

THE PRESENT PERFECT IN ENGLISH:  
FROM SEMANTIC, EVOLUTIONARY, AND CONTRASTIVE  
PERSPECTIVES

by

Fu Jian Liang

傅 建良

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Graduate School of Language, Communication, and Culture

Kwansei Gakuin University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

April 2010

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

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From Semantic, Evolutionary, and Contrastive Perspectives

By  
Fu Jian Liang

Members of Evaluation Committee

Major Advisor:

*Takaaki Kenzaka*

Associate Advisor:

*Katsunasa Yagi*

Associate Advisor:

*Hiromi Taka*

Associate Advisor:

*Aidri Yamamoto*

## Acknowledgments

I always keenly feel that I am extremely lucky because so many people have kindly extended their warm hands to me while preparing this dissertation. At this very moment my deepest gratitude goes to my respected advisor, professor Takaaki Kanzaki, for his kind and profound instructions that have led me out of the darkness of my academic ignorance. I cannot imagine completing this dissertation without his guidance. Then my sincere thanks go to other professors at the Graduate School of Language, Communication, and Culture, Kwansai Gakuin University, especially professor Katsumasa Yagi, professor Hisao Asada, professor Hiromi Otaka and professor Shuhei Kadota, for their valuable advice when I was at a loss as to what to do. Of course, my thanks also go to my dear family, including my parents, my wife, my daughter, my sisters and brothers, my nephew, and my friends both in China and Japan: they are always my strongest mental support. Lastly, but not least, my thanks go to my reliable proofreaders for their hard and careful work.

Finally, I will send a special message to myself in praise of my working so hard these last few years that my hair is rapidly turning gray, and to encourage myself to grow into a researcher in the near future.

## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research is to examine holistically the present perfect in English from semantic, evolutionary and contrastive perspectives. Grounded on the literature of grammaticalization of the present perfect in other European languages than English, and of universal grammaticalization of various languages in the world, grammaticalization of the English present perfect has been illustrated by a suggested four-stage principle in this research.

Stage One is characterized by “present > past” (the present overrides the past) semantically, covering a historic period before the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Old English and early Middle English. In this stage, “have” is a full verb and the semantic emphasis is on the present. In Stage Two it is hypothesized that the semantic focus shifts from the present to the past, lasting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the current syntactic form of the present perfect became established, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when “a strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite became established. In this stage, reanalysis motivates the

modification from the construction of “have + NP + past participle” to the construction of “have + past participle + NP” As a result, the new word order “have + past participle + NP” was generalized and settled down in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and later became the syntactic form of the present perfect in present-day English. “A strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite became established as late as the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Görlach, 1991, p.111) by analogy. In Stage Three, beginning from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has been proved that the present perfect is once again semantically characterized by “present>past,” though “have” is no longer a full verb as it used to be in OE. Stage Four is also characterized by “present < past” semantically, differing from Stage One in the way that “have” in Stage Four is a particle instead of a full verb. It is predicted in this research that present-day English is moving from Stage Three towards Stage Four.

It has been proved that the present perfect in present-day English is gradually developing from the present-oriented Stage Three to the past-oriented Stage Four through diverse routes. In addition to a route that the present perfect is usually replaced by the preterite in American English (Quirk et al., 1985; Swan, 2005; Carter & McCarthy, 2006), there are at least three other routes.

It has also been clarified that “have” in English expresses the intentional possession being equivalent to the existence of something at someone’s (the subject’s) place. A cline, “Stage 1 have (a full verb) > Stage 2 “have + NP + past participle” (in Old English and early Middle English) > Stage 3 “have + past participle (+ NP)” (a present perfect particle),” has been discussed. Using the evolutionary development of “have” (in Chapter Two) as a

model, Chapter Three has asserted that “le” in Chinese and “te-iru” in Japanese have followed the same evolutionary path as English. It is suggested that these two particles were originally full verbs expressing “existence” in their respective languages.

The continuative perfect (CP) has been examined from a contrastive perspective in Chapter Seven. The continuative perfect use can be classified into three groups according to its aspectual meaning. Temporal construction and adverbials of definite past (ADP) play an effective role in distinguishing these uses. The aspectual meaning of verbs and three continuative perfect uses can be summed up as follows. CP<sub>1</sub> represents a homogeneous state which begins at the point B1 and lasts up the point NOW. In the CP<sub>1</sub> use TAD refers to the time duration from B1 to B2=NOW. No changes can be found during this period as every point of the duration is homogeneous. CP<sub>2</sub> represents a multi-phased situation with some or many repeatedly occurring sub-events. The whole situation starts at B1 and extends up to NOW. In the CP<sub>2</sub> use the duration of TAD is not homogenous as in the CP<sub>1</sub> use. In Chinese “iterativity” must be employed to get rid of the aspectual ambiguity. The situation with iterativity is a typical use of CP<sub>2</sub> while the situation without it is a typical use of resultative perfect. CP<sub>3</sub>, a variant of CP<sub>2</sub>, represents the same aspectual meaning as CP<sub>2</sub> with a B1=B2 verb or verb construction and a plural subject or object. The aspectual meaning of a clause is based on the condition that the whole situation can be divided into certain number of sub-events with the help from the subject or the object. In the CP<sub>3</sub> use there is no aspectual constraint on verbs in Chinese, yet there is one on verbs in English and Japanese.

In English stative is preferred instead of B1=B2 verbs, whereas in Japanese “recovery” decides whether the sentence is grammatical or not. TAD in English is so logical that it can only refer to the time distance from B1 to NOW without any ambiguity.

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## Introduction

The English present perfect is still attracting long-lasting academic attention among linguists and scholars though numerous studies have been carried out so far. One of the reasons for it is that there is no perfect equivalent to it in other languages. Goto & Oda (1977, p. 89) provide us with several quite illustrative examples indicating the difficulty of the English present perfect aspect for the Japanese EFL learners to master.

- (1) He has become a good student. (ibid.)
- (2) Yoi seito ni nari-mashita. (ibid.)
- (3) He became a good student. (ibid.)

Example (1) above, a common English present perfect clause, is usually translated into Japanese as (2) above in which the past inflectional form “mashita” is used. Then if we translate (2) back into English, a possible translation might be example (3) above in which the past form of “became” is employed. As example (3) can only mean that “he was a good student,” that is to say, the back translation (3) turns out to be exactly the opposite of its original meaning “he was not a good student” in (1).

Secondly, the present perfect aspect, one of the most complicated problems regarding tense and aspect in English, can be related to three tense categories, viz. the past, the present and

the future, as illustrated in (4) below.

(4) Sharon has lived here since she was born.

(Declerck, 2006, p. 225)

Example (4) above implies that Sharon began living here in the past (when she was born), and is still living here at the moment of utterance, and will continue living here in the future, as the verb, i.e. “live,” is aspectually atelic and non-bounded.

Thirdly, there are still some issues that have not been fully verified, especially those regarding the changes of the present perfect. The complexity of the present perfect in English, relatively rare in other languages<sup>1</sup>, has attracted interests of many scholars; therefore a large number of studies have been carried out so far. However, some issues still have not been fully solved. One of the puzzles that have been receiving academic attention is the combination of the present perfect and adverbials of definite past, as shown in (5) below, especially in spoken British English. Such examples are not merely “performance error,” or “afterthought.”

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<sup>1</sup> The semantics of (4) covering the past, the present and the future is usually conveyed, for example, by a simple present verb form in German French, and Russian (Comrie, 1976, p. 60). Even in present-day English “‘present’ is defined in an inclusive rather than in an exclusive way” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 175), that is to say, “something is defined as ‘present’ if it has existence at the present moment, allowing for the possibility that its existence may also stretch into the past and into the future” (ibid.). Quirk et al. further illustrate this threefold characteristic by example of “*Paris stands on the River Seine*” (ibid.) suggesting that the sentence “may be correctly said to describe a ‘present’ state of affairs, even though this state of affairs has also obtained for numerous centuries in the past, and may well exist for an indefinite period in the future”(ibid.).

(5) I think I've been home a month ago.

(Wordbanks, U.K., spoken)

The increase in the number of the present perfect co-occurring with adverbials of the definite past is only one overt sign of the changes in the present perfect. It reflects that the present perfect in present-day English is developing semantically from a present-centered stage to a past-centered stage, illustrated, for example, by (a) the advent of the combination of the present perfect with adverbials of definite past; and (b) the extended interpretation of current relevance and so forth. Another unsolved issue is the present perfect without an auxiliary. In this research it is hypothesized that the present perfect without an auxiliary is closely relevant to the change of the present perfect towards the preterite semantically.

In addition to Introduction and Conclusion, the main body of research includes the following seven chapters. The main points in each chapter will be figured out briefly as follows. Chapter One is a critical introduction to the relevant literature. Chapter Two and Three deal with the present perfects in English, Chinese and Japanese from an evolutionary perspective. Chapter Three, Four and Five are three tendencies suggesting that the present perfect in present-day English is semantically developing from a present-centered stage to a past-centered stage. In addition to these changes occurring to the "finished" use of the present perfect, the "unfinished" (continuative) perfect use will be analyzed in Chapter Seven with a contrastive perspective.

In Chapter One, the basic and representative previous studies

regarding the present perfect in present-day English and the relevant subjects will be critically introduced and analyzed, making a foundation for further discussions in the following chapters. Section One will be a ground introduction to the tense and aspect in present-day English. From Section Two to Section Five the focus will be shifted to the present perfect covering its semantics, definiteness and indefiniteness, a combination with adverbials, current relevance and so forth. Section Six will present some theories of the present perfect while Section Seven will introduce the interaction between situation type and viewpoint. Section Eight will be a general summary of all the uses of the present perfect mentioned by various scholars. We will point out some issues regarding the present perfect in English, including the combination with the adverbials of definite past as shown in (6) below and the extended interpretation of the current relevance as shown in (7) below.

(6) \*Chris has left York some ten years ago.

(Klein, 1992, p. 525)

(7) Einstein has visited Princeton.

(Chomsky, 1971, p. 212)

In Chapter Two, a four-stage principle will be advocated to illustrate the brief historical amount of English present perfect from an evolutionary perspective. In Stage One the semantic focus lies on the present; in Stage Two the semantic focus lies on the past; in Stage Three the semantic focus lies on the present



again with “have” being an aspectual particle; in Stage Four the semantic focus lies on the past. It is hypothesized that the present-day English is between Stage Three and Stage Four, experiencing a semantic shift from the present to the past. It is also hypothesized that “have” in English expresses the intentional possession being equivalent to the existence of something at someone’s (the subject’s) place. A cline, “Stage 1 have (a full verb) > Stage 2 “have + NP + past participle” (in Old English and early Middle English) > Stage 3 “have + past participle (+ NP)” (a present perfect particle) > Stage 4 “ ‘ve + past participle (+ NP) > Stage 5 “Φ+ past participle + NP,” will be discussed.

Using the evolutionary development of “have” (in Chapter Two) as a model, Chapter Three endeavors to prove that “le” in Chinese and “te-iru” in Japanese have followed the same evolutionary path as English. It is suggested that these two particles were originally full verbs expressing “existence” in their respective languages.

Most linguists agree that the present perfect is generally used to report a “past event with current relevance” (see, for example, Leech, 1994; Quirk et al., 1985). However, linguists differ with one another regarding the definition of “current relevance.” Some see the present perfect as characterized by narrowed current relevance, while others see it as characterized by extended current relevance. Under such circumstances, Chapter Four aims to carry out a holistic research on the extended interpretation of current relevance in the present perfect, especially those present perfect clauses with deceased individuals as their syntactic subjects. In this research it is hypothesized that the extended current

relevance reading can be obtained from

- (a) the present relevance from any participant involved in the event in question;
- (b) situational current relevance;
- (c) resultative current relevance;
- (d) indirect resultative current relevance;
- (e) contextual current relevance;
- (f) speaker's (writer's) current relevance;

Chapter Five will analyze the combination examples of the present perfect with the adverbials of definite past. One of the puzzles regarding the present perfect (PP) in present-day English is whether it combines with adverbials of definite past (ADP) which denote a point of time or a period of time wholly located preceding Speech Time rendering "NOW" in the present perfect, such as *yesterday*, *a week ago*, and *last year*. Some linguists have pointed out so far that the present perfect in present-day English generally does not occur with adverbials of definite past (see, for example, Klein, 1992; Leech, 1994; and so forth). Klein (1992) asserts that such examples are ungrammatical owing to the so-called "position-definiteness constraint." These examples will be clarified from the following perspectives:

- (a) grammaticalization perspective;
- (b) extended current relevance;
- (c) influences from other European languages;
- (d) pragmatic influence;

- (e) morphological influence;
- (f) temporal contrast.

The present perfect without an auxiliary will be discussed in Chapter Six from an evolutionary perspective. In addition to the sociolinguistic analyses that have been carried out so far, an analysis from the evolutionary perspective will be launched. It will be suggested in this chapter that the present perfect form without an auxiliary is an intermediate morphological form between the abbreviated present perfect "I've finished" and the preterite "I finished." The present perfect without an auxiliary can be interpreted either as the present perfect or as the preterite. Therefore, it is also one of the indicators illustrating that the present perfect in present-day English is developing from Stage Three, a present-oriented stage, to Stage Four, a preterite-oriented stage. This grammaticalization process can therefore be summarized in the formulation:

- (a) I have seen it.
- (b) I've seen it.
- (c) I seen it. (the present perfect)
- (d) I seen it. (the preterite)

Chapter Seven will deal with the continuative perfect (CP) from a contrastive perfect. In this chapter, the continuative perfect use will be examined from a contrastive perspective. The continuative perfect use can be classified into three groups according to its aspectual meaning. Temporal construction and

adverbials of definite past (ADP) play an effective role in distinguishing these uses. The aspectual meaning of verbs and three continuative perfect uses can be summed up as follows. CP<sub>1</sub> represents a homogeneous state which begins at the point B1 and lasts up to the point NOW. In the CP<sub>1</sub> use TAD refers to the time duration from B1 to B2=NOW. No changes can be found during this period as every point of the duration is homogeneous. CP<sub>2</sub> represents a multi-phased situation with some or many repeatedly occurring sub-events. The whole situation starts at B1 and extends up to NOW. In the CP<sub>2</sub> use the duration of TAD is not homogenous as in the CP<sub>1</sub> use. In Chinese “iterativity” must be employed to get rid of the aspectual ambiguity. The situation with iterativity is a typical use of CP<sub>2</sub> while the situation without it is a typical use of resultative perfect. CP<sub>3</sub>, a variant of CP<sub>2</sub>, represents the same aspectual meaning as CP<sub>2</sub> with a B1=B2 verb or verb construction and a plural subject or object. The aspectual meaning of a clause is based on the condition that the whole situation can be divided into certain number of sub-events with the help from the subject or the object. In the CP<sub>3</sub> use there is no aspectual constraint on verbs in Chinese, yet there is one on verbs in English and Japanese. In English stative is preferred instead of B1=B2 verbs, whereas in Japanese “recovery” decides whether the sentence is grammatical or not. TAD in English is so logical that it can only refer to the time distance from B1 to NOW without any ambiguity. However, TAD in Chinese can refer to not only the time span from B1 to NOW but also the time span from B2 to NOW. This bi-dimension of TAD is the origin of the ambiguity in Chinese which can be solved by “iterativity.” Japanese is almost the same

as Chinese in which TAD can refer to both time spans, yet there is a constraint of “recovery” in the CP<sub>3</sub> use.

## Chapter 1

### The Present Perfect in Present-day English

#### 1. Time, Tense and Aspect

The conception of time, usually expressed by verbal constructions, plays an indispensable role in every verbal expression. It is true even in the so-called “timeless use of the present tense” (Huddleston et al., 2002, p. 129) as in examples (1) and (2). In (1) and (2), the present is used to describe what was written in the past, but has been preserved so that it “can be read now” (ibid.).

(1) Describing individual coping with ordinary life and social pressures, she [Jane Austen] uses a sharp satiric wit to expose follies, hypocrisies and false truths.

(ibid.)

(2) That’s not exactly what the Bible says.

(ibid.)

Strictly speaking, (1) and (2) are in fact not “timeless,” but are true in the real world “all time” (Palmer, 1974, p. 43). Palmer’s following examples of (3) and (4) are exactly the same, suggesting that the situation, i.e. <the sun rise in the east><sup>1</sup> in (3) and the

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<sup>1</sup> “< >” is used to denote a situation type in plain verb form without any inflection suffix.

situation, i.e. <the Bible say> in (4) are true in the real world “all time.”

(3) The sun rises in the east.

(Palmer, 1974, p. 43)

(4) Water boils at 100° Centigrade.

(ibid.)

There are generally two basic methods in English (probably in many other languages as well) to express a temporal relationship in an utterance. The first method is tense, primarily functioning to distinguish the time of past, present and future. The second method is aspect, illustrating whether a situation is ongoing or has already been completed.

The tense system in English would be much simpler if the past tense only expressed past events, and the present tense only expressed current events, and the future tense only expressed future events. However, this is not the case. For example, the use of the present tense in English is not limited to expressing present time (as in the “state present,” “habitual present,” and “instantaneous present”). Rather, the simple present can also be used with reference to the past and future, and in fictional narrative (Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 181-183). These non-present meanings can be illustrated in the following examples.

(5) I couldn't believe it! Just as we arrived, up comes Ben and slaps me on the back as if we're re life-long friends. ‘Come on, old pal,’

he says, 'Let me buy you a drink!' I'm telling you, I nearly fainted on the spot. (the historic present)

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 181)

(6) He'll do it if you pay him. (future)

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 182)

(7) I'll let you know as soon as I hear from her. (future)

(ibid.)

(8) The crowd swarms around the gateway, and seethes with delighted anticipation; excitement grows, as suddenly their hero makes his entrance ... (fictional narrative)

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 183)

Similarly, the simple past tense is also multi-functional, employed to "combine two features of meaning":

(a) The event / state must have taken place in the past, with a gap between its completion and the present moment.

(b) The speaker or writer must have in mind a definite time at which the event / state took place.

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 183)

The temporal relations in Quirk et al.'s examples (9), (10), and (11) are illustrated in Fig 1. In simple past tense, Event (E) time, equaling Reference (R) time (the blackened point of the time line in Fig 1), is temporally anterior to Speech (S) time and is generally



blocked from S time by the speaker or writer temporally<sup>2</sup>.

(9) Byron died in Greece.

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 184)

(10) This picture was painted by the owner's grandfather.

(ibid.)

(11) Rome was not built in a day. (a proverb)

(ibid.)



Fig 1 Temporal Structure of Simple Past

In addition to the above mentioned function (to “mark purely temporal relations of past and present”), tense in English is used to denote “reported speech” and “unreality particularly in conditional clauses and wishes” (Palmer, 1974, p. 43). In this research we will focus on the first function of the tense.<sup>3</sup> Quirk et al.’s “definite time” regarding the simple past tense seems to be fairly confusing so far as the following example is concerned. In (12) it is clear from the context that “we” including the writer do not know the definite time when the situation, i.e. <Marseilles become the main

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<sup>2</sup> As Quirk et al. (1985) point out, “Nevertheless, a sentence like [Albatrosses were large birds.] does not exclude the possibility of such a continuation. It is possible to assert, without inconsistency: Albatrosses were, are, and always will be large birds.” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 176)

<sup>3</sup> Palmer doubts “whether these uses are in fact all distinct” (Palmer, 1974, p. 43) and discusses the matter further at pp. 47-49. Refer to Palmer (1974) for details.

receiving point of the tin> happened; however the simple past tense is used appropriately.

(12) It remains true that we do not know when Marseilles became the main receiving point of the tin which was carried on horseback for thirty days from the British Channel.

(BNC)

Tense is not the only way to denote temporal relationships in English. There are other cases that the internal temporal part of a situation ought to be examined as in (13) and (14). This is known as aspect. Aspect does not relate the time of a situation to any other time references deictically. Rather, as Comrie (1976) says, aspect denotes “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (p. 3). In Comrie tense describes “situation-external” time while aspect describes “situation-internal” time (p. 3). In (13) and (14) the inherent process of two situations, <she cook the dinner> and <the river overflow its banks>, is observed and encoded in the progressive aspect. On such occasions there is an inevitable need to combine the present tense with the progressive aspect in verbal expressions.

(13) Where’s Joan? She’s cooking the dinner.

(Leech, 2004, p. 19)

(14) What’s happening? The river is overflowing its banks.

(ibid.)

## 2. Semantics of the Present Perfect

As one of the two verb forms adopted to describe a past situation in English, the present perfect differs from the preterite in that it indicates a past situation with current relevance. Current relevance has been considered to be a core semantic difference between the present perfect and the preterite by many linguists. Since the concepts of both past and present are concerned, the present perfect is called “a compound tense” in Huddleston et al. (2002).

When we combine the perfect with a primary tense, marked by the inflection of *have*, we have a compound tense expressing two temporal relations. We will use superscripts to distinguish the  $T_r - T_o$  pairs related by primary and secondary tense.<sup>4</sup> (Huddleston et al., 2002, p. 140)

The formal meaning of the present perfect is described as “posttime” in Klein (1992, 1994) and “anterior” in Bybee et al. (1994). According to Klein (1992), the present perfect clarifies the temporal relations in (15) in such a way that the tense part is characterized by “TU in TT,” and the aspect part is characterized by “TT in posttime of TSit.”<sup>5</sup> The past perfect can be illustrated as in (16), where the tense part exhibits the feature “TT<TU” and the aspect part exhibits the feature of “TT in posttime of TSit.” The

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<sup>4</sup> In Huddleston et al. (2002, p. 125)  $T_r$  is “the time referred” and  $t_o$  is “the time of orientation.”

<sup>5</sup> In Klein (1992) TT refers to Topic Time, TU refers to time of Utterance and TSit refers to situation time.

same method can also be applied to the future perfect in (17) where the tense part of it is featured by “TT>TU” and the aspect part of it is featured by “TT in posttime of TSit.”

(15) Chris has been in York. (TT in TU, TT in posttime of TSit)  
(Klein, 1992, p. 538)

(16) Chris had been in York. (TT<TU, TT in posttime of TSit)  
(ibid.)

(17) Chris will have been in York.  
(TT >TU, TT in posttime of TSit)  
(ibid.)

The particular term “posttime” in the above three examples is interpreted by Klein (1992) as follows.

the term ‘posttime’ simply means the time after TSit, note that posttime is not defined by what is the case at TSit, nor by what is the case after TSit: it is just the time after TSit.

Aspect does not say how long TT is after TSit; TSit may immediately precede TT, but it may also be in the distant past. Only contextual information can tell us something about the distance. (p. 538)

Klein neglects an important difference between two basic uses of the present perfect, “before now” reading and “co-extensive” reading, as indicated by Declerck (2006, p. 217).

(18) Chris has been dead for seven days.

(Klein, 1992, p. 541)

(19) \*Chris has been dead.

(ibid.)

That is why he explains his present perfect example (18) representing “co-extensive” reading in the same way as he explains the present perfect clause expressing “before now,” by stating that:

a lexical content such as <Chris be dead for seven days> has a posttime --- the time at which Chris is dead for more than seven days. Therefore, [(18)] should be appropriate, and so it is.” (Klein, 1992, p. 541)

“Before now” reading and “co-extensive” reading are two basic uses of the present perfect with a clear-cut difference in the semantics, the ability to combine with temporal adverbials and even evolutionary processes. Every discussion of the present perfect ought to begin by clarifying the distinction between these two uses. In Declerck (2006), “before now” T-interpretation is defined as follows:

The ‘BEFORE NOW’ T-interpretation: the situation time is included in the pre-present and covers a portion of the pre-present that is not adjacent to  $t_0$ . This meaning is realized, for example, in *I have already spoken to that man*. (Declerck, 2006, p. 215)

Briefly speaking, the “before now” use is very close to the “finished situation” use of the present perfect semantically. On the other hand, the “co-extensive” use is almost the same as the traditional continuative perfect in semantics, though Declerck (2006) says the following:

The ‘CO-EXTENSIVE’ T-interpretation: the situation time is co-extensive with the pre-present and therefore leads up to  $t_0$ . This meaning is realized, for example, in *I have been working in the garden*. (Declerck, 2006, p. 215)

In Bybee et al. (1994) anterior (perfect) is defined as follows:

Anteriors (or “perfect,” as they are often called) differ from completives in being relational: an anterior signals that the situation occurs prior to reference time and is relevant to the situation at reference time. Anteriors are typically translated with the English Perfect and often accompanied by the relational adverbs ‘already’ and ‘just’. (Bybee et al., 1994, p. 54)

In Bybee et al. (1994) the resultative, differing from what is generally regarded resultative perfect in other previous studies, is defined as follows:

“Resultatives signal that a state exists as a result of a past action. The resultative is often similar to the passive in that it usually makes the patient the subject of the clause but

differs in that a resultative may apply to an intransitive verb, as in *He is gone*, without a change of subject. Resultatives are compatible with the adverb ‘still’ and are used only with telic verbs, that is, verbs which describe events which have inherent endpoints.” (Bybee et al., 1994, p. 54)

The temporal relation in the present perfect aspect example (20b) is illustrated in Fig2. In this Reichenbach-based figure, in present perfect aspect, E time is prior to S time and holds certain relevance to S time by setting R time exactly coincident with S time. Reichenbach’s formula is accepted by many linguists. I have only one objection: because no information can be obtained to clarify the initial point and the final point of E, the formula fails to illustrate the continuation up to the present in the continuative perfect sense. An amendment to Reichenbach’s formula will be introduced in following chapters.

