

The Simple and Compound Past in Romance languages

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1. Introduction ¹

This chapter concerns the distribution and usage of some of the Past tenses to be found in Romance languages. In practice, we limit ourselves to those expressing the notion of aorist and present perfect, while we do not consider the Imperfect and the tenses expressing the notion of past-in-the-past (i.e., the various types of Pluperfect to be found in Romance). A terminological qualification is in order here. The grammatical forms we are going to consider are named differently in the different grammatical traditions (the following list is limited to the main languages for which an established grammatical tradition exists):

| | | |
|--------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cat.: | Pretèrit Perfet | Pretèrit Indefinit |
| | Pretèrit Perfet Simple | Pretèrit Perfet Compost |
| Fr.: | Passé Défini | Passé Indéfini |
| | Passé Simple | Passé Composé |
| It.: | Passato Remoto | Passato Prossimo |
| | Perfetto Semplice | Perfetto Composto |
| Port.: | Pretérito | Perfeito |
| | Pretérito (Perfeito) Simples | Pretérito (Perfeito) Composto |
| | Perfeito Simples | Perfeito Composto |
| Rom.: | Aoristul | Perfectul Nedefinit |
| | Perfectul Simplu | Perfectul Compus |
| Sp.: | Pretérito (Indefinido) | (Prétérito) Perfecto, or Antepresente |
| | Pretérito (Perfecto) simple | Prétérito (Perfecto) Compuesto |
| | Perfecto Simple | Perfecto Compuesto |

However, the two Past tenses that are to be found in virtually every Romance variety come, with very marginal exceptions, from the same sources (cf. section 2 for some diachronic information). Thus, in order to have a unified terminology, we shall speak in most cases of Simple Past and Compound Past (henceforth SP and CP). Occasionally, however, it will be useful, for both practical and theoretical reasons, to use the terms “perfect” and “perfectal” when referring to the CP. This is the inevitable consequence of the linguistic situation. The CP started out as a true perfect, but underwent a process of gradual aoristicization (i.e. of transformation into a purely perfective past). We shall refer to this process, which covered a greater or lesser distance according to the individual language, as the “aoristic drift”. Accordingly, when we use the term “perfect” in this paper, we do not mean an actual tense, but rather a semantic function, that is, essentially, a gram type in the sense of Dahl (this volume; cf. also Lindstedt, this volume, for a discussion of the semantics of the perfect). The real challenge lies in assessing how much, in each language, the CP has departed from the original perfectal functions.

2. The origin of the Past forms in Romance

¹ This paper was jointly conceived and written by the two authors. For academic purposes, though, PMB bears responsibility for sections 2, 4 and 5, while MS is responsible for sections 1 and 3.

The SP is in most cases the direct descendant of the Latin Perfect, a tense which, at the stage of the Classical language, had already developed into a general purpose perfective past.² In the Post-Classical period, a series of compound tenses was formed, of which we find sporadic anticipations in the older texts. It is not entirely clear what the ultimate origin and the chronology of this innovation are. Although most scholars maintain that it stemmed from colloquial usage as an uninterrupted evolution of original Latin constructions, some suggest that it originated in the cultivated classes through Greek influence (on this topic cf. at least Pisani 1981, Ramat 1982, Pinkster 1987 and the literature quoted therein). In any case, the creation of these tenses, and in particular of the form which seems to provide the model for the Romance CP, fulfilled the purpose of reintroducing into the paradigm a true perfect. Indeed, the first examples, to be found already in Pre-Classical texts, had a clear resultative meaning:

- (1) a. *Multa bona bene parta habemus* (Plautus, *Trin.* 347)
 Many goods well obtained we-have
 'We possess many well obtained goods.'
 b. *Te auratam et vestitam bene habet* (Plautus, *Men.* 801)
 You bejewelled and dressed well he-has
 'He keeps you bejewelled and well dressed.'

The distinctive features of this construction are the following:

- (a) there is no obligatory coincidence between the subject of the inflected verb and the subject of the Perfect Participle (e.g. in (1a) the person who owns the goods needs not be the same person who obtained them);
 (b) the Perfect Participle has a predicative meaning, and is a complement of the Object;
 (c) the inflected verb retains its lexical meaning of possession, i.e. it is not a true auxiliary.

The resultative nature of this construction is made evident by the fact that the great majority of the first examples concern telic verbs. In the course of time, however, the construction was extended to the remaining verbs. The final result is a true reanalysis, which encompassed the following major changes:

- (a') the coincidence between the subject of the inflected verb and the subject of the Perfect Participle (which obviously constituted the default case, for purely pragmatic reasons) became obligatory;
 (b') the Perfect Participle became part of the verb, and manifested a strong inclination to lose the original gender and number agreement with the direct object,³ while

2 Although this is the general pattern, there are exceptions. The most notable one is the colloquial Catalan SP, which is formed by means of the auxiliary *anar* 'go' followed by the Infinitive. Even here, though, there exists a synthetic literary variant. It might look misleading to adopt the label SP to speak of a periphrastic construction, but we shall nevertheless use this term for general conformity.

3 The various Romance varieties differ with respect to this parameter. Some languages, like Spanish, have lost the Perfect Participle agreement altogether; others, like French or (even more so) Italian, have retained it in particular circumstances. Contemporary Italian, for instance, shows agreement when the controller is a direct Object clitic (cf. (a)), but not when the Object consists of a lexical nominal or a relative pronoun (cf. (f-g)). Agreement is also exhibited relative to the internal argument of inaccusative verbs (cf. (b)), the surface subject of passives (cf. (c)), the clitic object of a causative verb (cf. (d)), and the subjects of reflexive verbs (cf. (e)). The theoretical reasons for unifying all these apparently disparate cases are spelled out by La Fauci (1989) within a Relational Grammar framework. Consider:

the respective order of inflected verb and Perfect Participle became increasingly fixed, with severe restrictions with regard to the type of syntactic constituents allowed to appear in between;□⁴

(c') finally, the inflected verb lost its lexical meaning and became a true auxiliary.□⁵

These changes might have been facilitated by a number of converging factors, such as the following. First, the structure of the Perfectum in deponentia verbs (e.g. *profectus sum* 'I left', lit.: Left I-am), or that of the passive Perfectum (e.g. *laudatus*

- a. (Quanto ai bambini) Giovanni li ha visti (*visto)
 As to the children, G. them has seen:OBJ (*has seen)
 '(As to the children) Giovanni has seen them.'
- b. Maria è arrivata (*arrivato)
 M. is arrived:SBJ (*arrived)
 'Maria has arrived.'
- c. Maria fu vista da Giovanni (*visto)
 M. was seen:SBJ by G. (*seen)
 'Maria was seen by Giovanni.'
- d. (Quanto ai bambini) Giovanni li ha fatti piangere (*fatto)
 As to the children, G. them has made:OBJ cry (*made)
 'As to the children, Giovanni has made them cry.'
- e. Maria si è messa le scarpe (*messo)
 M. she:RFL has put:SBJ the shoes (*put)
 'Maria has put on her shoes.'
- f. Giovanni ha visto Maria (*vista)
 G. has seen:SBJ M. (*seen:OBJ)
 'Giovanni saw Maria.'
- g. Questa sono le notizie che Maria ha ricevuto (*ricevute)
 These are the news that M. has received (*received:OBJ)
 'These is the news that Maria has received.'

French, by contrast, shows agreement only in (a-c). For a full-fledged analysis, both descriptively rich and theoretically thorough, of the Perfect Participle agreement in the Romance domain, cf. Loporcaro 1993, in press (a). It is noteworthy that Romance languages have undergone diachronic change in this domaine. For instance, Ancient Italian (and some varieties of Contemporary Italian) admitted the agreement also in (f).

- 4 A remnant of the original freedom is still to be observed, perhaps in all Romance varieties, in predicative constructions such as Port. *tenho uma carta escrita* 'I have a written letter' (lit.: I-have a letter written), as opposed to *tenho escrito uma carta* 'I have written a letter' (lit.: I-have written a letter; note that agreement is only required in the first case). The emergence of these predicative (and resultative) constructions correlates with the possibility of an adjectival reading of the Perfect Participle. When neither the agreement rule nor the order of the constituents provides a cue to their interpretation, sentences may be truly ambiguous, as in:

- a. It. (la collana) Maria l' ha appesa al collo
 (the necklace) Mary it:OBJ has hung at-the neck
 'CP' = 'M. has hung it around her neck'
 predicative-resultative construction = 'M. has it hanging around her neck'

- 5 The most commonly used auxiliaries in Romance languages are the descendants of *esse* 'be' and *habere* 'have'. As to the distribution of *esse* and *habere*, they vary from language to language (cf. Vincent 1982). In Spanish and Catalan *habere* has been generalized to all verbs. In French, Occitan, Italian and Sardinian by contrast, both *esse* and *habere* are used, although the respective distribution varies. Especially interesting is the case of Italian, where *esse* is only used with unaccusative verbs. However, in Central and Southern Italian vernacular dialects the situation is quite diverse (Tuttle 1986; Loporcaro 1993). As to Romanian, *habere* has been generalized to all verbs for the CP, while *esse* is used with Future, Conditional and Subjunctive Perfects. The case of Portuguese and Galician, where another auxiliary is selected, will be presented below. It has been observed that the reduction of the auxiliary choice to *habere* (as in Spanish and Catalan) correlates with the loss of agreement of the Perfect Participle (cf. also fn. 3)

sum 'I was praised', lit.: praised I-am), which consists in both cases of the auxiliary ESSE preceded by the Perfect Participle, provided the emerging construction with a possible model. Second, it is conceivable that the new construction converged with a periphrastic form, frequently attested in Classical Latin, involving cognition verbs, as in *cognitum habeo* 'I (have) learned / I know well' (lit.: learned I-have) and *compertum habeo* (or, equivalently, *mihi compertum est*) 'I (have) learned / I know for sure' (lit.: learned I-have/me:DAT learned is). Third, the general weakening of case endings might have precipitated to some extent the loss of agreement in the Perfect Participle.⁶ Finally, the change from SOV to SVO may have stabilized the order AUX + Participle.

