

# THE TENSE AND ASPECT OF THE PRESENT PERFECT IN ENGLISH AND PORTUGUESE\*

## *Tempo e Aspecto do Presente Perfeito em Inglês e Português*

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### INTRODUCTION

A thorough explanation and description of the PRESENT PERFECT<sup>1</sup> has evaded many modern theorists, since it seems to be an ambiguous representation of time, somehow linking an event in the past to the present. This is compounded by the confusion surrounding how to represent the categories of tense and aspect, making a consistent analysis for phenomena, such as the PRESENT PERFECT, more difficult to attain. The Brazilian Portuguese (BP) PRESENT PERFECT, while receiving little attention in the field of semantics, only adds to the confusion. This is due to its apparent obligatory reading of iterativity, as shown in (1a).

- (1) a. A Maria tem cantado “Parabéns pra você”. (várias vezes/  
\*uma vez)

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<sup>1</sup> I will use PRESENT PERFECT in small caps to refer to the morphology and not to the semantics.

The Mary has sung congratulations to you. (various times/\*one time)

‘Mary has been singing “Happy Birthday”’.

b. Mary has sung “Happy Birthday”. (once/many times)

While the American English (AE) PRESENT PERFECT is often used for expressing one-time occurrences (as in 1b), the BP PRESENT PERFECT is inappropriate in a one-time context. Obligatory iterativity is a phenomena specific to the BP PRESENT PERFECT and whose nature has been attributed to a covert habitual operator (Giorgi and Pianesi 1997) or to the selectional restrictions of the present tense morphology in BP (Schmitt 2001). However, iteration is not always obligatory and the PRESENT PERFECT can express single, durative situations as well (Ilari 2001), as in (2).

(2) A Maria tem estado doente.

The Mary has been sick.

‘Mary has been sick’.

The different readings that we have to account for in both languages can be schematized as in (3) and (4). The main readings that arise in the AE examples in (3) are resultative, recent past, experiential and persistent situation (Comrie 1976), while the main readings in BP (4) are durative and iterative (Ilari 2001).

(3) AE

a. Experiential: John has visited Paris. (once/before)

b. Resultative: John has arrived. (and is here)

c. Recent past: I have just graduated from college.

d. Persistent situation: John has lived in New York for 4 years.

(4) BP

a. Iterative: O Bruno tem ido a Disney. (várias vezes)

The Bruno has gone to-the Disneyland (various times)

‘Bruno has gone to Disneyland (many times)’

- b. Durative: A Maria tem sido feliz na Europa.  
The Maria has been happy in-the Europe.  
'Mary has been happy in Europe'.

With the PRESENT PERFECTS having corresponding grammatical structures ('have'/'ter' + past participle) and at least some undeniable semantic overlap, as in (2), it is argued here that a unified analysis for the PRESENT PERFECT in American English (AE) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) is possible. The objective of this paper is to provide a unified theoretical treatment for the meanings and uses of the AE and BP PRESENT PERFECTS with a review of the traditional frameworks of tense and aspect and their respective terminologies. More specifically, it will be seen how lexical aspect sets up basic tendencies for the kinds of readings that arise in both languages and, depending on how the different theories conceive of PRESENT PERFECT meaning, these notions taken together will then have consequences for how adverbials are handled. Adverbial modification is important in understanding how possible readings are made more explicit or even shifted to other readings. Section 1 will review the two main lines of research regarding the PRESENT PERFECT, that of Extended Now (McCoard 1978; Dowty 1979; Iatridou et al. 2003) and that of Anteriority or Indefinite Past (Klein 1992, 1994). Dowty's (1979) approach to the PRESENT PERFECT will be taken as representative of Extended Now (XN) theories since they are more widely adopted in the literature on the PRESENT PERFECT. Moreover, Dowty presents a thorough revision of Vendler's aspectual classification of verbs, which is relevant to the objectives of the present study as mentioned above. Klein's (1992, 1994) approach to the PRESENT PERFECT is chosen as representative of what I will refer to as the Indefinite Past<sup>2</sup> (IP) theory, which is a conceptually different approach in comparison to the XN theory, providing for a theoretical contrast whose consequences will be made clear along the course of the paper. The contrast goes beyond how the basic PRESENT PERFECT meaning is conceived of since Klein also presents a new take on aspectual classification for reasons independent of the PRESENT PERFECT analysis, but will be shown to have an effect on understanding how the different readings arise. It will be shown along the course of this paper that Klein's IP theory is more adept at accounting for the different readings that arise and possible shifts that occur between them. Section 2 will investigate

<sup>2</sup> As far as I know, there is no official label for theories that characterize the PRESENT PERFECT as having the main property of anteriority or of being an indefinite past, but I will assume the label of "Indefinite Past" here for the sake of easier reference.

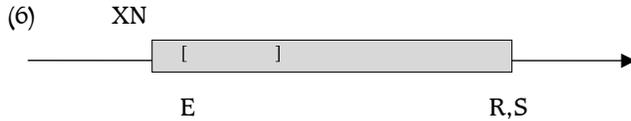
their respective perspectives on lexical aspect or aspectual class and how it factors into the PRESENT PERFECT meaning. In section 3, it will be shown how the traditional readings attributed to the AE and BP PRESENT PERFECTS can be derived from the basic perfect meaning, while differences are due to pragmatic factors. Section 4 deals with the puzzles that arise in each language, namely, variations in adverb compatibility. Section 5 concludes.

