The Pluperfect in English and Portuguese: What Translation Patterns Show

Diana Santos

SINTEF Telecom and Informatics, Oslo

1 Introduction

Not everyone has the luck of getting to know Stig Johansson in person, but nobody working in corpus linguistics can fail to come across his work. Stig Johansson has contributed greatly to the creation and availability of text corpora and tools, in addition to his active involvement in the investigation of them for more than 20 years.

As a tribute to his work, I would like to take another look at the pluperfect in English and Portuguese, using an English-Portuguese corpus compiled in connection with the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC) project (cf. Johansson and Hofland 1994). I also make some considerations on how to use the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen (LOB) Corpus (cf. Johansson *et al*. 1978) for this purpose.

In chapter 13 of my dissertation on the comparison and contrast of the tense and aspect systems of English and Portuguese (Santos 1996), I investigated the translation patterns linking pluperfects and simple tenses between English and Portuguese. In that work, I made use of a small corpus to perform several empirical investigations (see also Santos 1994; 1995; 1998). A logical next step is to verify my findings in larger corpora. Here, I use the English-Portuguese part of the ENPC (see Oksefjell, forthcoming) to verify the contrastive patterns.

The structure of this paper is as follows: In Section 2 I present the problem, together with some words on the pluperfect in the two languages. In Section 3, I present in some detail the work in Santos (1996). In Section 4, I suggest some generalisations in need for corroboration from larger corpora, offering a preliminary validation of such results.

2 Pluperfects and simple tenses

The interest of studying the translation and distribution of pluperfects in two languages lies in the *a priori* similarity of the corresponding devices. English pluperfects are traditionally described as 'past-in-the-past, [...] a time further in the past, seen from the viewpoint of a definite point in time already in the past' (Leech 1971: 42). A similar description of Mais que perfeito can be found in any Portuguese grammar (see e.g. Cunha and Cintra 1984). In addition, it is common in English grammars to distinguish another use of the pluperfect as the 'past of the perfect', which is a non-existent concept in Portuguese grammars (and Portuguese grammar, in general).

Salkie (1989), in his paper on the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect, notes that the pluperfect deserves more attention (compared to the

huge attention the perfect has received), and contraposes in detail Comrie's (1985) claims of a significant difference between the two. After providing some contrastive data for the pair English-French, based on a survey of literary texts, Salkie argues that 'detailed contrastive studies of a few languages are now most urgently needed' (1989: 30). The present paper provides one such study, where many of Salkie's observations are vindicated, with the methodological enhancement that the study is corpus-based.

The motivation for this study was the belief that relative ordering in time should be something not susceptible to alteration in translation – one would thus not expect pluperfects to be translated by simple tenses or the other way around –, and thus the fact that this often happens deserved closer investigation. Note, incidentally, that this is a very interesting piece of information that corpora alone are able to furnish (barring grammatical idiosyncrasies, which one may already find stated in practical manuals for translators).

After the composition[1] of the corpus is shown in Table 1, I present a quantitative overview of the changes in pluperfectness found in my corpus in Table 2.

Table 1 Corpus size

	English to Portuguese (EP)	Portuguese to English (PE)
Number of source language words	26,060	25,174
Number of target language words	23,262	27,972
Number of source language sentences	1,628	1,449
Number of target language sentences	1,861	1,459
Number of translation pairs	1,602	1,446
Number of tensed translations	3,744	3,318

---

[1] The source of the English to Portuguese examples is *The Pearl,* by John Steinbeck, Bantam Books, 1975 (first edition, 1945), translated into (European) Portuguese by Mário Dionísio as: *A pérola*, Publicações Europa-América, 1977. The source of the Portuguese to English examples is a selection of Portuguese short stories by Jorge de Sena, from *Antigas e Novas Andanças do Demónio*, Edições 70, 5ª edição, 1984 (first edition, 1978), translated into (American) English as: *By the rivers of Babylon and other stories*, edited by Daphne Patai, Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Table 2 Pluperfects in the corpus (total number and percentage of tensed forms)

	Portuguese		English	
Original	353	11%	142	3.8%
Translated	159	5.1%	340	9.4%

The first thing one notes is that, in the texts in question, the English pluperfect is considerably less frequent than the Portuguese Mais que Perfeito. Table 2 is misleading, however, because it displays a relatively similar number of pluperfects in each text (353/340 in the Portuguese-English material and 142/159 in the English-Portuguese material), corresponding to a small increase in Mais que Perfeito (17 instances) when translating from English and a small decrease in pluperfects when translating from Portuguese (14). But, as Tables 3 and 4 show, the number of translations linking simple tenses and pluperfects is considerably greater.

