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THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE AND ITS POLISH EQUIVALENTS

One of the most difficult problems facing people learning English as a foreign language is the use of the grammatical tenses. The structure of the English tenses is fairly easy to master (at least in writing), but even those learners who never forget to insert an "is" between "Joan" and "writing a letter" seldom know the range of the situational usage of the tense in question, and very few ever come to fully realize its meaning.

The most complicated of all the English tenses is undoubtedly the Future-Perfect-Continuous-in-the-Past, but fortunately one does not often meet with sentences like: "Say, John, do you know that if you had not come on time, by now I would have been waiting for you for forty five minutes?" or "No, it's too late to visit her; she told me this morning that by ten o'clock she would have been sleeping soundly for at least two hours." However, one does encounter sentences like "Have you been to London?" or "Have you seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark*?", and the Present Perfect Tense seems to be no less difficult to comprehend.

Its name suggests that it is a present tense, but its meaning involves an action which is past; on the other hand, it is not normally used with "an adverb of completely past and finished time"¹. The name is not a terribly important factor and

¹ J. M. Ward, *The Use of Tenses in English*, London 1954, p. 47; but cf. also F. R. Palmer, *The English Verb*, London 1974, p. 42; T. Krzeszowski, *Gramatyka angielska dla Polaków*, Warszawa 1980, p. 90; cf. also *idem*, *Angielskie czasy perfektywne w procesie nauczania*, "Zeszyty Naukowe UŁ" 1967, No 48, pp. 131-140; *idem*, *Teaching English to Polish Learners*, Warszawa 1970, p. 112.

can easily be changed - in fact some different names have already been proposed, for example Korsakov², offers a coinage the Beforepresent Static, whereas Krzeszowski³ follows Reichenbach⁴ and postulates that the word "perfect" be replaced with "anterior" - but the problems of meaning and usage remain.

Some explanation as to why a present tense can denote a past action is provided by the history of this tense.

The Present Perfect Tense developed from Old English structures of the type "I have it done", whose "have" was of course not causative, but had the basic meaning of "hold" or "possess", and whose "done" was originally inflected for case and number, in agreement with the direct object of the appropriate form of "to have"⁵.

Relevant and useful as it is, however, the explanation is far from being sufficient, for the present-day Present Perfect is considerably more complex than its ancestor.

Generally speaking, the present-day Present Perfect Tense has two functions - it is used either to denote an action completed at any time before the present, or to show that an action began to happen in the past but has not yet finished, i.e. it is still happening at the moment of speaking. The former is called the "Finished" Use, the latter - the "Unfinished" Use⁶. The "Unfinished" Use is very easy to explain. The trouble starts with the analysis of the "Finished" Use, because most grammarians tend to overlook its heterogeneity.

² A. K. K o r s a k o v, *The Use of Tenses in English*, Kiev 1978.

³ K r z e s z o w s k i, *Gramatyka...*

⁴ H. R e i c h e n b a c h, *Elements of Symbolic Logic*, New York 1947.

⁵ For more information as well as for some Old and Middle English Examples see for instance see: R. B e r n d t, *History of the English Language*, Leipzig 1982, pp. 154-156; cf. also H. S w e e t, *A New English Grammar*, vol. 2, Oxford 1898, pp. 86-87; G. O. C u r m e, *Syntax*, [in:] G. O. C u r m e, J. A. K u r a t h, *A Grammar of the English Language*, vol. 3, Boston 1931, pp. 358-359; G. O. C u r m e, *Part of Speech and Accidence*, [in:] C u r m e, K u r a t h, *A Grammar...*, vol. 2, Boston 1935, pp. 320-321; J. M a j e r, *The Present Perfect Tense and its Polish Equivalents*, University of Łódź 1974, unpubl. M. A. thesis.

⁶ After W a r d, *op. cit.*; these two functions are referred to as Exclusive and Inclusive, respectively, by G. G r a u s t e i n et al., *English Grammar. A University Handbook*, Leipzig 1977, p. 160.

THE "FINISHED" USE

The usual explanation of this use of the Present Perfect is that the tense is employed to express an action which took place in the past, but the results of which are still in existence, and it is the results that are being stressed here⁷. Following W. Maurice⁸, some grammarians observe the difference in the directness of the results of somebody's having come somewhere and of somebody's having read a book, and distinguish between objective (or direct) and subjective (indirect) results, the latter being understood very broadly, yet even with this reservation, the explanation, although not unacceptable, does not seem adequate.

First of all, the notion of indirect results appears to be completely groundless. According to traditional grammars, a sentence like

(1) I have read *David Copperfield*.

would imply that the speaker knows the contents of the book and is able to discuss it, this knowledge and ability being the results in question⁹. Any possibility that the speaker wants to convey such an idea cannot be excluded, but the idea is not inherent in the Present Perfect Tense: reading and remembering are not the same thing, and a person who has read some books may insist that he has read them even if he has a bad memory and does not remember half of them.

