

**Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého**

# **Formal and semantic restrictions for using perfective aspect in English**

**(Bakalářská práce)**

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**Formal and semantic restrictions for using perfective aspect in English  
(Bakalářská práce)**

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V Olomouci dne 17. 8. 2020

**Petr Koudelka**

Motto

*Nač spěchat? Pamatujte, že i diamant byl  
nejdříve jen trpělivý kus uhlí.*

Velice děkuji vedoucí bakalářské práce **doc. PhDr. Ludmile Veselovské, Ph.D.**  
za ochotu, kritiku a vstřícnost a podporu v nelehké době.

V Olomouci dne 17. 8. 2020

**Petr Koudelka**

### **Abstract**

The bachelor thesis focuses on semantic and especially formal criteria restricting the usage of perfective aspect in English with the main focus on adverbial concord. The goal is to prove that temporal adverbials are a reliable criterium. The first theoretical chapter provides a description of how the perfect has developed in English throughout history. The second theoretical chapter describes semantic and formal criteria restricting the usage of the perfective aspect and provides background for the phenomenon of adverbial concord. In the practical section I use data from corpora to examine the cooccurrence of specific adverbials of time with present a past tenses and the perfective aspect to see whether they are a reliable criterium. The last section is an analysis of educational materials. The goal is to reflect on how the materials explain the concept of the perfective aspect and if they use reliable criteria.

### **Key words**

Perfect, perfectum, perfective, aspect, corpus, corpus-based research, adverbial, concord, formal, semantics, criteria, tense

### **Anotace**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá sémantickými a obzvláště formálními kritérii determinujícími použití perfektivního aspektu v angličtině. Hlavní důraz je kladen na shodu příslovečného určení času s časem a aspektem slovesa. Cílem je prokázat, že příslovečné určení času je spolehlivým kritériem. První teoretická kapitola nabízí pohled na vývoj perfekta v angličtině v průběhu času. Druhá teoretická kapitola popisuje sémantická a formální kritéria determinující použití perfektivního aspektu a poskytuje teoretické pozadí pro fenomén shody příslovečného určení času se slovesem. V praktické části využívám dat z lingvistických korpusů ke zkoumání společného výskytu konkrétních adverbií, minulého, či přítomného času a perfektivního aspektu. Cílem je potvrdit status příslovečného určení času jako spolehlivého kritéria. Poslední část je analýzou výukových materiálů. Zde je cílem analyzovat, jako tyto materiály vysvětlují princip perfektivního aspektu a zda při tom používají spolehlivá kritéria.

### **Klíčová slova**

Perfektum, perfektivní, aspekt, korpus, korpusová lingvistika, adverbiale, shoda, formální, sémantika, kritéria, čas, předpřítomný, příslovečné, určení, času

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# 1 Introduction

This bachelor theses will focus on a grammatical feature which has been developing as long as English itself – the perfective aspect. First, I am also going to describe how the perfective aspect has developed throughout history and how it became expressed the way English speaker use it today. In the beginning, “there was a failure to distinguish regularly between perfective and non-perfective in the surface structure” (Traugott 1972, 91). Nevertheless, throughout years it has become an essential part of English grammar. Besides English, it can be also found in other Germanic as well as Romanic languages with evidence showing that similar processes were in progress when it was forming in both cases. According to Bybee (1994, 68), modern perfectives originally functioned as resultatives in these languages. However, perfective aspect is a concept that Old English speakers tried to convey much earlier than these processes came to effect – as early as the fifth century. I will clarify the origin and development of perfectum in English based on *A History of English Syntax* by Elizabeth Closs Traugott, an American linguist and professor of linguistics and English at Stanford University, *The Evolution of Grammar* by an American linguist Joan Bybee and her colleagues and other authorities in the field.

The crucial section of my thesis will focus on semantic and especially morphological criteria under which the perfective aspect is used. I will describe the perfective aspect on its own and in combination with the present tense. The main concern will be the usage of temporal adverbials in combination with the perfective aspect. I will compile observations from major English grammar manuals and linguistic articles. Specifically, I will use data from *A Grammar of Contemporary English* by Quirk et. al, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* by Huddleston and Pullum, *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* by Biber, *Meaning and the English Verb* by Geoffrey N. Leech and *The English Verb* by F. R. Palmer. The core of the thesis will be based on Liliane Haegeman and Yoshio Endo’s article *Adverbial clauses and adverbial concord* which provides a theoretical background for the relation between adverbials and the perfective aspect.

Next, I will use the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* and the *British National Corpus* to verify whether adverbials of time are a reliable criterium for the determining the tense and aspect in English. I will research the most frequent adverbials and make a statistic to show the reliability rate of each of them in relation to what the grammatical manuals state. The hypothesis is that certain adverbials of time will prove reliable in majority of cases and that temporal adverbials in general as well. The results might differ in American English and British English. Quirk et al. (1985, 194) for example note that “in American English, the simple past is often preferred to the present perfective”,

especially for some variants of clauses addressing the indefinite past. The results which will turn out unexpected I will compare with the British National Corpus to check whether the phenomenon is exclusive only to American English or not. Nevertheless, I expect that the formal criteria will prove reliable in both cases.

In the last part I will compare the collected data with a number of contemporary English textbooks and online courses used in the Czech Republic to analyze what criteria they use for explaining the concept of perfective aspect to students. I will focus on the formal aspect, especially the usage of adverbials of time. I will verify if the data in textbooks correspond with the data in grammar manuals. The objective is to evaluate to what extent do the educational materials use the relationship between adverbials of time and tense and aspect as opposed to the semantic criteria to explain the usage of the present perfect tense.



## 2 The origin of the perfect in English

The perfect's formal execution has undergone a diachronic development in English. This chapter will describe individual steps in its evolution beginning with the Old English in the ninth century.

### 2.1 Prefix 'ge-'

Old English speakers used the prefix *ge-* to express it. The prefix also included meanings “*entirely, completely* or even *achieve by*” (Traugott 1972, 91). Constructions using this morpheme could be either interpreted as perfective or resultative. Relying only on the prefix was therefore not sufficient as the sentences were ambiguous and because the prefix could only be added once, there were up to three possible interpretations with meanings similar to sentences in example (1).

- (1) (a) *He has cleaned the room.*  
(b) *He cleaned the room up.*  
(c) *He has cleaned the room up.*

### 2.2 Resultative constructions

The need to express the notion of perfectiveness led to the rise of new way of marking it – using resultative constructions. According to Bybee et al. (1994, 68), this process happened even in other Germanic and Romance languages including Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch and German as there are early documents available which confirm this evolution.

Traugott (1972, 92) mentions two ways of forming resultative constructions in Old English depending whether the verb was transitive or intransitive.

**Intransitive verb** based constructions used an auxiliary *beo-* ‘be’ and its paradigms in combination with an adjectival participle agreeing in case, number and gender with the subject.

- (2) *He wæs gecumen.*  
*HE WAS IN-THE-STATE-OF-HAVING-COME<sup>ADJ</sup>*

**Transitive verb** based constructions used an auxiliary *hobb* ‘have, take, get’ and its paradigms with an adjectival participle agreeing in case, number and gender with the object.

- (3) *Ic hæfde hine gebundenne.*  
*I HAD HIM IN-THE-STATE-OF-BEING-BOUND<sup>ADJ</sup>*

### 2.3 Start of grammaticalization of the perfect aspect

However, the agreement was not always overt, specifically when the adjective agreed in number, gender and case with masculine or neuter nominative singular. This led to possibility of different interpretations. As Traugott (1972, 93) says, “having no overt inflection, the participial verb could be interpreted as having no inflection at all.” The participle lost its adjectival nature and started to be seen as a perfect form which is never inflected, and verbs *be* and *have* have started to be seen as markers for the perfect.

### 2.4 Domination of have + past participle over be+ past participle

According to Traugott (1972, 93) phrases with *habb-* were originally only used only as possessives like in example (3), but by the eight century the perfect has developed and lost its original lexical meaning. The usage of this format was growing and started to be dominant over *be + past participle*. However, some words remained resistant to the change such as *come*. Traugott notes that in Shakespearean era for example, phrase *He is come* is “far more frequent” over *He has come*. The usage of *be + past participle* has ceased in the nineteenth century. One of the main reasons is that such constructions were in many cases ambiguous. Elsness (1996) also notes the rising importance of *be* as the passive auxiliary.

### 2.5 Perfective aspect today

In the process of grammaticalization, the verb *have* has lost its lexical meaning and the resultative adjective became part of the verb itself which besides the lack of inflection is signaled by its syntactic position shift closer to the auxiliary. Specifically, “the past participial main verb moves from a post-object position to the pre-object position” (Elsness 1996, 240).

- (4) (a) *I have him caught.*  
(b) *I have caught him.*

Now that we know how the manifestation of the perfective aspect developed throughout history and how it is manifested today, we can move on to examine the occasions on which it can be used.

