

Thesis
3507

The Present Perfect

A Corpus-Based Investigation

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Abstract

On the basis of an investigation of a corpus of 5.5 million words, this thesis analyses the use of the present perfect in modern American and British English. The investigation traces the development of the present perfect from its origins as a structure with adjectival meaning to its modern-day use as an aspectual verb form.

A frequency analysis tests the claims of various writers that the present perfect is losing ground against the preterite and is less frequent in American than in British English. Neither claim is supported by the results of this analysis.

A temporal specifier analysis investigates the co-occurrence of a large number of adverbials with the various verb forms. It finds that certain groups of specifiers which have hitherto been considered markers for the present perfect are in fact very poor indicators. Specifiers indicating a period of time lasting up to the moment of utterance, however, are found to be very reliable indicators. With one exception no significant difference was found between the British and American corpora in this respect.

A functional-semantic analysis examines the various theories of the present perfect against the background of the results of the empirical investigation and finds them to be insufficient in one or more respects.

In the final chapter the division between tense and aspect is shown to be artificial and a model of the present perfect is presented which is based on the idea of multi-layered aspectual values. The model is centred on the unifying concept of phragmatisation - the closing of the event time-frame. According to this model, discourse topics involving the present perfect are perceived to describe an event which takes place in a time frame which is not closed to the deictic zero point at the moment of utterance. The final section describes which factors are operative in the phragmatisation or closing of event time frames.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the research reported has been conducted by myself unless otherwise indicated.

Esslingen, 19th May, 2000

Terence Stewart Wynne

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I would like to thank the following people from the Esslingen University of Applied Sciences: Peter Günther for his advice on statistics, and Arthur Möllmann, for introducing me to the data-base language Clipper in which Present Perfect Tagger was written.

I am also grateful to Peter Baker of the University of Virginia for making the Old English TrueType fonts used in Chapter 2 available on the Internet. Thanks to many members of the TESL-L Internet discussion forum for stimulating questions and observations on the present perfect and preterite verb forms.

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Most of all, my thanks to the two people without whom this thesis would not have been possible. I am deeply indebted to John Higgins, my supervisor at the Centre for English Language Teaching at the University of Stirling for all his help, support and encouragement. Thanks and a great deal more to my wife, Gitta, who sacrificed so much to give me the time to complete this thesis.

Of all tense-aspects in human language, the so-called *perfect* is by far the most complex.

Talmy Givón *Syntax: A functional-typological introduction*

One of the major problems encountered in time travel ... is quite simply one of grammar, and the main work to consult in this matter is Dr Dan Streetmentioner's *Time Traveller's Handbook of 1001 Tense Formations*. It will tell you for instance how to describe something that was about to happen to you in the past before you avoided it by time-jumping forward two days in order to avoid it. The event will be described differently according to whether you are talking about it from the standpoint of your own natural time, from a time in the further future, or a time in the further past and is further complicated by the possibility of conducting conversations while you are actually travelling from one time to another with the intention of becoming your own mother or father.

Most readers get as far as the Future Semi-Conditionally Modified Subinverted Plagal Past Subjunctive Intentional before giving up: and in fact in later editions of the book, all the pages beyond this point have been left blank to save on printing costs.

The *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* skips lightly over this tangle of academic abstraction, pausing only to note that the term 'Future Perfect' has been abandoned since it was discovered not to be.

Douglas Adams *The Restaurant at the Edge of the Universe*

Glossary of terms, symbols and abbreviations

? – considered to be an unlikely utterance

?? – considered to be a very unlikely utterance

* – considered to be an infelicitous utterance

➤ – cross-reference to another section of the thesis

aphragmatisation – the absence of a closed event time frame forcing the use of the present perfect

BUC – Brown University Corpus of American English

CF – co-occurrence factor – ratio of number of present perfect forms to number of preterite forms

continuative – an event which is perceived as not completed but which is not necessarily in progress at the moment of utterance

ERC – the event-result continuum

event – an action or state

expanded form – form of verb formed using BE + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE e.g. *she has been working*

felicitous – an utterance considered to be well-formed and grammatically acceptable

Gr. – group

IF – index factor = number of occurrences per 1000 words

LOB – Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen corpus

MOU – moment of utterance

mutative – expressing a change of state or place

N-F – non-finite verb forms

PaP – past perfect

phragmatisation – the presence of a closed event time frame forcing the use of the preterite

pres. – present verb form

pret. – preterite verb form (also known as past tense)

progressive – an event which is actually in progress at the moment of utterance

PPT – present perfect tagger – software written to tag texts for occurrences of the present perfect

PrP – present perfect

occs - occurrences

oth. - other

rel. – reliability

RF – reliability factor, as defined in section 5.1

semelfactive – a short, instantaneous action which does not focus on a preceding process
e.g. *he has arrived, she knocked*

telic – an event which involves the achievement of a goal e.g. *to eat up*

utterance – something spoken or written

utterer – somebody who says or writes something

utterer – somebody who hears or reads something

verb – *write, to write*

verb form – *has written, wrote*

verb phrase – *has written a letter*

verb constellation – *she has written a letter*

Note: Speakers and linguists, interlocutors and grammarians can be masculine or feminine. This fact is reflected in the random use of the personal pronouns in this thesis.

Corpora and sub-corpora used in this thesis

BritRadio – transcriptions of a BBC radio phone-in show – sub-corpus of COB

BritLect – transcriptions of lectures at Birmingham University, UK – sub-corpus of COB

BritSem – transcriptions of seminars at Birmingham University, UK – sub-corpus of COB

BritMix – transcriptions of meetings and presentations in Birmingham, UK – sub-corpus of COB

COB – Cobuild-Collins Bank of English collection of texts

CommXXXX – one of 8 subdivisions of USCOMM

CSPA – Corpus of Spoken Professional American English

FacMt9x – one of four subdivisions of USACAD

TIMES – compiled from *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* newspapers

USACAD – transcriptions of faculty meetings at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA

USCOMM – transcriptions of committee meetings to plan educational policy on reading and mathematics conducted at various locations in the US

WASHPOST – compiled from *The Washington Post* newspaper

WHPRESS – transcriptions of White House press conferences – sub-corpus of CSPA

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Aims and motives

Italian students (and TEACHERS as well) seem to be puzzled as they tackle the thorny area of Simple Past vs. Present Perfect usage. I personally believe that teachers should not be too fussy about it, especially at an early stage of the student's "career".

Anyhow, could anyone help me with regard to assessing which of the following sentences is theoretically correct:

- 1) I'm sorry I'm late ... I missed the bus.
- 2) I'm sorry I'm late ... I've missed the bus.

I would say that 2) is more appropriate, as the logical relationship between the two events (missing the bus – PAST – and being late – PRESENT) is pointed out. In other words it's the action and its consequence on the present that are stressed, and not the time of the action.

On the other hand 1) sounds good to my ear.

This message¹ from a member of the TESL-L list (discussion forum for Teaching English as a Second Language on the Internet) exemplifies the dilemma faced by students and teachers alike when dealing with the present perfect/preterite dichotomy. To use Krashen's terminology, the writer has obviously *acquired* the distinction between the two verb forms (the form which is actually more appropriate sounds intuitively right to her), but the rules he has *learned* tell her that it is probably "theoretically correct" to use the present perfect. Presumably it will be the logical rule and not his linguistic intuition which he will convey to his students with the consequence that most of them will fail to grasp the essence of the present perfect. What is it that makes the verb form present perfect so difficult to learn and to teach?

First of all, it must be said that the present perfect is many-faceted and has a number of different readings, some of which would seem to contradict each other. It is used, for example, for events which are clearly terminated [1.1], but on the other hand it is used for events which are in progress at the moment of speaking

¹ Available from TESL@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU in the log file TESL-L LOG9805C. Subject line: Simple past or present perfect? Author: Luca Giuberti.

[1.2]. It is used to describe recent events [1.3], on the other hand it can equally well be used to refer to events which took place long ago [1.4]. Learners and teachers of English must be forgiven for their confusion.²

[1.1] Cuts in personnel, equipment, however else we choose to absorb our cuts, especially layoffs that may be inevitable. Those measures are bad enough in hard times as I **have written** in a private note to Governor Hunt.
[USACAD: 122]

[1.2] <M01> Yeah true enough. Tell me something MX have you have you made a scarf or anything while while we while **we've been talking**?
<M02> The machines are running they're all running.
[BRITRADIO: 259]

[1.3] VOICE: Secretary Brown, could you comment on the Republican budget proposal to eliminate your department? BROWN: I've **commented** about that already today. We're sticking to our Japanese bilateral situation.
[WHPRESS: 418]

[1.4] In addition to the well-known meltdowns of '29 and '87, October **has hosted** lesser-known nose-dives in 1937, 1978, 1979 and 1989, when the Dow lost 190 points, or 7 percent, in a single day.
[WASHPOST: 693]

Secondly, the many attempts to explain the present perfect and its different possible readings have led to a piecemeal description, with different authors choosing to emphasize a particular aspect as the central meaning. The most serious obstruction to an understanding of the present perfect has been an overemphasis on the so-called "resultative reading" (Michaelis 1994), a fact which is outlined by the extract quoted above. It is my own experience of the difficulties which learners of English have with the present perfect which first prompted my interest in this topic. Year after year students would make the same mistakes involving the present perfect, and when I corrected them, they would respond with explanations about present relevance and results being important, rules which were perfectly

² The reason why the preterite is the preferred form in the situation given in the quoted extract has to do with pragmatic presupposition. The statement "I'm late" presupposes an event which is the reason for being late. This event must then be anaphorically referenced using the preterite. "I've missed the bus" is appropriate only when a new topic is being introduced, that is, when there is no pragmatically presupposed event which must be referred to anaphorically. See section 7.5.3.

logical but unfortunately did not correspond to the way in which the present perfect is actually used. I determined to give my students a better explanation but was soon forced to admit that this undertaking was not as easy as I had imagined. Nevertheless, I was convinced that the present perfect must have an underlying, holistic principle. In spite of dialectal and sociolectal differences my intuition and experience told me that there is a considerable amount of agreement between native speakers of English as to when to use the present perfect and when not to. This investigation is the attempt to find that underlying principle and to ascertain whether my intuition was correct. It is pedagogically driven, and as such pays attention not only to scholarly writings but also to the explanations given in pedagogical grammars.

This thesis sets out to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Is the present perfect, as some writers have argued, becoming obsolete, both in American and British English? Elsness (1997: 168), for example, maintains that the present perfect is in a state of decline:

It will be seen that 1750-1800 now comes out as the period with the highest proportion of present perfect forms in British as well as American English, i.e. the frequency of the present perfect shows a decline over the past two centuries in both varieties, in sharp contrast to the development that was observable in Old and Middle English.

2. Even if it is not becoming entirely obsolete in these varieties of English, is it losing ground against the preterite. i.e. are more and more events which were formerly described in the present perfect now being encoded with the preterite?

3. Is the present perfect more frequent in American English than in British English? This claim has been made by Vanneck (1958), Swan (1980), Greenbaum (1996), Elsness (1997) and many others.

4. Are the so-called marker words or signal words propagated by many pedagogical grammars reliable indicators for the present perfect? What is the co-occurrence of these temporal specifiers with the various verb forms?

5. Do the various theories of the present perfect which have been postulated over the last 250 years stand up to rigorous scrutiny?

6. Is there a holistic theory of the present perfect, i.e. is there an underlying meaning which is applicable to all instances of this verb form?

7. If there is a common inherent principle, how is it possible, using this principle, to explain the various readings of the present perfect which describe completed, continuative and iterative readings?

8. How is the present perfect delimited from the preterite? What constraints are utterers subjected to in their choice of present perfect or preterite?

1.2 Outline of the chapters

Chapter 2 discusses the naming of the present perfect and traces its development between Proto-Indo-European and Middle English. The use of the present perfect and the preterite in Old and Middle English are compared.

The corpora used in this investigation are described in **Chapter 3**. The problem of the representativeness of corpora is addressed here.

The frequency analysis in **Chapter 4** is aimed at ascertaining the frequency of the present perfect in the chosen corpora in order to test claims that this verb form is becoming less frequent in Modern English. The relative frequency of the present perfect in the American corpora and the British corpora is compared. In contrast to the claims made by Elsness (1997) and others, the present perfect is found to occur more frequently in the American corpora taken as a whole than in the British corpora.

In **Chapter 5** temporal specifiers which have regularly been associated with the present perfect are analysed with the aim of ascertaining the co-occurring verb forms. Altogether 17,871 temporal specifiers taken from the corpora are analysed. They are classified into six semantic groups with respect to their temporal relationship to the moment of utterance (MOU). The analysis reveals that temporal specifiers which express a period of time lasting up to the MOU (►5.6) co-occur very frequently with the present perfect, whereas the specifiers which express a period of time lasting up to and extending beyond the MOU (►5.12) display a low co-occurrence factor. No significant difference with regard to temporal specifiers and co-occurring verb forms is found between the American and British corpora

with the sole exception of JUST, which co-occurs most frequently with the preterite in the American corpora and with the present perfect in the British corpora.

Chapter 6 investigates the main theories which have been put forward to explain the present perfect against the background of the data gained from a functional-semantic analysis of 6168 present perfect occurrences, and finds them to be insufficient in one or more respects. Some are insufficient from a pedagogical point of view because they fail to give an explanation which refers exclusively to the present perfect. Some are insufficient from a logical point of view because the reading of the present perfect they identify is dependent not on the verb form present perfect *per se* but on other factors such as the aspectual class of the verb or a co-occurring temporal specifier.

In the first part of **Chapter 7** the question of whether the present perfect is a tense or an aspect is considered I will argue that according to the widely accepted definition provided by Lyons (1977: 678) the present perfect is indeed a tense, but that tense itself is an aspectual category. A holistic model of the present perfect is presented which is based on the concept of phragmatisation/aphragmatisation (the presence or absence of a closed event time frame). I will show that the various readings of the present perfect are dependent on the interplay of three aspectual levels. The core level concerns the deictic aspect which places the event prior to the MOU and the aphragmatic aspect which indicates the absence of a closed time frame. The next level is the situation and viewpoint aspect level which combines with the core level to indicate such readings as accomplishment, achievement, stativeness, iteration, continuativeness and progression. The most superficial level is the pragmatic level on which readings such as resultativeness, recentness or current relevance can emerge. The final part of this chapter is concerned with ascertaining in which ways event time frames can be closed, thus forcing anaphoric reference and the use of the preterite.

Chapter 8 gives a brief summary of the findings, outlines possible future work as a follow-up to this thesis, draws some general conclusions concerning the pedagogical implications, and makes some tentative speculations about the future development of the present perfect.

Chapter 2

Designation and origins

2.1 The naming of the present perfect

Little attention has been paid to the importance of the names of the English verb forms, in spite of the fact that learners of a foreign language coming into contact with the name of a grammatical structure for the first time often attach more importance to the actual meaning of its name than is warranted or perhaps intended. In order not to beg the question of the most suitable name for the verb form under analysis, I will restrict myself for the moment to the more neutral shorthand of transformational grammar: HAVE -EN. Two examples of this verb form can be seen in the following extract.

[2.1] Police think it unlikely that one person is responsible for all the attacks which, while common in Hampshire, appear in spates in other parts of the country. One Hampshire vet **has treated** 30 horses attacked during the past 15 years. ... Most of the attacks **have taken place** in the summer months in fields adjoining roads, bridleways or footpaths. Some of the Hampshire victims last year had been advertised for sale in local newspapers.
[TIMES: 322, 323]

2.1.1 The confusion of tense and time

Many writers are at pains to stress the fact that tense and time are two separate entities:

“It is important to keep the two concepts time and tense strictly apart.”
(Jespersen, 1931: 1)

“Time is not the same as tense. The importance of the distinction cannot be overestimated.” (Lewis, 1986: 47)

“Tense does *not* mean time.” (Lester, 1971: 52)

These statements may appear superfluously self-evident until one reflects on the tendency of grammarians to employ terms which not only give a name to the individual grammatical structure but also attempt to describe its function. This practice, in principle a laudable attempt to facilitate recognition and understanding,

has often done more harm than good. To use the same name to denote a tense and a period of time invites identification of the two. Learners are understandably confused to learn that the 'past tense' can also refer to speculations about the present or future. Many linguistic expressions still in use today are the result of an attempt to squeeze the English language into the corset of Greek and Latin terminology.¹ Some forms have names which reflect their historical origins rather than their present functions. The so-called past or preterite participle, for example, was originally used as an alternative past tense or as a productive adjective. Today it can refer to any time period.

2.1.2 The identification of present perfect and present time

"The Perfect ... is itself a kind of present tense, ..." (Jespersen 1931: 47)

"The present perfect is almost a kind of present tense." (Swan, 1980: 493)

"The most important thing to understand about 'the present perfect' ... is that it is a present form." (Lewis, 1986: 76)

Perhaps one of the main contributing factors concerning the difficulty learners of English have in mastering the use of HAVE -EN is the term for this verb form which has established itself in most grammars and textbooks today: the present perfect. The first element of the name seems to precipitate an over-preoccupation with 'present' time, leading many learners and even teachers of English to believe that an action or state must be still in progress, or at least have a special current relevance, or be somehow "still with us, as part of our experience and knowledge", (Swan, 1980: 495) in order to be able to be used correctly with HAVE -EN. As will be seen later (►6.3.6.2), most HAVE -EN occurrences have no present reference at all, at least not in the sense described in the quotation above. In addition, the basic meaning of the second element (from Latin *perfectus*: completed, accomplished) is often either unknown or ignored. It is therefore hardly surprising that among learners of English an almost exclusive identification of HAVE -EN with 'things present' has taken place.

¹ *Subordinating conjunctions* and the *subjunctive mood* are examples of such terminology.

2.1.3 Historical references

HAVE -EN has enjoyed a variety of names over the centuries, ranging from *preterperfit* (1530), *preterit-perfect* (1727),² down to “3rd form of the verb with (have)” (Lewis, 1986: 75). The earliest reference to present perfect which I have been able to establish is Pickbourne (1789: 30). Pickbourne himself in fact refers to an earlier work by a certain Mr Harris who used the expression ‘perfect present’ (Pickbourne 1789: 46), so it can be assumed that the term ‘present perfect’ or something very similar must have been in use even before 1789.

Apart from the attempt by Lewis to give HAVE -EN a more neutral designation, many writers since the 1950s have been content to use the term ‘present perfect’, as can be seen from Table 1.1. Lewis’s laudable, but rather clumsy, formulation shows the problems involved with finding a term which is based solely on form and does not purport to say anything about function.

Table 1.1
Terminology used for HAVE -EN by selected writers since 1761

| Author | Year | HAVE -EN | Type of work |
|--------------------|------|--|--------------|
| White | 1761 | second past tense | Treatise |
| Pickbourne | 1789 | preterperfect, present perfect | Treatise |
| Jespersen | 1924 | perfect | Scholarly |
| Jespersen | 1931 | perfect | Scholarly |
| Jespersen | 1933 | perfect | Scholarly |
| Stannard Allen | 1959 | present perfect | Pedagogical |
| Thomson – Martinet | 1960 | present perfect | Pedagogical |
| Joos | 1964 | perfect phase | Scholarly |
| Zandvoort | 1965 | perfect | Scholarly |
| Leech | 1971 | present perfect | Scholarly |
| Lester | 1971 | present perfect | Scholarly |
| Quirk - Greenbaum | 1973 | (present) perfect | Pedagogical |
| Leech – Svartvik | 1975 | present perfect | Scholarly |
| McCoard | 1978 | perfect | Scholarly |
| Swan | 1980 | present perfect | Pedagogical |
| Quirk et al. | 1985 | present perfective | Scholarly |
| Lewis | 1986 | 3 rd form of the verb with (have) | Pedagogical |
| Huddleston | 1988 | present perfect | Scholarly |
| Sinclair (ed.) | 1990 | present perfect | Pedagogical |
| Greenbaum | 1996 | present perfect | Pedagogical |
| Elsness | 1997 | present perfect (& perfect) | Scholarly |

² Both cited in the Oxford English Dictionary on CD-ROM.

2.1.4 Arguments in favour of the term 'present perfect'

Various arguments can be put forward in favour of the term 'present perfect'. Firstly, it is quite simply the term which is universally used today in grammars and text books and is as such instantly recognizable. Secondly, assuming for the moment that English has three tenses (+ conditional) and that the perfect is an aspect, then 'present perfect' fits neatly into a tense/aspect matrix which has a pleasing symmetry as is shown by Table 1.2.

The fact that the conditional and, as many writers have claimed, the future may not be tenses at all (►7.1.1) is an obvious drawback to this apparently logical system.³

Table 1.2
The tense-aspect matrix

| Tense | + | Perfect Aspect | + | Progressive Aspect |
|-------------|---|---------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Present | | Present Perfect | | Present Perfect Progressive |
| Past | | Past Perfect | | Past Perfect Progressive |
| Future | | Future Perfect | | Future Perfect Progressive |
| Conditional | | Conditional Perfect | | Conditional Perfect Progressive |

A further argument is that HAVE -EN contains formal elements of both the present and the perfect (in its original sense of 'completed, past'). It is made up of the *present* tense of HAVE and the *past* participle. The final and perhaps most cogent argument which has been put forward is that the name present perfect captures the essence of the verb form as a connecting element between past and present time.⁴

2.1.5 Conclusions

In spite of a preference for more neutral terms like HAVE form or HAVE -EN, I propose to retain the term *present perfect* in this investigation. What it lacks in precision and neutrality, it makes up for in terms of recognizability and convenience. In order to maintain as much neutrality as possible, however, present perfect will in most cases be abbreviated to PrP. Moreover, in order to avoid the above-mentioned confusion of tense and time, the term *preterite* will be used instead of *past tense*.

³ The question of whether there is even such a thing as the present tense, or indeed whether 'tense' is a meaningful expression in English is addressed in section 7.1. For reasons explained in that section, this investigation will employ the expression 'verb form' instead of 'tense'.

2.2 The origins of the PrP

A purely diachronic account of a grammatical structure such as the PrP will tell us little about its use in modern English. It is, however, possible that a consideration of its origins and development might provide useful insights as to its essential nature, which could be useful in establishing a theory of the verb form. This is especially true when we attempt (in Chapter 7) to answer the question of whether the PrP is a tense or an aspect. In the following sections reference is made to the ‘perfect’ rather than to the PrP. The term ‘perfect’ includes verb forms constructed with the auxiliaries *wesan*, *beon*, *weorþan* (equivalents of modern BE) as well as *habban* (= HAVE).

2.2.1 Proto-Indo-European

Research into Proto-Indo-European has traditionally concentrated on phonology and morphology to the virtual exclusion of syntax (Lehmann, 1992), so that reliable data on the use and distribution of verb forms is difficult to obtain. It is only relatively recently that scholars have begun to turn their interest to the syntax of Proto-Indo-European. As far as can be established, Proto-Indo-European had no tenses in the generally accepted sense of the word. It can best be characterized as having a tense-aspect system. Hudson-Williams (1951) and Cowgill (1985) identify three aspects of Proto-Indo-European verbs.

1. The imperfect (traditionally called ‘present’) which was used for repeated actions and on-going processes and states.
2. The perfective (traditionally known as ‘aorist’) which referred to a single, completed occurrence of an action or process.
3. The stative (traditionally ‘perfect’) which described states of the subject.

2.2.2 Proto-Germanic

The transition from Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic was characterized by a reduction and simplification of the verbal system. This fact can be demonstrated by a comparison of the number of inflected verb forms in Greek and Latin on the

⁴ It will, of course, be one of the aims of this investigation to examine this proposition.

one hand, and in Gothic and other Germanic languages on the other. In particular, the Proto-Indo-European tense-aspect system was reshaped to a single tense contrast between present and past. Robinson (1992: 168) points out that aspectual distinctions “such as those between completed or uncompleted, punctual or ongoing activities, were poorly captured in Germanic.” The semantic vacuum caused by the disappearance of the inflected Proto-Indo-European verb forms was gradually filled by periphrastic verb forms, some already in existence like the modal auxiliaries, which began to take on new functions and meanings, some new such as the passive, the progressive and the perfect. A rudimentary periphrastic perfect began to emerge, at first with the emphasis on a present stative result, later to express the notion of completedness in the past and serving as a link between the past and the present.

2.2.3 Old and Middle English

Evidence of periphrastic perfect with HAVE (*habban*) can be found in the earliest written records of English.

Mæg ic me sylfum soðgied wrecan
 siþas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum
 earfoðwile oft þrowade,
 bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe,
 gecunnad in ceole cearselda fela
 atol yþa gewealc.

*Can I about myself true-poem utter,
 of journeys tell, how I in toilsome-days
 hardship-times often suffered
 bitter heart-sorrow have endured,
 come to know on ship many sorrow-
 cruel rolling of waves.*

The Seafarer – 10th century (translation after Crystal, 1995)

The origin of the periphrastic perfect can be traced back to the use of HAVE in its main-verb meaning of *possess* in combination with the preterite participle in the function of an adjective describing the object of HAVE. The fact that the participle was adjectival in function can be deduced from two features. Firstly, the participle agreed (originally) in gender, case and number with the object. Secondly, the adjectival participle was in final position:

... and we habbað Goddes hus inne and ute clæne berypte

... *and we have God's houses inside and out completely despoiled*

Wulfstan's Address – early 11th century

2.2.4 Inflection of the participle

Examples of the inflected participle are rare even in Old English texts and they become less frequent with the passing of time. Mitchell (1985: 284) observes that inflected participles “are not predominant in any OE text ... inflected forms are in a clear minority.” There has been a good deal of controversy amongst scholars of Old English as to if and when the participle is adjectival and as to whether the structure with post-positional participle can ever be regarded as the periphrastic perfect. Nevertheless, the process of ‘deinflection’ can certainly be interpreted as evidence of a shift in focus from HAVE to the participle as main verb entailing a shift from present to past reference, a necessary precondition for the development of the modern present perfect. Another indication of this change in focus is a process known as exbraciation.

2.2.5 Exbraciation

Somewhere between Proto-Germanic and Old English the HAVE/BE (+ OBJECT) + COMPLEMENT construction began to change into the periphrastic perfect. This change in focus was accompanied, at a somewhat later stage, beginning in Old English and still in progress during the Middle English period, by a process which is known as exbraciation (from German *Satzklammer*: sentence brace) by which the main verb moves to a position next to the auxiliary, forcing nominal and adverbial phrases into a post-verbal position.

The advent of the perfect was a gradual process – it is not possible to draw a distinct line to mark its beginning, although various writers have attempted to find a defining criterion. Traugott (1972: 93-94) argues that the loss of inflection is a certain indicator of the periphrastic perfect. Visser (1970) favours exbraciation as a necessary and sufficient condition. Mitchell (1985) and Denison (1993) reject such explanations, which they regard as simplistic and superficial, insisting that the only real criterion is the shift in semantic focus from the present to the past, accompanied by a change in syntactic focus, the main verb shifting from HAVE/BE to the participle.

2.2.6 Perfect versus preterite in Old and Middle English

In Old English the verb form used in connection with continuative events in time frames lasting from the past up to the moment of utterance was the neutral present (Traugott 1992: 182), so that, as a result of the shift in focus from present to past, the perfect at first competed exclusively with the preterite as a marker for past reference. There are only very few examples of past-reference periphrastic perfects in early writings, but its use continued to gather momentum and to encroach on the preterite up to the beginning of Modern English. Visser (1970: 751) gives numerous examples of this process in his comparison of the Wycliff (*c.* 1380) and Tyndale (1534) translations of the Bible. The following extracts demonstrate how the perfect was gaining ground:

thou lord in the begynnyng foundidist the erthe
not to aungels god suggesttid the world (Wycliff)

in the begynninge haste layde the foundacion of the erth
he hath not vnto angels put in subieccion the worlde (Tyndale)

Elsness (1997: 237-339) in an extensive survey of the distribution of the perfect and preterite verb forms traces the development of the perfect from Old and Middle English up to the present day. His statistics (► Table 1.3) would seem to indicate a steady increase in the use of the perfect, peaking between 1750 and 1800 both in British and American English and experiencing a decline since then, especially in American English. Elsness' figures must, however, be viewed with some caution since they are based on relatively small samples. As can be seen from the second half of Table 1.3 on the following page, Elsness has a total of 329 PrP occurrences in his Contemporary British and American English corpora. By contrast, the frequency analysis in Chapter 4 of this investigation is based on a total of 32,764 occurrences.

Table 1.3

Distribution of perfect and preterite verb forms from Old to Modern English.
Adapted from Elsness (1997: 267, 269)

| | Old English | | Early Middle Engl. | | 1350 - 1400 | | 1550 - 1600 | |
|------------------|-------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| PrP/HAVE | 7 | 0.79 | 46 | 5.42 | 78 | 10.01 | 136 | 18.45 |
| PrP/BE | 12 | 1.36 | 39 | 4.60 | 60 | 7.70 | 14 | 1.90 |
| Preterite | 824 | 93.21 | 725 | 85.50 | 603 | 77.41 | 538 | 73.00 |
| PaP/HAVE | 22 | 2.49 | 19 | 2.24 | 27 | 3.47 | 47 | 6.38 |
| PaP/BE | 19 | 2.15 | 19 | 2.24 | 11 | 1.41 | 2 | 0.27 |
| Total | 884 | | 848 | | 779 | | 737 | |
| Ratio: PrP:Pret. | 0.0085 | | 0.0634 | | 0.1294 | | 0.2528 | |

Table 1.3 (cont.)

Distribution of perfect and preterite verb forms from Old to Modern English.

Adapted from Elsness (1997: 267, 269)

| | 1750 - 1800 BE | | 1750 - 1800 AE | | Contemp. BE | | Contemp. AE | |
|------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| PrP/HAVE | 144 | 19.28 | 185 | 24.83 | 193 | 14.19 | 136 | 12.08 |
| PrP/BE | 11 | 1.47 | 17 | 2.28 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Preterite | 546 | 73.09 | 493 | 66.17 | 1071 | 78.75 | 951 | 84.46 |
| PaP/HAVE | 42 | 5.62 | 46 | 6.17 | 96 | 7.06 | 39 | 3.46 |
| PaP/BE | 4 | 0.54 | 4 | 0.54 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 747 | | 745 | | 1360 | | 1126 | |
| Ratio: PrP:Pret. | 0.2637 | | 0.3753 | | 0.1802 | | 0.1430 | |

The distribution of the perfect and preterite was certainly less systematic than it is today. Brunner (1962), Visser (1970), Görlach (1978) and other writers claim that in Old and Middle English the perfect/preterite distinction does not conform to modern usage and indeed seems to lack any systematic rules. "It is only after the time of Shakespeare that the preterite and the *have* + participle construction are used as they are used nowadays." (Visser, 1970: 751). There are certainly occurrences which would not normally be found in standard written English today. A concordance search of *The Canterbury Tales* produced examples of perfect, present, and preterite verb forms co-occurring in sentences with *sith* (since), for example, where modern usage would allow only the PrP, as extracts [2.2] – [2.4] illustrate. It should be stressed, however, that the great majority of sentences with *sith* in *The Canterbury Tales* concur exactly with the sequence of tenses found in modern English.

[2.2] Perfect in main clause: (= PrP in modern English)
 The Wife of Bath's Prologue
 4: For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,
 5: Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve,
 6: Housbondes at chirche dore I **have had** fyve, --

[2.3] Present in main clause: (= PrP in modern English)
 The Clerk's Prologue
 626: And namely sith my sone **yboren is**,
 627: Now is it worse than evere in al oure age.

[2.4] Preterite in subordinate clause: (= PrP in modern English)
 The Pardoner's Prologue
 389: by this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,

390: An hundred mark sith I was pardoner.⁵

Bauer (1970b), in a study of the English of Chaucer and Gower, maintains that the differences in the usage of PrP and preterite between Old and Modern English have been exaggerated. The question is, of course, impossible to answer with anything approaching certainty, but it is plausible to suggest that possibly as early as the 15th century and certainly by the middle of the 16th, the rules governing the use of the PrP were very much the same as today, although distribution was perhaps not quite as settled, and frequency was not as high. My own concordance searches of the works of Chaucer and contemporaries produced very few occurrences which deviated from modern usage. Rereading a number of Shakespearean dramas strengthened my conviction that, as far as the use of PrP and the preterite verb forms are concerned, there is not that much difference between then and now.

⁵ Although the verb in the main clause '*have I wonne*' is perfect as one would expect today, modern English usage would also demand the perfect in the subordinate clause, i.e. 'since I have been a pardoner', as the pardoner is still a pardoner.

Chapter 3

The Corpora

3.1 Methodology

This investigation would not have been possible in this form even five years ago. It has been made possible by the growing availability of machine-readable corpora of attested language use and by the techniques and methodology of corpus linguistics. From the very beginning I was convinced that the key to understanding the PrP could be found in a thorough and extensive analysis of occurrences of the verb form in attested language. I wanted to find out how the PrP is really used and not just speculate how I, or others, thought it could or should be used. I wanted to formulate a theory which is based on empirical data.

3.1.1 Introspection versus empiricism

In the investigation of linguistic phenomena there are two basic approaches. One involves introspection, also known as the rationalist approach, by which the investigator postulates felicitous and infelicitous statements involving the structure under analysis and goes on to form a theory on the basis of these examples. Empiricism, on the other hand, uses as its starting point attested language use in the form of spoken or written texts which have been assembled to form a corpus. The analysis of this authentic material can help to confirm or disprove previously formulated theories or serve as the basis of new theories. Diachronic linguistics is of necessity corpus-based. In the past many non-native linguists and grammarians of English such as Jespersen and Kruisinga resorted to corpora, usually in the form of plays and novels, to conduct their studies. Most native speakers tend to trust their intuition and employ the rationalist approach. McEnery and Wilson (1996) describe how, following a series of publications by Chomsky between 1957 and 1966, the empirical, corpus-based approach to linguistics became discredited. Chomsky maintained that the task of linguists was to describe models of language competence rather than language performance. Language competence is the algorithm on the basis of which individual utterances are formulated. Corpora,

being collections of such individual instances, were unreliable in a number of ways, Chomsky argued. Firstly, a corpus, being finite, could never hope to be representative of a language, however large the corpus was. Secondly, language performance may be influenced by various external factors such as memory failure, intoxication or anxiety. Unless it were possible to filter out these external influences, the results of corpus analysis would be skewed. Thirdly, even the most carefully compiled corpus will be arbitrary and will contain instances of linguistic phenomena which are extremely rare or even unique. On the other hand, it might, by chance, not contain examples of uses which are extremely frequent. Again the results will be skewed. Chomsky's influence led to a neglect of the corpus-based approach. It was not until computer technology became universally available that interest in corpus linguistics was rekindled. Linguists soon realized the tremendous potential of corpus-based studies using machine-readable texts, and began to transform their data into electronic form. Progress was slow and painstaking at first, but in the last few years the number of available corpora of attested language use has increased exponentially. Interest in corpus linguistics is greater than ever before.

Both rationalism and empiricism have advantages and disadvantages. Introspection is enormously time-saving in that examples can be produced at will and are immediately available for analysis. The examples produced will probably be 'purer' in that they are less likely to be affected by the external influences outlined above. There are, however, a number of disadvantages which indicate that the rationalist approach should be treated with extreme caution. Firstly, there is the tendency to treat oneself, or one's dialect or sociolect, as the measure of all things. What appears infelicitous to me, might be perfectly normal for another native speaker from a different social environment or from another part of the world. Moreover, it can be demonstrated that a speaker who is monitoring his language production will often produce language samples which deviate considerably from what he would produce in a real-life situation. While most examples produced by introspection are doubtless felicitous, there are numerous instances in pedagogical and scholarly writings which would appear questionable, at least to my introspective eye. To give just one example:

Her doll *has been broken*. (ie 'it's still not mended')
(Leech – Svartvik, 1975: 66)

I find it hard to imagine a situation in which anyone would formulate this utterance with the meaning given in brackets (as opposed to *Her doll's broken*), but then again my personal subjective feeling might be at fault here – that is exactly the problem with the rationalist approach.

Another danger of introspection is that one is likely to formulate examples which illustrate perfectly the point one is trying to make or which 'prove' the rule of grammar one is trying to explain and at the same time to disregard other perfectly feasible occurrences, either by chance or by intent, which would suggest the very opposite. Lewis's (1986: 75) attempt to explain the PrP will illustrate this.

It is comparatively easy to see the essential characteristic of the meaning of the form if we consider these examples:

I've met him before. (i.e. *before* Now)

I'd met him before. (i.e. *before* the meeting I just mentioned)

I'll have seen him before I see you. (i.e. *before* a specified future point)

these examples clearly suggest that (have) + third form is associated with "beforeness".

Using the word 'before' in each of the example sentences will obviously produce the idea of 'beforeness'! By a judicious selection of example sentences, however, it would be just as easy to 'prove' that the PrP expresses posteriority (►6.2.9).

The advantages of corpus-based investigations are basically the opposite of the disadvantages of introspection just discussed. Given that we know enough about the background of the individual corpora, corpus analysis produces authentic, objective and reliable samples which open up for the linguist the possibility of approaching the object of her investigation without prejudice. Furthermore corpus linguistics allows something which is not possible with the rationalist approach – the quantification of linguistic data. It is relatively easy to establish the frequency of a word, phrase or particular structure in a language. Corpus linguistics enables comparisons to be made between spoken and written language, between various dialects and between different registers.

In addition to the theoretical criticisms levelled against corpus linguistics by Chomsky which were discussed above, some writers have pointed to what they

believe are inherent problems and disadvantages. Facchinetti (1998: 211) outlines a number of “drawbacks and pitfalls of machine-readable texts for linguistic research”. Firstly, the analysis of corpora is extremely time-intensive, especially if the corpora have to be compiled and tested before analysis can begin. Facchinetti points also to the idiosyncratic codification and tagging of some corpora which only allow investigation with special software tools and in certain ways. According to Facchinetti this software itself, including corpus-specific tools and corpus-independent concordancers, is often unreliable. When searching for specific phrases, for example, different concordancers will produce different results, and will even differ as to the number of words in a particular corpus. Facchinetti goes on to claim that the part-of-speech tagging in most corpora is extremely unreliable, having been automatically performed by computer routines.¹ Finally, she questions the assumed objectivity of corpus linguistics, making the point that researchers first of all select their corpora, and then have to make subjective classifications as to text difficulty, the social level of the participants and the like, all of which will influence and determine research findings.

In this investigation both the empirical and the rationalist methods have been employed. As far as possible, a conscious attempt has been made to avoid the pitfalls described above, especially in connection with corpus-based analysis. These problems are addressed in Chapters 3 and 4. After selection and compilation of the corpora, PrP occurrences were identified automatically and then, after the determination of a catalogue of analysis criteria, analysed manually. For each step the methodology utilized is described in detail in order to ensure scientific replicability. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Starting in Chapter 6, and exclusively in Chapter 7, the rationalist approach is employed, firstly, in order to be able to discuss arguments made by other writers, and, secondly, because the corpora, being finite, do not contain all the instances of the PrP which need to be discussed. At all times, however, the aim was to employ

¹ Facchinetti (1998: 220) gives the example of the word *present* which had been wrongly tagged in the British National Corpus. In one case where it was used as an adjective it had been tagged as a noun. In another case where it was a noun, it had been tagged as a verb. Facchinetti maintains: “These and other similar errors appear to be quite common in the tagging systems of the corpus well exceeding the rate of 1.7%”.

an inductive approach as the interface between linguistic reality and linguistic theory. The rationalist model of the PrP presented in Chapter 7 is the result of the empirical investigation which precedes it.

3.2 The corpora used in this investigation

The choice of corpora used in this study of the PrP reflects the essential aims of the investigation. One of the primary considerations was that the analyses should be based exclusively on authentic material. There are a number of definitions of the concept of authenticity. In recent years a number of corpus-based studies of grammatical structures have been published. One of the first scholars to recognize the enormous potential of the computer in empirical linguistics was Mindt, who also emphasises the importance of authenticity: "This grammar uses a new approach to English. It is based on authentic English. There has been no borrowing from previous grammars" (Mindt, 1995: 6). In his studies of the English future forms (1987) and the modal verbs (1995), however, Mindt resorts almost exclusively to literary sources, mainly plays and novels. This is not unproblematical. In the same way as corpus linguists would argue that many previous grammarians have merely described their subjective perceptions of language, it must be argued that the subjective restructuring of language by authors in works of literature cannot constitute a true representation of authentic English. It may be the fact that there is a certain degree of correlation between attested language use and some types of literature, but a lot more research will have to be done in this area before it can be claimed that the English of fictional texts is qualitatively the equivalent of the English of real life. One of the major achievements of early corpus linguistics was the perception that real people do not speak like characters in books, plays and films. For this reason literary texts were rejected as a source of materials for this study. Authenticity is defined, therefore, as the real-life spoken utterances of native speakers, complemented by the real-life written utterances of native speakers in the print media.

The second main intention was to concentrate strongly on spoken English, which in the past, because of the lack of available corpora has received rather less attention than its written counterpart. Linguists have long been aware that there are

tremendous differences between written and spoken language, and that any written language is a secondary visual representation of the original audio-lingual encoding. Language, in the purest sense of the word, is always spoken. Moreover, if, as has repeatedly been asserted, the PrP is 'dying out', then it is in the spoken language that any new developments will first be manifested. At the same time, however, some corpora of written English were included in order to be able to compare the two areas. A further aim was to establish whether there is any significant difference between British and American English as represented in the corpora under investigation here with respect to the usage of the PrP. After a preliminary evaluation, the more 'traditional' corpora such as the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen corpus (LOB), the London-Lund corpus and the Brown University Corpus of American English (BUC), were rejected on the grounds of their limited scope. They do not contain any samples of spoken English which was, as mentioned above, the focal point for this investigation. Furthermore, as Elsness (1997: 81) points out, the tagging in these corpora does not allow a reliable automatic quantification of the PrP.² It was therefore decided to use more recent corpora which could either be acquired from academic or commercial sources or compiled personally. The corpora used in the main analyses were the Corpus of Spoken Professional American English, a selection from the UKSPOKEN section of the Cobuild-Collins Bank of English, and two compilations from the *London Times* and *Washington Post* newspapers, containing altogether a total of 5.5 million words. Table 3.1 gives details of the individual corpora and their subcorpora. For the analysis of some of the less frequent temporal specifiers, the entire UKSPOKEN corpus was used, bringing the total number of words under analysis up to approximately 13.5 million.

The demographic information on the corpora is limited or, as in the case of the newspaper corpora, non-existent. I have therefore tacitly assumed that the great majority, if not all, of the utterances in the American corpora are American native speakers and that those in the British corpora are native speakers of British English.

² HAS and HAVE are not tagged for part of speech, consequently it is not possible to distinguish automatically whether a particular instance is an auxiliary or a main verb.

I have not attempted to classify the corpora according to degrees to formality. The concepts of formal and informal language are extremely difficult to define objectively. A number of possible criteria have been identified by Biber (1988) and much progress has been made in this area, but as yet it is only possible to establish, as Sigley (1997) puts it, “a crude formality index”.

I have therefore limited myself to describing the situation and the context in which the utterances were made and refrained from attempting any subjective judgements as to the formality of the language in the corpora, something which would indeed only be made possible by reading the corpora in their entirety.

3.2.1 Counting words in corpora

Computers are at their best when they do useful things more accurately and in a fraction of the time it would take human beings. One of these things is counting words in texts and corpora. Concordancers and modern word processors have functions which will produce the desired result in seconds, even for very long corpora. The problem is that their algorithms seem to produce rather different results.³ It was therefore decided to use the same procedures and the same program for determining the size of the corpora. Firstly, in order not to skew the results of the frequency analyses, wherever automatically possible and feasible, all words in the spoken English corpora which are not part of the discourse were removed. This applies to text identification codes, the names or codes of speakers, tags for parts of speech, descriptions of non-linguistic sounds such as laughter and comments, all of which were added during or after transcription. These items are usually enclosed in pointed brackets < > and so are easy to detect. The texts were then evaluated using the {NUMWORDS} function of Microsoft Word, which proved to be reliably consistent and allowed verification procedures, for example, by adding or deleting a known number of words and comparing the results before and after. In this way consistent and comparable results for each of the corpora were achieved.

³ The number of words in Britprof.txt, for example, was counted using the concordancers WORDSMITH and MONOCONC, and with the word count function of Microsoft WORD. WORDSMITH returned 271,620 words, MONOCONC counted 275,215 and MS WORD 275,662 words.

Table 3.1
List of corpora used in this investigation

| The Main Corpora & Subcorpora | Type | Situation | Number of Words | Totals |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|------------------|
| CSPA | | | | |
| USACAD FacMt95 FacMt96 FacMt97-8 | spoken | university faculty meetings | 50,611 43,932 65,301 | |
| WHPRESS WHPress94 WHPress95 WHPress96a WHPress96b WHPress97a WHPress97b | spoken | White House press conferences | 188,350 96,491 76,345 163,014 173,585 200,400 | |
| USCOMM CommR6a97 CommR6b97 CommR797 CommM597 CommM697 CommM797 CommM897a CommM897b | spoken | academic committee meetings | 97,517 134,430 118,535 91,588 106,800 42,476 95,336 172,522 | 1,917,233 |
| COB BritRadio BritSem BritLect BritMix | spoken spoken spoken spoken | phone-in radio show university seminars university lectures presentations, meetings | 321,642 367,382 480,645 158,688 | 1,328,357 |
| TIMES Jan1 Jan2 Feb1 Feb2 Mar1 Mar2 Apr1 Apr2 May1 May2 | written | newspaper articles | 194,837 193,478 190,779 176,427 185,030 204,919 163,580 209,853 172,333 214,025 | 1,905,261 |
| WASHINGTON POST | written | newspaper articles | | 350,532 |
| Total | | | | 5,501,383 |

3.2.2 The Corpus of Spoken Professional American-English (CSPA)

The CSPA is a collection of transcripts⁴ of oral discourse of various types, which took place between 1994 and 1998. It was compiled by Barlow who, in the leaflet accompanying the corpus, describes it as consisting of “short interchanges by approximately 400 speakers that are centred on professional activities broadly tied to academics and politics.” The notes accompanying the corpus list the names, professional position and sex of the interlocutors. No other demographic information, such as country or region of origin, was given. It was decided not to take demographic factors into consideration, firstly because little or none was available for the other corpora, and secondly, because the possibility of a difference in the usage of the PrP, for example between male and female utterers, was discarded *a priori*. It was assumed that the great majority of the speakers in the American corpora were in fact American, the same was assumed for the British corpora.

The CSPA contains approximately 2 million words. The corpus falls into three distinct groups. The first is a set of three transcriptions of faculty meetings at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, between 1995 and 1996. These meetings consist primarily of a series of reports on academic and political events which have affected the faculty in the course of the previous year. They also include descriptions of the status quo and plans and projects for the immediate future. The texts are characterized by academic language. The second category is composed of a selection of White House Press Conferences given between 1994 and 1997. They consist of official statements on recent political events and administration policy interspersed with questions. The language in this category is characterized by a semi-official style, varying between prepared written statements and quips with and from the audience. The third group consists of a series of

⁴ The transcription of spoken language from sound recordings is a tricky business. Apart from difficulties involving bad recordings, inaudibility, several persons speaking simultaneously, the hesitations, restarts, broken-off words and non-standard syntactic structures which are especially typical in informal situations make the transcriber’s job extremely difficult. Frequently, one is left wondering whether the person really said something which is contained in a corpus in the way represented, or whether it is not a transcription error. It was decided not to change anything in the corpora, with the exception of obvious orthographic errors such as ‘their is’, and otherwise to accept everything at face value.

committee meetings conducted in 1997 to plan educational policy on standardized testing for reading and mathematics. The language involved is characteristic of the diction of academia. Naturally, in this latter collection of texts, the discussions are more focussed on the future than on the past.

3.2.3 The Cobuild-Collins Bank of English (COB)

The Bank of English project was launched in 1991 by COBUILD (a division of HarperCollins Publishers) and The University of Birmingham. It is being expanded continually and by 1999 had reached a volume of over 329 million words. It is composed of a wide range of different types of writing and speech, most of the material originating after 1990. For the purposes of this investigation the UKSPOKEN subcorpus was selected as a source of spoken British English. This corpus contains approximately 10 million words in 898 texts. It is described by Cobuild-Collins at <ftp://titania/cobuild.collins.co.uk/pub/50M/CONTENTS.asc> as consisting of “informal conversations, telephone calls, service encounters, discussions, consultations, lectures, radio phone-ins, research interviews, television discussion programmes, etc; mostly spontaneous, a few scripted; a wide range of topics (family, environment, crime, tourism, music, finance, etc); roughly equal numbers of male and female participants, from all parts of Britain.”. Exact demographic information on the speakers was not available. The corpus in its entirety was used for the analysis of temporal specifiers and co-occurring verb forms. To facilitate more comprehensive analysis the UKSPOKEN corpus was broken down by selecting texts with similar characteristics and compiling them to form four subcorpora of varying length: BRITLECT, BRITSEM, BRITMIX and BRITRADIO, known collectively in this study as the COB corpus. As indicated by the names, BRITLECT and BRITSEM are transcriptions of lectures and seminars at Birmingham University. BRITMIX is a mixture of meetings and presentations, some of which are academic in purpose, but which are characterized by a less formal situation than BRITLECT and BRITSEM. BRITRADIO is a transcription of a series of radio phone-in shows on BBC radio and is characterized for the greater part by a colloquial manner of speech and a relaxed style of speech.

3.2.4 The TIMES corpus

The TIMES corpus was compiled from the 1993 Compact Disc Edition of *The Times and The Sunday Times*. The texts were taken from the domestic news section of these newspapers and were divided up into 10 subcorpora covering the five months January to May, each containing about 200,000 words. This corpus represents written British English.

3.2.5 The WASHINGTON POST corpus

The texts in this corpus were taken from the World Wide Web edition of the Washington Post and were compiled over the period January to November 1998. The individual articles, taken from the Nation and Politics sections, were downloaded and transferred to a word processor where the typical HTML tagging was removed using a macro written for the purpose. The full corpus, WPFULL, consists of approximately 350,000 words. In order to facilitate the full verb form analysis, the first half of this corpus was split off to form WPSHORT containing some 180,000 words. In conjunction with the TIMES corpus, this corpus facilitates a direct comparison of written American and British English.

3.2.6 Representativeness

No corpus, however large, can hope to be representative of a living language. Even if it contained billions of words, it would still by chance omit some common utterances. Conversely it might include very rare usages, so that a skewed picture of that language would be the result. Size, however, is important. The bigger a corpus is, the more occurrences of the structure to be examined it contains, and the more confident we can be that the results of the evaluation are significant. Another major factor affecting representativeness is homogeneity⁵ which is important in two ways. Firstly, the corpus must contain a body of texts which are homogeneous enough and extensive enough to deliver significant results. One of the

⁵ The subject of the homogeneity or similarity of corpora is very complex. As Kilgarriff and Rose (1998: 52) point out: “computational linguistics is in urgent need of measures for corpus similarity and homogeneity. Without one, it is very difficult to talk accurately about the relevance of findings based on one corpus, to another... We note that corpus similarity is complex and multifaceted, and that different measures might be required for different purposes.”

shortcomings of corpora such as LOB and BUC is that they contain a great variety of relatively short texts. This was, of course, intentional – the compilers believed that their corpora would thus be more representative of the whole of British or American English respectively. LOB and BUC contain all manner of text types varying from learned and scientific writings to romance and love stories. Within the framework of this investigation it would not make sense, however, to compare the 34,000 words of religious texts with the 12,000 words of science fiction. Even texts taken from the same newspaper, for example the theatre reviews and the sports news, are too heterogeneous with respect to structures, vocabulary and speech intentions to produce significant results in an investigation such as this. As far as frequency analysis is concerned, it only makes sense if text types of a sufficient size are available for comparative analysis. It is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to give a quantitative definition of ‘sufficient size’, but, judging on the basis of my studies, about 250,000 – 300,000 would appear to be the lowest significant level. It was thus decided to select a small number of text categories containing texts of a substantial size which would produce significant results.

Homogeneity of the calculated results is the second important aspect with regard to representativeness and significance. Heterogeneity in small samples is not alarming, but the larger the samples the greater the convergence should be. To give a concrete example: a corpus consisting of two years of a certain news section of a newspaper is being analysed with respect to the frequency of a certain structure. The corpus is split up into subcorpora of about 300,000 words representing each individual month. The lowest frequency of the structure recorded is, say, 5.2 occurrences per 1000 words in one month, the highest 7.6 in another, which, in a larger corpus, would be a very significant spread. The twelve months of each year taken together, however, produce an average which can be compared with the other years. These averages, each calculated on the basis of about 3.6 million words, should be roughly equal. If one year has an average of, say, 5 occurrences per 1000 words, the other 7, then serious doubts will arise as to the significance of the data or to the soundness of the methodology. Homogeneous texts of a sufficient size must produce homogeneous results in order to be significant. If the frequency of the structure in our example varies so dramatically within large enough slices of

the reference corpus, then there will be no scientific basis for the comparison of the frequency of this structure in other corpora.

I will not be so bold, as some have been, to claim that the results of my investigation are representative of English as a whole, of British English or American English, or even of a particular subsection such as academic British English or political American English. The findings will, however, point in a certain direction, they will be indications of a certain tendency, and they can be used as a yardstick against which to measure the results of similar investigations, both in the past and in the future. As more and more corpora become available, as technologies are developed which enable the reliable and accurate tagging of parts of speech, the easier it will become to conduct such studies involving thousands of millions of words. Total representativeness can never be achieved, but the results gained from the investigation of machine-readable corpora are more than a supplement to the old practice of introspection.

3.2.7 The analyses

The corpora described in this chapter were used to conduct three distinct types of analysis: a frequency analysis, an analysis of temporal specifiers with respect to co-occurring verb forms and a full functional-semantic analysis of the present perfect verb form. The results of these analyses are described in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

The Frequency Analysis

The frequency analysis described in this chapter is based on an examination of the corpora listed in Table 3.1. The aim was to establish the relative frequency of the PrP on the basis of a total corpus of approximately 5.5 million words. It was thus possible to compare the relative frequency of the PrP with respect to the British and American corpora, and to formal and informal registers. In order to test the frequency ratio of the PrP to the preterite is declining, a frequency analysis of the preterite was performed on a selection of subcorpora totalling 1.34 million words.

4.1 Methodology

After collecting and compiling the corpora in ASCII format the first procedure was to tag the texts for the PrP. This was done using an automatic tagger which was developed for this specific purpose. Present Perfect Tagger (PPT) started life in 1989 as a simple concordancer and as a tool for the automatic identification of verb forms in texts. Over the years it was evolved into a specialized tool for the reliable identification and tagging of PrP forms. It was written in the database language CLIPPER which provides routines for rapid search, comparison and replacement operations. Texts for analysis must first be converted into a format which can be imported into a database. This entails the transformation of the texts into word lists in which each word is separated by the <RETURN> character. This can easily be accomplished using the search and replace function in any word processor. The resulting file is given the extension LST.

4.1.1 How Present Perfect Tagger (PPT) works

The first step is to import the LST file and convert it into a database file format with the extension DBF which can then be analysed using PPT. The program searches for instances of HAVE, 'VE, HAVEN'T, HAS and HASN'T followed by a PRETERITE PARTICIPLE. The user has the choice of specifying whether the tagger should also

search for 's followed by a PRETERITE PARTICIPLE.¹ If, after a series of checks, PPT is satisfied that an occurrence of the PrP has been identified, it inserts the tags [VVN1] for a form with an irregular verb, [VVN2] for a form with a regular verb, and [VVBN] if the HAVE form is followed by BEEN. The elimination of HAVE forms which do not form part of the PrP is the key to the reliability of PPT. If a HAVE form is located, the program first checks to see whether the preceding word is a modal auxiliary or a negative particle, in which case the occurrence is not marked. If the located form of HAVE is not preceded by a modal or a negative particle, the program then analyses the word immediately following. If the next word is an article, a pronoun, a preposition or a conjunction, i.e. word types which are never, or only extremely rarely, found between the auxiliary and the main verb in the PrP, then the occurrence is ignored and the search for the next HAVE form is continued. If none of these word types is found, PPT checks whether one of the three words following the HAVE form is a PRETERITE PARTICIPLE by first comparing the words with a list of irregular PRETERITE PARTICIPLE forms and then checking whether a word ends in -ED. In the case of a positive hit, the occurrence is tagged.² After tagging the corpus can then be exported as a text file for further analysis. Using a concordancer it is then possible to locate tagged occurrences, to manually eliminate false positives and, if necessary, to export the concordance for further analysis.

4.1.2 Accuracy and reliability issues

In a frequency analysis it is, of course, imperative to have a high degree of accuracy in order to produce reliable data. In contrast to some other verb forms, such as those containing modals, an automatic computer analysis of the PrP cannot produce a tagged corpus which is 100% reliable. Problematical structures are:

¹ This choice is useful when analysing written corpora which have very few occurrences of the 's (= HAS) contraction.

