THE EXPRESSION OF PRESENT AND PAST TIME IN THE ENGLISH PREDICATE*

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The proper use of the English verbal forms has long been a mystery to foreign learners of English. The Perfect forms (Present Past and Future) present special difficulties to foreigners including the Hungarians, and many language learners seem to be at a loss even at a relatively advanced level of the language learning process. An additional fact encouraging this investigation is that there seems to be wide disagreement among various scholars concerning the meaning of the Perfect forms, which has not been satisfactorily defined as yet.

This paper will first discuss time specification in a general context which will be followed by an analysis of the English verbal forms referring to either present or past time.

1. *Time specification*

1.1. Time in its philosophical sense is not identical with the time reflected in language. Time as a general notion exists whether we take notice of it or not. The time reflected in language is the result of a psychological process. It is a.

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* List of abbreviations and symbols:

V	verb stem
V-s	3rd person singular, Simple Present (in English)
V-ni	infinitive (in Hungarian)
V-ed	Simple past (in English) also for the type: *write+ed→wrote
V-n	past participle (in English)
V-ing	present participle (in English)
-∅-	zero morpheme signalling the Present in Hungarian
-T-	morpheme signalling the Past in Hungarian (realized as -t-, -tt-, -ott, -ett, -ött, -ta, -te)
-f	inflectional ending for number and person in Hungarian, symbolized by the respective English personal pronoun in the transcription of Hungarian verb forms.
-∅	zero morpheme for 3rd person singular inflectional ending in Hungarian.

psychological and linguistic interpretation of objective time. This difference
between the two kinds of time can be explained by the fact that man is in-
volved in this interpretation: the human being is there who perceives the sur-
rounding world, selects among the various elements of reality, sets up a hier-
archy of these elements — some being more important to him than others,
compares them to each other, tries to make some systematic order among these
elements of reality pouring in through the senses, and, translates them into
his own code-system that is called linguistic expression. It can be seen from
what has been said above that a good deal of subjectivity is involved (generaliza-
tion, simplification, emotions, etc.). Let us just consider how short sometimes
ten minutes can be, and, some other time how long it is.

The difference between the two kinds of time seems to be very much like
the difference between a photograph and a painting of the same thing.

1.2. Time, in the linguistic sense of the word, is a complex category, so some
elementary distinctions are necessary to be made. Kiefer (1980: 1 – 2) says in his
paper that "sentences may exhibit two different types of temporal categories.
The first type situates the sentence with respect to utterance time" while "the
second type of temporal categories does not situate the event at hand with
respect to the time of utterance, it rather describes the time during which this
event takes place." Kiefer calls the first category *external time specification* and
the second one *internal time specification.*

As far as the first category is concerned, it seems to be useful to adopt
Reichenbach's (1947) notions of temporal specification. He distinguishes be-
tween *Speech Time, Reference Time,* and *Event Time.* Speech Time is the time at
which a given sentence is uttered, that is, the moment of utterance (or: mo-
ment of speaking). Reference Time is the time indicated by the sentence. Event
Time refers to the moment at which the relevant event or state occurs.

Now, let us see how the three times of temporal specification are related to
each other. Consider:

(1) I *understand* it now.

In (1) all the three times are identical with one another. Both Reference Time
and Event Time are identical with Speech Time.

(2) I *understood* it yesterday.

In (2) Speech Time is the moment of speaking. Reference Time and Event
Time are identical, and they are prior to Speech Time.

(3) I *have understood* it now.

In (3) Speech Time and Reference Time are identical, Event Time is prior to
them.

(4) I *had* already *understood* it (before you explained it).

In (4) all the three times are different. Reference Time is prior to Speech Time,
Event Time is prior to Reference Time.

It is impossible to have sentences in which Event Time is identical with
Speech Time and Reference Time is prior to them because that would mean that
an event or state occurring at the moment of speaking has only relevance at a
time earlier than the moment of speaking.

There is, however, a question standing out here. Can any of the three times
be missing? It is quite obvious that even if so, it cannot be Speech Time. The
same can be said of Reference Time bearing in mind the function that communi-
cation has to fulfil. A sentence without having relevance at some time would
not make much sense. However, consider the following sentence:

(5) Oil *floats* on water.

In (5) Reference Time is unspecified, it can be identical with any moment
of time including Speech Time, and Event Time is not indicated. Thus, (5) can
be regarded as a sentence with *incomplete time specification.*

It follows from what has been said above that Speech Time is of crucial
importance since Reference Time is oriented to it. Thus, Speech Time may be
called a *primary axis of orientation.* Present Time means that reference time is
simultaneous with Speech Time, Past Time means that Reference Time pre-
cedes Speech Time, and Future Time means that Reference Time follows Speech
Time. It is also evident that Reference Time, too, is a non-omissible element of
temporal specification because Event Time is given in relation to it. Thus,
Reference Time might be called a *secondary axis of orientation.* Event Time may
be simultaneous with it, as well as precede it. So, Event Time is, in fact,
double-oriented.

1.3. So far, we have been concerned with external time specification, i.e.
we have been examining how events are situated with respect to the time of
speaking. However, events do not only take place in time but they also take time
to take place. Bull (1960:17) Internal time specification, as it has already been
mentioned, describes the time during which an event takes place. From this point
view, of events are not all alike. (It has to be emphasized that 'event' is used
throughout this paper as a cover-term for the lexical meaning that a full-verb
expresses in an utterance.) It seems to be necessary to have a look at the various
kinds of events, too, in order to be able to investigate the time expressed by the
verb (henceforth verbal time). Compare the following sentences:

(6) I *knew* him very well.
(7) He *got up* early today.
(8) I *was watching* the TV last night.
(9) He *died* yesterday.
(10) I *waited* there.

