

Tense and Aspect Grammaticalization in Bilbao Spanish

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Introduction

Tendency in Indo-European languages for the Present Perfect (PP) to expand its contexts of use at the expense of the Preterite (Comrie, 1976; Fleischman, 1983; Harris, 1982).

Developmental stages in Romance languages by Schwenter (1994):

- Stage 1: Resultative (Sicilian, Calabrian)
- Stage 2: Continuing or habitual (Galician, American Spanish and Portuguese)
- Stage 3: Anterior (Current Relevance) (Castilian Spanish, Catalan)
- Stage 4: Perfective (French, Northern Italian, Romanian)

The use of the PP for the Preterite is a diachronic innovation of a form that is going through a grammaticalization process. It does not disappear as a form but becomes something else, it incorporates the new functions to the previous ones (Lindstedt, 2000).

What motivates this linguistic change?

- a) A gradual relaxation of the degree of recentness of the PP (Comrie, 1976).
- b) To make relevant in the present an action that the Preterite presents as concluded and perfective (Serrano, 1994).
- c) The form that expressed past events with Current Relevance eventually loses this feature as it becomes frequently used to refer to events lacking relevance; the use becomes conventionalized and it extends to other contexts (Detges, 2001).
- d) "A gradual loss of the semantic relationship with the present moment, and a consequent gain of the expression of pure perfective meaning" (Aldai, 2002, p. 179).
- e) The boundary between the "anterior" function with current relevance and the "perfective" one has disappeared. (Schwenter 1994b).

Why is this change unidirectional?

The PP relates a past event with the present state (Comrie, 1976).

The PP has become the educated norm for many past situations (Kubarth, 1992; Schwenter, 1994).

This change is the voluntary result of some rhetorical techniques that speakers use to communicate in a more effective way (Detges, 2001).

Within contexts where two forms are possible if the PP is chosen, the link with the present can be explained by affective factors while with the Preterite, this emotional state is missing (Kempas, 2002).

Syntactic variation: the PP vs. the Preterite

A variable is two or more ways of saying the same thing. In syntactic variation, there are usually **slight differences** in meaning.

The Preterite and the PP with a perfective meaning are variants of the same variable: as Havu (1984) claims, they are synonymous tenses from the functional point of view (the speaker can use any of them without changing the meaning of the sentence, or the logical implications derived from it).

Change in progress or age-grading?

Schwenter (1994) studied this grammaticalization process in progress in Alicante Spanish. The almost categorical use of the PP by the younger generations leads him to claim that we are facing a change in progress instead of age grading (no stigma) (Howe & Schwenter, 2003).

In changes in progress, the female teenagers of the middle social class use the innovation more and lead the change (Guy et al. 1986; Cameron, 2000; Labov, 2001).

Age grading is a "change in the speech of the individual as he or she moves through life" (Eckert, 1997, p. 151).

Spanish in contact with other languages: the Basque case.

Spanish and Basque have been in contact since the origins of Hispanic Latin.

In the French provinces, the PP is used for prehodieral and hodiernal situations due to the influence of French whereas in the Spanish ones, there is a prehodieral-hodiernal distinction following the Spanish tendency (Rotaetxe, 1988).

Young people are replacing the Preterite with the recent perfect. Contact-induced change does not come from Spanish but from French.

Recent studies in Spain

Peninsular Spanish is characterized by the hodiernal/prehodieral distinction. Exceptions are Asturias, Cantabria, León and Galicia because of their eccentric geographical location and by the influence of the Galician-Portuguese domain (Kempas, 2006, p. 53). Hypercorrection is commonly found.

In Spain, there have been studies in **Madrid** (DeMello, 1994; Serrano (1994, 1995, 1998), **the Canary Islands** (Herrera & Medina, 1994; Piñero, 1998, 2000; Serrano, 1994, 1995, 1998), **Alicante** (Schwenter, 1994, Howe & Schwenter, 2003) **Seville** (DeMello, 1994), **Bilbao**, **Santander**, **León**, **Oviedo**, **Madrid** and **Granada** (Kempas, 2005, 2006).

Findings

In Alicante, the hodiernal/prehodieral distinction holds in narratives. In Seville, it does not.