In fact, as many as 41 cases of Mais que perfeito (MQP) are translated into the simple past and 7 into the passive, while the English pluperfect is rendered by Imperfeito, Perfeito, Imperfeito Conjuntivo and passive in 17, 13, 7 and 2 cases respectively. And cases where a simple tense is translated by a pluperfect are nearly as common: 17 Imperfeitos, 8 Perfeitos and 2 passives are translated into English pluperfect, while 39 simple pasts and 18 passives are turned into a Mais que perfeito (MQP) formulation in Portuguese.

Table 3 Portuguese to English translations

Number of MQPs: 353	MQP -> pluperfect	297	Number of pluperfects: 340
	MQP -> simple past	41	
	MQP -> passive	7	
	Imperfeito -> pluperfect	17	
	Perfeito -> pluperfect	8	
	Passiva -> pluperfect	2	

Table 4 English to Portuguese translation

Number of pluperfects: 142	pluperfect -> MQP	97	Number of MQPs: 159
	pluperfect -> Imperfeito	17	
	pluperfect -> Perfeito	13	
	pluperfect -> Imperf. conj.	7	
	pluperfect -> Passiva	2	
	simple past -> MQP	39	
	passive -> MQP	18	

In relative terms, thus, and contrary to what Table 2 seemed to indicate, 'pluperfectness' is preserved in only 84% (297 out of 353) of the cases from Portuguese into English, and in 68% (97 out of 142) of the cases from English to Portuguese. Conversely, pluperfects arise out of non-pluperfects in 13% (43 out

of 340) of the times for English and 39% (62 out of 159) of the times for Portuguese, respectively.

It seems, from this overview, that it is much more frequent for English simple tenses to be rendered by Portuguese MQP than the other way around.

3 The translation pattern

In order to see whether there are principled grounds for the data displayed in the tables above, I proceeded by analysing each translation pair in turn in Santos (1996). The conclusions I arrived at will be expounded in the present section.

3.1 English pluperfect into Portuguese Imperfeito

Looking at the translation of English pluperfect into Portuguese Imperfeito, I found two main patterns.

1. The translation featured a change of aspectual class, from event in English to a durative description in Portuguese, occurring in one of two forms: a) the Imperfeito formulation described the result state of the (previous) action described in the English text, as in examples (1) and (2):

(1)   The thing *had become* a neighborhood affair.
        Era um problema de todos.
        Lit: it was a problem for everybody

(2)   ... he saw that a great hole *had been knocked* in the bottom.
        ... viu que o barco *tinha*, no fundo, um buraco enorme.
        Lit: he saw that the boat had, in the bottom, a huge hole

or b) the Imperfeito translation describes a process in progress (after the action which originated it), as in examples (3) and (4):

(3)   A lethargy *had settled* on him, and a little gray hopelessness.
        Uma letargia e uma escura desesperança *dominavam*-no.
        Lit: A lethargy and a dark hopelessness dominated him

 (4)   But now, by saying what his future was going to be like, he *had created* it.
        Mas agora, planeando o futuro, era ele que o *criava*.
        Lit: But now, planning the future, it was him who created it

2. When the English sentence described a situation which is itself durative (or repetitive), simple Imperfeito is used (as one of its central meanings is precisely habituality). Examples (5) and (6) illustrate this regularity, also noted by Salkie (1989: 28) for French:

(5)   They *had been* suspicious of it from the first.
        Desconfiavam dela desde o princípio.
        Lit: They suspected it from the start

(6)   But this was a wasteful method, for often, in the excitement of bidding for a fine pearl, too great a price *had been paid* to the fishermen.
        Mas era um processo ruinoso: muitas vezes, com o entusiasmo de apanharem uma pérola de qualidade, os compradores *chegavam* a um preço escusado.
        Lit: But it was a ruining process: often, due to the enthusiasm of getting hold of a good pearl, the buyers came to an unnecessary price

Note that this does not necessarily correspond to what is called the 'universal perfect' – 'a situation which started in the past and continues until the present' (Sandström 1993: 121), since example (6) describes a situation which is clearly no longer the case at the now of the narrative.

3.2 English pluperfect into Portuguese Perfeito

Turning now to the translation of the English pluperfect into Perfeito, a different picture emerges: In fact, the vast majority of the cases concerning this translation of the English pluperfect are inside *when*-clauses.