(11) He *entered* the room.
(12) He *bought* a coat last week.
(13) He *talked* a lot.

All the sentences above refer to Past Time. On a closer look, we find that (6) describes a *state* while the sentences (7—13) denote *actions*. (8) is in opposition with (9) on grounds that *was watching* describes an *imperfective* activity whereas *died* is a *perfective* event. *Waited* in (10) denotes a durative action; *entered* in (11) is non durative (momentary). (12) denotes a telic event, while (13) describes an atelic one. To define the kind of event a verb describes will be important whe the English verbal forms are compared to their Hungarian counter parts.

1.4. It must be stated, however, that verbal time in itself may not be sufficient to give a precise indication of the time at which an event takes place. Consider:

(14) Four years ago, I *am* over to Belfast, …
(15) I *ate* my lunch after my wife *came* home.
(16) Joan *tells* me you're getting a new car.
(17) I *hear* t hat you're getting married.

In (14) an adverbial of time specifies when the event took place, while in (15) precise time specification is ensured by an adverbial clause. In (16—17) it is context that suggests that *Joan tells me* and *I hear* refer to events earlier than Speech Time. Note also that V, V-s refer to past time events in (14) and (16-17). It is also worth considering what stylistic role such a device has got to play. These are all further important issues that are not to be neglected

It follows automatically that a comprehensive analysis of the meaning of the English Perfect cannot be limited to the discussion of verbal time alone, an adequate definition of the meaning of the perfect forms requires an investigation in a much wider context.‖

2. *Time specification in English*

In this section, the various English verbal forms will be confronted and analysed in relation to one another. Emphasis will be laid on the confrontations with the Perfect forms, but it is also necessary to have a look at oppositions other than with the Perfect to reveal the real meaning of the forms under investigation.

2.1. From a formal point of view, *Past* and *Non-Past* (V-ed versus V, V-s) are signalled in English by a morphological device, Past being the marked member of the opposition, while the other forms are syntactic units. V-ed and V,

V-s constitute a primary category traditionally termed as the category of *tense*.

(18) I *work* hard. (Non-Past)
(19) I *worked* hard. (Past)

The morphologically indicated opposition underlies all other forms, as well. Cf:

	Non-Past	Past
Cont.	I am working hard.	I was working hard.
Perf.	I have worked hard.	I had worked hard.
Perf.-Cont.	I have been working hard.	I had been working hard.

Table 1.

To speak in terms of external time specification, the Non-Past form refers to events where both Reference Time and Event Time are identical with Speech Time. See sentences (1) and (18). As far as Past in concerned, Reference Time and Event Time are identical, but they are earlier than Speech Time. See sentences (2) and (19). In other words, V, V-s indicate the occurrence of an action or the existence of a state *now*, where *now* can be either the moment of speaking (Speech Time, or any length of time including *now* (taken as one chronological whole).

As far as the V-ed form is regarded, it is used to describe past time events, i.e. it indicates the occurrence of an action or existence of a state in the past. Past means any time point or span earlier than *now*, and which does not include *now*. The point of reference (Reference Time) is a recalled time *then*. The speaker's point of primary concern is with this *then*. Event Time is identical with this recalled *then*. (It should be noted in brackets that English does not distinguish between recent and remote past time unlike some Romance languages e.g. Italian.)

The above statement needs, however, to be refined since V, V-s and V-ed also occur in utterances that reflect a time specification other than described above. Consider the examples (5), (14), (16—17) as well as the following ones:

(20) I *wondered* if you'd like a drink.
(21) *Did* you *want* to see me, Mr Baxter?
(22) Yes, I *hoped* you'd help me with this.
(23) Well, I *thought* we might as well go to see them now.

As the example *Oil floats on water* illustrates, the Non-Past form is used in English to express incomplete time specification. Further distinction can, however, be made here as regards this use of the V. V-s form. Cf:

(24) Hydrogen *is* the lightest element.
(25) Two and three *make* five.
(26) Budapest *stands* on the River Danube.
(27) The Atlantic Ocean *separates* the New World from the Old.
(28) Necessity *is* the mother of invention.
(29) Action *speaks* louder than words.
(30) War *solves* no problems.

On close examination, it can be seen that (24—25) express *timeless* proposition, i.e. Reference Time is unspecified (it is impossible to specify it), and Event Time is not indicated (it is not possible to associate it with any moment of time). The statements in (26—27) are made *'for all time'* with both the Reference Time and Event Time unspecified, i.e. the statements are valid at any moment of time. Very similar to (24—27) are the so-called *eternal truths*, proverbs and proverb-like statements, e.g. (28—30). To make distinction between statements with incomplete time specification is sometimes difficult, and it is very often context that helps us to decide which type of incompleteness is expressed. Note the difference between (30) and the very same sentence with a different subject:

(31) His party *solves* no problems.

In (31) the idea of 'timelessness' is no longer present.