- (20) a. The taxi arrived.  
 b. The taxi has arrived.

(Leech, 2004, p. 39)



Fig 2 Temporal Structure of the Present Perfect

### 3. Definiteness and Indefiniteness

Leech (2004, p. 42) compares the definite/indefinite difference

between the present perfect and the preterite to that between the articles “the” and “a / an.”

The ‘definite’ / ‘indefinite’ contrast between Simple Past and Present Perfect is exactly parallel to the contrast in meaning between the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a* or *an*. We say *the cat* rather than *a cat* whenever a particular animal has already been mentioned, or else whenever, even though no cat has been mentioned, we know simply from familiarity with the context, what particular cat is under discussion. (Leech, 2004, p. 42)

Leech (2004) provides the following description of indefiniteness in the present perfect: “first, the number of events is unspecified,” and “second, the time is also left unspecified” (p. 37). Indefinite past is also called ‘at-least-once-before-now’ in Leech (*ibid.*), almost the same as Comrie’s experiential perfect<sup>6</sup> (1976, pp. 58-59).

It is true that we can find examples in which the present perfect is used to express the indefinite past, such as the following.

(21) Have you been to Brazil?

(Leech, 2004, p. 37)

(22) All my family have had injections against measles.

(*ibid.*)

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<sup>6</sup> Comrie says, “the experiential perfect indicates that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present” (1976, p. 58). And “Other terms found in the literature are ‘existential’ perfect and ‘indefinite’ perfect” (*ibid.*).



(23) [I don't know whether John is here.] I haven't seen him yet.  
(Declerck, 2006, p. 241)

(24) [I'm sure] I've met that man before.  
(ibid.)

(25) Bill has been to America.  
(Comrie, 1976, p. 59)

The above examples notwithstanding, the present perfect need not always be indefinite; on the contrary, it can be definite in regard to both the number of events and the time of events. In (26), the exact number of events, i.e. <he write to Monika Kocanek> is definite; in (27), a continuative perfect utterance, the time is definitely denoted by the since clause; and in (28), a non-continuative perfect clause, the time is obviously definite.<sup>7</sup>

(26) He has written three times to Monika Kocanek deeply regretting the hurt I have caused — and a mystery £100 has now been paid into her bank account in Bedford.  
(BNC)

(27) President Quett Masire is expected to be nominated again as the presidential candidate of the Botswana Democratic Party, which has ruled since independence in 1966.  
(BNC)

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<sup>7</sup> Example (28) and other similar examples will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

(28) In Brazil, death squads are gunning down at least one child a day. In Africa, for example, in Mauritania, the level of violence against ethnic blacks reached really disturbing heights. Those are some of the violations that we have seen in 1990.

(Wordbanks)

We can say that the present perfect can be either indefinite or definite in the number of the events and time of the situation. Similarly, the preterite can also be either definite or indefinite. Its indefiniteness can be illustrated in the following examples. In (29) from the context of “so I’m still not sure” it is clear the definite time when the situation, i.e. <he pass out of the garden and into the rest of the world> occurred is unknown. Similarly, in (30) the context of “I do not remember” suggests that the time when situation of <I miss> occurred is indefinite.

(29) I didn't even look up as he went up the ramp into the street, so I'm still not sure when he passed out of the garden and into the rest of the world.

(BNC)

(30) The epilogue to this evening's survival devotions was, strange as it may seem, exactly as I should have expected it to turn out, I do not remember when I missed — or at what stage — my flight engineer, but when I returned to camp and was literally wallowing in what the High Master at Command had to say to me.

(BNC)

The present perfect may be indefinite in the number of events and time; however it does not have to be so. In the same way, the preterite may be definite on some occasions, yet it does not have to be so. Thus the claim that definiteness or indefiniteness is main semantic difference between the present perfect and the preterite makes no sense at all. What is more, from a historical perspective, the difference between the present perfect and the preterite may vary from one stage of language's development to another.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. The Present Perfect with and without Adverbials

Temporal adverbials play an important role in helping the present perfect to further verify the temporal relationships in a clause. Literature maintains that temporal adverbials can be divided into three groups: those occurring only in the preterite, those occurring only in the present perfect, and those occurring in both. McCoard (1978) uses [+THEN], [-THEN] and [±THEN] to describe the three groups as follows.

(31) [+THEN]

long ago, five years ago, once[=formerly], yesterday, the other day, those days, last night, in 1900, at 3:00, after the war, no longer

(McCoard, 1978, p. 135)

(32) [-THEN]

at present, up till now, so far, as yet, not yet, during these five

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<sup>8</sup> A historical perspective will be presented in detail in Chapter Two.

years past, herewith, lately, since the war, before now

(ibid.)

(33) [±THEN]

long since, in the past, once [=one time], today, in my life, for  
three years, today (*sic*), recently, just now, often, always, never,  
already, before

(ibid.)

In Quirk et al. (1985) the use of three classifications to categorize temporal adverbials is quite similar, with minor differences regarding the classification of a few specific words such as “once.”

(34) Adverbials associated with the past tense

yesterday (evening), a week ago, earlier this week, last Monday,  
the other day, at four o'clock, in the morning, on Tuesday

(Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 194-195)

(35) Adverbials associated with the present perfective

up to now, since Monday, since I met you, so far, hitherto,

(ibid.)

(36) Adverbials associated with both

today, this month, this year, recently, before, this June, once,  
already

(ibid.)

Yoshioka (2003, p. 186) uses the label “semi-past” to denote those adverbials that are classified in the [+THEN] group in McCoard (1978) or “associated with both the past tense and the present perfect” in Quirk et al. (1985). According to Yoshioka, semi-past adverbials include such adverbials as “long ago” which appears in the completive resultative use and the experiential use, and “in the past” which appears in the experiential use but does not appear in completive resultative use (2003, p. 188).

Some types of adverbials that are generally assigned to the past tense category can --- at least occasionally --- be used with the present perfect. Examples include the phrase “in 1990” in example (28) above and the temporal adverbial “yesterday” in example (37) below. Although Swan (2005, p. 457) describes such usage as “unusual,” I will suggest below that such examples represent a new development in the use of the present perfect in British English.

(37) Thank you, the point which Mr has made yesterday, I think will continue to make.

(BNC)

Hornstein’s example (38) is ambiguous and can be interpreted that as meaning either (a) the time which the secretary ate was 3 p.m. or (b) the secretary had already eaten by the time 3 p.m. rolled around (1990, p. 39). On the basis of this ambiguity, Sawada (1992) claims that there are two types of adverbial, viz. E-type adverbials and R-type adverbials. E-type adverbials fall into the category of VP and R-type adverbials fall into the category of S.

(38) The secretary had eaten at 3 p.m.

(Hornstein, 1990, p. 39)

However, Klein (1992) points out the following defect in this distinction between “sentential adverbs” and “VP-adverbials”:

A precise formulation of this idea requires an elaborate theory of adverb modification. Such a theory in turn must include an in-depth analysis of various types of (temporal) adverbials and an analysis of how these adverbials interact with the remainder of the clause. Neither of these tasks is easy, and a detailed discussion, let alone a solution, is beyond the scope of this paper. (p. 527)

Except for ambiguous examples such as (38), it is relatively easy to understand the temporal relationships in a present perfect clause with a temporal adverbial because the temporal adverbials clarify definite temporal distances between Event time, Reference time and Speech time. Viewpoints regarding temporal relationships in a present perfect clause without temporal adverbials differ from linguist to linguist. Quirk et al. (1985) state the following:

Because of this connotation of recency, B's reply in the following exchange must be considered absurdly inappropriate:

A: Has the post man left any letters?

B: Yes, he did six months ago.

Since postmen in general deliver letters daily, the implicit

time zone in this case would be no longer than a day.

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 193)

Obviously, it is not the present perfect but general knowledge concerning postmen's letter-delivering which suggests that the implicit time zone would be no longer than a day.

The time zone denoted by the present perfect varies from one context to another because the implicit time zone depends on context. Example (39), from *The Japan Times Weekly Online* dated Aug. 15, 2009, reports the situation <actress Noriko Sakai tell Tokyo police>. In this present perfect clause the reference time (generally Now) is restricted to August 15, 2009, at least six days after the situation occurred on August 9<sup>th</sup>. The implicit time span in (39) is about a week (at least six days), a different kind of "recency" from "no longer than a day" in the postman example.

(39) Actress Noriko Sakai has reportedly told Tokyo police she started inhaling illegal stimulants last summer at the urging of her husband, sources said Aug. 9.

*(The Japan Times Weekly, Aug. 15, 2009)*

(<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/weekly/news/nn2009/nn20090815a3.htm>)

Onishi (2003) points out that though example (40) below is a quite common present perfect utterance, it is ambiguous to put it into the four use classification (p. 174)<sup>9</sup>. The ambiguity is caused by the vagueness in temporal distance between the event time and the

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<sup>9</sup> The traditional four-use classification of the present perfect includes the resultative use, the completive use, the experiential use and the continuative use.

reference time. If the situation <I tell you> occurs a few hours ago, it expresses recency of the present perfect; if it occurs several years ago, it sounds like an experiential perfect; and if it begins several years ago and continues up to the present moment of speaking, it is more likely to be a continuative perfect.

(40) (A mother says to her son who has broken the window glass with a stone.)

I've told you not to throw stones.

(Onishi, 2003, p.174)

As discussed so far in this section, the present perfect itself does not entail the precise time span between event time and reference time (=speech time). Therefore, recency can only be determined through using knowledge about the context in which the present perfect is used.

## 5. Current Relevance

“A strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect (PP) and the preterite became established early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Görlach, 1991, p.111).

Only after a strict semantic differentiation of past:perfect had been established in the early eighteenth century, did the sequence of tenses (especially in subject and conditional clauses) become possible: present/perfect/future as against preterite/pluperfect/second future. (Görlach, 1991, pp.



111-112)

This “differentiation” is supposed to be fulfilled by the semantic emphasis on so-called current relevance in the present perfect. Both the present perfect and the preterite are used to report a past situation, with the present perfect being characterized by the relevance to the present moment of speaking.

(41) a. I've hit it twice, but it's still standing up.

b. I've written, but they haven't replied.

(Palmer, 1974, p. 50)

With the concept of ‘nil results’ in examples (41a, b), Palmer defined current relevance in the present perfect as follows:

A more accurate explanation is in terms of ‘current relevance’ --- that in some way or other (not necessarily in its results) the action is relevant to something observable at the present. The past perfect may be treated in a similar way --- activity occurring before, but relevant to, a point of time in the past.  
(Palmer, 1974, p. 50)

“Nil result,” the pragmatic current relevance, ought to be separated from syntactic current relevance. “But it’s still standing up” is only one of the potential results of <I hit it twice> in (41a) and “but they haven’t replied” is only one of the potential results of <I write> in (41b). These results are fully pragmatically based, and are not guaranteed by the syntactic function of the present perfect.

A given present perfect clause may have any one of several results depending on the context, as shown in (42) and (43). According to Depraetere (1998), each of the following examples (42) and (43) can yield at least four results, and in each example one of those results can be assigned to class (a) and three of the results can be assigned to class (b).

(42) I have written them a letter. (resultative perfect)

- a. They have received a letter.
- b. 1) You need not write to them as I have already done so.  
2) This explains why they are angry at you as I told them you were no longer interested in the project.  
3) There are no more stamps left.

(Depraetere, 1998, p. 601)

(43) Mr Claes has tendered his resignation. (hot news perfect)

- a. Mr Claes has stepped down.
- b. 1) There will be a lot of international journalists in Brussels.  
2) NATO will start looking for a new president.  
3) Mr Claes is a fool.

(ibid.)

In Depraetere's conclusion, it is claimed that such current relevance of the present perfect, illustrated by various results, "arises as a result of the interaction between the verb used and the context" (1998, p. 611). Therefore, it might be reasonable to claim that the present perfect aspect itself only indicates the existence of current relevance, whereas the specific results are dependent on

the aspectual character of the verb and the context.

Results may be the most typical example of current relevance in the present perfect, especially distinguished from the preterite. Declerck maintains that a present result of the present perfect “may or may not be correct, depending on the meaning that is assigned to ‘present result’” (2006, p. 301). Declerck provides us with the following two examples, claiming that (44), a resultative reading clause, suggests that “The shop is locked up.” while (45) does not. However, Declerck also admits that “it is very difficult to rule out entirely some sort of understanding of present result in the second example (= example 45), e.g. ‘I am seen as a responsible employee.’”

(44) I’ve locked up the shop.

(Declerck, 2006, p. 301)

(45) [I’ve taken a lot of responsibility in my first job already. I’ve taken the takings to the bank, I’ve dealt with difficult customers and] I’ve locked up the shop.

(ibid.)

Declerck employs the terms “direct result” and “indirect result” to explain the distinction between (44) and (45).

A **direct result** is the resultant state that inevitably comes about when a situation is completed: the completion of the action of locking up the shop automatically (and immediately) produces the state of the shop being locked up. (This need

not be a lasting result, but it is there immediately after the locking up.) An indirect result is not an immediate and automatic result, but one which is linked with the preceding action because the link in question is in keeping with the meaning of the sentence and the context in which it is used. (Declerck, 2006, p. 302)

In summary, semantically speaking the present perfect only confirms that the past situation in questions has current relevance, while a particular interpretation of current relevance is totally pragmatically-based. There is a need for more extensive discussion of current relevance, moving beyond the discussion of direct results and indirect results described above.

## 6. Other Theories of the Present Perfect

In addition to the current relevance theory discussed in the previous section, other theories of the present perfect which used to be popular are the “indefinite past theory,” the “extended now theory,” and the “embedded past theory.”

McCoard describes the “indefinite past theory” in the following way:

The common element here is the claim that the present perfect locates events somewhere before the moment of coding, but without pointing to any particular occasion or subpart of the past. The time-reference of the perfect is thus indefinite. The preterite, on the other hand, narrows down the temporal

emplacement of the prior event to some (in principle) well-defined limits. (McCoard, 1978, p. 75)

The indefinite past theory had such a strong influence on many studies that indefinite past has been classified as one of the uses of the present perfect. However, a new “definite perfect” use, combining the present perfect with definite past adverbials, has appeared on the scene and is worthy of serious investigation.

The indefinite past theory which begins with Pickbourn (1789) suggests that “indefinite” means “included in present time” and “definite” means “excluded from the present”:

I have written ... evidently belongs to present tense. We do not say, I have written yesterday, I have written the first of August; but we say I wrote yesterday, I wrote the first of August. The tense [sc. the perfect] may properly be called the present perfect, or perfect indefinite. It always expresses a perfect or completed action; but an action that has been completed or perfected in the present time, i.e. in the present, the present year, the present age etc. If we speak of the present century, we say, philosophers have made great discoveries in the present century; but if we speak of the last century, we say, philosophers made great discoveries in the last century. (p. 31)

Then, the basic definition of the “extended now” theory is given by McCoard (1978) who describes it as follows:

“at several points we argued the merits of an analysis of the perfect as the marker of prior events which are nevertheless included within the overall period of the present, the ‘extended now,’ while the preterite marks events assigned to a past which is concluded and separate from the extended present” (p. 123).

Binnick (1991) maintains that “there is good reason to believe that the perfect is an aspect, not merely a tense or part of a tense,” contradicting what has been defined in the “extended now” theory:

However, XN [=extended now] theory in its classical form makes the meaning of the [present] perfect quite unlike a combination of tense and aspect, and thereby renders a compositional treatment impossible in any non-trivial sense. (It is always possible to arrive at a trivially compositional treatment, as we saw in the case of the Catalan periphrastic perfect tense.) (p. 268)

Finally, the “embedded past” theory still treats the auxiliary “have” in the same way as the full verb “have” at the deepest level of generality, similar to the situation in Old English. McCoard defines the “embedded past” theory as follows:

The characteristic analysis is one which treats the perfect as a sort of compound structure, with an ordinary past tense (preterite) embedded in (subordinate to) an ordinary present tense – whence the name for this chapter. The particular

details of each embedded past (or EB) theory differ. (1978, p. 165)

## 7. Situation Type<sup>10</sup> and Viewpoint

As described by Smith (1997), the aspectual meaning of a clause is the result of the interaction between the situation type and the viewpoint.

The two-component theory provides a principled approach to the relation between the situation type (event or state) and viewpoint (perfective or imperfective) of a sentence. There is certainly such a relation, as many scholars have recognized. It is well known that the co-occurrence patterns of adverbials, for instance, involve such concepts as event and state on the one hand, and aspectual viewpoint on the other. The same is true of the entailment patterns of sentences. (Smith, 1997, XIV)

In the following example, the dynamic situation type <we finally reach the starting line> interacts with viewpoint of the present perfect aspect, resulting in the meaning that the past situation has relevance in some way with the present moment.

(46) “We have finally reached the starting line,” Hatoyama told reporters on Aug. 31, leaving little doubt that he was eager to

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<sup>10</sup> In Smith (1997) “situation type” is a neutral term for a state or an event or broadly refers to verbs or verbal constructions which express a situation.

get on with governing.

(*Time*, Sep 10th, 2009, p.15)

One of the earliest attempts to classify verbs according to aspectuality of verbs is Vendler (1976) which divided verbs into four groups:

For activities: *A was running at time  $t$*  means that time instant  $t$  is on *a* time stretch throughout which *A was running*.

For accomplishments: *A was drawing a circle at  $t$*  means that  $t$  is on *the* time stretch in which *A drew that circle*.

For achievements: *A won a race between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$*  means that *the* time instant at which *A won that race* is between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ .

For states: *A loved somebody from  $t_1$  to  $t_2$*  means that at *any* instant between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  *A loved that person*.

(p. 106)

According to Verkuyl (1993, p. 42), Vendler employs three criteria when categorizing verbs --- “process,” “definiteness” and “momentariness.” Verkuyl asserts that either “process” or “momentariness” could be deleted due to an overlap in reality. Verkuyl’s analysis of Vendler’s classification can be seen in Table 1.



Table 1 Three Parameters in Vendler (1967)

	process	definiteness	momentariness
states	-	-	-
activities	+	-	-
accomplishments	+	+	-
achievements	-	+	+

In Smith (1997), situation type is divided into five classes as follows, adding “semelfactive” to Vendler’s four classes. Temporal features of each type are illustrated as follows.

(47) Temporal features of the situation types

Situations	Static	Durative	Telic
States	[+]	[+]	[-]
Activity	[-]	[+]	[-]
Accomplishment	[-]	[+]	[+]
<b>Semelfactive</b>	[-]	[-]	[-]
Achievement	[-]	[-]	[+]

(1997, p. 20)

Many studies classifying verbs or situations have been conducted in Japanese and Chinese,<sup>11</sup> as well as in English. The criteria employed in such studies are generally similar, viz. “dynamic,” “process” and “telicity.” These three criteria can be precisely illustrated on the time line in the manner illustrated

<sup>11</sup> Other studies include Quirk et al. (1985), Kindaichi (1950), Kinsui, Kudo & Numata (2000), Kudo (1982), Leech (2004), Okuda (1985), Teramura (1984), and Wu (2002).

below. “Dynamic” means the explicit or implicit existence of B1, the initial point of a situation, and B2, the final point of a situation; “process” means the temporal distance between B1 and B2; and “telicity” means the explicit and obligatory existence of B2.



Fig 3 Temporal Structure of “Dynamic,” “Process” and “Telic”

## 8. Usage Classification of the Present Perfect

Depraetere (1998) provides the following list of labels that scholars have employed when classifying uses of the present perfect.

(48) *Resultative* perfect (*stative, existential, retrospective* present)

I have had a bath.

(p. 598)

(49) *Experiential* perfect (*existential*)

Have you ever been to Venice?

(ibid.)

(50) *Hot news* perfect (perfect of *recent past*)

The Belgian government has fallen.

(ibid.)

(51) *Indefinite* perfect (*resultative*), i.e. the situation lies completely before the moment of speaking (subsumes [(48)], [(49)] and [(50)])

I have met him before.

(ibid.)

(52) *Iterative* perfect (*repetitive* perfect)

He has lied several times so far.

(ibid.)

(53) *Continuative* perfect (*universal, perfect of persistent situation, inclusive present*)

I have lived here since 1982.

(ibid.)

(54) *Declaratory* perfect

London has been repeatedly attacked by squadrons of German aeroplanes during the last few nights.

(ibid.)

The aforementioned labels help us when we try to analyze individual uses of the present perfect. However, they fail to provide a general image of the semantics of the present perfect such as that illustrated in Fig 4 (from Declerck, 2006).

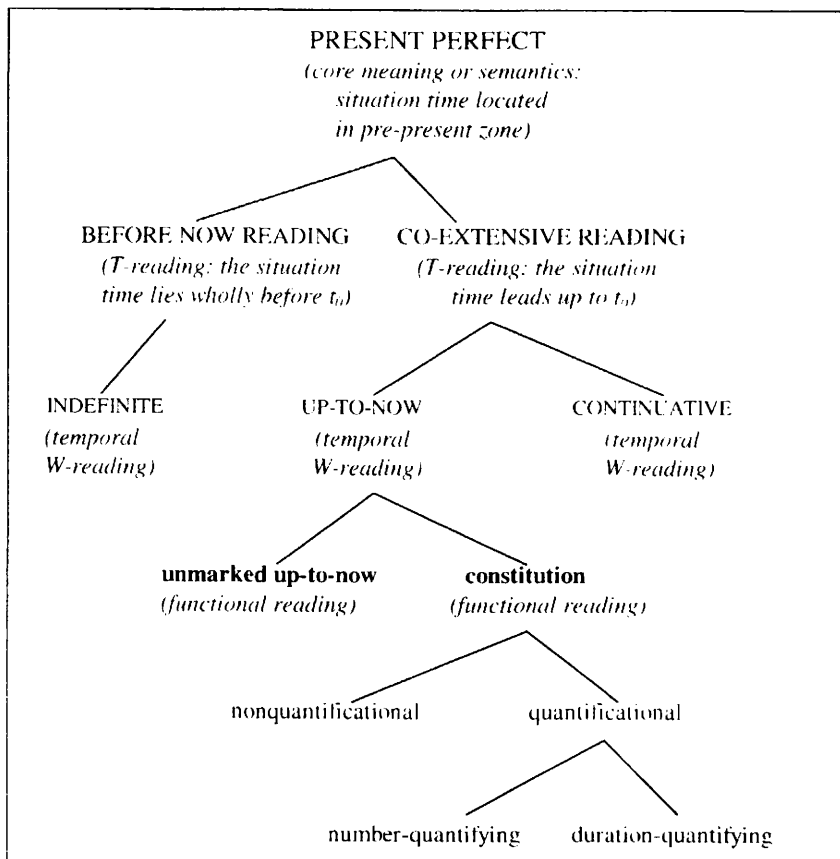


Fig 4 The Various Reading of Clauses in the Present Perfect

(Declerck, 2006, p. 217)

(55) through (60) below are specific examples of uses referred to in Figure4.

(55) I've received emails from her before, you know. (*indefinite reading: the full situation lies completely before t<sub>0</sub>*)

(pp. 222-223)

(56) I've had this car for a long time. (*continuative reading: I still have the car in question*)

(ibid.)

- (57) Three weeks have elapsed since then. (*up-to-now reading: the reference is to a duration-specifying situation which fills the entire pre-present*)

(ibid.)

- (58) [Sorry I'm dirty.] I've been cleaning the cellar.  
(explanatory-resultative, unmarked up-to-now reading)

(p. 252)

- (59) Nearly four years have elapsed since his accident.  
(duration-quantifying)

(p.257)

- (60) ["How many times have you met him?"] – "So far {have never met him / haven't met him} at all." (number-quantifying: the number is zero)

(p. 257)

However, as Wada (2009) has pointed out,

[I]t seems sometimes hard to distinguish the number-quantifying type from the experiential (i.e. *I've been to Japan three times*), which is a subtype of the indefinite reading, because the latter type can also be taken as compatible with the above-mentioned characteristic and as virtually focusing on how many times a given specific (sub)situation has occurred

in the pre-present zone. This implies that the indefinite reading cannot be clearly distinguished from the up-to-now reading. (pp. 270-271)

Neither Declerck (2006) nor Wada (2009) mentions the aspectual characteristics of situation type in the present perfect. Because the present perfect clause in question, i.e. <I never meet> in (60) does not have any static characteristics, it is reasonable to classify it as an experiential perfect under indefinite past, rather than to follow Declerck in giving it an up-to-now reading.

## Chapter 2

### The Present Perfect and Grammaticalization in English

#### 1. Introduction

It is well-known that in present-day English<sup>1</sup> there are two verb forms employed to report a past situation with different viewpoints, the present perfect and the preterite. The present perfect (PP) in present-day English “signals that the situation occurs prior to reference time (Now) and is relevant to the situation at reference time (Now)” (Bybee et al., 1994, p. 54). This description clearly indicates that the present perfect differs from the preterite in the way that the encoded situation in a present perfect clause is “relevant to” the moment of NOW. Similar claims can be seen in other literature such as Quirk *et al.* (1985), Leech (1994, 2004), Swan (2005) and so forth. However, historically speaking, an opposite description can be seen in Görlach (1991) declaring that it was not until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when “a strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite became established (p.111). In other words, before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the present perfect and the preterite were possibly interchangeable because of the lack of a strict meaning difference between them.