² PPT is extremely fast, typically achieving an analysis rate of approx. 2500 words per second with the 's option selected. Without the 's option, PPT can analyse and tag the PrP at a speed of over 4500 words per second.

a) HAVE + OBJECT + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE

At the testing center, applicants would be required to submit two forms of identification, including their "green cards" denoting legal immigrant status, and **have fingerprints taken** electronically.
[WASHPOST: 1061]

In order to recognize this structure PPT would have to be able to identify nouns. The only method of doing this reliably would be to have a complete list of all nouns – an unrealistic undertaking within the framework of this analysis.³

b) HAVE + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE used as an adjective

And if you **have written comments**, I would appreciate having a copy at the close of your remarks so that we can have that to make sure that anything that is in the record is accurate and falls very closely.
[COMMM697: PAGE 5]

Both McLaren and Otto **have court-appointed** attorneys who were in the courtroom, but have decided to represent themselves.
[WASHPOST: 477]

There is no feasible way to exclude this type of structure automatically – indeed, even a careful manual analysis will not always lead to an unequivocal conclusion.

The ambiguity of 's leads to further complications:

c) genitive 'S + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE used as an adjective

The discussions, if they do begin tomorrow, will be about the **President's balanced** budget plan, the congressional balanced budget resolution as passed, and that discussion will be enriched by consideration of other proposals that have been advanced by members of Congress, House and Senate in both parties.
[WHPRESS: 928]

d) 'S + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE = PASSIVE

Then we have this kind of output with all the modifiers and we can also have the one where **it's actually linked** on to the nouns form.
[BRITMIX: 483]

The corpora abound in examples of c) and d). The only reliable way to handle them is manual detection and removal – a laborious but necessary procedure.

³ As more and more corpora become available which are tagged for HAVE/HAS as auxiliary, PRETERITE PARTICIPLE and in which the intervening nouns are classified and tagged, it will become possible to eliminate these false positives automatically.

4.1.3 Testing the accuracy of Present Perfect Tagger

In order to give an indication of the accuracy of PPT, the play *Enter a Free Man* by Tom Stoppard was analysed manually and automatically. For the manual analysis the play was read three times and occurrences of the PrP marked. The text was scanned into the computer using a program for optical character recognition and was then analysed twice with PPT according to the procedures outlined above. The first run tagged for HAVE and HAS, and the contractions 'VE, HAVEN'T and HASN'T and excluded the 'S contraction. The second run included all forms. The first automatic analysis tagged 160 occurrences, of which 8 were false positives, all involving modals with inserted adverbials.⁴ Comparison with the manually evaluated results indicated 1 false negative.⁵ However, PPT also located 14 additional occurrences which had been overlooked in the manual analysis (11 with main verb GET). The analysis of 'S + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE produced 53 further occurrences, including 15 false positives and no false negatives, and again producing 7 samples which had been overlooked (5 with GET). Taken together the automatic analysis tagged 213 forms with 23 false positives and 1 false negative. The recall and precision figures⁶ for the automatic tagging by PPT are given in Table 4.1. As can be seen the figures for recall are particularly good.

Table 4.1

Recall and precision figures for the PPT tagging of *Enter a Free Man*

| Structure | Recall | Precision |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| HAVE/HAS | 99.35% | 95.00% |
| 'S | 100.00% | 71.70% |
| TOTAL | 99.50% | 89.20% |

Although the text analysed was very short (21,885 words including names and stage directions) and so can only provide an impression of the reliability of PPT, it can be concluded that the automatic analysis excluding 's displays a high degree of

⁴ Here is a typical example of this type of false positive:

RILEY: Married to a creative spirit, and for all you care I **might as well have stayed** [VVN2] in my father's office. [FREENOS #65]

⁵ PPT failed to identify the following occurrence, presumably because of the four full stops following the participle.

“You're a travelling man, Able. You know - **you have seen....** ABLE: I've only done [VVN1] one foreign trip so far.... I suppose it's all right, yeah.” [FREENOS #153]

⁶ See Oakes, 1998: 176 for a definition of recall and precision.

accuracy, even without manual correction. Because of the syntactical ambiguity, the results of the automatic analysis including the 's contraction are not as reliable as desired. In view of the fact, however, that the vast majority of false positives were subsequently identified and removed from the tagged list, a high degree of accuracy for the results of the frequency analysis can be claimed – significantly above 95%. Moreover, the automatic analysis is certainly more accurate than any manual analysis. Even if somebody had the time and the will-power to tag a 5.5 million word corpus manually, they would need immense powers of concentration to get anywhere near the accuracy of PPT.⁷

4.1.4 HAVE GOT

It was decided to exclude HAVE GOT in the sense of possession from all the analyses. Although syntactically an incidence of the PrP, HAVE GOT describes a present state and contains no information about preceding events. It can always be replaced by the present tense form HAVE. Furthermore, as this form only occurs in spoken English, its inclusion would skew the comparison of the frequency of the PrP in spoken and written English. It is interesting to note, in this context, that HAVE GOT in this sense is very prevalent in spoken British English – in the four COB corpora an amazing average 29.85% of all occurrences marked were HAVE GOT forms.⁸ HAVE GOT is much less common in spoken American English, averaging only 8.34%.⁹ Nor is it the case that this is due to the higher incidence of HAVE GOTTEN – in 1.9 million words there are only 142 instances, as opposed to 1150 occurrences of HAVE GOT.

⁷ Newer POS-taggers used for tagging corpora achieve similar success rates and will in future remove the necessity of home-made taggers such as PPT.

⁸ The individual values were: BRITRADIO: 33.18%, BRITSEM: 31.48%, BRITLECT: 25.25%, BRITMIX: 29.22%.

⁹ The range for the individual corpora is greater than in the British corpora: USACAD 2.58%, WHYPRESS 5.96%, USCOMM 15.58%. The values in the subcorpora of each corpus, were, however, fairly consistent.

4.2 The results of the frequency analysis

As outlined in section 2.2.6, the absolute and relative frequency of the PrP increased steadily between Old and Modern English. It is, however, far from clear whether this process continued into the 20th century. Barber (1993: 209) remarks that during “the whole of the modern English period, the Perfect and Progressive markings have become increasingly common.” Other scholars have asserted that, after peaking in the 19th century the PrP is in decline and losing ground quickly to the preterite. Many writers have pointed to the fact that this process is particularly discernible in American English, so much so that the PrP is widely considered to be on the verge of extinction. These assertions are based for the most part on intuition, introspection and general impression. Elsness (1997) is so far the only scholar to have conducted relatively systematic research on this question based on machine-readable corpora. His findings would tend to suggest that the frequency of the PrP has in fact decreased in the last century, at least in contrast to the preterite. However, in view of the very small sample of occurrences on which Elsness bases his conclusions, it is advisable to treat this data with caution. Elsness’ data and methodology will be discussed later in this chapter.¹⁰

The results of the frequency analysis which are presented in the following sections quantify the number of words in each corpus or subcorpus together with the corresponding number of PrP occurrences. On the basis of these figures an index factor is calculated which represents the number of PrP occurrences per thousand words. In order to test possible significant deviations the z score is calculated for each index factor against the mean¹¹ of the total values.

¹⁰ It would have been interesting to compare the findings of Elsness’ study with those of this investigation. Unfortunately Elsness does not provide exact figures - he does not state the number of words in his CONTCORP and so it was not possible to calculate the frequency of the PrP per 1000 words for that corpus. For the LOB and BUC corpora, where the number of words are known, he cannot, for reasons which will be seen later, quantify the number of PrP occurrences.

¹¹ Oakes (1998: 8) describes the z score as “a measure of how far a given value is from the mean, expressed as a number of standard deviations ... If two different data sets are both normally distributed, and the mean and standard deviation for each are known, then we can make use of the z score to compare them.”

4.3 The British corpora

The British corpora used in the frequency analysis contain a total of 3,233,618 words, comprising approximately 1.9 million words of written and 1.3 words of spoken English.

4.3.1 TIMES

Table 4.2
PrP frequency analysis of the TIMES corpus

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index Factor | z score to mean |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| JAN1 | 194,837 | 1111 | 5.70 | 0.50 |
| JAN2 | 193,478 | 1185 | 6.12 | -1.21 |
| FEB1 | 190,779 | 1127 | 5.91 | -0.34 |
| FEB2 | 176,427 | 999 | 5.66 | 0.65 |
| MAR1 | 185,030 | 1160 | 6.27 | -1.77 |
| MAR2 | 204,919 | 1134 | 5.53 | 1.21 |
| APR1 | 163,580 | 948 | 5.80 | 0.11 |
| APR2 | 209,853 | 1182 | 5.63 | 0.80 |
| MAY1 | 172,333 | 928 | 5.38 | 1.80 |
| MAY2 | 214,025 | 1201 | 5.61 | 0.90 |
| TOTAL | 1,905,261 | 10,975 | 5.76 | |

Table 4.2 shows the results of the frequency analysis of the TIMES corpora. The index factors are relatively homogenous for the ten corpora, ranging from 5.38 to 6.27 occurrences per thousand words. Of the ten subcorpora only MAR1 and MAY1 have a z score of over ± 1.645 which indicates a significant deviation at the 0.10 level.¹² Homogeneity is an important indication of the validity of statistical analysis and is a major criterion in this frequency analysis. If there should be large discrepancies of distribution in corpora judged to be of a similar nature, this would cause doubts as to the usefulness of the data and any possible conclusions drawn therefrom. It might possibly also indicate that the sample taken was too small. Seen statistically, the larger the individual corpora, the greater the correlation should be. This can be seen in the TIMES corpus. If the data for the individual months are combined, then the spread is reduced to between 5.5 for May and 5.9

¹² The value of statistical methods such as the z score should not be overemphasized. Because of the way the z score is calculated, the bigger a corpus is, the more likely it is that a deviation will be identified as significant, even if the index factors are the same as in a smaller corpus.

for January and March. A comparison of the first six with the last six months of 1993 would further increase the correlation, and so on. The number of occurrences per thousand words for the entire TIMES corpus is 5.76, a number which will take on meaning when compared with the other corpora. The factor 5.76 is our first point of reference and will be taken as an indication of the frequency of the PrP in formal, written British English.

4.3.2 COB

The first striking element is the greater disparity in the distribution of the PrP in these texts, ranging from 3.97 in BRITLECT to 5.42 in BRITMIX. The z score for the BRITLECT subcorpus at 5.58 shows a significant deviation from the mean. One reason for the larger spread in this corpus is the more diverse nature of the subcorpora. The subject matter of the discourses will certainly have a decisive effect on the choice of verb forms. Lectures on scientific topics will contain many descriptions of theories and 'eternal truths', which will be formulated using the neutral (present) form. Taken together, the factor 4.8 for the spoken British corpora would indicate a lower distribution in spoken than in written British English. This might be in keeping with the theory that the PrP is on the decline and is being replaced in spoken English by the preterite. As always the written language will tend to fossilize the older usage. The results in this respect are not conclusive and it is to be hoped that in the near future, as more and more reliably tagged machine-readable corpora of spoken English become available, it will be possible to answer this question with more authority.

Table 4.3
PrP frequency analysis of the COB corpus

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index Factor | z score to mean |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| BRITRADIO | 321642 | 1926 | 5.08 | 1.28 |
| BRITSEM | 367382 | 1677 | 4.56 | 1.42 |
| BRITLECT | 480645 | 1909 | 3.97 | 5.58 |
| BRITMIX | 158688 | 860 | 5.42 | -2.89 |
| TOTAL | 1328357 | 6372 | 4.80 | |

My own introspective intuition on this point is that is often not a case of written versus spoken language, but more a matter of register. Consider that classic, time-

honoured example which has served to explain the PrP to generations of learners: 'I've broken my leg'. Here are two alternative, but possible, examples of British discourse.

Dialogue 1:

(B enters with leg in plaster-cast)

A: My goodness! What's happened to you?

B: I've broken my leg.

Dialogue 2:

(B enters with leg in plaster-cast)

A: What 'appened to you, then?

B: I broke me leg, didn'I?

It has always seemed to me that the first dialogue (although I am far from certain that anyone would formulate the question in the PrP in the first place)¹³ belongs to a different register. In my mind's eye, it is spoken with an RP accent, whereas the second is something which I could imagine being said in my own dialect. If my speculation is correct, and at the moment, due to the lack of dialectal corpora,¹⁴ there is no way of testing this hypothesis, then the more formal the situation, the greater the chance of the PrP being chosen. This might help to explain the general impression, as a more colloquial and dialectal style of speech becomes increasingly acceptable on television and radio, that the PrP is becoming less frequent. As far as the overall frequency of the PrP is concerned, however, type of discourse and subject matter will remain the decisive factors. For the PrP to occur, the discourse must concern the past. A discussion about the possibilities of sending people to Mars will probably not produce many occurrences of the verb form PrP.

4.4 The American corpora

Conventional wisdom has it that the PrP is less prevalent in American English than in British English. Writing over 40 years ago Vanneck (1958: 237-238) had already reported differences in usage: "Written British English, spoken British

¹³ For a discussion of this and related questions, see section 7.5.3

¹⁴ The British National Corpus (BNC), which does contain dialectal subcorpora, did not become available in MS-Windows format until shortly before the completion of this thesis. The Survey of Dialectal English is due to be released shortly, so that it will soon be possible to answer this question.

English and written American English agree closely in their choice between the preterite and the perfect. Spoken American, however, uses the preterite in many cases where British English and written American English use the perfect". This opinion has persisted to the present day – but where Vanneck was careful to limit his claim to spoken American English, proponents today are often more sweepingly dogmatic: "The present perfect is used less often in American English than in British English." (Greenbaum, 1996: 272). The Greenbaum *Oxford English Grammar* is corpus-based but in spite of this, or perhaps for this very reason, he offers no examples to illustrate his claim, no evidence to support his hypothesis. As with many other writers it seems almost to be a statement of a self-evident truth.

Some writers, among them Vanneck (1958), Swan (1980), Stemmer – Wynne (1988), do offer some tentative evidence, contrasting introspective examples of British and American usage in connection with the adverbials JUST, ALREADY and YET and drawing attention to the fact that Americans often use the preterite to give news.

Did you have lunch (yet, already)?
(Vanneck, 1958: 238)

Did you hear the news yet? Switzerland declared war on Mongolia!
(Swan, 1980: 495)

Oh no, Tom just dropped the bottle.
(Stemmer – Wynne, 1988: 215)

They each go on to point out that in such cases British English would prefer the PrP. Assuming for the moment that this is true, it is still rather dubious methodology to generalize from a handful of examples that this is a principle difference between American and British English. First of all, it is very possible that the above examples could be heard in modern British English. Conversely, as Vanneck points out, "In all the above examples the perfect is an acceptable alternative in spoken American English; and some Americans habitually use it in nearly all of them." (Vanneck, 1958: 238). Again it is probably a question of register – the less formal the speech, the more frequent the preterite. The heightened exposure of some dialects and sociolects (especially New York dialect) through the media of film and television and the greater acceptance of more

informal sociolects have perhaps led to a perception of the domination of the preterite.

4.4.1 Elsness' frequency analysis

In a study which is remarkable for its scope, encompassing as it does the whole of the English language from Old English to the present day, Elsness (1997) traces the development of the PrP and the preterite. In the section on Modern English he sets out to ascertain the frequency of the PrP and the preterite in the LOB corpus of British English and the BUC corpus of American English, following this up with a similar analysis of his own corpus CONTCORP. One of the main aims of these analyses is to “establish whether there are any consistent differences between British and American English” (Elsness, 1997: 3). LOB and BUC are corpora each containing just over one million words in which each word has been tagged according to word class. HAVE and HAS are tagged [HV] and [HVZ] but are not differentiated with respect to function. It is, therefore, not possible to ascertain whether individual instances of HAVE are being used as perfect auxiliaries, main verbs, infinitives or auxiliaries after modals. Consequently, “Counts based on the occurrence of *have/has* plus a preterite participle proved highly unreliable” which require Elsness to base his evaluation on “various indirect indications” (Elsness, 1997: 81). One of these indirect indications is based on the findings of a study of LOB by Johansson – Hofland (1989), who found that 35.93% of all occurrences of HAVE were immediately followed by the preterite participle of a lexical verb. The corresponding figure for HAS was 32.85%. Drawing the logical conclusion that these are instances of the PrP, Elsness goes on to speculate “In addition a substantial number of the other occurrences of *have/has* can also be assumed to be part of perfect constructions ... some of them with adverbials intervening between the auxiliary and main verb.” (Elsness, 1997: 81) In his evaluation Elsness lists therefore not occurrences of the PrP but of HAVE/HAS and simply assumes that the estimated proportion of instances of the PrP remains constant throughout both corpora. His total figures are 7914 instances of HAVE/HAS in LOB against 6765 in BUC. In spite of such questionable methodology Elsness (1997: 84) comes to a remarkably firm conclusion:

These findings can be taken as strong evidence in favour of the assumption that the present perfect, and perfect constructions generally, are more common in British than in American English. The figures demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that the higher frequency of the preterite recorded for American English is matched by a higher frequency of the present perfect in British English.

Aware of the methodological problems Elsness makes a manual count of eight verbs (SAY, COME, GO, MAKE, TAKE, KNOW, SEE and USE) in the corpora, maintaining that because of “their wide semantic spread the eight verbs combined can be assumed to give a fairly accurate indication of the relative frequencies of the present perfect and the preterite among all lexical verbs, although the presence of SAY among the eight may have led to some overrepresentation of the preterite at the expense of the present perfect.” (Elsness, 1997: 92). In spite of admitting that the “frequencies are not very reliable” (90), he comes to the same conclusion: “The present perfect is more frequent in British English and the preterite more frequent in American English. The claims often made to that effect have been amply confirmed.” (94) He is rather more exact in his analysis of CONTCORP. Elsness does not reveal the size of this corpus,¹⁵ but by today’s standards it appears to be rather small. His total figures (104) for the BRPRINT subsection are 386 and 1199 occurrences for PrP and preterite respectively as against 169 and 1249 in AMPRINT, for Elsness “a striking difference in the distribution” (105). Admittedly, had the results for the relative difference of distribution been achieved on a much larger scale, on the basis of a much larger corpus, then they might indeed have been striking. Such a small sample, however, does not allow such sweeping conclusions, referring as they do to the two major varieties of the English language. The evidence Elsness provides is, at the very best, circumstantial – the jury must, at least for the time being, remain out.

4.4.2 WHPRESS

The White House Press corpus produced quite remarkable results. Firstly the subcorpora display a homogeneous frequency distribution – the spread is small,

¹⁵ In the appendix he gives a list of the individual texts in CONTCORP with an exact quantification of the total number of verb forms in each text, but not the number of words. It can only be assumed that these texts were available on paper only, and that the number of words was not determined.

ranging from 9.10 to 10.67 occurrences per 1000 words and the *z* scores show no significant deviations from the mean. Secondly, the total average factor is a remarkable 9.88, far higher than the 5.76 for the *Times* corpus and over twice as high as the factor for the COB corpora. The high incidence of the PrP in this corpus can partly be explained by the nature of the discourse. The aim of a press conference is primarily to describe and explain the happenings of the recent past which could entail an unusually high frequency of the PrP. Whatever the reason for the high frequency of the PrP in this corpus, one fact is beyond all doubt – the sweeping claims made by many writers that the PrP is universally less common in American English than in British English could not be substantiated.

Table 4.4
PrP frequency analysis of the WHPRESS corpus

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index Factor | <i>z</i> score to mean |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|
| WHPress94 | 188350 | 2009 | 10.67 | -0.12 |
| WHPress95 | 96491 | 957 | 9.92 | -0.10 |
| WHPress96a | 76345 | 695 | 9.10 | 1.78 |
| WHPress96b | 163014 | 1516 | 9.30 | 1.65 |
| WHPress97a | 173585 | 1612 | 9.29 | 1.68 |
| WHPress97b | 200400 | 2081 | 10.38 | -1.48 |
| TOTAL | 898185 | 8870 | 9.88 | |

4.4.3 WASHPOST

Table 4.5
PrP frequency analysis of the WASHPOST corpus

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index Factor |
|--------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| WPFULL | 350532 | 2214 | 6.32 |

For the purposes of this investigation the *Washington Post* was assumed to be the American equivalent of the British *Times*. The two newspapers are very similar in standing and are respected in their respective countries both for the high quality of their journalism and for their adherence to a high standard of linguistic expression. In order to make the *Times* and *Washington Post* corpora as comparable as possible, all the articles included were chosen from the domestic or national news sections. The factor of 6.32 for the American corpus is somewhat higher than the 5.76 for *TIMES*. Statistically it can be said that this figure represents a significant

deviation from the normal distribution at the 0.10 level, although it must be said such statistical analysis must be treated with caution because of the large size of the populations (in this case the number of words in each corpus) under examination. Suffice it to say that this result does not support the theory of the relative infrequency of the PrP in American English.

4.4.4 USACAD

Table 4.6
PrP frequency analysis of the USACAD corpus

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index Factor |
|--------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| USACAD | 159844 | 1101 | 6.89 |

The three subcorpora FACMT95, FACMT96 and FACMT97-98, which represent faculty meetings at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, were combined to form the USACAD corpus and were evaluated together because of the relatively small number of words in each subcorpus. The USACAD corpus displays a relatively high frequency of the PrP with a factor of 6.89. In keeping with the nature of such events, the meetings look back over the events of the previous 12 months, as well as looking forward to the coming year, so that the necessary preconditions for a frequent use of the PrP are given.

4.4.5 USCOMM

Table 4.7
PrP frequency analysis of the USCOMM corpus

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index Factor | z score to mean |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| CommR6a97 | 97517 | 401 | 4.11 | -1.27 |
| CommR6b97 | 134430 | 555 | 4.13 | -1.43 |
| CommR797 | 118535 | 396 | 3.34 | 1.68 |
| CommM597 | 91588 | 362 | 3.95 | -0.69 |
| CommM697 | 106800 | 364 | 3.41 | 1.34 |
| CommM797 | 42476 | 122 | 2.87 | 2.62 |
| CommM897a | 95336 | 334 | 3.50 | 0.96 |
| CommM897b | 172522 | 698 | 4.05 | -1.17 |
| TOTAL | 859204 | 3232 | 3.76 | |

The subcorpora in the USCOMM corpus are transcriptions of a series of committee meetings to plan educational policy on standardized testing for reading and mathematics. The striking thing about the results for this corpus is the relatively

low PrP frequency. The results for the individual subcorpora are homogeneous, the *z* scores indicating only two significant deviations. This homogeneity is an indication that the average frequency factor of 3.76 per 1000 words is no coincidence. This factor is significantly lower than that of the corpora examined so far. The reason for this deviation is presumably the type of discourse topic contained in the subcorpora. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss and plan national testing standards, their focus is clearly oriented towards the future, and so it is hardly surprising that references to the past, a major precondition for the use of the PrP, are relatively few.

4.5 Present perfect and preterite frequency distribution

As outlined in Chapter 3, Elsness (1997) claims to have found evidence that the frequency of the PrP is declining:

It will be seen that 1750-1800 now comes out as the period with the highest proportion of present perfect forms in British as well as American English, i.e. the frequency of the present perfect shows a decline over the past two centuries in both varieties, in sharp contrast to the development that was observable in Old and Middle English. (Elsness, 1997: 268)

Elsness calculates the ratio of the PrP to the preterite in the texts he has analysed. His figures are indeed dramatic, although again it must be remembered that they are based on extremely small samples.

Table 4.9

Distribution of PrP and preterite since Old English. Based on Elsness (1997: 267-269)

| | PrP ¹⁶ Occurrence s | Pret. Occurrence es | Ratio PrP: Pret |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Old English | 7 | 824 | 0,0085 |
| Early Middle English | 46 | 725 | 0,0634 |
| 1350 – 1400 | 78 | 603 | 0,1294 |
| 1550 – 1600 | 136 | 538 | 0,2528 |
| 1750 – 1800 BE | 144 | 546 | 0,2637 |
| 1750 – 1800 | 185 | 493 | 0,3753 |
| Contemporary BE | 193 | 1071 | 0,1802 |
| Contemporary | 136 | 1126 | 0,1430 |

The data in Table 4.9 indicate a sharp drop in the use of the PrP since 1800 both in British and American English, in the case of the latter almost back to the level of the 14th century. In order to check Elsness' claim a frequency analysis of the preterite was carried out on selected corpora representing BE and American English, and spoken and written English. To calculate the number of preterite occurrences, the program Automatic Structure Analysis (ASA) was used. ASA is the fore-runner of PPT and is a tool for the analysis of verb forms. In contrast to PPT, which was developed with the PrP in mind, ASA is not a specialized tool for the marking of preterite forms. Consequently, as a result of the many -ED forms in English which are not preterites, the analysis produced a large number of false positives, sometimes in excess of 30%, which had to be removed manually. A conservative estimate of the accuracy of the final data would be in excess of 90%.¹⁷ The results are summarized in Table 4.10.

As was to be expected the preterite is more frequent than the PrP. What is striking is the degree of deviation in the index factor for the preterite in the corpora, ranging from 15.37 for USACAD to 41.48 for WASHPOST. As noted above, this can partly be explained by text type. The two newspaper corpora display similar index factors for the preterite and almost identical PrP/preterite ratios. It should be noted that one of the reasons for the preponderance of preterite forms in the newspaper corpora, apart from their very nature, is the high incidence of the preterite verb form 'said', which occurs 1444 times in the WASHPOST corpus (19.5% of all preterite occurrences) and 1126 times in the JAN2 corpus (14.9%). In contrast, preterite 'said' occurs only 61 times in USACAD, equivalent to only 2.5% of all preterite occurrences.

¹⁶ PrP formed with auxiliary HAVE only.

¹⁷ It is not possible to give recall and precision statistics here since figures for a perfect search were not available.

Table 4.10
Distribution of PrP and preterite in selected corpora.

| Corpus | Words | Pret. Occurr | Pret. IF | PrP Occs | PrP IF | Total IF | Ratio PrP: Pret |
|----------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| BRITRADIO | 321642 | 6927 | 21.54 | 1926 | 5.99 | 27.52 | 0.278 |
| JAN2 | 193478 | 7554 | 39.04 | 1185 | 6.12 | 45.17 | 0.157 |
| BRITMIX | 158688 | 2793 | 17.60 | 860 | 5.42 | 23.02 | 0.308 |
| Brit. Corpora | 673808 | 17274 | 25.64 | 3971 | 5.89 | 31.53 | 0.230 |
| USACAD | 159844 | 2457 | 15.37 | 1101 | 6.89 | 22.26 | 0.448 |
| WHPRESS96b | 163014 | 4054 | 24.87 | 1516 | 9.30 | 34.17 | 0.374 |
| COMMM897b | 172522 | 2847 | 16.50 | 698 | 4.05 | 20.55 | 0.245 |
| WASHPOST | 178457 | 7403 | 41.48 | 1188 | 6.66 | 48.14 | 0.160 |
| Am. Corpora | 673837 | 16761 | 24.87 | 4503 | 6.68 | 31.56 | 0.269 |
| Totals | 1347645 | 34035 | 25.26 | 8474 | 6.29 | 31.54 | 0.249 |

IF = index factor (occurrences per 1000 words)

It is not the case that a higher preterite frequency entails a lower PrP frequency and vice versa. Total index factors for the two verb forms combined range between 20.55 (COMMM897b) and 48.14 (WASHPOST). Some text types, notably the newspaper corpora, contain far more past time verb forms than others. Interestingly, the combined total index factors for the British and American corpora are, at 31.53 and 31.56 respectively, virtually identical.

The ratio of the two verb forms is extremely heterogeneous, ranging from 0.157 (JAN2) to 0.448 (USACAD). Again the overall averages for the British and American corpora are very similar. For every 1000 past time verb forms (excluding preterite modals and the past perfect), there are 230 occurrences of the PrP and 770 preterite occurrences in the British corpora. For the American texts the figures are 269 and 731 respectively. Although these statistics are based on an analysis of 1.35 million words with a total of 42,509 past time forms, the sample is still too small and the ratio data are too heterogeneous to be able to make any claims concerning the whole of British or American English. The heterogeneity of the ratios of the two verb forms on the one hand, and the homogeneity of the results for the two newspaper corpora on the other, are further indications of the expediency of comparing only homogeneous text types.

The overall ratio of 0.249, or three preterite occurrences for every one PrP occurrence, does not indicate a decline in the relative frequency of the PrP.

Elsness' figures of 0.180 and 0.143 for his British and American corpora can possibly be attributed to the fact that, apart from the small sample taken, his evaluations were based for the greater part on written English. Certainly, they are comparable with the ratios calculated for the newspaper corpora in this investigation.¹⁸

The final point indicated by this frequency analysis is that there is no evidence that the PrP is less common in American English than in British English. On the contrary, the ratio of 0.249 for the American corpora, as opposed to 0.230 for the British corpora, indicates that, if there is any difference at all, then the opposite is true.

4.6 Conclusions

No corpus, however many words it contains, will ever be totally representative of any language, or even of any dialect or sociolect. Nevertheless the high degree of consistency and homogeneity recorded for the various subcorpora in this investigation constitutes grounds for confidence in the validity of the results of this investigation.

On the basis of the frequency analysis and evaluation of a selection of British and American corpora with a total of 5.75 million words, there is no evidence to support the claim that the PrP is less prevalent in American English than in British English (►Table 4.11). The average frequency factor for the American texts was 6.80 occurrences per 1000 words, considerably higher than the corresponding factor for the British corpora at 5.36. On the basis of the available data the indiscriminate claim made by Greenbaum and others that the “present perfect is used less often in American English than in British English” (Greenbaum, 1996: 272) must be rejected.

¹⁸ Although the newspaper corpora have a higher PrP index factor than most of the spoken corpora (a notable exception is WHPRESS), the PrP/preterite ratio is much lower.

Table 4.11
Summary of PrP Frequency Analysis.

| Corpus | Words | Occurrences | Index factor |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| TIMES93 | 1,905,261 | 10,975 | 5.76 |
| COB | 1,328,357 | 6372 | 4.80 |
| Total British Corpora | 3,233,618 | 17347 | 5.36 |
| WHPRESS | 898185 | 8870 | 9.88 |
| WPFULL | 350532 | 2214 | 6.32 |
| USACAD | 159844 | 1101 | 6.89 |
| USCOMM | 859204 | 3232 | 3.76 |
| Total American Corpora | 2,267,765 | 15417 | 6.80 |
| All Corpora | 5,501,383 | 32764 | 5.96 |

It is not possible to make claims about the frequency of the PrP, or any other structure, for the whole of American English or the whole of British English. Even if it were possible to agree on a definition of Standard British or Standard American English, even these varieties would contain so many deviations as to render the purported norm useless.

I would argue that there are two main criteria which affect and determine the frequency of the PrP. The first criterion concerns the type and subject of discourse. Whether the discourse is predominantly retrospective or prospective is of paramount importance for the frequency, as was seen in the comparison of the WHPRESS and USCOMM corpora. The second factor relates to the situation and style of language being used. More research needs to be conducted on this question and for the moment I can only speculate that the more formal the language, the more occurrences of the PrP it will contain. Informal colloquial English will contain fewer examples and will regularly prefer the preterite to the PrP.¹⁹ I believe that this phenomenon is by no means restricted to American English; it is a

¹⁹ An investigation of the Northern Ireland Transcribed Corpus of Speech lent some support to this speculation. This corpus is a transcription of the Tape-Recorded Survey of Hiberno-English speech which was conducted between 1973 and 1980 at 38 different localities in Northern Ireland. It contains approximately 250,000 words. A frequency analysis of the corpus returned an index factor of 2.87 occurrences per 1000 words, a much lower frequency than in the other corpora. Northern Ireland Transcribed Corpus of Speech was not included in the final version of this thesis as its dialectal nature meant that it was not comparable with the other corpora used in this investigation.

question of dialect or sociolect and not of continent. As more dialectal corpora become available, it will be possible to check this claim.

The analyses produced no evidence that the frequency of the PrP is on the decline. On the contrary the figures reveal a strong relative frequency with respect to the preterite, which varies according to text type. The PrP is alive and well, and will certainly play a major role in the English tense-aspect system for some time to come.

Chapter 5

Temporal specifier analysis

This part of the investigation is aimed at establishing whether there is a constant and consistent co-occurrence of the PrP with certain temporal specifiers. Scholarly and, more especially, pedagogical grammars frequently cite certain adverbials as ‘signal words’ or ‘markers’ for the PrP. The temporal specifier analysis was designed to test the reliability of such adverbials as indicators and predictors of the PrP and therefore to assess the usefulness of such ‘marker words’ for the learner.

The temporal specifiers selected for this investigation were those adverbials typically listed in grammars and text books.¹ In addition, a number of adverbials were added which were identified during the functional-semantic analysis and were thought to have a certain, possibly strong, co-occurrence with the PrP. Altogether over 20,000 samples of temporal specifiers and co-occurring verb forms were analysed.

The corpora used in whole or in part for this investigation were extracts from *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* (TIMES), the Cobuild-Collins Bank of English (COB), the Corpus of Spoken Professional American English (CSPA) and articles from *The Washington Post* (WASHPOST).

5.1 Methodology

Each corpus was searched for each temporal specifier in turn using the WordSmith concordancer. Ambiguous adverbials were analysed manually and the non-temporal specifiers were deleted.² The concordance list with a context of 500 words for each entry was saved in text format and transferred to a database in

¹ References to individual writers are given in the discussion of the individual specifiers beginning in section 5.3.1.

² This was especially the case with specifiers such as FOR, JUST, LONG, SINCE and YET. Often the number of non-temporal usages far exceeded the temporal. To give one example: 1314 occurrences of JUST were identified in CSPA. After manual evaluation and removal of the non-temporal occurrences, this figure was reduced to only 113 examples of JUST with temporal meaning.

Microsoft ACCESS. The form in Fig. 5.1 was developed for the analysis of the co-occurring verb forms.

Fig. 5.1
Temporal specifier analysis form

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Access form window titled "YET : Form". The form has a yellow background and a title bar with standard Windows window controls. At the top, it displays "Corpus: CSPA" and "Occurrences of: YET". Below this, there is a "Context:" label followed by a text area containing a paragraph of text. To the left of the text area is a "# 3" label and a small input field containing the number "3". Below the context area, there are four dropdown menus: "Tense:" with "perfect" selected, "Perfect Progressive:" with "no" selected, "Verb:" with "make decision" selected, and "Perfect Passive:" with "yes" selected. At the bottom of the form, there is a record navigation bar with icons for first, previous, next, and last records, and a text field showing "3" followed by "of 384".

The verb form³ was registered and the incidence of PrP expanded or passive forms noted. In the case of co-occurring PrP and, with some temporal specifiers such as JUST and ALREADY, also for the preterite, the main verb was recorded. The results of the completed analysis were evaluated using an evaluation module (Fig. 5.2) which was specially developed for this task and which utilizes custom-written automatic evaluation routines. The data for each temporal specifier from the various corpora were gathered together and analysed to produce total statistics for each individual specifier.

In the evaluation module the number of co-occurring verb forms are counted and the first co-occurrence analysis (*% absolute* in the sample evaluation form in Fig. 5.2) is calculated giving the absolute percentage co-occurrence for each verb form. In the evaluation form for YET in CSPA shown in Fig 5.2, for example, the PrP (= *perfect* in form) co-occurs in 51.30% of all samples with YET in the CSPA corpus. The preterite accounts for 3.13%, the present for 37.76%, with the other verb forms and occurrences without verb forms making up the 100%.

³ Categories of verb forms were PrP, preterite, present, HAD form (past perfect), WILL form, WILL HAVE form, WOULD form, WOULD HAVE form, other modal, other verb form (including subjunctive and semi-modal forms), no verb form (including infinite forms).

Fig. 5.2
Evaluation form

| CSPA | | YET | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|--------|
| Total Number of Records: | 384 | Reliability Factor: | 74.01 | | | |
| Verb form | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | % perfect v. preterite | |
| Perfect: | 197 | 51.30% | 53.68% | 55.18% | 92.92% | 94.26% |
| Preterite: | 12 | 3.13% | 3.27% | 3.36% | 5.66% | 5.74% |
| Had form: | 3 | 0.78% | 0.82% | 0.84% | 1.42% | |
| Present: | 145 | 37.76% | 39.51% | 40.62% | | |
| Will: | 3 | 0.78% | 0.82% | | | |
| Will have: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | | |
| Would: | 1 | 0.26% | 0.27% | | | |
| Would have: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | | |
| Modal: | 5 | 1.30% | 1.36% | | | |
| Other: | 1 | 0.26% | 0.27% | | | |
| No tense: | 17 | 4.43% | | | | |
| Perfect Progressive: | 0 | 0.00% | | | | |
| Perfect Passive: | 37 | 18.78% | | | | |

Additionally the incidence of PrP expanded and passive forms is calculated as a percentage of the total number of PrP occurrences. In the second co-occurrence analysis (*% all finite*) the non-finite forms are subtracted and the co-occurrence percentages calculated. This increases the percentage of PrP occurrences with YET in CSPA to 53.68%, as can be seen in Fig. 5.2.

The remaining three co-occurrence analyses are designed from the perspective of the learner who has to make a verb form choice and is possibly looking to the temporal specifier for guidance. Although many temporal specifiers can refer to different periods of time, it can be assumed that learners can easily distinguish whether they want to talk about the future or not and would not therefore mistakenly use a future verb form when they want to talk about an event in the past, for example. However, learners sometimes do experience difficulties in making a choice between present, perfect and preterite forms. This is especially the case for events which continue up to the moment of utterance, as in many languages such events are encoded using a present verb form. The third co-occurrence analysis (*% present and past ref.*) therefore counts the total number of PrP, preterite, past perfect and present verb forms and calculates their relative co-occurrence. As Fig. 5.2 shows, these four verb forms now make up 100%.

The fourth analysis (*% past ref.*) excludes the present on the assumption that the learner is making a conscious verb form selection concerning past time only. As the present is now excluded, the PrP now accounts for 92.92% of the sample of YET in CSPA (►Fig. 5.2).

The final co-occurrence analysis (*% perfect v. preterite*) is a head-on comparison between PrP and preterite, one of the most frequent and perhaps most difficult choices facing many learners of English. This latter factor, given as a percentage ratio, is a crucial figure for the evaluation of the correlation between a temporal specifier and the PrP. The best PrP indicators achieve co-occurrence ratios of over 90 to 10. The evaluation form in Fig. 5.2 shows that for every 100 occurrences of YET in CSPA involving either the PrP or the preterite, the PrP co-occurs approximately 94 times, as compared with about 6 occurrences of the preterite.

Finally, in order to rate the reliability of each temporal specifier as an indicator of the PrP, a reliability factor is calculated which allows the individual adverbials to be compared. This reliability factor is the average value of the last four co-occurrence analyses, that is, excluding non-finite verb forms. The reliability factor is a number between 0 and 100. The higher the number, the higher the reliability of the temporal specifier as an indicator for the PrP.⁴ The best PrP indicators have reliability factors of over 75. Temporal specifiers which have both a high PrP to preterite co-occurrence factor and a high reliability factor can justifiably be described as good markers for the PrP.

5.2 Classes of Temporal Specifiers

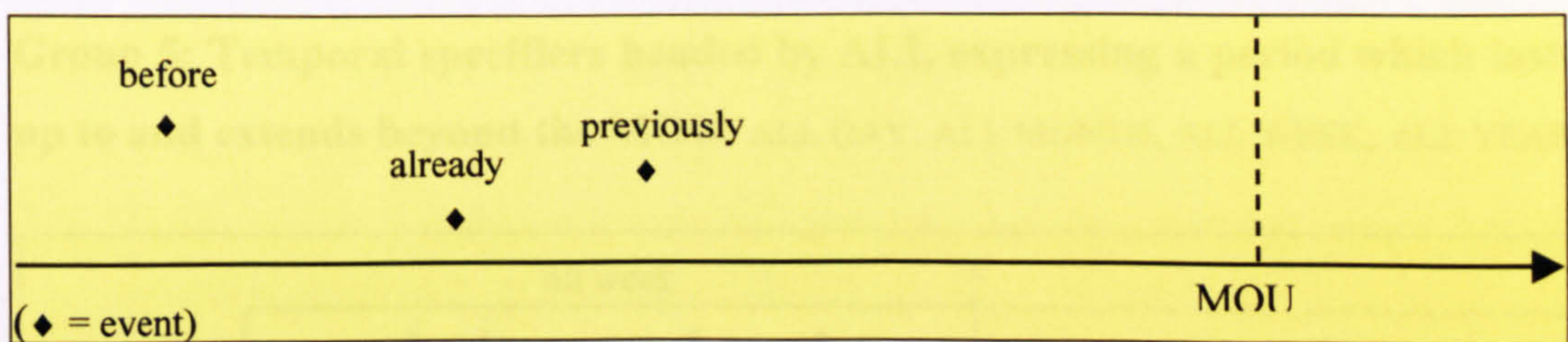
In the past temporal specifiers have been classified according to such criteria as definiteness, recentness, completedness or on the basis of their syntactic properties (Greenbaum, 1969). With respect to co-occurring verb forms, I have found that the most useful way of classifying these temporal specifiers is to group them according to their temporal and semantic relationship to the moment of utterance (MOU).

⁴ While this 'reliability factor' is rather arbitrary, I felt that, besides the head-on PrP-preterite comparison, an even stiffer test of temporal specifier co-occurrence reliability was required in order to test whether the pedagogical recommendation of 'marker words' had any grounding in linguistic reality.

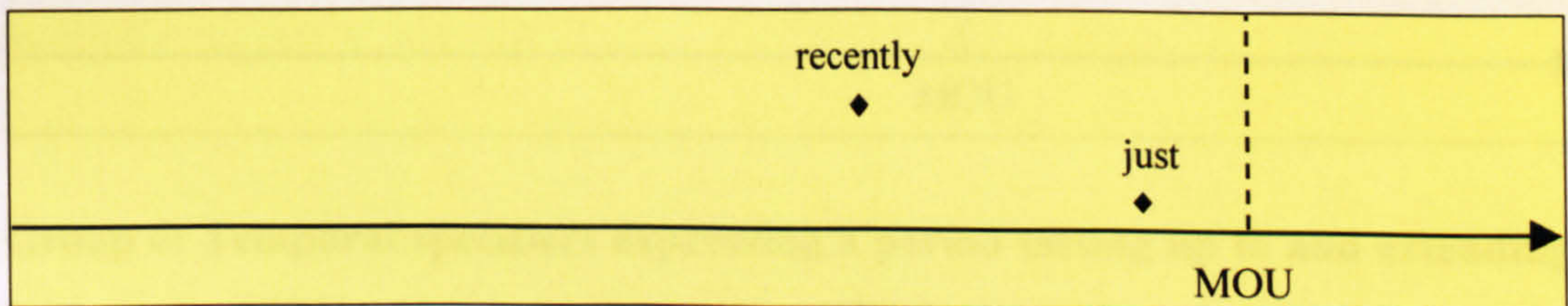
This grouping involved asking the questions: how does the specifier locate the event with respect to the MOU? Does the specifier indicate iteration? Can a time frame be drawn to represent this specifier? If yes, does the time frame extend up to the MOU? Does it extend beyond the MOU? The answers to these questions determined the classification and can be seen in the time diagrams for the individual groups.

Six separate categories can be identified:

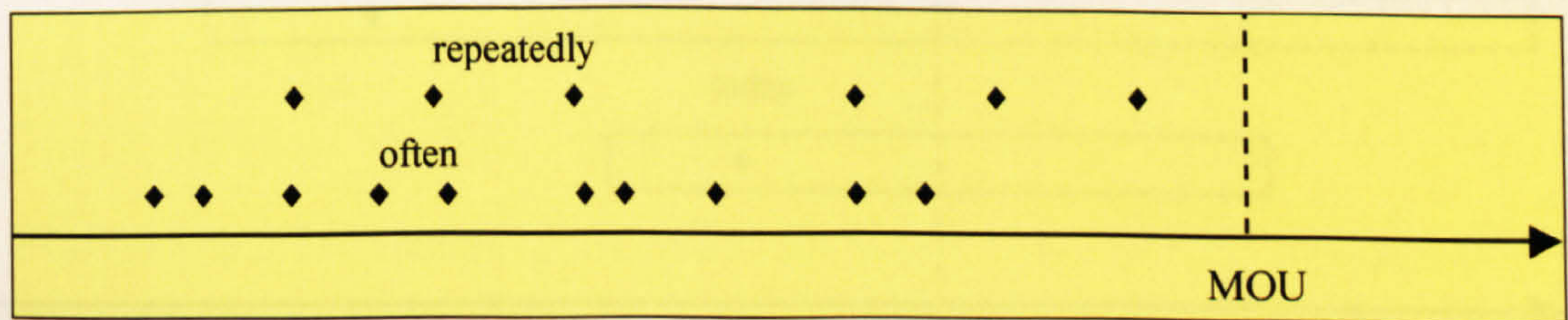
Group 1: Temporal specifiers expressing completion at an indefinite time before the MOU: ALREADY, BEFORE, PREVIOUSLY



Group 2: Temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time close to the MOU: JUST, LATELY, RECENTLY, NOW



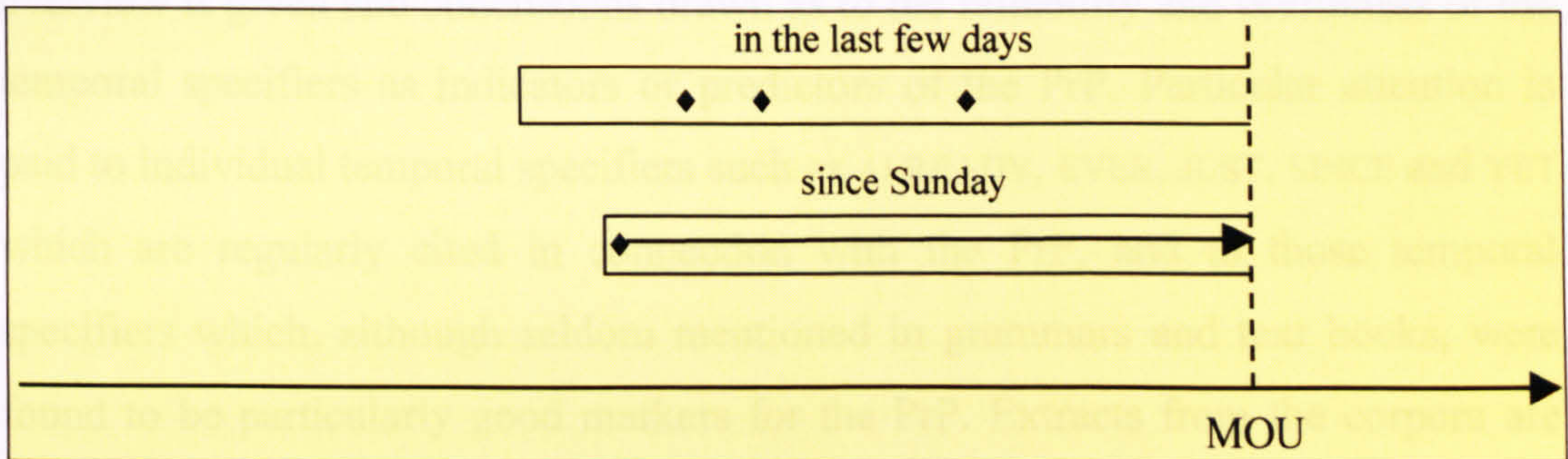
Group 3: Temporal specifiers expressing iteration⁵ before the MOU: FREQUENTLY, OFTEN, REPEATEDLY



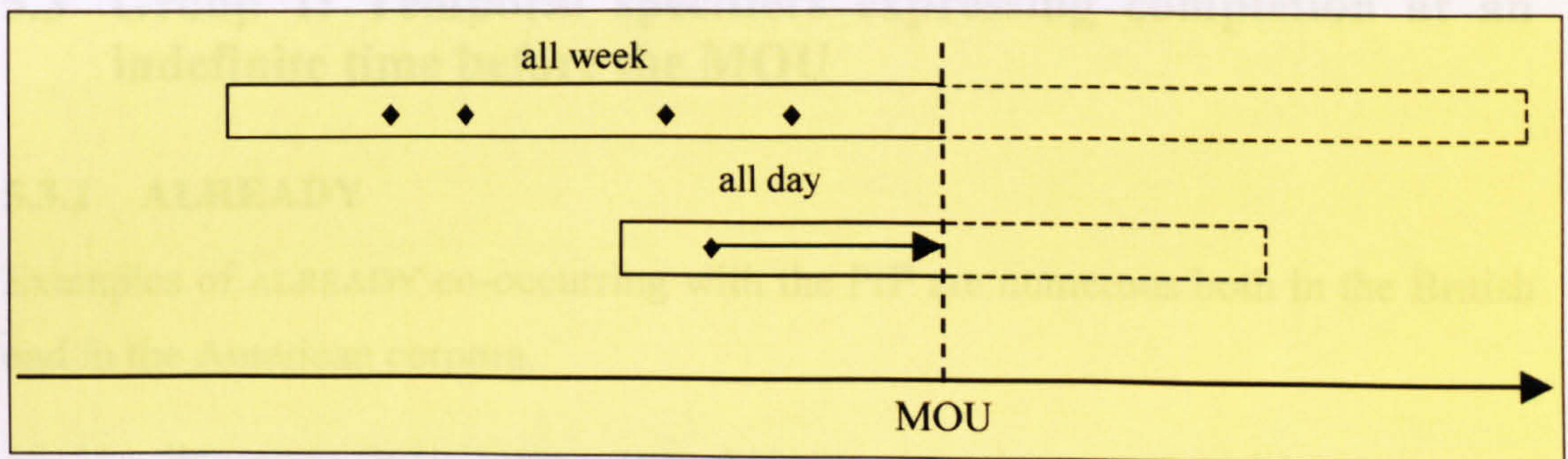
⁵ Other specifiers such as ALWAYS, FOR and SINCE can also indicate or imply iteration (see Greenbaum, 1996: 270-271).

Group 4: Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to the MOU:

ALWAYS, DURING THE LAST ..., DURING THE PAST ..., EVER, FOR ..., HOW LONG, IN THE LAST ..., IN THE PAST ..., LONG, NEVER, OVER THE LAST ..., OVER THE PAST ..., SINCE ..., SO FAR, STILL NOT, UNTIL NOW, UP TO NOW, YET

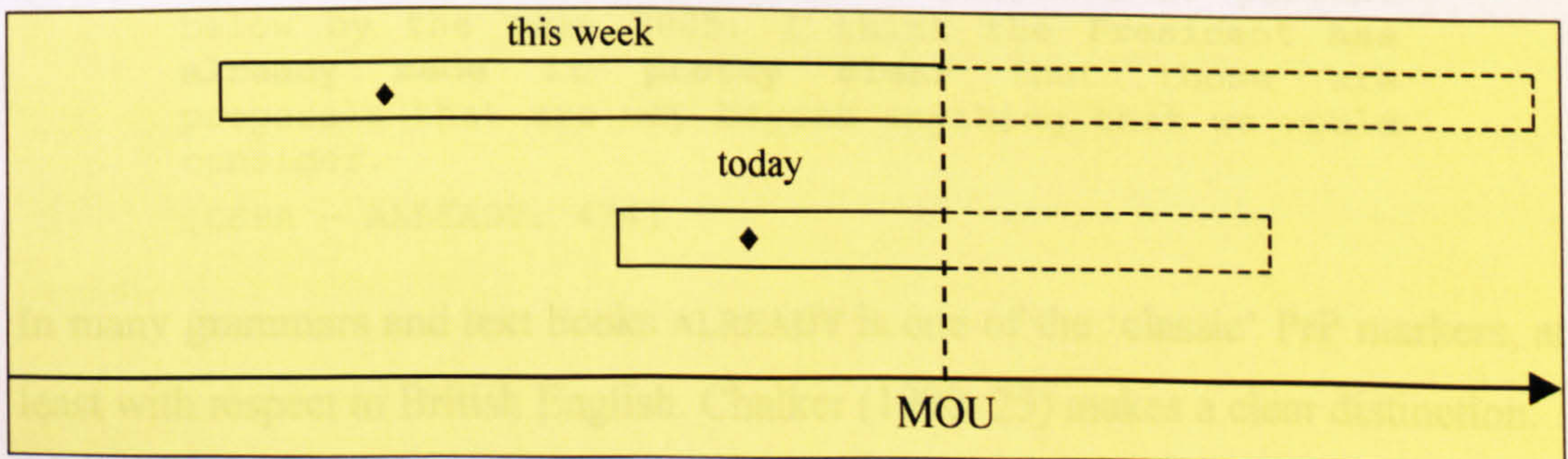


Group 5: Temporal specifiers headed by ALL expressing a period which lasts up to and extends beyond the MOU: ALL DAY, ALL MONTH, ALL WEEK, ALL YEAR



Group 6: Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to and extending beyond the MOU which are compatible with the insertion of *earlier*:

THIS CENTURY, THIS MONTH, THIS MORNING⁶, THIS WEEK, THIS YEAR, TODAY



⁶ Depending on the time of day, *this morning* can also indicate a closed time frame.

In the following sections the results of the analyses of these temporal specifiers and their co-occurring verb forms are given first for each corpus, whereby corpora with less than approximately 50 occurrences of the individual specifier are not presented individually, except in cases of particular interest. In the final section an overview is given and conclusions drawn as to the reliability and usefulness of the temporal specifiers as indicators or predictors of the PrP. Particular attention is paid to individual temporal specifiers such as ALREADY, EVER, JUST, SINCE and YET which are regularly cited in connection with the PrP, and to those temporal specifiers which, although seldom mentioned in grammars and text books, were found to be particularly good markers for the PrP. Extracts from the corpora are given in order to illustrate the way the PrP (and sometimes the preterite) is used in conjunction with the individual temporal specifiers.

5.3 Group 1: Temporal specifiers expressing completion at an indefinite time before the MOU

5.3.1 ALREADY

Examples of ALREADY co-occurring with the PrP are numerous both in the British and in the American corpora.

[5.1] He and Quinlivan are likely to face extradition applications from Scotland Yard, which said yesterday that it would set the machinery in motion. The Irish authorities **have already made clear** that charges against Quinlivan will have to take precedence, and the same may apply to McAuley.

[TIMES - ALREADY: 364]

[5.2] The Island States I think have proposed 20 percent below by the year 2005. I think the President **has already made it pretty clear** that those are proposals that are way beyond anything that we would consider.

[CSPA - ALREADY: 474]

In many grammars and text books ALREADY is one of the 'classic' PrP markers, at least with respect to British English. Chalker (1990: 25) makes a clear distinction.

In British English, action verbs with *already* prefer perfect, not past tenses:

I have already decided what to do.

Surely Tom hasn't already left.

But in American English we can say:

*I already decided.
Tom already left.*

The point that American English prefers the preterite with ALREADY is also made by Leech – Svartvik (1975: 66) and Stemmer – Wynne (1988: 215). The further implication of the first sentence of the quotation from Chalker is that in British English also the preterite is preferred with stative verbs co-occurring with ALREADY. The corpora do offer some evidence for this latter statement – 64.9% of all preterite occurrences with ALREADY in the British corpora are in fact stative verbs – an extremely high figure. The corresponding figure for the American corpora is lower at 44.2%, but still extremely high in comparison with the normal co-occurrence factor. The percentage of PrP stative verbs with ALREADY for the British and American corpora are 8.3% and 8.6% respectively. It would seem, therefore, that in conjunction with ALREADY stative verbs are indeed much more common with the preterite, but this is not, as Chalker implies, limited to British English.

5.3.2 ALREADY in the corpora

Table 5.1
ALREADY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 287 | 114 | 29 | 25 | 98 | 6 | 15 | 80:20 | 58 |
| TIMES | 718 | 234 | 68 | 90 | 209 | 13 | 104 | 77:23 | 54 |
| CSPA | 483 | 196 | 35 | 17 | 199 | 24 | 12 | 85:15 | 62 |
| WASHPOST | 99 | 33 | 15 | 12 | 25 | 2 | 12 | 69:31 | 50 |

ALREADY in COB displays a reliability factor of 58, which is only slightly higher than average for all temporal specifiers taken together. This is mainly due to the high co-occurrence of the present verb form which is nearly as frequent as the PrP with ALREADY. The PrP to preterite co-occurrence factor is heavily in favour of the former with a ratio of 4:1.

⁷ Legend: Occs – Number of occurrences, PrP – Present Perfect, Pret – Preterite, PaP – Past Perfect, Oth. – all other finite verb forms, N-F – co-occurring non-finite verb forms, CF – co-occurrence factor, ratio of PrP to preterite forms, RF – reliability factor, as defined in section 5.1.

As can be seen from Table 5.1, the figures for the TIMES corpus are similar to the data from COB. The major difference is the higher incidence of the past perfect resulting in a somewhat lower reliability factor. The co-occurrence factor is, however, comparable.

The most striking aspect of the analysis of ALREADY in the CSPA corpus of spoken American English, apart from the higher reliability and co-occurrence factors in comparison with the British corpora, is the low frequency of the preterite, in contrast to what might have been expected.

The smaller WASHPOST corpus displays the lowest PrP co-occurrence with ALREADY with a more even distribution of the four main verb forms. It is interesting to note the markedly higher incidence of the preterite in this corpus of written American in comparison with the spoken CSPA corpus. Most of these occurrences are either stative verbs or expanded forms.