The Non-Past form can also be used to describe events whose Reference Time and Event Time are prior to Speech Time as shown by (14). This use of the form V, V-s (and also is V-ing) is known by the term Historic Present. E.g.:

(32) "It was this way, your ladyship. Mr. Mosgorowsky, he *come* with a party to visit Chimneys on one of the show days. Mr. Tredwell, he was indisposed like — an ingrowing toe-nail as a matter of fact — so it fell to me to show the parties over. At the end of the tour, Mr. Mosgorovsky, he *stays* behind the rest, and after giving me something handsome, he *falls* into conversation. "Yes," said Bundle encouragingly. "And the long and the short of it was", said Alfred with a sudden acceleration of his narrative, "that he *offers* me a hundred pound down to leave that insta.t minute and to look after this here club". (SDM 83 - 84)

With Historic Present past happenings are portrayed or imagined as if they were going on at the moment of speaking, i.e. both Reference Time and Event Time are identified with Speech Time (shifted ahead in time). Leech (1971:7) writes the following about Historic Present;

"Such utterances are typical of a highly-coloured popular style of oral narrative, a style one would be more likely to overhear in the public bar of a village inn than in the lounge of an expensive hotel".

As the examples (16—17) indicate there are some other instances, too, where the Non-Past form refers to events that are clearly past. This use occurs with a group of verbs that are traditionally termed as verbs of communication. Further examples:

(33) The Times *writes* that ...
(34) The ten o'clock news *says* that ...
(35) I *understand* that you've bought a new car.

Now, the question may arise whether the Past form can ever refer to events whose Reference Time and Event Time are identical with Speech Time. The fact that it can is shown by the examples (20—23) where the events are clearly non-past. The form V-ed (and was V-ing, too) often occur in English in indirect, therefore more polite requests. The polite connotation here can be explained as a hint that the speaker is not necessarily committed to the feelings mentioned and that he is quite prepared to change his own attitude in the light of that of the listener. Requests expressed in such a way have a less demanding tone. The form was V-ing is often preferred in such contexts, as it adds a further overtone of politeness. What we can see here is that both Reference Time and Event Time are shifted back from Speech Time, with which they are in fact identical, to a time earlier than Speech Time.

2.2. The meaning of the form V, V-s was discussed in relation to V-ed in 2.1. Here, it will be dealt with as opposed to the form has V-n.

Both V, V-s and has V-n are present in that they both contact the moment of speaking, they both refer to present facts. They occur in present time contexts. Adverbial indicators also prove this. Both verbal forms are compatible with present time adverbials, e.g.: now, this moment, today, this week, this..., in 1984 (the current year), etc. They both describe states or actions with Reference Times identical with Speech Time.

However, the form has V-n, unlike V, V-s, indicates the occurrence of an action or existence of a state in or for a period of time extending from some time in the past till the moment of speaking. For this reason, has V-n can be called a *period verb-form*, while V, V-s is a *non-period verb-form*. Has V-n deals with the timespan stretching backward into the past from 'now', while V, V-s deals with 'now', the length of which is irrelevant (Akira 1963:41). The linguistic expression V, V-s says nothing about the length of duration before or after the present moment. Compare:

(36) I *have been married* to her for twelve years. (LE 308)
(37) ... I've always *been* dangerous. (i.e. so far) (BE 40—41)
(38) I *am married* to her.
(39) I *am* (always) dangerous.

It is also shown by the above examples that the length of the timespan expressed by the Present Perfect is either indicated by an adverbial (example (36)) or implied (example (37)).

It follows automatically from what was said above that an event expressed by has V-n presupposes a period, between t_1 and t_2. As the end-point of the timespan is the point 'now', i.e. the moment of speaking, t_2=Speech Time. It is also evident that t_1 is earlier than t_2. So, to characterize the has V-n form in terms of the criteria of external time specification, it can be stated that Reference Time is identical with Speech Time, and Event Time is between t_1 and t_2, but it is not — and it cannot be — identical with t_2, i.e. Event Time is earlier than Speech Time. It is obvious that Event Time cannot be identical with t_2 because that would result in the following formula:

$$\text{Reference Time}=\text{Speech Time}$$
$$\text{Event Time}=t_2=\text{Speech Time}$$

As a matter of fact, the above formula characterizes V, V-s, and, of course, V, V-s≠has V-n. It must be noted here that in the case of incomplete time specification there is no Event Time indication.

As the form has V-n involves two time points (t_1 and t_2), it is compatible with adverbials beginning with *since* and *for*. See example (36) and also the following ones:

(40) I *'ve known* her since she was a child.
(41) They *have lived* in Sidney for five years.
(42) I *have not seen* him since we left college.
(43) She *has not been* there since 1977.

A comment, however, seems necessary here. Actions or states expressed by has V-n may or may not characterize the whole of the period between t_1 and t_2, i.e. the end-point of a state or action denoted by has V-n does not necessarily coincide with t_2, the end-point of the timespan presupposed. Cf:

(44) I *have* already *been* to London.
(45) I have *been married* several times.
(46) I am cold because I*'ve been swimming* for an hour.
(47) Sorry for my dirty hands, I*'ve been cleaning* out the cellar.

As far as the form V, V-s is concerned, it is incompatible with *since*,

(48) *I *know* her since she was a child.

because *since* refers to a period between t_1 and t_2, the field of operation of the form has V-n. As regards V, V-s: $t_1=t_2$=Event Time=Speech Time. However, V, V-s is compatible with *for*. Consider:

(49) I *am* here for an hour.
(50) I always *see* her for minutes only.
(51) He *reads* the paper for hours.

