

Peripheral Envelopes: Spanish Perfects in the Variable Context

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1. Introduction

The most commonly invoked criterion for discerning the envelope of variation for Present Perfect (PP) and Preterite (PRET) usage in Spanish is some notion of perfective past reference (Howe 2006; Burgo 2008; Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008; Copple 2009; Rodríguez Louro 2009). This criterion is defined broadly so as to be consistent with the variationist principle of weak complementarity, which holds that potential variants “can serve one or more generally similar discourse functions” and in turn explains why morphosyntactic change often occurs via the “forcible juxtaposition of grammatically very different constructions” (Sankoff & Thibault 1981: 207–208). Regarding the PP/PRET distinction, the literature has consistently demonstrated that in some varieties of Peninsular Spanish indeterminate past reference¹ serves as a context of neutralization between these two forms with one result being that the PP acquires seemingly perfective functions typically ascribed only to the PRET (e.g., use with definite past adverbials).

What most analyses do not take into account, however, is the diverse aspectual profile of the Spanish PP, which in addition to its perfective uses, exemplified in (1), can also display imperfective meaning, as shown in example (2). These two distinct, and in our view divergent, contexts demonstrate that the sphere of functional overlap associated with the PP includes not only the PRET but also the Present Tense (PT) as the latter is also imperfective and displays similar discursive functions as the PP, demonstrated in example (3). By observing the PP/PT opposition in Spanish, we propose that (i) a given linguistic element may be associated with multiple, non-overlapping envelopes of variation and that these variable contexts play independent roles in the distribution and evolution of the form and that, importantly, (ii) current variationist approaches to the study of variation in the domain of tense/aspect have yet to address these types of *Peripheral Domains* of functional opposition (cf. Tagliamonte 2011).

- (1) *he trabajado un ratito. Y a las dos, nos hemos bajado para comer...que hemos comido allí detrás en el Agujero*
'I worked (PP) a little. And at two o'clock, we went (PP) out to eat...we ate (PP) behind here at *The Agujero* [a bar]' (Madrid, Howe 2006)
- (2) *He vivido allí...toda la vida*
'I have lived (PP) there...all of my life' (Madrid, Howe 2006)
- (3) *Vivo desde hace cuarenta años en el mismo edificio*
'I have lived (PT) in the same building for forty years' (CdE, 20th, written)²

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¹ Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós (2008:18) observe that cases of indeterminate past reference are those in which the temporal distance between the speech time and the event time cannot be reliably determined by the analyst and quite possibly by the interlocutor. It turns out that the PP in their sample of Peninsular Spanish is highly favored (vis-à-vis the PRET) in this context.

² See references for the list of corpora used in this analysis.

We begin the analysis in Section 2 with a summary of the particular context of semantic overlap between the PP and the PT, specifically cases referred to by Comrie (1976: 60) as “perfects of persistent situation”. In Section 3, we present our framework for interpreting *Peripheral Domains* of variation by comparing the PP in Spanish with the *passé composé* in Modern French. The details of our multivariate analysis of the PP/PT distinction are provided in Section 4 with a summary of the results given in Section 5. We conclude the analysis with a discussion of our findings and their broader implications for the study of morphosyntactic variation.

2. Continuative/Durative Contexts

2.1. The PP and the PT in Continuative/Durative contexts

The particular domain of variation relevant for our analysis is demonstrated in examples (4) and (5).³

- (4) *El fuego **ha estado** activo desde hace cuando menos una semana.* (CdE, 20th, written)
 ‘The fire **has been** (PP) active for at least a week.’
- (5) *Desde hace diez años **he trabajado** y, inicialmente, realmente no había nada.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘I **have worked** (PP) for ten years and, at first, there really wasn’t anything.’

According to Comrie (1976: 60), the “Perfect of persistent situation”, or continuative perfect, is characterized by an eventuality that initiates in the past and continues up to—and perhaps includes—the moment of speech—see also Bertinetto (1994, ‘Perfecto inclusivo’) and Havu (1997, ‘Perfecto persistente’). This is not unlike the meaning of the original resultative source of the PP—e.g., *He las cartas escritas* ‘I have the letters written’—which entails the existence of a present state (Pancheva 2003: 277).⁴ This particular perfect ‘type’ is available with atelic predicates (see Portner 2003) and manifests either as the duration of a past state, as with the stative predicate *estar* ‘to be’ (example 4), or as the repetition of an eventuality throughout a temporal interval, as seen with the activity predicate *trabajar* (example 5). For Spanish, this meaning can also be expressed by the PT, shown in examples (6) and (7). The *desde hace* adverbials (underlined) provide unambiguously continuative contexts in these examples, allowing for comparison of the PP and the PT in this particular functional domain.