Secondly, we find examples which refute the theory of direct results.

(2) The seventeen-fourteen train has come and gone. (John Cheever)¹⁰.

⁷ Cf. for example: F. V. B y w a t e r, *A Proficiency Course in English*, London 1969; J. C y g a n, *O znaczeniach kategorii gramatycznych czasownika angielskiego*, "Języki Obce w Szkole" 1966, nr 2 (49), pp. 65-73; V. L. K a u s h a n s k a y a et al., *A Grammar of the English Language*, Leningrad 1973; J. B. K h l e b n i k o v a, *Binary Relations in Morphology (with Special Reference to the English Verb)*, "Philologica Pragensia" 1964, no 7 (46)2, pp. 150-158; A. P r e j b i s z, *Gramatyka języka angielskiego*, Warszawa 1959.

⁸ W. M a u r i c e, *Present, Past and Future Versus Perfect*, "Zeitschrift für Französischen und Englischen Unterricht" 1927 Bd. 26, H. 7, p. 524 (after Korsakov, *op. cit.*, p. 43).

⁹ P r e j b i s z, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁰ The example is taken from K o r s a k o v, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

(3) I've hit it twice, but it's still standing up¹¹.

Analysed resultatively, sentence (2) yields contradictory results, and sentence (3) what Palmer calls "nil results". Under the resultative interpretation the first part of sentence (2) - the train has come - would mean that at the moment of speaking the train is still at the station, meanwhile the second part makes it perfectly clear that it is already somewhere else, further on its way. Since that is impossible, there seems to be no other explanation but that the thought of results is not the speaker's reason for employing the Present Perfect. As Bryan states:

"I believe that any idea there is of results or consequences is not implied in the perfect tense form but derives from the meaning or character of the verb, or from the context, or from the statement as a whole. That is to assign to the perfect tense form itself a resultative function means a failure in analysis"¹².

What then is the true meaning of the Present Perfect?

According to Twaddell, the tense (or what he calls Modification II)

"explicitly links an earlier event or state with the current situation. It signals a significant persistence of results, a continued truth value, a valid present relevance of the effects of earlier events, the continued reliability of conclusions based on earlier behavior"¹³.

Twaddell's definition is probably sufficiently broad to include every sentence in the Present Perfect, but its phrasing is rather unfortunate because relevance is relative, and besides his description does not exclude sentences in the Past Simple. Twaddell himself admits that "the 'Past' modification by no means denies such current relevance"¹⁴.

¹¹ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹² W. F. Bryan, *The Preterite and the Perfect Tense in Present-Day English*, "Journal of English and Germanic Philology" 1936, vol. 35, p. 363-382, 369 (after Majer, *op. cit.*); cf. also A. A. Hill, *Introduction to Linguistic Structures: From Sound to Sentence in English*, New York 1958, p. 212; R. L. Allen, *The Verb System of Present-Day American English*, The Hague 1966, pp. 142-143.

¹³ W. F. Twaddell, *The English Verb Auxiliaries*, Providence, Rhode Island 1965, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

Akira Ota's view is safer:

"The actual perfect (generic aspect) indicates the occurrence of an action or the existence of a state in or for a period extending from some time in the past up to the moment of speaking"¹⁵.

In his review Joos criticizes Ota and insists that Twaddell has "been totally right about 'current relevance' as the meaning of our 'perfect'"¹⁶ but his own formulation is rather different from Twaddell's: "the perfect phase means that the event is not mentioned for its own sake but for the sake of its consequences"¹⁷, and - at least to the present author - seems to be just a reformulation of the traditional resultative hypothesis¹⁸.

However, it must not be inferred that the idea of results is completely absent from all the uses of the Present Perfect Tense. Ota's statement, as well as Ward's definition that "the Finished Use of the Present Perfect shows that an action happened and finished at some time in the past but it says nothing at all to indicate when"¹⁹, although much better than the traditional explanation, are not perfect either, because in some cases, like for example

(4) I have decided to catch a Heffalump²⁰.

the results are too tangible to be ignored.

The conclusion is obvious - the so-called "Finished" Use comprises at least two different uses, for which one definition does not suffice. According to McCawley²¹, whose approach seems best to me and whose point of view I shall adopt here, it com-

¹⁵ A. O t a, Review of M. Joos, *The English Verb: Form and Meanings*, Madison and Milwaukee 1964, "Language" 1965, No 41, pp. 657-674, quot. p. 668.

¹⁶ M. J o o s, Review of A. Ota, *Tense and Aspect of Present Day American English*, Tokyo 1963, "Language" 1964, No 40, pp. 487-498, quot. p. 495.

¹⁷ J o o s, *The English Verb...*, p. 140.

¹⁸ Oddly enough, Joos' and Twaddell's conceptions are equated by F. R. P a l m e r, *The Semantics of the English Verb*, "Lingua" 1967, no -18, p. 186, but see also pp. 189-190.

