

The impact of the simultaneity vector on the temporal-aspectual development of the perfect tense in Romance languages

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This paper seeks an explanation of the Perfect in the Romance languages that takes into account its temporal rather than aspectual features. We contend that there is no real “aoristicization” process of the Perfect over time and across languages, but instead a semantic expansion of the notion of simultaneity enclosed in the functional configuration of the form. Based on the classical time vector configuration for Spanish posited by Rojo (1974) and Rojo & Veiga (1999), we argue that the semantic differences of the Perfect in Romance languages can be explained as a different development of the semantic possibilities of the simultaneity vector, whereby it may remain at a very low level and be hardly deictic (Portuguese) or become a pure sign of locutionality, and therefore mainly pragmatic (French).

Keywords: perfect in the Romance languages, aoristicization, temporal vectoriality, simultaneity and anteriority, Portuguese, American Spanish, European Spanish, French

1. Introduction

Following Harris (1982) and Squartini & Bertinetto (2000), the value of the Perfect¹ in Romance languages is assumed to have evolved through different stages, within a process of gradually acquiring the aspectual values characteristic of the simple

1. Like other scholars, we use the word “Perfect” with a capital “P” to refer to a grammatical content (not necessarily only aspectual) used in the Romance languages, among others, and distinguish it from the particular denomination its manifestation has in each language. Accordingly, the “Perfect” (or “Anterior”, as it is referred to by Kempas 2006; Dahl 1985; Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, etc.) is the grammatical category, which should not be confused with, for example, the Spanish present perfect tense, or *pretérito perfecto compuesto* (all in lower case) or the

past (“aoristicisation” or “aoristic drift”). The model has traditionally been identified with the compound form’s process of “grammaticalisation”. However, when scholars use this term to describe the Perfect tense in these languages, they usually mean the evolution of the resultative values of the original Latin periphrasis toward a perfective or aoristic use that is characteristic of the simple form, rather than the morphological fixing of the parts of the periphrasis. In the model propounded by these scholars it is therefore understood that the perfect steadily modifies (or extends) its aspectual contexts of use, until it finally encompasses the perfective (or aoristic) aspectual values that are typical of the simple form. The following is the four-stage model of the compound past (CP) propounded by Squartini and Bertinetto (2000: 406), quoting Harris (1982), for this process:

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

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

STAGE III: the CP expresses “the archetypal [*sic*] present perfect value of past action with present relevance” (Castilian Spanish; some varieties of *langue d’oil* and *langue d’oc*)

STAGE IV: the CP also expresses the preterital or aoristic functions, while the SP [simple Past] is restricted to “formal registers” (standard French, northern Italian, standard Romanian).

“Aoristicisation” is therefore a process that initially affects the aspectual interpretation of the form, which is clearly related to the fact that it was originally an aspectual periphrastic construction. Nevertheless, this model seems to overlook that the construction has become consolidated over time as a temporal form in almost all the Romance language systems, whereby one might wonder about the role that temporality plays, or has played, in this evolutionary process, and whether it would not be possible to address this topic from a perspective that considers the tense rather than the aspect. The aim of this study will be to answer this question.

French *passé composé*, which is simply this languages’ specific manifestation of this category. The term with an upper case aims to be a way of standardising terms and content in a study with an interlinguistic approach. Likewise, the “Past” is the grammatical content specific to the simple form that corresponds to what is referred to as the *pretérito perfecto simple* in Spanish, the *passé simple* in French, and the *perfeito simples* in Portuguese, for example.

Our aim is not to dismiss the findings of aspectual studies on the Perfect. Nevertheless, there are two reasons for following this alternative way of addressing the study of the Perfect: on the one hand, the exhaustion of the aspectual model, which does not, in our opinion, suitably resolve many of the descriptive contradictions it poses; on the other hand, the desire to find a coherent explanation for the different states in the Romance systems from a single theoretical starting point. In other words, we are proposing this new approach to the subject because we truly believe it is more profitable, given that it enables us to explain more language situations with a more straightforward theoretical toolkit.

2. Tense and aspect in the perfect

It is generally accepted that the difference between Tense and Aspect lies in the deictic nature of the former and the perspectivising nature of the latter. Understanding a temporal reference requires directly or indirectly orienting an event with regard to a point, which tends to be the moment of speech (S). Speaking about an aspectual reference requires establishing the relationship between an event and the part of its temporal constitution that is considered on each occasion (Klein 1992). Although it is almost impossible to refer to the “aspect” without also doing so to “tense” (the opposite, however, is indeed possible), the “tense” that Klein refers to, for example, is not exactly the deictic “tense”, as it does not orient itself regarding any origin, but instead remains on the level of pure abstraction.

In the case of the Perfect, its temporal structure may be that propounded by Reichenbach (1947: 289) E-R,S, where the event (E) is seen from a point of reference (R) that coincides with the point of speech (S). What temporally characterises this form is its double temporality: on the one hand, it refers to an event that occurred in the past; on the other, it establishes an unequivocal relationship with the present. This peculiarity has been noted in grammar books since ancient times, above all in comparison to the simple past form, which excludes the possibility of this reference to the present.

Regarding its aspectuality, the Perfect has been described by Klein (1992) as the outcome of coinciding the Topic Time with part of the time after the event or Situation Time. In other words, the Perfect aspect arises when the informative attention focuses on the resulting state following an event, and not on its occurring (this would be typical of the Imperfect aspect) or on its initial and final limits (specific to the Perfective or Aoristic aspect). This reading, which has been widely reported in the literature, is further qualified by the one described by Comrie (1976), who also singles out four subtypes of the Perfect: resultative, experiential, persistent situation and recent past (*hot news*).

There are several methodological problems with the models of the Perfect by Comrie (1976) and Klein (1992), as highlighted in the literature,² with the main one being that both the model are designed for, or “according to”, the performance of the *present perfect* in English. This is a form with very clearly defined aspectual traits that are similar to those described for the Perfect in the first classical grammars, but they do not adequately consider the semantic development of the forms of the Perfect in Romance languages, among others, which have a clear tendency to restate those values in temporal terms.

