Non-standard configurations in Eonavian Spanish: 
how to be perfect without a perfect tense
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The verbal system of Eonavian Spanish, a variety spoken between the Eo and Navia rivers in Asturias, has incorporated a series of non-standard configurations as a result of language contact between the so-called “normative” Spanish, taught in schools, and a Galician dialect, ‘a fala’ or ‘galego de Asturias’, traditionally spoken in that area and orally transmitted from generation to generation.

A noteworthy difference lies in the presence v absence of compound tenses ‘HABER + participle’: while these forms appear in standard (1), they are not found in Eonavian Spanish. In that respect, the non-standard variety mirrors the Galician system (3) (Freixeiro Mato, 1998). In this talk I examine the distribution and interpretation of forms which refer to “past” eventualities in Eonavian Spanish (2), especially those that appear underlined:

(1) Standard Spanish: bailé ‘I danced’; he bailado ‘I have danced’; había bailado ‘I had danced’
(2) Eonavian Spanish: bailé ‘I danced’; etymological past perfect bailara (<lat. –erat); periphrastic forms TENER ‘to have (got)’ + participle, e.g. tengo bailado
(3) Galician: bailei ‘I danced’; etymological pluperfect bailara (<lat. –erat); periphrastic forms TER ‘to have (got)’ + participle, e.g. teño bailado

In (1-3), the case of bailé is pretty straightforward: a simple past form that denotes perfective events, i.e. those completed in the past. When one looks at bailara and tengo bailado in (2), however, things are less clear-cut: first, although bailara is usually a past perfect (4), in some cases it can be interpreted like a simple past (5):

(4) Ana estaba segura de que suspendiera ‘Anne was positive she had failed’
(5) Aquí comiéramos una vez ‘we (had eaten/ ate) here once’

Given (5), and noticing the fact that suspendiera ‘fail’ in (4) may not necessarily have a perfect reading in the sense that it may not have present relevance, I put forward a first hypothesis (H1), that both bailara and bailé denote aspectually perfective eventualities only (just like amaverat and amavit in Latin, see for instance Squartini 1995), whereas the form tengo bailado is used to convey a perfect reading. Then I illustrate how H1 is supported by some syntactic tests such as the position of time adverbs and Thompson’s (2005) quantifier binding test. Nevertheless, examples like (6) in which bailara combines with ya ‘already’ to build a prototipical perfect, indicate the need for more fine-grained distinctions inside the perfect, from which the empirical differences observed between forms could be derived.

(6) Ana ya saliera cuando yo llegué ‘By the time I arrived, Anne had already left’.

To that end, I present a second hypothesis (H2) which takes into account García Fernández’s (1998) classification of perfects (resultatives v experientials): a good example of a resultative is (6), where we have a result of a single event of leaving; by contrast, an experiential perfect refers to the state of affairs that results from being in the possession of an experience, such as (7) from standard Spanish. H2 basically says that bailara can not only be aspectually perfective, but also may be used as a resultative perfect. By contrast, an experiential perfect would only be expressed in Eonavian Spanish using the periphrastic form tengo bailado, illustrated in concrete examples.

(7) Ana ya ha salido tarde varias veces ‘lit. Anne has already left late several times.’
References


