

Grammaticalization of a perfect into a perfective in Bilbao Spanish

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There is ample evidence in the literature regarding the use of anterior forms (Present Perfect) taking over perfective functions (Preterite). This innovation has been widely investigated in European languages but particularly in Romance (Harris, 1982; Fleischmann, 1983). Schwenter (1994) was the pioneer analyzing this change in progress in Alicante Spanish across age groups. However, other crucial social variables have not been investigated like gender or class. In addition, no attempt has been made to investigate Bilbao Spanish with regard to this phenomenon when it has been claimed that it has the highest percentage of hodiernal Present Perfects among the Spanish cities under study (Kempas, 2006) and it is in contact with another language (Basque). In addition, Basque is in contact with French, whose grammaticalization is complete.

In Spanish, several Peninsular dialects have been also examined: Alicante (Schwenter, 1994), Madrid and the Canary Islands (Serrano, 1994) and recently other cities such as Bilbao, Vitoria or Oviedo (Kempas, 2006). These dialects are immersed in a grammaticalization process, in which the Present Perfect (mainly used to refer to past actions with current relevance) has encroached on the semantic domain of the Preterite (referring to temporally bounded discrete past events that were uttered for their own sake, not because they were considered currently relevant). Ex: Hoy he comprado este libro "Today I have bought this book" (lit.) instead of Hoy compré este libro "Today I bought this book (lit.)

I conducted a variationist study of the increasing use of the Present Perfect instead of Preterite across three social variables: age, gender and social class in order to predict an actual change in progress. 49 semi-elicited sociolinguistic interviews of Bilbao speakers were recorded between 2004 and 2006 based on the methodology followed by Schwenter (1994) and Serrano (1994). Temporal reference, person and number, mood of the form and of the following verb, tense of the previous and following verb, narratives, telicity, polarity and clause type, type of temporal adverb and age, sex and class are the groups that were included in the binomial varbrul. These results are indicators of an ongoing change in progress that would support my hypothesis.