The grammaticalized hodiernal PP is still rare in the Canary Islands and it is frequently used in formal situations, especially in writing.

Canarian speakers associated this tense as being "more correct" or "more elegant" so it is extending among the middle social class and the second generation. This might be motivated by the media and the tendency to follow the prestigious Peninsular norm. In Madrid, there were not negative attitudes either.

In Madrid, the PP is preferred in "yesterday" contexts but as long as the temporal frame increases in distance from the TOC, the Preterite usage increases.

The occurrence of the two tenses cannot be distributed that way all the time:

Between "*ahora mismo*" (right now) and "*hace poco*" (a short time ago) the PP is preferred for the first one and the Preterite for the second one.

There was not a difference between "*hace dos horas*" (two hours ago) and "*hace un mes*" (a month ago); the Preterite is more used in both cases (Berschin, 1976)

With "*hace dos horas*" (two hours ago), the Preterite is prevalent in all the Spanish cities, being Bilbao the city with the highest percentage of occurrences of the PP and León and Oviedo with the fewest (Kempas, 2006).

Bilbao has the highest percentage of grammaticalized PPs in hodiernal contexts.

When the action takes place in the immediate past, all the cities used the PP (no variation), except for León and Oviedo. What determined the selection of one form over the other was **the temporal frame** and **the geographical origin** of the speaker.

The prehodieral PP has extended to writing: Copple (2005) found that 25.2 % of the prehodieral contexts were in the PP in her study of written texts of the 19th century. In her study of the 20th oral Peninsular speech (2005b), this percentage increased into 45% for "yesterday" and "last year" contexts.

The prehodieral PP is a mental association since emotionally, this event is as present in his/her life as it had happened during the day of communication (Current Relevance).

The main area of the prehodieral PP use can be located in Asturias and Cantabria due to hypercorrection.

The prehodieral PP is favored by the postverbal position. After the predicate, it might occur more often because of this lack of specification (Kempas, 2006).

Shortcomings in the literature

Schwenter (1994) does not give evidence of an actual change in progress. Howe and Schwenter (2003) discard the age-grading hypothesis because of the significant differences across ages and the apparent lack of stigma.

The PP is expected to occur more in the first person since it is usually used for showing affectivity or emotion. However, Piñero's data did not show so.

Why is this change unidirectional? Comrie (1976) alluded to the relationship of the PP with the past and the present. Detges (2001) argued this change is the result of some rhetorical techniques in order to communicate more efficiently.

When the Preterite has been increasing in detriment of the PP was due to prestige matters: Stratford (1991) claims that in Bolivia, the Preterite is the prestigious form since the PP is falsely associated with the peasants' speech. In Buenos Aires, the PP is considered more literary (Kubarth, 1992) and in Alicante it is the educated norm (Schwenter, 1994).

Performing a written task will probably show the attitude the speaker has towards the linguistic target rather than the way he/she actually talks.

In Kempas (2005), most of his informants were university students.

Motivations for my study

Within Variationist Sociolinguistics:

It is necessary to study this change in progress taking into account **a set of social variables:**

Schwenter (1994) only took into account age. Serrano (1994) found a curvilinear pattern (no significant differences across gender and a combination of level of education, occupation and income as factors for assigning social class).

Kempas (2005, 2006) only studied a social variable: city of origin.

Within Spanish:

The perfective PP is associated with the Peninsular norm.

Why Bilbao?

Bilbao shows the most advanced stage of grammaticalization in hodiernal contexts. The PP is used with all the verbs of the sample (*estar*, "to be", *llegar*, "to arrive" and *venir*, "to come") while in the rest, only the *estar* verb is used. Bilbao is the only city from that sample where Spanish is in contact with another language.

Research Questions

Do women significantly use more the PP than men?


- Do the lower middle class significantly use the PP more than the other classes?
- Do the younger generations significantly use the PP more than the older ones?
- Is the PP undergoing an actual change in progress from an anterior aspect into a perfective one in Bilbao?

Methodology

The community:

The subjects are monolingual and bilingual speakers, who have spent in Bilbao all or most of their lives.


49 sociolinguistic interviews recorded from 2004 up to 2006 (from 50 up to 200 tokens).