In (49-51) *for* does not refer to a period between t_1 and t_2, a timespan from some time in the past till the moment of speaking ,but it refers to a period around the moment of speaking (the restricted use of the V, V-s form). Such sentences indicate the limited existence of a state or the limited occurrence of an action *now*. Compare (52), 53), and (54), (55)

(52) He *is* here for two weeks.
(53) He *has been* here for two weeks.
(54) She *cries* for hours.
(55) She *has cried* for hours.

A consequence of the period nature of has V-n is its *temporal indefiniteness*, because has V-n specifies only the end-point of the period, but the time of the event is never fully determined. Has V-n never answers the question 'When?'. The only thing we can learn is 'For how long?' 'Since when?' in a period between t_1 and t_2. On the other hand, V, V-s can be identified with the point *now* or with a present segment of time taken as one chronological whole (with the exception of the instances of incomplete time specification). Thus, we may call it *temporally definite*,

A third difference between V, V-s and has V-n lies in their descriptive approach, the first one being *direct*, the latter *indirect*. V, V-s describes the present in a direct way, i.e. the time of what we describe is indetical with the time of the action/state that we name. (Reference Time=Event Time) E.g.:

(56) I *know* India well.
(57) She *is crying*.
(58) He *reads* poems
(59) She *doesn't want* to get married again.
(60) My parents *smoke* a lot.

Has V-n describes the present in an indirect way, i.e. the time of the action/ state that we name precedes present, the time of what we describe. (Present fact, pre-present state/action). In other words, Event Time is earlier than Reference Time.

The present facts expressed in sentences (56-60) could be described indirectly. E.g. the situation in (56) could be described by saying 'I have been to India/ I have read a lot about India/ My friends have told me a lot about India', etc. Accordingly, (57) may be the result of 'She has fallen down /Her mother has scolded her/ She has cut her finger', etc. 'He has been studying poetry /His girl-friend has bought a book by Shelley for him/ He has always liked poetry', etc. may describe the situation in (58). Similar indirect ways can be found to describe facts expressed in (59-60).
With has V-n, the action/state is not mentioned for its own sake but for the sake of a subsequent state in the present.
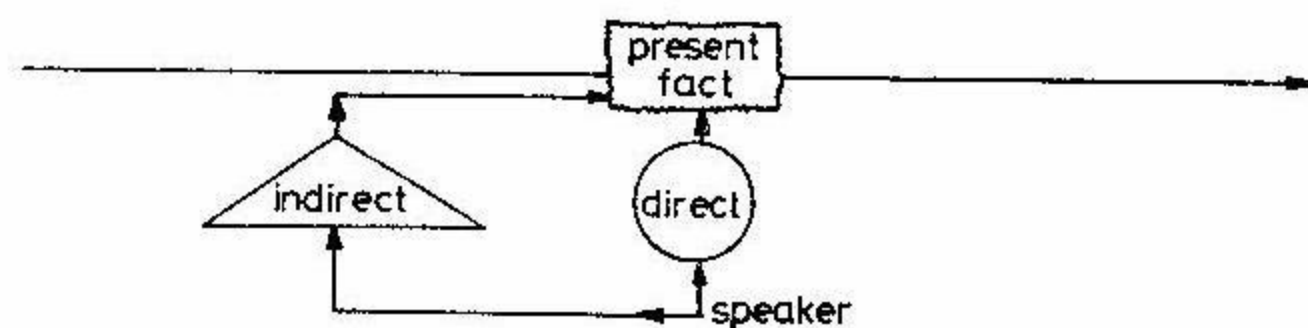
Symbolically:

Table 2.

The choice of approach — either direct or indirect — very much appears to be a matter of the speaker's personal style. V, V-s states present facts, the speaker offers facts 'ready made' and very little is left to the listener's imagination. The listener is to take the present fact for granted, and, one is to see things as the speaker sees them. (The direct approach implies the speaker's subjectivity of judgement.) Has V-n, on the other hand, does not present the fact 'ready made'. The very essence of the indirect approach is that it gives the source(s) of a present fact only, thus leaving it to the listener to deduct the present consequences, i.e. to derive a present fact from its 'roots'. When using the has V-n form, the speaker tries to avoid subjectivity thus trying to be more convincing. (This seems to be a sort of 'judge-it-for-yourself' approach.) The has V-n form very often has an explanatory, confirming, reinforcing function. For reasons of emphasis, the two approaches can also be combined. E.g.:

(61) Leslie's the best woman in the world. ... *I've been married* to her for twelve years, do you think I don't know her? (LE 308)
(62) Oh, he's a sort of family jeweller. ... *He's known* me ever since I was six. (BE 49)
(63) Ah, there's no city like Paris for gaiety, movement, excitement. ... *I've been* to the Moulin Rouge, ... and *I've been* to all the Bohémian cafés. Hot stuff! (LC 74)"
(64) "*I've done* very well," said Segal. "I am still alive". (RET 12)
(65) Of course, you're fond of him. You*'ve known* him all your life. (SA 79)

The following example clearly illustrates how difficult it is for the dumbfounded father to find the right approach (indirect or direct). (He has just learned that his beloved daughter may have gone too far in some dubious love affair). See (66) (CU 157)

(66) "Judith, you *haven't* ____ *you aren't* ____ "
I could not put my meaning into words. She shook her arm free from my detaining hand.
"Now listen, Father. I do what I choose. You can't bully me."

