

Bridget Drinka

The HAVE perfect (Eng. *I have seen*, Ger. *ich habe gesehen*), found almost exclusively in western Europe (Dahl and Velupillai 2013), has been identified as a “European quirk, unparalleled elsewhere in the world” (Cysouw 2011: 425). What is remarkable and important to note, however, is that this construction is not at all rare within its own geographical area. Periphrastic perfects formed with a possessive auxiliary are extremely well-represented in the Romance and Germanic languages, and have spread to numerous languages which have come in contact with them: certain varieties of W. Slavic (Upper and Lower Sorbian, Czech, Polish, Kashubian), Baltic (Lithuanian), Celtic (Breton), and Basque. The spread of this highly marked construction to adjacent varieties largely in the light of history provides us with an exceptional opportunity to observe the conditions under which this calquing occurred, and to assess the role of external as well as internal factors in the adoption of this structure in closely-related, distantly-related, and unrelated languages.

After a general overview of the distribution of HAVE-perfect calques across Europe, three representative instances are presented:

- Old High German and Old Saxon, which, as part of the “Charlemagne Sprachbund” (van der Auwera 1998, Haspelmath 2001), acquired their perfects through scribal and vernacular influence of Latin and Romance (Banniard 2004, Drinka 2013)
- Portuguese, which built its perfects on a vernacular model, with possible influence from Arabic (Fassi Fehri 2003), and
- Czech, which underwent centuries-long influence from German, calquing a HAVE perfect alongside its native BE perfect and constructing a perfect/aorist contrast modeled closely on that of German (Dickey 2011).

These examples illustrate, respectively, three important principles of social conditioning connected with the grammatical calquing of the perfect: the role of prestige in the operation of “roofing,” the linguistic repercussions of political and confessional realignment, and the capacity of social motivation to “trump” internal linguistic factors (Thomason and Kaufmann 1988), as witnessed both in the revamping of the verbal paradigm in the vernacular varieties and in the partially-successful attempts by language purists to suppress it in the standard variety (Thomas 2003). These examples illustrate, moreover, that we ignore the quirky nature of the HAVE perfect in western Europe at our peril. Only through a recognition of the multilayered interaction of formal properties, cognitive pressures, and, above all, socio-historical motivations can we hope to arrive at an understanding of this complex, out-of-the-ordinary development.

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