

Formal similarity encourages analogical semantic change
The Romance pluperfect and the perfect-to-perfective shift
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This project examines the development of the compound pluperfect [CPP] (imperfect auxiliary + past participle, ex. Sp. *había cantado* ‘I had sung’) in several western European Romance languages and specifically what relation this process had with the perfect-to-perfective shift (Condoravdi & Deo 2014) (also called *aoristic drift* (Bybee, et al. 1994, Squartini & Bertinetto 2000)) in the Romance compound past [CP] (present auxiliary + past participle, ex. Sp. *(yo) he cantado* lit. ‘I have sung’). Data is presented from several large historical corpora of Spanish, French, and Portuguese which show that the generalization of the CPP was complete before any subsequent perfect-to-perfective shift of the CP in the areas where it occurred. The semantics of the CP appear to have been influenced via analogy with the structurally very similar CPP. The generalization of the CPP is thus suggested to be a necessary precondition of the perfect-to-perfective shift of the CP.

This perfect-to-perfective shift is seen in the evolution of the semantics of the French compound past *j’ai chanté*, from originally ‘I have sung’ (perfect), to now ‘I sang’ (perfective past, hereafter ‘perfective’), which was traditionally only able to be expressed by the simple past [SP] (also called the preterite, ex. Fr. *je chantai*). Once this shift was complete, the CP entered into variation with the SP, which resulted in the functional loss of the latter.

Although it happened far earlier, the loss of the Latin synthetic pluperfect (CANTAVERAM ‘I had sung’) and the generalization of the Romance compound pluperfect has been recognized as analogous to the generalization of the compound past at the expense of the simple past which took place in early modern French and is currently partially underway in peninsular Spanish (Squartini 1999). Just as a past form can have two functions, the pluperfect form can also have two functions, the past of the perfect or the past of the perfective. Like the expansion of the functions of the CP, the interpretations of the CPP progressed from a perfect to a perfective, only in the further past.

The proposal presented here, dubbed the **Pluperfect First Hypothesis**, states that any perfect-to-perfective shift is only able to occur in the CP after the CPP underwent that parallel semantic extension. As the aspect of the compound pluperfect extended from perfect-in-past to perfective-in-past (cf. Squartini 1999), it came into competition with the original Romance synthetic pluperfect (called the ‘-ra form’, ex. Pt. *cantara* ‘I had sung’). After a period of variation, the compound pluperfect was then generalized at the expense of the -ra form in all of western Romance, with the exception of Galician and literary Portuguese.

In each language here examined, the CPP becomes the generalized form for the perfective-in-past before the CP’s first extension into a perfective function. In every period in the main varieties of western European Romance, the functional development of the pluperfect is more advanced. The areas in which the compound pluperfect was first generalized show the largest perfect-to-perfective shift in the compound past. Specifically, modern French and Italian show the most advanced shift (Squartini & Bertinetto 2000), and likewise had a generalized perfective compound pluperfect earlier than in other languages where the shift is less advanced (Occitan, Catalan, Spanish), or altogether absent (Portuguese, Galician).

This project presents historical textual evidence to show that the development of a generalized CPP and the degree of perfect-to-perfective shift experienced by the CP are not simply parallelisms in Romance. Rather, the early development of a generalized perfective-in-

the-past compound pluperfect provided a model of a compound tense with perfective semantics. Then, through analogy the compound past also began to be used in perfective, in addition to perfect, contexts (as in early modern French and modern Spanish). This process was greatly facilitated by the formal similarity between the compound past and the pluperfect. Thus, the generalization of a compound pluperfect is named a necessary precondition of the perfect-to-perfective shift of the compound past.

References

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