From the point of view of time reference, we can say, the indirect approach separates the time of reference from the time of the action/state; has V-n describes a present fact through some past action/state.

2.3. As we have seen, both V-ed and has V-n refer to actions/states taking place before the moment of speaking. The question thus may arise: What is then the difference between them? We may very well put that question, especially, when we see examples like these:

(67) I cannot go to her house, ask to see her and when I am shown into the drawing room say: 'Voilà, I *have come* to ask you to marry me.' (MC 286)
(68) We talked for a quarter of an hour. And then I said to myself: Allons-y. I said to her: ... 'I *came* to ask you to do me the honour of marrying me.' (ibid. 287)

The meanings the two forms signal are basically different from each other:

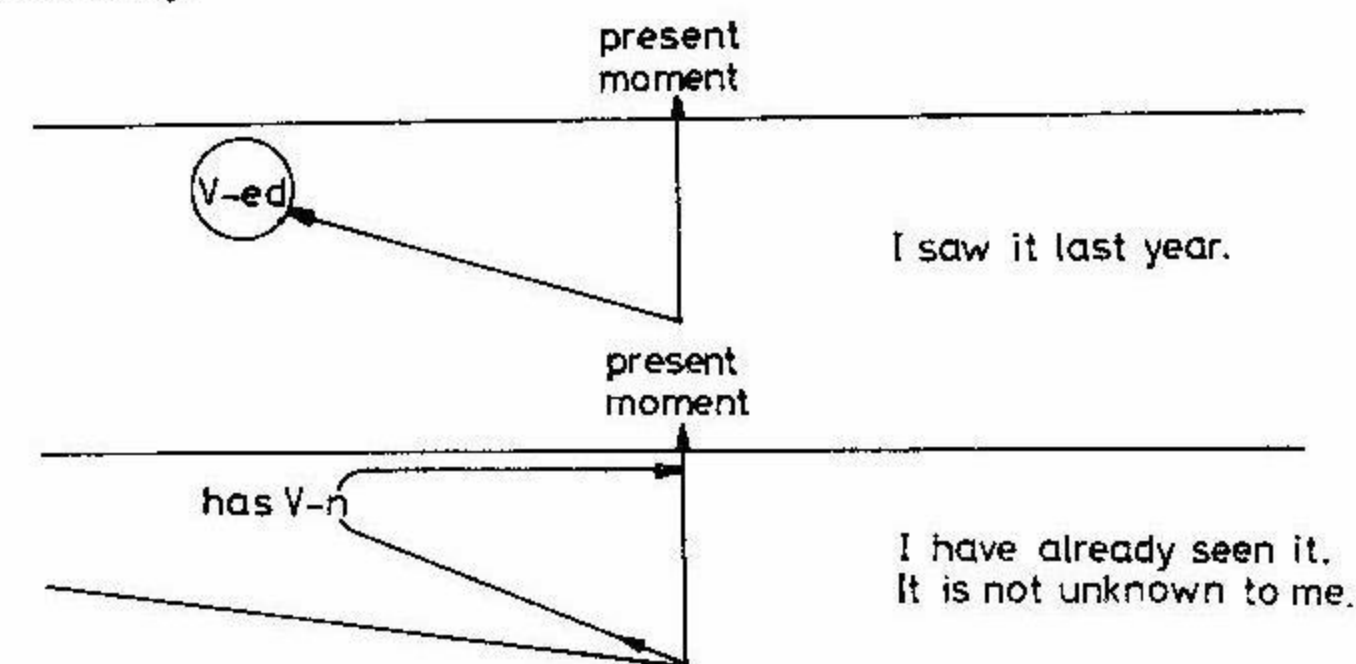| V-*ed*	has V-n
past	non-past
definite	indefinite
non-period verb-form	period verb-from
direct approach	indirect approach

Table 3.

Symbolically:

Table 4.

The Present Perfect is not opposed to the Past in terms of time; both refer to the time before the moment of speaking. The difference between '*I have written a letter*' and '*I wrote a letter*' is usually described in terms of Reference

Time — 'current relevance' which is present in the has V-n construction and missing in V-ed. However a little note is necessary. Though, both the Present Perfect and the Past refer to past time, there is a difference in the way they do so. The Past specifies the past time it refers to (definite past), while the Perfect does not (indefinite past). (See illustration above).

It has already been seen that the Event Time of a state/action expressed by the form has V-n is between t_1 and t_2 with t_2 being identical with Speech Time and t_1 is earlier. The Event Time of a state/action referred to by V-ed is a recalled time *then*. Because states/actions expressed by the Past form can be identified with the point *then* or with a past segment of time taken as one chronological whole, V-ed can be called a *non-period verb-form*, and, for the same reason, it is *definite*. V-ed does answer the question 'When?'. As stated earlier, *then* can also be a past segment of time between t_a and t_b, but neither of them contacts the moment of speaking, both of them are prior to Speech Time, t_a being earlier than t_b. From the point of view of descriptive approach, V-ed is *direct*. Reference Time is identical with Event Time. Reference and Event is not separated. The time of the fact we describe is identical with the time of the action/state we name.

V-ed is used when the SPPC is with the past action/state itself, whereas has V-n draws our attention to the present consequences of the past action/ state, i.e. to its *current relevance*. Thus, statements like 'I was in India/I heard a lot about India/My friends told me a lot about India.' will not imply that 'I know India well.'