¹⁹ W a r d, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁰ A. A. M i l n e, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Magnet 1980, p. 52.

²¹ J. D. M c C a w l e y, *Tense and Time Reference in English*, [in:] Ch. J. F i l l m o r e, D. T. L a n g e n d o e n [eds.], *Studies in Linguistic Semantics*, New York 1971, pp. 97-113.

prises three, namely: the Existential, the Stative, and the Hot News Use. (To be exact - McCawley does not use the term "Finished", nor does he group these three uses under any common heading).

THE EXISTENTIAL USE

The Existential Use of the Present Perfect indicates the existence of a past action, that is, it informs us about the fact of the occurrence of some action on the understanding that it is not important when the action happened but rather that it is now on record. Whether any results of the action are still in existence is absolutely irrelevant from the linguistic point of view. The action can be terminative or non-terminative, single or repeated.

(5) But God forgive me the wrong I've done you!²²

(6) "Termoli, is it? Place I've always wanted to see."
Miller paused. "Where the hell's Termoli?"²³

(7) The vampire has been dead many times.

The temporal distance between the end of the action and the moment of speaking is in no way limited, but the time of the action cannot be specified in the sentence. Statements in the Present Perfect Tense always relate the action to the present, and therefore apparently they should either contain no adverbial of time, or have some present time adverbial, which is only logical. Unfortunately, in practice not everybody conforms to that logic, and the popular rule that the adverbials of time used with the English Present Perfect must always include the present moment has to be reformulated.

Consider the following sentences:

(8) Well, I've come across him in the past too. (A. Cronin)

²² A. Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, Minster Classics 1968, p. 209.

²³ A. MacLean, *Force 10 from Navarone*, Fontana 1970, p. 22.

(9) You needn't think I'm going to go on enduring all this as I have in the past, I'm not. (Th. Dreiser)²⁴

Korsakov, who presents these examples, does not notice anything strange about them and hence does not offer any explanation, but it seems to me that they deserve at least some remarks. After all, the expression "in the past" clearly isolates the verbal process from the present moment and is in conspicuous conflict with the rule. Can we somehow account for this?

There are at least two possibilities. The first is the following: these examples might evidence a linguistic change influencing the rule governing the co-occurrence of the time adverbials with the English Present Perfect. It is perfectly grammatical in German to use *das Perfekt* with adverbials which are definitely past, although the auxiliary verb is marked for the present:

(10) Wir haben *gestern* die Stadt besichtigt.

(11) Der Lehrer hat *im vorigen Jahr* sein Examen abgelegt²⁵.

Also in French past adverbials are normal with *passé composé* (the French counterpart of the English Present Perfect), e.g.:

(12) Hier, j'ai été dans une papeterie²⁶.

Somehow in these languages the adverbials of time are associated with the main verb rather than with the auxiliary. Perhaps a development in this direction is now taking place in English?

But there is another possibility. The expression "in the past" is not markedly different from such adverbs of time as "lately", "recently", and "before", whose occurrence with the Present Perfect Tense is approved of by even the most conservative prescriptive grammarians on account of their being so indefinite as to somehow border on the present. Why then should "in the past" be refused this privilege and left out? Perhaps it is enough to say that the time reference of the Present Perfect must either include the present moment or be in some way

²⁴ Korsakov, op. cit., p. 143.

²⁵ G. Helbig, J. Buscha, *Deutsche Grammatik*, Leipzig 1975, p. 128.

²⁶ A. Zarach, *Parlez-vous français? Kurs I*, Warszawa 1969, p. 97.

tangential to it, or, in other words, that only definite past adverbials are forbidden with this tense²⁷.

Unfortunately again, occasionally we find sentences in which even definite past adverbials co-occur with the Present Perfect Tense.

(13) One member of the group has actually served as a Fulbright scholar in Burma a few years ago²⁸.

Ota is at a loss to account for this usage. Joos explains:

"The adverbial *a few years ago* is not colligated with *has served* but only with the wording that follows it, perhaps only with *in Burma*, perhaps especially with *as a Fulbright scholar*: this much ambiguity is routine in conversation in any language, while colligation with the perfect verb is grammatically impossible"²⁹.

Ota 1965 accepts Joos' analysis, adds one more example:

(14) Dr Turner [...] has had, it is announced, a heart attack three days ago.

but expresses his doubt about Joos' right to reject sentences of the type "I have shown it to her yesterday". But apparently in such sentences a past time adverbial is justified only if it is added as an afterthought³⁰.

It is also necessary to distinguish between a specific and an indefinite point of reference. At first glance, a sentence like:

(15) The train has arrived at 5 o'clock³¹.

seems to be ungrammatical, and it definitely is, if we mean one definite 5 o'clock. But sentence (15) has not been triggered by and does not answer the question

(16) When did the train arrive?