While these transformations were performed, a whole series of compound tenses was generated by analogy with the Present Perfect resultative. However, at that point the wheel had turned again, in the sense that the purely perfectal value of the Present Perfect had started to show signs of obliteration. But this is precisely the point where a comprehensive story of the Romance CP (and, concomitantly, of the SP) becomes impossible, for its evolution is different in each language. To this topic we revert in the following section. Let us simply observe here that in a few languages (or, more appropriately, in some local varieties of these languages) a series of supercompound forms was created. This happened in some Northern Italian varieties (Piedmontese, Lombard and Veneto vernaculars, cf. Rohlfs 1966 - 69 § 673 and Cornu 1953: 236 - 243), in Romansh, Ladin and Friulian (cf. Cornu 1953: 243 - 248 and Benincà 1989), in some varieties of Romanian (cf. Paiva Boléo 1936: 74 fn. 1, reporting Jordan's data on supercompound forms in Northern Moldavia), Occitan (Schlieben-Lange 1971: 134 - 154), and most notably in French. In the last language this usage belongs to some extent to the literary language, where it is admitted by the grammarians only in a temporal clause, indicating anteriority with respect to a CP in the matrix clause (as in *Quand on a eu fini nos études nous sommes revenus à St. Etienne* 'When we finished our studies, we came back to St. Etienne' lit.: When one=we has had finished our studies, we are come back to St. Etienne). Most typically the supercompound forms belong to some vernacular dialects, such as those spoken in Southern France and French-speaking Switzerland (the area influenced by Occitan and Franco-Provençal), where they occur in main clauses too (cf. Foulet 1925; Cornu 1953; Bleton 1982; Carruthers 1992, 1993).

To complete the picture, note that in some Romance languages (most notably those of the Iberian area and some Italian Southern dialects) another participial construction developed, where the auxiliary used is the descendant of Latin *tenere* 'to keep' instead of *habere/esse* 'to have/to be'. Such a form, which is sporadically attested in Latin as well (Pinkster 1987: 214 -215), evolved into CP in Portuguese and Galician, gradually substituting for the form construed with *haber*. In Spanish the opposite distribution occurs, for the *haber* construction is the normal CP and *tener* + Past Participle has a more restricted usage. Although we consider all these constructions as different manifestations of Romance CP, there are specific properties that will be dealt with in the following sections.

3. Stages of development

We find it useful to refer here to Harris (1982), which represents a well-known and influential point of reference and will thus provide the point of departure of our discussion. In summarizing the distribution of the CP in Romance (the Present Perfect, in his terminology), Harris (1982) proposes the following synchronic patterns,

⁶ Note, however, that the received idea that full grammaticalization of the CP is reached only at the stage when agreement is lost cannot be maintained, due to the existence of Romance varieties with highly grammaticalized compound tenses, where agreement is preserved (Loporcaro 1993, in press a; cf. also fn. 3).

corresponding to different ways of conceiving the opposition SP / CP (the languages indicated within parentheses in the following points are Harris' suggestions):⁷

STAGE I: the CP is "restricted to present states resulting from past actions, and is not used to describe past actions themselves, however recent" (some Southern Italian vernacular varieties)

STAGE II: the CP occurs "only in highly specific circumstances" such as contexts "aspectually marked as durative or repetitive" parallel to English *I have lived here / been living here all my life ; I have often seen him at the theatre* (Galician and Portuguese, many varieties of American Spanish)

STAGE III: the CP expresses "the archetypal present perfect value of past action with present relevance"(Castilian Spanish; some varieties of *langue d'oïl* and *langue d'oc*)

STAGE IV: the CP also expresses the preterital or aoristic functions, while the SP is restricted to "formal registers" (Standard French, Northern Italian, Standard Romanian)

In what follows, we shall reconsider in greater detail the situation in several Romance languages. In section 4, we shall point out the difficulties of interpreting these four stages as diachronic steps of grammaticalization.

3.1. STAGE I

Sicilian and Calabrian are presented by Harris as typical examples of a low degree of grammaticalization, admitting the CP only for current states, possibly connected to past situations. As to Sicilian more data will be presented in section 3.2, showing that the CP is rather at stage II than stage I. As to Calabrian, in Harris' source (Rohlf's 1966 - 69 section 673) there is at least one example (*aju jutu* 'I have gone (there) = I know the place', lit.: I-have gone, Southern Calabrian dialect in the province of Catanzaro) that should be interpreted rather as experiential perfect, i.e. as an instance of stage II (or perhaps more appropriately stage III). This means that, although a past perfective situation is normally expressed by a SP, even with regard to recent events (cfr. Rohlf's *u fici ora* 'I did it now', *scil.* 'a moment ago', lit.: it:OBJ I-did now), the CP in these varieties has already moved forward in the alleged process of grammaticalization. It is not restricted to current state situations, i.e. it is not a truly resultative perfect, but can also denote past situations with current experiential relevance. Clearly, more research needs to be done on this issue. Nevertheless, as far as we can see, no contemporary Romance language exhibits a CP with purely resultative value.

Even Spanish *tener* + Past Participle, which coexists with the most productive CP construction, built by means of the verb *haber* + Past Participle, seems to be in a further stage of grammaticalization, as shown by Harre (1991). Its usage is not restricted to durative states (like in: *Este chico tiene preocupada a su madre* 'The mother of this boy is worried because of him' (lit.: This boy keeps worried:OBJ to his mother), or to durative states resulting from past events (*Tengo pedido el libro* 'The book is now requested' (lit.: I-keep requested the book), because some speakers also accept iterative past contexts, such as: *Me tiene dicho repetidas veces que no piensa casarse con él* 'She told me several times that she is not considering marrying him' (lit.: Me:DAT she-keeps told several times that not she-thinks to marry:RFL with him), or even past punctual situations: *Tengo oído que mañana no va a haber clase* 'I heard that there is no class tomorrow' (lit.: I-keep heard that tomorrow not goes to have class). Admittedly, the usage of this construction has not yet become fully productive, and there is a great deal of variation as to extending it to other iterative

7 These patterns are very similar to the diachronic steps proposed by Alarcos Llorach (1947: 136) for the evolution of Spanish SP, and a slightly modified version is also presented in Fleischman 1983: 195 and Schwenter 1994a: 77; for a similar proposal, cf. also Schlieben-Lange 1971: 128 fn. 13.

contexts, such as for instance: *Tengo perdida la cartera varias veces* ‘I (have) lost the wallet many times’ (lit.: I-keep lost:OBJ the wallet several times).

3.2. STAGE II

STAGE II is represented by Portuguese, Galician and some varieties of American Spanish, where specific requirements must be fulfilled in order to use the CP. In fact, all the available descriptions of the CP in Portuguese (construed with auxiliary *ter* < Lat. *tenere* ‘to keep’)⁸ agree in pointing out that the semantics of this form differs from the corresponding CPs in the remaining Romance languages, excepting the other varieties quoted above. The major requirement is that the CP should refer to a durative or iterative situation, starting in the past and continuing up to the Speech Time. This implements the so-called inclusive meaning of the perfect, in which the event is seen as still ongoing at the Reference Time (obviously coinciding with the Speech Time, in the case of the Present Perfect), while nothing is presupposed regarding what follows it (cf. Eng. (*until now*) *I have worked* (or: *have been working*) *hard*). In fact, the Portuguese CP has often been defined as an imperfective form, or as a perfective form with imperfective features (cf. Irmen 1966; Sten 1973 and Suter 1984); and this makes sense given the above characterization.⁹ The obvious consequence of this is that activities and (to some extent) contingent states are grammatical in these contexts (2), while non-durative (3) and telic situations (4) are rejected, unless they appear in iterative contexts (5-6), where they can be visualized as spanning a temporal interval including the reference point:¹⁰

- (2) Tenho estudado imenso desde que decidi fazer o exame
I-have studied enormous since that I-decided to do the examination
‘I have been studying a lot since I decided to take the examination.’
- (3) *O João tem chegado agora
The John has arrived now
‘John has just arrived.’
- (4) *Ultimamente o João tem lido um romance de Eça de Queiroz
Recently the John has read a novel by Eça de Queiroz
‘Recently John read a novel by Eça de Queiroz.’
- (5) Nos últimos dias o João tem chegado tarde
In-the last days the John has arrived late
‘In the last few days John arrived late.’
- (6) Ultimamente o João tem lido muitos romances
Recently the John has read many novels
‘Recently John read many novels.’

8 Paiva Boléo 1936; Castilho 1966, 1967; Irmen 1966; Wandruzka 1966: 9 - 15; Brinkmann 1970; Sten 1973: 233 - 259; Algeo 1976; Cella 1978: 310 - 391; Travaglia 1981; Suter 1984.