[5.3] But other regions of the state, from the Central Valley and its huge agribusinesses to Southern California and its aircraft plants, are also bracing for a falloff in trade. **Already**, during the slowdown that preceded the Asian currency devaluations and stock market meltdown late last year, the impact **was beginning** to be felt.

[WASHPOST - ALREADY: 46]

Nevertheless, the co-occurrence factor at 69 to 31 is still clearly in favour of the PrP. It is interesting to note a phenomenon in this corpus in connection with the position of ALREADY in the sentence. In over a third of the PrP occurrences, ALREADY was located in front of the auxiliary, a phenomenon which was rarely encountered in the other corpora.

[5.4] In its monthly newsletter that accompanies electric bills, Pepco said it has "an aggressive program underway to identify deficiencies and upgrade all of the software and hardware that we use." The utility said many of its systems **already have been fixed**.

[WASHPOST - ALREADY: 32]

5.3.2.1 Summary

Fig. 5.3
ALREADY evaluation form

| ALL | | ALREADY | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Total Number of Records: | 1587 | Reliability Factor: | 56.88 | | |
| Verb form | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | % perfect v. preterite |
| Perfect: | 578 | 36.42% | 40.00% | 41.29% | 66.51% |
| Preterite: | 147 | 9.26% | 10.17% | 10.50% | 16.92% |
| Had form: | 144 | 9.07% | 9.97% | 10.29% | 16.57% |
| Present: | 531 | 33.46% | 36.75% | 37.93% | |
| Will: | 2 | 0.13% | 0.14% | | |
| Will have: | 1 | 0.06% | 0.07% | | |
| Would: | 4 | 0.25% | 0.28% | | |
| Would have: | 3 | 0.19% | 0.21% | | |
| Modal: | 28 | 1.76% | 1.94% | | |
| Other: | 7 | 0.44% | 0.48% | | |
| No tense: | 142 | 8.95% | | | |
| Perfect Progressive: | 3 | 0.52% | Perfect Passive: | 98 | 16.96% |

ALREADY is one of a number of adverbials which are regularly cited in grammars and text books in connection with the PrP. Consequently a very large sample of 1587 occurrences was taken from the corpora. Summing up, it can be said that ALREADY is not a particularly good overall predictor of the PrP with a reliability factor of 56.88. ALREADY, however, displays a high co-occurrence factor. For every preterite occurrence, four PrP occurrences were recorded, putting ALREADY in the top group of adverbials in this respect. There is no evidence of a preference for the preterite with ALREADY in American English, neither in the spoken nor the written corpora. The majority of co-occurring preterite verbs with ALREADY are stative verbs. There is also a high incidence of the passive form, both with the PrP and the preterite.

5.3.3 BEFORE

[5.5] Police said the three 20-kilogram devices were detonated by command wire. The IRA **has used** secondary devices **before**, the most notorious being the Warrenpoint bombing in August 1979 that killed six paratroopers initially and a further twelve in the secondary explosion.

[TIMES - BEFORE+: 31]

Although the prepositional adverb BEFORE is not usually cited as a marker for the PrP, the functional-semantic PrP analysis identified numerous instances of BEFORE in final position in the sentence or clause co-occurring with the PrP. In this meaning it co-occurs frequently with NEVER or EVER.

[5.6] MCCURRY: I've never had that question before. I don't know - maybe Lanny has looked into that.
[CSPA - BEFORE+: 62]

BEFORE in final position in the clause was therefore analysed with respect to a possible correlation. The results are summarized in Tables 5.2.

Table 5.2
BEFORE in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 86 | 40 | 22 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 65:35 | 58 |
| TIMES | 105 | 34 | 14 | 27 | 0 | 4 | 26 | 71:29 | 51 |
| CSPA | 207 | 84 | 80 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 5 | 51:49 | 46 |
| WASHPOST | 23 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 62:38 | 50 |

The data for BEFORE display a below-average PrP reliability factor for both American and British corpora. The British corpora, especially TIMES, indicate a higher tendency towards the PrP in the co-occurrence comparison whereas the American corpora overall display a closer parity between the two verb forms. Overall, however, the temporal specifier BEFORE is not a good marker for the PrP.

5.3.4 PREVIOUSLY

[5.7] VOICE: Has the President gotten information on the possibility that the Chinese government may have been involved in fundraising here?
MCCURRY: Yes, and we've previously told you the circumstances under which we got information.
[CSPA - PREVIOUSLY: 52]

In the corpora, especially in CSPA, there was some evidence of a possible correlation between PREVIOUSLY and the PrP, and the adverbial was therefore analysed. As can be seen in Table 5.3, the evaluated data did not confirm this evidence, producing very low reliability and co-occurrence factors, especially for the British corpora.

Table 5.3
PREVIOUSLY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 70 | 17 | 26 | 20 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 40:60 | 30 |
| TIMES | 79 | 12 | 21 | 22 | 0 | 4 | 20 | 36:64 | 25 |
| CSPA | 53 | 19 | 14 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 58:42 | 46 |
| WASHPOST | 8 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 00:100 | 0 |

5.3.5 Overview and conclusions

Table 5.4
Temporal specifiers expressing completion at an indefinite time before MOU

| Temporal specifier | Occurrences | PrP:Preterite co-occurrence | Reliability Factor |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ALREADY | 1595 | 79:21 | 57 |
| BEFORE | 421 | 58:42 | 50 |
| NOW | 1043 | 73:27 | 41 |
| PREVIOUSLY | 210 | 43:57 | 32 |

The four adverbials examined here produced widely differing results. ALREADY was shown to be a fairly reliable indicator of the PrP, both in the British and American corpora, and is one of the top ten temporal specifiers with respect to the co-occurrence factor. NOW has a similar PrP co-occurrence factor to ALREADY, but a considerably lower reliability factor. This is due to the high incidence of the present with this specifier. BEFORE, and more especially, PREVIOUSLY, show only a weak correlation with the PrP, and cannot be considered reliable indicators. The description of an event completed at an indefinite time in the past, as expressed by these adverbials, clearly in itself does not necessarily or primarily involve the use of the PrP. It can be assumed that PREVIOUSLY connotes a stronger link to a closed time frame, whereas ALREADY has a more indefinite connotation.

5.4 Group 2: Temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time close to the MOU

5.4.1 JUST

[5.8] Gabriel, 39, has now graduated from Mills & Boon and is living in Spain on the proceeds of his first blockbuster, *The Original Sin*. He **has just accepted** a three-book deal that is said to be worth Pounds 500,000.

[TIMES - JUST: 1]

In older pedagogical grammars JUST was often cited as a reliable marker for the PrP. “To indicate completed activities in the immediate past the perfect tense with the adverb *just* may be used:” (Zandvoort, 1965: 62). Thomson – Martinet (1969: 105) express similar views: “The PrP tense is used with **just** to express a recently completed action”, and go on to say “This is a special idiomatic use of this tense” (105), presumably because their theory of the PrP does not encompass the possibility of the PrP not having “a strong connexion to the present” (105).

In more recent times there has been a growing awareness that JUST frequently co-occurs with the preterite and in most grammars written in the last 20 years, JUST is conspicuous by its absence. Where it is mentioned, its use in British and American English is contrasted: “*Just, lately, already, yet* can emphasise recentness and are often associated with perfect tenses. But American English can use *just* with the past simple tense: <Tom just locked it.>” (Chalker, 1984: 102). “In British English, the present perfect is used with *just* to talk about very recent events. (Americans usually use the past simple with *just*. ‘Where’s Barbara?’ – ‘She’s just gone out.’ (US: ‘She just went out.’)” (Swan, 1980: 495). These introspective judgements are put to the test in the following analyses of the temporal specifier JUST.⁸

5.4.1.1 JUST in the corpora

Table 5.5
JUST in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 64 | 35 | 11 | 6 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 76:24 | 64 |
| TIMES | 100 | 44 | 2 | 43 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 96:04 | 60 |
| CSPA | 174 | 45 | 119 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 27:73 | 27 |
| WASHPOST | 16 | 1 | 10 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 09:91 | 7 |

The sample of JUST in COB displays a relatively high reliability factor of 64 and a strong bias in favour of the PrP in the head-on comparison with the preterite. As is to be expected with a corpus of spoken English, present verb forms with JUST are

⁸ The adverb JUST occurs very frequently in all the corpora examined. In its temporal meaning of ‘recently’ it is, however, relatively infrequent. There are approximately 5 non-temporal occurrences of JUST for every one temporal occurrence.

relatively frequent. The PrP is the most frequently co-occurring verb form, preterite and present being equally distributed.

The analysis of JUST in the TIMES corpus resulted in a reliability factor of 60, slightly lower than COB. This was mainly due to the high proportion of past perfect forms. The percentage of PrP and past perfect forms was almost identical, at 46.32% and 45.26% of all finite verb forms, with only 2.11% preterite occurrences. In many cases the high incidence of the past perfect can be attributed to the back shift of the PrP in reported speech (as far as this can be ascertained). There is without doubt an overwhelming correlation between JUST and perfect verb forms in this corpus. The head-on co-occurrence ratio of the PrP and the preterite is a remarkable 96 to 4.

The first striking aspect of the analysis of JUST in the CSPA corpus of spoken American English is the extremely low reliability factor of 27. The PrP to preterite co-occurrence factor at 27 to 73 is almost the exact inversion of the results for the COB corpus of spoken British English. The occurrence of the preterite is consistently high in all co-occurrence analyses whereas the frequency of past perfect and present verb forms is extremely low.

This small sample from the WASHPOST corpus is another indication of the preponderance of the preterite with JUST in American English. As was seen in the TIMES sample, the past perfect occurrences are mainly due to reported speech backshift, whereby, of course, it cannot be ascertained whether a putative PrP or preterite form has been backshifted.

The statistics for JUST in the British and US corpora show great discrepancy with respect to co-occurring verb forms. Whereas USCORP displays a low PrP reliability factor of 25, JUST in BRITCORP indicates a moderately high reliability of 60. The difference between the figures for the head-on PrP to preterite comparison is even greater – a very strong bias towards the PrP in the British corpora, a very strong bias towards the preterite in the American corpora. The statistics clearly lend support to the claim that Americans prefer the preterite in connection with JUST, whereas the British tend strongly towards the PrP. There is, however, no discernible pattern in either variety. Analysis of co-occurring verbs shows that in both the American and British corpora the same verb is used

apparently indiscriminately in the PrP and the preterite with seemingly no difference in meaning or speech intention.

[5.9] MCCURRY: - you will know what I am saying. Bob Bell, thank you for being here and thank you for taking a little time. We also, as **you just heard**, have paper available now on the African Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

[USCORP - JUST: 256]

[5.10] MCCURRY: Good afternoon everybody. **You have all just heard** the President announce the - make the announcement he just made concerning adding as service-connected diseases two diseases directly related to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

[CSPA - JUST: 254]

The same phenomenon can be observed in the British corpora:

[5.11] <F01> there's somebody there. So I'm going to be even later than normal.

<F02> Right.

<F01> And that's saying something.

<F02> Yeah. **FX just phoned** saying she'll be in late as well. all the all the phone calls I get

<F01> [laughs]

[BRITCORP - JUST: 8]

[5.12] <F01> Oh hi FX it's FX.

<F02> Hiya.

<F01> Erm I was ringing because **I've just phoned** FX

<F02> Yeah.

<F01> and she wants the number for company name .

<F02> [laughs]

[BRITCORP - JUST: 13]

A certain consistent tendency can, however, be perceived towards the preterite in the US corpora and towards the PrP in the British corpora. Of 34 instances of JUST with SAY in USCORP, 30 are preterite, 4 PrP. In BRITCORP there is no single verb with so many occurrences, but it is typical that the verbs RECEIVE + LEAVE both have three occurrences of the PrP to one occurrence of the preterite with JUST.

It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions from these data, firstly because of the very small number of JUST occurrences found in the WASHPOST corpus, and secondly, because the results are skewed by the strong British-American divergence.

Fig. 5.4
JUST evaluation form

| ALL | | JUST | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Total Number of Records: | | 354 | | Reliability Factor: 39.61 | |
| Verb form | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | % perfect v. preterite |
| Perfect: | 125 35.31% | 36.13% | 36.66% | 38.82% | 46.82% |
| Preterite: | 142 40.11% | 41.04% | 41.64% | 44.10% | 53.18% |
| Had form: | 55 15.54% | 15.90% | 16.13% | 17.08% | |
| Present: | 19 5.37% | 5.49% | 5.57% | | |
| Will: | 0 0.00% | 0.00% | | | |
| Will have: | 0 0.00% | 0.00% | | | |
| Would: | 1 0.28% | 0.29% | | | |
| Would have: | 0 0.00% | 0.00% | | | |
| Modal: | 0 0.00% | 0.00% | | | |
| Other: | 4 1.13% | 1.16% | | | |
| No tense: | 8 2.26% | | | | |
| Perfect Progressive: | | 7 5.60% | Perfect Passive: | | 9 7.20% |

5.4.2 LATELY

Several writers (Leech – Svartvik, 1975: 68, Chalker, 1984: 102) cite LATELY in connection with the PrP, stressing the fact that recentness is a primary semantic feature of PrP usage. The frequency of LATELY is, however, very low in the corpora, totalling only 67 occurrences.

[5.13] <M06> Yeah. Well er this is what I think. I always er I told a lot of people John Taynton on BBC er West Midlands and all that and er I think your your attitude just **lately has become** very high-handed. Er I nearly phoned you on Friday night over your attitude to gypsies. Was it Friday?

[COB - LATELY: 1]

Table 5.6
LATELY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 46 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 4 | 100:00 | 83 |
| TIMES | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100:00 | 63 |
| CSPA | 10 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 100:00 | 94 |
| WASHPOST | 5 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 75:25 | 68 |

As can be seen from the statistics in Table 5.6, LATELY in COB and CSPA displays very high reliability factors. The other corpora are not considered here because of the low occurrence rate. The figures for the past time reference co-occurrence in COB and CSPA are both 100% in favour of the PrP showing that there is a strong correlation between LATELY and the PrP in these corpora. The occurrence figures for the other corpora are too small to draw any definitive conclusions. About 25% of co-occurring verb forms with LATELY are present forms. If these are neglected, then LATELY co-occurs almost exclusively with the PrP. The relatively high incidence of the PrP expanded at 21.43% is worth noting. A typical example is shown in the following extract.

[5.14] <FOX> Hello
<FOX> Hello. He's fat.
<FOX> I know he's been eating quite a lot lately
actually.
<FOX> Mhm.
<FOX> Do you think he's too fat? Thing is they
always say you know if they ask for more give it to
'em.
[COB - LATELY: 18]

5.4.3 RECENTLY

RECENTLY is often cited together with LATELY as a marker word for the PrP, especially in British English. In contrast to LATELY, RECENTLY is found frequently in the corpora, with a total of 731 occurrences.

[5.15] We will have an opportunity - the President will
have an opportunity to meet President Mubarak to go
over some of the issues that he wishes to raise
about the peace process. You know that he has
recently hosted a summit of Arab leaders; he's
recently met with Prime Minister Netanyahu; and he's
also **recently** met with the United States Middle East
peace team. So there's a number of issues that will
come up during the course of those meetings.
[CSPA - RECENTLY: 8]

The two spoken corpora show a definite, but not very strong tendency towards the PrP with RECENTLY, whereas there is a clear inclination towards the preterite with the written corpora. This is probably a result of the distance to the MOU created by the process of reporting or narration.

Table 5.7
RECENTLY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 277 | 129 | 103 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 28 | 56:44 | 53 |
| TIMES | 238 | 63 | 108 | 25 | 3 | 1 | 38 | 37:63 | 33 |
| CSPA | 152 | 77 | 53 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 16 | 59:41 | 58 |
| WASHPOST | 46 | 14 | 26 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 35:65 | 33 |

As can be seen from Table 5.7, the American corpora display a greater tendency towards the PrP with RECENTLY. In none of the corpora, however, is this tendency particularly strong. RECENTLY is neither a good indicator nor a good predictor of the PrP. The PrP – preterite co-occurrence ratio for all the combined corpora is virtually 50:50 so that learners would be ill-advised to rely on this temporal specifier. The reliability factor at 46.50 is below the average of all temporal specifiers taken together.

5.4.4 NOW

[5.16] Now our neighbours were Christian spiritualists and they were extremely nice well they were still I've still got **my mother's gone now** but erm they were very very kind people and she had phlebitis in the one leg and a virus which made her extremely ill everyone thought she was going to die but she she didn't.

[COB – NOW: 92]

During the main functional-semantic analysis it became apparent that NOW co-occurs quite frequently with the PrP. It is, in fact, the sixth most frequent co-occurring temporal specifier in that analysis (►6.2.9). Occurrences of NOW with other temporal specifiers such as FOR and UNTIL, or in connection with other durational specifiers were excluded for the purposes of the analysis in this section. Not surprisingly the present turned out to be the most frequent co-occurring verb form with NOW, accounting for 711 out of a total of 1043 occurrences. As can be seen in Table 5.8, this resulted in a below-average reliability factor. The PrP-preterite co-occurrence factor at 73:27 is clearly in favour of the PrP, however, and puts NOW into eleventh place in the overall PrP co-occurrence factor table (►5.13.2.1). The preterite occurrences which were found co-occurring with NOW are, with very few exceptions, the result of backshift in reported speech as in [5.17]

or in conditional clauses. If these are subtracted, NOW has a nearly perfect co-occurrence factor.

[5.17] Mr Leonard said that dog owners were increasingly resorting to the law for compensation. It **was now** common for damages to be awarded against a breeder if a pedigree dog turned out to have a hereditary personality defect.

[TIMES - NOW: 100]

There are slight discrepancies between the British and American corpora, and also between the spoken and written corpora. This is due to the higher number of preterite forms found in reported speech, and also to the fact that whereas *The Times* frequently uses reported speech, *The Washington Post* seems to make more use of direct speech.

Table 5.8
NOW in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 202 | 19 | 4 | 0 | 147 | 23 | 9 | 83:17 | 47 |
| TIMES | 282 | 24 | 18 | 1 | 169 | 31 | 39 | 57:43 | 34 |
| CSPA | 286 | 24 | 3 | 0 | 215 | 15 | 29 | 89:11 | 49 |
| WASHPOST | 273 | 21 | 8 | 0 | 180 | 25 | 39 | 72:28 | 41 |

5.4.5 Overview and conclusions

Table 5.9
Temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time close to the MOU

| Temporal specifier | Occurrences | PrP:preterite co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| JUST | 354 | 47:53 | 40 |
| LATELY | 63 | 98:02 | 83 |
| RECENTLY | 713 | 49:51 | 47 |
| NOW | 1043 | 73:27 | 41 |

With the exception of LATELY and to a lesser extent NOW, the temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time considered to be close to the MOU are not reliable predictors of the PrP. It was seen, however, that the PrP co-occurs with JUST in the British corpora significantly more often than in the American corpora. Because of the relatively small number of occurrences, no conclusions should be drawn about LATELY as a temporal specifier for the PrP. It is interesting, however, to compare the data for LATELY and RECENTLY. Why these two adverbials, which are virtually identical in meaning, should produce such divergent results, is a matter for

speculation. Perhaps it is a question of collocation, the PrP just ‘sounds better’ with LATELY, this adverbial possibly being perceived as slightly more formal than RECENTLY. More data is, however, needed before a definitive answer to this question can be attempted.

5.5 Group 3: Temporal specifiers expressing iteration before the MOU

One of the theories about the PrP is that it is the preferred verb form for expressing iteration in the past.⁹ If this is the case, then we should see a clear tendency towards the PrP with these specifiers, at least in the head-to-head comparison with the preterite.

5.5.1 FREQUENTLY

[5.18] BERGER: Well, Libya is a problem, first of all, until the suspect of Pan Am 103 are turned over, until there is full compliance with the U.N. sanctions. We **have met frequently** with the families of Pan Am 103.

[CSPA - FREQUENTLY: 20]

Table 5.10
FREQUENTLY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 55 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 38 | 4 | 5 | 43:58 | 23 |
| TIMES | 40 | 3 | 12 | 0 | 15 | 1 | 9 | 20:80 | 15 |
| CSPA | 46 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 30 | 7 | 1 | 75:25 | 45 |
| WASHPOST | 15 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 3 | 33:67 | 18 |

Of the 156 occurrences of FREQUENTLY in the corpora, 13 co-occur with the PrP, 20 with the preterite, and 90 with the present. From these figures it can be seen that the adverbial, if anything, is correlated with the present rather than with any of the two main verb forms under investigation here.

⁹ See sections 6.2.11.2 and 6.3.6.6 for a discussion of iteration and the PrP.

5.5.2 OFTEN

[5.19] And she went on to become Eleanor Roosevelt, the Eleanor Roosevelt of enduring fascination, a model of the strong, independent, compassionate first lady. Hillary Rodham Clinton **has often cited** her as the kind of first lady she hoped to become, though it is doubtful she was thinking of the bond they shared as embarrassed wives deceived by unfaithful husbands.

[WASHPOST - OFTEN: 54]

Table 5.11
OFTEN in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 148 | 11 | 4 | 0 | 108 | 12 | 13 | 73:27 | 41 |
| TIMES | 349 | 20 | 84 | 4 | 174 | 13 | 54 | 19:81 | 13 |
| CSPA | 247 | 35 | 13 | 1 | 171 | 20 | 7 | 73:27 | 44 |
| WASHPOST | 77 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 48 | 4 | 6 | 56:44 | 34 |

The striking thing about the statistics for OFTEN is first of all the virtually identical figures for COB and CSPA with a strong PrP co-occurrence factor, although the reliability factor for both is relatively low.

The newspaper corpora display low factors on both counts, especially TIMES. The overall figures are very low – OFTEN is very near the bottom of the reliability table. Again this is influenced by the fact that the present is by far the most frequent co-occurring verb form with OFTEN with a total of 61% of all finite forms.

5.5.3 REPEATEDLY

[5.20] Sir Ivan Lawrence, Tory chairman of the Commons home affairs select committee, welcomed the Calcutt proposals. "The press **have been threatened repeatedly** with a supervisory body with teeth. If the press don't like it, they only have themselves to blame," he said.

[TIMES - REPEATEDLY: 6]

It is always difficult to draw conclusions from relatively small samples, but it can be concluded with some certainty that REPEATEDLY is not generally a marker for the PrP. The high figures in CSPA are worth noting, again it is an American corpus which displays the highest factors, but it would be unwise to overgeneralize in this respect.

Table 5.12
REPEATEDLY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 50:50 | 50 |
| TIMES | 61 | 11 | 29 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 11 | 28:72 | 24 |
| CSPA | 43 | 26 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 76:24 | 71 |
| WASHPOST | 23 | 8 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 47:53 | 45 |

5.5.4 Overview and conclusions

Table 5.13
Temporal specifiers expressing iteration before the MOU

| Temporal specifier | Occurrences | PrP:preterite co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| FREQUENTLY | 156 | 39:61 | 24 |
| OFTEN | 821 | 41:59 | 26 |
| REPEATEDLY | 133 | 49:51 | 45 |

The figures show that there is little correlation between iteration and the use of the PrP. There is, however, some evidence of a correlation in the spoken corpora, most specifically in CSPA. The newspaper corpora, presumably because of the intrinsic features of narration and reportage, favour the preterite.

5.6 Group 4: Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to the MOU

These specifiers fall into two groups – those which stipulate an exact, quantified period of time whose beginning is identifiable in absolute or relative terms and those which indicate a period of time perceived as lasting up to the MOU but whose beginning is not identifiable. The first group contains the specifiers: DURING THE LAST ..., DURING THE PAST ..., FOR ..., HOW LONG, IN THE LAST ..., IN THE PAST ..., OVER THE LAST ..., OVER THE PAST ..., SINCE We will call this group the quantifiers. *How long* is included in this group because, although it does not itself quantify the time period, it constitutes a request for this information. The group of non-quantifiers comprises: ALWAYS, EVER, IN THE PAST, LONG, NEVER, SO FAR, STILL NOT, UNTIL NOW, UP TO NOW, YET. The specifiers IN THE PAST ... AND IN THE PAST are treated together because of the low occurrence frequency of the latter. A further subdivision must be made. It is necessary to distinguish between those specifiers which make exclusive reference to a period of time lasting up to the

MOU¹⁰ and those which can also refer to closed time frames in the past and which can also refer to the future. We will call these ‘unambiguous’ and ‘ambiguous’ specifiers. The final categorisation thus consists of four sub-groups:

Unambiguous quantifiers

DURING THE LAST/PAST ...
IN THE LAST/PAST ...
OVER THE LAST/PAST ...
SINCE ...

Unambiguous non-quantifiers

LONG
SO FAR
UNTIL NOW
UP TO NOW
YET

Ambiguous quantifiers

FOR ...
HOW LONG

Ambiguous non-quantifiers

ALWAYS
EVER
NEVER
STILL NOT

5.7 Unambiguous quantifiers

5.7.1 IN THE LAST ...

Temporal specifiers containing the words LAST or PAST are not usually cited as markers for the PrP.¹¹ Greenbaum (1996: 270) does give the example: “The last few days haven’t been quite so hot and on Friday night it actually rained”, but more in order to point out the use of *the last few days* as an example of a temporal specifier as subject than to point to its significance as a possible marker. Leech – Svartvik (1975: 66) give the sentence: “All my family have had measles (in the last year)”, whereby the adverbial is more an explanatory afterthought than a concrete reference. In the section “Adverbials in relation to the past and the PrP” (Leech – Svartvik, 1975: 68), LAST/PAST are not mentioned.

¹⁰ Some of these specifiers can, of course, have a deictic reference point other than the MOU, either in the past, normally entailing the use of the past perfect, or in the future, entailing the future perfect.

¹¹ Any pedagogical grammar or textbook stressing the use of *last ...* with the *past* tense will have understandable reservations about mentioning these words in connection with the PrP, always assuming of course that the correlation had been recognized in the first place.

5.7.1.1 IN THE LAST ... in the corpora

[5.21] Er Kenya now that's been a fairly substantial increase in velocity or reduction and what's happened in Kenya surprisingly is that er inflation **has** actually **been** very stable erm **in the last few years** but there again it's history that's important.
 [COB - IN_THE_LAST ...: 60]

Table 5.14
 IN THE LAST ... in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 187 | 129 | 26 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 17 | 83:17 | 80 |
| TIMES | 48 | 22 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 60:40 | 56 |
| CSPA | 143 | 102 | 23 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 82:18 | 77 |
| WASHPOST | 20 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 67:33 | 66 |

IN THE LAST ... in the corpora of spoken English returns high reliability and co-occurrence factors. One reason for this is of course that using the word LAST virtually excludes all non-past time verb forms, although, as can be seen in Table 5.14, there are some examples of co-occurring present. The head-on comparison with the preterite for these corpora comes out clearly in favour of the PrP.

From smaller samples the newspaper corpora display lower PrP factors, in line with the general tendency in the newspaper corpora to return lower correlation values than the spoken corpora for most temporal specifiers.

5.7.1.2 Summary

IN THE LAST ... is a good indicator and predictor of the PrP. The PrP co-occurrence factor is consistently high in all categories. From the perspective of the learner of English this temporal specifier demonstrates a high degree of reliability, as can be seen in Fig. 5.5.

Fig. 5.5
IN THE LAST ... evaluation form

| ALL | | IN THE LAST | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Total Number of Records: | 398 | Reliability Factor: | 75.65 | | |
| Verb form | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | % perfect v. preterite |
| Perfect: | 263 | 66.08% | 71.66% | 73.67% | 78.04% |
| Preterite: | 69 | 17.34% | 18.80% | 19.33% | 20.47% |
| Had form: | 5 | 1.26% | 1.36% | 1.40% | 1.48% |
| Present: | 20 | 5.03% | 5.45% | 5.60% | |
| Will: | 3 | 0.75% | 0.82% | | |
| Will have: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| Would: | 1 | 0.25% | 0.27% | | |
| Would have: | 1 | 0.25% | 0.27% | | |
| Modal: | 5 | 1.26% | 1.36% | | |
| Other: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| No tense: | 31 | 7.79% | | | |
| Perfect Progressive: | 12 | 4.56% | Perfect Passive: | 37 | 14.07% |

5.7.2 OVER THE PAST ...

[5.22] Her stance represents a shift from that two weeks ago when she was said to be keen to give the impression that she was softpedalling on the report. It recommends changes that **have been advocated** in 20 separate, independent reports **over the past century** but which have been repeatedly ducked by health ministers.

[TIMES - OVER_THE_PAST ...: 28]

OVER THE PAST ... is a specifier which has been neglected in grammars and textbooks. It is perhaps not one of the most common adverbials, nevertheless it was found more frequently in the corpora than UNTIL NOW, UP TO NOW, LATELY, FREQUENTLY and other temporal specifiers which are commonly cited with reference to the PrP.

Table 5.15
OVER THE PAST...in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | DF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 43 | 28 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 90:10 | 81 |
| TIMES | 97 | 57 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 93:07 | 84 |
| CSPA | 63 | 48 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 92:08 | 90 |
| WASHPOST | 20 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 67:33 | 63 |

As can be seen from Table 5.15, OVER THE PAST ... in COB shows a high correlation with the present perfect, the figures being even higher than for IN THE LAST ... In CSPA this specifier returns some of the best results for reliability and co-occurrence recorded in this study and is to all extents and purposes nearly a perfect indicator for the PrP in this corpus.

The small WASHPOST corpus returns almost identical figures for OVER THE PAST ... as it did for IN THE LAST Interestingly, the TIMES corpus maintains the same high reliability and co-occurrence factors as the spoken corpora, the latter, in fact, being somewhat higher.

5.7.2.1 Summary

OVER THE PAST ... is one of the best indicators and predictors for the PrP. The extremely high PrP to preterite ratio of 9:1 and a reliability factor of 83 make it nearly perfect marker from a pedagogical point of view. As with the previous temporal specifier, the word PAST in the adverbial virtually excludes non-past time verb forms.

Fig. 5.6
OVER THE PAST ... evaluation form

| ALL | | OVER THE PAST | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Total Number of Records: | | 223 | Reliability Factor: 82.87 | | |
| Verb form | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | % perfect v. preterite |
| Perfect: | 143 (64.13%) | 79.01% | 79.89% | 82.66% | 89.94% |
| Preterite: | 16 (7.17%) | 8.84% | 8.94% | 9.25% | 10.06% |
| Had form: | 14 (6.28%) | 7.73% | 7.82% | 8.09% | |
| Present: | 6 (2.69%) | 3.31% | 3.35% | | |
| Will: | 0 (0.00%) | 0.00% | | | |
| Will have: | 1 (0.45%) | 0.55% | | | |
| Would: | 1 (0.45%) | 0.55% | | | |
| Would have: | 0 (0.00%) | 0.00% | | | |
| Modal: | 0 (0.00%) | 0.00% | | | |
| Other: | 0 (0.00%) | 0.00% | | | |
| No tense: | 42 (18.83%) | | | | |
| Perfect Progressive: | 18 (12.59%) | | Perfect Passive: | 12 (8.39%) | |

5.7.3 The LAST/PAST group of temporal specifiers

The results of the analysis of the previous two temporal specifiers were given in some detail as representatives of the LAST/PAST group, the results of which are summarized in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16
Overview: the LAST/PAST group in the corpora

| Temporal specifier | Corpus | Occurrences | PrP:preterite co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| IN THE LAST ... | COB | 187 | 83:17 | 80 |
| | TIMES | 48 | 59:41 | 56 |
| | CSPA | 143 | 82:18 | 78 |
| | WASHPOST | 20 | 67:33 | 66 |
| OVER THE LAST ... | COB | 126 | 89:11 | 84 |
| | TIMES | 21 | 100:00 | 93 |
| | CSPA | 118 | 88:12 | 84 |
| | WASHPOST | 7 | 100:00 | 100 |
| DURING THE LAST ... | COB | 7 | 50:50 | 50 |
| | TIMES | 2 | 100:00 | 100 |
| | CSPA | 7 | 33:67 | 30 |
| | WASHPOST | 2 | 00:100 | 0 |
| IN THE PAST ... | COB | 174 | 84:16 | 80 |
| | TIMES | 253 | 82:18 | 72 |
| | CSPA | 215 | 87:13 | 85 |
| | WASHPOST | 42 | 74:26 | 67 |

| Temporal specifier | Corpus | Occurrences | PrP:preterite co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| OVER THE PAST ... | COB | 43 | 90:10 | 80 |
| | TIMES | 97 | 93:07 | 84 |
| | CSPA | 63 | 92:08 | 90 |
| | WASHPOST | 20 | 67:33 | 63 |
| DURING THE PAST ... | COB | 2 | 00:100 | 0 |
| | TIMES | 55 | 80:20 | 67 |
| | CSPA | 2 | 100:00 | 100 |
| | WASHPOST | 2 | 100:00 | 63 |

With the exception of the phrases with DURING, which constitute an extremely small sample, the LAST/PAST group displays high reliability and co-occurrence factors. In the spoken corpora the LAST/PAST specifiers in the spoken corpora are extremely good predictors of the PrP with consistently high co-occurrence and reliability factors. The written corpora display more fluctuation with respect to LAST/PAST, no doubt due to the smaller samples available. The reliability factor of

73 is significantly lower than in the spoken corpora. Again this can be attributed to the higher proportion of past perfect forms in the newspaper texts.

Table 5.17
The LAST/PAST group in the British and American corpora

| Specifier | British Corpora | | | | American Corpora | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------|--------|----|------------------|------|--------|-----|
| | Corpus | Occs | CF | RF | Corpus | Occs | CF | RF |
| IN THE LAST ... | COB | 187 | 83:17 | 80 | CSPA | 143 | 82:18 | 78 |
| | TIMES | 48 | 59:41 | 56 | WASHPOST | 20 | 67:33 | 66 |
| OVER THE LAST ... | COB | 126 | 89:11 | 84 | CSPA | 118 | 88:12 | 84 |
| | TIMES | 21 | 100:00 | 93 | WASHPOST | 7 | 100:00 | 100 |
| IN THE PAST ... | COB | 174 | 84:16 | 80 | CSPA | 215 | 87:13 | 85 |
| | TIMES | 253 | 82:18 | 72 | WASHPOST | 42 | 74:26 | 67 |
| OVER THE PAST ... | COB | 43 | 90:10 | 80 | CSPA | 63 | 92:08 | 90 |
| | TIMES | 97 | 93:07 | 84 | WASHPOST | 20 | 67:33 | 63 |
| ALL | | 949 | 84:16 | 78 | | 628 | 85:15 | 81 |

The table shows a high degree of homogeneity between the British and American corpora, in spite of some fluctuation due mainly to sample size especially in the American corpora. In summary it can be said that temporal specifiers containing phrases such as IN THE LAST/PAST ... or OVER THE LAST/PAST ... are extremely good and reliable indicators and predictors of the PrP, as is demonstrated by the following extract [5.23].

[5.23] Twenty years ago, the traditional French meal was under siege, it seemed at the time, by American-style fast food. McDonald's outlets sprang up everywhere and were filled with young people. But **in the past five years or so**, eating in France **has undergone** another revolution. Takeout has taken over.

[WASHPOST - IN_THE_PAST ...: 6]

5.7.4 SINCE ...

[5.24] ... a record 66.7 million American families now own their homes. That's big news, and you missed this.
VOICE: What was it last year, 65?
MCCURRY: I can tell you that since Bill Clinton **has been** President, the number of homeowners in America **has increased** 5.8 million.


VOICE: Who deserves the credit for that? (Laughter.)

[CSPA - SINCE: 247]

SINCE is, of course, the 'classic' marker for the PrP. No grammar or textbook neglects to mention SINCE in connection with this verb form, no discussion of the

PrP is complete without at least one or two examples. Van Draat (1912) was the first writer to devote an article to SINCE and its co-occurring verb forms. Interestingly, he is one of the few writers to acknowledge that the perfect is not the automatic choice in conjunction with SINCE. “We find that in sentences containing this preposition the tense is mostly present-perfect, sometimes past, and in a not inconsiderable number of instances, present.” (van Draat, 1912: 155) He goes on to point out that when the present is the co-occurring verb form, SINCE displays a causal meaning. Chalker (1984: 103) takes a similar stance:¹²

But if *since* indicates cause, and not solely time, then this ‘rule’ about the PrP no longer holds good and present tenses are possible:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p><I am feeling better <I feel better <I’ve been feeling better <I’ve felt much better</p> |  | <p>since the doctor gave me these pills.></p> |
|---|--|--|

SINCE is unique among the temporal specifiers in that it can be used as three different parts of speech - a preposition, an adverb or a conjunction. SINCE used as a conjunction often leads to confusion for learners who are taught to rely on ‘tense markers’. They ‘know’ that the PrP should be used, but there are suddenly two finite verbs in the sentence, and they regularly use the PrP in the wrong clause, in the subordinate rather than in the main clause. A typical sentence would then run: **I live in America since we have moved here from Germany.*

SINCE is a very important temporal specifier in connection with the PrP, and its evaluation is therefore presented in some detail here. Co-occurring verb forms in both the main and the subordinate clause were analysed.

¹² Unfortunately neither van Draat nor Chalker gives any indication of how it would be possible to recognize whether SINCE is being used in its causal sense or not and when, if SINCE is causal, the present is necessary or just possible.

5.7.4.1 COB

[5.25] <M08> Er I I know it's people say that to me as I say I **have worked** with children **since I was sixteen since I left school** and <000> er have plenty of experience of sort of age range from eight to fourteen <000> and so I do understand children quite well ...

[COB - SINCE: 50]

The PrP dominates in the main clause achieving a high reliability factor of 81 in spite of a relatively high percentage of present occurrences. The PrP to preterite co-occurrence of 92 to 8 is even clearer. In the subordinate clause it is the preterite which dominates, although the PrP does achieve 27% of all finite verb forms. About 4% of the sentences with SINCE contain no main clause because of ellipsis. There is no subordinate clause in 61% of the example sentences, that is, in these sentences SINCE is a preposition.

Fig. 5.7
SINCE in COB

| COB | | SINCE Analysis | | | | overall index factor | % perfect v. preterite in main clause | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Total Number of Records: | | 202 | | 80.73 | | 91.84% | 8.16% | | | | |
| Main Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | Sub Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. |
| Perfect: | 135 | 66.83% | 71.05% | 71.81% | 88.24% | Perfect: | 21 | 10.40% | 26.58% | 26.58% | 27.27% |
| Preterite: | 12 | 5.94% | 6.32% | 6.38% | 7.84% | Preterit: | 54 | 26.73% | 68.35% | 68.35% | 70.13% |
| Had form: | 6 | 2.97% | 3.16% | 3.19% | 3.92% | Had form: | 2 | 0.99% | 2.53% | 2.53% | 2.60% |
| Present: | 35 | 17.33% | 18.42% | 18.62% | | Present: | 2 | 0.99% | 2.53% | 2.53% | |

5.7.4.2 TIMES

[5.26] Gary Tilley, Greater Manchester West's Euro MP, has tabled questions asking M Delors how Pi could be allowed to remain. "The single market was never designed to allow gangsters a safe refuge in the EC," he said. **Since** the screening of the programme on Tuesday night, police **have arrested** two people and are seeking more.

[TIMES - SINCE: 83]

Fig. 5.8
SINCE in TIMES

| SINCE_ALL_EVAL : Form | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| TIMES | | SINCE Analysis | | | | overall index factor | | % perfect v. preterite in main clause | | | |
| Total Number of Records: | | 91 | | 68.72 | | 85.71% | | 14.29% | | | |
| Main Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | Sub Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. |
| Perfect: | 42 | 46.15% | 60.87% | 62.69% | 65.63% | Perfect: | 1 | 1.10% | 4.00% | 4.00% | 4.00% |
| Preterite: | 7 | 7.69% | 10.14% | 10.45% | 10.94% | Preterit: | 24 | 26.37% | 96.00% | 96.00% | 96.00% |
| Had form: | 15 | 16.48% | 21.74% | 22.39% | 23.44% | Had form: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Present: | 3 | 3.30% | 4.35% | 4.48% | | Present: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | |

TIMES displays a much lower reliability factor in comparison to COB. This is due to the higher percentage of past perfect forms. If all other verb forms apart from PrP and preterite are ignored, then TIMES returns a respectable co-occurrence factor of 86 to 14. The present plays only a minor role. In the subordinate clause the preterite dominates.

5.7.4.3 CSPA

Fig. 5.9
SINCE in CSPA

| SINCE_ALL_EVAL : Form | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| CSPA | | SINCE Analysis | | | | overall index factor | | % perfect v. preterite in main clause | | | |
| Total Number of Records: | | 283 | | 86.49 | | 91.67% | | 8.33% | | | |
| Main Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | Sub Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. |
| Perfect: | 220 | 77.74% | 81.78% | 82.71% | 89.80% | Perfect: | 25 | 8.83% | 26.60% | 26.60% | 26.60% |
| Preterite: | 20 | 7.07% | 7.43% | 7.52% | 8.16% | Preterit: | 69 | 24.38% | 73.40% | 73.40% | 73.40% |
| Had form: | 5 | 1.77% | 1.86% | 1.88% | 2.04% | Had form: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Present: | 21 | 7.42% | 7.81% | 7.89% | | Present: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | |

CSPA returns a very high co-occurrence factor of 92 to 8 and a similarly high reliability factor of 86. The frequency of the present, although noticeable, is not as high as in COB. The similarity to COB is, however, underlined by the very similar PrP to preterite co-occurrence figures in the subordinate clause.

5.7.4.4 WASHPOST

[5.27] The number of students who smoke cigarettes regularly, 16 percent, **is** at its highest point **since the survey began** and **has** nearly **doubled since the late 1980s**. Student support for keeping abortion legal has sunk to its lowest point since 1979.

[WASHPOST - SINCE: 9]

For most temporal specifiers the newspaper corpora consistently display somewhat lower factors than the spoken corpora. This was also the case for SINCE in TIMES. It is therefore somewhat surprising to see that WASHPOST returns an equally high reliability factor and an even higher co-occurrence factor than in COB and CSPA. Another striking feature is the complete dominance of the preterite in the subordinate clause. No other finite verb form is found in the subordinate clause in this corpus.

Fig. 5.10
SINCE in WASHPOST

| SINCE_ALL_EVAL : Form | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| WP | | SINCE Analysis | | | | overall index factor | | % perfect v. preterite in main clause | | | |
| Total Number of Records: | | 183 | 85.96 | | 93.50% | 6.50% | | | | | |
| Main Clause Tense | | | | | Sub Clause Tense | | | | | | |
| | % absolute | % all finite | % present + pastref. | | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + pastref. | | | |
| Perfect | 115 | 62.84% | 80.99% | 81.56% | 87.79% | Perfect | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Preterite: | 8 | 4.37% | 5.63% | 5.67% | 6.11% | Preterit: | 53 | 28.96% | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% |
| Had form: | 8 | 4.37% | 5.63% | 5.67% | 6.11% | Had form: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Present: | 10 | 5.46% | 7.04% | 7.09% | | Present: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | |

5.7.4.5 Summary

Fig. 5.11
SINCE evaluation form

| ALL | | SINCE Analysis | | | | overall index factor | % perfect v. preterite in main clause | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Total Number of Records: | | 759 | | 82.92 | | 91.59% | | 8.41% | | | |
| Main Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. | Sub Clause Tense | | % absolute | % all finite | % present + past ref. | % past ref. |
| Perfect: | 512 | 67.46% | 76.42% | 77.34% | 86.34% | Perfect: | 47 | 6.19% | 18.73% | 18.73% | 18.88% |
| Preterite: | 47 | 6.19% | 7.01% | 7.10% | 7.93% | Preterit: | 200 | 26.35% | 79.68% | 79.68% | 80.32% |
| Had form: | 34 | 4.48% | 5.07% | 5.14% | 5.73% | Had form: | 2 | 0.26% | 0.80% | 0.80% | 0.80% |
| Present: | 69 | 9.09% | 10.30% | 10.42% | | Present: | 2 | 0.26% | 0.80% | 0.80% | |
| Will: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | | Will: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| Will have: | 1 | 0.13% | 0.15% | | | Will have: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| Would: | 1 | 0.13% | 0.15% | | | Would: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| Would have: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | | Would have: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| Modal: | 6 | 0.79% | 0.90% | | | Modal: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| Other: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | | Other: | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% | | |
| No tense: | 75 | 9.88% | No main cl.: | 14 | 1.84% | No tense: | 7 | 0.92% | No sub cl.: | 501 | 66.01% |
| Perfect Progressive: | 47 | 9.18% | | | | Perfect Progressive: | 3 | 0.40% | | | |
| Perfect Passive: | 38 | 7.42% | | | | Perfect Passive: | 3 | 0.40% | | | |

SINCE is an excellent marker for the PrP, especially in the spoken language. There is a high degree of homogeneity in the results, the slightly lower reliability factor in TIMES being attributable to that newspaper's propensity to reported speech, thus increasing by dint of backshift the frequency of the past perfect.

[5.28] Education would remain at the heart of the government's programme. Mr Patten said that the number of parental ballots for grant-maintained status **had accelerated since** the general election, with eight out of ten results in favour of opting out.

[TIMES - SINCE: 52]

In the subordinate clause the preterite dominates in all corpora. The PrP, virtually the only other verb form found in the SINCE-clause, is relatively infrequent. The vast majority of these PrP verbs in the subordinate clause are telic or mutative,¹³ all describe an event which still holds good at the MOU.

¹³ See section 6.3.7.2 for a discussion of telic and mutative verbs.

5.7.5 The present with SINCE

Several writers have pointed to a certain tendency to use the present in the main clause in connection with a subordinate clause headed by SINCE. This phenomenon was confirmed in the corpora, COB recording the most examples with 18.42% of all finite forms. The two writers quoted above, Chalker and van Draat, both attribute this to a causal function existing between the clauses and expressed by SINCE. No evidence was found to support this claim. Although it is, in the great majority of cases, not difficult to differentiate between SINCE used purely temporally and SINCE used purely causally,¹⁴ it is impossible to identify when since is being used partly in a causal and partly in a temporal sense. Most of the examples with the present which were analysed did not express reason or causality at all.

[5.29] MYERS: ... I mean, I think we've made that clear. Both our bilateral assistance and certainly the multi-lateral assistance.
 VOICE: But things **are falling** apart pretty fast **since** the President left Moscow. Now, to what extent is the President concerned about it?
 [CSPA - SINCE: 396]

Obviously the speaker does not mean to suggest that Russia is falling apart because of the President's departure from Moscow. Causality is obviously not the operative factor. The analysis of the verbs in the present in the main clause of the SINCE samples produced some interesting results. Table 5.18 shows the results of the analyses for COB and CSPA.

Table 5.18
 Verbs in present in the main clause of SINCE samples

| Corpus | Occurrences | Verbs of state and perception | Expanded | Iteration |
|--------|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| COB | 35 | be (22), have got (4) seem (2), feel, notice see | call, plead see | listen to stand |
| CSPA | 21 | be (11), have (3) know (2), seem see | decrease fall apart, focus see | |

¹⁴ Indeed, occurrences of SINCE in the sense of BECAUSE which were found by the concordancer were removed manually from the sample.

As can be seen in Table 5.18, all the verbs fall into one of three categories:

a) Verbs of state or perception

[5.30] I am distressed about Bridgestone-Firestone. In fact, Bridgestone-Firestone's decision to bring in striking replacement workers **is the largest decision of its kind since** the 1980s, since Eastern Airlines, Greyhound, International Paper, many of the major problems we had during the 1980s.
[CSPA - SINCE: 413]

The great majority of the verbs in this category are forms of BE of which there are two types. The first stresses a present state as in extract [5.30]. Most of these are followed by phrases containing adjectives, often superlatives: *the best ...*, *the first*, *the only ...*etc. In the second type BE refers to a period of time.

[5.31] <M01> To some extent I can understand what they're saying I think. They're they're saying look **it's over ten years since** we employed this person how do we know
<F01> <000> Yes.
[COB - SINCE: 213]

One major difference between the two categories is that in the first the PrP is not possible at all, while in the second it is. One possible explanation is that, due to the fact that all the phrases in type 2 begin with *it's*, the *been* is simply ellipsed.

b) Verbs of action in the expanded form

[5.32] VERSHBOW: Well, in terms of the process, **we're focusing now, since** the results of the Geneva meeting, on more shuttle diplomacy.
[CSPA - SINCE: 420]

Again the emphasis is on the present, in this case on a present activity, so naturally the expanded form is a natural choice.

c) Verbs indicating iteration

[5.33] <F02> Can I ask you a favour please?
<M01> Course you can.
<F02> **I listen to you every night since** I have discovered you and I haven't the faintest idea what you look like.
<M01> Mm.
<F02> Could I have a photograph please?
[COB - SINCE: 59]

Here again the PrP would be possible, but the speaker is obviously concerned to stress the fact for her this activity is 'timeless' and that she intends to extend this activity into the future.

5.7.6 The preterite with SINCE

The analysis of verb forms in the preterite in the main clause again revealed certain well-defined types.

a) Verbs of state or perception

[5.34] It **was** their first meeting **since** Sir Bob attacked the privatisation proposals in a BBC radio interview
[TIMES - SINCE: 47]

This category is analogous to that described in connection with the present in the main clause, the difference being that the event time frame is removed wholly into the past. The PrP is not possible in these cases.

b) Reported speech

[5.35] A March 1981 memo to Robert B. Seligman, the company's vice president for research and development, described habits of smokers 12 to 18 years old and warned that smoking rates **were** on the decline **since** 1976-77.
[WASHPOST - SINCE: 7]

[5.36] Weight Watchers said yesterday that **since** January 1, it **had** double the number of enquiries compared with an ordinary month.
[TIMES - SINCE: 35]

This type is found primarily in the newspaper corpora especially when statements are being reported. It probably reflects a general tendency to use the preterite instead of the past perfect or represents a backshift from the present in direct speech.

c) Closed time frames with specifiers

[5.37] **Since** then, he **tried** and **failed** to win a Senate seat in 1982 and **waged** another **failed** bid for president in 1992.
[WASHPOST - SINCE: 179]

In this group a possible PrP is overridden by a temporal specifier indicating a closed time frame.

d) Closed time frames without specifiers

[5.38] VOICE: And also, **since** Domenici spoke, the markets **began** falling. And it appears that they're taking as some sort of failure between the two sides. Is that a mistaken impression?
[CSPA - SINCE: 256]

[5.39] According to the Nasdaq Stock Exchange, 43 percent of American adults now own stock, and most of them **bought** in **since** 1980 ...
[WP - SINCE: 12]

Here the event is perceived by the speaker/writer to be wholly in a past time frame, the event is not perceived to be still going on. This is often the case with verbs which indicate the beginning or end of a process. The PrP is, however, possible in such cases. This type is, pedagogically speaking, the most difficult to explain, depending as it does on the psychological perspective of the speaker.

5.8 Ambiguous quantifiers

5.8.1 FOR ...

John has lived in Paris for ten years.

John lived in Paris for ten years.

The ambiguity of FOR is well documented. Indeed, it is traditionally cited in order to show the 'essential difference' between the PrP and the preterite. Unlike SINCE, the point of reference of FOR, that is, whether it indicates a closed or an open time frame, is determined by the co-occurring verb form. It was not expected that FOR would prove to be a particularly good marker for the PrP.

Table 5.19
FOR in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 231 | 76 | 52 | 8 | 35 | 24 | 36 | 59:41 | 50 |
| TIMES | 139 | 30 | 36 | 20 | 9 | 24 | 20 | 45:55 | 34 |
| CSPA | 254 | 101 | 41 | 1 | 31 | 50 | 30 | 71:29 | 61 |
| WASHPOST | 225 | 83 | 62 | 15 | 10 | 20 | 35 | 57:43 | 50 |

As shown in Table 5.19, this expectation was fulfilled by the analyses. Interestingly, the reliability and co-occurrence factors were markedly higher in the American texts, and, less surprisingly, in the spoken corpora.

5.8.2 HOW LONG

HOW LONG is the question phrase used to request information about an event in a period of time lasting up to the present. Like FOR, however, it is ‘ambiguous’, in that it can also refer to a closed time frame. Furthermore it often refers to the future.

How long have you lived in Paris?

How long did you live in Paris?

How long are you going to live in Paris?

HOW LONG is most frequently used not as in a direct question but as the header in indirect questions:

[5.40] Regarding test speededness, the prime comments that I heard were that we should do our best to provide generous time allotments for students, generous time allotments in terms of **how long it takes** to respond to an item, and how long it takes to read the prompts or the question in the item, and any of the stimulus material that accompanies the item.

[CSPA - HOW_LONG: 22]

A very wide co-occurrence of verb forms are found co-occurring with HOW LONG, the largest group being the present with 28.57% of all finite occurrences. The reliability factor is very low and the co-occurrence factor well below average.

Table 5.20
HOW LONG in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 199 | 41 | 27 | 1 | 65 | 53 | 12 | 60:40 | 43 |
| TIMES | 29 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 17 | 0 | 50:50 | 30 |
| CSPA | 111 | 5 | 16 | 2 | 45 | 36 | 7 | 24:76 | 14 |
| WASHPOST | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 00:100 | 00 |

5.9 Unambiguous non-quantifiers

5.9.1 SO FAR, UNTIL NOW, UP TO NOW

a) SO FAR

[5.41] The county health commissioner said his staff has tested 28 direct sexual partners of Williams, along with 53 other people who had contact with his sexual partners. It is still working on tests of 17 others. Eleven people **have tested** positive **so far**, Berke said.

[WASHPOST - SO_FAR: 1]

These three temporal specifiers with identical meaning, often referred to in grammars and text books as typical markers for the PrP, are grouped together here.¹⁵ Greenbaum (1996: 270), describing what he refers to as the “state present perfect”, cites a number of examples from his corpus, including one with SO FAR. “The food has been interesting so far.” He goes on to say: “Several of the citations ... suggest that the situation will continue into the future, but *until now* ... and *so far* ... imply an expectation of change.” Greenbaum’s obvious implication is that these temporal specifiers always involve the expectation of change. That this is not always the case can be seen from extract [5.41]. The possibility of more people testing positive (or negative) cannot be construed as an ‘expectation of change’. The implication of change, if there is one, lies in the statement taken as a whole in the given context, and not in the semantic value of these adverbials.

Table 5.21
SO FAR in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 188 | 119 | 3 | 2 | 48 | 0 | 16 | 98:02 | 83 |
| TIMES | 138 | 86 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 1 | 28 | 98:02 | 87 |
| CSPA | 127 | 77 | 3 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 11 | 96:04 | 81 |
| WASHPOST | 33 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 100:00 | 89 |

The representative sample of SO FAR produced excellent reliability factors and co-occurrence ratios in all corpora. With a total co-occurrence factor of 97:03 for the

¹⁵ Other temporal specifiers with similar meaning, such as UP TILL NOW, were not found in the corpora.

combined corpora it displays the best PrP to preterite co-occurrence ratio of all the temporal specifiers in the analysis.

b) UNTIL NOW and UP TO NOW

[5.42] "The longest standing noncompliance as far as depositions and documents are concerned has to do with the AFL-CIO," he said last week. What Thompson **has not disclosed until now** was that the labor federation had two unlikely allies in fighting the Senate subpoena.

[WASHPOST - UNTIL_NOW: 1]

Table 5.22
UNTIL NOW in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 11 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 78:22 | 74 |
| TIMES | 27 | 20 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 80:20 | 78 |
| CSPA | 10 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 67:33 | 53 |
| WASHPOST | 7 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 86:14 | 86 |

[5.43] This I think is totally false. Er there has been a common system in the USSR **up to now** but **it's been based** on central planning. That central planning system has gone.

[COB - UP_TO_NOW: 8]

Table 5.23
UP TO NOW in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|--------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|-----|
| COB | 19 | 14 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 93:07 | 88 |
| TIMES | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100:00 | 100 |
| CSPA | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75:25 | 75 |

The samples of UNTIL NOW and UP TO NOW are, unfortunately, too small to be able to draw any firm conclusions. They do, however, indicate a strong tendency towards the PrP.

5.9.2 YET

[5.44] VOICE: What about the leadership, Dee Dee - be necessary to get money moving.

MYERS: The President **hasn't spoken** to anybody **yet**. We've been, I think, focusing more directly on people who are affected ...

[CSPA - YET: 132]

[5.45] Erm so I've suggested she comes on the twelfth of November. So keep it free for your diary the
 <F02> Mm.
 <F01> twelfth of November. I mean I'm I'll sort it I **haven't spoken** to FX **yet**. And we thought we'd do it at FX's house 'cos then she hasn't got to worry
 <F02> Yeah.
 <F01> about babysitters or anything.
 [COB - YET: 81]

Students and teachers of the English language are often so attuned to the supposed differences between British and American English that they often fail to notice the overwhelming similarities. Ask how an American would express the equivalent of the British English “*Have you spoken to John yet?*”, the answer will invariably be “*Did you speak with John yet?*” We have all heard Americans using the preterite with YET. Is this the rule or the exception?

