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A longitudinal and genre-contrasted point of view

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 <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.194.04cis>

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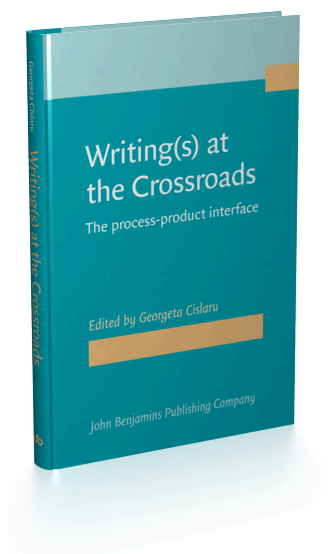
Edited by Georgeta Cislaru

2015. vi, 304 pp.

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The *instrumental* use of verbless sentences in writing and rewriting

A longitudinal and genre-contrasted point of view

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We sought to determine the role of verbless sentences across the writing process. We compared two corpora: a longitudinal corpus of social reports and a transversal corpus of diary entries and letters. An examination of successive draft reports revealed that verbless sentences were present in incipient versions, but subsequently grew into full sentences or even paragraphs. They served as reminders - condensed syntactic and semantic content intended to be expanded into full text. Similarly, verbless sentences contained in the diary entries were swiftly worked up into verbal sentences in letters relating the same events as the diary. We hypothesize the existence of a pragmatic constraint differentiating between self-addressed texts (incipient versions, personal diaries) and other-addressed texts (final reports, letters).

Keywords: verbless sentences; rewriting; social reports; diary; letters

1. Introduction

We conducted a study to determine the role and behavior of verbless sentences (VS) in hybrid corpora that allowed us to undertake a thorough observation of the rewriting process and the text as a finished product. VS are generally studied in languages where verbless copular clauses are the norm, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Hungarian and Russian (see Eid 1991; Hengeveld 1992;¹ Nordlinger & Sadler 2006). In languages like French or English, where standard copular clauses are verbal, the existence of VS such as:

1. According to Hengeveld (1992, 26–27), nonverbal predication can be expressed by means of either a copular construction or a nominal sentence. We did not take copular constructions into account here. Our nonverbal clauses seemed to be closer to nominal sentences, as per Hengeveld's definition.

- (1) a. *Beautiful dress!*
- b. *What for, this book?*
- c. *Hey, guys, on the road!* (Lefeuve 1999)

is subject to major problems of categorization. Linguists tend to treat them as ellipses, or as mangled versions of verbal structures (see Merchant 2004). For the purposes of our research, however, we regarded these syntactic constructions as fully-fledged VS. A VS (see Lefeuve 1999) is a direct speech act (sentence type: declarative, interrogative, imperative) that contains a nonverbal predicate. The nonverbal predicate can take negation and other modalities (e.g. *Not a sound, Not fair*). A VS may characterize (a), localize (b, c), assert the existence of something (d) or express an event (e):

- d. *On the left, a table*
- e. *Yesterday, walk on the riverside*

VS are compact constructions with a high potential from an informative and expressive viewpoint. As stated by Kotjevskaja-Tamm (1993, 266), nominalizations “may be used for at least two opposing purposes – to compress texts and to elaborate them” (see also Jespersen 1924). When considering heterogeneous corpora such as social reports on children at risk, and diary entries and letters, we may find numerous VS in both the draft reports and the diary entries that are specifically developed in the final reports and in letters whose content is derived from the diary entries. What, then, is the role of VS in text construction, through process to product? And how can we explain the parallel observed between social reports, diary entries and letters? We argue that VS play a complex, instrumental role in writing and rewriting, functioning as semantic and cognitive textual cues (see also Schleppegrell 2007).

2. Verbless sentences and discourse genre constraints

As noted by Benveniste (1966) and discussed further by Lefeuve (1999), VS are relatively frequent in written communication. Benveniste (1966) showed that VS are often used in direct speech expressing universal truths, although they can be found in a variety of discourse genres. Thus, verbless sentences are used in literature (Behr 2011; Delorme 2004; Lefeuve 2015) and academic discourse (Nichols 1988), as well as media discourse (Lefeuve 2004, 2007; Grinshpun 2011) for a variety of rhetorical, stylistic and textual purposes.

It was Jespersen (1924, 137–139), followed by Kotjevskaja-Tamm (1993, 266), who first signaled the text compressing uses of nominalizations, which can be used as VS to express an event:

- (2) a. *Mais tout de même, les chômeurs ne sont-ils pas stigmatisés? Grand éclat de rire général: “Mais non: c’est plutôt nous, les travailleurs, qui passons pour des cons!” Sûrement exagéré. Mais pas très rassurant. (Le Nouvel Observateur, 6–12 February 2014 – media discourse)*

But, all the same, the unemployed aren’t they stigmatized? Laughter all round: “No! it’s us, the employed, who look like damned fools!” Surely an exaggeration. But not very comforting.

- b. “[...] *D’ailleurs, les meilleurs s’arrangent pour ne pas trop savoir ce qui s’est passé. La danse finie, Bach de nouveau.*”

Sonnerie du téléphone. Il décrocha l’appareil [...].

(Cohen, *Belle du Seigneur* – literary discourse)

“[...] Moreover, the best ones manage to turn a blind eye. Once the dance over, Bach again.”

Ring of the phone. He picked up the receiver [...].