Sentence (15) could only be uttered - with the sentence stress on "has" - when we are fanning hopes (or simply expect) that

²⁷ Cf. Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

²⁸ Ota, *Tense and Aspect...*

²⁹ Joos, *Review of...*, p. 495.

³⁰ *Ibidem*; also B. Comrie, *Aspect*, Cambridge 1978, p. 54.

³¹ I owe this example to Prof. T. P. Krzeszowski.

a train which is frequently late may be punctual this time, meaning that there has been at least one case before now of the train being at our station on time. The overt time adverbial would then be an indefinite point of reference not connected with the constraint on the use of the adverbials of time with the Present Perfect, and the real specific point of reference to which the action is anterior would be the covert "now", that is the moment of speaking³².

Similarly, the use of the Present Perfect Tense is entirely justified in the following sentences:

(17) I tell you, I've sat and looked into that dog's eyes till the shivers ran up and down my spine. (J. London)

(18) I have sat and thought upon it till my head went round. (J. London)³³

because the adverbial clauses of time containing the Past Simple Tense are not meant to be points of reference for the actions in question. In a sense they lie on a different plane, marking only the termination of the actions which in actual fact are related to the moment of speaking.

The problem of the time reference of the Present Perfect is closely connected with the question of the existence of the subject of the record.

It is a common belief that the subject of a sentence in the Present Perfect must be alive or still existing. Curme illustrates this by comparing the sentences:

(19) My grandfather has seen a good deal in his lifetime.
and

(20) England has had many able rulers.
with

(21) *Caesar has seen a good deal in his lifetime.
and

(22) *Assyria has had many able rulers.

³² Comrie, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³³ After Korsakov, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

respectively³⁴. McCawley³⁵ proves however that the belief is wrong. To Chomsky³⁶, the sentence:

*(23) Einstein has visited Princeton.

seems odd as compared with:

(24) Princeton has been visited by Einstein.

because while Princeton still exists, Einstein is no longer alive. But according to McCawley, if one reads the sentences with the sentence stress on the first word in both examples, then clearly in (21) "one is talking about events of visiting Princeton", and in (22) "about events of Einstein visiting"³⁷. Thus the first sentence becomes grammatical and the second one seems odd in turn, which proves that the condition of being alive or existing refers to the topic rather than to the subject of the sentence - the subject of the sentence does not have to be the subject of the record³⁸.

McCawley compares also the following sentences:

(25) Many people have died in auto accidents.

(26) Dennis Brain has died in an auto accident³⁹.

The subjects of both sentences are dead, but only the second sentence is ungrammatical. The first sentence speaks about deaths in car accidents which can (and which do) still happen, whereas the second one is about one death in one particular accident - and thus belongs to the past (unless it is "Hot News", discussed later). It is however possible to say:

³⁴ Curme, *Parts of Speech...*, p. 321.

³⁵ McCawley, *op. cit.*

³⁶ N. Chomsky, *Deep structure, Surface Structure and Semantic Interpretation*, [in:] D. D. Steinberg, L. A. Jakobovits [eds.], *Semantics*, Cambridge 1971, pp. 183-217.

³⁷ McCawley, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

³⁸ It seems to me that Chomsky is slightly inconsistent, because questioning the grammaticality of (23), he at the same time admits "that if Hillary had just announced that he had succeeded in climbing Everest, it would have been appropriate, without the presupposition that Marco Polo is alive, to have said, But Marco Polo has done it too" - Chomsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213. Cf. also Palmer, *The English Verb*, p. 53.

³⁹ McCawley, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

(27) Dennis Brain and many other famous musicians have died in auto accidents⁴⁰.

THE STATIVE USE

The Stative Use indicates that an action which happened in the past has some results in the present, that is, its direct effect still continues. Evidently, the traditional explanation of the Present Perfect corresponds only to this use. For example:

(28) I'm from the collection agency [...] I've come to collect my wife⁴¹.

The way of looking at the action in the Stative Use is naturally the same as in the Existential Use, hence the presence of the adverbials of time is regulated by more or less the same constraints. The time of the action, if it is at all given, is specified only as belonging to some broader or narrower sector of the present, or - in some cases - a very general past expression is used, for example:

(29) Why, I believe you. You have convinced me long ago.
(G. B. Shaw)

(30) I'm sure she's forgotten all about you long ago. (H. Walpole)⁴²

To say to what effects sentences in the Stative Use refer is fairly easy; to account for it is however impossible. Only one thing can be stated: in spite of what we frequently find in grammars and textbooks, the results of the action do not have to affect the subject of the sentence; for example in the sentence:

(31) The police have arrested my wife, so we can't come to your party.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁴¹ P. Bowen, M. Hayden, F. Riess, *Screen Test*, Penguin Books 1974, p. 148.

⁴² Korsakov, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

"it is the speaker's wife and not the police that is being asserted to be in the state in question"⁴³.

