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The Development of English Perfect Constructions: structure and semantics

The perfect is a system of verbal forms expressed by a combination of the past participle and any form of the auxiliary verb *to have* [6: 274]. The place of Perfect in the system of Tense in the modern English language causes the biggest number of discussions among linguists. In the theoretical grammar of the Modern English there exist the following discrepancies to the definition of the category, to which perfect forms should belong: "tense" view, "aspect" view, "tense-aspect blend" view, "time correlation" view. The traditional treatment of the perfect as the tense form denoting the priority of one action in relation to another was developed by H. Sweet, G. Curme, and other linguists [2: 107]. M. Deutchbein, G. N. Vorontsova and other consider the perfect to be an aspective form because the perfect forms denote some result, some transmission of the past to the present [1: 111-113]. I. P. Ivanova treats the perfect as the verbal form expressing temporal and aspective functions in a blend. A. I. Smirnitsky was the first to put forward the idea that the perfect forms its own category, which is neither a tense category, nor an aspect category and he suggested the name "*the category of time correlation*" [5: 304].

Process of formation of any new verb category and its inclusion in the paradigm is the subject of many linguistic research works both of theoretical grammar and history of the English Language. Linguists, who study the language in diachrony, such as G. N. Vorontsova, A. A. Smyrnytskyy, G. Fridren, F. T. Visser have no

consensus about the period of emergence and final establishment of the Category of Perfect.

In the Old English language the most usual way of expressing the Perfect is a synthetic one, though at that period exist some free syntactic combinations with *beon* or *habban* and past participle, which enter the process of grammatization at the end of the Old English period. In the Middle English period the process of grammatization of the free syntactic combinations continues to develop and as a result the model becomes universal, that means that it can be used almost with all the verbs. In the Early Modern English Language begins the process of inclusion Perfect in the verbal paradigm and expansion of relations between different categories of verbs [4: 102].

During Early Modern English the very important process started – paradigmatization. The analytical construction acquires its semantic invariant and begins to be used with other verbal forms. By the end of this period the form enters the verbal paradigm and gains its modern meanings.

In Early Modern English two perfect constructions are used, they are *to be + Participle II* and *to have + Participle II*. The first one is used only with the verbs of motion, while the second is used with all verbs including verbs of motion:

(1)*Madam**, he has gone** to serve the Duke of Florence[8:78];*

(2)*When haply he shall hear that she **is gone** he will return[8:81].*

In the Early Modern English Language perfect structure *to have+Participle II* in present form is used to express all meanings of modern Present Perfect:

1. an action which took place in the past and continues up to the present moment:

(3) *Or do I dream? Or **have I dream'd** till now [8:1758]?*

2. an action which took place in the past but the exact time isn't mentioned:

(4) ***Hath promis'd** me to help me to another,*

   A fine musician to instruct our mistress [8:1769];

(5)*I **have seen** them in the church together [8:1802].*

3. a repeated past action which occurred before the moment of speaking:

(6) *Signior Hortensio, I **have often heard***

   Of your entire affection to Bianca [8:1791].

4. an action which has recently finished and whose result is obvious in the present:

*(7) And, to conclude, we **have 'greed** so well together that upon Sunday is the wedding-day [8:1777].*

*(8) I know you think to dine with me to-day, and **have prepar'd** great store of wedding cheer but so it is my haste doth call me hence, and therefore here I mean to take my leave[8:1785] .*

Sometimes Present Perfect is used to express the meanings of Past Simple but in the Early Modern English this phenomenon is residual.

The usage of the perfect forms with the auxiliary verb *to be* both in present and past in is very limited, in contrast to the Middle English language. For example, the present perfect with the auxiliary verb *to be* is used to denote an action which happened at an unstated time in the past:

*(9) Madam, my lord **is gone**, for ever gone [8:78].*

Present Perfect Continuous is used to denote the durative action which started in the past and continues up to the present:

*(10) To express the like kindness, myself, that **have been more kindly beholding** to you than any, freely give unto you this young scholar that **hath been long studying** at Rheims; as cunning in Greek, Latin, and other languages, as the other in music and mathematics [8:1773].*

Past Perfect is used to express an action that happened before another past action:

*(11) I would not marry her though she were endowed with all that Adam **had left** him before he transgress'd [8:1442].*

The past perfect with the auxiliary verb *to be* is used to denote the action which took place before a certain past moment and used with the verb of motion:

*(12) For my part, I only hear your son **was run away**[8:78].*

The development of the word order in Early Modern English occurs gradually and is accompanied by a loss of endings. The common type of the narrative sentences is SVO. In Early Modern English arrangement of the main elements of the sentence becomes more fixed. Although we still find the cases of inversion, especially in the

sentences with analytical structures. In most cases, the inversion in sentences with perfect constructions is caused by the adverbial modifiers of time, place and objects.

Analysis of the structure of the sentences with perfect constructions from the standpoint of generative grammar provides evidence that the main functional projections of the sentence with the perfect construction are CP (*complimentizer phrase*), TP (*tense phrase*), Perf.P (*perfect phrase)* and *v*P (*verbalizer phrase*). Auxiliary verb *to have* is generated in the functional projection Perf.P, but moves to the position T in order to obtain morphological endings of time and person. The verb is generated in VP but moves to the projection *v*P and there receives the ending, which also moves to the position of *v*P due to the process of Affix Hopping.