## TENSE AND GRAMMATICAL ASPECT

Most analyses of tense-aspect phenomena make use of some variation on Reichenbach's (1947) classic three-point system of temporality, which is outlined in (5) below. Tense is understood here as the relation between speech time and reference time. Grammatical aspect, that which is morphologically marked, refers to the relation between reference time and event time. While speech time and event time are straightforward, the major contribution of this system is the reference point, which is some contextually determined point that refers to some other event. As can be seen in the schema below, this point is what distinguishes the Present Perfect from other structures which have the same event and speech time order, like the Simple Past and Past Perfect.

(5)	Past	E,R_S	Present Perfect	E_R,S
	Present	S,R,E	Past Perfect	E_R_S
	Future	S,R_E	Future Perfect	S_E_R

The two main approaches outlined here, Dowty's XN and Klein's IP, employ these times in different ways, such that the rest of the analysis – lexical content, readings and adverb compatibility – are derived along those respective lines. For Dowty (1979), the tenses are introduced by temporal operators for past, present and future. Assuming an Extended Now (XN) theory, there is a perfect operator that introduces an interval whose left boundary is unspecified and whose right boundary is fixed by the reference time, which in the case of the PRESENT PERFECT, coincides with speech time (McCoard 1978; Dowty 1979; Iatridou et al. 2003). The eventuality is located somewhere within this interval. This conception of the PRESENT PERFECT meaning is represented in (6).



The XN theory is unspecified in terms of how long the perfect interval is and although it necessarily includes speech time, it is unspecified as to whether the eventuality itself overlaps speech time or not. The interval's inclusion of speech time also accounts for the complicated, yet intuitive, notion specific to the PRESENT PERFECT, such that the past situation is somehow linked to the present, known as "current relevance" (Comrie 1976).

The Indefinite Past theory is so called because the situation described in the PRESENT PERFECT occurs some time prior to speech time, and the distance between the situation and speech time is not specified. Klein builds upon Reichenbach's system by including the notions of finiteness in the definitions of E, R and S. In the IP theory, these three moments are considered intervals instead of points, but the basic temporal relations remain the same, such that the relation of tense is expressed by Klein's 'time of utterance' (Reichenbach's S) and 'topic time' (Reichenbach's R) and the relation of aspect is expressed by 'topic time' and 'time of situation' (Reichenbach's E). The main difference is that the 'time of situation' (TSIT), besides representing the event time, also refers to the non-finite component of the clause. And the 'topic time' (TT) is no longer vaguely defined as some contextually determined point as in Reichenbach's R point, but is the interval which corresponds to the finite component of the clause, and is the mediating interval between the other two. So, instead of the perfect introducing an interval independent of the other tense-aspect structures, the idea here is merely to qualify the role of reference time and event time with Klein's topic time and time of situation. The tense part of the PRESENT PERFECT is marked by the relation between topic time and speech time (TT-TU) while the aspect part is marked by the relation between topic time and event time (TT-TSIT). The graphic in (7) illustrates the conception of the PRESENT PERFECT in the IP theory. Here, TT and TU are not simultaneous, as were R and S in Reichenbach's system; TT includes TU and TT comes after TSIT.

- (7) Tense: TT includes TU = PRESENT  
Aspect: TT after TSIT = PERFECT



One immediate result of this conception of topic time is how it accounts for the notion of “current relevance”. While the situation being described by the PRESENT PERFECT occurred in the past, the speaker is making a claim at a time which includes the moment of speech. Current relevance, situated in the time after the time of the situation, is thusly represented by topic time, which starts prior to, includes and possibly surpasses the moment of speech. This relation does not deny that the situation may still occur, at speech time or in the future, but this is not a requirement for the use of the PRESENT PERFECT. Often, the idea of current relevance can be resolved by the previous establishment of the topic time as shown in (8) and (9) (example by Ana Ibaños).

(8) A: Why are you in prison?

B: I've killed my husband.

(9) A: Why were you in prison?

B: I killed my husband.

In (8), speaker A establishes the TT for the present, such that s/he is asking what past occurrence has led to speaker B's present state. In (9), the killing situation is relevant to Speaker B's time spent in prison and not to her present state of being out of prison. So, upon leaving prison, Speaker B would no longer use the present perfect to express the past relevance of the killing situation. Thus, TT is truly a relevance time in that it sets up the time for which the situation is relevant. The XN interval nor the simultaneity of S and R can account for this subtlety.

Another result of this conception of the PRESENT PERFECT in the IP theory is that it is unspecified as to the distance between the time of situation and the speech time as well as the number of times the eventuality occurs before speech time. These values of distance and repetition are unspecified in the XN theory as well, which means they both allow for much modification. However, it will be shown along the course of the paper that the XN interval's obligatory inclusion of speech time will not allow for a proper account of the different readings in both languages. Next, we will look at the role of lexical temporal information in the respective PRESENT PERFECT meanings.