The different functions account for the temporal definiteness of V-ed and the temporal indefiniteness of has V-n. (From the viewpoint of function, a comparison is often drawn between V-ed and has V-n and the definite and indefinite articles.)

To indicate that an action/state is in the definite/indefinite past, adverbials have a significant role to play. They reinforce the meaning of the tense form. Adverbials referring to past time can be devided into two groups:

(a) adverbials that specify the time of the action/state. Eg. yesterday (tegnap), ... ago (-val/-vel ezelőt), last ... (az elmúlt...), the other day (a minap), in those days (akkor/akkoriban), then (akkor).

(b) adverbials that do not specify the time of the action/state. Eg. never (sohasem), already (már), yet? (már?), not yet (még nem), once, twice, x times (egyszer, kétszer, x-szer), earlier (korábban), so far (ezidáig), before (eddig még), ever (valaha is), and last but not least: zero adverbial.

It must be mentioned though that Akira (1963: 21—24) finds that only 9,2% of the V-ed forms in his material is accompanied by some adverbial indicator and that there are a number of adverbials that can occur with both V-ed and has V-n. This means that reference to a definite past time is an essential element of the V-ed form in itself.

(69) Yes, I *saw* her with you last night. (BE 39)
Igen, tegnap este veled *láttam*. (lit: see-T-I)

(70) At the age of 45 he *became* a recluse and would see no one. (BBC "Twenty-four hours", 1979, 06.1.)
Negyvenöt éves korában egy remete *lett* belőle, és senkit sem volt hajlandó fogadni. (lit: become-T-he)

(71) But yesterday, I suddenly *realized* that I had made a grave error. (EH 179)
De tegnap hirtelen *rájöttem*, hogy súlyos hibát követtem el. (lit: realize-T-I)

(72) I *saw* it only the other day in that drawer. (EH 29)
Épp a minap *láttam* abban a fiókban. (lit: see-T-I)

(73) A moment later they *reappeared*, ... (EH 172)
Egy perccel később *újra megjelentek*. (lit: reappear-T-they)

(74) And even then, I *saw* nothing. (EH 22)
Ésmég akkor sem *láttam* semmit. (lit: see-T-I)

(75) It *fell* in the night. (EH 26)
Az éjjel *leesett*. (lit: fall-T-it)

(76) Your cousin, Mrs Melford *rang up* Mummy yesterday afternoon. (BE 62)
Mrs Melford, az unokanővéred tegnap délután *felhívta* anyámat. (lit: ring-T-she up)

(77) I don't know his name, but he *has* already *paid* two drinks for me. (MC 278)
Nem tudom a nevét, de már *fizetett* nekem két pohárral. (lit: pay-T-he)

(78) We *haven't* exactly *proved* it yet. (SA 58)
Hát még valójában nem *bizonyítottuk*. (lit: prove-T-we)

(79) Odd I *haven't seen* you here before. (BE 13—14)
Különös, hogy eddig még nem *láttalak* itt. (lit: see-T-I-you)

(80) *Have* you never *been* anywhere even for a trip? (LC 73)
Még sohasem *voltál* sehol. akár csak egy kis kiruccanáson is? (lit: be-T-you)

(81) By the way, *have* you *shown* yourself to Miss Tuppence yet? (SA 132)
Apropó, *megmut attad* már magad Miss Tuppence-nek? (lit: show-T-you)

(82) *Have* you *shown* him the animals? (MC 279)
Megmutattad neki az állatokat? (lit: show-T-you)

(83) I guess every pair of lovers *has said* that sometime or another. (SA 109)
Azt hiszem, minden szerelmespár *mondott* már ilyet valamikor. (lit: say-T-it)

V-ed can occur with or without a time adverbial. If it occurs without a time indicator, the past time context (Reference Time) must be established first so that it can be clear what definite past time is referred to by the verbal form

V-ed. (Compare the introductory function of the indefinite article and the anaphoric use of '*the*').

2.4. A definite past time fact can, of course, be described in an indirect way too. The verbal form had V-n (Past Perfect), which is the Past form for has V-n, serves this purpose. The following illustration will show the direct (by V-ed) and indirect (by had V-n) ways of describing past time facts:
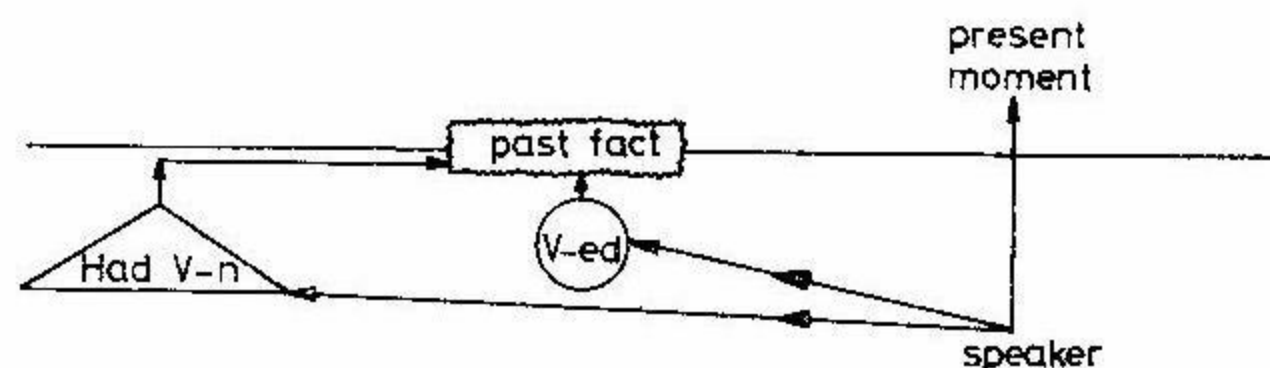

Table 5.

