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PAST TIME REFERENCES IN ITALIAN AND THEIR
ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää miten italian kielen menneeseen aikaan viittaavat verbimuodot käännetään englanniksi. Tutkielmassa keskitytään erityisesti tarkastelemaan italian kielen imperfektiivistä Imperfetto -muotoa ja sen kääntämistä englantiin. Muita tarkasteltavia muotoja ovat Passato Prossimo sekä Passato Remoto. Lisäksi Trapassato Prossimo ja Trapassato Remoto -muodot käsitellään lyhyesti. Tutkielma on pääosin kvalitatiivinen, vaikka kvantitatiivistakin lähestymistapaa käytetään jonkin verran. Menneen ajan verbimuotoja käsitellään semanttiselta kannalta eikä niiden morfologisia piirteitä kuvata. Tutkielmassa keskitytään tarkastelemaan menneen ajan viittauksia tempuksen ja aspektin kannalta. Keskeisiä käsitteitä ovat verbimuotojen perfektivisyys ja imperfektiivisyys. Modusta ja ajan adverbeja ei tutkielmassa käsitellä erikseen, vaan niihin viitataan niiden ollessa merkityksen kannalta olennaisia.

Teoriaosuudessa annetaan teoreettinen kuvaus sekä englannin että italian menneeseen aikaan viittaavista verbimuodoista. Tämän pohjalta käsitellään tutkimusaineiston tarjoamia esimerkkejä. Tutkimusaineisto, joka koostuu yli 6300 käännösparista, on kerätty italiankielisestä kaunokirjallisuudesta valituista pitkäköistä yhtenäisistä otteista ja niiden englanninkielisistä käänöksistä. Aineiston esittelyssä pohditaan ongelmia, joita käännösten käyttäminen tutkimusaineistona synnyttää. Aineistosta löytyneiden käännösparien esiintyminen esitetään kvantitatiivisesti, niitä analysoidaan ja erikoisempia käännösratkaisuja pyritään selvittämään.

Tutkielmassa todetaan, että yleisesti englannin kielestä löytyvät keinot alkuperäisen italiankielisen tekstin sisällön välittämiseksi. Joissakin tapauksissa kääntäjä on kuitenkin joutunut lisäämään käännökseen jonkun ajan adverbin tukemaan verbiä tai käyttämään jotakin korostavaa rakennetta, jotta alkuperäinen merkitys tulisi esille. Aineisto tarjoaa kuitenkin tapauksia, joissa englanninkielinen versio ei onnistu välittämään alkuperäistekstin vivahteita. Vain harvoissa käännöspareissa voidaan lähtökielen rakenteen epäillä vaikuttaneen kääntäjän ratkaisuun.

Tutkielmassa todetaan, että kahden kielen tempus- ja aspektijärjestelmien yksityiskohtaisempi vertailu edellyttää laajemman, mahdollisesti tietokonepohjaisen aineiston käyttöä. Aikamuotoja ja aspektia tutkittaessa on otettava huomioon koko puhunnos omassa kontekstissään, sen syntaktinen rakenne ja semanttinen merkitys sekä siinä esiintyvät ajan adverbit.

Asiasanat: aspect. English. Italian. past time. tense. translation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Tense and aspect are among the fundamental elements of many human languages. They are linguistic categories which enable us to refer to the past, present and future. Moreover, they give us the possibility to describe whether different situations take place simultaneously or one after another. In other words, these categories have an important role in most verbal communication. The human mind seems to function in a fairly similar way all over the world regardless of how different the languages might be. In the course of the development of various languages linguistic expressions such as tense and aspect may have taken different directions, resulting thus in diverse linguistic systems. Therefore, differences in tense and aspect systems between various, even closely related, languages do exist.

Placing tense and aspect systems under contrastive scrutiny serves several purposes. Firstly, finding similarities in the corresponding systems of different languages makes us see how the human mind in the end functions to a certain extent similarly despite the diversity of languages. Secondly, the differences remind us of the fact that there are also other ways to perceive and express things, not only the one familiar to us. Thirdly, a contrastive discussion around tense and aspect can bear some pedagogical meaning as well. In a language learning context, awareness of the differences between two languages can reduce the number of mistakes caused by the first language interference.

The present study deals with the ways in which English and Italian refer to the past time sphere. The goal is to find how Italian verb forms with past time reference are translated into English. I first got interested in the Italian Imperfetto with its various usages. Then I wanted to find out what the corresponding means of expression are in English. However, soon I found it fruitful to extend the study to include also other Italian verb forms with past time reference and their English translations. The emphasis is on absolute tenses, but the relative tense forms will be discussed when of particular

interest. For its variable nature, the Imperfetto is under closer scrutiny. The starting point is aspect and more precisely the distinction between perfective and non-perfective aspect. If the verb form which normally refers to the past is used in some other sense in the data, it is discussed briefly, even though in most cases this requires moving out of the domain of tense and aspect and entering that of mood. In order to narrow down the topic, the Italian subjunctive has not been taken into account.

The approach of the present study is purely semantic in that the morphological features of different verb forms are not dealt with. The temporal specifiers, such as temporal adverbials, are not discussed separately, but only in a larger context when necessary. The goal is to consider only semantic and pragmatic English translations of Italian verb forms with past time reference. As data I have used original Italian literary texts and their English translations, from which I have systematically collected examples, that is, translation pairs.

The study is fundamentally qualitative, even though there are some quantitative considerations as well. In a more general sense, I have made the study from a purely theoretical point of view, without any pedagogical purpose in mind. Even though translations have provided the data for the study, I have not taken any translation theories under a close scrutiny. A reference to translating is made only when discussing the possible problems caused by the use of translations as data. Furthermore, the primary sources have not been analysed from a stylistic point of view, although, when relevant, some stylistic considerations have been included.

Among different studies on tense and aspect the use of terminology varies quite a lot. In this study the terms 'perfective' and 'non-perfective' are used as opposites. A perfective past time reference indicates a past event pictured globally, in other words, having an initial and final point, without any continuity at the moment of utterance. A non-perfective past form, instead, sees the past event from an internal viewpoint. Some grammarians use the term

'imperfective' for what was defined above as 'non-perfective'. The term 'perfect' refers to an aspectual value which is mainly used when the situation is seen as having a connection to the present. When referring to different studies, I will use the term of the original source. The terminology around reference to something that took place in the past is variable, too: grammarians talk about events, actions, activities or situations. In order to avoid too much repetition, I will alternate the use of these terms. However, events, actions and activities always have a dynamic element in them, whereas situations and particularly states are not dynamic.

As to language-specific grammatical forms, I will employ the original terms of the language in question. Capital letters are used when language-specific forms are being referred to, whereas general names, that is, metalinguistic terms of universal grammatical categories are written with small letters.

I will begin this study by discussing the central concepts of time, tense, aspect and aktionsart. Then I will give an account of the ways in which English refers to the past. In addition, I will deal with the aspectual oppositions found in English. From the English system I will move on to the description of the past time reference in Italian together with the relevant aspectual oppositions. After having presented briefly some general concepts and problems of translating, I will present the data and method which will be followed by the analysis of the data.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Tense and aspect are the two fundamental linguistic categories which will be dealt with in this study. In addition, the notion of aktionsart, termed also 'action' or 'actionality' in some studies, is discussed in this section because in several works on tense and aspect a clear connection is seen between these

three concepts. However, the emphasis here is on tense and aspect and, thus, aktionsart is brought into the picture only when necessary. Mood is not included in this study, but reference will be made to it whenever it proves essential for the study. Because tense and aspect are very widely discussed and studied concepts, it is unavoidable that there is great variety in the terminology and definitions connected with them.

When discussing different linguistic categories, one needs to be aware of their complexity. Comrie (1985:19-20) points out that often grammatical categories have more than one meaning, that is, a basic meaning and secondary meaning/s or uses. For instance, the basic meaning of the English Simple Past is the past time reference and secondarily it is used to indicate politeness as in *I just wanted to talk to you* (Comrie 1985:19-20). This multiplicity of meanings often results from a historical process in which first a form had its original meaning together with secondary meanings as extensions of the basic meaning. Then in many cases the form acquired a new basic meaning, which was wider than the old one, now including new uses that were originally secondary meanings. An example that Comrie (1976:11) gives of such a development is the case of many Romance languages in which the present perfect is ousting the simple past. This process has included a gradual relaxation of the requirement of present relevance when the present perfect is used to refer to a past situation. I will return to this point later in the section on Italian verb forms with past reference.

Both tense and aspect are concerned with time, but in different ways. Tense is a deictic category dealing with the external temporal relations of the situation, whereas the non-deictic aspect is concerned with the internal temporal construction of the situation (Comrie 1976:5). Comrie (1985:6-7) calls for a clear distinction between the terms 'tense' and 'aspect'. In some instances tense is viewed erroneously as covering for both tense and aspect. For example, the Italian Passato Remoto and Imperfetto include specification both of location in time and of the aspectual nature of the event. In other words,

they both locate events in the past with the aspectual difference that the *Passato Remoto* carries a perfective aspectual value, whereas the *Imperfetto* is non-perfective. In universal grammar, according to Lyons (1977:687-690), it is not even possible to have a clear-cut distinction between tense and aspect or between tense and modality. Even within one language there are gaps and asymmetries in the use of different tense and aspect forms.

Bache (1985:2,10) calls for a strict distinction between aspect and *aktionsart*. In order to avoid confusion in different ways of defining *aktionsart*, Comrie (1976:7n) does not operate with the term at all in his study. For this failure in drawing a clear line between aspect and *aktionsart* Bache (1995a:65) criticises both Comrie (1976) and Lyons (1977). Bache (1995b:82) asserts that the organisation of grammar into major components needs to be the same on both a language-specific level and the general metalinguistic level. Thus, Bache (1995b:83) criticises Comrie for his failure to respect this principle. Comrie places aspect and *aktionsart* under the same universal category, but at the same time he recognises aspect and *aktionsart* as potentially separate categories at a language-specific level. Also Jespersen (1924:286) deals with aspect as being synonymous with *aktionsart*. He defines aspect through several oppositions combining in them what in this study is perceived as aspect and *aktionsart* separately.

2.1 Tense

Time is a universal concept which is generally perceived as consisting of past, present and future time (see Comrie 1985). As human beings have created linguistic means to refer to extralinguistic concepts, they have also invented linguistic categories, like tense, with which the temporal extralinguistic realities can be referred to. However, a distinction is made in linguistics between physical time and linguistic time, i.e. tense. The former, which is measured with different units of time and objectified by calendars, refers to events in the outside world. The latter, in turn, indicates the system of temporal

relations that can be expressed by means of linguistic devices. Linguistic time does not measure individual intervals but locates events in relation to each other according to the idea of before, during and after. In Italian the term *tempo* corresponds to both 'time' and 'tense' in English as well as to the two German terms *Zeit* and *Tempus*. (Bertinetto 1986:23-25.)

Comrie (1985:4-5) denies the existence of cultures with no concept of time, but argues that many cultures do not have any conceptualisation of progress, that is, 'today' in these cultures is much the same as 'yesterday' and in the same way 'tomorrow' will be much the same as 'today'. However, Comrie (1985:5) adds that, even in these cultures, every day is characterised by a temporal sequence from sunrise to sunset. Thus, in many cases languages that are argued to lack any concept of time or this concept is said to be very different from our view, simply do not have a grammatical category for locating events in time, in other words they have no tense (Comrie 1985:4). However, all human languages have means of locating events in time either with lexical or grammatical tools, which Comrie (1985:8) divides into three classes:

- 1) lexically composite expressions,
e.g. *five minutes ago, last Christmas*
- 2) lexical items, e.g. *now, tomorrow, later*
- 3) grammatical categories, e.g. present, past, pluperfect.

The present study discusses mainly the third category, i.e. tenses.

Using Lyons' (1977:678-679) terms, a language which is said to be tenseless does not use any systematic variation in its sentence structure in order to indicate a temporal relation between the event and the moment of the utterance. The information needed for understanding the temporal dimension is included in the context.

According to Bertinetto (1986:23-29), tenses, seen from a diachronic point of view, are the crystallisation of certain fundamental options available

for the speaker when conceptualising a chronological course of events. These options, as anyone studying a foreign language easily notices, can vary remarkably between different languages. The temporal reference indicated by tense forms as such even within one language is often ambiguous. Therefore, the reciprocal temporal localisation of two events is many times defined on the basis of strictly pragmatic information that the context offers as illustrated by the following examples:

(1) Quando dormo bene, russo.
When I sleep well, I snore.

(2) Quando dormo bene, lavoro meglio.
When I sleep well, I work better. (Bertinetto 1986:23-29.)

Notwithstanding the fact that the two phrases contain the same tense forms, it is clear to the hearer that in (1) sleeping and snoring take place simultaneously, whereas in (2) working follows sleeping. The temporal information carried by verbal forms is purely linguistic. Thus, it corresponds to the internal logic of a given language and it can be reproduced only indirectly to the pragmatic dimension of physical time. Therefore, as Bertinetto (1991:27) observes, the speaker's pragmatic competence is crucial in the interpretation of facts.

For Greenbaum (1996:253), tense is a grammatical category referring to the location of a situation in time. Comrie (1985:1), too, defines tense as the grammaticalisation of location in time. He points out that in order to form a comprehensive study of the notion of tense and its relation to time, a number of related concepts need to be discussed. It is necessary to take into account also other linguistic categories, such as aspect and mood. Apart from grammaticalisation, also other ways of locating events in time, such as time adverbials, have to be considered. Furthermore, deixis as a framework of the logical possibilities for locating events in time and different tense categories are among the fundamental concepts in the study of tense. Comrie (1985:1) distinguishes three parameters, all related to the notion of deixis, that are relevant in the definition of tense categories. Firstly, the deictic centre which can be either the present moment or some other point of time, is essential whenever dealing with tense. Secondly, a basic factor in defining a tense

category is whether the event referred to is located prior to, subsequent to or simultaneous with the deictic centre. The third parameter is the distance between the event and the deictic centre. Some languages have past tense forms that bear different degrees of remoteness in their basic meaning, but Comrie (1985:24-25) argues that often these degrees are illusory being created only in the human mind.

Lyons (1977:677) emphasises the close connection between tense and deixis. His definition of deixis is a fairly straight-forward one:

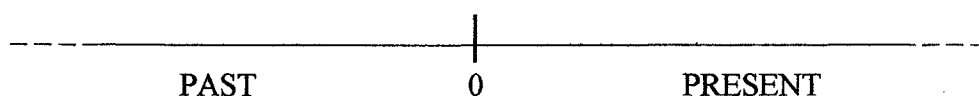
By deixis is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee. (Lyons 1977:637.)

Comrie (1985:14) defines the deictic system as the system relating entities to a reference point in relation to which events can be located in time. Comrie's definition of deixis is thus broader than Lyons's in that he sees a verb form as deictic if it relates a situation to a reference point even if this reference point is not the speech moment. Tense is part of the deictic framework of temporal reference, in that it grammaticalises the relationship between the time of the event that is being referred to and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context.

Concerning the temporal location of events Comrie (1985:7-8,12) sees differences among languages in the following two senses. Firstly, there is variation in the degree of accuracy of temporal location between various languages. Secondly, there are different ways in which events are located in time, including the use of lexicon and grammar. In most languages tense is indicated on the verb morphologically or by grammatical words adjacent to the verb, e.g. by auxiliaries. Traditionally tense is considered a category of the verb, but according to a more recent view it should be seen as a category of the whole proposition (Comrie 1985:12). In fact, Lyons (1977:678), too, remarks that, even though in a traditional view tense is an inflectional category of the verb, semantically tense is a category of the sentence. According to Comrie

(1985:26,29), tense forms have meanings that can be defined independently of particular contexts. Furthermore, he notes that confusion between the meaning of a tense form and the function of a grammatical category in discourse should be avoided, for the latter ought to be explained as regards the interaction between meaning and context. As a matter of fact, the distinction between meaning and implicature is one of the main problems in the characterisation of tenses (Comrie 1985:28).

According to Comrie (1985:5), the following diagram serves as an representation for the analysis of the grammaticalisation of temporal location in human languages:



A situation can be located on this time line in two ways. One possibility is to set the situation somewhere on the line in relation to some other point or segment of the line (Comrie 1985:6). This temporal localisation is the basic concept for the linguistic category of tense. Another way to relate a situation to the time line is according to whether it can be seen as a single point on it or as a stretch of it. Putting this internal temporal structure of a situation in the spotlight forms the basis for the concept of aspect, which will be discussed in section 2.2. (Comrie 1985:6.)

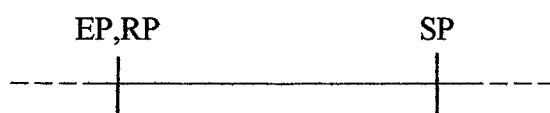
For analysing tenses it is necessary to have some instruments that help perceive the various temporal references made by different tense forms. Bertinetto (1986:35-37), among numerous other linguists, uses the following concepts for temporal analysis which derive from Reichenbach (1947 as cited by Bertinetto 1986:35-37):

- speech point (=SP)
- event point (=EP)
- reference point (=RP).