Also, it should be added that the current existence of the results of the action is to some extent only a side effect and in some cases can be expressed almost equally well by means of the Past Simple. As Korsakov has keenly observed, we find the two respective tenses not only in more or less parallel situations, eg.:

(32) I've brought you a box of chocolates. Get through them as quickly as you can and put some weight on. (D. Cusack)

(33) "By the way, I brought you a box of cigars". Annixter stared as Presley laid the box on the edge of the washstand (F. Norris)⁴⁴

(34) "They like haycorns," said Pooh, "so that's what we've come for, because poor Tigger hasn't had any breakfast yet"⁴⁵.

(35) ... Tigger explained to anybody who was listening that he hadn't had any breakfast yet.

"I knew there was something," said Pooh. "Tiggers always eat thistles, so that was why we came to see you, Eeyore"⁴⁶.

but also employed by one person in a sequence referring to the same event:

(36) And that's the reason I've come to see you. I came more or less to ask your advice. (A. Cronin)⁴⁷

The two tenses cannot be said to be interchangeable, because the use of either does bring about a change of meaning, only sometimes the change is very slight and does not affect the resultative character of the utterance. The criterion governing the choice between the two tenses in such cases is the speaker's state of mind at the moment of speaking. If the speaker is concentrating on the results without relating the

⁴³ McCawley, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴⁴ Korsakov, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴⁵ A. A. Milne, *The House of Pooh Corner*, Magnet 1980, p. 23.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁴⁷ Korsakov, *op. cit.*, p. 136

action to any particular past time, he will use the Present Perfect; if he is mentally in the past, if he somehow associates the action with some past circumstances, he will shift to the Past Simple.

However, there are sentences in which in order to convey the idea that the results of the action are still in existence the speaker has no option but to use the Present Perfect Tense. For example Jespersen states that we should say:

(37) Newton has explained the movements of the moon.

if Newton's theory is still thought to be correct, because the use of the Past Simple in this sentence:

(38) Newton explained the movements of the moon.

might mean that Newton's explanation has since been given up⁴⁸. (Note, incidentally, another proof that the subject of a sentence in the Present Perfect definitely need not be alive).

THE HOT NEWS USE

Usually the tense in its Hot News Use expresses actions from the immediate past. The actions are so recent, that it does not yet make sense to separate the time of their happening from the moment of speaking. The use is frequently (although not necessarily) associated with the adverb "just".

(39) It has just struck twelve.

(40) Where have you been? It's almost midnight.

However, the temporal proximity of the action is not a prerequisite for the employment of the Hot News Use. The action can be fairly remote, only the listener is not supposed to have heard about it. As McCawley explains it:

"The hot news present perfect is an existential present perfect in which the speaker bases the range of the quantifier not on his own presupposi-

⁴⁸ O. Jespersen, *Essentials of English Grammar*, University of Alabama Press 1964, p. 245.

tions as to when the event in question might happen but on his estimate of his addressee's presuppositions"⁴⁹.

In other words: a speaker reporting the news of an event assumes that his hearer does not yet know that the event took place in the past; not knowing about it, the hearer cannot treat the action as definitely past; therefore, the period in which the action happened somehow seems to belong to the present.

To quote McCawley once again:

"The period is always extended forwards so as to include the time that it would take for the news of its happening to get around and [...] in the case of a sentence actually being used to convey the news, get around is taken to mean get to the person to whom the sentence is addressed"⁵⁰.

Thus it is possible to say:

(41) Kennedy has been assassinated⁵¹.

provided that the sentence is uttered to a person who has lived in complete isolation since, for instance, 1960⁵².

Before we pass on to the next section, two more things have to be pointed out.

First, that the three subtypes of the "Finished" Use are not always easily distinguishable and that some utterances might be hard to classify. For example the sentence "Max has been fired" can be either interpreted existentially (there were occasions on which Max was fired), or regarded as Hot News ("Hi, Johnny, what's new?"), with a possible resultative connotation (he has not found another job yet)⁵³.

Second, that an action expressed by the Present Perfect Tense is not always related to the moment of speaking (a common misconception). Sometimes it can be anterior simply to a general present point of reference, regardless of whether the tense is in its Existential, Stative, or Hot News Use.

⁴⁹ McCawley, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁵¹ *Ibidem.*

⁵² Cf. also Comrie, *op. cit.*, p.

⁵³ Cf. McCawley, *op. cit.*, p.

(42) *Alumnus* - n. A Boy or man who has attended or been graduated from a school, college, etc.⁵⁴

(43) The female box turtle comes to select a place to lay her eggs at about six o'clock in the evening, at a time when turtles have generally retired for the night. (P. F. Collier)⁵⁵

(44) So Pooh rose and sat down and said "Thank you," which is the proper thing to say when you have been made a Knight [...]⁵⁶

THE "UNFINISHED" USE

The "Unfinished" Use of the Present Perfect (called Universal by McCawley) indicates "that a state of affairs prevailed throughout some interval stretching from the past into the present"⁵⁷. In other words, it expresses the past duration of a present state or action.