9 Bertinetto (1986) considers the inclusive meaning of perfectal tenses an instance of aspectual blending. One might wonder whether the restriction on this particular interpretation of the Portuguese CP is due to the presence of the auxiliary *ter* instead of *haber*. This is a reasonable hypothesis in itself; but note that some varieties of Latin American Spanish, discussed below, seem to behave in the same way, despite the presence of the auxiliary *haber*.

10 It is a general Romance feature that with stative and activity verbs, in inclusive contexts, it is also possible to find the Present:

(a) Fr. J’habite ici depuis longtemps
I live here since long-time
‘I have lived here for a long time.’

Interestingly, as the translation suggests, English makes use of the Present Perfect also in these cases.

Note that in Portuguese the CP cannot refer to truly past situations, not even when these are located in the recent past (3), or interpreted as experiential (7),¹¹ as hot news (8), or as triggering a Reference Time reading of the Speech Time (9-10), or in hodiernal contexts (11):

- (7) *Já tens estado em Australia? (PFQ: 32)
 Already have-you been in Australia
 ‘Have you already been to Australia?’
- (8) *Tem chegado o rei! (PFQ: 56)
 Has arrived the king
 ‘The king has arrived!’
- (9) *Não, já se tem ido embora (PFQ: 27)
 No already s/heRFL has left
 ‘No, s/he has already left.’
- (10) *Não, ainda não tem voltado (PFQ: 28)
 No yet not s/he-has come back
 ‘No, s/he has not come back yet.’
- (11) *Tenho acordado às quatro da manhã (PFQ: 16)
 I-have woken up at the four of the morning
 [Context: A question asked at 9 a.m.: Why do you look so tired?] ‘I woke up at four in the morning.’

This data entails that notions such as current relevance (stage III) and anteriority cannot be at work here. Rather, the Portuguese form seems to be sensitive to the actional character of the situation. It selects only durative and non-telic situations encompassing the reference point, while non-durative and telic situations are only accepted if interpreted as spanning an interval that reaches up to the Reference Time (possibly by way of iteration). Note that this set of restrictions does not hold for the other compound forms, such as the Pluperfect, Compound Future, Compound Conditional, or Subjunctive CP. This state of affairs is clearly due to the competition between CP and SP, rather than being an intrinsic character of Portuguese compound forms in general.

It is worth adding that there are contexts that, while not fulfilling the requirement of durativity or iterativity, do admit the CP. These are for instance stylistic usages restricted to given pragmatic or textual environments (such as the formulae *tenho acabado* ‘I have concluded’ or *tenho dito* ‘I have said’, uttered at the end of a formal speech), or modal extensions towards irrealis (*Se tens continuado no Seminário, campavas* ‘If you had kept on in the seminary, you would have managed’ (lit.: If you have kept on in the seminary, you-managed:IMPF, from Suter 1984: 84), or special usages relating to specific syntactic patterns, such as a relative clause following a superlative (*um dos maiores escritores que tenho lido é ... o Júlio Dinis*¹² ‘one of the greatest writers I have read is ... Júlio Dinis’ (lit.: one of the greatest writers that I have read is the Júlio Dinis), from Suter 1984: 174. The last example shows that there is some leakage towards the experiential function, although this is not generally the case. Moreover the CP may be used in the original resultative or current state contexts with the past participle agreeing with the direct object. Some of these cases can also be interpreted as referring to a past situation with current relevance, as in *A mãe tem tudo preparado para irmos viver no andar de cima* ‘our mother has prepared everything, so that we could move upstairs’ (lit.: the mother has everything prepared for we-to go to live in the floor of upstairs, Sten 1973: 234).

11 Cf. by contrast the Calabrian example cited in section 3.1, where the CP is employed in exactly this situation.

12 According to Sten (1973: 251), this case could also be considered an example of iterativity, since there is a comparison between different occurrences of the same situation.

The distribution of the CP in Galician seems to be partially similar to Portuguese. A notable difference, though, is that in Galician all compound tenses (not only the CP) are quite rare, and most of their modern usages are due to Spanish or Portuguese influence. The CP is documented in resultative contexts or contexts denoting inclusive iterative situations (cf. Paiva Boléo 1936: 12 - 15; Santamarina 1974: 159 - 161; Rojo 1974: 128 - 132). As noted by Harris (1982 fn. 4), no example of durative (non-iterative) context, similar to the Portuguese examples described above, is attested in the literature. Paiva Boléo (1936: 16 - 19) notes that also in Asturian and Leonese the usage of CP is very restricted, and this is confirmed by Cano González (1992: 666 - 667) for Asturian¹³ and by Millán Urdiales (1966: 174 - 175, quoted by Harris 1982: 53) for Leonese.

In some varieties of American Spanish, the CP shows a distribution similar to the Portuguese form. For instance, the Mexican CP designates durative and iterative situations encompassing the Speech Time (cf. Lope Blanch 1961; Said 1976; Moreno de Alba 1978; Spitzová & Bayerová 1987). The following examples, both from Lope Blanch (1961 [1983]: 135), show typical durative contexts:

- (12) Desde entonces sólo he sido una carga para ti
 Since then only I-have been a burden to you:DAT
 ‘Since then I have only been a burden to you.’
- (13) Pero ¿Cómo? ¿Tú con lentes? -Pues claro; yo siempre los
 But, how You with glasses Well, of-course I always they:OBJ
 he usado
 have used
 ‘What? You wear glasses? - Yes, of course; I have always used them.’

As an example of iterativity, Lope Blanch (1961 [1983]: 136) quotes the following distinctive pair:

- (14) Eso ya lo discutimos ayer
 This already it:OBJ we-discussed yesterday
 ‘We already discussed this matter yesterday.’
- (15) Eso ya lo hemos discutido muchas veces
 This already it:OBJ we-have discussed many times
 ‘We discussed this matter many times.’

13 As for Asturian, Harre (1991: 155 - 159, 165 - 166) carried out specific research on Oviedo Spanish, confirming that the CP (of the Spanish type *haber* + Past Participle) tends to be avoided and is substituted by the SP. But Oviedo Spaniards show quite a productive usage of the construction with *tener* + Past Participle, which is much more extensive not only with respect to the corresponding Spanish construction but also with respect to Portuguese. As in Portuguese, the Asturian form occurs for durative and iterative situations including the Speech Time, but, unlike Portuguese it can also occur in experiential contexts (*Ayer pesqué una trucha que medía ... - Pues eso no es nada. Yo tengo pescado una que medía ...* ‘Yesterday I caught a trout measuring ... - Well, that’s nothing. I caught one measuring’, lit.: Yesterday I-fished a trout that measured:IMPF Well this not is nothing. I have fished one that measured:IMPF) and also for semelfative punctual situations with current relevance reading (*Tengo roto la pierna en esos días que llovía y estaban las calles resbaladizas* ‘I broke my leg in those days when it was raining and the streets were slippery’, lit.:□I-have broken the leg in those days that it rained:IMPF and were the streets slippery). Moreover in Asturian, unlike Portuguese, the situation is not required to include the Speech Time (*Tiene perdido cinco kilos pero después engordó diez* ‘S/he lost five kilos but then s/he gained ten kilos’, lit.: S/he-has lost five kilos but then s/he-gained ten), but significantly the invariant Past participle form is preferred in these cases, while when the Speech Time is included the agreeing form occurs (*Tiene perdidos cinco kilos y espera perder cinco más* ‘S/he (has) lost five kilos and hopes to lose five more’, lit.: S/he-has lost:OBJ five kilos, but hopes to lose five more).

This contrast shows that with a semelfactive situation the SP is preferred. However, just like in Portuguese, when the same situation is iterated over a span of time encompassing the Speech Time, the CP is used.

Lope Blanch (1961 [1983]: 137) also notes the opposite distribution of CP and SP with the adverbials *ya* ‘already’ and *todavía no* ‘not yet’, both referring to a Reference Time coinciding with the Speech Time. When *todavía* occurs in a negative context, the CP is used, while *ya* always requires the SP:

- (16) *Todavía no ha llegado*
 Yet not s/he-has come
 ‘S/he has not yet come.’
 (17) *Sí, ya llegó*
 Yes already s/he came
 ‘Yes, s/he has already come.’

The contrast here is between an inclusivity-oriented situation (16), and a recent past with current relevance (17). The opposite distribution would be ungrammatical (Lope Blanch 1961 [1983]: 137 fn. 15):

- (18) **Todavía no llegó*
 Yet not s/he-came
 ‘S/he has not come yet.’
 (19) **Ya ha llegado*
 Already s/he-has come
 ‘S/he has already come.’

