Aoristic Drift and Narrative Perfect in Early Modern English: A Functional Approach

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ABSTRACT

In the current study, data from A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760) are used to consider contexts with the have-perfect and temporal adverbs of the definite past time such as yesterday, last night, ago. Data analysis is conducted within the framework of a usage-based approach, which gives evidence to the hypothesis that in Early Modern English the have-perfect in spoken register was gradually developing perfective semantics and that it followed the stages of generalization of meaning depending on the degree of event remoteness. Investigation of the instances where the have-perfect is used in narrative passages shows that the have-perfect in such contexts does not lose its pragmatic component of current relevance but is employed to highlight a crucial event out of a chain of past events. The paper proposes the hypothesis that the main mechanism preventing the have-perfect from further aoristicization is the operation of syntactic analogy within the syntactic paradigm of the present perfect, which had already fully developed by the time of Early Modern English.

KEYWORDS: Present perfect; Preterite; Aoristic drift; Narrative perfect; Syntactic analogy; Early Modern English.

1. INTRODUCTION

The grammatical-semantic development of the have-perfect, as is well-known, begins within the construction of the possessive verb and past participle, which has resultative semantics (Bybee et al., 1994; Carey, 1994). As the typological material shows, HAVE+PP can continue its semantic evolution from anteriority to preteritality (the so-called aoristic drift) or evidentiality (Bybee et al., 1994; Schaden, 2012). In this respect, the have-perfect in Standard British English has moved along the grammaticalization path only from resultative to anterior,

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in contrast to its equivalents in such languages as German, Italian, French, where it has developed preterital semantics over time. Moreover, while in modern languages such as Spanish the present perfect tends to gradually shift towards the perfective (Schwenter, 1994; Detges, 2018), Standard British English regards sentences like I have written this letter yesterday as non-grammatical and thus unacceptable.

An important point in the evolution of the *have*-perfect (resultative>anterior>perfective/simple past) is the specifics of the tense-aspect system of a language: if a language contains an opposition of perfective and imperfective, then anterior may replace perfective and contrast with imperfective. In the absence of such an opposition, anterior develops into the simple past tense, with which it begins to compete (Bybee et al., 1994: 85). However, as this study will show, the development of anterior into the past tense can occur through an intermediary stage of perfectivity, even if the language does not have imperfective in its inventory. This can be accounted for by the retention of the semantics, which still point to the situation as a complete bounded whole in contrast to the simple past that can signal both perfective and imperfective situations.

Thus, anterior indicates that the situation occurs prior to reference time and is relevant to the situation at reference time, as demonstrated by the experiential meaning of the *have*-perfect in the following example (for the readings of anterior cf. e.g. Comrie, 1976: 52-66):

1) I **have read** of many indiscreet lovers, who not succeeding in their addresses, **have pretended** to repent, and acted as you do. [D5FLENNO][1]

Perfective presents the situation described by the clause as having temporal boundaries, and being a single, unified, discrete situation. In this study instances of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts will be regarded as perfectives:

2) "There was a day sett for them to answere at the Consistorye in Paules: but they **have** *the last Sunday* **peticioned** his Majestie, shewing that it is not out of obstinacie, but they decline the Ecclesiasticall jurisdiccion altogether." [D2THIGHC]

And finally, past simple points to a situation which occurred before the moment of speech, signaling past time for situations viewed both perfectively and imperfectively (Bybee et al., 54-55, 81-85, 92, 104; cf. also Comrie, 1976: 16-41).

Diachronically the *have*-perfect in Standard British English evades aoristicization (cf. Burgos, 2004). However, this does not mean that there are no examples in which the *have*-perfect could demonstrate perfective semantics and be used in past time contexts.

There is ample research on the evolution of the *have*-perfect in English, which analyze various aspects that contribute to the change of this category in time (Carey, 1994; Lee, 2004; Łęcki, 2010 among many others). However, studies that would focus on diachronic cases where the *have*-perfect appears to be combinable with definite past time adverbials seem to be lacking. Schwenter (1994) points out *en passant* that Middle English displays examples in which the *have*-perfect is used "…with adverbs referring to past situations". (Schwenter, 1994: 1008). This observation is supported by Denison who gives a brief account of examples from Middle English that can be interpreted as the *have*-perfect in past time contexts (Denison, 1993: 353 et passim). However, such examples are scattered, and no explanation is provided as to whether we are dealing with further grammaticalization of the *have*-perfect or its special use in narrative.

Yao (2014) claims that the *have*-perfect in British English has advanced so far along the grammaticalization path over the last two centuries (from 1750 to the present day) as to have acquired a stronger temporal character and become more like a tense rather than a resultative aspectual marker (Yao, 2014: 323). More importantly, although the study was not concerned with instances of the *have*-perfect with temporal specification of the definite past time like *yesterday*, it argues that the nature of current relevance of the *have*-perfect shows essential change "…from the salient present result of a past event to the situational constitution of the extended-now interval" (Yao, 2014: 325). As it will be shown, examples of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials can point to erosion of current relevance of the *have*-perfect.

Yet, most documented and unequivocal examples of the use of the *have*-perfect with past time adverbials are found in Present Day British English (see e.g. Rastall, 1999: 80; McCoard, 1978: 128). Such instances are most typical of a nonstandard or dialectal use. Trudgill (1984) notes that in spoken English on the British Isles such examples as *I've seen him last year* or *He's done it two days ago* can be found, whereas in Standard British English such usage will definitely be stigmatized and considered ungrammatical (Trudgill, 1984: 42). That the *have*-perfect in past time contexts (narrative perfect) is not unusual in Present Day British English and can often be heard in interviews with footballers (players, or football managers) and football commentators on local BBC radio stations has been demonstrated in Walker (2011).

The author argues that such usage of the *have*-perfect is not only additional evidence and the result of the continued aoristicization process, but rather what "…we are actually witnessing is a much older state of affairs which is only now coming to light" (Walker, 2011: 83). Williams (2006) also talks about examples of rule breaking when "…the present perfect

in its resultative use occurs in clauses which are scoped by past time adverbials…" (Williams, 2006: 15). Such rule breaking contexts occur on a daily basis in the UK media, both spoken and written (ibid.). Moreover, Miller (2000) and Trudgill (1984) also argue that examples of the use of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts are not 'slips'. Such examples can be accounted for by syntactic semantics, in particular, by an appeal to the result-oriented use of the present perfect, which in these cases overrides past time adverbials (c.f. Williams, 2006: 17; Miller, 2000: 327).