Sandström's observations about this kind of English discourse are highly relevant here: 'perfect states seem to always pick out points at which the relevant result state has just begun to hold' (Sandström 1993: 189). In fact, while English needs the *when*-clause and the perfect to signal temporal sequence, given that the simple past in a *when*-clause most often would convey simultaneity,[2] the distinction between Perfeito and Imperfeito in Portuguese allows the expression of temporal sequence by the simple tenses. Examples (7) and (8) show this clearly.

(7)   And when Juana *had seated* herself and *had settled* to nurse the baby, Kino went back to the road.
        Quando Joana se *sentou* e *deu* o peito à criança, Kino voltou atrás.
        Lit: When Juana sat down and gave the breast to the child, Kino came back

(8)   And when it *had passed* out of sight, he went back to the roadway
        Quando o carro *deixou* de se ver, Kino voltou à estrada
        Lit: When the car could no longer be seen, Kino returned to the road

Particularly interesting in this respect is (9), where the translator felt the need to assert the temporal imediacy of the two events by a temporal connective *mal* ('as soon as'), and where the possibly vague description (cf. Santos, 1997) of the pearl

---

[2] Or, according to Moens (1987), a simple past *when*-clause allows any relative temporal ordering.

buyers' position in English – did they sit down at that moment, or were they already sitting? – is rendered unambiguously as the action of sitting down.

(9)   ... and when the day *had come*, in the offices of the pearl buyers, each man sat alone with his little black velvet tray...
Mal *rompeu* a manhã, cada um dos compradores sentou-se sozinho na sua lojeca ...
Lit: As soon as the morning broke, each one of the buyers sat down alone in his small shop

Another conspicuous case is the translation of *be gone* – considered as (one form of) the past perfect of the verb *go* by several authors – associated to the connective *and then*, which is always translated by a Portuguese verb denoting a change of state;[3] cf. (10) and (11).

(10)   For a moment his body was black in the cave entrance, crouched and silent, and then he *was gone*.
Por um instante, o corpo recortou-se-lhe, negro, na entrada da gruta, atento e silencioso. Depois – *saiu*.
Lit: For a moment, his body was silhouetted, back, at the cave entrance, attentive and silent. Then – he went out.

(11)   And then the startled look *was gone* from him ...
Foi quando o susto lhe *desapareceu* do rosto ...
Lit: it was when the fright disappeared from his face

3.3 Portuguese Mais que perfeito into English simple tenses

We now turn to the Portuguese-English direction. The different tense distributions can be classified into three major categories:

- those depending to a large extent on language-specific discourse rules, namely regarding *when*-clauses (and *quando*-clauses) and relative clauses in the two languages, as well as whole passages in the pluperfect[4]
- those depicting a consistent aspectual change, from a change of state to its result
- those where the relative temporal information is lost in the translation

---

[3] The researchers on the perfect would call this case the 'resultative perfect'. Note that, when *was gone* co-occurs with *now*, or *long since*, it is never translated by Perfeito in the corpus.
[4] Portuguese patterns with French in that 'in narratives where a pluperfect introduces a "flashback" that stretches over more than one sentence, English often switches back to the simple past after the first or second pluperfect, while French sticks with the pluperfect throughout' (Salkie 1989: 25).

As an example of the first case, English tends to skip pluperfects in *when*-clauses, as Sandström (1993: 176) has noted: 'If an event [which precedes the point reached on the narrative timeline] is referred to in a *when*-clause […], the past perfect does not appear in the *when*-clause, but only in the head clause'. This explains examples (12) and (13) – noting that, in Portuguese, such a restriction in connection with *quando*-clauses does not hold.

(12)   ...meditou em porque esquecera a bacia, a não vira quando se *sentara...*
         ... he wondered why he had overlooked the basin, had not seen it when he *sat* down...
         Lit: he considered why he had forgotten the bowl, had not seen it when he had sat down

(13)   Quando, enfim, *entrara* nele, também como agora se encostara à porta
         When finally she *entered* it, she had leaned, even as now, against the door ...
         Lit: When, at last, she had entered it, also like now she had leaned against the door

Another conspicuous difference in terms of discourse organization between the two languages is the use of the Mais que perfeito to render arbitrary location in the past (cf. Cunha and Cintra 1984: 455), which in English seems to be done by the simple past instead.[5] This seems to be one of the causes for the large quantitative discrepancy of pluperfects in the two languages.[6] Some examples are presented in (14) - (16).