Such a great semantic gap urges us that there is a pressing need to investigate it synchronically and diachronically. Chapter

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<sup>1</sup> Present-day English in this research refers to English from 1900 up until now (Ukaji, 2000, pp. 17-18).

One focused on the various features of the present perfect in present-day English synchronically, while in this chapter a diachronic approach is taken to clarify the development process of the English present perfect with a close focus on what possible direction the present perfect in present-day English is evolving.

## 2 Grammaticalization in Hopper and Traugott (2003)

### 2.1 What is Grammaticalization?

The term “grammaticalization” was first advocated by a French linguist named Antoine Meillet who defines it as “the attribution of grammatical character to an erstwhile autonomous word”<sup>2</sup>(translated by Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 19). According to Hopper & Traugott (2003), as far as the research content is concerned, grammaticalization has two meanings:

... one to do with a research framework within which to account for language phenomena, the other with the phenomena themselves. In this respect the term “grammaticalization” resembles not only other terms in linguistics such as “grammar,” “syntax,” and “phonology,” but the terminology of all high-level concepts in scholarly disciplines. (Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 3)

“Phenomena” overlaps the terms such as “syntax,” “phonology,” and “grammar” and so forth which have been discussed and researched

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Meillet (1912, p. 131).



up to now. The above mentioned first meaning, however, is to account for such grammatical problems historically.

In Hopper & Traugott a cline (1) below is summarized showing how a content word expressing notional meaning develops into an inflection affix working as a functional word. It may not be true to all languages in details, but the direction from word items expressing a concrete meaning to those expressing an abstract meaning is cross-linguistically true.

(1) content item > grammatical word > clitic > inflection affix

(Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 7)

## 2.2 Reanalysis and Analogy

Hopper & Traugott's cline (1) illustrates a general direction of how a word item is evolving from a concrete sense to an abstract sense. Such changes do not occur naturally, and the mechanism of such changes can be demonstrated by interaction of two basic methods of grammaticalization, i.e. reanalysis and analogy. Reanalysis and analogy are two significant methods motivating and spreading the changes of a language.

In reanalysis, the grammatical – syntactic and morphological – and semantic properties of forms are modified. These modifications comprise changes in interpretation, such as syntactic bracketing and meaning, but not at first change in form. (Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 39)

On the other hand, in analogy there is no modification in grammatical or semantic rules. It only affects the spreading of new rules logically. The mechanism of reanalysis and analogy will be demonstrated through grammaticalization of “be going to” in example (2) below.

(2) Schema of the Development of an Auxiliary “be going to”

- Stage One     be going to visit Bill
- Stage Two     be going to visit Bill
- Stage Three   be going to like Bill
- Stage Four    gonna like / visit Bill

(Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 69)

In (2) above there are four stages in grammaticalization of “be going to.” Having undergone some changes in history shown in (2), in present-day English “be going to” is used to “talk about plans, especially in an informal style” and to “[emphasize] the idea of intention, or a decision that has already been made” (Swan, 2005, p. 188). In Stage One “be going to” is a progressive form of the full verb “go,” while in Stage Two the same form is adopted to express the future meaning. The new interpretation in Stage Two is thus motivated by one of the important methods of grammaticalization, viz. reanalysis. The constraint on the verbal construction just after “be going to” still exists in this stage, that is to say, not all verbs are able to appear after “be going to.” However, in Stage Three the constraint disappears thoroughly under the effect of analogy. Then reanalysis again motivates another change from Stage Three to Stage Four in which “be going to” is abbreviated to

“gonna.” These four stages in (2) illustrate a very typical cline from a full verb to a tense affix.

### 3. Grammaticalization of “Have” and the Present Perfect in English

Every language in the world including English is developing constantly. It seems to be very important to analyze the English present perfect from a grammaticalization perspective, especially focusing on the meaning and the functions of “have.” “Have” plays an overt role of one of the keys in clarifying the evolutionary changes in English present perfect. In addition to this inside perspective in English, an outside perspective comparing with other languages is also an important key in analyzing the historical changes in the English present perfect. Thus, a diachronic account of the English present perfect ought to be given based on a systematic description of the present perfect in European languages with special reference to German and French. In this section the focus will be extended to the present perfect in European languages as a whole. One of the representative pieces of literature in this research field is Elsness (1997, p. 347) in which the history of the present perfect in European languages as a whole is briefly described in a “three-stage theory.”

According to Elsness, in the first stage the semantic weight of the present perfect is on “a present state or result of action” (Elsness, 1997, p. 347). At this stage the “present” is more emphasized than the “past,” exactly the same as the present perfect

in Old English <sup>3</sup> and early Middle English. This semantic characteristic is labeled as “present>past” meaning “the present is more emphasized or more important than the past semantically.”

Then,

... at the second stage the emphasis has shifted to the past action which brought about the state or result, but any specification of time that is separate from the deictic zero-point is still disallowed. (Elsness, 1997, p. 347)

According to Elsness, a very typical example and conceivably the only example in European languages at this stage is present-day English, whose present perfect generally does not co-occur with adverbials of definite past (ADPs) <sup>4</sup> in terms of prescriptive grammar. It is special enough that among various European languages only present-day English still remains in this stage, while German is developing towards the third stage and French, Romanian, Italian and Russian have already reached the third stage.

Finally,

“At the third and final stage the present perfect has become a simple exponent of past action, without any restrictions on the temporal specification.” (Elsness, 1997, p. 347)

Elsness does not mention much on the early present perfect in

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<sup>3</sup> OE stands for Old English from 449 to 1100, while ME stands for Middle English from 1100 to 1500 (Ukaji, 2000, p. 17).

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Chapter Five for details.

European languages. Elsness's three-stage theory does not directly apply to the present perfect in English whose development in early history (before the 14th century) may be a bit special. Thus, in this research, it is claimed that the present perfect in English evolves four stages as shown in Fig 1 below.

Stage 1: present > past<sup>5</sup>



Stage 2: present < past<sup>6</sup>



Stage 3: present > past



Stage 4: present < past

**Fig 1. Four Stages of Semantic Focus Shift  
in the English Present Perfect**

### 3.1 Stage One: Present > Past

Stage One is characterized by “present > past” semantically, covering a historic period before the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Old English and early Middle English. In Old English and early Middle English (3) below is a typical example to describe an event or a situation in a done or finished condition, approximately meaning that “I possess or have my work in a done or finished condition.” However, in present-day English example (3) is morphologically

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<sup>5</sup> “Present>past” shows that the semantic weight on “present” overrides “past.”

<sup>6</sup> “Present<past” shows that the semantic weight on “past” overpasses “present.”

organized as the present perfect form “I have done my work.”

(3) I have my work done.

(= “I possess or have my work in a done or finished condition.”)

(OED Online)

Similarly, Ando (2005) provides us with two contrastive examples (4) and (5), with (4) being a present perfect clause in present-day English, and (5) being a primitive present perfect clause in Old English and early Middle English. These two examples are in accordance with the example (3) in OED Online. According to Ando (2005), example (5) means that I have the fish in a caught condition implying that the action of “catching the fish” has already finished. The past participle form “caught” is used as a modifier to express the state or the condition of the fish.

(4) I have caught the fish.

(Ando, 2005, p. 130)

(5) I have the fish caught.

(ibid.)

“Have” in Stage One is a full verb with aspectual characteristics shown in OED Online as follows:

no notion of any action upon the object remains, what is predicated being merely a static relation between the subject and object.

(<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50103266>)

The static relation between the subject and the object is very similar to the semantic relation between the place and the entity in static “existence.” This is stated by Washio & Mihara (1997) as well, asserting that the main verb “have” means “intentional possession” through example (6) below. According to Washio & Mihara (1997), “Sally has it” in the conversation indicates that the flag exists at the place where Sally is, with “Sally” playing a role of the place in this sentence semantically. This claim is exactly in conformity with what is suggested in OED Online.

(6) A: Where is our flag?

B: Sally has it.

(Washio & Mihara, 1997, p. 120)

In a word, the aspectual characteristic of “have” makes it easy to appear in the verb construction (3), the primitive syntactic form of the present perfect in Old English and early Middle English. In this stage, “have” is a full verb and the semantic emphasis is laid on the present.

### **3.2 Stage Two: Present < Past**

In Stage Two it is claimed that the semantic focus shifts from the present to the past. This stage lasts from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the current syntactic form of the present perfect became established, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when “a strict semantic

differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite became established. In this stage, reanalysis motivates the modification from the construction “have + NP + past participle” to the construction “have + past participle + NP” As a result, the new word order “have + past participle + NP” was generalized and settled down in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and later became the morphological form of the present perfect in present-day English.<sup>7</sup> Despite the establishment of the explicit morphological changes of the present perfect, it takes long periods of time for the establishment of semantics, especially regarding its semantic difference from the preterite. “A strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite finally became established about 400 years later (Görlach, 1991, p.111).

### 3.3 Stage Three: Present > Past

“A strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite became established as late as the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Görlach, 1991, p.111). This conforms to Visser (1963-73, p. 751) who claims that

“[i]t is only after the time of Shakespeare that the preterite and the have + past participle construction are used as they are used nowadays: the first when the past event is circumstantially related, the second when a particular happening of the past has a bearing on the present.” (Visser,

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<sup>7</sup> Ando (2005) introduces us the historical changes in the present perfect over time by using (4) and (6); however he does not go depth to explain it using reanalysis and analogy from a grammaticalization perspective.



1963-73, p. 751)

The present perfect thus formally turns out to be a compound aspectual form, relating what happened in the past to present moment of utterance.

We assert that this semantic shift brings about several changes in the present perfect, one of which is whether it can combine with ADPs or not. In order to make a clear-cut distinction from the preterite, current relevance of the present perfect has been excessively emphasized since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, directly resulting in a prescriptive grammar rule that the present perfect does not co-occur with ADPs and current relevance is strictly interpreted. At this stage it is appropriate to state that the present perfect is once again semantically characterized by “present>past,” though “have” is no longer a full verb as it used to be in OE.

One of the earliest studies specifying this grammatical law is Pickbourn (1789) who describes this non-combination rule as follows:

The other tense likewise, viz. *I have written*, as evidently belong to present time. We do not say, *I have written yesterday*; I have written the first of August; but we say, I wrote yesterday; I write the first of August. This tense may properly be called the present perfect or perfect indefinite.  
(p. 32)

Another earliest piece of literature regarding the

non-combination rule is Murray (1968, pp. 42-43) who says in his *English Grammar 1795*,

“when the particular time of any occurrence is specified, as prior to the present time, this tense [=the present perfect] is not used: for it would be improper to say, ‘I have seen him yesterday,’ or ‘I have finished my work last week.’” (Murray, 1968, pp. 42-43)

This grammatical rule is also described by Bullions (1857, p. 183) that “the present-perfect tense ought never to be used in connexion with words which express past time; thus, ‘I have formerly mentioned his attachment to study,’ should be ‘I formerly mentioned.’”

Therefore, the grammatical law that the present perfect cannot co-occur with adverbials of definite past seems to be established accompanying the advent of “a strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite.

### 3.4 Stage Four: Present < Past

Stages Four is also characterized by present <past semantically, differing from Stage One in the way that “have” in Stage Four is a particle instead of a full verb in Stage One. No powerful evidence has ever been found to show the exact start of Stage Four, yet it can be confirmed that present-day English is moving from Stage Three towards Stage Four motivated by reanalysis. This movement can be proved by some superficial

changes such as combination of the present perfect with adverbials of definite past and the present perfect without an auxiliary (see details in Chapter Five and Six), and some deep changes in semantic interpretation of current relevance (see details in Chapter Four).

### 3.5 Between Stage Three and Stage Four

A development of the present perfect in present-day English from Stage Three to Stage Four can be true to many languages. Elsness (1997) has proved it by providing us with typical examples of some European languages, such as French and German which have reached Stage Four. Bybee et al. (1994) also claim that the change from “anterior,” where current relevance is emphasized, to “perfective,” a preterite-like use of the present perfect, is universal among various languages in the world.

As to English, the present perfect in present-day American English has moved from a present-oriented sense to a past-oriented sense much more obviously and quickly than in present-day British English. According to Quirk, et al. (1985),

“In AmE [=American English], the simple past is often preferred to the present perfective for the variants of the indefinite past.” (p. 194)

Quirk et al. (1985) further provide us with the examples as follows:

(7) a. Did the children come home yet? (esp AmE)

- b. I just came back.
- c. You told me already.
- d. I'm tired – I had a long day.

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 194)

On the other hand, British English has been taking smaller steps regarding the changes in the present perfect under the universal evolution. Such smaller steps can be seen in both (a) the combination of the present perfect and adverbials of definite past; and (b) extended interpretation of current relevance especially in spoken British English. The above unique changes in British English, especially in spoken British English, indicate that British English is also developing towards Stage Four, though not so obvious as American English is.

Such a smaller step of development in the present perfect in British English can also be supported by the similar phenomena in Australian English and New Zealand English. Cox (2005) has suggested the “preterite uses of the present perfect” in New Zealand English and Rits & Engel (2008) have suggested the “vivid narrative use” in spoken Australia English.

#### 4. Conclusion

It has been debated in this chapter that the history of English present perfect is accompanied by the semantic shift between the present and the past. With this semantic shift as a background, the evolution of the present perfect can be summarized in four stages. In Stage One the semantic focus lies on the present; in

Stage Two the semantic focus lies on the past; in Stage Three the semantic focus lies on the present again with “have” being an aspectual particle; in Stage Four the semantic focus lies on the past. It has been proved that present-day British English is moving from Stage Three, a present-oriented stage, to Stage Four, a past-oriented stage, with an explicit evidence shown both in the combination of the present perfect with adverbials of definite past, the present perfect without an auxiliary, and an implicit evidence illustrated by the extended interpretation of current relevance.

“Have” in English expresses the intentional possession being equivalent to the existence of something at someone’s (the subject’s) place. A cline (8) below from an existential verb “have” to a perfect particle “have” was thus proved.

(8) Schema of the Development of “have” in English

- Stage 1    have      (a full verb)
- Stage 2    “have + NP + past participle” (in Old English and early Middle English)
- Stage 3    “have + past participle (+ NP)” (a present perfect particle)
- Stage 4    “ ’ve + past participle ( + NP)
- Stage 5    “Φ+ past participle + NP”

A cline from an existential verb to a present perfect particle in English will be employed to examine whether it can be applied to Chinese perfect particle “le” and Japanese “iru” in the next chapter. It is hypothesized in the next chapter that the above mentioned cline, as shown in (8), will be effective to analyze those perfect

particles in Chinese and Japanese, thus a cross-linguistic conclusion, at least among these three languages, will be drawn.

Chapter 3  
The Present Perfect and Grammaticalization  
in Chinese and Japanese

1. Introduction

The present perfect “signals that the situation occurs prior to reference time (Now) and is relevant to the situation at reference time (Now)” (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 54). These two temporal features, the “past” and the “present,” are briefly summarized in this definition. This temporal (or semantic) characteristic can be applied to the present perfect in many other languages, though the morphological forms vary from language to language.<sup>1</sup> So far as English, Chinese and Japanese are concerned, the aspectual particles “have” in English, “le” in Chinese, and “te-iru” in Japanese are employed to express this semantic feature of present perfect respectively<sup>2</sup>. The English present perfect particle “have” and its grammaticalization have already been discussed in the previous chapter. There, it was concluded that “have” in English has experienced an evolutionary path from a main verb expressing “existence” to a present perfect particle, as shown in (1) below. A general cline of “a full verb (expressing “existence”) > an auxiliary

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<sup>1</sup> What is said here about the English present perfect being relevant to both the present and the past can be applied to many other languages as well, though generally speaking, there are no perfect equivalents to it in other languages in the world.

<sup>2</sup> In Chinese and Japanese there are several other aspectual particles that can be employed to express the meaning expressed by the present perfect in English. This chapter will focus on “le” in Chinese and “te-riu” in Japanese.

(present perfect particle)” can be deduced. Morphologically, the present perfect form “have/has + past participle (+NP)” in present-day English is believed to have developed from the “have + NP + past participle” form in Old English and early Middle English.

(1) Schema of the Development of “have” in English

- Stage 1    have    (a full verb)
- Stage 2    “have + NP + past participle” (in Old English and early Middle English)
- Stage 3    “have + past participle (+ NP)” (a present perfect particle)
- Stage 4    “ ’ve + past participle ( + NP)
- Stage 5    “ $\Phi$ + past participle + NP”

On the other hand, from the perspective of semantic focus shift, the present perfect typically develops through four stages over time. The difference between stages, as shown in (2), is a gradual semantic shift between the present and the preterite. So far as the English language is concerned, those stages can be described as follows.

At Stage One the “have + NP + past participle” form implied the existence of a situation in a finished state, with “have” being a full verb fundamentally meaning “to exist.” At this stage the present overrode the past semantically. Reanalysis led to a new word order of “have/has + past participle (+ NP)” that appeared at Stage Two, without strict semantic differences from the preterite until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The focus on the past overrode the



present at this stage. Stage Three (the stage where the English language is still located) started in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when “a strict semantic differentiation” was established. The focus on the present, characterized by “current relevance,” overweighed the past, clearly distinguishing the present perfect from the preterite. This research predicts that at Stage Four the English present perfect will function semantically as a preterite.

## (2) Four Stages of Semantic Focus Shift in the English Present Perfect

Stage 1: present > past

Stage 2: present < past

Stage 3: present > past

Stage 4: present < past

Using the evolutionary development of “have” as a model, this chapter endeavors to prove that “le” in Chinese and “te-iru” in Japanese have followed the same evolutionary path as English. It is suggested that these two particles were originally full verbs expressing “existence” in their respective languages.

## 2. The Present Perfect in Present-day Chinese

The present perfect in present-day English is so complicated and diverse that there is no exact equivalent to it in Chinese. In present-day Chinese there are basically four “perfective viewpoints” (Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 89). They are (a) the actual aspect

marked by “le”<sup>3</sup>, (b) the experiential aspect marked by “guo,” (c) the delimitative aspect marked by verb reduplication, and (d) the completive aspect marked by resultative verb complements (RVCs). Examples of the four types are as follows.

(3) the actual aspect marked by “le”

- a. *Xianggang laoban juan-zhe women de qian*  
 Hong-Kong proprietor grab-DUR we GEN money  
*taozou san-tian le*  
 escape three-day COS<sup>4</sup>

“The proprietor from Hong Kong has run away with our money for three days.”

(Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 129)

- b. *Wo huilai le* (Chao, 1968, p. 799)

I come-back COS

“I have come back.”

(Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 132)

- c. *ta zai Lundun zhu-le san-nian le*  
 he in London live-le three-year le

“He has lived in London for three years.”

(Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 138)

(4) the experiential aspect marked by “guo”

*Ta shang-guo Niujin daxue*  
 he attend-guo Oxford University

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the perfect use, “le” functions diversely in present-day Chinese. The other uses of “le” are not developed in this research.

<sup>4</sup> In Xiao & McEnery (2004), DUR stands for “durative;” GEN stands for “genetic;” and COS stands for “change of stage”.

“He has attended Oxford University.”

(Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 139)

(5) the delimitative aspect marked by verb reduplication

*Ta xiao-le xiao shuo [...]*

he smile-le smile say

“He smiled a little and said [...]”

(Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 151)

(6) the completive aspect marked by resultative verb complements

(RVCs)

*ta xi-wan-le yifu*

he wash-finish-le clothes

“He finished washing clothes.”

(Xiao & McEnery, 2004, p. 161)

As can be seen in (7) and (8) below, Wu (2004) and Mochiduki (1997) have also discussed the aspectual function of “le” as present perfect auxiliary.

(7) *wo kan-wan shu le*

I look-finish book LE

“I have finished reading the book.”

(Wu, 2004, p. 161)

(8) *ta qu Lundun le*

he go London LE

“He has gone to London.”

### 3. Grammaticalization of “le” in Chinese

In this section it is hypothesized that the grammaticalization of “le” follows a process of “a full verb expressing ‘existence’ > a resultative verb complement > a perfect aspectual particle.” This evolutionary path is illustrated in (9) below in details. At Stage One “liao,” the strong phonological form of “le,” is a full verb that can be used as freely as any other verb. Then, at Stage Two the “verb 1 + verb 2” construction was so popular at that time that “liao” began to appear after other full verbs as a complement. At Stage Three, after losing its stressed accent in pronunciation, “le” became a perfect aspectual particle. More details will be provided in the following sections.

#### (9) Schema of the Development of “le” in Chinese

- Stage 1     *liao*    (a full verb)
- Stage 2     a full verb + *liao/le* (complement)
- Stage 3     a full verb + *le* (aspectual particle)

#### 3.1 “Liao” As a Full Verb

Like “have” in English, “liao” at Stage One was a full verb in ancient Chinese, meaning “to finish.” Phonetically, “liao” had a strong accent in pronunciation, different from the present-day form “le” without an accent. Examples (10) and (11) are from ancient Chinese literature in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period (907-960). Example (10) is

from a novel describing a famous Chinese historical figure, Wu Zixu.<sup>5</sup> The novel was written during the Tang Dynasty or during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period. “Liao” in (10) is employed as a full verb, meaning “to finish.” With the subject “jiange” (literally “singing with sword”) at the beginning, it appears immediately after the temporal adverbial “yi” (literally “already”). Another Example (11) is from the same novel with its “liao” functioning exactly the same way. This use of “liao” as a full verb was the mainstream at that time.

- (10) *jiange yi liao, gengfu qianxing*  
 sword-singing already finish again go ahead  
 The singing with sword had already finished, so (he) went ahead again.

(Liu & Jiang (eds), 1990, p. 200)

- (11) *beige yi liao.*  
 sad song already finish  
 The sad song had already finished.

(Liu & Jiang (eds), 1990, p. 200)

A new construction in which “liao” appears immediately after another full verb can also be seen in novels written during the Tang Dynasty and during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period. “Liao” in (12) is used after another verb “shi” (literally “to eat”). The new construction “shiliao” literally means “to finish eating.”

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<sup>5</sup> Wu Zixu (? ~ 484 BC) is “the most famous ancestor of people with the surname of Wu.” He lived in the Spring and Autumn era (722 BC - 481 BC) of Chinese history. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu\\_Zixu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Zixu))

This resultative verb complement (RVC) construction did not become widespread until the Song Dynasty (960-1279) (Wu, 2004, pp. 234-235). However, it is obvious that the RVC constructions began to appear as early as the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period.

- (12) *junguan shi liao, bianji dujiang*  
military officer eat finish soon cross-river  
As soon as the military officer finished (having) a meal, they  
crossed the river.

(Liu & Jiang (eds), 1990, p. 202)

### 3.2 From “Liao” to “le”

“Liao” in RVC constructions became widely used in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). During this era a new syntactic construction “a full verb + complement” developed so rapidly (Wu, 2004, pp. 234-235) that not only adverbs and adjectives, but also verbs, appeared in the position of complements. This re-positioning of “liao” might be a result of “phonological reasons” in which “‘liao’ was first reduced to a clitic-form ‘le’ and then raised to the verb to encliticize to it as a suitable host element” (Wu, 2004, p. 235). Under this circumstance, “le/liao” – positioned immediately after full verbs --- emerged as a resultative complement by the mechanism of analogy at Stage Two in (9) above. At this stage “le/liao” functioned the same as other verbs, adverbs, or adjectives appearing as compliments after full verbs. However, reanalysis did not stop until “le/liao” was thoroughly abstracted to an aspectual particle at Stage Three: “le” in present-day Chinese.

The phonetic change from stressed syllable “liao” to unstressed “le” is one of the predominant proofs corroborating the grammaticalization cline shown in (9) above.

### 3.3 “Le” in Present-day Chinese and its Negation

It can be deduced from the negative form that the affirmative form of “le” implies the existence of an event or a situation which has happened or is finished. The grammaticalization of “le” superficially has nothing to do with the semantics of “existence;” however “mei(you),” the negative form of “le” literally meaning “not exist,” is closely related to the meaning of “existence.” In (13) the “mei + verb” construction is employed as a negative form of “le” in present-day Chinese. “Mei(you) + verb” literally means that “an action does not exist,” implying that the affirmative form of “le” probably has a literal meaning that “an action exists.” “Mei(you)” is also employed in the negative form of another perfect particle “guo” in Chinese, as shown in (14). In other words, the full verb “liao” implies that a finished event or situation “exists” as shown in (15).

(13) *wo hai mei xie huixin*

I yet mei write reply

“I haven’t replied to the letter.”

(Hayashi, Wang & Onishi, 2001, p. 6)

(14) *Youxie lu wo zou-guo, youde hai meiyou zou*

some-road I walk-le some yet meiyou walk

“I have walked some roads, but I haven’t walked others.”