Taking the above into account, I assume as proven that examples of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials in Present Day British English are neither mistakes nor slips, but rather a grammatical phenomenon that points to the processes that the *have*-perfect is undergoing at the present stage of its development. Therefore, it is of importance to see if these processes started earlier than the Present Day stage. To this end, diachronic examples of nonstandard usage of English need to be found and analyzed to understand whether the *have*-perfect was used in the same manner as can be employed today. For reasons of space and time, I have restricted the scope of the analysis of the use of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials to only Early Modern English (for the history of the present perfect and division of labor between the present perfect and preterite in the history of English, see e.g. Carey, 1994; Elsness, 1997). The *be*-perfect, which also existed in the language of this period and was used with intransitive verbs, was excluded from the research since, in contrast to a wide range of interpretations of the *have*-perfect, it only denotes a perfect of result (for the competition of the *have*-perfect and *be*-perfect in the history of English, see McFadden & Alexiadou, 2010).

Thus, the main research questions in this study can be formulated as follows:
- what mechanisms could possibly underlie the process of incipient aoristicization of the *have*-perfect in Early Modern English?
- what deters the *have*-perfect from engaging in the full-scale transition towards preterital semantics which occurred with its German or French equivalents?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the corpus. Section 3 deals with the description of the theoretical frameworks within which the research was done. Section 4 discusses the corpus data of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts. Section 5 examines the hypothesis that is put forward to explain what prevented the *have*-perfect from further aoristicization. And finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and provides directions for further analysis of the semantics of the *have*-perfect.

2. CORPUS DESCRIPTION

A complete diachronic study of the use of the *have*-perfect in contexts with adverbs of the definite past time would require a careful investigation of all English diachronic corpora, starting with the Old English period. However, due to the lack of data on spoken interaction in the texts of such corpora, it would be impossible to yield the contexts that would contain examples of the use of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials. In this respect, *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* seems to be a fortunate exception since it includes numerous speech-related texts that represent records of authentic spoken language. Why is spoken language so important for this study? Although this idea might seem trivial, as Kytö and Smitterberg remark, "a great deal of linguistic change has taken place in speech, and notably speech used in dialogue situations" (Kytö & Smitterberg, 2015: 337).

Since in Present Day British English we observe the use of the have-perfect in past time contexts mostly in dialects and colloquial nonstandard speech, it would, therefore, be more consistent when studying language phenomena from a diachronic perspective to focus on the search for respective contexts within those genres that reflect spoken language. It is assumed that such genres are more likely to exhibit the drift of the *have*-perfect toward preterital semantics. Consequently, *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* appears to be most suited for the goals of the study. In addition, following the works of Bauer (1970) and McCoard (1978), it can be argued that semantic properties and functions of the *have*-perfect in literary texts from previous periods did not differ much from what can be seen in Present Day Standard British English.

A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760) includes texts with a total of 1.2 million words which belong to the following genres: *Trial Proceedings*, *Witness Depositions*, *Drama/Comedy*, *Didactic Works*, *Prose Fiction.* However, the question is bound to arise as to what extent the speech-related texts reflect spoken language. This question was addressed in Kytö and Walker (2003). The authors argue that although the issue of reliability of speech-related texts as records of spoken interaction is a complicated one, enough evidence exists to suggest that texts such as *Trial Proceedings* and *Witness Depositions* "…may be fairly reliable records of spoken interaction of the past" (Kytö & Walker, 2003: 241). What is peculiar about, for example, *Trial Proceedings* is that they include recorded court proceedings "taken down by an official scribe, or an observer who is not otherwise involved in the proceedings" and that present the speech in a dialogue form, generally in the question and answer format, with limited scribal intervention or explanatory comments on the proceedings (Kytö & Walker, 2006: 20).

However, it should be kept in mind that in every text of *Trial Proceedings* and other similar documents that put down spontaneous speech, there is still a certain degree of scribal interference and essentially every speech-related document was produced by a scribe rather than by a speaker. Nevertheless, this should not diminish the value of the material which was

handed down to us by the corpus texts. As stated in Kytö and Walker (2006), *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* is "…the material that…can be studied in its own right—not necessarily as we study present-day tape-recorded speech, but as spoken interaction of the past recorded in written form" (ibid.).

The search of the *have*-perfect was carried out manually in each separate text for all five genres presented in the corpus. When the data were collected, all the corpus texts were double searched, using an automatic search engine, for the following temporal adverbs of the definite past time: *yesterday*, *ago*, *last*. That was done to prevent any significant context with the definite past time adverbials from escaping the search. Examples in which the *have*-perfect is used with several homogeneous verbs in coordinate sentences were considered as one token:

3) Lady, **went out** together, and Mr. (Lyddel) **has returned** again, **and staid** with his Lady. [D5WLYDDE]

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As the main theoretical framework, the present study employs an approach of the usage-based linguistics which helps to understand how new constructions arise, compete and evolve. One of the key principles of the usage-based approach to language is that context plays a crucial role in the way that constructions evolve through time within so called usage events, which are an interaction between a speaker and hearer. The mapping of structure and usage in production and comprehension in such communication events is assumed not to be "flawless", which leads to variation of meanings of the construction and, consequently, gives rise to linguistic innovation (von Mengden & Coussé, 2014: 4).

Thus, it is due to varying contexts in which interlocutors start making new inferences during communication acts. In other words, these are "inferences about linguistic meaning based on contextual assumptions such as the cooperativeness of participants in a conversation" (Hopper & Traugott, 2003: 76). Further interpretation of the linguistic meaning modifies the conventional meaning of utterances. Certain implications and logical inferences that the speaker makes in a speech act are based on the subjective interpretation of a linguistic sign (Bybee & Beckner, 2010: 845-847). It is as a result of the process of subjectification that a linguistic sign acquires a new meaning, which is "situated in the subjective belief, state or attitude toward the situation…" (Hopper & Traugott, 2003: 93; see also Traugott 2010).