Table 5.24
 YET in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 263 | 137 | 0 | 4 | 83 | 14 | 25 | 100:00 | 79 |
| TIMES | 257 | 67 | 7 | 17 | 48 | 20 | 98 | 91:09 | 64 |
| CSPA | 384 | 197 | 12 | 3 | 145 | 10 | 17 | 94:06 | 74 |
| WASHPOST | 56 | 13 | 2 | 5 | 29 | 5 | 2 | 87:13 | 51 |

As can be seen from Table 5.24 both the British and American corpora equally favour the PrP with YET. While the reliability factor is not particularly high, due to the high frequency of the present, it is high enough to put YET into the top ten of all temporal specifiers. The PrP co-occurrence factor is, however, consistently high for all corpora. The co-occurrence factor for the American corpora at 94:06 is a strong rebuttal of the generally accepted theory that in American English YET co-occurs most frequently with the preterite. COB with a representative sample of 263 occurrences returns an amazing 100:00 for the PrP; in absolute terms, 137 to 0 occurrences.

The high incidence of present forms with YET was quite surprising. A closer examination revealed that all these were forms of BE or other statives such as KNOW or HAVE, with a small percentage of expanded forms.

[5.46] BROWN: **Is** David here **yet**? David Godschalk.
 [CSPA -YET: 104]

[5.47] VOICE: Is he going to do anything on Labor Day?
 MYERS: I **don't know yet**, maybe.
 [CSPA - YET: 196]

Summing up, it can be said that YET is a very good marker for the PrP, both in the British and American corpora. In the corpora examined the preterite was extremely infrequent in connection with this temporal specifier.

5.9.3 LONG

[5.48] The move towards fixed-rate mortgages could make it easier for the government to change the way it calculates the retail prices index. Currently, this includes variable mortgage interest rates. The government **has long wanted** to drop the mortgage rate from the official statistic.
 [TIMES - LONG: 55]

The temporal specifier LONG was included in this analysis after a number of instances were observed in the functional-semantic analysis. Although the sample was rather small, there are clear indications that LONG is an excellent marker for the PrP, even though it is not mentioned in any of the standard pedagogical grammars. In fact, LONG has the highest reliability factor and the second highest co-occurrence factor of all the temporal specifiers analysed.

Table 5.25
 LONG in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|--------|-----|
| COB | 16 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 100:00 | 67 |
| TIMES | 55 | 39 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 98:02 | 85 |
| CSPA | 32 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100:00 | 100 |
| WASHPOST | 24 | 18 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 90:10 | 82 |

The results from the corpora with the highest number of samples, TIMES and CSPA are particularly high, CSPA returning a perfect score. The reliability factors are somewhat reduced owing to the number of past perfect occurrences and to the small sample size especially in COB.

5.10 Ambiguous non-quantifiers

5.10.1 ALWAYS

[5.49] KIFER: Well, I've got two points I want to make. I think that in our discussion of the calculators we've **always confused** what we believed was good instructional practice with how we were testing, and I actually think this sort of could be a document about how we're testing rather than good instructional practice.

[CSPA - ALWAYS: 121]

Although introspection suggested that ALWAYS would not return particularly high reliability and co-occurrence factors, it was included in the evaluation of the temporal specifiers because of its frequency in the functional-semantic analysis. It was expected that the co-occurrence would be roughly equal between PrP and preterite and that the PrP frequency would be higher in the British corpora.

Table 5.26
ALWAYS in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 237 | 39 | 36 | 0 | 123 | 35 | 4 | 52:48 | 35 |
| TIMES | 425 | 114 | 94 | 24 | 119 | 48 | 26 | 55:45 | 41 |
| CSPA | 248 | 58 | 19 | 2 | 130 | 30 | 9 | 75:25 | 50 |
| WASHPOST | 75 | 26 | 12 | 2 | 28 | 4 | 3 | 68:32 | 52 |

The expectations were only partly confirmed. The PrP to preterite co-occurrence in the British corpora was roughly equal: in the American corpora, however, the PrP was clearly dominant. The PrP was the first choice both in the spoken and in the written corpora, the co-occurrence factor in the spoken corpora being somewhat higher. Summing up, it can be said that ALWAYS is not a particularly good marker for the PrP.

5.10.2 EVER

[5.50] They wondered whether he would show up again and whether his presence would reignite an argument they've been having. "He lies," Whalen said. "I think he's the most intelligent president we've **ever had**," she said. "Well then, he should be intelligent enough to resign," he said.

[WASHPOST - EVER: 47]

EVER is mentioned in almost all grammars and text books in connection with the PrP. It is often used in paraphrases to explain the use of the PrP: “Have you seen ‘Romeo and Juliet’? (= Have you ever seen it?)” (Swan, 1980: 495). It was to be expected, therefore, that EVER would display a strong PrP correlation.

Table 5.27
EVER in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 202 | 73 | 37 | 6 | 39 | 38 | 9 | 66:34 | 54 |
| TIMES | 214 | 55 | 34 | 14 | 18 | 52 | 41 | 62:38 | 48 |
| CSPA | 245 | 79 | 67 | 5 | 27 | 43 | 24 | 54:46 | 47 |
| WASHPOST | 108 | 40 | 16 | 7 | 4 | 14 | 27 | 71:29 | 61 |

EVER does not co-occur with the PrP as strongly as might have been expected. The reliability factor is only average and the head-to-head comparison with the preterite shows a ratio of approximately 3:2 in favour of the PrP.

In all corpora the preterite regularly co-occurs with EVER, a fact which is rarely, if ever mentioned in grammars books.¹⁶ The preterite frequently co-occurs with EVER in conditional clauses, but the following example is also typical and widespread:

- [5.51] [Bennett]: We can't hear you, Mr. President.
 A. And I said that you-all might call every woman I **ever talked to** and ask them that, and so I said you would qualify, or something like that. I don't, I don't think we **ever had** more of a conversation than that about it, but I might have mentioned something to her about it ...
 [WASHPOST - EVER: 68]

Clearly, the speaker regards the events as having taken place in a closed time frame, the preterite is therefore in this case the natural choice.

5.10.3 NEVER

The following extracts exemplify the use of NEVER with both the PrP and the preterite.

- [5.52] <F01> Mm. Oh Marcus is moving in on Monday. Yeah [laugh]. He's he's not big he's virtually an albino. He's got long blond hair. Erm he's great I mean you know he'll have Kevin down the pub I'll tell you.

¹⁶ An exception is Stemmer – Wynne (1988: 61)

I've never seen anyone who couldn't be friends with Marcus. He's brilliant yeah. Absolutely charming.

[COB - NEVER: 248]

[5.53] M01> So you had a nice memorable honeymoon?

<F08> Yeah it was good. But a lady in the same compartment left her case behind.

<M01> Mm.

<F08> So we in our good you know we took it to the lost property office and we **never heard** a dicky-bird about that.

<M01> Well let's hope she got it back then.

<F08> Well I hope she did.

[COB - NEVER: 150]

NEVER is, of course, similar to EVER but is also different due to the fact that it is widely used as a negative particle, especially in colloquial language. '*I never said that*' is equivalent to '*I didn't say that*'. Furthermore, as some writers (Leech – Svartvik, 1975: 68, Stemmer – Wynne, 1988: 61) have pointed out, the preterite is used when NEVER refers to a closed time frame: '*I lived in Australia for five years but I never saw a kangaroo*'. A case can be made for saying that NEVER is basically a short-hand negative particle which can refer to different time periods:

'I've never seen a kangaroo' = 'I haven't seen a kangaroo in all my life'

'I never saw a kangaroo' = 'I didn't see a kangaroo when I was in Australia'

Table 5.28

NEVER in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 275 | 82 | 64 | 7 | 52 | 62 | 8 | 56:44 | 45 |
| TIMES | 667 | 139 | 183 | 52 | 54 | 209 | 30 | 43:57 | 37 |
| CSPA | 321 | 81 | 102 | 5 | 55 | 69 | 9 | 44:56 | 37 |
| WASHPOST | 173 | 41 | 57 | 16 | 17 | 32 | 10 | 42:58 | 34 |

As expected, NEVER returned a negative PrP – preterite co-occurrence which is relatively consistent in the corpora with the exception of COB. The reliability factor is consistently low.

5.10.4 STILL NOT

[5.54] Tories who have already been knighted were indignant at the suggestion that they owed their knighthoods to having behaved like obedient, lickspittle hacks. Tories who have behaved like obedient, lickspittle hacks for decades, and **still not been knighted**, were indignant that their efforts were being overlooked by Flynn and, indeed, by the PM.

[TIMES - STILL_NOT: 3]

Table 5.29
STILL NOT in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 33 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 24 | 2 | 1 | 50:50 | 24 |
| TIMES | 37 | 11 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 3 | 2 | 79:21 | 51 |
| CSPA | 31 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 3 | 1 | 100:00 | 54 |
| WASHPOST | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 00 | 00 |

The small sample of the temporal specifier STILL NOT produced some variegated results. The main co-occurring verb form with STILL NOT is the present. Of the 65 recorded occurrences of the present, all but one are preceded by a form of BE, either as main verb or as an auxiliary as part of the GOING TO, expanded or passive forms. STILL NOT is a poor predictor of the PrP although the co-occurrence factor in TIMES and CSPA is quite high.

5.10.5 Overview and conclusions

Table 5.30
Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to MOU
(samples with over 100 occurrences)

| Category | Temporal specifier | Occs | PrP:Pret co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| UNAMBIGUOUS QUANTIFIERS | IN THE LAST ... | 398 | 79:21 | 76 |
| | OVER THE LAST ... | 272 | 89:11 | 85 |
| | IN THE PAST ... | 684 | 84:16 | 78 |
| | OVER THE PAST ... | 223 | 90:10 | 83 |
| | SINCE | 759 | 92:08 | 83 |
| UNAMBIGUOUS NON-QUANTIFIERS | LONG | 127 | 97:03 | 87 |
| | SO FAR | 486 | 97:03 | 84 |
| | YET | 960 | 95:05 | 72 |
| AMBIGUOUS QUANTIFIERS | FOR | 849 | 60:40 | 51 |
| | HOW LONG | 343 | 51:49 | 35 |
| AMBIGUOUS NON-QUANTIFIERS | ALWAYS | 985 | 60:40 | 42 |
| | EVER | 769 | 62:38 | 51 |
| | NEVER | 1436 | 46:54 | 37 |
| | STILL NOT | 104 | 75:25 | 40 |

As Table 5.30 shows, the temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to the MOU fall into two well-defined groups of specifiers with regard to PrP co-occurrence. The first is the group of unambiguous quantifiers and non-quantifiers, that is, those adverbials which always refer to a ‘past period up to the moment of utterance’. These specifiers are excellent predictors and indicators of the PrP. The

second group is the group of ambiguous quantifiers and non-quantifiers, which can refer to different time periods, and, most importantly for the head-on comparison of PrP to preterite co-occurrence, can refer to a definite closed time frame in the past. These specifiers are only average or below-average markers for the PrP.

5.11 Group 5: Temporal specifiers headed by ALL expressing a period lasting up to and extending beyond the MOU

These specifiers are similar to the previous group, in that they can refer to a period of time which has started in the past and has lasted up to the MOU. They differ from them in that, as in the following group, the period specified extends beyond the MOU, although they will, by their very meaning, tend to be used towards the end of the period specified.

[5.55] <F01> Yeah. Erm for example good ones to use in the bath just little tips here say for example **you've been working all day** and you're absolutely exhausted and you're going to go out to a party in the evening and you want to be invigorated and refreshed and look as if you were actually sort of thinking and then er use rosemary.
[COB - ALL_DAY: 99]

Table 5.31
The ALL group in the corpora

| Temporal specifier | Corpus | Occurrences | PrP:preterite co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|--------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| ALL DAY | COB | 97 | 47:53 | 34 |
| | TIMES | 19 | 25:75 | 18 |
| | CSPA | 23 | 71:29 | 49 |
| | WASHPOST | 2 | 00:100 | 00 |
| ALL WEEK ... | COB | 12 | 83:17 | 57 |
| | TIMES | 2 | 50:50 | 50 |
| | CSPA | 3 | 100:00 | 83 |
| ALL YEAR | COB | 7 | 100:00 | 71 |
| | TIMES | 3 | 00 | 00 |
| | CSPA | 3 | 100:00 | 92 |

With the exception of ALL DAY in COB the frequency of temporal specifiers with ALL ... was extremely small. As is often the case with small samples, the factors vary considerably so that no firm conclusions should be drawn. There are, however, indications that, where specifiers headed by ALL are used with the PrP, the incidence of the expanded is relatively high (►5.13.3).

5.12 Group 6: Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to and extending beyond the MOU which are compatible with the insertion of *earlier*:

This category includes periods of time which extend from a definite point of time relative to the MOU to a fixed point in the future and contains adverbials such as TODAY and those headed by THIS. They differ from the previous group in that it is always possible to specify a definite time within the given period or use other specifiers such as EARLIER to modify them. These specifiers are regularly quoted in grammars in connection with the PrP.

5.12.1 TODAY

TODAY has often been cited indiscriminately as a marker for the PrP. More recent grammars are more careful, conscious of the frequent co-occurrence of the preterite. Swan (1980: 494) gives this explanation:

‘Definite’ time-expressions (like today, this week, this morning) are not often used with the PrP when we talk about finished events.

Compare:

I've spoken to the boss about my holiday.

I spoke to the boss today about my holiday. (Not: *I've spoken ... today.)

Two things must, however, be noted. Firstly, when we use these ‘time-expressions’, we are invariably talking about finished events, even if the expanded form is used. Secondly, it is perfectly possible to say ‘I’ve spoken to the boss today’. It is the insertion of ‘about my holiday’ which is crucial, indicating as it does a specific incident in a certain period within the time frame of TODAY.

Table 5.32
TODAY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 276 | 42 | 23 | 1 | 130 | 53 | 27 | 65:35 | 42 |
| CSPA | 291 | 25 | 80 | 1 | 93 | 48 | 44 | 24:76 | 18 |
| TIMES | 293 | 6 | 15 | 1 | 122 | 90 | 59 | 29:71 | 16 |
| WASHPOST | 290 | 12 | 127 | 1 | 70 | 37 | 43 | 08:92 | 07 |

Apart from in COB, TODAY is a very poor predictor and indicator of the PrP. The figures for the British corpora are somewhat better than in the corresponding

American texts, so that a certain tendency can be assumed here. The most frequent co-occurring verb form is the present, used mostly to describe plans and arrangements for that particular day. Where the reference is to past time, the preterite is favoured by a ratio of three to one over the PrP. The PrP is used when the speaker is not referring to a specific incident:

[5.56] Hello Paul. Hello Annabel. Oh we've just been down to Liverpool it's **been** absolutely hectic down there **today**. Are you all right? Well to be quite honest I'm depressed. [laughter]
[COB - TODAY: 61]

However, as pointed out in the introduction to this class of temporal specifiers, it is always possible to refer to a specific period within the framework of TODAY. This can be a time of day such as AT 3 PM TODAY, or be a more general specifier such as EARLIER:

[5.57] And so this morning, based on the unanimous recommendation of my national security team, I ordered our armed forces to take action to counter an immediate threat from the bin Laden network. **Earlier today**, the United States **carried out** simultaneous strikes against terrorist facilities and infrastructure in Afghanistan.
[WASHPOST - TODAY: 91]

Often it is enough just to indicate the incident itself. The following extract indicates very clearly the use of the PrP to refer to a general, indefinite period and the preterite to refer to a specific event within the definite time frame of TODAY:

[5.58] We have not threatened economic aid, but we have certainly made it clear that interfering with those pursuing legitimate commercial activities who are employed by enterprises doing legitimate business in Russia sends a very bad signal and could put a chilling effect on commercial relations that are important to future economic prosperity in Russia. That point **has been made** and **was made today** specifically by the presentation given to the Russian ambassador, as the State Department has already briefed.
[CSPA - TODAY: 89]

5.12.2 THIS MORNING

[5.59] According to initial reports, two American helicopters were mistakenly identified as Iraqi helicopters and shot down by United States aircraft. I **have met** with Secretary Perry **this morning**; I have

talked with him and with General Shalikashvili, and I have instructed him to lead a full inquiry into the circumstances of this terrible incident.

[CSPA - THIS_MORNING: 136]

The traditional, and seemingly logical, view of the specifier THIS MORNING in connection with the PrP is stated by Thomson – Martinet (1969: 107):

Note that the PrP can be used with **this morning** only up to about one o'clock, because after that **this morning** becomes a completed period and actions occurring in it are put into the simple past:

(at 11 a.m.) He has rung up three times this morning already.

(at 2 p.m.) He rang up three times this morning.

The judicious insertion of ALREADY should be noted in the first example. Evidently Thomson and Martinet thought, and they were certainly right in thinking so, that the mere fact that this statement is uttered at 11 a.m. is not sufficient to force the PrP. In fact, it is most probably the specifier ALREADY itself rather than the time of day which exerts the greater influence.

Table 5.33

THIS MORNING in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 281 | 25 | 189 | 1 | 31 | 9 | 26 | 12:88 | 11 |
| TIMES | 48 | 4 | 14 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 15 | 22:78 | 18 |
| CSPA | 319 | 21 | 232 | 4 | 23 | 9 | 30 | 8:92 | 08 |
| WASHPOST | 26 | 0 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 0:100 | 00 |

THIS MORNING is a very poor marker for the PrP, both in the British and American corpora, in the spoken and in the written corpora. In fact, it is by far the least reliable of all the temporal specifiers examined. The reason for this could, of course, be that in most of the samples taken the statement containing THIS MORNING was actually uttered in the afternoon or evening. It should be obvious that the later the day, the smaller the chance of the PrP co-occurring. Unfortunately the corpora rarely indicate the time of day, and so it is not possible to verify the Thomson-Martinet theory. In extract [5.59] at the beginning of this section, Bill Clinton is speaking at a press conference which has been called hurriedly to comment on the accident mentioned in the extract. It probably took place in the morning. That does not mean that an utterance before lunchtime will automatically entail the use of the PrP. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. It is

perfectly possible, and perfectly normal, to be speaking early in the morning and say: ‘I read in the newspaper this morning that ...’. An extract from the corpora supports this:

[5.60] MYERS: No. I mean, I think that, again, what we know about it is what **was** in The Post **this morning** in terms of an investigation.
[CSPA - THIS_MORNING: 128]

As Close (1992: 73) has pointed out, it is not the time of day when the utterance is made which is decisive: “*Your letter reached me this morning. ...* (Someone brought it at a definite moment earlier in the morning;) ...”. That is to say, if the speaker is thinking of a particular period of time within the framework of THIS MORNING, then the preterite is the natural choice, even if it is still morning at the MOU. This is the case with all temporal specifiers of this type which express periods of time which include the MOU.

5.12.3 THIS WEEK

[5.61] On the Avon after the good start we had the catch rate is now slowing down. The odd double figure catches **have been taken this week** but the outlook would be better if we had a little more colour in the river.
[COB - THIS_WEEK: 36]

Table 5.34
THIS WEEK in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 128 | 37 | 24 | 0 | 37 | 19 | 11 | 61:39 | 48 |
| TIMES | 309 | 15 | 69 | 9 | 38 | 84 | 94 | 18:82 | 13 |
| CSPA | 164 | 12 | 33 | 0 | 31 | 50 | 38 | 27:73 | 20 |
| WASHPOST | 56 | 4 | 29 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 11 | 12:88 | 11 |

Both newspaper corpora show a distinct tendency towards the preterite with THIS WEEK. Of the spoken corpora, the British COB has a co-occurrence ratio of 3:2 in favour of the PrP, whereas the American CSPA returns a ratio of 1:3 in favour of the preterite. Overall the temporal specifier THIS WEEK is a poor marker for the PrP.

5.12.4 THIS MONTH

[5.62] GRASS-ROOTS evidence to support John Major's claim that the recession is ending is emerging in towns where many businesses collapsed and unemployment soared. In the Bath area, hundreds of people **have found** work **this month** through a project involving a radio phone-in.

[TIMES - THIS_MONTH: 146 (26 April 1993)]

[5.63] Last November a teacher was fined Pounds 2,800 for drinking and driving, and **this month** a motorist who left his car on a yellow line while he went to fetch water for its overheated engine **was fined** Pounds 500.

[TIMES - THIS_MONTH: 89 (15 March 1993)]

Table 5.35

THIS MONTH in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Other | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 14 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 60:40 | 43 |
| TIMES | 54 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 13 | 22 | 25:75 | 18 |
| CSPA | 18 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 100:00 | 55 |
| WASHPOST | 23 | 2 | 12 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14:86 | 12 |
| ALL | 109 | 9 | 23 | 3 | 20 | 23 | 31 | 28:72 | 20 |

The sample with THIS MONTH is too small to allow any firm conclusions to be drawn, except that it can co-occur with virtually any verb form. As can be seen from the cited extracts, the exact time of utterance, whether it is earlier or later in the month seems to have no effect on the choice between PrP and preterite. In extract [5.62] the writer is obviously not thinking of a certain time. In extract [5.63], on the other hand, the speaker is reporting a particular individual incident.

5.12.5 THIS YEAR

Table 5.36

THIS YEAR in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|----|
| COB | 221 | 40 | 32 | 0 | 77 | 47 | 25 | 56:44 | 40 |
| TIMES | 402 | 21 | 64 | 6 | 46 | 81 | 184 | 25:75 | 18 |
| CSPA | 290 | 33 | 46 | 1 | 58 | 84 | 68 | 42:58 | 30 |
| WASHPOST | 95 | 8 | 26 | 1 | 15 | 25 | 20 | 24:76 | 18 |

The most striking thing about the large sample with THIS YEAR is the wide range of co-occurring verb forms, of which the perfect forms are often the most infrequent. THIS YEAR shows the same tendencies which were identified with the other

specifiers of this group. The head-to-head comparison shows a clear tendency towards the preterite in the written corpora. The ratio in the spoken corpora shifts towards the PrP, with COB slightly favouring this form. As to be expected with such a relatively extended period of time, there are numerous co-occurring future forms. In order to test the hypothesis that the number of preterite usages would increase as the year progressed, the WASHPOST corpus, which incorporates extracts from various months, was analysed. The results did not support this hypothesis. There was no recognizable pattern, the preterite forms being more or less evenly distributed throughout the year.¹⁷ The same was true of the PrP, so that it can be concluded that the time of utterance within the period of time has little or no influence on the speaker's choice between the PrP and the preterite.

5.12.6 THIS CENTURY

[5.64] Cryer keeps both his intelligence and his humour almost secret. In tones half way between a Yorkshire bellow and a North Country whine, he **has spent** much of **this century** in a sedentary position, interrupting Tory MPs.

[TIMES - THIS_CENTURY: 24]

Table 5.37

THIS CENTURY in the corpora

| Corpus | Occs | PrP | Pret | PaP | Pres | Oth. | N-F | CF | RF |
|----------|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|--------|----|
| COB | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 75:25 | 68 |
| TIMES | 34 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 27 | 50:50 | 46 |
| CSPA | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 00:100 | 00 |
| WASHPOST | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 67:33 | 67 |

Most of the examples in this small sample with THIS CENTURY co-occur with non-finite verb forms - "the first major railway to be built in Britain this century" [TIMES - THIS_CENTURY: 2] or in elliptical phrases such as "Maastricht makes the biggest constitutional change this century" [TIMES - THIS_CENTURY: 8]. The 8 occurrences of the PrP as opposed to 7 preterite forms are inconclusive.

¹⁷ The exact figures for occurrences of the preterite with THIS YEAR were: January: 3, February: 5, June: 6, September: 3, October: 7, November: 2.

5.12.7 Overview and conclusions

Table 5.38

Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to and beyond the MOU (samples with over 100 occurrences).

| Temporal specifier | Occurrences | PrP:preterite co-occurrence | Reliability factor |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| TODAY | 1150 | 26:74 | 18 |
| THIS MORNING | 674 | 10:90 | 09 |
| THIS WEEK | 657 | 30:70 | 23 |
| THIS MONTH | 109 | 28:72 | 20 |
| THIS YEAR | 1008 | 38:62 | 28 |

As can be seen from the table above the group of temporal specifiers expressing a period of time lasting up to and extending beyond the MOU are very poor markers for the PrP. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, because of the nature of these specifiers, future forms are often found to co-occur. Secondly, as was mentioned above, it is often the case that the speaker or writer wants to refer to a particular event at a definite but unspecified time within the stated period. The inevitable choice is then the preterite.

5.13 Temporal specifiers - general conclusions

The following table gives an overview of the results of all temporal specifiers analysed in this investigation. The individual specifiers have been allocated to six groups as specified in the introduction to this chapter. Group 4 (temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to the MOU) was divided into two subgroups: 4a – unambiguous specifiers and 4b – ambiguous specifiers (►5.6).

Table 5.39
Results of the temporal specifier analysis (all specifiers, in alphabetical order)

| Specifier | Group | Occs | PrP CF in % | Reliability |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| ALL DAY | 5 | 141 | 45.10 | 32.38 |
| ALL WEEK | 5 | 17 | 80.00 | 59.65 |
| ALL YEAR | 5 | 13 | 100.00 | 71.59 |
| ALREADY | 1 | 1587 | 79.72 | 56.88 |
| ALWAYS | 4b | 985 | 59.55 | 42.25 |
| BEFORE | 1 | 421 | 57.84 | 49.58 |
| DURING THE LAST | 4a | 18 | 42.86 | 40.71 |
| DURING THE PAST | 4a | 61 | 80.00 | 65.86 |
| EVER | 4b | 769 | 61.60 | 50.76 |
| FOR | 4b | 849 | 60.29 | 50.73 |
| FREQUENTLY | 2 | 156 | 39.39 | 23.81 |
| HOW LONG | 4b | 343 | 51.02 | 34.82 |
| IN THE LAST | 4a | 398 | 79.22 | 75.65 |
| IN THE PAST | 4a | 684 | 84.21 | 78.44 |
| JUST | 2 | 354 | 46.82 | 39.61 |
| LATELY | 2 | 63 | 97.56 | 82.68 |
| LONG | 4a | 127 | 96.94 | 86.77 |
| NEVER | 4b | 1436 | 45.87 | 36.60 |
| NOW | 1 | 1043 | 72.73 | 41.23 |
| OFTEN | 3 | 821 | 41.08 | 25.53 |
| OVER THE LAST | 4a | 272 | 89.45 | 84.67 |
| OVER THE PAST | 4a | 223 | 89.94 | 82.87 |
| PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 210 | 42.86 | 31.90 |
| RECENTLY | 2 | 713 | 49.39 | 46.53 |
| REPEATEDLY | 3 | 133 | 49.46 | 45.23 |
| SINCE | 4a | 759 | 91.59 | 82.92 |
| SO FAR | 4a | 486 | 97.44 | 83.91 |
| STILL NOT | 4b | 104 | 75.00 | 40.46 |
| THIS CENTURY | 6 | 47 | 53.33 | 50.20 |
| THIS MONTH | 6 | 109 | 28.13 | 20.44 |
| THIS MORNING | 6 | 674 | 10.04 | 9.28 |
| THIS WEEK | 6 | 657 | 30.49 | 23.20 |
| THIS YEAR | 6 | 1008 | 37.78 | 27.58 |
| TODAY | 6 | 1150 | 25.76 | 17.81 |
| UNTIL NOW | 4a | 55 | 78.72 | 74.14 |
| UP TO NOW | 4a | 25 | 90.48 | 86.54 |
| YET | 4a | 960 | 95.17 | 72.21 |
| | TOTAL: | 17871 | AV. 63.70 | AV. 52.01 |

In the following concluding evaluations only those temporal specifiers with more than 100 occurrences are listed, larger samples being more likely to provide representative and reliable results.

5.13.1 The temporal specifiers according to PrP reliability factor

The reliability factor demonstrates the overall correlation between selected adverbials and the PrP as opposed to all other co-occurring verb forms. It gives an indication of how reliable certain temporal specifiers are as predictors of this verb form.

5.13.1.1 The combined corpora (COB, CSPA, TIMES, WASHPOST)

Table 5.40
Temporal specifiers ranked according to reliability factor (all corpora)

| Rank | Specifier | Group | Occs | Reliability |
|------|---------------|-------|------|-------------|
| 1 | LONG | 4a | 127 | 86.77 |
| 2 | OVER THE LAST | 4a | 272 | 84.67 |
| 3 | SO FAR | 4a | 486 | 83.91 |
| 4 | SINCE | 4a | 759 | 82.92 |
| 5 | OVER THE PAST | 4a | 223 | 82.87 |
| 6 | IN THE PAST | 4a | 684 | 78.44 |
| 7 | IN THE LAST | 4a | 398 | 75.65 |
| 8 | YET | 4a | 960 | 72.21 |
| 9 | ALREADY | 1 | 1587 | 56.88 |
| 10 | EVER | 4b | 769 | 50.76 |
| 11 | FOR | 4b | 849 | 50.73 |
| 12 | BEFORE | 1 | 421 | 49.58 |
| 13 | RECENTLY | 2 | 713 | 46.53 |
| 14 | REPEATEDLY | 3 | 133 | 45.23 |
| 15 | ALWAYS | 4b | 985 | 42.25 |
| 16 | NOW | 1 | 1043 | 41.23 |
| 17 | STILL NOT | 4b | 104 | 40.46 |
| 18 | JUST | 2 | 354 | 39.61 |
| 19 | NEVER | 4b | 1436 | 36.60 |
| 20 | HOW LONG | 4b | 343 | 34.82 |
| 21 | ALL DAY | 5 | 141 | 32.38 |
| 22 | PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 210 | 31.90 |
| 23 | THIS YEAR | 6 | 1008 | 27.58 |
| 24 | OFTEN | 3 | 821 | 25.53 |
| 25 | FREQUENTLY | 2 | 156 | 23.81 |
| 26 | THIS WEEK | 6 | 657 | 23.20 |
| 27 | THIS MONTH | 6 | 109 | 20.44 |
| 28 | TODAY | 6 | 1150 | 17.81 |
| 29 | THIS MORNING | 6 | 674 | 9.28 |

Average: 48.07

The results show that the top eight specifiers clearly form a separate, well-defined group with a large gap between YET with a factor of 72.21 and ALREADY at 56.88.

All the temporal specifiers in the top bracket are exclusively from group 4a, and no group 4a specifier is outside the top group. The other significant fact is that all group 6 specifiers are in the bottom seven.

5.13.1.2 The British and American corpora

Table 5.41

Temporal specifiers ranked according to reliability factor (British and American corpora - samples with at least 100 occurrences)

| British Corpora | | | | | American Corpora | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Specifier | Gr. | Occs | Rel. | | Specifier | Gr. | Occs | Rel. |
| 1 | IN THE LAST | 4a | 147 | 85.01 | 1 | SINCE | 4a | 466 | 86.30 |
| 2 | SO FAR | 4a | 326 | 84.43 | 2 | OVER THE LAST | 4a | 125 | 84.28 |
| 3 | OVER THE LAST | 4a | 118 | 83.50 | 3 | SO FAR | 4a | 160 | 82.90 |
| 4 | OVER THE PAST | 4a | 140 | 82.51 | 4 | IN THE PAST | 4a | 257 | 82.50 |
| 5 | SINCE | 4a | 293 | 77.41 | 5 | IN THE LAST | 4a | 163 | 76.47 |
| 6 | IN THE PAST | 4a | 427 | 75.77 | 6 | YET | 4a | 440 | 71.47 |
| 7 | YET | 4a | 520 | 73.05 | 7 | ALREADY | 1 | 582 | 60.22 |
| 8 | JUST | 2 | 164 | 60.47 | 8 | FOR | 4b | 479 | 55.69 |
| 9 | ALREADY | 1 | 1005 | 54.94 | 9 | RECENTLY | 2 | 198 | 51.73 |
| 10 | BEFORE | 1 | 191 | 54.40 | 10 | EVER | 4b | 353 | 50.62 |
| 11 | EVER | 4b | 416 | 51.03 | 11 | ALWAYS | 4b | 323 | 50.24 |
| 12 | RECENTLY | 2 | 515 | 44.42 | 12 | BEFORE | 1 | 230 | 46.35 |
| 13 | FOR | 4b | 370 | 44.00 | 13 | NOW | 1 | 559 | 44.96 |
| 14 | HOW LONG | 4b | 228 | 41.59 | 14 | OFTEN | 3 | 324 | 41.13 |
| 15 | ALWAYS | 4b | 662 | 38.99 | 15 | NEVER | 4b | 494 | 35.53 |
| 16 | NOW | 1 | 484 | 38.11 | 16 | THIS YEAR | 6 | 385 | 26.89 |
| 17 | NEVER | 4b | 942 | 37.25 | 17 | JUST | 2 | 190 | 25.33 |
| 18 | TODAY | 6 | 569 | 33.60 | 18 | THIS WEEK | 6 | 220 | 15.92 |
| 19 | THIS YEAR | 6 | 623 | 28.08 | 19 | HOW LONG | 4b | 115 | 13.86 |
| 20 | PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 149 | 27.72 | 20 | TODAY | 6 | 581 | 11.69 |
| 21 | THIS WEEK | 6 | 437 | 27.00 | 21 | THIS MORNING | 6 | 345 | 7.37 |
| 22 | ALL DAY | 5 | 116 | 23.46 | | | | | |
| 23 | OFTEN | 3 | 497 | 16.53 | | | | | |
| 24 | THIS MORNING | 6 | 329 | 11.44 | | | | | |
| | AVERAGE | | | 49.78 | | AVERAGE | | | 48.64 |

Table 5.41 shows basically the same constellation as the overall statistics. In both the British and American corpora the specifiers from Group 4a are at the top and those from Group 6 at the bottom, although the order of the various adverbials is slightly different and some of the specifiers have dropped out as they no longer meet the 100 occurrence criterion. There are some differences. In the American list SINCE has moved to first position compared with fifth in the British table. JUST, which is near the bottom of the American table, is at position eight in the British. OFTEN, at 16.53, is a very bad predictor of the PrP in the British corpora, in the American it is also below average, but over 24 points higher. The average

reliability factor for the British corpora is slightly higher (49.78 to 48.64) but, in general, the figures indicate a comparable reliability of the temporal specifiers in both main varieties of English.

5.13.2 The temporal specifiers according to PrP co-occurrence factor

The PrP co-occurrence factor is, from a pedagogical point of view, perhaps the more relevant of the factors. It tells a learner faced with a choice between the preterite and the PrP which temporal specifiers have a high correlation factor with the PrP.

5.13.2.1 The combined corpora (COB, CSPA, TIMES, WASHPOST)

Table 5.42
Temporal specifiers ranked according to PrP co-occurrence factor

| Rank | Specifier | Group | Occs | PrP CF |
|---------------|---------------|-------|------|--------|
| 1 | SO FAR | 4a | 486 | 97.44 |
| 2 | LONG | 4a | 127 | 96.94 |
| 3 | YET | 4a | 960 | 95.17 |
| 4 | SINCE | 4a | 759 | 91.59 |
| 5 | OVER THE PAST | 4a | 223 | 89.94 |
| 6 | OVER THE LAST | 4a | 272 | 89.45 |
| 7 | IN THE PAST | 4a | 684 | 84.21 |
| 8 | ALREADY | 1 | 1587 | 79.72 |
| 9 | IN THE LAST | 4a | 398 | 79.22 |
| 10 | STILL NOT | 4b | 104 | 75.00 |
| 11 | NOW | 1 | 1043 | 72.73 |
| 12 | EVER | 4b | 769 | 61.60 |
| 13 | FOR | 4b | 849 | 60.29 |
| Average 59.79 | | | | |
| 14 | ALWAYS | 4b | 985 | 59.55 |
| 15 | BEFORE | 1 | 421 | 57.84 |
| 16 | HOW LONG | 4b | 343 | 51.02 |
| 17 | REPEATEDLY | 3 | 133 | 49.46 |
| 18 | RECENTLY | 2 | 713 | 49.39 |
| 19 | JUST | 2 | 354 | 46.82 |
| 20 | NEVER | 4b | 1436 | 45.87 |
| 21 | ALL DAY | 5 | 141 | 45.10 |
| 22 | PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 210 | 42.86 |
| 23 | OFTEN | 3 | 821 | 41.08 |
| 24 | FREQUENTLY | 2 | 156 | 39.39 |
| 25 | THIS YEAR | 6 | 1008 | 37.78 |
| 26 | THIS WEEK | 6 | 657 | 30.49 |
| 27 | THIS MONTH | 6 | 109 | 28.13 |
| 28 | TODAY | 6 | 1150 | 25.76 |
| 29 | THIS MORNING | 6 | 674 | 10.04 |

The break which indicates the top bracket in Table 5.42 is after position eleven after which there is a drop of nearly 11 points. Again all the group 4a specifiers are

in this top group with ALREADY breaking into their phalanx at position eight. In contrast to the reliability statistics group 4b is well represented in the upper regions of the table. Of the top 16 positions 13 specifiers are from group 4. Group 6 is again to be found at the bottom of the table. The PrP co-occurrence factors for the first three specifiers in the table SO FAR, LONG and YET are excellent.

5.13.2.2 The British and American corpora

Table 5.43

Temporal specifiers ranked according to PrP co-occurrence factor (British and American corpora - samples with at least 100 occurrences)

| British Corpora | | | | | American Corpora | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Specifier | Gr. | Occs | PrP CF | | Specifier | Gr. | Occs | PrP CF |
| 1 | SO FAR | 4a | 326 | 97.62 | 1 | SO FAR | 4a | 160 | 97.06 |
| 2 | YET | 4a | 520 | 96.68 | 2 | YET | 4a | 440 | 93.75 |
| 3 | OVER THE PAST | 4a | 140 | 92.39 | 3 | SINCE | 4a | 466 | 92.29 |
| 4 | OVER THE LAST | 4a | 147 | 90.60 | 4 | OVER THE LAST | 4a | 125 | 88.12 |
| 5 | SINCE | 4a | 293 | 90.31 | 5 | IN THE PAST | 4a | 257 | 85.53 |
| 6 | JUST | 2 | 164 | 85.87 | 6 | ALREADY | 1 | 582 | 82.14 |
| 7 | IN THE PAST | 4a | 427 | 83.28 | 7 | NOW | 1 | 559 | 80.36 |
| 8 | IN THE LAST | 4a | 235 | 78.65 | 8 | IN THE LAST | 4a | 163 | 80.00 |
| 9 | ALREADY | 1 | 1005 | 78.20 | 9 | ALWAYS | 4b | 323 | 73.04 |
| 10 | BEFORE | 1 | 191 | 67.27 | 10 | OFTEN | 3 | 324 | 68.18 |
| 11 | NOW | 1 | 484 | 66.15 | 11 | FOR | 4b | 479 | 64.11 |
| 12 | EVER | 4b | 416 | 64.32 | 12 | EVER | 4b | 353 | 58.91 |
| 13 | HOW LONG | 4b | 228 | 59.46 | 13 | RECENTLY | 2 | 198 | 53.53 |
| 14 | TODAY | 6 | 569 | 55.81 | 14 | BEFORE | 1 | 230 | 51.98 |
| 15 | FOR | 4b | 370 | 54.64 | 15 | NEVER | 4b | 494 | 43.92 |
| 16 | ALWAYS | 4b | 662 | 54.06 | 16 | THIS YEAR | 6 | 385 | 36.28 |
| 17 | RECENTLY | 2 | 515 | 47.64 | 17 | JUST | 2 | 190 | 26.29 |
| 18 | NEVER | 4b | 942 | 47.33 | 18 | HOW LONG | 4b | 115 | 22.73 |
| 19 | THIS YEAR | 6 | 623 | 38.85 | 19 | THIS WEEK | 6 | 220 | 20.51 |
| 20 | PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 149 | 38.16 | 20 | TODAY | 6 | 581 | 15.16 |
| 21 | THIS WEEK | 6 | 437 | 35.86 | 21 | THIS MORNING | 6 | 345 | 07.89 |
| 22 | ALL DAY | 6 | 116 | 30.19 | | | | | |
| 23 | OFTEN | 3 | 497 | 26.05 | | | | | |
| 24 | THIS MORNING | 6 | 329 | 12.50 | | | | | |
| | AVERAGE | | | 62.16 | | AVERAGE | | | 59.13 |

The results for the British and American corpora are very similar. One noteworthy, and perhaps rather surprising result, is the position of YET in second place in both corpora. As was noted above, it is commonplace in grammars and textbooks of English to point out that the Americans prefer to use the preterite with YET. The results of this investigation indicate convincingly that this is not the case. One common claim was confirmed, however. The British corpora show a marked preference for the PrP with JUST with a factor of 85.87, whereas the situation is

entirely different in the American corpora. With a factor of only 26.29 JUST is a very poor indicator of the PrP in the American corpora. The average co-occurrence factor for the 21 temporal specifiers in the American corpora is 59.13, somewhat lower than the 62.16 for the 24 specifiers in the British corpora. This would suggest that the specifiers as a whole are slightly better indicators of the PrP.

5.13.3 Expanded and passive forms

Table 5.44

Temporal specifiers ranked according to co-occurrence of the PrP expanded

| Specifier | Group | PrP Occs | Expanded | Passive |
|------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| ALL DAY | 5 | 23 | 39.13% | 4.35% |
| ALL WEEK | 5 | 8 | 37.50% | 0.00% |
| ALL YEAR | 5 | 4 | 25.00% | 0.00% |
| LATELY | 2 | 40 | 22.50% | 2.50% |
| FOR | 4b | 290 | 21.03% | 4.48% |
| HOW LONG | 4b | 50 | 20.00% | 6.00% |
| DURING THE LAST | 4a | 6 | 16.67% | 0.00% |
| THIS MORNING | 5 | 50 | 16.00% | 12.00% |
| OVER THE PAST | 4a | 143 | 12.59% | 8.39% |
| OVER THE LAST | 4a | 195 | 9.23% | 6.15% |
| SINCE | 4a | 512 | 9.18% | 7.42% |
| RECENTLY | 2 | 283 | 8.48% | 8.13% |
| TODAY | 6 | 85 | 8.24% | 4.71% |
| THIS YEAR | 6 | 102 | 5.88% | 13.73% |
| JUST | 2 | 125 | 5.60% | 7.20% |
| UP TO NOW | 4a | 19 | 5.26% | 10.53% |
| IN THE LAST | 4a | 263 | 4.56% | 14.07% |
| THIS WEEK | 6 | 68 | 4.41% | 11.76% |
| UNTIL NOW | 4a | 37 | 2.70% | 13.51% |
| SO FAR | 4a | 304 | 2.63% | 10.86% |
| REPEATEDLY | 3 | 46 | 2.17% | 10.87% |
| PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 48 | 2.08% | 25.00% |
| IN THE PAST | 4a | 464 | 1.51% | 10.56% |
| OFTEN | 3 | 76 | 1.32% | 13.16% |
| EVER | 4b | 247 | 1.21% | 6.48% |
| BEFORE | 1 | 166 | 1.20% | 12.65% |
| LONG | 4a | 95 | 1.05% | 10.53% |
| ALREADY | 1 | 578 | 0.52% | 16.98% |
| ALWAYS | 4b | 237 | 0.00% | 6.75% |
| DURING THE PAST | 4a | 61 | 0.00% | 6.25% |
| FREQUENTLY | 2 | 13 | 0.00% | 23.08% |
| NEVER | 4b | 344 | 0.00% | 11.34% |
| NOW | 1 | 88 | 0.00% | 12.50% |
| STILL NOT | 4b | 15 | 0.00% | 26.67% |
| THIS CENTURY | 6 | 47 | 0.00% | 12.50% |
| THIS MONTH | 6 | 9 | 0.00% | 11.11% |
| YET | 4a | 414 | 0.00% | 17.87% |

As can be seen from Table 5.44 there is no absolutely clear pattern concerning the co-occurrence of the PrP expanded with the temporal specifiers. It is, however,

perhaps significant that the top three specifiers are those beginning with ALL It is interesting to note that several common temporal specifiers such as ALWAYS, NEVER and YET never co-occur with the PrP expanded. The co-occurrence of the PrP passive is even more haphazard. Three specifiers, STILL NOT, PREVIOUSLY and FREQUENTLY return scores in excess of 20% but the samples are too small to be conclusive. The high frequency of the PrP passive with YET and ALREADY is worthy of note. It seems generally to be the case that the more a temporal specifier co-occurs with the passive, the less it occurs with the expanded and vice versa.

Table 5.45

Temporal specifiers ranked according to co-occurrence of the PrP passive

| Specifier | Group | PrP Occs | Expanded | Passive |
|------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| STILL NOT | 4b | 15 | 0.00% | 26.67% |
| PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 48 | 2.08% | 25.00% |
| FREQUENTLY | 2 | 13 | 0.00% | 23.08% |
| YET | 4a | 414 | 0.00% | 17.87% |
| ALREADY | 1 | 578 | 0.52% | 16.98% |
| IN THE LAST | 4a | 263 | 4.56% | 14.07% |
| THIS YEAR | 6 | 102 | 5.88% | 13.73% |
| UNTIL NOW | 4a | 37 | 2.70% | 13.51% |
| OFTEN | 3 | 76 | 1.32% | 13.16% |
| BEFORE | 1 | 166 | 1.20% | 12.65% |
| THIS CENTURY | 6 | 47 | 0.00% | 12.50% |
| NOW | 1 | 88 | 0.00% | 12.50% |
| THIS MORNING | 6 | 50 | 16.00% | 12.00% |
| THIS WEEK | 6 | 68 | 4.41% | 11.76% |
| NEVER | 4b | 344 | 0.00% | 11.34% |
| THIS MONTH | 6 | 9 | 0.00% | 11.11% |
| REPEATEDLY | 3 | 46 | 2.17% | 10.87% |
| SO FAR | 4a | 304 | 2.63% | 10.86% |
| IN THE PAST | 4a | 464 | 1.51% | 10.56% |
| UP TO NOW | 4a | 19 | 5.26% | 10.53% |
| LONG | 4a | 95 | 1.05% | 10.53% |
| OVER THE PAST | 4a | 143 | 12.59% | 8.39% |
| RECENTLY | 2 | 283 | 8.48% | 8.13% |
| SINCE | 4a | 512 | 9.18% | 7.42% |
| JUST | 2 | 125 | 5.60% | 7.20% |
| ALWAYS | 4b | 237 | 0.00% | 6.75% |
| EVER | 4b | 247 | 1.21% | 6.48% |
| DURING THE PAST | 4a | 61 | 0.00% | 6.25% |
| OVER THE LAST | 4a | 195 | 9.23% | 6.15% |
| HOW LONG | 4b | 50 | 20.00% | 6.00% |
| TODAY | 6 | 85 | 8.24% | 4.71% |
| FOR | 4b | 290 | 21.03% | 4.48% |
| ALL DAY | 5 | 23 | 39.13% | 4.35% |
| LATELY | 2 | 40 | 22.50% | 2.50% |
| ALL WEEK | 5 | 8 | 37.50% | 0.00% |
| ALL YEAR | 5 | 4 | 25.00% | 0.00% |
| DURING THE LAST | 4a | 6 | 16.67% | 0.00% |

5.13.4 The spoken and written corpora

Table 5.46

Temporal specifiers – PrP co-occurrence factor in the written and spoken corpora (specifiers with over 50 occurrences in both corpora, in alphabetical order).

| Specifier | Group | Written corpora | | Spoken corpora | |
|---------------|-------|-----------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | | Occurrences | PrP CF | Occurrences | PrP CF |
| ALREADY | 1 | 817 | 76.07 | 770 | 83.16 |
| ALWAYS | 4b | 500 | 56.91 | 485 | 63.82 |
| BEFORE | 1 | 128 | 60.85 | 293 | 54.87 |
| EVER | 4b | 322 | 65.52 | 447 | 59.38 |
| FOR | 4b | 364 | 53.55 | 485 | 65.56 |
| IN THE LAST | 4a | 68 | 61.54 | 330 | 82.50 |
| IN THE PAST | 4a | 295 | 81.25 | 389 | 86.01 |
| JUST | 2 | 116 | 78.95 | 238 | 38.10 |
| NEVER | 4b | 840 | 42.86 | 596 | 49.70 |
| NOW | 1 | 555 | 63.38 | 488 | 86.00 |
| OFTEN | 3 | 426 | 24.59 | 395 | 73.02 |
| OVER THE PAST | 4a | 117 | 88.16 | 106 | 91.57 |
| PREVIOUSLY | 1 | 87 | 33.33 | 123 | 47.37 |
| RECENTLY | 2 | 284 | 36.49 | 429 | 56.91 |
| SINCE | 4a | 274 | 91.28 | 485 | 91.73 |
| SO FAR | 4a | 171 | 98.18 | 315 | 97.03 |
| THIS MORNING | 6 | 74 | 12.90 | 600 | 9.85 |
| THIS WEEK | 6 | 365 | 16.24 | 292 | 46.23 |
| THIS YEAR | 6 | 497 | 24.37 | 511 | 48.34 |
| TODAY | 6 | 583 | 11.25 | 567 | 39.41 |
| YET | 4a | 313 | 89.89 | 647 | 96.53 |
| AVERAGES | | | 55.60 | | 65.10 |

The co-occurrence of the PrP with the individual temporal specifiers is considerably and consistently higher in the corpora of spoken English. There are five exceptions to this statement: SO FAR, THIS MORNING, EVER, BEFORE and JUST. The specifiers SO FAR and THIS MORNING are at the top and bottom of the range of values respectively. The difference in the case of SO FAR is negligible and can be ignored. The discrepancy with THIS MORNING probably stems from the small sample available in the written corpora. The variance in the PrP co-occurrence factor with EVER and BEFORE is greater but not large enough to be significant. A larger sample might well produce a different result. The most striking exception is JUST, which has a factor of 78.95 in the written corpora, but only 38.10 in the spoken texts. What is the reason for the preponderance of the preterite with JUST in the spoken language? One possible explanation is the ellipsis of the auxiliary when speaking. While this is a possibility, it is not entirely convincing as the same phenomenon should then also have been observed with some of the other temporal specifiers. The more likely explanation is that JUST is increasingly coming to be

regarded as a specifier which refers to a closed time frame. This will only appear in more formal and written language after a longer period of assimilation.

The only other significant discrepancy is with OFTEN, which displays a low incidence of the PrP in the written corpora (24.59) and a high frequency in the spoken corpora (73.02), a difference which is larger than would be expected. The other two temporal specifiers expressing iteration, REPEATEDLY (33 to 75) and FREQUENTLY (22 to 60) display similar tendencies so that it can be assumed that speaking about repeated actions in the past will tend to evoke the PrP, whereas the written narration of such iteration will favour the preterite.

The overall PrP co-occurrence factor at 65.10 is significantly higher for SPOKENCORP than for WRITTENCORP at 55.60. This is certainly a reflection of the temporal phragmatisation¹⁸ which is concomitant with the process of reportage and narration.

5.13.5 Conclusions

The analysis of the most frequent temporal specifiers and co-occurring verb forms indicated that in most cases there are no significant differences between the British and American corpora. ALREADY and YET, which are often cited as examples of major differences between British and American were found to be equally good markers for the PrP both in the British and American corpora. The only major difference in this respect was JUST which was found to co-occur much more frequently with the preterite in the American than in the British corpora. Seen as a whole, the temporal specifiers examined were found to be slightly more reliable indicators of the PrP in the British corpora than in their American counterparts.

There was found to be a greater tendency to use the PrP in the spoken corpora than in the written texts. It should not be deduced from this fact that the PrP is used in more informal, the preterite in more formal language. The great majority of the texts in the spoken corpora represent the type of English used in formal situations.

¹⁸ Phragmatisation = closing of the event time frame. See Chapter 7 for a definition and discussion of phragmatisation.

The reason has probably more to do with the immediacy of spoken language as opposed to the phragmatisation evoked by narration and reportage.

Many of the temporal specifiers examined co-occurred regularly with both the PrP and the preterite. An attempt was made to establish whether there is a logical explanation for the choice of verb form in connection with a specific adverbial. While this is true of some ambiguous temporal specifiers such as FOR, in the specifiers which were examined more closely in this respect, it would seem not to be a case of logical necessity, but more a matter of the subjective psychological perspective of the speaker. Consequently, the unreflected pedagogical recommendation of specifiers such as EVER, RECENTLY and JUST as markers for the PrP is not advisable. The learner who has not grasped the basic semantic function of the PrP will still be baffled by it, even after numerous successful pattern drills involving these temporal specifiers.

There is, however, a group of temporal specifiers which proved to be excellent predictors and indicators of the PrP. This is the group of unambiguous quantifiers and non-quantifiers which expressed a period of time lasting up to the moment of utterance (Group 4a in our classification). This group contains specifiers such as SINCE, SO FAR and YET, which have long been recognized as PrP markers, but also less frequently cited phrases involving IN THE LAST/PAST ... and OVER THE LAST/PAST

In contrast, there is a group of specifiers which, although apparently similar in meaning to the above-mentioned category, cannot be considered markers for the PrP. These are adverbials expressing a period of time which starts before and extends beyond the MOU (Group 6 in our classification). Group 6 contains specifiers such as TODAY and phrases headed by THIS ..., which are frequently cited in grammars in connection with the PrP. It was found that when these particular temporal specifiers are used, the speaker/writer is often thinking of a particular incident which took place at a definite time during the period described by the adverbial. The event time can be specified by the insertion of a specifier which can express the exact time (AT 3 O'CLOCK) or can be a general specifier (EARLIER). Such specifiers cannot be used in connection with adverbials from Group 4. This indicates a fundamental difference between the two types.

Group 4a specifiers do not readily admit a phragmatisation of the event time frame, whereas Group 6 adverbials are often used specifically to refer to an event in a psychologically closed time frame within the period specified. It will be our hypothesis that the intrinsic function of the PrP is intimately bound up with the absence of phragmatisation implied by the temporal specifiers of Group 4a.

Chapter 6

The Functional-Semantic Analysis

In this chapter we will examine some of the scholarly and pedagogical theories of the PrP which have been propounded in various forms literally over the centuries and which still enjoy varying degrees of acceptance. These are the theories of recentness (▶6.3.4), indefiniteness (▶6.3.5.) and current relevance (▶6.3.6). Current relevance (CR) theory is subdivided into the continuative (▶6.3.6.2), resultative (▶6.3.6.3) and existential readings (▶6.3.6.4). In order to evaluate these theories, 6168 samples of PrP occurrences were collected from the corpora and analysed according to defined criteria. The criteria are divided into two categories, peripheral criteria and core criteria. Peripheral criteria involve among other things the establishment of objective facts such as whether the PrP verb form under analysis is active or passive, simple or expanded, and whether the verb has an object or not, facts which are not only interesting from a statistical point of view, but which might also throw some light on patterns of PrP usage. Also in the peripheral group of criteria are statistics pertaining to person, number, positive or negative, statement or interrogative, which were not expected in themselves to provide any deep insights, but which, in combination with other evaluation criteria, might prove to have a certain relevance. The core criteria were formulated with a view to evaluating the above-mentioned theories, and include temporal specification, past, present and future reference, duration, iteration and current relevance. Most of these criteria involve varying degrees of interpretation, so that in some cases different analysts could arrive at different conclusions with regard to the same occurrence. In view of this I have endeavoured to apply a rigorous methodology which applies the same criteria in the same way to each individual sample.

The corpora selected for the functional-semantic analysis were BRITRADIO and BRITMIX from the Cobuild-Collins Bank of English, JAN1 from the Times 93 corpus, WPSHORT from the Washington Post corpus, WHPRESS95 from the CSPA corpus and the NORTHERN IRELAND transcribed corpus. The three subcorpora FACMT95, FACMT96 and FACMT97-8 were combined to form the

USACAD corpus. The primary criterion for the selection of these corpora was again the wish to analyse different varieties and registers of English. However, whereas in the preceding chapters great emphasis was laid on contrasting the use of the PrP in the various corpora, this chapter concentrates more on what the different varieties have in common. There we were concerned with how often the PrP is used, here we are concerned with how and in what context it is used, i.e. with a functional analysis on the basis of semantic and contextual values.

6.1 Methodology

Fig. 6.1
Representation of a functional-semantic analysis table (excerpt)

| # | Occurrence | Corpus | Person | Passiv | Prog | Neg | Int | Number | MainVerb | Object | E/S | Marker | Ext |
|----|---------------------|---------|--------|--------|------|-----|-----|----------|---------------|--------|---------|-----------------|-----|
| 1 | d prospective m | BritMix | prono | no | no | ye | n | singular | decide | no | dynamic | at the momen | no |
| 2 | he Department o | BritMix | we | no | no | nc | n | plural | bring with | yes | dynamic | tonight | yes |
| 3 | ionary and the E | BritMix | we | no | yes | nc | n | plural | operate | no | dynamic | ever since | no |
| 4 | out-of-date it's c | BritMix | prono | no | no | nc | n | plural | fall out of u | yes | dynamic | no | no |
| 5 | e're trying to co | BritMix | prono | no | no | nc | n | plural | acquire | yes | dynamic | during the lat | yes |
| 6 | perhaps familiar | BritMix | I | yes | no | nc | n | singular | record | no | dynamic | no | no |
| 7 | popping of ballo | BritMix | they | no | no | nc | n | plural | be | no | stative | no | no |
| 8 | This is funny 'cc | BritMix | we | no | no | nc | n | plural | finish | no | dynamic | no | no |
| 11 | I ballet company | BritMix | I | no | no | nc | n | singular | be here | no | stative | twelve (month | yes |
| 12 | it'll be a success | BritMix | non-p | no | no | nc | n | singular | be | no | stative | no | no |
| 13 | ighties and actu | BritMix | non-p | no | no | nc | n | singular | be | no | stative | in the last ye | yes |
| 14 | u can feel the liv | BritMix | prono | no | no | nc | n | singular | be | no | stative | no | no |
| 15 | in England that t | BritMix | I | no | no | nc | n | singular | come here | no | dynamic | in the last ye | yes |
| 16 | hing that we cou | BritMix | we | no | no | nc | n | plural | do | yes | dynamic | no | no |
| 17 | n lots of cities. A | BritMix | we | no | no | nc | n | plural | turn round | yes | dynamic | no | no |
| 18 | me. The city wa | BritMix | prono | no | no | nc | n | singular | become | no | dynamic | just | no |
| 19 | a a a tiny sum a | BritMix | prono | no | no | ye | n | plural | sponsor | yes | dynamic | before | no |
| 20 | ready starting to | BritMix | they | no | no | ye | n | plural | see | yes | dynamic | before | no |
| 21 | s of decorative | BritMix | prono | no | no | nc | n | singular | rise | no | dynamic | in the past fiv | yes |

The methodological procedures involved in the functional-semantic analysis were in principle the same as those described in Chapters 4 and 5. After tagging the individual occurrences with Present Perfect Tagger, the corpora were restored to normal text format with a word processor. The occurrences were located with a concordancer and stored with a context of 500 words.