### 3 Perfectum criteria

In this section, I will provide a theoretical background describing when and how the **perfect** is used in English based on the observations of reputable linguists. The first part will focus on semantic criteria for the perfect in general and its combinations with tenses and progressive aspect. The second part will deal with formal criteria. I will base my descriptions on definitions from major English grammar manuals.

#### 3.1 Semantic criteria

##### 3.1.1 Perfect

Quirk and his colleagues (1985, 190) define the perfect as a grammatical feature indicating “anterior time – time preceding whatever time orientation is signaled by tense or by other elements of the sentence or its context”. If we think of time as a straight line, the indicated time orientation is a point on this line and the perfect aspect always signals a period preceding this point independently on the tense.

- (5) (a) *I had already done the dishes when she came.*  
(b) *I have already done the dishes.*  
(c) *I will have done the dishes before she comes.*

In sentence (a) the time of orientation is a point in the past and the perfect signals a period preceding this point.

In sentence (b) the time of orientation is identical with the moment of speech.

In sentence (c) the perfect signals a period preceding the time of orientation in the future, the period can only stretch as far the moment of speech.

##### 3.1.2 Present perfect

When talking specifically about the **present perfect** we can say it is used to describe past events or actions that are somehow related to the present moment, or in other words have a “current relevance” (Quirk et al. 1985, 192). While both simple past and present perfect may describe the same action or event, they differ in semantics – specifically in their effect on the present moment. Because of this, they cannot be used interchangeably under the same semantic criteria.

According to Quirk et al. (1985, 192) the present perfect tense is used for talking about either i) a **state** which is still in effect at least until the moment of speech, ii) an **indefinite event** in a period anterior to the moment of speech and iii) a **recurring event** or **habit** in a period anterior to the moment of speech.

Some structures can be ambiguous, and these three notions may not be recognizable without further context, e.g. the use of adverbials of time or frequency. However, the time of the past situation cannot be specific.

### **State leading up to present**

(6) *Jack has **already** fallen asleep.*

The **present perfect** here is most probably used for indicating a state starting at some point in the past and remaining at least to the moment of speech. In some contexts, it could also refer to an indefinite event.

### **Indefinite event**

(7) *George has been to New York **before**.*

Here, the **present perfect** signals an event that happened at any point in time preceding the moment of speech. The result will persist even after the moment of speech.

### **Recurring event**

(8) *James has written a new book **every month**.*

In this case, the **present perfect** signals a habitual behavior or recurring event which remains in effect at least until the moment of speech.

### **Variations of referencing the indefinite past**

When referencing the indefinite past, there are three variations of meaning possible according to Quirk et. al (1985, 193).

- i) The time period leads up to present.
- ii) The referenced event took place recently.
- iii) The result is still in effect at the moment of speech.

Variants i) and iii) can be deduced from the description of the perfect in general. In case of ii), when speaker chooses to use the present perfect tense in favor of past simple, the implication is that the event has not concluded yet. In example (9) sentence a) can imply that the play has had its last performance, while b) can imply that it is still possible to attend the play.

(9) a) *Did you see the play?*

b) *Have you seen the play?*

Variant iii) corresponds with the resultative nature of some verbs. Their lexical meaning implies a change of state with a result which in combination with the perfect still applies at least until the moment of speech. Leech (2004, 39) mentions such use of present perfect tense as well. He lists it as a separate category rather than a variant of referencing the indefinite past, however he argues that it is hard to distinguish these two cases and that resultative past may be considered a special case of the recent indefinite past.

In example (10), one of the interpretations is that the floor is clean. This corresponds with the fact that resultative constructions served as a base for the origin of perfect in English.

(10) *The floor has been cleaned.*

### **American vs British English**

These connotations are present mainly in the British English. Quirk et. al (1985, 193) note that “In American English, there is a tendency to use the past tense in preference to the present perfect, especially for the indefinite past.” See example (11).

(11) *Did you ever go see opera?*

In such case, the only morphological mark of the perfective aspect is the adverb *ever* which is associated with it.

### **Present perfect vs simple past**

**Frequency** – According to Leech (2004, 40), simple past tense is used more frequently than the present perfect. The four different senses of the present perfect also differ in frequency. Leech says that the resultative sense is most common, the indefinite past follows and the other two senses are used more scarcely.

**Semantics** – More importantly, choosing one tense over the other one results in different meaning. Leech (2004, 40-42) mentions following contrasts:

a) **Continuation up to the present time** – Using the present perfect tense results in continuation of a state, action, event or habit having effect to the present.

(12) a) *His mother has been a vegetarian all her life.*

b) *His mother was a vegetarian all her life.*

According to Leech (2004, 40), example a) could be interpreted as ‘*She’s still alive.*’ while b) could be perceived as ‘*She’s dead.*’

b) **Present result** – The contrast between the tenses is also apparent in the result of a verbal action.

(13) a) *Peter has broken his arm.*

b) *Peter broke his arm.*

According to Leech (2004, 41), the second example “allows us to conclude that the result of the injury has disappeared.”

However, he also notes that the simple past is used for events which are unique in history even when the result is still present as in example (14) and simple past is also favorable for results of recent indefinite past (especially in American English) as in example (15).

(14) *The Eiffel tower was built by the best French architects.*

(15) *Why are you crying? Did you hurt your arm?*

b) **Indefinite time** – In contrast to the present perfect tense, the simple past requires a definite point in the past which may be specified formally by an adverbial of time (16), preceding use of past or perfect tense (17) or implicitly by the context of speech (18).

(16) *I saw her yesterday.*

(17) *I saw / have seen her tonight – she was looking through the window.*

(18) *Did you see that?*

### 3.2 Formal criteria

Apart from the semantic criteria mentioned above, perfective aspect is also restricted formally. According to Leech (2004, 44), the difference between points of reference in present perfect and past simple leads to the fact that each tense has a restricted set of time adverbials that can be combined with it.

He says that “a rough general rule is that with the Present Perfect, as with Present tense in general, adverbials must relate, in one way or another, to the present point of reference ‘now’, while with the Past Tenses they must refer to some point of time in the past.” Palmer (1974, 50) says that “often it is the choice of the adverbial alone that determines the choice between present perfect and past.”

### ***3.2.1 Adverbials in concord with the past simple***

When the **time of the past situation is specified** by the adverbial, the matrix clause is restricted to **past simple tense**.

Adverbials such as: *Yesterday, last year, a few minutes ago, the night before, on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, at ten o'clock ...*

- (19) *Jack bought a house a week ago.*  
\**Jack has bought a house a week ago.*

In example (19), the adverbial of time *a week ago* requires the past simple tense in the sentence, because it describes a specific moment in the past.

### ***3.2.2 Adverbials in concord with the perfective aspect***

If the adverbial denotes a **time period anterior to its time orientation**, the matrix clause is restricted to the **perfective aspect**.

Adverbials such as: *So far, already, until, hitherto, ...*

- (20) *So far, I have written two pages.*  
*He lied. So far, he had written only one page.*  
\**So far, I wrote two pages.*

In example (20), the adverbial of time *so far* requires the **perfect aspect** in the sentence, because it describes a **time period anterior to its time orientation**.

### ***3.2.3 Adverbials in concord with both***

However, having an adverbial of time in the sentence doesn't necessarily guarantee a clear distinction as there are adverbials of time which can be used with both tenses and the choice is optional for the speaker. Such adverbials can describe:

#### **Frequency**

Adverbials such as: *annually, daily, every hour, monthly, usually, ...*

- (21) *James gave me a nice present every Christmas.*  
*James has given me a nice present every Christmas.*

In example (21), the speaker's decision to use the perfect in contrast to the past simple signals, that the event has been recurring at least until the moment of speech.

### **Periods including the present moment**

Adverbials such as: today, tonight, this year, ...

- (22) *Jack has bought the newspaper today.*  
*Jack bought the newspaper today.*

In example (22), the adverbial of time *today* describes both a specific point in the past and a time period anterior to the moment of speech, the usage of perfectum is therefore optional depending on the semantics.

### **Adverbials requiring further context**

Adverbials such as: earlier, finally, before, after, when...

- (23) a) *I've met him earlier.*  
b) *I met him earlier.*  
c) *I met him earlier than you.*

In example (23), the choice of using the perfectum depends on further context – formal or semantical. Unmodified *earlier* can either signal a period anterior to the present moment and therefore require the use of perfectum as in sentence a) or it can be used with past simple as in sentence b), for example with a similar meaning to sentence c) where the past is specified.

- (24) a) *I finally beat him in tennis yesterday.*  
b) *I have finally seen the Godfather.*

In example (24), the sentence a) indicates a specific event that happened at a specific moment in the past after a long time but doesn't persist. Sentence b) indicates an indefinite event with a definitive result that will always remain in effect after the moment of speech.

### **3.2.4 Exceptions**

There is a number of exceptions which allow the usage of non-perfective forms where the perfective aspect is expected. In most of these cases, both forms are acceptable.