They are even more frequent in some types of discourse, such as stage directions and all kinds of notes:

- (3) *Texte de L. non encore parvenu* (note in the margin of a script)
L.’s script not come yet

as well as in short forms of discourse, such as text messages:

- (4) *Gâteau pas encore pris*
Cake not picked up yet

Private diaries constitute a discourse genre that favors and easily accommodates verbless sentences, especially sentences describing places:

- (5) *La rivière est déjà un estuaire, ça sent l’algue et la vase. Plaisant paysage d’automne*. (Diary, 21 September 1939)

The river is already an estuary; it smells of mud and seaweed. Nice autumn landscape.

events (existential VS):

- (6) a. *Je me calme, je descends; les rues sont graves. Sur la place Montparnasse, une bagarre*. (Diary, 3 September 1939)

I calm down, I go down; the streets are somber. In Montparnasse Square, a fight.

- b. *Il y a du clair de lune plein la chambre. Soudain un grand cri – je vais à la fenêtre, une femme a crié*. (Diary, 1 September 1939)

The room is full of moonlight. Suddenly a loud cry – I go to the window, a woman had cried out.

or the writer's emotion:

- (7) *Un petit spasme en m'asseyant ici: la fenêtre de Bost, Bost traversant la place (avant notre amour), je le revois si bien.* (Diary, 5 September 1941)

A little convulsion when I sit down here: Bost's window, Bost crossing the square (before our love), I can see him again so clearly.

Fictitious diaries often use VS and, more precisely, nominalizations:

- (8) a. *Réunion* mardi chez le curé D'Hébuterne, pour la conférence mensuelle. (Bernanos, *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, cf. Lefeuve 1999)
Meeting on Tuesday at the vicar D'Hébuterne's place, for the monthly conference.
- b. *Rapporté à Olivier ses affaires. Sitôt de retour de chez Passavant, travail.* Exaltation calme et lucide. (Gide, *Les Faux Monnayeurs*)
Took Olivier's belongings back to him. As soon as back at Passavant's, work. Calm and lucid exaltation.

It is the correlation with the corpus of letters that underlines the specific uses of VS in Simone de Beauvoir's diary.

Social reports do not belong to a discourse genre that allows for extensive VS use. Thus, the occurrence of a VS other than a title or subtitle suggests that the text is still in its draft version. Indeed, addressed to a judge and with an extremely high performative value, social reports have to formulate and develop all the key concepts relating to the situation of the child or its family. From this point of view, in any longitudinal analysis of a corpus of social reports, VS can be assumed to serve as cognitive-semantic writing tools.

3. Corpora

The present study was supported by a collection of data in the form of:

- the draft and final versions of 27 social reports on children at risk, each file containing 2–41 versions of the same text; all of them are considered as texts (see Mahrer & Nicollier Saraillon 2014);
- Simone de Beauvoir's private diary (*Journal de Guerre*, September 1939 to January 1941);
- Simone de Beauvoir's letters to Jean-Paul Sartre (*Lettres à Sartre*, 1930–1939, 1940–1963).

3.1 Social reports as an example of constrained professional writing

Social reports on children at risk are examples of professional writing that are both institutionally and socially constrained. The authors of our corpus were social

workers and youth workers belonging to an association who worked with more than 20 fostered children aged 5–21 years. The social workers had to write regular and final reports describing the situation and progress of each child, and recalling the family history and the reasons for fostering. Each report ended with a conclusion. All the reports had comparable structures, divided into the same sections and with comparable section headings. Indeed, there was even an institutional template, although this was not overtly followed.

47	OU LE RECUEILS RMA adultes n'est pas acquis d'emblée.	OU LE RECUEILS RMA adultes n'est pas acquis d'emblée.	OU LE RECUEILS RMA adultes n'est pas acquis d'emblée.	OU LE RECUEILS RMA adultes n'est pas acquis d'emblée.	
Evolution					
48		II. Evolution	II. Evolution	II. Evolution	1 insertion
49		sur le groupe	sur le groupe :	sur le groupe :	2 insertions
50			Jade est une jeune fille de tout juste 15 ans.	Jade est une jeune fille de tout juste 15 ans.	1 insertion
51		Jade a	Elle a	Elle a	1 insertion 1 substituti
52		intégré le groupe de l'Origami le 18 janvier 2010.	intégré le groupe de l'Origami le 18 janvier 2010.	intégré le groupe de l'Origami le 18 janvier 2010.	1 insertion
53		Nous constatons à la dernière échéance que Jade s'était installée sur le groupe comme une jeune	Nous constatons à la dernière échéance que Jade s'était installée sur le groupe comme une jeune	Nous constatons à la dernière échéance que Jade s'était installée sur le groupe comme une jeune	1 insertion
54		" calme mais pas effacée ".	calme, mais cependant pas effacée.	calme, mais cependant pas effacée.	2 insertions 1 substituti 1 suppressi
55		La prolongation	La prolongation	La prolongation	1 insertion
56		du recueil	du recueil	du recueil	1 insertion 1 substituti

Figure 1. Report template and sections

Our corpus of social reports contained 23 files of drafts recorded by the authors themselves and four files of drafts recorded by Inputlog, a keystroke-logging program that also records realtime data (cf. Leijten & Van Waes 2006; Leijten et al. this volume). The data recorded by the authors were computer processed and periodically saved (ideally, every 10–15 minutes).

Via all these documents, we were able to track the gestation of the social reports from the first short, schematic version to the full-length, final report. Although fragments of text might be either added or subtracted from one version to another, generally speaking, the text increased in volume between Version 1 and Version N. The existence of these successive drafts enabled us to adopt a longitudinal approach (see, among others, Fuchs et al. 1987; Prior 2004) by means of text alignment, using MkAlign² and Allongos³ (Lardilleux et al. 2013), in order to study the way that VS are handled across the writing process. The results of the alignment, showing the various rewriting operations (marked with different colors), can be seen in Figure 1.