## LEXICAL ASPECT

Lexical aspect is understood here as the inherent temporal information in verbs, verb phrases and simple sentences. The situations or eventualities picked out by VPs or simple sentences can be classified in different ways. The most widely assumed classification system is that of Vendler's (1967) classes, which have been assumed and revised by Dowty (and which have also been historically attributed to Aristotle, Ryle (1949) and Kenny (1963)). Dowty's version of Vendler's classification system will be compared to that of Klein's system, which is quite a different take on how VPs and simple sentences should be classified. The motivations of Klein's changes are independent of PRESENT PERFECT phenomena (which will be discussed below), but it will be shown how this different perspective will have an effect on how the different readings are accounted for.

The basic idea is that the aspectual classes introduce tendencies for readings that might arise, creating possible patterns, but these are not clear-cut classifications since other factors are often involved, such as adverbial modification, plural vs. singular noun phrases, discourse, context, etc. The purpose in this section is to lay out the different classification systems according to the XN and IP theories and to make predictions about the possible patterns that arise between the different classes and the different readings available. Dowty's classification system, as summarized in (10) includes the notion of agency, but this does not seem to have any effect on the readings as discussed here. However, the division between agentive and non-agentive is left in here for the sake of remaining faithful to the original (1979: 184). An extra column was added to show what tests are used to determine the correct membership of verbs and verb phrases. It is noted that some states can occur in an '-ing' context while others cannot as shown by the '\*' marking unacceptability. States also cannot occur in 'do' constructions, such as '\*What John *did* was love Mary'. Activities reflect an entailment such that the past progressive form of the verb entails the present perfect. For example, 'John was walking' entails 'John has walked'. This entailment does not hold for achievements nor for accomplishments.

(10)

Aspectual class	Non-agentive	Agentive	Tests
States	1a. be asleep; love; know 1b. interval statives: sit, stand, lie	2a. be polite; be a hero (or in 4) 2b. interval statives: sit, stand, lie (with human subject)	1a.: *-ing 1b,2b,3-8: -ing 1-2: *'do' constructions
Activities	3. make noise, roll, rain	4. walk, laugh, dance	was V-ing → *has V-ed
Achievements	5. notice, realize, ignite	6. kill, point out (something to someone)	was V-ing → *has V-ed *finished V-ing
Accomplishments	7. flow from x to y; dissolve	8. build (a house); walk from x to y; walk a mile	was V-ing → *has V-ed finished V-ing

Despite the tests, “type-shifting” often occurs such that certain verbs in certain contexts can change categories.<sup>5</sup> Statives, in particular, seem to behave differently in different contexts, like ‘be sick’ versus ‘be intelligent’, which cannot be captured by the tests available in (10). For example, a distinction can be made between individual-level stative predicates (ILPs) which refer to those statives that are apparently permanent (e.g. ‘be intelligent’) and stage-level stative predicates (SLPs) which refer to those statives that are apparently temporary (e.g. ‘be sick’) (Kratzer 1995). When in the PRESENT PERFECT, these two classes of statives give rise to different types of readings, as will be shown in the next section. The basic idea, though, is that the temporary nature of SLPs will allow for iterative or durative readings, while the permanent nature of ILPs will, in the PRESENT PERFECT, give rise to a shift, giving it an eventive reading, as in ‘John has been intelligent’, where John has actively demonstrated his intelligence on one or more occasions. In Dowty’s system, they were both simply statives and nature of the shift in reading is not obvious. Overall, while testing gives a general idea of verb class membership, the possibility of type-shifting questions the nature of the categories themselves and how this has consequences for the understanding of their role in all tense-aspect structures and not just the PRESENT PERFECT.

In Klein’s IP theory, the aspectual classes are not defined in terms of test distinctions, but in terms of topic time, which can be considered the time for which the claim is made, or its evaluation time. Since topic time also includes the notion of finiteness and considering the role of topic time in the PRESENT PERFECT, this illustrates an overlap in tense, grammatical aspect and lexical aspect categories. Indeed, Klein defends that it is inconceivable to make clearcut distinctions between the three categories and that they all interact to express notions of temporality. In this classification system, the nonfinite lexical information of the VP is located in the time of situation, which is prior to speech time and topic time. The topic time is understood as the time for which the situation is evaluated. That is, topic

<sup>5</sup> Most of these type-shifts do not have a direct effect on PRESENT PERFECT readings but which take away from the consistency of this classification system, such as achievements that become accomplishments when in the progressive form. For example, ‘win the race’ and ‘reach the summit’ are considered achievements and thusly, instantaneous, suggesting that they would not be able to take the progressive form. However, ‘winning the race’ and ‘reaching the summit’ are perfectly acceptable, but would then be understood as accomplishments. This shift occurs even though achievements and accomplishments behave similarly with regards to the ‘was V-ing’ → ‘has V-ed’ entailment test. Also, activities such as ‘walk’ often shift to accomplishments when adverbial phrases like ‘to the store’ are added.

time can be seen as a kind of temporal constraint on the situation's realization. In the PRESENT PERFECT, the topic time evaluates the claim of the prior eventuality at speech time. This role of topic time as distinguishing between aspectual classes is summarized as 'topic time contrast' as shown in table (11) below.