- (6) *También **está** cerrada, desde hace nueve años.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘[It] too **has been** (PT) closed for nine years.’
- (7) *Sin embargo, la BBC de Londres, con la que yo **trabajo** desde hace años, hace sus propias grabaciones.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘Nevertheless, the BBC of London, with whom I **have worked** (PT) for years, makes its own recordings.’

³ One reviewer pointed out that in comparing the PP and the PT, there are other possible domains of overlap that have not been considered here. While we have chosen to focus on the shared imperfective uses of these two structures, they further share (depending on the dialect and the context) the potential to mark past reference, in particular if we consider the ‘Historical Present’ usage of the PT (see Lubbers Quesada 2004). We will set this issue aside in the current analysis and focus exclusively on the Continuative/Durative domains as explained in Section 2.

⁴ The similarity between the resultative meaning of the Latin source construction, *HABĒRE + participle*, and the continuative reading of the PP in Modern Spanish concerns the aspectual nature of the two, namely that they are both atelic. However, the *HABĒRE + participle* was originally used only with telic, transitive predicates and retained the lexical meaning of possession attributed to *HABĒRE* (Penny 1991: 140). Compatibility with stative predicates, the source of the continuative reading, was a later (15th century) development in the diachrony of the Spanish PP (Copple 2011: 166).

2.2. Approaches to continuative meaning in Spanish

Schwenter and Torres Cacoullós note that the PRET "may also appear in continuative contexts such as that seen in (example 8) with an *overt indication* that a past situation continues to obtain in the present" (2008: 6, emphasis ours). For example (8), the adverbial *hasta la fecha* produces the required effect of having the relevant interval of evaluation extend into the moment of speech. The lexical meaning of *seguir* 'to continue' further contributes to the durative reading.

- (8) *Pero ya vi que...que fui más o menos agarrándole a fondo, y le **seguí** hasta la fecha.* (MexPop, 230; cited from Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008:6)
 '[Talking about playing the guitar] But I finally realized that . . . that I was more or less getting it right, and I **have continued** (PRET) up until now.'

Similarly, for Argentinian Spanish, Rodríguez Louro (2009) shows that the PRET features at 72% (44/61) in the oral corpus (example 9) while the PP represents a mere 28% (17/61) of all continuative forms used (example 10).

- (9) *Desde la Guerra no **tuvieron** una oportunidad como ésta.* (Rodríguez Louro 2009: 143, example 104)
 'Since the war they **haven't had** (PRET) an opportunity like this one.'
- (10) *En los últimos 6 meses no me **he dado** piquitos con nadie.* (Rodríguez Louro 2009: 119, example 51)
 'In the last 6 months I **have not kissed** (PP) anyone.'

Given the examples in (8)-(10), it would appear that continuativity, as a variable context, should include not only the PP and the PT but the PRET as well. Although we will not be considering these uses of the PRET in our multivariate analysis, we believe that there are independent factors that warrant treating the PP/PT overlap without including cases of the PRET. Specifically, the PP and the PT in Spanish (a) display what Katz (2003: 208) refers to as a "present orientation" (in contrast to the past orientation of telic constructions) and (b) do not typically play a role in the sequencing of past events in narrative discourse. The Spanish PRET, on the other hand, unquestionably produces a past interpretation and is the default form used for event sequencing in Spanish.⁵

According to Hernández (2004), the 'Perfect of Persistent Situation' represents 32% (266/838) of the cases of the PP attested in his sample of Salvadoran Spanish (example 11).

- (11) *porque eso a mí **me ha fascinado**, pues, todo el tiempo y me sigue fascinando.* (Hernández 2004: 30, example 1, emphasis in original)
 'because that **has always fascinated me** (PP), well, all the time and it keeps fascinating me.'