2. Developed by Serge Fleury at Université Sorbonne nouvelle Paris 3 (<http://www.tal.univ-paris3.fr/mkAlign/>).

3. This is automatic alignment software developed by Adrien Lardilleux within the Ecritures ANR program (<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/allongos-221592.kjsp?RH=1295620557102>).

The social reports had complex communicative features:

- collective writing: several authors wrote and revised the text. The body of the report was written by social workers, but the conclusion was written by the section head of the child protection unit. Authorship therefore had to be understood as a collective responsibility, implying collective norms of writing and assessment;
- an official addressee in the shape of the judge, who requested the report in the first place. In our corpus of social reports, there were two kinds of texts: regular progress reports, and final reports that summarized the overall situation. Although the latter were written with the judge in mind, they might also be consulted and used by the families during the court hearings;
- an unofficial addressee in the shape of the family, who were given the right to access social reports in the 2002 act reforming French social services. This means that while social workers must describe the child's situation as accurately as possible, with some judges even providing guidelines (cf. *Guide pratique pour la protection de l'enfance*, Huyette & Desloges 2009), they must also protect the child and its family, and avoid hurting them in the report.

Another layer of complexity concerns the data that has to be set out and used for the purposes of assessment and argumentation. Social workers collect field data while visiting the family/child, and during meetings with the parents. They then have to summarize this information, which evidently results in some VS, at least in the incipient versions of the reports.

3.2 The private diary and the letters: Two sides of the same life experience and informational content

Our other corpus provided two different versions of the same life experience: Simone de Beauvoir's private diary (*Journal de Guerre*, September 1939-January 1941) and her letters to Jean-Paul Sartre (*Lettres à Sartre*, 1930–1939, 1940–1963). Between September 1939 and January 1941, de Beauvoir wrote in her private diary almost daily, while at the same time sending letters to Sartre. The two sets of texts are opposed from the point of view of the communicative situation: in the private diary, the writer wrote for herself, whereas the letters were written for someone else. These features seem to have determined the writing process. For instance, in the diary, the grammatical subject is sometimes absent, inasmuch as the identity of the agent of the process is obvious:

- (9) *Arrive une petite script-girl du "Flore" qu'ils emmènent avec eux, elle est hagarde de tristesse et de peur, ils ne pensent qu'à foutre le camp. Raconte qu'il y a eu avant-hier soir un formidable accident de chemin de fer. (Diary, 5 September 1939)*

A little script girl comes from the “Flore” and they take her with them, she is crazed with sadness and fear, they think only of bugging off. Tell how the day before yesterday there was a terrific train accident.

The subject is regularly absent when it corresponds to the writer, as in the sentence below, where there is neither subject nor verb:

- (10) *Levée dès 8h. du matin — à 8h. ½ au fond du “Dôme”, dans la pénombre avec un café et des journaux.* (Diary, 8 November 1939)

Up at 8 a.m. – at 8.30 a.m. in the “Dome”, in the half-light with a coffee and newspapers.

By contrast, in the letters, the subject and verb are always formulated:

- (11) *Je me suis levée à 8 h. bien juste et à 8h. ½ j’étais au fond du “Dôme”* (Letters to Sartre, 8 November 1939)

I woke up at 8 a.m. precisely, and at 8.30 a.m. I was in the “Dome”.

3.3 Methodology and quantitative data

For both corpora, we identified the VS on the basis of the description provided in the Introduction, and classified them according to the criteria set out below (“Corpus data and analysis: typology and textual development of verbless sentences”). We thus obtained three lists of VS, which were indexed according to their position and role in each corpus.

On the basis of data yielded by the social reports, we hypothesized that VS generally serve an instrumental purpose in this particular discourse genre.

There seemed to be no absolute correlation between the number of versions of a social report and the instrumental use of VS, inasmuch as some reports that had undergone only a limited amount of rewriting (Files 3, 4, 8, 9, 20...) still contained instances of the instrumental use of these constructions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation between the number of versions and the instrumental use of verbless sentences (VS) in social reports

Files	No. versions	Reports containing no VS
File 1	2	0
File 2	4	0
File 3	2	
File 4	4	
File 5	3	0
File 6	4	0

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Files	No. versions	Reports containing no VS
File 7	5	0
File 8	4	
File 9	4	
File 10	10	0
File 11	7	
File 12	6	
File 13	6	0
File 14	5	
File 15	24	
File 16	16	
File 17	30	
File 18	12	
File 19	41	
File 20	3	
File 21	5	
File 22	6	
File 23	5	
File I Inputlog	12	
File II Inputlog	14	
File III Inputlog	9	
File IV Inputlog	13	
Total: 27 files	Total no. versions: 256; Mean: 9.5 versions per file	7 files containing 0 VS

Table 2. Total number of verbless sentences correlated with the number of reports

Number of reports	27
Number of reports featuring the instrumental use of VS	20
Total number of VS affected by the rewriting process	126
Mean number per report (out of 20)	6
Cases of reduction	6

We also took verbless subclauses (Lefeuivre 1999, 29) into account. These were quite few and far between in our social report corpus, and were mostly concentrated in the realtime recorded Inputlog files. They mainly took the form of nominalizations used as compressing tools.

4. Corpus data and analysis: Typology and textual development of verbless sentences

This section offers a detailed insight into the different types of verbless sentences we were able to identify in our corpora on the basis of several heterogeneous criteria: referential content, grammatical structure (and grammatical and semantic features of the reformulated unit), and status in the text.