Bertinetto (1986:37) distinguishes between absolute and relative temporal localisation. In the former case a situation is located in the past, present or

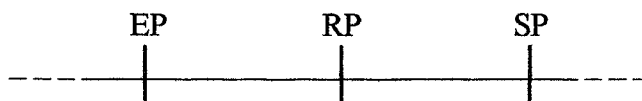
future in respect to the SP. Relative localisation, in turn, indicates a relation of priority, simultaneity or posteriority between situations. In Comrie's (1985:36,56) terms there are absolute and relative tenses. A tense is absolute when the present moment is the deictic centre, whereas in the case of a relative tense the RP, usually other than the present moment, is given by the context. The following examples illustrate different possibilities of temporal localisation of situations employing the Reichenbachian terminology.

(3) *Yesterday* (RP) I *went* (EP) to the cinema.



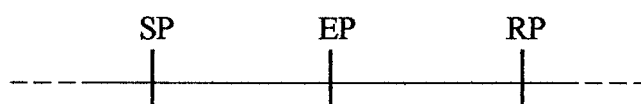
In example (3) the deictic centre of the utterance is the present moment, that is, the SP, and the RP and the EP are simultaneous in the past. In example (4) the SP, again, is in the present and the EP and RP are in the past, EP being further in the past than the RP.

(4) *At five o'clock* (RP), Richard *had* already *left* (EP).



In example (5), instead, the SP still being in the present, the EP and RP are in the future, RP being prior to the EP.

(5) *At five o'clock* (RP), Richard *will* already *have left* (EP).



In (4) and (5) the moment of EP is not determined. In fact, it is only known that in (4) Richard had left sometime before five o'clock and that in (5) Richard will leave some time before five o'clock.

Despite relying on the Reichenbachian model presented above, Bertinetto (1986:39) argues that when the point of time denoted by the adverbial is simultaneous with the EP, the RP is not needed for localising a situation on the time line. As a matter of fact, Bertinetto introduces a new element, the temporal locator, to replace the RP in the case described above.

The temporal locator is, thus, an adverbial indicating simultaneity with the EP. The following examples clarify Bertinetto's point.

(6a) Giovanni uscì *a mezzogiorno*.
Giovanni went out *at midday*.

(6b) Giovanni era uscito *a mezzogiorno*.
Giovanni was gone *at midday*.

In example (6a) the adverbial indicates the moment in which the event took place, and this is what Bertinetto (1986:43) terms the temporal locator rather than the RP. In example (6b) the adverbial expresses a moment after the occurrence of the situation, so that the precise moment of the event itself is left open. Thus, the result of the event is observed at a certain point of time. According to Bertinetto (1986:42), in this case the term reference point is correct. In other words, when the adverbial indicates the same moment as that of the EP, it does not stand for a RP but it is the temporal locator of the event.

Even though there are different expressions for locating situations in time, the present study concentrates on tense. Lexical items and lexically composite expressions having temporal reference are dealt with only when necessary for the validity of the interpretation of the data. The works of several linguists (see e.g. Palmer 1987, Bertinetto 1986) clearly show the interrelatedness of the linguistic concepts, such as tense, aspect, mood, deixis and adverbials. However, due to the complexity of the above mentioned concepts and the limited length of a thesis, in the present study the topic has been narrowed down to tense and aspect as the main concepts.

There has been quite a lot of discussion about whether tense itself carries a meaning or if tense is a category of the whole proposition. In this study tenses are seen as having their basic meaning or function together with different implications created in various contexts. The tense forms are not taken out of their context, but they are viewed as a whole with the other elements of the sentence. In the analysis of the tenses the Reichenbachian terminology will be

used, however, replacing Reichenbach's RP with Bertinetto's temporal locator when the RP coincides with the EP.

2.2 Aspect

In addition to the concepts of precedence and successivity, the Stoics already recognised another factor involved in what Aristotle and later the Alexandrians referred to as tense, namely the distinction what we now identify as the aspectual distinction of completeness vs. incompleteness. Later with the development of the Greco-Roman grammatical tradition the terms 'perfect' and 'imperfect' came to be used in collocation with tense. (Lyons 1977:704). Lyons (1977:704) has observed that the use of the originally Latin terms 'perfect' and 'imperfect' has often caused confusion since in the terminology of both aspect and tense there are several terms deriving from them. Lyons (1977:705) argues that aspect is more common than tense among the world languages. Moreover, he points out that, in the light of different studies conducted on children's first language acquisition, aspect seems to be ontogenetically more basic than tense since, of these two linguistic categories, children come to command aspect first. Jespersen (1924:286) claims that in Indo-European languages the tense systems have developed out of various aspects.

Brinton (1988:2-3) distinguishes between two trends in the definition of aspect. Defined in a strict way, aspect is the viewpoint or perspective from which the speaker chooses to look at a situation. The speaker may view it "as completed (perfective aspect), or as ongoing (imperfective aspect), or as beginning (ingressive aspect), continuing (continuative aspect), ending (egressive aspect), or repeating (iterative or habitual aspect)" (Brinton 1988:3). Often, however, aspect is defined more broadly as concerning the inherent character of the event observed, that is, "whether it is static or dynamic, punctual or durative, bounded or unbounded, continuous or iterative" (Brinton 1988:3). Brinton (1988:3) argues that, rather than being the definition of

aspect, the latter defines aktionsart which is "an indication of the intrinsic temporal qualities of a situation". He calls for a clear distinction between aspect and aktionsart, since the interaction between these two categories is crucial for the aspectual interpretation of a sentence.

Brinton (1988:3,247) considers aspect as grammatical and subjective, whereas for him aktionsart is lexical and objective. However, in his notes Brinton concludes that in the end also aktionsart is subjective, since it is always the speaker who conceptualises the situation from her/his own point of view. Lyons (1977:709-710), too, asserts that the speaker chooses to present the situation in one aspectual way or another "according to whether the speaker is concerned with its internal temporal structure or not". Similarly Comrie (1976:4) reminds us of the fact that the same speaker may refer to the same situation with different aspects.

For Comrie (1985:6), the conceptual basis for the notion of aspect lies in the internal contour of a situation in that he sees aspect as the grammaticalisation of expression of internal temporal constituency. The non-perfective aspect can be defined as the consideration of a verbal process based on an internal point of view of its occurrence. On the contrary, the perfective aspect, as defined by Comrie (1976:3), is the 'global' consideration of the verbal process, where the whole of the event is viewed.

Bertinetto (1991:23-25) illustrates aspect with the distinction between the Italian imperfective past tense form and its perfective counterpart. In the case of the imperfective attention is paid to one particular instant within an interval of time corresponding to the situation expressed by the verb in question. In other words, the imperfective aspect is used to refer to an open interval of time without considering neither the initial nor the final moment of the situation. Conversely, the perfective aspect indicates a closed interval of time which coincides with the situation whose conclusion is suggested. From this follows that no single instant within the interval can be focalised but the situation is

visualised globally. Thus, for Bertinetto the focalising moment is crucial in the definition of aspect. In fact, he distinguishes the imperfective aspect from the perfective one by arguing that the former does not visualise the final nor the initial point of the situation, whereas the latter does include such visualisation. Furthermore, he underlines that aspect deals with a particular viewpoint of the speaker rather than with some intrinsic feature of the situation. Bertinetto (1994:392) asserts that aspect is normally expressed, even though almost never strictly, morphologically, i.e. by tense forms or by specific periphrases and not by lexicon.

The present study agrees with Comrie and Bertinetto's idea of aspect as the polarisation of non-perfective and perfective view of the situation or event. Aspect is considered grammatical and subjective, whereas aktionsart is seen closely connected to the lexical meaning of the verb. Aspect is involved in the temporal presentation of an action or event.

2.3 Aktionsart

When discussing aspect it is worthwhile to consider the verb itself from a semantic point of view. Lyons (1977:706) refuses to use the term 'aktionsart' for he sees much confusion in the use of it and, in addition, he finds the term itself unsatisfactory. Therefore, Lyons introduces the concept of 'aspectual character', shortly 'character', of a verb. By this he means that part of the meaning of a verb whereby it indicates one kind of a situation rather than another. For instance *to live* denotes a state, whereas *to realise* an event. Hence, the aspectual character is stative or dynamic respectively. In Bache's (1985:10-11) view the distinction between aspect and aktionsart is necessary even though he sees a tendency among linguists to conceive aspect broadly enough to include aktionsart. Aktionsart deals with the type of action or situation. By type in a narrow sense, Bache means "the manner in which the action or situation is performed or takes place". The broader conception of type is concerned with "the phasal constituency of an action or a situation". Usually

the different values put under the term aktionsart are presented as oppositions. Bache (1985:13-14) presents the following oppositions which have been typically employed in linguistic discussion on aktionsart (see Comrie 1976, Lyons 1977):

- 1) punctual versus durative
- 2) dynamic vs. stative
- 3) telic vs. atelic
- 4) ingressive vs. terminative
- 5) semelfactive vs. iterative
- 6) habitual vs. non-habitual.

In English verbs a major distinction is that between dynamic and stative verb senses (Greenbaum 1996:74). The dynamic verb sense refers to an action and the stative one to a state of affairs, but it is essential to notice that some verbs can appear with either of the senses (Greenbaum 1996:74). A verb in its dynamic sense can occur in the imperative and in the progressive, which is not possible in the case of the stative verb sense (Greenbaum et al. 1972:94). Leech and Svartvik (1994:65) use the terms 'event' and 'state verbs' respectively. However, they do admit that a more accurate, though less convenient, way to refer to these categories would be to term them as 'event uses of verbs' and 'state uses of verbs'. According to Leech and Svartvik (1994:65-66), from this polarisation of event and state verbs arise three basic types of verb meaning, which can be illustrated in the following manner:

_____	(A) state	Verdi was an Italian.
.	(B) single event	Columbus discovered America.
.....	(C) set of repeated events (habit)	Paganini played the violin brilliantly.

Leech and Svartvik (1994:66) argue that the third meaning is a combination of event and state meanings in that a habit, in fact, is a state composed of a series of events. Furthermore, they introduce a fourth type of verbal meaning, that is the temporary meaning, which is expressed by the progressive aspect. The following examples illustrate this fourth type.

(7a) John teaches in an elementary school.

(7b) John is teaching in an elementary school.

In (7a) the use of the Simple Present conveys the idea of John permanently working as a teacher, whereas the Present Progressive in example (7b) tells that John's work is of a temporary nature.

For 'aktionsart' Bertinetto uses an English version 'actionality'. He (1991:26) distinguishes between aspect and actionality arguing that, whereas aspect is of a morphological nature, actionality, in turn, is closely connected to the lexicon. According to Bertinetto (1991:27), within actionality there are two distinct categories: durative and non-durative verbal action. The former type indicates situations or processes that stretch over time, whereas the latter refers to situations or events that take place rapidly, in such a way that conceptually the initial and final point of the action coincide. Nevertheless, it is often the context which determines whether a verb is durative or not. Bertinetto's durative and non-durative verbal actions correspond to Greenbaum's dynamic and stative verb senses and Leech and Svartvik's event and state verbs respectively. In his discussion of actional categories, that is, categories of aktionsart, Bertinetto (1991:36) notes that when a verb is assigned to any such category, what is meant is that there are certain typical contexts in which the verb can appear. Hence, in order to classify verbs coherently the whole context around the verb needs to be taken into consideration. Finally, as in any other field of human behaviour also in understanding language our pragmatic competence is crucial in the interpretation of facts.

In the present study aktionsart does not play an important role. It is seen, in accordance with Bertinetto, as lexical, whereas aspect is viewed as morphological. Whenever aktionsart proves necessary for the study, it is mainly dealt with as the opposition of what Greenbaum terms dynamic and stative verb senses.

3 PAST TIME REFERENCE IN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN

3.1 Past time reference in English

The English verb forms referring to the past are the following: Simple Past, Present Perfect and Past Perfect. In this study the emphasis is on the Simple Past and Present Perfect. Markkanen (1979:118) distinguishes between the Simple Past and Present Perfect employing the Reichenbachian tools for a temporal analysis. The Simple Past has its RP in the past coinciding with the EP, whereas in the Present Perfect the RP coincides with the SP. Thus, the situation expressed by the Simple Past is completely in the past. The Present Perfect, instead, refers to a situation which is closely connected to the speaker's present. Comrie (1985:24-25), however, argues that a degree of remoteness is not included into the meaning of any of these forms, but the degrees of remoteness that seem to exist are only illusory. This point will be taken up again when discussing the *Passato Remoto* in the analysis section of the present study. As to its perfective nature, the Past Perfect is similar to the Present Perfect. However, in the case of the Present Perfect the point of current relevance to which it extends coincides with the SP, whereas the relevant point of an event described by the Past Perfect is in the past. In this thesis the relative past time references will be discussed only briefly.

3.1.1 Simple Past

The Simple Past is used when the action has been completed prior to the SP and has taken place at a definite time in the past. The definite time may be indicated by a time expression or it may be presupposed on the basis of common knowledge of the hearer and the speaker. Brinton (1988:16) points out that grammars rarely address the aspectual value of the Simple Past. For him it is a marker of perfective aspect. Comrie (1976:25) notes that the only excluded aspectual meaning of the Simple Past is the progressive.

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990:50) have labelled the different uses of the Simple Past. The 'event past' is used when a verb with the dynamic sense refers to a single definite event in the past. The event may extend over a segment of the time line, as in example (8), or it can occur at a point of the time, as in (9):

(8) The Normans *invaded* England in 1066.

(9) We *arrived* at seven o'clock.

The 'habitual past', again with the dynamic verb sense, is used to express past events that occurred repeatedly:

(10) We *spent* the summers in the countryside
when we were young.

The 'state past' is used with the stative verb senses to refer to a single unbroken state of affairs in the past:

(11) I once *liked* wearing only black.

The 'habitual' and 'state' uses can be paraphrased by the marginal modal *used to*, and less frequently by the modal *would* (Greenbaum 1996:264). The construction *used to* indicates a state or habit that existed in the past but has ceased (Greenbaum et al. 1972:102). The modal *would* can be used to express a characteristic activity or a customary action (Greenbaum et al. 1972:101).

In addition to the above mentioned primary uses of the Simple Past, it can be found in indirect speech as a backshift of the present tense:

(12) I *thought* you *were* out of town.

The 'attitudinal past' replaces the present tense when the speaker wants to achieve politeness or tentativeness with verbs expressing thinking or wishing:

(13) I *wanted* to ask you something.

This can be seen as the speaker's metaphorical distancing from the hearer. The 'hypothetical past' is used in hypothetical conditions relating to present or future time. For example in

(14) I wish I *had* lots of money

the Simple Past conveys the belief in the non-fulfilment of the condition.

3.1.2 Present Perfect

The Present Perfect is not to be seen as a tense, but as a combination of present tense and perfect aspect. It refers to a period of time stretching to the past, however, with a current relevance (Greenbaum et al. 1972:91). Generally, the Present Perfect cannot refer to a past event which took place in a specific moment in the past denoted by a time adverbial. Brinton (1988:9) remarks that, unlike in the Romance languages, the perfect in English has not undergone any relaxation in its degree of recentness.

Greenbaum (1996:270-272) has categorised the different uses of the Present Perfect. The 'state use', naturally with the stative verb sense, expresses a state or a situation which has existed before the SP and continues until this time, possibly even including it:

(15) This morning *has been* quite hectic.

The 'recurrent' or 'habitual' use refers with the dynamic verb sense to recurrent events, including the present:

(16) They *have come* to see us every weekend (since last summer).

The 'event present perfect', with the dynamic verb sense, refers to one or several events or situations that have occurred within a period leading up to the SP. The period is viewed as relevant to the present either since the event has just been announced, as in the news (17), or it has just taken place, as in (18), or the past period is seen operative still in the present, as in (19):

(17) The communists *have won* the election.

(18) I *have just got* a new job.

(19) *Have you seen* it after the restoration?

Comrie (1976:56-61) distinguishes between the following four different uses of the Present Perfect. The 'perfect of result' puts in the spotlight the result of a situation that has begun in the past. Consider examples (20) and (21):

(20) John *has gone* to Italy.

(21) John *has been* to Italy.

In (20) the fact that John is at the moment in Italy is the result of his having gone there some time prior to the SP. In (21) the Present Perfect is used as 'experiential' and in this case John has been at least on one occasion in Italy and this experience of his is seen now relevant. When the Present Perfect expresses a past situation that continues in the present, as in (22), Comrie calls it the 'perfect of persistent situation'.

(22) The Johnsons *have lived* in London for two years.

Example (22) contains the idea of the Johnsons' still presently living in London. If the Present Perfect is used to refer to recent situations, such as in (23), Comrie terms it the 'perfect of recent past':

(23) *I've recently learned* that the Johnsons' live in London.

Brinton (1988:10-11), however, suggests that Comrie's four uses of the Present Perfect could be reduced to only two by placing the 'experiential perfect' and 'perfect of recent past' as the two subcategories under the 'perfect of result'. As a consequence, Comrie's classification would narrow down to the 'perfect of persistent situation' and 'perfect of result', which would correspond to Greenbaum's 'state use of the Present Perfect' and 'event present perfect' respectively. Furthermore, Greenbaum's 'recurrent' or 'habitual' use could go under Comrie's 'perfect of persistent situation'. Therefore, two main categories seem sufficient: one including the cases in which the result of the past action is relevant, and the other one covering the cases where the situation persists still in the present.