The samples were then imported into a Microsoft ACCESS database for further evaluation. The basic form of data representation in ACCESS is the table. As can be seen from the table in Fig. 6.1, it is only possible to display a small part of the

data in a functional-semantic analysis table at any one time. I therefore developed a form module in order to facilitate evaluation. Such a form can be seen in Fig. 6.2.

Fig. 6.2
Functional-semantic analysis evaluation form

British Meetings Corpus

Britmix Database

Comment: It has been existing for more than 3000 years ago!!

| | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Corpus | BritMix | Dyn/Stat | stative |
| Extract No. | 91 | Temporal Specifier | for more than 3000 |
| Subject | it | Exact Specs | yes |
| Number | singular | Duration | not completed |
| Negative | no | Past Reference | over 10 years |
| Progressive | yes | Present Reference | yes |
| Passive | no | Future Reference | no |
| Interrogative | no | Results Motivation | no |
| Verb | exist | Iteration | no |
| Object | no | | |

drop a stone on his foot and injured himself and he ask another one to rub his feet and by doing that he helped the one the injured one and there again some reference book says it used to be known as under the name of oriental massage. It has been [VBN] existing for more than three thousand years ago but as everybody went for the instant benefit of er medicine it wasn't very much known in the altern I mean the alternative field of medicine medicine he knew it but other people didn't know it muc

Record: 86 of 829

Data representation in such a format allows an efficient on-screen evaluation. For most of the analysis criteria, drop down boxes containing the allowed items facilitated data entry. Each occurrence was assigned a unique extract number for later reference and retrieval. The large frame at the bottom of the form contains the occurrence and its immediate context. If, as was the case on numerous occasions, this context was not sufficient for the assessment of such factors as duration or past reference, uniquely identifiable text was copied and the occurrence was located in the corresponding corpus. A comment frame allowed the recording of any remarks on significant or interesting phenomena.

In order to evaluate the results of the investigation two evaluation forms were constructed, one for the peripheral, one for the core criteria. Evaluation modules were written to automatically extract and quantify results. An example of such an evaluation form is seen in Fig. 6.3.

Fig. 6.3
Example of a functional-semantic analysis core evaluation form

| BritMix | | Core Evaluation | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------------|-----|--------|
| Total Number of Occurrences: | | 829 | | | |
| Temporal Specifications | | | | | |
| Temporal specification: | 251 | 30.28% | No temp spec: | 578 | 69.72% |
| Exact specifications: | 60 | 7.24% | No exact specs: | 769 | 92.76% |
| Duration | | | | | |
| None: | 108 | 13.03% | Not yet started: | 3 | 0.36% |
| Completed (all records): | 656 | 79.13% | Not completed: | 62 | 7.48% |
| Completed (- no duration): | 656 | 91.36% | Not completed: | 62 | 8.64% |
| Present and Future Reference | | | | | |
| Present reference: | 45 | 5.43% | No present reference: | 784 | 94.57% |
| Future ref. | 3 | 0.36% | No future reference: | 826 | 99.64% |
| Past Reference | | | | | |
| Same day: | 16 | 1.93% | Same week: | 5 | 0.60% |
| Same year: | 6 | 0.72% | Same month: | 1 | 0.12% |
| Last 5 years: | 7 | 0.84% | Same decade: | 7 | 0.84% |
| Over 10 years: | 14 | 1.69% | Indefinite: | 770 | 92.88% |
| None: | 3 | 0.36% | Asking for ref.: | 0 | 0.00% |
| Results Aspect | | | | | |
| No: | 383 | 46.20% | Yes: | 40 | 4.83% |
| Mutative: | 406 | 48.97% | | | |
| Iteration | | | | | |
| Yes: | 41 | 4.95% | No: | 788 | 95.05% |

6.2 The Evaluation of the Peripheral Criteria

The PrP verb form samples were analysed according to the following criteria which were outlined in the introduction to this chapter:

What is the subject of the verb?

Is the verb active or passive?

Is the verb form simple or expanded?

Is the verb positive or negative?

Is it a statement or an interrogative?

Is the verb singular or plural?

Is the verb dynamic or stative?

Does the verb have an object?

Does the PrP occurrence have future reference?

Does a temporal specifier co-occur with the PrP verb form?

Do the temporal specifiers provide an exact specification of the event time frame?¹

¹ The last three points were originally part of the core criteria, but were assigned to the peripheral criteria after evaluation.

6.2.1 Subject

The subject was allocated to one of twelve categories. In addition to the usual personal pronouns *I, you, he, she, it, we* and *they*, there were also individual occurrences of *one* and *youse*. Subjects could also be allocated to the categories of OTHER PRONOUNS (i.e. not personal pronouns), PERSONAL NOUNS or NON-PERSONAL NOUNS. Relative, demonstrative, possessive, interrogative and indefinite pronouns and the dummy *there* as subject were placed in the group OTHER PRONOUNS. PERSONAL NOUNS were proper names and any nouns referring to people. Nouns like *the government, the committee, the team* were generally classified as NON-PERSONAL NOUNS, even if they were later referenced by *they*.

Table 6.1
Subject of PrP verb form (in %)

| Subject | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| I | 30.88 | 29.77 | 3.42 | 15.07 | 3.43 | 5.51 | 14.20 |
| YOU | 13.27 | 11.76 | 0.28 | 6.71 | 0.34 | 4.10 | 5.8 |
| HE | 2.29 | 3.26 | 3.70 | 1.84 | 6.17 | 3.46 | 3.53 |
| SHE | 1.69 | 0.72 | 0.66 | 0.64 | 1.03 | 0.97 | 0.92 |
| IT | 6.88 | 6.88 | 2.75 | 4.60 | 3.17 | 2.81 | 4.46 |
| WE | 8.69 | 10.05 | 3.32 | 23.90 | 3.08 | 22.57 | 11.72 |
| THEY | 4.58 | 11.40 | 3.42 | 5.79 | 2.14 | 8.32 | 5.92 |
| PERSONAL | 5.91 | 7.15 | 22.70 | 9.65 | 24.85 | 14.25 | 14.49 |
| NON-PERS. | 10.98 | 8.05 | 44.92 | 17.28 | 39.85 | 19.01 | 24.03 |
| OTH. PRON. | 14.72 | 10.95 | 14.81 | 14.52 | 15.94 | 19.01 | 14.90 |
| ONE | 0.12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.01 |

As was to be expected, there was a large spread with regard to subject, with *I, we* and *you* dominating in the spoken corpora, and non-personal nouns dominating in the newspaper corpora. No PrP-specific pattern could be identified.

6.2.2 Subject number

As can be seen from Table 6.2 there is a preponderance of singular subjects in most of the corpora. Only in USACAD and WHPRESS do we find a slight majority of plural subjects which is due to the high incidence of *we* in these corpora. The frequency of singular subjects is especially marked in the corpora with more informal register.

You was counted as singular unless it was clear from expressions such as *all of you, you people* etc. that it was plural, or this fact was obvious from the context, such as a spokesperson addressing a press conference.

Table 6.2
Subject number (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| SINGULAR | 74.07 | 69.59 | 61.06 | 48.99 | 64.87 | 46.98 | 60.81 |
| PLURAL | 25.93 | 30.41 | 38.94 | 51.01 | 35.13 | 53.02 | 39.19 |

6.2.3 Positive and negative forms

In this evaluation ‘negative’ was defined in a formal structural sense as a verb form containing a negative particle. In addition to NOT, the adverbial NEVER was also treated as a negative particle. Negative nominals, however, such as NOBODY or NOTHING, or negative phrases such as *I don’t think ...* in referring clauses were not counted as negating the verb form.

Table 6.3
Positive and negative forms (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| POSITIVE | 89.99 | 88.96 | 95.82 | 93.38 | 94.86 | 92.66 | 92.72 |
| NEGATIVE | 10.01 | 11.04 | 4.18 | 6.62 | 5.14 | 7.34 | 7.28 |

Of the 6168 verb forms analysed 449 (7.28%) were negative in the sense defined above. Of these 98 contained the adverbial NEVER so that the proportion of ‘pure’ negatives is even lower at 5.69%. Altogether 205 negative verb forms co-occur with specifiers, the second biggest group of which (after NEVER) is YET with 36 occurrences. The TIMES and WASHPOST corpora return the lowest percentages with 4.18% and 5.14% respectively, obviously reflecting the tendency of newspapers to report what has happened rather than what has not. There is no evidence of any discernible pattern, nor any indication that the negative is significantly more prevalent with the PrP than with other verb forms.²

² Elsness (1997: 201-204) claims that the negative is indeed more prevalent in the PrP than in the preterite. He identifies 11.63% negatives in a sample of 800 PrP forms as opposed to 4.90% negatives in a sample of 3348 preterite forms. The present investigation indicates, however, that the figure for PrP negative forms is closer to Elsness’ figures for the preterite.

6.2.4 Statement/interrogative

The interrogative was identified by the inversion of subject and auxiliary or, for implied questions, which lack this syntactic marking, by the presence of a question mark at the end of the sentence. On the basis of the manual assessment A number of interrogative occurrences from the spoken corpora were included which were obviously intended by the speakers to be questions although the transcribers had neglected to formally mark them. These were discovered during the manual evaluation.

Table 6.4
Statement and interrogative forms (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| STATEMENT | 96.50 | 96.11 | 99.91 | 99.45 | 99.83 | 95.79 | 98.04 |
| INTERROG. | 3.50 | 3.89 | 0.09 | 0.55 | 0.17 | 4.21 | 1.96 |

Not surprisingly the percentage of interrogatives is higher in the spoken corpora than in the written corpora. There is no evidence that the PrP favours the interrogative or that this verb form is in any way influenced by the interrogative form. No significant patterns could be ascertained.

6.2.5 Dynamic/stative

During the analysis of verb forms with dynamic or stative meaning it soon became clear that it was often not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the two. It is, of course, well known that certain verbs such as HAVE belong to both categories. Such verbs, however, have distinct meanings for stative and dynamic usage and the usage can easily be identified by applying syntactic tests. The main test applied in this analysis was to ask whether the verb form could be used in the expanded form. There are numerous border-line cases, however, especially with expressions containing BE. There are many examples of such phrases where the expanded form could not be used, but which obviously have a dynamic meaning and which could be replaced by a dynamic verb. An example of this is the BE in "I've just been to er the Buddy Holly show" [BRITRADIO: 666]. This is not a statement about the state of existing at the Buddy Holly show at some time in the past, but rather a statement that the speaker has just attended the Buddy Holly

show, that is, BE is being used dynamically here. Such usages were therefore not counted as stative.

Table 6.5
Dynamic and stative forms (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|---------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| DYNAMIC | 88.42 | 90.32 | 90.31 | 86.12 | 88.00 | 83.15 | 87.86 |
| STATIVE | 11.58 | 9.68 | 9.69 | 13.88 | 12.00 | 16.85 | 12.14 |

Of the 749 examples of the PrP with stative meaning recorded in the corpora, 611 are forms of BE (81.58%). Elsness (1997: 192) reports a total of 12.39% PrP verb forms with stative meaning³ which is very close to the average percentage recorded in this analysis (12.17%). Elsness's figures for the preterite are 34.9% indicating a significant difference which can almost certainly be ascribed to the ubiquitous use of WAS and WERE. Support for these figures was found in the analysis of the temporal specifiers, especially in the analysis of ALREADY (►5.3.1).

6.2.6 Object/no object

This criterion was included on the assumption that the presence of an object might possibly have some bearing in connection with a possible resultative reading of the PrP. In addition to direct objects, the objects of verb-bound prepositions were also counted in this category.

Table 6.6
Object or no object (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| OBJECT | 61.04 | 63.35 | 54.32 | 65.81 | 60.07 | 57.24 | 60.39 |
| NO OBJECT | 38.96 | 36.65 | 45.68 | 34.19 | 39.93 | 42.76 | 39.61 |

Approximately 60% of all the PrP forms examined have an object. If, however, intransitive verbs such as BE (611 occurrences), BECOME (73), COME (106), GO (19) and the passive forms (759) are excluded from the analysis, then 3725 out of a total of 4600 transitive verbs have an object which is equivalent to 812%. In the absence

³ My calculation on the basis of Elsness's figures.

of comparable statistics for the other verb forms it is difficult to say whether this is significant, but it does seem to be quite a high figure. What is definitely significant is the fact that, in some cases, it is the presence of an object which makes the PrP identifiable.

[6.1] We have the same corresponding area in the hands as well but the problem with hand it have a different er structure to the feet. So if I if I have a client who hasn't got a limb then I would do on their hands or say **somebody's hurt their foot** like the ankle and come to me for reflexology I'll use the corresponding area because I can't work on the ankle
[BRITMIX: 99]

The object *their foot* disambiguates the 's. If there were no object, the sentence would be read as "If somebody is hurt".

6.2.7 Active and passive forms

The analysis of active and passive forms produced no real surprises except perhaps for the fact that the frequency of the passive was slightly higher in the less formal texts than might have been expected. The highest incidence was in TIMES with 22.98%, almost twice as high as the corresponding American newspaper corpus WASHPOST.

Table 6.7
Active and passive forms (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|---------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| ACTIVE | 90.83 | 91.67 | 77.21 | 90.63 | 87.83 | 88.44 | 87.69 |
| PASSIVE | 9.17 | 8.33 | 22.79 | 9.38 | 12.17 | 11.56 | 12.31 |

The results of the analysis of the PrP passive forms were unremarkable apart from the fact that, in contrast to the figures for the entire sample, they returned consistently lower statistics for all applicable criteria. That is to say, there were by percentage fewer negatives and fewer interrogatives amongst the passive forms than amongst the active forms.

6.2.8 Future reference

[6.2] I will make some appropriate public statement, particularly because it pertains, among other things, to a member of our Board of Trustees. So I will make appropriate public statements but not until the appeals process **has played** itself out and I know that you understand that from previous personnel issues.

[USACAD: 948]

A number of occurrences of the PrP with future reference were recorded in the functional-semantic analysis. This usage is found in the majority of cases in co-occurrence with the conjunctions AFTER, AS SOON AS, ONCE, UNTIL and WHEN. As can be seen from Table 6.8 the use of the PrP to refer to future events is extremely rare accounting for only 0.62% of all occurrences. The above-mentioned conjunctions appear to shift the co-occurring verb form back one position on the time scale. In the same way as the present is found instead of a future form, the PrP is here found instead of the future perfect.

Table 6.8
Future reference (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| FUTURE REF | 0.36 | 0.36 | 1.23 | 1.01 | 0.43 | 0.22 | 0.62 |
| NO FUTURE REF | 99.64 | 99.64 | 98.77 | 98.99 | 99.57 | 99.78 | 99.38 |

6.2.9 Temporal specifiers

Temporal specifiers and their co-occurring verb forms were analysed in detail in the preceding chapter. In this section we will examine how many of the analysed PrP forms co-occurred with a temporal specifier and which specifiers were found.

A temporal specifier is that part of speech which enables the interlocutors to position the event described more exactly in relation to the deictic zero point. This is usually the MOU, but can also be specified at a point in the past or in the future. Past time specification allows the use of past perfect, a specification of the deictic zero point in the future makes a future perfect form possible. The great majority of temporal specifiers are adverbs or adverbial phrases in which the time is often specified by an adjective. Sometimes the time frame can be indicated by other parts of speech such as the subject:

Table 6.9

Top 31 temporal specifiers ranked according to frequency given in absolute numbers (at least 10 occurrences) and as a percentage of the total number of specifiers (2011)

| Rank | Specifier | Occs | % | Rank | Specifier | Occs | % |
|------|-----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-------|
| 1 | FOR | 232 | 11.54 | 17 | AS ... | 33 | 1.64 |
| 2 | IN ... | 183 | 9.10 | 18 | AFTER ... | 29 | 1.44 |
| 3 | SINCE | 163 | 8.11 | 19 | AT ... | 22 | 1.09 |
| 4 | NEVER | 113 | 5.62 | 20 | ONCE | 21 | 1.04 |
| 5 | ALREADY | 112 | 5.57 | 21 | LONG | 20 | 0.99 |
| 6 | JUST | 93 | 4.62 | 22 | DURING ... | 18 | 0.90 |
| 7 | OVER ... | 90 | 4.48 | 23 | UNTIL ... | 18 | 0.90 |
| 8 | ALWAYS | 64 | 3.18 | 24 | ALL ... | 16 | 0.80 |
| 9 | EVER | 63 | 3.13 | 25 | ON ... | 15 | 0.75 |
| 10 | NOW | 57 | 2.83 | 26 | TONIGHT | 15 | 0.75 |
| 11 | THIS ... | 51 | 2.54 | 27 | THE FIRST TIME | 14 | 0.70 |
| 12 | RECENTLY | 47 | 2.34 | 28 | WHEN ... | 11 | 0.55 |
| 13 | BEFORE | 47 | 2.34 | 29 | REPEATEDLY | 11 | 0.55 |
| 14 | YET | 46 | 2.29 | 30 | OFTEN | 11 | 0.55 |
| 15 | SO FAR | 43 | 2.14 | 31 | WHILE ... | 10 | 0.50 |
| 16 | TODAY | 42 | 2.09 | | | | 85.07 |

Phrases headed by AFTER to describe preceding events are quite common in connection with the PrP. In most cases AFTER is a preposition:

[6.5] More than 100 oiled seabirds **have been washed up** on a 70-mile stretch of the Norfolk coast **after** an oil spillage in the North Sea.

[TIMES: 262]

AFTER does, however, also co-occur with the PrP as a conjunction:

[6.6] TWO British brothers **have arrived** in Jamaica exhausted and starving **after** sharks attacked and damaged their canoe in the Caribbean ...

[TIMES: 1165]

The numerous examples of the PrP to describe an event which succeeds another event constitute a strong disproof of the claim by Lewis (1986: 75-79), that the PrP is intimately associated with the idea of “beforeness”. As can be seen from [6.5] and [6.6] an equally strong (or weak) case could be made for associating it with “afterness”.

There are a number of PrP occurrences with temporal specifiers which would seem to anchor the event in a closed time frame, that is, with these specifiers one would

normally expect the preterite. The temporal specifiers concerned are AGO, YESTERDAY, phrases headed by AT and subordinate clauses headed by WHEN.

[6.7] And then there was a Dr William Fitzgerald he was an American doctor a physician and an anaesthetist. He has even worked in London in some hospital many years ago.

[BRITMIX: 92]

In the corpora there are eight instances of AGO occurring with the PrP. Often, as in excerpt [6.7], this seems to be an afterthought, a more precise locating of the event time frame, which is, however, not essential to the sense of the statement. The speaker⁶ obviously does not feel it necessary to repeat the verb in the preterite. It is extremely unlikely that the PrP would be found co-occurring with AGO if the temporal specifier containing AGO were located in front of the verb. No such example was found in the corpora.

[6.8] <FOX> I mean all the kind of informal ones that he's mentioned yesterday add enormously to that

<MOX> They do. They do.

<FOX> things like

<MOX> Yes. Yes I was thinking the same thoughts

[BRITMIX: 534]

YESTERDAY is similar to AGO in that co-occurring PrP verb forms are only found preceding the specifier. It is quite common to hear utterances such as [6.8] or (6.1), whereby LAST WEEKEND or TWO DAYS AGO could easily be substituted for YESTERDAY.

(6.1) I've just returned from Hong Kong yesterday.

There are 11 instances of the PrP co-occurring with WHEN. This conjunction is not, however, used with reference to a closed time frame but rather with the meaning of 'whenever' as in [6.9] or in the sense of 'there have been occasions when ...'. There are also a few examples of WHEN with future reference.

⁶ All the examples were found in the spoken corpora apart from one in WASHPOST which is different from the others in that it is part of an elliptical expression indicating a period of time lasting up to the present: "from a standing start 6 years ago".

[6.9] Under the President's leadership, the United States has stood by the parties when there **have been** triumphs, such as at the signing ceremony here in Washington and at Araba.

[WHPRESS: 91]

In the corpora there are 22 occurrences of the PrP verb form in co-occurrence with a phrase headed by AT. Four of these concern iteration (e.g. AT TIMES) and are not remarkable. There are eight instances of AT THE MOMENT/PRESENT in which the PrP could be replaced by a verb form in the present.

[6.10] It can be used for arthritis for excema for many problems. It helps them we not curing person but we helping them with element to get better. **At the moment I've been working** on a girl. She's twenty one now but I have known her as a child because she was my neighbour's daughter. She is a rubella child.

[BRITMIX: 100]

Six refer to somewhat indefinite periods of time such as AT THE TRANSCRIPTION STAGE, and are not strong enough to force the preterite. AT SOME POINT DURING THE FALL OR WINTER is used in connection with recurring actions. The other four, AT AN EARLIER POINT, AT CHRISTMAS, AT THE WEEKEND and AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR are, however, specifiers where one would expect the preterite.

[6.11] What I'd like to discuss in the next 20 minutes to half hour is an item on your agenda labeled "Visions of the Future of the University." **I've said at the beginning of the year** that one of the things that I'd like to do is take some time as best we can arrange it at each faculty council meeting to open up some serious discussion about important topics ...

[USACAD: 1016]

Although these occurrences are very infrequent if we look at the corpora as a whole, they do help to remind us that the spoken language is not an exercise which is carried out with mathematical precision and that things are often said which, given the benefit of reflection, would not be written. Linguistic logic is sometimes rather fuzzy.

6.2.10 Exact specification

The criterion of exact specification was defined as the ability to draw an event time frame on a time line, so that the beginning and end of the time frame are precisely delimited. This naturally excludes occurrences without temporal specifiers, and

also those with ‘indefinite’ temporal specifiers such as ALREADY, ALWAYS, JUST. Examples of temporal specifiers with exact specification include TODAY, adverbials headed by SINCE, adverbials headed by FOR if the number of time units is specified. That is to say FOR YEARS is not classified as exact specification, adverbials such as FOR THREE YEARS, or even FOR THREE OR FOUR YEARS are. Some non-temporal specifiers such as IN THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION were also classified as having exact specification, as this information can be used to delimit the time frame.

Table 6.10
Exact specification (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| EXACT SPECS | 7.24 | 6.88 | 8.55 | 10.29 | 9.68 | 11.12 | 8.98 |
| NO EXACT SP. | 92.76 | 93.12 | 91.45 | 89.71 | 90.32 | 88.88 | 91.02 |

Altogether 554 occurrences of the PrP co-occurring with temporal specifiers expressing exact specification were recorded in the corpora, which is equivalent to 8.98% of all occurrences, and 27.55% of all temporal specifiers recorded. The great majority of these specifiers express a period of time lasting up to the moment of utterance (Group 4 according to the classification in Chapter 5). An analysis of the other evaluation criteria in connection with exact specification revealed no significant correlation.

6.2.11 Simple and expanded forms

As can be seen in Table 6.11, just over 5% of the PrP occurrences in the corpora were in the expanded form. All corpora returned consistently low frequencies for the expanded form, although USACAD and WHPRESS display a higher incidence, perhaps because the speakers in these two corpora are frequently concerned with ongoing processes. The PrP expanded was analysed with respect to present reference, duration and iteration.

Table 6.11
Simple and expanded forms (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|----------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| SIMPLE | 95.17 | 95.48 | 96.11 | 91.73 | 95.37 | 92.66 | 94.44 |
| EXPANDED | 4.83 | 4.52 | 3.89 | 8.27 | 4.63 | 7.34 | 5.56 |

[6.3] **This evening's talk** has been very enthusiastic and I think it's been erm an insight to us all in how Birmingham art is pushing Birmingham.

[BRITMIX: 77]

The same function can also be performed by the object of the verb:

[6.4] This has been going on for years and years of course and the tragedy is that it's taken **recent events** to bring it to a head isn't it really?

[BRITRADIO: 470]

Altogether 2011 co-occurring temporal specifiers were identified out of a total of 6168 occurrences of the PrP. This is equal to 32.6%,⁴ roughly one third of the total. The 31 most frequently occurring temporal specifiers are given in Table 6.9. These 31 specifiers account for 85.07% of all the temporal specifiers identified in this investigation.

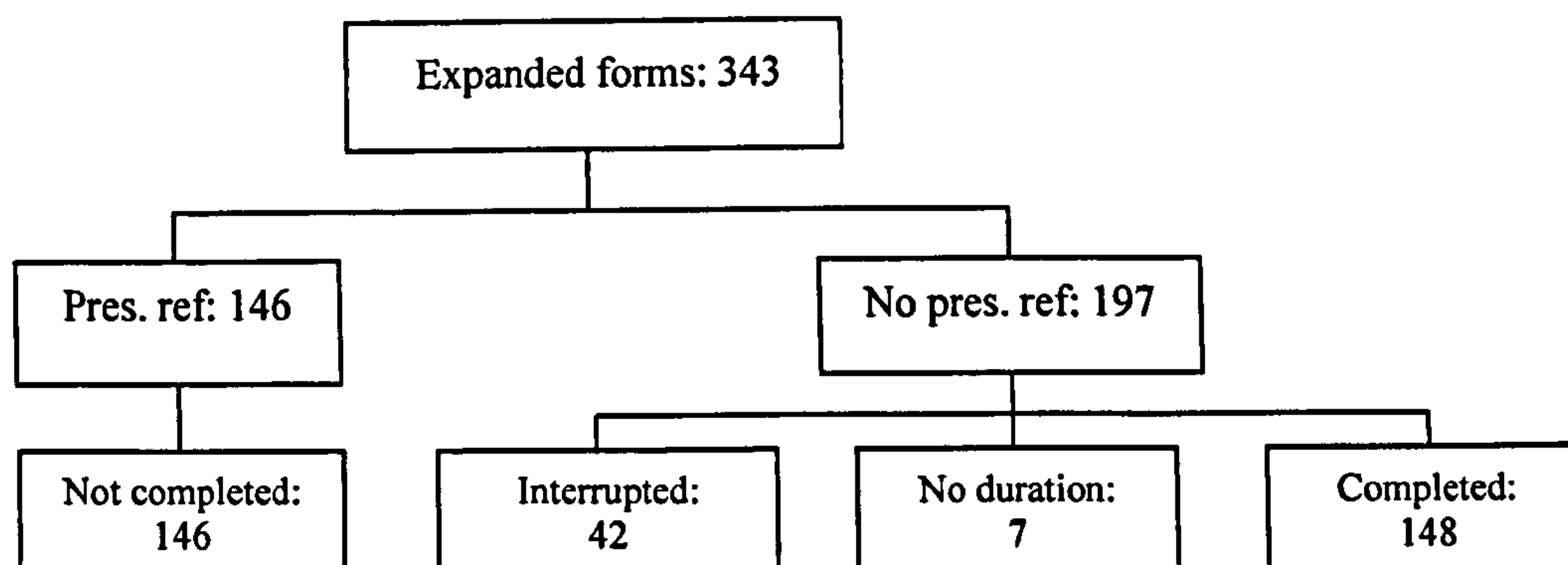
The temporal specifiers FOR and SINCE together account for roughly 20% of all occurrences, a strong indication of their significance for the PrP verb form, although as was seen in section 5.8.1, FOR in itself is not a reliable marker. The second most frequent group of specifiers is comprised of phrases headed by IN. The great majority of these are expressions referring to a period of time which extends up to the MOU such as IN THE LAST ... or IN THE PAST ... which were discussed in Chapter 5, but there are a few which refer to an apparently closed time frame such as IN THAT MEETING or IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL. These locative specifiers are apparently not strong enough to force the use of the preterite. The preterite would, however, be equally possible in these cases. There are a number of such indirect specifiers.⁵ Most of them, however, specify events which are still in progress such as IN THE CRISES OF SE ASIA or EVENTS IN BOSNIA.

⁴ Elsness (1997: 113) on the basis of a sample of 1179 PrP occurrences registers 67.3% without temporal specification, an almost identical figure to that recorded here.

⁵ I call them 'indirect' because they refer not to a time but to a place.

6.2.11.1 Present reference and duration in PrP expanded occurrences

Fig 6.4
Present reference and duration in PrP expanded occurrences



An event is defined as having present reference if it is actually in progress at the MOU. There are altogether 343 occurrences of the PrP expanded in the corpora. Of these 146 have present reference, 197 do not have present reference. That is to say, the majority (57.43%) of all PrP expanded occurrences in the corpora are not actually in progress at the moment of utterance.⁷

[6.12] <M02> Well yes but I mean er there's how many Maggie Thatchers are there? There are thousands of er factory workers and office workers
<M01> Yeah.
<M02> and hospital workers on regular just wages.
<M01> Yeah.
<M02> And they can't afford to pay it.
<M01> Yeah true enough. Tell me something MX have you have you made a scarf or anything while while we while **we've been talking**?
<M02> The machines are running they're all running.
[BRITRADIO: 259]

Extract [6.12] is an example of the 'classic' PrP expanded – the action has started in the past and is actually synchronous with the MOU. These occurrences are, however, extremely rare in the corpora, even in the spoken corpora. The more typical example is [6.13] where the concept of 'in progress at the MOU' has to be interpreted in a broader sense to justify present reference.

⁷ For a discussion of the evaluation criteria for duration, see section 6.3.7. It is not easy to establish whether an event is in progress at the MOU, and it is, for the most part, a question of interpretation. A stricter definition of 'going on at the MOU' would have led to even lower figures for the present reference of the PrP expanded.

[6.13] I don't think many people think more about technology and its impact on society than I do and I am absolutely convinced that, in order to prepare students for a technology-infused 21st century, what we need to do is pretty much what we've been doing for the past 200 years. That is, provide a good liberal arts education.

[USACAD: 706]

In the majority of cases the event referred to by the PrP expanded is clearly not in progress at the MOU and was thus classified as having no present reference. The expanded occurrences without present reference fall into three categories, completed duration, interrupted duration or no duration. Extract [6.14] is an example of completed duration.

[6.14] PELLETREAU: Their next meeting, I believe, will be in Paris on the way home.

VOICE: Tomorrow?

PELLETREAU: But they have been meeting previously on this subject as well. The two governments have been discussing this issue. That is something that we think is very appropriate and very proper, that they should discuss it between themselves in a serious fashion ...

[WHPRESS: 276]

In extract [6.15] the action of preparation is not in progress at the MOU but the clear implication is that the work will continue in the future. As the event is interrupted at the MOU, it is classified as having no present reference but its duration is incomplete. This type is, of course, very similar to the type exemplified by [6.13]. The difference lies in the broader interpretation which is possible with certain concepts (*do, go on, grow, work, etc*), which can justify the claim that they are somehow going on 'in the background'.

[6.15] Steve Hoffman, who is one of the heads of the graduate students, has created a wonderful pack of information that he has been making available to the Legislature, and has been making a concerted effort, an excellent effort. We also have been preparing our own larger packet of information that will go to each of the legislators, and I hope we will have enough to also give to each of you so you can be articulate spokespeople for the University as well.

[USACAD: 217]

The small group of expanded forms which are classified as having no duration consist of negatives and interrogatives which were thus defined. This also includes statements such as the one in extract [6.16] which were not classed as being

negative in the sense defined in section 6.2.3. It is clear, however, that the speaker's opinion is that the lecturing has not taken place and it therefore has no duration.

[6.16] Is it Netanyahu and his people that the President is lecturing to curb rhetoric, or is he talking about some far right or far left fringe element? What is he talking about?
INDYK: I don't think the President has been lecturing anybody. It's not his style, Barry.
[WHPRESS: 895]

There are two types of interrogatives: those where the utterer is asking about the existence of the event and those, as in [6.17] where the interrogative is concerned with the length of duration of the event not with its existence. The latter was therefore classed as having duration, while the former was allocated to the NO DURATION category.

[6.17] <M01> What I think we ought to do is put the two of you in touch oughtn't we really.
<M06> Yeah that that that that sounds erm ideal you know.
<M01> Okay.
<M06> He sounds very keen and er that's you know what we
<M01> That's im that's important isn't it.
<M06> Oh yeah it's a bit essential.
<M01> How long have you been er involved in this then MX?
<M01> Erm quite recently.
[BRITRADIO 466]

6.2.11.2 Iteration in the present perfect expanded

[6.18] What is it like to use improved versions of Microsoft Word and Excel on a day-in and day-out basis? Mac users have been whacking away with these tools for more than a decade.
[WASHPOST: 1137]

An important function of the PrP expanded is to express iteration. 82 (23.91%) of the recorded occurrences referred to repeated events, which is more than double the figure for PrP occurrences taken as a whole (10.41%). The time frame in which iteration had taken place ranged from over ten years, as in example [6.18], to the same day. 69 occurrences (84.15%) had no specific reference to a specific time. The iterative usage included examples referring to events still going on in the

background, and to interrupted actions, but the large majority (75.610%) referred to completed events.

6.2.11.3 The present perfect expanded – conclusions

The PrP expanded is used to refer to three different types of event. 43.15% of the occurrences describe completed events. 12.24% refer to activities which are interrupted at the moment of utterance. 42.57% can be said to have present reference, whereby the number of occurrences which actually refer to an event which is actually synchronous to the MOU as in [6.12] is extremely small (1.90%). The remaining occurrences with present reference (40.67% of all PrP expanded occurrences) can be said to be going on ‘in the background’ at the MOU by virtue of their general semantic nature. The small remainder (2.04%) are negatives or interrogatives which were deemed to be without duration.

Nevertheless, present reference is an important characteristic of the PrP expanded. As Table 6.12 shows, 42.57% of all PrP expanded occurrences have present reference, as opposed to only 7.26% of the occurrences in the simple form. Over a quarter (25.66%) of all PrP occurrences which describe events in progress at the MOU involve the use of the expanded form. Moreover, 54.81% of expanded occurrences are not completed at the MOU, compared with 7.04% for the simple form. Another important use of the PrP expanded is to describe iterated events. Just under a quarter (23.91%) of all the expanded occurrences identified in the corpora displayed this function. This compares with the 9.61% of PrP simple occurrences which express iteration.

Table 6.12
Comparison of simple and expanded occurrences (in %)

| | Occs. | PresRef | Completed | Not completed | No duration | Iteration |
|------------|-------|---------|-----------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| PrP simple | 5825 | 7.26 | 82.70 | 7.04 | 10.26 | 9.61 |
| PrP exp. | 343 | 42.57 | 43.15 | 54.81 | 2.04 | 23.91 |
| PrP all | 6168 | 9.23 | 80.50 | 9.70 | 9.81 | 10.41 |

6.3 The Evaluation of the Core Criteria

The core criteria are those criteria whose evaluation it was presumed would give a deeper insight into the use of the PrP. They include past and present reference, duration, the resultative aspect and iteration, all of which have relevance for the various theories of the PrP.

6.3.1 Theories of the Present Perfect

It is a mark of the elusiveness of the PrP that no other verb form has had so many theories devoted to it. In this section we will first look at two theories which are connected to each other by virtue of their reference to the temporal positioning of the PrP event in the past. These are the theory of recentness (►6.3.4) and the theory of indefiniteness (►6.3.5). The theory of recentness claims that the great majority of PrP occurrences refer to events which have taken place in the recent past. The indefiniteness theory states that the basic distinction between the PrP and the preterite is that the latter places the event it describes in a definite and identifiable timeframe whereas the former does not. In section 6.3.6 we will turn our attention to one of the major theories of the PrP, the theory of current relevance (CR). Modern CR theory distinguishes three readings of the PrP – the continuative reading (►6.3.6.2), the resultative reading (►6.3.6.3) and the existential reading (►6.3.6.4). Finally, with reference to the existential reading, we will look at present existence (►6.3.6.5) and iteration (►6.3.6.6) as possible criteria for PrP usage.

6.3.2 Criteria for the evaluation of verb form theory

In order to evaluate the individual theories I have endeavoured to establish criteria by which any theoretical explanation of a verb form can be judged. I suggest that from a logical and pedagogical perspective there are three essential criteria.⁸ Firstly, the theory must be applicable to that verb form exclusively. For example, to state that the preterite describes completed events is certainly true but this

⁸ These criteria emerged fairly organically from the literature review of PrP theories and I present them here for critical examination.

function is not exclusive to the preterite. This type of theory is therefore at best part of a theory or a proto-theory, i.e. it is only the forerunner of a comprehensive theory. Secondly, the function described by the theory must be inherent in the verb form itself, and not in any concomitant features, be they of a linguistic or pragmatic nature. That is to say the function must be perceivable from the verb form alone and not 'become apparent' by the addition of adverbs or by the assessment of the pragmatic non-linguistic context in which the utterance is made. This is not to say that these concomitant features are not important for the meaning of the verb form. However, if there is a basic inherent meaning, this cannot depend on and change according to co-occurring structures. Thirdly, the theory must be holistic, that is to say, it cannot consist of a series of proto-theories expounding that verb form X is used for A OR B OR C without any attempt to link these proto-theories to each other by an underlying principle. While this approach may satisfy a purely descriptive analysis, it is highly disadvantageous from a pedagogical point of view. We will call these three criteria the conditions of exclusiveness, inherence and holism, all of which must be satisfied in order for the theory to be accepted. Other essential criteria which apply to theories in general, such as correspondence to reality, internal coherence and falsifiability⁹ will be taken as given.

6.3.3 Past Reference

Past reference is a crucial criterion for the evaluation of the PrP, relating as it does to the major theories of recentness and indefiniteness which will be discussed in this section. In this analysis the attempt was made to establish the exact period of time in which the event described took place. This is often an extremely difficult undertaking unless the occurrence is accompanied by the sort of exact specification described in section 6.2.10. The original intention was to allocate each occurrence to a definite time frame, even if no specification was available. This turned out to be a very subjective process which all too often entered the realm of pure speculation. The resultant data were unsatisfactory and potentially misleading. It was therefore decided only to count those occurrences where the time frame is made absolutely clear, either by specification, by pre-reference, or by an

⁹ See McLaughlin (1987: 6-18)

unambiguous context. All others were assigned to the category INDEFINITE. It is likely that the past reference for most unspecified events described, for example, in the newspaper corpora will be the immediate rather than the more distant past – this is a tacit assumption made by the reader of a newspaper, but it is often impossible to decide which specific time frame these events belong to. It is also possible that in a particular conversation the past time reference is unstated but mutually known to the participants, but which is impossible to reconstruct by a non-participant at a later date.

The categories finally chosen for the criterion of past reference were those discrete time units which are provided by the English language, with the exception of LAST 5 YEARS, which was inserted because the gap between SAME YEAR and DECADE was felt to be too large. The categories are: SAME DAY, SAME WEEK, SAME MONTH, SAME YEAR, LAST 5 YEARS, SAME DECADE, and OVER 10 YEARS. Originally, the category PERSON'S LIFETIME was also included to accommodate for occurrences such as [6.19] but this was abandoned after it became clear that, firstly, this category was too vague and too relative, and secondly, that virtually anything anybody says about himself could be assigned to it.

[6.19] Robert Kee, the author and broadcaster who has written a history of the IRA, said: "I **have never heard** of this conspiracy, but we do know that Sean Russell went to Germany to make contact with Nazi leaders.

[TIMES: 181]

6.3.4 The theory of recentness

The claim that a main function of the PrP is to describe events of the immediate past is an old one. White (1761: 84) was probably the first to formulate the theory of a remote preterite usage in opposition to the recentness of the PrP:

We make use of the First Past Tense [= preterite] when we refer to actions long since past, and the performers of which have already left the present stage of life. In this view of it, it might be call'd the Historical Tense. We also make use of it, when we refer to the past actions of ourselves or others now alive, when taken in a distant view, or unconnected with present proceedings.

The Second Past Tense [= PrP] is seldom us'd but with respect to persons now existing, and with respect to such acts of theirs, as have either been but very lately performed, or such at least as are taken into view as connected with their present proceedings.

Recentness is sometimes regarded as one of the sub-divisions of the current relevance theory. Thus Comrie (1976: 60), describing what he calls “the perfect of recent past”, states “... while present relevance does not imply recentness, recentness may be a sufficient condition for present relevance.”

Evidence for the theory of recentness is often furnished by citing PrP occurrences co-occurring with JUST. The point of time referred to is so close to the MOU, according to the theory, that the utterer perceives no sense of separation. In the words of Poutsma (1926: 263) “it does not separate the action or state appreciably from the present. Hence it requires the predicate to be placed in the perfect.” Although most modern writers have abandoned radical recentness-remoteness explanations for the PrP and preterite, the theory still crops up in vague explanations of the PrP which refer to events which are *somehow connected to the present*.¹⁰ Murphy (1985: 40), for example, warns learners:

Do not use the present perfect ... for happenings or actions which are not connected with the present (for example, historical events):

- The Chinese invented printing. (*not* ‘have invented’)
- Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*. (*not* ‘has written’)
- How many symphonies did Beethoven compose? (*not* has ... composed’)

The implication is clearly that more recent events are connected with the present and that therefore in this case the PrP would be appropriate. Chalker (1984: 102) similarly refers to what she calls a “short-term present period” which “usually implies recent action.”

Let us now analyse the theory of recentness according to the three criteria of exclusiveness, inherence and holism which were described in section 6.3.3.1.

The theory of recentness fails the test of exclusiveness. There are countless examples of preterite occurrences which refer to recent events, both with and without temporal specifiers. As was shown in the analysis of the temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time close to the MOU in section 5.4, a

¹⁰ This statement, first formulated in the citation from White above, is a favourite with proponents of current relevance (►6.3.6). The statement is neither verifiable nor falsifiable because everything is ‘somehow connected with the present’, if only in the sense that the utterance is made at the present.

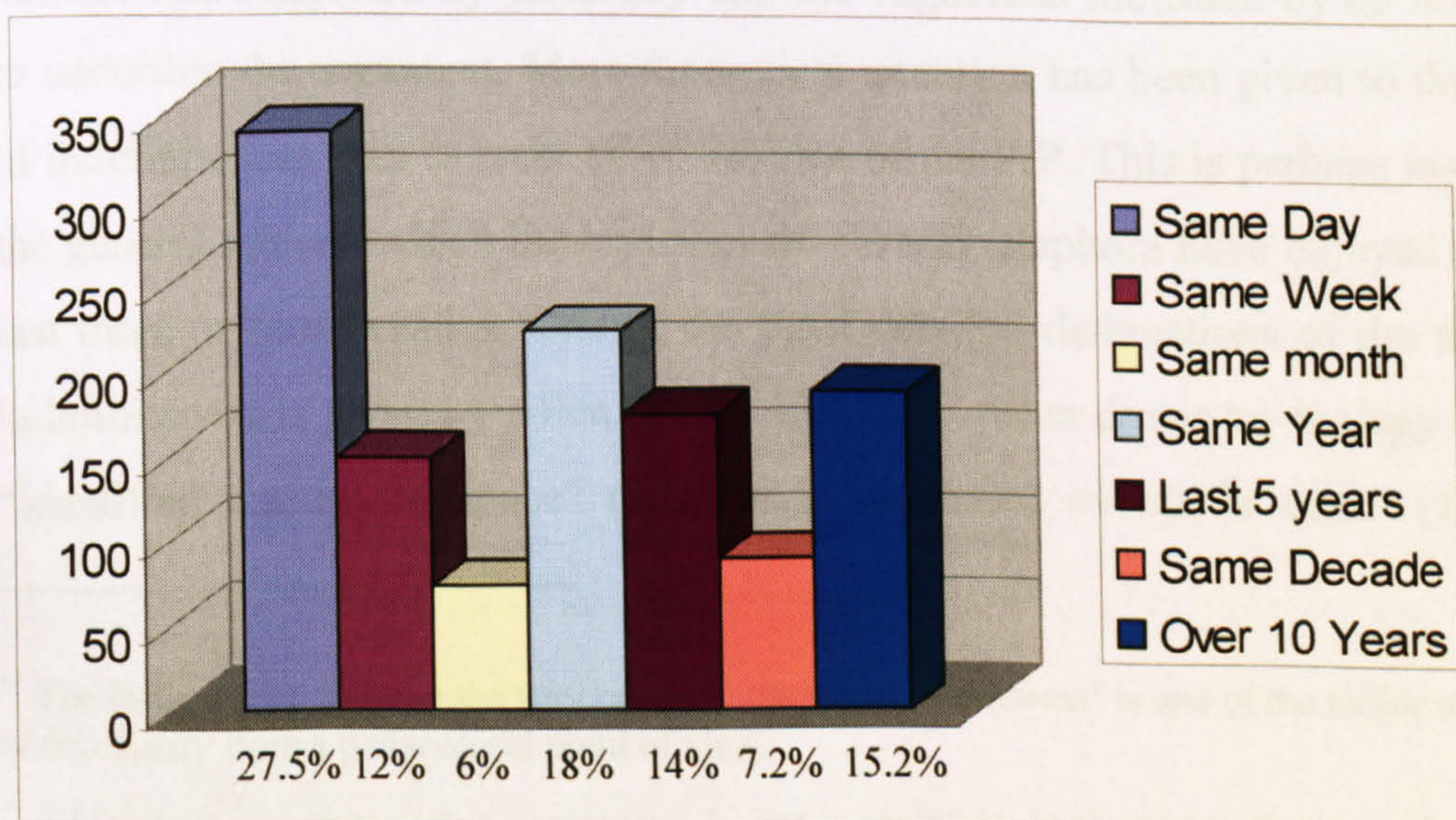
majority of preterite occurrences were recorded with JUST and RECENTLY. The PrP can lay no claim to exclusiveness with regard to recentness.

As far as inherence is concerned, it is evident that recentness is in no way rooted in the verb form PrP. There is no contradiction involved in using the PrP to describe events which took place a long time before the MOU. An example from the TIMES corpus will serve to illustrate this:

[6.20] Police think it unlikely that one person is responsible for all the attacks which, while common in Hampshire, appear in spates in other parts of the country. One Hampshire vet **has treated** 30 horses attacked **during the past 15 years**. ...
 Most of the attacks **have taken place** in the summer months in fields adjoining roads, bridleways or footpaths. Some of the Hampshire victims last year had been advertised for sale in local newspapers.
 [TIMES: 322, 323]

Recentness fails the holism test for the same reason. If it is possible to use the PrP other than for recent events, then the theory is scientifically and pedagogically worthless. The results of the past reference analysis of the samples in the corpora are given in Fig. 6.5. This figure shows the percentages for each of the event time frames with unambiguous past reference, on the basis of a total of 1380 PrP occurrences with exact specification.

Fig. 6.5
 Distribution of event time frames with unambiguous past reference
 (based on a sample of 1228 PrP occurrences with exact specification)



As can be seen from Fig. 6.5 the largest category is indeed the event time frame referring to the SAME DAY with 338 occurrences (27.52%). The next two largest groups are, however, SAME YEAR with 222 occurrences (18.08%), and OVER TEN YEARS with 186 occurrences (15.15%). Even if recentness is defined liberally¹¹ as SAME DAY (27.52%), SAME WEEK (12.05%) and SAME MONTH (5.94%), the ‘non-recent’ time frames SAME YEAR (18.08%), LAST 5 YEARS (14.09%), SAME DECADE (7.17%) and OVER 10 YEARS (15.15%) still add up to 54.49%. The theory of recentness fails on all three counts and must be discounted as an explanation for the PrP.¹²

6.3.5 The theory of indefiniteness

The theory of indefiniteness is also one of the oldest and most influential theories of the PrP. Writers who expound this theory include Allen (1966), Leech – Svartvik (1975), Swan (1980) and Sinclair (1990). According to this theory the PrP locates the event in the past without positioning it on the time line continuum. The preterite, on the other hand anchors the event at a specific time or at least locates its position between well-defined limits. Proponents of the indefiniteness theory compare this contrast to the definiteness of nominals as expressed by minimal pairs such as ‘the book’ and ‘a book’. The key argument is based on the relationship between the verb forms and certain adverbials: we say *he left yesterday*, but not **he has left yesterday* and *he has left by now* but not **he left by now*. The definiteness suggested by *yesterday* and the vagueness indicated by *by now* serve to underline the argument. More theoretical attention has been given to the theory of indefiniteness than to most other theories of the PrP. This is perhaps because of the general interest which the topics of deixis and anaphora have enjoyed over the last three or four decades. One of the most detailed delineations of the theory of indefiniteness is given by Allen (1966: 139-163). Allen draws an analogy between “identified entities in space” (152) and “identified events in time” (155) and

¹¹ The difficulty of defining the very relative concept of ‘recentness’ is one of the major weaknesses of this theory from a pedagogical point of view.

¹² This does not mean that recentness is not a possible concomitant feature of many PrP occurrences. As will be seen in Chapter 7, the reason that many PrP occurrences refer to recent events is that the more recent an event is, the less chance there is of phragmatisation taking place.

postulates that “a striking parallel exists in English between noun-clusters introduced by the determiner *the* and verb-clusters manifesting some allomorph of the ‘past’ morpheme [-d] ... in the preterit forms of regular verbs, and as phonemic changes in the preterit forms of irregular verbs” (155). Allen draws five parallels between articles and verb forms:

The first is the ‘anticipatory use’. The definite article in *the book on the table* ‘anticipates’ the following determiner *on the table* in the same way as the *did* in (6.2) anticipates the adverbial *yesterday*.

The second parallel is between the use of *the* to identify a unique person or thing as in *the Pope* and the preterite used to identify a unique event in the past such as that in (6.3).

The “mutual use” entails the use of *the* to refer to a person or thing not present at the moment of speaking but recognized by common or shared experience as when two students in the same class talk of *the teacher*. Allen identifies this mutual use in the preterite, as in (6.4).

The fourth parallel concerns what Allen terms the “immediate use”. He gives the example of a student in a classroom who speaks of *the blackboard*. This seems to correspond to the use of the preterite to refer to an event which took place in the immediate past as in (6.5).

The final parallel concerns the use of *the* to refer back to a nominal that has already been introduced, as in (6.6). This is similar to the switch from the PrP to the preterite in a conversation such as (6.7).

(6.2) Did you go downtown yesterday?¹³

(6.3) Napoleon died on St. Helena.

(6.4) I am so glad we did it when we did.

(6.5) What did you say?

(6.6) I see a cat. The cat is lying on the window sill.

¹³ All examples in this section are taken from Allen (1966: 155-157).

(6.7) A. I've been to the Guggenheim Museum only once. B. How did you like it?

Allen's scheme has some obvious weaknesses. First of all, it would appear to be equally as feasible to speak of an anticipatory indefinite article as in (6.8) in which case the definite article = preterite and indefinite article = PrP dichotomy breaks down.

Secondly, even if it is admitted that there is such a thing as a unique *the*, it cannot be claimed that unique events are always described using the preterite. For example, a contemporary of Napoleon's might well have used sentence (6.9) to talk of this unique event.

(6.8) A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

(6.9) Have you heard the news? Napoleon has died on St. Helena!

Thirdly, as McCoard (1978) has pointed out, it is not at all clear whether the "mutual use" and the "immediate use" are not one and the same usage whereas the two uses of the preterite would indeed seem to be different. It is also a little disconcerting to see immediacy (i.e. recentness) being expounded as a defining criterion for the preterite. As was seen earlier in this chapter the same aspect is often offered as an explanation for the PrP.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Allen's theory is the analogy between anaphoric *the* and the change from the PrP to the past which can often be observed in conversation. This switch between the two verb forms is also referred to as the transition between 'new time' and 'given time' (Elsness, 1997: 125-127). Elsness claims that the PrP is "overwhelmingly a verb form used in reference to new time" (127) although he admits that in most cases it is very difficult to ascertain whether the time referred to by a verb form is given or not.¹⁴

Most of Allen's arguments are unconvincing – it is not possible to draw a general analogy between the 'definiteness' expressed by the definite article with that associated with the preterite. Even if such a correlation existed, it is certainly not

¹⁴ See section 7.5.3 for a discussion of the reasons for the switch from the PrP to the preterite in such occurrences.

acceptable to then make a tacit assumption that the same relationship also exists between the indefinite article and the PrP.¹⁵ While it is a commendable attempt to provide some theoretical foundation to the concept of indefiniteness as applied to verb forms, nominal phrases and verb phrases are too different in their ontology and in their system of reference for any but the most vague definition to fit both. However, it is still perfectly possible that some other, differently defined, notion of indefiniteness can be applied to the PrP in general. After all, it seems to be the case that the preterite is often used with adverbials which express a ‘definite time’ such as YESTERDAY, LAST WEEK, IN THE 19TH CENTURY etc. while the PrP is more frequently associated with ‘indefinite time’ adverbs such as ALREADY, OFTEN, PREVIOUSLY etc.¹⁶ It is not entirely clear what is meant by the concepts of definite and indefinite time – most writers seem to assume *a priori* that they need no further explanation. One of the few writers to attempt a clarification is McCoard (1978: 78-88). McCoard, who firmly rejects the theory of indefiniteness, points out that adverbials such as YESTERDAY and IN THE 19TH CENTURY, which are conventionally referred to as adverbs of definite time, are in fact not definite in the sense that they refer to a particular point of time at which an event happened. Rather they rather represent “an entire *set* of times” (78) during which an event can have happened at any of the possible subtimes. Such adverbials are only definite in the sense that they refer to certain identifiable periods of time with well-defined limits. However, this definition of definite time does not exclude the PrP, as can be seen with temporal specifiers expressing a period of time lasting up to the MOU. *Since Monday, in the last six months* and *for eight years* are equally as ‘definite’ as any adverbial used with the preterite. In spite of these reservations with regard to definite and indefinite time as expressed by temporal specifiers, it is still, however, possible that indefiniteness plays a role in PrP occurrences which have no co-occurring adverbial, which, as was noted in section 6.3.1, amount to two-thirds of all occurrences. Indeed, as can be seen in Table 6.13, the great majority of instances (79.47%) of the PrP in the corpora have indefinite past reference (as

¹⁵ There are, however, cases in which the anaphoric definite article used to refer to a pragmatically presupposed event effectively excludes the use of the PrP. See section 7.5.3.

¹⁶ As was seen in the previous chapter, however, assumptions about the predominant co-occurrence of the PrP with adverbs such as these do not always correspond to linguistic reality.

defined in section 6.3.5). Over three-quarters (76.25%) of these occurrences have no co-occurring temporal specifier. It would seem to be the case, then, that four-fifths of all utterances involving the PrP refer to events which took place at a moment of time or in a period of time which the utterer cannot or does not wish to specify. This does not mean, of course, that this is a defining characteristic of the PrP. Only a contrastive, in-depth investigation of the preterite could provide the evidence which would be necessary to verify such a claim. If it turned out that a large majority of preterite occurrences did indeed refer to events in a well-defined and identifiable timeframe, then there would appear to be some justification for the indefiniteness argument. Certainly, any theory of the PrP will have to take the aspect of indefiniteness into account.

Table 6.13
Past reference (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| SAME DAY | 1.93 | 16.38 | 0.85 | 5.51 | 0.17 | 7.56 | 5.48 |
| SAME WEEK | 0.60 | 1.27 | 5.89 | 0.18 | 2.40 | 4.00 | 2.40 |
| SAME MONTH | 0.12 | 1.63 | 0.76 | 0.83 | 2.06 | 1.40 | 1.18 |
| SAME YEAR | 0.72 | 1.63 | 2.18 | 5.70 | 4.54 | 6.48 | 3.60 |
| LAST FIVE YEARS | 0.84 | 1.45 | 2.85 | 3.77 | 3.34 | 4.43 | 2.80 |
| SAME DECADE | 0.84 | 0.45 | 1.04 | 1.75 | 3.08 | 1.08 | 1.43 |
| OVER TEN YEARS | 1.69 | 3.71 | 3.51 | 1.93 | 5.14 | 1.40 | 3.42 |
| INDEFINITE | 92.88 | 73.12 | 81.67 | 79.41 | 78.83 | 73.43 | 79.47 |
| NO PAST REF | 0.36 | 0.36 | 1.23 | 0.92 | 0.43 | 0.22 | 0.62 |

Applying the three criteria, we can say that the theory of indefiniteness might possibly pass the test of exclusiveness, if only for lack of evidence that other tenses are used to describe events which took place at an unknown or unspecified time in the past. Nobody to my knowledge has ever claimed this as one of the defining characteristics of the preterite (apart from the aspect noted by Allen which was examined above). As far as inherence and holism are concerned, the fact that 20% of the PrP occurrences in the corpora can be assigned to definite periods disqualifies this theory in these respects. For occurrences without temporal specifiers, however, a case might be made for indefiniteness. (6.10) is a perfectly acceptable proposition about a temporally unspecified event in the past. (6.11), on

the other hand, leaves the utterer with a feeling of incompleteness,¹⁷ wanting more information, and possibly desiring to ask *when?*

(6.10) Harry has died.