No less important is frequent repetition of a construction in a new environment in which new logical inferences become stable, and this contributes to the process of the development of a new meaning that becomes dominant in the new environment. As an example, the emergence of the implication of the sentence *what is X doing with Y* can be provided. In this sentence, when a locative component is available, the negative connotations inherent in the

construction in the context of a direct question prompt the meaning of *why does X have Y*, especially during the visual inspection (*What are you doing with that knife = why do you have that knife*), although the primary meaning, namely *what are you doing with it*, is not excluded (Bybee & Beckner, 2010: 846). Thus, the new meaning arises first through context-dependent inferences, then through repetition and, finally, new conversational implicatures become conventionalized (von Mengden & Coussé, 2014: 4; Hopper & Traugott, 2003: 78-81). It should be noted, however, that new inferences or conversational implicatures are cancelable and in some contexts even denied, whereas conventional implicatures are not (Hopper & Traugott, 2003: 79-81). This implies that at a certain point in its development, a new meaning of the construction does not necessarily have to be conventionalized.

Since the study touches upon functional issues related to the competition between the *have*-perfect and preterite, it also draws on the form-function reanalysis approach within functional grammar, which is concerned with the analysis of interaction processes between form and function, as described in Croft (2000). In essence, any construction is regarded as a whole which consists of a syntactic unit corresponding to a certain semantic structure that repeatedly co-occurs in the same linguistic environment. However, such a frequent usage evokes "a certain degree of potential indeterminacy or ambiguity in the attribution of semantic components to syntactic components in an utterance" (Croft, 2000: 118). Hence, the possibility arises for speakers/listeners to reanalyze the form-meaning mapping in a grammatical construction.

What is essential in this approach is that a form-meaning mapping emerges in the course of language use and it plays a crucial role in how the speaker constructs and conveys the information. As Croft puts it, "the network of relations holding together the units of a grammatical construction and the semantic structures they conventionally denote can also be subject to interactive activation, leading to production of an altered form of the construction" (Croft, 2000: 119). Thus, these altered forms of constructions can occur due to the uniqueness and novelty of communication situations. Moreover, innovations are often produced when speakers are trying to reproduce 'correct forms' but fail to do so in accelerated real time, which leads to the creation of new forms in utterances. In fact, the spoken genres in *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* best reflect this concept since they are able to show what was happening with the semantics of the *have*-perfect and how the meaning of this construction may have been reanalyzed in the real time speech recorded during trials and witness depositions.

More importantly, a form-meaning mapping includes a phenomenon that is called hypoanalysis. In Croft (2000) this phenomenon is exemplified by the extension of the third singular simple present -*s* marker for all persons in Somerset/Dorset dialects. This happens as a result of the division of semantic labor between -*s* and *do* (semelfactive/nonhabitual vs iterative/habitual semantic function interpretation). It is the complexity in the form-function

mapping in the use of *-s* and *do* that led to hypoanalysis of these forms, in particular, *-s* acquiring the contextual semantic property of marking present tense: *I **sees** the doctor tomorrow* (Croft, 2000: 129). In this paper the theory of hypoanlysis will be applied to the analysis of the contexts where "…the listener reanalyzes a contextual semantic/functional property as an inherent property of the syntactic unit…" and later attributes the inherent property of the context "…to the syntactic unit, and so the syntactic unit in question gains a new meaning or function" (Croft, 2000: 126-127).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Aoristic drift

A corpus data search yielded examples from the texts of all five genres[2], classified by the compilers of the corpus, that contain the *have*-perfect in past time contexts. The token frequency is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts in *A Corpus of English Dialogues*.

Corpus text genre	Witness Depositions (172,940)	Trial Proceedings (285,660)	Prose Fiction (223,890)	Drama /Comedy (238,590)	Didactic Works[3] (236,640)	Miscellaneous (25, 970)
Total number of occurrences	21	8	10	6	11	1
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	12,2	2,8	4,48	2,52	4,65	3,8

The total number of tokens retrieved from the corpus is 57. Overt occurrences account for 49 instances (see example 4 with the temporal adverb of the definite past time). Covert temporal specification, introduced in clauses with verbs in the simple past tense, was identified in 8 instances (see example 5, also examples 18, 19, 20).

4) **Have** you well **slept last night**? [D4HFBOYE]

5) I **haue called** you **an houre before you began to rise**, you will force me in the end to complaine to my Ladye your mother… [D2HFERON]

The data from Table 1 suggest that the *have*-perfect is most frequent in *Witness Depositions*, as it has both the highest total number of occurrences (21) and the highest number per a hundred thousand words (12,2). This can be accounted for by the nature of the genre that most consistently and widely reflects the spoken register of English of that time (authentic dialogue). In contrast, *Drama/Comedy* texts contain stretches of passages of both literary and spoken nonstandard English (constructed dialogue) that would make the number of occurrences of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts less frequent (6 and 2,52 respectively). The *have*-perfect in all of these examples is used to convey actions completed by the time of the moment of speech. However, in most of such contexts, in contrast to the meaning of anterior, current relevance of the completed action loosens or disappears altogether.

It should be noted, however, that a small sample in quantitative terms does not diminish its value, especially when it comes to the diachronic perspective, which is by its nature limited in terms of frequency and represented genres of the language. Thus Werner (2013) shows, based on data retrieved from the *International Corpus of English*, that in a number of variants other than British or American English examples of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials also appear with low frequency and mainly in the spoken discourse.

Now the contexts from the corpus will be considered in more detail. Out of all the definite past time adverbials found with the present perfect, the most frequently used is *ago* with varying degrees of remoteness (7 contexts). Also, 4 contexts with the temporal adverbial phrases of *last+noun* with varying degrees of remoteness were attested: *last night*, *last Sunday*, *last week*, and one example with a temporal adverbial of hesternal meaning (*yesterday*).