The Present Perfect is less frequent than the Simple Past. Greenbaum (1996:272) argues that the Present Perfect is more common in American English than in British English. If the statement contains expressions referring to a specific time in the past, generally the Present Perfect cannot be used. On the other hand, if there is a reference to a period of time extending to the SP, usually the Present Perfect is used. (Greenbaum 1996:172.) Comrie (1985:32) asserts that the English Present Perfect ought not to be analysed only as a tense because of its relevance to the present and its incompatibility with time

adverbials indicating a specific moment or stretch of time that is located wholly in the past. Thus, it is a form that combines tense and aspect and consequently, also aspect should be included into the study of the Present Perfect. Overall, the English Present Perfect is a complex tense as regards its interaction with time adverbials. In English there has not been any reduction of the presentness of the Present Perfect form.

3.1.3 Aspectual oppositions

In English there are two sets of aspectual contrasts: perfect vs. non-perfect and progressive vs. non-progressive. The perfect aspect is primarily used to place the time of a situation relative to the time of another situation. The Present Perfect carries a perfect aspectual value, whereas the Simple Past is non-perfect. Here one has to pay attention to the terminology, in that the terms 'perfect' and 'perfective' ought not to be interchanged but kept clearly apart. 'Perfect' as a term refers to a past time reference form that, from the aspectual point of view, indicates a close connection to the SP, whereas the term 'perfective' has to be understood as the opposite of 'imperfective'. In Brinton's (1988:14) terms "the perfective views a situation as discrete", whereas the perfect views it as having some connection to the present state.

The progressive aspect emphasises the duration of the situation, which is generally the most accepted meaning of this verb form. There is much debate among linguists on whether the perfect and progressive verb forms express tense or aspect distinctions or neither (Brinton 1988:7). However, generally the progressive is considered the most evident, and sometimes the only, representative of the category of aspect in English (Brinton 1988:7). Brinton (1988:9) argues that the ambiguous use of the term 'durative' has caused a great deal of the confusion around the meaning of the progressive. Rather than being the right term for the description of the progressive, according to Brinton, 'durative' is an aktionsart term which indicates a certain inherent

temporal feature of a situation. In Brinton's (1988:9) view the English progressive is a marker of imperfective aspect.

The following structures present examples of the English tense and aspect categories with their possible combinations. All the forms are in the third person singular. (Greenbaum et al. 1972:90.):

Present	<i>studies</i>
Simple Past	<i>studied</i>
Present Perfect	<i>has studied</i>
Past Perfect	<i>had studied</i>
Present progressive	<i>is studying</i>
Past progressive	<i>was studying</i>
Present Perfect progressive	<i>has been studying</i>
Past Perfect progressive	<i>had been studying</i>

The progressive aspect indicates temporariness. It refers to an event seen in progress at a particular point of time. The progressive cannot imply an occurrence of an action or a state (Greenbaum 1996:276). It can create a temporal frame around an event expressed by a non-progressive verb form, such as the Simple Past. In (24) the progressive forms a frame within which a punctual action took place:

(24) John *was reading* when I entered the room.

Leech (1971:17) calls the relationship of meaning between two neighbouring Simple Past forms that of time-sequence, whereas the relationship between a progressive and a Simple Past he terms that of time-inclusion. Leech (1971:17) points out that if a contrast between an event or a point of time and a durative situation does not exist, a temporal frame is not created either.

The progressive in English has a wider use than the progressive in Italian, maybe because English does not have a directly equivalent verbal form of the Imperfetto and thus, the progressive has enlarged its domain (Bertinetto

1986:176). Here Bertinetto refers to the progressive as the Progressive Periphrasis, which in Italian has an exclusively progressive meaning. Verbs that traditionally have the stative verb sense do not occur as such in the progressive, but if they do so, they adopt a dynamic meaning, as illustrated by the following examples:

(25) *I was being stupid.*

(26) *I'm hoping to hear from them soon.*

In (25) *to be* appears in the progressive indicating a behaviour with a limited duration and in (26) the progressive brings in an element of tentativeness or uncertainty.

According to Greenbaum (1996:276), there are two main categories of the use of the progressive. The 'event progressive', used with dynamic verb senses, indicates an event that is or was in progress. Thus, it does not refer to a situation which is represented as a state. It can suggest that an event was in progress when another event took place as in (27) or it can indicate the simultaneity of an event with a state or another event, as in (28):

(27) *I was studying* when you called.

(28) He *was appearing* uncomfortable when Kate was all over him.

The 'recurrent' or 'habitual' progressive is used with dynamic verb senses to refer to a set of recurrent events that are seen in progress over a limited period of time:

(29) *She's teaching* in a school.

Example (29) implies temporariness of the situation, whereas the same statement in the Simple Present tense would indicate permanence.

Greenbaum (1996:277) gives the following secondary uses of the progressive. It can be used to refer to an event scheduled in the future as in (30):

(30) The train *is leaving* at nine.

The progressive combined with the attitudinal past offers, often with verbs of thinking, a more polite or tentative alternative to the Simple Present or the Simple Past. Compare examples (31) and (32):

(31) I *was thinking* if you could (...).

(32) I *thought* if you could (...).

In (31) the progressive expresses a less conclusive process of thinking than the Simple Past in (32), which is more direct and at the same time also less polite.

The Present Perfect progressive, in other words the progressive combined with present tense and perfect aspect, indicates a temporary situation leading up to the SP or continuing after it. This form may contain the idea of incompleteness or speaker's emotional colouring of the situation:

(33a) Lately John *has been living* with Mary.

(33b) Lately John *has been eating* out.

In (33a) the speaker considers the situation temporary. According to Greenbaum et al. (1972:97) the speaker in (33b) could in this way express her/his disapproval of John's eating habits. However, the Present Perfect progressive with dynamic verb senses can also refer to a temporary habit continuing up to the present, as in (34):

(34) He's *been working* hard lately
(Greenbaum and Quirk 1990:56).

Example (34) means that the person in the question has lately had the habit of working a lot.

3.2 Past time reference in Italian

Due to the vagueness and context dependence of the interpretation of different tense forms, it seems impossible to give an exhaustive definition to each of them. However, according to Bertinetto (1991:15), it is possible to determine a basic function for every tense form. On a universal level Bertinetto (1991:14) sees the system of temporal reference to the past generally richer than the system referring to the future. This is perhaps due to the fact that past is

something already experienced whereas future can be only imagined or predicted. In order to convey the idea of anteriority in respect to the SP in Italian, the following five past reference forms are available: Passato Prossimo, Imperfetto, Passato Remoto, Trapassato Prossimo and Trapassato Remoto (see e.g. Bertinetto 1991, Dardano and Trifone 1995). Of these, the Passato Prossimo corresponds to both the English Simple and Past Present Perfect depending on the context:

- (35) *Ho letto la lettera.*
I read / have read the letter.

The Passato Prossimo is connected to the present more loosely than the English Present Perfect in that it can refer to a single past activity which does not bear any particular present relevance. The Imperfetto expresses duration or repetition in the past:

- (36) *Quella mattina faceva freddo.*
It was cold that morning.

The Passato Remoto refers to an action that has been completed in the past:

- (37) *L'ultima volta che vidi mio nonno fu la scorsa estate.*
The last time when I saw my grandfather was last summer.

The Trapassato Prossimo and Trapassato Remoto are relative tense forms, which refer to the past-in-the-past. In other words, their reference point is not the SP, but some other moment indicated by the context, a simple tense or a temporal adverb. The English equivalent of both the Trapassato Prossimo and Trapassato Remoto in most contexts is the Past Perfect. The Trapassato Prossimo is formed with the Imperfetto of an auxiliary, *essere* 'be' or *avere* 'have', and the past participle of the main verb:

- (38) *Avevo creduto alle sue parole, ma poi ho dovuto cambiare la mia opinione.*
I had believed him, but later I had to change my mind.

The Trapassato Remoto consists of the Passato Remoto of an auxiliary, *essere* or *avere*, and the past participle of the main verb. This form indicates a past action which precedes another action expressed by the Passato Remoto. The use of the Trapassato Remoto is more limited than the use of the Trapassato Prossimo in that the former, nowadays, can be found only in phrases

introduced by temporal adverbials, such as *quando* ‘when’, *dopo che* ‘after’ and *non appena* ‘as soon as’:

- (39) Non appena *ebbe ricevuto* il regalo, pianse di gioia.
As soon as *he had received* the present, he cried out of joy.

The Passato Remoto and Imperfetto are simple tense forms since they are formed only by one word, whereas the Trapassato Remoto, Trapassato Prossimo and Passato Prossimo are compound consisting of an auxiliary verb, *avere* or *essere*, and the past participle of the main verb. The choice of the auxiliary depends on the nature of the main verb. All the above mentioned verbal forms of the verb *amare* ‘to love’ conjugated in the third person singular are presented below:

Passato Prossimo	<i>ha amato</i>
Imperfetto	<i>amava</i>
Passato Remoto	<i>amò</i>
Trapassato Prossimo	<i>aveva amato</i>
Trapassato Remoto	<i>ebbe amato</i>

The Passato Prossimo refers to an action which has been carried out in the past but has, at the same time, a certain relation with the present. This tense form can imply also that the situation described continues in the present or that its effects reach up until the present moment. As can be easily noticed from the description, the Passato Prossimo is fairly similar to the English Present Perfect. However, the Passato Prossimo has undergone a relaxation of the requirements of present relevance (see e.g. Bertinetto 1986:406-407). In addition, it tolerates time adverbials indicating a definite time in the past. Therefore, the Simple Past is often its English counterpart.

Comrie (1976:61), too, observes the relaxation in the degree of recentness required by the use of the Perfect in the Romance languages. In Northern Italy, in fact, the Passato Prossimo is used more widely replacing the Passato Remoto also when the speaker is referring to a remote situation in the past with no current relevance (see e.g. Dardano and Trifone 1995:355). On the

contrary, in the South the Passato Remoto is much more employed also in the references to the recent past.

The situation expressed by a Passato Remoto has been terminated in the past. The course of the situation described is not considered nor its possible relation with the present. A clear example of the difference between the Passato Remoto and Passato Prossimo is a reference to someone's birth. Consider examples (40) and (41):

(40) Susanna Tamaro *è nata* nel 1957. (Passato Prossimo)
Susanna Tamaro *was born* in 1957.

(41) Leonardo da Vinci *nacque* nel 1492. (Passato Remoto)
Leonardo da Vinci *was born* in 1492.

When referring to the birth of someone who is alive at the SP the Passato Prossimo is employed, whereas in the case of the dead it is necessary to use the Passato Remoto. The latter tense form can convey the idea of chronological or psychological remoteness. Thus, the speaker can use the Passato Remoto if he/she feels that the event belongs to the remote past or he/she does not have a close psychological connection to it.

The Imperfetto indicates duration of the past situation. Furthermore, it can indicate also a repetition of the situation or action in the past. The Imperfetto, of all Italian verbal forms referring to the past, presents most variety in its meaning and use. Bertinetto (1986:346-347) has listed the main characteristics of the Imperfetto. Firstly, it leaves indeterminate whether the process talked about continues beyond the interval or the moment of focalisation.

(42) Quando arrivò la notizia, Andrea *faceva* tranquillamente
colazione come ogni mattina.
When the news came, Andrea *was* tranquilly *having breakfast*
as every morning.

The Imperfetto in example (42) implies that when the news arrived, that is, at the moment of focalisation, the process of Andrea having breakfast was already in its full course. However, it is not possible to say whether he

continued having breakfast or if he interrupted it. The same situation is viewed differently when Andrea's action is expressed with the Passato Remoto:

- (43) Quando arrivò la notizia, Andrea *fece* tranquillamente *colazione* come ogni mattina.
When the news came, Andrea *had* tranquilly *breakfast* as every morning.

Example (43) suggests that Andrea began to have breakfast precisely in the moment indicated by the subordinate proposition and that Andrea did finish his breakfast. The second important feature of the Imperfetto is the indeterminateness of the length of the process implied by it:

- (44) Riccardo *correva* due ore al giorno.
Riccardo *used to run* for two hours a day.

Example (44) indicates Riccardo's habit of running for two hours every day, but the duration of the whole habit is left indefinite. Thirdly, the number of iterations of the process indicated by the Imperfetto is indeterminate, as in (45):

- (45) Gigi *andava* spesso al cinema.
Gigi *used to go* often to the cinema.

Example (45) suggests that Gigi had the habit of going to the cinema. However, the number of the repetitions of the event is left open. In fact, the presence of a time adverbial indicating the number of iterations together with the Imperfetto would result in an ungrammatical expression, as in (46):

- (46) * Gigi *andava* sei volte al cinema.
* Gigi *used to go* to the cinema six times.

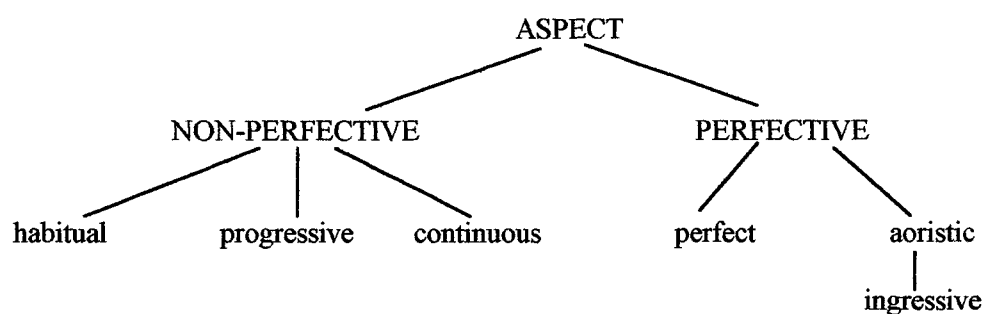
The numerous uses of the Imperfetto serve different communicative purposes. On the basis of its several functions, this many-sided non-perfective past reference form has been given various labels. The descriptive use of the Imperfetto, as the name already indicates, describes situations and circumstances. Thus, it can paint the surroundings or frames to an action which is then expressed by a perfective tense. The iterative use visualises a habitual or repetitive nature of an action. In its narrative use the Imperfetto serves to lengthen the duration of the action by immobilising it in the eyes of the reader. Due to this function, it frequently takes the place and aspectual value of a

perfective past tense in literary language and newspaper reports. (Serianni 1989:468-471.)

Some manifestations of the Imperfetto cannot be sufficiently analysed using only temporal or aspectual parameters. They express the movement away from the real world towards that of imagination and suppositions. Therefore, the Imperfetto is used in the recalling of a dream, children's games and as a form of courtesy, just to mention a few. In such uses of the Imperfetto, the linguistic value carried by it is that of mood.

3.2.1 Aspectual oppositions

According to Serianni (1989:390), in Italian aspect marks the verbal action according to its duration, repetitiousness, beginning and conclusion, and completeness or incompleteness. Bertinetto (1986:77) argues that the clearest example to illustrate aspect in Italian is the distinction between the Imperfetto expressing non-perfective aspect and the Passato Remoto expressing the perfective one. The Passato Prossimo indicates a concluded action which still has a close connection to the present moment. The following diagram presents Bertinetto's (1991:41) categorisation of aspect in Italian:



3.2.2 The non-perfective aspect

When a verb indicates a process caught in a single moment of its full course we can speak of a non-perfective aspect. In the non-perfective aspect there always exists a point of focalisation from which the process or action is observed in its full course. Moreover, the continuation of the process beyond

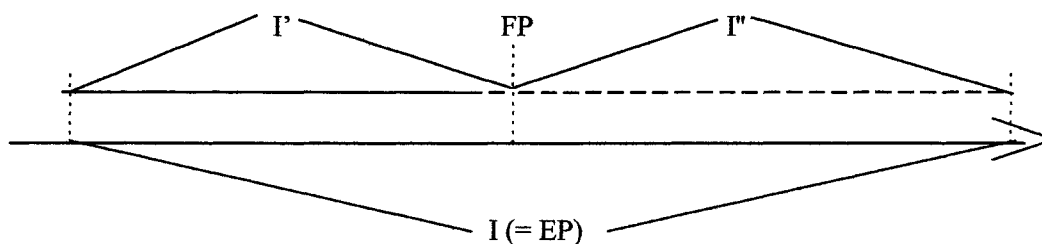
the point of focalisation is undetermined. In other words, the interval corresponding to the length of the process is an interval open to the right on the time line. (Bertinetto 1986:121.)

The progressive aspect is employed whenever the speaker refers to a process in a way that he/she focalises one instant in the full course of the situation. Bertinetto (1986:126-127) gives the following informal definition of the progressive aspect:

There is an interval I that can be individually determined on the time line. This interval I corresponds to the EP (= event point) designated by the verbal predicate P. The interval I is subdivided into two subintervals I' and I'', so that I' is the initial subinterval of I.

The ultimate instant of I' is called the focalisation point (= FP). The predicate P expresses the progressive aspect if, and only if, at the FP the P is fulfilled in I' and if it is possible that P could be fulfilled in I''.

Graphically the same definition can be expressed as follows:



In other words, the predicate conveys the progressive aspect when the action expressed by it is in its full course at the focalisation point. Furthermore, the action has started at some indeterminate point in the past, so that it has continued uninterruptedly until the focalisation point, possibly continuing even beyond it. The progressive aspect in Italian can be expressed by the Progressive periphrasis consisting of the verb *stare* 'to be' and the gerund of the main verb. The English equivalent is the construction *to be* + non-finite *-ing*. The Italian Progressive periphrasis has forms for both present and past time reference:

(47) *Sto mangiando.*
I am eating.