### 3.2.4.1 *Past simple tense in concord with adverbials associated with the perfective aspect*

#### **Since-clauses and *since* as adverbial or preposition in informal English**

Quirk et al. (1985, 1015) mention that “in informal American English and increasingly in informal British English, non-perfective forms are commonly used in the matrix clauses with *since*-clauses and in clauses with preposition or adverbial *since*.”

(25) *I got fat since the quarantine started.*

### 3.2.4.2 *Present simple and present progressive in concord adverbials associated with the perfective aspect*

Sometimes, the present simple or present progressive tense may be used with adverbials associated with the perfective aspect. Quirk et al. (1985, 1016-1017) describe three different cases where it is acceptable.

#### **Stative verbs denoting durative predicate**

First case where non-perfective forms may be used according to Quirk et al. (1972, 1016) is with stative verbs when the predication is durative – denoting a continuous state. Particularly *be* and *seem*. They added that “the most common pattern that falls under this exception is *It + be + a time expression*, in which the verb may be in the simple present or simple past or have the *will*-future.” See example (26).

- (26) a) *Since his father died, John seems less energetic.*  
b) *I'm alright, since I took the medicine.*

#### **Modal auxiliaries and semi-auxiliaries**

Another exception described by Quirk et al. (1985, 1016) is with modals which cannot be used in perfective forms as in example (27).

- (27) a) *Since I broke my leg I can't walk.*  
b) *I must use a wheelchair since I broke my leg.*

However, in case of semi-auxiliaries or equivalent lexical verbs, both forms can be used again, and the difference is semantic. Compare the sentences in example (28).

- (28) a) *I'm not able to walk since the accident.*  
b) *I haven't been able to walk since the accident.*

### **Habitual reference**

The last case concerns clauses with habitual references demonstrated by example (29).

- (29) a) *I go to the doctor every Wednesday since I broke my leg.*  
b) *I'm feeling happy since I started working out.*

#### **3.2.4.3 Perfective aspect in concord with adverbials associated with the past simple tense**

In some cases, even the perfective aspect may be used in combination with adverbials generally inherently associated with the past simple tense.

### **Habitual reference distanced in the past**

Speaking about the usage of present tense with habitual references, Quirk et al. (1985, 1017) add that “when the whole period under consideration is distanced in past time, the past perfective is generally used in the matrix clause.

- (30) a) *Since Americans had landed on the moon, many countries had tried to replicate their success.*

In such case, it is acceptable to replace the past perfective by past simple as in example (31).

- (31) a) *Since Americans had landed on the moon, many countries tried to replicate their success.*

### **Specification of time in conversation**

Comrie (1976, 55) adds another exception of using adverbials associated with past simple tense in combination with perfective aspect. She claims that the specification of time is possible, “provided it is added as an afterthought to a sentence with a perfect verb, such as (32), or as a reply to a question, such as (33).”

- (32) *I have been to Birmingham, last week in fact.*  
(33) *Have you finished your article on Tibetan morphology? – Yes, last week.*

#### **3.2.5 Specific adverbials mentioned by linguists**

In this part, I will make listings of specific adverbials associated with perfective aspect and past simple tense by major English grammar manuals. From these sets I will later choose some of the most frequently used adverbials and they will

be used to verify whether they always occur in clauses with their associated aspect and tense.

**Adverbials associated with the past tense:**

Quirk et al. (1985, 194): *Yesterday, a week ago, earlier this week, last Monday, the other day, at four o'clock, in the morning, on Tuesday*

Biber and Conrad (2007, 467): *Yesterday, at that moment, one day, a few days ago, then, in (August), during (the fall of 1988), throughout (the rest of the week), for (six months)*

Huddleston and Pullum (2007, 49): *last week*

Leech (2004, 45): *a week ago, earlier this year, last Monday, the other day, yesterday morning*

Palmer (1974, 39): *last week, yesterday, last year, a long time ago*

**Adverbials associated with the present perfect**

Quirk et al. (1985, 194): *Up to now, since Monday, since I met you, so far, hitherto*

Biber and Conrad (2007, 467): *Since last January, already, since the early 1970s*

Huddleston and Pullum (2007, 49): *by now*

Leech (2004, 45): *So far, up to now, hitherto, since Thursday, since I met you, lately, latterly, for the present, for now, for the time being*

**Adverbials associated with both**

Quirk et al. (1985, 195): *Today, this month, this year, recently, before, this June, once, already*

Leech (2004, 45): *Today, this month, this year, this century, this morning, this March, this Christmas*

Palmer (1974, 39): *Today, this week, this year*

### **3.3 Empirical evidence for processing of the adverbial concord**

For the next part, I am going to include data from experiments carried out by Nicoletta Biondo, Francesco Vespignani and Brian Dillon (2019).

The importance of concord between the temporal adverbial and the verb has been confirmed by various experiments. Biondo, Vespignani and Dillon (2019) for example mention event-related potential (ERP) studies. These have brought evidence that people evaluate the temporal concord between a verb and a temporal adverb in real-time. They investigated the electrophysiological activity triggered by a grammatical violation during processing of a sentence. The research has shown that violation of the concord between a deictic temporal adverb and the verb tense as in (34), yields ERP components which are associated with the detection of syntactic and semantic anomaly. Eye tracking measures also confirmed that when the concord is violated between a temporal adverb and a distal verb, the reading time is longer. (Biondo et al. 2018).

(34) \**Yesterday, I sail.*

The evidence supports the idea that the comprehender needs to find an appropriate attachment for the adverbial in the syntax and then evaluate the temporal concord between the adverbial and the verb.

Biondo, Vespignani and Dillon's (2019) eye-tracking experiment revealed that total reading times significantly increased when the adverbial didn't match the tense features of the main verb of the clause. They didn't find evidence of a significant change of reading times of the embedded and structurally inaccessible verb matching the adverbial.

(35) *The musician taught the song that shocked everyone to his new bandmates last week during the dress rehearsal.*

The experiment showed that “comprehenders are primarily sensitive to the agreement between the temporal features of the adverb and of the matrix verb in incremental sentence processing: reading times were slower when the temporal concord relationship was violated” (Biondo, Vespignani and Dillon 2019). The authors see it as evidence that comprehenders look for the structurally licit place of attachment in a sentence to check whether the adverbial is in concord with the verb, “despite the fact that the verb phrase is linearly more distant than the more recent but more syntactically embedded verb phrase” (Biondo, Vespignani and Dillon 2019).

### **3.3.1 Conclusion**

The experiment points to the proposition that the comprehender “reliably makes use of structural information to find the right attachment site for the temporal adverb” (Biondo, Vespignani and Dillon 2019). The experiments also did not

brought enough evidence to say that the processing of the concord can be interfered by the presence of a verb phrase that is structurally illicit but has features matching the adverbial as in example , where both the main verb and the embedded verb have matching features with the adverbial.

(36) *The musician **taught** the song that **shocked** everyone to his new bandmates **last week** during the dress rehearsal.*

### 3.5 Syntactic structure for the adverbial concord

The core of this thesis is based on the research by Yoshio Endo and Liliane Haegeman (2014) on adverbial clauses and adverbial concord. They form a proposition that the external syntax i. e. the distribution and the degree of integration of an adverbial clause with the clause they modify is determined by its internal syntax i. e. the degree to which they allow for the encoding of information structural concepts.

#### 3.5.1 Binary distinction

The paper follows up to Haegeman's earlier work where she introduces a binary distinction of adverbial clauses based on the degree of their syntactic integration.

The first type she labeled as “**central adverbial clauses**” (Haegeman 2009). This kind of clauses provides a temporal specification for the matrix clause as in example (37). In such case, *since* is modifying the auxiliary of the matrix clause – meaning something like *from the moment*. In this case, the adverbial of time needs to be in concord with the matrix clause – to exhibit the perfective aspect.

