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Narrative *until* in English

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Abstract

This paper examines the narrative use of until-clauses in English found in examples like *She was so enjoying life until she suddenly realized that all her efforts had been in vain*. In such sentences the until-clause expresses the main situation ('her suddenly realizing ...') against the background of the situation expressed by the matrix clause ('her so enjoying life'). This use contrasts with the much more common temporal use, as in *He was so happy until he got married*, where the main situation is expressed by the matrix and gets restricted temporally by the until-clause. My analysis of almost 7,000 sentences containing an until-clause shows that narrative until behaves much like narrative when and before (dealt with in Bache 2016 and 2018) in being both pragmatically and formally distinct from its temporal counterpart. The clearest cases exhibit functional superordination, main clause phenomena, progressive textual cohesion and stylistic intensity. At the same time, however, narrative until differs from when and before in allowing greater actional variety in the clauses it initiates and hence relies less on a fixed actional pattern for its narrative effect. Like before-clauses, until-clauses include stylistically more neutral types to convey a specific juncture in a storyline.

Keywords

English grammar, until, narrative clause, temporal conjunction, syntactic subordination, functional superordination, text strategies, cohesion, stylistics.
1. Introduction

This paper concludes a series of three papers dealing with the narrative use of the temporal linkers \textit{when}, \textit{before} and \textit{until} in English.\textsuperscript{1} In the first two studies of \textit{when} and \textit{before} (Bache 2016 and Bache 2018, respectively) I found that the narrative use is both formally and pragmatically distinct from the much more frequent, unmarked purely temporal use of these linkers. The temporal/narrative contrast in connection with \textit{when} and \textit{before} is seen in the following pairs of sentences:\textsuperscript{2}

(1a) She immediately saw him \textit{when she looked up}. (temporal)
(1b) Jenny was reading the newspaper \textit{when suddenly the telephone rang}. (narrative)
(2a) They heard her explanation \textit{before Jack called her parents}. (temporal)
(2b) They had hardly heard her explanation \textit{before Jack burst out crying}. (narrative)

In the temporal a-examples, the \textit{when}-clause and the \textit{before}-clause offer temporal specification and contextualization of the situations referred to by the matrix clauses (henceforth 'base clauses') to which they are linked. In other words, the main message is expressed by the base clause: 'her immediately seeing him (at the time when she looked up)' in (1a) and 'them hearing her explanation (prior to Jack calling her parents)' in (2a). In the narrative b-examples, by contrast, there is a shift of situational 'focus' (or 'foregrounding').\textsuperscript{3} In (1b) it is the \textit{when}-clause that conveys the main message, viz. that 'the telephone suddenly rang (while Jenny was reading the newspaper)', and the same is true of the \textit{before}-clause in (2b), where the focus is on 'Jack burst out crying (immediately after they had heard her explanation)'. The base clauses in the b-examples simply provide the context for the situations expressed by the \textit{when}-clause and the \textit{before}-clause. In addition to the switch of relative communicative weight between base clause and subordinate clause, sentences with a narrative \textit{when}- or \textit{before}-clause offer a slightly more dramatic representation, displaying cataphoric textual cohesion with a pattern of 'anticipation followed by

\textsuperscript{1} I wish to thank the editors of \textit{Acta Linguistica Hafniensia} and my two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and constructive comments and suggestions.

\textsuperscript{2} For these examples and many more, see Bache 2016 and 2018.

\textsuperscript{3} Throughout this paper I use the term 'focus' about the foregrounding of a situation in a storyline.
resolution': the base clause 'sets the scene' – and thus becomes the onset – for what happens in the subsequent narrative clause. From a purely functional point of view, it is argued in Bache (2016, 2018), the narrative clause thus becomes superordinate, not to a subordinate clause but to a clause constructed syntactically as a main clause, and it is this functional 'supersuperordination' which accounts for the special stylistic effect of such constructions.\(^4\) The narration is 'transposed' from the unmarked ordinary base clause level to a higher level. Narrative clauses are called narrative precisely because they effectively "push forward the action " (Declerck 1997: 213, 2006: 731f), i.e. they add a new foreground event to the storyline, and do so with increased intensity.\(^5\)

While the effect of narrative when-clauses and narrative before-clauses is identical, the two linkers require somewhat different descriptions owing to their different properties. I argue (in Bache 2016) that narrative when is a metaphorical use of when as a sentential relative pronoun, i.e. a relative pronoun which takes a whole clause as its antecedent, while narrative before (according to Bache 2018) changes an aspect relating to the inherent comparative property of before ('earlier than') as a conjunction (or preposition), among other things.

The temporal/narrative contrast noted in connection with when and before is also found in until-clauses:

(3a) He was so happy until he got married. (temporal)
(3b) She was so enjoying life, until she suddenly realized that all her efforts had been in vain. (narrative)

At first these sentences may strike the reader as very similar. However, on closer inspection, especially if one considers the relative communicative balance of the two clauses, one realizes that there is a subtle difference similar to the one between the sentences in (1a-b) and (2a-b) above. In (3a) the until-clause qualifies the preceding base clause, imposing a temporal boundary on the base-clause situation expressed – 'him being so happy' – which is the main message of the sentence. In (3b) a similar

\(^4\) The term "supersuperordination" is of course rather cumbersome and is here only used to emphasize the fact that narrative clauses are functionally superordinate to a main clause, not a syntactically subordinate one (which is the normal implication of superordination). Narrative when- and before-clauses are thus functionally superordinate to clauses normally considered superordinate.

\(^5\) The term "narrative clause" was originally defined by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and further developed by Labov (1972:359ff).
temporal boundary is imposed, but in addition, the *until*-clause prompts the foreground narration forward and thus takes over as the expression of the main message. In effect *until* thus marks the coming about of the situation referred to by the narrative clause ('her suddenly realizing that all her efforts had been in vain') rather than just the end of the situation expressed by the base clause ('her so enjoying life'). As we shall see, although there are grey zones and varying degrees of narrative effect, this subtle distinction often has formal repercussions and cannot simply be dismissed as a matter of subjective interpretation.

In the following I shall take a close look at narrative *until*-clauses. My analysis will show that although *until* can be used with essentially the same narrative function as *when* and *before*, it differs from them (as indeed they differ from each other) in certain formal and pragmatic ways. Throughout the paper I illustrate my points and arguments with examples from a corpus collected from a great variety of sources (in each case the source is indicated by an abbreviation in parentheses immediately after the example) – for details see next section. Surprisingly, the narrative use of temporal linkers is largely ignored in comprehensive university grammars of English, such as Quirk et al. (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and also in my own and Davidsen-Nielsen's 1997 grammar. The present paper seeks to supplement their treatment of these linkers and therefore employs several of their terms and diagnostic measures. My point of departure is a general characterization of the syntactic and semantic properties of *until*.

