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UN JOUR (ONE DAY) IN NARRATIVES

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In French, the noun *jour* has two main meanings: it can denote either the light of the sun or a day in the calendar. These two meanings are clearly interrelated and the noun can enter, with different subvalues, into several idiomatic constructions such as *un beau jour*, *un jour ou l'autre*, *voir le jour*, etc.¹

In a previous study focusing on the referential interpretation of the NP *un jour* (Charolles, forthcoming), I suggested that (i) when the NP is a direct duration complement and it does not refer to a temporal interval and that (ii) when it is used as a temporal adverbial, it can refer either to a possible upcoming day or to an unspecified past or fictional day during which, an event will happen or has taken place. These 3 common uses of *un jour* are illustrated by:

- (1) John a passé un jour en prison.
John spent a day in jail.
- (2) Un jour, John battra Jane aux échecs.
One day, John will beat Jane at chess.
- (3) Un jour, John battit Jane aux échecs.
One day, John beat Jane at chess.

In this paper², I will only deal with the referential adverbial *un jour* and focus my attention on its narrative use illustrated in (3), leaving aside its

¹ On temporal complements, cf. Berthonnaux (1990)

² I wish to thank F.Gibson and S.Carter-Thomas for rereading the English version of this paper.

predictive use in (2). In the first part, I will review some findings concerning the referential interpretation of narrative *un jour* and will insist on its cohesive function. In a second part, I will set out some results of a corpus study designed to identify the discourse profiles (Ariel 2004) of the narrative use of *un jour* and, particularly, its framing function.

I. UN JOUR (ONE DAY) IN NARRATIVES

Un jour can be used in a formulaic way at the beginning of a story, as in (4):

(4) Un jour, le roi de Poldévie fit venir ses fils...

One day, the king of Poldevia asked his sons to come ...

In (4), *un jour* selects a particular unspecified day in the past, or more precisely, among a set of possible days in a fictional world. This day is disconnected from the actual situation, and it establishes a point of reference for the localization of the particular event denoted by the sentence in which *un jour* appears. This event is put forward as the starting point of the story, and, as such, it evokes a background situation against which the story is precisely focused. When used in an incipit as in (4), this situation is not specified, but the day in question is presented as remarkable to the extent that it is the day during which a certain event happened. Hence there is an implicit contrast between the day referred to by *un jour* and the set of days linked to the situation described by the event; in (4) this would be the set of days during which the king of Poldevia reigned. *Un jour* selects a specific day out of this implicit set and provides a partitive indefinite description linked to the event considered.

The same reasoning can apply to (3), where *un jour* evokes a temporal associative set of events comprising all the occasions when John or Jane played some game against somebody. (3) is also possible in the course of a story. In cases where other events have been mentioned previously it is likely that the immediately preceding context will specify the time interval from which *un jour* singles out one particular day, as in (5):

(5) Depuis deux ans que John jouait aux échecs avec Jane, elle avait toujours gagné. Un jour, John la battit à plate couture....

John had been playing chess regularly with Jane for two years and Jane had always won. One day, John beat her hands down.

The contextual temporal interval required to interpret the reference of *un jour* can also be mentioned in a sentence following that with *un jour*, as in (6):

- (6) Un jour, John battit Jane aux échecs. Il jouait régulièrement avec elle depuis deux ans et Jane le battait régulièrement...

One day, John beat Jane at chess. He had been playing chess with her regularly for two years and Jane always won. ...

Un jour may be also qualified by a relative clause as in:

- (7) Un jour où/que John jouait aux échecs contre Jane, il la battit à plate couture.

One day when John was playing chess with Jane, he beat her hands down.

However, in (7), the relative clause does not provide the time interval for the interpretation of *un jour*. Instead it qualifies the day in question as being the one where John played against Jane, as opposed to those where he played against other persons. In this respect, it is interesting to note that, in French, there is no common construction to express something like *one day among those where*.

The content of the qualifying clause in (7) could be expressed by an independant sentence, and followed by one or several imperfective sentence(s) as in (8):

- (8) Depuis que John avait acheté un ordinateur, il passait toutes ses soirées à jouer aux échecs (S-1). Un jour, il jouait contre Jane (S0), et toutes ses pièces étaient en position favorable (S1). Elle ne pouvait rien faire (S2).