A similar function is performed by the Present Perfect Continuous Tense but, naturally, its distribution is not completely equivalent with that of the Present Perfect (although there is some overlapping between the two tenses). The main difference between the Present Perfect Tense and its progressive counterpart is the way of looking at the action. If the action is important as a whole, if we view it synoptically, we use the Present Perfect; if we want to emphasize the progress of the action, if we view it analytically, we use the Present Perfect Continuous.

The Present Perfect Tense in its "Unfinished" Use is therefore restricted to stative verbs:

(45) I have known her for about eight years.

to certain non-terminative verbs:

(46) Bill has worked in our factory since 1977.

(47) How long have you lived in our town?

⁵⁴ K o r s a k o v, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁶ M i l n e, *The House...*, p. 174.

⁵⁷ M c C a w l e y, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

and to sentences expressing the state of the complete lack of an activity:

(48) I haven't seen him for two years⁵⁸.

It is normally very easy to distinguish between the "Finished" and the "Unfinished" Use of the Present Perfect, because of the periods of time that must always appear with this use: the speaker has to specify either the length of the period for which the action has been happening or the starting point since when the action has been happening.

Thus the sentence "Richard has been ill" represents the "Finished" Use and means that he is not ill any longer, and the sentence "Richard has been ill for nearly a month / since Monday" immediately tells us that he is still ill⁵⁹.

Unfortunately, there are exceptions to that rule of thumb - in some cases the Present Perfect Tense in its "Finished" Use can also be followed by a period. For example, a completed action may have taken a significant amount of time, which the speaker wants to emphasize (the Existential and, consequently, the Hot News Use):

(49) He lives in England permanently now - but he has been in China for thirty years.

(50) Where have you been for such a long time?⁶⁰

or the speaker may want to specify the length of time a state has been introduced for (please note that the use of a period in the Stative Use always indicates that the result will continue beyond the moment of speaking):

(51) They've gone to England for two months.

⁵⁸ Cf. Kaushanskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Past duration of a present state is sometimes expressed by means of the Present Simple Tense: "I know you for 10 years already now" (Th. Dreiser) after Korsakov, *op. cit.*, p. 5. "Since when do you smoke so much"? but the grammatical status of such sentences is not quite clear. Korsakov attributes such cases to a change of intention in the middle of the sentence, Close speaks about the "double focus" of such constructions - the speaker wants to emphasize both the past duration and the general present validity of the state or action (R. A. Close, *English as a Foreign Language: Grammar and Syntax for Teachers and Advanced Students*, London 1962).

⁵⁹ Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

However, the meaning of such sentences is clear and misinterpretation hardly possible.

SPECIAL USE

The Present Perfect Tense replaces the Future Perfect Tense in temporal and conditional clauses:

(52) As soon as you have read this book, bring it back to me.

(53) When you have finished, we'll go to the zoo.

(54) Hurry up! You won't go to the party unless you have done your homework by seven o'clock.

THE POLISH EQUIVALENTS OF THE PRESENT PERFECT

The Polish language does not have a present perfect tense. In fact, none of the temporo-aspectual oppositions present in the grammatical tenses of English is reflected in the Polish system of tenses.

The category of tense in English can be said to comprise four elements, one obligatory and three optional. The obligatory element is tense proper, establishing for the action a point of reference in relation to the time of the utterance, with just two realizations, namely the Present, or rather Non-Past, and the Past. The three optional elements are:

- modality - for the sake of simplicity let us assume that it is represented by "shall" and "will" only and is used to denote futurity, although in reality the category is much more complex, and, including also such modal auxiliaries as "can", "may", "must", "need", etc., it is employed to state that actions are possible, allowed, forbidden, necessary, advisable, or the like;

- aspect perfective, implying that the action is anterior to the point of reference, not simultaneous with it;

- aspect progressive, indicating that the action is viewed analytically, as if from the inside, not synoptically, from the outside.

Thus a predicate in English will be marked for the following contrasts:

[+	past]
[+	future]
[+	anterior]
[+	analytical]

and sentences in the Present Perfect will be characterized as [- past, - future, + anterior, - analytical], which means that they express synoptically seen actions anterior to a present point of reference.

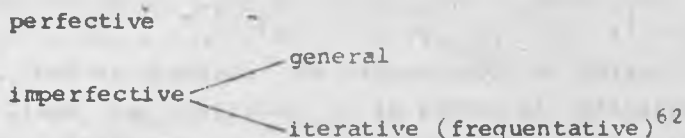
In Polish, the category of tense proper does not establish an abstract point of reference, rather it directly relates the time of the action referred to in the sentence to the time of the utterance, and, the Pre-Past Tense having fallen out of use, its three realizations - the Past, the Present, and the Future - correspond to the usual division of time. (It must be remembered that from the physical point of view the present constitutes only the undimensional boundary between the past and the future, and that in practice it is extended into both of them and can embrace even the whole of eternity).