(48) *Stavo mangiando.*
I was eating.

In addition, the progressive aspect with past reference can be expressed with the Imperfetto as well. Thus, examples (49) and (50) are synonymous:

(49) *Lavoravo* in cucina, mentre mio figlio *giocava* in giardino
I was working in the kitchen, while my son *was playing*
 in the garden.

(50) *Stavo lavorando* in cucina, mentre mio figlio *stava giocando*
 in giardino.

In the synonymous examples (51) and (52) the progressivity is even clearer since the focalisation point is expressed by a precise temporal expression:

(51) Una mezz'ora fa, Giulia *dormiva* ancora.
 Half an hour ago Giulia *was still sleeping*.

(52) Una mezz'ora fa, Giulia *stava dormendo* ancora.
 (Bertinetto 1991:41-42).

The habitual aspect implies a more or less regular repetition of a certain action or situation. Often, however, the habitual interpretation of a verb form comes from the context. Example (53) carries a clearly habitual meaning:

(53) In quel periodo, Giulia *andava* a dormire alle 11 di sera.
 In that period, Giulia *used to go* to sleep at 11 o'clock
 in the evening.

Removing the initial temporal expression *in quel periodo* gives way to two different interpretations of the phrase. It could still be viewed as habitual, but also as semelfactive, that is, as a single process taking place only once. (Bertinetto 1991:44). However, the use of the periphrasis consisting of the verbal phrase *essere solito* 'to do something usually' and the main verb in the infinitive form guarantees a habitual reading to a phrase. Lenci (1996), referring to the habitual aspect carried by the Imperfetto, points out that there has to be a certain norm according to which the events take place.

(54a) Gianni *prendeva* spesso il treno alle 10.
 Gianni often *took* the ten o'clock train.

(54b) Gianni *ha preso* spesso il treno alle 10.
 Gianni often *took* the ten o'clock train.

In example (54a) the Imperfetto conveys the idea of a certain regularity or a norm that characterises Gianni's past habit of taking the train at ten o'clock. In example (54b), instead, the Passato Prossimo indicates a limited number of times when Gianni has taken the train in question.

Habituality does not mean that the action proceeds always in the same way, but there remains the possibility of a different proceeding. The duration of the habit and the number of possible repetitions of the event can vary. It is not so essential how many times the event has occurred, but more important is that ideally no exceptions are known. (Bertinetto 1986:141-142). When the Imperfetto carries a habitual value, it can be substituted by the construction *essere solito* + infinitive of the verb. In the past the English construction *used to* is its equivalent:

(55) *Erano soliti andare al mare per l'estate*
They used to go to the seaside for the summer.

Quite close to the habitual aspect there is the notion of constant aptitudinality which indicates a quality that is constantly possessed by the subject in question, for example a profession, an attitude or a skill (Bertinetto 1986:143). Bertinetto (1986:143) points out that in order to be aptitudinal in a constant manner, the process need not be in its full course uninterruptedly. It is sufficient that there is a continual possibility for the process to proceed. Constant aptitudinality gives the subject a persistent characterisation, expecting a specific property of it, whereas habituality individualises the specific character of a certain situation in the iteration of the process (Bertinetto 1986:147). Even though habituality and constant aptitudinality, both requiring iterativity of the process, are equal on the aspectual scale, they assume their own specific meanings according to the context (Bertinetto 1986:149). In Italian the periphrasis *essere solito* + infinitive cannot be used to indicate constant aptitudinality, whereas in English the construction *used to* can occur in such a case:

(56a) * *Le sigarette erano solite costare 3000 lire pochi anni fa.*
Cigarettes used to cost 3000 lire some years ago.

In Italian phrase (56b) has to be expressed using the Imperfetto:

(56b) *Le sigarette costavano 3000 lire pochi anni fa.*

In Italian the combination of the progressive aspect and constant aptitudinality (subcategory of habituality) is not known, whereas in English such a combination is possible (Bertinetto 1986:157):

(57a) *I'm continually forgetting people's names.*

*In continuazione *sto dimenticando* i nomi delle persone.

In Italian this meaning can be conveyed using the simple present tense:

(57b) *Dimentico continuamente i nomi delle persone.*

I continually forget people's names.

The combination of the progressive and habitual aspect, instead, is to some extent acceptable also in Italian. This use is, however, statistically only marginal, and often clauses combining these aspects are not accepted by all speakers of Italian.

(58a) Quando torno a casa, lui *sta sempre lavorando* con il computer.

In English this convergence of progressivity and habituality is more evident and completely acceptable:

(58b) When I *come* home, he *is* always *working* with the computer.

Furthermore, the combination of the progressive and habitual periphrasis in Italian is unacceptable, but it can occur in English:

(59) * Quando andavo a trovare John, lui *soleva star recitando* his latest poems.

When I visited John, he *used to be reciting* his latest poems (Comrie 1976:30).

Bertinetto (1986:158) argues that indeterminateness is a fundamental characteristic of the non-perfective aspect, as illustrated above by example (46) (p.29). In the case of the habitual aspect an event is presented as indeterminate so that an insertion of a precise number of events would forbid a habitual reading of the event (Bertinetto 1986:159).

(60) * Maria *andava* al mare con Gianni tre volte.

* Maria *used to go* to the seaside with Gianni three times.

(61) Maria *usciva* con Gianni.

Maria *used to go out* with Gianni.

As examples (60) and (61) show, both in Italian and English the presence of a time adverbial expressing a definite number of occurrences renders a habitual sentence agrammatical.

Bertinetto (1986:161-162; 1991:47-49) summarises the following major differences between the progressive and habitual aspect in Italian. Firstly, the progressive vision implies one single event in process, whereas the habitual vision refers to a numerically indeterminate series of iterations of the event. Thus, the progressive carries a semelfactive value. Secondly, habituality normally cannot be expressed by the periphrastic progressive. Exceptions to this rule can be found in some substandard registers. In English, as shown above, such convergence is possible. Thirdly, in the progressive aspect the temporal reference is always strictly determined, or at least possible to determine. Temporal locutions, such as *in quel momento* 'in that moment' and *alle 8 di ieri* 'yesterday at eight o'clock' punctually set the focalisation point. In the habitual vision the temporal frame or outline is very generic, for example *quando ero giovane* 'when I was young'. Fourthly, the progressive aspect leaves undetermined the eventual continuation of the process beyond the focalisation point, whereas the habitual vision considers every single occurrence of the situation fully concluded. However, the number of iterations and in some contexts the eventual continuation of the habit are left open.

Bertinetto (1986:162,164) points out that his use of the term 'continuous' differs from the way the term is employed in English grammars, where it equals the progressive. Moreover, his continuous aspect is not to be confused with Comrie's (1976 as cited by Bertinetto 1986:162) 'continuous' which designates a characteristic meaning of stative verbs. According to Bertinetto (1986:170-171), there are three principal features of the continuous aspect. Firstly, it implies non-perfectivity in that the process is seen as continuous and that the number of iterations is indeterminate. Secondly, the continuous aspect does not contemplate a single instant of focalisation, which is the case with the progressive. Thirdly, it individualises one single temporal frame, which differentiates it from the habitual aspect:

(62) Per tutta la durata della riunione, Gianni *guardava* Maria.
Throughout the meeting John *was looking* at Maria.

In example (62), the continuous aspect is of a durative nature, but in (63) it is iterative:

- (63) Durante la riunione, Gianni *chiedeva* a Maria di tradurgli ciò che diceva l'oratore.
 During the meeting John *was asking* all the time Maria to translate him what the speaker was saying.

The continuous aspect combines some properties of the other two non-perfective aspects. The temporal frame in the continuous aspect is a single one within which the iterative action takes place, whereas in the habitual aspect there are several RPs at which the action is observed. In Italian the progressive periphrasis is incompatible with the continuous aspect. On the contrary to the progressive aspect, in the continuous one there is not any focalisation point. (Bertinetto 1991:52). Furthermore, Bertinetto (1986:172) points out that the continuous aspect does not constitute an authentic aspectual property, but represents simply a particular meaning of the Imperfetto and a variation of the progressive aspect.

3.2.3 The perfective aspect

The perfective aspect refers to precisely determined situations whose terminal point is visualised. Normally, without any explicit indication of iterativity or such, a speaker using this aspect makes a reference to a single occurrence of a situation. The perfective aspect as such does not succeed well in expressing simultaneity between situations. However, Bertinetto (1991:54) reminds us of the important role of pragmatic competence and contextual precisions in the understanding of time relations present in a language. He (1991:41) distinguishes between two subclasses of this aspect, namely, the perfect and aoristic aspect. By the latter Bertinetto (1986:190-193) means the perfective and global view of an event which does not bear any current relevance.

The perfect aspect refers to a situation which has been carried out in the past in a way that its result or consequence still lasts at the SP or continues in the present. This aspectual value is carried by the compound verb forms, such

as the *Passato Prossimo*, *Trapassato Prossimo* and *Trapassato Remoto*. These aspectually perfect forms presuppose both a moment of localisation indicated by a temporal locator and the psychologically relevant following moment which serves as a point of observation of the results of the situation described (Bertinetto 1991:56). However, in spoken language the *Passato Prossimo* is used largely in descriptions containing sequences of events that occurred even far in the past. Traditionally the *Passato Remoto*, carrying the aoristic aspectual value, is the tense form of the narration, but nowadays in Italy there are some authors who employ the *Passato Prossimo* in a way it is used in spoken language. Nevertheless, in narration such use is still rather marginal.

In Italian the *Passato Remoto* carries the aoristic aspectual value. It refers to situations or events that have been concluded in the past and it does not consider their course or their possible relation with the present. The *Passato Remoto* is widely used in literary language, for in narrative texts it carries on the story like the Simple Past in English.

4 DATA AND METHOD

The goal of the present thesis is to study, in the light of the data, the way in which Italian past time references are translated into English. The method consists of the comparison of examples found in original Italian texts and their English translations. The texts have been taken from novels, since literary texts offer a textually organised source with high temporal cohesion. However, the use of literary data and translations is by no means without drawbacks. Thus, it is worthwhile to take these problems into consideration. In this chapter I will briefly discuss translating and the problems that can arise when using literary texts and their translations as data. In addition, I will present the data and the way they were collected.

4.1 Use of translations in comparing languages

One central concept in the field of translating is translational equivalence, which means reaching maximum equivalence between the original text, i.e. source, and the translation, i.e. target text. It is impossible to reach sameness or full correspondence even between two text versions of the same language, let alone between two different languages. Translation is a process which always involves a translator's subjective choices. A translator ought to find expressions with a similar frame of reference both in source and target language. The information contained in the source text has to remain the same in the translation. (Bassnett 1995:32, 35, 37.)

In the present study the problem of equivalence is a question of trusting the target language producers, i.e. translators, since all the data have been taken from literary texts and their translations. Markkanen (1979:24) has listed some of the problems found in the practice of basing the comparison of languages on source and target texts. Firstly, it is not easy to find a literary source which is representative of different types of language use. Secondly, dialogues which imitate spoken language in a literary text are artificial. Thirdly, the aims and values of literary language can differ from those of so called normal language usage. Furthermore, Markkanen (1979:24) points out that the translator's aim or role affects the usability of the text for a comparative purpose.

The phenomenon of target language being influenced by the structures of the source language is well-known. As a consequence of this source language interference, a study using cross-linguistic corpora, i.e. translations, is not based on two independent languages. In fact, researchers using such a corpus need to be aware of this problem. In spite of their problematic nature, translation corpora have been used in linguistic studies for different purposes. At present there is new interest in the use of translations, due to the

possibilities offered by modern technology for working with large corpora. (Gellerstam 1996:53-54.)

In his research Gellerstam (1996:54) set out to look for "unmistakable fingerprints of English in the Swedish texts". He calls the features of the source language found in the target language "translationese". His study, which was based on extensive corpus data and statistical methods, confirmed the influence of source language on target language in translations. In fact, Gellerstam suggests the use of 'comparable' corpora rather than translations in cross-linguistic research. However, according to Gellerstam a systematic comparison between original texts and translated texts in the same language is an important way of utilising translations in finding new cross-linguistic facts. (Gellerstam 1996:54, 61.)

In his discussion of different types of corpora used in language comparison Johansson (1998:6) has also listed a number of problems users of translation corpora ought to be aware of. Firstly, the range of translated texts is normally limited. Secondly, the number and types of translated texts depend on the languages in question and the direction of translation. Thirdly, there are always differences between individual translators. In addition, even clear mistakes can be found in translations. Johansson (1998:6) calls for the use of translations in both directions in order to be able to control for translation effects.

In this thesis the corpus consists of original texts in Italian and their English translations, i.e., translations are used in only one direction, because the purpose is to find out how Italian forms are translated into English. If the purpose of this study had been to find full correspondences between past reference forms in the two languages, the data ought to have consisted of comparable texts in original languages and translations in two directions. In the data of the present study spoken language is represented only by dialogues found in the three novels. The use of novels is partly due to their fairly easy

availability, whereas for example English films and their dubbed Italian versions are more difficult to find. Moreover, from a practical viewpoint, the collection of translation pairs from films is more complicated than taking them down from a written source. Finally, the use of films as the source of data does not take away the problem of the translator's role.

4.2 Collection of data

The primary material consists of extracts from three different novels that were originally written in Italian and their English translations. The choice was limited by the availability of translations. The goal in the choice of the novels was to find texts in standard Italian. The reason for gathering the data from more than one source was to render them more representative. On one hand, in this way the possible errors or personal stylistic choices made during the translation process could be narrowed down. On the other hand, the use of more than one source made it possible to draw translation pairs from different narrative styles because there might be differences in the way writers use past references. Bassani's and Tabucchi's novels represent the standard literary use of the tense forms in a narrative setting, whereas Tamaro's style in this sense is different. Her novel is a monologue creating quite a natural context for the use of the perfect *Passato Prossimo*, which as a reference to perfective past events is still mainly used in spoken language.

The data were collected reading systematically extracts of the novels in Italian and English. More precisely, the extracts were read one sentence at a time; first the original Italian sentence and then its English translation. All the indicative finite clauses with verbs referring to the past together with their English translations were picked out. The cases in which the structure of the clause had been completely changed in the translation, for example if it had been substituted with a noun phrase, were ignored for two reasons. Firstly, the limited length of a thesis placed certain restrictions on the study. Secondly, the

aim of this study is to find out how Italian past reference forms are translated into English verb forms with past time reference.

A relatively long extract was taken from each of the three books. The 161 pages analysed from Bassani's novel were those from 67 to 227. The corresponding pages of the English translation were those between 41 and 153. The analysed part of 105 pages of Tabucchi's novel covered the pages from 103 to 207, corresponding to those from 63 to 136 in the English translation. Finally, the 84 pages analysed from Tamaro's novel were those from 27 to 110, which correspond to pages 34-137 of the translation. The data gathered from these extracts amounted to more than 6 300 translation pairs of indicative finite clauses in different past tense forms.

As mentioned above (p.5), the present study is mainly qualitative. However, studying how the different Italian past references can be translated into English calls for some quantitative considerations as well. Hence, the distribution of different translation pairs will be presented giving both the number of occurrence of each type and their respective percentual share. In addition to figures given separately for each novel, also the total number and percentage of various translation pairs will be presented.

Table 1. The different Italian verb forms with past reference present in the analysed extracts of the three novels.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Imperfetto	1333	49.2	376	18.5	861	53.4	2570	40.4
Passato Remoto	698	25.6	1309	64.4	180	11.2	2187	34.4
Trapass. Prossimo	547	20.2	67	3.3	220	13.6	834	13.1
Passato Prossimo	99	3.7	278	13.7	341	21.1	718	11.3
Perifr. stare + ger.	29	1.1	3	0.1	11	0.7	43	0.7
Trapassato Remoto	5	0.2	-	-	-	-	5	0.1
TOTAL	2711	100.0	2033	100.0	1613	100.0	6357	100.0

The occurrence of different past references in the collected data is shown in table 1. The table presents how many times the forms occurred in each extract

individually and their corresponding percentage. In addition, in the right column the same information is given considering the whole data. Looking at the figures in the 'total' column, it can easily be noticed that the most frequently used verb forms with past reference in these extracts are the Imperfetto and Passato Remoto, forming together nearly 75% of all the cases. The second and third most frequently appearing are the Passato Prossimo and Trapassato Prossimo representing almost the whole remaining 25% of the data.

The Passato Remoto is a perfective past reference form and thus, it has an important role in carrying on the narration. It refers to single actions or occurrences taken place in the past time sphere. The Imperfetto, in turn, is a non-perfective form referring to iterative, habitual, continuing and durative actions in the past. Because of these characteristics it is often used to describe the past circumstances under which single events then took place. Therefore, the frequent use of both the Imperfetto and Passato Remoto in narrative contexts is highly justified. As table 1 above shows, the occurrence of the Trapassato Remoto is very marginal covering only 0.1% of the total data.