2. A Note on Data

The empirical part of this paper follows the approach adopted in Bache (2018: 27f). I have collected a corpus of 6,875 examples made up by the following subsets (of which the first five are random hits from electronic corpora freely available at www.corpus.byu.edu, while Collins Wordbanks Online requires a license):

- BNC (British National Corpus): 1,000 hits
- COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English): 1,000 hits
- iWEB (iWEB: The Intelligent Web-based Corpus): 1,000 hits
- NOW (News on the Web): 1,000 hits
TIME (Time Magazine Corpus, limited to 2000-2018): 1,000 hits

COLLINS (Collins Wordbanks Online): 1,000 hits

The last 875 examples derive from 15 Kindle novels (modern British, American and Australian novels) which I screened for all occurrences of *until*. In addition to this corpus of 6,875 examples I have made several more specific searches in Google (such as e.g. 'until suddenly', 'until one day', 'until bang'). I did not make any a priori restrictions on the sets of examples from the electronic corpora partly because I wanted to get a comprehensive impression of the narrative use of *until* in the context of its other uses, and partly to get a broader picture of *until* in preparation of the sections below on its syntax and semantics.

The aim of collecting all these examples was not to conduct a formal corpus investigation (with collocations, frequencies and statistics) but rather to get an empirical platform for observations of all uses of *until*, and to make sure that my analysis included all relevant details. My approach in this paper is to explore and interpret data in an eclectic manner, drawing on all sorts of sources (traditional grammar and generative, functional and cognitive linguistics) and to supplement the before-mentioned comprehensive university grammars on this particular subject.

3. Syntax

Like *before*, but unlike *when*, *until* is traditionally considered a preposition or a conjunction depending on its complementation. When followed by a nominal unit, it is treated as a preposition heading a prepositional phrase, as in example (4):

(4) It was never quite clear what he was talking about *until last week.* (TIME)
In this sentence the prepositional phrase serves as an adverbial, more specifically as a temporal adjunct (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 526ff). When followed by a clause, until is treated as a subordinating conjunction linking the clause it initiates to a superordinate clause, as in (5) and (6):

(5)  *Until this matter is decided,* Gbagbo will remain in detention, they ruled.  
(NOW)

(6)  One night he nearly caught her, so she climbed up a lamppost and waited *until he had gone.* (BNC)

The subordinate clauses initiated by until here also serve as temporal adjuncts. While some until-clauses precede the base clause they qualify, as in (5), others follow the base clause, as in (6). In this paper I shall focus especially on until-clauses that follow a base clause because it is only in that position that we find the temporal/narrative contrast (for reasons to be explained below).

The distinction between subordinating conjunction and preposition is rejected by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1011-1014), who argue that whether the complement is clausal or nominal, the item in question (before, when, until and others) can be usefully regarded as a prepositional head. I am not going to take sides in this debate (because it does not affect my analysis of narrative until) but I will simply note that in all cases involving until, it serves as a linker relating a construction Y (expressing the meaning y) to a construction X (expressing the meaning x) in such a way that until and Y form a constituent serving a function (typically but not inevitably adverbial function, as in examples (4) to (6)) in relation to X at a higher syntactic level:

\[ X(x) \quad [\text{until} \quad Y(y)] \]

Y is thus traditionally regarded as a subordinate extension of X. I shall continue to refer, in traditional terms, to the combination of until and a clausal Y as an until-clause, even though, strictly speaking, this combination may be regarded (as do Huddleston and Pullum) as a phrase rather than a clause (viz. a phrase containing a clausal complement). More generally I use the term 'until-construction' about until in combination with any (clausal or non-clausal) complementation.

In addition to straightforward finite clauses and nominal units such as those in (4) to (6), Y may be realized by a number of other constituent types:
a) prepositional phrases:

(7) But I've told Leeds I would prefer delaying it until {after the World Cup final}, especially with the Aussies playing three warm-up games ... (TIME)

b) adverbs:

(8) I didn't even realize it until {recently}, but when it comes to classical music, there's a real pattern ... (COCA)

Now and then are frequent adverbs after until:

(9) Why has OVH waited until {now} to launch its Virtual Cloud Desktop solution? (Google)

(10) Everyone, I'll see you tomorrow night, 8:00 sharp Eastern. And until {then}, good night, friend. (COCA)

c) present participles / present participle clauses:

(11) Gently heat while stirring until {boiling}. (Google, 2 July 2018)

(12) Goode handled every special teams snap until {suffering a season-ending knee injury in December 2015 in a game at Oakland}. (NOW)

d) past participles / past participle clauses:

(13) You can also maintain a stop payment bearing no expiry date i.e., the instruction remains effective until {revoked}. (Google, 5 July 2018)

(14) Then again, none of us can say how we would react until {faced with the situation}. (BNC)

e) adjectives / adjectival phrases:

(15) Add 1 cup olive oil in a slow, steady stream, whisking constantly until {smooth}. (COCA)

(16) Swim parallel to the beach until {free of the rip}, then make for shore. (NOW)

Irrespective of its complementation until is sometimes reinforced by up or even right up:

(17) I did my night shift up until I had to move from that space to a better space in Pimville. (NOW)
(18) C.L.R. James retained his revolutionary fervour right up until his death in 1989. (BNC)

An until-construction can as a whole be premodified:

(19) In person he could be hilariously entertaining, at least until he vomited or passed out. (TIME)

Sentences containing until-constructions are subject to cleaving:

(20) It was not until 1920 that a Third Division of twenty-two southern clubs was formed, ... (BNC)

(21) ... it was not until the police received the report from Cary that they decided to reopen the Nicholson case (NOW)

All the examples of cleft sentences with until-constructions in my corpus have negative polarity, as in (20) and (21). Note in that connection that not is moved from the verbal context of the base clause in an uncleft sentence to a position immediately in front of until in the cleft construction:

(20') A Third Division of twenty-two southern clubs was not formed until 1920.

(21') They did not decide to reopen the Nicolson case until the police received the report from Cary.

Though the negation in these sentences is standard operator negation of the base clause, the scope of the negation is restricted to the until-construction (for the terms 'standard negation' and 'scope of negation', see Bache 2000: 88ff). Thus in (20') a Third Division of twenty-two southern clubs was in fact formed (but not until 1920), and in (21') 'they' did in fact decide to reopen the Nicolson case (but not until the police received the report from Cary).

Also positive polarity is possible in cleft sentences selecting an until-construction for its contrastive focus, especially when until has a nominal complement, but it is much rarer and felt to be somewhat marked by some native speakers:

(22) It was until yesterday morning that I felt really dizzy.

(23) It was right up until she returned from her trip that we worked on that particular case.
The special relationship between *not* and *until* shown in examples (20) and (21) is also found outside cleft sentences, and again *not* is removable from its verbal context to a position in front of *until*:

(24) The Senate didn't take the slave rebellion seriously *until* it became clear that Rome itself was under threat. (COCA)

(24') *Not until* it became clear that Rome itself was under threat did the Senate take the slave rebellion seriously.

