       |
|         | 2-1 (1-2)  | 20%       |
|         |  | Total 36% |

The preference<sup>17</sup> for the anteriority (83%)/posteriority (64%) reading in the RRC/NRRC is statistically significant. Examples of this type, in which the semantics do not impose a particular reading, show that although foregrounding is possible in RRCs, they are less likely to indicate posterior situations. The same difference in unmarked temporal interpretation between RRCs and NRRCs can be observed in the following examples:

- (37) a. John married the girl who got pregnant.  
 b. John married Mary, who got pregnant.
- (38) a. John hit the man who hit him.  
 b. John hit Bill, who hit him (= John).

RRCs embedded in indefinite NPs must also answer a particular requirement in order to be understood as posterior to the main-clause situation: there must be lexical items that establish a posteriority reading



or it must be clear from the semantics of the clauses in general that the RC situation follows the main-clause situation (cf. [39]). Otherwise, the RC situation is interpreted as being anterior to the main-clause situation (cf. [40]):

- (39) a. Sam married a woman who left him for another (Heny 1982: 116).  
 b. It grew even more acute when a four-man commission led by Mr Justice Devlin, sent out to investigate the reasons for the upheaval, produced a long report which shocked everyone — except, as it seemed later, the government (LOB).
- (40) John married a girl who got pregnant.

In NRRCs, on the other hand, there need not be such lexical or semantic clues in order for the SC situation to be interpreted as following the main-clause situation. This is particularly clear when we compare (40) with (41):

- (41) John married a 25-year old secretary, who got pregnant.

The semantics and pragmatics of the situations referred to in (40) and (41) do not impose a particular order: pregnancy may be the reason for as well as the result of getting married. However, whereas the reason interpretation is preferred in (40) (i.e. RRC situation is anterior to the main-clause situation), the unmarked interpretation of (41) is that the NRRC situation is posterior to the main-clause situation. The following example with a RRC in an indefinite NP also indicates a preference for an anterior interpretation of the RRC information:

- (42) Yesterday Bill met a man who robbed a bank (Gabbay and Rohrer 1979: 100).

Posteriority	1-2	16%
	1-2 (2-1)	16%
		Total 32%
Anteriority	2-1	40%
	2-1 (1-2)	28%
		Total 68%

### 3.5. *Restriction on foregrounding in RRCs explained*

So far, it has been established that the foregrounding capacity of RRCs is constrained: a RRC can be foregrounded provided it follows from the semantics of the clauses or general pragmatic knowledge that the RC situation is posterior to the main-clause situation. The constraint on

foregrounding in RRCs described so far cannot be explained in terms of the syntactic subordination of the RRC as such, because in that case, it should not be possible for NRRCs, which are also embedded in a NP, to present a foregrounded situation. A more promising track can be pursued by considering the function of the relevant clauses, which is reflected in their syntactic status<sup>18</sup> (i.e. loose [NRRC] vs. tight [RRC] bonds with the main clause): a RRC provides restricting (non-)identifying information in the same information unit as its antecedent. The information will be identifying if the NP is definite, as it helps the hearer find out who the speaker is talking about. If the NP is indefinite, the RRC information does not have an identifying function, but all the same it narrows down the number of possible referents. No matter whether the NP is definite or indefinite, the fact that the speaker chooses to add the information in the same information unit as the antecedent indicates that he believes that the hearer cannot do without it in order to find out who or what the speaker is talking about. The hearer knows the speaker provides him with more information so that he might establish reference. It follows from the cooperative principles that the speaker will select the kind of information that is most easily accessible to the hearer: for the provision of restricting information the speaker is likely to use information that is anterior to the main-clause situation. This mutual presumption (the speaker uses information that he assumes is most easily accessible to the hearer and the hearer trusts that the speaker will use information that is easily accessible to the hearer) explains why an anteriority reading arises whenever the semantics and pragmatics of the situation do not impose a sequential reading. RRCs embedded in a definite NP differ from those embedded in an indefinite NP in that the urge to interpret the RC information as anterior to the main-clause information is even greater in the former than in the latter. This is clear from examples such as (31b): although the semantics and pragmatics of the sentence suggest a posterior reading, the influence of the definite article, which prefers anterior situations to perform its reference-assigning function and accordingly tries to impose such a reading, is so strong that the resulting sentence is anomalous.

The function of a NRRC in a NP differs considerably from that of a RRC. The NRRC adds relevant information in a separate information unit: the speaker assumes that the hearer is familiar with the referent of the NP; therefore, he need not bother about the “reference-restricting function” of the RRC. Bounded situations are interpreted as posterior to the main-clause situation unless this reading is ruled out by the semantics and pragmatics of the situations.