Transcending the English description therefore gives rise to references to the deictic-temporal in aspectual descriptions, such as the very term *hot news*, or the continuous allusions in the literature to “hodiernal” or “prehodiernal” usages of the Perfect. Finally, as reported on sundry occasions (Azpiazu 2012, 2019: §1.2.4), Comrie’s aspectual values of the Perfect, far from being clear and unequivocal, overlap time and time again: in the Spanish spoken in Spain itself, the same event such as (2) may be interpreted both as resultative (*Juan ya está aquí/John is already here*) and as experiential (“he has arrived at some moment that includes S”), or even as resultative, experiential, and recent past (*acaba de llegar/he’s just arrived*):

- (2) *Juan ha llegado*
 John have.3SG arrive-PTCP
 ‘John has arrived’

This is the case because in reality the aspectual categories of Comrie’s Perfect do not form a table of aspectual values on the same level of opposition, but instead on different levels. The aspectual differences that could be found in (2) cannot be found in the morphology of the Perfect, but elsewhere instead, generally in the verb’s lexical meaning.³ We therefore agree with Iatridou et al. (2003) in that all Comrie’s aspectual readings can be summarised in two: continuative – universal and experiential, with each one linked to a different type of aktionsart of the predicate,

2. On the issue of the “resultative” identification with the Perfect, see, for example, Thibault (2000: 167–68); on the real existence of a “persistent” type, also called “continuative” or “universal”, see Iatridou et al. (2003); on the difficulty of labelling real usages with either one of these categories, see Azpiazu (2012, 2019: §1.3.2.), Azpiazu & Kempas (2017), etc.

3. It should be noted that the examples Comrie (1976: 59) uses to differentiate between resultative and experiential are based on the difference between two verbs, *to be* and *to go*: *Bill has been to America* and *Bill has gone to America*. The former has an experiential meaning and the latter a resultative one; although this reading is obviously not implicit in the verbal form, which is the same, but instead in the verb’s meaning and in the construction’s semantic implications.

of a uniform or non-uniform event, respectively.⁴ All the other labels are simply subdivisions of the experiential Perfect, once again depending on the verb's action mode, the linguistic context, or even the extralinguistic context, which is always the one that ultimately gives the expression its final meaning.

In short, the actual difficulty involved in discerning between the different aspectual readings of the Perfect that we encounter in real cases of certain varieties of the spoken language is, in our opinion, a clear indication of its low descriptive adaptation. This is how Kempas (2017) has understood it, too. He provides a critique of aspectual descriptions based on Klein's work, incapable of overcoming the ambiguity between "Perfect" and "Aorist" in the characterisation of the Perfect in European Spanish, and adopts the temporality perspective to more precisely address the semantics of the compound form in Spanish. This is also the position we take here.

We are therefore aligned with Rojo (1974), Coseriu (1980: § 2.3.2) and, more recently, Haßler (2016), for whom, at least in Romance languages, the verbal system is based primarily on relationships of a temporal nature, upon which aspectual interpretations are assembled. As regards the Perfect, we defend the temporal description made by Rojo (1974), restated in Rojo & Veiga (1999), and recently revised by Veiga (2013, 2014a).

3. The perfect's temporal vectors. Simultaneity

3.1

The model proposed by Rojo (1974) and Rojo & Veiga (1999) is based on the one by Bull (1960). Initially, it is a vector model that establishes three types of temporal relationships based on a point zero or origin (O): anteriority, posteriority and simultaneity, represented, respectively, by directional vectors: $-V$, $+V$ and oV . Based on a strong deictic conception of time, "vectors" in this model mean the temporal orientation of a situation with regard to the origin, which is most often identified with the speech moment. As noted in Rojo & Veiga (1999: 2879), temporal forms do not strictly locate the situations at a concrete temporal point (as in the Reichenbachian model), as they only "orient" the situation before or after the origin, or make it coincide with it. This is how vectors should be understood.

4. In fact, a continuative or universal reading is difficult to achieve without specific complements that lead in this direction, as reported by Iatridou et al. (2003): the continuative meaning of *I have always lived here* is only clearly possible thanks to the presence of *always*. Without this adverb, the normal meaning is experiential.

The semantic representation of the verbal tenses is the outcome of the different combination of these vectors or orientations, whereby O+V represents the basic posteriority regarding the origin (*I'll arrive*), OoV indicates basic simultaneity regarding the origin (*I'm arriving*) and O-V implies pure or basic anteriority regarding the origin (*I arrived*). Moreover, verb forms can also orient primarily regarding a former direct (or indirect) orientation to the origin. This is the case, for instance, of the pluperfect (*I had arrived*), which expresses an anterior situation with regard to a moment prior to the origin. It would be represented in this vector model as (O-V)-V.⁵

As regards the two forms of interest to us here, one is direct (3a), and the other combines two vectors, anteriority and simultaneity, regarding the origin (3b):

- (3) a. Past (*I arrived*) → O-V
 b. Perfect (*I have arrived*) → (OoV)-V

The verb form in (3b) expresses the anteriority of an event within a situation that is simultaneous to the origin (Rojo 1974: 104). There are two relevant aspects here: (i) both forms in this model primarily express anteriority (the vector at the right end of the quotation: -V); (ii) the Perfect is a more complex form than the Past, as it includes a secondary vector of simultaneity the former lacks. Our position here is that this vector is crucial for interpreting the Perfect, as it is the “distorting” feature that not only differentiates it from the Past, but also introduces nearly all its classical aspectual readings, as well as the various temporal nuances. We shall thus seek to answer the following questions: what do we mean when we say that something is “simultaneous to the origin”? Does this expression have the same scope (meaning) in all Romance languages? In a word, can Rojo’s vectorial model be applied equally to all of them, or can different formulas be proposed for each language?