A more interesting feature that table 1 shows are the differences found between the novels in their use of the various verb forms. In Tabucchi's text almost 65% of all past time references are in the Passato Remoto, whereas in Bassani's and Tamaro's texts the corresponding percentages are as low as 25.6% and 11.2% respectively. The proportion of the Imperfetto in Tabucchi's text is only 18.5%, while in Bassani's text it is 49.2% and in Tamaro's text 53.4%. Also in the case of the occurrences of the Passato Prossimo the extracts differ greatly. Bassani's text contains the lowest proportion of Passato Prossimo with only 3.7%. The corresponding percentages in Tabucchi's and Tamaro's texts are 13.7% and 21.1% respectively. Nearly the same proportional differences exist in the case of the Trapassato Prossimo. The percentage of this form in Bassani's text is 20.2%, in Tamaro's text 13.6% and in Tabucchi's text 3.3%.

The differences between the proportions of various verb forms referring to the past time sphere are due to the writers' stylistic and structural choices. Bassani's novel is narrated in the first person by the main character who takes the reader to the middle of his experiences. The writer has used the Imperfetto in abundant descriptions of the various situations in which the character finds himself. Thus, the reader sees vividly what the character has lived through. Tabucchi narrates his novel in the third person. The Passato Remoto carries on the story and the Imperfetto is used in the descriptions. Tabucchi uses the Passato Prossimo in the dialogues between the characters. Tamaro's novel is narrated in the first person. She uses the Passato Remoto even less than Bassani, but their use of the Imperfetto is proportionally about the same. Tamaro, however, employs the Passato Prossimo much more frequently than the other two writers. The nature of the novel explains this. Tamaro's novel is a grandmother's letter to her granddaughter. The voice of the main character can be easily heard. Thus, the Passato Prossimo, which is frequently used in spoken language, renders the narration more vivid bringing it closer to the reader. It feels as if the character were narrating her story aloud. The proportion of the Imperfetto in Tamaro's text is very high, which suggests a strong presence of description. The Imperfetto is the prevalent verbal form in the character's reminiscences. In summary, the three extracts offer to some extent different contexts for the past time reference due to their slightly diverse nature.

In the theory section the main usages of the different past reference forms in both English and Italian were presented. In the following chapter I will discuss the various English translations found in the data. Special attention will be paid to the cases which have been translated in an unexpected way.

5 ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF PAST TIME REFERENCE

5.1 Imperfetto and its English translations

The Imperfetto is a fairly many-sided non-perfective verb form which can be translated into English in various ways depending on its role and the context. Table 2 presents all the different English translations for the Imperfetto found in the data. As explained above (p.42), the cases of omission or where the structure of the translation was extensively modified were not taken into account in this thesis.

Table 2. Imperfetto and its English translations.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Simple Past	1115	83.6	286	76.1	684	79.4	2085	81.1
Past progressive	131	9.8	37	9.8	61	7.1	229	8.9
would	38	2.9	8	2.1	90	10.5	136	5.3
non-finite -ing	10	0.8	28	7.5	10	1.2	48	1.9
Past Perfect	24	1.8	3	0.8	-	-	27	1.1
used to	6	0.45	5	1.3	8	0.9	19	0.7
Present Perfect	1	0.1	1	0.3	3	0.35	5	0.2
Past Perf. progr.	3	0.2	-	-	2	0.2	5	0.2
non-finite -ed	3	0.2	-	-	-	-	3	0.1
other	2	0.15	8	2.1	3	0.35	13	0.5
TOTAL	1333	100.0	376	100.0	861	100.0	2570	100.0

The most frequent translation equivalent of the Imperfetto is the Simple Past. In fact, as Comrie (1976:25) points out, the progressive is the only meaning the Simple Past cannot bear and thus, in many cases it suits as the translation for the Imperfetto. In all three extracts the percentual proportion of the Imperfetto forms translated into the Simple Past is almost the same, that is, about 80%. The second most used translation of the Imperfetto is the Past progressive with 8.9% of the total. In approximately 5 % of the cases it has been translated using the modal verb *would* together with the main verb in the infinitive form. However, in the proportion of this translation pair there is some variation between the three extracts. In the text taken from Tamaro's novel the

proportion of the Imperfetto - *would* translation pair is three times higher than in Bassani's novel and even five times higher than in Tabucchi's text. Another case of considerable variation is the translation of the Imperfetto into the construction with the non-finite *-ing* form. In Tabucchi's text 7.5% of all the Imperfetto forms have been translated into this non-finite *-ing*, whereas the corresponding percentages in Tamaro's and Bassani's texts are only 1.2% and 0.8% respectively. Between other translations of the Imperfetto there is no remarkable variation from one text to another.

Example (1) contains some of the various uses of the Imperfetto and their translations in the relevant contexts.

- (1) La ragazza arrivò, sostiene Pereira, *portava* un cappello di refe. *Era* bellissima, chiara di carnagione, con gli occhi verdi e le braccia tonde. *Indossava* un vestito con delle bretelle *che si incrociavano* dietro la schiena e *che mettevano in risalto* le sue spalle dolci e ben squadrate. (Tabucchi 27.)

The girl who turned up *had* an Italian straw hat *on*. She *was* really beautiful, declares Pereira, her complexion fresh, her eyes green, her arms shapely. *She was wearing* a dress with straps *crossing* at the back that *showed off* her softly moulded shoulders. (Tabucchi 15.)

All the Imperfetto forms in (1) have a descriptive function in that they describe the girl and the way she was dressed and, consequently, they do not carry a progressive aspectual value. The translator, however, could have translated the first sentence into *The girl who turned up was wearing an Italian straw hat*. Obviously this choice would have created repetition considering what follows in example (1). In the second sentence the Imperfetto has its typical function of giving a permanent characterisation of the subject in question. The only possible translation is the Simple Past *She was really beautiful*. A Past progressive form is, in turn, the most suitable translation for the Imperfetto *indossava* in the beginning of the last sentence. It could also be translated into the Simple Past *wore*, but the progressive form renders the description more vivid. In addition, the Simple Past would rather refer to a habit. In the last sentence of example (1) the translator has changed the structure by substituting the subordinate clause with the non-finite *-ing* form. The part *un vestito con delle bretelle che si incrociavano dietro la schiena e che mettevano in risalto*

le sue spalle dolci e ben squadrate could have been translated, following the original clause structure, with *a dress with straps that crossed at the back and that showed off her softly moulded shoulders*. The reason for not using such a structure might be that in English the use of descriptive relative clauses is less frequent than in Italian. With the non-finite *-ing* structure *a dress with straps crossing at the back* the translator has probably thought of making the sentence structure more fluent, avoiding repetition. Thus, it is a stylistic choice made by the translator.

Example (2) contains several cases of Imperfetto and their English translations.

- (2) Siamo tornate al canile per tre giorni di seguito. *C'erano* (a) più di duecento cani là dentro e *tu volevi* (b) vederli tutti. *Ti fermavi* (c) davanti a ogni gabbia, *stavi* (d) lì immobile e assorta in un'apparente indifferenza. I cani intanto *si buttavano* (e) tutti contro la rete, *abbaiavano* (f), *facevano salti* (g), con le zampe *cercavano di divellare* (h) le maglie. Assieme a noi *c'era* (i) l'addetta del canile. Credendoti una ragazzina come tutte le altre, *per invogliarti ti mostrava* (j) gli esemplari più belli: "Guarda quel cocker", *ti diceva* (k). Oppure: "Che te ne pare di quel lassie?" Per tutta risposta *emettevi* (l) una specie di grugnito e *procedevi* (m) senza ascoltarla. (Tamaro 10.)

We went back to the kennels three days in a row. *There were* (a) more than two hundred dogs in there, and *you wanted* (b) to see them all. *You stopped* (c) in front of every cage and *stood* (d) there without moving, looking distracted and indifferent, while the dogs *flung themselves* (e) against the wire mesh and *barked* (f) and *jumped around* (g) and *tried to tear* (h) the links apart with their paws. The woman who ran the place *was* (i) with us. She thought you were an ordinary little girl, so *she kept on trying to interest you* (j) in the best-looking dogs. "Look at that cocker spaniel," *she would say* (k), or "How do you like that collie?" The only reply *you gave* (l) was a sort of grunt, and *you continued on* (m) without listening to her. (Tamaro 12-13.)

In this extract the actions described repeated themselves every day for those three days when the two characters went to the kennels. In (a) the use of the Imperfetto is descriptive and thus the Simple Past is found in its translation. In (b) the Imperfetto *tu volevi* 'you wanted' indicates a state of wanting that had a certain duration in the past. In English the Simple Past, as used in the translation, covers also such an unbroken state of affairs. In the case of (c) and

(d) the past action occurred repeatedly. On each of those three days the girl stopped in front of all the cages and stood there without moving. Since the Simple Past expresses repetitive occurrence of past events too, its use in cases such as (c) and (d) is appropriate. In (c) and (d) the concept of repetition could also be expressed using the modal *would*, thus, resulting in *You would stop in front of every cage and stand there without moving*. In (e), (f), (g) and (h) the Simple Past is used again to indicate recurring past action. The presence of the time adverb *intanto* preceding phrase (e) speaks for the possibility of a progressive interpretation of the Imperfetto in these four cases (e) - (h). The translator has joined together the third and fourth sentence of the original extract. Keeping the sentences apart, applying the progressive and changing the adverb, the sentences could be as follows:

(c)-(h) You stopped in front of every cage and stood there without moving, looking distracted and indifferent. *In the meantime the dogs were flinging themselves against the wire mesh and barking and jumping around and trying to tear the links apart with their paws.*

The above structure is heavier than in the actual translation. The idea of overlapping between the girl standing in front of the cages and what the dogs did comes out with the Simple Past forms equally well. In fact, Palmer (1987:55) points out that especially with verbs that inherently indicate continuity two overlapping periods can be expressed with either the progressive or non-progressive form. In (i) there is a clear case of the state use of the Simple Past. In (j) the translator has decided to emphasise by lexical means the repetitive nature of the woman's attempts to show the girl the most beautiful dogs. Instead of translating (j) with *she was trying to interest you* the translator has employed the construction *to keep on* and non-finite *ing*. In (k) again, the Simple Past would have suited well, but the translator has used the modal auxiliary *would* perhaps in order to remind the reader of the fact that what is being described repeated itself for three days in a row. As a consequence, the Simple Past in (l) and (m) makes the reader understand that the idea of repetition extends itself up until the end of the extract.

The data contain numerous examples of the habitual use of the Imperfetto. Since the English Simple Past can indicate habitual past events, it often serves as the translation equivalent of the Imperfetto in this kind of contexts, as well. Also where there is a mere repetition of an action, without picturing it as a habit, the Imperfetto has been translated into the Simple past. Consider example (3):

- (3) La notte prima di andare a prenderlo non hai chiuso occhio.
Ogni mezz'ora bussavi alla mia porta e dicevi: "Non riesco a dormire". (Tamaro 10.)

The night before we went to pick it up you didn't sleep a wink.
Every half hour you knocked on my door and said: "I can't sleep". (Tamaro 12.)

Example (3) contains a repetitive past action that took place during one night. Translating the Imperfetto forms *bussavi* and *dicevi* with the marginal modal *used to* would be erroneous, for the repetitive action described is by no means a habit. As discussed above (p. 26), the Past progressive can express recurrent or habitual past action. At first it seems that also in example (3) this form could be used. Nevertheless, Palmer (1987:63) points out that the Past progressive can express sporadic repetition, but any indication of regularity referring to set points of time requires a non-progressive form. Consequently, in (3) the progressive would not be possible, since the example contains a specific reference to the repetition *every half hour*.

5.1.1 Imperfetto translated with Simple Past

According to the data, in most of the cases the Imperfetto can be translated into English with the Simple Past. This is certainly due to the fact that the domain of the Simple Past is quite extensive, excluding only the progressive sense. The Imperfetto is a form that, due to its non-perfective nature, describes situations, circumstances, people, objects and places. In story-telling or narration it is often used to create the frames within which single past events have taken place.

In Italian state verbs can appear in the non-perfective Imperfetto referring to an unbroken state of affairs in the past. In this case the Simple Past is used in English, as shown by example (4):

- (4) *La detestavo, eppure lentamente e contro la mia volontà, stavo diventando proprio come lei.* (Tamaro 60.)
I detested her, and yet slowly, against my will, I was becoming just like her. (Tamaro 75.)

There are two reasons why the Simple Past has to be used here. On one hand, the verb *to detest* belongs to state verbs, which generally (see above p.25) cannot appear in the progressive form. On the other hand, the progressive could not even refer to a situation viewed as a state. In fact, it can be tested whether the Imperfetto in (4) is used in the progressive sense by trying to paraphrase it with the Progressive periphrasis, as follows:

- (4a) *La *stavo detestando...*

Example (4a) proves that the Imperfetto *detestavo* in (4) cannot be in the progressive sense, since the Progressive periphrasis results in an ungrammatical form. Consequently, the Imperfetto in (4) carries a state meaning. In (5) we have a similar case:

- (5) *Sapevamo dov'era, cos'era e camminavamo distanti (...).*
 (Tamaro 24.)
We knew where it was and what it was and we were walking far apart (...). (Tamaro 30.)

The Imperfetto in the first three verbs of example (5) purely describes a state of affairs. Thus, the Simple Past is the only possibility for as translation equivalent. The Imperfetto *camminavamo*, instead, being a dynamic verb does not give a description of the circumstances, but is used with the progressive sense. Accordingly, the progressive form is used in English as well. Having the last verb in the Simple Past would give more of an idea of succession between knowing, being and walking.

The Imperfetto has its iterative meaning and the Simple Past is often the appropriate translation also in these cases. However, for the sake of clarity, in some contexts it is worthwhile emphasising the iterative sense of the English Simple Past by lexical means, as in (6):

- (6) Appena stavo per raggiungerla, *faceva un saltino in avanti*.
 (Tamaro 65.)
 Every time I almost had her, *she hopped out of reach*.
 (Tamaro 82.)

If in (6) in the place of the Imperfetto *faceva* there were the Passato Prossimo *ha fatto* or Passato Remoto *fece*, the phrase would give the idea that the subject was once about to reach something that then hopped out of reach. On the contrary, the Imperfetto *faceva* gives an iterative sense to the event so that the reader sees how the subject several times almost reached something but every time this something managed to hop away. In the English translation of (6) the translator has decided to make the repetition clearer to the reader by using the temporal adverb *every time* instead of for example *as soon as* or *just as*, which would be the direct translations of *appena*. Consider (6a):

- (6a) As soon as I almost had her, she hopped out of reach.

Example (6a) does not exclude an iterative meaning, but changing *as soon as* into *every time* underlines the repetitive character of the sentence. The data offer other similar cases, as in example (7):

- (7) Quando le *chiedevo* perché non utilizzasse in alcun modo la sua laurea in lettere (...). (Tamaro 81-82.)
 Whenever I *asked* her why she didn't put her literature degree to some use (...). (Tamaro 101.)

In (7) the translator has again chosen a kind of temporal adverb which emphasises the iterative nature of the action. Translating *quando* into *when* would not have excluded the idea of repetition but with *whenever* such interpretation is more obvious. A somewhat similar case is found in example (8):

- (8) ... e *veniva voglia* di levarglieli... (Bassani 135.)
 ... and *you* always *felt like* tearing them off him... (Bassani 88.)

The Imperfetto in the Italian phrase contains the idea of iterativity, whereas in the English translation the temporal adverb *always* has been added in order to bring out more clearly the original iterative meaning.

In some cases when the Imperfetto expresses a repetitive past action the translators have used the structure with the Simple Past form of the verb *to keep* or *to keep on* and non-finite *-ing*. Consider (9):

- (9) Il problema è che non lo so neanche io, disse Pereira, fino ai giorni scorsi *mi facevo molte domande*, ma forse è meglio che smetta di farmele. (Tabucchi 177.)
 The real problem is that I don't know either, said Pereira, until a few days ago *I kept on asking myself*, but maybe it's better for me to stop asking. (Tabucchi 116.)

With *I kept on asking myself* the translator has achieved the same idea of repetition that the original sentence conveys. Another possibility would be to use the Past progressive, as follows: *Until a few days ago I was asking myself*. In Palmer's (1987:63) terms, such a sentence expresses sporadic repetition since the asking himself probably did not take place at set times, in a way that a habit does. In (9), however, the presence of the time adverbial *fino ai giorni scorsi* 'until a few days ago' tells the reader that the action has been repetitive. When the Imperfetto is the only element indicating iterativity, the translator needs to bring the same meaning into the translation, as in (10):

- (10) Oh, l'inverno '38-'39! Ricordo quei lunghi mesi immobili, come sospesi al di sopra del tempo e della disperazione (a febbraio nevicò, Micòl *tardava* a rientrare da Venezia) (...). (Bassani 146.)
 Oh, the winter of '38/'39! I remember those long months, immobile, as if suspended above time and despair (in February it snowed, Micòl *kept postponing* her return from Venice) (...). (Bassani 96.)

Since the English Simple Past carries also an iterative sense, the above sentence could have been translated into *Micòl postponed her return from Venice*. However, in this case the reader might easily think that Micòl postponed her return only once, whereas the original sentence clearly indicates a certain recurrence. The use of the structure *kept* and non-finite *-ing* emphasises the repetitive nature of the action. In (11) we have a similar case:

- (11) Ero furibonda con me stessa, *cercavo* di ripetermi cosa c'è da spaventarsi tanto, è solo un medico che fa il suo lavoro, non è normale né serio che io mi agiti in questo modo. (...). (Tamaro 116.)