(Locked doors: the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS in China, p. 86)

(15) Affirmation : *liao* (literally “exist”)

Negation: *meiyou* (literally “not exist”)

It has already been pointed out, traditionally, the perfect aspectual particles in Chinese have been viewed as being derived from the main verbs meaning “to finish.” However, the above mentioned studies and research support the new hypothesis that perfect aspectual particles are from the verbs of “existence.” The hypothesis is compatible with the assertion that the perfect is the existence of a state or the result of what has already occurred or been completed.

#### 4 The Present Perfect in Present-day Japanese

In present-day Japanese there are no perfect morphological equivalents for the present perfect in present-day English. Despite this, much research regarding the present perfect in present-day Japanese has been carried out from contrastive perspectives. The definition of the perfect aspect by Kudo (1995) can be regarded as an interpretation of the resultative perfect in English. In addition, there is an obvious overlap between “*Menomaesei*” in Japanese as described by Matsumoto (1994) and the semantics of the present perfect in present-day English.



#### 4.1 Kudo (1995)

Kudo (1995) is one of the key studies of the perfect use in Japanese. Kudo's famous definition of "perfect aspect" in the Japanese language includes the following three main points.

##### (16) Perfect Aspect in Kudo (1995)

- a. Three time points of Speech Time (ST), Event Time (ET) and Reference Time (RT) should always be available on the temporal line.
- b. Anteriority: ET should be anterior to RT temporally.
- c. Not only the anteriority of the event or situation but also the relevance of the event or situation to RT is required. In other words, the completion or current relevance of one of the events in question is necessary in the semantics of the perfect aspect.

(Kudo, 1995, p. 99; summarized by the author)

#### 4.2 Matsumoto (1993)

Matsumoto (1993) is a remarkable study of "menomaesei" (literally meaning the characteristics of what is just before one's eyes) in a Japanese dialect spoken on Amami Island in Kagoshima Prefecture. The Japanese morphological form "shite-arū" is adopted to express this special combination of aspectual and spatial meaning. According to Matsumoto (1993):

"Shite-arū" is employed to describe existence of the traces of what has already happened at the present time (Now) and at this place (Here) before one's eyes. It is a special

combination of aspectual meaning and spatial meaning.

(Matsumoto, 1993; summarized by the author)

Semantically, the aspectual part of this “menomaesei” (excluding the spatial meaning) is exactly the same as the resultative perfect use in English.

## 5. Grammaticalization of “te-iru” in Japanese

### 5.1 Classical Japanese Grammar

Aspectual particles of the present perfect are well-developed in ancient Japanese. According to Hashimoto (2001, p. 166), the Japanese language of Nara and Heian periods used four aspectual particles “tsu,” “nu,” “tari” and “ri.” Numbers (17), (18), (19) and (20) are examples of these four perfect particles.

- (17) kuni ni tachiokuretaru hitobito matsutote,  
hometown ni late-depart persons wait-tote  
soko ni hi wo kurasi tsu  
there ni one-day wo spend tsu

“We have spent one day waiting for those who were late for departure from their hometown.”

(Hashimoto, 2001, p. 167)

- (18) Matsuura kawa kawa no se hikari ayu  
Matsuura river river no shallow light sweetfish  
turu to tataseru imoto ga mo no suso nure nu.  
fish to stand-let sister ga clothes no hem wet nu

“You were standing in the middle of the shallow of Matsuura River to fish a sweet fish. Your hem had become wet.”

(ibid.)

(19) “Kaguya hime ni mise tatematsuri tamaru e”

Kaguya princess ni see-let tatematsrri give e

to iieba, okina omochi te hairi tari.

to say-if old man hold te enter tari

“Saying that he wanted to show it Princess Kaguya, the old man entered the room.”

(ibid.)

(20) Kasugano ha kefu ha na yakiso wakakusa no

Kasugano ha kefu ha not burn green grass no

tsuma mo komore ri ware mo komore ri.

wife mo hide ri I mo hide ri

“Please do not burn Kasugano since my wife and I hid ourselves in the green grass.”

(ibid.)

The above four aspectual particles are not employed in modern Japanese. “Tsu” and “nu” are usually translated into present-day Japanese as “ta,” “te-shimau,” “te-shimatta” or “te-ita” whereas “tari” and “ri” are usually translated as “ta” or “te-iru.”

## 5.2 Te-iru in Present-day Japanese

Thus far, no evidence has been uncovered that suggests that classical particles and modern Japanese particles were ever used at

the same time. Hence, it is possible that a significant amount of time might have elapsed between the point at which the classical particles ceased to be used and the time at which the modern particle made their appearance.

One of the new particles of the present perfect in present Japanese is “te-iru.” The grammaticalization of the latter part of this particle, viz. “iru” can be illustrated by the three stages shown in (20) below. At Stage One “iru” is a full verb representing “the existence of movable beings at one spot of a place.” Then at Stage Two it is abstracted to express the perfect aspectual meaning in present-day Japanese by reanalysis. At this stage, “iru” and “te” have been integrated as a combination expressing the present perfect semantics in present-day Japanese. At Stage Three “te-iru” is further abbreviated to “te-ru” phonetically by reanalysis.

(21) Grammaticalization of “iru” in Japanese<sup>6</sup>

Stage One “iru” (a full verb)

Stage Two “te-iru” (an aspectual particle)

Stage Three “te-ru” (an abbreviated form)

In a word, the Japanese aspectual particle “te-iru” has been proved to have developed from the full verb “iru” representing that “some movable beings exist at a certain place.” This development can be shown in the following cline: “iru (a full verb) > te-iru (an aspectual particle) > te-ru (an abbreviated form)” can be obtained.

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<sup>6</sup> The progressive use of te-iru in Japanese is not developed in this research. Refer to Kindaichi (1950), Okuda (1985) and Kudo (1995) for details.

## 6. Conclusion

Thus far, this chapter has demonstrated that the existence type verb is closely related to the present perfect aspect or its equivalent not only in English but also in Chinese and Japanese. Through reanalysis and analogy, “liao/le” in Chinese and “te-iru” in Japanese have followed a grammaticalization process from full verbs to aspect particles.

“Have” in English expresses the intentional possession, being equivalent to the existence of something at one’s (the subject’s) place. A cline from an existential verb “have” to a perfect particle of “have” was demonstrated in the previous chapter.

The Chinese perfect particle “le” is traditionally viewed as having developed from the full verb “liao” (literally “to finish”). However, this research presents an alternative view: that “le” might have developed from the existential verb “liao.”

In Japanese the perfect particle “te-iru” is from the full verb “iru” representing the existence of some moving things. Another cline from an “existential” verb “iru” to a perfect particle “te-iru” and “te-ru” can be deduced.

The clines of “have” in English, “le” in Chinese and “te-iru” in Japanese have been examined from the grammaticalization perspectives. The research demonstrates that “existential main verbs > perfect aspectual particles” is plausible cross-linguistically, at least in these three languages. The research will be expanded to examine whether or not the hypothesis can be applied to other languages.

**Chapter 4**  
**From Narrowed Current Relevance**  
**Towards Extended Current Relevance**

**1. Introduction**

The present perfect, defined as “a compound tense expressing two temporal relations” (Huddleston et al., 2002, p.140), is one of the most complicated issues regarding tense and aspect in present-day English. Most linguists agree that the present perfect is generally used to report a “past event with current relevance” (see, for example, Leech, 1994; Quirk et al., 1985). However, linguists differ with one another regarding the definition of “current relevance.” Some see the present perfect as characterized by narrowed current relevance, while others see it as characterized by extended current relevance. What follows will attempt to clarify the differences between the two viewpoints and will attempt to demonstrate that these different views reflect changes in the ways in which the present perfect has been used over time.

The present perfect differs from the preterite in regard to current relevance, an inevitable relevance to the present moment of utterance, which is frequently described as the fundamental difference in semantics between the two verb forms. Such meaning difference can be easily demonstrated by examples (1) and (2), with sentence (1) implying that the sister is still alive whereas

sentence (2) implies that the sister is now dead.

(1) His sister has been an invalid all her life (i.e. 'She is still alive').

(Leech, 1994, p.40)

(2) His sister was an invalid all her life (i.e. 'she is now dead').

(ibid.)

Similarly, Chomsky (1971, p. 212) offers example (3). According to Chomsky, (3) presupposes that Einstein has not died. In other words, (3) is grammatical only when Einstein is still alive. In this research, such strict and intentionally narrowed interpretation regarding current relevance is called "narrowed current relevance." The narrowed current relevance is a symbol of the present perfect at Stage Three,<sup>1</sup> where "present" is overwhelmingly a semantic focus.

(3) Einstein has visited Princeton.

(Chomsky, 1971, p. 212)

Narrowed current relevance was accepted universally for many years. However, a number of linguists have argued that the use of the present perfect has evolved over time, and the narrowed current relevance view no longer reflects the ways in which the present perfect is actually used. Inoue (1979) refutes that even if Einstein is not alive, example (3) can be possibly grammatical provided that it is uttered in the following discourse contexts (4),

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Chapter Two for details.

(5), and (6).<sup>2</sup> Inoue argues that it is the repeatability of a situation that makes the usage of the present perfect possible. In (4), Princeton University's memorable occasions are repeatable; in (5), the Nobel Prize winners' visit to Princeton is also repeatable; and in (6), Jewish scholars' coming to the United States is also repeatable. There is no doubt that example (3) can be fully grammatical in some appropriate contexts and it is supposed that there are more possibilities in addition to (4), (5), and (6) that make (3) grammatically correct.

(4) Talking about Princeton University having memorable occasions.

(Inoue, 1979, p.574)

(5) Talking about the Nobel Prize winners visiting Princeton.

(ibid.)

(6) Talking about Jewish scholars coming to the United States.

(ibid.)

Extended interpretation of current relevance in (4), (5), and (6) in Inoue (1979) and other similar literature marks an important turning point in interpreting the meaning of current relevance, motivating the development of the present perfect into a past-oriented verb form by reanalysis.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter the

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<sup>2</sup> Inoue's claim is acceptable except for her conclusion of repeatability, which I do not think is the element that triggers the acceptance of the example.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Chapter Two for details.



developing process from narrowed current relevance to extended current relevance will be discreetly examined from diachronic (grammaticalization) and semantic (temporal) perspectives. Inoue's relatively loose interpretation of current relevance will be referred to as "extended current relevance" in this research.

## 2. Grammaticalization Perspective

Grammaticalization of English present perfect can be characterized by an argument on the issue which is semantically focused, on the present or the past. The semantic focus (on either the present or the past) varies at different stages of the present perfect evolution. In this research, it is advocated that the development of English present perfect can be included in a four-step amendment to Elness (1997), Bybee *et al.* (1994) and other literature<sup>4</sup>. In our proposal, the first stage is featured by "present > past," approximately equaling the present perfect in Old English and early Middle English in semantics; the second stage, roughly from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, is characterized by "present < past," without a strict semantic differentiation from the preterite; the third stage, lasting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present time, refers to "present > past" semantically; the last stage, a suggested stage that present-day English is approaching, refers to "present < past" semantically. Historically semantic focus lies on present, past, present, and past in order at four stages respectively.

Present-day English present perfect seems to be moving from

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Chapter Two for details.

present-oriented Stage Three (present > past) to past-oriented Stage Four (present < past), as shown, for instance, in its co-occurrence with adverbials of definite past (see Chapter Five). During this stage, changes have been observed carefully from different perspectives, such as changes in the superficial structure of its combination with adverbials of different temporal characteristics, and a deep semantic movement towards the preterite. The research on two types of interpretation of current relevance that have been mentioned so far in this chapter, narrowed current relevance and extended current relevance, is to be carried out with reference to this diachronic background of English present perfect.

### 3. Temporal Interpretation of Current Relevance

The narrowed interpretation of current relevance mentioned in Section One can be considered one of the main features of the present perfect at the third stage. It is first of all related to the subjects who are alive at the present, then to the physically visible results or visible consequent states of certain events at the present. Such narrowed current relevance can be easily observed in the following examples. In example (7), in Jespersen's opinion, the quotation

“must have been written between 1859, when Macaulay died, and 1881, when Carlyle died.” (Jespersen, 1931, pp. 66-67)

(7) Macaulay did not impress the very soul of English feeling as Mr. Carlyle, for example, has done.

(Jespersen, 1931, pp. 66-67)

In example (8), Pickbourn claims that “we may say” [(8a)]; “but we cannot say” [(8b)] because

[w]e suppose Cicero, as it were, still existing, and speaking to us in his orations; but as the poems are lost, we cannot mention them in the same manner. (Pickbourn, 1789, pp. 33-34)

To Pickbourn, the present existence of at least a relevant participant in the event in question seems to be a necessary condition in deciding whether to adopt the present perfect or not.

(8) a. Cicero has written orations.

b. \*Cicero has written poems.

(Pickbourn, 1789, pp. 33-34)

Michaelis (1994) states that (9a) implies Neil Young is still engaged in musical activity while (9b) implies that Neil Young is no longer a singer or a musician. Michaelis' interpretation is another example of narrowed current relevance, even referring to the present existence of the objects in a present perfect clause.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The viewpoint is certainly criticized by many native speakers as pointed out by Kashino (1999, p. 50) with no more details.

- (9) a. I've been to a Neil Young concert.  
b. I went to a Neil Young concert.

(Michaelis, 1994)

In order to verify whether the above mentioned narrowed interpretation of current relevance in Jespersen (1931), Pickbourn (1789), and Michaelis (1994) is true and why it is (or is not) true, there is an urgent need to reconsider the definition of current relevance.

Current relevance has been frequently used as a key in analyzing the meaning of the canonical present perfect, especially distinguishing its meaning from the preterite at Stage Three where the English present perfect is characterized by “present > past.” The semantic focus on the present at this stage is thoroughly in agreement with the sense of current relevance. However, ironically no linguists have ever been successful in giving a satisfactory definition of current relevance taking its syntactic meaning and pragmatic meaning into consideration. This is due to a special bilateral quality: the present perfect only syntactically guarantees that the reported situation in the past bears current relevance while a specific interpretation of current relevance in a present perfect clause is totally subject to its context pragmatically.

Some experimental research has been done on the definition of current relevance. One important study of recent date is Declerck (2006) who created a “present time-sphere” including pre-present and post-present. In Fig 1, the present time-sphere is centered by  $t_0$ ,

“[t]he temporal zero-point is the time from which all the temporal relations expressed by a tense ultimately take their starting point. It is usually speech time,” (Declerck, 2006, p. 97)

with pre-present preceding  $t_0$  and post-present succeeding  $t_0$  on the time axis. A situation reported with current relevance is thus located within the present time-sphere as illustrated in Fig 1.

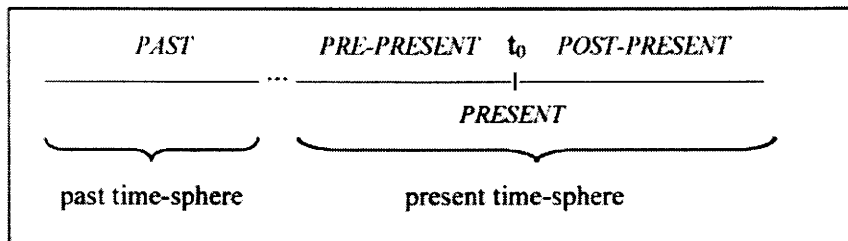


Fig 1 Linguistic conceptualization of the time line in English  
(Declerck, 2006, p. 149)

As an attempt at a visual representation of current relevance, Fig 1 (Declerck, 2006, p. 149) is an original contribution to analysis of the present perfect. However, it is very difficult to imagine that there is an obvious interval between past time-sphere and present time-sphere. Situationally speaking, what is encoded in a present perfect clause must be in the past, i.e. be located in the past time-sphere. This is pointed out by Wada (2009) in the following examples.

- (10) a. I have visited Singapore once before. That was a long time ago.

b. The phone rang a minute ago.

(Wada, 2009, p. 269)

Wada says:

“What seems problematic is that in case of an indefinite reading such as the experiential perfect in [(10a)], the situation time not only seems disconnected from  $t_0$ , but also is situated farther in the past than the situation time of the past tense in [(10b)].” (Wada, 2009, p. 270)

Another reliable study on current relevance can be Palmer (1974) who defines that current relevance suggests that

“in some way or other (not necessarily in its results) the action is relevant to something observable at the present.” (Palmer, 1974, p. 50)

In Palmer’s statement, the phrase “not necessary in its results” is very inspiring, yet no further information is supplied. The definition so far can be called a perfect syntactic current relevance interpretation. Palmer continues beyond syntactic field to provide an ambiguous additional explanation of “nil results.” The so-called nil results are illustrated by the following (11a) and (11b), which ought to be analyzed at pragmatic level. Unfortunately, Palmer does not make a clear-cut line between syntactic current relevance and pragmatic current relevance.

- (11) a. I've hit it twice, but it's standing up.  
 b. I've written, but they haven't replied.

(Palmer, 1974, p. 50)

Syntactic current relevance refers to the confirmation that the past event is somewhat related to the present. The semantic scope that current relevance covers can be illustrated in the following figures. In Fig 2, current relevance is guaranteed to be valid from temporal point B1 (initial point of an event) to another temporal point B2 (final point of an event) on the time axis. Syntactically speaking, there is no more information on aspectual quality between B1 and B2. Fig 2 is a temporal illustration of traditional continuative perfect, a result state of the situation up to the preset, or habit up to the present.



**Fig 2 Semantic Scope of Current Relevance of  
 the Continuative Perfect**

In Fig 3, current relevance covers a different temporal distance from Fig 2. The semantic scope takes up a coverage from B2 to NOW, B1 being cognitively neglected. The aspectual details between B2 and NOW are not provided syntactically. Fig 3 is a temporal demonstration of what have been called, resultative perfect, experiential perfect, existential perfect or indefinite past. The distinction can be made according to the temporal distance

between B2 and NOW. When B2 is relatively close to Now, the perfect illustrated might be the resultative use. On the other hand, when B2 is temporally far from Now, the present perfect might be the experiential or existential perfect use. In present-day English most verbs do not distinguish these two perfects by themselves, except for the verbs of “be” and “go.” According to Comrie,

a useful illustrative example in English is the distinction between *be* and *go* in sentences like *Bill has been to America* and *Bill has gone to America*, since English here perfect makes an overt distinction between the experiential perfect and the perfect of result. (1976, pp.58-59)

Such distinctions in other languages such as Chinese and Japanese are always overt, since in Chinese there is an experiential perfect particle of “*guo*” and in Japanese there is also an experiential perfect particle of “*shita koto ga aru.*”



**Fig 3    Semantic Scope of Current Relevance of  
The Non-continuative Perfect**

Syntactic current relevance can be easily demonstrated by the above Fig 2 and Fig 3; however the pragmatic current relevance seems to be more complicated and diversified, thus requiring an



extended interpretation of current relevance in Section 4.

#### 4. Extended Current Relevance

Diachronically speaking, present-day English is obviously on its way towards the fourth stage from the third stage. In other words, the present perfect is undergoing a semantic shift from a present-oriented sense to a past-oriented sense. Under such circumstances, this chapter aims to carry out a holistic research on the extended interpretation of current relevance in the present perfect, especially those present perfect clauses with deceased individuals as their syntactic subjects<sup>6</sup>. In this research it is hypothesized that the extended current relevance reading can be obtained from

- (a) the present relevance from any participant involved in the event in question;
- (b) situational current relevance;
- (c) resultative current relevance;
- (d) indirect resultative current relevance;
- (e) contextual current relevance;
- (f) speaker's (writer's) current relevance.

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<sup>6</sup> Albert Einstein was born on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1879 in Ulm, Germany, and died on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1955 in Princeton Hospital (Ze'ev Rosenkranz, *The Einstein Scrapbook*, 2002, 2-5). It is confirmed that all the present perfect clauses in this chapter with Albert Einstein as their syntactic subjects are all from books published later than 1955.

#### 4.1 Current Relevance from Any Participant in the Event

In addition to subject's current relevance which has already been discussed in the previous sections, other current relevance brought about by any participant in the event under discussion can also be possible, such as an object's relevance. Although Shakespeare being not alive (in 1999), example (12) is completely acceptable because "most of the best plays we know," the object in the situation <Shakespeare write most of the best plays we know>, is a present topic. "Most of the best plays we know" written by Shakespeare are still available for us to touch, to read, and to discuss. The object in the event in question is also possible to create current relevance, thus justifying the use of the present perfect in example (12).

(12) Shakespeare has written most of the best plays we know.

(Kashino, 1999, p. 167)

In example (13), Nancy Polette wrote a book entitled *Gifted Gooks, Gifted Readers: Literature Activities to Excite Young Minds* in 2000 when Albert Einstein is not alive. Current relevance of Albert Einstein's writing cannot be read from the subject of the present perfect clause. Current relevance of Einstein's writing in the past is instead triggered by the object, another participant in the event of writing. What Einstein wrote as shown in (13) can be still read in his book which was entitled *The World as I See it* and was published in 1935 (translated by Alan Harris). Current relevance can thus be read easily through the object (another

participator except for the subject) of the event in question.

- (13) One of the world's great thinkers, Albert Einstein, has written, "The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not, who can no longer wonder, can no longer feel amazement is as good as dead – a snuffed out candle."

(Nancy Polette, *Gifted Gooks, Gifted Readers: Literature Activities to Excite Young Minds*, 2000)

The object's current relevance can also be found in example (14) where the writers pay close attention to the present value or influence of Einstein's saying that "you cannot solve a problem at the same level of abstraction at which it was created." This proverb-like saying can still be effective and true at the moment of writing. With this in the authors' minds, even though Einstein being not alive, his famous saying remains valid still giving people some inspiration.

- (14) To create new images, organizations must see themselves in a larger context --- they must first consider, and then act upon, questions of purpose and "calling." As Albert Einstein has said, "you cannot solve a problem at the same level of abstraction at which it was created."

(Diana Kaplin Whitney, Amanda Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*)

## 4.2 Situational Current Relevance<sup>7</sup>

Situational current relevance refers to the current relevance that can be proved by the physical continuation of an event or a state up to the present moment in the real world we live in. In example (15a) the house's state of being "empty" began at the time of "ages ago" and continues up to the present moment of utterance. The present moment of being physically empty is a powerful and convincing proof of current relevance. (15b) is slightly different from (15a) so far as the situation type is concerned, <be empty for ages> in (15a) being a state and <sing in this choir ever since he was a boy> in (15b) being a habitual action. In example (15b) current relevance is proved by an inerasable present truth that Mr. Terry is still in this choir.

- (15) a. That house has been empty for ages.  
b. Mr. Terry has sung in this choir ever since he was a boy.  
(Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p. 192)

Such examples are so-called continuative perfect clause in which current relevance can be supported by a situational or physical proof suggesting that the situation (usually a state or a habitual action) is still going on at the moment of speaking or writing in the real world. Such is also the case in example (16) where the present truth that Einstein is dead is a sufficient support for current relevance.

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to Chapter Seven for details regarding the continuative perfect use of the present perfect.

(16) As for this writing Albert Einstein has been dead for forty-five years, but in his absence he seems more present than ever.

(Linda Anderson, *Creative writing*)

#### 4.3 Resultative Current Relevance

In both examples (17) and (18) the direct results of the situations can be observed physically. Example (17) causes us to imagine a bleeding finger at the present moment; example (18) possibly shows us the broken window directly at the moment of speaking or writing.<sup>8</sup> The resultative is “by far the most common sense” among four principal meanings of the present perfect (Leech, 2004, p. 40). This direct result use of the present perfect has been discussed so much that some linguists simply assert that resultative current relevance is the core meaning of the present perfect instead of current relevance.

(17) I’ve cut my finger. (It’s still bleeding.)

(Palmer, 1974, p. 52)

(18) He’s broken the window. (It hasn’t been mended.)

(ibid.)

Example (19), despite its subject, i.e. Albert Einstein who is not alive any longer at the time of writing in 2002, adopts the syntactic form of the present perfect due to an observable present

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<sup>8</sup> These interpretations are only typical examples, and there are some other possible interpretations regarding examples (17) and (18).

result. This present state is a result of the event <Albert Einstein become a myth, a symbol, a paradigm of scientific revolution>.

(19) In these pages, the reader is given a view, admittedly limited, of one of the most universal symbols of the twentieth century, one of the greatest intellects of all ages. Albert Einstein has become a myth, a symbol, a paradigm of scientific revolution.

(Ze've Rosenkranz, *The Einstein Scrapbook*, 2002)

#### 4.4 Indirect Resultative Current Relevance

In Leech (1994), the present perfect clause (20) implies a conventional result that “the taxi is now here,” which ought to be regarded as only one of the possibilities. This can be proved by example (22) where another present consequence that the taxi is not here is also possible. In this chapter, it is called indirect resultative current relevance which suggests a resultative state of a series of events in the context. Indirect resultative is more concretely exemplified than Declerck’s definition of “not an immediate and automatic result” (Declerck, 2006, p. 302). In other words, in example (22) the present consequence expresses the result of a two-phased situation <the taxi arrive and leave>. The same can be true of examples (21) and (23), where (21) shows one typical result that “I’m clean” and (23) expresses another possible result of the multi-phased situation <I have a bath, but after that slog in the garden>. This indirect resultative current relevance also works well Palmer’s “nil result” in the sentences in (11) where

the conventional results are excluded intentionally by the relevant contexts.