4.1 Referential content

One of the first questions that emerged when we studied the list of VS concerned their denotation: which types of referential content were most frequently denoted by the VS? We were able to identify three categories in the social reports, which also apply to other discourse genres, including diaries:

- a. VS denoting topics to be developed, such as “Ophthalmology appointment” [*Bilan ophtalmo et orthoptiste; port de lunettes de confort* (File II), *les retours des week-ends* (Files 15, 17, II)]
- b. Adjectival VS characterizing the child or a member of its family, such as “Very opposed to the idea of meeting his father” [*Très opposée à l'idée de rencontrer son père* (File 10)]

Here, we can see that there are no subjective verbless sentences, such as:

Très bien élevé, ce prince monténégrin. (Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, cf. Lefevre 1999)

Very well brought up, this Montenegrin prince.

Une belle ville, Toulouse. (Bernanos, *Un Crime*, cf. Lefevre 1999)

A beautiful city, Toulouse.

Fameuse, hein, [...], cette soupe à l'oignon. (Queneau, *Zazie dans le Métro*, cf. Lefevre 1999)

Delicious, ain't it, [...], this onion soup.

Le plus précis des hommes, ce Bernard. (Mauriac, *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, cf. Lefevre 1999)

The most precise of men, this Bernard.

- c. Verbless sentences denoting events, such as “17.06.09: interruption of psychomotor rehabilitation sessions”

[*Depuis le 17. 06. 09: interruption des séances de psychomotricité* (File 20)]

Although some of the VS in the “topics to be developed” category could also represent types of events, they had a specific status in the development of the text that allowed us to distinguish them from the “events” category.

4.2 Grammatical structure of the VS

Quite a few of the VS identified in the social reports and diary entries had a nominal form, and some were straightforward action nominalizations (see examples above). From a textual point of view, in the social reports, we could distinguish between the subtitles, which remained unchanged in most cases, but signaled the expansion of the text in the rewriting process, and the events (roughly speaking),⁴ which were generally affected by the rewriting process and turned into verbal sentences in the majority of cases.

As shown in Table 3, only the subtitles had a saturated syntactic structure and could be represented by NPs. Bare nouns and action nominalizations characterized both categories (i.e. events and subtitles). Nonsaturated patterns corresponded to events that would be reformulated as verbal sentences in subsequent drafts of the text (see “Grammatical structure and semantics of the reformulated unit” below); they therefore constituted “to-be-filled-in” patterns.

Table 3. Syntactic structure and discursive function of verbless sentences in social reports

	Subtitles	Events
Noun phrase	<i>L'environnement familial, La scolarité, La santé</i> The family environment, Schooling, Health	–
Bare noun	<i>Problématique à l'admission, Fratrie</i> Problem at admission, Siblings	<i>RDV pédiatre, Dentiste, Poids</i> [File 15] Appointment with pediatrician, Dentist, Weight
Action nominalization (bare)	<i>Evolution sur le groupe, Prise en charge du quotidien</i> Progress within the group, Day-to-day care	<i>Evocation de vécus difficiles post-placement</i> [File 16], <i>Appel téléphonique, Départ et retour du dimanche</i> [Files 15, 17] Evoking difficult experiences post-fostering, Phonecall, Departure and return on Sundays

4.3 Grammatical structure and semantics of the reformulated unit

Most of the VS in the social reports were reformulated and expanded into verbal clauses. Similarly, some of the VS in de Beauvoir’s private diary correlated with verbal clauses in her letters to Sartre. These reformulations and expansions took a

4. Bare nouns and action nominalizations do not denote events in the same way. Bare nouns, featured in Table 3, only evoke events.

variety of forms, and seemed to depend on the nature of the VS as well as on the position it occupied in the text's formal and semantic structure.

Plain verbal paraphrase

In the excerpt below, a copula completes the adjectival predicate in the first sentence, and action nominalizations are reformulated as verbs in the following sentences:

(12)

Draft 2

Bonne évolution de Damien.

Verbalisation de plus en plus importante de ses affects, peut être dans l'interrogation, s'intéresse de plus en plus à son environnement.

Good progress by Damien. Increasing verbalization of his feelings, may be in a questioning phase, taking more and more of an interest in his environment.

Final version

L'évolution de Damien est bonne. Il verbalise de plus en plus importante ses affects. Il peut être dans l'interrogation et s'intéresse de plus en plus à son environnement. [File 20; 3 versions]

Damien is making good progress. He is increasingly verbalizing his feelings. He may well have entered a questioning phase, and is taking more and more of an interest in his environment.

The same progression can be seen in the transition from diary to letters, with nominalizations being reformulated as verbal sentences:

(13)

Diary

On va au "Cintra": discussion sur le pacifism. (S. de Beauvoir, *Diary*, Friday 19 November 1939)

We go to the "Cintra": discussion on pacifism.

Letter

Nous avons été au "Cintra" de la rue du fb Montmartre et nous avons eu une grande discussion sur le pacifisme. (S. de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*, Friday 19 November 1939)

We went to the "Cintra" in Faubourg Montmartre Street and had a great discussion on pacifism.

Text unfolding

The subtitles in the social reports were formulated as VS, as mentioned above. They were sometimes affected by the rewriting operations, but their predicative structure never changed. Subtitles were often already present in the very first draft, as elements of the basic outline, leaving empty fields to be completed as and when the care process and writing process advanced. In some cases, this expansion resulted in the production of several paragraphs filling an entire subsection of the report (see Figure 2).