(6.11) Harry died.

In conclusion, it can be said that although the theory of indefiniteness does not satisfy the criteria completely, indefiniteness is a concomitant feature of many PrP occurrences. I will argue in the following chapter that indefiniteness is not central to the meaning and essence of the PrP, that it is, in the words of McCoard (1978: 86) “a secondary, and fundamentally incidental, feature”. Indefiniteness is a feature made possible by the aspect of aphasmatism inherently involved in the PrP.

6.3.6 The theory of current relevance

As was seen in Chapter 2, the origins of the PrP can be traced to the periphrastic structure *habban* + DIRECT OBJECT + PRETERITE PARTICIPLE which was used to describe the resultant state of a preceding event. Over the centuries the structure gradually began to take on more temporal features. The question is whether the structure has retained these connotations of resultativeness and present validity, and if so, to what extent. Is, as some writers believe, current relevance (CR) still the unifying principle underlying the use of the PrP? CR theory has been advocated in a number of different varieties. Some writers have attempted to give a precise definition of what they understand by the term; others, in particular the authors of pedagogical grammars, are content with vague claims that the PrP is used when the event being described is somehow connected with the present. Examples of this type of explanation are frequent (the italics are mine): “A more accurate explanation is in terms of ‘current relevance’ – that *in some way or other* (not necessarily in its results) the action is relevant to something observable at the present” (Palmer, 1965: 74). “The past period may be relevant because it is viewed as *still operative in the present*” (Greenbaum, 1996: 271).

¹⁷ At least this is my British English native speaker feeling. It is certainly possible that native speakers from other parts of the world may not experience the same feeling.

Many different variations and aspects of CR theory have been put forward. One aspect, the notion of recentness,¹⁸ was examined in section 6.3.4. Modern CR theory is an attempt to unify seemingly disparate readings of the PrP by the postulation of one underlying principle. In contrast to the imprecise statements of pedagogical grammars, the academic proponents of current relevance are at pains to provide a solid theoretical substructure. The foundations of modern CR theory were laid by Bauer (1970a) and Palmer (1965), elaborating upon the explanations which had been provided by Jespersen, Kruisinga and Zandvoort.¹⁹ Bauer's work was echoed almost simultaneously by McCawley (1971) who set up a theoretical framework for what came to be known as the theory of current relevance. McCawley identifies the four uses of the PrP outlined in (6.12) to (6.15).

- (6.12) The 'universal' use: indicating a state of affairs which has prevailed through an interval of time from the past into the present (= continuative).
- (6.13) The 'stative' use: indicating that the direct effect of a past event still continues (= resultative).
- (6.14) The 'existential' use: indicating the existence of past events.
- (6.15) The 'hot news' use: to report recent events (= recentness, later subsumed under (6.14)).

Bauer (1970a), using a similar framework, links the three separate readings of the PrP to the concept of telicness.²⁰ According to Bauer, the essential meaning of the PrP is determined by "combinatory variants" (Bauer, 1970a: 194), that is to say, by the interplay of grammatical and lexical functions as represented in (6.16) to (6.19).

- (6.16) PrP + telic verb = resultative: I have persuaded him.

¹⁸ Greenbaum (1996: 271), for example, gives three examples of what he understands by "relevant to the present", two of which are examples of recentness. Firstly, it "may be relevant because the event has just been revealed, as in news broadcasts." Secondly, "the event may just have happened". The third example is the notion of being "operative in the present" quoted above.

¹⁹ Zandvoort (1965: 61) was the first to enunciate the three aspects of the PrP which will be referred to here as the three readings of current relevance theory. Zandvoort refers to them as the "(a) the CONTINUATIVE PERFECT; (b) the RESULTATIVE PERFECT; (c) the PERFECT OF EXPERIENCE".

²⁰ Telic verbs are verbs which involve the achievement of a goal. For a discussion of telicness, see section 6.3.7.2.

- (6.17) PrP + telic verb + time span/durational adverb = iterative existential: The team has lost for half a year now.
- (6.18) PrP + atelic verb = existential (possibly iterative): He has lived in London.
- (6.19) PrP + atelic verb + time span/durational adverb = continuative: He has lived in London since 1990.

Although neither McCawley's nor Bauer's theories are entirely comprehensive; for example, they do not take non-durational adverbs into consideration, and do not do justice to the role of the expanded form, the framework provided has been developed by other writers such as Inoue (1979) and Michaelis (1994) and will serve as the skeleton for the model of the PrP which will be outlined in the next chapter.

As a basis for the evaluation and quantification of CR theory, a number of analysis criteria were established. These are the criteria of duration, present reference and results motivation, which will be explained in detail in the following sections. Each of the three readings of CR theory, the continuative, the resultative and the existential readings, will be analysed individually. Finally, an evaluation of the theory as a whole on the basis of the empirical analysis and the theoretical discussion will be attempted.

6.3.6.1 Duration and present reference

The duration of each occurrence was evaluated and assigned to one of four sub-groups: NOT COMPLETED, COMPLETED, NOT YET STARTED and NO DURATION. As explained in section 6.2.11.1, the category NOT COMPLETED was applied to events which were either (a) actually in progress at the MOU, (b) in progress 'in the background', or (c) interrupted at the MOU. Present reference was considered to hold if either condition (a) or (b) were satisfied. PrP occurrences referring to future events were classified as NOT YET STARTED. The classification NO DURATION included all negative statements²¹ and interrogatives where the utterer does not know whether the event has taken place. Other interrogatives of the type: "How

²¹ In the early stages of this investigation most negative statements were classed as being completed on the basis of the reasoning that the 'not-taking place of the event' was completed at the MOU. Although a case can be made for this in terms of philosophical and symbolic logic, after due deliberation it was decided to adhere to the logic of common sense.

have you succeeded as a young woman in a male-dominated industry?” [WASHPOST: 1043] were not classified as NO DURATION as the event obviously has duration. PrP occurrences in if-clauses such as that in [6.21] were also classified as having NO DURATION.

[6.21] When I saw Bouncers I felt the audience were
applauding performing working-class people from
Hull. Now I wondered if you've ever felt that
yourself.
[BRITMIX: 758]

6.3.6.2 The continuative reading

The concepts of present reference and duration are essential to theories of the PrP. Although nobody today would seriously maintain that all events described with the PrP are actually and necessarily in progress at the MOU, there is a school of thought which is still very prevalent among textbook writers and teachers of English that such an event described by the PrP is always ‘somehow still going on’.

Many writers have identified the use of the PrP which we shall call the theory of continuativeness. Jespersen (1931: 47) formulates it thus:

The Perfect, which is composed by means of the present of an auxiliary, is itself a kind of present tense, and serves to connect the present time with the past. This is done in two ways: first the perfect is a *retrospective present*, which looks upon the present state as a result of what has happened in the past; and second the perfect is an *inclusive present*, which speaks of a state that is continued from the past into the present time.

The first theory mentioned in the extract, the theory of resultativeness, will be dealt with later in this chapter. It is the concept of the ‘inclusive present’ which interests us here. Some pages after the extract quoted above Jespersen explains what he understands by ‘inclusive present’: “The term ‘inclusive time’ is here used when an expression denoting a specified length of duration is meant to include the notion that the action or state implied is still ... lasting at the time implied in the sentence.” (Jespersen, 1931: 56) That is, he does not limit the concept of ‘state’ in the first extract exclusively to stative verbs. This theory of continuativeness has played a dominant role in the explanations of the PrP given by generations of scholars and teachers especially on the European continent and is still present in a

slightly different form in the works of writers such as Leech (1969), Quirk et al. (1985) and Greenbaum (1996).²²

Let us now apply our test criteria for the evaluation of verb form theory. The theory of continuativeness claims that the PrP verb form creates a link between the present and the past by describing an action or a state which has started in the past and still holds good at the MOU. As such it passes the test of exclusiveness – no other verb form in English fulfils or has been claimed to fulfil this function.²³ In order to test the theory for inherence we must look more closely at the arguments which have been put forward in its favour. The proponents of continuativeness produce a number of apparently convincing example sentences, most of which inevitably contain the preposition FOR.

(6.20) John has lived in Paris for two years.

(6.21) John lived in Paris for two years.

(6.20) and (6.21) are the classic minimal pair. Advocates of continuativeness conclude from examples such as these that it is the verb form PrP which expresses the continuativeness, whereas the preterite expresses completeness. Indeed there seems to be no other possible interpretation. Zydati (1978) has, however, demonstrated quite clearly that the verb form PrP itself is ambiguous as to whether the action is still in progress or not, both with respect to repeated and single events.

(6.22) John has run.

(6.23) John has run for two hours.

(6.24) John has run for two hours now/for the last two hours.

(6.25) John has been running for two hours.

²² Leech and Quirk et al. speak of the duration of state or habit up to the moment, Greenbaum (1996: 270) refers to the “state present perfect” which “began before the present time of speaking or writing and continues until that time, perhaps including it”.

²³ This function is not inevitably linked to a periphrastic perfect. As has already been pointed out, many other European languages employ the present rather than the perfect for this function.

Sentence (6.22) does not tell us whether this action is still going on, indeed, as the sentence stands we would tend to view the event as completed.²⁴ Even (6.23) is ambiguous as to the continuative reading, we require either a pragmatic context or further linguistic clarification in order to decide the question of continuativeness. In (6.24) the statement is disambiguated by the addition of a temporal specifier. A proposition containing the expanded form is likewise ambiguous: (6.25) could be supplemented by *every day for the last week*, thus making it non-continuative.

Although many writers have recognized the difficulties of maintaining the theory of continuativeness in connection with verbs which describe activities, some, such as Quirk et al. (1985: 192-193) and Greenbaum (1996: 270) seem to believe that states are less ambiguous in this respect. Quirk et al. cite (6.26) as an example. It should be clear, however, that the fact that this state still holds good at the MOU is not dependent on the verb form itself but on the interplay between the verb form, the temporal specifier and the pragmatic context. (6.27) is a perfectly logical proposition.

(6.26) That house has been empty for ages.

(6.27) That house has been empty but it's not empty at the moment.

As mentioned above, the example sentences produced to support the theory of continuativeness are nearly always based on phrases with FOR. If the same temporal specifier *for two years* can be used with the PrP and the preterite and refer to completely different periods of time, one continuing, the other completed, then, so it is reasoned, this semantic difference must be inherent in the verb form. This is not the case – it is the adverbial phrase *for two years* which is ambiguous. It has two distinct meanings. One meaning is ‘from two years ago up till now’, the other is ‘for a two-year period in the past’. This becomes clear when we consider how these expressions with FOR are rendered in other languages. In German, for example, the first meaning is given as *seit zwei Jahren*, the second as *zwei Jahre lang*. The fact that in English the verb form disambiguates these phrases does not mean that the semantic value which they express is transferred to the verb form

²⁴ McCoard (1978: 46) writes: “It is somewhat curious to realize that the most likely, “neutral” interpretation of I’ve lived here, without adverbial supplements, involves the inference that the speaker is *not* presently living here.”

itself. It is the ambiguity of FOR which has misled generations of writers and teachers into believing that continuativeness lies in the verb form PrP. As Zydatiŕ (1978: 339) points out:

These would seem to be interpretations of whole sentences or contextually embedded utterances, which are dependent upon the semantic properties of the basic states of affairs, the type of adverbial they co-occur with and frequently pragmatically derivable information.

Michaelis (1994: 130-131) supplies a slightly different variation on this theme. She claims that “the PrP construction is characterized by TOKEN AMBIGUITY”. She cites (6.28) as an example of the essential ambiguity of the PrP, pointing out that it has two possible readings, firstly, a continuative reading: “Harry’s presence in Bali obtains for all times within a present-inclusive time span whose lower bound is two days ago” and, secondly, an existential reading: “There were one or more visits to Bali by Harry within a present-inclusive time-span; each of these visits lasted two days”.

(6.28) Harry has been in Bali for two days.

These two readings are undoubtedly possible, although the second is a little strained, but in this case the ambiguity of the proposition lies not in the PrP but, as was pointed out above, in the expression ‘for two days’, or more precisely, in the concept of ‘being in Bali for two days’. Note that there is no ambiguity in similar statements containing ‘since’.²⁵

The connotation of continuativeness is not inherent in the PrP verb form. Sometimes continuativeness is expressed by a statement containing the PrP, in most cases the PrP has no possible continuative interpretation. At the same time the PrP is not itself ambiguous, even if the proposition containing it is. The PrP has an underlying basic function, the individual interpretation of which is expressed by its interplay with the pragmatic context and a temporal specifier, if present. To use

²⁵ Inoue (1979: 566) makes the claim that by stressing the auxiliary in “Oh, but Jack Norbert HAS taught at MIT since 1969” the statement can be interpreted as meaning that “Jack Norbert has returned to MIT to teach on one or more occasions during the intervening years since 1969”. For the proposition to be understood in this way, however, some adverbial such as ‘a couple of times’ or ‘on one or more occasions’ must be tacitly assumed. The insertion of such temporal specifiers, explicitly or implicitly, clarifies the continuative or iterative nature of the statement.

the phrase from Bauer quoted above, it is these ‘combinatory variants’ which produce the various readings and the apparent ambiguity of the PrP.

In order to quantify the continuative reading of the PrP, the 6168 occurrences of the PrP were analysed with respect to completed and uncompleted duration and to present reference, that is, to the fact whether they were actually in progress at the MOU.

Fig. 6.6
Duration analysis of all PrP occurrences

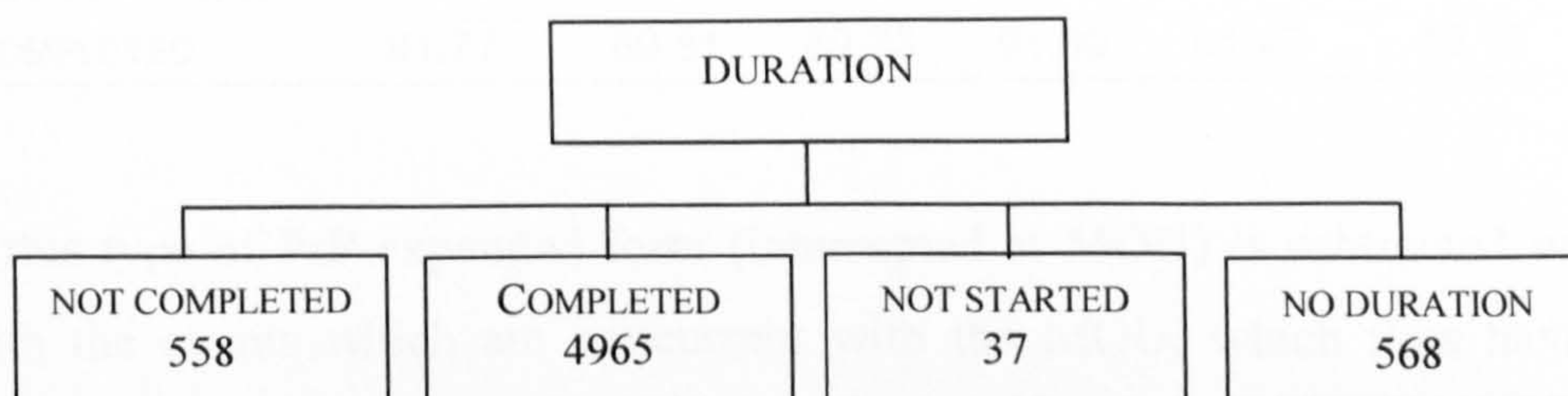


Figure 6.6 gives the figures for the duration analysis for the complete corpus divided into the four categories described at the beginning of this section. The percentage figures for the individual corpora are given in Table 6.14. This table shows the absolute percentages, that is, including the categories NOT YET STARTED and NO DURATION. As can be seen only about 9% of occurrences can be said to be not completed at the MOU.

Table 6.14
Duration (absolute in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| NOT COMPLETED | 7.12 | 8.69 | 9.69 | 7.44 | 14.65 | 9.50 | 9.21 |
| COMPLETED | 79.37 | 76.56 | 84.62 | 84.38 | 79.69 | 78.08 | 80.50 |
| NOT STARTED | 0.36 | 0.36 | 1.23 | 0.92 | 0.43 | 0.22 | 0.60 |
| NO DURATION | 13.15 | 14.39 | 4.46 | 7.26 | 5.23 | 12.20 | 9.21 |

A better idea of the ratio between completed and not completed events is given in Table 6.15 in which the two non-durational categories have been subtracted. The number of events described by the PrP which are not completed is just under 11%. This figure also includes those events which are interrupted at the MOU, but of which it can be assumed that they will be resumed at a later date. An example of such an occurrence is given in [6.22].

[6.22] "I believe that people pay more attention to stories where there are personal details and a photograph." She said as soon as the attack was over her mind focused on recalling her assailant's face. "Ever since I **have been looking** very hard at men's faces to see if I can improve on my description."

[TIMES: 41]

Table 6.15
Distribution of completed and not completed events in %
(without NO DURATION and NOT YET STARTED)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| NOT COMPLETED | 8.37 | 10.19 | 10.27 | 8.11 | 15.53 | 10.85 | 10.75 |
| COMPLETED | 91.77 | 89.81 | 89.73 | 91.89 | 84.47 | 89.15 | 89.25 |

If this type of PrP expanded form (interrupted at MOU) is subtracted we are left with the events which are concurrent with the MOU, which thus have present reference, although, as was seen in section 6.2.8.1, the great majority of these events are not 'visible' at the MOU but can be thought of as going on 'in the background'.

The figures for present reference are shown in Table 6.16. It is interesting to note that the corpus with the highest percentage of occurrences with present reference is a newspaper corpus, WASHPOST and the corpus with the lowest percentage is a spoken corpus, BRITMIX.

Overall 11.18% of all PrP occurrences in the corpora can be said to be continuative in the broad sense of 'not completed at the MOU'. If the narrower definition of present reference is applied, then only 9.50% of the sample are in progress at the MOU. The test of holism will not be applied here, however, as, according to CR theory, continuativeness is only one of three elements. The criteria of holism must be applied to the theory of current relevance as a whole.

Table 6.16
Present reference (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| PRESENT REF | 5.91 | 9.23 | 9.59 | 5.79 | 15.34 | 8.10 | 9.23 |
| NO PRESENT REF | 94.09 | 90.77 | 90.41 | 94.21 | 84.66 | 91.90 | 90.77 |

6.3.6.3 The resultative reading

Although most pedagogical grammars of the last twenty years refrain from stressing or even mentioning the ‘resultative use’ of the PrP, it is this reading which remains arguably the most frequently taught aspect of the PrP. It is understandable why it should be a favourite with teachers and textbook authors alike. It is easy for teachers to teach and easy for learners to understand, it can be visualized, and textbooks abound with broken windows, painted fences and mended roofs. I believe that it is this overemphasis on the resultative aspect which is a main reason why generations of learners have failed to grasp the essence of the PrP.

Every event which takes place will have some kind of effect, will change something in the world, will produce a result of some sort. The mere observation of an event or a state, the linguistic encoding of an event, or even of a non-event, will effect minute changes in the brain of the perceiver or encoder.²⁶ It is to be assumed that the proponents of resultativeness are not referring to results of such a scope when they argue their case. Unfortunately, however, they do not attempt to define exactly what they understand by the results of an action, obviously believing that such a definition is superfluous. One thing which is clear, however, is that the term ‘resultative’ is always used to mean ‘having a result which is significant/relevant/accessible at the moment of utterance’. The possibility of an event having results at other points in time is never considered. Michaelis (1994: 114) attempts a concise definition of resultative theory:

... the resultative PrP is used to focus upon the presently accessible consequences of a past event, rather than on the past event per se. The latter function is associated with the preterite.

In its most radical form the theory of resultativeness states that for all instances of the PrP the utterer is ‘more interested’ in the results of an action than the action itself. Propositions such as (6.29) which is taken from Swan (1980: 495) are said to describe a present state rather than a past action. Swan claims that the “present perfect is used ... when the past events have some present importance, and when

²⁶ For a description of such physical mental processes see Rose (1992).

we could make a present tense sentence (with a similar meaning) about the same situation.” Swan does not define what is meant by “some present importance”, but presumably he is referring to the results of the described event.

(6.29) I can't go on holiday because I've broken my leg.

Let us take a closer look at the concept of 'result'. There are two types of possible result, one of which we might call the 'inevitable' result, and the other the 'interpretative' result. (6.29) illustrates both possibilities. The statement I'VE BROKEN MY LEG inevitably implies the result LEG BROKEN which holds at the MOU (disregarding for the moment a possible iterative interpretation). The possible interpretative results are numerous – I CAN'T GO ON HOLIDAY, I CAN'T PLAY FOOTBALL, I DON'T HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL et cetera, results which can be obvious or surprising, and, from the perspective of the interlocutors, can have positive or negative effects. The first type of result is a unique logical conclusion based on the semantic value of the verb phrase. The second is arbitrary and depends solely on the pragmatic context for its realization.

Resultative theory has two main weaknesses. Firstly, it would seem to require that the use of the preterite must necessarily indicate lack of results or at least lack of interest in the results on the part of the utterer.²⁷ This is obviously not the case as can be seen from (6.30) and (6.31). Resultativeness fails the test for exclusiveness.

(6.30) I spoke to John about our new strategy. He said he would do everything in his power to support us.

(6.31) John can't go on holiday because he broke his leg playing football.

Secondly, the PrP is used when the ensuing results are unexpected, or even when there are no results at all. Close (1992: 70) gives (6.32) as an example of an unexpected result. It should be remembered, however, that we must distinguish between the two types of resultativeness outlined above. HAVING A BATH or WASHING ONE'S FACE do not always have the desired effect. Anyone who claimed (6.33), on the other hand, would be using the verb REPAIR in a different sense from

²⁷ One of the hardest things for learners of English who have been taught the resultative theory is to comprehend that one cannot say: *This building has been built by Christopher Wren*, even if one is standing directly in front of St Paul's Cathedral at the time.

its usual meaning, perhaps in the sense of GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF REPAIRING.

(6.32) Look at you! You've just had a bath and you're still filthy.

(6.33) I've repaired the washing machine, but it's still broken.

In order to test the argument from resultativeness, each PrP sample in the corpora was analysed as to whether, firstly, a result of the PrP event was perceptible and, secondly, if a result was perceptible, whether it could be considered to be the motivation for using the PrP. Was the speaker more interested in the event itself or in the results of that event? This was probably the most difficult criterion to apply in the whole of the semantic-functional analysis. The clear-cut examples presented in grammars and journals as evidence of the resultative aspect are often a far cry from the imponderabilia of linguistic reality. At the outset of the analysis, occurrences were allocated to one of two categories: either Results Motivation or No Results Motivation. It soon became clear, however, that in the majority of cases in which a resulting state was observable, it did not make sense to ask whether this result was more significant than the event itself. Indeed, it was often not even possible to separate the result from its antecedent cause.

(6.34) They have fixed the motorway now, it's great ...

In (6.34) it does not make sense to ask what the result of the fixing event is. It is not possible for the speaker to emphasize either the event or the result. They are one and the same – the proposition HAVE FIXED THE MOTORWAY expresses what can be termed an event-result continuum (ERC). If the proposition is true, then a resulting state MOTORWAY FIXED is logically entailed.²⁸ In such cases the resultative reading often ascribed to the PrP is clearly a semantic function of the verb phrase.²⁹ It has nothing to do with the PrP qua PrP. The predicate in (6.35)

²⁸ Again we are disregarding for the moment a possible iterative interpretation, which would be specified by the addition of iterative adverbials such as 'four or five times' and would admit a result such as 'and it's still got potholes in it'.

²⁹ This point is echoed by Comrie (1976: 20-21) from a slightly different perspective: "Similar to the definition of the perfective in terms of a completed action is its definition as being a resultative, i.e. indicating the successful completion of a situation. It is true that perfective forms of certain individual verbs do effectively indicate the successful completion of a situation, as with Russian *ja ugovoril* (Pfv.) *ego* versus *ja ugovarival* (Ipfv.) *ego*, which could be rendered into English as 'I

has exactly the same semantic function. To my knowledge no-one has ever referred to this as the ‘resultative preterite’, although to do so would make just as much, or just as little, sense as to talk about the resultative use of the PrP.

(6.35) They fixed the motorway last week. It’s great now.

The importance of such event-result continuum verbs for the understanding of the PrP has long been recognized. They have usually been associated with the verb class generally known as ‘telic verbs’, a term coined by Garey (1957). A telic verb is directed to a definite end or purpose, it is goal-defined. Garey (1957: 105) formulates a critical test: “If one was *verbing*, but was interrupted while *verbing*, has one *verbed*?” If yes, then the verb is atelic. If no, then the action has not reached its goal, the verb is therefore telic. Thus, if someone was swimming and was interrupted, it would be valid to say ‘he has swum’. SWIM is therefore atelic. If, however, someone was drowning and was interrupted, we would not be entitled to say ‘he has drowned’. DROWN is therefore telic.

There are various linguistic devices for creating telic verbs. Adding –EN to an adjective, for example, will result in a telic verb: TIGHTEN, WIDEN etc. Adding a particle can change an atelic verb into a telic, for example, EAT and EAT UP. Adding an object will sometimes have the same effect. Vendler (1967: 101) points out the difference between RUNNING (atelic) and RUNNING A MILE (telic).³⁰ In this context it should be pointed out that not all telic expressions are ERC as defined above. There is a difference between expressions such as WRITING A LETTER and RUNNING A MILE. The former is an ERC proposition, the latter is not – there is no logically inherent result of such an event.

Atelic verbs describe only the existence of an event (or a series of iterated events) and are sometimes therefore termed ‘existential’. Stative verbs are by definition

succeeded in persuading him’ and ‘I tried to persuade him’. But resultativity is only one possible type of perfectivity, and the term ‘resultative’, like the term ‘completed’, puts unnecessary emphasis on the final stage of the situation rather than on its totality.”

³⁰ Vendler (1967) does not use the term ‘telic’. He makes the distinction between “activity terms” such as *running*, “accomplishment terms” such as *running a mile*, “achievement terms” such as *reaching the top*, and “state terms” such as *knowing somebody*. The difference between accomplishment terms and achievement terms is that it is not (normally) possible to use the latter in the PrP expanded form. Both accomplishment terms and achievement terms can be ERC verbs.

atelic, they themselves describe a state and do not bring about another resulting state. As was pointed out in section 6.2.5 there are numerous examples of verbs which at first glance would seem to be stative, but which in fact describe an activity. The most common example is BE. The predicate in extract [6.24] is equivalent to *a progressive deterioration has taken place* which is a process and was therefore classed as dynamic. Such verbs can themselves be telic or can have resultative implications.

[6.23] ... over time **there has been a progressive deterioration** of the faculty seats in the Smith Center ...
[USACAD: 181]

During the analysis of the resultative aspect it became clear that the class of ERC was not solely comprised of telic verbs. Verbs expressing changes of all kinds and movement from one place to another which are not telic in the traditional sense of the word are also examples of ERC verbs. An example of this type is given in extract [6.25]. CHANGE is not telic according to the definition given above, since, if the process of change is interrupted, we can still say that the person has changed.

[6.24] Their example inspires me constantly to do more, to know more, and to one day be more. I guess **I've changed** in that I know now there's a lot more I want to know.
[USACAD: 192]

Furthermore, the active maintenance of a state, that is the prevention of change as expressed by verbs such as KEEP, MAINTAIN and RETAIN are examples of verbs which express an event-result continuum. These atelic verbs expressing change, movement and prevention of change, some of which are atelic, are called mutative in this investigation. Together with the telic verbs described above these mutative verbs form the ERC group. Altogether eleven categories of ERC verb phrases were identified:

1. Verbs expressing creation or destruction such as BUILD, BURN DOWN, DESTROY, DEVELOP, MAKE, PRODUCE, SCRAP
2. Verbs expressing disclosure or concealment such as FIND, HIDE, IDENTIFY, SHOW

3. Verbs expressing facilitation or non-facilitation such as AGREE TO, BAN, ENABLE, FAIL TO, PROVIDE
4. Verbs expressing initiation or termination such as BEGIN, COMPLETE, DIE, ESTABLISH, FINISH, START, STOP
5. Verbs expressing a change in location such as ARRIVE, BRING, EMIGRATE, LEAVE, SEND, TRANSFER
6. Verbs expressing a change of physical, mental or legal condition such as AMAZE, ARREST, BREAK, DO DAMAGE, HIT, LEARN, MARRY, UPSET, WORRY
7. Verbs expressing a change of possession such as BUY, GIVE, LOSE, RECEIVE, SELL, WIN
8. Verbs expressing a change in the properties of an entity such as FIX, MAKE ATTRACTIVE, IMPROVE, REPAIR, WIDEN
9. Verbs expressing a change in quantity such as ACCUMULATE, DECLINE, FALL, GROW, INCREASE, REDUCE, TREBLE
10. Verbs expressing the active maintenance of a state or situation such as DETAIN, KEEP, RETAIN, WITHHOLD
11. Verbs expressing a general change of state or situation such as BECOME, CHANGE

Within these categories there are many borderline cases and verbs which could have been allocated to two or more categories, for example, BRING or MARRY. Occasionally a fine distinction must be made between verbs which are very similar in meaning, for example between SAY and TELL. Saying something leaves open whether the event has had any results or effects. Telling somebody something, on the other hand, strongly implies that the addressed person is now in possession of a new piece of information. Some verbs can be ERC or non-ERC, depending on the context. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the two. If (6.36) is equivalent to (6.37), then it would be construed as existential. (6.38) would clearly be ERC whereas (6.39) is ambiguous, it is not clear if the utterer just wants to report five existential acts of writing, or whether she is stressing the resultative products of the individual events.

(6.36) John has written.

(6.37) John has been a writer.

(6.38) John has written them a letter.

(6.39) John has written five books.

Sometimes whether a verb is ERC or not depends on the object – SPEND MONEY, which expresses a change of possession, is an ERC expression, SPEND TIME is not. The addition of an object can change an existential verb into an ERC expression. Most ERC verbs have an object, but there are many which do not.³¹

The PrP samples in the corpora were therefore classified into two main categories: the ERC group and the non-ERC group. In this context the ‘resultative reading’ turns into a tautology – there is no other possibility for ERC expressions. However, as was seen earlier, existential propositions can also have a resultative interpretation.

(6.40) You speak really good French.

(6.41) I’ve been to France on a number of occasions.

(6.41) is an iterative non-ERC proposition. Contrary to what some writers, for example Swan (1980: 493)³² have claimed, this statement has no logically necessary results. There are an infinite number of possible ‘results’ – ... THAT’S WHY I LIKE FRENCH FOOD, ... AND I NEVER WANT TO GO THERE AGAIN and so forth. If, however, sentence (6.41) is the response to the statement (6.40) then it must be construed as resultative – the person speaks good French as a result of having been to France. The resultative reading is therefore the motivation for the statement which contains the PrP. This type of resultative reading, however, is clearly dependent on the pragmatic context, on extra-linguistic factors, and is in no way inherent in the verb form itself.

Three categories for the resultative analysis were therefore defined: the group of non-ERC propositions, where no result is perceivable or intended, the group of non-ERC propositions where the use of the PrP statement is obviously motivated

³¹ In this investigation 59.62% of the 3108 identified ERC verbs had an object, whereby not only verbs with direct objects were counted. Verbs with prepositional objects where the preposition clearly formed part of the predicate were also allocated to this category.

³² Swan claims that saying *I’ve been all over Africa* is equivalent to *I know Africa well*. Take out the *all over* and substitute *to* and it becomes clear that the verb form says nothing whatsoever about what the person knows about Africa and how well.

by an existing and perceived result and the group of ERC verb phrases where it is not possible to separate the event from the result. As can be seen from Table 6.17 the non-ERC propositions make up just over half of all the samples analysed. Only 3.18% of all occurrences have an interpretative result reading, in the sense defined above. A large proportion of all occurrences (48.02% of the total), however, are ERC expressions. Thus, over 51% of all PrP propositions can be associated with some form of results. It is interesting to note that in the spoken corpora, non-ERC propositions form the largest group, whereas in the case of the newspaper corpora (and BRITMIX) the ERC group dominates. Obviously, reportage leads to a greater use of such ERC verb phrases.³³

Table 6.17
Results aspect analysis (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| ERC | 49.46 | 42.17 | 57.74 | 44.21 | 52.70 | 41.14 | 48.02 |
| NON-ERC RESULT | 4.83 | 3.98 | 4.46 | 2.48 | 1.80 | 1.84 | 3.18 |
| NON-ERC | 45.72 | 53.85 | 37.80 | 53.31 | 45.50 | 57.02 | 48.80 |

Although just over 50% of all the PrP occurrences in the corpora can be said to have a resultative reading, it has been seen that this reading is either semantically inherent in the verb phrase itself, or is dependent on extra-linguistic pragmatic factors, and is not a semantic function of the PrP. We have also seen that the main criterion which is espoused for the resultative use of the PrP, namely that the focus is on the present consequences of an event, not on the event itself, can apply equally to the preterite.

The theory of resultativeness as an explanation of the PrP fails with respect to both inherence and exclusiveness and must be firmly rejected.

³³ A similar investigation of the preterite would reveal whether ERC verbs are equally as prevalent with that verb form. Samples taken with the verbs BECOME, BEGIN, BREAK, FALL, GROW and RISE in two corpora indicated that the preterite was consistently more frequent. Only in the case of CHANGE was the incidence of the PrP higher. It can be assumed, however, that because of the greater frequency of the preterite as compared with the PrP, the percentage of ERC verbs occurring in the preterite verb form will be considerably lower.

6.3.6.4 The existential reading

The existential (sometimes also known as the experiential) reading is the seemingly weak link in the chain of CR theory. Whereas it is easy to see the connection of the continuative and the resultative PrP to the present, it is much harder to perceive the present relevance in a statement such as [6.26].

[6.25] One Hampshire vet has treated 30 horses attacked
during the past 15 years.
[TIMES: 322]

Sometimes the existential reading appears as a kind of tautological sump – any occurrence which is not identifiable as continuative or resultative is automatically allocated to the existential category. Obviously, all events, including those with continuative and resultative readings, have existence (from the point of view of the utterer), so that the real definition of the existential reading in CR theory would appear to be ‘not continuative/not resultative’. There are, however, some good reasons for examining this concept more closely. Various writers have pointed out that the addition of temporal specifiers can change the reading of a PrP statement. A Group 4 temporal specifier expressing duration can change the existential reading of (6.42) into the continuative reading of (6.43). The statement can regain its existential reading by the insertion of a Group 2 temporal specifier expressing iteration as in (6.44) As was seen above, Michaelis has argued that PrP propositions are inherently ‘ambiguous’³⁴ as to the particular reading.

(6.42) Harry has lived in Bali.

(6.43) Harry has lived in Bali for three months.

(6.44) Harry has lived in Bali for three months on a number of occasions.

Zandvoort (1965: 62) gives a definition of the existential or experiential reading. “The PERFECT OF EXPERIENCE expresses what has happened, once or more than once, within the speaker’s or writer’s experience.” There are two obvious

³⁴ We should be careful when using the word ‘ambiguous’. If there are different readings for the PrP then this is certainly a kind of ambiguity, but it is a different kind of ambiguity from lexical ambiguity. The lexical item ‘post’ has several distinct meanings – it is ambiguous in the sense that it has various referents which are, for the most part, unconnected. On the other hand, the pronoun SHE is not normally called ambiguous although it can refer to a woman, a cat, a ship or a country. If the PrP is ambiguous, then it is this latter type of ‘ambiguity’ which is operative here.

difficulties with such a definition. Firstly, the notion of the ‘speaker’s or writer’s experience’ has to be defined extremely broadly in order to encompass statements such as [6.27] which lie outside the bounds of the utterer’s personal experience. If ‘experience’ is equivalent to ‘have heard about’, then it becomes meaningless.

[6.26] A STUDENT **has died** and a second is in hospital after an outbreak of meningitis at Halesowen College, West Midlands.

[TIMES: 249]

The second difficulty is that the definition can be applied equally as well to any proposition involving the preterite. Aware of these shortcomings, later writers have attempted to define a clear boundary between the existential PrP and the existential preterite and at the same time to establish a link between all PrP existential statements and the MOU and thus to current relevance. Two theories have emerged. Firstly, the assertion that the topic of the sentence must somehow be in existence at the MOU and, secondly, the claim that, in order to validate the use of the existential PrP, the proposition must be replicable at the MOU. We shall examine these two theories in the next section.

6.3.6.5 Existence and replicability

The beginning of this thread in the discussion of the PrP can be traced back to White (1761). In one of the first written explanations of the difference between the preterite and the PrP, White, in the extract quoted above in section 6.3.4, points to existence as a criterion. The preterite is used to refer to actions “the performers of which have already left the present stage of life”. The PrP “is seldom us’d but with respect to persons now existing”.

A refinement of this theory is provided by Pickbourne (1789: 33-34) who shows that the criterion ‘present existence’ is not limited to the physical existence of the agent at the MOU. Pickbourne points to the fact that it is possible to say “Cicero has written orations” but not “Cicero has written poems”, the reason being that Cicero’s orations have survived into the present time whereas his poems have not.

A further variation on the existence theme was introduced by Poutsma (1926: 264) and Jespersen (1931: 66), who with reference to the theories of Newton, identify present validity as a sufficient criterion for the use of the PrP. According to

Jespersen it is acceptable to say “Newton has explained the movements of the moon” because his explanation is still thought to be correct. Jespersen even goes so far as to claim that the proposition “Newton explained the movements of the moon” would automatically imply that the explanation is no longer considered valid.

The question of existence, death and the PrP was taken up in more modern times by Chomsky (1971: 212) whose celebrated propositions (6.45 & 6.46) have served as a basis for an on-going discussion.

(6.45) Einstein has visited Princeton.

(6.46) Princeton has been visited by Einstein.

Chomsky claims that sentence (6.45) presupposes that Einstein is still alive, whereas the corresponding passive sentence (6.46) makes no such claim.

Such considerations have led some writers such as Traugott (1972: 46) to make the rather wild claim that, in order to facilitate the use of PrP, the subject of the verb must be still in existence at the MOU:

Certain conditions have to apply for the use of the present perfect to be appropriate. For one, there must be what can be called “present relevance”; the subject of the sentence must be alive (or still in existence if an inanimate).

McCawley (1971) and Inoue (1979) demonstrate, however, that it is the topic of the sentence, not the subject, which is important in this respect. McCawley (1971: 106) disagrees with Chomsky that Einstein’s existence can be inferred from (6.45), pointing out that “whether a sentence in the present perfect commits the speaker to the belief that the subject refers to someone who is alive depends on the rest of the sentence”. McCawley gives these sentences to illustrate his point:

(6.47) *Frege has contributed a lot to my thinking.*

(6.48) *Frege has been denounced by many people.*

(6.49) *Frege has been frightened by many people.*

(6.47) and (6.48) are perfectly possible even if Frege is no longer alive. If Frege is dead then (6.49) is not acceptable, because to be frightened entails being in existence whereas being denounced or contributing to someone’s thinking does

not. McCawley concludes (106) that the fact that Einstein is alive is not logically inherent in (6.45) but “is merely inferrable” from the “factual knowledge that one must be alive to visit Princeton”.

Inoue (1979: 574) sees the discourse topic, defined as “a proposition about which the speaker is either providing or requesting information”, as the crucial criterion for acceptability. If, for example, the discourse topic is TALKING ABOUT EINSTEIN VISITING AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES, then (6.44) is not acceptable. If, however, the discourse topic is TALKING ABOUT NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS VISITING PRINCETON OR TALKING ABOUT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY HAVING MEMORABLE OCCASIONS, then (6.45) is perfectly acceptable. In this context Inoue introduces the concept of replicability at the MOU. It is possible for further Nobel Prize winners to visit Princeton and for Princeton to have further memorable occasions, Einstein’s visits to American universities, on the other hand, are no longer replicable.

Michaelis (1994: 154) also cites “current replicability of an event” as a decisive criterion for the acceptability of the existential PrP. Presumably this does not imply that every individual PrP existential proposition is replicable at the MOU. Einstein’s visit to Princeton cannot be repeated although (6.46) is an acceptable PrP statement. As long as replicability is not construed in the narrow sense as a reference to a singular discrete event, but rather to the possible iteration of a similar event within the broader context of a discourse topic, then replicability can be a useful criterion for assessing the felicity of sentences with the PrP.³⁵

It can be seen, therefore, that the discourse topic is an operative criterion for the acceptability of the existential PrP. The underlying question, however, is why some discourse topics allow the use of the PrP, while others do not. I will argue that the reason lies in the phragmatisation values of the various discourse topics. TALKING ABOUT EINSTEIN VISITING AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES closes the event time frame, while TALKING ABOUT NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS VISITING PRINCETON does not. It is important to note that a discourse topic must always be seen from the perspective of the utterer (and utterer). If the utterer mistakenly believes that

³⁵ See section 7.5.2 for constraints on the usefulness of the replicability criterion.

Einstein is still alive, or believes in the possibility of his resurrection, then the event time frame remains open.

The replicability of an event is dependent on the presence of an aphragmatic time frame. If the time frame is closed by linguistic, pragmatic or psychopragmatic factors, then replicability is no longer available.

6.3.6.6 The existential reading – iteration

As was seen in the preceding sections, the PrP often has an iterative reading. The occurrences in the corpora were therefore analysed with respect as to whether the event described is repeated in the past. Iteration was defined as the same action being repeated by the same subject with (if present) the same object. This was necessary in order to disambiguate the situation and provide a consistent criterion for evaluation. Extract [6.28] is an example which was not classified as iteration, although the act of speaking was probably repeated a number of times. Iteration was only assumed if it was feasible to insert typical adverbials such as OFTEN, MANY TIMES, REPEATEDLY without changing the meaning.

[6.27] <M04> No I don't. I I've spoken to several people
and it seems there's var there's various er er
points raised they say that er apparently in pubs
and everything you're only allowed to have a very er
small kind of gaming thing
[BRITRADIO: 324]

The aspect of iteration in connection with the PrP has been described by a number of writers³⁶ under varying headings. In modern CR theory iteration has been subsumed as a subcategory of the existential reading. Michaelis (1994: 114) refers to “an event complex” and to “multiple instantiations of a given event” (138).

There is no doubt that the PrP is frequently used for iteration, especially, as was seen in section 6.2.11.2, in connection with the expanded form. Consider the sentences (6.50) and (6.51), a thread started by Jespersen (1931) and taken up, among others, by McCoard (1978):

(6.50) When I was in London, the policemen were very helpful.

³⁶ Jespersen (1931: 57) speaks of “repetition”, Zandvoort: (1965: 62) refers in this context to the “perfect of experience”, Greenbaum (1996: 270) postulates a “recurrent present perfect”.

(6.51) When I have been in London, the policemen have been very helpful.

The natural reading of (6.50) is *The one time when I was ...* and of (6.51) is *Whenever I have been ...*, that is, the PrP in the second sentence clearly indicates iteration. More precisely, the verb forms disambiguate the ambiguity of WHEN in the same way as was seen with FOR in section 6.3.7.1. Again we will argue that it is the phragmatisation which is expressed by WHEN = THE ONE TIME which forces the preterite in (6.50) and the aphrasegmatism of WHEN = EVERY TIME that forces the PrP in (6.51).

As can be seen from Table 6.18, 10.41% of all PrP occurrences in the corpora involve iteration. The figure for PrP expanded occurrences is well over twice as high at 23.91% (►6.2.11.3). Iteration is clearly not inherent in the PrP, nor exclusive to it.³⁷ It is, however, an important feature of a number of PrP occurrences, and any holistic theory must accommodate it.

Table 6.18
Iteration (in %)

| | BRIT MIX | BRIT RADIO | TIMES | US ACAD | WASH POST | WH PRESS | ALL |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| ITERATION | 4.95 | 9.32 | 10.07 | 12.68 | 10.54 | 13.93 | 10.41 |
| NO ITERATION | 95.05 | 90.68 | 89.84 | 87.32 | 89.46 | 86.07 | 89.59 |

6.3.6.7 The theory of current relevance – summary and conclusions

The theory of current relevance is the only coherent theory which attempts to explain all aspects of the PrP on the basis of a single underlying principle. It is divided into the three readings of continuativeness, resultativeness and existentiality. In the sections above it was seen that the two first readings, which both have a clear link to the concept of current relevance, do not entirely satisfy the criteria of exclusiveness and inherence (►Table 6.19). The existential reading, which has as its defining criterion the replicability of the discourse topic, was seen to satisfy both criteria, but the connection to the concept of current relevance is harder to establish. Even if we do accept the existential reading as expressing

³⁷ Zandvoort (1965: 60) points out that the preterite is also used with iterative meaning and gives the example: “We always went to a pantomime at Christmas.”

current relevance in some way, (for example, because the discourse topic is replicable at MOU), then the three individual readings (continuative, resultative, existential) are currently relevant in entirely different ways – so that current relevance would seem simply to be a convenient name rather than a consistent principle.

The continuative reading was seen to apply to approximately 10% of all PrP occurrences. If continuative is defined as describing an action which has started in the past and continues up to the MOU, then it can be said to satisfy the criteria of exclusiveness. However, as was seen, this reading is not inherent in the PrP, neither in the simple nor in the expanded form. The resultative reading, in the sense used by the proponents of CR theory, fails both tests. Two types of resultative reading must be distinguished. The first involves a resulting state which is the logical entailment of the preceding action, in which the result cannot be separated from the event. These verbs describe what can be termed an event-result continuum. This group of ERC verb phrases consists of telic and mutative expressions. In connection with ERC verb phrases the resultative reading is inherent in the semantic value of the verb, not in the verb form. ERC verbs were involved in 47.81% of all the PrP occurrences examined in this investigation. The second type of result is one which can only be inferred from a knowledge of the pragmatic context. It is not logically implied by either the verb phrase or the verb form. This type of result was found to be present in 3.51% of all occurrences. Both of these result types are found co-occurring with the preterite and other verb forms.

Table 6.19

Evaluation of the three readings of CR theory according to the criteria of exclusiveness and inherence

| | EXCLUSIVENESS | INHERENCE |
|--|---------------|-----------|
| CONTINUATIVE | ✓ | ✗ |
| RESULTATIVE | ✗ | ✗ |
| EXISTENTIAL (= replicability of discourse topic) | ✓ | ✓ |

The existential reading accounts for the remaining 48.67% of the occurrences. Some proponents of CR theory originally argued that the subject or topic of the PrP proposition must be in existence at the MOU to validate the use of the PrP. This was seen to be fallacious. In the context of the existential reading, it is in fact the replicability of the discourse topic at the MOU which is the defining criterion

of the proposition. Given this interpretation the existential reading goes quite a way towards passing the tests of exclusiveness and inherence and must for the moment be given the benefit of the doubt. To test the criterion of holism it is necessary to consider CR theory as a whole.

One of the advantages of CR theory is that each PrP occurrence can be allocated to one of the three readings, although, as was seen above, the existential category is so broadly defined as to be able to accept any occurrence which cannot be allocated to the first two. It should also be remembered that existence qua replicability could also be applied to the other two categories of current relevance. Nevertheless, taken as a whole CR theory passes the test of holism. It must be pointed out, however, that although CR theory goes some way towards explaining some main aspects of the use of the PrP, it fails as a theory of the PrP in several important ways. Apart from the fact that some of its constituent parts do not satisfy some or all of the test criteria, it does not do justice to the aspect of indefiniteness which was seen to play a significant role in the PrP. Moreover, it tacitly assumes that each PrP occurrence can be allocated to one of the three readings only and makes no provision for the possibility of an occurrence belonging to two, or even all three, categories simultaneously. Iteration, for example, is regarded as a subset of the existential reading. However, as was seen in section 6.2.11.2 and is demonstrated in [6.29], many PrP occurrences are both continuative and iterative.

[6.28] More than 250,000 freshmen, nearly all of whom graduated from high school last year, took part in the survey. It was conducted last fall at 464 colleges and universities. Its size and scope are unrivaled, and its results have long been used to gauge how new college students view their lives and their futures.

[WHPRESS: 360]

It is also common for continuative events to be resultative, as is demonstrated by [6.30]. The events described in this extract are still in progress at the MOU. At the same time they have produced changes of state, or results, which are at the centre of the interlocutors' interest.

[6.29] But there are other factors here and the framework understands that. The last two years, the United States has been growing very rapidly. Japan's been going through the worst recession in many, many

years. So **we've been pulling in imports**, and they have not been.

[WHPRESS: 26]

The ellipsed PrP expanded occurrence in [6.31] is resultative: *people are dead*, existential/iterative: *it has been repeated in the past* and continuative: *it is still going on*. CR theory makes no provision for such occurrences.

[6.30] <M01> Well here we're saying I mean we're we're talking about Yugoslavia and how we don't understand how Serb can kill Croat and yet we have Catholic and Protestant killing each other in Northern Ireland. <M07> That's right <M01> And **have been** for years now. <M07> That's right.

[BRITRADIO: 1003]

CR theory is flawed in two main ways. Firstly, it ascribes to the PrP continuative and resultative readings which are not inherent in the verb form itself. Secondly, it mixes different levels of verb meaning. The existential reading is on a different level to the continuative interpretation, which differs again from a possible resultative rendering. Stripping away the various levels of CR theory, we are left with two categories: ERC events and non-ERC events. All other readings are interpretations which can be derived, in conjunction with the specific linguistic and non-linguistic contexts, from these two basic classes.

We have now identified a fundamental aspectual distinction which is crucial for the understanding of the PrP. However, we still have not arrived at the underlying principle. It is still necessary to show what underpins and binds these two aspectual categories together at the level of the verb form. This will be attempted in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

A Model of the Present Perfect

The theories of the PrP analysed in the preceding chapter were seen to be insufficient in one or more respects. In this chapter an attempt will be made to present a model of the PrP which satisfies the criteria of exclusiveness, inherence and holism, does justice to the theoretical considerations described in the previous chapters, and conforms with the results of the empirical analysis. We will first consider whether the PrP should be regarded as a tense or an aspect. I will argue that the tense/aspect dichotomy is theoretically inconsistent and pedagogically misleading, and briefly sketch a possible model for the analysis of verb forms. I will then go on to develop a model of the PrP, and, by contrast and implication, of the preterite. This model is based on the concept of phragmatisation, the closing of the event time frame. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the interaction of the fundamental aspectual values of the PrP with other concomitant aspectual values. It is this interaction which determines the particular reading of the utterance. The final section describes which factors are involved in the phragmatisation of event time frames.

7.1 The present perfect - tense or aspect?

The great majority of learners of English are taught that there is a Past Tense, a Future Tense, and, of course, a Present Perfect Tense. Normally they, and their teachers, have no occasion to question whether the word *tense* is being used correctly or exactly in each instance. Nevertheless, the question of whether there is such a thing as a Future Tense, whether the PrP is an aspect rather than a tense, indeed, whether there is such a thing as tense at all, is one which is of prime interest to linguists and grammarians. Although most are perfectly happy to describe the preterite as a tense, many are reluctant to accord the same status to the PrP. Indeed, the HAVE + -EN construction does seem to form a system of its own in that it can be added, as shown in Table 7.1, to finite and infinite forms in a regular way to indicate a semantic aspect which has been called by some writers anteriority, by others, completiveness.

Table 7.1
Finite and infinite verb forms and the corresponding forms with HAVE

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| I go | I have gone |
| I went | I had gone |
| I will go | I will have gone |
| I would go | I would have gone |
| I must go | I must have gone |
| to go | to have gone |
| going | having gone |

A look at Table 7.1 suggests, however, that the type of anteriority, if that is what is being expressed, which is entailed by I WOULD HAVE GONE is certainly different to that expressed by I HAD GONE, and that the infinite forms would seem to be different again from the finite in that they are not restricted by temporal constraints. The following sections will attempt to establish firstly, whether the PrP is a tense or an aspect and secondly, whether this distinction is helpful in understanding the PrP per se.

7.1.1 What is tense?

The uncertainty surrounding the concept of tense can be seen from the fact that there is no agreement as to how many tenses there are in the English language. Many text books and syllabi postulate the traditional eight tenses: PRESENT, PRESENT PERFECT, PAST, PAST PERFECT, FUTURE, FUTURE PERFECT, CONDITIONAL (FUTURE IN THE PAST), CONDITIONAL PERFECT, but the inconsistency of this system is immediately apparent. Why should WOULD GO be a tense, but MIGHT GO not? In what way can I GO be said to be a tense at all? Over the years grammarians have postulated a widely differing number of tenses. The prize for the highest number must go to Joos (1964: 120), who has claimed a grand total of 224 tense forms. In recent years most writers have settled for a rather more modest claim of two. (See Palmer, 1965: 59, Quirk et al., 1985: 176ff., Huddleston, 1988: 69-73). How many tenses there are in English depends of course on the definition of tense.

A widely accepted definition of the concept is given by Lyons (1977: 678):

Tense, in those languages which have tense, is part of the deictic frame of temporal reference: it grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero-point of the deictic context.

Lyons stresses the deictic nature of tense, that is to say, the temporal relationship expressed by the verb form can only be understood by reference to the deictic zero-point, which can be the moment of utterance or another point in time which can be specified by another sentence element. Pronouns such as I, SHE and WE, adverbials such as HERE and THERE, adjectives such as THIS and THAT, temporal specifiers such as TODAY and YESTERDAY are deictic in that they can only be understood by reference to the temporal or spatial location of the utterer. These are lexicalized deictics. Lyons, however, defines tense as a grammaticalized deictic. The verb forms in (7.1), (7.2) and (7.3) would not therefore be considered tenses according to the above definition because the temporal relationships are described by the lexical items YESTERDAY, NOW and TOMORROW, and not by a grammatical modification of the verb form itself.

(7.1) * I go yesterday.

(7.2) * I go now.

(7.3) ? I go tomorrow.

To qualify as a tense the verb form must be grammaticalized, i.e. it must undergo changes which specify the temporal relationship with respect to the deictic zero-point. Many writers identify such changes exclusively with inflectional modifications, and therefore arrive at the conclusion that English can have only two tenses. Quirk et al. (1985: 176) sum up the situation.

It remains only to mention the familiar fact that 'present' and 'past' are also interpreted on a grammatical level, in reference to tense. Here, however, the threefold opposition is reduced to two, since morphologically English has no future form of the verb in addition to present and past forms. Some grammarians have argued for a third, 'future tense', maintaining that English realizes this tense by the use of an auxiliary verb construction (such as *will* + infinitive): but we prefer to follow those grammarians who have treated tense strictly as a category realized by verb inflection.¹

¹ This perception is also related to the theory of markedness, whereby a non-marked form with neutral and more general meaning (in this case the PRESENT or NON-PAST), is contrasted with a marked form with more specific meaning (in this case the PAST).

The difficulty of assigning a definite deictic value to the 'present tense' has prompted writers such as Lyons (1977: 678) to transmogrify the 'present' into a 'non-past tense'.²

What is commonly referred to as the present tense, in English and many other languages, is in fact more satisfactorily described as the non-past tense. Normally the use of the past tense in simple sentences does indeed locate the situation about which a statement is being made in the past with respect to the time of utterance (e.g., *He worked hard*); but the use of the so-called present tense does not generally imply contemporaneity with the act of utterance (cf. *He works hard*).

This terminological modification is necessary in order to avoid contradicting his own definition of tense. Even so, it still remains unclear how the 'non-past tense' can inherently grammaticalize the deictic frame of temporal reference, that is, without resort to other, non-verbal, elements.

This equation of grammaticalization with inflectional modifications and the consequent limiting of the number of tenses to the two mentioned above would seem to contradict both intuition and the definition of tense given above. Lyons (1977: 678) himself warns against an overly narrow interpretation:

Traditional doctrine is also misleading in that it tends to promote the view that tense is necessarily an inflexional category of the verb. It is an empirical fact ... that tense, like person, is commonly, though not universally, realized in the morphological variations of the verb in languages.

When we examine the 'traditional tenses' of English according to Lyons' criteria, it is immediately clear that (7.4), (7.6) and (7.9) satisfy the criterion of deixis. The situation is located clearly in the past or future with respect to the deictic zero-point, which would normally be interpreted as being the moment of utterance.³ The other examples require, in varying degrees, additional qualification in the form of a linguistic (or possibly non-linguistic) context. (7.8) and (7.11) clearly locate the situation in the past, (7.10) in the future, but the deictic zero-point is not the MOU,

² Seen from a logical-philosophical point of view, present time does not exist as such. It is not possible to localize such a point of time as the NOW which appears in time diagrams. How long does it last? A second? A tenth or a hundredth of a second? As soon as one says 'now' it is past. The concept of PRESENT necessarily includes part of the past and even part of the future.