(20) The taxi has arrived (i.e. 'The taxi is now here').  
(Leech, 1994, p. 39)

(21) I've had / taken a bath ('I'm now clean').  
(ibid.)

(22) Yes, it has arrived and left, I'm afraid.  
(Elsness, 1997, p. 68)

(23) I have had a bath, but after that slog in the garden I need another one.  
(ibid.)

#### 4.5 Contextual Current Relevance

In example (24) written in 1991 with the late Albert Einstein as its subject, current relevance of the present perfect clause "But Albert Einstein has been deified by the scientific community and society at large" can be easily read from the context. The context of "the enormity of Einstein's intellect" is a key to current relevance, where the powerful present influence of Einstein's intellect is still being studied and discussed.<sup>9</sup> Context is another way of providing an extended interpretation of current relevance.

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<sup>9</sup> Example (24) current relevance can also be obtained from the semantic subject of the event "deifying" as "the scientific community and society at large" bears strong present influence.

(24) HOW CAN one grasp the enormity of Einstein's intellect?

All great scientists seem remote, extra human even. But Albert Einstein has been deified by the scientific community and society at large. In the guise of a superbrain, a mind that commanded the most complex and abstract aspects of physical science, he is portrayed as with out [*sic*] equal among scientists.

(1991, BNC)

#### 4.6 Speaker's (Writer's) Current Relevance

Speaker's or writer's current relevance deals with an important fact that the presenter of a situation plays a key role in connecting a past event with the present moment perceptively, overriding what is physically true in the real world.

The writer-biased (speaker-biased) extended current relevance can be illustrated by example (25) with a debating point on the temporal adverbial "modern times." "Modern times" in example (25) acts like a trigger that both Einstein's lifetime and the time of writing this sentence are ambiguously included in "modern times." This vague definition tactically supplies us with current relevance of Einstein describing how his work was affected by the philosophy of David Hume and Ernest Mach.

(25) For example, the most distinguished physicist of modern times, Albert Einstein, has described how his work was affected by the philosophy of David Hume and Ernest Mach.

(John Cunningham Wood, *J. A. Schumpeter*, 1991)



## 5. Conclusion

The present-oriented meaning of the present perfect is characterized by a strict interpretation of current relevance such as Jespersen (1931), Leech (1994), and Pickbourn (1789) at Stage Three of the present perfect evolution. Present-day English is undergoing a semantic switch from a present-oriented sense towards a past-oriented sense. The shift is marked by some criticisms by Inoue (1979) and so forth, accompanying an extended interpretation of current relevance. The problems mentioned in Section One can be solved by extended current relevance law, an amendment of traditionally narrowed interpretation of current relevance. The evolution from narrowed current relevance to extended current relevance comes into advent with a grammaticalization background that English present perfect is developing from Stage Three to Stage Four in our evolution model provided in Chapter Two.

The extended interpretation of current relevance illustrated in previous parts can easily explain those examples that cannot be dealt with by narrowed current relevance, indicating that current relevance of the present perfect is more relatively loosely employed than before. In many cases in Section Four, the extended current relevance simply plays a role of background for a reported situation, with a gradual outstanding of the preterite semantically.

## Chapter 5

### The Present Perfect and Adverbials of Definite Past

#### 1. Introduction

One of the puzzles regarding the present perfect (PP) in present-day English is whether it combines with adverbials of definite past (ADP) which denote a point of time or a period of time wholly located preceding Speech Time rendering “NOW” in the present perfect, such as *yesterday*, *a week ago*, and *last year*. Some linguists have pointed out so far that the present perfect in present-day English generally does not occur with adverbials of definite past (see, for example, Klein, 1992; Leech, 1994; and so forth). Klein (1992) asserts that the following examples (1a,b,c) are ungrammatical owing to the so-called “position-definiteness constraint.”<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. \*Chris has left York yesterday.<sup>2</sup>  
b. \*Chris has left York last year.  
c. \*Chris has left York some ten years ago.

(Klein, 1992, p. 525)

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<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon in English that it is impossible to say \**Yesterday at ten*, *Chris has left York* is called “the present perfect puzzle” in Klein (1992). Klein’s solution to the puzzle is “position definiteness constraint,” analyzing as follows: “If it is true that Chris left York at ten, then for any time span after ten, he is in the posttime of leaving York at ten. Therefore, it is pragmatically odd, though not false, to single out some specific time span *t* and to restrict the claim that Chris is in the posttime of leaving York at ten to just this time span *t*.” (Klein, 1992, p. 550)

<sup>2</sup> “\*” indicates that a sentence following it is ungrammatical.

Although Leech (1994) expresses a similar opinion with regard to the puzzle, he discloses a different reason maintaining that this is just because adverbials of definite past “refer to a specific time in the past temporally.” These standpoints by Klein (1992) and Leech (1994) are consistent with Vanneck’s

“hypercorrect written use of the present perfect in American English in contexts where British English would use simple past tense” (1958, p. 240)

although

“in many contexts Americans spontaneously use the preterite instead of the perfect.” (ibid.)

Such descriptions can be easily seen in prescriptive grammar books for EFL learners published both in Japan and China.

On the other hand, Swan (2005, p. 457) states prudently that co-occurrence of the present and adverbial of definite past is “unusual but not impossible.” The “unusualness” is illustrated by the following examples (2) and (3) with an attempted analysis that:

“they [=structures that the present perfect co-occurs with adverbials of definite past) often occur in brief news, where space is limited and there is pressure to announce the news and give the details in the same clause.”

(2) Police have arrested more than 900 suspected (*sic*) drugs

traffickers in raids throughout the country on Friday and Saturday.

(Swan, 2005, p. 457)

(3) ... a runner who's beaten Linford Christie earlier this year.

(ibid.)

In addition to Swan (2005), Quirk et al. (1985, p. 195) try to clarify that such a combination is brought about by a “performance error” in example (4); however they fail to apply this “performance error” law to another combination in example (5). Poutsma’s (1926, p. 260) “afterthought” may be an appropriate analysis for example (5) with the adverbial “years ago” at the very end of the utterance.

(4) –Have you ever seen Macbeth on the stage?

–Yes, I’ve seen it ages ago, when I was a child.

(Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p.195)

(5) They asked me about something I’ve said years ago.

(ibid.)

Up until now, what has been discussed relating to the present perfect and adverbials of definite past in representative literature can be concisely summarized as follows: (a) generally speaking, the PP does not co-occur with ADPs in present-day English; (b) when the PP puzzles do co-occur on certain unusual occasions, such analyses as “performance error,” “afterthoughts,” and “brief news

constraint” have been carried out. Unfortunately, more instances can be easily sought out in both written registers and spoken registers. Those three rules obviously do not analyze the following examples of (6), (7) and (8) convincingly. This research aims to conduct a holistic investigation on the PP puzzle based on corpus data and to explain it systematically, adopting diachronic and semantic approaches.

(6) The M6 crosses on the Thornbridge Viaduct, a viaduct which has been extensively repaired last year using a very powerful water lance to cut out deteriorated concrete, a German tool being used in Britain for the first time.

(BNC)

(7) IN THE FACE of the millions of people who have become displaced from their homes and their countries, and are refugees, the Vatican has published a document last month to ask Western governments to deal effectively with the tragedy of forced exile.

(ibid.)

(8) The company has stabilised debt at £2.8 billion last year and will begin cutting its borrowings in 1992, 12 months ahead of schedule.

(ibid.)

## 2. A Brief Historical Account of the English Present Perfect

### 2.1 The Present Perfect in Old English and Middle English

Elsness (1997, p. 247) has pointed out that the verbal system in Old English (OE) consisted of only two inflectional tenses, the present and the preterite, with the preterite performing

“most of the functions later taken over by the present perfect, the pluperfect and other forms.” (Elsness, 1997, p. 247)

The word order of “have / has + past participle + NP” in present-day English is believed to have originated from “have / has + NP + past participle” in OE (Visser, 1963-73, p. 2189). Visser states that (9a) means that “I possess a done or finished condition,” with “have” being a full verb approximately meaning “possess” and “done” being used to modify “my work.” The construction is semantically characterized by “**present>past.**” Therefore, it is hypothesized that at this stage of development the PP (taking the construction of “have/has + NP + past participle”) generally did not co-occur with ADPs. It was not until the 14<sup>th</sup> century that the word order of (9b), “have/has + past participle + NP,” was finally established as a normal grammatical form of the PP (Ando, 2005, p. 130). It can be deduced that the then PP (taking a syntactic form of “have/has + past participle + NP”) was not strictly distinguished from the preterite semantically. The semantic obscurity between the PP and the preterite lasted around 300-400 years, approximately from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was not until the beginning

of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when “a strict semantic differentiation” between the PP and the preterite became established (Görlach, 1991, p.111). It is thus inferred that the English PP in late Middle English and early Modern English was semantically characterized by “present < past.”

- (9) a. I have my work done. (Old English and early Middle English)  
(=I possess a done or finished condition.)  
b. I have done my work. (Present-day English)  
(Visser, 1963-73, p. 2189)

## 2.2 English PP in Modern English<sup>3</sup>

“A strict semantic differentiation” between the PP and the preterite became established as late as the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Görlach, 1991, p.111). This conforms to Visser (1963-73, p. 751) who claims that

“[i]t is only after the time of Shakespeare that the preterite and the have + past participle construction are used as they are used nowadays: the first when the past event is circumstantially related, the second when a particular happening of the past has a bearing on the present.” (Visser, 1963-73, p. 751)

The PP thus formally turns out to be a compound aspectual

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<sup>3</sup> Modern English, often abbreviated as “Mod E,” refers to English from 1500 up till now (Ukaji, 2000, p. 17).

form, relating what happened in the past to the present moment of utterance.

We assert that this semantic shift brings out several changes in the PP, one of which is whether it can combine with ADPs or not. In order to make a clear-cut distinction from the preterite, current relevance of the PP has been excessively emphasized since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, directly resulting in a prescriptive grammar rule that the PP does not co-occur with ADPs. At this stage it is appropriate to state that the PP is once again semantically characterized by “present>past,” though “have” is no longer a full verb as it was in OE. One of the earliest studies specifying this grammatical law is Murray (1968, pp. 42-43) who states in his *English Grammar 1795* that

“when the particular time of any occurrence is specified, as prior to the present time, this tense [=the present perfect] is not used: for it would be improper to say, ‘I have seen him yesterday,’ or ‘I have finished my work last week.’” (Murray, 1968, pp. 42-43)

The rule is also described by Bullions (1857, p. 183) that “the present-perfect tense ought never to be used in connexion with words which express past time; thus, ‘I have formerly mentioned his attachment to study,’ should be ‘I formerly mentioned.’” Therefore, the grammar law that the PP cannot co-occur with ADPs seems to be established accompanying the advent of “a strict semantic differentiation” between the PP and the preterite.



### 2.3 Elsness' "Three-stage" Theory

Every language in the world including English is developing constantly. It is extremely important to analyze the English PP, especially its combination with ADPs, from a grammaticalization perspective. A diachronic account of the English PP ought to be given based on a systematic description of the PP in European languages with special reference to German and French. In this section the focus will be extended to the PP in European languages as a whole by providing representative pieces of literature. One of them is by Elsness (1997, p. 347) in which the history of PP in European languages is briefly described in a "three-stage theory."

"[T]he first stage is characterized by reference to a present state or result of action." At this stage "present" is somewhat more emphasized than "past," exactly the same as the PP in Old English and early Middle English.

Then,

"at the second stage the emphasis has shifted to the past action which brought about the state or result, but any specification of time that is separate from the deictic zero-point is still disallowed." (Elsness, 1997, p. 347)

A very typical example and conceivably the only example in European languages at this stage is present-day English, whose PP generally does not co-occur with ADPs in terms of prescriptive grammar. It is special enough that among various European languages only present-day English still remains at this stage,

while German is moving towards the third stage and French, Romanian, Italian and Russian have already reached the third stage.

Finally,

“At the third and final stage the present perfect has become a simple exponent of past action, without any restrictions on the temporal specification.” (Elsness, 1997, p. 347)

To sum up from the above mentioned three stages, two evolutions with the PP in European languages seem to be certain: (a) from present-oriented to past-oriented semantically; (b) from not co-occurring with ADPs to co-occurring with ADPs superficially.

### **3. Co-occurrence of the Present Perfect with Adverbials of Definite Past in Present-day English**

#### **3.1 About Adverbial of Definite Past**

ADP stands for “adverbial of definite past” which denotes a point of time or a period of time totally located in the past on the time axis. As an indicator allotting a temporal relationship of reported events in an utterance or in a clause, ADPs bear distinctive importance in analyzing English PP. Those adverbials associated with the past tense in (10) and (11) can all be called ADPs, yet “in 1900” in (11) obviously holds a longer inherent time span than “yesterday” in (10). Taking this temporal length into consideration, eight typical ADPs are chosen for clarification as

listed in (12).

(10) Adverbials associated with the past tense

yesterday (evening), a week ago, earlier this week, last Monday,  
the other day, at four o'clock, in the morning, on Tuesday

(Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p. 194)

(11) [+THEN]

long ago, five years ago, once(=formerly), yesterday, the other  
day, those days, last night, in 1900, at 3:00, after the war, no  
longer

(McCoard, 1978, p. 135)

(12) yesterday, a week ago, a month ago, a year ago, last night, last  
week, last month, last year,

### 3.2 Co-occurrence Examples

A recent tendency towards the employment of the preterite in a PP context in American English has been pointed out (Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p. 194). This influence on British English is obvious; however, British English takes its own unique step of development by combining with ADPs in the PP use. Such particular combinations can be found in both spoken and written registers. In this research the data from two well-known and authoritative English corpora BNC and Wordbanks are adopted in the following Table 1.

Table 1. The PP co-occurring with ADPs

	BNC/SP <sup>4</sup>	BNC/WR <sup>5</sup>	Wordbanks UK/SP <sup>6</sup>	Wordbanks UK/WR1 <sup>7</sup>	Wordbanks UK/WR2 <sup>8</sup>	total
yesterday	17	0	6	1	1	25
a week ago	1	0	0	0	0	1
a month ago	0	0	1	0	0	1
a year ago	0	0	1	0	0	1
last night	1	0	0	0	2	3
last week	9	0	6	0	0	15
last month	0	0	0	0	1	1
last year	5	0	4	0	0	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	33	0	18	1	4	<b>56</b>

Despite the clear-cut rules of the strict semantic difference between the PP and the preterite, and of the incompatibility of the PP with ADPs, counter examples still exist in present-day English, among which some are listed above. The number is big enough to warrant further research and to be regarded as more than exceptional usage. They obviously cannot be convincingly explained by the above mentioned rules of “performance error,” “afterthoughts,” or “brief news.” Among 56 examples listed in Table 1, 51 examples appeared in spoken English, with only five

<sup>4</sup> BNC/SP: spoken data in British National Corpus, 11,741,100 words.

<sup>5</sup> BNC/WR: written data in BNC, Leisure, 13,717,132 words.

<sup>6</sup> Wordbanks/UK/SP: BBC World Service radio broadcasts and UK transcribed informal speech, 10,467,549 words.

<sup>7</sup> Wordbanks/UK/WR1: UK books, fiction & non-fiction, and UK magazines, 9,787,427 words.

<sup>8</sup> Wordbanks/UK/WR2: UK Sun newspaper, Time newspaper, and Today newspaper, 15,881,646 words.

examples appeared in written English.

## 4. Discussions

### 4.1 Grammaticalization Perspective

The number of combination examples of English PP with ADP in spoken British English in Table 1 in Section 3 suggests that such co-occurrences in question do not appear accidentally and suggests a need for further systematical analysis of it. As already discussed in Section 2, the grammaticalization of English PP is believed to coincide with that of the PP in other European languages. Based on the previous literature regarding the PP evolution in other European languages, a unique “four stage” principle will be adopted with regard to English PP development in Fig 1. The “four stage” principle is briefly illustrated by Fig 1 abiding by a semantic focus shift of “present→past→present→past.” At these four suggested stages, the discussion focuses on which is more emphasized semantically from tense and aspect perspectives, the present or the past.

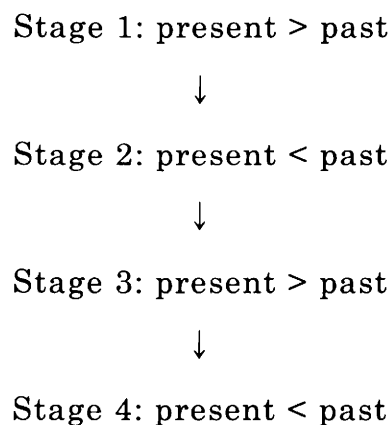


Fig 1. Four Stages of Semantic Focus Shift in English PP

The “four-stage” principle is also supported by the grammaticalization process of “resultative > anterior > perfective” advocated by Bybee *et al.* (1994) as a universal evolution of the PP in many different languages in the world. In Bybee *et al.*, “resultative” suggests the meaning of the preliminary PP in OE, “anterior” suggests the meaning of the PP with current relevance, and “perfective” suggests nearly the same meaning as the preterite. In other words, the close semantic connection with Speech Time (NOW) is gradually losing its semantic prominence, resulting in a past-oriented use of English PP. This unique process of English PP towards past-oriented usage is triggered by an explicit undergoing of co-occurrence of the PP with ADPs and an implicit undergoing of extended interpretation of current relevance.

#### 4.2 Extended Current Relevance

Current relevance of English PP used to be interpreted very strictly by Jespersen (1931, p. 66) and Chomsky (1971, p. 212), claiming that subjects in the present perfect clauses are required to be alive at speech time (NOW). This regulation is thought to be closely relevant to Stage Three in Fig 1, where present-oriented meaning outweighs past-oriented meaning. Under the universal development principle that English PP is gradually shifting its semantic focus from present to past, it is quite natural to lessen the prominence of current relevance in a clause that has been carefully and strictly interpreted so far, by extending the semantic interpretation of current relevance. As has already been discussed in the previous chapters, current relevance can be explained more loosely in various ways only if the speaker or the

writer would like to do so.

How is current relevance extendedly interpreted in a PP clause combining with ADPs? It can be illustrated by the semantic scope figure of a traditional continuative perfect usage discussed and designed in previous chapters. In continuative perfect use the beginning and the end of the semantic scope of a clause on the time axis can be explicit and definite. In example (13) the semantic scope of current relevance covers a temporal distance from “1960” to “NOW,” reporting a situation <I know Max> starting in 1960 extending up to the present time (speech time).

(13) I’ve known Max since 1960.

(McCawley, 1973, p. 104)

The semantic scope of (13) can be illustrated on a time line in the following Fig 2. The scope begins “in 1960,” at the point of B1 (initial point of the event) and terminates at speech time, the point of B2=NOW (B2, the final point of the event; NOW, reference time). Obviously, current relevance does not concentrate on NOW, but extends back into the past as far as the point of B1, establishing a far broader semantic (temporal) scope of current relevance.

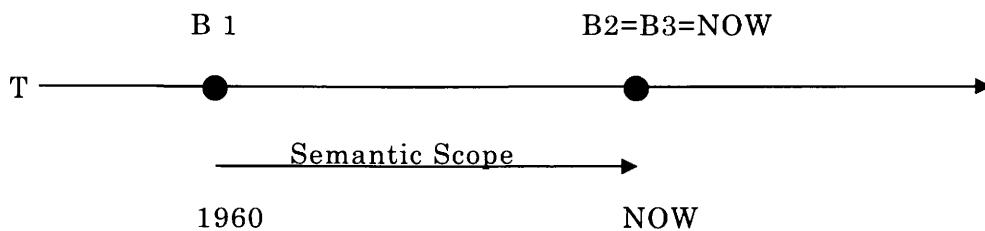


Fig 2 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (13)

Similarly, in example (14) current relevance takes up a temporal scope on the time line from “last year” to “NOW,” as shown in Fig 3. Syntactically, “last year” is an event adverbial expressing when the event “doubling” happened. At the same time, semantically speaking, “last year” plays a role as the starting point of “current relevance” on the time line. Such use of “definite perfect” can thus be analyzed by the suggested extended current relevance under the new development that the English PP is gradually approaching the preterite semantically.

- (14) The curricular review for the age group 5–14 years presents many exciting opportunities and during the year, the Mini Enterprise in Schools Project (MESP) was introduced to 100 primary schools in a very successful pilot scheme. Since SCIDI's involvement in 1989, the participation of Scottish secondary schools in this scheme has doubled to 212 last year.

(BNC)

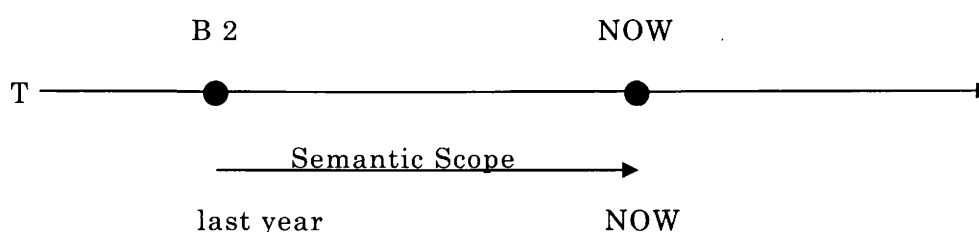


Fig 3 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (14)

As being discussed previously on the above examples (13) and (14), the temporal structure of a PP clause is established by the union of the PP and the adverbials. Adverbials are especially significant in designating extended part of the interpretation of



current relevance. Example (15) plays a very peculiar role in the midway between the traditional analysis of the continuative perfect clause (13) and the suggested new analysis of PP clause (14) by using a special adverbial combination of the past (“yesterday”) and the present (“today”).

(15) Judge Thomas has spoken yesterday and today, very movingly really, about how he’s felt demeaned and humiliated and hurt during these proceedings. But is there any indication that you have, Mara, so far that he’s been harmed politically? Can you count so much as a single vote that’s switched?

(Wordbanks)

The union of adverbials in (15) unites an adverbial denoting the past and another adverbial denoting the present, appearing within one clause. Another union of adverbials in the following (16) combines three adverbials of definite past, “yesterday,” “the day before (yesterday),” and “the day before Friday.” Furthermore, the union distinctively emerges in context instead of a clause. It can be predicted that in the speaker’s mind, “yesterday” does not appear alone as a superficial ADP. The union helps to establish a bit more ambiguous start point of current relevance than the one in example (14).

(16) She was grounded. That hasn't helped. She has talked, we've talked to her yesterday, was it yesterday? Or the day before? Yesterday I think well m maybe the day before Friday. So she started to cry and all then and said she said she was sorry, and

right enough she stuck to the time that we allow her to, she's  
come in last night dead on the button.

(BNC)

#### 4.3 Influences from Other European Languages

English PP differs from other European languages as to whether it combines with ADPs or not. English PP does not co-occur with ADPs as frequently as German, French, and Dutch do (de Swart, 2007, p. 2276). According to de Swart, the English PP clause in (15) is not acceptable. However, its literally translated versions in Dutch, French, and German, as listed below in (16), (17) and (18), are completely grammatical.

(17) \*Sara has left at six o'clock. [English]  
(de Swart, 2007, p. 2276)

(18) Sara is om zes uur vertrokken. [Dutch]  
(ibid.)

(19) Sara est partie à six heures. [French]  
(ibid.)

(20) Sara ist um sechs Uhr abgefahren. [German]  
(ibid.)

Considering that English and English PP are still developing, it is reasonable to suggest that English PP is being influenced by

German, French, and other European languages. In example (21) a German native speaker called Klaus Voss working as the general manager at Miami Beach Ocean Resort in the U.S.A. provides a combination example of “It has been rebuilt just six months ago,” possibly being influenced by his mother tongue of German in which the combination of PP and ADP is quite common. Example (22) is another combination example spoken by a non-native speaker called Ibrahim Mousawi, who is a Lebanese journalist and Hezbollah media relations officer.<sup>9</sup>

(21) Alex Chadwick, newscaster: Joining us now is Klaus Voss, the general manager of the Miami Beach Ocean Resort. Hello, Mr. Voss.

Klaus Voss (General Manager): Hi. Good morning.

Chadwick: You stayed at the hotel through the storm. What was it like?

Voss: Yes, I stayed here with security and with the--engineering. And until I'd say 2:00 this morning, it was more or less all right. But afterwards when the waves came in and the tide came over -- it was frightening, but we have been prepared--the hotel, et cetera. All our guests--500 guests we had--were evacuated yesterday. And here at the hotel we are new. It has been rebuilt just six months ago. I have hardly any damage.

Chadwick: Ah. So you didn't lose windows?

Voss: No.

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim\\_Mousawi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim_Mousawi).

Chadwick: Ah.

Voss: I lose one awning.

Chadwick: Ah. I think I detect from your accent that you're not from this country, Mr. Voss.

Voss: Exactly. I'm from Germany.

Chadwick: You can't have seen storms like this very often I would think.

Voss: Oh, yes I have. Unlucky I am. Four years ago I was in Jamaica with Gilbert so ...