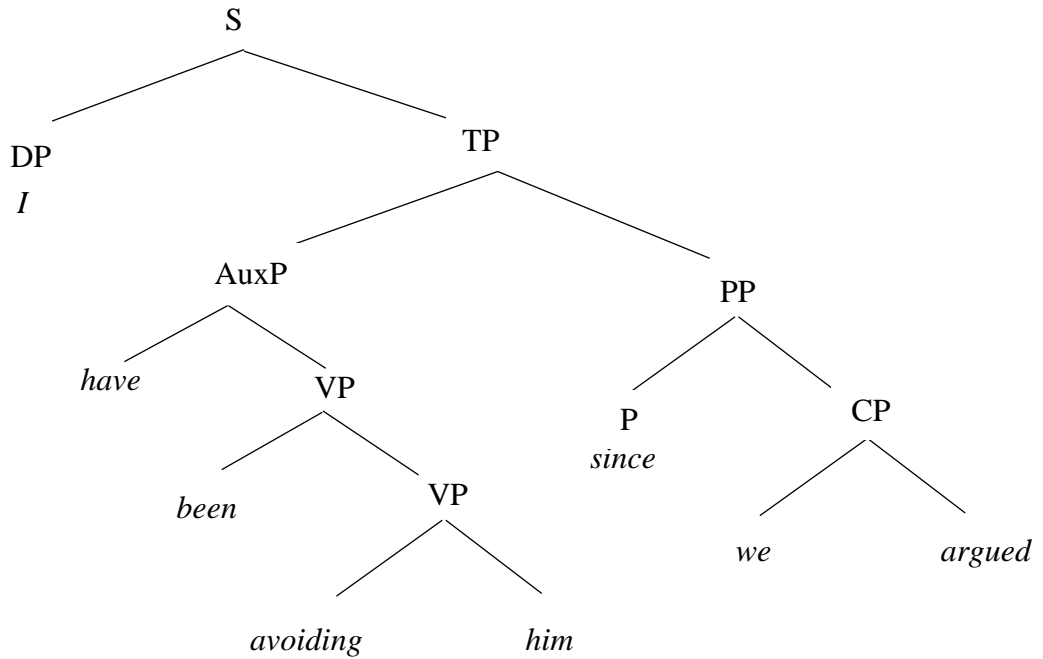
The second type is “**peripheral adverbial clauses**” (Haegeman 2009). Such clauses introduce a proposition providing a discourse context. Here *since* is used as a complementizer introducing a proposition, doesn't have scope over the auxiliary in the matrix clause and has a meaning similar to *as* or *because*. Notice that the past simple tense in the matrix clause is not ungrammatical in example (38).

(37) \**I was avoiding him, (ever) since I owe him money.*

(38) *I was avoiding him, (\*ever) since I owe him money.*

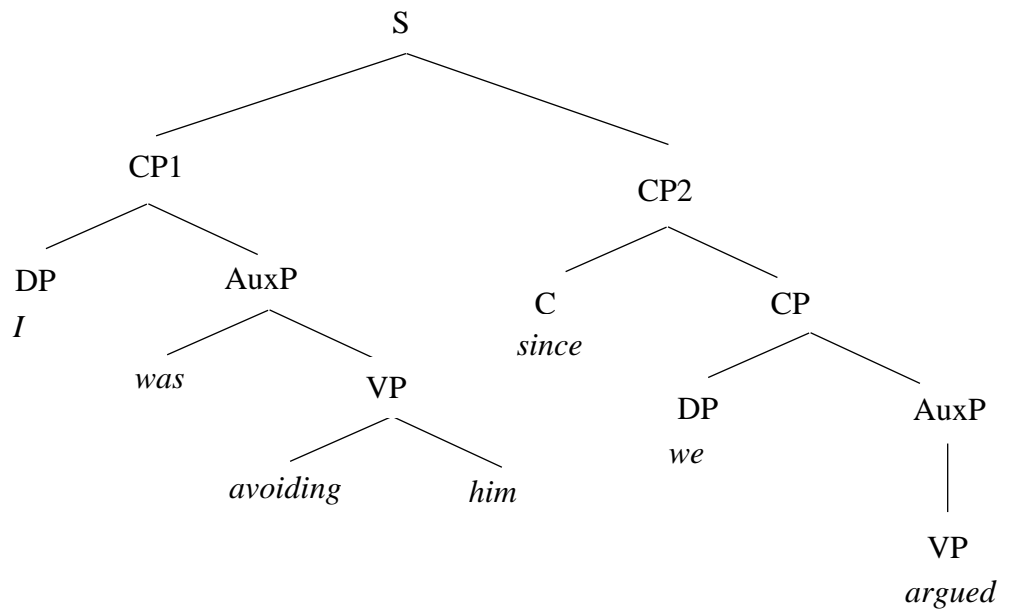
The following scheme in (39) demonstrates the structure of a sentence containing a central adverbial clause where the temporal adverbial is adjoined to the top of verbal domain, i. e. above the auxiliary.

(39) Syntactic tree - the central clause



The scheme in (40) demonstrates the structure of a sentence containing a peripheral adverbial clause where the adverbial is adjoined to the matrix clause higher in the hierarchy. The relation is close to that of coordination. Notice that compared with (39), in which *since* was analyzed as a preposition introducing a clause (CP2), in the contrasting structure in *since* is marked as a complementizer.

(40) Syntactic tree – the peripheral phrase



### 3.5.2 External syntax

As demonstrated on the schemes above, the two types of adverbial clauses differ in their external syntax – the peripheral adverbial clauses are merged hierarchically higher in the structure than the central adverbial clauses and their relation with the matrix clause is close to that of coordination. However, Haegeman (2012, 168) notes that they “cannot be equated” with coordinated *and* clauses. For example, majority of peripheral adverbial clauses does not allow for subject ellipsis as demonstrated in example (41).

- (41) *I had a cheesburger and John a hotdog.*  
*\*I had a cheesburger while John a hotdog.*

Endo and Haegeman (2019, 5) also confirm the hierarchical difference by applying scope effects. They cite Hornstein (1993) in that for example the temporal interpretation of central adverbial clauses is dependent on the matrix clause, as opposed to peripheral adverbial clauses where the temporal interpretation is overtly expressed.

The difference is demonstrated in example (42). In the first sentence – a central adverbial clause – *prepares* is assigned future interpretation, while in the second sentence the futurity is overtly expressed by the auxiliary *will*.

- (42) *John will wait for Mary, while she prepares.*  
*John will go to the cinema, while Mary will go to the beach.*

### 3.5.3 Internal syntax

Endo and Haegemann (2014, 5) then describe the difference between central and peripheral adverbial clauses in terms of their internal syntax.

The results show that central adverbial clauses manifest less internal structure than peripheral adverbial clauses. The former for example doesn't allow for argument fronting while the latter does. Look at example (43).

- (43) *I will go home, while your mother you'll wait for.*

Endo and Haegemann (2014, 5) then address Stowell (2004), Nilsen (2004), Zagana (2007), Ernst (2007; 2009) and Haegeman (2005; 2006; 2011) saying that “central conditional clauses have been reported to resist speaker-anchored modal expressions, especially the four topmost expressions of modality described in Cinque's (1999; 2004, 133) functional sequence – speech act, evaluative and epistemic modality. Peripheral adverbial clauses on the other hand do have illocutionary potential.



Endo and Haegeman (2014, 6) however prove that central adverbial clauses are not completely incompatible with encoding information structure as they are compatible with in situ focus, clefting and heavy NP shift. Furthermore, although central adverbial clauses do not allow for argument fronting, the data in the paper prove that their left periphery is available for encoding information structural data as with peripheral adverbial clauses.

### ***3.5.4 Derivation of central adverbial clauses***

Endo and Haegeman (2014) propose that the availability of the left peripheral space as a landing site for movement is reduced in order to prevent intervention. Adopting a view under which central adverbial clauses are derived by the leftward movement of a maximal projection, the left peripheral space must be restricted in order to not interfere with the movement. The impoverished internal syntax of central adverbial clauses would then be a result of derivation

### ***3.5.5 Derivation of peripheral adverbial clauses***

Under this view, peripheral adverbial clauses can be seen in two angles. Either as full clausal structures not derived by movement or derived by movement of an operator so high in the hierarchy of the clause that the movement doesn't not interfere with the data in lower left periphery. Assuming the latter, the position of adverbial clauses in the hierarchy can be attributed to their internal syntax, which opens doors for a gradient typology in favor of a binary one.

### ***3.5.6 A gradient typology of adverbial clauses***

This view correlates with Endo's (2011 a; b; 2012; 2014) work on Japanese adverbial clauses after which he proposed that the typology of adverbial clauses must be recast in terms of a gradient system. Endo (2011; 2014) developed the head movement derivation to capture the gradient variation of availability of post-verbal elements in Japanese demonstrated by Minami (1974) and Noda (1989; 2001). Endo's proposition is based on the hypothesis that the lowest functional head missing in the adverbial clause corresponds to the head that has been moved to the left of the periphery. Due to the Head Movement Constraint described by Travis (1984), all higher functional heads become unavailable in the clause while the lower ones are still available. That would explain why more internal structure is available within adverbial clauses so far labeled as peripheral.

Relating the internal syntax and the external syntax of adverbial clauses Endo and Haegeman then follow up to Frey (2011) saying that "an adverbial clause which contains the Force head must merge at the level of Force in the matrix clause. This leads to the conclusion made by Endo and Haegeman (2014, 21) that "the derivation of the adverbial clause determines the merger with the main clause it modifies."

### ***3.5.7 Adverbial concord***

According to Endo and Haegeman (2014, 21), Noda (1989) was the first to talk about “concord” between a specific adverbial clause and the availability of functional heads in the matrix clause. Endo and Haegeman (2019) note that while his proposal might seem to only express compatibility in terms of semantics, his claims were actually of syntactic nature as well. They paraphrase Noda (1989) saying “that the point of attachment of an adverbial is determined by concord with a functional element in the matrix.”