Note that this opposition does not occur in Portuguese, since the SP would be used in both cases, although (16) is somehow oriented towards the inclusive meaning, in the sense that the non-occurrence of the event lasts at least up to the Reference Time. Thus, this Mexican peculiarity can be understood as an actional requirement: in negative contexts, the verb undergoes (in cases like (16)) an actional reclassification, i.e. it is turned into a durative predicate. However, just like in Portuguese, a recent past context does not trigger the CP. This is documented not only by (17), but also by *¿Qué dijiste? ¡Repítelo, si te atreves!* ‘What did you say? Repeat it, if you dare’ (lit.: what you-said Repeat-it if you dare), from Lope Blanch 1961 [1983]: 137.¹⁴

The picture proposed by Lope Blanch is basically confirmed by Berschin 1976, and in more detailed works by Said 1976, Moreno de Alba 1978 and Spitzová & Bayerová 1987, even though in these more recent works the CP shows a tendency to move forward in the process of grammaticalization, admitting also non-durative and non-iterative contexts referring to purely perfective situations. Some of these cases are also discussed in Lope Blanch 1961 [1983]: 142 and labelled as marked affective utterances¹⁵ (*Pasó un carro rozándolo ... ¡Qué salto ha dado!* ‘A truck/car passed by

14 A constrained usage of the CP is also documented in contemporary Judeo-Spanish, as it is spoken and written in Israel (cf. Malinowski 1984). The auxiliary used for constructing the CP is *tener*, which occurs mostly in negative contexts, as in *No lo tengo visto hasta ahora entre los clientes de mi tante* ‘Until now I had not seen him among my aunt’s customers’ (lit.: Not him I-have seen until now among the customers of my aunt). Notwithstanding the tendency to use the CP in negative contexts, similar to Mexican rather than to Portuguese, Judeo-Spanish maintains the SP with the adverbial *not yet* (*Ainda no me kazi* ‘I have not yet married’, lit.: Yet not I:RFL I-married), while in Mexican the CP is also used in such a case. Besides, Judeo-Spanish seems to admit experiential contexts (*Tiene sintido esta palabra?* ‘Have you ever heard this word?’, lit.: you-have heard this word), thus showing a further degree of grammaticalization.

15 Schwenter (1994b: 1014 - 1019) considers these marked affective utterances mentioned by Lope Blanch as hot news perfects, which, according to Schwenter’s data, do occur in Mexican television newscasts, even if their frequency is much more restricted with respect to European

grazing him ... What a jump he made!’ (lit.: passed-by a truck grazing-him What jump he-has made); but in other cases, quoted by Moreno de Alba 1978: 60, there is no affective meaning (*Tu sabes que hace poco han descubierto un palacio que ...* ‘You know that recently a palace was discovered that ...’, lit.: You know that ago little time they-have discovered a palace that...). According to Moreno de Alba, these cases are extremely rare in the corpus analyzed (4.4% of the occurrences of the CP), and mostly limited to formal speech influenced by literary style.

As for the other varieties of American Spanish, we only have some descriptions concerning the aspectual value of the CP. Rallides 1971: 24 - 31 and Berschin 1976 for Colombian, Cardona 1979 for Puerto Rico, Catalán 1966: 492 - 494 for Canarian and Kubarth 1992 for Buenos Aires Spanish all describe a distribution parallel to the Mexican one, where the CP denotes durative or iterative situations encompassing the Speech Time. Actually, the data quoted by Cardona for Puerto Rico shows that there seems to be some extension towards purely perfective contexts, as noted above for Mexican Spanish, while in Canarian some cases of experientiality are documented (*Yo he ido a la escuela = he recibido enseñanza escolar* ‘I have gone to school = I am an educated person’, from Catalán 1966: 493).¹⁶

Berschin (1976: 35 - 37) and Westmoreland (1988: 379 - 380) cite all the information available on the distribution of the CP in the other countries of Central and South America. In most of these areas, the SP seems to prevail over the CP, thus confirming the generalization given by Kany 1951 [1975]: 161 - 164 that the “the simple preterite [...] is frequently used in most of Spanish America in cases where a purist insists on the Present Perfect [=CP]”, but no information is provided whether the usage of the CP is simply less frequent than in European Spanish, or whether it is semantically constrained as in Mexico. Nevertheless the distribution is not at all homogeneous at both the diaphasic and the geographic dimension, since all over Spanish America the CP occurs more frequently in formal style, under the influence of the peninsular norm. Moreover there are some areas (mostly in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Northern Argentina) in which the CP is frequently also used in the informal style, as noted by Kany and confirmed by more recent studies.¹⁷

Spanish television broadcasting. Schwenter considers hot news perfects as an important turning point in the grammaticalization of perfects, being the first instance of purely past perfective situations.

Among the special usages of the Mexican CP, Lope Blanch also mentions cases of modal extension towards irrealis, as in Port. *Si ha salido un poquito antes, no lo hubiera recibido a tiempo* ‘if s/he had left a little before, s/he would not have received him/it in time’ (lit.: if s/he has left a little:DIM before, not him/it have:SUBJ received in time).

16 More recently, Almeida (1987 - 88) and Herrera Santana & Medina López (1991) have confirmed that in the Canaries the SP prevails over the CP and the latter is most frequent in negative contexts or when denoting durative/iterative situations encompassing the Speech Time. Moreover they show that the CP can also be used when referring to semelfactive situations; the examples quoted often contain verbs of perception or verbs of saying (*Ya he dicho antes que soy maestra* ‘I have already told you that I am a teacher’, lit.: Already I-have said before that I-am teacher, from Almeida 1987 - 88: 73), but other verbs can be found as well (*He vuelto otra vez a jugar al fútbol* ‘I started playing football again’, lit.: I-have started another time to play at the football, from Herrera & Medina 1991: 236).

17 As for Argentina, Donni de Mirande (1977: 46 - 49, 1992: 666 - 668) reports that in the area of Rosario (Santa Fe) all the compound forms (not only the CP) tend to be rarely used in informal style. A similar pattern, whereby the SP prevails over the CP, can be found in most of the country, including Buenos Aires (where Kubarth’s 1992 data suggest a distribution of CP similar to that observed in Mexico). However, the pattern changes in the North of the country, where it is the CP that occurs most frequently, while in some areas of the Centre the two forms alternate. The prevalence of CP over SP is also reported by Schumacher de Peña (1980) in the Southern Peruvian highlands (Cuzco, in the Quechua area and Puno, in the Quechua and Aymara area), even though this distribution is not common to the whole Peruvian area, since in the North (Huaraz, department of Ancash, in the Quechua area) it is the SP that prevails. According to

Quite interestingly, there is another Romance variety, Sicilian vernacular, which is reported as showing the same actional restrictions as Mexican Spanish. Skubic (1973 - 74, 1974 - 1975) notes that in Sicilian the CP does not express recent past or current relevance, but rather durative or iterative situations encompassing the Speech Time. See for instance the following examples (from Skubic 1973-74: 231) where an iterative situation expressed by the CP (20) is contrasted with a recent semelfactive situation expressed by the SP (21):

- (20) Aju manciatu tanti voti u piscispata, e m' ha fattu sempri
 I-have eaten many times the sword-fish, and me:DAT it-has done always
 beni
 good
 'I have eaten swordfish many times, and it has always done me well.'
 (21) M' u manciài oj e mi fici mali
 me:DAT it:OBJ I-ate today and me:DAT it-did bad
 'I ate swordfish today and it made me sick.'

Examples (from Mócciaro 1978: 345 - 346) with durative activities encompassing the Speech Time (*l'amu circatu tutta a matinata* 'we have been looking for him all morning', lit.: him we-have looked for all the morning) or negative situations (*aguannu un a chiuvutu* 'This year it has not rained', lit.: this-year not it-has rained) are also reported, showing similarity to the Mexican distribution.

In section 4 below we shall discuss the problem of the diachronic interpretation of stage II regarding the evolution of Romance CPs.

3.3 STAGE III

Stage III represents an important turning point in the evolution of the CP as described by Harris, since at this point the CP extends its coverage to purely perfective situations (in section 1 above we called this process "aoristic drift"). In characterizing this stage, Harris uses the widespread notion of current relevance. However, since the different languages indicated by Harris as belonging to stage III vary in their distribution of the CP, the notion of current relevance must be interpreted as a subjective notion, expressing some kind of psychological feeling of the speaker for what is currently relevant. In fact, Klein (1992) pointed out the unfalsifiable nature of this notion.¹⁸ Accordingly, Schwenter (1994a) proposed to interpret it from the point of view of the aoristic drift (although he does not use this term), whereby the different distribution of the CP in the various Romance languages should not to be accounted for as a difference in the conceptualization of the notion of current relevance, but as a varying degree of grammaticalization of this tense as a purely perfective past. According to this view, if an Englishman, unlike a Spaniard, does not allow a temporal location adverbial (e.g. *today at three o'clock*) to co-occur with a CP, this does not mean that these speakers have a different conception about what is currently relevant and what is not; it only means that the Spanish CP has reached a further stage in the aoristic drift.

As a matter of fact, the Spanish CP¹⁹ seems to be rather advanced in this process of transformation. It occurs not only in inclusive contexts (22), as in Portuguese and

Schumacher, such a distribution can be traced back to the fact that Quechua lacks a distinction corresponding to Spanish CP/SP, while the Quechua evidential form is rendered by the Spanish Pluperfect. In some other areas (Ecuador Spanish), it is the CP that assumes a modal meaning (admirative or evidential) due to Quechua influence, as for instance in: *el año que viene ha sido bisiesto* 'next year will be a leap year' (expressing surprise, lit.: the next year has been leap; cf. Toscano Mateus 1953: 260 and Bustamante 1991).

18 But many others, such as Dahl & Hedin (this vol.), still exploit this notion, which is useful at the descriptive level, despite the theoretical problems it poses.