(Wordbanks)

(22) MOUSAWI: They knew by keeping our hostages in their prisons that we have pledged and we have said we're going to do everything possible to set them free. This has been told to the international community, to the Security Council, to the United Nations, even the child in Lebanon knows this. It has been a pledge that we want to take them back. And the Israelis didn't allow this in any way. The other thing, when you talk about President Bush. President Bush has said yesterday that we will let the Israelis collect the garbage and get rid of the garbage. This is what it means for them. The Lebanese people are garbage for President Bush and for those who are in the White House.

KING: I don't think he used that term. But it isn't just President Bush...

(CNN Larry King Live, 20060718,

<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/lkl.html>)

#### 4.4 Pragmatics Perspective

Syntactically English PP itself does not denote how far it is temporally from Event Time (ET) to Speech Time (ST) if there is no temporal adverbial in a clause. Thus, there appears a “blind spot” in English such that it is not so convenient to encode an event which happened for instance, “yesterday,” “last week,” or “last night,” with an obvious connection with Speech Time if the speaker or the writer refuses to employ those ambiguous temporal adverbials such as “recently” or “these days.” The data in Table 1 shows that “yesterday,” “last week,” “last year,” and “last night” seem to be more likely to co-occur with PP than other ADPs. These four ADPs occupy 94.6% (53/56) of the total combination examples in this research.

#### 4.5 Morphological Perspective

Among 59 combination examples, 43 take the abbreviated form of “’ve / ’s + past participle + NP,” indicating that about 73% of the verb forms in the PP clauses are abbreviated morphologically. As Elsness (1997) and Egel & Ritz (2000) argue, morphological factors could be an important stimulant for the evolution of (23) as follows. It is thus predicted that the abbreviated form “I’ve finished” in (23) is not merely a shortened form. It is probably an important semantic step towards the preterite of “I finished.”

(23) I have finished. > I’ve finished. > I finished.

(Egel & Ritz, 2000, p. 127)

Therefore, the combination clause of “I’ve made last week” in (24) is very close to “I made last week” semantically.

(24) Don't break that appointment, (*sic*) it's to your benefit anyway that you don't. By the way, are you realising that this week is for setting up appointments for next week. Try and get that going as soon as possible. Do you understand this? All this week is for is going on appointments I've made last week, and for setting up my appointments for next week. It's given me five clear working days to set up my appointments for next week. So I'm working on what we call a rolling week. Other personal things might be that Tommy, your little lad, has a school sports day.

(BNC)

The alternative of the shortened form and the preterite can be vividly observed in (25) where the speaker Adams firstly used the PP and then changed it into the preterite.

(25) **Abt:** Instead of--instead of everybody going off at the same time, they go off either one minute apart or two minutes apart, and they race against the clock.

**Adams:** Greg LeMond has decided to--he decided yesterday to pull out. He's a three-time Tour de France winner. Is it a shameful thing for an athlete of this stature to--to drop out of the Tour de France?

**Abt:** No, no, it's not shameful.

(Wordbanks)

#### 4.6 Temporal Contrast

We claim that definite perfect is also used in order to avoid temporal interference from other signifiers of the past time in a context. It is hypothesized that the advent of this new perfect is also semantically-driven, the same as the advent of rule of non-occurrence of the present perfect and ADP.

(26) (= (22) in Chapter Four)

MOUSAWI: They knew by keeping our hostages in their prisons that we have pledged and we have said we're going to do everything possible to set them free. This has been told to the international community, to the Security Council, to the United Nations, even the child in Lebanon knows this. It has been a pledge that we want to take them back. And the Israelis didn't allow this in any way. The other thing, when you talk about President Bush. President Bush has said yesterday that we will let the Israelis collect the garbage and get rid of the garbage. This is what it means for them. The Lebanese people are garbage for President Bush and for those who are in the White House.

KING: I don't think he used that term. But it isn't just President Bush...

In (26), besides the verb form of “has said” under discussion, there are four other contrastive verb forms in the context, “have pledged,” “have said,” “have been told,” and “has been.” Temporally speaking, the two kinds of references to the past are

quite different, “has said” being an immediate past situation and “have pledged” group being recent past situations. However, the PP itself does not specify the temporal distance between event time (ET) and speech time (ST). By occurring with “yesterday” in the verb form of “has said,” the temporal distance between ET and ST is evidently distinguished from the other four.

Such “temporary contrast” can be seen in (27) as well, where there are two other temporal indicators, a time adverbial of “in March” and a verb form of “they’ve been focusing.” “Yesterday” in the verb form of “I’ve had” is thus employed to avoid temporal confusion with the other two. Without “yesterday” we may fail to tell the temporal relation among the three past situations.

(27) So there's some good news there. Erm in March the top branch was erm Hugh erm interestingly enough erm in the south erm Nicholas erm was well down on recruitment, he was down minus twenty seven on his fore on his target, but was significantly up on his bus business that he brought in because they've been focusing on er in on that. But erm the conversations I've had yesterday indicate that they are doing a major push on recruitment.

(BNC)

## 5. Conclusion

From a grammaticalization perspective, English PP is gradually moving towards the semantics of the preterite. The advent of the definite perfect follows the track of a universal



development of PP towards the preterite. This semantic development is triggered by an explicit advent of the definite perfect and vice versa. With the interaction between the two as a backdrop, the definite perfect practically appears on the historical stage after solving a technical problem of temporal construction by suggested “extended current relevance.” The other contributors accelerating the appearance of the definite perfect are “influences from other European languages,” “pragmatic influence,” “morphological influence” and “temporal contrast” in addition to “afterthought,” “performance error,” and “brief news constraint” which have already been mentioned in previous studies.

## Chapter 6

### Between the Present Perfect and the Preterite:

#### An Analysis on the “I seen it” Pattern<sup>1</sup>

##### 1. Introduction

The present perfect in present-day English uses a standard syntactical form of “subject + have/has + past participle (+ NP),” as in (1) below. This pattern was established in around the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a developed form of the “subject + have/has + NP + past participle” pattern in Old English and early Middle English (Ando, 2005, p. 130; Visser, 1963-73, p. 751).

- (1) I have reached a stage where I can watch television, as long as the programme doesn't require too much attention, and knit at the same time.

(BNC)

Another form “subject + be + past participle,” which used to be employed to intransitive verbs, has become an archaic style except for such verbs as *go*, *finish*, and *change*. Even for these verbs,

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<sup>1</sup> A sociolinguistic analysis on the “I seen it” pattern is not developed in this research. Refer to Trudgill (1974, p. 34) and Crystal (1995, p. 326) for details. For other analyses on the “I seen it” pattern, refer to Vanneck (1958, pp. 240-241), Swan (2005, p. 296) and so forth. The present perfect without an auxiliary is special, unusual, a variant form of the standard present perfect form. However, it is suggested that it contributes to linguistic researches as much as other items. “A standard language is not linguistically ‘better’ than other dialects; it is simply the dialect that has been adopted for official purposes such as government and education” (Swan, 2005, p. 288).

their past participle forms are usually considered adjectives as in (2), (3), and (4)<sup>2</sup> (Curme, 1931, p. 359; Kashino, 1999, p. 155).

(2) Humphrey's style is personal and informal; when he is finished, he reveals a palpable satisfaction — and unease.

(BNC)

(3) Everything in Ithaca is changed now because my brother is not going to look at anything any more.

(William Saroyan, *The Human Comedy*, Kashino, 1999, p. 155)

(4) "He'll take it," the old man said aloud. "God help him to take it."

He was gone and the old man felt nothing.

"He can't have gone," he said. "Christ knows he can't have gone. He's making a turn."

(E. Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, 1995, p. 14)

(5) She's stuck in the lift.<sup>3</sup>

(Engel & Ritz, 2000, p. 127)

In addition to the above-mentioned standard forms, the other so-called non-standard forms such as the present perfect without the auxiliary "have" can also be seen, for example, in (6) ~ (8).

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<sup>2</sup> In Curme (1931, p. 359) it is discussed as follows. "The present perfect remained in reality a present tense, the perfect participle serving as a predicate adjective indicating a state, the present tense of the copula performing the function of predication."

<sup>3</sup> According to Engel & Ritz (2000, p. 127), "there is even more ambiguity with a form like 'she's stuck.'" It might be "a copula plus adjective derived from a past participle" (ibid.).

Such present perfect clauses appear on various different occasions. Example (6) is from a BBC radio program in which the first speaker Isay is an anchor of the program and is interviewing a guest named Geneva Chaffin on the topic of religion. In the latter part of the example, Geneva is telling how she felt when she went to church and watched her husband get bitten by a snake. She says “the first time I seen it,” adopting a special pattern of “subject + past participle (+NP)”<sup>4</sup>. The present perfect clause consists of only the subject “I” and the past participle form “seen” without the auxiliary “have.”

(6) Isay: Not all of the relationships between non-believing relatives and serpent handlers play out quite so dramatically. On the front porch of the Chaffin house in Jolo, Geneva Chaffin is still waiting for her husband Dewey to return home from church. He is the man who had taken me serpent hunting the day before. Geneva spends a lot of her time sitting out here. When she and Dewey first married, Geneva, a Catholic, tried going to church but stopped because she couldn't bear to watch her husband get snake bitten.

Geneva Chaffin: The first time I seen it, I ran outside the church and cried like a baby. It's not a good feeling.

(Wordbanks)

(7) “She Done Him Wrong”

(title of a 1933 movie)

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<sup>4</sup> The pattern of “Have/Has + subject + past participle (+NP)” is excluded in this research.

(8) I done it yesterday.

(Trudgill, 1974, p. 34)

The analysis on these present perfect clauses without the auxiliary “have” varies considerably from linguist to linguist. In Trudgill (1974, p. 34) it is asserted that the speaker of (8) is of lower “social status” than speaker of “I did it yesterday” and the reason “lies in the existence of varieties of language which have come to be called social-class dialects.” Similarly, Vanneck (1958) also notes that the present perfect without an auxiliary was once “an outstanding feature of uneducated speech;” however, he has also pointed out the possible relationship between the present perfect without an auxiliary and the colloquial preterite (pp. 240-241). On the other hand, Swan (2005) has observed it phonetically providing an example of “I’ve got.” According to Swan, “the weak form of ‘have’ in ‘I’ve got’ is so quiet that it is often not heard at all; and people are beginning to say ‘I got’ instead of ‘I’ve got’” (p. 296). He predicts that “in time this could become a new regular form” (p. 296).

The purpose of this chapter is to launch a holistic analysis on the “I seen it” pattern from evolutionary and semantic perspectives. In the research it is hypothesized that the above-mentioned “I seen it” pattern is an intermediate grammatical form between the present perfect forms and the preterite forms. It is also suggested that the “I seen it” pattern is one of the symbols suggesting the evolutionary process of grammaticalization in the English present perfect from the present perfect towards the preterite.

## 2. The Present Perfect and Grammaticalization

Diachronically (Historically) speaking, the English present perfect has been changing morphologically and semantically since its advent in Old English. Such changes suggest certain hints for the future development of the present perfect in present-day English.

### 2.1 Bybee et al. (1994)

Bybee et al. (1994) suggest that in many languages there is a cross-linguistic phenomenon in which the present perfect evolves in the following manner: resultative > anterior > perfective (p. 81). In Bybee et al., the resultative usage is very similar to the preliminary present perfect in Old English; anterior is the present perfect with strictly interpreted current relevance; and perfective use is the preterite (*ibid.*). So far as the evolution from anterior to perfective is concerned, Bybee et al. have pointed out that

The next development for anteriors along their diachronic path is the change from anterior to past or perfective. This change is well documented around the world, occurring or having occurred in Indo-European languages such as French, Italian, Rumanian, German, and Dutch; in African languages of the Kru and Bantu groups; and in Mandarin Chinese. (Bybee et al., 1994, p. 81)

### 2.2 The Present Perfect with Reduced Form of the Auxiliary

Elsness (1997) has pointed out that there are at least two

features of the present perfect that need to be taken into account when assessing the current and future roles of the present perfect in English:

(a) In colloquial, spoken English the present perfect auxiliary HAVE usually appears in a highly reduced form, as one of the two voiced-lenis phonemes /v/, /z/, or as /s/.

(b) Within the vast majority of verbs in Modern English the form of the past participle is identical with that of the preterite, in both speech and writing.

(Elsness, 1997, pp. 347-348)

Elsness further states that “the combination effect of [these two] is that with most verbs the difference between the form of the present perfect and the form of the preterite is slight in present-day English, especially in informal speech” (p. 348). In addition, Engel & Ritz (2000) express a similar opinion, providing in examples (9a, b, c), an evolutionary process of the English present perfect. They state that the difference between (9b) and (9c) is “negligible in phonological terms, especially in verbs such as this one, with initial labiodentals or alveolar fricatives, where juncture is the sole distinguishing feature” (Engel & Ritz, 2000, p. 127).

(9) (a) I have finished. > (b) I’ve finished. > (c) I finished.

(Engel & Ritz, 2000, p. 127)

It is reasonable to assert that (9b) is gradually developing into (9c) as far as grammaticalization of the present perfect is

concerned (cf. Bybee et al., 1994). However, without further proof, it is not so reasonable to assert that the difference between (9b) and (9c) is “negligible in phonological terms” (Engel & Ritz, 2000, p. 127). It is hypothesized that there might be an intermediate morphological form between (9b) and (9c), especially when the past form of the verb is not identical with the past participle. Such forms can be seen in the following (10); thus the revised evolutionary process of the English present perfect can be summarized in (11) below.

(10) Bonilla: You know, because that’s what happened, you know, in my eyes. I seen people that was getting arrested for, you know, a quarter or a half a gram and they were given two years in the state.

(Wordbanks)

(11) (a) I have seen it. > (b) I seen it. > (c) I saw it.  
the present perfect →→→→→ the preterite

### 2.3 Elsness’s Three-Stage Theory

According to Elsness (1997), three stages may generally be recognized in the development of the present perfect.

(a) The first stage is characterized by reference to a present state or result of action (in which case the combination of HAVE/BE plus a past participle fails to satisfy our definition of a perfect verb form).

(b) At the second stage the emphasis has shifted to the past



action which brought about the state or result, but any specification of time that is separate from the deictic zero-point is still disallowed.

- (c) At the third and final stage the present perfect has become a simple exponent of past action, without any restrictions on the temporal specification.

(Elsness, 1997, p. 347)

In Elsness (1997), the typical example at the second stage is the present-day English whose present perfect does not co-occur with adverbials of definite past, while some other European languages such as French, Romanian, Italian, and Russian at the third stage do not adopt a restriction on the temporal specification. German lies between the second stage and the third stage.

#### **2.4. Four-Stage Development of the English Present Perfect**

Based on the above mentioned literature, the grammaticalization of the English present perfect is summarized and revised in Table 1. The suggested four-stage theory lays close focus on the semantic shift over time. The semantic focus at different stages is respectively laid on “present,” “past,” “present” and “past” in a diachronic order.

It is hypothesized that the present perfect in present-day English is gradually developing from the present-oriented Stage Three to the past-oriented Stage Four through diverse routes. In addition to a route that the present perfect is usually replaced by the preterite in American English (Quirk et al., 1985; Swam, 2005; Carter & McCarthy, 2006), there are at least three other routes

that will be discussed in the following section.

Table 1. Four-Stage Development of the English Present Perfect  
(A Revised Version of Elsness's Three-Step Theory)

Stage	Era	Semantic Focus	Morphological form	Remarks
Stage 1	old English, early Middle English	present	have/has + NP + past participle	
Stage 2	14 <sup>th</sup> ~18 <sup>th</sup> century	past	S + have /has + past p. + (NP); S've(s) + past p.+(NP)	adverbial of definite past (ADP): allowed?
Stage 3	18 <sup>th</sup> century ~	present	S + have /has + past p. + (NP); S've(s) + past p. + (NP)	ADP: not allowed; current relevance
			replaced by past form, etc. ;	
Stage 4	?	past	S + past p. + NP	e.g., I seen it.

### 3. Four Variations from Stage Three to Stage Four

How the present perfect is developing from Stage Three to Stage Four will be carefully discussed in this section. It is suggested that there are at least four variations illustrating the details of the evolutionary path. They are extended current relevance, the co-occurrence of the present perfect and adverbials of definite past in British spoken English, the present perfect

replaced by the preterite in American English, and the “subject + past participle (+ NP) pattern.”

### 3.1 Extended Current Relevance

The first tendency which can be seen in present-day English is that the current relevance of the present perfect may be interpreted much more freely than before. For instance, (12) is generally accepted even though Albert Einstein is not alive.<sup>5</sup>

(12) Einstein has visited Princeton.

(Chomsky, 1971, p. 212)

In short, extended current relevance can be: (a) the present relevance from any participant involved in the event in question, (b) situational current relevance, (c) resultative current relevance, (d) indirect resultative current relevance, (e) contextual current relevance or (f) writer’s current relevance.

### 3.2 PP + ADP in British English<sup>6</sup>

The second tendency of the English present perfect from Stage Three to Stage Four is the co-occurrence examples of the present perfect and the adverbials of definite past in British spoken English. Though the co-occurrence examples are still considered somewhat “unusual” (Swan, 2005, p. 457), they are completely possible in corpus data such as Wordbanks and BNC. These “unusual” examples were analyzed from the following

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to Chapter Four for details.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Chapter Five for details.

perspectives in Chapter Five: evolutionary perspective, extended current relevance, cross-linguistic perspective, pragmatic perspective, morphological perspective and temporal contrast.

### 3.3 The Present Perfect Replaced by the Preterite in American English

The third tendency illustrating that the English present perfect is developing from Stage Three to Stage Four is a phenomenon that the present perfect is occasionally replaced by the preterite in American English. This has already been mentioned by many linguists (Quirk et al., 1985; Swan, 2005; Carter & McCarthy, 2006). In Quirk et al. (1985), they state that

In [American English], the simple past is often preferred to the present perfective for the variants of the indefinite past discussed in this section. Compare “Have the children come home yet?” for example, with “Did the children come home yet?” <esp [American English]>. Other [American English] examples are: “I just came back; You told me already; and without an adverb: I’m tired --- I had a long day.”

(Quirk et al., 1985, p. 194)

In addition, in examples (13) and (14), “with phrases like *this morning* and *this month* referring to a present period of time, the choice between the two verb constructions [the present perfect or the preterite] reflects merely a difference of focus or orientation” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 195). Under the influence of such special adverbials as *this week* indicating either a past period of time

excluding the present or a period of time closely connected to the present, there is almost no strict semantic or pragmatic difference between them.

(13) Did you read *Punch* this week?

(ibid.)

(14) Have you read *Punch* this week?

(ibid.)

Carter & McCarthy (2006) also express a similar opinion providing a present perfect example (15) with an extended context. The context explicitly indicates that the past situation of <you already get some out> influences how much the speaker B can take out of a cash machine at the speech time because it can be read from the conversation that one can only get out three hundred each day. However, the present perfect is replaced by the preterite in this conversation.

(15) [discussing how much money speaker B is allowed to take out of a cash machine each day]

A: How much can you get out here?

B: Three hundred.

A: So you'd have three hundred? You've got three hundred you can get out right now?

B: Yeah.

A: But you already got some out. So you can do three hundred a day. You already took out some today. How much did

you take out?

B: A hundred. I can only take another two hundred.

(Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 887)

The tendency is further explained that

the frequency of use of the present perfect form is different in [British English] and [American English], with a tendency to use it less in [American English]. [American English] often allows the simple past in situations which demand the present perfect in [British English].

(ibid.)

### 3.4 The “subject + past participle (+NP)” Pattern

The final tendency illustrating the recent changes in the English present perfect is the “subject + past participle (+NP)” pattern, as in example (16) below. The further discussion on it will be developed in Section 4.

(16) Bonilla: You know, because that’s what happened, you know, in my eyes. I seen people that was getting arrested for, you know, a quarter or a half a gram and they were given two years in the state. (=10)

(Wordbanks)

#### 4. The “subject + past participle (+NP)” Pattern and Grammaticalization of the English Present Perfect

##### 4.1 Data Gathering

The examples following the pattern in question were gathered from the standard corpus Wordbanks and a self-made corpus containing American spoken English. Firstly, the 19 verbs listed below, whose past forms are not identical with their past participle forms, were chosen from Hirayama (2007), a junior and senior high school English grammar book.

(17) begin, break, do, drink, drive, eat, fly, forget, give, go, grow,  
know, see, show, sing, speak, swim, take, write

(Hirayama, 2007, p. 183)

Then statistics were compiled on the most frequently used pronouns in spoken English. The results show that “I” and “you” are the two most frequently used ones.<sup>7</sup> In the next step, target examples of the “subject + past participle (+NP)” pattern (listed in Table Two) were collected.

In Table Two, the first column is a search operator, following the pattern of “I/You + past participle.” The second column is the number of target examples in British spoken English. The LKL corpus is a self-made corpus of American spoken English. Among the results listed in Table Two, “I/you done” and “I/you seen” stand in the top two positions in number, respectively 55 and 46.

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<sup>7</sup> AntConc2.6.0 is employed to make a word list of a Larry King Live transcript containing 10,000,000 words. Among all the words “I” ranked third and “you” ranked fifth.

Table 2. Examples of *I/You + Past Participle*  
in British Spoken English and American Spoken English

	UK/SP <sup>8</sup>	LKL <sup>9</sup>	Total	Remarks
I/you begun	0	0	0	
I/you broken	0	0	0	
I/you done	34+16	4+1	55	
I/you drunk	1	0	1	
I/you driven	0	0	0	
I/you eaten	0	0	0	
I/you flown	0	0	0	
I/you forgotten	0+1	0	1	
I/you given	0	0	0	
I/you gone	1+2	1	4	
I/you grown	0	1	1	
I/you known	2	1	3	
I/you seen	16+2	25+3	46	
I/you shown	0	0	0	
I/you sung	0	3+2	5	
I/you spoken	1	0	1	
I/you swum	0	0	0	
I/you taken	0+1	0	1	
I/you written	0	0	0	
total	77	41	118	

<sup>8</sup> UK/SP: BBC World Service radio broadcasts, 2,548,830 words + UK transcribed informal speech, 7,918,719 words = 10,467,549 words.

<sup>9</sup> Larry King Live transcript from August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2001 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005, 10,000,000 words (AntConc2.6.0).



## 4.2 Discussions

The number of the target examples shows that the loss of the auxiliary “have” of the present perfect is not merely a phonologically reduced form in spoken English. It is more objective to analyze this special pattern with a background of grammaticalization of the present perfect. As already pointed out by Bybee et al. (1994), Elsness (1997) and so forth, it is cross-linguistically true that the present perfect is gradually being replaced by the preterite in many languages in the world. Diachronically speaking, it is reasonable to assert that it is motivated by an inevitable change towards the preterite. One of the indicators illustrating such changes is the phonologically reduced “I seen it” pattern as pointed out by Defromont (1973) who states that

a phonological change – the loss of the auxiliary [“have”] – is the starting point for a grammatical change: the substitution of the [preterit] for the [perfect].

(Defromont, 1973, p. 110; translated into English by  
McCoard, 1978, p. 245)

### 4.2.1 Difference between American English and British English

There are, as shown in Table Two in Section Three, 77 examples in British spoken English and 41 examples in American spoken English. A chi-square test was employed and the P-value was 0.0009, suggesting that there is a significant difference between British spoken English and American spoken English. The results indicate that more examples can be seen in British

spoken English.

#### 4.2.2 The Present Perfect vs. the “I seen it” Pattern

Firstly, the “I seen it” pattern is considered a highly reduced form of the present perfect form in spoken English. It can be proved by the examples (18) through (20) below.

(18) And then suddenly you plunge and that's it, your whole adrenalin going and you're screaming and [your] (you're) holding on and that's where you get the expression “white knuckle rag” because your knuckles are white as you hold on and then you scream all the way round and then it slows down again and you think, I done it, I done it!

(Wordbanks, UK, spoken)

In example (18) “I done it” is hypothesized to be the highly reduced form of “I have done it.” Speakers in (18) are talking about a feeling of “super excitement” appeared after horror. “White knuckle” means “to hold something with your hand(s) in a constant position so tight and long that blood rushes away from your knuckles and they become pale and sweaty.”<sup>10</sup> According to the context, it is not so easy to experience this feeling of “super excitement;” however, the speaker succeeded in it and says excitedly “I done it, I done it!” to express the feeling at speech time (ST).

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=white%20knuckles>) for details.

(19) KING: This guy -- this guy likes worms.

HANNA: But Larry, we've never had a hairy armadillo. This is amazing. Feel this -- a very prehistoric creature, Larry, the armadillo. Has been around for since the dinosaur era.

KING: I like them. OK, are you done? You done? Think is it's McDonald's.

HANNA: From Zoo-To-You, thank you for [bring] (bringing) the Armadillo.

(LKL, Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004)

Example (19) functions differently from other examples in which “You done” in (19) can be considered a highly reduced form of “are you done.” “Are you done,” the “subject + be + past participle” pattern, is another present perfect form in history, which is overwhelmingly outweighed by “have/has + past participle (+NP)” in present-day English.

(20) (BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STALLONE: You seen anybody that impresses you so far.

(LKL, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005)

In example (20) there is a greater possibility that “You seen” is the reduced form of “You’ve seen.” A that-clause followed “You seen” provides a syntactic hint that “You seen” in (20) is a varied form of “you’ve seen,” the standard present perfect form.