Since John had bought a computer, he had played chess every evening One day, while he was playing against Jane, all his pieces were in the best positions. She couldn't move.

But (8) definitely sounds incomplete. It requires a perfective sentence as in:

- (9) et il la battit à plate couture (S3).

and he beat her hands down.

In (10), the concluding event is preceded by two perfective sentences:

- (10) Depuis deux ans que John jouait régulièrement aux échecs avec Jane, elle avait toujours gagné (S-1). Un jour, toutes les pièces de John étaient bien placées (S0). Il les avançait avec prudence (S1). Jane résista autant qu'elle put (S2) mais il la battit (S4).

For the two years that John had been playing chess regularly with Jane, she had always won. One day, John found himself with all his chess pieces in the best positions. He moved them carefully. Jane defended herself as best as she could but he beat her.

In (10), S1 and S2 develop the same discourse topic as the previous and following sentences. On the contrary, in (11):

- (11) Depuis deux ans que John jouait régulièrement aux échecs avec Jane, elle avait toujours gagné (S-1). Un jour qu'ils faisaient une partie, le père de Jane l'appela de Nice pour lui dire qu'il était malade (S0). Cela la perturba (S1) et elle perdit (S2).

John has been playing chess regularly with Jane for two years and she always won. One day while they were playing together, Jane's father called her on the phone from Nice and told her he was ill. This news disturbed her and she lost.

S1 refers to a perfective fact which is not linked to the chess topic. As in (8), *un jour* is here necessary for the coherence of the sequence, but, in (11), the use of *un jour* without further qualification would not be sufficient to maintain the coherence of the passage. The addition of the modifying adjunct clause is required to ensure the transition.

The examples discussed above show that:

- *un jour* establishes a point of temporal reference which localizes at least one perfective upcoming event. This event is highlighted and creates a rupture with a previous background situation;

- this background situation can be mentioned in the previous or subsequent context of the sentence containing *un jour* but, even when the situation is not explicitly mentioned, the referential interpretation of the adverbial leads to the creation of such a context, because it is necessary in order to justify the uniqueness of the day referred to by *un jour*;

- *un jour* thus creates cohesive links with the previous sentences but also programs a number of links with sentences following that in which it appears.

Even if the narrative *un jour* does not provide an ordinary quantifying indefinite description (it cannot commute with *deux jours*), its head noun denotes a temporal interval corresponding to something like 24 hours. It could be the case that, in such cases the 'N' *jour* is, at least partly desemanticised, but the fact that it can be replaced by *matin* (morning), *soir* (evening), *dimanche* (Sunday) and other temporal N, suggests the contrary. We can assume that *jour* is chosen by a narrator because it refers to a specific temporal interval, one that is different from those denoted by these N. Moreover the fact that there are very similar expressions such as *une fois* (*once*) and *un coup* (in colloquial French) which seem specialized in referring to temporal occasions, independantly of their duration, reinforces the idea that *un jour* must in fact refer to an interval corresponding to one day.

To throw light on this point it is useful to consider (12) which is identical to (11) apart from the fact that it contains two further sentences (S3) and (S4), referring to events continuing the narration subsequent to the episode expressed in (S2):

- (12) Depuis deux ans que John jouait régulièrement aux échecs avec Jane, elle avait toujours gagné (S-1). Un jour qu'ils faisaient une partie, le père de Jane l'appela de Nice pour lui dire qu'il était malade (S0). Cela la perturba (S1) et elle perdit (S2). Elle abandonna John (S3) et rejoignit l'aéroport (S4).

John has been playing chess regularly with Jane for two years and she always won. One day, Jane's father called her on the phone and told her he was ill. This news disturbed her and she lost. She left John and went to the airport.

In (12), the situation denoted by S0 necessarily takes place during the day referred to by *un jour*. On the contrary, nothing ensures that Jane necessarily left John and went to the airport during the day they played chess. It is even possible that Jane was beaten the day after they began to play because their game took a long time. Though these interpretations cannot be excluded, they seem rather unlikely for the following reason.