Regarding some of the central differences between the PT and the PP, García Fernández (2000: 345) observes that "[e]l presente es una forma verbal que aspectualmente expresa [aspecto imperfectivo], es decir eventos que están teniendo lugar y cuyo final no se predica", adding that "no es cierto sin más que las formas compuestas adquieran a veces el valor del [imperfectivo]; sólo lo hacen cuando el [imperfectivo] tiene especificado *el inicio del evento*" (2000: 350, emphasis ours). Given this, "Aspecto Imperfectivo" relates to the PT while "Perfecto Continuativo" is relevant to the PP. Moreover, overt modification of the final boundary of the target interval is not possible with either the PP or the PT (as shown in example 12 adapted from García Fernández 2000: 345). Observe, however, that the PRET is compatible with this type of modification, providing further evidence that the focus on event culmination indicated by the PRET distinguishes it from both the PP and the PT.

- (12) *María *ha vivido / *vive / vivió sola desde 1900 hasta el año pasado.*
 'María *has lived (PP) / *lives (PT) / lived (PRET) alone since 1900 until last year.'

⁵ While the PRET may be the default, and in most dialects preferred, form for indicated sequence in past narratives, the Spanish PP is also attested in these contexts. See Rodríguez Louro and Howe (2010) for further details on the PP in narrative contexts.

3. Peripheries in the variable context

The variationist enterprise places a premium on the circumscription of a carefully delimited variable context within which variation may be accounted for (Tagliamonte 2006: 86). PP variation has thus far been gauged in relation to the PRET (e.g., Schwenter & Torres Cacoullos 2008). However, the PP varies in meaningful ways with verb forms other than the PRET, which motivates a look beyond PP/PRET variation. This is in line with Aaron's recent call to account for "Synchronized Change"; that is, acknowledging that "frequently occurring contexts that fall *outside* the envelope of variation may provide valuable explanatory insight regarding diachronic shifts in patterns *within* the variable context" (Aaron 2010: 4, emphasis in original). Indeed, it has long been observed that, throughout the historical development of the PP, PT, and PRET, their meanings have been complex, capable of producing a number of different temporal and aspectual interpretations (see, e.g., Weinrich 1968 and Moreno de Alba 1998).

We maintain that, in Spanish, the PP and the PT do in fact display a considerable degree of functional equivalence parallel to that observed between the PP and the PRET but are distinct in the semantic/pragmatic features that characterize the set of overlapping contexts. Our claim is that the variable context under discussion is not external to the grammaticalizing form (here, the PP)—as is the case with the epistemic meaning in the synthetic future as discussed by Aaron 2010). Instead, the PP overlaps with both the PT and the PRET and, more importantly, the semantic nature of the overlap is distinct in both instances, as shown in Figure 1. The feature that associates the PP and the PT in Figure 1 is the inclusion of the Speech Time (ST) in the interval during which the eventuality holds. For the PRET, however, Speech Time is typically not included; though as we have seen (example 9), such an interpretation may be licensed, for instance, under the scope of negation.

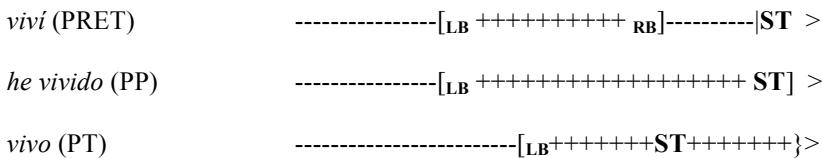


Figure 1 Functional overlap between PP/PRET and the PP/PT⁶

In those varieties undergoing the shift of *Perfect/Anterior* to *Perfective* the relevant vector of change is temporal, with increasing use of the PP as a form of default past reference (see Schwenter & Torres Cacoullos 2008). As a periphrastic past continues to evolve into a perfective, we argue that imperfective meanings (e.g., the continuative usage) will be relegated to marginal contexts. (Cf. layering as discussed by, e.g., Hopper & Traugott 2003: 124). The French *passé composé*, widely considered to be the Romance prototype for the development of periphrastic pasts, does not typically occur with adverbials that require a durative interpretation, as with *cela fait cinq ans* in example (13). Instead, the *passé composé* patterns like the Spanish PRET in that it is compatible with adverbials indicating event culmination/termination, shown in example (14) with *jusqu'à l'année dernière*. Note that the incompatibility of the *passé composé* with durative adverbials is subject to neutralization in certain contexts, as shown in example (15) with the verb under the scope of the negation.

- (13) **Cela fait cinq ans que Marie a habité seule.*
 *'It is five years that Marie **has lived/lived** alone.'
- (14) *Marie a habité seule de 1990 jusqu'à l'année dernière.*
 'Marie lived alone from 1990 to last year.'
- (15) *Je ne l'ai pas vu depuis un an.*
 'I **haven't seen** him for a year.'