(14)   ... *chegara*, de uma vez, a arriscar que ...
         ... and even *ventured*, on one occasion, the opinion that ...
         Lit: he had gone so far as, once, to venture that

(15)   ... ele *acabara* conhecendo todas as almas de que dispunha aquela pequena parcela da humanidade.
         ... he *ended* up knowing all the souls contained in that small parcel of humanity.
         Lit: he had ended up knowing every soul which that small portion of mankind had at its disposal

---

[5] In my corpus. On the other hand, this is one of the 'meanings' traditionally associated with the English perfect: the 'existential perfect'; see again Sandström (1993).

[6] One should in any case pause to think why all those facts are given in a Portuguese text, if they do not correspond to a temporally ordered narrative: my explanation is that they are employed in the characterization of the characters and of the setting, which, as Slobin (1997) noted, is much more elaborate in Romance languages than in English.

(16)   ... *haviam sido* muito poucas as que tinham desaparecido, ascendidas ao Sumo Bem.
        ... very few *were* those who had disappeared by ascending to the Supreme Good.
        Lit: there had been very few which had disappeared, ascended to the Supreme Good

Good examples of the second case, that is, of lexical aspectual change, are (17) and (18), where the action expressed in Mais que perfeito is translated by the (probable) process resulting from it:

(17)   ... porque, ao começar a vida, encontrara a feliz conjuntura de [...], é que se *instalara* ali.
        ... at the beginning of his life he had encountered the fortunate combination of [...]; and there he *stayed*.
        Lit: because, as his life began, he had found the happy combination of [...], it is why he had settled there

(18)   O Rebelo, atribulado, chegara a separar-se da mulher que depois se *juntara* com um sargento que a abandonou em Luanda quando regressou à metrópole.
        Tormented, Rebelo went so far as to separate from his wife, who later *lived* with a sergeant until he abandoned her in Luanda when he returned to the Metropolis.[7]
        Lit: Rebelo, distressed, had even gone so far as to separate from his wife, who afterwards had began to live with a sergeant who left her

Finally, several cases were found where the information of temporal precedence was simply not conveyed in the English translation, sometimes making it clear from the context (19) or leaving it open (20); other times, in my opinion, actually changing the meaning conveyed, as in (21) and (22).

(19)   A alma da jovem não a vira mais; mas o demónio *dissera*-lhe que era franga na capoeira do pai.
        He hadn't seen the young girl's soul again; but the demon *told* him that she was a pullet in her father's coop.
        Lit: The young girl's soul he had not seen anymore; but the demon had told him that she was a pullet in her father's coop

---

[7] The simple past tense here may be attributed to several other (or additional) causes: First, it occurs in a relative clause – and other examples show that English avoids the pluperfect in this kind of clauses, too; second, the English main clause is not in the pluperfect, and since the relative clause refers explicitly to a time later than that of the main clause, a pluperfect would be infelicitous here. Still, it is undeniable that *juntar* ('get together') is an eventive verb, while *live with* is not.

(20)   Mas *haviam concordado* ambos em que ...
       But they both *agreed* that ...
       Lit: But they had agreed both that

(21)   O amor para ele *fora* carne e espírito, ...
       Love *was*, for him, flesh and spirit, ...
       Lit: Love to him had been flesh and soul

(22)   Não *deixara* família, nem na província.
       He *had* no family, not even in the provinces.
       Lit: He had left no family, not even in the land

A more delicate case of translation problem occurs in (23), which involves a lexical item of a Portuguese aspectual class that I have called Aquisições. (For a similarly structured aspectual class in English, aquisitions, see Santos 1997.) Aquisições are vague between a change of state and the resulting state (in this case, corresponding in English to *meet / get to know*, and *know*). The translator chose the wrong correspondence, leading to a nonsensical rendering.

(23)   ... os habitantes da aldeia (que ele já *conhecera* como antepassados deles mesmos ou de animais que lhes circulavam ao pé) ...
       ... the villagers (whom he *knew* as their own ancestors or as animals that gathered around them) ...
       Lit: which he had once met as their own ancestors / which he had already known before as their own ancestors[8]

3.4 Simple tenses into pluperfects in general

It should not be surprising that some of the cases translationally relating the pluperfect to the simple tenses can be inverted, i.e., can also occur in the opposite direction, relating simple tenses to pluperfects: In fact, one would expect to find states and processes translated by the pluperfect of an event which triggered them (even though this is addition of information), as displayed in examples (24) - (25).