3.2

Grammatically speaking, basic simultaneity is expressed in language through the Present forms. The Present in Romance languages is assigned two major temporal-aspectual readings (our overview is based on the descriptions of Catalan by Pérez Saldanya 2002: § 22.5.1.1., of Portuguese by Gärtner 1998: § 1.1.1.2.1.1.;

5. Rojo’s quotation for the time relationship is not very different to Reichenbach’s one. There are just two important differences: (a) in Rojo’s vector model, there is no reference point (R) that must be always present – present, simple past and simple future orient directly to the origin. When a reference point arises, it appears in brackets, and is always a prior and secondary temporal orientation regarding the origin; (b) Reichenbach’s quotation requires a left-to-right reading, whereby the event at issue is always at the left end of the formula (e.g., the pluperfect: E-R-S), whereas Rojo’s quotation is a right-to-left one: the event at issue is at the right end of the quotation (pluperfect: (O-V)-V).

of Spanish by NGLE⁶ 2009: § 23.5, and of French by Grevisse 1993: 1247–1248), which are as follows:

- a. Present progressive: the designated situation, which tends to be an achievement, concurs with the act of speech. Its use is scarce and avoided in languages such as English (Klein 1992), because, in the strictest sense, it is not easy to find a precise temporal coincidence between the two events, the one performed and the one spoken about (with the exception, of course, of acts of spoken performance; 4b.). Whatever the case, it is clearly a deictic use:

- (4) a. Spanish
El portero coloca la barrera
 DEF.SG.M goalkeeper put.PRS.3.SG DEF.F barrier
 ‘The goalkeeper is organizing the wall’
 b. Portuguese
Prometo que vou contigo
 promise.PRS.1SG that go.PRS.1SG with.you
 ‘I promise to go with you’

- b. Present undefined, which groups the habitual present tense (5), the characteriser (6) or the gnomic (7). Once again, as we saw in the sub-classifications of the Perfect, the different readings of the Present depend largely on the verb’s aktionsart (telic events in 5; atelic events and states in 6 and 7), as well as the sentence construction itself.

- (5) a. Portuguese
O menino toma banho de manhã
 DEF.SG.M kid take.PRS.3SG bath of morning
 ‘The kid has a bath in the morning’
 b. French
Il arrive à 9 heures
 3SG.M arrive.PRS.3SG at 9 hour.PL
 ‘He arrives at 9 o’clock’
 (6) a. Spanish
Las ventanas de mi casa son enormes
 DEF.PL.F window.PL of POSS.1SG house be.PRS.3PL huge.PL
 ‘My house’s windows are huge’
 b. French
Notre entreprise se trouve à Paris
 POSS.1PL business REFL.3SG find.PRS.3SG in Paris
 ‘Our business is in Paris’

6. RAE & ASALE (2009). *Nueva gramática de la lengua Española* [New grammar of the Spanish language].

- (7) a. Spanish
 La Tierra *gira* alrededor del Sol
 DEF.F Earth spin.PRS.3SG around of.DEF.M Sun
 ‘The Earth spins around the Sun’
- b. French (Grevisse 1993: 1248)
Les corps s’attirent en raison directe de
 DEF.PL body.PL attract.RFL.PRS.3PL in ratio direct of
leur masse
 POSS.3PL mass
 ‘Bodies attract each other in direct relation to their masses’

The most prominent feature of the present indefinite is that it tends to be devoid of temporal boundaries, above all toward the future (we do not know how long a present situation may last), yet also often toward the past (we do not know when it began), hence the reason it is, paradoxically, a scarcely deictic tense. This paradox has not gone unnoticed among the scholars that have studied this tense, some of whom question the pertinence of continuing to consider that the present is actually a verb tense (NGLE 2009: § 23.5c). We do believe it is a tense, as ultimately the Present is anchored in the speaker’s existential (and unavoidable) awareness at the moment the utterance is made. Indeed, it is not infrequent for speakers to expressly establish a relationship with S, either contextually or through an adverb of time. This is the usage that grammarians call “current or extended present”, and which involves atelic predicates such as (8);⁷

- (8) a. Spanish
Hoy no me encuentro bien
 Today NEG RFL.1SG find.PRS.1SG well
 ‘I’m not feeling well today’
- b. Portuguese
Há um mes que moro em Berlim
 Have.3SG one.M month that live.PRS.1SG in Berlin
 ‘I’ve been living in Berlin for a month’

7. For the time being, we shall omit the values of “historical or narrative present” and “prospective present”, which are also features of all Romance languages: the former is a present whose origin has been displaced from O to a specific place in the past; the latter is a natural extension of the use of the present “toward the right”, where the boundaries are also undefined, and may therefore easily overlap in the appropriate context (generally together with adverbs expressing posteriority).

3.3

In itself, a lack of temporal specificity associated with simultaneity does not appear to pose many problems in languages, but it does do so when associated, in the Perfect, with the vector of anteriority. In turn, the two vectors are not uniformly combined in Romance languages: in each one, this combination has different semantic effects (temporal, aspectual and even modal); that is, it leads to different types of Perfect.

Our hypothesis is that the Perfect's developmental stages in Romance languages may be better explained as different outcomes of the connection between the vectors of simultaneity and anteriority, rather than as strictly aspectual developments (Azpiazu 2018, 2019). It should be noted that this notion contradicts the one put forward by Fleischman (1983) and Dahl and Hedin (2000), for whom the Perfect's "aoristicisation" is a process involving the loss of the sense of "current relevance" (i.e., of a link to the present) associated with this form (cf. *infra* § 7). The following aims to show the direction in which we understand a development takes place, and not a diminishing of "the present", throughout the Perfect's different developmental stages in Romance languages.

Certain scholars (e.g., Klein 1992, Giorgi & Pianesi 1997; Xiqués García 2015, [this volume](#)) have defended a similar notion to this one, placing the focal point of the Perfect's behaviour on the vector of simultaneity, in other words, on the Present's aspectual and temporal properties in each language. Thus, the striking restrictions that English encounters for developing the *present perfect* seem to be closely linked to the limitations the *present tense* has to express an event that is ongoing (*I speak* ≠ *I am speaking*), that is, a telic event that coincides in all its dimensions with the statement's time limits. In European Spanish, which do indeed have a Present progressive (4), the Perfect may be used not only with punctual adverbs (*Me he levantado a las 7/I got up at 7 o'clock*), but also to express immediately preceding events (*¿Qué has dicho?/What did you say?*), with both contexts rejected by the Perfect in English (**I've got up at 7 o'clock / *What have you said?*).