The *Perfect/Anterior* > *Perfective* can be seen as occurring in (at least) two distinct (and probably overlapping) developments: (i) **Temporal neutralization** between the PP and the PRET (cf.

⁶ LB = Left Boundary; RB = Right Boundary; ST = Speech Time; "+" = eventuality holds

Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008) and (ii) **Aspectual neutralization** between the PP and the PT.⁷ We argue that this latter development constitutes a ‘Peripheral Context’ and is subject to different constraints than those presented by Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós (and others) for the former. This study seeks to elucidate the behavior of grammaticalizing forms in those contexts that become marginal as meaning change results in layering of older uses. We pose the following hypotheses.

1. By analysing PP/PT distribution in contexts that are primarily continuative (i.e., collocation with *desde hace*), we expect to observe that the operant factors pertaining to the PP/PRET opposition (e.g., temporal reference) **are not the same as those that characterize the PP/PT distribution**.
2. Moreover, through a comparison of these forms cross-dialectally, we expect to find some preliminary evidence that the PP is indeed preferred or dispreferred depending on the type of boundary modification observed—e.g., left (with *desde hace*).

4. Methodology

As noted earlier, we analyse PT/PP variation in continuative contexts; that is, contexts where the eventuality encoded by the verb begins in the past and extends into the speech time. However, attributing a specific function (i.e., continuative) to the forms that concern us here (i.e., the PT/PP) may be theoretically biased and unreliable (Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008: 11). To circumvent this, we focus on PT and PP tokens co-occurring with the adverbial phrase *desde hace* which has been shown in the semantics literature to favor PP morphology (Pancheva & von Stechow 2004: 13) and is found in Spanish with the PT. The choice of *desde hace* as a means of identifying durative contexts is not meant to preclude the possibility that other contexts might produce a continuative interpretation. As can be observed in the following examples, a continuative interpretation can arise with *hace* (example 16), with *desde* (example 17), and with other temporal modifiers (as in example 18). Delimiting our analysis to the cases occurring with *desde hace* provides us a uniform procedure for discerning target tokens and allows us to start exploring the variable context underlying the PP/PT distinction. A more general treatment of continuative contexts would include tokens like the examples in (16)–(18), in addition to other verb forms (see examples 8 and 9).

- (16) *Yo **hace** mucho tiempo que no la **he oído*** (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘I **have** not **smelled** (PP) it for a long time’
- (17) ***He sido** periodista desde el día que lo decidí* (CdE, 20th, written)
 ‘I **have been** a journalist since the day I decided [to do] it’
- (18) *Este año **ha estado** bastante bien* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘This year **has been** (PP) quite good’

In line with these protocols, using collocation with *desde hace* as a distinguishing criterion, we extracted 1430 tokens from the *Corpus del Español* (19th and 20th century, written and oral). Of these, a total of 1052 PP and PT tokens were used in the subsequent quantitative analysis. The remaining tokens (N=378) were excluded because either (i) they modified other verb forms (as in example 19 with the imperfect), (ii) they modified a non-finite verb form (as in 20), or (iii) they represent repeated examples, ambiguous cases, or false starts (as in 21).

- (19) *Es algo que ya se **sabía** desde hace treinta años.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘It’s something that **had been known** for 30 years.’
- (20) *Capturan a presunto asesino **buscado** desde hace tres años.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘They capture the alleged murderer who **had been sought** for three years.’
- (21) *el fuel ya **ha llegado**, si o dais cuenta desde hace—desde hace— desde hace un par de días.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘the fuel **has arrived** (PP), if you’ve noticed, a few—a few—a few days ago.’

⁷ This claim is compatible with the observations made by Pancheva & von Stechow (2004) and Schaden (2009) regarding the semantic ‘competition’ between simple and periphrastic past forms.

The example in (21) offers a somewhat problematic case for our data set given that the meaning obtained is not a continuative one. It is typically claimed that Perfects with atelic predicates are ambiguous between an experiential and a continuative reading (see Iatridou, Anagnostopoulou & Izvorski 2001; Portner 2003). For the example in (21) (and those in 22 and 23), however, the predicates are telic, with the resultant meaning being non-continuative. Thus, it would seem that *desde hace* does indeed allow for a punctual reading akin to English ‘ago’. Nevertheless, examples like (21) suggest that even with a telic predicate a continuative reading can obtain given the appropriate linguistic and/or contextual features (e.g., plural subjects or plural objects), in line with Bertinetto & Delfitto’s (2000: 193) claim that some predicates are “lexically telic but contextually atelic”.