Note here that initial *Not until* triggers partial inversion in the base clause with the operator before the subject (*... did the Senate take ...*).

*Until*-clauses are sometimes used as an alternative to *before*-clauses after *It is/was not long*:

(25) From here, Dave found himself to be an integral part of young German's life and *it was not long until* they considered themselves family. (Google, 5 July 2018)

(25') From here, Dave found himself to be an integral part of young German's life and *it was not long before* they considered themselves family.

The *until*-clause in (25) serves as a kind of real subject (*it* being the provisional subject).

Consider in this context also the stock expression with *it* + *TAKE* + *until*:

(26) *It took until* mid-afternoon for the rail network to get back to normal ... (BNC)

Here *It* is a preliminary subject, and the *for*-expression (*for the rail network to ...*) is the real subject. The construction as a whole is used to emphasize the temporal extension up to the point defined by the *until*-construction.

*Until* regularly forms a balanced adverbial construction with a preceding *from* (*from ... until ... *):

(27) Teachers and students will notice you *from the moment you arrive in the parking lot until you drive away after the concert*. (COCA)

Another frequent collocation is *wait until .... before ...*:

(28) *Wait until* first flowers have set fruit *before* planting out the peppers. (BNC)
Occasionally, an *until*-clause serves as a subject complement:

(29) ... she preferred the company of mother and the family. But that was *until she met her Johnny* (and that was his christian [sic] name). (BNC)

The *until*-clause is here added in a separate sentence. The effect of delaying the qualification of the preceding clause is to attract more communicative attention to the content of the *until*-clause. A similar effect is ensured by appending the *until*-clause after a dash or in connection with a specifying 'that is' construction:

(30) He lasted just 4 1/2 months – *until Iraqi insurgents bombed his truck and nearly killed him at gunpoint*. (TIME)

(31) ... the blond rapper seemed to avoid insulting African Americans. *Until, that is, hip-hop magazine The Source dug up some Eminem juvenilia* ... (TIME)

Examples (29) to (31) illustrate a different narrative balance between the *until*-clause and the preceding clause than what we see in examples like (5) and (6) at the beginning of this section, where the *until*-clause simply offers temporal qualification of the base clause. In (29) to (31) the communicative impact of x and y (the content of the two clauses respectively) is more equally balanced and thus of central interest in this paper on the narrative use of *until*-clauses.

Narrative *until*-constructions are always clausal (with one possible exception to which I shall return), and – for reasons to be explained below – they always follow the clauses to which they are linked.

4. Semantics

Like the section on syntax above, this section is based on the evidence provided by the many examples in my corpus. Like *when* and *before*, *until* basically expresses a temporal relation between x and y, where x is a situation in a broad sense (state, process, activity, event) and y is a time or a situation capable of serving as a contextual temporal marker. More specifically *until* employs y to set a terminal boundary to x, which is always construed as taking up a period of time. This period of

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7 Little attention has been paid to the semantics of *until* in comprehensive university grammars of English. Declerck (2006: 738-9) has a brief discussion of the topic from a temporal adverbial perspective.
time is presented as terminated at (the time of) \( y \). Basically therefore a sentence containing an \textit{until}\-construction expresses a situation \( x \) that lasts up to \( y \), and the main narrative focus is thus typically on \( x \), as in the following examples:

(32) One person is 'it' – possibly the birthday girl – and swims around \textit{until} she touches one of the other children. (BNC)

(33) When she got a little sad we snuggled \textit{until} she was happy again. (Google, 2 July 2018)

Here \( x \) is 'one person being 'it' ... and swimming around' and 'us snuggling', respectively, and \( y \) is 'her touching one of the other children' and 'her being happy again'.

While \( x \) is always construed as durative, taking up an extended period of time, as in these examples, \( y \) is actionally more variable. In (32) 'touching' is clearly punctual, and the point expressed serves to mark the endpoint of \( x \) (swimming around as 'it'). By contrast, 'being happy again' in (33) is stative, i.e. does not express a point, but in combination with \textit{until} it is construed as a 'state reached' and thus assumes inchoative meaning: the initial point of 'being happy again' marks the end of 'us snuggling'.

Looked at in isolation \( x \) is typically unbounded while \( y \) may or may not be bounded, but the effect of linking \( y \) to \( x \) through \textit{until} is to supply \( x \) with a non-inherent boundary, and in that sense \( y \) typically provides a punctual orientation in combination with \textit{until}.

Telic situations serving as \( y \) are also bounded, being defined as durative situations (activities or processes) leading up to and including a finishing point beyond which they do not or cannot continue, like 'performing a brain autopsy' in:

(34) ... the truth is, doctors can't really distinguish between Alzheimer's and other dementias \textit{until a brain autopsy is performed}. (TIME)

With a telic situation as \( y \) it is the situation as a whole with its endpoint that marks the end of \( x \).

While the expression \( X \) is always interpreted as having durative meaning, the actual verbal part may in fact denote a punctual situation. This happens when \( x \) is negated: the absence of a situation, even a punctual one (such as e.g. 'receiving or touching something'), is durative:
... technicians did not receive the email until returning from vacation on July 10. (NOW)

The complement of until, i.e. Y, is typically either an expression of time, as in (36), or a temporally specifiable situation in the context, as in (37) (and, indeed, in most of the examples looked at so far):

(36) But when I called the week before, she told me she wasn't getting in until Monday night. (TIME)

(37) But a spokesman said: 'She should have stayed with her child until he was booked in.' (BNC)

In the last example, y is situational and as such temporally specifiable in the context. The situation of 'being booked in' is not basically a time like Monday night in (36) but lends itself to temporal instantiation in some real or fictional world. In both examples the situation x (expressed by the base clause X) gets temporally bounded and contextualized in terms of y. The fact that situations lend themselves to temporal instantiation is also seen in the frequent use of event nouns (or nominals headed by event nouns) as Y:

(38) In 1972 he was appointed chief executive ... and held that position until his appointment as chairman of the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations in 1974 ... (BNC)

Nominals referring to 'things' rather than times or events are not usually possible as Y – unless an event is implied:

(39) But Hirsh couldn't remember being on a strict count until high school. (COCA)

A high school is not a temporal artefact or an event as such, but the nominal high school may be used metonymically to imply a temporally specifiable event such as entering/attending high school.

Very occasionally x is strictly speaking punctual or telic but implies duration:

(40) Medics supplied him with a sedative until his father arrived to take him home. (NOW)
Supplying a patient with a sedative is punctual or telic (depending on the interpretation of 'supplying' with respect to temporal extension), but in this sentence the implication is that the sedative, once given, kept the receiver calm and relaxed until his father arrived, and being calm and relaxed is a physical state taking up a period of time.

