

Tense Interpretation Ambiguities in Tyneside English

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Introduction to Tyneside English Tenses

Tyneside English vs. Standard British English

Standard British English

- Present Perfect is formed using auxiliary verb 'have' + perfect participle:
 - He has played
 - She has caught the ball
 - I have seen the movie
- The simple past is formed by inflecting the verb with a past tense morpheme:
 - They threw away the receipt
 - We walked through the park
 - You thought the meal was delicious

Tyneside English vs. Standard British English

- For regular verbs and weak irregular verbs, tenses are formed in the same way as SBE.
- With strong irregular verbs, the forms are derived differently.
 - Present Perfect: SBE simple past used as the participle.
 - Simple past: SBE participle used as the simple past conjugation.

Examples Tenses

(1) Tyneside English Simple Past [NECTE2]¹

- a. The last time I **come** across that road, it was going back [...] about nine years ago.
‘The last time I **came** across that road, it was going back [...] about nine years ago.’
- b. I **done** some work experience surveying.
‘I **did** some work experience surveying.’

¹The examples in (1) have been taken from the Diachronic Electronic Corpus of TE (DECTE) Corrigan et al. (2012). Files within this corpus have been taken from pre-existing corpora, namely the Tyneside Linguist Survey (TLS) and the Newcastle Electronic Corpus of TE 1 and 2 (NECTE/NECTE2).

Example Tenses

(2) Tyneside English Present Perfect [NECTE2]

- a. A few door handles **have fell** off.
‘A few door handles **have fallen** off.’
- b. I’m hoping my horse **has came** in.
‘I’m hoping my horse **has come** in.’

Possible Theoretical Analyses

Levelling of Verbal Paradigms

Beal (2010) → TE irregular verb paradigms are reduced so that the simple past and perfect participle are the same.

- (3) a. swim/swam/swum → swim/swam/swam
b. come/came/come → come/come/come

This would rule out examples like (2b):

- (2) a. A few door handles **have fell** off.
‘A few door handles **have fallen** off.’
b. I’m hoping my horse **has came** in.
‘I’m hoping my horse **has come** in.’

Variable Event and Reference Times

Describing tenses using Reichenbach's Temporal Parameters (1947):

- **E: Event time**
- **R: Reference time**
- **S: Speech time**

(4) Preterite vs. Present Perfect (Hamm & Bott, 2014)

a. I saw John \rightarrow $E, R > S$

b. I have seen John \rightarrow $E > R=S$

What about languages where the present perfect can be used for preterite and perfective events?

(5) **German *Perfekt*** (Rothstein, 2008, 24)

- a. Sigurd ist gestern angekommen
Sigurd is yesterday came
‘Sigurd arrived yesterday’
- b. Sigurd kam gestern an
Sigurd came yesterday *particle*
‘Sigurd arrived yesterday’

(Ballweg, 1988; Zeller, 1994; Grewendorf, 1995)

E before **R**, but **R** not fixed in relation to **S**.

Goal of this presentation

- Investigate whether TE tenses can be mapped directly to their SBE counterparts regarding their temporal interpretation.
- Does the combination of SBE constructions (aux + simple past form, and perfect participle as a preterite conjugation) result in more ambiguous temporal readings?

The Experiment

Hypothesis

Hypothesis

TE tenses are **NOT** directly equivalent to SBE counterparts regarding their temporal readings.

TE Simple past \neq SBE Simple Past

TE Present Perfect \neq SBE Present Perfect

Subjects

Subjects	Male	Female
29	14	15

Table 1: Total Subjects

Age range: 21 – 58 years old.

Mean age: 35 years old.

Subjects

Subjects	Male	Female
15	5	10

Table 2: Group A Subjects

Age range: 21 – 58 years old.

Mean age: 34.25 years old.

Subjects

Subjects	Male	Female
14	9	5

Table 3: Group B Subjects

Age range: 21 – 58 years old.

Mean age: 34.17 years old.

Method

- Designed as a Forced-Choice survey (Erlewine & Kotek, 2016).
- Each participant given a series of contexts, each with either a SBE present perfect reading, or a SBE preterite reading.
- For each context, the participant chose the most suitable TE construction (either TE simple past or present perfect) to describe the event.
- Survey A and B were mirror copies of each other. If a context had a perfect reading in survey A, the same context would be altered to have a preterite reading in survey B.
- Both surveys contained filler questions that were identical in both TE and SBE.

Filler Questions

(6) Filler Question

Patricia is sitting on the porch with her friend when she sees a shooting star. She grabs her friend and says:

- ☐ Did you see that over there?
- ☐ Did you see that over here?

- Stop participants trying to predict “correct” or expected answers.
- If a participant answers 50 % or more of these questions incorrectly, their entire survey was classified as inconsistent and disregarded from the analysis.

Testing Temporal Interpretations

(7) Simple Past

Peter and Mary decide to stay at home and watch a film together. Peter wants to watch *Goal* again, but Mary complains because she doesn't want to watch the same film every night. Peter says to her "But it's romantic. Can you not remember which film we went to see on our first date?" Mary sighs and says:

- ☐ Yeah, we seen *Goal* on our first date.
- ☐ Yeah we have saw *Goal* on our first date.