Evolution sur le groupe	Evolution sur le groupe
	Annie est arrivée sur le groupe de l'Hortensia depuis le mois de juin 2008. Elle semble aujourd'hui moins souffrir de l'éloignement du domicile et commence à réfléchir sur les raisons du placement. <u>Depuis 40 à 41 ans</u> , plus autant vindicative ou, tout au moins, elle ne semble plus dans une perspective immédiate de retour. Lors de la dernière audience, elle a bien entendu les positions communes de Madame LELEU, Monsieur PAUTY et notre service de continuer le placement pour la protéger. Cela a permis de dépasser certains enjeux de loyauté pour s'autoriser à mieux s'installer sur le groupe.
	Jusqu'aux vacances de la Toussaint 2009, nous avons vu Annie évoluer favorablement. En tant que jeune fille la plus âgée sur le groupe, elle s'est placée en leader positif, accessible et disponible. Cependant, Annie est une jeune fille qui cherche à être en bonne relation avec tout le monde et a toujours autant de difficultés à se défendre des autres ou à préserver ses espaces. Par exemple, lorsque les autres jeunes ont remis en cause cette place de grande, Annie n'a pas accepté et a préféré quitter le groupe pour se réfugier dans le parc. Annie reste fragile dans ses relations. Elle peine à s'affirmer face à des personnalités fortes et peut encore se laisser influencer. Par exemple, elle a été revue pour le vol de chaussures avec des autres jeunes du groupe.
	Le comportement d'Annie s'est modifié à partir du déménagement de Madame LELEU à MONTROUGE. Nous avons observé une régression dans ses positions auprès des adultes et des autres jeunes. A travers un discours conforme sur l'intérêt du déménagement, Annie a ressenti le besoin d'être plus souvent en lien téléphonique avec sa mère, allant jusqu'à utiliser excessivement le téléphone du groupe sans autorisation.
	De plus, pendant cette période, Madame LELEU ne disposait pas de véhicule et était dépendante des prêts possibles par sa famille. En conséquence, elle a estimé qu'Annie était suffisamment grande pour rentrer seule le week-end en bus. Etant donné la fréquence des bus, Annie a dû rentrer seule certains vendredis soir. Ces retours tardifs et longs l'ont particulièrement insécurisée.
	Pour ces raisons, nous nous sommes mobilisés pour organiser les transports et Madame LELEU a pu, courant janvier, acquérir un véhicule. Pendant cette même période, Annie a recommencé à affaiblir sur ce qu'elle vivait le week-end. Nous retrouvons la jeune fille du début du placement, relayant des événements du week-end qui ne correspondaient pas au discours de la mère. De plus, elle relayait des propos très sexualisés sur son intimité qui ont mis à mal les autres jeunes du groupe.

Figure 2. Example of text expansion after a subtitle (*Evolution sur le groupe*)

Narrative verbal paraphrase

Adverbial phrases of time frequently accompanied the nominalizations. This facilitated the reconstruction of the narrative thread, in both the social reports and the diary entries versus letters:

(14)

Draft 2

Depuis le 17. 06. 09: interruption des séances de psychomotricité.

17.06.09: interruption of psychomotor rehabilitation sessions.

(15)

Diary

Travail au “Dôme” après déjeuner.
(S. de Beauvoir, *Diary*, 19 November 1939)

Work at the “Dome” after lunch.

Draft 3

Depuis le 17 juin 2009, les séances de psychomotricité ont été interrompues.
[File 20; 3 versions]

Since 17.06.09, there have been no further psychomotor rehabilitation sessions.

Letter

Je me suis donc mise au travail de nouveau à 1h. de l'après-midi. (S. de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*, 19 November 1939)

I therefore resumed my work at 1 p.m.

Verbal paraphrase with inserted modalization

Whereas the social reports elided modalization and other subjectification markers throughout the rewriting process, the objectivation constraint did not apply to

the letters. For instance, a simple nonverbal statement in the diary might have the same modal and indexical adjunctions as its verbal paraphrase. A point of view, in the form of a personal assessment, might thus be added to a factual statement.

(16)

Diary

Matinée libre. (S. de Beauvoir, *Diary*,
Friday 20 October 1939)

Free morning.

Letter

*Heureusement j'ai un petit temps ce
matin.* (S. de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*,
Friday
20 October 1939)

Fortunately I have a little time this
morning.

Guidelines for drafting social reports tend to suggest avoiding modalization. However, while some rewriting operations are aimed at deleting modalizations, others may also insert them (see Brunner and Pordeus-Ribeiro, this volume). In rare cases, alongside verbal paraphrases and other additions, modalization may be added to VS, as in the following:

(17)

Draft 14

*Appel téléphonique, départ et retour du
dimanche.*

Phone call, departure and return on
Sunday.

Draft 15

*Les départs en famille et les retours sur
le groupe sont généralement chaleureux.
[...] [File 15]*

The departures to his family's place
and his returns to the group are usually
warm.

Verbal paraphrase with inserted adverbial

The following example resembles the previous one in several respects, including the addition of modalization and indexicality.⁵ Moreover, an adverbial specifies the date. This adverbial supports the argumentation that follows the verbal paraphrase of the verbless sentences: when we compare the dates, we can understand why de Beauvoir found that the letters from Sartre took too long to arrive.

5. "As a genre, letters have specific forms of deixis, that is ways of referring to the writer and the intended reader and to space and time. [...] Two words are invoked: the here and now of the writer and the here and now of the reader. Shared knowledge is referred to, often explicitly." (Barton & Hall 2000, 6)

(18)

Diary

Lettre de Sartre – 2 lettres de Bost – je leur réponds. (S. de Beauvoir, *Diary*, Monday 2 October 1939)

Letter from Sartre – 2 letters from Bost
– I answer them.