6) I **have been** a great while **yesterday pleading** my Right by Law, for Councel, and now I have stood many houres to hear your proofes to the Indictment. [D3TLILBU]

The present perfect continuous in (6) is used to indicate a finished activity in the recent past. Although in (6) we are dealing with the only example of the perfect continuous, it is synonymous with the experiential meaning of the present perfect. Moreover, they are used interchangeably in similar contexts. The semantic closeness to the experiential perfect finds support in the use of another experiential perfect in the subordinate clause in (6): *have stood many houres*. The use of the *have*-perfect in (6) is significant in two respects: the experiential reading and use in a recent past context, which is expressed by the hersternal temporal adverbial *yesterday*.

Bybee et al. (1994) show that in the course of grammatical changes, anteriors can develop perfective or preterital meanings through the process of semantic generalization. The process triggers a weakening and further loss of the pragmatic component associated with current relevance (Bybee et al., 1994: 86-87). The weakening of current relevance occurs due to more frequent usage of the linguistic construction in contexts, where the connection between the result of an action and the moment of speech is emphasized, which makes the propositional content of the message redundant. In Schwenter (1994) a more detailed picture and the mechanisms of the shift of anterior to perfective are drawn on the basis of data from the Alicante dialect of peninsular Spanish. The author points out that during the shift of anterior to hodiernal perfective, several logical stages of inferences take place: from anterior to recent or immediate past events to more remote events of the same day, when "today" is perceived as part of the present perfect, capable of denoting all events transpired during the day, and in some Romance languages (e.g. French) these even go beyond the hodiernal past, extending to all past contexts (Schwenter, 1994: 102-103).

Data from the *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* do not provide such an opportunity to draw a detailed picture of the diffusion of hodiernal or recent past meanings to other more remote perfective contexts. Nevertheless, there are examples that capture the use of the present perfect in recent past contexts, and also, as shown in Schwenter (1994), that demonstrate variation with preterites in past contexts. In particular, this applies to temporal adverbials with the adjective *last*.

(7) Pardon mee, wife, quoth he, for **this night hath** a miracle **beene wrought**…[D2FKIT]

(8) he **hath bin** somwhat wayward **the last night**. [D4TPILKI]

(9) Sir, You **have had** the Resolution of the Court upon the like Question **the last day**, and you were told, That having such a Charge of so high a Nature against you, and your Work was, that you ought to acknowledge the JURISDICTION. [D3TCHARL]

(10) I know him very well, his wife **hath been** with me **last week**, and asked me if I knew what time he was with me on Wednesday, the 16th of October. [D3TGBH]

In (7)-(10), the *have*-perfect is used in contexts that indicate different degrees of remoteness: from *this night* (hodiernal meaning), *last day, last night* (hesternal meaning), to sufficiently remote events – *last week*, *last Sunday* (example 2*)*. I assume that by Early Modern English the present perfect in spoken register of English may have been going through changes similar to those described in Schwenter (1994). It should be noted, however, that in Standard

British English, both Present Day and earlier, the present perfect in such contexts is considered ungrammatical, whereas the new shades in meaning of the *have*-perfect that are stigmatized as unacceptable arise in dialectal forms and spoken register.

Variation of the present perfect and preterite in contexts of immediate and recent past also occurs with the temporal adverbial *this night*.

(11) But how **haue** you **reposed this night**? [D2HFWODR]

(12) Truly sir, quoth he, I **was** late abroad **this night** making merrie with my friends…[D1FCOBLE]

Examples (11)-(12) demonstrate excerpts of dialogue speech from various works in the corpus. In (11) the conversation takes place in the morning and the *have*-perfect clearly refers to an action that occurred in the definite past time, that is, at night. The extract can hardly be interpreted as a continuative situation. Moreover, in Present Day British English if any event that is being talked about happened earlier, but not at the moment of the conversation, the use of the preterite is obligatory: *I have lost my key in the morning* would be felicitous if the phrase is pronounced in the morning but has to be changed for *I lost my key in the morning* if uttered in the evening. Thus, the standard use in (11) would be, *But how did you repose last night*? Furthermore, the time of the conversation in (12) is also the morning. One of the characters apologizes for having to disturb another person and asks why he slept "out of his hostel to night". In response, the addressee recounts a story explaining why he had to change his lodgings that night. Again, according to the standard rules, the preterite should be used, which is indeed found in the context. Thus, semantically equal contexts make it possible to argue that in cases with (11) and (12) we can talk about a variation between the *have*-perfect and preterite. Overall, 14 instances of this type of variation were detected in the corpus.

The functional-semantic closeness of the *have*-perfect with the preterite becomes even more evident in the examples where the question and the answer immediately following it include different grammatical forms (the *have*-perfect and preterite):

(13) what **hath** shee done? **did** she hit or misse? she **hath hit**, says the other, better she had mist, says the first. [D2FARMIN]

In this regard, it is necessary to mention functional and semantic properties of the present perfect, which are observed in Present Day British English, as well as in American English. Thus, Elsness (2009) analyzes examples of variation of the *have*-perfect and preterite in contexts of immediate and recent past. In indeterminate contexts of recent past with such adverbs as *just*, *yet*, *recently*, in American English there is a clear and statistically significant

tendency towards the preference of the preterite, although similar examples are not seen as ungrammatical in British English, despite fewer respondents there opting for the preterite (Elsness, 1997: 231-232; Elsness, 2009: 231-235 et passim). Davydova also emphasizes the preference for the preterite in immediate and recent past contexts in English of non-native speakers (Davydova, 2011: 223-256)[4], which indicates that these contexts are pragmatically less sensitive to current relevance:

(14) - **Has** he **married** a young woman?
       - No, he **married** an old woman. [D3HFMAUG]

(15) - **Have** you **put** the Date?
       - I believe yes: But I **did not** subscribe. [D4HFBOYE]

I argue that the processes which happen with the present perfect and are widely attested in Present Day varieties of English, both for native and non-native speakers, also occurred in Early Modern English, where examples like (14)-(15) can serve as additional evidence of variation of the *have*-perfect and preterite. It is assumed that this type of variation can be regarded as an example of hypoanalysis (Croft, 2000: 117, 126-128). In the course of hypoanalysis, the listener reinterprets a contextual semantic/functional property of completion as an inherent property of the syntactic unit (preterite). In other words, properties inherent in the context are assigned to the syntactic unit (Croft, 2000: 126-127). Referring to Haspelmath, 1998: 41-45, Croft remarks that when dealing with expressions of future meanings, the future tense in the first place had to be expressed by telic verbs of the present forms, since it is these forms that are more logical to interpret as future events, e.g. *The train for London leaves at 9:30* (Croft, 2000: 128).