(24)   The world *was* awake now, and Kino arose ...
       Enfim, o mundo *acordara*. Kino levantou-se ...
       Lit: At last, the world had awakened

(25)   But Juana's eyes *were* on him ...
       Mas os olhos de Joana *tinham*-se *cravado* nele ...
       Lit: But Juana had fixed her eyes on Kino

---

[8] The Portuguese sentence is still vague between the change-of-state alternative (*meet*) and the localization of several past periods of knowing, corresponding to a translation of *já* as indefinite *once* or as a marker of *dejá vu*. Cast in terms of my appropriation of Moens's (1987) aspectual network in Santos (1996: Chapters 5 and 6), this means that Mais que perfeito preserves the vagueness of Aquisições.

Likewise, different language-specific discourse or syntactic properties are liable to cause the inverse translation pattern; cf. the relative clause of (26), the cleft of (27), and the indefinite time location of (28).

(26)   Kino's people had sung of everything that *happened* or *existed*.
        A gente de Kino cantara tudo que *acontecera* ou *existira*.
        Lit: The people of Kino had sung everything that had happened or had existed

(27)   This *was* the bed that had raised the King of Spain to be a great power in Europe in past years ...
        Fora aquilo que tornara poderoso na Europa o rei de Espanha ...
        Lit: It had been that that had made powerful in Europe the king of Spain

(28)   The news *stirred* up something infinitely black and evil in the town; ...
        A novidade *erguera* na cidade qualquer coisa profundamente negra e diabólica.
        Lit: The news had raised in the town something deeply black and evil

There were, however, special cases related only to the change from the passive into Mais que perfeito, and to Imperfeito from pluperfect, which shed light in yet other differences in the organization and overall structure of the two languages. Let me present them here, in the hope that they illustrate the advantage of a multiplicity of studies using the same corpus.[9]

3.4.1 English passive into Mais que perfeito

The question of English passive into Mais que perfeito is relevant also to explain the quantitative differences between English and Portuguese original texts concerning the use of the pluperfect. It is obvious that the passive and the perfect share a good deal of properties in English, therefore it is not surprising to find the passive translationally related to the pluperfect (provided the target language has something similar to the English pluperfect, which is our working hypothesis).

There are a number of cases, into which I cannot go for lack of space, where the passive in English is more encompassing than its Portuguese counterpart. Some translations of the passive, however, deserve special mention, as they show semantic differences between the languages. Example (29), for instance, displays the only natural way to translate the English passive, which is clearly resultative:

(29)   The little hole *was* slightly *enlarged* and its edges *whitened* from the sucking, but the red swelling extended farther around it ...
        A pequenina mancha *aumentara* um pouco, o contorno *desinflamara*-se

---

[9] By this I mean looking at the same data (the same corpus) from several perspectives, instead of only looking at the pluperfect, or the lexical aspect of some set of verbs, or at the Imperfeito. In my opinion, this allows one to discover more unity and coherence in the very many cases that occur than if one is devoted to the study of a single facet.

com a sucção, mas toda a bolha vermelha se alargara ...
Lit: the little spot had increased a little, the contour had disinflamed with the sucking, but the whole red bubble had enlarged

In fact, Imperfeito would convey a process taking place (like English *was enlarging*); Perfeito would describe the enlarging as sequential to the previously mentioned examples (something which is precluded by the context); and the passive with *ser* and Perfeito, or with *estar* and Imperfeito, would put too much focus on agentivity.[10] This shows that the past tense piece of the pie is rather different in the two languages, having Mais que perfeito in Portuguese doing some of the work performed by the English passive.

Another interesting case, now with a human subject, rendered as agent in Portuguese, is the one displayed in (30).

(30)   He *was shaved* close to the blue roots of his beard, and his hands were clean
        Barbeara-se até às raízes azuis da barba, tinha as mãos muito limpas
        Lit: He had shaved until the blue roots of his beard, he had the hands very clean

While the passive describes both the previous action of shaving and his resulting appearance, the closest way to describe the two pieces of meaning in Portuguese is to use the Mais que perfeito (adding the action's agent, which is not expressed in the English text).

3.4.2 Portuguese Imperfeito into English pluperfect

Another interesting translation regularity that emerged from my study was the use of the English pluperfect to render the habitual character of Imperfeito, and which can be considered the inverse of the regularity described in point 2 of section 3.1 above.