Sometimes X expresses an unbounded activity involving punctual events (i.e. individually bounded) events (traditionally referred to as 'iteration'):

(41) To hide my embarrassment, I clapped before everyone else and longer than anyone else until our ambassador leaned over and said: 'I wouldn't do that.'

(BNC)

When y is situational (expressed by either a clause or an event noun) rather than simply a time, x is not only assigned a temporal boundary but also becomes contextually enriched by being related to another situation in the context. This raises the question of the precise relationship between x and y: is y an independent situation that just happens to be a convenient way of supplying x with a terminal point? Or is it a natural endpoint of x, and if so, is it caused by x? The variability of the relationship between x and y can be seen in examples like:

(42) The boy, as in a rite of passage, hacks at the trunk until the tree is mortally wounded (NOW)

(43) This grandfather of mine died in 1932, but his wife lived until I was sixteen.

(BNC)

In (42) the tree being mortally wounded (y) is caused by the boy hacking at the trunk (x). By contrast, in (43) y simply provides a convenient independent way of expressing the temporal boundary of x: 'me being sixteen' (y) was not caused by 'his wife living' (x).

More technically we can say that the constructional frame X(x) [until Y(y)] accommodates a number of more regular pragmatic meanings. One frequent such meaning is indeed 'resultative' ('x resulting in y'), as in (42) and the following:

(44) ... hooligans – at least two strong men – are believed to have rocked the seats until the bolts snapped. (TIME)
Both examples express some activity directed towards and reaching some (deliberate or accidental) result.

In resultative constructions y is often (the onset of) a new state caused by x or a further development of x, as in:

(45) She sewed until her hands turned all blue. (COCA)
(46) But the longer he waited, the more his shaking worsened, until even his teeth chattered [= 'started chattering']. (COCA)

The resultative meaning is especially characteristic of recipes and instructions more generally:

(47) Bake enchiladas until bubbling, cheese is melted, and tortillas are starting to brown on edges ... (COCA)
(48) Use a garden roller to consolidate the sand. Add more until just the thickness of the slabs remains ... (BNC)

Other possible pragmatic meanings include 'condition' and 'determination', as in (49) and (50), respectively:

(49) ... some officers will refuse to stamp the passport or hold on to the passport until payment is made. (NOW)
(50) She said: 'I shall be campaigning until the day I die. I shall fight and fight ...' (BNC)

As this last example indicates, certain until-clauses are sayings employed for stylistic emphasis rather than for their literal meaning. Other frequent examples are:

(51) ... those two could talk until the cows came home. (BNC)
(52) We're going to fight until blood comes out of our eyes. We're going to stop at nothing. (TIME)
(53) He says he'll sit there until hell freezes over before he'll pay them one red cent, and if the family makes his bail, he'll personally see to it that we're all buried alive in airtight caskets. (Collins)

In addition to these idiomatic expressions, note also the formal stock phrase until further notice:
The city is offering sand bags at five locations starting 24/7 until further notice. (NOW)

The realization of Y as clausal in the constructional frame X(x) [until Y(y)] combined with y's variable contextual relationship with x allows a change of balance with respect to narrative foregrounding. In the default temporal use of until, x (as terminated at y) is foregrounded. But with its rich meaning potential in its relationship to x, y may detract focus from x. Even if y does not inherently link up with x (as in examples like (43)), it may provide important new information in the storyline. Consider the following:

So I held him in my arms and cuddled him until he took his last breath. (Google, 12 February 2019)

Claudette watched us watch her until her eyes drooped shut and she drifted away. (COCA)

These are hardly to be interpreted as resultative. Nor do 'him taking his last breath' and 'her eyes drooping shut and her drifting away' simply provide a convenient way of expressing the endpoint of x. Instead they move the narration forward, expressing important new situations in the storyline, at least matching x with respect to narrative progression, if not in fact taking over the main focus. An until-clause that takes over some or all the focus from X qualifies as a narrative until-clause. The next section takes a closer look at such until-clauses.

5. Narrative use

As already indicated, the narrative use of until involves a shift, or rebalancing, of situational focus from base clause to until-clause. Both x (expressed by the base clause X) and y (expressed by the until-clause Y) are situational, and for the until-clause to be narrative the sequential order of the two clauses must be iconic in the sense that their order (X before Y) reflects the order of x and y in the real or fictional world depicted: x takes place before y. The narrative effect presupposes the mention of x as the contextual setting for y. In this respect narrative until behaves just like narrative when and before (Bache 2016: 276; 2018: 26). Most of the examples offered so far in this paper involve (narrative or temporal) until-clauses that follow the base
clause. Only purely temporal until-clauses may be used also non-iconically preceding the base clause:

(57) Fellow drinkers helped him hold on to Nicholls and Gould until the police arrived. (Collins) (following base-clause position)

(57') Until the police arrived fellow drinkers helped him hold on to Nicholls and Gould. (preceding base-clause position)

Thus, while temporal until-clauses such as until the police arrived may or may not be iconically ordered, depending on position, narrative until-clauses are always in an iconic sequence. This means that the temporal/narrative distinction is relevant only in X-Y sequences and has narrative until-clauses as the marked member of the opposition.

Since narrative until-clauses express a new situation y happening sequentially and iconically against the background of another previous situation x extending up to y, such clauses typically (though not inevitably) contain an absolute simple past tense or historic (dramatic) present tense. The base clause also often contains a simple past or historic present, but as we shall see below (especially in section E on textual cohesion), other tenses are regularly used here, including relative tenses. In sentences with temporal until, both clauses have a wider range of possible combinations.8

In my studies of when and before (Bache 2016, 2018) I pointed out that the temporal/narrative distinction is not simply a matter of subjective interpretation of a given construction type but has certain formal repercussions (as shown in connection with when by Declerck (1997: 218-225) and Couper-Kuhlen (1988, 1989), and elaborated on by myself). The same is true of until. The clearest cases of narrative until display a number of both formal and functional characteristics absent from temporal until. In the following I shall discuss until-clauses in the light of the characteristics summarized in my study of narrative when and before (Bache 2016: 275ff; Bache 2018: 32ff) and note similarities and differences.

8 I am grateful to one of my reviewers for pointing out the role of tense choice and for suggesting it as yet another criterion. For discussion of the distinction between absolute and relative tenses and of tense choice generally as well as in sentences containing when, before, after and until, see Declerck 1997 and 2006, and others of his publications on the subject.
A) Clefting

In principle, narrative until-clauses (like narrative when- and before-clauses) do not allow clefting, and in this they differ from their temporal counterparts and non-clausal until-constructions (as we saw in section 3). Clefting involves moving the until-construction to a complement position after It BE in front of the base clause to indicate a marked contrast, as in the following temporal examples repeated from section 3:

(22) I felt really dizzy until yesterday morning.
(22') It was until yesterday morning that I felt really dizzy.
(23) We worked on that particular case right up until she returned from her trip.
(23') It was right up until she returned from her trip that we worked on that particular case.