Nevertheless, the evidence for Romance languages does not uphold the notion of the functional parallelism between Present and Perfect,⁸ as the Present behaves in the same way in these languages, while the Perfect reveals significant differences. For example, the Present in Portuguese and Spanish hardly differs in terms of

8. Nor does the evidence for other language families. As Prof. Melum Eide kindly pointed out to me, "the Mainland Scandinavian languages seem to face similar restrictions to developing the present perfect as English does, in spite of the fact that they regularly expresses the Present progressive reading in simple presents" (p.c.).

usages: both cases include the two major values described in § 3.2., including the progressive-present value. Nonetheless, there are significant differences in the use of the Perfect in these two languages. The same may be said even more confidently for American Spanish and European Spanish: the same Present, but different uses of the Perfect. Thus, it is not so much the nature of the concept of simultaneity in each language as *the nature of the connection with the vector of anteriority* that introduces the differences between the varying Perfects in Romance languages. This is not a new concept: Veiga also claims that “the applicability of its marked component of simultaneity” lies at the heart of the denotative differences between the Perfects in the European and American varieties of Spanish (2014b: 170). In what follows we seek to define what this “applicability” means precisely in Romance languages and varieties in stages II (Portuguese and American Spanish), III (European Spanish and Catalan) and IV (French) of the model described in (1) (see also Azpiazu 2018, 2019).

4. The Portuguese perfect

Almost all the scholars that have studied the present perfect, the *perfeito composto* (PC), in Portuguese report that this tense works more as an aspectual periphrasis than as a grammaticalised way of expressing a temporal relationship, as it cannot be used to locate an event on a timeline. Although the durative reading of the PC in Portuguese has been assumed since Paiva Boléo (1936), more recent studies (Ilari 2001; Cabredo-Hofherr et al. 2010; Oliveira & Leal 2012) have questioned whether this conclusion is correct. In particular, these studies report that the defining aspect of the Portuguese Perfect is that its usage always requires a plurality of iterated events or discontinuous phases (as shown in examples like 10a below). When the durative reading occurs, it is associated solely with the presence of verbs of state, and under certain contextual conditions (Oliveira & Leal 2012: 74) (as shown in examples like 9). In general, the vector of anteriority in Portuguese is always linked to plural events, but ones that cannot be isolated by specific (11) or cardinal (10b) location features, whether these are adverbial complements or of another type (Howe 2014; Oliveira & Leal 2012).

- (9) *Ele tem estado doente constantemente / de modo intermitente*
 3SG.M have.3SG be.PTCP ill constantly / occasionally
 ‘He has been ill constantly (durative) / occasionally (iterative)’

- (10) a. *O professor tem chegado tarde*
 DEF.M teacher have.3SG arrive.PTCP late
 'The teacher has arrived late'
- b. **O professor tem chegado tarde quatro vezes*⁹
 DEF.M teacher have.3SG arrive.PTCP late four time.PL
 'The teacher has arrived late four times'
- (11) **O professor tem chegado às quatro*
 DEF.M teacher have.3SG arrive.PTCP at.DEF.PL four
 'The teacher arrived at four o'clock'

According to Amaral and Howe (2010), this rejection of the singularisation of events by the PC in Portuguese is the result of an isolated evolution, in which the form gradually assimilated the plurality of the contexts in which it appeared. It is therefore understood that in one origin this form allowed for semelfactive resultative readings (also Suter 1984; and Wigger 2005). The studies by Cabredo-Hofherr et al. (2010) and Laca (2009) on the PC in Brazilian Portuguese also point to a very strong tendency toward the event's pluralisation.

Anteriority in this type of Perfect is nonetheless represented by an indefinite series of events that cannot be located at any specific point: it is, therefore, just as vaguely deictic as the simultaneity in its indefinite usage (the most common one). The consequence of the combination of these two indefinite vectors is something of a "lack of eventive specificity"; the *perfeito composto* thus designates a group of events for which the importance does not lie in why they happened, but that they are part of a time continuum that extends through to the present.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some authors refuse to accept that this form in Portuguese is truly a past tense and not a present (Oliveira 2003: 159), and even that it may be a temporal periphrasis and not an aspectual one. The formula's deictic weakness prompts a reading that is more readily aspectual than temporal. There is, after all, the possibility of deictically associating the Perfect Time Span (PTS)¹⁰ with the S, or placing limits on it to the left, just as we saw in (8) in relation to the "extended present":

9. This expression would be grammatical if it were included in a statement of frequency: *O professor tem chegado tarde quatro vezes por semana* / *The teacher has arrived late four times a week* (Oliveira & Leal 2012: 77–78 and 83).

10. That is, the interval referred to by the Perfect. See Iatridou et al. (2003) and Pancheva & von Stechow (2004).

- (12) *Nos últimos dias /desde aquele dia o professor tem*
 in.DEF.PL.M last.PL day.PL /since DEM.SG.M day DEF.M teacher have.3SG
chegado tarde
 arrive.PTCP late
 ‘Over the past few days/since that day the teacher has arrived late’

In sum, the effect of the union of simultaneity and anteriority in the perfect in Portuguese is the annulment of the temporal specificity of any event. We understand that this is the case because if these two vectors are to interact in this language they need to head in the same semantic direction; otherwise: a prior event in Portuguese can only be associated with simultaneity if it removes its boundaries; in other words, if it is presented as repeated indefinitely or if, since the start, it is a boundless event, that is, a state. The temporal barriers between anteriority and simultaneity are removed whereby, at least in Portuguese, it cannot be affirmed that the *perfeito composto* is a form that primarily expresses anteriority, as Rojo contended for Spanish, but instead one that refers to a current situation. Oliveira and Leal (2012: 82) approach the matter in a fairly similar way when they posit that the *perfeito composto* designates a single eventuality of a group nature formed by the iteration of basic eventualities (not necessarily identical to one another).

Thus, the initial formula for the Perfect that we presented in (3b) should be modified for Portuguese according to the type of relationship established between the two vectors. The following is our proposal for addressing and breaking down the relationship we have described as specific to the Portuguese PC (Perfect 1):

- (13) $P1 = (OoV)-V \rightarrow (O-V)_{TTEE}^{11} \equiv (OoV)_{PTS}$
 The Perfect (1) establishes the equivalence of the primary vector of anteriority of a succession of events (TTEE) – or of a continuative event – to a temporal lapse simultaneous to the origin (= “Perfect Time Span” – PTS)



The diagram is designed to depict the notion of equivalence between the two temporal vectors. The dot and arrow indicate the origin and direction of simultaneity. The box shows the temporal scope in which the vectors interact. The prior events, whether in themselves telic or atelic, coincide in their origin and in their development or repetition with the time span (PTS, in grey); so until O, both vectors designate a persistent situation, and not a past event. It should be noted, however, that the present lapse allows surpassing this point toward the future (which is why the box, and the arrow, extend beyond O).