The sociolinguistic variables:


The PP and the Preterite are variants of the same linguistic variable.

The social variables are age, gender and social class (occupation). It is the combination of these factors that indicates whether we are facing a change in progress or not (Cameron, 2000).



Factor groups or internal constraints (based on Copple, 2005, 2005b):

Temporal Reference
Temporal Adverb or Clause
Place of the Adverb or Clause
Temporal distance of the Adverb or Clause
Person and Number
Verb Semantics
Transitivity
Mood




Mood of the Previous Verb
Mood of the Following Verb
Tense of the Previous Verb
Tense of the Following Verb
Narratives
Clause type
Animacy of the object pronoun
Telicity of the verb
Polarity and clause type
Irregular Form in the Preterite
Information status of the subjects
Temporal Adverb




The sociolinguistic variables

- Age:
Three generations following Serrano (1994): first generation (18-34), second generation (35-54) and third generation (55-on).

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- Sex:
The leaders of linguistic change are women who earned a respectable socio-economic status and had a nonconformity history.

In the Canary Islands, there were not significant differences among sexes but men of the middle social class and women of the upper social class use more the PP.

There is a greater motivation to adopt it by the women of the upper classes since the PP is the standard and prestigious norm (Serrano, 1995).

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- Social class:
Occupation is the social class factor that is considered to correlate more with linguistic variation, at some points even more than the combined index of occupation, education and house value (Labov, 1966, 1990).
Three occupational categories: **Professionals** (business executives, accountants or teachers), **Technical/Sales/Secretarial** (sales personnel, artists, physical therapists) and **Skilled labor** (carpenters, plumbers or hairdressers) following Cameron (2000).

The sociolinguistic interview

- One-to-one interview in which the interviewer tries to elicit the vernacular since it gives us the most systematic data for linguistic analyses (Labov, 1970).

- How?
By selecting topics of the informant's interest (modules).

Labov (1970) insists on the uniqueness of this method to obtain sufficient data on the speech of an individual because of the quality of the sound.

- After 30 or 45 minutes of open interview, I asked the informants to tell me what they just did that day, the previous day and a couple of days ago (following Schwenter, 1994 and Serrano, 1994) to collect more narratives in hodiernal and prehodiernal contexts.

- *Snowball* sampling (by word of mouth).

- If the researcher is a member of the community, recordings tend to be closer to the spontaneous speech of daily life (Silva-Corvalán (2001).

General Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** The first generation and the second generation will show more occurrences of PP than the third one.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Women will use the PP more than men.
- **Hypothesis 3:** The intermediate class group will show a higher percentage of PP.
- **Hypothesis 4:** In prehodiernal contexts, the use of the PP is really low.
- **Hypothesis 5:** Certain semantic verb classes such as Perception, Stative, Cognitive and Emotion verbs are more likely to occur in the PP since they allow a fluid conception of time, a conception of the past in present (Downing, 1996).

- **Hypothesis 6:** Atelic verbs are more frequently encoded in the PP than the telic verbs. However, an increase in the use of the PP with telic verbs is expected.
- **Hypothesis 7:** Priming effects (the Present and the PP will favor the PP and the Imperfect and the Preterite will favor the Preterite).
- **Hypothesis 8:** The PP will also be found in narratives.
- **Hypothesis 9:** Verbs with an irregular form in the Preterite are more frequently encoded in the PP due to the difficulty of accessing this irregular form.
- **Hypothesis 10:** The factor groups that contribute to the selection of the PP over the Preterite are the form of the previous tense, the temporal reference, the

VARBRUL (percentages and chi-squares)

All the groups except for place of adverb, previous verb's mood, information status of subjects and gender were considered significant by chi-squares.

A probability based model is necessary to get a more accurate pattern.

VARBRUL Results (probabilities)

- **Significant factor groups:**
 - Temporal reference
 - Person and number
 - Mood
 - Following verb's mood
 - Previous verb's tense
 - Following verb's tense
 - Narratives
 - Telicity
 - Polarity and clause type
 - Type of temporal adverb
 - Age, sex and class.