- (22) *A pesar de que ha concluido el tiempo de investigación desde hace mucho.* (CdE, 20th, written)
 ‘Despite the fact that the period of investigation **concluded** (PP) a while ago.’
- (23) *Hemos perdido contacto con Mildin desde hace mucho.* (CdE, 20th, written)
 ‘We **have been losing** (PP) contact with Mildin for a while.’

Once the data were extracted and sorted, we coded for five language-internal factors—Polarity, Progressivity, Verb Type, Grammatical Person and Interval Duration—and two external factors: Century (19th vs. 20th) and Register (written vs. oral). Concerning the latter two factors, we do not expect to find any significant effects for Century, though a closer diachronic investigation of these forms by dialect may reveal some effect.⁸ As for register, we do expect to observe a preference for the PT in the written sources given that the prescriptive norm strongly favors the use of the PT in continuative contexts (see Butt & Benjamin 1994: 405). This effect, as will be shown below, was not borne out in the data.

Our working hypothesis in this analysis is that, of the two target forms, the PP is the more likely to require some type of contextual coercion in order to make it compatible with the *desde hace* adverbial. The reason behind this claim concerns the fact that the PP is aspectually complex and is thus compatible with a range of different types of predicates with the result being either punctual or durative (i.e., continuative) readings. The PT on the other hand is imperfective, and even with simple telic predicates (e.g., *llegar* ‘arrive’), the interpretation must be atelic. The first of the three linguistic factors chosen for this analysis targets this feature of the PP/PT distinction. For the factor Polarity, we expect that negative polarity will favor the PP, as shown in example (24), given that negation has an atelicizing effect on predicates and that the result of this effect would render the PP compatible with the durative meaning required by *desde hace*. Conversely, the PT, exemplified in (25), should show no interaction with Polarity since the PT is always atelic regardless of the presence or absence of negation.

Polarity

- (24) *Desde hace un año y medio no me han ofrecido nada.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘It’s been a year and a half that they **haven’t offered** (PP) me anything.’
- (25) *Yo no trabajo con los niños ya directamente desde hace...más o menos quince años.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 ‘I **haven’t worked** (PT) directly with children for more or less 15 years.’

We follow a similar line of reasoning with respect to the factor group Progressive Form, which like negation typically produces an atelic interpretation. Thus, forms that are morphologically progressive, like the examples in (26) and (27), should favor the use of the PP and exhibit no effect for the PT.⁹ For the last of this group of factors, Verb Type, we chose to adopt the Vendlerian taxonomy of verb types: stative, activity, accomplishment, and achievement (Vendler 1967). Stative (*saber* ‘to

⁸ Copple observes that, for Peninsular Spanish, the relative frequency of the PP (in comparison to the PRET) changes from 49% (N=733) in the 19th century texts to 54% (N=956) in the 20th century, suggesting an “extension to new contexts of use” for the PP (2011:171).

⁹ As one reviewer pointed out, examples (26) and (27) can both be viewed as having continuative interpretations. Coding for the factor of Progressive Form, however, was based not on a possible interpretation of the token but rather on the presence vs. absence of progressive morphology.

know') and activity (*trabajar* 'to work') predicates are further classified as atelic or durative while achievements (*decidir* 'to decide') and accomplishments (*trasladarse* 'to move') are classified as atelic or punctual. We predict that telic predicates, exemplified in (28)-(31), will favor the PP and atelic predicates will disfavor it.

Progressive Form

- (26) *Nosotros hemos estado trabajando desde hace meses en el sentido de ganar las elecciones del año 2000.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 'We **have been working** (PP) for months on the way to win elections in 2000.'
- (27) *Mi marido está trabajando en un bar, Sí—desde hace diez años.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 'My husband **has been working** (PT) in a bar, Yes—for ten years.'

Verb Type (Stative = examples 4 and 6, Activity = examples 5 and 7)

Achievement

- (28) *Se ha decidido desde hace tiempo avanzar en la coalición.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 'It **was decided** (PP) a while ago to advance in the coalition.'
- (29) *Los únicos colores que veo desde hace mucho son el pálido kaki que visten los guardias de turno.* (CdE, 20th, written)
 'The only colors that I **have seen** (PT) for a long time are the pale kahki that is worn by the guards on duty.'