19 As for a basic literature on Spanish SP/CP see Alarcos-Llorach 1947; Barrera-Vidal 1972; Berschin 1976; Kuttert 1982.

Mexican, but it is compatible with other typical perfectal contexts, such as hot news (23) and experiential (24), or contexts indicating anteriority with respect to a Reference Time (25-26) or persisting result of a past situation (27). Moreover, being sensitive to the temporal distance from the Speech Time, it also admits temporal adverbials of recent past (28):

- (22) He vivido aquí toda mi vida (PFQ: 50)
I-have lived here all my life
'I have lived here all my life.'
- (23) Ha llegado el rey! (PFQ: 56)
Has arrived the king
'The king has arrived!'
- (24) ¿Has estado en Australia? (PFQ: 32)
Have-you been in Australia
'Have you been to Australia?'
- (25) No, ha salido ya (PFQ: 27)
No s/he-has left already
'No, s/he has already left.'
- (26) No, todavía no ha llegado (PFQ: 28)
No, yet not s/he-has come back
'No, s/he has not yet come back.'
- (27) No, ha muerto (PFQ: 03)
No, he-has died
[Context: Question: Is the king still alive?]□ 'No, he died.'
- (28) Hoy me he despertado a las cuatro de la madrugada (PFQ: 16)
Today I:RFL I-have woken up at the four of the morning
[Context: A question asked at 9 A.M.: Why do you look so tired?]□ 'Today I woke up at four o'clock in the morning.'

As to examples such as (25), note that the usage of the CP is not at all obligatory in peninsular Spanish, where it undergoes stylistic and geographical variation. In the Eurotyp Questionnaire the CP has been used in (25), but in an emphatic context such as the following, in which the speaker shows his/her surprise, a SP would be preferred even though, from a purely semantic point of view, the context is the same as (25):

- (29) !Oh, no! Ya se despertó (PFQ: 31)
Oh no Already she:RFL she-woke up!
'Oh, no! She has already woken up!'

Moreover, Skubic (1964: 89) provides examples of non-elicited conversational Spanish, in which the SP occurs with the adverbial 'already' without any sort of emphatic effect:

- (30) Profesor, [¿]ya entregó su ponencia? (Granada)
Professor, already you-handed in your conference?
'Professor X, have you already handed in your conference?'

Interestingly, Skubic (1964: 88) notes that in the negative counterpart of these contexts, containing *not yet* instead of *already*, the usage of the CP is more systematic (cf. *No ha llegado todavía* 'S/he has not yet come', lit.: Not s/he-has arrived yet, Córdoba Spanish). He suggests this usage in negative contexts, attested also in Mexican Spanish, to be the oldest one, and therefore the best rooted.

As to the sensitivity of CP to the temporal distance from the Speech Time, Schwenter (1994a) shows that in Alicante Spanish the CP, in its purely perfective function, tends to respect the hodiernal vs. prehodiernal distinction. In fact, with hodiernal adverbials (such as *esta tarde, hoy, hace una hora* 'tonight, today, an hour

ago' vs. *el otro día, el lunes, hace una semana* 'the other day, on Monday, a week ago') the CP is much more frequent than the SP.²⁰ The on-going character of the aoristic drift is manifested in Alicante Spanish by the difference between the younger and older generation, since the latter shows a higher percent of SP in hodiernal contexts as compared to the former. Moreover, the CP seems to also be extending to prehodiernal contexts and again in this respect the younger generation has moved further than the older. In fact, the extension of CP to prehodiernal contexts seems to be a general phenomenon in Spanish, for Kuttert (1982: 196 - 197) quotes several examples of CP with prehodiernal adverbials in written texts. Schwenter also presents elicited and spontaneous data showing that the hodiernal/prehodiernal distinction is respected even in narrative contexts. But in this respect there seems to be some geographic variation, since a Sevillian speaker in the Eurotyp questionnaire uses the SP also for hodiernal narratives,²¹ while respecting the hodiernal/prehodiernal distinction in non-narrative contexts.²¹

These recently elicited data on Alicante Spanish confirm the picture depicted by Berschin (1976: 76 - 80) for Madrid students.²² This author also notes that the percent of CPs increases with hodiernal adverbials, even though the percent of SPs with hodiernal adverbials is higher than in Schwenter's data.

As to Occitan and Catalan (cf. Schlieben-Lange 1971: 127 - 132 and the literature quoted therein), they are at that point of stage III, where SP (i.e. *anar* + infinitive, cf. fn. 2) and CP coexist with different functions (specifically, in terms of temporal distance), the CP being mostly used for situations closer to the Speech Time. According to Badia Margarit (1962 [1985], 1: 423), the distribution of CP and SP in Catalan is quite similar to that in Spanish, the only difference being that Catalan seems to be more sensitive to the hodiernal/prehodiernal distinction. This observation is borne out by the result of the Eurotyp Questionnaire, in which the hodiernal/prehodiernal distinction is respected also in narrative contexts by the Catalan native speaker in contrast to the Sevillian speaker mentioned above.²³

3.4. STAGE IV

At this point of the aoristic drift, represented by Standard French, Standard Romanian, Northern Italian varieties and Romansh, Ladin, Friulian,²⁴ and Sardinian,²⁵ the CP

20 On the frequency of the CP with adverbials denoting an interval close to the Speech Time or encompassing it, cf. de Kock (1984), who analyzes a corpus of written Spanish texts. In a later work, de Kock (1986) presents statistical data on the usage of the CP in the same corpus, and the specific temporal perspective conveyed by it.

21 Skubic (1964: 87 fn. 2) reports that children in Southern Spain use the SP also in hodiernal narratives.

22 Actually, it is not clear whether the subjects were Madrileños or generally Spaniards.

23 That Catalan has proceeded further and faster in the aoristic drift (cf. section 4) is also demonstrated by the diachronic data presented in Eberenz (1977), who compares the usage of SP and CP in a 15th century Catalan text with its Spanish translation, published at the beginning of the 16th century. It appears that the Catalan CP has assumed the function of a purely perfective past earlier. See also Morales (1993) on the gradual extension of CP in a Catalan dialect (the *valenciano* as spoken in Vall d'Uxó), where CP prevails when there is no temporal adverbial localizing Event Time, but it may also occur with these adverbials or denote long-distance situations. Note, moreover, that in the dialect of Catalan spoken in Rousillon (France) the CP has proceeded even further in extending its functions, for it is the only form used, thus adopting the spoken French distribution (Dahl, p.c.).

24 Nevertheless Benincà (1989: 576) reports that in some areas of Friulian the SP is still currently used.

25 In most varieties of Sardinian the SP has completely disappeared, and, as a result of this process, two main patterns can be depicted: in the Northern varieties the SP has been replaced by the CP, as in the other Romance languages at stage IV, while in the Southern area of Sardinia (i. e.

can be used in any kind of purely perfective contexts and in some cases it is the only existing form. As opposed to stage III, a notion such as temporal distance is no longer at work, in the languages (and varieties) that obey the typical situation of stage IV. The diachronic data show that the French CP was previously sensitive to temporal distance, since the SP was first ousted in contexts referring to situations close to the Speech Time (Foulet 1920: 291 - 296).

But apart from the actual relationship between stage III and IV, which will be discussed below, the list of the languages belonging to stage IV requires more accurate distinctions. First, a distinction should be made between the local vernaculars²⁶ and the local varieties of the standard language. This is certainly relevant regarding Northern Italian, where the vernaculars have in most cases entirely lost the SP, even at the level of morphological possibility, whereas the local varieties of the standard language still present this form, at least to some extent (to this we revert in section 5 below).

Second, a distinction has to be made between colloquial language and written texts. In Standard French, the SP has disappeared from colloquial conversation, but it is reported as relatively frequent in newspapers (Zezula 1969, Herzog 1981, Engel 1990). Moreover, the SP is used in formal style and typically in literary texts (cf. among others Stavinochová 1978: 33 -73), where it is traditionally considered to fulfill the function of propulsive tense, which advances the plot by situating the events in the narrative loom relative to one another. According to Waugh & Monville-Burston (1986) such a foregrounding function cannot be extended to newspaper usage, where the SP has rather a contrastive function, demarcating formal and logical articulations of the text, emphasizing special points, even particular details independently of foregrounding.

The French pattern involving textual/stylistic restrictions for the SP has some similarities to Standard Italian (cf. section 5) and Romanian, but it cannot be generalized as such. As for Standard Romanian, the restrictions on the usage of the SP are stronger than in French and the evolution of the CP even more advanced in the aoristic drift. The SP seems to have been virtually dismissed in the colloquial language, and its usage is also quite restricted in written cultivated texts, literary style and in narratives. In literary texts the SP is still admitted (cf. Canarache 1965, Sa#deanu 1972), but it is much rarer than in the literary register of the other Romance languages. Support for this conclusion comes from Savic% (1990), who observes that in the translation of the same narrative passage, Romanian presents only CPs, whereas French and Italian show both CPs and SPs, and Portuguese has only SPs. Also Ca#la#ras#u (1992), analyzing a contemporary Romanian (epistolary) novel, points out that the SP is completely absent, while it is used in its French translation. As for newspaper texts, Savic% (1979: 189) finds that in his corpus the SP is completely missing.

However, it has to be noted that there are dialectal varieties of Standard French and Romanian where the SP is still quite common. This is particularly prominent in Romanian (S#iadbei 1930), where the SP is still currently used in some dialects of Daco-Romanian (especially in the Southwest, as in Oltenia and Southwest Muntenia, cf. Georgescu 1958, Moise 1977), in Arumanian²⁷ and Megleno-Romanian, while in

Campidano), the Pluperfect and even the Imperfect are reported as substitutive forms instead of the SP (cf. Loi Corvetto 1982: 144 - 147; Blasco Ferrer 1984: 30-33, 1986: 147- 152).

