

## Language contact and the development of Bulgarian *have*-perfects

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The formation of a new Bulgarian perfect(-like) resultative construction with auxiliary *have* and a past passive participle ending in *-n/-t* has featured prominently in the specialist literature for a long time, with questions about its status and nature still generating debate amongst scholars in Bulgaria and further afield (see Georgiev 1976[1957]; Friedman 1976; Asenova 1987; Elliott 2001; Xaralampiev 2001: 144–145; Kuteva and Heine 2004: 43–44; Nicolova 2008: 270; 2016; 2017: 379–381; Hristov 2020).

Different motivations have been proposed for the emergence of this new grammatical construction. Some researchers see it as a predominantly functionally-motivated language-internal development: prompted by contact with Turkish, the earlier Bulgarian *be*-perfect (formed with *be* and a past active participle) acquired an additional function of expressing non-witnessed events, so a new *have*-perfect was recruited to alleviate the functional load of the older construction (see Georgiev 1957; Mirčev 1976; Hristov 2020, including problems for such an account).

Primarily language-external explanations have also been put forward. Popova (1931), Georgiev (1957: 45), Mladenov (1979[1929]: 292) and Elliott (2001: 49), among others, make a case for Romance influence on the *have*-perfect construction in Bulgarian and the closely related Macedonian. Support for such contact scenarios is supplied by the variable geographical distribution and entrenchment of *have*-perfects on Bulgarian/Macedonian territory, as well as the areal spread of different types of perfect in the rest of Europe, coupled with the rarity of *have* as a perfect auxiliary outside Western Europe (see Friedman 1976; Drinka 2017; Hristov 2020). *Have*-perfects appear to be most entrenched in south-western Macedonian varieties and increasingly less so the further north and east one goes. The different participial profile of Eastern European languages with two past participles (active and passive) is noteworthy too, as is mixing them up despite their morphological distinctness – they are thus brought into line with those of the Romance and Germanic languages. All of this is indicative of Western European and/or Greek influence on the emergence of this new perfect, as noted in earlier work (Drinka 2017, Hristov 2020, with references). Considering the textual record and translations evincing foreign models, it is not at all implausible to conclude that this type of perfect periphrasis spread in Europe and in the Balkans as a result of language contact, stemming from prestigious languages like Latin and/or Greek.

In order to provide further empirical testing of this hypothesis, I propose to look at a sample of texts and examine the occurrence and entrenchment of *have*-perfects in them in view of their geographical provenance. The aim will be to collect data from a standard Macedonian online newspaper, and compare it to three sources of Bulgarian data: a comparable sample from a standard/nation-wide Bulgarian daily, alongside a local media sample from the south-west (Blagoevgrad) and the north-east (Varna). Evidence of variable entrenchment from south-west to north-east can suggest that each contiguous variety has replicated the grammaticalised structures of its neighbours in an externally prompted round of grammaticalisation, but the replicas will naturally be less entrenched (and hence also less frequent and grammaticalised) than in the source variety. Such a synchronic areal snapshot can help elucidate the diachronic diffusion of this construction in the Balkans and provide further support for an external motivation for the rise of *have*-perfects in South Slavonic and Europe more widely.

**Key words:** grammaticalisation, *have*-perfect, language contact, Bulgarian, Macedonian

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