Moreover, Polish verbs display a two-way aspectual opposition, but it is neither that of anteriority vs. non-anteriority nor that of analytical vs. synoptical viewing. Aspect in Polish involves completion or incompletion of the action⁶¹, and although the terms employed here may be the same (completed verbs are sometimes called perfective, incompleting naturally imperfective), the phenomena they denote are not the same. It may be worth while adding that with momentary verbs completion means a single act, and incompletion a series of acts, for instance: *macinać/machać*.

Not every Polish verb has both aspectual versions - there does not exist for example an imperfective form of *zastrzelić*, nor can we find a perfective form of the verb *chodzić* (*pójść* seems rather the completed version of *iść*). On the other hand,

⁶¹ I. Granićka, *English Past Tenses and Polish Aspect - a Contribution to the Linguistic Theory of Translation*, University of Łódź 1967, unpubl. Ph. D. dissertation, p. 5.

some verbs have also special forms indicating an occasionally repeated action (the general imperfective forms express it as well), so as a matter of fact the category of aspect in Polish is threefold:



The combination of the three tenses and the three-way aspectual opposition results in an inventory of eight tense forms (perfective verbs cannot be used in the Present Tense). As has been said, none of them would mean exactly that an action which is viewed synoptically is anterior to a present point of reference, but the theoretical similarity between two systems is not a prerequisite of the establishment of certain practical correspondences between them (nor does it by the way guarantee the equivalent distributions of the elements within the respective systems - compare the distribution of the English Present Perfect with that of *das Perfekt* in German).

Thus the Present Perfect Tense in its "Finished" Use corresponds to the Polish Past Tense,

When it denotes a terminative action (single or repeated), it is usually rendered by means of the Past Tense in its Perfective Aspect. When the action is non-terminative, the tense is translated into the Past Tense in its Imperfective Aspect. When it is obvious that a repeated non-terminative action is meant and the Polish verb happens to have the iterative form, the Past Iterative can be used.

However, it happens very frequently that we use the Past Imperfective instead of (and in the meaning of) the Past Perfective: the process is identified with the completion of the

⁶² For more information see: J. Fisiak, M. Lipińska-Grzegorek, T. Zabrocki, *An Introductory English-Polish Contrastive Grammar*, Warszawa 1978; Z. Kłemeńiewicz, *Podstawowe wiadomości z gramatyki języka polskiego*, Warszawa 1973; W. Smiech, *Funkcje aspektów czasownikowych we współczesnym języku ogólnopolskim*, Łódź 1971; K. Turwicz, *The Complete and Incomplete Verbs in Polish and their Equivalents in English*, University of Łódź 1977, unpubl. M. A. thesis.

action. Czochralski⁶³ calls this phenomenon *Aoristische Extension*. and distinguishes two cases of such usage:

1) Sentences expressing single actions of a special type where it is self-evident that the completed action is meant:

(55) Czytałeś tę książkę?⁶⁴

(56) Słyszałem o tym wczoraj.

2) Sentences in which we mention (or ask about) a creator and the finished result of his action:

(57) Kto malował ten obraz?⁶⁵

(58) Ten film reżyserował George Roy Hill.

Thus it is also possible to translate the Present Perfect denoting a terminative action by means of the Polish Past Imperfective⁶⁶.

Sentences (1)-(9) and (17)-(20) would therefore be translated in the following way:

(1') Czytałem "Davida Copperfielda".

(2') Pociąg siedemnaście czternaście [?] przyjechał i odjechał.

(3') Uderzyłem to dwa razy, ale nadal stoi.

(4') Postanowiłem złapać Słonia.

(5') Ale niech Bóg wybaczy mi zło, które ci wyrządziłem.

(6') - Aha, Termoli. Miejsce, które zawsze chciałem zobaczyć - Miller przerwał - Gdzie u diabła jest Termoli?

(7') Wampir był martwy wiele razy.

(8') Cóż, ja również natknąłem się na niego w przeszłości.

(9') Nie myśl, że zamierzam dalej znosić to wszystko tak, jak znosiłem (-am) to w przeszłości, nie mam zamiaru.

⁶³ J. C z o c h r a l s k i, *Verbalaspekt und Tempussystem im Deutschen und Polnischen. Eine Konfrontative Darstellung*, Warszawa 1975, p. 181.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Cf. also T. W ó j c i k, *Gramatyka języka rosyjskiego - studium kontrastywne*, Warszawa 1973, p. 121-122.

(17') Mówią ci, siadywałem i wpatrywałem się w oczy tego psa, aż ciarki przechodziły mi po plecach.

(18') Przesiadywałem i rozmyślałem nad tym, aż zaczynało mi się kołować w głowie.