I was furious at myself, *I kept trying* to tell myself there's nothing to be afraid of, he's only a doctor doing his job, it's not normal or dignified to be so agitated. (...). (Tamaro 145.)

In (12) the translation could have the verb in the Simple Past, but the structure used by the translator conveys better the meaning of the original sentence:

- (12) *Speravo* sempre che fossero loro a nominare Micòl.
(Bassani 205.)
I kept hoping they would mention Micòl's name.
(Bassani 137.)

In (12) there is the verb *to hope*, which normally does not appear in the Progressive or if it does, it bears an element of tentativeness or uncertainty. The original sentence means that whenever the character met with Micòl's family, he hoped they would say something about her. The structure with the verb *to keep* expresses the iterative nature of this past event. The adverb *sempre* 'always' has not been translated as such since the verb structure conveys the idea of continuity.

Due to its descriptive nature, the Imperfetto can be used narratively in a recalling of a dream as a reference to perfective past events. This 'oneiric' use of the Imperfetto (see Bertinetto 1986) can be illustrated by an example found in Bassani's text, where the narrator tells his dream to the readers:

- (13) "(...) La scusa del tennis non regge piú, e in casa, d'altra parte, col pericolo di rimaner bloccati dall'acqua alta (la vedi com'è Venezia?), in casa non è opportuno né bello che ti faccia entrare".
"Che bisogno c'è?", ribattevo io. "Potresti anche venire fuori tu, dopo tutto".
"Fuori io?!", esclamava lei, sgranando gli occhi. "E sentiamo un po', *dear friend* [*sic*]: per andar dove?"
"Non... non saprei...", rispondevo balbettando. (Bassani 139-140.)

"(...) Tennis is no longer a good excuse, and at home, on the other hand, with the risk of being blocked by the high tide (you see what Venice is like?), at home it's not fitting or convenient for me to let you in."

"What's the need?" I answered. "You could come out, after all."
"Me? Out?" she exclaimed, her eyes wide. "And just tell me, *cher ami* [*sic*], where would we go?"
"I... I don't know..." I answered, stammering. (Bassani 91.)

In the above example the Imperfetto outlining the dream has been translated with the Simple Past, which in fact is the only suitable translation. However, the special effect of crossing the line between reality and an oneiric universe created by the Imperfetto is not expressed in the translation.

5.1.2 Imperfetto translated with Past progressive

The Imperfetto can assume a progressive aspectual value. When this is the case, the Simple Past is not an appropriate translation for it. As discussed above (p. 25-26), Greenbaum distinguishes between two main uses of the English progressive, namely the ‘event progressive’ and ‘recurrent or habitual’ progressive. The data contain several examples of both types. In examples (14) - (16) the Imperfetto of the original text denotes a progressive aspect:

(14) Io me ne sono ricordata solo oggi mentre *seppellivo* la merla.
(Tamaro 115.)
(...) I remembered it while *I was burying* the blackbird.
(Tamaro 144.)

(15) Così una mattina, mentre *facevamo* colazione, hai detto:
“Voglio una rosa”. (Tamaro 9.)
So one morning, while *we were having* breakfast, you said, “I
want a rose”. (Tamaro 12.)

(16) Mentre il cameriere li *serviva* parlarono del clima (...).
(Tabucchi 80.)
All the while the waiter *was serving* them they talked about the
weather (...). (Tabucchi 50.)

In English they have been translated with the event progressive, which creates a temporal frame around another past event expressed by a Simple Past. Sentences (14) - (16) are classical examples of what Leech (1971:17) calls a time-inclusion relationship between a progressive and a Simple Past form.

One characteristic of the progressive both in English and Italian is that the action expressed by it is seen in its full course without considering the beginning or end of it. As presented above (p. 32-33), in Bertinetto’s terms there is a moment of focalisation within an open interval of time and the

progressive observes the action at that particular moment. Consider examples (17) - (17b):

(17) *Veniva giù per il viale d'accesso, il danese (...).* (Bassani 86.)

(17a) *He was coming down the driveway, the Great Dane, (...).*
(Bassani 55.)

(17b) *He came down the driveway, the Great Dane.*

In Bassani's text the Imperfetto in (17) is used in the progressive sense. The dog's act of coming down the driveway is seen in the middle of it and both the initial and final points are left open. The Past progressive in example (17a) conveys the same idea as the original phrase, whereas sentence (17b) visualises the situation globally excluding any progressive interpretation. Another clear example of the difference between the point of view offered by a progressive form and a Simple Past is phrase (18):

(18) *I giorni passavano e non prendevo nessun tipo di decisione.*
(Tamaro 15.)

The days were slipping by and I wasn't reaching any kind of decision. (Tamaro 19.)

In (18) the Imperfetto and Past progressive in the translation express two simultaneously occurring actions. The focalising moment is in the full course of the two actions without visualising any initial or final point. In English the Simple Past would give a global view of each of the two situations. Furthermore, they would seem to have taken place one after another. From the reader's viewpoint the Simple Past would probably take the situation further away from her/him making thereby the description less vivid. The progressive, due to its moment of focalisation, helps the reader to get more involved in the narration.

In (19) the Imperfetto is used in an iterative sense visualising a habit or a repetitive past action:

(19) *Nei libri che avevo comprato quando tu andavi all'asilo, a un certo punto avevo trovato scritto che (...).* (Tamaro 43.)

One of the books I bought when you were going to nursery school said that (...). (Tamaro 52.)

The Imperfetto and Past progressive refer to a limited period of time characterised by the regular action of going to nursery school.

As presented above (p. 37-38), Bertinetto has created a subcategory under the habitual use of the Imperfetto. According to him, the ‘continuous’ use of the Imperfetto can be distinguished from the habitual one. Consider the following example:

- (20) Nei primi tempi Alberto *annunciava* di continuo la propria imminente partenza per Milano. (Bassani 167.)
 At the beginning, Alberto *was* constantly *announcing* his imminent departure for Milan. (Bassani 111.)

The Imperfetto in (20) does not carry a progressive meaning, for there is no moment of focalisation which is present whenever the action is viewed in a progressive sense. In other words, the Imperfetto in this case is not used in a semelfactive sense, but refers to a repetition. The temporal expression *nei primi tempi* ‘at the beginning’ creates a temporal frame within which iterations of announcing took place. In the translation the recurrent or habitual progressive conveys well the original idea of a set of iterative events seen in progress over a limited period of time. Using the Simple Past the constant repetition of the action would be less emphasised. A similar case is offered by example (21):

- (21) Tua madre me lo *rimproverava* sempre. (Tamaro 46.)
 Your mother *was* constantly *giving* me *hard time* about that.
 (Tamaro 58.)

Also in (21) the translator has used the progressive in order to express the idea of frequent iterations. In Palmer’s (1987:63-64) terms, both (20) and (21) contain the English progressive carrying a habitual aspectual value with a special reference to sporadic repetition. There is no reference to the points of time when the iterations took place. Furthermore, Palmer (1987:64) points out that the progressive can bring about the idea of the speaker’s disapproval especially if the clause contains adverbials such as *continually*, *for ever* or *always*. In fact, examples (20) and (21) both have the adverbial *constantly*, even though in (21) the original adverbial is *sempre* ‘always’. The high density

of the repetitive action within a limited period of time together with a hint to a disapproving element is better expressed with the English progressive than with a Simple Past.

Because of its durative nature, the Imperfetto can refer to two overlapping durative past actions. In (22) the two Imperfetto forms have different aspectual values:

- (22) *Mentre parlavo, tornava davanti a me un'immagine (...).*
 (Tamaro 85.)
While I was talking to her, an image kept appearing before my eyes (...). (Tamaro 106.)

The first Imperfetto in a progressive sense clearly creates a frame within which the repetitive action expressed by the second Imperfetto took place. The English Past progressive is a natural choice as the translation in the first clause since it offers the possibility of a time-inclusion relationship between the clauses. However, as Palmer (1987:55) points out also the Simple Past can be used to refer to overlapping situations if the verbs as such normally indicate continuing activity. In (22) the first clause could be translated into English with the Simple Past *while I talked to her*, since the verb *to talk* denotes a continuing activity. On the contrary, the verb *to appear* is used in a punctual sense and as a consequence, translating the second clause with *an image appeared* would refer to a single appearance of the image.

The Imperfetto can also be used in order to express tact and tentativeness replacing a perfective past time reference as in (23):

- (23) *Oh, dottor Pereira, disse la signora in camice bianco, l'aspettavamo per pranzo (...).* (Tabucchi 107.)
Oh, Dr Pereira, said the white-coated lady, (...), we were expecting you for lunch. (Tabucchi 67.)

The use of the Passato Remoto or Passato Prossimo in Italian and correspondingly the Simple Past in English would have made the phrase sound more direct and at the same time less polite.

When discussing the Imperfetto it is also worthwhile to consider the Italian past Progressive periphrasis. Table 1 above (p.43) shows that the proportion of the Progressive periphrasis *stare* + gerund of all the data is 0.7%. In other words the use of this past reference form is only marginal in the extracts chosen as data. In Bassani's text 1.1% of the past time references have been made with the Progressive periphrasis, whereas the corresponding percentages in Tabucchi's and Tamaro's texts are 0.1% and 0.7%. Table 3 shows the two different translations for the past Progressive periphrasis found in the data.

Table 3. Imperfetto form of the periphrasis *stare* + gerund and its translations.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Past progressive	28	96.6	3	100.0	11	100.0	42	97.6
Simple Past	1	3.4	-	-	-	-	1	2.4
TOTAL	29	100.0	3	100.0	11	100.0	43	100.0

As table 3 shows, with only one exception the Progressive periphrasis has been translated with the English Past progressive. The past periphrasis *stare* + gerund is formed of the Imperfetto of the verb *stare* 'to be' and the gerund of the main verb. As its name suggests, it is used in a purely progressive meaning. Thus, the natural English translation for it is the Past progressive, as illustrated by the following examples:

(24) Il sole *stava* già *scendendo* ma più andavo avanti meno avevo voglia di fermarmi (...). (Tamaro 139.)

The sun *was* already *going down*, but the further I went the less I felt like stopping (...). (Tamaro 173-174.)

(25) (...) e ho capito che corsa *stava prendendo* la mia vita (...). (Tamaro 97.)

(...) and I realised the direction my life *was taking* (...). (Tamaro 121.)

Examples (24) and (25) are clear cases where the action is pictured in its full course without taking into consideration either the initial or the final point. The progressivity of the situations is more emphasised by the use of the Progressive periphrasis than if it were expressed with the Imperfetto of the main verbs. The

only suitable translation of the periphrasis is the Past progressive which, however, does not convey any extra underlining of the progressivity.

As table 3 above (p.59) shows, in only one case the past Progressive periphrasis has been translated into the Simple Past:

- (26) (...) non era assolutamente il caso che sciupassimo, come *stavamo rischiando*, i bei ricordi d'infanzia che avevamo in comune. (Bassani 222.)
 (...) it would be absolutely wrong for us to ruin, as *we risked doing*, the beautiful childhood memories we had in common. (Bassani 149.)

The verb *to risk* in the English translation could appear in the progressive form, i.e. *we were risking*. However, being a transitive verb, in the example it would have to be followed by the non-finite *doing*. Consequently, using the progressive form the phrase would result in a heavier structure *we were risking doing*. The verb itself contains a sense of duration and thus, the non-progressive form can be used even with some duration (see Palmer 1987:55).

5.1.3 Imperfetto translated with *would* and *used to*

As mentioned above (p. 30), the Imperfetto can refer to iterative past events. In English, in addition to the Simple Past and in some cases the Past progressive, it is also possible to express repetitive past events with the modal auxiliary *would* or the marginal modal *used to*. Table 2 above (p.46) shows that the percentage of all Imperfetto forms translated with *would* is 5.3% and with *used to* only 0.7%. Furthermore, it can be easily noticed that the corresponding percentage for the Imperfetto - *would* translation pair in Tamaro's text is as high as 10.5%. For such a variation there can be several explanations. Perhaps the main reason is the temporal structuring of the text. Tamaro's text contains quite a lot of reminiscence and, consequently, she describes also what usually happened in the past. Another factor could be the translator's stylistic choice. He seems to have used the modal auxiliary *would* frequently in cases where the Simple past would have served the purpose as well.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines the expression *used to do something* as follows: “if something used to happen, it happened regularly or all the time in the past, but does not happen now”. The corresponding definition given by Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary reads “if something used to be done or be true, it was done regularly in the past or was true in the past, but is not done or is not true now”. The important element in these two definitions is the idea of regularity. For *would* used as past reference indicating iterativity Longman gives the following definition: “used to describe what someone used to do a lot or what used to happen a lot”. The corresponding definition given by Collins is similar, stating that “if you say that someone or something would do something or would be in a particular state, you mean that they often used to do that thing or used to be in that state”. According to Leech and Svartvik (1994:72), *used to* refers to a past state or habit and *would* can express characteristic or habitual behaviour in the past. Furthermore, *would* can bear the idea of predictability of the past behaviour. Leech and Svartvik (1994:73) add that *would* is typically used in narration and less in spoken English.

In the light of the data there seem to be certain differences between the use of *would* and *used to*. Consider the following examples:

- (27) È una località, disse Pereira, è una spiaggia vicino a Oporto, ci *andavo* da giovane quando ero studente a Coimbra, poi c'era Espinho, era una spiaggia elegante, con piscina e casinò, *spesso facevo delle nuotate* e giocavo a biliardo, perché c'era una bella sala da biliardo, è lì che *veniva* anche la mia fidanzata, che poi sposai (...). (Tabucchi 114.)

It's a place, said Pereira, it's a beach near Oporto, *I used to go* there as a young man when I was a student at Coimbra, and there was also Espinho, a classy beach with a swimming-pool and casino, *I often used to have a swim* there and then a game of billiards, there was a first-rate billiard-room, and that's where I and my fiancée whom I later married *used to go* (...). (Tabucchi 72.)

- (28) Durante i balli, *strusciavano* la parte giusta del corpo e, strusciandosi, *guardavano* l'uomo negli occhi con l'espressione intensa delle giovani cerbiatte. (Tamaro 95.)

At dances *they'd stroke* certain parts of their bodies, and while stroking themselves, *they'd stare* into the man's eyes with that stricken expression of young fawns. (Tamaro 118-119.)

As examples (27) and (28) show, in both extracts the form used in the original Italian extract is the Imperfetto. However, in the English translation a choice needs to be made. In (27) the element of regularity seems to be stronger than in (28) where, instead, the verbs describe a characteristic, and perhaps also predictable, repetitive action of the girls. Although using the Simple Past would not exclude the idea of repetition, *used to* in (27) emphasises action having been a regular habit and *would* in (28) underlines the activity being characteristic and repetitive under certain circumstances.

In some cases the translators have used the structure *used to* even though there is a time adverb which together with the Simple Past would have had the same meaning. Compare the following examples:

- (29) Ti ricordi quando la notte di ferragosto *andavamo* sul promontorio a guardare i fuochi d'artificio che sparavano dal mare? (Tamaro 39.)
Do you remember how every August *we used to go out* on the promontory to watch the fireworks over the ocean during Ferragosto? (Tamaro 50.)
- (30) (...) anche lui a quel tempo *suonava* la viola. (Tabucchi 20.)
(...) in those days *he too used to play* the viola. (Tabucchi 10.)
- (31) (...) ho detto la preghiera che *ripetevamo* sempre alla sepoltura dei nostri uccellini. (Tamaro 114.)
(...) I recited the prayer *you and I always used to say* when we buried our little birds. (Tamaro 142-143.)

In (29) the Imperfetto means that the subjects went on the promontory regularly every Ferragosto. Since the translator has chosen to translate *la notte di ferragosto* with *every August (...) during Ferragosto* it would not have been necessary to use the structure *used to* in order to convey the idea of iterativity of the original sentence. The Simple Past would have suited as well. In (30) and (31) the presence of the time adverbs *a quel tempo* 'in those days' and *sempre* 'always' would have maintained the iterativity of the action even with the verbs in the Simple Past. In (32) the Imperfetto alone carries the reference to a repetition:

- (32) Ti ricordi come *mi prendevi in giro* quando mi vedevi ferma ad accarezzare i tronchi? (Tamaro 53.)

Remember how *you used to tease me* when you saw me stroking one of our trees? (Tamaro 66-67.)

In the above example the use of the structure *used to* brings out more clearly the repetitive nature of the action than the Simple Past which in this sentence would more likely refer to a singular past event.

Extract (33) presents a fairly interesting use of the Imperfetto. The English translation requires a closer analysis as well.

