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Perfect Parameters

This study links the Perfect and Evidentiality [10/20] within the Minimalist Program [3]. In this framework, the Formal Features (FF) which derive syntactic structures also define syntactic parameters. Variation in Perfect structures over languages would then be due, not to semantic constraints on Tense [16/17] or to covert pluractional or evidential operators [13/10], but rather to variation in the repertory or value of FFs. We claim that the crucial FF for the Perfect is Aspect, defined as a [+/-pl.] Nb. F of V which merges with T. [+Pl] Nb +T defines an *interval* of time (=Imperfectivity) while [-pl.] Nb. (or the absence of Nb.) defines a *point* of time (=Perfectivity). The hypothesis that English *have* is [+pl] while French *avoir* is [+/- pl] accounts for the fact that the Present Perfect obligatorily denotes an Extended Now interval incompatible with the adverb *yesterday* in English, but either an interval deriving a canonical Perfect, or a point deriving an aorist construal in French.

An auxiliary verb raised from vP to T often maintains a grammaticalized FF version of its inherent lexical content. Lack of a progressive Present in both English and Portuguese [17] suggests that lexical verbs lack a [+pl] Nb. value in the Present in both languages. Both derive a Present Perfect by raising a [+pl] "light" verb (HAVE/TER) from vP to TP. But Portuguese TEM, unlike English HAVE (but like English KEEP [7]), maintains its [+frequentative/ +continuative] content which derives an obligatorily pluractional Perfect [1/9/13].

2. We attribute the persistence of the Present Perfect despite competition with the simple Past ([19]) to its *evidential* function. We propose the Uncertainty Principle (1), a cognitive constraint on grammars.

(1) It is impossible to simultaneously observe and describe an event (as opposed to a state).

Evidentiality is one compensatory grammatical strategy provoked by (1). Evidentiality is marked on either the syntactic level of Assertive Force, TP, or that of Speech Acts CP, or both [2/6/]. We claim that the canonical Perfect embeds evidentiality within an Assertion via the *existential* content of the auxiliary. In simple sentences, [HAVE/ BE] merged with [Loc.] [Dem.] and [T] Fs (*there is, il y a, hay, c'è*) asserts the existence of an object at the Reference Time and Place. As auxiliaries, the same verbs imply the existence of evidence for the eventuality the subjacent participle denotes.

A Perfect in TP is the mirror image of an Accomplishment in vP. In vP, an Agent uses an implied or overt Instrument to advance towards a Goal: "John write the letter (with his left hand/with a pen)". In the Perfect, the Speaker uses implied evidence as an Instrument to move backwards in time towards the Goal of contact with the eventuality. The Experiential Perfect locates the situation farther away from the RT than does a Universal or Resultative Perfect. But in any case, the Goal is unreachable, for the Instrument *intervenes* between the Agent and the Goal.

The Goal is reachable on the CP level, however, if the Perfect defines a Speech Act [5/2]. Thus the Hot News/Mirative Perfect alone rejects evidential adverbs compatible with doubt like *allegedly/reportedly*.

    (2) a. I have (allegedly) won.   (Experiential: "clueless I" [20])

        b. The Red Sox have (*allegedly) won!   (Hot News)

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