Until now, I have only considered examples in which *un jour* figured at the beginning of a sentence or a text. Narrative *un jour* does not always occur in initial position. It is generally acknowledged that the positioning of adverbials play an important functional role (Thompson 1985, Ford & Thompson 1986, Ramsay 1984, and for a presentation and discussion cf. Charolles & Lamiroy 2002, Charolles 2003). In a series of papers on adverbials (Charolles 1997, Charolles & Prévost eds 2003, Charolles & Péry Woodley eds. 2005, Charolles 2005) we argue that, when adverbials are preposed, they function as an index for the distribution of upcoming discursive information. Spatial (Sarda, 2005) and temporal adverbials (Le Draoulec & Péry-Woodley, 2003, 2005, Terran 2002) are commonly used as an index because it is relatively easy to distinguish situations according to the place where and the time when they take place. More abstract localizing adverbials sometimes called framing adverbs (Bonami et alii 2003), such as *in chemistry*, *in French*, are also commonly used in the same fashion (Vigier 2004, Charolles & Vigier 2005). But the notion of framing can be extended to non referring expressions, namely mediative adverbials such as *according to X* (Schrepfer-André, 2006), thematizing adverbials such as *concernant X* (*concerning X*) (Porhiel, 2005), serial text organizing expressions such as *d'une part/d'autre part* (*on the one hand/on the other hand*) (Jackiewicz, 2005), etc.

Framing adverbials can index a large segment of discourse and extend their scope far beyond the sentence in which they occur. So far, we have focused our attention on the contextual clues signaling the extension or the closure of a previously opened frame. These clues vary from one introducer to another, but a general hypothesis could be the following:

when a speaker or a writer chooses to begin a sentence with a potentially framing adverbial, he expresses his intention to exploit

its organizing power. This implies the control of its closure scope since, once a frame is opened, it tends, by default, to integrate in its scope the upcoming information; and, since this control can only be made on the basis of the semantic meaning of *un jour* (i.e. 24 hours), it prevents the desemanticisation of *N jour*.

II. CORPUS STUDY OF NARRATIVE USES OF *UN JOUR*

The following corpus study was undertaken to provide evidence for this hypothesis. The corpus³ contains 100 occurrences of narrative uses of *un jour* from two literary first person novels of the eighteenth century: 39 occurrences from Rousseau's *Confessions* and 61 occurrences from Lesage's *Gil Blas de Santillane*. As the two works belong to the same genre and the same historical period, it is reasonable to assume that their authors use *un jour* in the same general manner.

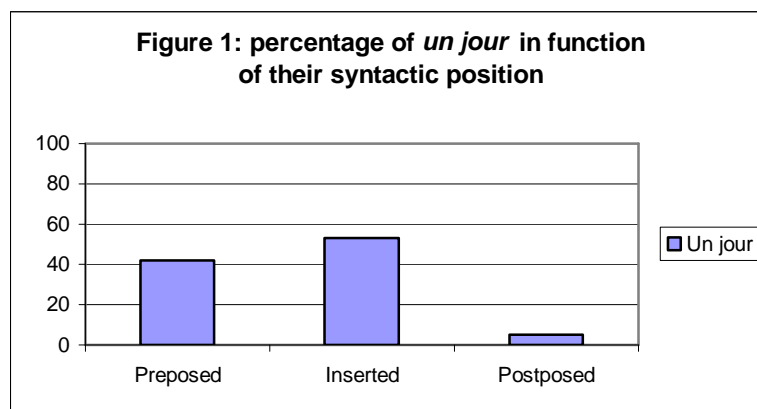
Each occurrence of *un jour* was entered in an Excel table using a series of approximately 60 features, classified under several general headings. In this paper the specific subset of features examined included:

- the morphosyntactic expression and syntactic position of *un jour*;
- the aspect and tense characteristics of the sentence *S0* containing *un jour* and of the preceding and following ones;
- the temporal scope of the adverbial.