Letter

J'ai reçu une petite lettre de vous, du 24; comme elles sont longues à arriver, celles de Bost mettent trois jours de moins. (S. de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*, Monday 2 October)

I have received a little missive from you, dated the 24; they take so long to arrive, those from Bost take three days less.

The same strategy can be found in the social reports, although the outcome of the rewriting is more complex, with many formal modifications:

(19)

Draft 3

Très opposée à l'idée de rencontrer son père.

Very opposed to the idea of meeting her father.

Draft 4

Depuis les vacances de Toussaint 2007 où Marine avait rencontré son père au ABCD, il n'y a plus eu de contact direct. [File 10; 10 versions]

Since the autumn half-term holiday in 2007, when Marine met her father at the ABCD, there has been no direct contact.

Adverbials are also commonly added when the VS calls for the text to be expanded, and the resulting rewriting produces new paragraphs.

Development through verbal clauses

Verbal clauses can provide more detailed information about a given situation. For instance, in the letters, the writer can explain what has been happening or describe her feelings- in this case her disappointment -in greater detail:

(20)

Diary

Au concert, plus de place; déception; on va au "Cintra". (S. de Beauvoir, *Diary*, 19 November 1939)

Letter

On a filé en taxi salle du Conservatoire, mais il ne restait plus une place; on a été déçus, c'était un peu raide d'avoir Delarue tout cru sur les bras; nous avons été au "Cintra" de la rue du fb Montparnasse. (S. de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*, 19 November 1939)

At the concert, no seats left;
disappointment; we go to the “Cintra”.

We drove by taxi to the Conservatoire,
but there weren't any seats left; we were
frustrated, it was a bit much being stuck
with Delarue in full throttle; we went
to the “Cintra”, in the Rue du Faubourg
Montparnasse.

In the social reports, the detailed versions could contain far more information than was suggested by the VS. For instance, phone calls and weekend departures and returns were routine events in the association's fostering practice. They were also subject to assessment, inasmuch as the relationship with the family was regularly scrutinized in order to interpret the young person's situation more fully or discuss the pursuance of the social measure.

(21)

Draft 14

Appel téléphonique, départ et retour du dimanche.

Phone call, departure and return on Sunday.

Drafts 15–16

Par ailleurs, les appels téléphoniques sont réguliers les mercredis. [Nous avons le sentiment que le placement est bien vécu.] Toutefois, Anthony exprime peu de choses de son quotidien au domicile tant sur ce qu'il y fait, ce qu'il y vit. Il parle surtout de ces moments privilégiés avec son père lors de dépannage. [File 17]

In addition, there are regular phone calls on Wednesdays. [It looks to us as though the fostering is going down well] However, Anthony says little about his everyday life at home, be it about his activities or about his experiences. He mainly talks about the special moments he spends with his father while he is doing his breakdown repair work.

(Dis)ambiguating paraphrase

In both corpora, some – rare – cases of reformulation seem to contradict the semantic content of the verbless sentences. In the excerpt below, *post fostering* and *before fostering* are clearly opposed. Does this mean that the author formulated contradictory statements about the situation? This is not an easy question to answer, and we propose an alternative hypothesis: the condensed formula in Draft 6 is ambiguous, in that either the child could only evoke his/her difficult background since coming

into contact with the carers (i.e. post-fostering), or else he/she found being fostered a difficult experience. This allows us to view the reformulation as a means of clarifying the situation, with the adverb *recently* helping to situate the events chronologically.

(22)

Draft 6

Evocation de vécus difficiles post placement.

Evocation of difficult personal experiences post fostering.

Draft 7

Depuis peu de temps Thierry peut évoquer de vécus difficiles avec ses frères et soeurs avant le placement. [file 16]

Recently, Thierry has become able to talk about the difficult personal experiences he had before being fostering with his brothers and sisters.

In the same way, the letters to Sartre seem more precise than de Beauvoir's diary:

(23)

Diary

Lever vers 8h. ½. (S. de Beauvoir, Diary, 22 December 1939)

Up at around 8.30 a.m.

Letter

On s'est levées à 8h. (S. de Beauvoir, Letters to Sartre, 22 December 1939)

We rose at 8 a.m.

In the adverbial clause, we can see that the vague and semantically underdetermined preposition *vers* (~about) has been replaced by the preposition *à* (~at), which has a precise spatial or temporal value.

The types mentioned below were only observed in the social reports, owing to the specific nature of this written genre and the lengthy writing process.

Verbal paraphrase with evaluation and focus modification

The textual change signaled below in example (24) is probably due to the report's very long gestation period. All the cases involved long-term social measures, and it could take several weeks, if not months, to complete each report. Going by the dates, Draft 10 was written prior to or simultaneously with the room change. The verbless statement is factual, possibly anticipatory, whereas the statement in Draft 31 is clearly posterior and assesses the situation arising from the room change. This is therefore very different from the case of de Beauvoir's diary and her letters to Sartre, which were written on the same day.

(24)

Draft 10 (14 January)

Changement de chambre à compter du début janvier.

Draft 31 (17 March)

Annie occupe depuis le début de l'année une chambre individuelle qu'elle a plutôt bien investi. [File 19]

Room change early January.

Since the New Year, Annie has been in a single room that she has very much made her own.