Similarly, the data contain past tense telic verbs that are used in contexts implying the completion of an event, and therefore the meaning of the syntactic environment can easily transfer to the grammatical meaning of the verb. Such use, however, is not a unique phenomenon since similar processes have been observed in, for example, Samaná English, where "…have + past participle constructions and preterite forms continue to stand out as dominant expressions of present perfect" (Tagliamonte, 2000: 348).

The most frequent examples (7 instances) with temporal adverbs of the definite past time and the *have*-perfect in the corpus are those that include *ago* with varying degrees of remoteness: *seven years ago* (D4HOROGU), *long ago* (D2HOCHUR), *three sessions ago* (D5FDEFOE), *a year ago* (D1MBARRO), *about two years ago* (D2WPENDL), *a fortnight ago* (D3CDRYDE).

(16) - and you where dine you?

- At maister chauncelours of London: he **hath bidden** mee **aboue a fortnight ago**. [D3CDRYDE]

In (16) *ago* indicates the closest past time event. Yet, it should be noted that in terms of remoteness, *ago* with the *have*-perfect in all the cases mentioned above points to a relatively remote past, which is the next step on the remoteness scale after recent past.

However, in the corpus there are examples which make it possible to view the use of the *have*-perfect with *ago* from a different angle.

(17) Jaquel – Truly Sir, I cannot say that, but William Drake told me, he was gone thither to speak with Titus; and **this is above two years ago**, that William Drake told me so. and he propounded nothing to us, nor did I ever see his face afterwards, and **this is about two years and a halfe ago**. [D3TLOVE].

In (17), the verb in the present form is used with *ago*: *this is*. This form can be interpreted in the following way: *it is now two years since this happened* or *this happened two years ago*. Such examples are not isolated[5] and are used in the same contexts as (16). If the semantics of the contexts in (17) and (16) are identical, then it should be assumed that the *have*-perfect in (16) is similar in its functional properties to the present form. Similarly, we find variation in the following contexts in Present Day British English: *this is the first time that* vs *this has been the first time that*. If this observation is correct, then it can be argued that in contexts with *ago,* the present perfect preserves the pragmatic component of current relevance, whereas *ago* with temporal specification indicates the period of time that has passed up to the speech point (extended-now interval).

This interpretation, however, does not exclude the possibility that, in the course of variation with preterital forms in contexts with *ago*, further generalization of perfective semantics was underway. In the same instances, the cognitive effects of hypoanalysis could operate, which also transferred perfective semantics of the syntactic environment onto the *have*-perfect. The process could have been enhanced by the functional overlap of the preterite and *have*-perfect used in identical past time contexts.

Another context in which the present perfect is found with past time reference includes complex sentences where the preterite sets the past time specification in one of the clauses. 15 instances of such contexts were attested. The syntactic environment in such examples is mainly represented by temporal clauses introduced by the conjunctions *when* and *before*.

(18) M. Cust. – Not so strange as true, woman; I should rather, and sooner forget my mother that bare me, and the paps that gave me suck, then forget this merry time; nay, if thou hadst ever seen the mirth and jolitie that we **have had** at those times **when I was young**, thou wouldst blesse thy selfe to see it. [D3MWOMEN]

In (18), the *have*-perfect is used in its experiential meaning. Overall, 8 such instances were found in the corpus. Although the experiential perfect highlights habitual past time events, the temporal clause undoubtedly refers to a remote past. Similar examples are found also in complement clauses in dialogue passages:

(19) Daughter attend, for I will tell thee now what **in my yong daies** I my selfe **haue tried**…[D2CHEYWO]

In (19) the *have*-perfect is also employed in its experiential meaning with the indication of the definite past time event: *in my yong daies*.

Another example, where the experiential perfect is found in a past time context, includes a temporal subordinate clause with the conjunction *before*:

(20) – "Mrs. Whittingham, you have reported that I **have had** a child **before** I **was maried**. I trust you will bringe forth the father for yt."

– "I doe not saie that you **hadd** anie child **before** you **were maried**; but I saie that I have herd that you **had** a child **before you wer maried**, but I will not saie that it is trew." [D1WDURHA]

It is noteworthy that (20) displays variation of the *have*-perfect and preterite in the past contexts introduced by the temporal clause. In response to a remark in which the *have*-perfect is used in a past context, the interlocutor uses a preterite in an absolutely identical syntactic environment.

Why is it important to emphasize that in contexts (18)-(20) we are dealing with the experiential perfect? As noted in Klein (1994), the distance between topic time and situation time is much greater in the experiential perfect than in the resultative perfect. Based on this observation, Davydova (2011) concludes that "current relevance is not as explicitly expressed in experiential contexts as in resultative contexts… experiential contexts are less favored by the perfect when compared to resultative contexts or extended-now contexts" (Davydova, 2011: 60). Moreover, analyzing the semantics of the resultative and experiential perfects, Mittwoch (2008) comes to the conclusion that the past tense shares a number of common features with the experiential perfect: it allows "adverbs of quantity or cardinality, iterative or habitual readings that do not have to be overtly spelled out" (Mittwoch, 2008: 346). In addition,

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Print ISSN: 1578-7044; Online ISSN: 1989-6131

the experiential perfect can trigger a past tense reading in complement clauses, which instantiates the semantic closeness between the two grammatical categories:

(21) I **have always said** that eight **was** a perfect number (taken from Mittwoch 2008: 346).

These observations lead to the main conclusion that the experiential perfect focuses much more strongly on the events occurring in the past (ibid).

As for the types of verbs which are favored with this meaning of the *have*-perfect, it should firstly be mentioned that the experiential perfect, due to its generalized semantic nature, can be used with any group of verbs from Vendler's classifications: accomplishment, achievement, state and activity (cf., Davydova, 2011: 61). Secondly, this observation is supported by the collected data, where all types of verbs[6] were attested with the experiential perfect in past time contexts.