26 Recall, that in the Italian area, more than in any other Romance language, the vernacular does not always coincide with the local variety of the Standard. This should also be kept in mind when considering the data in section 5, where what has been studied is the local variety of Standard Italian rather than the vernacular.

27 The usage of SP in Arumanian is confirmed by Savic% (1991), who notes that in a recent Arumanian Bible translation the SP is quite frequent, while it is completely missing in the corresponding Romanian version.

Istro-Romanian it tends to disappear as in standard Daco-Romanian. Even in France the situation is more varied than is often assumed: apart from the Occitan and Franco-Provençal areas, where the SP is more resistant, this tense is also recorded as still currently used (at least until the late 19th-early 20th century, when some of the data were collected) in the Northwest and Northeast (basically Normandy and Wallonia), and in some other residual areas (cf. Cornu 1953: 200 - 201, Harris 1982: 56 - 59 and the literature quoted therein).

A special case should be made for some Romanian dialects, such as those spoken in Oltenia. Here, the distribution appears strikingly different from that of Standard Romanian or any other Romance language. These varieties are sensitive to temporal distance, but the form expressing proximity to the Speech Time is not the CP, like in other Romance languages, but the SP. The latter tense is used for more recent situations, mostly located in the same day regarding the Speech Time, while the CP refers to more distant situations. According to Pana# Boroianu (1982) such a specialization of the SP to indicate the most recent past, in particular in hodiernal contexts, is a recent phenomenon that is the product of a gradual evolution which can be traced back in local texts. In addition to the hodiernal requirement, the SP is reported to be used only with non-durative situations or with situations that Manoliu-Manea (1989: 108 - 109) labels as “limitées” (presumably, telic). This author notes that, with a predicate such as *to drink*, the SP is only possible when the verb is followed by a direct object, thus allowing a telic interpretation: *ba#u un pahar cu apa#* ‘he drank a glass of water’ vs. **ba#u* ‘he drank’.²⁸ Clearly, these data cannot be easily located in any of the four stages described above, although they also represent a peculiar form of aoristic drift. It seems reasonable to invoke here interference from the Greek aorist (as suggested by Manoliu-Manea 1989: 109) or Serbian influence (cf. Lindstedt, p.c.).

4. The diachronic puzzle

4.1. On the proper interpretation of stage II

At this point, it is worth discussing the diachronic interpretation of the four stages proposed by Harris. This author conceives of these four steps as representing the pattern of evolution of the Romance CP, from a resultative value to a purely perfective reading. Stage II is thus interpreted as an intermediate stage between resultativity and pure aoristicity. It refers to a durative or iterative situation, expanding (so to say) a present state into the past (or, more appropriately, stating the persistence of a past situation up to the Speech Time). This interpretation, even if appealing, is problematic for a number of reasons.

First, diachronic data on 17th century Portuguese CP seem to show that instead of being actionally restricted, as it is nowadays, it was also used in non-durative past contexts. Several authors (Paiva Boléo 1936: 34 - 35; Irmen 1966; Suter 1984: 54 - 58; Harre 1991: 144) quote examples from 17th century texts (mostly Bible translations) where the CP has a non-durative meaning, a usage unknown in contemporary Portuguese. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether these examples are due to the cultivated influence of other languages (such as Spanish or French) on written texts, as maintained by Paiva Boléo (1936: 27), or genuinely mirror the situation of the spoken language of that time, as suggested by Irmen. The problem is open to further research.

29

28 However, Mateica-Igelmann (1989: 46 - 49) notes that other situation types (in particular non-telic) admit the SP (*Dormis%i? Dormii toata\$ ziua* ‘Did you sleep? I slept the whole day’).

29 Analogous considerations can be formulated regarding the Sicilian vernacular, which is reported nowadays as being at stage II. Historical data from literary texts show that the CP used also to occur in other contexts, in particular those expressing current relevance (cf. Ambrosini 1969 and Skubic 1973 - 1975). Skubic interprets these data as the result of literary influence from other Romance languages.

Second, Harris' sequence presupposes the generalization of stage II to those Romance languages that do not show any attested past evidence of this stage in the usage of the CP. Whether stage II also occurred in French or Italian is an empirical issue that has not yet been documented.³⁰ But what is problematic is the very conception of stage II as an intermediate step. Although the development suggested by Harris is plausible, an alternative interpretation is equally possible. According to this, stage II, corresponding to the inclusive meaning of the CP, would not be the second step of the aoristic drift, but rather a totally independent development in which actional values, or rather a peculiar interaction of actional and aspectual values, are foregrounded. As to actional restrictions, recall our discussion in section 3.2. As to aspectual properties, what characterizes the inclusive meaning is the blending of perfective and imperfective values. It is perfective inasmuch as it implies a Reference Time (obviously simultaneous with the Speech Time), which is the distinctive feature of perfectal tenses, a subspecies of perfective tenses. It is however imperfective, inasmuch as the event is not necessarily terminated at the Reference Time, as is typical of the imperfective aspect in all of its manifestations. Thus, the inclusive meaning may be considered an aspectual hybrid (as suggested by Bertinetto 1986).

Obviously, in the spirit of Harris' proposal, one might maintain that stage II is subsumed in the following stages, rather than completely superseded by them. Indeed, the inclusive meaning attached to stage II is still present in possibly every Romance language, where it is precisely the CP (or it may be the Present, but by no means the SP) which is used for this purpose. If this is the case, one might contend that there is a sort of aspectual escalation from the basically stative meaning of stage I (pure resultivity, with no sharp perfective orientation) to the hybrid status of stage II (inclusivity) to the decidedly perfective nature of stages III and IV.³¹

Nonetheless, we would venture to suggest that Portuguese might plausibly attest a situation which points towards a radically diverging orientation, as compared to the remaining Romance languages. Namely, Portuguese might have privileged the SP rather than the CP, just as Northern German has in contrast to Southern German. In other words, the Portuguese situation might simply exhibit one possible outcome of the frequent conflict arising between past tenses competing for the same (or for a too similar) semantic territory. Recall, in fact, that the restriction to the inclusive meaning does not concern the remaining Portuguese compound tenses, which have no direct

30 Referovskaja (1949, quoted by Schogt 1964: 10) maintains that, when in Old French texts the CP is used for referring to purely past situations rather than to the current result of a past situation, the first verbs to occur are accomplishments or achievements. As noted by Fleischman (1983: 207 fn. 27), these data contrast with the distribution of stage II, in which the CP is favored in non-telic situations. Further research should clarify whether the French CP underwent a different process of grammaticalization with respect to the Portuguese form, inasmuch as actional restrictions are concerned (On the diachronic evolution of French CP cf. also Saettele 1971, Blumenthal 1986).

31 In fact, such an evolution seems to be confirmed by diachronic data on European Spanish presented by Alarcos Llorach (1947), who claims that the CP has passed through a stage in which it expressed a durative or iterative situation leading up to the Speech Time. He notes that while in *The Cid* and in 13th century texts the CP mainly has a resultative value (although in some cases its usage is simply because of metrical reasons or to *variatio*), in the 14th century it is already used for expressing mere durativity and iterativity, and later evolves into a past perfective tense. However, there are data contradicting Alarcos' account. Consider, for instance, the following example quoted by Harre 1991: 114 from Gonzalo de Berceo (13th century), where the CP refers to a semelfactive past action: *Yo nunca te tollí valía de un grano e tú hasme tollido a mí un capellano* 'I never took the slightest thing from you / and you have taken a priest from me', lit.: I never you:DAT took (the) value of a grain and you has-me:DAT taken to me:DAT a priest. Clearly, in this case the CP, alternating with the SP, is used for stylistic *variatio*; nevertheless it is undeniable that it could also occur with a mere semelfactive value. Also in Company's (1983) data on medieval Spanish the CP is to be observed in semelfactive perfective contexts.

competitors. If this is so, then the logic of the distribution of SP and CP in Portuguese would be totally alien to the tendency which characterizes, as a whole, the rest of the Romance area, should the notion of aoristic drift be taken in its obvious sense, i.e. as the gradual extension of the CP towards purely perfective values at the expense of the SP. Note, however, that this conclusion does not exclude, on strictly logical grounds, the possibility that stage II, as claimed by Harris, be an actual sequential step. We have no strong evidence to prove or disprove either hypothesis. Thus, what the above discussion suggests is simply that stage II might not belong to the same line of development as stages III-IV.

Obviously, this matter cannot be settled on the ground of mere speculation. We need detailed data from the ancient stages of Romance languages to prove any of the above hypotheses. Unfortunately, the relevant input may no longer be available, given the relatively late emergence of vulgar scripts.³²

4.2. *On the proper relationship of stages III and IV*

Another problem that we have to consider is the exact distinction between stages III and IV. According to Harris, stage III implies some residue of the original perfectal meaning, as is apparent in the notion of current relevance. However, it is hard to assess what exactly this might mean in the case of Romance languages. For instance, no Romance language of stages III and IV (thus excluding Portuguese and the Sicilian vernaculars) presents the restriction that is to be observed in English and other languages, whereby a definite temporal localization of the event cannot co-occur with the CP. Thus, in any such language one may say the equivalent of ‘I have left at 5 o’ clock’, which is ungrammatical in English. This depletes the ultimate meaning of the notion current relevance, for the event, rather than being considered in its present consequences, is simply taken in and by itself (i.e. as an event localized at some point preceding the Speech Time). Indeed, as Klein (1992) convincingly argues, the notion of a link connecting a past event to the present is admittedly too vague to make real sense, unless there are testable consequences as in “persistent result” situations (like, for instance, the creation of a previously non-existing object or a change of state in a given object).