#### 4.2.3 The Preterite vs. the “I seen it” Pattern

The present perfect without the auxiliary “have” can be

interpreted either as the present perfect in 4.2.2 or the preterite in this section. The interpretation as the present perfect indicates that the present perfect without “have” is simply a highly reduced form while the interpretation as the preterite illustrates an important movement of the present perfect from Stage Three towards Stage Four. The “subject + past participle” in examples (21) through (27) can be regarded as a variable form of the preterite.

(21) Such MX[,] when was last time you seen him?

I seen him years ago [,] but I don't like him.

(Wordbanks, UK, Spoken)

Hinted by the temporal adverbial of “years ago” in example (21), the verb construction of “I seen him” is probably adopted as a varied form of the past form “saw.” Thus, the semantic focus in the “I seen him” clause is laid on the preterite instead of the present. In other words, the present perfect without an auxiliary in (21) is a variety of the preterite semantically and morphologically.

(22) [“] You done that on purpose[,] didn't you Dad. [”]

(Wordbanks, UK, Spoken)

In example (22), an analysis that “You done” is a variety of “You did” is syntactically supported by the tag question “didn't you.” The same analysis that the present perfect without auxiliary is a varied form of the preterite in examples (23) through

(28) can be thus proved.

(23) ... it was about five or six o'clock it was and I seen some girl  
and I started talking to her.

(Wordbanks, UK, Spoken)

(24) Last time I went in I never seen FX she wasn't there. I seen  
some other bloke.

(Wordbanks, UK, Spoken)

(25) R. REYES: I work in K-Mart, and by metropolitan, and I see,  
you know, somebody told me the plane was on fire. So I looked  
out the back and see a whole lot of fire and stuff. And when I  
went up there and I seen it, I said, "What is going on?" And  
then he said -- and then (UNINTELLIGIBLE) I call everybody.  
I started saying, "My brother was on the plane." He says  
American Airlines. Was he going someplace or was he coming?  
And then they didn't know. So I really -- I was just shocked.  
Then when I called my sister again, my sisters told me it was  
his flight. So then we all started scrambling toward the hotel,  
Ramada Inn, so...

(LKL, Sep 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001)

(26) KING: We're back. Mark Lunsford, was anything -- what time  
did you -- when was the last time you saw your daughter?

MARK LUNSFORD: Just before she went to bed. I mean, I  
came home from work, I take my shower, I ate dinner. We  
watched TV. I spent time with Jessie. When she got ready to

go to bed, she was taking her shower, and then when she got out of her shower, you know, it was time for me to go out for the evening, for what I had planned for the evening. And she kissed me good night and she told me she loved me, because that's what we do. And that was the last time I seen her.

(LKL, Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005)

(27) KING: So you can like a rock piece. You can like jazz.

PAVAROTTI: Oh, yes.

KING: You like ...

PAVAROTTI: I sung rap.

KING: You sang rap?

PAVAROTTI: Yes. With a -- in the duet of Pavarotti and Friends.

(LKL, Sep 27<sup>th</sup>, 2003)

#### 4.2.4 The Past Perfect vs. the “I seen it” Pattern

Among 118 target examples only one example, as a varied form of the past perfect, is found. “I known” in (28) can be proved to be a varied form of “had known,” the past perfect form. “I wouldn’t have brought” in the matrix clause shows that the conditional clause ought to follow the past perfect tense “I had known.” Therefore, “if I known you were sensitive” is probably a varied form of “if I had known you were sensitive.”

(28) A. GORE: No...

KING: I'll get to the books in a while.

A. GORE: If I known you were sensitive, I wouldn't have

brought it up.

(LKL, Nov 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002)

Another example (29) of this kind is from an academic paper in the proceedings of the twenty-fifth annual conference of the cognitive science society. It is supposed that this use of “they seen” may possibly be influenced by a close context of “when they had seen.”<sup>11</sup>

(29) Participants correctly recognized sentences from the first target sub-story when they had seen the analogous base (m=0.75) at a higher rate than when they seen the non-analogous base....

(Neil Stewart & Nick Chater, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, p. 1126)

#### 4.2.5 The Present Perfect without an Auxiliary in Other Cases

The present perfect without an auxiliary is still extremely rare in written English and other semi-formal situations such. However, it is marginally possible, as in (30), (31), and (32).

(30) I seen my opportunities and I took 'em.

----George Washington Plunkitt

(Wordbanks, US, Written)

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<sup>11</sup> One native speaker of English from the United States of America has pointed out that “the omission of “had” in “when they seen” is almost certainly a transcription error that proofreaders didn’t catch. That is, the authors intended to write “had seen” but slipped up. These types of errors pop up from time to time in almost everybody’s writing, and tell us nothing about English usage.”

Example (30) is employed as a political slogan by the famous American politician, George Washington Plunkitt (1842 ~ 1924). He is remembered for the line he used to defend his actions.<sup>12</sup> Even in written English such examples as (31) and (32), the present perfect without an auxiliary can be seen. (31) is written by the famous American author Mark Twain whose English might be somewhat influenced by Southern American English. Example (31), together with another written English example (32), is so rare in number that the analysis of them will not be developed in this research.

(31) They swore in the jury, and then the lawyer for the prosecution got up and began. He made a terrible speech against the old man, that made him moan and groan, and made Benny and aunt Sally cry. The way he told about the murder kind of knocked us all stupid it was so different from the old man's tale. He said he was going to prove that uncle Silas was seen to kill Jubitter Dunlap by two witnesses, and done it deliberate, and said he was going to kill him the very minute he hit with the club; and they seen him hide Jubitter in the bushes, and they seen that Jubitter was stone-dead.

(Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer, Detective*, p. 54)

(32) Then they interviewed this girl and boy who say they seen a jeep. It started going slow and pulled up in front of a bus.

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to the following URL for details:  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Washington\\_Plunkitt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Plunkitt))



They *pow pow pow pow pow*. Like it's the Wild Wild West.  
That's all they seen, because they ran back inside.

(Connie Rose Porter, *Imani All Mine*, p. 41)

#### 4.3 Other Variable Forms of the Present Perfect

In addition to the "I seen it" pattern, the present perfect without an auxiliary, there are other varied forms of the present perfect in modern English. They are the "have/has + plain form of a verb" pattern and the "have/has + the past form of a verb" pattern, as shown below. Firstly, in (33) "rang," the past form of "ring," appears after the auxiliary "have." Immediately after this varied form, a temporal phrase "last night" contextually suggests a semantic focus on the past. Secondly, the "have + plain form of a verb" pattern can be seen in the following (34), (35), and (36). These examples are still extremely peculiar as for the number of their occurrences in corpus. The only attentive implication we can get from these examples is that the present perfect is changing into a past-centered stage in various approaches.

(33) Don't you ever speak to me like that again, I haven't, I rang, no, no, I the landlord either, I waited until the next morning.

Rang the landlord the next morning, Saturday morning, and, apparently he has rang last night, and your wife Debbie took my drink away and away, I said that's fair enough, so he said.

Oh no it's not, oh no it's not, oh no it's not, no it's not.

(BNC)

(34) I have know such gloriously gentle Rotties, especially bitches,

and your wonderful story proves that when they are in the right family, they blossom to their full potential.

(ibid.)

(35) I have know skilled fishkeepers have nothing but problems with them.

(ibid.)

(36) ... shake yourself round, but I've never know that last night...

(ibid.)

## 5 Conclusion

In sum, the English present perfect without the auxiliary “have” is special, and it is not a standard present perfect form in present-day English as there are few examples that can be found in corpora. However, in spoken English it is completely possible because the data in this research suggest that the number of such examples in every 14,000,000 words goes as high as 118, even though the results are restricted to 19 verbs in (17) and two pronouns “I” and “you.”

Statistics shows that there is a significant difference between the use of the “I seen it” pattern in British spoken English and American spoken English. More examples are found in British spoken English in my data.

From a perspective of grammaticalization, the present perfect form without an auxiliary is an intermediate morphological form between the abbreviated present perfect “I’ve seen it” and the

preterite “I saw.” The present perfect without an auxiliary can be interpreted either as the present perfect or as the preterite. Therefore, it is also one of the indicators illustrating that the present perfect in present-day English is developing from Stage Three, a present-oriented stage, to Stage Four, a preterite-oriented stage. This grammaticalization process can therefore be summarized in the formulation below.

(37) (a) I have seen it. > (b) I’ve seen it. > (c) I seen it. (the present perfect) > (d) I seen it. (the preterite)

Chapter 7  
Temporal Adverbials of Duration and  
The Continuative Perfect

1. Introduction

1.1 The Continuative Perfect

The present perfect (PP) in English is multi-functional and is known as “a compound tense expressing two temporal relations” (Huddleston *et al.* 2002: 140). Though the usage classification of it varies greatly from researcher to researcher, the continuative perfect (CP) use is adopted by almost all the researchers (McCawley, 1973; Comrie, 1976; Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Leech, 1994 and so forth).

As the name suggests, the PP is originally used to encode a completed or finished situation with current relevance. In example (1a) below the prior reading is that “Mr. Whorf is not our sales representative,” i.e. a finished situation, while in (1b) the adverbial of temporal duration, “for 21 years,” brings about a prior interpretation of the continuative perfect. In Declerck’s opinion, the continuative perfect sense can only be read by (a) progressive verb forms, (b) duration adverbials, and (c) pragmatic factors (Declerck, 2006, pp. 227-228).

(1) a. Mr Whorf has been our sales representative.

(before now)

b. Mr Whorf has been our sales representative for 21 years.

(co-extensive)

(Declerck 2006: 228)

## 1.2 The Continuative Perfect, Situation Type and Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization of the English PP can be summarized in a four-step process proposed in Chapter Two. It is stated that present-day English is developing from Stage Three towards Stage Four, accompanied with four prominent indicators, the present perfect replaced by the preterite, the co-occurrence with adverbials of definite past, an extended interpretation of current relevance, and the present perfect without an auxiliary. The semantic differentiation between Stage Three and Stage Four is an outstanding shift from a present-oriented sense to a past-oriented sense. However, this should not be the case for the continuative perfect which will stay in Stage Three (current-oriented) because of its physical occupation of a situation in question on the time axis. The physical occupation on the time axis makes it extremely difficult to switch the semantic focus from the present to the past. The aspectuality of the situation type will also be taken into consideration. It will be discussed that the static feature of a situation type, either states or habitual states, is a main contribution to the semantics of the continuative perfect in an utterance.

### 1.3 The Continuative Perfect and its Variables

Although four of the following examples (2) through (5) are the same usage, viz. the continuative perfect of the PP in English, they apparently have different characteristics from semantic, verbal and aspectual perspectives. In example (2) below, a homogeneous state of our knowing each other from “years ago” up to “NOW” is represented, suggesting that every instance between “years ago” and “NOW,” the reported state of our knowing each other is true. The same kind of homogeneous state can be seen in example (3) below, where the state <that house be empty> is true at any instance from “ages ago” to “NOW.” In both examples, the states cannot be further divided situationally.

(2) We’ve known each other for years.

(Leech, 2004, p.39)

(3) That house has been empty for ages.

(Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p.192)

On the other hand, example (4) below represents a habitual action consisting of certain number of repetitive events of “teaching” at subcategory level. We cannot say that the action of “teaching” is going on at very moment from “ten years ago” to “NOW.” Example (5) below basically bears the same aspectual sense as example (4), yet aspectual character of the situation “die” totally differs from that of the situation “teach.”

(4) I've taught in this school for ten years.

(Araki & Yasui, 1992, p.1124)

(5) People have died for years.

([www.mepc.org/forums\\_chcs/39.asp](http://www.mepc.org/forums_chcs/39.asp))

#### 1.4 Temporal Adverbials Duration

TAD stands for “temporal adverbial of duration”. The TADs that frequently appear in the continuative perfect clause are “for X time,” “ever since-clause” and “since-clause” (Quirk, 1985, pp. 192-193; Leech, 2004, pp. 36-39, Declerck, 2006). These TADs share a common characteristic that they refer to a period of time span up to the present or including the present moment. The TAD is an important signal designating the starting point and the end of the temporal distance expressed by a continuative perfect clause. In this research only “for X time” will be chosen for verification.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter goes in depth to examine the use of continuative perfect especially when co-occurring with temporal adverbials of duration (TAD), based on temporal structure on the time axis from the contrastive points of view.

## 2. Present Perfect and Continuative Perfect

### 2.1 Literature

The present perfect is one of the puzzles in English which have attracted the attention of many linguists. These linguists have

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<sup>1</sup> “For X time” can both be used as a time span including the present moment and a time span excluding the present moment. In this research, only the former use will be discussed.

researched and studied this puzzle. Some representative studies are as follows.

McCawley (1973) might be one of the early pieces of literature, in which four uses are advocated: “Universal,” “Existential,” “Stative,” and “Hot News” (McCawley, 1973, p. 263). The CP use is semantically included in “Universal” as follows. In McCawley “Universal” is used “to indicate that a state of affairs prevailed throughout some interval stretching from the past into the present” (ibid.).

- (6) I ve known Max since 1960. (Universal)  
(McCawley, 1973, p.263)

In Comrie (1976) the present perfect has four uses: “perfect of result,” “experiential perfect,” “perfect of persistent situation,” and “perfect of recent past” (pp. 56-61), in which the continuative perfect use is named “perfect of persistent situation.” Comrie (p. 60) further points out that “many other languages such as French, German and Russian use the present tense here.” This continuative perfect use seems to be a unique characteristic in the English present perfect.

Among the three senses of the present perfect suggested by Quirk *et al.* (1985) are two which are closely pertinent to the continuative perfect use. They are “state leading up to the present” and “habit (*i.e.* recurrent event) in a period leading up to the present” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p. 192).

Leech (2004) divides the present perfect into four uses with two of them closely connected with the CP use. They are “state up



to the present” and “habit up to the present event” (Leech, 2004, p.36).

## 2.2 Continuative Perfect

Although all of the above-mentioned previous studies on the present perfect differ from each other in classification, the continuative perfect use is listed by all of them. With the evolution of English and its present perfect, non-continuative perfect uses are undergoing some changes. On the contrary, the continuative perfect use remains almost unchanged and will gradually become a typical sense of the present perfect in Stage Three as the non-continuative perfect uses are approaching the preterite in British English or replaced by the preterite in American English. So far as the above is concerned, there seems to be urgent need in analyzing the continuative perfect use, especially from a contrastive perspective. However, the fact is that the CP use has only been studied to some extent, its systematic research on it not being fulfilled. What is more, little research on the CP use from contrastive viewpoints can be found. In this chapter, the CP use is further divided into CP<sub>1</sub>, CP<sub>2</sub> and CP<sub>3</sub>, grounded on semantics and the aspectual nature of verbs. The following hypothesis are defended: (a) the CP<sub>1</sub> use expresses a homogenous state that started in the past and extends up to the present moment; (b) the CP<sub>2</sub> use expresses a re-occurring or repeatedly occurring state of a dynamic situation or an event starting in the past and leading up to the present; (c) the CP<sub>3</sub> use expresses exactly the same sense as (b) with special kind of verbs under certain semantic constraint.

### 3 Situation Type

#### 3.1 Literature

Much attention has been placed on the studies of the aspectuality of verbs or situation types up till now among which representative ones are Kindaichi (1950), Vendler (1967), Quirk *et al.* (1985), Okuda (1985), and Kinsui, Kudo & Numata (2000).

In Kindaichi (1950) verbs are sorted into four groups according to their aspectual meaning: “*zyotai doshi* (state verbs),” “*keizoku doshi* (durative verbs),” “*syunkan doshi* (punctual verbs),” and “*daiyonsyu doushi* (the fourth group).”

Vendler (1967) divides verbs into “state,” “activity,” “accomplishment,” and “achievement” according to Vendler’s criteria of “process,” “definiteness” and “punctuality.”

Okuda (1985) objects to Kindaichi (1950) asserting that first of all verbs should be classified by whether or not they are aspectual (dynamic). Those with an aspectual system belong to the first group and those without it belong to the second group. The first group is further classified into two categories, those with the inflectional form of “te-iru” and those without it. In the second group, there are two kinds of verbs, those expressing the actions of subjects and those expressing the changes of subjects.

Kinsui, Kudo & Numata (2000) put verbs into four groups based on the two criteria, “process” and “result.”

Quirk *et al.* (1985) is the only one different from the above mentioned literature, claiming a theory of “situation type” instead of verb categories advocated by Kindaichi (1950) and so forth. In this chapter, the theory of situation type is employed, stating that

not only the verb itself but also the co-occurring elements should be taken into consideration in analyzing the aspectual meaning of an event or a situation. “Situation type” including verbs and co-occurring elements, and “viewpoint” are organically combined together into a method --- an analysis of temporal structure on the time axis.

### 3.2 Temporal Structure Analysis on the Time Axis

Temporal structure analysis is a method of analyzing occurrence, progress and completion, and the aspectual phase of beginning, ending and reference time of an observed situation on the temporal line. In this research the beginning or the realization of a situation is named B1, short for Boundary 1, a temporal division point on the time axis, and the ending point is called B2, short for Boundary 2, another temporal division point on the same time axis. The temporal relation between B1 and B2 can be illustrated by figures of temporal structures provided in the succeeding sections. So far as “situation type” and “viewpoint” (Smith 1997) are both considered synthetically, B1 and B2 are inevitably in existence in the schemata of the aspectual meaning of every reported situation. In this research the reference time is equal to NOW<sup>2</sup> because the PP is mainly observed.

In a word, the criteria which are frequently used in the previously mentioned studies of verbs and situation type are “process,” “telicity,” “definiteness,” “punctuality” and so forth. All

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<sup>2</sup> Speech Time, abbreviated as ST, is also called “utterance time” (Klein 1992), or  $t_0$  (Declerck 2006). In this paper, as the present perfect is mainly observed, we sometimes use NOW indicating the ST of the present perfect.

these criteria can be substituted by one standard --- Boundary method. In Boundary method “definiteness” and “telicity” mean explicit existence of B2; “process” suggests  $B1 \neq B2$ <sup>3</sup> with a temporal distance between B1 and B2; “punctuality” indicates  $B1 = B2$ <sup>4</sup> without an obvious temporal distance between B1 and B2.

4.  $B1 \text{---} B2 = B3 \rightarrow CP_1$

The temporal structure of the state <I be away in India> in example (7) below can be illustrated by Fig 1 with absolute existence of B1 and B2. In Fig 1, B1 and B2=NOW above the temporal (T) line are at a schemata level of a situation, with B1 indicating the beginning of the situation several years ago, and B2 indicating the possible ending of the situation at the point of NOW. The boldface part of the time line from B1 to B2 is the duration which TAD refers to, coinciding with semantic scope of the present perfect. As Fig 1 shows, the state <I be away in India> in (7) is true at every point from B1 to B2=Now.

- (7) I have been away in India for several years. And manners have changed so much that I sometimes don't know whether I'm at a respectable dinner-table or a ship's fore-castle.

(Hosoe 1932 : 45)

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<sup>3</sup> “ $B1 \neq B2$ ” means that B1 and B2 are separated from each other at a temporal line.

<sup>4</sup> “ $B1 = B2$ ” means the punctuality of a verb, or B1 and B2 are at the same point of a temporal line.

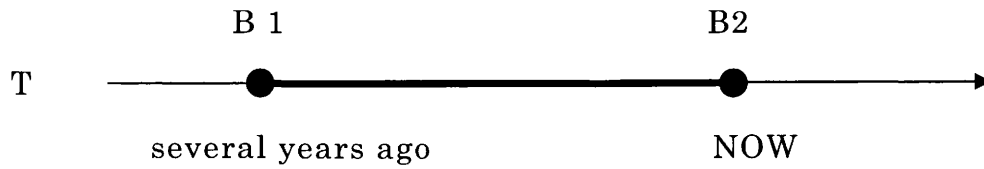


Fig 1 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (7)

Similarly, example (8) below, re-representation of example (2) in Introduction, can be illustrated in the same way. The aspectual meaning of the clause is presented by the boldface part of the time line in Fig 2, B1 standing for the beginning of the situation <we know each other> years ago, and B2 standing for the possible ending of the situation at the moment of NOW. The semantic scope of (8) is highlighted by the boldface line in Fig 2. The previously mentioned example (3) can also be illustrated in this way.

(8) We've known each other for years. (=2)

(Leech, 2004, p.39)



Fig 2 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (8)

5. B1\_\_\_\_\_B2=B3 → CP<sub>2</sub>

Compared with the English CP<sub>1</sub> in Section 4, the English CP<sub>2</sub> is relatively complicated, especially comparing with Chinese and Japanese. Instead of the key word “homogeneity” discussed in CP<sub>1</sub>, “iterativity” and “ambiguity” are two key words in this

section.

### 5.1 Iterativity and CP<sub>2</sub>

Example (9) below represents an aspectual sense that the situation <I teach in this school> starts ten years ago and remains valid up to the present moment.

(9) I've taught in this school for ten years. (=4))

(Araki & Yasui, 1992, p.1124)

The verb “teach” and its present perfect form with TAD in (9) can be carefully illustrated by what is shown in Fig 3. The verb in CP<sub>2</sub> must be a verb with temporal span between B1 and B2 so that the sub-event can be observed. What is more, the process of the situation can be further divided into smaller sub-events, as illustrated by a broken line in Fig 3. The duration from B1 to B2 which TAD refers to in Fig 3 is exactly the same as that in Fig 1; the quality of the duration from B1 to B2, however, is completely different. In Fig 3 the event of “teaching” does not go on continuously; however, it occurs and continues with intervals during 10 years from B1 to B2. The re-occurrence of the situation is summed up by “iterativity” by Jespersen (1909, p. 70), suggesting the multi-phased nature of a situation or an event.

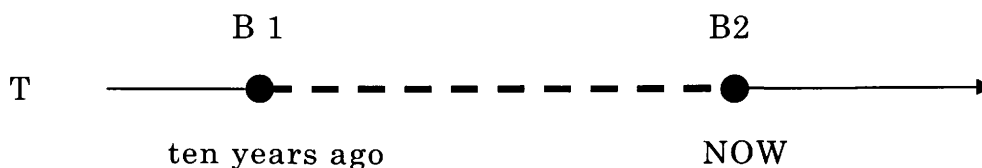


Fig 3 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (9)

(10) is a Japanese example with the verb form “*te-iru*” which is adopted as one of the present perfect forms. The above analysis is true of example (10) below.

- (10) *Sorekara, tatoeba kangoshi nado dewa, hitotsu no shigoto wo zutto yatte-irun desukeredomo, byoin wa iroiro kawatta. Shikashi daitai 20 nen shigoto wo shite-iru, soiu baai ga 20 years work ACC do-te-iru 2 banme deshu.*

From then on, for example nurses have been working in the same place, but hospitals have changed a lot. Yet most of them have worked for twenty years, which is the second case.

(<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/shingi/2004/12/txt/s1222-2.txt>)

The Japanese clause “20 nen shigoto wo shite-ru” (“they have worked for 20 years”) represents an entailment that the situation <they work> is true from 20 years ago up to the present moment. This semantics is diagrammed in Fig 4, with B1, 20 years ago, as a start of the situation in question, and B2 the end of the situation. Between B1 and B2, the situation is illustrated by a dotted line suggesting the possibility that the whole situation in question can be divided into some or many small sub-events.

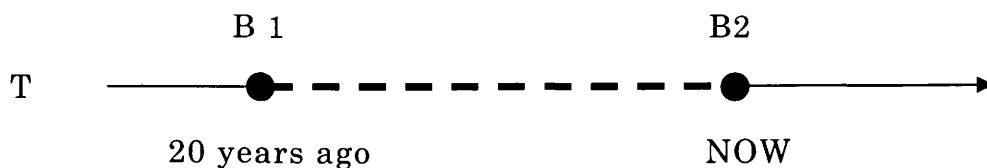


Fig 4 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (10)

## 5.2 Ambiguity and CP<sub>2</sub> in Chinese

The formula “B1\_\_\_\_\_B2=B3 → CP<sub>2</sub>” in English represents the sole aspectual meaning of iterativity leading up to the present; in Chinese, however, the formula of “B1\_\_\_\_\_B2 =B3” may cause aspectual ambiguity as illustrated in Chinese examples (11) and (12) below.

- (11) zhe ben shu kan le yinian le, hai mei kan wan.  
see *le* one year *le*

I have read this book for a year, but I haven't finished reading it.  
(Ma, 1981, p. 87)

- (12) Na chang xi wo yijing kan le yinian le, hai ji de hen qingchu  
see *le* one year *le*

Though it's been a year since I saw that drama, yet I still remember it clearly.

(ibid.)

The present perfect constructions “kan *le* yinian *le*” literally meaning “see *le* one year *le*” in examples (11) and (12) apparently have different aspectual senses. Example (11) describes the realization of the action of “kan (to see)”, suggesting that the situation occurs repeatedly for one year from B1 to B2 as shown in Fig 5. As far as the quality of duration is concerned it is exactly the same use as what is said in the CP<sub>2</sub> use. On the other hand, TAD of “one year” in example (12) refers to the period of time from B2 to NOW as illustrated in Fig 6. B1 is no longer prominent in



the schemata of example (12) because only B2, the end of the situation is temporally emphasized. Therefore the semantic scope of *<kan le yinian le>* in (12) covers from B2 to NOW, completely the same as the resultative perfect suggesting the continuation of the consequence.