Accomplishment

- (30) *Desde hace varias semanas agentes dominicanos se han trasladado a Haití para establecer y coordinar las medidas de seguridad con el Gobierno haitiano.* (CdE, 20th, written)
 'For several weeks Dominican agents **have moved** (PP) into Haiti to establish and coordinate security measures with the Haitian government.'
- (31) *Este déficit provoca desde hace tiempo un agrio intercambio de puntos de vista y acusaciones entre las instituciones.* (CdE, 20th, written)
 'This deficit **has for a while provoked** (PT) a bitter exchange of points of perspectives and accusations between the institutions.'

For the last two linguistic factors, we chose Grammatical Person and Interval Duration. With the former, we hope to observe the potential role of subjectivity in the variation between the PP and the PT, where use of the first person singular is expected to favor the PP, shown in examples (32) and (33) (see Schwenter & Torres Cacoullos 2009: 18).

Grammatical Person

- (32) *Desde hace cinco años he establecido un proyecto de investigación muy duro* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 'For the last five years, I **have been setting up** (PP) a rigorous research project'
- (33) *Yo tengo muchos amigos desde hace años en la Orquesta Nacional.* (CdE, 20th, oral)
 'I **have had** (PT) a lot of friends for years in the National Orchestra.'

Finally, we have selected the factor Interval Duration as a means of targeting the temporal deictic distinctions between the PP and the PT. For the PP/PRET alternation, Schwenter & Torres Cacoullos (2008) chose the criterion of temporal reference as a measure of the degree to which the PP prefers that an eventuality be situated at a point close or somehow connected to the moment of speech. Similarly, the PT prefers eventualities that are either close to the moment of speech or possibly not deictically bound whereas the PP allows the relevant interval of evaluation, the left boundary of which is established by the temporal complement of *desde hace*, to extend further into the past. To capture this observation in our quantitative analysis, we coded each token for the temporal constitution of the interval, using the distinction between indefinite and definite temporal phrases as a proxy for the understood duration of the eventuality. In other words, the intervals defined by indefinite modifiers, as in examples (34) and (35), tend to create the interpretation of a longer lapse of time than those that occur with cardinal modifiers, as in examples (36) and (37). Therefore, we predict that the *desde hace* adverbials with indefinite temporal NPs will favor the PP. To our knowledge, this analysis is the first attempt to apply this factor to the PP in Spanish.

Interval Duration (measure of temporal reference)*Indefinite*

- (34) *Y benemérito expresidente X.X., por quien **he tenido** especial predilección desde hace muchos años. (CdE, 20th, oral)*
 ‘and notable ex-president [name omitted], for whom I **have had** (PP) a special preference for many years.’
- (35) *Me **ama desde hace mucho tiempo**. (CdE, 19th, written)*
 ‘He/She **has loved** (PT) me for a long time.’

Definite

- (36) *Aunque no **ha cantado** en Madrid desde hace casi veinte años, el nombre de Mirella Freni es familiar (CdE, 20th, oral)*
 ‘Even though he **hasn't sung** (PP) in Madrid for almost twenty years, the name Mirella Freni is well known’
- (37) *Sí. **Trabajo** también en Madrid desde hace cuatro años. (CdE, 20th, oral)*
 ‘Yes. I **have also been working** (PT) in Madrid for four years.’

5. Results

Using Goldvarb *X* (Sankoff, Tagliamonte & Smith 2005), we examined the interaction of the aforementioned language-internal and external factors on the use of the PP and the PT in the variable context.

5.1. Multivariate analysis

| Factor Group | Number | % PP | Total N | Weight |
|---------------------------|--------|------|---------|------------|
| VERB TYPE | | | | |
| <i>Achievement</i> | 40 | 56.3 | 71 | .86 |
| <i>Accomplishment</i> | 46 | 32.2 | 143 | .69 |
| <i>Activity</i> | 50 | 17.1 | 292 | .50 |
| <i>Stative</i> | 65 | 11.9 | 546 | .39 |
| <i>Range</i> | | | | 47 |
| INTERVAL DURATION | | | | |
| <i>Indefinite</i> | 129 | 21.5 | 452 | .54 |
| <i>Definite</i> | 72 | 15.9 | 600 | .45 |
| <i>Range</i> | | | | 9 |
| GRAMMATICAL PERSON | | | | |
| <i>First Person</i> | 24 | 14.5 | 165 | [.38] |
| <i>Other</i> | 177 | 20 | 887 | [.52] |
| POLARITY | | | | |
| <i>Affirmative</i> | 188 | 19 | 989 | [.51] |
| <i>Negative</i> | 13 | 20.6 | 63 | [.40] |
| PROGRESSIVE FORM | | | | |
| <i>Progressive</i> | 18 | 14.9 | 121 | [.48] |
| <i>Non-progressive</i> | 183 | 19.7 | 931 | [.50] |
| CENTURY | | | | |
| <i>19th</i> | 25 | 15.2 | 165 | [.44] |
| <i>20th</i> | 176 | 19.8 | 887 | [.51] |
| REGISTER | | | | |
| <i>Written</i> | 149 | 17.9 | 831 | [.48] |
| <i>Oral</i> | 52 | 23.5 | 221 | [.59] |