The prototypical value of the Imperfeito applied to events expresses a twofold character: (a) habitual/characteristic action, which is (b) simultaneous with the time of the narrative. In English, one either renders the simultaneity (thus failing to mark the habitual, repetitive, character) or renders the recurrence of the action, through the use of the pluperfect, but missing the co-temporality. Consider as examples of this last case (31) - (33).

(31)   Ele, que *via* almas de brâmanes passarem a cães, ...
        He, who *had seen* Brahmins' souls become dogs', ...
        Lit: He, who was used to see Brahmins' souls turn into dogs'

---

[10] The two other passives, finally, are too marked to be considered: the passive with *ser* ('be') and Imperfeito implies habituality, and the passive with *estar* ('be') and Perfeito implies temporariness of a past state.

294 Diana Santos

(32)   ... vindos não se sabia de onde, pois todos os servos *estavam* bem pagos.
         ... not knowing where they were coming from, for all his servants *had been* well paid off.
         Lit: since all the servants were well paid

(33)   ... uma época revolta, tumultuosa, [...], que, como as ondas do mar, *vinha* bater às portas do seu mosteiro de Jarrow...
         ... an era, rebellious, tumultuous, [...] which, like the waves of the sea, *had beaten* upon the portals of his Jarrow monastery
         Lit: a revolved, turbulent time, which like the sea waves, came to knock at the doors …

These examples show a case (very common, indeed) in which two pieces of information conveyed by a grammatical device, in this case a tense, cannot be expressed in a similarly compact way (or at all) in another language, leading to a (probably) subconscious choice from the part of the translator.

The same phenomenon is easier to perceive when the time line is considered, as is the case in example (34), which involves the passive in a relative clause and the adverb *always*. It is impossible, with one clause only, to convey both the present and the past in Portuguese, thus the (arbitrary?) translation choice.

(34)   He was trapped as his people *were* always *trapped...*
         Estava peado, como todos os da sua raça sempre *tinham estado...*
         Lit: he was hindered, as everyone of his people had always been

4 Verification in larger corpora

From the above description, one could select many possible observations to be corroborated or refined. Possible hypotheses for generalization are indicated by H and a number.

- The *when*-clause pattern vs. *quando*-clause pattern:

H1. When the (preposed) *when*-clause has an event in the pluperfect, and the main clause has a simple past, the two clauses will be translated by Perfeito tenses, possibly with *quando*, but not necessarily.

H2. When a *quando*-clause is in the Mais que perfeito and the main clause agrees in tense, the English translation has at most one of the two clauses (most probably the main clause) in the pluperfect.

- The pluperfect of stative verbs (like *be* or *have*):

H3. When the English verb has a pluperfect of a stative clause, more often than not it expresses a habitual (or durative) state that is rendered in the translation by Imperfeito.

- The combination of a passive with *always*:

H4. It always produces difficulties for the translation into Portuguese.

- The Imperfeito-to-pluperfect translation strategy:

H5. Whenever (or at least, often when) an Imperfeito clause conveys a property that can be understood as repeated a number of times, the English translation will use a pluperfect if at all possible.

- The relative clause pattern:

H6. An English main clause in the pluperfect will tend to co-occur with relative clauses in the simple past, which will often be translated into Portuguese as agreeing in tense with the main clause, thus resulting in two MQPs.

H7. Portuguese relative clauses in Mais que Perfeito will tend to be translated by simple tenses in English, with the pluperfect as the main clause tense.

- The pattern of aspectual class change:

H8. It is common to have an aspectual class change in a translation involving the pluperfect in either direction.

For obvious reasons, I did not try to verify the hypotheses for which there are no easily available data, as is the case with the translation of Portuguese into English. Also, time and space restrictions prevent me from looking into those cases which, due to non-dependence on formal markers, are more difficult – or even impossible – to extract (semi)automatically.

4.1 Testing the hypotheses

Here I just perform the simplest kind of test, namely, I collect the instances that are related to the hypothesis, count the cases which are in accordance, and the cases which disagree with the hypothesis, and discuss the resulting figure. I used the whole English to Portuguese part of the ENPC for this process.[11] The material amounts to about 370,000 words (including originals and translations).

A complementary test of the relevance and generalizability of the hypotheses presented here, profiting from the available resources for English, would be to look at the LOB and Brown corpora − and their frequency distribution by Hofland and Johansson (1982) − in order to check the possible claims relating to English alone. For example, the LOB data concerning *when*-clauses or pluperfect distribution might be consulted in order to see whether the English originals in the English-Portuguese corpus used here, or Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, deviated in any important respect from LOB's fiction part.