Noda (1989) sees every adverbial clause as associated with some functional element such as aspect or tense. The clause then restricts the choice of the functional element in the matrix clause it modifies. For example, adverbial clauses associated with the perfective aspect restrict the matrix clause to manifest the perfective aspect too. The concord is seen by Endo and Haegeman (2014, 24) as the outcome of a matching relation between the internal syntax of the adverbial clause, the launch site of the head movement that derives the clause, and its external syntax, i.e. the point in functional sequence of the matrix clause where the clause merges. They also describe the concord effect as a reflex of the merge position.

### ***3.5.8 Conclusion***

The theory described above suggests that temporal adverbials should share the same temporal and aspectual features with the verbal domain they modify and so they should prove to be a reliable criterium.

## 4 Corpora

In this section I am going to compare the information described so far with concrete collected data. As I already suggested, it is expected that temporal adverbials will most likely prove a reliable criterium for determining the tense and aspect. However, there is a tendency especially in American English to abandon the perfective aspect even when the associated adverbial is present in the clause.

### 4.1 American English

As I mentioned before, Quirk et al. (1985, 194) note that “in American English, the simple past is often preferred to the present perfective”, especially for some variants of clauses addressing the indefinite past.

Traugott (1972) also notes that “the perfect frequently has no overt expression as an auxiliary in American English if an adverb like *just* is present.” See example (44) with a) for British English and b) for American English.

- (44) a) *I have just arrived.*  
b) *I just arrived.*

Quirk et al. (1985, 1015) then mention that “in informal American English and increasingly in informal British English, non-perfective forms are commonly used in the matrix clauses with *since*-clauses and in clauses with preposition or adverbial *since*.”

- (45) *I got fat since the quarantine started.*

In such cases, adverbials are the only devices for marking the perfective aspect. In the following chapter I am going to verify whether adverbials of time are despite such tendencies still a reliable criterium for determining the tense and aspect combinations. I will use the Corpus of Contemporary American English to do so. I will then compare some of the unexpected results with the British National Corpus to see whether the phenomenon is exclusive only to American English or not.

### 4.2 British National Corpus

The British National Corpus was created by Oxford University Press in the 1980s and early 1990s and contains 100 million words of texts from British spoken English, fiction, magazines, newspapers and academic works. It provides a variety of tools for linguistic analysis shared with the Corpus of Contemporary American English which I am going to describe below.

### 4.3 Corpus of Contemporary American English

To analyze how adverbials of time are reliable in determining the use present perfect or simple past tense I mainly used the Corpus of Contemporary American English. According to its creator Mark Davies (2008), it is “the only large, genre-balanced corpus of American English” and “probably the most widely-used corpus of English.” It contains more than a billion words of text from spoken English, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, television a movie subtitles, blogs and web pages from years 1990 to 2019.

The corpus is an essential tool for linguistic research as it offers a spectrum of tools for browsing, comparing and searching for words by many features including word form, part of speech, frequency or pronunciation. For each searched word, users can view collocates, topics, clusters, websites, concordance lines, and related words. It is also possible to search for whole phrases, strings and even substrings – for example morphemes. The search can be adjusted by a filters allowing users to find exactly what they are looking for.

#### *4.3.1 Expression frequency based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English*

Following are lists of specific expressions based on the data in grammar manuals mentioned above. The expressions are ranked by their frequency in the Corpus of Contemporary American English. However, these expressions are not limited only to adverbials of time but some of them include other syntactic functions as well. The search included all parts of speech as adverbials can be formed by words of different grammatical categories. For this reason, the following lists serve only for orientational purposes and do not represent the actual frequency of given adverbials. Upon comparing the data from grammatical manuals with corpora, only adverbials will be taken into account.

I also included adverbials *ever*, *never*, *yet*, and *still* which were not explicitly mentioned as associated with the present perfect tense by any of the cited authors but are used frequently too.

**Table 1: Expressions including temporal adverbials associated with past simple tense**

<b>Expression</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>Then</i>	1349393
<i>During [_XP]</i>	423650
<i>Throughout [_XP]</i>	90404

<i>Yesterday</i>	65660
<i>Last week</i>	64706
<i>One day</i>	53165
<i>In the morning</i>	36485
<i>On Tuesday</i>	16997
<i>In August</i>	15656
<i>The other day</i>	11229
<i>At that moment</i>	5749
<i>Earlier this week</i>	3763
<i>A week ago</i>	3738
<i>For six months</i>	2921
<i>A few days ago</i>	2782
<i>Last Monday</i>	756
<i>At four o'clock</i>	278

**Table 2: Expressions including adverbials associated with the perfective aspect**

<b>Expression</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>Still</i>	791324
<i>Never</i>	744597
<i>Since</i>	495047
<i>Ever</i>	402601
<i>Yet</i>	338520
<i>Already</i>	311582
<i>So far</i>	69125
<i>By now</i>	16635
<i>Hitherto</i>	1391
<i>Up to now</i>	1291

**Table 3: Expressions including adverbials associated with both**

<b>Expression</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>Before</i>	822177
<i>Today</i>	431451
<i>Once</i>	374739
<i>Already</i>	311582
<i>Recently</i>	125587
<i>This year</i>	114030
<i>This month</i>	19556
<i>This June</i>	464

### 4.3.2 Adverbials associated with the past simple tense

While collecting data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English I made sure that the searched expression is indeed an adverbial of time and is modifying the verbal domain. I also excluded conditional clauses, imperative mood, future tense and ambiguous clauses. For each adverbial I collected data from **200 random sources** including television, films, fiction, spoken English, news, websites, blogs and academic works.

I tested seven of the most frequent adverbials associated with the past simple tense. The expected result – past simple – is marked green. Unexpected results are marked red.

**Table 5: *Yesterday***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>Yesterday</i>	98%	0.5%	0.5%	1%

Adverbial *yesterday* proved to be very dominantly used with the past simple tense. Only four cases out of two hundred had unexpected tense.

**Table 6: *Back then***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>Back then</i>	91.5%	0.5%	8%	0%

Rather than *then* I tested the adverbial *back then*, to filter out other functions of the expression for easier orientation. The Past perfect tense was used mainly in clauses with origins in fiction or narrative structures.

**Table 7: *Last week***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>Last week</i>	97.5%	0.5%	1.5%	0.5%

**Table 8: *One day***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>One day</i>	87.5%	9.5%	3%	0%

In the case of adverbial *one day*, I made sure to include only such clauses where the adverbial refers to a point in time anterior to the moment of speech.

**Table 9: *The other day***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>The other day</i>	98.5%	1%	0%	0.5%

**Table 10: *Earlier this week***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>Earlier this week</i>	97%	0%	3%	0%

**Table 11: *During summer [\_ (NP)]***

ADVERBIAL	PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT
<i>During summer [_ (NP)]</i>	90.5%	2%	2%	5.5%

**Examples of deviations:**

(46) **Present perfect:** *There have been demonstrations yesterday in Gaza to that effect, calling on the Palestinian leader not to go.* (spoken)

*Yesterday the Senate of the United States of America has decided that the Laws of the Land may be broken with impunity where the National Sovereignty of the Union is concerned.* (blog)

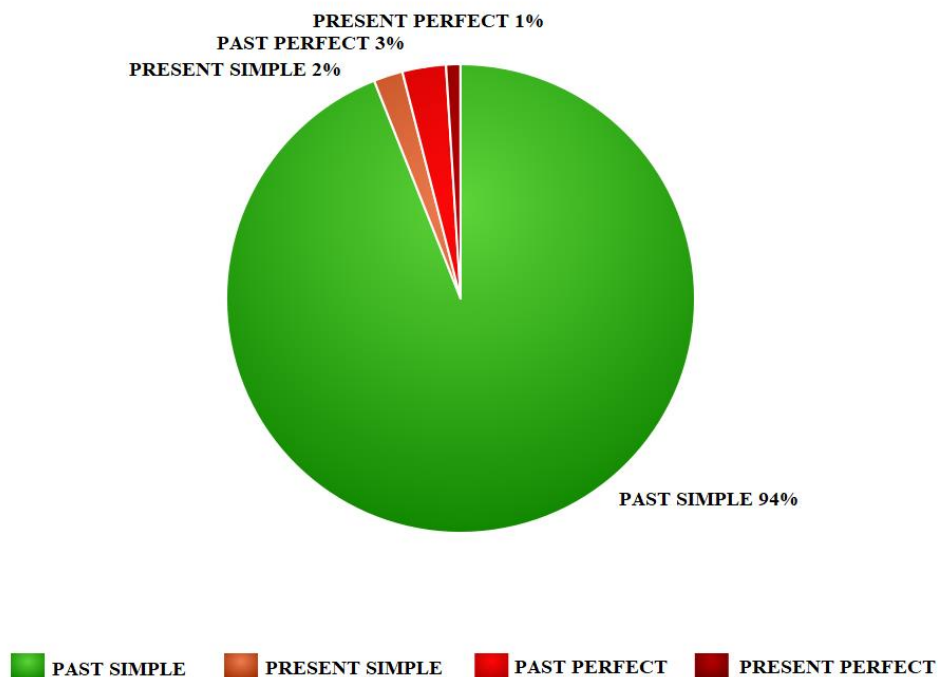
**Past perfect:** *John Ireland's party had arrived at the Skagit's fishing village yesterday, utterly baked.* (fiction)

**Present simple:** *They wanna close this case yesterday.* (TV)

**Conclusion**

Out of 1400 total clauses, in approximately 94% of cases the tested adverbials were used in combination with the past simple tense. Only in 1% of all cases were they used in combination with the present perfect tense. The tested adverbials therefore proved to be very reliable. The results are visualized in a graph (47) below.