According to the fact that perfect constructions consist of the auxiliary verb and the past participle the structure of the sentences with perfect constructions is more complex and following considerations should be taken into account:

- the VP-internal subject hypothesis;

- the morphological complexity of the perfect participle;

- the idea that inflectional endings are associated with functional projections;

- the locality conditions on movement [7: 304].

Structural shifts in the sentences with perfect constructions involve a change in its communicative orientation. Any non-standard usage of an element in the structure of a narrative sentence occurs due to its movement. Structural position for this element is in the functional projection CP. According to the theory of the generative grammar, the functional projection CP splits into additional projections - TorP (Topic Phrase) and FocP (Focus Phrase). TopP is the functional projection, the top of which has a sign of topikalization. Projection FocP contains focused material that causes the inversion of known information [3: 134]. For example, in the sentence

(13) *The tedious minutes **I** with her **have spent** [8:1404].*

Two structural elements *the tedious minutes* and *with her* are placed in the functional projection CP, where they are accentuated. *With her* is situated in the position of

TopP. In this case, the position of TopP contains already known information. The phrase *the tedious minutes* is placed in the position of FocP and it is new information in the utterance. Structural positions of the elements of the functional projection CP are shown with the help of the scheme-tree:
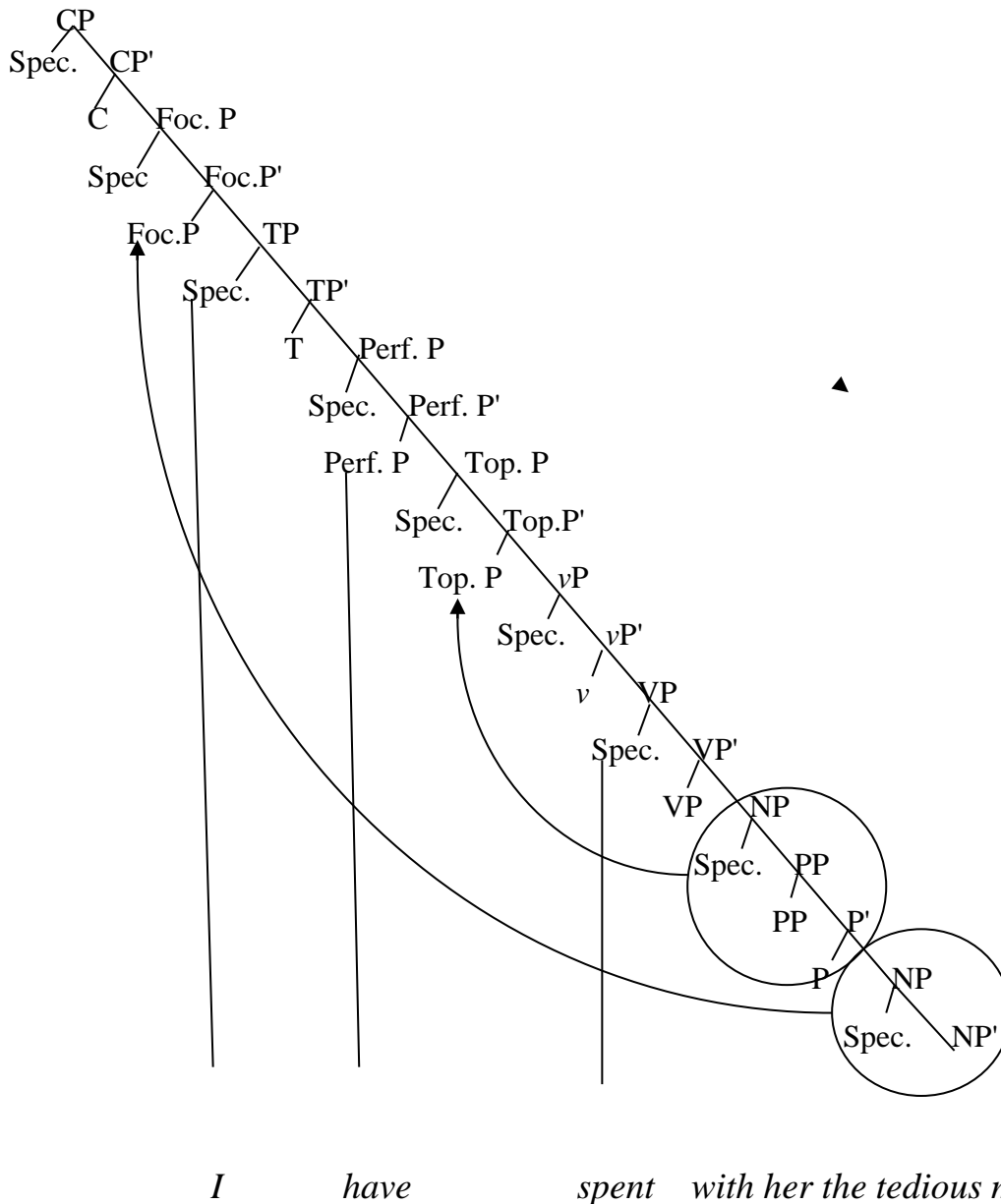
I   have   spent   with her the tedious minutes

Analysis of the structure of the sentences with perfect constructions from the standpoint of generative grammar underlines that the emphasis of constituents of sentence happens due to their movement to the functional projection CP, which includes such functional projections as TopP and FocP. In most cases there is accentuation in medial position, namely between the positions of the auxiliary verb

and Particle II, between the positions of the subject and the predicate and in the initial position of the sentence that makes the sentence more expressive.

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