(19') Mój dziadek widział sporo w swoim życiu.

(20') Anglia miała wielu zdolnych władców.

And here is the translation of the relevant examples from among sentences (28)-(44):

(28') Jestem z MPO... [?] Przyszedłem po swoją żonę.

(29') Ależ wierzę ci. Przekonał-eś (-aś) mnie dawno temu.

(30') Jestem pewien, że zapomniała o tobie dawno temu.

(31') Policja aresztowała moją żonę, więc nie możemy przyjść na twoje przyjęcie.

(32') Przyniosłem ci pudełko czekoladek. Zjedz je jak najszybciej i przybądź trochę na wadze.

(34') - One lubią żołądźcie - powiedział Puchatek - więc po to przyszliśmy, gdyż biedny Tygrys nie jadł jeszcze śniadania.

(36') I właśnie dlatego przyszedłem się z tobą zobaczyć. Przyszedłem mniej więcej prosić cię o radę.

(37') Newton wyjaśnił ruchy Księżycy.

(39') Właśnie wybiła dwunasta.

(40') Gdzie byłeś? Jest już prawie północ.

(41') Kennedy został zamordowany.

The "Unfinished" Use of the Present Perfect is rendered into Polish by means of the Present General, except for sentences expressing the state of the complete lack of an activity, where it is translated by means of either the Past Perfective (terminative actions) or the Past Imperfective (actions which are non-terminative):

(45') Znam ją od około ośmiu lat.

(46') Bill pracuje w naszej fabryce od 1977 roku.

(47') Od jak dawna mieszkasz w naszym mieście?

(48') Nie widziałem go od dwóch lat.

When the Present Perfect Tense is used instead of the Future Perfect Tense, it is translated into Polish by means of one of the future tenses:

(52') Jak tylko przeczytasz tę książkę, przyniesz mi ją z powrotem.

(53') Kiedy skończysz, pójdziemy do zoo.

(54') Pośpiesz się! Nie pójdziesz na przyjęcie, jeżeli nie zrobisz (skończysz) pracy domowej przed siódmą.

The correspondences established above can be presented in the following diagram (table 1).

Table 1

The correspondences between the Present Perfect Tense and the Polish tense forms

Polish tenses		Past			Present		Future	
		Perfective	Imperf.		Gen.	Iter.	Perf.	Imp. Gen.
			Gen.	It.				
Finished	Terminative	X	/X/					
	Non-Terminative		X	/X/				
Unfinished	Stative				X			
	Lack of an activity	X	X					
For Future Perfect in Temporal and Conditional Clauses							X	/X/

X - typical rendering

/X/ - occasional rendering

It must be added, however, that while the Present Perfect in its "Finished" and "Unfinished" Use is generally readily translatable into Polish, the tense in its Special Use can pose serious problems for the translator (as can the Future Perfect

Tense). Saying that an action is anterior to a future point of reference is not the same thing as saying that it is future in relation to the moment of speaking, and, consequently, in order to convey the precise meaning of a perfect tense with a future reference, the translator may often have to resort to paraphrase, and perhaps use a different Polish tense.

Needless to say, even the "easy" uses of the Present Perfect can sometimes be difficult to render, for example because of the lack of equivalence between some verbs in English and Polish, but these are problems for the theory of translation and lie beyond the scope of this paper.

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CZAS PRESENT PERFECT I JEGO POLSKIE ODPOWIEDNIKI

Artykuł dotyczy użycia angielskiego czasu Present Perfect i jego odpowiedników w języku polskim.

Autor przeciwstawia się popularnej koncepcji, że użycie Present Perfect związane jest z trwaniem w chwili mówienia rezultatów czynności, o której mowa w zdaniu, a następnie przedstawia szczegółową dystrybucję tego czasu.

Czas Present Perfect służy do: wyrażania czynności przeszłych, jeżeli nieistotne jest, kiedy się one odbyły, lecz raczej, że są obecnie w rejestrze; podkreślenia faktu, że bezpośrednie rezultaty czynności przeszłej trwają w teraźniejszości; mówienia o czynnościach z przeszłości bezpośredniej; podawania, jak długo jakaś czynność teraźniejsza jest już wykonywana. Wspomniane jest też użycie specjalne - w zdaniach podrzędnych okolicznikowych czasu i warunku.

Autor zwraca uwagę, że nieprawdą jest, iż czas Present Perfect nie może być użyty z okolicznikami czasu przeszłego, podkreśla też, że akcja wyrażona tym czasem nie musi być uprzednia w stosunku do momentu mówienia; jej punktem odniesienia może być dowolna (nawet wielokrotna) chwila w teraźniejszości.

W części kontrastywnej porównana jest struktura syntaktyczno-semantyczna systemu czasów w języku angielskim i polskim, oraz przedstawione są polskie odpowiedniki angielskiego czasu Present Perfect.