We prefer therefore to view stages III and IV as a single continuum, in which the various languages are disposed scalarly, from a minimum to a maximum in terms of proximity to the purely aoristic value. The extreme is reached by those Romance varieties, such as various Northern Italian and French vernaculars, where the SP does not even exist as a remote morphological possibility. In these varieties, the CP has gone all the way through to becoming a general purpose perfective tense. In all other cases, including Standard Romanian, there are residual stylistic areas which are still reserved to the SP, as distinct from the CP. These areas, however, may be more or less significant according to the individual languages. Obviously the ultimate difference rests in the domain of discourse-related preferences. A glance at Eurotyp Perfect Questionnaire may provide some useful hint regarding the relevant discourse contexts. This is especially the case with sentences (8-13) (personal narrative), (20-21) (informal conversation), (72) and (74) (historical events with persistent result), (23) and (25) (historical events), and (61) (tales). The results are summed up in the following table:

32 Blasco Ferrer (1984) notes that there are similarities among some peripheral languages of the Romance domain, such as Portuguese, Spanish, Sicilian and dialectal Romanian. This might suggest an areal interpretation, with obvious implications as to the situation of Vulgar Latin. However, among these peripheral languages, differences are often more prominent than similarities. Take, for instance, the Romanian dialect of Oltenia, which exhibits a very different and peculiar evolution, as compared to Portuguese, Spanish and Sicilian. We would like to reformulate Blasco Ferrer’s proposal by claiming that all we can say at the present time is that there are clear semantic similarities among Sicilian, Portuguese, and some varieties of Latin American Spanish (not Spanish in general).

| TABLE 1 | Spanish | Catalan | Italian | French |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| - personal narratives | - preferably SP, irrespective of temporal distance | - preferably SP, but the CP prevails in hodiernal contexts | - preferably CP SP for Southern speakers, preferably for long distance events | - preferably CP SP for long-distance events, and only in <i>style soutenu</i> |
| - informal conversation | - SP preferred for non-hodiernal events | - SP preferred for non-hodiernal events | - preferably CP | - preferably CP |
| - historical events with persistent result | - preferably SP | - preferably SP | - preferably SP | - preferably CP |
| - historical events | - preferably SP | - preferably SP | - preferably SP | - preferably SP |
| - tales | - preferably SP | - preferably SP | - preferably SP | - preferably SP |

On the face of this, it is certainly correct to state that Spanish is farther back in the aoristic drift than French, although it would be daring to attribute this to some specific semantic (as opposed to textual/stylistic) feature that is present in the Spanish CP and absent in the French. We prefer to view this as a statistical matter: although no purely deterministic principles may be identified, the number of contexts where the CP takes on a merely aoristic function is larger in French than in Spanish. This seems to imply that, if the aoristic drift carries on in the future as it has done so far, there will eventually be a point when Spanish and French coincide. A tentative scalar orientation, based on these observations, would be the following:□

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---|
| Spanish | Occitan Catalan | Standard Italian | Standard French | Standard Romanian | various North Italian & French vernaculars |
| <more perfectal>----- | | | <purely aoristic> | | |

However, this is a very coarse-grained formulation. The actual picture is more diverse, for there are areas (such as Southern Italy) where the tense which has survived best is the SP, rather than the CP. We address this in the final section of the paper, where we discuss in some detail the situation of the different varieties of Italian.

5. Italian: A case in detail

The first issue we should consider is the extent to which the CP of Standard Italian (i.e. the variety originally spoken in Tuscany and now spoken by and large by cultivated people also outside of this area) shows some of the typical perfectal functions.³³ As noted in section 4 above, the CP in Standard Italian allows for the explicit temporal localization of the event (a typical aoristic function), but it goes without saying that in typically perfectal contexts this tense is by far the preferred (if not the only) choice. This is notably the case with the following semantic functions, in descending order of relevance: inclusivity (as defined in section 3.2), experientiality, hot news, and persistent result (cf. also Lindstedt, this vol.). On the other hand, there is a sharp preference for the SP in narrative contexts, particularly in the case of historical narration (cf. Table 1). Thus, it is no wonder that the SP is widely used in tales and literary texts, as indeed also happens in French, where this tense fulfills the

33 On the semantic properties of Italian SP/CP see Bertinetto (1986) and Lepschy & Lepschy (1992).

specifically aoristic function of a propulsive (or foregrounding) tense.³⁴ As in French, Italian SP also occurs in newspaper (Burr 1993), where it is reported as more frequent than in French newspaper texts (Savic%'s 1979: 189 - 191), even if still less frequent than Spanish SP (Savic%'s 1979, Burr 1989).

These tendencies may be further modulated by a number of variables such as presence of adverbs relating to the speaker's *nunc*; temporal distance; and first vs. third person narration. But above and beyond this, there are territorial differences in language usage, for the varieties of Italian spoken in the North are close to the situation exhibited by French, whereas those spoken in the South are traditionally described as virtually ignoring the CP and generalizing the use of the SP.³⁵ While this is clearly the case with the vernacular dialects spoken in these two areas (recall what we said in section 3.4 about the total absence of the SP in the Northern vernaculars), things are definitely more complicated regarding the corresponding varieties of the national language (recall that in Italy vernaculars do not necessarily coincide with the local variety of the Standard; this is quite a prominent feature of the Italian area, with respect to the rest of the Romania, cf. fn. 26).

In order to shed some light on this problem, an investigation was carried out by the present authors (Bertinetto & Squartini, in preparation) in eleven towns: three in the North (Torino, Bergamo, Padova), three in the Centre (Pisa, Roma, Macerata), three in the South (Napoli, Potenza, Lecce), plus one in Sicily (Palermo)³⁶ and one in Sardinia (Cagliari). Since the inquiry was performed by means of a written questionnaire, the results obtained cannot directly reflect the spoken usage, although the subjects (mostly university students) were warned that they should produce as colloquial answers as possible, despite the usage of the national language instead of the vernacular dialect. Presumably, the results reflect some sort of mental projection of the Standard language, rather than the actual linguistic behaviour of the individual speakers. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to observe that the data vary systematically from town

34 In some cases the textual distribution of SP and CP is even more complicate: Centineo (1991) has shown that even in a Southern variety, namely the variety of Italian spoken in Sicily, SP and CP alternate in oral narratives, and both forms show a pure perfective function. Centineo claims that the alternation of the two forms in the same text is due to textual strategy purposes, signalling the switch from the sequential narration to the evaluative section, without any restriction as to which form can appear in the narrative sequence and or in the evaluation.

35 Solarino (1991) and Lo Duca & Solarino (1992) have studied the relationship between geographical variety and textual restrictions of SP/CP. They show that in speakers from a Northern variety the SP is restricted to the oral telling of fairy tales, while it is absent in autobiographical stories and in movie plots; but even in fairy tales the percent of SP is lower than in speakers from a Southern variety, who, on the contrary, do use the SP also for autobiographical stories.

Some suggestions on the distribution of SP in spoken Italian can be found in Gambarara (1994), who reports data from the LIP (*Lessico dell'Italiano Parlato*, 'Spoken Italian Lexicon'). First, an inspection of the 200 most frequent verbs shows that the SP is used comparatively more often with irregular than with regular verbs, despite the fact that the SP of irregular verbs must be learned by rote. As to the different types of communicative style, the percentage of SP reaches the minimum in TV and radio talks, and in face-to-face conversations (between 0.06% and 0.4 % of all verbal forms), while it rises slightly in telephone conversations, monologues (such as lectures) and formal discussions (between 0.4 % and 0.8 %). Unfortunately, no indication is given as to the frequency of usage in the four towns where the recordings were made (Firenze, Milano, Napoli and Roma). One piece of data relevant for our discussion is the following: among the observed data, the SP is virtually absent in the first and second persons of the verb, and is almost exclusively concentrated in the third person (sg. and pl.). Apparently, the use of this tense in the spoken language mirrors the Benvenistian opposition between *discours* and *histoire*. This seems to agree perfectly with the data presented in Table 2.

36 Note that the variety under scrutiny is the variety of Italian spoken by Sicilians rather than the local vernacular, where (as shown in section 3.4) the CP is restricted to inclusive contexts.

to town, and especially from one geographical area to another, so that we are allowed to draw some reliable conclusions.

Consider Table 2, which presents the results by geographical area. The figures in each cell show the percentage of CP used by the informants of a given area regarding the given semantic and textual function, indicated in the left column. The first four rows refer to typically perfectal functions, while the remaining three refer to functions typically fulfilled by a purely perfective Past. It should be remarked that the functions tested do not exhaust the list of possible values to be assigned to the SP and the CP; they simply represent the most salient cases for assessing the contrast between the two Past tenses of Italian (and possibly of any Romance language). Although most labels are self-explanatory, a clarification is needed for the category “ST-oriented adverbs”, which groups together sentences containing adverbs explicitly pointing to the Speech Time (such as: *not...yet* or *two days ago*). As to the contrast “personal vs. impersonal narration”, this obviously rests on the contrast between first and third person subjects.

