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 a 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

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