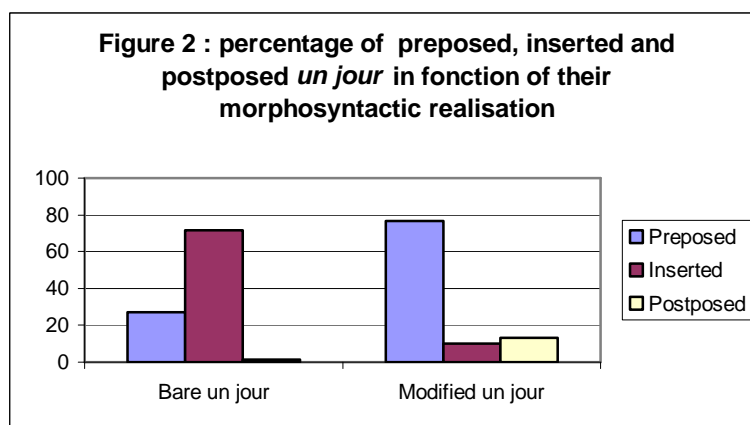
2.1. Morphosyntactic and syntactic features

In the corpus, there are 70% of bare *un jour* occurrences and 30% of modified ones. With regard to the syntactic position of *un jour*, three positions were distinguished. *Un jour* was categorized as preposed when appearing at the head of *S0* or at the head of a subordinate *S0*, or immediately preceded by another adverbial constituent (for example, a connective). It was categorized as postposed when figuring at the end of a sentence and as inserted, in all other positions in *S0*.

³The corpus is accessible on the following address : <http://www.lattice.cnrs.fr/>. I would like to thank E.Terran for her help in the collection and annotation of the corpus.

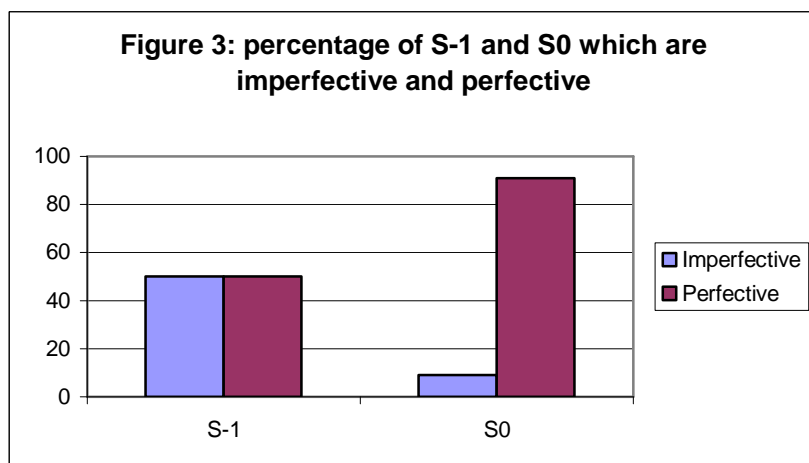


As can be seen in figure 2, the combination of the features examined above (i.e.: the morphosyntactic expression and syntactic positioning of the adverbial constituent) reveals an important difference between bare and modified *un jour* occurrences: while bare *un jour* is more often found in the inserted position (71%), modified *un jour* is more often preposed (77%).



2.2. Aspect and tense features

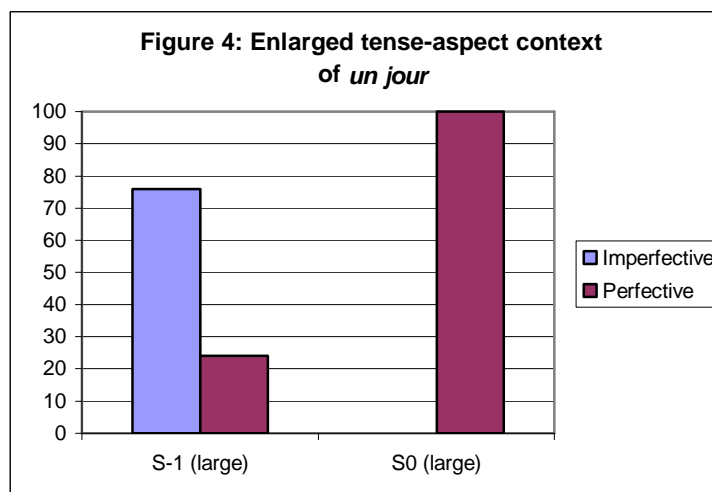
In order to categorize the tense-aspect features of the context of *un jour*, I considered the tense of the verb of the main sentence in which *un jour* was employed (S0) as well as the tense of the preceding one (S-1), and the aspectual type of the event denoted. I distinguished only two main cases, referred to simply as "perfective" and "imperfective". The data in figure 3 shows that in 91% of the cases, S0 refers either to an accomplishment or to an achievement and is in the simple past, or present perfect or present of narration. On the contrary, the sentence immediately preceding S0 can be either equally imperfective or perfective (50/50).



