The diachronic development of the Upper-German Perfekt

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Introduction The presentation focuses on the semantic change of the Perfekt from Middle High German (MHG) to Modern Swabian via constant entailments (cf. Beck, 2012). I suggest that the Perfekt developed from an extended-now semantics to a simple past meaning in Upper-German dialects. This claim is based on MHG data as well as on original fieldwork data on Swabian, an Alemannic dialect and descendant of MHG. My data lend support to Bybee & Dahl's (1989) universal perfect development path. The data also challenge us to re-think previous assumptions on the availability of the future use of the Perfekt (Musan, 2001) and the repercussions this has for the right analysis of the Modern Swabian (and Standard German) Perfekt.

Background Considerable research has been devoted to the history and diachronic development of perfects (Bybee & Dahl, 1989) and that of the German Perfekt in particular (Lindgren, 1957; Dentler, 1997; Öhl, 2009; Gillmann, 2016; Fischer, 2018) yielding the following account: The German perfect developed from a possessive construction A that expressed the current result of a past event to a construction B that only came to express current relevance. In a last step, it developed into construction C in Early New High German which caused the loss of the Präteritum in Upper-German. I will focus on the diachronic step from construction B to C and on the kind of construction C' that is available in Modern Swabian. Current formal semantic theories on the German Perfekt do not take dialectal variation into account and do not argue for a plain past semantics (cf. von Stechow, 1999; Musan, 2001 von Stechow, 2002; Rothstein, 2006).

The MHG Perfekt The MHG Perfekt is functionally equivalent to the Modern English present perfect in its prototypically close connection to the speech time (cf. Zeman, 2010), in the choice of temporal adverbials (cf. Zeman, 2010; Fischer, 2020), and in its occurrence in indefinite past time contexts. In the talk, I will illustrate this with data from *Der Pfaffe Amis*, a comic romance written in verse.[1] In total, there are 86 occurrences of the Perfekt in *Der Pfaffe Amis*; 15 *sîn*-Perfekts and 71 *hân*-Perfekts. 83 of the 86 Perfekts occur in dialogue, 1 occurs in monologue and 2 in the frame narrative. This distribution fits to a semantics that expresses the current relevance of the event, i.e. it describes the immediate effect of a past event to a present situation. It is not (yet) a narrative tense.

Secondly, those temporal adverbials that can modify the MHG Perfekt all include the speech time. They are the same lexical items that are available for the Modern English present perfect. Thirdly, there are several instances of an 'experiential past' reading as well. Based on these data, I am assuming that the MHG Perfekt denotes an extended-now semantics, employing the operator in (1). I'm following von Stechow (2002) in assuming that this operator is expressed by the auxiliary.

(1) $[\![\text{HAVE}_{XN}]\!] = [\lambda p_{<i,t>}. \ [\lambda t_{<i>}. \ \exists t'[XN(t',t) \ \& \ p(t')]]]$,
where XN(t',t) iff t is a final subinterval of t'

This analysis makes two predictions which are born out: Firstly, universal readings of the Perfekt exist in MHG, as shown in (2). Secondly, the Perfekt cannot be modified by definite past time adverbials, as this leads to a logical contradiction (cf. Klein, 1992).

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[1] The occurrences of the Perfekt were counted and analysed manually by the author.

(2) *im **hât** der siehtuom **gewert**   / wol   zwei jâr   unde mê" / "nu*
     him has the sickness lasted.PST.PTCP / certainly two years and   more / now
     sagt mir, wi   ist im   wê? / sprach der wîse arzât"
     tell me   how is him sore / said   the wise doctor
     'His sickness has lasted for at least two years now." "Now tell me what is wrong
     with him?" said the wise doctor'
     (*Der Pfaffe Amis* 2222ff.)

The Swabian Perfekt   Bybee & Dahl (1989) predict that if a perfect develops into a
past tense, (i) "the point of reference must be restricted to the moment of speech" and
(ii) "the part of its meaning that specifies that the past event is especially relevant to the
current moment must be lost." (p.74). I take this to mean that a Perfekt with a true past
tense meaning (= construction C') should be unacceptable as a future perfect and that
the XN-semantics needs to have disappeared. This is partly true for Swabian. The data
were elicited during one-to-one meetings with 8 Swabian informants, where they had to
judge the acceptability of a target sentence in a specific context[2] (cf. Matthewson, 2004).

   While a future perfect seems to be completely unavailable with telic verbs as in (3)-(4),
its status is less clear with states and activities, as in (5).

(3)   future perfect with *have*, achievement
   a. **Morgen   um drei **hat** die Konferenz bereits **aufgehört**.*
      tomorrow at   three has the conference already end.PST.PTCP.
   b. comment, informant 5: "'Morga em dri isch die Konferenz scho vorbei.' Das
      Problem bei dem [Ziel-] Satz oben: des kann man nur sagen, wenn die Kon-
      ferenz scho rum isch." (Suggested paraphrase avoids the perfect with future
      reading. Informant explains that the target sentence can only be used when
      the conference is in the past (without 'morgen'.)

(4)   future perfect with *sein*, accomplishment
   a. **Morgen   **ist** Clara hier **eingezogen**.*
      tomorrow is   Clara here move.in.PST.PTCP.
   b. comment, informant 3: "Des isch ja, morgen ist sie einzogen. Also Zukunft
      mit Vergangenheit. Ich würde eher sagen, also aktiv: 'Morga ziagt d'Clara
      ei.' 'Morge isch d'Clara dahanne eizoge.' klingt komisch konstruiert für nen
      Schwaben." (Informant rejects target sentence because future and past refer-
      ence are mixed. He suggests an active paraphrase with a present tense and says
      that the target sentence translated into Swabian sounds oddly constructed for
      a Swabian.)

(5)   future perfect with *have*, activity
   a. *??Nächsten Monat **hat** sie dann zehn Jahre im   Betrieb **geschafft**.*
      next   month has she then ten   years in.the firm   work.PST.PTCP.
   b. comment, informant 3: "Besser zum Kontext passen würde: 'Nächsten Monat
      schafft se dann zehn Joar beim Zellwanger.' Der [Ziel-] Satz würde passen,
      wenn sie ab nächstem Monat in Rente geht."
      (The [target] sentence does not fit to the context. It would fit if the context
      made clear that she will work until next month and then retire.)
   c. Informant 5 prefers a paraphrase with the present tense.

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[2]The contexts are left out here for space reasons.

d. Informant 8 finds this target sentence totally acceptable in this context.

Universal uses of the Perfekt are not available in Swabian, see (6). This illustrates that the XN-semantics is not available anymore.

(6) context makes universal use true, Perfekt is unacceptable in this context
  a. #Ich **habe** den Peter jetzt vierzig Jahre **gekannt**.
    I have the Peter now forty years know.PST.PTCP.
  b. comment, informant 3: "Des secht mr wenn dr Peder gstorbe isch. Des sech-sch am Grab und jetzt laid er do dinne im Grab. S isch schad omen. Richtig wär: 'I kenn dr Peder seit viazg Joar.' "
    (The target sentence can only be said if Peter has died. This would be appropriate during a eulogy. The informant suggests a present tense instead.)

In sum, finding out more about the Upper-German Perfekt and its history is an important part in the quest of semantic theory building. The Swabian Perfekt shows traits that point towards a plain past analysis. However, for some speakers, a future use seems to be available with activities and states.

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