11. TE = Time of the event; TTEE = succession of events.

5. The perfect in American Spanish

5.1

The pluralisation of the event is not an unknown phenomenon in other Romance languages. Indeed, iteration also seems to be the default reading of the *pretérito perfecto compuesto* (PPC) in the Spanish spoken in the Plate River area of Argentina (Caviglia & Malcuori 1994; Laca 2009). The difference is that in most of the other varieties this is not the only reading of the Perfect, simply one of many other possibilities that for that reason are expressly flagged. This is especially the case for American Spanish,¹² which, according to (1), would also be part of stage II, although it behaves in a significantly different way to Portuguese. For a start, most American varieties do not exclude the cardinal reading of plural events (14; cf. 10b) or of semelfactive events, if they have a resultative interpretation (15):¹³

- (14) *El profesor ha llegado tarde cuatro veces*
 DEF.SG.M teacher have.PRS3SG arrive.PTCP late four time.PL
 ‘The teacher *has arrived* late *four times*’
- (15) *El problema que trajo emparejada la enfermedad*
 DEF.SG.M problem that bring.PST.3SG combine.PTCP.F DEF.SG.F illness
de Chávez y su intervención en La Habana ya ha
 of Chávez and poss.3SG.F operation in Havana already have.3SG
sido resuelto por los tres poderes del Estado
 be.PTCP resolve.PTCP.M by DEF.PL.M three power.PL of.DEF.SG.M State
en Venezuela
 in Venezuela
 ‘The problem that combined Chávez’s illness and his operation in Havana *has already been resolved* by the three powers of State in Venezuela’
 (Visión 7 – Argentina; 12/1/2013)

12. We are aware that referring to “American Spanish” is an over-generalisation, as there are American varieties of Spanish with major dialectal dispersion. Regarding the Perfect, the dispersion goes in the opposite directions to those traditionally described for the American norm (mostly Mexican Spanish), both in one sense (greater frequency of the compound form in Andean Spanish) and in another (lower frequency of the compound form in the Spanish spoken in and around Plate River).

13. Moreno de Alba (2006: 18) accepts the possibility that Mexican Spanish has a resultative reading, although it is not the most common usage. Our data on the media in American Spanish, especially its audiovisual side, suggest that this usage is more common in the spoken language than is normally acknowledged (Azpiazu 2015b: § 4.). For a recent past use of the Mexican PPC, see also Schwenter & Torres-Cacoullos (2008: 7).

In other words, in contrast to what we found in Portuguese, Spanish has no need for past events to be shown as indefinite for their combination with the vector of simultaneity in the Perfect. This is especially verifiable in (15), where we see another form of temporal interaction between anteriority and simultaneity, this time in two phases: a first phase, that of anteriority, where the event takes place, and a second one, that of simultaneity, which follows on from the first and includes the event's consequences or results, and reaches S. In fact, according to diachronic studies, this type of resultative Perfect is the first reading obtained from the derivative construction of the Latin periphrasis, which explains why we encounter it in all Romance languages with the exception of Portuguese where, as we have explained, it has been lost.¹⁴

Another specific use of the PPC in almost all varieties of Spanish, albeit avoided by the Portuguese PC, is that of a negated event: a sentence like (16) does not exist in Portuguese except as (17b):

(16) Spanish:

No ha llegado todavía
NEG have.3SG arrive.PTCP still
'He still hasn't arrived'

(17) Portuguese:

- a. **Ele ainda não tem chegado*
3SG.M still NEG have.3SG arrive.PTCP
'He still hasn't arrived'
- b. *Ele ainda não chegou*
3SG.M still NEG arrive.PST.3SG
'He still hasn't arrived'

There is a clear explanation in the Portuguese case: if the event has not even occurred, it cannot be repeated, and neither can it appear in the *perfeito composto*.¹⁵ In Spanish, however, it can do so because the vectors of the PPC indicate both the event (in this case, the non-event *llegar/arrive*) and the resulting state, which does not overlap with the former, but instead follows it.¹⁶

14. For a fuller explanation of the involution of periphrasis in Portuguese, see Wigger (2005).

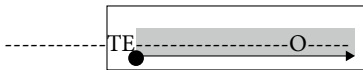
15. Contrary to the other Romance varieties (and also English), Portuguese does not permit *perfeito composto* in a *not-yet* sentence. This concerns sentences with the adverb *nunca* ('never'), which is not a Perfect marker in this language: *Eu nunca estive em Berlim* (lit.: 'I never was in Berlin' → 'I have never been to Berlin').

16. We do not share the view put forward by Squartini and Bertinetto (2000: 412) that in Mexican Spanish cases such as (16) imply an actional reclassification of the non-event, which becomes durative. The non-event is not durative in any case, but instead the resulting state caused by it.

We therefore find that the interaction between the two vectors is different in Spanish and Portuguese: in Portuguese they are comparable (13); in Spanish, besides being comparable, they can be combined without being confused, giving rise to a new type of Perfect:

$$(18) P2 = (OoV)-V \rightarrow (O-V)_{TE} + (OoV)_{PTS}$$

The Perfect (2) adds a time span simultaneous to the origin (PTS) to the event's primary vector of anteriority (TE)



On this occasion, the diagram depicts the relationship between the two vectors in the resultative reading: in contrast to P1, the dimensions of anteriority do not coincide here with simultaneity, but instead they both follow on in succession. It should be noted in this case that the box that groups both these vectors does not coincide with the PTS (in grey). This means that both temporal orientations are joined, but they are not comparable at all moments of the Perfect's time lapse, as was the case in P1. Once again, the PTS may extend beyond O. Regarding the origin and orientation of simultaneity, the event begins to come to an end and moves into the future, toward the right.