Objectivating paraphrase

In the example cited below, the rewriting operations deeply affect the text. VS are not only reformulated as regular verbal clauses, but some semantic information is profoundly modified. Thus, the references to the author's/team's impressions ("doubts", "picture") are deleted, and elements forming part of the social assessment are replaced by descriptive statements. This strategy is in line with guidelines for drafting social reports (cf. Huyette & Desloges 2009).

(25)

Version 3

Interrogation de l'équipe sur ses capacités d'élaboration et de compréhension sur les relations avec ses pairs. Constat d'une maturité affective faible et besoins éducatifs important. Positions éducatives fortes, vigilance sur le quotidien et constat d'une jeune pouvant se satisfaire de cet encadrement.

Team's doubts about her ability to develop and understand her relationships with her peers. Picture of weak affective maturity and major educational needs. Strong educational stance, careful monitoring of her everyday life and picture of a youngster who can get by with this type of supervision.

Version 15

Annie est une jeune qui cherche à être en bonne relation avec tout le monde et à toujours des difficultés à se défendre des autres ou à préserver ces espaces. Elle reste assez fragile face à des personnalités fortes et peut encore se laisser influencer.
[File 19]

Annie is a youngster who always wants to be on good terms with everybody and always has difficulty defending herself and preserving her private space. She remains vulnerable when she comes into contact with strong personalities and may still be easily influenced.

4.4 Status in the text

This section focuses on the longitudinal process of writing social reports, inasmuch as it offers a more direct access to text configuration strategies. It is not always easy to follow the progress of verbless constructions through the various draft versions, and text alignment is of little use if no direct track is available. We can nonetheless identify two kinds of writing situations: (i) the use of VS as key concepts, which can be tracked across the drafts using semantic analysis and keyword searching; and (ii) the use of VS and nonfinite sentences or clauses as "to fill in" and "to do" clues, which have more to do with social work practice than with the actual writing process.

4.4.1 *Verbless sentences as key concepts*

In File 15 (24 versions), for instance, two nonverbal constructions share comparable semantic and topical information, and are deleted at different stages in the writing process, while the content is fully developed in an intermediate draft, in a different section of the text:

Table 4. Example (26)

Drafts 1–2	Draft 7	Draft 8	Draft 9	Draft 20
	(<i>Gestion de l'agressivité, gestion d'un conflit</i>) [Line 32] (Aggressiveness management, conflict management)	<i>Par exemple, à la suite d'une discussion autour de l'inscription en club pendant les vacances, le jeune est rentré dans une colère avec des propos assez agressifs considérant que nous voulions l'éloigner du groupe.</i> [Line 35] <i>Nous observons également qu'Anthony est un jeune qui se contient énormément autant dans ses relations avec ses pairs qu'avec les adultes.</i> <i>Il évite autant que possible les conflits ou il y a risque de débordements.</i>		Line 32 (see draft 7) deleted
<i>La colère contenue, agressivité sur plus jeune</i> [Line 142] <i>Anger held back, aggressiveness toward the younger ones</i>		<i>Néanmoins, il apparait par moment des explosions de colère</i> <i>par essentiellement des propos orduriers et quelques fois des gestes agressifs à l'égard des plus jeunes.</i> [Lines 44–53] <i>For example, after a discussion about enrolling in a holiday club, the youngster became very angry and came out with some rather aggressive words, accusing us of wanting to distance him from the group.</i> [Line 35] <i>We have also noticed that Anthony is a youngster who controls his emotions a lot, in his relations with his friends as well as with adults. He avoids conflicts where there is a risk of things getting out of hand as much as possible. Nevertheless, he sometimes has fits of rage, using foul language and sometimes making aggressive gestures toward the younger children</i> [Lines 44–53]	Line 142 (see drafts 1–2) deleted	

The final version of the social report preserves the text produced in Draft 8 and featured in the Table 4.

Comparable functioning is found in some of the other files. For instance, the fact that a child is disturbed by frequent moves and has a weak personality is conveyed in verbless sentences in File 19 (41 versions).

4.4.2 *Verbless sentences serving as “to fill in” and “to do” clues*

In the corpus of social reports, a sizeable proportion of VS (27.5%) take the form of section subtitles or lexical elements related to section subtitles that indicate the discourse thread and the sections to be fleshed out. VS function as topic markers. The example of text expansion commented on above illustrates this process.

Along with VS, nonfinite clauses are also worth mentioning. A few of the nonfinite clauses were unrelated to the writing process. For instance, a series of nonfinite segments appeared in Draft 1 of File 20 (3 versions) only to disappear immediately afterwards, leaving no obvious semantic or topical trace in that section:

- (27) *Maintenir les RDZ réguliers avec l'AF de Damien. Maintenir l'organisation actuelle des DVH. Soutenir la scolarité de Damien, et l'aider à adapter ses réactions parfois violentes avec les autres enfants. Accompagner Damien dans ses passages entre sa famille et sa famille d'accueil. Proposer un espace repéré par Damien à Mme VAILLANT.* [File 20, Draft 1, Line 172]

Keep [having] regular meetings with Damien's foster carer. Keep to the current organization of the visiting and staying contact. Support Damien's schooling, help him to modify his sometimes violent reactions to other children. Accompany Damien in the transitions from his family to his foster family. Propose a place spotted by Damien to Mme VAILLANT.