Adopting von Wright's state of change calculus (1963), Klein attempts to simplify the classification system to a conceptual minimum and avoids aspectual modification testing like that used in Dowty's classification system (e.g. was V-ing → has V-ed), which are meant to illustrate the completion or not of an event in different constructions. Klein defends this information is part of pragmatics and world knowledge and should not be part of the verb classification system. This simplification also means avoiding the inclusion of other aspectual features often found in classification systems in the literature such as [+/-boundedness], [+/-dynamic], [+/-duration] and [+/-telic], etc. The table in (11) shows how the verb classes are reduced to states or changes of states.

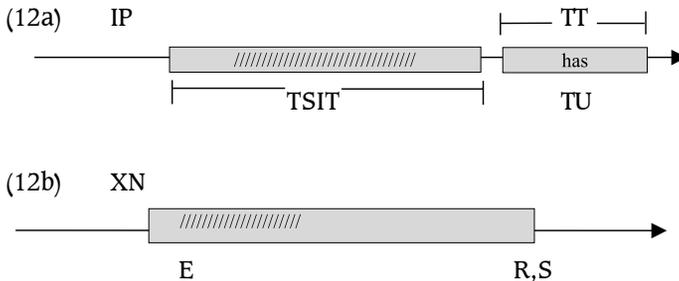
(11)

Lexical Content	Topic Time Contrast
0-states	None. There is no other time at which the sentence is not true.
1-states	At least one. There is at least one other possible time at which the sentence is not true.
2-states	There is a change of state, such that these lexical contents are composed of two states, a source state (SS) and a target state (TS). For each state, there is at least one other possible time at which the state is not true.

To say that a situation has no TT contrast means it is a 0-state; there is no change in state. This means there is no time before (pre-time) or time after (post-time) which the sentence is not true. For example '\*the book has been in Russian' is unacceptable since a book's being in Russian is presumably true for the whole of the book's existence. This category of 0-states would correspond to ILPs as discussed earlier, or those statives considered to be permanent. SLPs and activities would be grouped together in 1-states, such that for 'John has been funny', there is some pre-time and post-time at which John is not funny and for 'John has run', there is some pre-time and post-time at which John is not running. 2-states would include achievements and accomplishments such that each has a source state and a target state, both of which have pre- and post-times. For 'John has built a house' (SS: house not built, TS: house built) and 'John has noticed the girl' (SS: not notice girl, TS: notice girl), there is a general feature of some activity which brings about the target state. This general feature does not require intentionality as would agentivity. An independent benefit of this simplified perspective on aspectual classification is that type-shifting is kept to a minimum.

The shift relevant to the PRESENT PERFECT, that between SLPs (1-states) and ILPs (0-states), is predicted by the fact that they are already conceived of as belonging to different classes. The possible iterative and durative readings of SLPs is explained by TT contrast such that there is at least one other possible time at which this type of stative is not true, thus, they are temporary. For apparently permanent ILPs used in the PRESENT PERFECT, the shift is from 0-states, for which there is no TT contrast, to 1-states, for which there is TT contrast and an eventive reading is possible.<sup>4</sup>

Summing up, the lexical information picked out by VPs and simple sentences are worked into each theory in different ways. In the IP theory, as illustrated in (12a), the lexical information is worked into the time of situation, prior to speech time and topic time. (12b) illustrates the XN theory, where the lexical information is worked into the XN interval, which necessarily includes speech time and reference time.



Note that both theories leave unspecified information regarding the left boundary of the interval including the eventuality description. Also, information about the distance between the eventuality and speech time and its possible repetitions before, during or after speech time are left unspecified. This way, the basic readings as explained in section 3 correlate similarly to the aspectual classes in both theories. The difference so far is that the shifts that occur in SLPs and ILPs are better predicted by Klein's classification system. Moreover, when the basic readings are made more explicit, for example by adverbial modification (section 4), it will be shown that the XN theory is not capable of accounting for possible differences in readings due to its necessary inclusion of speech time.

<sup>4</sup> The shift from 1-states (activities) to 2-states (accomplishments) becomes clear here, as we can say that 2-states are formed by adding a target state to 1-states. So, 'run', a 1-state, is shifted to a 2-state when a target state, 'to the store', is added lexically.

## THE BASIC READINGS

As mentioned earlier in (3), repeated here as (13), the main readings for the AE PRESENT PERFECT are resultative, recent past, experiential and persistent situation (Comrie 1976). Notice that the recent past readings can be understood as either a kind of resultative or experiential and the resultative, in turn, can be seen as a kind of experiential. These subtle differences are usually due to adverb modification, such that without adverbs, the four readings can be reduced to two: universal and existential (McCawley 1971).