³ We are here disregarding any possible 'modal' meanings of these verb forms, such as the preterite in if-clauses.

and must be supplied elsewhere. (7.5) and (7.7) are temporally ambiguous as they stand. Clearly, the temporal reference is not inherent in these verb forms. From the point of view of deixis the WILL-FUTURE and the PrP clearly have a stronger claim to tensehood than such forms as the NON-PAST.

(7.4) I spoke to John.

(7.5) I speak to John.

(7.6) I will speak to John.

(7.7) I would speak to John.

(7.8) I had spoken to John.

(7.9) I have spoken to John.

(7.10) I will have spoken to John.

(7.11) I would have spoken to John.

Grammaticalization must involve some kind of modification of the verb form. There are two basic ways of modifying verb forms: a) by morphological modification, which involves inflection of the verb stem, and b) by syntactic modification or periphrasis, which involves the use of an auxiliary (sometimes in conjunction with a morphological modification of the main verb). Although, as mentioned above, many grammarians have chosen to limit the concept of grammaticalization of the verb form to morphological modification alone, there is no logically necessary reason for doing so, especially in view of the fact that it has been suggested that the Germanic preterite ending itself might possibly have developed from a periphrastic form, along the lines: I WORK DID → I WORKED.⁴ And why should inflectional forms not precede the verb? If the auxiliary in the PrP was considered a prefix and the verb form was written as one word: I HAVEWORKED, HE HASWORKED, would this count as inflection and therefore as grammaticalization?⁵ There is no convincing argument for not regarding the syntactic modification of the verb as grammaticalization. In fact not to do so would lead to the absurdity of having to accord tensehood to the preterite in the active

⁴ See Baugh – Cable (1978: 61).

⁵ Various languages, for example the Slavic family, have inflectional prefixes.

voice but not to the preterite in the passive voice, the passive being a periphrastic form.

According to the criteria established by Lyons, the PrP is a tense. It locates the event which is being described as being prior to the deictic zero-point, which for the PrP is the moment of utterance, and it does this by the semantic grammaticalization of the verb, so that the statement X HAS VERBED has an unequivocal deictic reference.

7.1.2 What is aspect?

The difficulties of defining aspect and delimiting it from tense are apparent in this passage taken from Comrie (1976: 5):

Aspect is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation; one could state the difference as one between situational-internal time (aspect) and situation-external time (tense). In a sentence like *John was reading when I entered* it might seem that the different forms do serve a deictic function of locating my entry internally to John's reading, but this apparent deictic function is only a secondary consequence of the different ways in which they view the internal constituency of the situations referred to: since *was reading* places us internally to the reading situation, therefore naturally when we are presented with another situation given to us as a unified whole without internal constituency, this new situation is located temporally at that point in time where we already are, namely internally to John's reading.

Thus Comrie presents aspect as being on a kind of secondary (internal) time level. Tense locates the situation initially with relation to the MOU. Once placed in time, aspect governs the temporal relationships between individual events or elements belonging to that situation. In (7.12) the simple aspect in MADE locates the event after GOT HOME. The expanded form in (7.13) indicates that the event had commenced previously and was in progress at GOT HOME.

(7.12) When I got home, Mary made a cup of tea.

(7.13) When I got home, Mary was making a cup of tea.

However, not all aspectual classes are concerned with purely temporal relationships. Telicness, for example, is not essentially a temporal category and it is doubtful whether Comrie's definition can be made to fit all types of aspect. More recent writers on the subject of aspect such as Moens (1987) and Smith

(1991) are more wary of trying to give abstract definitions in two or three sentences, preferring instead to provide taxonomies and pragmatic classifications. Indeed, it is without doubt easier to understand what is meant by aspect by considering some concrete examples.

(7.14) John has arrived.

(7.15) John has cleaned the car.

The complex events described in (7.14) and (7.15) are presented as single entities. (7.14) is perceived as being instantaneous, whereas (7.15) will be interpreted as having a certain duration. The process which precedes (7.14) does not form part of the proposition, in (7.15) the process is included. Both events involve the production of resultative states.

(7.16) John walked to school.

(7.17) John was walking to school.

(7.16) refers to a complete event with a goal and provides the information that this goal was achieved. (7.17) describes part of the same type of event without any information as to whether the goal was reached or not. Smith (1991) differentiates between two basic types of aspectual class: situation type and viewpoint. (7.14) and (7.15) are examples of situation type aspect, which is realized by the whole verb constellation. (7.16) and (7.17) represent examples of aspectual viewpoint which presents situations from a particular perspective. (7.16) presents a full view, (7.17) a partial view of the event. This aspectual viewpoint is realized by the simple and expanded forms.

Numerous aspectual classes have been identified; examples include initiation and termination, perfectiveness and imperfectiveness, telicness, duration, punctuality, iteration, uniqueness, anteriority, posteriority, completiveness, continuativeness, progressiveness, recentness and habit. Many languages, notably the Slavic languages, have a complex system of verbal inflections for expressing and distinguishing such aspectual classes. Many languages combine aspect with tense, for example, French *il lut* and *il lisait*, Spanish *leyó* and *(él) leía*. Although these forms are traditionally referred to as tenses, the difference is one of aspect, and it

would be more accurate to refer to them as tense-aspect forms. Givón (1984: 272 ff.) and others have also stressed the indivisibility of tense and aspect.

Indeed, some of the aspectual classes mentioned above, especially anteriority and posteriority, display a conspicuous proximity to the category of tense. Tense is, as was seen above, the temporal location of events before or after the deictic zero-point. In this sense tense can be regarded as just another type of aspectual class. This deictic aspect can be combined with other aspects, just as more 'conventional' aspects such as habitual and progressive aspects or habitual and iterative aspects can combine freely.

Comrie (1976: 82-83) describes a number of West African languages in which there are no tense markers but which do have markers for aspect and points out that there is a close relationship between imperfect aspect and present time, and between perfective aspect and past time. Comrie concludes:

It is not unlikely to speculate that a very similar system obtained at a late stage in the prehistoric development of Indo-European, with aspect being marked overtly and time reference at best a secondary consequence of aspectual distinctions.

It would, therefore, not be unreasonable to speculate that what we now call tense originally developed out of aspectual values of the verb form. Far from aspect being a kind of second-level tense, tense is simply another type of aspect - the deictic aspect.

7.1.3 Conclusions

The distinction between tense and aspect is arbitrary and unwarranted. As Quirk et al. (1985: 189) and others have pointed out: "the distinction in English grammar between tense and aspect is little more than a terminological convenience which helps us to separate in our minds two different kinds of realization: the morphological realization of tense and the syntactic realization of aspect." This "terminological convenience" is unnecessary and misleading. English, like many other European languages, has a tense-aspect system of verb forms, or more precisely, a system of verbal constellations and associated situations which can express various aspectual classes. These verbal structures can never be regarded in isolation, however, but must be seen in the context of the interplay between their

aspectual and semantic values and the other linguistic and non-linguistic elements which constitute the utterance in its entirety. It is this interplay which gives the utterance its ultimate meaning.

7.2 The values of the verb form

Table 7.2
The values of the verb form

| VALUE | EXPRESSED BY | MEANING |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Deictic value | Morphological/syntactic marker | Location of event time frame? |
| Phragmatic value | Morphological/syntactic marker | Time frame open or closed? |
| Semantic-aspectual value | Verb phrase | Dynamic or stative? ERC? Process or instantaneous? |
| Durational value | BE –ING | Continuative, progressive? |
| Agentive value | BE –EN | Active or passive voice? |
| Modal value | Modal auxiliary Subjunctive form | Factual or possible? |
| Contextual and interactive value | Subject Object Temporal specifier | Iterative? Indefinite? Progressive? |
| Pragmatic value | Location Experience Intuition World-knowledge | Current relevance? Resultative? Recent? |

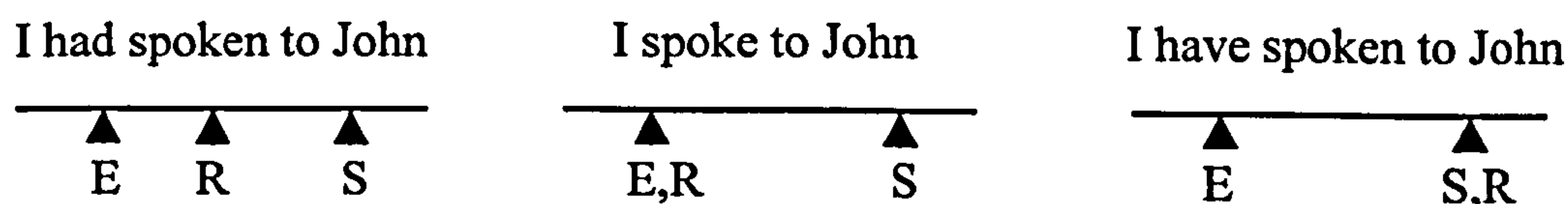
In order to avoid the confusion traditionally surrounding the concepts of tense and aspect, I propose to speak for the time being simply of the values of verb forms⁶ or verb phrases. I have argued that tense is a type of aspectual class, and therefore it would also be consistent to speak of the ‘aspectual values’ of the verb phrase. The model of verb form values presented in Table 7.2 is a result of the analysis of the PrP. It is presented here divorced from the PrP, however, as most of the values described, possibly all, would appear to be of universal relevance.

⁶ Throughout this investigation I have referred to ‘verb forms’ rather than ‘tenses’. I have nothing against the expression ‘tense’ as such, but do not wish to confer on it a special status which it does not warrant but which is implied by the use of this term.

The verb phrase forms the nucleus of the utterance.⁷ The meaning of an utterance is the product of its aspectual and semantic values and their interplay with the other elements of the utterance including pragmatic aspects. A verb form can have a number of values, not all of which are realized in every utterance. The possible values for verb forms are listed in Table 7.2. The first six are inherent to the verb form, although the exact interpretation of an individual value is often dependent on its interplay with other values as will be seen below.

7.2.1 The deictic value

Verb forms can locate the event time frame with relation to the deictic zero-point. I will here make use of Reichenbach's scheme of notation in order to illustrate this. Reichenbach (1947) shows that each tensed verb form expresses the relationship between three temporal positions. The three positions he identifies are the event (E), the point of reference (R), and the point of speech (S).⁸ Different verb forms relate E, R, and S in different ways:



It should be pointed out, however, that such time diagrams are misleading in that they appear to indicate that events are located at specific points in time by linguistic means. This is only very rarely the case, and in such cases the locating is achieved with temporal specifiers such as AT SIX O'CLOCK YESTERDAY and not by the verb forms. The great majority of temporal specifiers such as YESTERDAY, IN 1998, FOR TWO WEEKS refer to time frames within which the event is perceived to have taken place. Verb forms themselves can only indicate event time frames relative to the MOU and the deictic zero-point, as can be seen from utterances which do not contain temporal specifiers.

⁷ I am not suggesting, of course, that every utterance contains a verb form, but to paraphrase Lyons, it is an empirical fact that most do.

⁸ The point of reference corresponds to the deictic zero-point, the point of speech to the MOU.

7.2.2 The phragmatic value

The concept of phragmatisation is central to the model of the PrP which is presented in this chapter. The term has been coined (from Greek *phragma* – fence) to indicate an event time frame which is closed or fenced off from the deictic zero-point. In the discussion of phragmatisation later in this chapter I will argue that the preterite displays a phragmatic value which has the effect of separating the event time frame from the MOU, whereas the PrP displays an aphafragmatic value which entails that the event time frame remains open to the deictic zero-point at MOU. Anybody choosing an aphafragmatic discourse topic, or perceiving it to be such, will encode the topic using the PrP. A phragmatised event time frame allows, but does not necessarily entail, such concomitant features as remoteness, completedness, certainty and definiteness. An aphafragmatised event time frame allows, but does not necessarily entail, immediacy, current relevance, non-completedness or indefiniteness.

7.2.3 The semantic-aspectual value

One of the main factors for determining the meaning of an utterance is the semantic-aspectual value of the verb phrase. By this I mean not only the meaning of each individual verb qua lexeme, but also the aspectual class to which each particular verb belongs. The ERC verbs which were identified in the previous chapter are an aspectual class. In the taxonomy which is presented in section 7.4, I will argue that there are altogether six aspectual verb classes: ERC process (▶7.4.3), ERC semelfactive⁹ (▶7.4.4), non-ERC process (▶7.4.5), non-ERC semelfactive (▶7.4.6), transitory state (▶7.4.7) and stable state (▶7.4.8). The semantic-aspectual value plays a crucial role in determining the felicity of the PrP verb form and the individual readings.

7.2.4 The durational value

BE + ING can indicate the durational value of the verb form. It is important to stress that this is a possibility rather than a necessity, as the presence of BE + ING does not automatically express continuativeness or progression. While this might be the

⁹ Semelfactives are verbs such as ARRIVE or COUGH which express an instantaneous event without reference to a preliminary process or to an ensuing state.

case for the present expanded in (7.18), it is certainly not the case for the PrP expanded in (7.19), which as it stands would be interpreted as indicating a completed action. Sentence (7.19) requires further specification such as FOR TWO HOURS to give it a progressive reading, or SINCE HE WAS SIX YEARS OLD for a continuative meaning.¹⁰

(7.18) John is painting.

(7.19) John has been painting.

7.2.5 The agentive value

The presence of BE + -EN indicates that the subject is not to be regarded as the agent.

7.2.6 The modal value

The presence of a modal auxiliary in the verb form or the use of a subjunctive form will indicate how the utterer judges the event, or wants the event to be judged by others, i.e. they determine whether it is to be regarded as factual or possible.

7.2.7 The contextual and interactive value

The presence of temporal specifiers can fundamentally affect the reading of the verb form. A temporal specifier from Class 3 such as OFTEN or TWICE will change the unique reading into an iterative reading. The presence of SINCE will turn an existential reading into a continuative or progressive. The interpretation is dependent on the interplay of the temporal specifier with the specific type of aspectual class displayed by the verb phrase. Other words or phrases in the sentence can also introduce modality. Examples of such phrases are IF, IT'S HIGH TIME, I WISH etc.

The subject and, if present, the object of the verb can also affect the reading. A plural subject in connection with an ERC semelfactive verb, for example, will

¹⁰ In the model of the PrP presented in this chapter a distinction is made between the progressive reading, which implies that the event is actually in progress at MOU, and the continuative reading, which refers to an event which has taken place at least once in the past, which is not in progress at MOU, but which, it is assumed, will be resumed in the future.

introduce an iterative reading, as can be seen in (7.20). Sentence (7.21) demonstrates the infelicity of the expanded form with ERC semelfactives (in the ‘pure’, non-iterative sense).

(7.20) Guests have been arriving all afternoon.

(7.21) *John has been arriving all afternoon.

The presence of an object, or the type of object involved, can also change the aspectual class of the verb phrase. As was mentioned above, SPEND MONEY is an ERC process whereas SPEND TIME is non-ERC.

7.2.8 The pragmatic value

The situation in which a verb form is used, the fact, for example, whether it is a reaction or response to something perceived or experienced, can influence the interpretation of the utterance. Depending on the context, proposition (7.22) can lead to numerous interpretations (above and beyond the logically necessary result of the car being clean) such as those given in (7.22a) – (7.22c). These are examples of the so-called resultative reading of the PrP. As was shown in the previous chapter, this reading is not inherent in the PrP verb form *per se* and is dependent on the pragmatic context.

(7.22) I’ve cleaned the car.

(7.22a) And now it’s sparkling.

(7.22b) Now I’m tired.

(7.22c) So you can pay me now.

Numerous propositions involving the PrP will be interpreted as referring to recent events, not because this is inherent in the verb form or indicated by the semantic-aspectual value, but because of the fact that the statement involves the description of an event which is often reported as news soon after the event. (7.23) would normally be interpreted as involving recentness, while (7.24) is neutral in this respect.

(7.23) John has got married.

(7.24) John has been to America.

The analysis and interpretation of any proposition must take the values described above into consideration. Not all of them will, of course, be present in every utterance, but all verb forms will display a semantic-aspectual value, and will always have a pragmatic context. In addition, preterite and PrP verb forms always possess deictic and phragmatic values.

7.3 Phragmatisation

Phragmatisation and aphaugmatisation are the underlying and holistic principles of the preterite and PrP verb forms respectively. All utterances encoded in the preterite express events which are perceived by the utterer to have taken place in a closed or phragmatic time frame. This perception is necessarily subjective, but not subjective in the sense that the utterer can arbitrarily choose to close or open time frames at will. Somebody talking about Einstein and knowing that Einstein is dead will of necessity choose a verb form which expresses a phragmatic time frame. The utterer's choice is limited by constraints of truth and grammatical and pragmatic convention.¹¹ A person learning and talking about Einstein and not knowing that he is dead might use the PrP, but as soon as they learn of his decease, they will resort to using the preterite. Another way of expressing this is to say that the discourse topic is phragmatic. TALKING ABOUT THINGS WHICH EINSTEIN DID DURING HIS LIFETIME (7.25) constitutes a phragmatic discourse topic. TALKING ABOUT EINSTEIN'S THEORIES AND PERCEPTIONS, however, which are still discussed today (7.26), can be aphaugmatic and thus encoded in the PrP. In such instances the utterer does have a certain amount of choice in that she can focus her utterance on the event which took place during Einstein's life-span thus making the use of the preterite perfectly possible and felicitous (7.27).

(7.25) Einstein emigrated to the United States.

(7.26) Einstein has shown that space and time form a continuum.

(7.27) Einstein showed that space and time form a continuum.

¹¹ These constraints and the question of what factors necessitate the phragmatisation of the time frame and thus the choice of the preterite are discussed in section 7.5.

Choosing a pragmatic discourse topic and encoding in the preterite can, and often does, have implications involving such aspects as remoteness, certainty and definiteness.

An utterer perceiving an event to have happened in an a pragmatic time frame will encode his statement using the PrP. An a pragmatic time frame is not ‘fenced off’ from the deictic zero point, which for the PrP is the moment of utterance. A pragmatic is the principle which underlies such diverse readings of the PrP as seen in (7.28) – (7.34). These examples are taken from the detailed model which is outlined in the following section. All the propositions cited below are examples of a pragmatic discourse topics, either because the time frame is not defined or because the time frame extends up to the MOU. Depending on the interplay of the various values of the verb form which were outlined above, the proposition can have various readings involving such interpretations as immediacy, current relevance, indefiniteness, iteration, habit, completedness or non-completedness.

(7.28) John has cleaned the car.

COMPLETED, NON-ITERATIVE, INDEFINITE, FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT (►7.4.3)

(7.29) John has cleaned the car for twenty years.

CONTINUATIVE, ITERATIVE, DEFINITE, REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT/HABIT (►7.4.3)

(7.30) John has been cleaning the car since 9 o’clock.

PROGRESSIVE, NON-ITERATIVE, DEFINITE, ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS (►7.4.3)

(7.31) John has been coughing all day.

CONTINUATIVE, ITERATIVE, DEFINITE, REPEATED ACTIVITY/INTERRUPTED (►7.4.6)

(7.32) John has been captain.

COMPLETED, NON-ITERATIVE, INDEFINITE, FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE (►7.4.7)

(7.33) John has been captain twice.

COMPLETED, ITERATIVE, INDEFINITE, REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE (►7.4.7)

(7.34) John has known him for twenty years.

PROGRESSIVE, NON-ITERATIVE, DEFINITE, STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS (►7.4.8)

The idea of a pragmatic is not new. Many writers have commented on the fact that “the period containing the action extends from some time in the past until now” (Chalker, 1984: 102), although most have mistakenly used this idea to

overstate the importance of the “present reference” of the PrP.¹² The two previous major works on the PrP, McCoard (1978) and Elsness (1997), arrive at similar conclusions concerning the central meaning of the PrP. McCoard (1978: 123) describes what he calls the “extended now theory”:

... at several points we argued the merits of an analysis of the perfect as the marker of prior events which are nevertheless included within the overall period of the present, the “extended now,” while the preterit marks events assigned to a past which is concluded and separate from the extended present.

Elsness (1997: 66) comes to the same conclusion:

On the view we have adopted, the essential difference between the present perfect and the preterite is definable as a difference in the way the two verb forms express temporal reference: the preterite is typically used if the situation is somehow tied to a past-time anchor, while the present perfect is used if the situation involved is seen as located at some unspecified time within a past period which extends all the way up to the deictic zero-point, and, of course, if the situation itself extends up to zero.

Both writers reject, as we have done, other theories of the PrP, such as current relevance and indefinite past, as being readings which stem not from the inherent semantic value of the PrP, but are rather an interpretation of the values at varying levels of the utterance containing the PrP verb form.

What is new is the realisation of aphragmatisation as a fundamental and unifying aspectual value of the PrP. Aphragmatisation as the location of an event within a time frame which is open to the deictic zero-point, and as the natural expression of a discourse topic which is not fenced off from the MOU is the key to the understanding of the PrP. The aphragmatic model satisfies the criteria of exclusiveness, inherence and holism for verb form theories which were established in Chapter 6. It refers exclusively to the PrP because the time frame is aphragmatic to the deictic zero-point at MOU, something which cannot be achieved with any other verb form. It is inherent in that it derives its meaning from the PrP verb form alone, and does not rely on any concomitant values or features. Any aphragmatic discourse topic will be automatically encoded in the PrP. Any proposition encoded

¹² Only the very end of the aphragmatic time frame is connected to the ‘present’. The overwhelming portion is located in the past.

in the PrP will automatically be interpreted as referring to an event within an aphragmatic time frame. It is holistic because it applies to every utterance involving the PrP.¹³ On its own, however, it does not explain all the possible readings of the PrP. As was seen in the previous chapter, readings involving such aspects as indefiniteness, continuativeness, resultativeness (or the lack of these aspects) are definitely possible in PrP utterances. In order to explain these readings a more extended model will be presented in the following section. As a pedagogical model aphragmatisation is useful because it is relatively easy to explain and understand. What is more difficult for the learner to discern is that there are sometimes circumstances which proscribe the use of the PrP which are not immediately obvious. This will be dealt with in section 7.5.

7.4 The extended model of the PrP

At the fundamental level the PrP was seen to express a past event in an aphragmatic time frame. Other levels of the verb form combine to give the utterance its final reading. Foremost among these is the semantic-aspectual value. The discussion of the situation aspect of the verb constellation goes back to Vendler (1967).¹⁴ In his classic article Vendler distinguishes between four aspectual classes: activities (*run, walk*), accomplishments (*paint picture, clean car*) achievements (*arrive, reach top*) and states (*be, know*). A further category was introduced by Smith (1991) – the class of semelfactives.¹⁵ Semelfactive verbs typically refer to very short events (*cough, tap, jump*). When used with the expanded form semelfactives indicate iteration. The taxonomy presented here is a further development of the Vendler/Smith model. Taking the analysis of the PrP as

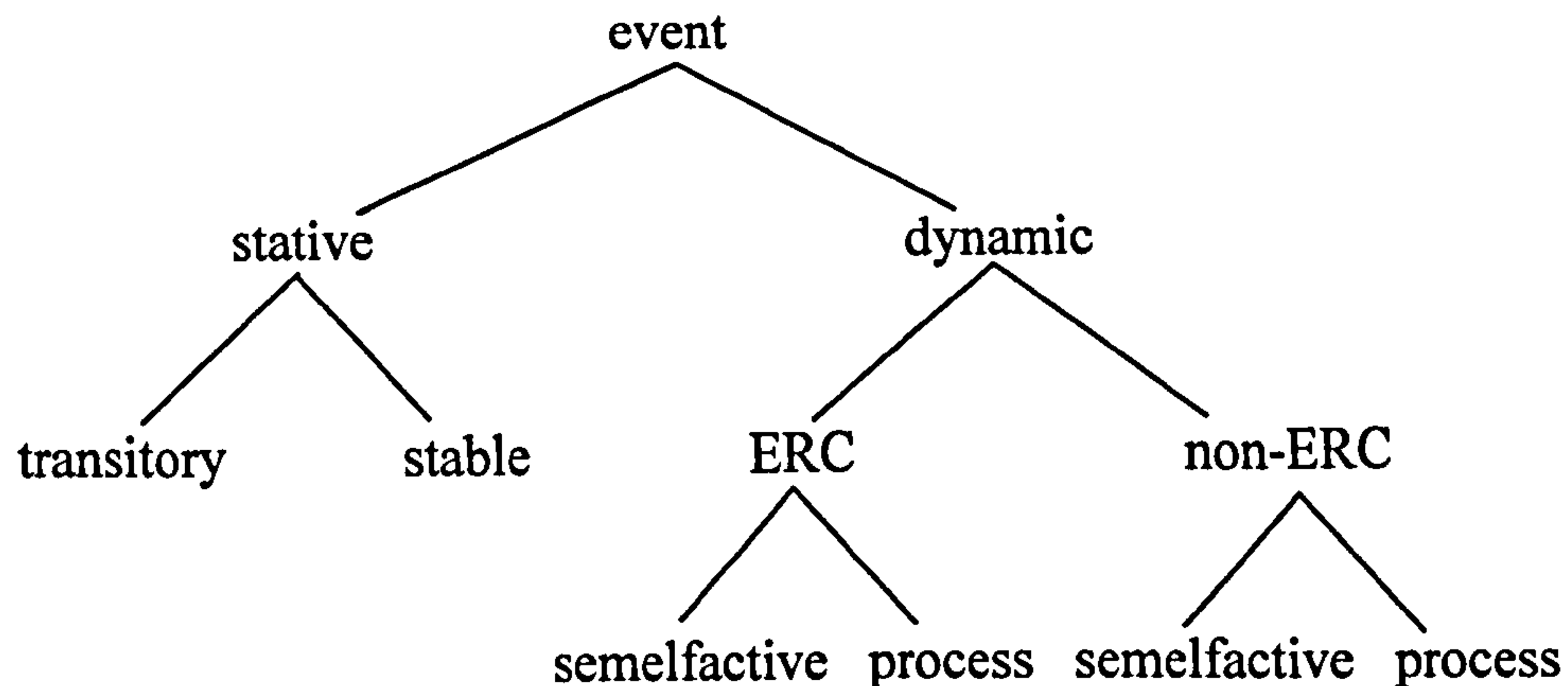
¹³ We are here ignoring the very infrequent occurrences of the PrP with phragmatic temporal specifiers such as YESTERDAY, ... AGO which were found in the corpora and which are generally considered to be infelicitous. As was stated in section 6.2.9, these specifiers are usually offered as an afterthought, the speaker obviously feeling the need for subsequent temporal precision without revising the verb form already used.

¹⁴ In fact Dowty (1986: 51) traces the beginnings of this aspectual classification back to philosophers such as Gilbert Ryle, and even as far back as Aristotle.

¹⁵ The term ‘semelfactive’ (from Latin *semel* once + *facere* to do) expresses “the sudden and single occurrence of an action” (OED). It was first used in Slavic linguistics.

its starting point, it stresses the importance of the concept of the event-result continuum for the semantic-aspectual value of the individual verb constellation.

Fig. 7.1
The hierarchy of aspectual classes



Apart from the central role played by the ERC versus non-ERC distinction for dynamic events, there are two further main differences between this model and Vendler/Smith. Firstly, the model has been terminologically and taxonomically systematised in that the Vendler/Smith category of achievements is shown to be a class of semelfactive verb – ARRIVING or REACHING THE TOP are as instantaneous and non-durative as COUGHING or JUMPING. Activities and accomplishments, which both have duration, are classed as processes. Secondly, the class of statives is divided into verb phrases expressing transitory states and those expressing stable states. This distinction is necessary to account for differences in the felicity of stative verb phrases involving the PrP in various combinations with other values. A direct comparison of this model with Vendler/Smith is seen in Table 7.3.¹⁶ Smith assigns each aspectual class a positive or negative static, durative and telic value. This is rendered unnecessary by the taxonomy presented here: ERC situation types are by definition telic (or mutative), processes and states are automatically durative, and states are, naturally, stative. Further descriptions of the aspectual classes together with examples are given in the corresponding sections.

¹⁶ I have retained the Vendler/Smith terminology of activity, accomplishment and achievement to express the probable readings of the individual examples. See section 7.4.2.

Table 7.3
Taxonomies of the aspectual classes

| Class | Vendler/Smith | | | This model |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|--|
| | Static value | Durative value | Telic value | |
| Activity | - | + | - | Non-ERC process |
| Accomplishment | - | + | + | ERC process |
| Achievement | - | - | + | ERC semelfactive |
| Semelfactive | - | - | - | Non-ERC semelfactive |
| State | + | + | - | a. Transitory states b. Stable states |

Although it is relatively easy to provide introspective examples of verb phrases which fit into the individual categories, it is often very difficult to analyse authentic occurrences and allocate each to a specific aspectual class. For example, does the verb UNDERSTAND in extract [7.1] express a stative or a dynamic event? Is it perhaps both - a dynamic event leading to a stative psychological result?

[7.1] What's already destined to happen is a massive increase in the consumption of coal," a senior administration official said. "Their scientists **have understood** where this is heading."
[WASHPOST: 1105]

This difficulty applies especially to the distinction between ERC and non-ERC verbs, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, but also to the difference between ERC processes and ERC semelfactives and between transitory and stable states. In order to facilitate classification, I have designed a number of discriminatory tests (see Table 7.4) which have proved helpful. These questions are in part standard procedures for recognising different verb categories (2, 3), question 1 was utilised in the functional-semantic analysis in Chapter 6. The remainder were devised to differentiate between different types of semelfactives and states (4, 5).

1. Does the situation have a logically necessary resulting state? A positive response will indicate an ERC situation.
2. Is it sensible to ask the question *How long has X VERBed?* or *How long has X been VERBing?* A negative here will indicate an ERC semelfactive.
3. Is the expanded form possible? A negative answer will point to a state.
4. Does the expanded form automatically indicate iteration? A positive here will indicate a non-ERC semelfactive.

5. If the situation is a state, does it make sense to ask *Has X VERBed?* A negative response will point to a stable state.

Table 7.4
Discriminatory tests for aspectual classes

| How long? | Log. nec Result? | Exp. form? | Exp. = Iteration? | Has X VERBed? | Aspectual class | Example |
|-----------|------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| + | + | + | - | + | ERC process | <i>clean car</i> |
| - | + | - | - | + | ERC semelfactive | <i>reach top</i> |
| + | - | + | - | + | Non-ERC process | <i>run</i> |
| + | - | + | + | + | Non-ERC semelfactive | <i>cough</i> |
| + | - | - | - | + | Transitory state | <i>be captain.</i> |
| + | - | - | - | - | Stable state | <i>know s.o.</i> |

As can be seen from Table 7.4 the discriminatory tests are designed to provide a unique fingerprint for each of the six aspectual classes. It should be borne in mind, however, that when applied to real language, the answers are not always as clear-cut as one would wish. Questions 1 and 5 are sometimes especially difficult to answer. Let us take the example given in extract [7.1]. Does the situation entail a logically resulting state? I think most people would agree that if one has understood something, then there is a necessary psychological result. So the statement “Their scientists have understood where this is heading” involves an ERC verb. On the other hand, UNDERSTAND is not normally used in the expanded form which would point to a state. Nevertheless I would argue that at least part of the process of understanding is dynamic. A search of the corpora produced the following example from the USACAD corpus:

[7.2] And that was our concern, that it was giving us a bad reputation, and that faculty relations between students and teachers would be impaired by it.
<SP>BROWN:</SP> Okay, I think **I'm understanding**. I think I may know what part of the report you're talking about as well.

Having established that UNDERSTAND is a dynamic ERC verb, we move on to question 2. Is it sensible to ask “How long has X understood?” The answer is yes, and so we conclude that UNDERSTAND is an ERC process.

The extended model of the PrP looks at each of the six aspectual classes first without additional specification and then in connection with various temporal

specifiers.¹⁷ It examines first the simple, then, if applicable, the expanded form and analyses the implications of the interplay of aspectual values with regard to duration, iteration, time frame (TF) reference and total reading. It also demonstrates the syntactic implications of the various aspectual combinations.

7.4.1 Classification of temporal specifiers

The classification of temporal specifiers used in the extended model is based on the classification presented in section 5.2. The following groups and individual specifiers were used:

TS1 – temporal specifiers expressing completion at an indefinite time in the past, for example, ALREADY.

TS2 – temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time close to the MOU. The particular temporal specifier examined was JUST.

TS3 – the group of temporal specifiers expressing iteration was subdivided into two classes, as in some aspectual contexts there were seen to be differences in felicity: group TS3a expresses an indefinite number of repetitions, for example OFTEN, TS3b expresses an exact number of repetitions, for example, TWICE.

TS4 – this important group of temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to the MOU was examined very closely. The following combinations were analysed:

SINCE; SINCE + OFTEN; SINCE + TWICE; ALWAYS

FOR1 = FOR + short period of time lasting up to the MOU, e.g. *for two minutes*

FOR2 = FOR + period of time completed in the past, as in *Have you ever held your breath for two minutes?*

FOR3 = FOR + long period of time lasting up to the MOU

TS5 – temporal specifiers headed by ALL. The particular temporal specifier examined was ALL DAY.

¹⁷ Moens (1987) calls such temporal specifiers which can change the reading of the verb form “aspectual adverbs”. Higgins (1982, 272), in connection with the temporal specification expressed by the past perfect, demonstrates that this is also true of what might be termed “aspectual conjunctions”.

TS6 – temporal specifiers expressing a period which lasts up to and extends beyond the MOU, for example, TODAY.

TS7 – temporal specifiers headed by AT. The particular temporal specifier examined was AT 9 O’CLOCK.

It should be pointed out that this is a model which is designed to show how the interpretation of the PrP is derived from the various aspectual values at work in the utterance. It is not intended to cater for every possible PrP occurrence. Temporal specifiers from the same group may sometimes have a slightly different affect on the probable reading, as can be seen from the examples with TS3a and TS3b. The lexical value of individual verb phrases will affect acceptability in some combinations. Sometimes real world knowledge will also make some forms unacceptable. (7.35) is perfectly feasible whereas (7.36) is hardly acceptable, unless breath-holding was considered to be some kind of sport or hobby.

(7.35) John has been holding his breath for two minutes.

(7.36) ?? John has been holding his breath for twenty years.

A further example of the impact of real world knowledge is seen in the comparison of sentences (7.37) and (7.38). In contrast to cleaning a car, writing a particular letter is not an event which is usually repeated. However, it must be stressed that the infelicity of such a sentence is not inherent in the specific aspectual class to which it belongs.

(7.37) John has often cleaned the car.

(7.38) ?? John has often written the letter.

7.4.2 The individual readings

The individual examples were examined with respect to duration, iteration, time frame (TF) reference and probable total reading (►7.4.3 – 7.4.8). The various possibilities for each category are shown in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5
The categories of the extended PrP model

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Completed | Iterative | Definite | A. Finished event |
| Continuative | Non-iterative | Indefinite | B. Repeated event/habit |
| Progressive | | | C. Event in progress |
| | | | D. Interrupted event |

Occasionally the same proposition has different possible readings. This is especially the case in combination with SINCE and FOR, and with the PrP expanded without specification. In such instances both readings are considered. Examples which are introspectively regarded as unlikely (?), very unlikely (??), or infelicitous (*) are marked accordingly. Authentic occurrences from the corpora are quoted in order to back up the introspective examples and their readings. Sometimes no matching occurrence was located in the corpora, even though the example seems perfectly felicitous. In those cases where numerous samples were available, the best match was chosen. Some samples deviate slightly in meaning from the given examples.

7.4.3 Verbs expressing ERC processes

An ERC process describes a situation in which a particular activity is undertaken in order to bring about a specific result. Examples of ERC processes are WRITE A LETTER, CLEAN A CAR, BUILD A BUSINESS, MAKE A CUP OF TEA, PAINT A PICTURE, PRICES RISE or PRICES FALL. ERC processes allow virtually all combinations with aphragmatic discourse topics, both in the simple and expanded forms, even if some instances do appear rather unlikely, at least with reference to the verb phrase used in the examples.

EVENT IN APHRAGMATIC TIME FRAME

+

ERC PROCESS: *clean the car*

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|---|------|
| 1. | | | John has cleaned the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| But momentum is what the Valley has. If you want to build that here, you need people who have built successful businesses to stick around ... | | | | |
| TIMES: 521 | | | | |
| 2. | TS1 | | John has already cleaned the car | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| ... new industry bodies that have already drawn up new standards for products as varied as gas appliances and medical equipment. | | | | |
| TIMES: 56 | | | | |
| 3. | TS2 | | John has just cleaned the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| But this raises a very interesting paradox which you have just yourselves produced that the sort of sentences that people seem happiest with are precisely the ones that seem to function as substitute scales ... | | | | |
| BRITMIX: 297 | | | | |
| 4. | TS3a | | John has often cleaned the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 5. | TS3b | | John has cleaned the car twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| One WPC has twice had her vehicle rammed by youths on the Halton Moor estate, east Leeds. | | | | |
| TIMES: 764 | | | | |
| 6. | SINCE | | John has cleaned the car since 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| Since the Jan. 27 announcement, the company's stock (BDX on the New York Stock Exchange) has climbed 15 percent to close at \$49.37 1/2 on Friday. | | | | |
| WASHPOST: 431 | | | | |
| 7. | TS3a | SINCE | ? John has often cleaned the car since 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 8. | TS3b | SINCE | John has cleaned the car twice since 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 9. | ALWAYS | | John has always cleaned the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT/ HABIT | B |
| Well 'cos we've always kept our options open of being able to use Yeah yeah. the mai the mainframe. | | | | |
| BRITMIX: 519 | | | | |

The two following examples illustrate different readings arising from the ambiguity of FOR. 10a is unlikely because most utterers would certainly prefer to

encode using the expanded form. 10b is an example of a reading which crops up regularly in introspective argumentation, but which is probably so rare as to be negligible.

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---|--|------|
| 10a. | FOR1 | ? John has cleaned the car for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | EVENT IN PROGRESS | C |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 10b. | FOR2 | ? John has cleaned the car for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 11. | FOR3 | John has cleaned the car for twenty years. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT/ HABIT | B |
| For 122 years, G.H. Bass & Co. has made shoes in Wilton, population 4,000 WASHPOST: 770 | | | | |
| 12. | TS5 | ? John has cleaned the car all day. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | EVENT IN PROGRESS | C |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 13. | TS3b | TS5 | ? John has cleaned the car all day twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 14. | TS6 | John has cleaned the car today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| I mean for as many years as we can remember Council have run four displays each November ... This year they've cut it back they've had one. BRITRADIO: 607 | | | | |
| 15. | TS7 | John has cleaned the car at 9 o'clock. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| Tampa, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, La., and Charleston, S.C., have recorded record rainfall at some point during the fall or winter. WASHPOST: 896 | | | | |
| 16. | TS3b | TS7 | John has cleaned the car at 9 o'clock twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |

17a and 17b indicate the fundamental ambiguity of the reading of the non-specified expanded PrP with ERC processes. Normally only the pragmatic value or real world knowledge can disambiguate the situation. The two readings are clearly demonstrated by the samples from the corpora. In 17a the activity of PULL IN IMPORTS – is clearly still in progress, or at least will be continued in the future, whereas the event WRITE ANSWERS DOWN in 17b cannot be interpreted as being

either progressive or continuative. Depending on viewpoint perspective 17a will sometimes be interpreted as an iterative event.

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--|------|
| 17a. | -ING | | John has been cleaning the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | ACTIVITY INTERRUPTED | D |
| So we've been pulling in imports, and they have not been. | | | | |
| WHPRESS: 29 | | | | |
| 17b. | -ING | | John has been cleaning the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| Erm and twelve if you suddenly find that the person at the bus stop has been writing your answers down [laughter] er particularly if they ask you to sign it at the end | | | | |
| BRITMIX: 400 | | | | |
| 18. | -ING | TS1 | ?? John has already been cleaning the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 19. | -ING | TS2 | John has just been cleaning the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A |
| But er BBC I've just been recording the Thunderbirds by the way. | | | | |
| BRITRADIO: 910 | | | | |

As can be seen from the next two examples the expanded PrP with ERC processes would appear to be incompatible with temporal specifiers expressing iteration. However, in combination with SINCE and FOR it can indicate iteration in the sense of habit, as is demonstrated in example 24.

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--|------|
| 20. | -ING | TS3a | ?? John has often been cleaning the car. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 21. | -ING | TS3b | ?? John has been cleaning the car twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 22. | -ING | SINCE | John has been cleaning the car since 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | EVENT IN PROGRESS | C |
| I've been collecting annuals since since early sixties you know it was my hobby. | | | | |
| BRITRADIO: 924 | | | | |
| 23. | -ING | FOR1 | John has been cleaning the car for two minutes. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | EVENT IN PROGRESS | C |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 24. | -ING | FOR3 | John has been cleaning the car for twenty years. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |
| There are members of Congress who have been staunchly supporting action to end Japanese discrimination against U.S. autos and parts for at least 10 years. | | | | |
| WHPRESS: 388 | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|---|------|--|
| 25. | -ING | TS5 | John has been cleaning the car all day. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type | |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | EVENT IN PROGRESS | C | |
| We've been telling you all day today that there are right ways and wrong ways to cut the federal government ... | | | | | |
| WHPRESS: 142 | | | | | |

26a and 26b again indicate the ambiguity of the expanded PrP with ERC processes. Even the sample from the corpora does not make it clear whether the utterer intends the event to be viewed as continuative (or even progressive) or completed although the use of the expanded present in the first part of the sentence would seem to indicate the latter.

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--|------|--|
| 26a. | -ING | TS6 | John has been cleaning the car today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type | |
| CONTINUATIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY INTERRUPTED | D | |
| Lockerbie of course is still making the news and has been making the news today. | | | | | |
| BRITRADIO: 917 | | | | | |
| 26b. | -ING | TS6 | John has been cleaning the car today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type | |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A | |
| Lockerbie of course is still making the news and has been making the news today. | | | | | |
| BRITRADIO: 917 | | | | | |
| 27. | -ING | TS7 | ? John has been cleaning the car at 9 o'clock. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type | |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT | A | |
| No occurrence | | | | | |

7.4.4 Verbs expressing ERC semelfactives

ERC semelfactives express the achievement of a certain aim. They are not concerned with the process which leads up to this achievement and are non-durative and instantaneous. Sentence (7.39) makes no sense.

(7.39) * How long has John been reaching the top?

ERC semelfactives, in their basic, non-durative meaning,¹⁸ are not compatible with the expanded form or with durative adverbials such as SINCE and FOR. Examples of ERC semelfactives are LOSE SOMETHING, FIND SOMETHING, WIN A GAME, DIE, RECOGNIZE. ERC semelfactives allow only a limited number of propositions involving the PrP.

¹⁸ See also section 7.2.7.

EVENT IN APHRAGMATIC TIME FRAME

+

ERC SEMELFACTIVE: *reach the top*

28. John has reached the top.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT | A |

And our view is that the parties have reached the point where they see a negotiated solution in sight ...
WHPRESS: 759

29. TS1 John has already reached the top.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT | A |

Many White House workers have already discovered one financial headache, Seidman said.
WASHPOST: 514

30. TS2 John has just reached the top.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT | A |

Well in actual fact we've just come back from a COPE concert in Leicester.
BRITRADIO: 480

31. TS3a John has often reached the top.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT | B |

... and perhaps inspired by the bloody example of Algeria, where civilians have often died in mass killings ascribed to Islamic extremists.
WASHPOST: 510

32. TS3b John has reached the top twice.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT | B |

No occurrences

33. SINCE John has reached the top since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT | A |

The District has lost nearly 78,000 residents since 1990, according to a recent U. S. Census Bureau report,
WASHPOST: 753

34. TS 3a SINCE ?? John has often reached the top since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT | B |

No occurrences

35. TS3b SINCE John has reached the top twice since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT | B |

No occurrences

36. ALWAYS John has always reached the top.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT | B |

No occurrences

37a. FOR1 * John has reached the top for two minutes.

No occurrences

37b. FOR2 * John has reached the top for two minutes.

No occurrences

38. FOR3 * John has reached the top for twenty years.

No occurrences

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|--|----------------|
| 39. | TS 5 | * John has reached the top all day. | | |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 40. | TS 3b | TS5 | * John has reached the top all day twice. | |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 41. | TS 6 | John has reached the top today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT | A |
| Everybody's ransacked the estate they've people have walked miles tonight | | | | BRITRADIO: 577 |
| 42. | TS 7 | John has reached the top at 9 o'clock. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT | A |
| It might be something that er you've come across in the news at the weekend today er something locally you want to raise and have your two penn'orth on ... | | | | BRITRADIO: 204 |
| 43. | TS 3b | TS7 | John has reached the top at 9 o'clock twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |

The following infelicitous examples are included to demonstrate the fundamental incompatibility of the expanded PrP with ERC semelfactives (with singular subjects) whatever the combination.

| | | |
|-----|-------|--|
| 44. | | * John has been reaching the top. |
| 45. | TS1 | * John has already been reaching the top. |
| 46. | TS2 | * John has just been reaching the top.. |
| 47. | TS3a | * John has often been reaching the top. |
| 48. | TS3b | * John has been reaching the top twice. |
| 49 | SINCE | * John has been reaching the top since 9 o'clock. |
| 50. | FOR1 | * John has been reaching the top for two minutes. |
| 51. | FOR2 | * John has been reaching the top for twenty years. |
| 52. | TS5 | * John has been reaching the top all day. |
| 53. | TS6 | * John has been reaching the top today. |
| 54. | TS7 | * John has been reaching the top at 9 o'clock. |

7.4.5 Verbs expressing non-ERC processes

Non-ERC processes are activities which have no specific or logically necessary result – they identify the pure event itself. In contrast to semelfactives they are durational and allow all aspectual combinations with the PrP. This fact is supported by the large number of authentic samples from the corpora. Examples of non-ERC process are RUN, WALK, PUSH, PLAY, DRIVE.

EVENT IN APHRAGMATIC TIME FRAME

+

NON-ERC PROCESS: *run*

55 John has run.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

I think it's easier certainly we've been more successful in Bouncers than we have in Shakers in the way that the men have played women.

BRITMIX: 779

56. TS1 John has already run.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

Where do you store your stuff over the summer? So we hope that that is going to be successful. It's had two meetings already, and they are excitedly working.

USACAD: 1080

57. TS2 John has just run.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

Let me introduce the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, Richard Holbrooke, who's just attended the meeting between the Prime Minister and the President.

WHPRESS: 335

58. TS3a John has often run.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

... American citizens participating in rebuilding the economic life of communities that have very often faced hard economic times, obviously, especially in urban areas.

WHPRESS: 529

59. TS3b John has run twice.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

Mr. Dole's regulatory reform bill -- he's tried cloture three TIMES: now, and he hasn't been able to invoke cloture and apparently has now rejected a very reasonable and modest proposal ... put forward by the Democrats.

WHPRESS: 612

60a. SINCE John has run since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS | C |

No occurrences

60b. SINCE John has run since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

The other thing I want to mention, though, is that the other thing that has occurred in the meantime since this debate all began ...

USACAD: 177

61. TS3a SINCE ?? John has often run since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

No occurrences

62. TS3b SINCE John has run twice since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

No occurrences

63. ALWAYS John has always run.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|------|
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |

Erm the other interesting thing and then I'll I'll I'll I'll probably shut up is I've always written from my own point of view.

BRITMIX: 730

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 64a. | FOR1 | John has run for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS | C |
| The prince accompanied the Duke of Edinburgh to the Shetlands ..., a visit twice postponed from Monday by the storms that have lashed the north for days. | | | | TIMES: 1270 |
| 64b. | FOR2 | John has run for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 65. | FOR3 | John has run for twenty years. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |
| I mean I've driven coaches now for forty years and on motorways on on roads on the continent and I've still got I've seen coaches pass me. | | | | BRITRADIO: 527 |
| 66. | TS5 | John has run all day. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS | C |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 67. | TS3b | TS5 | John has run all day twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 68. | TS6 | John has run today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| But I there was once again one another programme that I was I I put it on tape er this morning I've watched it tonight. | | | | BRITRADIO: 759 |
| 69. | TS7 | John has run at 9 o'clock. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| So now we have to come back and say We've done Bouncers at Christmas what percentage has it played to it's played to eighty-three per cent thank you very much. | | | | BRITMIX: 740 |
| 70. | TS3b | TS7 | John has run at 9 o'clock twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| In addition to the well-known meltdowns of '29 and '87, October has hosted lesser-known nose-dives in 1937, 1978, 1979 and 1989 | | | | WASHPOST: 693 |
| 71. | -ING | John has been running. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| I think I just botched his formal title, but we've been working on a couple of issues together and he wants to speak to us about the Carolina Course Review quickly. | | | | USACAD: 16 |
| 72. | -ING | TS1 | John has already been running. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| And Vice President Gore has already been traveling around the country extensively visiting some of the empowerment zones. | | | | WHPRESS: 527 |
| 73. | -ING | TS2 | John has just been running. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| Someone has obviously just been drinking champagne midday. | | | | BRITMIX: 809 |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|---|------|
| 74. | -ING | TS3a | John has often been running. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 75. | -ING | TS3b | John has been running twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| We have been running shopping trips almost daily, but now we expect demand to rocket," said Michael Harris TIMES: 131 | | | | |
| 76. | -ING | SINCE | John has been running since 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS | C |
| Privately, even Senate Democrats appeared divided over the bill, which has been circulating in draft form among senators since last Friday. WASHPOST: 126 | | | | |
| 77. | -ING | FOR1 | John has been running for two minutes. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS | C |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 78. | -ING | FOR3 | John has been running for twenty years. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |
| For 40 years I've been going to Broadway, and this is the first time I've seen a Latino show WASHPOST: 1145 | | | | |
| 79. | -ING | TS5 | John has been running all day. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS | C |
| It honors our students who we've been working with all year. USACAD: 268 | | | | |
| 80. | -ING | TS6 | John has been running today. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| I've been speaking to a driver tonight and why not about time BRITRADIO: 360 | | | | |
| 81. | -ING | TS7 | ?? John has been running at 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |

7.4.6 Verbs expressing non-ERC semelfactives

Non-ERC semelfactives are relatively short events which have no logically necessary result. They are non-durative but in contrast to the ERC semelfactives they allow the expanded form and combinations with SINCE and FOR without restriction, which then indicate an iterated event or habit. Examples of non-ERC semelfactives are COUGH, SNEEZE, JUMP, KNOCK, TAP, ANNOUNCE, ASK, CITE, DENY.

EVENT IN APHRAGMATIC TIME FRAME

+

NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE: cough

82. John has coughed.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

Erm I have invited [VVN2] the manageress erm to a meeting next Wednesday at twelve o'clock.
BRITMIX: 230

83. TS1 John has already coughed.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

- Hello MX. - Hello. - Yes MX. - Erm actually I have met you before. I don't know if you remember at er you at Selly Park Tavern we did a do for the Dogs' Home.
BRITRADIO: 915

84 TS2 John has just coughed.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

I have met recently with the Student Congress
USACAD: 522

85 TS3a John has often coughed.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

RAPHEL: Let me repeat what we've often said on this very question, and that is that we believe that Pakistan could assemble a relatively small number of nuclear devices on relatively -- in a relatively short time frame.
WHPRESS: 291

86 TS3b John has coughed twice.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

The chairmen of British Rail and BAA have twice met John MacGregor, the transport secretary, over the past few months in failed efforts to reach a compromise.
TIMES: 453

87a SINCE ?? John has coughed since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

No occurrences

87b SINCE John has coughed since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |

We have seen, since January, a concerted and orchestrated effort to roll back 25 years of health and environmental protections.
WHPRESS: 499

88 TS3a SINCE John has often coughed since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

No occurrences

89 TS3b SINCE John has coughed twice since 9 o'clock.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|------|
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |

Since the existence of Lewinsky's tape-recorded conversations was first reported 12 days ago, Ginsburg has bounced from "Burden of Proof" to "Nightline" (twice) to "Meet the Press" (twice) to "Dateline" to "20/20,"
WASHPOST: 397

90 ALWAYS John has always coughed.

| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|------|
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |

I've always said that I'd quite like to see it played by men erm but I l'm glad it wasn't done by men initially because I think erm having women playing erm the husbands their own husbands and relatives in it erm it helped to focus the play.
BRITMIX: 698

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|
| 91a | FOR1 | ? John has coughed for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/INTERRUPTED | D |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 91b | FOR2 | ?? John has coughed for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 92 | FOR3 | John has coughed for twenty years. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |
| - Not just for me tonight because of what's happened I've said it for years and I think - Okay FX. - that's what we should be doing. BRITRADIO: 587 | | | | |
| 93a | TS5 | John has coughed all day. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACT./INTERRUPTED | D |
| The President has said all along that this is something that states ought to have the right to try. WHPRESS: 587 | | | | |
| 93b | TS5 | John has coughed all day. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| The President has said all along that this is something that states ought to have the right to try. WHPRESS: 587 | | | | |
| 94 | TS3b | TS5 | ?? John has coughed all day twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 95 | TS6 | John has coughed today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| This won't require laborious negotiations. It's more the symbolism in formalizing what has happened today which, of course, is the key event. WHPRESS: 473 | | | | |
| 96 | TS7 | ? John has coughed at 9 o'clock. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| I've said at the beginning of the year that one of the things that I'd like to do is take some time as best we can arrange it at each faculty council meeting to open up some serious discussion USACAD: 1016 | | | | |
| 97 | TS3b | TS7 | John has coughed at 9 o'clock twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| I've seen [VVN1] them with the the rabbits in this country as who are coming up to very quickly to er erm a numerous problem that they are in Australia. BRITRADIO: 296 | | | | |
| 98 | -ING | John has been coughing. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| You are not sure you've been clear about whose side you're on. (Kirby has been saying you should look neutral; better for credibility but you aren't neutral). WASHPOST: 143 | | | | |
| 99 | -ING | TS1 | ?? John has already been coughing. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY | A |
| Their next meeting, I believe, will be in Paris on the way home. VOICE: Tomorrow? PELLETREAU: But they have been meeting previously on this subject as well. WHPRESS: 276 | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------|---------------------------------|------|
| 100 | -ING | TS2 | ? John has just been coughing. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 101 | -ING | TS3a | ? John has often been coughing. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 102 | -ING | TS3b | ? John has been coughing twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| We have been running shopping trips almost daily, but now we expect demand to rocket," said Michael Harris TIMES: 131 | | | | |

In the next two examples it is difficult to decide whether the utterer regards the act of coughing as being in progress at MOU. Both the continuative and progressive readings are possible. The same consideration applies to a number of examples on this section, for example 106a.

| | | | | |
|---|-----------|--------------|--|------|
| 103 | -ING | SINCE | John has been coughing since 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/INTERRUPTED | D |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 104 | -ING | FOR1 | John has been coughing for two minutes. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/INTERRUPTED | D |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 105 | -ING | FOR3 | John has been coughing for twenty years. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT | B |
| The two sides will now resume efforts to find a compromise through a government-appointed committee that has been meeting for five months. WASHPOST: 156 | | | | |
| 106a | -ING | TS5 | John has been coughing all day. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/INTERRUPTED | D |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 106b | -ING | TS5 | John has been coughing all day. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | A |
| The six Task Force committees have been meeting all semester. USACAD: 544 | | | | |
| 107 | -ING | TS6 | John has been coughing today. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 108 | -ING | TS7 | ?? John has been coughing at 9 o'clock. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY | B |
| He has been getting to the arena at 4: 30 p.m. for 7 p.m. games in order to work on his outside shooting. WASHPOST: 174 | | | | |

7.4.7 Verbs expressing transitory states

Transitory states are states which can be changed relatively easily by will-power or by external agency. For example, if a person is in Bali, that person can choose to go somewhere else. If a person owns a car, they can sell it, or it may be stolen. These are examples of transitory states. If a person is tall or a woman, or knows a certain person, it is much more difficult to alter these situations. These are stable states. Some states such as BELIEVE or LIKE are borderline cases, since it is possible to persuade oneself to believe something or to like somebody or vice versa. Examples of transitory states are BE CAPTAIN, BE ANGRY, HAVE, POSSESS, OWN.¹⁹ Transitory states do not admit the expanded form, but they readily allow all combinations with the simple form.

| EVENT IN APHRAGMATIC TIME FRAME + TRANSITORY STATE: <i>be captain</i> | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| 109. | | John has been captain. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE | A |
| On my left we have Mr Anthony Sargent who was formerly from the BBC and he's also been director of artistic projects at the South Bank Centre in London and he's now head of arts ... BRITMIX: 7 | | | | |
| 110. | TS1 | John has already been captain. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 111. | TS2 | John has just been captain. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 112. | TS3a | John has often been captain. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE | B |
| Although October has been Wall Street's most notorious party crasher, it has often been generous to investors. WASHPOST: 377 | | | | |
| 113. | TS3b | John has been captain twice. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |

¹⁹ Following Carlson (1977: unpublished PhD dissertation), Smith (1991: 33) also identifies these two types of stative situation. "Carlson argues that predicates which denote relatively stable properties, such as [be extinct], [be a beaver], hold of individuals and are 'individual-level' predicates. Predicates such as [be available], [be angry], denote transitory properties. They are 'stage-level' predicates. The distinction has many ramifications in syntax and semantics."