(84) He was a very tall lad, thin, with a slight stoop, he was only eighteen and *had grown* too fast for his strength. (MI 291)
(85) About sixty boys and young men entered the hospital every year; they were most of them shy and confused by the new life they were entering upon; many *had* never *been* in London before. (ibid.)
(86) ... and now he felt warm and excited. Three small whiskies *had gone* to his head and Gallaher's strong cigar *had confused* his mind, for he was a delicate and abstinent person. (LC 88—78)
(87) The old personal charm was still there under this new gaudy manner. And, after all, Gallaher *had lived*, he *has seen* the world. Little Chandler looked at his friend enviously. (ibid. 74)

The function of had V-n is very much similar to that of the has V-n form with the difference though that had V-n is concerned that with a past fact, and, to describe it in its indirect way, it refers to actions/states taking place in or for a period of time leading up to the moment *then* (pre-past period). The end-point of this period is the point *then*. The time indicated by had V-n is earlier than the one expressed by V-ed. Had V-n refers to actions/states anterior to those indicated by V-ed. So, the distinguishing features of had V-n are: past time and indirect approach. In terms of external time specification Reference Time is prior to Speech Time, and Event Time is prior to Reference Time. The Past Perfect covers an area of meaning — further in the past — equivalent to both the Past and the Present Perfect. So, the form had V-n is *both definite and indefinite*, and for that matter, both a *period and a non-period verb-form*. For the *period, indefinite* use see sentences (84—87). In English, there is no separate form to convey a definite, non-period, pre-past idea. Consider:

(88) The police found Billy. He *had* run *away* from home five days before.
(89) The parcel *had arrived* on April 15th but Mother kept it in secret.

It was stated earlier, that the has V-n form expresses events taking place in a period between t_1 and t_2, with t_2 identical with Speech Time, and t_1 earlier than t_2. Accordingly, it can be pointed out that the verbal form had V-n describes events taking place in a period between t_0 and t_1, with t_0 earlier than t_1. The actual occurrence of the event may either be temporally fixed in relation to t_1 (definite use) or may not be fixed, thus indicating the occurrence of an action or existence of a state some time between t_0 and t_1 (indefinite use).

It must be noted here that had V-n is often replaceable by V-ed in English, if an adverbial indicator makes it clear that a time earlier than t_1 is referred to. (Usually with *after* and *before*.)

2.5. So far the Continuous forms have deliberately been disregarded because they can better be discussed here when investigating the matter of internal time specification in English. As was pointed out in 1.3., internal time specification describes the time during which an event takes place, and shows the way an event is viewed.

The Continuous and Non-Continuous forms constitute the category, traditionally termed as the category of *aspect*, that describes events internally.

From a formal point of view, the Continuous form is the marked member of the opposition signalled by 'to be+V-ing'. The Continuous forms can be combined with the other verbal forms:

	Non-Continuous	Continuous
Non-Past	V, V-s	is V-ing
Past	V-ed	was V-ing
Non-Past Perf.	has V-n	has been V-ing
Past Perf.	had V-n	had been V-ing

Table 6.

As opposed to the synoptic (or: factual) interpretation of events by the Non-Continuous forms, the basic function of the Continuous forms is to describe events in *progress* at a time (period or nonperiod) referred to by the aspectually non-marked member of the opposition.

(90) *Is* Lady Sedgwick *staying* here? (BE 26)
(91) What *are* you *trying* to say, Derek? (BE 40)
(92) *Are* you *suggesting* it really was Mr Justice Ludgrove? Come now, Davy.

No, *I'm not suggesting* that it was Mr Justice Ludgrove and that he was mixed up in a bank robbery. (BE 34—5)

(93) Within the confines of Scotland Yard a conference was in progress. ... Six or seven men *were sitting* easily around a table. ... Sir Ronald Graves, ..., *was presiding* at the head of the table. No formal reports *were being presented* on this occasion. (BE 30)

(94) Still, there Bess Sedgwick *was, looking* as usual very smart, in her dark suit and her emerald shirt, *lunching* at a table with a man. A young man with a lean hawklike face, *wearing* a black leather jacket. They *were leaning* forward talking earnestly together, *forking* in mouthfuls of food as though they were quite unaware what they *were eating*. (BE 54)

(95) Your, wife. ... She's *been waiting* down in the office since evening with two young ladies. (LM 409)

(96) Frankly, things look bad for him. He's *been butting* in somewhere where he wasn't wanted. No doubt of it. But don't give up hope. (SA 81)

(97) The red-faced sheperd offered her the fork with which he *had been stirring* the kettle of stew. (BR 77)

(98) She was carrying a pack on her back and walked swiftly, although she *had* already *been walking* for three days. (BR 75)

(99) My brother Gábor's house was full of smoke and steam. ... They'd *been heating* the place this evening because of the cold ... (FC 282)

As the examples above show, events may be in progress at any time described by the forms V, V-s, V-ed, has V-n, had V-n. It can also be seen that the Continuous forms do not alter the verbal time referred to by external time specification. It follows from the basic function of the Continuous forms that events thus described are *incomplete* and they have *duration* or their duration is stressed. Since these forms focus attention on the progression of the event, it is implied that the situations described in such a way are *temporary* ones. The emphasis on the temporary nature of such events gives an emotional colouring to events that are not normally described by the Continuous forms.