Not only does the thematizing of the until-construction emphasize its temporal properties but the sentence as a whole disrupts the sequential iconicity of the uncleaved sentence. The fact that temporal until-clauses in principle allow clefting fits with their status as adjuncts: as Quirk et al (1985: 1071) argue, adjuncts are fully integrated with the base clause and available for clefting like subjects, objects and complements (but unlike disjuncts and conjuncts, which are more peripheral to clause structure).

By contrast, narrative until-clauses become extremely odd (or unacceptable), or simply turn into temporal clauses, if cleaved:

(58) Alastair chattered, Sadie nodded, until finally he drew breath and she was able to squeeze in a thank you and something about the dogs needing to get home.
(Kindle: The Lake House, p. 159) (narrative)
(58') *It was until finally he drew breath and she was able to squeeze in a thank you and something about the dogs needing to get home that Alastair chattered, Sadie nodded.

(59) Initially, the restorer had taken mild professional offense until he realized he was being used as the subject of a daily master class in the techniques of street surveillance. (Kindle: The Fallen Angle, loc 144) (narrative)
It was until he realized he was being used as the subject of a daily master class in the techniques of street surveillance that, initially, the restorer had taken mild professional offense. (temporal, if acceptable).

However, things are much more complicated. Many temporal until-clauses, especially those following a base clause with positive polarity (as noted in section 3) resist clefting like narrative ones, simply because the sentence as a whole becomes clumsy or because it is hard to think of a context where thematizing until + y is relevant. As we shall see below, until-clauses following a base clause with negative polarity prove especially tricky in connection with the question of narrative focus.

B) Main Clause Phenomena

Superficially, narrative until-clauses look like subordinate clauses and are hard to distinguish from temporal until-clauses that serve as adjuncts. However, like narrative when- and before-clauses, narrative until-clauses have (a potential for) certain formal features in common with main clauses. Such features are recognized in the generative tradition as 'root transformations' or MCP (= Main Clause Phenomena), cf. Hooper and Thompson 1973, Green 1976, Aelbrecht, Haegeman and Nye 2012. One such MCP in narrative until-clauses is the fronting of a spatial adverbial or adverbial particle (such as out, in, down and along) resulting in full subject-predicator inversion:

(60) They had not been there very long until out came the song books and they started to sing, and they didn't stop until after eleven o'clock. (Google, 10 July 2018)

(61) Chamberlin had flown 14 hours from his home in Wellington, New Zealand, and was disoriented until [the Volvo passed the old Sears building and] into view came the tall gymnasium. (COCA)

This MCP is not possible in a temporal until-clause:

(62) Soon I was in and out of consciousness and completely relaxed, at least I would be until the doctor came in and jammed Sputnik up my butt. (Google, 11 July 2018)
Soon I was in and out of consciousness and completely relaxed, at least I would be *until in came the doctor* and jammed Sputnik up my butt.

Some *until*-clauses that are meant to be temporal will actually allow this MCP but then turn into narrative clauses:

(63) He kept on shouting at her *until the neighbours came out* to see what the matter was. (Google, 10 July 2018) (temporal)

(63') He kept on shouting at her *until out came the neighbours* to see what the matter was. (narrative)

Another notable, though not very frequent, MCP in connection with narrative linkers, including *until*, is the possible use of the so-called historic or dramatic present tense following a base clause in the past tense; compare:

(64) He *went* by the house every night, patrolling Marilyn Street, up and back, up and back, until one midnight a neighbor *came* out with a snow shovel and *flagged* him down and *asked* if he was missing something. (Kindle: About Grace, p. 31)

(64') He *went* by the house every night, patrolling Marilyn Street, up and back, up and back, until one midnight a neighbor *comes* out with a snow shovel and *flaggs* him down and *asks* if he is missing something.

Again, this MCP is not found in temporal *until*-clauses:

(65) In 1992 Senator Al D'Amato *goaded* his rival until he *called* D'Amato a "fascist." (TIME)

(65') *In 1992 Senator Al D'Amato goaded* his rival until he *calls* D'Amato a "fascist."

(66) I *plowed* through dozens of clubs until I *found* some winners. (TIME)

(66') *I plowed through dozens of clubs until I* *find* some winners.

However, the ordinary present tense is possible if temporally appropriate, e.g. to refer to the present or to the future in indirect speech, as in the following example:

(67) We *were ordered* to wait until the Americans *came* closer.

(67') We *were ordered* to wait until the Americans *come* closer.
So far we have assumed that narrative *until* must be followed by a clausal Y. However, there is one exception, and this exception demonstrates another MCP. Y may be an onomatopoeic interjection, as in:

(68) ..., someday soon, the universe is going to stop expanding and slowly, slowly begin to contract. And then the contraction will speed up, speed up, speed up, *until boom.*" She smashed her palms together." The big crunch." (Collins)

(69) Ambush was absolutely motionless, covered in thick gray fur. She wasn't complaining about the heat. She smelled a mouse. She was working. So Broker sat with her *until ... Rinnngggg ...* Broker was getting so he could activate the cell with his eyes shut. (Collins)

This shows that narrative *until*-constructions have some illocutionary independence. In examples (68) to (69) the base clause is declarative while the *until*-construction is exclamatory. By contrast, a temporal *until*-clause is always within the illocutionary scope of the base clause (being part of the statement, question, etc.):

(70) Was it in 1812 or *did she live until she was about 100 years old, dying in 1844*? (Google, 11 July 2018) (part of question)

The various MCP noted in narrative *until*-clauses are not arbitrary. Each of them signals increased narrative tension and thus serves to direct the receiver's attention away from the base clause to the *until*-clause. In fact, rather than saying that narrative clauses have a potential for MCP, it would perhaps be better to say that the presence of one or more MCP ensures or helps establish narrative focus.

The important point to emphasize in connection with MCP in narrative *until*-clauses is that they show that the temporal/narrative distinction is not just a matter of subjective interpretation of a given type of construction but also has formal repercussions. While temporal *until*-clauses are subordinate clauses in the traditional sense, being both formally and functionally integrated in the main clause structure, narrative *until*-clauses assume a somewhat different status, displaying greater independence and features shared with main clauses.
C) Assertiveness

We have established that one of the main differences between temporal and narrative until-clauses involves the distribution of situational focus of the sentence as a whole: while a temporal until-clause supports and qualifies the base clause message, a narrative until-clause takes over the role of expressing the main message, leaving the base clause to offer circumstantial information. A different way of describing this difference is to say that in a sentence with a temporal until-clause, the base clause X is assertive and the until-clause Y is presupposed, whereas in a sentence with a narrative until-clause, assertiveness is distributed differently. Assertiveness is in this context to be understood in Langacker's and Christofaro's cognitive linguistic sense, where an asserted situation has an 'overriding profile' and is associated with superordination, while a presupposed situation has an 'overridden profile' and is associated with subordination (Christofaro 2003: 33, based on Langacker 1991). Consider a simple sentence like the following (for a similar discussion of before, see Bache 2018: 35f):

(71) They kept counting the votes until the bell rang.