5.2

Furthermore, and besides the above cases, Mexican Spanish even has certain examples such as (19):

- (19) *Después de caminar algunos minutos hemos llegado al*
 after of walk.INF few.PL minute.PL have.1PL arrive.PTCP at.DEF.M
lugar donde fueron encontrados los cuerpos de las
 place where be.PST.3PL find.PTCP.PL.M DEF.PL.M body.PL of DEF.PL.F
personas que supuestamente fueron atacadas por una
 person.PL that allegedly be.PST.3PL attack.PTCP.PL.F by INDF.F
jauría canina
 pack canine.F

'After walking for a few minutes we arrived at the place where they found the bodies of the people that were allegedly attacked by a pack of dogs'

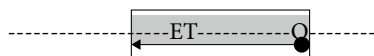
(Azteca Noticias – Noticias con J. C. Baraja 11/1/2013)

The reading of the *pretérito perfecto compuesto* could be resultative, although there are also other possibilities. A comparison with the forms of the *pretérito perfecto simple* (*fueron encontrados/they were found*, *fueron atacadas/they were attacked*) rather suggests a relationship of temporal distance between events. These usages,

which are commonplace in the digital press in European Spanish (Azpiazu 2015b), may not be as uncommon in American Spanish as we have been led to believe (see note 11) and, of course, they point to a new way of understanding the relationship between anteriority and simultaneity. In contrast to what we saw in the previous resultative reading (P2), simultaneity would not now be working *after* anteriority, but instead *alongside* it, although not occupying the same dimension, as was the case in P1, but at a higher level that encompasses it. We are therefore dealing with a third type of Perfect, which we represent as follows:

$$(20) \quad P3 = (OoV)-V \rightarrow (O-V)_{ET} \subset (OoV)_{PTS}$$

The Perfect (3) includes the event's primary vector of anteriority (TE) in a simultaneous time span to the origin (PTS)



The diagram is similar to that of P1, in which TE is again included within the PTS, although there are also significant differences between the two: on the one hand, the event is not reiterated until O, but instead is unique and has its beginning and end in the past. On the other hand, the PTS does not extend beyond O. This is related to a third difference that is subtle yet important: simultaneity in the previous Perfects began at the same time as the prior event (P1) or immediately after it ended (P2), and moved chronologically toward the right, toward O. In this new version of the Perfect, simultaneity is established *from* O and moves toward the past. As happened before, the time span does not now end either at the temporal point at which the event occurs in the past, but instead could eventually extend beyond this point. As always, the lapse is open on one side, in this case on the left. Finally, in contrast to P1 and like P2, the Perfect's framework does not fit into the PTS's precise boundaries, which indicates there is no exact temporal coincidence, but instead the inclusion of one vector within another.

A significant difference between this Perfect and the two previous ones is that the designated event's aktionsart is now less relevant to the choice of the form. The past event's true link with the present O is only determined by the speaker: the one to decide whether or not the event is included in the PTS (Veiga 2014a: 168),¹⁷ which thus acquires a subjective dimension. Indeed, the phenomenon of "subjectivation" has in one way or another been associated with the Spanish Perfect¹⁸ and, in our opinion, largely explains the vast dialectal, and even idiolectal, dispersion found in Spanish between the simple and the compound form.

17. This is also the ultimate meaning of the arrow's direction "toward the left" in (20).

18. This is how Jacob (1996) and also Detges (2000) explain the developmental step from the resultative Perfect to the temporal one in Old Spanish, although they lay particular stress on the pragmatic, modalising aspect of this subjectivation.

6. The perfect in European Spanish and Catalan

6.1

Nevertheless, the fact there is a subjectivity factor in the choice of P3 by the speaker does not mean its appearance in the discourse is arbitrary. In some varieties of Romance languages, such as European Spanish and Catalan, the language has systemised the presence of simultaneity in very specific syntactic and discursive contexts, in which a temporal deixis may be established that is specific to the “extended” present (8) or even to the “progressive” present (4).¹⁹ It often involves contexts of the event’s temporal proximity to O (21), or in which an adverbial indication is presented that expressly includes the event in a time span that is still current in O (22):

- (21) Spanish
 ¿Qué ha pasado? - ¿Qué has dicho?
 what have.3SG happen.PTCP - what have.2SG say.PTCP
 ‘What’s happened?’ – ‘What did you say?’
- (22) Catalan
 Avui he treballat poc
 today have.1SG work.PTCP little
 I’ve worked little today

As regards (21), the temporal proximity between the event and O enables us to consider that specific part of the PTS. Within these contexts, furthermore, perfect and present (progressive) tense tend to be interchangeable (21’):

- (21’) Spanish
 ¿Qué pasa? - ¿Qué dices?
 what happen.PRS.3SG what say.PRS.2SG
 What’s happening? – ‘What do you mean?’

Regarding (22), Alarcos (1947) already posited the notion for Spanish that both the *pretérito perfecto simple* and the *pretérito perfecto compuesto* were favoured by the presence in the discourse of certain adverbial complements that include or exclude the “extended present” event: *today, this week, this month, this year* for those included; *yesterday, the other day, last year, in 2003* for those excluded. In this paper, we do not address the issue of whether such complements are necessary for these readings (on this matter, see also Veiga 2014a: 168).

19. We also move from the use of the Perfect in irrelevant and indeterminate temporal contexts (as in examples 9 to 15) toward more determinate ones. For a further explanation of “irrelevant” and “indeterminate” temporal contexts, see Schwenter & Torres-Cacoullos (2008) and Copple (2009).

The important question here is that it opens the possibility of setting the limits for simultaneity according to temporal references that are fairly “objective”, whether or not they are explicitly expressed, as references that any speaker may assume to be simultaneous to S: today, or the week, month, or year, for example, in which they are talking. Usage systemises these references as being especially useful for the appearance of the Perfect forms.

6.2

Although the above is undoubtedly true, so too is the fact that empirical studies on European Spanish (e.g., Serrano 1994; Kempas 2006; Azpiazu 2012, 2015a, 2019; Veiga 2019) report a notional flexibility among speakers regarding what “simultaneous to the origin” really means.²⁰ This does not apply solely to individual speakers: in Azpiazu & Kempas (2017) we have shown that European Spanish does not have much trouble in providing cases of PPC in prehodiernal contexts, that is, with adverbial complements that would *a priori* block the “objective” connection with O (*yesterday, a few years ago*, etc.), and which nonetheless “go unnoticed” by the rule; in other words, they could easily be used by almost any speaker of any one of the varieties:

- (23) *He dedicado un estudio específico a este tema*
 have.1SG dedicate.PTCP INDE.M study specific.M to DEM.M topic
hace algunos años
 make.PRS.3SG few.PL.M year.PL
 ‘I dedicated a specific study to this topic a few years ago’
 (Azpiazu & Kempas 2017: 719)

It is true to say that these expressions will only be accepted when a series of lexical and syntactical-discursive factors come together, as may be the eventive type of verb (as expected, resultative verbs are more frequent in these constructions), the type of adverbial complement, and especially, as in (23), their postposition. Yet this combination is in no way anomalous in language, which means we are not dealing with isolated or idiolectal uses of the PPC, but instead “normal” usages (in Coseriu’s norm sense).