3.6. *Effect of tense on foregrounding in RCs*

It was pointed out in connection with the examples in (23) that foregrounding is not possible in present-perfect sentences. In this section, this claim is substantiated with evidence from RC examples.<sup>19</sup>

The examples in (43) show that the use of the present perfect hampers a posterior interpretation of the NRRC:

(43) a.	John fell in love with Mathilde, who won a beauty contest.		
	Posteriority 1-2		25%
	1-2 (2-1)		39%
		Total	64%
	Anteriority 2-1		16%
	2-1 (1-2)		20%
		Total	36%
b.	John has fallen in love with Mathilde, who has won a beauty contest.		
	Posteriority 1-2		23%
	1-2 (2-1)		33%
		Total	56%
	Anteriority 2-1		17%
	2-1 (1-2)		27%
		Total	44%

The present-perfect NRRC is chronologically vaguer than its past-time counterpart: unlike the past-tense sentence, there is no statistically relevant preference for either an anterior or a posterior interpretation in (43b). The effect of the present perfect is also visible in the following example, be it in a somewhat different way. There is very often a notional relation of some sort between the NRRC situation and the main-clause situation. When confronted with a sentence in isolation, one will try to look for such a link. In the following sentences, there is one available, namely, Bill was killed in a place that had already proved to be dangerous before, that is, the one where John had his accident:

(44) a.	Bill was killed in Baker Street, where John had his accident.		
	Posteriority 1-2		9%
	1-2 (2-1)		11%
		Total	20%
	Anteriority 2-1		46%
	2-1 (1-2)		34%
		Total	80%
b.	Bill has been killed in Baker Street, where John has had his		

accident.		
Posteriority	1-2	31%
	1-2 (2-1)	16%
		Total 47%
Anteriority	2-1	42%
	2-1 (1-2)	11%
		Total 53%

The posteriority reading was not often chosen in (44a).<sup>20</sup> In my opinion, this is because the “logical” (cf. note 5) ties between the SUPC situation and the RC situation are so strong that only the “semantically determined” chronological order can be chosen: the relevant place is dangerous (John had an accident there), which also explains why Bill got killed in exactly the same spot. Just as the present perfect in (43) interferes with the usual pattern of posteriority associated with NRRCs, so it does in (44b): the notional relation between the NRRC situation and the main-clause situation is less effective at imposing a chronological order in (44b) and cancelling the “unmarked” posterior reading than in its past time counterpart.

### 3.7. Effect of (a)telicity on foregrounding in RCs

It was shown in section 2.3 that the rule of foregrounding should be formulated in terms of (un)boundedness rather than Aktionsart classes. However, the elicitation test reveals that telic bounded situations are more effective in imposing a posterior reading than atelic bounded situations, which proves that the claim that bounded telic sentences are more prototypically foregrounded than bounded atelic sentences (cf. section 2.7) makes sense. Consider the following examples:

- (45) a. He signed a contract with IBM, for whom he worked for 3 years (RC = bounded telic).
- |              |           |           |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Posteriority | 1-2       | 50%       |
|              | 1-2 (2-1) | 19%       |
|              |           | Total 69% |
| Anteriority  | 2-1       | 20%       |
|              | 2-1 (1-2) | 11%       |
|              |           | Total 31% |
- b. Tom met his girlfriend in London, where he lived for three years (RC = bounded atelic).
- |              |           |     |
|--------------|-----------|-----|
| Posteriority | 1-2       | 19% |
|              | 1-2 (2-1) | 31% |

		Total	50%
Anteriority	2-1		30%
	2-1 (1-2)		20%
		Total	50%
c. John married Mary, who took a course in chemistry (RC = bounded telic).			
Posteriority	1-2		24%
	1-2 (2-1)		53%
		Total	77%
Anteriority	2-1		3%
	2-1 (1-2)		20%
		Total	23%

The sentence in (45a) refers to the usual pattern of signing a contract before taking up a job. In other words, the content of the sentence implies a certain order. The results of the elicitation test indicate a clear preference for the posterior interpretation of the RC: 69% of the informants thought that this was the only or preferred reading of the sentence. However, if no order is suggested by the pragmatic-semantic meaning of the clauses,<sup>21</sup> it becomes more difficult to determine the chronological order between the main-clause situation and the bounded atelic subclause, as is shown by (45b): there is no preference for either the anteriority or the posteriority reading. However, the figures are somewhat misleading in that the informants could not choose the option of simultaneity, which maybe many would have preferred. This observation also applies to the example in (45c). Still, the figures are revealing because, in spite of this, the results show that (a)telicity influences the temporal interpretation. Unlike in (45b) (in which the NRRC is bounded atelic), in (45c) (in which the NRRC is bounded telic), there is a clear preference for a posterior interpretation (77%).

