Temporal coherence in discourse is provided through several temporal cohesive ties, such as tense, aspect and discourse connectives. In the relevance theoretic framework and more specifically in the Geneva school of pragmatics, these cohesive ties encode procedural information important for guiding the hearer towards the intended interpretation of the discourse. Jacques Moeschler and his team studied temporal cohesive ties and proposed original theoretical models that have been validated with human and automatic annotation experiments, as well as in language acquisition studies (Zuffrey and Popescu-Belis, this volume). In this paper, I show that Jacques Moeschler’s model for inferring temporal discourse relations and his description of tenses expressing past time in French is cross-linguistic valid and can be modelled for improving the results of statistical machine translation systems.

* The ideas presented in this paper are based on a series of articles published with Bruno Cartoni, Thomas Meyer, Andrei Popescu-Belis, Michele Costagliola and Jacques Moeschler, with whom I collaborated in two research projects. I am very grateful to Jacques Moeschler for his guidance and resourceful discussions since the beginning of my research.