Drawing on the results of the studies on the experiential perfect, I hypothesize that this meaning of the *have*-perfect appears to be the sphere where the weakening of the pragmatic component of current relevance may have occurred. Since the experiential perfect largely focuses on past events, this allows the speaker to take one more step forward in highlighting the definite time when these events regularly happened (iterative or habitual nature of events emphasized). While preserving such readings as iteration and habituality, the experiential perfect starts to develop perfective semantics, indicating the definite past time (*when I was young, in my yong daies*).

4.2. Narrative perfect

As noted above, there are examples in the corpus when the *have*-perfect is used in narrative passages describing a chain of past events (19 cases were attested in the corpus). The existence of such contexts raises an important question: can the *have*-perfect in narrative passages denoting a chain of past events be regarded as evidence of aoristicization, or is it only a special functional characteristic that the present perfect develops in a certain syntactic environment? To begin with, I will provide an example that can be considered a narrative perfect proper:

(22) Mr. Com. Serj. – My Lord, when the Common Cryer **hath made** Proclamation, the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen being set upon the Hustings, Mr. Recorder **makes** a Speech; as soon as that **is done**, my Lord Mayor and the Aldermen **retire** into this Court, leaving the Sheriffs and me, and the rest of the Officers upon the Hustings, and I there **manage**

the Election, and when the Election **is made**, I **go** up to the Court of Aldermen, and **make** Report of what **hath been done** in the Hall. I **declare** the Election, and I **manage** the Election, and **do** it as the duty of my Place. [D4TPILKI]

In (22), both present perfect forms are used to describe events that happened in the past. In fact, in the context, we expect the use of the preterite to indicate deictic time that is in no way connected with the present moment. However, here we find the use of the present tense verb forms instead of the expected preterites. Undoubtedly, this use of the simple present tense to denote a chain of past events is not something new: the so-called *praesens historicum* is a rhetorical device, the purpose of which is to revive the narrative, to enhance the vividness of the events depicted. Through the present verb forms, the narrator transfers the listener into the thick of the described events, depicting them as events unfolding in front of the listener, thereby creating the effect of co-presence.

The present perfect in this case can be likewise interpreted as the narrative perfect proper – this form indicates the completion of the event and its importance for the moment of speech (current relevance), although it is assumed that we are talking about a chain of past events. Since in (22) the present perfect is functionally identical to the simple present, it can be called *historical present perfect*.

However, not all contexts are so obvious, and the corpus includes such, in which the present perfect occurs in the syntactic environment of preterites. What is the semantics of the *have*-perfect in these contexts?

(23) Wee **haue seen** the Queen in her coutche which **cam** from walking out of the Parke: and as she **went** to the chappell to heare the seruice, **there was** a Lady of the court auncient enough, which **hath presented** her a request: the Queene **hath taken** it very gently, truly, and **hath geeuen** her her hand to kisse. [D2CHEYWO]

It is noteworthy that both in (22) and (23) the perfect forms are found in dialogue passages where the author describes a chain of events. This may be due to the genre characteristics of the corpus, where the material reflects spoken register as far as possible. However, the possibility cannot be excluded that the narrative perfect can also be used in purely narrative passages describing events in the past time. Yet, even in this case it will be tied to the delivery of the author's position or the position of the narrator, and therefore will display the same semantic and functional characteristics that can be found in (23). Thus, I argue that in (23), as in other similar contexts with the narrative perfect, the *have*-perfect retains its anterior meaning and does not show any sign of a shift towards perfective semantics.

As noted in other studies, such examples are not a remarkable feature of Early Modern English but can already be found in Middle English texts (McCoard, 1978; Fischer, 1992). According to Fischer (1992), such examples in Middle English can be accounted for by the influence of rhythm and meter (Fischer, 1992: 259). French influence is suggested in McCoard (1978), who mentions, as an argument, a deep knowledge of French by prominent and influential Middle English poets such as Chaucher and Gower. However, neither French influence nor considerations of rhythm and meter can be conclusive and convincing evidence as in Early Modern English examples of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts can be found in the vernacular language in such texts as *Witness Depositions*, *Trial Proceedings* and others.

Therefore, I argue that in narrative passages the *have*-perfect fully retains its anterior semantics, and is placed in the past time environment to highlight an important moment in the narrative chain of past events. It also enhances the effect on the listener by conveying new and unexpected information, as well as involving the interlocutor in the narration, and adding more vividness to it.[7]

This effect can also be traced in the examples of the corpus. Thus, if in (22) the *have*-perfect is found in the syntactic environment of the present tense verb forms, and in (23) it is surrounded by preterites, in the instance below we see the combination of three tenses: simple present, simple past and present perfect:

(24) my good man **came** home drunk the other day, and because I should not see him in that manner, he **hid** himselfe in the house of speciall Office, and their he **began** to ease his stomacke, and **lay** about him like a Hog, when he **hath eaten** so much that he **is ready** to burst: & because I should not heare him: hee **thrusts** his head into the hole; and whether it **was** his large Asses eares, or his Bul necke, I cannot tell, but he **could** not get his necke out again, but **needs must pull** up the seate about his necke, so that he **looked** as if he **had been** on the Pillorie. [D3FPARLI]

The use of the *have*-perfect in (24) is an excellent example that supports the idea of the narrative perfect proper in (22) and the narrative perfect in (23) being functionally related phenomena. The narrative perfect in (24) can be called transitional in terms of functional and syntactic features, since it is located in the syntactic environment of preterites and the narrative present (*praesens historicum*).

The narrative perfect in past time contexts in the syntactic environment of preterites functions to highlight the most crucial action out of a chain of past events.

(25) at last she cryed out: alas deare sonne, such a chaunce as neuer **was** hard of: as we **went** through old Romney, hard by the church, a woman **threw** out a bowle of bloudie water right vpon your wiues head, which **hath so berayed** hir linen and hir gowne, that she **could** go no further, and so I as fast as I **could came** running home for clean clothes… [D1FCOBLE]

In (25), in order to convey more vividly the reason why one of the characters was forced to urgently run home, the present perfect is used in the environment of past events: the *have*-perfect (*hath so betrayed*) conveys new, unexpected information for the unprepared mind, emphasizing the validity of the event committed in the past, that is *besmeared clothes*.