What is interesting is that if (23) is possible throughout almost the entire Iberian Peninsula, the step to an expression such as (24) may not be so difficult to

20. This is also the case in certain very specific regions where American Spanish is spoken (Argentina: Donni de Mirande 1992; Kempas 2006, or the Andean region: Bustamante 1991; Escobar 1997), albeit under discursive and sociolinguistic conditions that are very different to those on the Iberian Peninsula.

take, even though it may currently be an unusual construction for many speakers, and restricted to geographically highly localised varieties (in this specific case, to the province of Salamanca):

- (24) *Salimos ayer mi hija y yo del Corte*
 come.out.PST.1PL yesterday POSS.1SG daughter and 1SG from.DEF.M Corte
Inglés y nos hemos encontrado un monedero tirado.
 Inglés and RFL.1PL have.1PL find.PTCP INDEF.M wallet drop.PTCP.M
Abierto, por supuesto, sin dinero pero tenía todas
 open.PTCP.M of.course without money but have.PST.IPFV.3SG all.PL.F
las tarjetas. Entonces lo hemos entregado allí en El
 DEF.PL.F card.PL so ACC.3SG.M have.1PL hand.PTCP there in El
Corte Inglés
 Corte Inglés

‘Yesterday, when my daughter and I came out of *El Corte Inglés* department store, we found a wallet on the ground. It was open, and there was no money in it, of course, but all the cards were there, so we handed it in to *El Corte Inglés*.’

(Azpiazu 2012: 28)

It should be noted that the text begins with a temporal-adverbial combination that is perfectly apt from a grammatical perspective (*salimos + ayer*), but it then switches from the simple to a compound form. The first verb in the PPC (*hemos encontrado*) is not consistent with a resultative usage (P2), as one might expect from the context (at S, the speaker is no longer in possession of the wallet), and neither necessarily is the second (*hemos entregado*). They are type 3 Perfects, but the temporal period has overcome the psychological (and not very stable) barrier of the same day of speaking, even in the presence of a prehodiernal adverb.

Although these cases in Spanish are not as yet systematic enough to speak of a clear step toward the grammaticalisation of the Spanish PPC in line with the French *passé composé* (as attempted elsewhere with much less convincing evidence (e.g., Schwenter 1994), they may be used to show that, at least in European Spanish, the concept of simultaneity to the origin embedded in the Perfect is not shaped on the basis of fixed lexical or grammatical categories, as may be the aktionsart of the verb or the presence of certain adverbial complements, but instead through the speaker’s own will in specific discursive conditions (Azpiazu 2014, 2019; Azpiazu & Kempas 2017).

7. The perfect in French

7.1

According to (1), the final stage in the process of grammaticalising the Perfect is to be found in standard French, northern Italian dialects, and standard Romanian. As we know, the simple form has completely vanished from the spoken language in French, with its place being taken by the compound form. This tends to be referred to as a neutralisation process, whereby the compound form in the spoken language has become the only way of referring to a past event. In our descriptive model, this is tantamount to saying that simultaneity has disappeared from the Perfect's formula (3b), and this has become a pure form of anteriority, namely, a Past (3a):

(25) (OoV)-V → O-V

Nevertheless, we find this view somewhat simplistic for several reasons:

- a. Although it is not found in the spoken language, the simple past, *passé simple* (PS), has not disappeared from the French language system; that is, it continues to be a form that is capable of establishing a functional juxtaposition with the present perfect, *passé composé* (PC). This renders it difficult to talk about a true neutralisation of the forms.
- b. What we have seen so far is that throughout the different stages simultaneity has steadily broadened its semantic spectrum. Postulating now its total disappearance implies the challenge of explaining how an element that in the previous developmental stage was clearly expanding has now vanished.
- c. As we have seen in § 5.3. and § 6.2., the semantic expansion of simultaneity suggests a subjective development of the notion of temporality. What's more, this development appears to adopt clear overtones of modality related to the epistemic conditions of the statement's truth (Azpiazu 2014, 2016, 2019). Should we therefore assume that these values have been completely erased in the evolutionary step from the *passé composé* to the *passé simple*?

7.2

Like us, Barbazan (2007) does not believe that the French PC forgoes the notion of "present", arguing against the idea of the neutralisation of both forms and in favour of a complementary, and therefore functional, distribution between them (Barbazan 2007: 431). The author discusses the possibility, reported by other scholars (e.g., Caudal & Vetters 2007), of two types of *passé composé* under the same name, a Perfect one and an Aoristic one, and that the latter is exactly the same as the *passé simple*. The coexistence in some texts (26) of the two forms (in bold) and the fact that the *passé simple* seems impossible to use on certain occasions have led

this scholar to conclude that these forms are not synonymous or alternating, but instead in opposition.

- (26) *Une tapisserie flottait à quelques pas de là devant une porte; Billot alla droit à cette tapisserie, la souleva et se trouva dans une grande salle circulaire [...]. Cette salle, nos lecteurs y sont déjà descendus, il y a quinze ou seize ans, sur les pas de Rousseau*
 INDEF curtain hang.PST.IPFV.3SG to few.PL step of there before INDEF door; Billot go.PST.3SG straight to DEM.F curtain ACC.F lift.PST.3SG and se trouva dans une grande salle circulaire [...]. Cette salle, REFL.3SG find.PST.3SG in INDEF big.F hall circular.F [...] DEM.F hall nos lecteurs y sont déjà descendus, il POSS.1PL.PL reader.PL there be.PRS.3PL already go.DOWN.PTCP.PL.M 3SG y a quinze ou seize ans, sur les pas there have.PRS.3SG fifteen or sixteen year.PL after DEF.PL step.PL de Rousseau of Rousseau

‘A curtain hung a few steps before the door to which Billot went straight; he lifted it up and found himself in a vast circular hall [...]. Our readers have already gone down to this hall fifteen or sixteen years ago, following in Rousseau’s footsteps’ (Dumas: *Le Comtesse de Charny*, quoted by Barbazan 2007: 431).²¹

Barbazan contends that there is only one PC in French, the bearer of two semas, a present one and a past one, which are registered in the same dimension of meaning (Barbazan 2007: 440) and which are activated in a different way depending on the linguistic context. Nevertheless, if the PC/PS opposition remains effective in French, as (26) allegedly shows, it is not located solely within the temporal scope that it occupied in Spanish for instance, but instead within another additional scope, namely, discourse. This means simultaneity has adopted a new semantic component, not a temporal one, to which the vector formula cannot be applied. In order to explain what this component consists of, Barbazan resorts to the classic concepts of “discourse/history” propounded by Benveniste (1959), but no longer associates them with specific types of texts, but rather to the speaker’s attitudes (i.e., to Weinrich’s notion (1964) of “commented world/narrated world”). Specifically, they refer to the way in which the speaker imagines their dialogue with an interlocutor.