(33) Avrei potuto benissimo prendere il treno, una domenica, e andare a trovarla. C'era un diretto che partiva da Ferrara alle otto di mattina e arrivava a Venezia alle dieci e mezzo. Appena arrivato le telefonavo dalla stazione, proponendole che mi portasse al Lido (così, tra l'altro - le dicevo -, avrei finalmente visitato il famoso cimitero israelitico di San Niccolò). Più tardi facevamo colazione assieme, sempre da quelle parti, e dopo, previa telefonata a casa dagli zii per tener buona la *Fräulein* (oh il viso di Micòl, mentre telefonava, le sue boccacce, le sue smorfie buffonesche!), dopo andavamo a spasso lungo la spiaggia deserta. (...) Eh, sí: a farlo allora, quando *dovevo*, tutto ciò sarebbe stato ben facile. (Bassani 198-199; use of italics original)

I could easily have taken the train, one Sunday, and gone to see her. There was a through train that left Ferrara at eight in the morning and arrived in Venice at ten-thirty. The moment I arrived, I would telephone her from the station, suggesting she take me to the Lido (and so, among other things - I would say to her - I could finally visit the famous Jewish cemetery of San Niccolò). Later we would lunch together, in that same neighbourhood, and afterwards, with a call to uncle's house to keep the *fräulein* [*sic*] calm (oh, Micòl's face, as she telephoned, her grimaces, her clowning expressions!), afterwards we would stroll along the deserted beach. (...) Ah, yes: to have done it then, when I *should* have, would all have been quite easy.
(Bassani 133-134; use of italics original)

The temporal structure of the passage in (33) could be given different explanations. A glance at the underlined Imperfetto forms and their English translations easily gives the idea of a habit. However, two clues that exclude such an interpretation can be found. Firstly, considering the opening and closing of the original passage with the compound conditional reveals that the extract describes something that has not taken place. Secondly, the lexical temporal reference *una domenica* 'one Sunday' excludes a habitual reading of the extract.

Because of the unreal element created by the compound conditional in example (33), the Imperfetto forms cannot be automatically given a narrative reading either. The Imperfetto is used narratively in contexts that would actually require a perfective form (Bertinetto 1991:83). As Bertinetto (1986:383, 1991:86-87) points out, in order to have an authentically narrative reading of a text using the Imperfetto, there has to be the possibility to give a strictly actual and deictic interpretation of the past event that is situated in a moment preceding the speech point. In other words, the ‘narrative’ Imperfetto is purely temporal and aspectual, but has no modal value. If the Imperfetto in (33) is meant in a narrative sense, the translation *would* + infinitive does not correspond to the original text.

The Imperfetto of the original passage in (33) could be interpreted as ‘unreal’ or ‘imaginary’ (see Bertinetto 1986:369-370). In this way the narrator creates an imaginary world or a virtual universe. In such a use the Imperfetto marks the crossing from the real world into the imaginary one. In fact, the narrator is imagining what would have happened if he had gone to Venice on a Sunday in the past.

Finally, the ‘hypothetical’ use of the Imperfetto offers a further interpretation of example (33). In a conditional sentence the hypothetical Imperfetto can substitute for the sunjunctive in the protasis, i.e. the *if*-clause, or for the conditional in the apodosis, i.e. the main clause, or even for both of them (Bertinetto 1986:378-379). Bertinetto (1986:378) points out that such a use of the Imperfetto is frequent in spoken Italian, but it can be also found in literary texts. In (33) the protasis could be implicit *se fossi andato a trovarla*. In this case the Imperfetto would not refer to past events, but to a hypothetical future of the past imagined from the reference point. In Italian the same meaning could be reached by using the compound conditional. The phrase (...) *appena arrivato le telefonavo* (...) could be rephrased as (...) *appena arrivato le avrei telefonato* (...). Consequently, the phrase *più tardi facevamo colazione assieme* (...) would be translated into *later we would have lunched together*

(...). If the Imperfetto in (33) was used in this hypothetical sense, the phrase *we would have lunched together* would be the most natural form in the English translation. However, the structure in the English translation with compound verb forms would be rather heavy.

The Imperfetto in the Italian extract (33) manages to convey well the idea of a description of something that never took place. However, the translator has had to come up with a solution, since the English Simple Past as the translation of the Imperfetto would not express the original meaning. It seems that the translator has shifted the reference point to the imagined moment of the narrator's arrival at the station in Venice. In order to vividly describe what the narrator would have done, the translator has made him look into the hypothetical future from a point of view in the past. However, the English version of (33) remains somewhat vaguer in meaning than the original extract.

The Imperfetto can be used to refer to a future-in-the-past action in a subordinate clause, such as indirect speech, as in example (34):

- (34) Pereira pensò che il direttore *non poteva mai cogliere* il messaggio nella bottiglia (...). (Tabucchi 136.)
 Pereira had a feeling that the editor-in-chief *would never receive* the message in the bottle (...). (Tabucchi 85.)

This type of use of the Imperfetto is termed 'prospective' and it is used as an alternative to the compound conditional (Bertinetto 1991:78-79). Consequently, without altering the meaning the Imperfetto in (34) could be rephrased with the expression *non avrebbe mai potuto cogliere*. Bertinetto (1991:78-79) points out that the Imperfetto used in this prospective sense with verbs *volere* and *potere* is easily interpreted as a future reference. In fact, example (34) contains this idea of future reference from the point in the past indicated by the Passato Remoto *pensò*. In the English version *would* refers to a future which is seen from a viewpoint in the past. This is a typical case of backshift in indirect speech.

5.1.4 Other translations of Imperfetto

As table 2 above (p.46) shows, in addition to the most frequent English translations of the Imperfetto there are some less common ways to translate it. Their percentages show that the use of these translations is rather marginal. In Tabucchi's text the proportion of Imperfetto forms translated into the *-ing* participle is 7.5%, whereas in the other two extracts the corresponding percentage is about 1%. It is not easy to clearly point out the reasons for this variation. One reason might be that Tabucchi's text simply contains more descriptive relative clauses. Individual translating styles could be another factor. However, the use of a participial phrase, instead of translating the relative clauses directly, offers an economical solution for the sentence structure, as demonstrated by the following examples:

(35) Sulla battigia c'era un gruppo di giovani *che giocavano a palla* e Pereira li evitò. (Tabucchi 106.)

(36a) At the water's edge were a number of young men *playing ball* and Pereira gave them a wide berth. (Tabucchi 66.)

(36b) At the water's edge were a number of young men *who were playing ball* (...).

Using the non-finite *-ing*, as in the translator's version in (36a), renders the sentence smoother than the direct translation in (36b). In addition to the longer structure of the relative clause itself, the last example is repetitive in that the verb *were* appears in it twice.

Another purely marginal translation of the Imperfetto found in the data is the non-finite *-ed*, which covers only 0.2% of all the Imperfetto forms. This translation appears in only three cases which all are found in Bassani's text. Example (37) illustrates such a translation:

(37) ...ce n'erano parecchie centinaia *che appartenevano* alla Letteratura della Nuova Italia. (Bassani 176.)
 ...there were several hundred *devoted* to the literature of the New Italy. (Bassani 117.)

In (37) the relative clause has been transformed into a participial phrase. The verb phrase *devoted* is a shorter version of the clause *who devoted themselves* or *who were devoted*.

In some cases the Imperfetto has been translated into English with the Past Perfect and in a few cases also with the Past Perfect progressive. In Italian the ‘hypothetical’ Imperfetto (see Bertinetto 1986) can sometimes substitute for the compound past subjunctive, as in (38):

- (38) “Quanta bella neve!”, fece, accennando col mento al parco.
 “Pensa: a Venezia mai, neanche un centimetro. Se *sapevo* che qui ne era venuta tanta (...)”. (Bassani 191.)
 “What beautiful snow!” she said, pointing to the park with her chin. “Just think: it never snowed in Venice, not an inch. If *I had known* so much had fallen here (...). (Bassani 128.)

The alternative way of putting the Imperfetto of example (38) would be *se avessi saputo*. According to Bertinetto (1986:378) such a use of the Imperfetto is very common in spoken language, but also in dialogues of literary texts. In (38) the translation is perfectly linear with the original text. The following example (39) presents a more complicated case:

- (39) (...) mentre così discutevamo, la marea lagunare stava rapidamente montando. Se *tardavo* ancora un poco, l’acqua mi avrebbe bloccato definitivamente, impedendomi di uscire dalla sua camera senza esser notato. (Bassani 139.)
 (...) as we were arguing, the lagoon’s tide was rapidly rising. If *I delayed* a little longer, the high tide would block me, would prevent me from leaving her room unnoticed. (Bassani 90.)

At first, the Imperfetto in (39) seems hypothetical substituting for the compound past subjunctive in the subordinate clause which is then followed by the compound conditional in the main clause. In this case the Imperfetto in italics in (39) could be rephrased with *se avessi tardato*. However, a closer scrutiny reveals that example (39) is not so straightforward. It seems that the author has used the Imperfetto *sapevo* in order to tie this reference made to a hypothetical future to the preceding description of what was happening. In this way the author conveys the idea of contemporaneity between arguing, rising of

the tide and delaying. The phrase *se fossi tardato* would create more distance on the temporal axis between the tide rising and delaying.

The translator in (39) has been aware of the particular temporal and modal nature of the original text and has attempted to convey the same idea in English. Looking at *se tardavo* translated with *if I delayed* seems to suggest that the English translation has been affected by the structure of the source language. However, the translator has translated the compound conditional *mi avrebbe bloccato* with the simple conditional *would block me* and not with *would have blocked me*. Normally the English conditional sentence consisting of *if* + Simple Past in the subordinate clause and *would* + infinitive in the main clause cannot refer to the future-in-the-past. Consequently, the translation suggests a shift of the reference point into the past moment when the tide was rapidly rising. Since in English it is not possible to combine the structure *would have* + past participle in the main clause with the Simple Past in the subordinate clause (see Palmer 1987), the translator has had to make a compromise. Nevertheless, the English version manages to convey the original meaning quite well.

The Imperfetto can be used to express a past possibility with modal verbs. Bertinetto (1991:82-83) calls such a use of the Imperfetto ‘potential’, which can be illustrated by the following examples:

(40) (...) *potevi venire a salutarmi lo stesso, trovo.* (Bassani 208.)
 (...) *you could have come and said hello to me anyway (...).*
 (Bassani 139.)

(41) (...) *ma lei però doveva prendere prima informazioni, doveva consultare la polizia o il suo direttore (...).* (Tabucchi 196.)
 (...) *but you really ought to have made enquiries beforehand, you should've consulted the police or your boss (...).*
 (Tabucchi 128.)

(42) *Questo non doveva farlo (...).* (Tabucchi 196.)
You shouldn't have done that (...). (Tabucchi 128.)

In the above examples the Imperfetto carries a clearly modal value referring to events that never took place in the past. Examples (40) - (42) could be

paraphrased with the Italian past conditional, as follows: *saresti potuto venire* in (40), *avrebbe dovuto prendere* and *avrebbe dovuto consultare* in (41) and *non avrebbe dovuto farlo* in (42). In fact, the English phrases all make use of the past conditional, which is the only suitable translation. Because all the above examples (40) - (42) would move the discussion from tense and aspect to mood, they will not be discussed here any further.

Examples (43) and (44) bring out the differences between Italian and English in the compatibility of certain adverbs and verb forms:

(43) Ma da qualche minuto *mi trovavo* in una disposizione di spirito particolare. (Bassani 193-194.)
But for some minutes *I had been* in a quite special mood. (Bassani 130.)

(44) (...) da quasi vent'anni, oramai, *vegetavano e morivano* in silenzio. (Bassani 162.)
(...) and for almost twenty years now *had been vegetating and dying* in silence. (Bassani 108.)

The adverb *da qualche minuto* in (43) and *da quasi vent'anni* in (44) refer to a period of time which has started in the past and continues up until the past reference point including it. In Italian the Imperfetto is compatible with such temporal adverbs when the reference point is in the past. On the contrary, in English the Simple Past cannot tolerate a temporal expression referring to a period of time in the past including the reference point. Consequently, the English translation in both (43) and (44) has to be in the Past Perfect. In addition, in (44) the Imperfetto bears the idea of progressivity and thus, the progressive form has been used also in the English translation.

In (45) the Imperfetto of the verb *potere* refers to a past possibility:

(45) Ebbene ogni volta che, in bicicletta, passavamo dalle loro parti, Micòl aveva per il gruppo solitario delle *Washingtoniae* sempre nuove parole di tenerezza. “Ecco là i miei sette vecchioni”, poteva dire. (Bassani 110; use of italics original)

Well, every time we went near them, on our bicycles, Micòl had always new words of tenderness for the solitary group of *Washingtoniae*. “There they are, my seven old men,” she might say. (Bassani 71; use of italics original)

In the English version the translator has used the modal of possibility *might*. The choice seems somewhat interesting, since according to Palmer (1987:117) when it is not a case of reported speech, *might* cannot indicate a past possibility. The translator has used *might* in order to express a repetitive but not purely habitual past activity. The idea of the original passage is that whenever the characters passed the forest the girl always said something, but what she said was every time different. In fact, the English translation does not manage to bring out the idea as clearly as the Imperfetto does in the Italian sentence. Nevertheless, the context indicates the habitual meaning of the extract.

In the following examples the Imperfetto is used in indirect speech as a reference to a future-in-the-past possibility. The reference point, is indicated by the Passato Remoto *pensò* in (46) and *venne* in (47):

(46) Magari *si tratteneva* qualche giorno in più, pensò (...).
(Tabucchi 103.)

He might possibly stay on a few days longer, he thought to himself, (...). (Tabucchi 63.)

(47) E gli venne l'idea che forse sul "Lisboa" poteva pubblicare un paio di capitoli dal *Journal d'un curé de campagne* [sic], che non era stato ancora tradotto in portoghese. (Tabucchi 140.)
And it occurred to him that perhaps he might publish a couple of chapters of the *Journal d'un curé de campagne* [sic], which had never been translated into Portuguese.
(Tabucchi 89.)

In both examples the Imperfetto in question has been translated with the verb *might*, which conveys the idea of future-in-the-past possibility in reported speech. However, these examples take the attention away from the use of tenses to the discussion of modality, which is not dealt with in the present study.

0.2% of the Imperfetto forms have been translated with the Present Perfect. In (48) the narrator describes the state of affairs which has been valid for some time in the past up lasting until the speech point:

(48) (...) all'inizio mi sembrava che di morte se ne intendesse, e così l'ho preso come praticante, per fare i necrologi anticipati, lui me ne ha fatto qualcuno, glieli ho pagati di tasca mia perché *non volevo* pesare sul giornale (...). (Tabucchi 122.)

(...) it seemed to me at first that he understood what death is all about, so I took him on as an assistant to do the advance obituaries, and actually has done me a few, and I've paid him out of my own pocket because *I haven't wanted* to charge it to the Lisboa (...). (Tabucchi 75.)

In (48) the translator has used the Present Perfect as the translation of the Passato Prossimo in order to describe the situation which is or can be operative still in the speech point. The Imperfetto, too, has been translated with the Present Perfect, which in fact seems to fit the context best. The Simple Past *I didn't want* would not go together with the Present Perfect in the main clause. The only other possibility would be to translate the Imperfetto with the Present *don't want*, since with the Imperfetto the speaker is referring to something that is valid also in the SP.

One peculiar use of the Imperfetto is found in the last sentence of example (49):

(49) Per un po' questa mia spiegazione ti aveva rasserenata. Soltanto alla morte del tuo quarto o quinto pesce rosso eri tornata sull'argomento e mi avevi chiesto: "E se non c'è più spazio?" "Se non c'è spazio", ti avevo risposto, "bisogna chiudere gli occhi e dire per un minuto intero 'stanza allargati'. Allora, subito la stanza *diventava* più grande." (Tamaro 115.)

This explanation satisfied you for a while, but after your fourth or fifth goldfish died you brought up the subject again: "What happens if there isn't enough space to fit everybody?" "If there isn't enough space," I answered, "you have to close your eyes and say 'Room spread out' over and over again for a whole minute. Then all at once the room *will get* bigger." (Tamaro 142.)

The use of the Imperfetto in the above example is interesting, since within the same piece of direct speech the speaker all of a sudden switches from using the present tense over to the Imperfetto. In fact, in the English translation the Imperfetto has been translated with the modal *will* as a future reference. The English version seems temporally more coherent than the original text. The Imperfetto *diventava* could be interpreted as a narrative Imperfetto which is

used to tie the direct speech to the preceding narration in the *Trapassato Prossimo*. There could be a slight possibility of a misprint. The *Imperfetto* seen as creating a connection to the narration in the *Trapassato Prossimo* would seem even more valid if the inverted commas followed the word *allargati*.

5.2 Passato Remoto and its English translations

The *Passato Remoto* is the perfective past form that corresponds to the English Simple Past in that it has no connection with the speech point, but refers to a past action whose initial and final points are pictured. As table 1 above (p.43) shows, Tabucchi's text of the three primary sources contains proportionally most *Passato Remoto* forms. The English translation of this verbal form is a very clear-cut case.

Table 4. *Passato Remoto* and its translations.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Simple Past	697	99.9	1309	100.0	180	100.0	2186	99.9
Past progressive	1	0.1	-	-	-	-	1	0.1
TOTAL	698	100.0	1309	100.0	180	100.0	2187	100.0

As table 4 shows, only in 1 case out of 2187 has the *Passato Remoto* not been translated into the Simple Past. Example (50) contains this peculiar singular case.

- (50) Non mi ero accorto dell'ascensore, e *mi avviai a salire* a piedi.
 (Bassani 210.)
 I hadn't noticed the elevator, and *I was starting up* on foot.
 (Bassani 140.)

In example (50) the translator has used a Past progressive form as the translation for the *Passato Remoto*. In the light of the data, this seems to be a rather rare translation pair at first. However, by examining it more closely, the given translation proves to be appropriate. The Italian verb *avviarsi* means 'to set off', 'to set out' or 'to start'. Thus, the Italian phrase could be translated into *and I started up on foot*, which would mean that the subject did go up at least some stairs. Looking at the textual context where the sentence appears, it

seems that Bassani has used the verb *avviarsi* meaning ‘to be on the point of’. In this case the subject did not go up any stairs, but was about to do it. In fact, the Past progressive *I was starting up on foot* conveys well this idea.