Thus, *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* provides enough data to claim that in Early Modern English the *have*-perfect tends to display perfective semantics in a number of contexts, particularly, with temporal adverbs of the definite past time. Moreover, in narrative passages, the present perfect is used to describe chains of past events, but in such examples it retains its anterior semantics, acquiring only a new function similar to the narrative function of the *historical present*. In narrative passages, the present perfect is used to create an effect of co-presence and to highlight an important event out of a chain of past events. If these observations are correct, then the questions arise: Why did the present perfect not continue its evolution along the grammaticalization path towards preterital semantics? What was in the way of the present perfect, and is possibly still there, that prevents it from further aoristicization even in nonstandard English? The next section proposes a hypothesis aimed to answer these questions.

5.   EFFECTS OF SYNTACTIC ANALOGY

The principle of analogy has been known in linguistics since the time of Neogrammarians and was developed in the 19th century to explain sound changes. However, this phenomenon operates not only in the field of sound change, but at the level of morphology and syntax. Although analogy is sporadic, that is, irregular in its operation, it works as a powerful tool in creation of regularities (e.g. Sturtevant's paradox[8]). Within the framework of the usage-based theory, structural changes by analogy represent a cognitive phenomenon that occurs not just at the level of lexical expressions, but also at the level of structural schemas, transferred to new units due to, firstly, the activation strength of a schema in memory and, secondly, the similarity between lexical expressions that appear in a schema (Diessel, 2017: 14).

As noted in Fischer (2008), analogy can be a good explanation for stages and changes in the grammaticalization process. Operating at the level of form and meaning, analogy

IJES, vol. 21(2), 2021, pp. 57–81
Print ISSN: 1578-7044; Online ISSN: 1989-6131

becomes not only an important cause, but also a mechanism for syntactic change for similar constructions, which are perceived as such by speakers at the synchronic level within a communicative situation (Fischer, 2008: 381-382). Syntactic analogy is always obvious and straightforward. Without syntactic analogies the language would become too complex, and therefore, the process helps to keep the system simple and running (Fischer, 2008: 381-382). Indeed, the significance of analogy for syntactic change is difficult to overestimate, even though it "… may be difficult to prove conclusively because so many different constructions can be involved" (Fischer, 2018: 100).

While considering the constraint on the use of definite past time adverbials with the English *have*-perfect, Rothstein tentatively suggests that the possibility of the use of past time adverbials with the present perfect may depend on the properties of the temporal auxiliary. It is assumed that the perfect is a bi-clausal structure consisting of a VPAux and a PartP. Hence, as "…VPAux cannot be topicalised, it is also impossible to topicalise both the auxiliary and the past participle" (Rothstein, 2008: 62). Thus, the present perfect both in English and Swedish in contrast to German cannot be used with definite past time adverbials on account of the fact that the auxiliary asymmetrically c-commands the past participle.

Following Rothstein's explanation, I am going to give a functional interpretation of the constraint on the use of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials. Indeed, as the Early Modern English data show, there is enough evidence of the incipient aoristic drift. This conclusion is supported by the fact that examples of the *have*-perfect in past time contexts were spotted in texts attributed to both commoners and educated speakers. Thus, example (6), where the *have*-perfect is used with the adverbial *yesterday*, reproduces an utterance of lieutenant colonel John Lilburne, a famous English politician of the English Civil Wars period. It is known that he received his education in Royal Grammar School in Newcastle and later in Bishop Auckland. At the same time, example (20) refers to a deposition of a certain Anne Ewbanke, of the city of Durham, aged about 23 years.

It can be argued that, to a certain extent, incipient aoristic drift in English may have been going in the direction towards preterital semantics as was the case with the German *perfekt* (Dentler, 1997). However, in contrast to the German *perfekt*, the *have*-perfect never reached preterital semantics. Therefore, I propose to view analogy as a force that hindered further movement along the grmmaticalization path towards preteriral semantics. It should be noted, however, that this proposal is a tentative approach to the question of why the *have*-perfect, provided that it had all the necessary prerequisites, did not follow the grammaticalization path of the German *perfekt*.

How could analogy have become the force that prevented the *have*-perfect from further development towards preterital semantics? The corpus contains multiple examples (e.g., in *Trials Proceedings* 11 instances were found) in which the *HAVE+PP* construction is used as a

resultative (with state-resultant semantics), which is semantically close to the resultative perfect:

(26) Mul. – I say, when thou **hast *anie thing* stolne** from thee, come to me, and I will helpe thee to seeke it. And so farewell. [D1CWARNE]

In (26), the resultative construction points to the absence of things, in other words, the state of the subject whose things have been stolen. The resultative construction appears to be part of the entire paradigm and occurs not only in the present tense, but also in other tenses, for example, the future:

(27) Med. – Oh I **will haue *your head*** throughly **purged**. [D1CWARNE]

The distinction between the resultative perfect and the resultative construction, which was the progenitor of anterior (cf. Carey, 1994), was not always clear (cf. Detges, 2000). It was only by Early Modern English that the resultative perfect and the resultative construction had received a semantic-functional demarcation through specific word order: SVauxVppO for the resultative perfect and SVauxOVpp for the resultative (Visser, 1966). Why is this fact so crucial? I assume that constituting the basis of anterior semantics, preserving and displaying the current relevance of a completed action, the resultative construction becomes the core in the syntactic paradigm of the present perfect and makes an impact on other meanings of the *have*-perfect through analogy. This impact becomes possible due to the similarity of the structural schema of the resultative construction and current relevance of the *have*-perfect.

Generally, there are differences in opinion as to whether it is possible to reduce all the meanings of the present perfect to one meaning (for example, experiential, see in Inoue, 1979) or several meanings that cannot be narrowed down to one (Comrie, 1976; Schwenter, 1994; Michaelis, 1994). In addition, the distinction between such meanings as the resultative and the experiential, can often be very slippery (Mittwoch, 2008: 348-349). Speaking about the existential-resultative ambiguity, Michaelis (1994) notes that despite a number of differences these two readings display semantic congruity (Michaelis, 1994: 142).