As can be seen, the upper part of the table does not show dramatic differences between the various geographical areas, with the use of the CP overwhelming consistently the SP (cf. the row “perfectal functions”). Only the lower part exhibits notable divergences. The first conclusion to be drawn is therefore that the most characteristic perfectal functions are expressed by the CP, with very minor areal differences. As to the narrative functions typically associated with aoristic tenses (i.e. the last three categories, cf. the row “narrative functions”), they are attributed to the CP significantly more often than to the SP by Northern and Sardinian speakers, while in the case of Southern speakers the SP significantly prevails over the CP. With Sicilians, on the other hand, the distribution of the responses is not significant, while the situation of Central Italy’s speakers is close to significance (note that the different size of the two samples, with 10 and 30 subjects respectively, has a bearing on the statistical outcome).

The variance in use of the CP is also confirmed by bivariate comparisons of geographical areas regarding the last three (typically aoristic) functions: the contrast between the North and the remaining geographical areas is significant in nearly all cases, with the only exception being the comparison between the North and Sardinia. This shows that, indeed, as is often claimed, Northern speakers tend to generalise usage of the CP and extend it to specifically aoristic contexts, and this is fundamentally true also of Sardinians. Logically, this tendency emerges in particular with the category “personal narration”, where a deictic element, namely the first person subject, is involved.³⁷ It is interesting to observe that the categories “personal narration” and “impersonal narration” on the one hand, and “historical narration” on the other hand, show diverging trends in the Centre as opposed to the South, a result which lends credence to the received idea that speakers from the former area make a subtler choice of the SP/CP opposition. This is partly true also of Northern speakers, who show a constant decrease in the use of CPs from “personal narration” to “impersonal narration” down to “historical narration”, while Southern speakers tend to maintain the same percentage throughout. Presumably, in a really spontaneous situation these tendencies would be further emphasized. Thus it is possible with Northern speakers that the percentage of CPs in the categories of “impersonal” and “historical narration” would be even higher than observed. Conversely, it is possible that in truly spontaneous situations Southern speakers would exhibit a somewhat lower percentage of CPs in the upper part of the table, at least in categories such as “current relevance” and “ST-oriented adverbs”. However, it is likely that the result would not change with “inclusivity” and “experientiality”, which seem to represent the most resistant CP functions.

37 Obviously, this deictic element suggests the possible current relevance of the narrated event, while the third person marks the distance of the narrator from her/his topic.

TABLE 2: Number of CP responses and corresponding percentages in the questionnaire sentences.

The proportion of SP responses (including also other solutions marginally chosen by the speakers) may be computed by subtracting the percentage indicated in each cell from 100. Asterisks mark the only cell values non-significant at the 0.05 level, according to the χ^2 test; asterisks in parenthesis indicate values close to significance. A cell may be significant not only when the percentage is very high, but also when it is very low, for this suggests that an overwhelming proportion of SPs were used. Note that significance is established with respect to the size of the sample, which is different for North, South, and Centre vs. Sicily and Sardinia.

| <i>Semantic functions</i> | North | Centre | South | Sicily | Sardinia | row total |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>a. inclusivity</i> | 30 100 % | 30 100 % | 30 100 % | 10 100 % | 10 100 % | 110 100 % |
| <i>b. ST-oriented adverbs</i> | 90 100 % | 87 96.5 % | 83 92 % | 29 96.5 % | 30 100 % | 319 97 % |
| <i>c. persistent result</i> | 206 98 % | 200 95 % | 181 86 % | 67 95.5 | 70 100 % | 724 94 % |
| <i>d. experientiality</i> | 86 95.5 % | 89 99 % | 82 91 % | 28 93.5 % | 28 93.5 % | 313 95 % |
| <i>PERFECTAL FUNCTIONS (a-d)</i> | 412 98 % | 406 96.5 % | 376 89.5 % | 134 95.5 % | 138 98.5 % | 1466 95 % |
| <i>e. personal narration</i> | 209 69.5 % | 166 (*) 55.5 % | 74 24.5 % | 53 * 53 % | 78 78 % | 580 53 % |
| <i>f. impersonal narration</i> | 66 * 55 % | 37 31 % | 27 22.5 % | 13 32.5 % | 25 * 62.5 % | 168 38 % |
| <i>g. historical narraion</i> | 7 23.5 % | 2 6.5 % | 6 20 % | 1 10 % | 2 (*) 20 % | 18 16.5 % |
| <i>NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS (e-g)</i> | 282 62.5% | 205 (*) 45.5 % | 107 23.5 % | 67 * 44.5 % | 105 70% | 766 46 % |
| column total | 694 79.5 % | 518 70 % | 483 55.5 % | 201 63.5 % | 243 84 % | |

The general conclusion that seems to emerge from this data is the following. The communis opinio that Northern Italian speakers tend to extend the CP to all contexts turns out to be true to a very large extent, although in semi-formal situations (such as the completion of a questionnaire) the SP occurs relatively often in narrative contexts. As to Southerners, in the type of situation considered, they dramatically diverge from Northerners, but also from Central speakers. It should be noted, though, that this is merely a probabilistic tendency, rather than a sharp contrast of grammaticality. In actual usage, a fair amount of variability is to be observed, at least in the less characteristic contexts. Recall also that the spontaneous behaviour of the North and South, when heavily influenced by the respective vernacular dialects, would appear to be even more extreme than that elicited by our questionnaire. Finally, the two major

islands occupy some kind of intermediate position, with Sardinia closer to the North and Sicily, somewhat surprisingly, closer to the Centre than to the South proper.³⁸

The investigation carried out reveals that Italian, particularly the variety spoken in the Centre (which essentially coincides with the Standard variety), has not altogether dismissed the original perfectal meaning of the CP. However, it is equally clear that a fair amount of variability is to be observed along the geographical dimension, suggesting that the competition between SP and CP will continue to develop within an intricate, multifactorial interplay.

38 One should not forget, however, that the insular data come from only two points of observation, Palermo and Cagliari. Thus, one should be cautious before generalizing these results. This is actually also necessary with reference to the other major areas, for slight divergences were often gathered from town to town.

Furthermore, in the Southern town of Cosenza (Northern Calabria, not included in the data reported here) our questionnaire elicited very extreme behaviour, yielding virtually no SP in the responses of the subjects: something that did not happen in any of the Northern locations investigated. Although this is clearly a deviant phenomenon, not representative of the overall behaviour of Southern speakers, it tells us that the observed regularities should not be extended to each individual location.

Interestingly, although the total disappearance of the SP is reported to be a recent phenomenon in Cosenza and the surrounding area in general (Loporcaro 1995: 550), the linguistic behaviour of its inhabitants is much more extreme than that of our subjects from Cagliari, although the disappearance of the SP from Sardinian vernaculars (not to be confused with the local variety of Italian spoken there, as scrutinized in our questionnaire) started already by the end of the 17th century and is nowadays complete, as claimed by Blasco Ferrer (1984: 30).

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Languages that have discarded the simple past in speech and or writing: French, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Slovenian, Belarussian. Languages that preserve distinction between simple past and compound past: Spanish, Portuguese, English, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian. Languages in transition (compound past dominates but simple past is still sometimes used): German, Dutch, Italian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian. Last edited by a moderator: Apr 16, 2009. A. Tenses and moods include simple present indicative, imperfect indicative, preterite indicative, future indicative, conditional, present subjunctive, imperfect subjunctive, affirmative and negative imperative, gerund, present participle, past participle, and the auxiliary verb used in the perfect tenses. If you have any corrections or additions (including other Romance languages and vos conjugations for Spanish), please e-mail me at ielanguages [at] gmail [dot] com. If you are looking for comparative vocabulary lists, please go to Romance Vocabulary. Perfect / compound tenses are not included in the conjugation charts since they are easily formed by using the auxiliary verb in the correct tense plus a past participle: compound tense. tense of auxiliary verb. (1995). The simple and compound past in Romance languages. *Quaderni del Laboratorio di Linguistica* 9:219-240. Google Scholar. Squartini, Mario, & Bertinetto, Pier Marco. (2000). The simple and compound past in Romance languages. In Dahl, Å. (ed.), *Tense and aspect in the languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 403-439. Google Scholar. In Romanian, Găvruta-Davies distinguishes three main tenses in the indicative, i.e., the present tense, the past tense (compound past, simple past tense, past continuous tense or imperfect and past perfect) and the future tense (with three forms and a future in the past tense). The aspect in Romanian is not an independent feature. Like in the other Romance languages, it is the imperfect past tense itself which carries a progressive aspect. A major difference of aspect between Romanian and English but also between Romanian and other Romance languages is, that there is in fact no possibility to convey a present progressive aspect grammatically (for example, the Spanish gerund, *Estoy trabajando*. > I am working.). Simple Tenses vs. Compound Tenses "The distinction between simple and compound tenses corresponds to the distinction between affixes and words. A simple tense form of a verb is a single word, usually augmented by a suffix (less often a prefix). A compound tense form consists of several words, at least one of them an auxiliary. "What is potentially confusing here is the fact that English, like many European languages, uses the past participle (e.g. taken) both for the perfect (a compound tense) and for the passive voice. Note that the English passive is formed in a way quite parallel to the formation of compound tenses, i.e. with an auxiliary and a participle. But, of course, passive is not a tense." (James R. Hurford, *Grammar: A Student's Guide*.)