## (13) AE

- |  |   |               |
|--|---|---------------|
| a. Experiential: John has visited Paris. (once/before)                       | } | (Existential) |
| b. Resultative: John has arrived. (and is here)                              |   |               |
| c. Recent past: I have just graduated from college.                          |   |               |
| d. Persistent situation: John has lived in New York for 4 years. (Universal) |   |               |

The universal reading means that the predicate holds true throughout the entire perfect interval, including speech time, while the existential perfect means that the predicate is true at least one time before speech time (McCawley 1971; McCoard 1978; Dowty 1979). Given these definitions and our previous aspectual classifications, we can predict that statives and 1-states can give rise to universal readings and all other classes can give rise to existential readings. The existential reading, 'at least once', allows for possible repetition while universals express duration. Temporal adverbs can then serve to make these features of repetition and duration more explicit. This way, adverbs play an important role in interpreting the PRESENT PERFECT. So important, in fact, that theorists considered the BP PRESENT PERFECT to have the particular characteristic, setting it apart from other languages, of not requiring adverbial modification (Boléo 1936; Ilari 2001). However, adverb modification is not a necessary condition for using and understanding the PRESENT PERFECT in AE either, but whose purpose is to make the basic readings more explicit. (14a) expresses a repetition of visits to Disneyland while (14b) expresses a durative situation of Mary's being happy in Europe.

## (14) BP

- a. Iterative: O Bruno tem ido a Disney. (várias vezes)  
The Bruno has gone to-the Disneyland.  
'Bruno has been going to Disneyland'.
- b. Durative: A Maria tem sido feliz na Europa.  
The Maria has been happy in-the Europe.  
'Mary has been happy in Europe'.

While the readings in (14) seem to correspond to existential and universal readings, the BP PRESENT PERFECT has been cited as having only a universal, and not an existential, reading (Brugger 1978; Squartini and Bertinetto 2000). This may be due to the notion that the existential refers to one and only one occurrence of an eventuality, while the universal refers to duration and indefinite repetition of eventualities. This idea conflicts directly with Amaral and Howe's (2005) claim that the existential is a subcase of iterativity. The idea that existentials refer to only one occurrence of the eventuality in question is a matter of pragmatic implicature, which can be canceled in a context suggesting repetition as well as the fact that adverbs of repetition are perfectly acceptable with the PRESENT PERFECT. I will use the term 'noncontinuous' to accommodate both existential and iterative possibilities and 'continuous' to refer to universals as being durative, avoiding the possible confusion that they can also refer to repetition. So, continuous readings arise when certain predicates are used to express duration or continuity throughout the interval and whose subevents repeat. Noncontinuous readings arise when certain predicates are used to express iterative situations, repeating whole events. Single-occurring events are considered noncontinuous as well, being a kind of shortened version of iterating events, as long as repetition is possible. Hence, the iterative PRESENT PERFECT in BP and the existential PRESENT PERFECT in AE fall under the same general type of reading, the noncontinuous, (15a,b,c). The continuous readings are the same in both languages, (16a,b).

- |         |                                     |                         |                 |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| (15) a. | A gente tem corrido. (muitas vezes) | } Iterative             | } Noncontinuous |
|         | The people have run (many times)    |                         |                 |
|         | 'We've been running'                |                         |                 |
| b.      | We have run. (once)                 | Resultative/Existential | }               |
| c.      | We have run every day.              | Iterative               |                 |

- (16) a. A professora tem sido paciente com as crianças.<sup>5</sup>  
 The professor has been patient with the children.  
 'The professor has been patient with the children'.  
 b. The professor has been patient with the children.
- } Continuous

This way of characterizing noncontinuous readings is compatible with the notion of some presupposition of repeatability that is often associated with the PRESENT PERFECT (Inoue 1979; Smith 1997; Katz 2003). That is, the AE PRESENT PERFECT is often used to express one-time occurring eventualities, but there is still some element of repetition that guides its felicitous use.

- (17) a. ??Einstein has visited Princeton.  
 b. Princeton has been visited by Einstein.

It has been noted that examples like (17a) are unacceptable because Einstein is dead and is therefore no longer capable of visiting Princeton again (Inoue 1979). However, (17b) is more acceptable if we are talking about Nobel Prize winners who have visited Princeton. In (18), there are two conditions which must be met for the sentence to be felicitous.

- (18) Have you visited the museum exhibit?

It is only appropriate to ask this question if: (i) the museum exhibit is still open, so that one can still possibly visit it; and (ii) the person being asked the question is physically capable of visiting the museum exhibit. Hence, the event in question must be repeatable and the referents of the noun phrase must exist at the time of utterance (Smith 1997). This condition of repeatability corroborates the idea that existential-type readings are a subtype of iterative readings. However, this does not mean that the eventuality must repeat at present or any time in the future, as shown by (19a). Even when the eventuality is understood as iterative as in the BP counterpart (19b), continuation can be canceled. So, while the eventualities need

<sup>5</sup> This example can also be understood as noncontinuous, given the right context, and is a possibility that can be argued for in the English counterpart as well.

not repeat, or continue to repeat, the possibility must be there at speech time.

- (19) a. I have visited my parents, but I won't anymore.  
 b. Eu tenho visitado os meus pais, mas não vou mais.  
 I have visited the my parents, but no I-go more.  
 'I've been visiting my parents, but I won't anymore'

The result of this is that even though the default understanding of the AE PRESENT PERFECT is that the situation happened only once, a condition for uttering it is that of repeatability, in the sense of a possibility of repetition. In BP, the default understanding is that the situation has happened various unspecified times and can possibly continue, but not necessarily. Hence, it is this presupposition of repeatability that distinguishes between the different uses in the two languages. As mentioned earlier, aspectual classes introduce tendencies for readings that might arise, creating possible patterns. It was predicted at the beginning of the section that statives (Dowty) and 1-states (Klein) can give rise to continuous readings while all other classes can give rise to noncontinuous readings. Below is a rough correlation between aspectual class and types of readings. In (20) and (21), the examples show that achievements, accomplishments, or 2-states give rise to noncontinuous readings.