Temporal Reference

Table 1
Temporal Reference

	Weight	App/Total	Input & Weight
Today	0.991	0.98	0.96
Yesterday	0.104	0.03	0.03
2 days' ago	0.075	0.02	0.02
3 days- 1 week	0.038	0.01	0.01
+1 week- 1 month		0.236	0.07 0.07
+ 1 month- 6 months	0.442	0.15	0.17
+ 6 months- 1 year	0.420	0.15	0.15
+ 1 year- 5 years	0.244	0.11	0.08
+ 5 years	0.184	0.08	0.05
not specific	0.646	0.50	0.32
not temporally modified	0.769	0.63	0.46

Person and Number

Table 2
Person and Number

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
1 s	0.549	0.38	0.23
1 p	0.380	0.25	0.13
2 s specific	0.744	0.75	0.42
2 s non specific	0.891	0.83	0.67
3 s	0.460	0.31	0.18
2 p		0.468	0.58 0.18
3 p		0.550	0.32 0.24

Mood

Table 3
Mood

	Weight	App/Total	Input & Weight
Subjunctive	0.075	0.21	0.02
Not in subjunctive	0.514	0.35	0.21

Following verb's mood

Table 4
Following verb's mood

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Subjunctive	0.745	0.54	0.42
Not in subjunctive	0.497	0.34	0.20

Previous verb's tense

Table 5
Previous verb's tense

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Infinitive	0.568	0.35	0.25
Present	0.634	0.46	0.30
Preterite	0.232	0.07	0.07
PP	0.853	0.82	0.59
Imperfect	0.353	0.19	0.12
Periphrastic	0.497	0.55	0.20
Future			
Future	0.669	0.57	0.34
Past Perfect	0.200	0.18	0.06
Other	0.556	0.35	0.24

Following verb's tense

Table 6
Following verb's tense

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Infinitive	0.495	0.30	0.20
Present	0.596	0.46	0.27
Preterite	0.260	0.09	0.08
PP	0.867	0.84	0.62
Imperfect	0.432	0.23	0.16
Periphrastic	0.626	0.50	0.30
Future			
Future	0.726	0.58	0.40
Past Perfect	0.390	0.20	0.14
Other	0.478	0.34	0.19

Narratives

Table 7
Narratives

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Narratives	0.462	0.29	0.18
Not narratives	0.632	0.55	0.30

Telicity

Table 8
Telicity

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Telic	0.418	0.30	0.15
Atelic	0.593	0.40	0.27

Polarity and clause type

Table 9
Polarity and clause type

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Negative declarative	0.662	0.49	0.33
Affirmative declarative	0.483		0.33
	0.19		
Negative interrogative	0.783	0.83	0.48
Affirmative interrogative	0.575	0.46	0.25

Temporal adverb

Table 10
Temporal adverb

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Location	0.422	0.26	0.16
Duration	0.675	0.34	0.34
Frequency	0.783	0.55	0.48

Age, class and sex

Table 11
20-34 age group

Sex	Class	Weight	
Female	High	0.403	
Female	Middle	0.469	linear pattern
Female	Low	0.482	
Male	High	0.348	
Male	Middle	0.442	curvilinear pattern
Male	Low	0.322	

35-54 age group

Table 12
35-54 age group

Sex	Class	Weight	
Female	High	0.422	
Female	Middle	0.551	curvilinear pattern
Female	Low	0.394	
Male	High	0.601	
Male	Middle	0.633	curvilinear pattern
Male	Low	0.312	

55-on age group

Table 14
55-on age group

Sex	Class	Weight	
Female	High	0.736	
Female	Middle	0.537	
Female	Low	0.601	
Male	High	0.495	
Male	Middle	0.596	linear pattern
Male	Low	0.666	

Testing the hypotheses

Table 15
Age

	PP	P	Total	%
20-34	N 895	1433	2328	42.2
	% 38.4	61.6		
35-54	N 450	943	1393	25.2
	% 32.3	67.7		
55-on	N 555	1244	1799	32.6
	% 30.9	69.1		
Total	N 1900	3620	5520	
	% 34.4	65.6		

Hypothesis 1

Right: the youngest generation uses the PP more frequently than the second one and the second one more than the oldest group.

Not significant.