4.2 Exploring the English-Portuguese corpus

In order to test H1, I looked at every sentence in the corpus, having *when* followed by *had* in the next ten tokens (62 cases), using the WebTCE (Translation Corpus Explorer, cf. Ebeling 1998). Obviously, only a fraction of

---

[11] The composition of the corpus is available at http://www.hf.uio.no/iba/prosjekt/. It should be noted that a finer analysis should take into account the possible differences between American and other variants of English, and European Portuguese and the Brazilian variant, but this must be left to a future study.

these actually corresponded to subordinate temporal clauses in the pluperfect: 29 cases, described in Table 5.

Table 5 Translations of pluperfect *when*-clauses in the English-Portuguese corpus

Translation *when* clause - main clause	*when* plup, non-plup	*when* plup, plup	plup *when* plup	non-plup *when* plup	Time spe-cification
Perf-Perf	7			1	1
MQP-MQP	1		2		
depois - Perf	2				
MQP-Imperf		1	1		
Imperf-Imperf				1	
MQP-Perf					2
other	1		1		8

In the case of preposed *when*-clauses, our data strongly confirms the suggestions above: The pluperfect with a non-pluperfect main clause is used to convey temporal sequence, which is rendered by a sequence of Perfeitos in Portuguese, sometimes even with the explicit use of the temporal conjunction *depois* 'after' (instead of *quando*). The only case where the main clause in English is also in the pluperfect, involves *had already been*, a straightforward example of the universal perfect case, with a fully predictable translation into Portuguese; namely Imperfeito with *já* ('already').

The other two translations of the pluperfect into Imperfeito can be attributed to the above rule 'when the pluperfect in English expresses repetitiveness, it is rendered by the Imperfeito expressing habituality in Portuguese'. An interesting translation pair is (35), because the translator uses MQP to transmit the past in the past meaning, and Imperfeito to transmit the 'more than once' information.

(35) On his previous visits to L. he *had seen* M.C. spread out beneath him when he and his aunt *had stood* surveying the headland … (PDJ3)
Nas suas anteriores visitas a L. *vira* M.C. lá em baixo quando ele e a tia *olhavam* para o promontório…
Lit: On his previous visits to L. he had seen M.C. down there when he and the aunt looked (Imperf.) at the headland …

Finally, from this cursory exploration of the pluperfect in English *when*-clauses, other cases emerged as interesting (though not necessarily producing a change of pluperfectness, contrastively):

• The use of *when*-clauses to further specify a temporal location already introduced, like in *later, when...*

- The use of *when*-clauses as a specifier to non-temporal NPs, such as *the present Soviet leader when he had been Chairman ...*, or *attic, just right for the children when they had got to the age ...*

In order to test H3, I looked at all the 67 instances of the form *had been* + adjective or *had been* + noun (with no determiner). Only 19 are actually rendered, in the translation, by a tense other than MQP (10 Imperfeito, 2 Perfeito, 2 Infinitivo composto, 1 Perfeito passive, 1 Imperfeito conjuntivo, and 3 paraphrases or ommissions); furthermore, only 6 of the 10 Imperfeito translations correspond to a clearly habitual interpretation.

Clearly, the results do not seem to enforce the hypothesis to any great degree, but it should be mentioned that many other factors can be at stake, like relative clause tense agreement, negation, quantification, counterfactuality, complex paraphrasing (of e.g. *able to*), as well as eventive interpretation of a kind so often discussed in the literature (*he was nice* as referring to an event).

First of all, it is clear that the number of instances retrieved did not reflect the number of instances where the pluperfect could be preferentially (or at all) interpreted as durative. If one, after consideration of each individual example (irrespective of any of the factors mentioned in the preceding paragraph), tries to single out where it was possible to interpret the English sentence as describing either a durative situation or a situation repeated an indefinite number of times, the number of examples to consider is brought down to 34. If one notes, in addition, that the cases which specify a strictly prior temporal period cannot in principle be rendered by the Imperfeito, one narrows the number of cases down to only 15.