Achievements and Accomplishments / 2-states: Noncontinuous readings

- (20) a. A Lúcia tem chegado tarde ao escritório. (iterative events)  
 The Lucia has arrived late to-the office.  
 'Lucia has been arriving late to the office'.  
 b. Lucia has arrived late to the office. (existential)
- (21) a. O Paulo tem pintado a casa. (iterative subevents)  
 The Paulo has painted the house.  
 'Paulo has been painting the house'.  
 b. Paulo has painted the house. (existential)

In (21a), this may mean that the target state is not necessarily reached: the house is not completely painted yet. Or, in a suitable context

where, for example, the house is a miniature toy, it is conceivable that Paulo has painted the same house over and over. The difference between the repeating subevents of an achievement and those of activities or statives refers to the implied telicity of achievements, or in Klein's terms, the fact that achievements are made of 2 states while activities and some states, only one. Activities or 1-states, when in the PRESENT PERFECT, give rise to non-continuous readings as well, as shown in (22).

Activities / 1-states: Noncontinuous readings

- (22) a. A Ana tem corrido muito. (iterative events or subevents)  
 The Ana has run a lot.  
 'Ana has been running a lot'.
- b. Ana has run a lot. (existential/iterative events)

The difference in (22), when compared to (20) and (21), is that since there is no target state, the examples can be understood as having repeating subevents or events. For example, (22) can be understood as repeating subevents if Ana is running a marathon and it is not over yet. Then it would be understood similarly to (21). Otherwise, with an implicit target state in mind (a particular distance, for example), it would be understood as iterative events of running, or as an existential in AE. (23) illustrates the importance of distinguishing stage-level and individual level predicates since they behave slightly differently with respect to iterativity and continuity, as previously mentioned.

Individual-Level Predicates (ILP) / 0-states: Noncontinuous readings

- (23) a. O João tem sido inteligente. (iterative events)  
 The João has been intelligent.  
 'João has been intelligent'.
- b. John has been intelligent. (existential/iterative events)

The sentences in (23) most likely mean that João has demonstrated his intelligence on various occasions. Here, in Klein's system, it is the PRESENT PERFECT structure that shifts the 0-state (permanent) to a 1-state (temporary) such that an iterative or existential reading is possible. This difference is not predicted by Dowty's system. (24a) and (24b) behave similarly

in AE and BP. In an iterative context, Mary may have been sick on various occasions, while in a durative context, Mary's being sick refers to one, continuous situation.

Stage-Level Predicates (SLP) / 1-states: Continuous or Noncontinuous readings

- (24) a. A Maria tem estado doente. (iterative or durative)  
 The Mary has been sick.  
 'Mary has been sick'.  
 b. Mary has been sick. (iterative or durative)

It appears that only SLPs do not force iterativity in BP and continuity holds. An iterative reading is also possible, but only with overt adverbial modification (Amaral and Howe 2005). The same is true in AE, as the gloss shows in (25).

- (25) A Maria tem estado doente muitas vezes ultimamente.  
 The Mary has been sick many times lately.  
 'Mary has been sick a lot lately'.

For eventive predicates<sup>6</sup>, the AE PRESENT PERFECT is compatible with one-time readings and iterative readings, while the BP forces iterative readings and does not seem to allow for one-time readings, unless they are like those cases in (21), where the eventuality is understood as incomplete. So far, the only benefit of Klein's system is its prediction of 0-states shifting to 1-states when described by the PRESENT PERFECT. However, more shifts are possible depending on factors such as context, adverbial modification and the use of plural NPs with the PRESENT PERFECT. The next section will deal only with adverbial modification due to space restrictions. It will be shown how the IP theory is more compatible with reading shifts than XN, particularly with regards to repetition.

<sup>6</sup> i.e. accomplishments, achievements, activities and ILPs coerced into an eventive context.

## ADVERB COMPATIBILITY

## THE FREQUENCY PUZZLE

To better understand the frequency puzzle, it is important to remember the presupposition of repeatability, as discussed in section 2, which acts differently on the PRESENT PERFECT meanings in each language. Within the possible readings of noncontinuity, the default expectation in AE is of completion, while in BP it is of continuation. Continuation of an eventive predicate gives us repetition. The puzzle we face in BP though, is the fact that while AE is compatible with both types of noncontinuous readings, BP is not. That is, the BP PRESENT PERFECT cannot be used to express a single, completed eventuality with eventive predicates. It is defended here that this is a matter of a pragmatic condition of repeatability and not a semantic restriction. Various factors are involved in answering the question in (26).

- (26) O Paulo tem te ligado?  
 The Paulo has you called.  
 ‘Has Paulo called/been calling you?’.