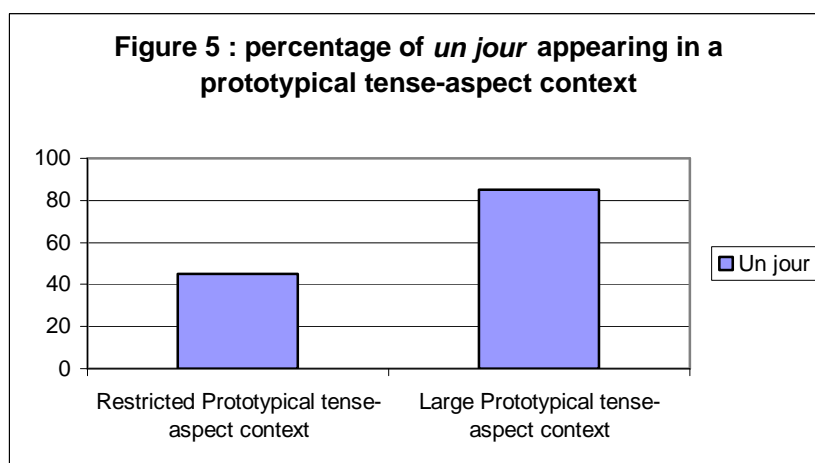
When including in the context the sentences following S0 in the same paragraph, the 9 cases where S0 refers to an imperfective eventuality are followed by at least one perfective sentence, so that this feature seems a strong characteristic of narrative uses of *un jour*. As regards the sentences immediately preceding S0 which are not imperfective, 18 occurrences are in fact difficult to categorise as perfective or imperfective, because for instance they are questions. If we consider the remaining cases and enlarge the contextual window to one or several preceding sentences, we observe that in 26 cases the preceding context can be recategorised as imperfective because it includes

- an imperfective sentence in the same paragraph or in the paragraph just before;
- a sentence stating a temporal interval opened, for instance, by *depuis* (*since*);
- a sentence denoting iterative activities or perfective events.

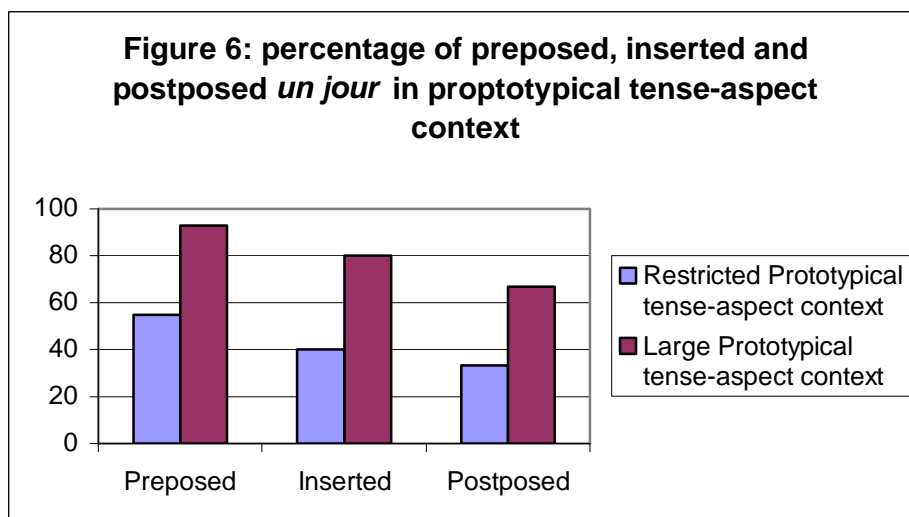
Finally, only 6 occurrences remain where the preceding context is definitely perfective.