Even so, there is an obvious link with the contents of the conclusion, which is already clear to see in Draft 1:

- (28) [Conclusion]

Le maintien de l'accompagnement de Damien et des soins entamés dans un cadre thérapeutique et éducatif le concernant nous paraît toujours adapté. La question de l'accompagnement scolaire de Damien reste centrale, car cette année va être décisive en terme d'orientation scolaire. Concernant les droits de visite, l'organisation actuelle paraît adaptée à Damien et en adéquation avec les capacités de Madame VAILLANT. [File 20, Draft 1, Lines 219–221]

We believe that maintaining Damien's educational and medical care, initiated within a therapeutic and educational framework conceived specifically for him is a suitable solution for the situation. The question of schooling support for Damien remains central, inasmuch as this is a decisive year for his future educational choices. As for visiting rights, the current system seems to suit both Damien's current state and Madame VAILLANT's capabilities.

Our data suggest that nonfinite clauses are future- and action-oriented, whereas nominalizations tend to refer to past or present facts or judgments.

5. Interpretation

5.1 Role of the verbless sentences in text configuration

VS are, to all intents and purposes, textual elements. Talking about VS in finished texts, Behr (2011, 243) specifies that some of them are discursively nonautonomous, inasmuch as they are semantically – and probably also syntactically – entrenched in the preceding and following phrasal constructions, serving as a kind of intratextual link.

In several types of texts, we find that VS are used to scaffold the discourse (see Lefeuve 2004, 2007). In media discourse, for instance, VS help to organize the text, as with *une certitude* in the following excerpt:

- (29) *Une certitude, le chômage va s'aggraver: il pourrait atteindre 10,5 % fin 2012 selon l'OCDE. (Le Nouvel Observateur, 19–25 January 2012)*

An absolute certainty, unemployment will get worse: it could reach 10.5% by the end of 2012, according to the OECD.

This can also happen in discourse genres where the text is mainly composed of verbal sentences, as in de Beauvoir's letters:

- (30) a. *Un truc amusant: j'ai lu au vendredi 10 Novembre un passage sur vous qui m'a surpris par un certain ton légèrement pompeux, de pathétique contenu, de simplicité tendue [...]. (S. de Beauvoir, Letters to Sartre, 12 December 1939)*

A funny thing: I read a passage about you on Friday 10 November which surprised me by its slightly pompous tone of contained pathos and strained simplicity.

- b. *Juste un petit mot avant de partir pour Quimper. J'ai eu une journée bien occupée [...]. (S. de Beauvoir, Letters to Sartre, 19 September 1939)*

Just a word before departing for Quimper. I have had a rather busy day [...].

Conversely, in the diary entries and draft social reports, VS are regularly used to relate events. Verbal sentences then replace these VS in the letters and final reports.

The fate of VS in the social reports is mainly tied up with chronological anticipation in the narrative plot. As the “life-giving” (Jespersen 1924, 139) elements of verbs, such as time, mood and person, are absent, the reconstruction of the chronology is free from all but contextual constraints (see Plane et al. 2010;

Cislaru 2014). Sometimes, as in the example evoking the room change (24), VS may anticipate or accompany social acts, thus enhancing the text's performativity. Linguistic changes may reflect changes in the nature of the social intervention, or in the criteria used to assess the situation. It is worth recalling that social reports help judges to reach decisions about children's situations and potential social worker involvement. Therefore, only relevant information should be kept in the final version, which is why some VS are deleted:

- (31) *Un week-end par mois à la Clairefontaine. (... L'aider à comprendre l'histoire de sa mère...)* [File 19]

One weekend per month at Clairefontaine (... Help her understand her mother's story...)

In the end, the mother's story was deemed to be irrelevant to the assessment. Other verbless and verbal constructions, concerning fantasizing verging on mythomania, were also deleted during the writing process. The deleted content might have seemed too subjective to the judge, and none of the information contained in the VS was included in the final report.

5.2 Writing for oneself versus writing for others

Adopting a more general approach, we can say that syntactic choices are contingent upon the communication situation, and that there are two very different communicative attitudes: writing for oneself (e.g. diary entries, draft reports) and writing for others (e.g. letters and final reports). For instance, when de Beauvoir was writing for herself, she could just jot down pieces of information without any further explanation, because she knew what she meant and was the regular reader of the diary. When she was writing to someone else, such as Sartre, she had to deploy those pieces of information and introduce details – possibly embellished with a few rhetorical flourishes – if she wanted her letters to be understood.

Similarly, draft social reports are for internal use only, and their authors are the texts' sole addressees. By contrast, final reports are addressed to judges, families, and the whole social service. They therefore need to conform to discourse norms and constraints, and be clear, relevant, and performative (see Bach 1992). Furthermore, when we compared the drafts recorded by the authors and the drafts recorded by Inputlog, we noticed slight differences in the way that the VS were employed. VS were less frequent in the Inputlog corpus, and in three out of four Inputlog files, they consisted exclusively of sequences (subclauses) within longer clauses containing verbs. The paradox of the observer, and the implicit presence of the linguist may account for the specific status of the Inputlog subcorpus, which was halfway between writing for oneself and writing for others. These data are

not entirely reliable because of the discrepancy in the volume of the two draft subcorpora. Nevertheless, this difference would be worthwhile exploring in future research.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, VS are useful tools for studying texts and the process of writing them. VS are ambivalent, in that they may either compress or elaborate a text. They may serve as a basis for either objectivation or subjectification. In our two corpora, the effect of the rewriting operations mainly took the form of linguistic and semantic deployment. The way that VS are handled is conditioned by

- Communicative needs (writing for oneself vs. writing for others);
- The conditions and chronology of the writing process (availability and relevance of facts and other information);
- Genre constraints and rhetoric (for diaries).

Last but not least, the study of VS and their paraphrasing in two types of textual configurations offers new insights into the status of these constructions, and highlights the numerous hypotheses concerning the syntactic and semantic operations involved in VS, such as ellipsis, addition and predicativity.

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