The interval within which a call could have occurred is contextually determined based on intimacy/proximity to the subject, past experience, such that a close friend would normally call within days or weeks, while a distant friend could call within months. If one phone call occurs within this contextually determined interval, one would not be able to respond ‘não’ (‘no’), since this would mean that no calls occurred in this interval, which would be false. It seems a one-time occurrence can be inferred, but it cannot be made explicit in the same utterance as the PRESENT PERFECT structure, as in ‘\*Paulo tem ligado uma vez’ (‘Paulo has called one time’). Now consider (27).

- (27) A Brenda tem beijado. (\*três vezes)  
 The Brenda has kissed. (three times)  
 ‘Brenda has kissed/been kissing. (three times)’

The speaker may continue this utterance by describing three specific occasions on which Brenda kissed. But, s/he would not be able to specify

this as shown by the unacceptability in (27) of a continuation with ‘três vezes’. This expectation of repetition has created a sense that the BP PRESENT PERFECT is a kind of imperfective or that it possesses imperfective qualities (Squartini and Bertinetto 2000), in that it must refer to indefinite repetition with eventive predicates. The PRESENT PERFECT meaning given by Klein’s IP theory is compatible with this, given it says nothing about frequency. An XN theory is not compatible with this since the existential reading is considered as one and only one eventuality (instead of ‘at least one’), treating examples like (28a) as single events of many kissings.

- (28) a. A Brenda tem beijado muitas vezes.  
The Brenda has kissed many times.
- b. Bill has read “The Da Vinci Code” five times.

In AE, existential events can shift to iterative ones with frequency adverbs, as in (28b), which is easily accounted for in the IP theory given that frequency adverbs modify the number of eventualities or situations to which the lexical content is associated. In the XN theory, (34b) would be treated as a single event of five readings, which does not seem to intuitively reflect the nature of repetition, be it definite as in (28b) or indefinite as in (34a). Frequency adverbs can modify all types of eventualities, but usually not statives. Those statives that do accept frequency modification are those that fall under the 1-state category in Klein’s system, as in example (25) above. The AE PRESENT PERFECT can be modified by definite (e.g. ‘once’, ‘three times’) and indefinite frequency (e.g. ‘often’, ‘many times’) adverbials while the BP PRESENT PERFECT can only be modified by indefinite frequency adverbs as shown in examples (29) – (31). Example (30) shows how modification with a definite frequency adverb is acceptable in a context of indefinite repetition or habituality.

- (29) Eles têm nos visitado várias vezes/\*três vezes.  
They have us visited three times/ many times.  
‘They have visited us three times/many times’.

- (30) Eles têm nos visitado três vezes por semana.  
They have us visited three times per week.  
‘They have visited us three times a week’.

(31) O João tem encontrado o professor frequentemente./\*duas vezes.

The João has encountered the professor frequently./ two times.

'João has met with the professor frequently./twice'.

In BP, the condition of repeatability is only met if the repetition is left indefinite.<sup>7</sup> While AE is compatible with repetition, its condition of repeatability is met only if the possibility of repetition remains at speech time as seen in examples (17) and (18). The IP framework accounts for both types of repetition, definite and indefinite, since the interval within which the eventuality occurs remains unspecified in terms of repetition and is detached from speech time, allowing for repetition that does not include this moment. The differences between languages regarding definiteness can be explained by how the presupposition of repeatability acts differently in the two varieties of PRESENT PERFECT.

#### THE "PRESENT PERFECT PUZZLE"

This is the "original" present perfect puzzle, which refers to the incompatibility of the PRESENT PERFECT with positional adverbs (Klein 1992, 1994).<sup>8</sup> Positional adverbs can modify either the topic time (reference time) or the time of eventuality for all types, but statives less so. The potential for dual modification is more easily demonstrated with the past perfect as shown in examples (32) and (33).

(32) Chris had left **yesterday**. (TT)

(33) Chris wasn't in his hotel room this morning. He had **left** yesterday. (event time)

<sup>7</sup> Corroborating the idea that the BP PRESENT PERFECT possesses imperfective qualities, or a sense of habituality, it has been shown in sociolinguistic studies of BP that the present progressive is often used in the same contexts that would license the PRESENT PERFECT (Mendes 2003).

<sup>8</sup> These puzzles have been shown not to arise in other Germanic and romance languages like German, Dutch, Italian (Pancheva and von Stechow 2004) and French (de Swart forthcoming). Interestingly, it has also been shown not to arise in Australian English (Engel and Ritz 2000). This suggests that the PRESENT PERFECT in these languages, including BP, are undergoing some kind of evolution and expansion of uses. This is confirmed by Amaral and Howe's (2005) investigation into the grammaticalization process of the 'ter' versus 'haver' auxiliary, the latter of which is predominantly used to form the PRESENT PERFECT in other Romance languages.

Modification of one or the other time interval depends on other cues given by further lexical specification, discourse or context. Both the AE and BP PRESENT PERFECTS are not compatible with position-definite adverbs, as shown by the unacceptability of the examples in (34).

- (34) a. \*Chris has worked yesterday.  
 b. \*O Chris tem trabalhado ontem.