This finding confirms that the tense-aspect features are indeed appropriate for the characterisation of the "discourse profile" of narrative usages of *un jour*. It therefore seems reasonable to consider that occurrences of *un jour* with a subsequent perfective event and with a preceding imperfective event are prototypical uses of the adverbial, at least in the present corpus. About 50% of the occurrences of *un jour* meet this condition and over 80% when the context (as in figure 5) is enlarged to previous and subsequent sentences.



There is no difference between bare and modified *un jour* as regards their frequency of occurrence in prototypical tense-aspect contexts. The results of the same calculation with the syntactic position of *un jour* presented in figure 6 are more significant since they indicate that, when *un jour* is preposed, it appears more often in prototypical tense-aspect contexts than when it is inserted and postposed:



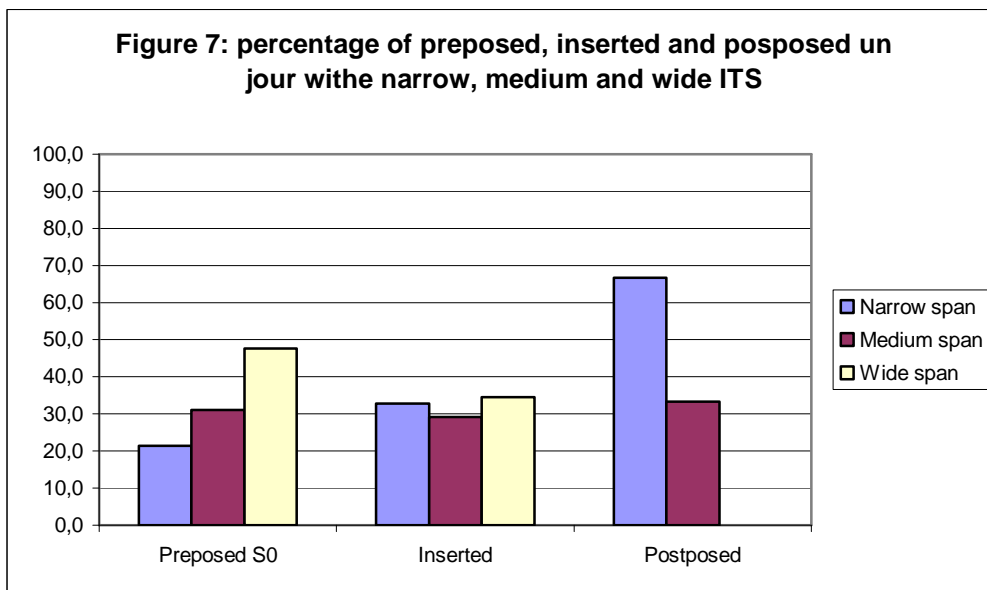
2.3. The Interpretative Temporal Span of *un jour*

I considered that all the occurrences of narrative *un jour* referred to a given day during which an *a priori* indefinite number of eventualities denoted by upcoming sentences could take place. The extent of the temporal span of *un jour* was stopped when one of these eventualities could not be interpreted as taking place during the day in question. In the remainder of this article this span will be referred to as the Interpretative Temporal Span (ITS) of *un jour*. In practice, it was not always easy to decide when an eventuality could or could not take place during the day referred to by *un jour*, but there always came a point in the text where it became clear that an eventuality could not have happened during the day in question. It was thus possible to count the number of clauses included in the ITS of *un jour*, and from this to distinguish the cases where *un jour* has:

- a narrow span (that is a span restricted to S0 containing the adverbial or to fewer than 5 following sentences);
- a medium span (that is a span covering at least 5 sentences but less than a paragraph);
- a wide span corresponding to an entire paragraph (either its length) or going through at least one paragraph boundary.

Since narrow, middle and wide span *un jour* are approximately equally represented in the corpus, this feature was also tested along with the morpho-syntactic and tense-aspect features considered previously. There appears very little difference either between bare and qualified occurrences of *un jour*, or between *un jour* appearing in restricted prototypical and enlarged prototypical tense-aspect contexts. On the contrary, as figure 7

shows, there was a significant difference between the number of preposed and postposed *un jour* occurrences.