(47)



#### 4.3.3 Adverbials associated with the present perfect tense

Next, I tested seven of the most frequent adverbials associated with the present perfect tense including *ever* and *never* which weren't mentioned in any of the cited sources. The unexpected result – past simple is marked red, the expected results are marked green.

**Table 12: *Ever***

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Ever</i>	57%	11%	8%	24%

In the case of *ever*, I found it interesting that almost quarter of collected data associated the adverbial with the past simple tense.

**Table 13: *Never***

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Never</i>	29%	22%	3.5%	45.5%

Even greater number of clauses with the past simple tense included the adverbial *never*. The total number of such clauses actually surpassed the number of clauses with the present perfect tense and neared half of the data.



**Table 14: *Already***

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Already</i>	29.5%	42%	8.5%	20%

Quirk et al. (1985) describe *already* as an adverbial that can be associated with both the present perfect tense and the past simple tense. While the difference between these two groups is only 9.5%, the collected data still suggest that generally it is still used more frequently with the perfective aspect and especially the present tense.

**Table 15: *Since* [\_(*XP*)]**

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Since</i> [_( <i>XP</i> )]	84%	6%	3%	7%

While collecting data I made sure to only include those *since*-clauses which could be labeled as “central”.

**Table 16: *Yet***

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Yet</i>	58%	31.5%	7%	3.5%

In the case of *yet*, I considered only those results where it was used as an adverbial of time.

**Table 17: *So far***

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>So far</i>	65.5%	23.5%	5.5%	5.5%

Again, I made sure to include only clauses with *so far* as an adverbial of time.

**Table 18: *Throughout history***

ADVERBIAL	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Throughout history</i>	87%	6%	1.5%	5.5%

Although *throughout* [\_NP] is generally associated with the past simple tense according to Biber and Conrad (2007), I tested a specific adverbial *throughout history* (according to the corpus, *history* is the most frequent collocate to *throughout* considering time periods) which suggests a period anterior to the present moment. The result only confirmed this suggestion with 87% of results contained the present perfect tense. Adverbial containing the preposition *throughout* therefore doesn't necessarily signal the past simple tense.

### British English

I compared the two of the most unreliable adverbials with the British National Corpus to see whether their tendency to be used with the past simple tense is exclusive to the American English. However, the data suggest that the tendency is general in nature.

**Table 19: *Ever* and *Never* in the British National Corpus**

ADVERBIAL (British)	PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT SIMPLE	PAST PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
<i>Ever</i>	36.5%	8.5%	15.5%	39.5%
<i>Never</i>	24.5%	18%	16%	41.5%

### Examples of deviations:

(48) **Present simple:** *According to the letter-writer, this is her cousin's first attempt at dating since her transition.* (blog)

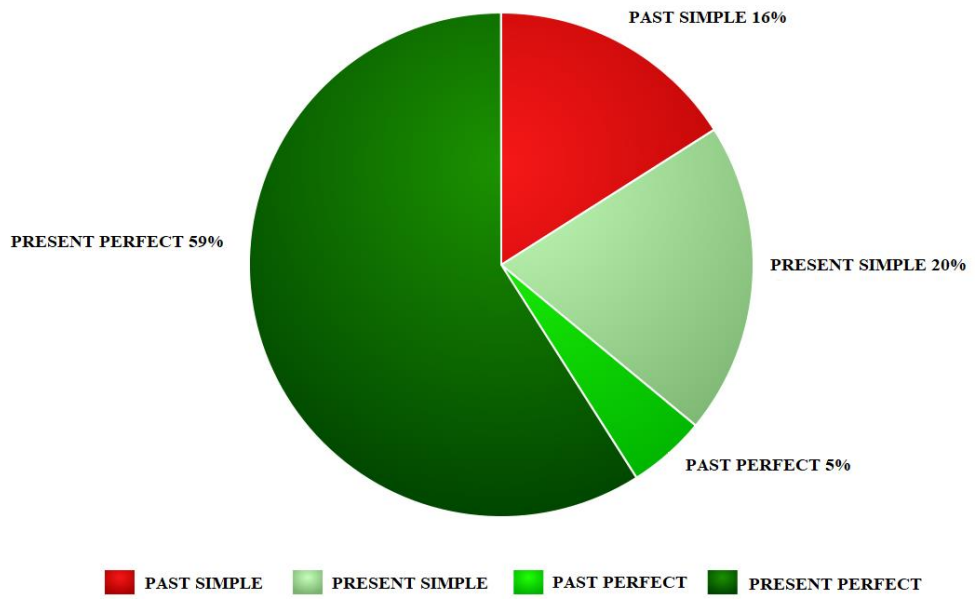
**Past perfect:** *Since the tragic accident, he'd become overly cautious.*  
(fiction)

**Past simple:** *Ben, The House GOP passed 2 budgets since 2011.* (web commentary)

### Conclusion

Out of **1400** total clauses, in approximately 64% of cases the tested adverbials were used in combination with the perfective aspect, 20% of clauses used the present simple tense. In 16% of cases, the past simple tense was used. The number is so high especially because of *ever* and *never* which according to the data often tend to be used with the past simple tense. Comparing the two charts, the data confirm that adverbials of time are a reliable criterium and also that adverbials associated with the past simple tense are more reliable than adverbials associated with the perfective aspect. The results are visualized in a graph (49) below.

(49)



## 5 Perfective aspect in educational material

In this next chapter I am going to analyze to what extent do English textbooks and online educational materials used in the Czech Republic reflect the data collected in corpora and described in the cited literature. I am going to consider whether they offer students a reliable way of recognizing when to use the present perfect tense and when to use the past simple so that the result is grammatical. The main focus is on the usage of adverbials of time which proved to be a very reliable criterium for the tense and aspect combinations.

### 5.1 English textbooks

#### 5.1.1 *Maturita Solutions Pre-Intermediate Student's book (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*

This English textbook introduces the concept of perfective aspect with a subtitle saying "I can talk about recent events". As this sentence suggests, the chapter focuses mainly on **semantic criteria** to explain when to use the present perfect tense.

The textbook specifically gives four possible cases and only in one of them the **adverbials of time** are mentioned:

According to the website, the present perfect tense is used:

- a) To give news, when we do not say exactly when the event happened.
- b) To talk about events during a period of time (e.g. a holiday) that is still continuing.
- c) To ask how long a situation has existed.
- d) With *for* or *since* to say how long a situation has existed. We use *for* with a period of time and *since* to say when it started.

These rules are demonstrated by following examples:

(50)

- a) *Guess what? I've won a competition!*
- b) *I'm in Paris. I've visited a museum but I haven't seen the Eiffel tower.*
- c) *How long have you been in Spain?*
- d) *We've been in Spain for a week/since Tuesday.*

However, some of these can be disproven by examples or logical processes or clash with the data from grammar manuals.

1. In contrast to statement a), past simple can be used for giving news without saying exactly when the event happened.

(51) *Guess what? I won a competition.*

2. Statement c) is tricky. It is only true because it exhibits perfective aspect itself. To describe a duration of a situation doesn't mean to use the perfective aspect.

3. In statement d), it is said that *for* and *since* are associated with the present perfect tense. While *since* is associated with perfective aspect according to cited linguists, Biber and Conrad (2007) associate *for* with past simple. No other data from grammar manuals disprove that it can be used with both.

(52) *I lived in Paris for two months before I moved here.*  
*I've lived in Paris for two months so far.*

These examples suggest there is another adverbial of time needed before the choice is restricted.

The textbook then contrasts present perfect tense and past simple tense with these criteria:

- a) We use the present perfect to talk about an experience at any time in the past. The exact time of the experience is not stated.
- b) We use the past simple to talk about a specific occasion in the past.
- c) We often use the present perfect to ask and answer questions about an experience, and then use the past simple to give specific information about it.

These criteria are then demonstrated by these examples:

- a) *I've read 'The Hobbit' three times.*  
*Have you ever travelled by helicopter?*
- b) *I watched a good film on TV last night.*  
*Did you go to Newcastle last weekend?*
- c) *Have you ever been to the USA?*  
*Yes, I have. I went to New York last winter.*

However, semantics can be misleading. What does it mean to “talk about an experience at any time in the past”? Also, past tense can be used to “ask and answer question about an experience” as well.