This is exactly where the effect of analogy may be brought about in examples with the experiential perfect: being a prototypical perfect that clearly retains anterior semantics (current relevance), the resultative meaning is associated with the resultative construction (*have something done*), with both keeping the experiential meaning from sliding along the grammaticalization path down to preterital semantics. Moreover, I assume that syntactic analogy is not limited to the influence of a prototypical meaning. I hypothesize that the operation of analogy in the case with the *have*-perfect is also carried out due to the pressure of the entire syntactic paradigm of the present perfect. The syntactic paradigm incorporates all the

forms of the perfect (active and passive) that are present in the tense-aspect system of a language at a definite period of its development.

In particular, a strong connection with the moment of speech is revealed by the perfect of persistent situation, which by the Early Modern English period had become part of the syntactic paradigm of the perfect and could also exert an influence on expansion of the scope of syntactic analogy. Also, another syntactic environment which has a strong connection with the moment of speech is represented by sentences where the subordinate clause introduces the conjunction *since* indicating the deictic time in the past:

(28) Heard Blaikeston say to Alvey "Yow **have** ever **borne** spite or malice to me **since** yow **came** to the towne." [D2WDIOCE]

Thus, the pressure of syntactic analogy may have prevented and may still prevent the *have*-perfect from an increase in token frequency and contributes to the preservation of anterior semantics. Therefore, the frequency of the present perfect in past time contexts even in Present Day British English remains low. To put it differently, syntactic analogy may be the cause that keeps the *have*-perfect from further movement towards preterital semantics.

6. CONCLUSION

Analysis of the data from *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)* makes it possible to draw two main conclusions. Firstly, judging by the examples of the use of the *have*-perfect with temporal adverbials of the definite past time in Early Modern English in the colloquial register of different genres[9] it tended to move along the grammaticalization path towards perfective semantics. Secondly, the *have*-perfect in narrative passages describing a chain of past events does not contribute to the development of perfective semantics. The narrative perfect in such contexts reveals a special function of creating certain communicative effects aimed at the unprepared mind of the listener.

This study confirms the hypothesis of the movement of anterior to perfective through varying degrees of remoteness of the event as generalization of meaning: from hodiernal to immediate and recent (cf. Bybee et al., 1994; Schwenter, 1994), evidence of which is found in similar processes taking part in the colloquial register of Present Day English varieties (cf. Werner, 2013; Davydova, 2011). Yet, variation of the *have*-perfect and preterite in indeterminate contexts of recent past is viewed as the result of hypoanalysis (cf. Croft, 2000)

with similar processes occurring in Present Day British and American English (Elsness, 2009; Carey, 1994).

Finally, the operation of syntactic analogy is tentatively proposed as a mechanism for preventing the *have*-perfect from further movement along the grammaticalization path towards preterital semantics. Within the framework of the syntactic paradigm of the present perfect, the prototypical resultative construction, as well as a number of other meanings that have a strong connection with the moment of speech (current relevance), affect the perfect of recent past and the experiential perfect, keeping their reference time within the scope of the speech time.

Directions for future studies may include clarification of whether or not the processes that the *have*-perfect was undergoing in Early Modern English were residue of the processes that had already started in the Middle English period. Further research is required to describe examples of the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials (if any can be spotted) in American English based on historical documents such as, for example, the Salem Witchcraft trials (1692-1693), and to compare the results with the findings of the present study. Another essential aspect for the analysis of the semantic change of the *have*-perfect can be the introduction of new sources of information such as ego-documents (in particular, diaries) to see if the hypothesis suggested in this study can find additional support in them as well.

NOTES

[1]The designation of text file names is taken from *A Corpus of English Dialogues (1560-1760)*, where the first letters stand for the genre, e.g. D5F – *Prose Fiction*, whereas LENNO – the name of the author, i.e. Charlotte Lennox. Each file name is provided in respective tables with the information on the first print date, publication date, short text tittle and word count along with the genre name and the name of the author (for the tables, see Kytö &Walker, 2006: 14-19).

[2]Miscellaneous "…is not a text type as such, but rather a 'mixed bag' of dialogues which do not fall into any of the above text types. They are almost all fictional dialogues which resemble Didactic Works, but seem to be intended as entertainment or complaint…rather than being informative/instructional" (Kytö & Walker, 2006: 24).

[3]In the corpus the text category *Didactic Works* is subdivided into '*Other*' and '*Language Teaching*' texts. In this study the number of tokens in this category includes examples from both subdivisions.

[4]This phenomenon (language-internal variation attested in non-native Englishes) is explained by the author in terms of the varying complexity levels of the present perfect rather than references to imperfect understanding or rendering of Standard English grammar rules (Davydova, 2011: 101-109 et passim). From this perspective, "complexity aims at providing generalizations across languages or varieties thereof, which in its turn may help to understand the nature of variation of the present perfect and other forms in present perfect contexts across non-native Englishes" (Davydova, 2011: 109).

[5]Random sampling of such examples from the D3 texts, which belong to all five genres and cover the period from 1644 to 1679, revealed 5 instances.

[6]The following verbs were found: *have*, *call*, *leave*, *do*, *see*, *be*, *stand*, *observe*, *try*.

[7] Data from Australian English show that the narrative perfect, similar to the narrative present simple, is able to introduce a narrative tone by itself; a fact that confirms the topicality of the time of utterance in uses of the present perfect (Ritz & Engel, 2008: 41). The specific discourse functions of the narrative perfect are also discussed in Williams, 2006: 19-20, where the narrative perfect is viewed as a special function of the present perfect within the framework of narrative discourse, the aim of which is to make certain stretches of narration more vivid and mark what the speaker considers an important episode of the narration.

[8]The paradox by which sound change is regular but creates irregularity, whereas analogy is irregular but creates regularity.

[9]*Trial Proceedings* – examples (2), (6), (8), (9), (10), (17), (22), *Witness Depositions* – examples (3), (20), (28), *Prose Fiction* – examples (1), (7), (12), (13), (24), (25), *Didactic Works* – examples (4), (5), (11), (14), (15), *Drama/Comedy* – examples (16), (19), (23), (26), (27).

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