In this sentence the until-clause is clearly temporal, telling us for how long 'they kept counting the votes'. The situation x ('them counting the votes') is asserted while y ('the bell ringing') is presupposed. In the descriptive framework offered by Matthiessen and Thompson (1988: 308-317), x is the 'rhetorical nucleus' and y is the 'rhetorical satellite'. In other words, it is x that is the crux of the sentence, and as such it can be negated, questioned, confirmed, debated and elaborated on. Thus, for example, if Speaker A said (71), Speaker B might react by saying No, they didn't! or Did they really? (with 'they' referring to the subject of X) but she couldn't possibly say No, it didn't! or Did it really? (with 'it' referring to the subject in Y, the bell). So X is assertive, while Y offers presupposed contextual information in relation to x.

Consider next:

(72) They had been counting the votes for a while, until suddenly she turned around and kissed him.

In this sentence the until-clause is narrative, y taking over the story against the background of x. Here Speaker B might in fact perfectly well react by saying She didn't! or Did she really? (with 'she' referring to the subject of the until-clause). This indicates that the until-clause in (72), unlike the one in (71) can be interpreted as
assertive. Note also that while a tag question picking up the subject in the until-clause is completely out the question in (71), it is more acceptable in (72):

(71') *They kept counting the votes until the bell rang, didn't it.

(72') (?) They had been counting the votes for a while, until suddenly she turned around and kissed him, didn't she.

However, while in (71) we have a combination of an asserted x and a presupposed y, in (72) we have a string of assertions: both x and y are asserted. That X is also still assertive can be seen from the fact that it is perfectly possible to insert a tag after the base clause in (72):

(72'') They had been counting the votes for a while, hadn't they, until suddenly she turned around and kissed him.

This means that what we see in sentences with a narrative until-clause is not just a switching of the normal roles of the two clauses in temporal constructions. In a sentence with a narrative until-clause, y is assertive against the background of another asserted situation (x), not a presupposed one.

**D) Clausal Independence**

Narrative until-clauses are generally more independent of the base clause than temporal until-clauses, prosodically and orthographically. While temporal clauses typically serve as fully integrated adjuncts in the superordinate clause, narrative clauses are more peripheral. This is often marked in writing by means of a comma separating the narrative clause from the base clause, as in some of the examples cited so far and the following one:

(73) Anthony stood and Eleanor did the same, stumbling on legs that were suddenly weak, waiting as time seemed to stand still, until finally the young reporter turned and shook his head. (Kindle: *The Lake House*, p. 97)

Sometimes a narrative clause is separated by more than just a comma (a dash, a semicolon, a full stop, or even a new paragraph):

(74) It was a waste product – until we realised it could be used as a self-levelling screed in floor covering ... (BNC)
(75) We must have watched the same five-minute clip a dozen times. Until suddenly it was enough: Tracey got up and told me to follow. (Kindle: Swing Time, p. 57)

(76) She'd be home in an hour or two with her ill-gotten winnings rattling in a silver catch purse, happier than usual.

Until my father told her my news. "What the hell did you do?" (Kindle: Life after Life, p. 14)

However, such orthographical independence is not a reliable criterion for narrativity. Often commas are left out, so many narrative clauses are not formally separated from the base clause in writing. And in fact it is quite possible to have a temporal clause separated from its base clause without it turning into a narrative clause:

(77) The kept counting the votes – (but only) until the bell rang.

But the effect here is different from the effect of separating a narrative clause from the base clause. In (77) the until-clause is added as an afterthought or as a deliberately delayed piece of information about the base clause, whereas in (74) to (76) the narrative clause initiates a new development in the story and attracts its own full narrative focus, thereby putting the base clause behind.

**E) Cohesion: action and related means**

In section 3 on the semantics of until-clauses, we noted that x by itself is typically unbounded, taking up some duration of time, while y is actionally more variable (punctual, telic, directional, stative) yet serves in conjunction with until to set a boundary to x (in terms of a terminal point, a telic situation as a whole, or a stage reached). This actional pattern applies not only to sentences containing temporal until-clauses but also to sentences containing narrative until-clauses. Thus until differs from when and before, which only occur with a specific pattern of actionality in sentences with narrative clauses (cf. Bache 2016, 2018). One possible explanation is that, unlike when and before in combination with y, 'until + y' concerns a feature of x itself. While a when-clause basically serves to specify the time when x took place by relating it to y, and a before-clause serves to order x as anterior to y, an until-clause is more like a quantifier restricting the temporal extension of x.
In connection with *when* and *before* the actional pattern 'unbounded x + bounded y' in sentences with a narrative clause helps create progressive (cataphoric, forward-directed) textual cohesion (cf. Bache 2018: 38). The unboundedness of x tends to make the main clause communicatively incomplete and to make the receiver anticipate something more to happen. This anticipation is then met by y, which takes over the narration and offers resolution. Conversely, in a sentence with a temporal clause, textual cohesion is regressive (anaphoric, backwards), with the temporal clause simply offering more information in relation to x as the already mentioned main message.

In sentences with narrative *until*-clauses this mechanism is still present but it is not felt to be quite so distinct in sentences with temporal *until*-clauses because basically we have the same actional pattern with 'until y' setting a point-like boundary to an extended x. What we see, however, is the use of strategies (also used in connection with *when* and *before*) to secure an interpretation of the construction in terms of progressive rather than regressive textual cohesion, i.e. to shift the narrative focus from x to y as the main message. One such strategy (already exemplified above in examples (59) to (61) and (72)) is to emphasize the communicative incompleteness of X by choosing a progressive and/or perfect tense form (cf. Bache 2018: 33f):

(78) I *was* even *contemplating* marrying her as a second wife, *until* I *spoke* to one of my friends who warned that she could be using herbs ... (NOW)

(79) The band *had been* dormant for a while *until* Mack *handed* Cook a CD one night. (NOW)

When hearing or reading a progressive form, as in (78), or a past perfect, as in (79), the receiver expects something more to be added: both expressions point forward to y in the *until*-clause (for discussion of the textual function of the progressive form, see Bache 2008: 102ff; 2013: 89ff).