#### 4. Conclusions

The above discussion has revealed that in order for a situation to belong to the foreground it must satisfy the following three conditions: (1) the situation is represented as bounded, (2) it is posterior to the situation mentioned in the previous clause, and (3) the linear order of the clauses corresponds to the order in which the situations take place. Situations of this type that belong to the “narrative present” and are presented in a main clause or a subclause that has loose bonds with the main clause constitute the most prototypical examples of a foregrounded situation.

The reason why NRRCs, unlike RRCs, are more likely to contain foregrounded information is related to the differences in function performed by the two types of clause (which is reflected in their syntactic status, i.e. loose vs. tight bonds with the main clause): where RRCs restrict the reference of the antecedent N by presenting modifying information in the same information unit, NRRCs need not bother about this task and presuppose the speaker's familiarity (in the broad sense) with the antecedent. NRRCs are free of the burden of providing restricting (non-)identifying information; accordingly, the relevant information about the antecedent they give is presented in a separate information unit and will be interpreted as a sequence if the situation is bounded. RRCs, on the other hand, are more absorbed by their restricting function, for which they typically use anterior situations. Accordingly, in RRCs, foregrounding is possible only (a) if the RC precedes the main clause or (b) if the semantics and pragmatics of the situations impose a posterior reading. However, RRCs in definite NPs differ from RRCs in indefinite NPs in that in the former, due to their defining function, the "bias" toward an anterior reading is stronger. Accordingly, there may sometimes be a clash between the posteriority reading dictated by the semantics and pragmatics of the situations and the anteriority reading urged by the definite NP.

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## Notes

- \* I am grateful to R. Declerck and the three referees for their useful comments on an earlier version of this article. Correspondence address: Lousbergskaaai 50, B-5000 Ghent, Belgium.
- 1. The examples are taken from the Lancaster–Oslo–Bergen (LOB) corpus and the Wall Street Journal corpus (WSJ).
- 2. The elicitation test was carried out on 3 November 1992 in the English Department of University College London. My informants were 64 first-year English students, whose mother tongue was English. The test was aimed at finding out to what extent (a) the order in which the clauses are reported, (b) the tense that is used, (c) (un)boundedness and (a)telicity, and (d) the difference RRC–NRRC influence the temporal interpretation of sentences.
- 3. Whenever *follow* and *precede* are used in combination with *situation*, temporal meaning (reference to the extralinguistic order between the situations) is intended; when they are used in combination with *sentence* or *clause*, linear order (between the clauses) is intended.

4. Dowty (1986) formulates his “temporal discourse interpretation principle” (TDIP) as follows:

“Given a sequence of sentences  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$  to be interpreted as a narrative discourse, the reference time of each sentence  $S_i$  (for  $i$  such that  $1 < i \leq n$ ) is interpreted to be:

- (a) a time consistent with the definite time adverbials in  $S_i$ , if there are any;
- (b) otherwise, a time which immediately follows the reference time of the previous sentence  $S_{i-1}$ ” (Dowty 1986: 45).

Nerbonne (1986) puts it as follows:

“Reichenbach’s Pragmatics (RP): For  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$  a sequence [sic] sentences uttered in a temporally connected discourse:

$$t_r(S_i) \not> t_r(S_{i+1})$$

where  $t_r(S)$  designates the reference time with respect to which  $S$  is to be evaluated. ( $t_r(S)$  may be an interval; for intervals  $i_1, i_2$ :  $i_1 > i_2$  iff  $i_1$  properly follows after  $i_2$ , i.e., formally, iff for all points  $t_1$  in  $i_1$  and  $t_2$  in  $i_2$ ,  $t_1 > t_2$ .)”

Cf. Declerck (1991a: 119–120, 138–139) for remarks on foregrounding.