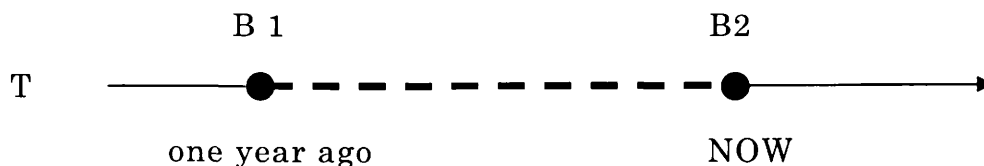


Fig 5 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (11)



Fig 6 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (12)

### 5.3 Iterativity

In a word, iterativity plays a key role in the decision of an aspectual meaning. In English the CP<sub>2</sub> use is completely dependent on iterativity with a constraint on verbs (B1≠B2). In Chinese TAD is a clear-cut standard to distinguish between these two uses of “*kan le yinian le*” (literally “see *le* one year *le*”). No constraint can be found on verb constructions in Chinese. The example such as (11) possesses iterativity with TAD referring from B1 to B2=NOW. Aspectual focus is obviously put on the beginning of a situation which is a typical use of CP<sub>2</sub>.

On the other hand, situations such as example (12) do not carry

the nature of iterativity with TAD referring to B2 to NOW. The ending of the situation is emphasized semantically. This is the typical use of the resultative perfect discussed in previous chapters.

## 6. CP<sub>3</sub>: A Variation of CP<sub>2</sub>

Aspectually speaking, example (13) below tells a single-phased situation without a series of sub-events, restricted by the singular form of the subject “he.” In English the durational TADs are not compatible with the B1=B2 verbs without aspectual duration. Therefore it is difficult for B1=B2 verbs such as “die” to co-occur with TAD of “For X time” on such occasions in which only stative verbs are preferred. The B1≠B2 verb construction <be dead> with duration is compatible with the TAD “for three years” in a rewritten example (13’).

(13) \*He has died for three days.

(13’) He has been dead for three days.

Superficially examples (5) and (13) are the same in terms of “B1=B2 verb construction + for X time.” Example (5) differs from (13) in which it is a multi-phased situation whose particular meaning is carried by its plural form of subject “people.” The subject with plural meanings is a very common way to create the multi-phased meaning of some B1=B2 verbs.<sup>5</sup> The aspectual meaning of example (5) can be analyzed by the following steps in

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<sup>5</sup> Not only subjects but also objects can be used to create the multi-phased meaning of a situation (Kashino, 1999, p. 182)

Fig 7.

Step 1 Aspectual meaning of the clause:

↓ Multi-phased situation represent the sense of  $CP_2$

Step 2 Aspectual characteristic of the verb or the verb construction:

↓ Shift of verb construction to  $B1 \neq B2$  triggered by subject  
(people: death 1; death 2; death n)

Step 3 Change of temporal diagram:

Fig 7. From  $B1=B2$  type “die” to  $B1 \neq B2$  type “die”

Example (5) aspectually means that “people have died one after another for years.” That is to say, it is a typical example of an iterative situation. The death of one person is a sub-event forming one phase of the observed situation as shown in Fig 3. It is clear that example (5) is the  $CP_2$  use, and the  $CP_2$  use requires verbs to be  $B1 \neq B2$ . The similar constraint is also suggested by Kashino (1999, pp. 181-182) that the accomplishment verbs cannot appear in the  $CP_2$  use unless the objects become plural. With the help of plural subjects the verb “die” is employed as a  $B1 \neq B2$  verb. This special use of  $B1=B2$  verbs can be found in the sentences co-occurring with other TADs such as “so far” in example (14), “since” in example (15) and so forth.<sup>6</sup>

(14) Seventeen people have died so far this year.

( BNC )

(15) More than 3,800 people have died since deadly gas escaped

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<sup>6</sup> The special use of  $CP_2$  of “have died since ...” is exactly the same as (5). Refer to Fu (2006, p. 21) in the JASEC BULLETIN 15(1) for details.

from a pesticide plant managed by an Indian subsidiary of Union Carbide.

( *ibid.* )

The Chinese verb “*si* (to die)” seem to work differently from that in English, though carrying the same aspectual nature of B1=B2. In example (16), TAD of “*san tian* (three days)” refers to the time from (B1) B2 to NOW which is the most typical use of the resultative perfect. The resultative perfect expresses a consequence state of a finished situation or an event leading up to the present as illustrated in Fig 8 with the dotted line suggesting the resultative state of the situation in question. The resultative perfect use in Chinese does not have any constraint on the aspectual meaning of verbs which is not the case in English or Japanese.

(16) Yijing si le san tian le.

die *le* three days *le*

He has been dead for three days.

(Ma, 1981, p. 87)



Fig 8 Temporal Structure of Example Sentence (16)

As discussed so far, in Chinese there is no syntactic constraint on the aspectual meaning of verbs in the resultative perfect use, yet

the constraint can be seen in Japanese in addition to what we have discussed in English. In English B1=B2 verbs cannot occur with TAD of For X time in single-phased situations such as example (13). In Japanese such similar constraints can also be found in (17). Example (17) is ungrammatical under the condition that the recovery from the death is impossible. However, in examples (18) and (19) recovery is possible so both of them are grammatically acceptable. In example (18) it is possible for the broken vending machine to be repaired; similarly in example (19) the possibility that the wet road becomes dry again is extremely high. Therefore, recovery from the present unusual state to normal state, plays a necessary role in the resultative perfect use in Japanese.

(17) ? *mikka shinde-iru.*

for three days die de-iru

(He) has been dead for three days.

(18) *Nomimono no jihanki ga 1 shukan koware te-iru*

for one week break te-iru

*nimokakawarazu shuri ga dekite-inakatta. Motto hayai shuri wo onegaishitai.*

Although the drink vending machine has been broken for a week, it has not been repaired yet. I hope someone repairs it quickly.

(<http://72.14.235.104/search?q=cache:ETsDORrMdBkJ:web.travel.rakuten.co.jp/portal/my/toukou.iken>)

(19) *doro wa kiri no tame ichinichi nurete-iru.*

one day be wet te-iru

The road has been wet all the day.

(<http://homepage.mac.com/kanjanokenriho/kenriho/news/Ikenaga1.html>)

## 7. Conclusion

It is hypothesized in this research that present-day English present perfect aspect especially in British English is developing from a present-centered sense at the third stage towards a preterite-centered sense at the fourth stage of its grammaticalization process. However, this evolution only occurs in non-continuative perfect uses such as the traditional resultative perfect use, experiential perfect use and so forth, while continuative perfect use remains almost unchanged with a possibility of becoming the typical use of English present perfect at the fourth stage.

In this chapter, the continuative perfect use is examined from a contrastive perspective. The continuative perfect use can be classified into three groups according to its aspectual meaning. Temporal construction method and TAD play an effective role in distinguishing these uses. The aspectual meaning of verbs and three continuative perfect uses can be summed up as follows.

CP<sub>1</sub> represents a homogeneous state which begins at point of B1 and lasts up the point of NOW. In the CP<sub>1</sub> use TAD refers to the time duration from B1 to B2=NOW. No changes can be found during this period as every point of the duration is homogeneous.

CP<sub>2</sub> represents a multi-phased situation with some or many repeatedly occurring sub-events. The whole situation starts at B1 and extends up to NOW. In the CP<sub>2</sub> use the duration of TAD is not

homogenous as in the CP<sub>1</sub> use. In Chinese “iterativity” must be employed to get rid of the aspectual ambiguity. The situation with iterativity is a typical use of CP<sub>2</sub> while the situation without it is a typical use of resultative perfect.

CP<sub>3</sub>, a variant of CP<sub>2</sub>, represents the same aspectual meaning as CP<sub>2</sub> with a B1=B2 verb or verb construction and a plural subject or object. The aspectual meaning of a clause is based on the condition that the whole situation can be divided into certain number of sub-event with the help from the subject or the object. In the CP<sub>3</sub> use there is no aspectual constraint on verbs in Chinese, yet there is on verbs in English and Japanese. In English stative is preferred instead of B1=B2 verbs, whereas in Japanese “recovery” decides whether the sentence is grammatical or not.

TAD in English is so logical that it can only refer to the time distance from B1 to NOW without any ambiguity. However, TAD in Chinese can refer to not only the time span from B1 to NOW but also the time span from B2 to NOW. This bi-dimension of TAD is the origin of the ambiguity in Chinese which can be solved by “iterativity.” Japanese is almost the same as Chinese in which TAD can refer to both time spans, yet there is a constraint of “recovery” in the CP<sub>3</sub> use.

## Conclusion

The English present perfect has been examined holistically in this research from semantic, evolutionary and contrastive perspectives, because it is still attracting academic attentions among linguists and scholars though numerous studies have been carried out so far. One of the reasons for it is that contrastively speaking, there is no perfect equivalent to it in other languages. Secondly, the present perfect aspect, one of the most complicated problems regarding tense and aspect in English, can be related to three tense categories, viz. the past, the present and the future. Thirdly, there are still some issues that have not been fully verified, especially those regarding the changes of the present perfect, such as the combination of the present perfect and adverbials of definite past, the extended interpretation of current relevance, and the present perfect without an auxiliary. This research so far has engaged in seeking out a more objective description of the present perfect and a suggested solution to these issues from semantic, evolutionary and contrastive perspectives.

Grounded on the literature of grammaticalization of the present perfect in other European languages than English, and of universal grammaticalization of various languages in the world, grammaticalization of English present perfect has been diachronically illustrated by a suggested four-stage principle in Chapter Two. The differences between stages lie on the semantic focus on the present or the past.

Stage One is characterized by “present > past” semantically,



covering a historic period before the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Old English and early Middle English. The aspectual characteristic of “have” makes it easy to appear in the primitive syntactic form of the present perfect in Old English. In this stage, “have” is a full verb with aspectual characteristics shown in OED Online as follows:

“no notion of any action upon the object remains, what is predicated being merely a static relation between the subject and object.”

In Stage Two it is suggested that the semantic focus shifts from the present to the past. This stage lasts from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the current syntactic form of the present perfect became established, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when “a strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite became established. In this stage, reanalysis motivates the modification from the construction “have + NP + past participle” to the construction “have + past participle + NP” As a result, the new word order “have + past participle + NP” was generalized and settled down in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and later became the syntactical form of the present perfect in present-day English. Despite the establishment of the explicit syntactic changes of the present perfect, it takes long periods of time for the establishment of semantics, especially regarding its semantic difference from the preterite. “A strict semantic differentiation” between the present perfect and the preterite finally became established about 400 years later (Görlach, 1991, p.111).

“A strict semantic differentiation” between the present

perfect and the preterite became established as late as the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Görlach, 1991, p.111). In Stage Three, beginning from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was proved that the present perfect is once again semantically characterized by “present>past,” though “have” is no longer a full verb as it used to be in OE. We conclude that this semantic shift brings about several changes in the present perfect, one of which is whether it can combine with ADPs or not. In order to make a clear-cut distinction from the preterite, current relevance of the present perfect has been excessively emphasized since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, directly resulting in a prescriptive grammar rule that the present perfect does not co-occur with ADPs and current relevance is strictly interpreted. At this stage it is appropriate to state that the present perfect is once again semantically characterized by “present>past,” though “have” is no longer a full verb as it used to be in OE.

Stages Four is also characterized by “present < past” semantically, differing from Stage One in the way that “have” in Stage Four is a particle instead of a full verb in Stage One. No powerful evidence has ever been found to show the exact start of Stage Four, yet it has been proved that present-day English is moving from Stage Three towards Stage Four motivated by reanalysis. This movement can be proved by some superficial changes in the combination of the present perfect and ADPs (see details in Chapter Five), in the present perfect without an auxiliary (see Chapter Six), and some deep changes in semantic interpretation of current relevance (see details in Chapter Four).

It has also proved that the present perfect in present-day English is gradually developing from the present-oriented Stage

Three to the past-oriented Stage Four through various routes. In addition to a route that the present perfect is usually replaced by the preterite in American English (Quirk et al., 1985; Swan, 2005; Carter & McCarthy, 2006), there are at least three other routes that were discussed in Chapter Four, Five and Six.

The first tendency which can be seen in present-day English is that the current relevance of the present perfect may be interpreted much more freely than before. Extended current relevance can be:

- (a) the present relevance from any participant involved in the event in question;
- (b) situational current relevance;
- (c) resultative current relevance;
- (d) indirect resultative current relevance;
- (e) contextual current relevance;
- (f) writer's current relevance.

The second tendency of the English present perfect from Stage Three to Stage Four is the co-occurrence examples of the present perfect and the adverbials of definite past in British spoken English. These examples have been clarified from the following perspectives:

- a. Grammaticalization perspective;
- b. extended current relevance;
- c. influences from other European languages;
- d. pragmatic influence;

- e. morphological influence;
- f. temporal contrast.

The final tendency illustrating the recent changes in the English present perfect is the “subject + past participle (+NP)” pattern. From a perspective of grammaticalization, the present perfect form without an auxiliary is an intermediate morphological form between the abbreviated present perfect “I’ve finished” and the preterite “I finished.” The present perfect without an auxiliary can be interpreted either as the present perfect or as the preterite. Therefore, it is also one of the indicators illustrating that the present perfect in present-day English is developing from Stage Three, a present-oriented stage, to Stage Four, a preterite-oriented stage. This grammaticalization process can therefore be summarized in the formulation as follows:

- (a) I have seen it.
- (b) I’ve seen it.
- (c) I seen it. (the present perfect)
- (d) I seen it. (the preterite)

Chapter Three has demonstrated that the existence type verb is closely related to the present perfect aspect or its equivalent not only in English but also in Chinese and Japanese. Through reanalysis and analogy, “liao/le” in Chinese and “te-iru” in Japanese have followed a grammaticalization process from full verbs to aspect particles.

“Have” in English expresses the intentional possession, being

equivalent to the existence of something at one's (the subject's) place. A cline from an existential verb "have" to a perfect particle of "have" was demonstrated.

The Chinese perfect particle "le" is traditionally viewed as having developed from the full verb "liao" (literally "to finish"). However, this research presents an alternative view: that "le" might have developed from the existential verb "liao" based on an examination on the negative form the present perfect.

In Japanese the perfect particle "te-iru" is from the full verb "iru" representing the existence of some moving things. Another cline from an "existential" verb "iru" to a perfect particle "te-iru" and "te-ru" can be deduced.

The clines of "have" in English, "le" in Chinese and "te-iru" in Japanese have been examined from the grammaticalization perspectives. The research demonstrates that "existential main verbs > perfect aspectual particles" is plausible cross-linguistically, at least in these three languages. The research will be expanded to examine whether or not the hypothesis can be applied to other languages.

Chapter Seven have dealt with the continuative perfect from a contrastive perfect. In this chapter, the continuative perfect use was examined from a contrastive perspective. The continuative perfect use can be classified into three groups according to its aspectual meaning. Temporal construction method and adverbial of definite past play an effective role in distinguishing these uses. The aspectual meaning of verbs and three continuative perfect uses can be summed up as follows. CP<sub>1</sub> represents a homogeneous state which begins at point of B1 and lasts up the point of NOW. In the

CP<sub>1</sub> use TAD refers to the time duration from B1 to B2=NOW. No changes can be found during this period as every point of the duration is homogeneous. CP<sub>2</sub> represents a multi-phased situation with some or many repeatedly occurred sub-events. The whole situation starts at B1 and extends up to NOW. In the CP<sub>2</sub> use the duration of TAD is not homogenous as in the CP<sub>1</sub> use. In Chinese “iterativity” must be employed to get rid of the aspectual ambiguity. The situation with iterativity is a typical use of CP<sub>2</sub> while the situation without it is a typical use of resultative perfect. CP<sub>3</sub>, a variant of CP<sub>2</sub>, represents the same aspectual meaning as CP<sub>2</sub> with a B1=B2 verb or verb construction and a plural subject or object. The aspectual meaning of a clause is based on the condition that the whole situation can be divided into certain number of sub-event with the help from the subject or the object. In the CP<sub>3</sub> use there is no aspectual constraint on verbs in Chinese, yet there is a constraint on verbs in English and Japanese. In English stative is preferred instead of B1=B2 verbs, whereas in Japanese “recovery” decides whether the sentence is grammatical or not. TAD in English is so logical that it can only refer to the time distance from B1 to NOW without any ambiguity. However, TAD in Chinese can refer to not only the time span from B1 to NOW but also the time span from B2 to NOW. This bi-dimension of TAD is the origin of the ambiguity in Chinese which can be solved by “iterativity.” Japanese is almost the same as Chinese in which TAD can refer to both time spans, yet there is a constraint of “recovery” in the CP<sub>3</sub> use.

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## Appendix 1

### The Present Perfect Co-occurring with Adverbials of Definite Past in Spoken English

#### 1. BNC: UK, Spoken

- (1) One other letter, while we're mentioning receipts of things, the report does say that er Environmental Services Committee will be considering this and I have er yesterday received a letter from and I just want to tell you the outcome of that before the actual vote occurs, if there is one.
- (2) Anyway three people have phoned yesterday, we had two phone calls yesterday, in the morning I had one last night and there was another one this morning about the washing machine and I said sorry but I said the advert was put in the Campaign I said a month or so ago.
- (3) Thank you, the point which Mr has made yesterday, I think will continue to make.
- (4) In the event my Lord, erm, that er your Lordship felt that further guidance was required, there are the two routes that I've indicated to your Lordship briefly yesterday, there is the
- (5) route of er seeking some information, if your Lordship felt it'd be of assistance to you in resolving any doubts that you may have from the and your Lordship has seen yesterday the notice on co-operation which is in and at page eleven thirty two and is

also the exhibit.

(6) No, she said, I've been there yesterday, but er I lost a brooch, and I wish you would be on the look out for it.

(7) As for long term projections er er another issue raised by erm er Mr Brook, er I think if we were to go beyond two thousand and six the debate we've had erm yesterday, er what day is Thursday, er Tuesday and Wednesday, erm and to small degree today would pale into insignificance and really er er it might boggling to to think about it, to try and erm er to draw some sense out of er demographic data for the post two thousand and six er er scenario, the uncertainty would be so great that erm that er we certainly wouldn't er er advice it.

(8) I mean that might be er a solution to our water problem.

I've spoken to him yesterday.

You did?

Yeah, I've spoken to Tom, he wants me to get an outline price which I'll do today.

(9) [L]ook at some the points, I've heard, I've been heckled yesterday[.] [D]on't heckle me this week the section of level funding.

(10) She has talked, we've talked to her yesterday, was it yesterday? Or the day before? Yesterday I think well m maybe the day before Friday.

(11) But erm the conversations I've had yesterday indicate that they are doing a major push on recruitment.

(12) And that's an encouraging line because those of us, and I include myself who am not always articulate, who can't always get the, the words together to make a sentence and finish it, can try nevertheless to come up with something which is interesting, can contain the; Hey, this is for you; for the audience, along the lines we've been talking about yesterday.

(13) Paintings erm have the power to take you back in time, I can look at a painting and remember something that's happened yesterday or years and years ago ...

(14) And it's, no if you'd retired yesterday, it's always retired yesterday, you died yesterday.

(15) Do you know the Highway Code?

No.

Mind you all the questions he's asked me yesterday I answered.

I could have done that.

Nothing else, just the Highway Code.

(16) See the A four five's , er three's been closed yesterday.

Mm.

[T]onight.

Well.

There's been an accident, I'm sure, on the motorway.

Cos of an accident.

- (17) I mean, Ann finished lectures, Ann's finished lectures yesterday, she's a secondary teacher and she doesn't have a lecture again until after Christmas.
- (18) It is, it is, it's re-opened about a week ago, having been shut for re-doing.
- (19) Group Four Security, have you noticed we've lost another prisoner last night and he nicked me trousers!
- (20) This stride and those that have followed last week, as recently as last week as Mr said are already miles back along that road.
- (21) we've already written, we've already written last week to the Scottish office, we've written to our member of parliament and we've asked him to see if we can get a delay on the date because we've taken three years to try and get planning consent.
- (22) We erm we've been discussing all last week the amount of housing that has to be accommodated in Harrogate District and in North Yorkshire as as a whole.
- (23) But in the mean time my wages I've had last week have been spent.

(24) Well I, obviously want to try and attend meetings if and when possible , er I've been to one last week, which basically was er because I don't feel I'm qualified to get up and David got up and spoke very well actually, he was always, at the police not neighbourhood watch, er to do with the cascade telephone system which we found out afterwards, after a three quarters hour debate a man came up to Dave afterwards and showed him a memo which said this cascade system has now ceased in November nineteen ninety-two and that was the the abuse on that particular meeting .

(25) All this week is for is going on appointments I've made last week, and for setting up my appointments for next week.

(26) Have you left it, wh what did you actually do?

I slipped on scaffolding up which is that bigger machine.

Yeah.

and all that frost we've had all last week I never slipped once.

Made it slippery.

(27) I will be outside with a placard!

Do not buy a caravan on Field Park!

I've threatened him, that's what I'm going to do!

of the er erm.

I've seen it done last week.

Throw a brick through his windows!

There's been nothing done!



I'd love to do it to him!

Well I've got to.

Hang on!

(28) ... she says er I'm er guaranteed, she says oh no you're not, she says Ruth's told me last week to take you off guarantee, so they took her off like...

(29) Do you think so?

No, it doesn't seem very positive, I don't know

When, never is, is it?

No, we'll see I don't know if I want to spend the money this year.

Has he bothered last year?

Oh I suppose he could, we'll see.

Will, will, will, will we still go?

(30) Well what it is you've used it all last year haven't you?

(31) I've said last year.

(32) Are you optimistic that erm people will perceive the services under this budget as better than they've had last year, or worse?

(33) He's been doing it last year on this foot mm, I think it was claw.

2. Wordbanks: UK, Spoken, BBC world service, UK transcribed

informal speech

- (34) Officials in Israel have described a meeting yesterday between two Israeli cabinet ministers and President Gorbachev as a major breakthrough in relations between Israel and the Soviet Union.
- (35) The Israeli science and energy minister, Mr Yuval Neeman, has described talks yesterday in Moscow with President Gorbachev as a breakthrough in relations between Israel and the Soviet Union.
- (36) And they use those 'cos they've heard them yesterday.
- (37) Now that excludes as we've already seen yesterday workers' remittances.
- (38) Erm at the moment he's drawing today all day he's been drawing yesterday he's been drawing and before that he's been playing with his puzzles.
- (39) But it's nice to know that there's somebody next door I think now and but he's been out yesterday night doing the garden so but it it's nice to know it's being cared for again.
- (40) I think I've been home a month ago.
- (41) But er in actual fact the way the business has gone in the

last year has been very encouraging and we've actually from a year ago when we first took over we've actually doubled the number of staff that work at company name Garage.

(42) I I've been at this club and the best performance from an Aston Villa team that I have been involved in was this year against Inter Milan now those players have gone out last week against Wimbledon and haven't produced at all and that's the consistency that you've got to look for.

(43) Her Foreign Secretary, Mr Douglas Hurd, has argued last week CONT that Moscow has abundant resources, its problem is that it is uniquely misgoverned.

(44) Parliament in the republic of Kazakhstan has reversed its decision last week to ignore the Soviet order raising the prices of luxury goods.

(45) Well the toilet upstairs couple of mornings I've gone out last week my path was damp.

(46) Another thing is you might get the wrong size and you have to send it back and wait again.

if you go down town and get the wrong size you've got to go down and

This is it.

I've done that.

I've done that last week.

Went down the shoe shop got the wrong pair of shoes.

I had to go all the way back again to find that they didn't have the pair of shoes and go to another shop to get another pair of shoes.

(47) And erm like me and my neighbour have both decided when we come back off the holiday 'cos she's just been last week.

(48) We've tackled them head-on last year at some very considerable cost.

(49) I I've read somewhere last year that the majority of prof the majority of professional boxers in South Africa are H I V positive.

(50) So but we've actually stopped that last year we said. It's our life now.

(51) ... er like showing slides of what's happened last year or something like that.

### 3. Wordbanks: UK, Written 1, UK books, UK magazines

(52) He knew that von Arzfeld was, as he put it to himself, "All right": but a man could not stop his heart beginning to race when conversation took this turn.

What was coming?

What would be required?

You've heard about yesterday?

You mean the false alarm?

4. Wordbanks: UK, Written 2, UK Sun, Time and Today

(53) Isabelle Murray 17 April 1998 AUSSIE brew Foster's launched a bid yesterday to become Britain's top-selling lager.

(54) Walter's war cry as Gers see title grip slip DEFIANT  
Rangers boss Walter Smith refused to admit his side's 10-in-a  
row dream has vanished last night.

(55) ROBERT Maxwell's wine collection is expected to fetch  
£ 40,000 when it comes under the hammer next month,  
Sotheby's said last night.

(56) When St Martin's announced last month that it had agreed a  
\$ 25,000 ( £16,000 ) advance to Mr Irving, there was anger from  
New York 's Jewish lobby.