This restriction is due to the fact that the topic time is already being modified in terms of position, in the present tense, by the time of utterance. So, positional adverbs cannot modify both the topic time and the eventuality time simultaneously. This constraint, known as the PRESENT PERFECT puzzle, does not need to be explained by independent pragmatic constraints (as Klein does), since by simply making the distinction between definite and indefinite positional adverbs, it seems a natural result that eventualities cannot be doubly marked in terms of position. However, in a context of habituality, both AE and BP PRESENT PERFECTS can be modified with definite adverbs, giving rise to the reading that on various occasions Chris has worked at 9 o'clock or on Sunday. See (35) and (36).

- (35) a. O Chris tem trabalhado às 9 horas.  
 The Chris has worked at-the 9 hours.  
 b. Chris has worked at 9 o'clock.

- (36) a. O Chris tem trabalhado no domingo.  
 The Chris has worked on-the sunday.  
 b. Chris has worked on Sunday.

Again, the subtle differences in the readings regarding a default existential reading for AE and a default iterative reading for BP are both accounted for in the IP theory. The general similarity in behavior of the two languages regarding compatibility with positional adverbs marks one more point of convergence where both PRESENT PERFECT varieties can be treated within the same framework.

## A DURATIVE PUZZLE?

Durative adverbs can modify the eventuality time of states, specifying a continuous reading, whereas the durative modification of events would give rise to noncontinuous readings. The AE PRESENT PERFECT accepts modification of definite and indefinite durations, while BP often does as well. However, there is some variation of acceptability, which may be due to a possible influence of European Portuguese, whose speakers consistently do not accept definite modification of duration with the PRESENT PERFECT (Móia and Amaral, personal communications, 2005).

- (37) a. I have lived here for ten years/many years.  
 b. Eu tenho morado aqui por muitos anos/??por??há dez anos.
- (38) Mary has been sick for a long time /for two weeks .  
 A Maria tem estado doente por muito tempo/??duas semanas.
- (39) Eu tenho morado aqui desde criança.  
 I have lived here since I was a child.

'Since' acts a bit differently because it seems to mark both a duration and a position, the left boundary. In this sense, it is position-definite, but the duration is indefinite. Regardless of this variable acceptability, it can still be treated along the same lines as the restriction with frequency adverbs as discussed above. Whether the variation is a matter of dialectal variation or not, both possible readings are accountable in the IP theory, where modification of the durative interval does not include speech time. The XN interval necessarily includes speech time which is not preferable considering that this inclusion is always cancelable with such continuations as 'but not anymore' ('mas não mais'), suggesting it is more of a pragmatic implicature.

Summing up, the ability of the IP theory to deal with iterative readings when modified by frequency adverbs and the similar behaviors of the two varieties of PRESENT PERFECT when modified by other types of adverbs argue in favor of the IP theory over the XN theory.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis outlined, while of an informal nature, argues for a unified analysis of the PRESENT PERFECT in American English and Brazilian Portuguese. Under an Indefinite Past framework, the basic PRESENT PERFECT meaning in both languages is uniform and the differences can be explained by a pragmatic differences regarding a condition of repeatability. Future study must take into account the modal properties involved in this condition of repeatability and must also explore the generic, habitual and imperfective characteristics of the PRESENT PERFECT.

## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role of “lexical aspect” (“Aktionsart” or “verb semantics” or “inherent aspect”, etc.) in understanding the Present Perfect in English and Portuguese. I will measure out the consequences of assuming one conception over another, given the respective Present Perfect meaning assumed. In this case, the comparison involves Vendler (1967) and Dowty (1979) versus Klein (1994). It will be shown how this methodological choice has an effect on how we interpret the various readings attributed to the Present Perfect in English and Portuguese. The readings of the English Present Perfect (resultative, experiential, persistent situation, recent past (COMRIE, 1976)), are at odds with the readings of the corresponding structure in Portuguese, the “pretérito perfeito composto” (default iterativity and occasional duration (ILARI, 2001)). Despite these variations, this study will provide a unified analysis for the Present Perfect in English and Portuguese, which have traditionally been treated as semantically divergent. From this analysis will be derived an explanation for the various Present Perfect puzzles that arise in each language.

Key-words: *Present Perfect; iterativity; puzzles.*

## RESUMO

Este artigo investiga o papel do “aspecto lexical” (“Aktionsart” ou “semântica dos verbos” ou “categoria aspectual”, etc.) no entendimento do pretérito perfeito composto em português e do *Present Perfect* em inglês. Vou medir as consequências de assumir uma concepção sobre outra, dadas as respectivas definições. Neste caso, vou comparar os sistemas de Vendler

(1967) e Dowty (1979) *versus* Klein (1994). Esta escolha metodológica afeta a interpretação das diferentes leituras atribuídas ao pretérito perfeito composto/*Present Perfect* nas duas línguas. As leituras do *Present Perfect* em inglês (resultativo, experiencial, situação persistente, passado recente (COMRIE, 1976)) entram em conflito com as leituras da estrutura correspondente em português, o pretérito perfeito composto (iteratividade e duração (ILARI, 2001)). Apesar dessas variações, este trabalho propõe uma análise unificada para as estruturas “ter+ -ado”/“have+ -ed” em português e inglês, que geralmente são tratadas como semanticamente diferentes. Desta análise vai ser derivada uma explicação dos vários enigmas que cada língua apresenta.

Palavras-chave: *pretérito perfeito composto; iteratividade; enigmas.*

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