Testing Temporal Interpretations

(8) Present Perfect

Peter and Mary decide to stay at home and watch a film together. Peter wants to watch *Goal* again, but Mary complains because she doesn't want to watch the same film every night. Which response is most appropriate?

- ☐ Mary and Peter have saw *Goal* loads.
- ☐ Mary and Peter seen *Goal* loads.

Unusable Data

- Item 9 from both surveys was removed as the verb ‘fall’ does not function grammatically in the TE simple past.
- This was evidenced in speakers’ unanimous choice of the TE present perfect ‘I have fell’ in both survey A and B despite differing contexts.
- This was confirmed by feedback given by participants stating they chose the TE present perfect despite preferring to use the SBE simple past construction.
- Participant 28’s responses were disregarded due to incorrectly answering 5 out of the 7 filler questions.

Findings and Analysis

Inter-Rater Reliability

Fleiss' Kappa (Fleiss & Cohen, 1973):

κ value	Agreement
< 0	poor
$0.01 - 0.2$	slight
$0.21 - 0.4$	fair
$0.41 - 0.6$	moderate
$0.61 - 0.8$	substantial
$0.81 - 1$	almost perfect

Table 4: *Fleiss' Kappa*

Inter-Rater Reliability

Krippendorff's Alpha (Krippendorff, 2018):

α value	Agreement
> 0.8	good
$0.67 - 0.8$	low
< 0.67	very low

Table 5: *Krippendorff's Alpha*

Agreement Among Subjects

Survey	α	κ
A	0.16	0.154
B	0.101	0.094

Table 6: *Subject Agreement*

- Very little agreement among participants regarding how the TE tenses should be interpreted.
- Implication would be that TE tenses can encode more than one temporal meaning.

Variation Among Verbs and Contexts

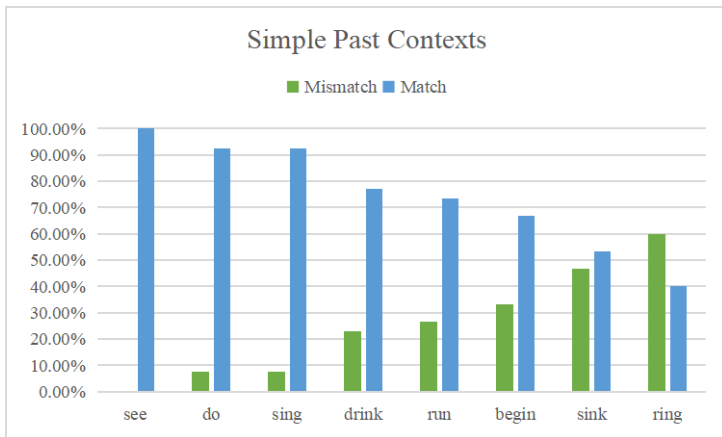


Figure 1: Simple Past Contexts

Variation Among Verbs and Contexts

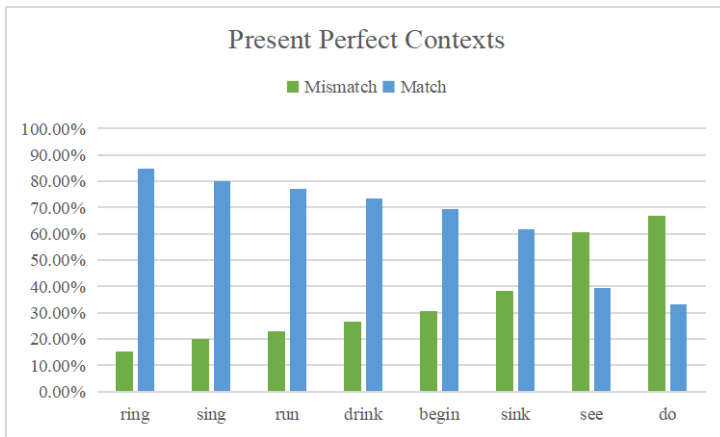


Figure 2: Present Perfect Contexts

Conclusions

Conclusions

Participant Agreement:

- Very little agreement among speakers - this implies that each TE tense does not have one temporal interpretation.
- Instead, it is more likely that they should be described like the German *Perfekt*.
- E before R, but R not fixed in relation to S.

Different verbs:

- Not all verbs are as acceptable in terms of encoding multiple event timings.
- ‘see’, only the TE simple past can be used for simple past contexts.
- Dependent on the reading - in perfect contexts, speakers use both constructions for the verb ‘see’.

Implications Going Forward

- Larger study required - more verbs and a larger set of participants.
- Results of the experiment should be reproduced on a larger scale before definitive conclusions can be made.

Implications Going Forward

Other tenses:

- Alternation of the simple past and participle affect the interpretation of TE simple past and present perfect
- What about other auxiliary tenses?
 - He would have saw the man
 - He had ate the apple
 - She will have did her homework
- These constructions are all grammatical, but further investigation is required to see if they are interpreted in the same way as SBE.

Thank You For Listening!

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