2.4. Closure clues to the Interpretative Temporal Span of *un jour*

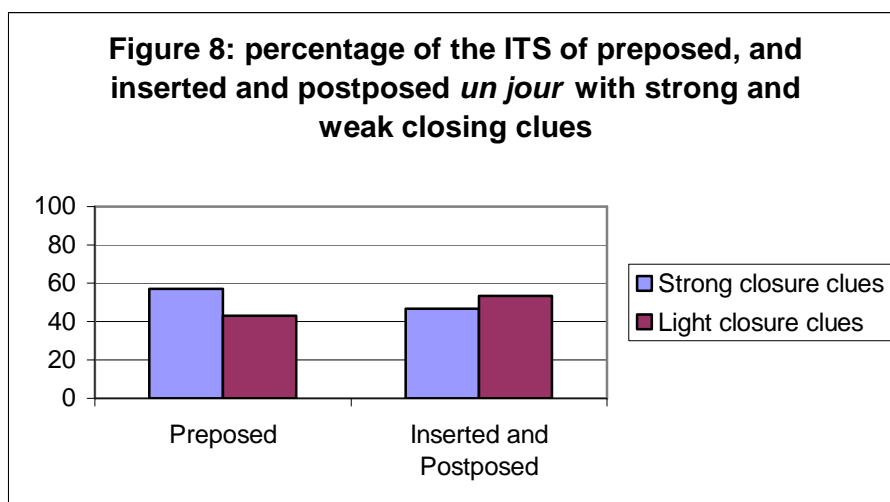
I considered that the ITS of *un jour* was signalled by a strong closure clue when this clue was:

- another temporal preposed adverbial (such as *le lendemain - the day after*);
- an inserted or postposed temporal adverbial indicating that an event took place during an interval incompatible with the one referred to by *un jour*;
- a resumptive demonstrative NP (such as *cet épisode – this episode*);
- the end of a chapter.

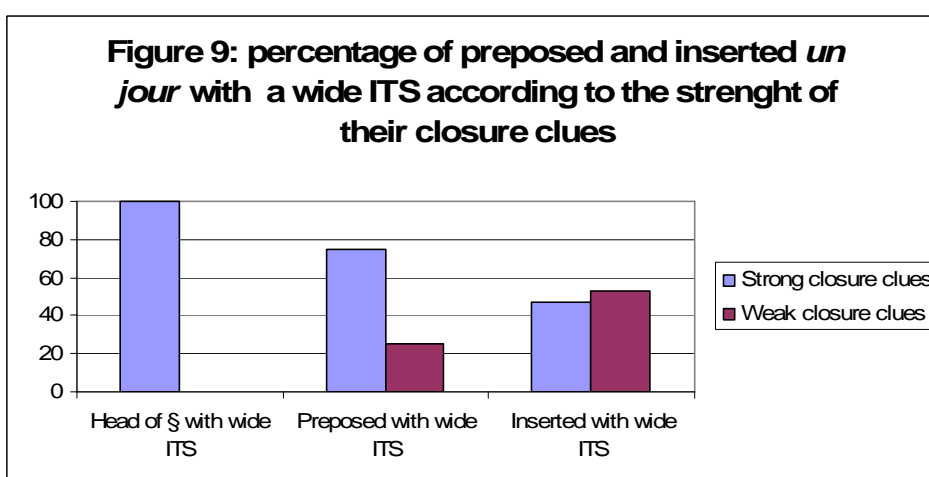
The other closure clues listed, such as for instance paragraph shifts or tense shifts were considered as weak clues since they were not decisive.

The number of occurrences of *un jour* followed by a strong or a weak closure clue are almost the same (50/50), but as figure 8 shows:

- the ITS of preposed *un jour* is more often closed by strong clues than by weak ones;
- on the contrary, the ITS of inserted and postposed *un jour* is more often closed by weak clues than by strong ones.