5. *Logical* is used its nontechnical, everyday sense of *rational, in accordance with our general pragmatic knowledge of the world*.
6. I do not want to assert that other chronological orders are completely ruled out. As one referee pointed out, in the academic world, people happen to move as a result of finding a job. Applying this observation to the example, this means that the person in question might have moved to London after having been appointed there. However, I believe that this is not the unmarked reading associated with (7b).
7. A sentence is unbounded if the situation it refers to is not represented as having reached a temporal boundary (Depraetere 1995: 3). Cf section 2.3 for a more elaborate discussion of the notions *boundedness* and *unboundedness*.
8. Couper-Kuhlen refers to this characteristic when she writes, “Events in the foreground are expressed via lexical verbs with perfective aspect (...) or in English, in the simple form (...). Imperfective aspect, or in English the progressive form, is reserved for events which are part of the background (...), or which belong to some other section (e.g. orientation, evaluation) of the narrative” (Couper-Kuhlen 1989b: 8).
9. It is a matter of debate whether situations referred to by means of a progressive form can receive an inchoative interpretation (cf. e.g. Cooper 1986: 34; Couper-Kuhlen 1989b: 14, 23; Dowty 1986: 54; Ehrlich 1990: 113–114; Eisterhold 1986: 12; Hinrichs 1986: 69–70; Nerbonne 1986: 91).
10. Partee (1984) is aware of the limitation that an exclusive focus on past-tense sentences implies: “As before, we are limiting our attention to sentences in narratives in which only simple past tenses occur, with clauses describing either events or states (thereby bypassing a number of issues that would be important for a more comprehensive treatment)” (1984: 256).
11. The definitions that are standardly given of the foreground are conspicuously vague in this respect. The definitions all hinge on reference to situations that are “on the time line” or the “storyline” or “narrative events,” but I do not know of any definition that specifies accurately which characterizing property actually determines the so-called “time line.”

12. The past perfect is bound directly (Declerck 1991a: 63) if the clause that is mentioned before or the clause in which it is embedded functions as reference time (cf. [i]). Otherwise it is bound indirectly (cf. [ii]):

- (i) Bill knew that John had often said he was unhappy (Declerck 1991a: 62).
- (ii) Mary knew that John had left because he *had felt* unhappy (Declerck 1991a: 62).

*Had felt* could be bound by *John had left*, in which case it is bound directly. However, the situations of feeling unhappy and leaving probably occur simultaneously. In that reading, *had felt* is bound (indirectly) by *Mary knew*.

13. It needs to be added that NRRCs with bounded situations are not always of the continuative type; the following examples show that the semantics of the NRRC may establish an anterior reading:
- (i) NEC, one of its largest domestic competitors, said it bid one yen in two separate public auctions since 1987. In both cases, NEC lost the contract to Fujitsu, which made the same bid and won a tie-breaking lottery (WSJ).
  - (ii) After breaking into a factory at Soho Hill, Handsworth, Birmingham, he set an alarm clock belonging to one of the staff and went to sleep in the managing director's chair. He stole about £3 from the canteen, which he entered with the help of factory tools, and also helped himself to eggs and milk (LOB).
14. The original example is "Investors in stock funds didn't panic the weekend after mid-October's 190-point market plunge. Most of those who left stock funds simply switched into money market funds" (WSJ).
15. The original example is "Police leave has been cancelled and secret plans prepared to deal with the mass sit-down rally planned for Sunday in Parliament Square by the Committee of 100, the anti-nuclear arms group. It was Mr Butler who authorized action which ended yesterday in 32 members of the Committee of 100 being imprisoned for inciting a breach of the peace" (LOB).
16. The original example is "Frankfurt prices fell across the board amid continued rumors the Bundesbank will call for an emergency meeting Thursday to raise interest rates. Earlier in the day, a central bank spokesman denied the rumor, which had unsettled some financial markets in Europe" (WSJ).
17. If I say that there is a (no) preference for a particular option, it means that the choice in favor of a certain order is (not) statistically relevant.
18. By *syntactic subordination*, I refer to the fact that both the RRC and the NRRC are subclauses. However, they differ in that one has strong bonds with the main clause and the other has loose bonds with the main clause. To refer to this phenomenon, I use the term *syntactic status*.
19. As pointed out in note 2, the scope of the elicitation test was larger than the issues that are here at stake. In order to arrive at trustworthy judgments by the informants, not more than 25 sentences should be presented at a time. This, together with the fact that I was only in a position once to present a number of examples to a large number of informants, has resulted in the selection of examples. Therefore, I cannot corroborate all the claims made with results from the elicitation test.
20. Examples whose temporal interpretation was clear and did not need to be attested by native speakers were not included in the elicitation test. The following past-tense NRRC examples, for instance, were not included because the posteriority reading was so obvious that it did not need to be corroborated by a large number of native speakers:
- (i) John married Mary, who got pregnant.
  - (ii) John hit Bill, who hit him (= John).



21. As was pointed out in section 2.2, strictly speaking, the rule of foregrounding need only be appealed to for examples in which the lexical content does not imply a certain order.

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