Table 16
Sex

	PP	P	Total	%
Females	N 1217	2396	3613	65.5
	% 33.7	66.3		
Males	N 683	1224	1907	34.5
	% 35.8	64.2		
Total	N 1900	3620	5520	
	% 34.4	65.6		

Hypothesis 2

Wrong: Men use more the PP.

Not significant.

Table 22
Class

	PP	P	Total	%
High	N 514	1201	1715	31.1
	% 30.0	70.0		
Middle	N 718	1201	1919	34.8
	% 37.4	62.6		
Low	N 668	1218	1886	34.2
	% 35.4	64.6		
Total	N 1900	3620	5520	
	% 34.4	65.6		

Hypothesis 3

Right: Middle class uses the PP more than the other classes.

Not significant.

Table 17
Temporal Reference

	Weight	App/Total	Input & Weight
Today	0.991	0.98	0.96
Yesterday	0.104	0.03	0.03
2 days' ago	0.075	0.02	0.02
3 days- 1 week	0.038	0.01	0.01
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not specific	0.646	0.50	0.32
not temporally modified	0.769	0.63	0.46

Hypothesis 4

Partially wrong: from yesterday up to a week ago, the PP probability of occurrence is really low. However, this does not hold for all prehodieral temporal frames even though the PP is disfavored in all of them.

Significant.

Table 18
Verb Semantics

	PP	P	Total	%
Movement	N 362 % 30.4	828 69.6	1190	21.6
Stative	N 463 % 32.9	943 67.1	1406	25.5
Cognitive	N 64 % 38.8	101 61.2	165	3.0
Emotion	N 97 % 44.9	119 55.1	216	3.9
Communication	N 182 % 36.8	313 63.2	495	9.0
Perception	N 90 % 40.4	133 59.6	223	4.0
Others	N 642 % 35.2	1183 64.8	1825	33.1
Total	N 34.4	1900 55.6	3620	55.0

Hypothesis 5

Wrong: All verb types have a higher percentage of Preterite than PPs.

Not significant.

Table 19
Telicity

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Telic	0.418	0.30	0.15
Atelic	0.593	0.40	0.27

Hypothesis 6

Right: Atelic verbs occur encoded in PPs more.
The probability weight is not really high.

Significant.

Table 20
Previous verb's tense

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Infinitive	0.568	0.35	0.25
Present	0.634	0.46	0.30
Preterite	0.232	0.07	0.07
PP	0.853	0.82	0.59
Imperfect	0.353	0.19	0.12
Periphrastic	0.497	0.55	0.20
Future	0.669	0.57	0.34
Past Perfect	0.200	0.18	0.06
Other	0.556	0.35	0.24

Table 21
Following verb's tense

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Infinitive	0.495	0.30	0.20
Present	0.596	0.46	0.27
Preterite	0.260	0.09	0.08
PP	0.867	0.84	0.62
Imperfect	0.432	0.23	0.16
Periphrastic	0.626	0.50	0.30
Future	0.726	0.58	0.40
Past Perfect	0.390	0.20	0.14
Other	0.478	0.34	0.19

Hypothesis 7

Right:
PP and Present favor the PP (also Future, Infinitive and Other).
Preterite and Imperfect disfavor PP (also Past Perfect).

Significant.

Table 22
Narratives

	Weight	App/ Total	Input & Weight
Narratives	0.462	0.29	0.18
Not narratives	0.632	0.55	0.30

Hypothesis 8

True: PPs occur in narratives.

Significant.





Table 23
Irregular form in the Preterite


		PP	P	Total	%
Yes	N	870	1762	2632	47.7
	%	33.1	66.9		
No	N	1030	1858	2888	52.3
	%	35.7	64.3		
Total	N	1900	3620	5520	
	%	34.4	65.6		



Hypothesis 9


False: PPs are not more frequently encoded with verbs with an irregular form in the Preterite.

Not significant.



Hypothesis 10

Right: temporal reference, type of temporal adverb, telicity and previous verb's tense are significant factor groups in the prevalence of the PP over the Preterite.



Conclusion

There is evidence for a change in progress:
 there is a linear pattern with the youngest and the oldest age groups and a curvilinear pattern in the middle age group.