A frequent strategy is to lexically emphasize the suddenness or unexpectedness of y:

(80) Her mother's voice became a faint background drone, *until suddenly* she was no longer in this room in London, ... (Kindle: *The Lake House*, p. 107)
Another rhetorical means to shift the focus to y is to use an expression to mark the beginning of a 'new story' or new turn in the storyline, e.g. until one day ... / until one night ... / until one afternoon ..., etc.:

(81) But I couldn't help the way I felt about Carl. We got closer every day until one afternoon he grabbed me in the kitchen and I couldn't resist. (Collins)

Yet another way of securing attention to y is to present it as something 'finally' or 'eventually' happening, or happening 'at (long) last':

(82) The grown ups having gone out for the evening we then kept awake alternately for half-hour shifts by one of the boy's watches until at long last we were rewarded by the sound of creaking and thumps from the stairs, accompanied by slurry avuncular curses and "shushes" from the aunts. (BNC)

The mere distribution of linguistic weight in a sentence may affect the narrative focus: the longer Y is and the shorter X is, the more likely the narrative status of the until-clause; compare:

(83) long X, short Y → temporal:

X [Having suffered All-Ireland semi-final defeats in 2007 and 2013, in addition to a heartbreaking final loss in 2011, the high of victory was enough to keep them ticking over] until Y [they arrived back in Athlone.] (BNC)

(84) short X, long Y → narrative:

X [They're heading for a 0-0 draw] until Y [Yogi Hughes comes in to bowl, slides, takes out their No9 batsman just above the pad and while Big Eck reorganises his field they lose 453 runs.] (Collins)

F) Cohesion: Polarity

In my discussion of narrative before (cf. Bache 2018: 38ff), I noted that not only action but also polarity was employed to create progressive cohesion (with base-clause negation having scope over the before-clause rather than base-clause itself). So the question arises: is polarity also an important means of creating progressive cohesion in sentences with an until-clause? As noted in section 3, negative polarity in X may in fact have the until-clause in its scope:
(85) To his relief, Rose returned to her seat and did not speak again until they reached her mother's house in the Royal Crescent of Bath. (COCA)

(86) The precise figure will not be available until receipts and expenses in connection with the Steam Engine Rally are all in. (BNC)

In such examples, though x is negated its negation is effective only until y: in (85) Rose in fact spoke again (but not until they reached her mother's house); and in (86) the precise figure will in fact be available (but not until receipts and expenses are all in). Note the very special inchoative meaning in such examples: the temporal point expressed by y signals the onset of the situation negated in the base clause. In other words, y marks the beginning of a situation that adds to the storyline rather than simply the end of x. This construction type seems to allow the possibility of directing the communicative focus to neither the situation expressed by X (i.e. the negation of x: $x^{\neg}$) nor the one expressed by Y (y), but to x with positive polarity, $x^{\pos}$, as something which immediately follows y.9 In other words we have the following development in the storyline:

$$[x^{\neg} + y] \rightarrow x^{\pos}$$

This reading of the construction sometimes leads to the interpretation of y as a condition for $x^{\pos}$ rather than a signal of its actual coming about:

(87) Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford says he's not going to implement the ban until he receives an official order. (NOW)

In this example General Dunford is most probably trying to avoid having to implement the ban by laying down a condition.10

Negation in the base clause does not have to be standard operator negation but may be expressed locally by other means:

(88) ... and no work should be started until an application for a grant has been approved. (BNC)

9 As Declerck (2006: 740f) notes, another but rarer possibility is to actually focus on the absence of x.
10 I thank one of my reviewers for pointing out that the onset of $x^{\pos}$ is not always a likely implication in conditional constructions like (87), and also for mentioning that the choice of tense in examples like (86) and (87) support my claim that these are not genuine examples of narrative until (see the end of subsection F).
Henry, seated next to Olive toward the back, recognized no one, until a silent large presence made him look up, and there was Jerry McCarthy. (Kindle: Olive Kitteridge, p. 19)

Sometimes a sentence with formally positive polarity but with an implied negative or restrictive meaning has the same inchoative effect:

A faint smile crossed her face, but she remained silent until they had descended the stairway and stood at the entrance to the great hall. (BNC)

More generally one might say that an until-construction always implies a switch of polarity: when the base clause has positive polarity there is a negative implication for what happens as a consequence of y ([x^{pos} + y] → x^{neg}), and vice versa ([x^{neg} + y] → x^{pos}). But since a positive implication that x takes place after a negative X is more drastic with respect to the storyline than the implication that x simply stops at y, we tend to notice it as something that pushes the story forward. It might seem relevant, therefore, to consider the possibility of including examples like (85) to (90) under the heading of narrative constructions.

However, there is an important difference between until-clauses and before-clauses with respect to the effect of polarity. In my analysis of narrative before-clauses, I found that negative polarity serves to strengthen progressive textual cohesion and thus the narrative status of the before-clause, as in the example quoted in the introductory section:

They had hardly heard her explanation before Jack burst out crying.

Here the negative polarity expressed by hardly takes the before-clause within its scope (they did hear her explanation but 'almost not before y'). But unlike the examples with until-clauses offered above, the situational focus is primarily on y ('Jack bursting out crying') whereas in the examples with until, it is on x^{pos} or on y as a condition, not on y as a new foregrounded situation. For that reason, although there is a kind of progressive cohesion in such examples, they are not truly narrative as far as the until-clause is concerned.
G) Functional superordination

Narrative *until*-clauses take over the main communicative focus of the sentence of which they are a part, leaving the base clause to express x as relevant contextualization for y, or as something leading up to y. This means that, from a functional point of view, narrative *until*-clauses are superordinate to the base clause to which they are linked. As I demonstrated in my study of narrative *when* and *before* (Bache 2016, 2018), it is possible to revert the formal status of the base clause and the narrative clause (so that the base clause is also formally marked as subordinate and the narrative clause takes over as base clause) without this changing the meaning much. This is very occasionally also the case in sentences with narrative *until*-clauses:

(91) He walked on a dozen paces into the darkness *until he came to the door of 213th cell which he opened and invited Hanuman to enter.* (Collins)

(91') Having walked on a dozen paces into the darkness *he came to the door of 213th cell which he opened and invited Hanuman to enter.*

(92) He tried for years without success *until finally, in utter despair, he threw himself into the kiln.* (BNC)

(92') Having tried for years without success *he finally, in utter despair, threw himself into the kiln.*

While such examples are rather rare, they do illustrate a point: though the variants are near-synonymous, there is a slight stylistic difference. The original sentences with the narrative *until*-clause are a bit livelier, closing in on each situation progressively, than the paraphrased variants, which come across as somewhat factual, simply summing up x as a precedent for y. In the original sentences the receiver is presented with x with normal main clause focus but is then led on to y offering an important juncture in the storyline. In the paraphrased variants x is downranked both syntactically and functionally. This means that the difference between them is not just a change of syntactic and functional roles but one that involves the raising of the narrative level from normal to high in the original sentences, not from low to normal. As mentioned, narrative *until*-clauses are in this sense functionally 'supersuperordinate' like narrative *when*- and *before*-clauses: they are functionally superordinate to the normal superordinate syntactic level with its normal narrative level (cf. note 4). This observation is in line with our finding in connection with assertiveness: in a sentence...
with a narrative until-clause, y is assertive against the background of another asserted situation x, not a presupposed one.