That is when the formal criteria come on stage. In the next section the textbook gives some advice about looking for adverbials of time:

We use finished-time phrases (e.g. *yesterday, last week, at 2 p.m.*) with the past simple but not with the present perfect.

This advice is then followed by two practical exercises which require students to choose between past simple and present perfect. Following is an excerpt from one of these exercises:

(53)

- a) *I travelled/I've travelled to Paris on the Eurostar last May.*
- b) *Tom loves the Hunger Games books. He read/He's read them all.*
- c) *Where's my maths homework? Oh no! I forgot/I've forgotten it!*

In sentence a), the student is expected to choose between past simple and present perfect, the only lead for deciding being adverbial of time *last May*, which according to all cited linguists is associated with past simple. The corpus study suggests that this is a reliable criterium.

Sentence b) doesn't provide any adverbials of time and students are supposed to decide based on the context and semantics. However, there is no evidence disproving past simple as an ungrammatical choice here.

Sentence c) is similar to sentence b), except that the context describes a recent situation which is a semantic criterium for present perfect tense mentioned by cited linguists. However, past simple can be used here as well without the sentence being ungrammatical. The tense is optional.

#### **5.1.1.1 Conclusion**

The textbook focuses mainly on semantic criteria for explaining when to use the perfective aspect. However, these can be easily misinterpreted, and they are not definitive regarding grammaticality. Formal criteria, specifically adverbials of time, are used to distinguish the tenses in practical exercises. In such cases, only one choice can be grammatical. The examples where adverbials of time are absent rely only on semantic criteria. Here the expected answer can be deduced, however the second choice would not make the sentence ungrammatical. The textbook also associates adverbial of time *for [\_NP]* with the present perfect, which the cited linguists associate more with past simple. Moreover, examples show it can be used with both tenses depending on the noun phrase used. Apart from unreliable semantic criteria the textbook therefore contains an unreliable formal criterium.

### 5.1.2 Project 3 Student's book (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

In this textbook, the usage of the present perfect tense is summed up into only three sentences with no word about adverbials:

- a) We use the present perfect to talk about experiences up to now.
- b) We aren't interested in when.
- c) When we say the actual time, we must use the past simple.

All three sentences are problematical.

- a) Both the present perfect tense and the past simple tense are used to talk about experiences in the past.
- b) The speaker can be interested in when even considering the present perfect tense as in *I've been waiting here since Monday*. More specific description should be used instead of *when*.
- c) This sentence exhibits a similar problem to sentence b). What is the meaning of *the actual time*? Is *for five minutes* not the actual time in *It has been raining for five minutes*?

The difference between the present perfect and the past simple tense is then demonstrated by two following examples:

- (54) Present perfect: *I've been in some plays at the theatre.*  
Past simple: *Last year, I was in our school play.*

Although the importance of adverbials of time wasn't mentioned in the summary, the contrast is marked by one – *last year*. However, since there is no adverbial of time in the first sentence, there is no solid argument as to why the past simple tense couldn't be used there since we don't have any context other than comparison with the second sentence. Based on this comparison, students might think that the absence of an adverbial of time automatically means they have to use the present perfect tense.

In the next exercises, the textbook implicitly associates adverbials *ever* and *never* with the present perfect tense. Besides *in my life*, these are the only adverbials of time the textbook mentions in the exercises. However, as the corpus research showed, *ever* and especially *never* are just the two adverbials which have a tendency to be used with the past simple tense the most.

The textbook doesn't include any exercise on deciding between the past simple and the present perfect tense.

### 5.1.2.1 Conclusion

The textbook provides very little reliable information for students as to when to prefer the present perfect tense over the past simple tense. The criteria mentioned here are by a majority semantic. They are very problematic as they can be misleading and cannot be taken as reliable.

### 5.1.3 English File Elementary Student's book (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

This textbook starts with making students think about the semantic criteria by deciding whether given clauses are about either a specific time in the past or a non-specific time. The clauses with the present perfect tense are differentiated by adverbials of time *just*, *yet*, and *already*. Students then read an interview and decide which clauses are about the experiences sometime in the protagonist's life and which are about a specific moment. They are also supposed to think about the meaning of the adverbial *ever*. More insight into the present perfect tense is offered at the end of the book.

The present perfect tense is described by semantic and formal criteria:

- a) We often use the present perfect to talk about the recent past, not saying exactly when things happened.
- b) We often use the present perfect to give news.
- c) We often use *yet*, *just*, and *already* with the present perfect.
  - i. Use *yet* in interrogative and negative sentences to ask if it hasn't happened. Put *yet* at the end of the sentence.
  - ii. Use *just* in positive sentences to say that something happened very recently. Put *just* before the main verb.
  - iii. Use *already* in positive sentences to say that something happened before now or earlier than expected. Put *already* before the main verb.

The first two criteria correspond with the semantic criterium of recency mentioned in cited works. The second criterium focuses on adverbials of time which proved to be a very reliable criterium based on the corpus research. So far, the explanation is correct. However, the more specified criteria can be misleading. For example, *just* can be used in negative clauses as in example (55) and *already* doesn't necessarily have to precede the main verb as in example (56).

(55) *Haven't you just arrived?*

(56) *I've finished my lunch already.*



The textbook then provides exercises including two which focus on deciding between the present perfect tense and the past simple tense based on the adverbial of time present in the clause. Although, one of these exercises only contains adverbials *already*, *yet*, and *just*, the second one includes more adverbials and students are required to think about the choices more thoroughly.

Following are excerpts from the exercises:

(57) *I / have / breakfast. (just)*

*/ you / finish / your homework? (yet)*

(58) *Oh no! I've seen this film before! (see)*

*Really? When \_\_\_\_\_ it? (see)*

*I \_\_\_\_\_ to the cinema in March and it was on then. (go)*

*Oh, never mind. I \_\_\_\_\_ to the cinema in ages. The last film*

*I \_\_\_\_\_ was Mamma Mia! (nor be, see)*

### **5.1.3.1 Conclusion**

Although some of the provided criteria concerning the distribution of adverbials of time are not one hundred percent correct, the textbook manages to provide reliable means of distinguishing between the two tenses. Nevertheless, both the semantic and the formal criteria are described very briefly and the importance of adverbials of time is neglected even though the exercise which makes students choose between the present perfect and the past simple tense relies only on their presence.

## **5.2 Online education**

### **5.2.1 Help for English**

As of August 17, 2020, this online educational server explains the concept of perfective aspect both with semantic criteria and formal criteria. For marking the distinction between present perfect tense and past simple tense it mentions the adverbials of time which according to the website are typical (not exclusive) to the present perfect tense.

**Adverbials typical for present perfect tense according to the site:** *never, ever, always, just, yet, already, still, today, in my life, recently, all my life, since, for (eight years)*

Some of the mentioned adverbials here conflict with the data from grammar manuals.

1. Biber and Conrad (2007) describe the adverbial *for* (*eight years*) as commonly used for delimiting a period of time, “thus marking a clear ending point before the present time.” They suggest that the past simple tense is common here in contrast to the present perfect tense that is used with adverbials which rarely indicate the ending time.

2. *Always* is described as an adverbial typical for present perfect tense, however no cited grammatical manual implies so. Furthermore, the following examples prove that *always* can be used in both cases if no further context is provided.

(59)

a) *She always wanted to see the Eiffel tower.*

b) *She has always wanted to see the Eiffel tower.*

c) *\*Until now, she always wanted to see the Eiffel tower.*

d) *\*She has always wanted to see the Eiffel tower before she died.*

Without further context there is no way of knowing whether the time period indicated by *always* ends with the moment of speech or exceeds it indefinitely as the website suggests with example (60).

(60) *I have always wanted to be a doctor.*

While the website does specify that the perfective aspect is used when the speaker still wants to be a doctor at the moment of speech, it does not mean that the adverbial itself is typically used with the perfective aspect.

3. *Today* is described as typical for the present perfect tense as well. Again, no data from grammatical manual implies that it should be associated with the perfective aspect more than the past tense. Quirk et al. (1985) even specifically describe it as example for adverbials available in both cases.

4. Apart from adverbials of time, the site also mentions phrases *how many* and *how long* as typical for the present perfect tense with the following examples:

(61) a) *How many books by Shakespeare have you read?*

b) *How long have you lived here?*

This is neither mentioned in any grammatical manual nor it can be confirmed by examples which again prove that in both cases the simple past may be used, and the sentences stay grammatical.

- (62) a) *How many books by Shakespeare did you read last summer?*  
b) *How long did you live here?*

*How many* and *how long* thus without further context do not indicate that the present perfect tense should be used.

The website then includes a list of example adverbials which according to its words cannot occur in a sentence with the present perfect tense.

**Adverbials restricted to the past simple tense according to the site:**  
*yesterday, last year, in September, in winter, at the party, in his lifetime.*

Again, there are several conflicts with the manuals and examples which may disprove this statement.