Given that quantified examples (3 using *never* and 2 *always*) are also liable not to be rendered by Imperfeito (which is marked with *nunca* and *sempre*; cf. Sections 6.6 and 7.2.5.3 of Santos (1996)), the remaining cases do not really speak against the refined hypothesis H3: when the pluperfect describes an indefinitely durative or repetitive situation extending till the now of the narrative, the natural Portuguese counterpart is Imperfeito.[12]

On the other hand, the five cases of Imperfeito translation or paraphrase using Imperfeito which are no longer included in the habitual description above are notoriously typical of this tense as property-describing, corresponding to evaluation or assessment – and, as such, outside of temporal bounds.

As regards the assessment of hypothesis H4, this was not possible: in the English-Portuguese corpus, there was one single instance of the past passive with *always*, rendered in the translation by a gerundive paraphrase.

Finally, even though no explicit exhaustive testing of H8 was performed, several cases of aspectual change were recorded while testing hypotheses H1 and H3.

---

[12] The little proportion of actual examples is to be expected on the grounds that English, in contrast to Portuguese, does not have a grammatical device with this as its main role.

5 Concluding remarks

I hope to have provided enough evidence that the pluperfect is an interesting area for contrastive studies, due to the wealth of situations it can be used for, from monolingual and contrastive perspectives alike. In a nutshell, matters of aspectual class, discourse sequence and connective use can be illuminated by looking at the pluperfect contrastively and, conversely, insights from these areas can shed light on the behaviour of the pluperfect.

Corpus exploration is shown here to be an incremental task: refining and producing further hypotheses when getting to analyse more data, or taking into consideration other findings in different explorations concerning other language phenomena.

I offer this particular study to Stig Johansson as an expression of my gratitude both at a professional level, for the resources he has made available to the research community, and at a personal level, for his encouragement and critical review of my work.

References

Comrie, Bernard. 1985. *Tense*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cunha, Celso and Lindley Cintra. 1984. *Nova Gramática do Português Contemporâneo*, Lisboa: Edições João Sá da Costa.

Ebeling, Jarle. 1998. The Translation Corpus Explorer: A Browser for Parallel Texts. In Stig Johansson and Signe Oksefjell (eds.) *Corpora and Crosslinguistic Research: Theory, Method, and Case Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 101-112.

Hofland, Knut and Stig Johansson. 1982. *Word Frequencies in British and American English*, Bergen and London.

Johansson, Stig, Geoffrey Leech, and Helen Goodluck. 1978. *Manual of Information to Accompany the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus of British English, for Use with Digital Computers*. Oslo.

Johansson, Stig and Knut Hofland. 1994. Towards an English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus. In Udo Fries, Gunnel Tottie, and Peter Schneider (eds.) *Creating and Using English Language Corpora*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 25-37.

Leech, Geoffrey N. 1971. *Meaning and the English Verb*. London: Longman.

Moens, Marc. 1987. Tense, Aspect and Temporal Reference. PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

Oksefjell, Signe. Forthcoming. A Description of the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus: Compilation and Further Developments. To appear in *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*.

Salkie, Raphael. 1989. Perfect and Pluperfect: What is the Relationship? *Journal of Linguistics 25* (1989), 1-34.

Sandström, Görel. 1993. *When-*clauses and the Temporal Interpretation of Narrative Discourse. PhD dissertation, Department of General Linguistics, University of Umeå, Report nr. 34, DGL-UUM-R-34, May 1993.

Santos, Diana. 1994. Imperfeito: A Broad-coverage Study. *Actas do X Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Linguística* (Évora, 6-8 de Outubro de 1994), 525-539.

Santos, Diana. 1995. L'Imperfeito portugais: étude systématique de ses fonctions et de comment en rendre compte en traduisant vers l'anglais. *Actes du XXIV Colloque sur la linguistique des langues romanes* (Palermo, 18-24 Séptembre 1995), to appear.

Santos, Diana M.S.M.P. 1996. Tense and Aspect in English and Portuguese: A Contrastive Semantical Study. PhD dissertation, Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, June 1996.

Santos, Diana. 1997. The Importance of Vagueness in Translation: Examples from English to Portuguese. *Romansk Forum 5* (1997), June 1997, 43-69.

Santos, Diana. 1998. Perception Verbs in English and Portuguese. In Stig Johansson and Signe Oksefjell (eds.) *Corpora and Crosslinguistic Research: Theory, Method, and Case Studies*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 319-342.

Slobin, Dan I. 1996. Two Ways to Travel: Verbs of Motion in English and Spanish. In M. Shibatani and S. A. Thompson (eds.). *Grammatical Constructions: Their Form and Meaning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 195-220.