Table 1 Multivariate analysis of the factors contributing to the choice of the PP over the PT
 Total *N* = 1052, *p* = 0.021, Corrected mean: .191 (**19% PP**), Log likelihood: -468.770

A look at overall frequency reveals that, in continuative contexts with *desde hace*, the PT is more frequent than the PP: it occurs at 81% (N=851) vs. 19% (N=201) for the PP. This overall tendency of the PT in continuative contexts is not surprising given its prescriptive preference (Butt & Benjamin 1994: 405). Of the operant conditioning factors observed in the multivariate analysis, Verb type and Interval duration are the only two factors selected as significant, with Grammatical person, polarity, progressive form, century and register not being selected as significant.¹⁰ Within the two significant factor groups, PPs are strongly favored with telic verbs (.86/.69) and less so with indefinite intervals (.54, e.g., *desde hace muchos años*). Both of these trends follow our predictions.

Based on this initial analysis, our overall hypothesis regarding the difference in conditioning factors between the PP/PT and the PP/PRET is supported, though with only two significant factors emerging from the analysis further exploration of these effects is required. Nevertheless, the PP/PT clearly does not display the same type of opposition as the PP/PRET. This emerges, at least in part, by looking at the significance of the Verb Type factor. Here, we see that the functional opposition between the PP and the PT is characterized the favoring effect of telic predicates on the PP. A comparison with the results obtained by Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós (2008) shows that this is the opposite effect from that demonstrated with the PP/PRET opposition where the PP was preferred with durative (i.e., atelic) predicates (at least for the Mexican sample). We maintain that the PP/PRET pattern demonstrates the primary domain of variation that characterizes the variable temporal profile of the PP, depending on the particular dialect under consideration. The factors relevant to the PP/PT distinction are, on the other hand, aspectual and constitute a peripheral context of variation for the PP.

5.2. PT/PP by dialect

Before concluding, we want to provide a preliminary view of the PP/PT distinction cross-dialectally. A look at usage frequencies from the *Corpus del español actual* (CREA) reveals that the PT and the PP vary to different extents across three particular dialects of Spanish. Table 2 gives the distribution of the PP and the PT with *desde hace* in samples from Argentina, Mexico, and Spain.

| | Argentina | Mexico | Spain |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| PT | 96% (N=69) | 58% (N=39) | 81% (N=147) |
| PP | 4% (N=3) | 42% (N=28) | 19% (N=34) |
| Total | 100% (N=72) | 100% (N=67) | 100% (N=181) |

Table 2 Overall usage frequencies for the PT and PP plus *desde hace* in the Argentina, Mexico and Spain oral CREA database (Fisher's p-value = 1.378e-07)

The Argentina corpus displays the lowest overall usage frequency for the PP in continuative contexts. This is consistent with previous claims regarding the low PP usage in these settings (see Rodríguez Louro 2009). Additionally, a comparison of PP overall frequencies for Argentina and Mexico reveals that these two dialects behave differently (cf. Laca 2010). Mexico, on the other hand, displays the highest overall frequency of PP usage in the CREA oral corpora, a finding consistent with previous suggestions that the Mexican PP is favored in continuative/durative settings (see Lope Blanch 1972: 138; Moreno de Alba 1978: 57). The Spanish usage is roughly the same as the overall frequency distributions noted in our sample from the *Corpus del Español*. Interestingly, the distribution (in terms of simple overall frequencies) of the PP vis-à-vis the PT across these three varieties of Spanish is not in all cases parallel to that of the PP/PRET attested in the literature. Compare the PP/PT frequencies in Table 2 to those of the PP/PRET given in Table 3.