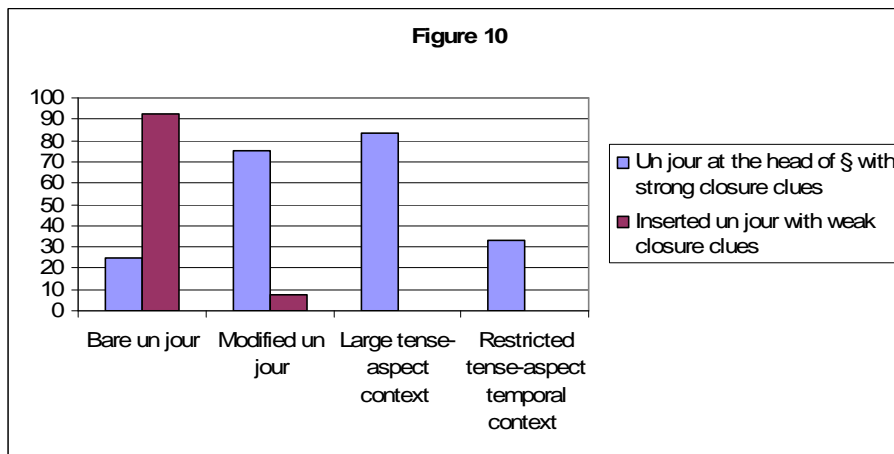


In order to identify the more potentially framing uses of *un jour*, I selected from among the preposed occurrences with a wide ITS, those which were the most detached, namely those appearing at the beginning of a paragraph: 12 occurrences of *un jour* (among 16 occurring paragraph initially) satisfied these conditions. As can be seen from the first column in figure 9, the ITS of all these *un jour* is signalled by strong clues. A comparison with the simply preposed *un jour* and inserted *un jour* occurrences with a wide span, indicates that the ITS of *un jour* at the beginning of a sentence tends to be more often closed by strong clues than by weak ones, while the difference is not as clear-cut and is marginally in favour of weak closure clues in the case of inserted *un jour*. So it seems that uses at the beginning of a paragraph simply reinforce the tendency observed in cases where *un jour* appears at the beginning of a sentence.



These indications are confirmed by the cases where the only "clue" indicating that an event doesn't fit within the ITS of *un jour* is the fact that this event cannot have taken place during the interval denoted by the

adverbial. These 18 underdetermined occurrences represent an important percentage of the corpus, but they do not have the same discourse profile. Their ITS is equally distributed between the three span sizes we have distinguished and they are more often inserted than preposed. Among these 18 occurrences I selected those in which *un jour* is inserted (13) and compared them with the 12 occurrences in which *un jour* is paragraph initial with both a wide ITS and strong closure clues. Other differences appear. These differences can be seen in the following figure which takes into account the morpho-syntactic expression of the adverbial and the tense and aspect characteristics of the context within which it appears.



This last figure shows that the ITS of modified *un jour* tends to be more frequently controlled by strong closure clues than bare *un jour* and that inserted *un jour* with weak closure clues do not appear in prototypical tense-aspect contexts.

Conclusion

The data presented in the second part of the paper show that it is possible to distinguish, in our corpus at least, two prototypical discourse profiles of narrative uses of *un jour*:

Discourse profile A	Discourse profile B
at the head of a paragraph or at the head of a sentence	inserted and postposed
prototypical tense-aspect context	non prototypical tense-aspect context
wide interpretative temporal	narrow interpretative temporal

span	span
Strong closure cues	weak closure cues
modified <i>un jour</i>	Bare <i>un jour</i>

The discourse profile A corresponds to the framing uses of *un jour*. In such cases, *un jour* functions as a forward labelling index and is strategically used for its organising power. It opens up a frame within which all the information concerning the day referred to by the adverbial is gathered as in a sort of file. The writer controls the opening of this file and also, as we have seen, its closure, signaling this by strong clues. Since this function is associated with a specific and constraining discourse profile, it seems possible to say that framing adverbials have a true textual scope (and not only an Interpretative Temporal Span) and that it is this capacity which confers on them a specific organisational role in the cohesion of discourse. When they are preposed they tend to grammaticalise this function - a process which in turn favours the non-desemanticisation of N *jour*.

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