Thus, what characterises the *passé composé* for Barbazan is the presence of a feature [+allocutive] that addresses the recipient directly, similar to the Latin vocative. By choosing this form over the *passé simple*, the speaker includes their interlocutor in the discourse, or at least the image they have of them, as well as the peculiarities of their environment at O (Barbazan 2007: 456). This explains that the *passé composé* is the exclusive form of the spoken language, where there is always

21. Similar examples are also found in Stravinohová (1973) and Engel (1990).

an interlocutor, but not always so in the written language, where this interlocutor may (or not) be absent. The PS/PC alternation is therefore linked to the type of information the speaker decides to prioritise: the content (*passé simple*) or the interaction with the interlocutor (*passé composé*).

This last type of Perfect (Perfect 4) cannot actually be broken down into vectors, as what characterises it is not temporal information but pragmatic instead. Yet this does not mean it is a form that is outside the French tense system; in fact, it is the same P3 that we have described for Catalan and Spanish, only over-generalised to any past context and informed by certain specific discursive conditions.

8. Conclusions

8.1

Our purpose is to consider the Perfect's semantic development in the Romance languages from a fundamentally temporal perspective: not as an "aoristic drift", but instead as the outcome of the different semantic interactions between the temporal vectors of anteriority and simultaneity that configure it, and based above all on this latter vector's functional possibilities. The evolution would not so much involve moving from the designation of a present state of things to a past one as in changing the way of understanding "the present" inherent to the formula.

Nevertheless, in line with the recent studies by Veiga (2013, 2014a) it is worth reconsidering the original approach made by Rojo (1974) upon which we have based our theory. According to Veiga, the Perfect presents a double orientation that does not permit the interjection of any other temporal orientation; it is, therefore, an indissoluble relationship between anteriority and simultaneity. In order to flag this connection, this author imbues the Perfect (now called *pre-present*) with a new formula (27, cf. 3b):

(27) Pre-present: Oo(V-V)

Binary and inseparable relationship between the primary temporal orientation of anteriority and one of simultaneity from which it is always directly focused
(Veiga 2013: 123)

The key to this approach is that the relationship between the two vectors is no longer understood to be the mere "sum" of components, but rather as a simultaneous and indivisible set of temporal orientations. Furthermore, this in itself makes us question the notion that the Perfect continues to be a tense of *primary anteriority*.²²

22. Barbazan refers to the "semantic uncertainty" of the French PC to indicate that it does not coincide with the description of any one of the categories of meaning of grammatical tradition, that is, it is not purely a past form or a present form (Barbazan 2007: 440).

Can we really ask what the formula's "primary" temporal orientation is if we are proposing an inseparable relationship between its components?

8.2

Furthermore, as noted on several occasions throughout this article, the development of the Perfect's semantic possibilities means accepting the previous types (Schwenter & Torres-Cacoullous 2008 refer to *persistence* or *retention*). This means that a language using a type 4 Perfect (French) may also do so with values 1, 2 and 3.

Nevertheless, this statement is once again challenged by Portuguese. Diachronic studies show that P2 is historically earlier to P1 in languages, and yet it no longer survives in Portuguese.²³ For that reason alone, and as noted by Squartini & Bertinetto (2000: 419–20) themselves, a review should be conducted of developmental stage II, as Harris proposed. Yet there is more: it no longer seems appropriate to group the Perfect in American Spanish, in which P1 and P2 are present, together with its counterpart in Portuguese, which only accepts P1.

8.3

Furthermore, if we accept that P2 is chronologically prior to P1, the simultaneity's semantic path in the Perfect will designate a time lapse that is successively added to that of anteriority (P2) to become confused with it, creating a macro-event in which the temporal boundaries between past and present are erased (P1).²⁴ If one goes beyond this reading, simultaneity ends up subsuming anteriority (P3) into a broader temporal space, of objective or subjective boundaries, to finally become a discursive sign of contact between interlocutors, that is, a form of modal appeal (P4).

The Portuguese case and the varieties of Spanish nonetheless show us that all these readings need not be reflected in the same way in all languages, as each variety explores pathways in part repeated and in part unexplored, whose outcome is difficult to foresee. This can also undoubtedly be explained by the referential uncertainty and the subjectivity inherent to the concept of simultaneity.

23. As noted in § 5.1., it so happens that Plate River Spanish also records a clear "regression" in the use of the Perfect, with major semantic restrictions on events (Rodríguez Louro 2009; Fløgstad & Rodríguez Louro [this volume](#)), a phenomenon that Laca (2009) relates to the regression of Portuguese, and especially with that of Brazilian Portuguese.

24. The path from irrelevant temporal references to more determinate ones reflects the semantic evolution of the Spanish Perfect across centuries, according to Copple (2009).

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Marc Fryd, Kristin Melum Eide and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on the different versions of this paper. All errors or omissions are only mine.

Funding

This work is part of the research project *Pretérito perfecto simple y pretérito perfecto compuesto: Historiografía, gramatización y estado actual de la oposición en el español europeo* (FFI2013-45914-P) [Past Perfect and Present Perfect: Historiography, grammatisation and current state of the opposition in European Spanish], funded by Spain's Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO) and led by the author.

Abbreviations

In this chapter, the following abbreviations were used:

1	first person	M	masculine
2	second person	NEG	negation
3	third person	PL	plural
ACC	accusative	POSS	possessive
DEF	definite	PRS	present
DEM	demonstrative	PST	past
F	feminine	PTCP	participle
INDF	indefinite (article)	RFL	reflexive
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective		

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