

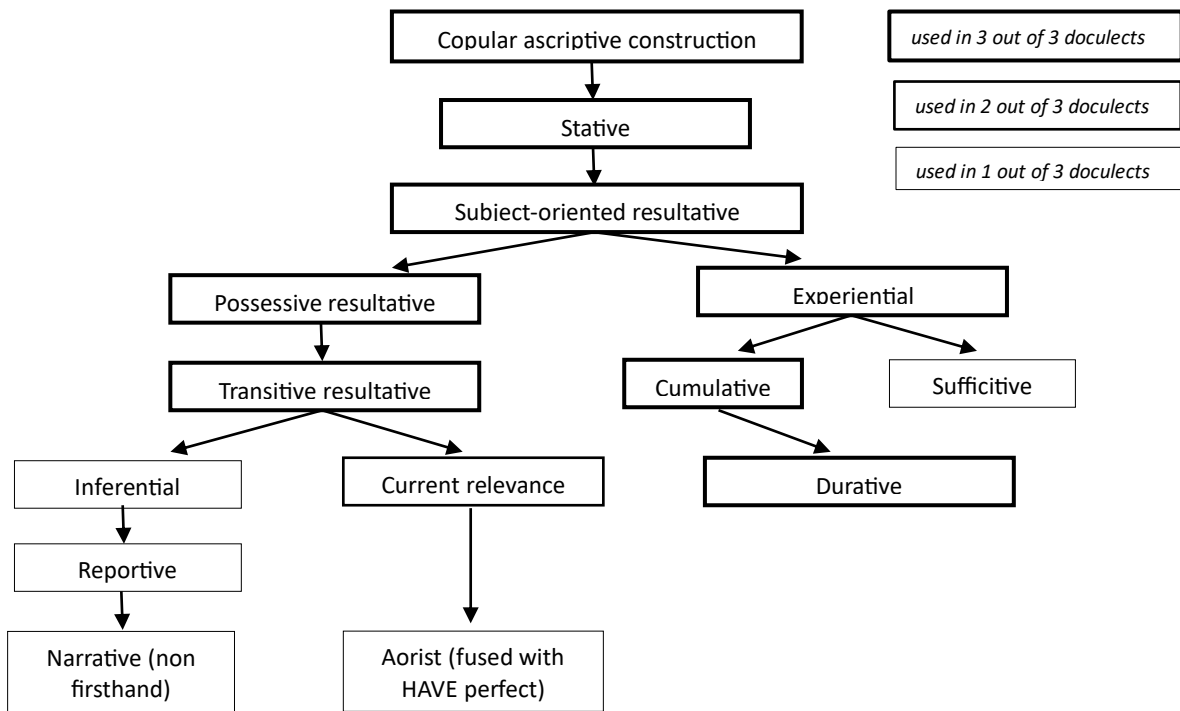
Grammaticalization of BE perfects and the role of token frequencies: some insights from Barese, Bulgarian, and Lithuanian

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Grammaticalization clines are based on diachronic conceptual shifts that may also coincide with points of ambiguity observed in synchronic data (Hopper & Traugott 2003, Heine 1993). The goal of my study is to propose a grammaticalization cline (Figure 1) based on conceptual links and token frequencies for BE perfects – perfects formed with BE auxiliaries and past participles – previously undifferentiated from HAVE and split-auxiliary perfect grammaticalization clines (Squartini & Bertinetto 2000, Heine & Kuteva 2006, Broekhuis 2021).

Figure 1. Proposed grammaticalization cline for BE perfects.



The dataset comprises three doculects (Wälchli & Cysouw 2012) in Lithuanian (Baltic), Bulgarian (Slavic), and Barese (Italo-Romance). The Lithuanian and Bulgarian doculects consist of public Facebook comments, while the Barese doculect comprises written texts (newspaper articles and a fiction book). An annotated database was created for each doculect, containing ~700 to ~2000 perfect tokens each. Statistical analysis of token frequencies shows that:

1. In Bulgarian and Lithuanian perfects, where the auxiliary can be optional, its frequency gradually increases with each step forward on the proposed grammaticalization cline. Both perfects tend to include the auxiliary more frequently with meanings that are cross-linguistically more perfect-like, resulting in an analytic perfect.
2. Barese, featuring a person-based auxiliiation system with the HAVE auxiliary relegated to the 3rd person (Andriani 2017), actually exhibits auxiliary variation in all persons apart from 2sg. While variation in other persons depends on a range of factors, in 3PL and 3SG especially HAVE

is in competition with BE, and BE is used with those functions of the perfect that coincide with the initial steps of the grammaticalization cline (statives and subject-oriented resultatives).

3. Experimentals with BE perfects should not be considered a secondary value, developing from CR perfects, as it is for HAVE or split-system perfects (Lindstedt 2000). Experimentals are well-established and frequent in both more (Bulgarian) and less (Lithuanian) grammaticalized perfects, which may lack the CR perfect altogether. Barese, with its perfect fused from HAVE and BE periphrases, demonstrates the third-highest proportion of the BE auxiliary with experiential perfects. However, BE with Barese experimentals does not violate the person-based pattern and is due to salience and frequency of the 1st person in experiential contexts.

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