**H) Degrees of narrativity**

Many of the features of narrative until-clauses discussed above (main clause phenomena, incompatibility with clefting, orthographical/prosodic independence, assertiveness, functional superordination) are present in the clearest examples in my corpus. But the situation is rather more complex. Many examples are more difficult to categorize unambiguously as either clearly temporal or clearly narrative. As shown in Bache (2018: 41ff), before-clauses exhibit various intermediate types indicating degrees of narrativity. The same is true of until-clauses. Unambiguously temporal until-clauses are very frequent, unambiguously narrative until-clauses much less so. But in between these opposite poles we find many examples that fall into rather distinct subtypes that may count as narrative in a weaker sense or in a different way. We have already noted the occurrence of negative polarity in the base clause which together with an until-clause may trigger an inchoative reading of y as the starting point of \( x^{pos} \) rather than simply the terminal point of \( x^{neg} \) as expressed by X. When there is a clear implication that \( x^{pos} \) takes place, triggered by until in combination with Y, the narration is pushed forward, but the until-clause as such is not a narrative one: it is \( x^{pos} \) rather than y that adds to the storyline.

Another very frequent sentence type (also noted in connection with before) is what may be termed neutral-narrative. In sentences of this type, y is not contextualized by x but simply adds to a rather evenly balanced sequence of situations without there being a sense of functional superordination or dramatic effect. The textual strategy is to present a sequence of events with until marking y as a specific juncture or new turn of the events presented, as in:

(93)  She had known it as we brush-passed, and she knew it as she took me naked into her arms, welcomed me, absolved me, showed me; then formed herself around me until we were old friends, then careful lovers, and finally triumphant rebels, broken free of everything that presumed to control our two lives. (Kindle: *A Legacy of Spies*, loc 2420)
Sometimes a single sentence may present a sequence of situations arranged around two occurrences of *until*:

(94) She blunders across the grass, dodging between picnic rugs *until* she finds the dangerously unsignposted fire exit at the other side of the cloisters, is waved away by a man in shorts, rushes back *until* she finds another opening and bursts out into the unforgiving chill of Martyrs' Lodge. (Kindle: *Almost English*, p. 305)

Neutral-narrative *until*-clauses include examples where *until* is close in meaning to a purely sequential 'and then':

(95) And despite treatments and diet, the disease began to deteriorate his kidneys *until* [= and then], by age 43, he was diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure. (COCA)

More commonly, however, there is a contrastive element in addition to the sequential meaning so that *until* is closer in meaning to 'but then':

(96) And everything worked out perfectly *until* [= but then] Eleanor fired Rose, and Rose decided she wanted her baby back. (Kindle: *The Lake House*, p. 316)

In these examples the *until*-clause is a stylistically smooth alternative to a paratactic main clause.\(^{11}\)

Neutral-narrative *until*-clauses are often non-finite:

(97) Goode handled every special teams snap *until* suffering a season-ending knee injury in December 2015 in a game at Oakland. (NOW)

Like neutral-narrative *before*-clauses (cf. Bache 2018: 45) neutral-narrative *until*-clauses (both finite and non-finite) are often used to convey sequences of events in sports and games:

(98) The Germans actually were controlling play, looking as adventurous as Brazil, *until* Ronaldo struck in the 67th minute. He stole the ball from Dietmar

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\(^{11}\) In the generative tradition the kind of relationship between main clause and linked clause noted here has led to an analysis of narrative linkers as quasi-paratactic (for discussion of this concept, see Meinunger 2006, Haegeman 2009; Frey 2012; de Vries 2012). The most serious objection to this analysis is that it misses the functional aspects of choosing narrative *until* instead of an explicit coordinator (Bache 2016: 281f).
Hamann and fed his attacking partner, Rivaldo. The hard left-footed shot was stopped by Kahn, who was impenetrable for nearly the entire month. (Collins)

One particularly frequent neutral-narrative use of until-clauses is to introduce dialogue in fiction (and in this respect, too, until is like before, cf. Bache 2018: 44f):

(99) Mrs Dodds passed the flowers over to Bridget, who remained holding the sweet peas like a bride until Mrs Dodds said to her, 'Put them in water, you daft girl.' (Kindle: Life after Life, p. 76)

(100) ... To which she says nothing at all, but looks at me, until Major Kaufmann, from her chair in the corner of the room, says helpfully in her excellent English:

'You may sit down now, Brigitte.'

So Brigitte sits, prim and upright like the good German schoolgirl she has evidently decided to be. (Kindle: The Pigeon Tunnel, p. 101)

Neutral-narrative until-clauses are narrative in the sense that they add situations to the main storyline. But, unlike intensive-narrative until-clauses, they are more equally balanced (from the point of view of narrative focus) with the main clause to which they are linked.

6. Conclusion

Narrative until-clauses are very similar to narrative when- and before-clauses in that they add new foregrounded situations to the storyline. The clearest cases are characterized by functional superordination, a potential for formal main clause phenomena, progressive textual cohesion and stylistic intensity. In more neutral cases they are used in presentations of a sequence of events with until marking y as a specific juncture or new turn of the events presented. In offering an alternative expression of such sequences to formal parataxis (e.g. expressed by e.g. 'and then' or 'but then'), they are a productive, stylistically (more or less) marked representational resource. Unlike when- and before-clauses, which are used to arrange x and y relative to each other in terms of simultaneity and/or precedence, until-clauses help more directly to define or restrict x quantitatively by supplying it with a terminal point in both temporal and narrative constructions. The terminal point is secured by until, and
this makes y actionally more variable than in narrative when- and before-clauses, where y is bounded independently of the linker. While x is always construed as durative in sentences with an until-clause, whether temporal or narrative, x is actionally variable in temporal when- and before-clauses and only invariably unbounded in narrative when- and before-clauses. In sentences with such clauses we thus have a fixed pattern of unbounded x followed by bounded y, and this creates a definite sense of progressive cohesion that is absent in sentences with narrative until-clauses. Narrative impact in until-clauses is therefore typically secured by other means (also found, but mainly as reinforcement, in when- and before-clauses): main clause phenomena, communicative incompleteness in X expressed by perfect and or progressive tense forms, expressions of suddenness, 'new story' markers and linguistic weight. Negative polarity in X (as the formal expression of x\textsuperscript{neg}) may take the subsequent until-clause into its scope. But this does not make the until-clause narrative as such. Instead it often triggers a reading of y as the point of initiation of x\textsuperscript{pos} as a new addition to the storyline after x\textsuperscript{neg} and y. This mechanism is different from the progressive cohesion created by negative polarity in sentences with narrative before. Despite these differences, until clearly belongs with when and before in a small group of temporal clausal linkers with a distinct narrative potential and a variety of uses rarely recognized in the literature.

References