In keeping with what has been said so far, the following conclusion can be made: the category of tense situates the event at hand in time, while the category of aspect describes events taking place in time.

However, it seems necessary to come back on the question of the Perfect forms once again. So far, the Perfect forms have been investigated from the point of view of verbal time, i.e. we have been trying to answer the question: 'What function do the Perfect forms have in external time specification?' But the Perfect forms characterize events in not only this one way. The category to which the Perfect forms belong views an action/state not only as one being prior to Reference Time but as being an accomplished fact at Reference Time, i.e. a fact belonging to, valid at, a point of reference (present, past or future). In the

context of internal time specification, the opposition of Perfect and Non-Perfect forms can thus be formulated:

event   versus   accomplished event

This second function of the Perfect may be even more important than the first one, since an accomplished event at a point of reference is supposed to have taken place earlier, hence is the distinction between 'pastness' and 'anteriority' made by many grammarians.

To complete the discussion over time specification in English, there is one more important opposition left to be analysed. This opposition can be set up between telic and atelic verbal meanings. Bauer (1970:191) quoting Garey defines the criterion of the distinction in the following way:

"If one was *verbing*, but was interrupted while *verbing*, has one *verbed*? If the answer is Yes, the action evidently does not have to reach a goal or conclusion to be fully realized, but is realized as soon as it begins and is therefore atelic. If the answer is No, this means that the interruption must have prevented the action from reaching its goal or conclusion; the verb is thus telic".

This distinction is essential to be made because there are two factors that determine whether the Perfect forms refer to an accomplished fact or not: (a) the lexical type of the verb, (b) co-occurrence with some adverbials.

The lexical meaning of telic verbs in such that they imply that the action tends towards and reaches a certain goal. Atelic verbs do not imply any goal of the action. All state verbs are atelic, action verbs are either atelic or telic. In keeping with the definition quoted above, momentary verbs should also be included among the telic verbs, since they can hardly be interrupted. Here are a few examples of telic verbs (100—106) which will be followed by sentences with atelic verbs (107—113):

(100) We *have persuaded* him to try again.
(101) I've *achieved* only half of what I hoped to do.
(102) He's just *bought* this car.
(103) They've *sold* their house.
(104) *Have* you *found* your pen?
(105) He *has kicked* the ball too hard.
(106) He *has* just *entered* the building.
(107) They *have waited* there for hours.
(108) She *has been* here for years.
(109) I *have lived* here ten years.
(110) I *have loved* her all her life.
(111) We *have known* each other for many years now.

(112) They *have been staying* in Budapest since last May.

(113) I *have* always *admired* her.

From a semantic point of view, an unaccomplished fact may be either a state or a process continuing in the moment of speaking. A state cannot be a process. A state exists or does not exist, but it involves no notion of movement towards completion. Process means continual change. It means that the action has already started and that it is now moving towards a completion, but has not come to completion yet. So, process involves incompletion. Many action verbs have, as an element of the lexical meaning, an inherent notion of incompletion.

The meaning of the Perfect with a telic verb is that the event is an accomplished fact at the point of reference and it also suggests that the event has reached its goal. The Perfect with an atelic verb also indicates an accomplished fact, but there is no reference to the event having reached any goal since the verbal meaning itself does not imply any notion of goal. Telic verbs with the Perfect Continuous form — owing to the meaning 'event-in-progress' — indicate that the goal of the action has not been reached yet, while atelic verbs with the same verbal form express the notion of accomplished fact that action has been in progress for some indefinite time between t_1 and t_2.

As it has been indicated in the introduction this paper has been concerned with only verbal meaning and the analysis of the temporal information that the verbal part of the predicate carries. For a more complete treatment of the subject how English expresses time in general, an investigation of some other factors seems also to be necessary. The analysis of the role that other structural elements play in an English sentence (e.g. adverbials) can further broaden our knowledge about time expression in English. On the other hand, factors outside the limits of a sentence (e.g. context, situation, style) do also have an impact on the meaning of a verbal form in an English sentence.

The investigation of these further factors can be the subject if a subsequent study in the matter of time expression in English.

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EH	— — — — — —	*Peril at End House.* Pan Books, London, 1966
BE	— — — — — —	*Bertram's Hotel.* Fontana Books, Glasgow, 1975
SDM	— — — — — —	*The Seven Dials Mystery*, Bantam Books, N. Y. 1976
CU	— — — — — —	*The Curtain*, N. Y., 1976
LC	Joyce, James,	*A Little Cloud*, in *Dubliners*, Penguin Books, 1970
MC	Maugham, W. Somerset,	*A Marriage of Convenience*, in *Collected Short Stories* vol. 4., Penguin Books, 1972
MI	— — — — — —	*Mirage*, ibid.
PS	— — — — — —	*Princess September*, ibid.

LE	— — — — — —	*The Letter*, ibid.
RET	Shaw, Irwing,	*Retreat*
BR	Móricz,	*Zsigmond, Brutes*, in 44 Hungarian Short Stories, Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 1979
FC	Veres, Péter,	*Family Circle*, ibid.
LM	Thurzó, Gábor,	*The Lion's Maw*, ibid.

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