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---|--|-----------------|
| 114. | SINCE | John has been captain since Christmas. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| China has been a net importer of petroleum since 1993 ... | | | | WASHPOST: 161 |
| 115. | TS3a | SINCE | John has often been captain since Christmas. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 116. | TS3b | SINCE | John has been captain twice since Christmas. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 117. | ALWAYS | John has always been captain. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| Er I mean I think we've we've always been part of Europe we've been afraid to recognize it. | | | | BRITRADIO: 1161 |
| 118a. | FOR1 | John has been captain for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| the problem being for me is that they've been on sale for three weeks | | | | BRITRADIO: 574 |
| 118b. | FOR2 | John has been captain for two minutes. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 119. | FOR3 | John has been captain for twenty years. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| For 41 years, ambassadors have been the whipped cream on this confection, and a diplomat can still make a killing selling history and charm | | | | WASHPOST: 332 |
| 120. | TS5 | John has been captain all day. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| Yeah but I it's been a bit cloudy all year | | | | BRITRADIO: 280 |
| 121. | TS3b | TS5 | John has been captain all day twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 122a. | TS6 | John has been captain today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE | A |
| Oh we've just been down to Liverpool it's been absolutely hectic down there today | | | | BRITMIX: 588 |
| 122b. | TS6 | John has been captain today. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| You know I've been really upset today I've really got run down I've been unhappy. | | | | BRITMIX: 592 |

| | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|---|------|
| 123. | TS7 | John has been captain at Christmas. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE | A |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 124. | TS3b | TS7 | John has been captain at Christmas twice. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE | B |
| No occurrences | | | | |

7.4.8 Verbs expressing stable states

As was pointed out in the previous section it is not easy to alter stable states. If you know somebody, it is virtually impossible to forget them by sheer willpower. If a man is tall, there is very little he can do about it, apart from perhaps a body-shortening operation. The distinction between transitory and stable states is important because, as can be seen from the following examples, stable states are incompatible with certain aspects such as iteration and with certain groups of temporal specifiers which are perfectly felicitous with transitory states. The aspectual class of stable states is the only one which does not allow a non-specified PrP proposition. It is very difficult to imagine a situation in which statements (7.40) and (7.41) would be deemed felicitous.

(7.40) ?? John has known him.

(7.41) ?? John has been tall.

The determining characteristic of the stable state PrP proposition is that all examples judged to be felicitous refer to an event which is in progress at MOU, a further indication of the stability of the members of this aspectual class.

EVENT IN APHRAGMATIC TIME FRAME
+
STABLE STATE: *know s.o.*

| | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------|
| 125. | ?? John has known him. | | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | ?? | ? |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 126. | TS1 | ?? John has already known him. | | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | ?? | ? |
| No occurrences | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|---|------|
| 127. | TS2 | | * John has just known him. | |
| 128. | TS3a | | * John has often known him. | |
| 129. | TS3b | | * John has known him twice. | |
| 130. | SINCE | | John has known him since Christmas. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| I told her, 'I've known David Pryor almost since from the time you were born, and that's what he wants,' recalled Robert Wright. | | | | |
| WASHPOST: 724 | | | | |
| 131. | TS3a | SINCE | * John has often known him since Christmas. | |
| 132. | TS3b | SINCE | * John has known him twice since Christmas. | |
| 133. | ALWAYS | | John has always known him. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| Now it didn't tally with me it didn't tally with my experience of working-class life and I've always remembered that. | | | | |
| BRITMIX: 733 | | | | |
| 134a. | FOR1 | | John has known him for two minutes. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| No occurrences | | | | |
| 134b. | FOR2 | | * John has known him for two minutes. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | ?? | ? |
| 135. | FOR3 | | John has known him for twenty years. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| The killing took place as Mr Urquhart and Miss lamspithone, 36, who have known each other for four years, left a public house. | | | | |
| TIMES: 289 | | | | |
| 136. | TS5 | | ? John has known him all day. | |
| Duration | Iteration | TF Reference | Probable reading | Type |
| PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS | C |
| We have believed all the time that a successful resolution of the issues in autos and auto parts will be beneficial both to Japan and to all of Japan's trading partners. | | | | |
| WHPRESS: 370 | | | | |
| 137. | TS3b | TS5 | * John has known him all day twice. | |
| 138. | TS6 | | * John has known him today. | |
| 139. | TS7 | | * John has known him at Christmas. | |
| 140. | TS3b | TS7 | * John has known him at Christmas twice. | |

7.4.9 The readings of the PrP

Against the background of the aphrasegmatic discourse topic/aphrasegmatic event time frame, and in combination with the other aspectual values of the utterance, there are three basic readings of the PrP. It expresses either a) a finished event, b) an iterated finished event, or c) an event which has started in the past and is either in progress or interrupted at MOU. An event which has been repeated over a long period of time is often regarded as a habit.

7.4.9.1 Reading A – finished event

Table 7.6
The finished event reading

| ASPECTUAL CLASS + EX. | DURATION | ITERATION | TIME FRAME | READING |
|--|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|
| ERC PROCESS John has cleaned the car | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT |
| ERC PROCESS John has been cleaning the car. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT |
| ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has reached the top. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has run. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has been running. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has coughed. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has been captain. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE |
| ERC PROCESS John has cleaned the car today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT |
| ERC PROCESS John has been cleaning the car today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT |
| ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has reached the top today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACHIEVEMENT |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has run today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has been running today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has coughed today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED ACTIVITY |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has been captain today. | COMPLETED | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | FINISHED TRANSITORY STATE |

The finished events reading is found with ERC and non-ERC processes, with ERC and non-ERC semelfactives and with transitory states. They have completed duration and are non-iterative. Most of the events described take place in an indefinite time frame, occasionally, when temporal specifiers such as SINCE or TODAY are used, the time frame is definite.

7.4.9.2 Reading B – repeated event

As in the case of finished events, the repeated event reading is found with all aspectual classes except for the stable state. It has completed or continuative duration, it is iterative and is found with indefinite and definite time frames. Together with the temporal specifier ALWAYS and longer periods with FOR and SINCE, the proposition described has continuative duration and will often be interpreted as a habit. This is dependent on the type of event being described.

Table 7.7
The repeated event reading

| ASPECTUAL CLASS + EX. | DURATION | ITERATION | TIME FRAME | READING |
|---|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------|
| ERC PROCESS John has often cleaned the car. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT |
| ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has often reached the top. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has often run. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has often coughed. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has been coughing. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has often been captain. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE |
| ERC PROCESS John has cleaned the car twice since 9 o'clock. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT |
| ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has reached the top twice since 9 o'clock. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACHIEVEMENT |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has coughed twice since 9 o'clock. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has been coughing all day. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has been captain twice since Christmas. | COMPLETED | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED TRANSITORY STATE |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has been coughing for twenty years. | CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/HABIT |
| ERC PROCESS John has been cleaning the car for twenty years. | CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/ HABIT |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has been running for twenty years. | CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/ HABIT |
| ERC PROCESS John has always cleaned the car. | CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | REPEATED ACCOMPLISHMENT/ HABIT |

7.4.9.3 Reading C – event in progress

The event in progress reading is found with ERC and non-ERC processes and with transitory and stable states. As mentioned above, it is often difficult to decide whether an event is progressive or continuative. For example, sentence 104 (*John has been coughing for two minutes*) was classified as continuative because of the semelfactive nature of the event, but it is of course feasible that the event is in progress at MOU.

The parameters for events in progress readings are very consistent: progressive, non-iterative and definite. The only exception to this are utterances containing ALWAYS which has been classified as an indefinite temporal specifier, although in

the pragmatic context of the proposition, ALWAYS probably refers consistently to a definite period as is demonstrated in (7.42) and (7.43).

(7.42) John has always been captain (= since he has been at the club).

(7.43) John has always known about it (= since it started).

Table 7.8
The event in progress reading

| ASPECTUAL CLASS + EX. | DURATION | ITERATION | TIME FRAME | READING |
|--|-------------|---------------|------------|------------------------------|
| ERC PROCESS John has been cleaning the car since 9 o'clock. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | EVENT IN PROGRESS |
| NON-ERC PROCESS John has been running since 9 o'clock. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has been captain since Christmas. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has been captain for twenty years. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS |
| STABLE STATE John has known him since Christmas. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS |
| TRANSITORY STATE John has always been captain. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | TRANSITORY STATE IN PROGRESS |
| STABLE STATE John has always known him. | PROGRESSIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | STABLE STATE IN PROGRESS |

7.4.9.4 Reading D – event interrupted

The event interrupted reading is found with ERC processes and non-ERC semelfactives. In connection with the semelfactives it indicates a repeated activity which is probably interrupted at MOU, and which will be resumed. Most examples involve the expanded form, however, the simple form is also theoretically possible.

Table 7.9
The event interrupted reading

| ASPECTUAL CLASS + EX. | DURATION | ITERATION | TIME FRAME | READING |
|---|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| ERC PROCESS John has been cleaning the car. | CONTINUATIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | INDEFINITE | ACTIVITY INTERRUPTED |
| ERC PROCESS John has been cleaning the car today. | CONTINUATIVE | NON-ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | ACTIVITY INTERRUPTED |
| NON-ERC SEMELFACTIVE John has been coughing all day. | CONTINUATIVE | ITERATIVE | DEFINITE | REPEATED ACTIVITY/ INTERRUPTED |

7.5 Phragmatisation and anaphora

The concept of phragmatisation is closely linked to the concept of anaphora. The preterite is used to refer back to a time frame during which a certain state of events is asserted to have held. In the words of Michaelis (1994: 115):

The preterite is anaphoric in that preterite-form assertions locate a situation at a 'definite' past interval: a time which has either been previously evoked in the discourse or is contextually recoverable. Preterite-form assertions are said to 'refer back' to a linguistic or extra-linguistic temporal antecedent.

The preterite is deictic and anaphoric. The PrP is deictic but not anaphoric. The preterite refers back to a phragmatic (closed, definite) event time frame. The PrP describes events in aphragmatic (open, usually indefinite) time frames. Even in the case of definite time frames with such as SINCE, FOR or TODAY the event time frame is open to the deictic zero point at MOU and therefore cannot be referred back to.

One of the most difficult things for learners of English is not to grasp the idea of phragmatisation, but to understand when the event time frame must be closed, in what circumstances it must be left open, and when the utterer has a choice depending on her perception of the event situation. The 'understanding' of the PrP/preterite dichotomy is often reduced to a by-rote learning of 'tense markers'. As was seen in Chapter 5, many of the traditional 'tense markers' for the PrP are extremely unreliable, and learners geared towards tense markers are often at a loss if no specifiers are present, which is the case in the majority of occurrences. The key to understanding the phragmatisation of the time frame is anaphora. The relationship between the two works in both ways: in order to be able to refer back anaphorically to an event, its time frame must be closed, and, in the absence of overriding features such as linguistic or non-linguistic parameters, anaphoric reference will by itself serve to close a time frame, that is to say, if the utterer encodes with the preterite, this will be interpreted by the utterer as anaphoric reference to a phragmatic time frame. Anaphoric reference can be facilitated in a number of ways: a) by temporal reference, b) by non-temporal reference, c) by pragmatic presupposition, d) by the perception of an event being located in a closed time frame and therefore the choice of a phragmatic discourse topic. These

points are closely linked, and basically the first three could be subsumed under the fourth, but the role of anaphora is perhaps best illustrated by the division given above.

7.5.1 Temporal specification

The connection between certain temporal specifiers and specific verb forms is well-known and well-documented. With respect to temporal specifiers and the preterite we must distinguish two groups, firstly the group of adverbials which are used exclusively with the preterite,²⁰ and secondly, those which are used predominantly with the preterite and occasionally with the PrP. The first group contains unambiguous specifiers which refer to a unique time frame which either has an absolute reference such as IN 1998, ON MAY 4TH 1999, DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, or has a unique reference relative to the deictic zero point/MOU such as YESTERDAY, THREE MONTHS AGO, LAST NIGHT. These specifiers refer to a unique pragmatic time frame and allow only the preterite. The second group contains ambiguous specifiers which are usually tacitly assumed to have a deictic reference to MOU, thus admitting only the preterite, but which can also refer to regularly recurring time periods, such as AT NOON, IN SEPTEMBER, ON TUESDAY.²¹ In this case the PrP is possible.

(7.44) I was in New York in September.

(7.45) I have been to New York in September.

The temporal specifier in (7.44) refers to a unique closed time frame (= LAST SEPTEMBER) which forces anaphoric reference. The utterance is therefore encoded with the preterite. The temporal specifier in (7.45) does not refer to a specific September but rather to one or more possible Septembers (= OF A SEPTEMBER). In this case anaphoric reference is not forced, there is no unique closed time frame, and the PrP is admitted.

²⁰ Exclusively, that is, with respect to a straight PrP/preterite choice, disregarding past perfect and other possibilities.

²¹ Such a 'cyclic' reference would probably be realized by expressions such as ON A TUESDAY or ON TUESDAYS.

7.5.2 Non-temporal specification

There are many situations in which anaphoric reference is forced by a more indirect method than that of temporal reference. As was seen in Chapter 6, the fact that Einstein is known to be dead proscribes the PrP when the discourse topic is TALKING ABOUT THINGS EINSTEIN DID. Such a topic will close the time frame and force anaphoric reference. Other examples of such indirect, non-temporal reference are seen in (7.46) and (7.48). TALKING ABOUT JOHN'S BIRTH is a closed-frame discourse topic which forces anaphoric reference. The aphragmatic discourse topic TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE BEING BORN IN HOTELS in (7.47) does not require anaphora. In (7.48) and (7.49) the contrast is between TALKING ABOUT JOHN MEETING MARY FOR THE FIRST TIME (or on a particular occasion which is specified elsewhere) and TALKING ABOUT MEETINGS BETWEEN JOHN AND MARY, THE MEETING PLACE IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE BEING HEIDELBERG. In both (7.47) and (7.49) the iterative implication excludes anaphoric reference.²²

(7.46) John was born in a hotel.

(7.47) Many people have been born in a hotel.

(7.48) John met Mary in Heidelberg.

(7.49) John has met Mary in Heidelberg.

An interesting aspect of such indirect non-temporal specification is that often an event reference encoded in the PrP will itself suffice to close the time frame for ensuing elaboration. Elsness (1997: 45-46, 125-127) speaks of "new time and given time" pointing out that 'new time' is usually encoded in the PrP, 'given time' in the preterite. An example of such a situation is given in [7.3].

[7.3] Enoch Powell, a former government minister best known for his 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech on the dangers of immigration, has died. He was 85. Powell, who also was a scholar and historian, died Sunday in a London hospital where he was being treated for Parkinson's disease, said his wife Pamela.
[TIMES: 511]

This type of PrP utterance, identified by McCawley (1971) as the 'hot news' present perfect, is very common in newspapers and news bulletins. At the

²² This is not to say, of course, that iteration never allows anaphoric reference. This is perfectly possible with phragmatic specifiers: *John met Mary in Heidelberg on two occasions in 1999.*

beginning of the story the event time frame is still open (and is not closed by temporal specification). The description and introduction of the topic using the PrP pragmatises the time frame and the discourse topic, makes anaphoric reference available, and thus forces the preterite. Sample [7.3] shows quite clearly that, contrary to the claims of Inoue (1979) and Michaelis (1994), replicability of the discourse topic at MOU is not the key criterion here – the discourse topic THE DEATH OF ENOCH POWELL is clearly not replicable at MOU. Rather it is the aphrasegmatic event time frame which is the determining and underlying factor. The utterer does not suppose the utterer to have knowledge of the event (otherwise it would not be news) and therefore, as will be explained in the next section, chooses an aphrasegmatic time frame. Obviously, the further back in time an event is located, the greater the probability of pragmatic presupposition, and the greater the tendency to phrasegmatise the time frame.

7.5.3 Pragmatic presupposition

Another way of looking at the occurrence in [7.3] is to view the sample from the perspective of pragmatic presupposition. Pragmatic presupposition refers to a proposition encoded lexically or grammatically in a sentence which the utterer assumes that the utterer already has cognizance of at MOU. (7.50) pragmatically presupposes event (7.51) and it is the anaphoric reference to this presupposed event which proscribes use of the PrP.

(7.50) It was John who broke the window.

(7.51) Someone broke/has broken the window.

Therefore, if an event is not pragmatically presupposed, such as the death of Enoch Powell, this event is introduced and established in the PrP. Subsequent elaboration will necessarily be encoded in the preterite. Michaelis (1994: 144-145) gives (7.52) as an example of what she calls the ‘elaboration mode’, pointing out that the PrP in the second and third sentences would be infelicitous.

(7.52) Hayward police have arrested the prime suspect in last week’s string of laundromat robberies. Two off-duty officers confronted the suspect as he left a local 7-11. A back-up unit was called in to assist in the arrest.

Pragmatic presupposition also provides a clue to solving the classic dilemma of the broken leg. As has been pointed out above, both (7.53) and (7.54) are felicitous utterances involving a person with a plaster cast on his leg.

(7.53) A. Oh my goodness! What happened to you? B. I've broken my leg.

(7.54) A. Oh my goodness! What happened to you? B. I broke my leg playing football.

The questioner, seeing the cast, presupposes the event *Something has happened to B's leg* and consequently encodes her question in the preterite. In (7.53) the answer is encoded in the PrP because B lays the focus on introducing a new a pragmatic topic. B can regard it as new information because although A can see the cast, there are various possible explanations for it, torn ligaments or a broken ankle, for example. In (7.54) B is assuming that A will presuppose the event *B has broken his leg* or *B has had an accident* and now offers further anaphoric information which is encoded in the preterite.

There are a number of grammatical constructions whose function it is to provide or request additional information. Among these are cleft sentences and wh-questions. Most wh-questions presuppose a particular event. This is the reason why most questions headed by wh-words are encoded in the preterite. This is not to say that the PrP is totally excluded with wh-questions. In fact the PrP is frequently found with wh-questions aimed at ascertaining identity (7.55) or involving iteration. The implication of (7.56) is that the respondent has been in New York repeatedly, a possible answer being (7.57).

(7.55) Who's been using my computer?

(7.56) When have you been in New York?

(7.57) I've been in New York in September, in March, and in July.

Dinsmore (1981) and Michaelis (1994) point out that in connection with certain classes of verbs, (which we can identify as ERC verbs which have a tangible, visible result) nominal and pronominal anaphora exclude the PrP. In (7.58) the existence of the picture is not presupposed whereas in (7.59) the pronoun *it* refers anaphorically to the picture which presupposes a painting event. It would,

however, appear that the object in question has to be visible or tangible in order to be able to force anaphora as is demonstrated by (7.60) and (7.61).

(7.58) Look! John's painted a lovely picture.

(7.59) Look at this lovely picture. *John's painted it.

(7.60) Where have you hidden my watch?

(7.61) *Where have you found my watch?

Pragmatic presupposition can also refer to a non-linguistic event, that is to say, to an event which has hitherto not been linguistically encoded. The infelicitous sentences (7.62) and (7.63) are clear examples of non-linguistic events²³ which must be anaphorically referenced.

(7.62) *Have you seen that huge wasp fly by?

(7.63) *What have you just said?

As has been indicated, in all the examples quoted above, the PrP becomes available as soon as iteration is evoked, indeed it is the use of the PrP which distinguishes between a reference to a unique single event and a reference to multiple events, as shown by sentences (7.64) to (7.69).

(7.64) A: Where did they arrest the thief? B: They arrested him in Princeton.

(7.65) A: Where have they arrested the thief? B: They have arrested him in Princeton, in Berkeley and in Stanford.

(7.66) A: Where did you find my watch? B: I found it in the bathroom.

(7.67) A: Where have you found my watch? B: In the bathroom, in the garden and in the attic.

(7.68) A: Did you see that huge wasp fly by? B: Yes, I did.

(7.69) A: Have you seen that huge wasp fly by? B: Yes, many times.

Reference to multiple events in an aphantomatic time frame precludes anaphoric reference and thus forces the PrP. Reference to multiple events in a phragmatic time frame, however, will require the preterite. If for example the thief in (7.65) is now dead or has retired, the PrP will no longer be available.

²³ It should be noted that, although (7.63) refers to a speech act, the event which is anaphorically referenced <WHAT A JUST SAID> has not been lexico-grammatically encoded.

Interestingly, certain adverbs of manner can also serve to indicate pragmatic presupposition. The insertion of such an adverb into otherwise perfectly salient utterances (7.70) renders the PrP infelicitous, or at least questionable. ANGRILY in (7.71) appears to presuppose an external event which must be anaphorically referenced. That this event must be external to the agent is indicated by (7.72).

(7.70) The prime minister has called for an inquiry.

(7.71) ?? The prime minister has angrily called for an inquiry.

(7.72) The prime minister has reluctantly called for an inquiry.

7.5.4 Choosing an event time frame

The occurrences described in the previous three sections left the encoder with little or no choice, the verb form was forced by specification or presupposition. Often, however, the encoder is in a position to make a choice (sometimes conscious, usually intuitive) concerning time frame and discourse topic. If the utterer perceives, or chooses to perceive, an event to be in an aphrasegmatic time frame, or elects to assume pragmatic presupposition, he will choose the appropriate verb form. This is often the case when no explicit temporal specification is present, as was seen in the example of the broken leg in the previous section. Some temporal specifiers such as YESTERDAY and LAST WEEK will close the time frame. Others, like SO FAR, SINCE and YET will leave the time frame open. As was seen in Chapter 5 and in section 7.4 above, however, many temporal specifiers are not as unequivocal as these. This is where the individual circumstances and the individual perception of the encoder play a big role. This can be manifested on the idiolectal level but is more commonly influenced by dialect or sociolect. Take the example of JUST. As was seen in Chapter 5, there is a strong tendency to use the preterite with JUST in the American corpora, and just as strong a tendency in the British corpora to use the PrP. This can be interpreted in two ways. Either JUST is experienced by many American speakers as being strong enough to close the time frame, or there is a general tendency in some dialects to view finished events generally as occupying phrasegmatic time frames and therefore to use the anaphoric preterite to refer to them. Only events in progress or temporal specifiers perceived as strong aphrasegmatic time frame markers will force the PrP. As more and more dialectal corpora become available it will be possible to test whether such a

process is taking place. On the basis of the findings which were described in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, it can be claimed that the speakers and writers in the corpora under investigation here have a considerable element of choice with respect to the use of the PrP. It is, however, a choice which is limited by the constraints of grammar, pragmatics and truth.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter a model of the present perfect has been presented which is based on the central and unifying aspectual value of aphragmatisation. As such it satisfies the criteria of exclusiveness, inherence and holism. The expanded model of the PrP shows how the ultimate meaning of any PrP propositions depends on the interaction of different levels of aspectual values. This model explains and incorporates the aspects of previous theories which were found to be significant, such as indefiniteness, iteration and replicability.

The model is based on the three levels of meaning of the present perfect:

1. The core level concerns the deictic and aphragmatic aspects. The present perfect locates the event in past time in an open event time frame. This is the fundamental meaning of the present perfect on which the individual readings are based.
2. The next level is the situation and viewpoint aspect level. On this level aspectual elements (aspectual class of the predicate, expanded form, aspectual specifiers) combine with level 1 meaning to indicate such readings as accomplishment, achievement, dynamism, stativeness, iteration, continuativeness and progression.
3. The final level is the pragmatic level. In contrast to the first two levels this layer of meaning is not inherent in the linguistic utterance. At this level readings such as resultativeness, recentness or current relevance can emerge. Occasionally the pragmatic level is necessary to clarify continuative or progressive readings. Often pragmatic presupposition or real-world knowledge will determine whether an event time frame will be perceived as being phragmatic or not, thus precluding, enabling or forcing the use of the present perfect.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Overview of findings

In this section I would like to review the research questions which were set out in Chapter 1 and outline the relevant findings which this investigation has produced.

- Is the present perfect, as some writers have argued, becoming obsolete, both in American and British English?

The analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 did not produce any evidence to support this claim – the PrP is well represented in the corpora used in this investigation.

- Is the PrP losing ground against the preterite?

The frequency count of the PrP and preterite in the various corpora in Chapter 4 produced no evidence of this.

- Is the present perfect more frequent in American English than in British English?

The comparison of the use of the PrP in the American and British corpora in Chapters 4 and 5 did not lend support to this claim. Seen overall PrP occurrence is very similar in the two groups of corpora.

- Are the so-called marker words or signal words propagated by many pedagogical grammars reliable indicators for the present perfect? What is the co-occurrence of these temporal specifiers with the various verb forms?

The temporal specifiers analysis in Chapter 5 showed that one group of temporal specifiers – those unambiguous specifiers expressing a period of time lasting up to the moment of utterance (MOU) – demonstrates a high co-occurrence of the PrP. Others, such as those specifiers expressing a period of time which extends up to and beyond the MOU and are headed by THIS, have a very low PrP co-occurrence rate. Again, no significant difference was found between the American and British corpora with respect to the individual groups of temporal specifiers and co-

occurring verb forms with the sole exception of JUST which was seen to co-occur primarily with the preterite in the American and with the PrP in the British corpora.

- Do the various theories of the present perfect which have been postulated over the last 250 years stand up to rigorous scrutiny?

In Chapter 6 various theories of the PrP were examined and were seen to be unsatisfactory from a logical and, more especially, from a pedagogical point of view.

- Is there a holistic theory of the present perfect, i.e. is there an underlying meaning which is applicable to all instances of this verb form? How is the present perfect delimited from the preterite?

In Chapters 6 and 7 a model of the PrP was presented which is based on the concept of phragmatisation. According to this model the preterite is used to describe an event in a phragmatic or closed time frame prior to the deictic zero point at the MOU and which is 'fenced off' from the MOU and must therefore be anaphorically referenced. The PrP is used to refer to an event in an aphragmatic time frame prior to the MOU which, however, is open to the MOU and which therefore cannot be anaphorically referenced.

- How is it possible to explain the various readings of the present perfect which describe completed, continuative and iterative readings?

It was seen that the readings of the PrP are derived from a combination of meanings from three aspectual levels. At the core level all PrP propositions describe an event which takes place in an aphragmatic time frame prior to the MOU. More specific meanings emerge at the level of situation and viewpoint aspects and on the pragmatic level. This latter level is not inherent in the verb form PrP itself.

- What constraints are utterers subjected to in their choice of present perfect or preterite verb forms?

In Chapter 7 it was seen that utterers have a certain amount of choice as to when to use the PrP or the preterite, depending on psychological viewpoint and speech intention. This choice is, however, limited by the presence of elements such as

temporal specification and pragmatic presupposition, as well as truth considerations.

General conclusions

The concept of aspect is crucial for the understanding of verb forms, superseding and subsuming tense. More fundamentally, the ability to distinguish aspectual categories is a universal cognitive capacity which is central to the thought processes of human beings. It is one of the main ways in which we order the chaos of perceptual impressions which impinge upon our senses. Smith (1991: xv) describes the process of aspectual differentiation:

Human beings make aspectual distinctions quite automatically, without conscious thought. States, activities, etc. impress themselves on our notice, organizing the way we see the world. ... Evidence for this claim can be adduced from the field of language acquisition. Children make aspectual distinctions easily, without being taught. This fact suggests strongly that they are perceptually and cognitively based.

The earliest and most basic aspectual distinction made by young children is that between dynamic and stative events, which are very probably impressed on our consciousness by the perception of movement and non-movement respectively. However, it is very interesting to note that even the youngest of children are capable of even more subtle aspectual differentiation. Smith (1991) describes a study of Turkish children which demonstrates that even two-year-olds have an intuitive awareness of the distinction between atelic and telic/change-of-state verbs. It is just this distinction (between what I have termed ERC and non-ERC verb phrases) which was found to play a pivotal role in the meaning and function of propositions involving the PrP.

In matters concerning language, opinions formed on the basis of intuition should not be trusted. I started this thesis firmly convinced that it would prove that the frequency of the 'resultative' reading was wildly overestimated. As we have seen, it turned out that over 50% of all the PrP occurrences examined involved resulting states, albeit not in the way propagated by proponents of resultative theory. Often we have ideas and beliefs about language which do not correspond to linguistic reality. As explained in Chapter 1, I do believe that rationalist argumentation and thought experiments have an important role to play in linguistics, but I do not

believe that so-called ‘elicitation tests’ possess much linguistic merit. People do not know how they speak – their answers to questions about language are influenced by prejudice and the sometimes questionable wisdom of convention. To give one anecdotal example: an American friend of mine, an English teacher, once declared to me that he “never used the present perfect”. It was only after I taped a telephone conversation with him that he was forced to admit that he did in fact use the PrP quite frequently. I had to do this surreptitiously – if I had told him he was being taped, he would have monitored his language, and when we monitor our language, we speak differently from the way we would normally speak. It is almost as if, as in quantum mechanics, the very act of observation changes the characteristics of the object being observed.

It is not possible to make sweeping statements about the grammar of ‘American English’ or ‘British English’. The two forms are far too variegated to allow such generalisations. It is far more sensible to talk of ‘written British English as found in newspapers such as *The Times*’, for example. I must admit, however, that sweeping generalisations are much more spectacular and therefore very tempting.

Prospects

Like species, language is subject to natural selection. When two linguistic forms such as the PrP and the preterite compete for the same resources, an inevitable process begins. First, one form starts to become predominant, and the other will gradually begin to decline. In the spoken forms of most European languages, with the exception of Greek and Portuguese, and of course English, the periphrastic perfect has ousted the preterite as the dominant form for describing past events. The declining form is then forced to find a linguistic niche in which it can survive. For example, the preterite in German has evolved to become the formal alternative for describing past events. It is found predominantly in newspapers, prose and formal speech, but rarely in informal register. Whether it can survive indefinitely is another question. Already the perfect has begun to encroach and is found more and more in newspaper articles. It seems to be an inexorable law that major developments which first occur in the spoken language and are perhaps frowned upon as being substandard, will gradually find their way into the written language and are ultimately accepted as standard forms.

The development of the present perfect in English is an on-going process. As was seen in Chapter 2, the PrP evolved from a periphrastic form with adjectival meaning to compete directly with the preterite for the temporal past. In other European languages one of the two forms has come to dominate, whereas in English both verb forms still manage to coexist more or less harmoniously. The PrP has established itself in the area of aphasitic event time-frames, leaving phrasalised discourse topics to the preterite. This investigation produced no evidence to support the claim that the PrP was dying out, although the question of whether certain spoken dialects have developed in this direction cannot be answered at present. It is to be hoped that in the future more corpora of natural spoken language, especially of American English, will become available so that more light can be shed on the matter. My personal prognosis is that the PrP will become further specialised and one day will be restricted to co-occurrence with Group 4a temporal specifiers (adverbials expressing a period lasting up to the MOU). It will, however, be a long time until this development has established itself in those varieties of English known as Standard American and Standard British English.

Follow-up research issues

This investigation produced quite different findings with respect to the frequency of the PrP than the studies conducted by Elsness (1997). Although I have confidence in my data due to the large sample taken, it would be interesting to see if the statistics can be corroborated by findings from investigations using other corpora.

The availability of dialectal corpora in the British National Corpus and the Survey of Dialectal English will make it possible to test the hypothesis that the PrP is less prevalent in dialects of English than in 'standard' varieties. The setting up of a reliable formality index for corpora will also facilitate comparison.

It would also be interesting to conduct a similar investigation into the use of the preterite using the same criteria and methodology.

It might be possible, using the model of aspectual classes which was presented in Chapter 7, to program a computer to analyse the readings of the PrP automatically.

It would probably be necessary to compile a list of all (or most) English verbs, classifying them according to aspectual class, a massive but, I believe, feasible undertaking. After establishing the aspectual class of a particular PrP proposition, the program would then analyse the form (simple/expanded) and any co-occurring temporal specifiers to find the individual reading.

In order to explore the pedagogical implications of this thesis, it would be necessary to develop one or two didactic models which would be taught to different groups of students. Progress over a period of about 2 years would be monitored and compared to a control group taught according to 'traditional' methods. This would produce some insights into the pedagogical value of the theory of phragmatisation. At this stage, I would just like to comment on a number of points which I would see as the logical consequences of this thesis.

Pedagogical implications

The PrP is a multi-layered verb form which derives its function and meaning from the interplay of the various layers of aspect. As such it is too complex to be cognitivised didactically; certainly this is the case for young learners of English. Although the idea behind phragmatisation is relatively easy to understand and easy to teach and can be introduced at a later stage, I would not recommend trying to explain the difference between the PrP and the preterite in the first three or four years at school. Give the students plenty of authentic examples and forget the idea of tense markers. Where temporal specifiers are used with the PrP, however, make sure that all Group 4a specifiers such as SINCE, SO FAR, IN THE LAST ... are well represented. Avoid mentioning concepts such as resultative use, present relevance and the like. Do not mislead learners by oversimplification, however well-meant. Trust more in the linguistic intuition of the learners to guide them along. If two-year-olds can distinguish between ERC and non-ERC verbs, then I am convinced that learners of English, children and adults alike, can attain a basic understanding of the essential aspectual values of the present perfect without explicit cognitivation.

Another point to be considered concerns the implications of the findings of this investigation for the description of the present perfect in grammar books. Here we must make the distinction between scholarly and pedagogical grammars. An entry

for a scholarly grammar would not be a problem and would consist of a condensed version of Chapter 7 and parts of Chapter 6. The situation is more difficult with pedagogical grammars. A pedagogical grammar must of necessity simplify, and I am convinced that oversimplified 'explanations' ultimately mislead the learner. I do not believe that the present perfect should be cognitivised for beginners and intermediate learners. It is possible, however, to give advanced learners, who already have a certain intuitive grasp of the present perfect/preterite dichotomy, a deeper insight into the PrP. I have endeavoured to provide such an explanation which incorporates my findings and which is included in the following appendix.

Appendix

The use and meaning of the present perfect

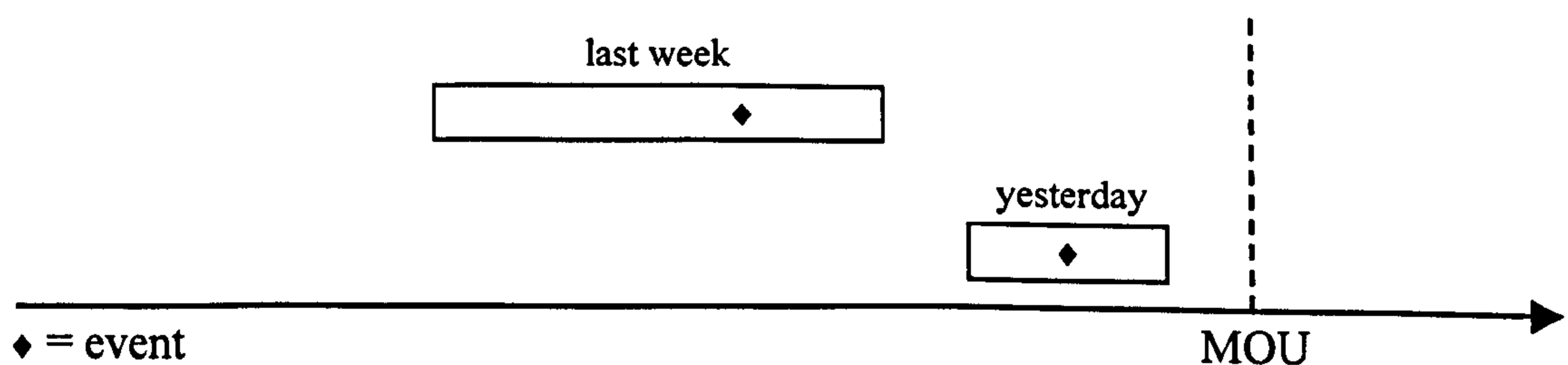
The present perfect and past tense both tell us that an **event*** took place before the **moment of utterance (MOU)**. The **past tense** is used to describe an event which occurred in a closed time frame. A closed event time frame allows, but does not necessarily entail, such concomitant features as remoteness, completedness, certainty and definiteness. The present perfect is used to refer to an event which took place in an open time frame. An open event time frame allows, but does not necessarily entail, such features as recentness, current relevance, continuativeness or indefiniteness.

Open and closed time frames

1. Closed time frames

Mrs Bottomley said that the case of Ben Silcock, the 27-year-old man diagnosed as schizophrenic who was mauled by a lion at London zoo **last week**, underscored her concerns. [TIMES #305]

I **arrived** home yesterday and I'm going away tomorrow. [BRITRADIO #352]



An event time frame is closed if the period which it refers to is separated from the MOU. The boxes in the time diagram represent closed time frames. The event which is being described took place at some time within this period. To describe an event which took place in a closed time frame we use the past tense. The closed time frame is usually indicated by a **temporal specifier**. (See, however, also section X.X.X for information about how event time frames are closed without the use of temporal specifiers.)

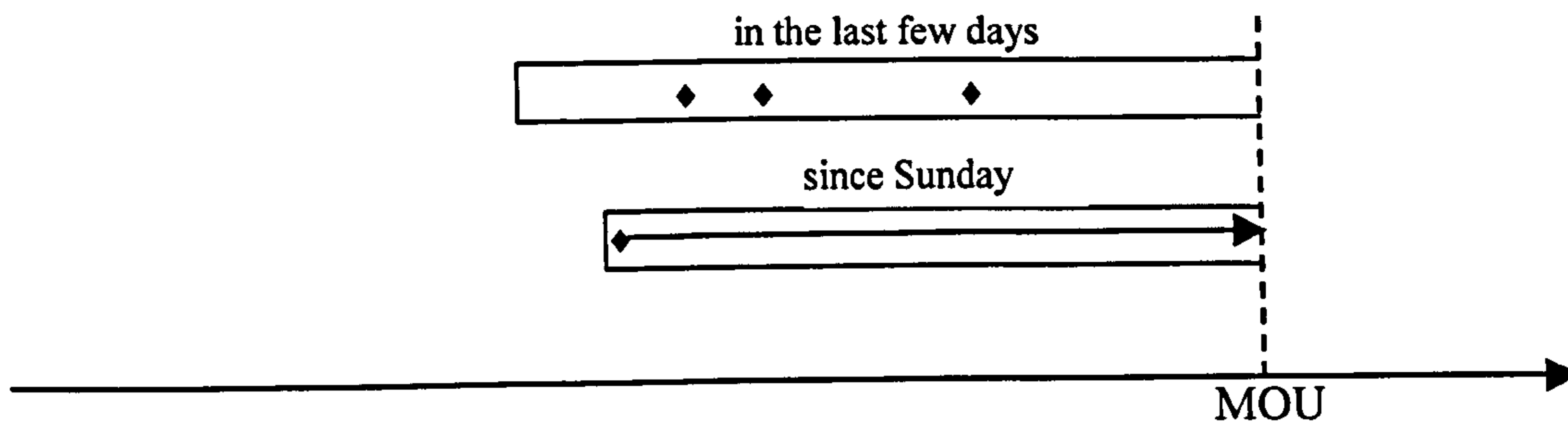
2. Open time frames

a) Definite time frames

Just judging, though, from the comments the President **has made in the last few days** on the health care bill, wouldn't it be accurate to say that the Chafee plan is an approach that he considers one that does more harm than good? [CSPA – IN THE LAST #78]

U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials **have also been interrogating** a suspect in the bombing **since Sunday**. [WASHPOST – SINCE #126]

*Expressions in bold type are explained elsewhere in the grammar



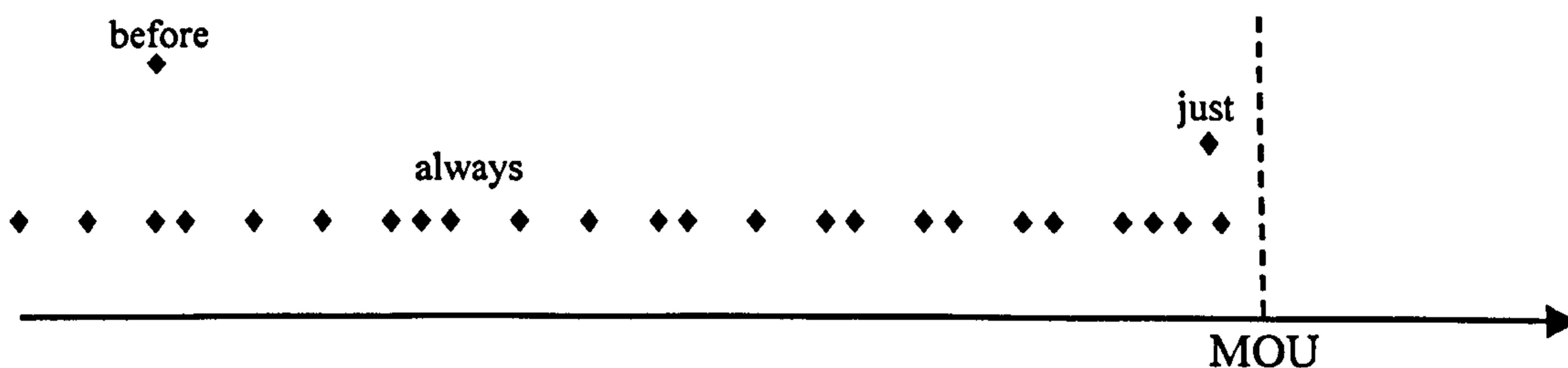
Event frames are said to be open if the period they refer to lasts up to the MOU. The event which is being described has taken place at some time within this open time frame. To describe such an event we use the present perfect.

b) Indefinite time frames

The IRA **has used** secondary devices **before**, the most notorious being the Warrenpoint bombing in August 1979 that killed six paratroopers initially and a further twelve in the secondary explosion.
 [TIMES – BEFORE #31]

He **has just accepted** a three-book deal that is said to be worth Pounds 500,000.
 [TIMES – JUST #1]

I think that in our discussion of the calculators we've **always confused** what we believed was good instructional practice with how we were testing
 [CSPA – ALWAYS #121]



If we cannot draw a box to represent the time frame, then that event time frame can be regarded as being open and we can use the present perfect to describe the event.

The basic meaning of the present perfect

The basic meaning of the present perfect therefore expresses two fundamental pieces of information:

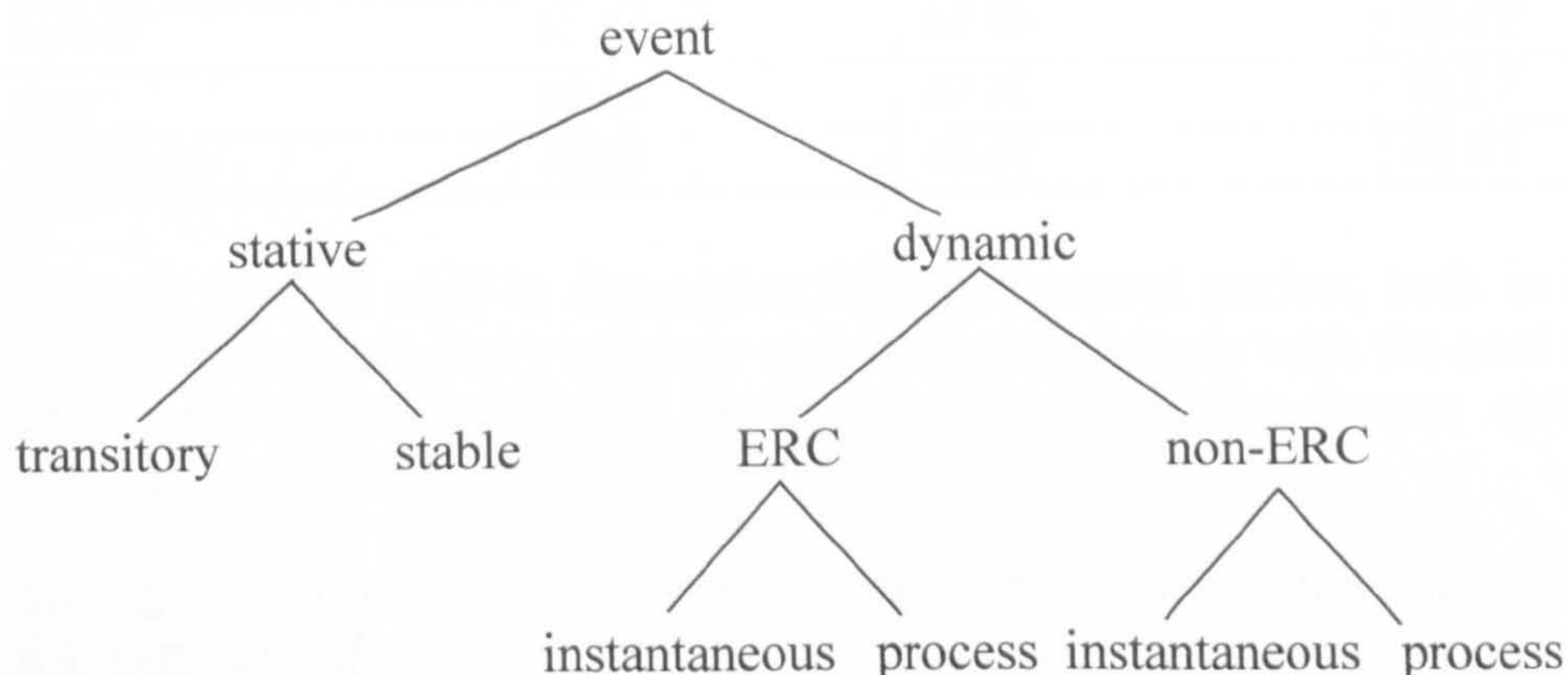
- The event being described took place before the MOU.
- The event took place in an open time frame.

The exact interpretation of the present perfect

The exact interpretation of each individual occurrence of the present perfect is dependent on a number of further factors:

- A. The **aspectual category** of the verb phrase.
- B. The co-occurring temporal specifier, if present.
- C. The **pragmatic** context.

A. Types of verb phrase



Events can be divided into **stative** and **dynamic events**. There are two types of stative event, transitory and stable states. Transitory states describe states which can easily be changed, e.g. *be angry*, *have a car*. Stable states cannot be changed easily, e.g. *be tall*, *know somebody*.

Dynamic events can be divided into ERC and non-ERC situations. ERC stands for **event-result continuum** and describes an event which has a logically necessary result e.g. *make a cup of tea*, *repair something*, *arrive*. Non-ERC verb phrases do not have a logical necessary result, e.g. *run*, *read*, *cough*, *jump*. ERC and non-ERC events can be further subdivided into processes and instantaneous events. Processes have duration whereas instantaneous events are characterized by their brevity. Examples of ERC processes are *write a letter*, *clean a car*. Examples of ERC instantaneous events are *lose something*, *win a game*, *arrive*. Non-ERC processes are activities such as *walk*, *play*, *drive*. Examples of non-ERC instantaneous events are *sneeze*, *knock*, *ask*. (See section X.X.X for tests to distinguish the different aspectual categories of verb phrases).

| Aspectual category | Example |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Transitory state | <i>be angry</i> |
| Stable state | <i>know somebody</i> |
| ERC process | <i>write a letter</i> |
| ERC instantaneous | <i>arrive</i> |
| Non-ERC process | <i>play</i> |
| Non-ERC instantaneous | <i>cough</i> |

B. Temporal specifiers and the present perfect

With reference to the present perfect, we can distinguish six classes of temporal specifier. The tables in this section show how often the present perfect and past tense occur with the individual specifiers, both in British and American English .

Group 1: Temporal specifiers expressing completion at an indefinite time in the past, e.g. *already, before, now, previously*.

| Temporal specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| already | 78:22 | 82:18 | 80:20 |
| before | 67:33 | 52:48 | 58:42 |
| now | 66:34 | 80:20 | 73:27 |
| previously | 38:62 | 53:47 | 43:57 |

Already is often used in connection with the present perfect, both in British and American English. For every one occurrence of *already* with the past tense, there are four occurrences of the present perfect. *Now* also occurs quite often in conjunction with the present perfect.

Group 2: Temporal specifiers expressing completion at a time close to the MOU, e.g. *just, recently*.

| Temporal specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| just | 86:14 | 26:74 | 47:53 |
| recently | 48:52 | 54:46 | 49:51 |

Just often co-occurs with the present perfect in British English, but the past tense is the preferred tense with *just* in most cases in American English.

Group 3: Temporal specifiers expressing iteration, e.g. *frequently, often, repeatedly*.

| Temporal specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| frequently | 27:73 | 63:36 | 39:61 |
| often | 26:74 | 68:32 | 41:59 |
| repeatedly | 29:71 | 67:33 | 49:51 |

As the figures in the above table show, there is little correlation overall between specifiers expressing iteration and the use of the PrP, although they have a higher correlation with the present perfect in American English..

Group 4: Temporal specifiers expressing a period lasting up to the MOU, e.g. *always, ever, for ..., how long, in the last ..., in the past ..., long, never, over the last ..., over the past ..., since ..., so far, still not, until now, up to now, yet*.

This group is divided into the unambiguous specifiers, such as *since, so far, yet* and the adverbial phrases with *last* and *past*, which always refer to a period of time

lasting up to the MOU, and the ambiguous specifiers which can refer to open time frames but which can also refer to closed time frames such as *for*, *always*, *ever*, *never*.

| Unambiguous specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| in the last ... | 79:21 | 80:20 | 79:21 |
| in the past ... | 83:17 | 86:14 | 84:16 |
| long | 98:02 | 96:04 | 97:03 |
| over the last ... | 91:09 | 88:12 | 89:11 |
| over the past ... | 92:08 | 87:13 | 90:10 |
| since | 90:10 | 92:08 | 92:08 |
| so far | 98:02 | 97:03 | 97:03 |
| yet | 97:03 | 94:06 | 95:05 |

Unambiguous specifiers from Group 4 are excellent indicators of the present perfect.

| Ambiguous specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| always | 54:46 | 73:27 | 60:40 |
| for | 55:45 | 64:36 | 60:40 |
| ever | 64:36 | 59:41 | 62:38 |
| never | 47:53 | 43:57 | 46:54 |

The present perfect is also found in the majority of cases with the ambiguous specifiers from Group 4 (with the exception of *never*), but the incidence of the past tense is much higher than with the unambiguous specifiers.

Group 5: Temporal specifiers headed by *all*, e.g. *all day*, *all month*, *all week*, *all year*.

| Temporal specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| all day | 47:53 | n.a. | 45:55 |

These specifiers are generally not good indicators of the present perfect.

Group 6: Temporal specifiers expressing a period which lasts up to and extends beyond the MOU, e.g. *this month*, *this week*, *this year*, *today*.

| Temporal specifier | Present perfect:past tense ratio | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | British English | American English | Brit. & Amer. Engl. |
| this month | 35:65 | 20:80 | 28:72 |
| this week | 36:64 | 21:79 | 30:70 |
| this year | 39:61 | 36:64 | 38:62 |
| today | 56:44 | 15:85 | 26:74 |

These specifiers are usually accompanied by the past tense, only in about one in three cases is the present perfect found.

All of the temporal specifiers mentioned above co-occur with the present perfect. Only the unambiguous specifiers from Group 4, however, can be said to be reliable indicators of this tense. This is because they always express an open time frame which lasts up to the MOU. This open time frame requires the use of the present perfect.

C. Pragmatic context

The factors discussed thus far are all present in the linguistic structure of the utterance. The pragmatic context – present situation, past experience, intuition and real-world knowledge – can also provide information for a further interpretation of the utterance. For example if someone says: “John has been to America”, this statement is neutral as to when the visit took place. If someone says: “John has got married”, the hearer will immediately assume that this event took place in the recent past. The statement “I have been to France on a number of occasions” tells us nothing about any possible results. If the above statement is given in reply to the remark: “You speak really good French”, then we assume that this is the result of the person’s having been to France. This interpretation is, however, not present in the present perfect itself, but only in the pragmatic context.

The meaning of the present perfect

The linguistic meaning of the present perfect is derived from a combination of the following factors:

1. The event which took place in the past.
2. The event time frame which is open to the MOU.
3. The aspectual category of verb phrase.
4. The temporal specifier, if present.

The combination of these factors gives rise to the three possible basic readings of situations described using the present perfect:

- The event is completed.
- The event is iterative.
- The event is continuative (either actually in progress or interrupted at the MOU).

About 89% of all events which are described with the present perfect are completed at the MOU. Correspondingly, about 11% of all present perfect events are continuative. Approximately 11% are iterative, which is usually made clear by an appropriate temporal specifier. There are considerable differences between the **simple** and **expanded present perfect** forms with respect to these readings as can be seen in the following table. The expanded form is found in about 5% of all present perfect occurrences.

| | Completed | Continuative | Iterative |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Present perfect simple | 91.72 | 8.27 | 10.25 |
| Present perfect expanded | 42.69 | 57.31 | 23.29 |
| All present perfect | 88.82 | 11.18 | 10.95 |

The readings of the present perfect

The following tables demonstrate how these readings arise from the combination of the factors described above. Two other values have been added to the table: whether the event is an indefinite time frame and whether a logically necessary result is involved (this is always the case for completed ERC events). In some cases two readings are possible. With some types of verb phrase not all combinations are possible – this is indicated by an asterisk and shading. Unlikely occurrences are indicated by a question mark.

1. ERC processes

TS group = group of temporal specifiers explained above

| Example | TS group | Completed | Cont. | Iterative | Indef. | Result |
|--|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|--------|
| John has cleaned the car. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has already cleaned the car. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has just cleaned the car. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has often cleaned the car. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has cleaned the car since 9 o'clock. | 4 | ✓ | - | ✓ | - | ✓ |
| ?John has cleaned the car all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ |
| John has cleaned the car today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | ✓ |
| John has been cleaning the car. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has been cleaning the car. | - | - | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| ?John has already been cleaning the car. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has just been cleaning the car. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| ?John has often been cleaning the car. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has been cleaning the car since nine. | 4 | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ |
| John has been cleaning the car all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ |
| John has been cleaning the car today. | 6 | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ |
| John has been cleaning the car today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | ✓ |

2. ERC instantaneous

Expanded forms and the co-occurrence of temporal specifiers expressing duration are not possible with ERC instantaneous events. With plural subjects, however, they are possible and indicate iteration, i.e. it is not possible to say *John has been arriving all day* but *People have been arriving all day* is perfectly acceptable.

| Example | TS group | Completed | Cont. | Iterative | Indef. | Result |
|--|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|--------|
| John has arrived. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has already arrived. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has just arrived. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has often arrived. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| John has arrived since 9 o'clock. | 4 | ✓ | - | - | - | ✓ |
| *John has arrived all day. | 5 | | | | | |
| John has arrived today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | ✓ |
| *John has been arriving. | - | | | | | |
| People have been arriving. | - | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| *John has already been arriving. | 1 | | | | | |
| *John has just been arriving. | 2 | | | | | |
| *John has often been arriving. | 3 | | | | | |
| *John has been arriving since 9 o'clock. | 4 | | | | | |
| People have been arriving since 9 o'clock. | 4 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ |
| *John has been arriving all day. | 5 | | | | | |
| People have been arriving all day. | 5 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ |
| *John has been arriving today. | 6 | | | | | |
| People have been arriving today | 6 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - | ✓ |

3. Non-ERC processes

This category allows all types without restrictions.

| Example | TS group | Completed | Cont. | Iterative | Indef. | Result |
|--|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|--------|
| John has run. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has already run. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has just run. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has often run. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| John has run since 9 o'clock. | 4 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has run since 9 o'clock. | 4 | ✓ | - | - | - | - |
| John has run all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has run today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | - |
| John has been running. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has already been running. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has just been running. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has often been running. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| John has been running since 9 o'clock. | 4 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has been running all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has been running today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | - |

4. Non-ERC instantaneous

As for ERC instantaneous situations, the expanded form here indicates iteration.

| Example | TS group | Completed | Cont. | Iterative | Indef. | Result |
|---|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|--------|
| John has coughed. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has already coughed. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has just coughed. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has often coughed. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| John has coughed since 9 o'clock. | 4 | ✓ | - | - | - | - |
| John has coughed since 9 o'clock. | 4 | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | - |
| John has coughed all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | - |
| John has coughed today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | - |
| John has been coughing. | - | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| ?John has already been coughing. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has just been coughing. | 2 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| ?John has often been coughing. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| John has been coughing since 9 o'clock. | 4 | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | - |
| John has been coughing all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | ✓ | - | - |
| John has been coughing today. | 6 | ✓ | - | ✓ | - | - |

5. Transitory states

This category allows all types with the simple form.

| Example | TS group | Completed | Cont. | Iterative | Indef. | Result |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|--------|
| John has been ill. | - | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has already been ill. | 1 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has just been ill. | 2 | ✓ | - | - | ✓ | - |
| John has often been ill. | 3 | ✓ | - | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| John has been ill since 9 o'clock. | 4 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has been ill all day. | 5 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has been ill today. | 6 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has been ill today. | 6 | ✓ | - | - | - | - |
| *John has been being ill. | | | | | | |

6. Stable states

This category allows only two types which both have a continuative reading.

| Example | TS group | Completed | Cont. | Iterative | Indef. | Result |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|--------|
| *John has known him. | | | | | | |
| *John has already known him. | 1 | | | | | |
| *John has just known him. | 2 | | | | | |
| *John has often known him. | 3 | | | | | |
| John has known him since Christmas. | 4 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| John has known him all year. | 5 | - | ✓ | - | - | - |
| *John has known him today. | 6 | | | | | |
| *John has been knowing him. | | | | | | |

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