¹⁰ In a separate regression, we excluded the tokens labelled as progressive (remaining tokens N=931, 19.7% PP). For this run, the factor group Interval Duration turned out not to be significant, while the Grammatical Person did, with the first person being disfavored with a factor weight of 0.38.

| | Argentina ^a | Mexico ^b | Spain ^c |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| PRET | 94% (N=783) | 85% (N=1903) | 54% (N=956) |
| PP | 6% (N=47) | 15% (N=331) | 46% (N=827) |
| Total | 100% (N=830) | 100% (N=2234) | 100% (N=1783) |

Table 3 Overall usage frequencies for the PRET and the PP in three dialect samples.¹¹

The data in Tables 2 and 3 corroborate the results of our multivariate analysis. In particular, they lend support to our claim that the respective domains of variation for the PP/PT and the PP/PRET are in fact distinct, particularly if we compare the data from the Mexico and Spain corpora. This can be observed both as a function of the variable distribution of these forms across dialects as well as of the different relative frequencies of the PP/PT and PP/PRET groupings.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The results outlined above highlight three main areas for discussion. Firstly, the PP/PT and PP/PRET distributions are parallel in the two data sets from Argentinian Spanish. The low usage frequency of the Argentinian PP in continuative contexts is consistent with the ‘past-referring’ value of this form and its frequent use in experiential and indefinite past contexts (cf. Rodríguez Louro 2009; Rodríguez Louro & Howe 2010; Rodríguez Louro & Jara Yupanqui 2011). By contrast, with the Mexican samples, Tables 2 and 3 suggest that while the functional overlap with the PRET is minimal (see also Schwenter & Torres Cacoullous 2008), the PP has quite a different distribution with respect to the PT. In fact, it would seem that the continuative meaning discussed here represents a type of neutralizing context in these data (similar to the affect attributed to indefinite past reference in the Peninsular data noted by Schwenter & Torres Cacoullous 2008). Finally, the effect observed with the two corpora of Peninsular Spanish suggest the inverse trend from that shown in the Mexican sample. In other words, while past reference seems to be a neutralizing context for the PP, continuative uses are not. This is consistent with the observation that as a periphrastic past evolves into a perfective (as has been claimed for the PP in Peninsular Spanish), imperfective meanings (e.g., the continuative usage) will be relegated to marginal contexts. (cf. layering as discussed by, e.g., Hopper & Traugott 2003: 124).

This proposal allows us to model the development of periphrastic pasts in Romance more generally by observing parallel trends of expansion of past reference and the concomitant erosion of the present meaning, which, in the case of the perfective periphrastic past in French for example, is available only under specific structural and semantic conditions, such as negation (see examples 12–14). The question remains why ‘layered’ meanings are often retrieved under the influence of negation. Poplack (2009) describes a similar situation in which the simple future form in Canadian French (i.e., the *futur simple* as in *je vendrai* ‘I will come’), which has suffered retraction vis-à-vis the periphrastic *go-future* (i.e., the *futur proche* as in *je vais vendre* ‘I am going to come’), is strongly retained in **contexts of negation**. For the *passé composé* in French, negation mitigates the effects of perfective aspect that produce a bounded situation (note, also, example 9 from Argentinian Spanish).

To conclude, our results suggest that the PP/PT opposition is distinct from the one represented by PP/PRET. We maintain that the opposition of the PP with the PT is a **Peripheral Context**, one that, in the process of change from perfect to perfective, is subject to considerable recession. In considering the broader implications of this work, we revisit the role of multiple contexts of variation in the development of morphosyntactic variables, distinguishing this situation from those in which multiple forms are involved in the same envelope of variation, as has been proposed for variables of future reference in Spanish where synthetic and periphrastic forms are often considered in conjunction with future uses of the PT (see, e.g., Orozco 2005). Our proposal provides a novel approach to explaining semantic change across parallel components of meaning, contrasting with more recent claims that the development of periphrastic past forms in Romance is motivated exclusively by its opposition with the simple perfective past (cf. Schaden 2009).

¹¹ *a* = Rodríguez Louro (2009), *b* = Lope Blanch (1971, 1976), as compiled by Schwenter & Torres Cacoullous (2008), *c* = Marcos Marín (1992) as compiled by Schwenter and Torres Cacoullous (2008)

Corpora

- CdE* Davies, Mark. 2002. Corpus del Español (100 million words, 1200s-1900s). Available online at <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org>.
- CREA* REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA: Banco de datos (CREA) [online]. Corpus de referencia del español actual. <http://www.rae.es>.

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