1. While Biber and Conrad (2007) list *in August* as commonly associated with the past simple tense, they do not claim it cannot be used with the present perfect tense as the site is suggesting with *in September*. The following example proves that it is possible to use present perfect tense here when not having a specific period in mind. Same can be told about *the winter*.

(63) *Have you ever swum in the sea in September?*

2. *At the party* can be either an adverbial of time or an adverbial of place. Without further context, it can be used in both cases. Example (64) proves it can be used with present perfect tense.

(64) *Have you been enjoying yourself at the party so far?*

3. *In his lifetime* is not mentioned in the manuals and the following example proves, it can be used with the present perfect tense.

(65) *The old man has been through a lot in his lifetime.*

### **5.2.1.1 Conclusion**

The website uses both semantic and formal criteria for explaining the notion of perfective aspect. It includes a reliable way of determining the tense and aspect by looking at the adverbial concord. However, several examples are in conflict either with major grammatical manuals or with example clauses which disprove them. With seven objections in total, I wouldn't recommend this website as a reliable source for explaining the notion of perfective aspect.

### **5.2.2 Umíme anglicky**

As of August 17, 2020, this Czech educational website begins explaining the present perfect tense similarly to Quirk et al. (1985). It describes it as a tense used for talking about events in past that have some current relevance and goes on to specify the variants which have been described by Quirk et al. (1985) including state up to moment of speech, recent event and present result.

According to the website, these cases are not specified by a concrete time but are often used with adverbials of time such as *ever, never, before, in my life, so far, up until now, just, recently, for [\_NP], since [\_ (NP)], already, and still.*

The website then includes several exercise including those where students have to choose between the past simple and the present perfect tense based on the adverbial of time.

(66) \_\_\_\_\_ we just \_\_\_\_\_ (to drive) past your school?

(67) *They laugh at me because I \_\_\_\_\_ (have never ridden/never rode) a horse. But they don't know that I \_\_\_\_\_ (have ridden/rode) an elephant last summer when we \_\_\_\_\_ (have been/were) on holidays.*

#### **5.2.2.1 Conclusion**

The website explains semantic criteria in accordance to the cited literature while also providing a list of adverbials of time which are associated with the present perfect tense. The exercises make students choose between the present perfect tense and the past simple tense based on adverbials of time and other linguistic context. The website therefore provides a very reliable way of learning and practicing the usage of the present perfect tense.

### **5.2.3 Online jazyky**

This website includes online language courses including English. As of August 17, 2020, it explains the concept of the present perfect tense in the following way:

- a) We use the present perfect tense when talking about life experiences and experience.
- b) The time period in the past is not defined. We don't know when something happened and the past has a clear effect in the present.
- c) We use the present perfect tense when talking about things that happened sometime in the past but unlike the past simple tense we don't state or know when exactly these events happened in the past.

- d) We use the present perfect tense when talking about things that started in the past and continue till today.
- e) We choose the past simple tense when talking about something that had its beginning and its end in the past.

The site then goes on to feature a “golden rule” of using the present perfect tense in English.

According to the website, the rule is that “we use the present perfect tense in English anytime we talk about the past, but the past is in no way defined” (Online jazyky. 2013).

So far, the website only provides semantic criteria, some of them problematical.

- b) The time period starting in the past can be defined. The specific moment in the past cannot be defined.

(68) *I've been trying for a week.*

(69) *\*I've been here yesterday.*

- c) We can use the present perfect tense while stating or knowing the event's exact point of beginning and its duration.
- e) The past perfect tense could also fit this description.

The website then associates adverbials *for* [*\_NP*] and *since* [*\_(NP)*] with the present perfect tense and explains their meanings.

### **5.2.3.1 Conclusion**

This educational website provides brief insight into the present perfect tense. It focuses on semantic criteria which are not reliable for understanding the topic as they are often misleading. It mentions two adverbials of time – *for* [*\_NP*] and *since* [*\_(NP)*] which it implicitly associates with the present perfect tense, even though *for* [*\_NP*] can be used with both tenses depending on the noun phrase used. Nevertheless, the site does not state the importance of adverbials of time in deciding between the two tenses and overall does not provide a reliable basis for understanding the concept.

## 6 Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to describe both semantic and formal criteria of the perfective aspect and to research whether adverbials of time present in the clause are a reliable criterium for students to distinguish between situations where the past simple tense should be used and situations where the present perfect tense is preferable. The next objective was to analyze English textbooks and online educational materials used in the Czech Republic to evaluate whether they use these formal criteria to explain the concept.

The data collected in the Corpus of Contemporary American English suggested that adverbials of time are indeed a reliable criterium for determining the tense and aspect combinations, especially the adverbials associated with the past simple tense which were in **94% of 1400 cases** used in combination with **the past simple tense**. The adverbials of time associated with the present perfect tense also proved reliable, although the result was not as definite. In approximately **64% of 1400 cases** the tested adverbials were used in combination with the perfective aspect, **20% of clauses** used **the present simple tense** and **16% of clauses** unexpectedly used **the past simple tense**. The last value was influenced mainly by the results for adverbials *ever* and especially *never*, which according to the collected data have a tendency to be used with the past simple tense – the former in **24% of cases** and the latter in **45.5% of cases**. I compared these results with the British National Corpus to see whether the tendency is exclusive to the American English. The results proved otherwise *ever* was in **39.5%** of cases used with the past simple and *never* in **41.5%** of cases.

Next, I analyzed several English textbooks and online educational materials to see if they use the relationship between the adverbials of time with tense and aspect to explain the usage of the present perfect tense. In all three textbooks the importance of the adverbials of time is neglected and only one of them – the English File Elementary Student's book (4<sup>th</sup> edition) – includes exercises based on adverbials of time to make students choose between the present perfect and the past simple tense. Out of the online educational materials, the best of the three proved to be Umíme anglicky, which provided both semantic criteria based on linguistic literature and formal criteria including adverbial concord. It also featured exercises where students are supposed to decide between the tenses based on adverbials of time and other linguistic context. The other websites failed either by providing misleading criteria or by neglecting the importance of adverbials of time which proved to be a very reliable criterium in determining the tense and aspect of a clause in the English language.

## 7 České resumé

Cílem této práce bylo popsat jak sémantická, tak formální kritéria perfektivního aspektu v angličtině a ověřit, zda je příslovečné určení času spolehlivým kritériem, pomocí kterého mohou studenti rozlišovat mezi situacemi, které si žádají čas minulý prostý a situacemi, kde se je vhodný čas předpřítomný. Dalším cílem bylo analyzovat učebnice angličtiny a online vzdělávací materiály používané v České republice ke zhodnocení, zda využívají těchto formálních kritérií k vysvětlení principu předpřítomného času.

Data získána v americkém korpusu Corpus of Contemporary American English naznačila, že příslovečné určení času je opravdu spolehlivým kritériem pro určení času a aspektu, zvláště pak výrazy spojené s časem minulým prostým. Ty byly v **94%** z **1400 případů** použity v kombinaci s **časem minulým prostým**. Výrazy spojené s časem předpřítomným se také potvrdily jako spolehlivé, přestože výsledek nebyl tolik jednoznačný. V přibližně **64%** z **1400 případů** byla tato adverbiale použita v kombinaci s perfektivním aspektem, **20%** vět obsahovalo **čas přítomný prostý** a **16%** vět obsahovalo nečekaný **minulý prostý čas**. Poslední hodnota byla ovlivněna zvláště výsledky pro adverbiale *ever* a *never*, které podle výsledků z korpusu mají tendenci být používané s časem minulým prostým – *ever* v **24%** případů a *never* v **41.5%** všech vět. Tyto výsledky jsem porovnal s britským korpusem British National Corpus, abych se přesvědčil, zda je tato tendence výlučně v americké angličtině. Výsledky tento předpoklad vyvrátily. *Ever* bylo s časem minulým prostým použito v **39.5%** případů a *never* v **41.5%** případů.

Dále jsem analyzoval několik učebnic angličtiny a online výukových materiálů, abych zhodnotil, zda využívají vztahu mezi příslovečným určením času s časem a aspektem k vysvětlení užívání předpřítomného času. Všechny tři učebnice význam příslovečného určení zanedbaly a jen jedna z nich – English File Elementary Student's book (čtvrté vydání) – obsahuje cvičení založené na příslovečném určením času k tomu, aby studenti zvolili mezi minulým prostým a předpřítomným časem. Co se týče online výukových materiálů, nejlépe obstál web Umíme anglicky, který poskytl jak sémantická kritéria založená na lingvistické literatuře, tak formální kritéria včetně vztahu mezi příslovečným určením času a použitým časem a aspektem. Také obsahuje cvičení, kde studenti vybírají mezi oběma časy právě na základě příslovečného určení času a dalšího lingvistického kontextu. Ostatní weby selhaly buď tím, že poskytly zavádějící kritéria, nebo tím, že zanedbaly význam příslovečného určení času, které se prokázalo jako velice spolehlivé kritérium v určení času a aspektu věty v angličtině.

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