As observed above (p.29-30), the Passato Remoto can be used to express a psychological distancing of the past event and the speaker. An example of this kind can be found in the data. The narrator of Tamaro’s novel is telling about her first encounter with death through her dog’s passing away. The following extract includes the description about how she found out about the dog’s death:

- (51) Il mio primo incontro con la morte l’ho avuto verso i sei anni. Mio padre possedeva un cane da caccia, Argo; aveva un temperamento mite e affettuoso ed era il mio compagno di giochi preferito. (...) Un giorno, però, mi sono accorta che sotto la gola c’era qualcosa di gonfio. (...) Una mattina, al ritorno da scuola, *non lo trovai* ad attendermi al cancello. (...) Ma quando *vidi* mio padre tranquillamente seduto nello studio e senza Argo ai suoi piedi, *mi nacque* dentro una grande agitazione. (...) “Argo è andato via.” “E perché?” *domandai io*. “Perché era stufo dei tuoi dispetti.” Indelicatezza? Superficialità? Sadismo? Cosa c’era in quella risposta? Nell’istante preciso in cui *sentii* quelle parole, qualcosa dentro di me *si ruppe*. (Tamaro 36-37.)

For the most part Tamaro uses the Passato Prossimo in her narration. However, in the above example the narrator uses the Passato Remoto. It seems that the writer has taken advantage of the possibility of psychological distancing offered by the Passato Remoto. In English this effect cannot be reached. In fact, the translation has made use of the only choice, the Simple Past (Tamaro 46-47).

5.3 Passato Prossimo and its English translations

As table 1 above (p.43) shows, the Passato Prossimo covers 11.3% of all the Italian data, however, with quite a lot of variation between the different texts, which can be seen in table 5:

Table 5. Passato Prossimo and its translations.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Simple Past	61	61.6	164	58.9	290	85.0	515	71.7
Present Perfect	36	36.4	112	40.3	48	14.1	196	27.3
Past Perfect	2	2.0	1	0.4	3	0.9	6	0.8
Pres. Perf. progr.	-	-	1	0.4	-	-	1	0.1
TOTAL	99	100.0	278	100.0	341	100.0	718	100.0

Table 5 presents the different English translations for the Passato Prossimo with the numbers of their occurrence and the corresponding percentages. In most of the cases the Passato Prossimo finds its English translation in the Simple Past. The second most frequent translation is the Present Perfect. Other translations are only marginal. Whether the Passato Prossimo is translated into the Simple Past or into the Present Perfect varies quite a lot between Tamaro's text and the other two extracts. As table 2 (p.46) shows, in Bassani's and Tabucchi's novels the percentages of the Passato Prossimo forms translated into the Simple Past and into the Present Perfect are about 60% and 40% respectively, whereas Tamaro's text differs in this sense. In her novel 85% of the Passato Prossimo forms have been translated into the Simple Past and only 14% into the Present Perfect. This difference could be explained by the fact that Tamaro's novel is more of a speech-like monologue where the Passato Prossimo naturally fits. Overall Tamaro uses more frequently the Passato Prossimo in a way it is used mostly in spoken language with the reference to single past actions. Consequently, in Tamaro's text most of the Passato Prossimo forms have been translated into English using the Simple Past. In the other two extracts the writers employ the more standard type of narration and thus carry on the story with the Passato Remoto.

As a basic rule, when the Passato Prossimo indicates a single past event and in the clause there is a specific temporal adverb locating the event clearly in a certain point in the past, the Simple Past is the English equivalent. Example (52) illustrates such a case:

- (52) No, è partito l'altro ieri. (Bassani 198.)
 No, he left day before yesterday. (Bassani 133.)

Example (52) contains a verb form with reference to the past together with a specific past time adverb *l'altro ieri* 'day before yesterday'. As pointed out above (p. 20-21), whenever there is a temporal adverb specifying the past event point, English requires a perfective form, namely the Simple Past. Consider (53):

- (53) Questa mattina, in giardino, *mi sono fermata* a lungo davanti alla tua rosa. (Tamaro 9.)
This morning, in the garden, *I stood* in front of your rose for a long time. (Tamaro 11.)

In the original Italian text the action described in example (53) is clearly in the past with no indication of its continuity until the SP. Thus, the Passato Prossimo has been translated into the Simple Past. Translating the sentence with the Present Perfect would require it to be still morning at the SP.

When the Passato Prossimo indicates an action whose consequences last up until the SP, the natural choice for the translation is the English Present Perfect.

- (54) Il muso e le orecchie *sono diventati* ormai quasi bianchi e sugli occhi, da qualche tempo, *gli si è posato* quel velo che sempre si posa sugli occhi dei cani vecchi. (Tamaro 11.)
His muzzle and ears *have become* almost white, and for some time now *he's had* that film over his eyes that all old dogs get. (Tamaro 14.)

In example (54) the result of the past action is relevant. The dog's ears have become white and what is meant is that they are still white at the SP. Translating the first clause of example (54) with the Simple Past would take away the emphasis from the result of 'becoming almost white' and give more importance to the transformation itself. Considering the second part of the example it is important to notice the role of the adverbs. The presence of *da qualche tempo* 'for some time now' requires a verb form that expresses the continuation of the result of the past action up until the SP. In other words, it is necessary to use the Present Perfect in English. Also the second sentence of example (55) puts the result in the spotlight:

- (55) No, è partito l'altro ieri. È andato a passar Pasqua a casa.
 (Bassani 198.)
 No, he left day before yesterday. He's gone home for Easter.
 (Bassani 133.)

The reader understands from the context that at the SP of the utterance Easter is not yet over. The emphasis is on the fact that the subject has gone home, and thus the Present Perfect suits the translation. From both Italian and English sentences the reader understands that the subject is at home at the SP.

With the Passato Prossimo the speaker can refer to past experiences underlining their relevance at the present moment. Consider (56):

- (56) Ho letto tanti libri, sono stata curiosa di molte cose (...).
 (Tamaro 46.)
 I've read many books, I've been curious about lots of things
 (...). (Tamaro 57.)

In example (56) the use of Passato Prossimo is a natural choice. It conveys the idea that as a result of her extensive reading and curiosity the subject is quite well-read and intelligent at the SP. In addition, the reader understands that the subject still reads much and is curious. Thus, the appropriate English translation is the Present Perfect. If the sentence were translated into *I read many books, I was curious about lots of things*, it would cut down the relevance of these past events at the SP. Furthermore, the Simple Past would give the idea that at the SP the subject did not read any more nor was she curious. The Simple Past would also require a temporal locator, since without any temporal specifier arises the question about when the reading and being curious took place. Also in example (57) the result is of importance:

- (57) “Ti piace come ho messo su lo studio?”, chiese Alberto.
 (Bassani 154.)
 “You like the way I've done the study?” Alberto asked.
 (Bassani 101.)

At the SP the characters are in the study, thus the result of Alberto's redecoration is right in front of their eyes. This is a perfectly normal context for the English Present Perfect.

5.4 Trapassato Prossimo and Trapassato Remoto and their English translations

The two Italian verb forms with past reference that were found in the data but that have not been discussed yet in the present study are the Trapassato Prossimo and Trapassato Remoto. Both of these compound verb forms require that the reference point is in the past. They refer to a past situation which is anterior to another situation in the past.

The Trapassato Prossimo covers 13.1% of all the cases with past time reference found in the data. However, there is a lot of variation between the three extracts. In Bassani's text the proportion of the Trapassato Prossimo is as high as 20.2%, whereas in Tamaro's and Tabucchi's texts the corresponding percentages are 13.6% and 3.3% respectively. Table 6 illustrates the different English translation for the Trapassato Prossimo found in the data.

Table 6. Trapassato Prossimo and its translations.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Past Perfect	453	82.6	56	83.6	120	54.5	629	75.4
Simple Past	94	17.2	10	14.9	97	44.1	201	24.1
Present Perfect	-	-	-	-	2	0.9	2	0.2
Past Perf. Progress.	-	-	1	1.5	-	-	1	0.1
Past Progressive	-	-	-	-	1	0.5	1	0.1
TOTAL	547	100.0	67	100.0	220	100.0	834	100.0

As can be easily seen from table 6, in about 75% of the cases the Trapassato Prossimo has been translated with the Past Perfect and in the remaining 25% with the Simple Past. The other translations occur only rarely. Since in this thesis these two relative past reference forms are discussed briefly, only the most frequent translations found in the data are illustrated by examples.

Example (58) presents a very clear-cut case of the use of the Trapassato Prossimo and its English translation:

(58) *Si era portato il suo Larousse, che gli fece molto comodo.*
(Tabucchi 130.)

He had brought along his Larousse, which made things easy for him. (Tabucchi 82.)

Example (58) contains two past time references: one made by the Trapassato Prossimo and the other by the Passato Remoto. The former refers to an action that had taken place in the past prior to the one indicated by the Passato Remoto. However, the action expressed by the Trapassato Prossimo had current relevance at the event point of the Passato Remoto. The only way to conserve the meaning of the original is to translate the Trapassato Prossimo with the Past Perfect. Sometimes this Italian compound verb form can be translated with the Simple Past. In fact, in Italian the Trapassato Prossimo is used more independently in descriptions than the English Past Perfect. It can be used without any reference to other verbs with past time reference. Consider (59):

(59) Non appena *ci aveva veduti venire avanti*, la signora *era stata scossa* da una specie di soprassalto. Dopodiché *si era subito data* a fare grandi segnalazioni con le braccia (...).
(Bassani 96.)

As soon as *she saw us* coming forward, the lady *made* a kind of start. After which *she* immediately *began* making great signals with her arms (...). (Bassani 60-61.)

In (59) the translator has used the Simple Past as the translation for the Trapassato Prossimo. In fact, using the Past Perfect would result in a rather heavy sentence structure. However, with the help of the adverbs *as soon as* and *after* the Simple Past conveys the temporal relations of the original text.

The use of the Trapassato Remoto is very limited in contemporary Italian. It belongs only to high-style literary language. In fact, its appearance in the data as well is only marginal. As table 1 above (p.43) shows, the Trapassato Remoto covers only 0.1% of all the verb forms with past reference found in the data. All five sentences with this verb form were found in Bassani's text, which in fact seems to represent a higher literary style than the other two extracts. Table 7 shows that in two sentences the Trapassato Remoto has been translated with the Past Perfect and in three cases with the Simple Past:

Table 7. Trapassato Remoto and its translations.

	Bassani		Tabucchi		Tamaro		TOTAL	
		%		%		%		%
Simple Past	3	60.0	-	-	-	-	3	60.0
Past Perfect	2	40.0	-	-	-	-	2	40.0
TOTAL	5	100.0	-	-	-	-	5	100.0

The Trapassato Remoto refers to a past action prior to another past action indicated by the Passato Remoto. Thus, it does not appear independently. Furthermore, it is normally preceded by a temporal adverb such as *non appena* ‘as soon as’ or *dopo che* ‘after’. In example (60) the Trapassato Remoto has been translated with the Simple Past:

- (60) Non appena *mi fui reso conto* di quanto egli desiderava da me, mi affrettai ad esaudirlo. (Bassani 181.)
 As soon as *I realised* what was wanted of me, I hastened to satisfy his wish. (Bassani 120.)

The Simple Past is possible because the temporal adverb *as soon as* is a sufficient indication of the fact that the realisation had taken place before the hastening. In other words, in (60) the time indication carried by the Past Perfect is not necessary. In example (61) the Trapassato Remoto has been translated with the Past Perfect:

- (61) “Chi era?”, domandò mio padre, non appena *fui rientrato* in tinello. (Bassani 69.)
 “Who was it?” my father asked, once *I had come back* into the breakfast room. (Bassani 42.)

Also (61) is an example where the Simple Past and Past Perfect could be used interchangeably in the English version without altering the meaning.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to find out how different Italian verb forms with past time reference are translated into English. First, some theoretical considerations about the fundamental concepts of tense, aspect and aktionsart

were presented. Secondly, a description of both English and Italian past reference systems was given. Then the different translation pairs found in the data were discussed with the emphasis on the less predictable translations.

Since the Italian Imperfetto is used in various ways, it was put under a more detailed scrutiny in this study. In fact, the most fruitful observations were made around this non-perfective verb form and its translations. In most cases the Imperfetto was translated with the Simple Past. However, sometimes in order to convey the original meaning the translator had added in the translation a temporal adverb which took away all elements of ambiguity.

Being a non-perfective form the Imperfetto can assume a progressive meaning. In this case it was translated with the Past progressive. In fact the Simple Past could not be used in the progressive sense. Generally the Imperfetto referring to continuously repeating past events is often accompanied by a temporal adverb underlining the continuity. This ‘continuous’ use of the Imperfetto can be seen as a subcategory of its habitual use. In the data this continuous aspect was rendered in English by using the Past progressive combined with a temporal adverb indicating repetition. In some cases repetitive meaning of the Imperfetto was translated with the structure *to keep + non-finite -ing*. With these verb forms in both Italian and English a speaker can express her/his disapproval or irritation. In fact, the Simple Past would not carry such connotation.

The Imperfetto can be used to refer to two overlapping durative past actions. In the past reference with this idea of time-inclusion the English translation depends on the nature of the verb. The Simple Past can refer to a durative activity if the lexical meaning of the verb as such denotes a continuing action. On the contrary, if the verb itself does not carry the meaning of durativity, a Past progressive is used in the English translation, as was seen in present data.

In Italian a further emphasis on the progressivity in the past can be created by using the Imperfetto form of the Progressive periphrasis *stare + gerund*. In English this further emphasis of the progressivity does not become entirely clear. In the data the Italian periphrasis was translated with the Past progressive with only one exception where the periphrasis was rendered into English with the Simple Past. In this unpredictable translation the Progressive periphrasis translated with the Past progressive would have caused repetition in the clause structure. Thus, the lexical meaning of the verb permitting, the translator had chosen to smoothen the sentence structure by using the Simple Past.

The Imperfetto has some particular uses as well. It can create a special effect in the recalling of dreams by marking the crossing over from the reality into an imaginary universe. In such contexts the Imperfetto was translated with the English Simple Past which, however, does not convey this nuance. This matter, however, was not paid particular attention to since mood was not among the concepts dealt with in this thesis.

The Imperfetto is used to refer to a past habit. In English it can be expressed with the modal auxiliary *would*, marginal modal *used to* or the Simple Past. In certain contexts the Simple Past alone leaves it somewhat ambiguous whether the sentence is to be interpreted as habitual or as a single past situation. Therefore, sometimes it is necessary to add in a translation a temporal adverb indicating habituality, as can be seen in present data. In the light of the data it seems that there is quite a lot of variation between different translators and texts in the choice between these three solutions. However, in order to find out if the variation is due to translators' or authors' stylistic choices, it would be necessary to study separately all the cases where Imperfetto refers to a habit together with their translations. In this thesis the Imperfetto forms which referred to a past habit and were translated with the Simple Past were not discussed separately. Consequently, it is not possible to

draw conclusions about the distribution of different English translations of the Imperfetto with reference to a past habit.

The translations of the Passato Remoto followed what could be predicted from the theoretical description. Being a perfective past reference form without any present relevance, its most natural English translation is the Simple Past. However, in Italian the Passato Remoto offers a possibility for further distancing of past events in respect to the speech point. For example Tamaro's text contains a lot of narration where the Passato Prossimo is used as a reference to perfective past events. Then, all of a sudden she describes certain past actions with the Passato Remoto. In these extracts it seems that the author has intentionally created a further distancing to these events either because they were rather unpleasant or the narrator conceives them as belonging to the time very far away in the past. This idea of psychological distancing expressed by the Passato Remoto is missing in the English translation.

In most cases the Passato Prossimo was translated with the Simple Past or with the Present Perfect. The former solution was chosen when the Passato Prossimo referred to a single past action without present relevance, whereas the Present Perfect was used as its translation when there was a strong element of present relevance. In Italian the Passato Prossimo can be used as a reference to single past actions. In English, on the contrary, the Present Perfect requires a strong present relevance and furthermore, it does not tolerate any specific temporal adverbs.

For the most part the translations followed what could be expected on the basis of the theoretical descriptions. Perhaps due to the data being rather limited, they offered only very few translation pairs where the translators' choices could not be exhaustively explained from a grammatical viewpoint. In a couple of cases it could be suspected that the translations had been influenced by the source language. These are examples of what Gellerstam (1996) terms *translationese*.

In this thesis the corpus was very limited. In order to get a fuller picture of how Italian verb forms with past reference are translated into English, the corpus ought to be larger. It would be fruitful to carry out a similar study making use of large computer-based corpora. In addition, further studies could include a more detailed discussion on temporal adverbs and their role in past time reference. Furthermore, because past time reference should be seen as a feature of the whole proposition, the whole context together with the syntactic structure and semantic meaning of sentences need to be taken into consideration. Since tense forms have implicatures that cannot be explained from the temporal or aspectual viewpoint, the concept of mood should be included in a full discussion of different uses various verb forms have. Finally, due to the complexity of temporal and aspectual systems the aim of this thesis was to give a general picture of how Italian verb forms with past time reference can be translated in English. A detailed analysis would require more extensive research.

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