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The Distribution of the Perfect Auxiliaries *be/have* in Middle English Texts

Abstract

Like many Germanic languages, English has developed specific periphrastic constructions to express perfective meaning. Before being fully grammaticalized in the 16th century, they were used occasionally in Old and Middle English as complex verb phrases with either *habban* 'to have' or *beon/wesan* 'to be' acting as auxiliary verbs. By the Modern English period, forms created with *be* disappeared from the language and were almost completely replaced by forms with *have*, a process which did not occur, for instance, in German. As the data on this development are quite scarce, a relatively simple model is assumed with a steady diachronic progress towards the system established in Modern English, a model which disregards synchronic variation. This paper attempts to investigate the distribution of the perfective constructions with *be* and *have*, especially in the 15th century texts and to identify the main factors accounting for differences in their usage. Instead of taking into account only the diachronic aspect of the development described, the present study focuses mainly on investigating the synchronic variation in the auxiliaries used with the two most frequent verbs of motion, namely *come* and *go* in the perfective meaning.

1. Introduction

The origins and subsequent development of the category of aspect in English is a question that has generated a great degree of dispute among scholars over the past decades. Despite a significant amount of attention in literature this subject has received, it still remains a controversial issue far from being resolved, as presented more thoroughly in Section 2. Regardless of the ongoing debate concerning the history of English aspect, the presence of this category in the currently spoken language is universally recognized. The aspectual system of English is based on the main distinction between the progressive (*I am reading a book.*) and perfective, formed by combining the auxiliary verb with the past participle of the main predicate (*I have read a book.*). Although today the only verb in the perfective constructions is *have*, in its earlier stages English would allow, prefer or even require the use of *be* as an auxiliary for verbs

expressing the concept of motion and/or change of state, such as *come*, *become*, *go*, *arrive*, etc, while combining the other verbs only with *have*. Both cases are illustrated by (1):

(1a)   if thy conseil **is comen** to the eres of thyn enemy, chaunge thy conseil. (*The Tale of Melibeus*, p.213, l.20-21)
['if your counsel has come to the ears of your enemy, change your counsel.']

(1b)   I **haue herd** saye that she **hath had** seuen husbondes… (*The Doctrinal of Sapience*, p.186, l.12-13)
['I have heard that she has had seven husbands…']

The distinction between motion verbs combining with *be* and all the other verbs combining with *have* in perfective constructions is found in many modern languages, like French, Italian, Dutch, or German. The remaining question is why English, unlike other, closely related languages, such as German or Dutch, has almost completely rejected *be* as an auxiliary in the perfective aspect. This issue, however, still seems to be disregarded or, at least, inadequately addressed in the studies of Old and Middle English.

The present paper is, therefore, an attempt to outline the problem of the distribution of the perfect auxiliaries *be* and *have* in various dialects of Middle English, basing on the texts from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*. The research is conducted for the two most frequent verbs of motion, namely *come* and *go.* Then, several linguistic factors, such as tense or modality, are discussed as potentially influencing the selection of a specific auxiliary in particular context.

2. Unaccusativy Hypothesis

The phenomenon discussed above, where the intransitive verbs denoting a change of a certain state in perfective forms require an auxiliary different from that used for all the other verbs, is known as "split intransitivity", and has been traditionally accounted for by the Unaccusativity Hypothesis (Perlmutter 1978). This is a hypothesis proposing that intransitive verbs can be divided into two categories due to the fundamental syntactic difference between them regarding the respective status of their argument. From this perspective, the argument of the first class of verbs, the "unaccusative" verbs, is viewed as a transitive object, although on the surface it looks like a regular subject (as in, for example, *The door opened = Someone/something opened the door*). As a result, such constructions are treated more like passives (*The door was opened by somebody/something*) and for that reason they require the auxiliary derived from the verb meaning *be*, as is the case with the passive voice. The verbs from the other class, the "unergative" verbs,

treat the argument as the ergative argument of a transitive verb (e.g., *He talks = *He is talked*).

Further evidence corroborating this hypothesis comes from the fact that in a number languages unaccusative verbs appear to form a separate syntactic class. For example, ergative languages use the same morphological case, called "absolutive", for the subject of unaccusative verbs and the object of transitive verbs. On the other hand the "ergative" case is used for the subjects of transitive verbs and other intransitive verbs, usually called "unergative" (see Perlmutter 1978; Dixon 1994).

However, recent research has presented evidence that the clear-cut categorical distinction between unaccusative and unergative verbs is difficult to maintain since the preference of a specific verb for one or the other auxiliary may vary considerably across languages. A solution to this problem was proposed by Sorace (2000) in the form of *The Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy* (ASH). According to Sorace, all verb meanings can be ordered with respect to their semantic properties. The resulting hierarchy determines the auxiliary selection for a specific class of verbs. In other words, a verb can be more or less prone to accept BE as the perfective auxiliary, depending on its place in the hierarchy.

3. Origins of periphrastic perfect in English

As mentioned in the previous section, it is still difficult to establish the status of periphrastic perfect in the early stages of English and the further development of this construction up to the present-day. Although such constructions, generally regarded as the source of the perfective aspect, can be found even in earliest English texts (see, e.g., Mitchell 1985 or Brinton 1988), there exist a considerable variety of positions and opinions concerning their status and function at that time, processes of grammaticalization of the perfect, as well as a diachronic change in the distribution of the perfect auxiliaries *be* and *have*.

Visser (1973, IIIb, 2189–2193) distinguishes three main stages in the process of spreading HAVE-perfects throughout the Old English period. At the initial stage of the development of the periphrastic perfect, it was entirely impossible to use *have* with intransitive verbs expressing movement or a certain change in status. The next stage identified by Visser began around the turn of the 11th century, when the omission of the object became possible, whereas in the third stage, reached at the beginning of the 12th century, *have* could finally be combined with both types of lexical verbs in perfective constructions.

According to Visser, the earliest perfective constructions with *have* cannot be interpreted as combinations of the auxiliary and the main verb but *have* should rather be seen as a lexical verb with the past participle functioning as a modifier to an object, like in the following Modern English sentences:

(2a)   I have my work cut out for me.
(2b)   I have my mind made up.

Structures of this kind have been called "split perfect" or "conclusive perfect" (Kirchner 1941). In fact, Visser claims that "[i]t is only after the time of Shakespeare that the preterite and the *have* + past participle construction are used as they are used nowadays…" (Visser 1973, 751).

Denison (1993, 352) also suggests that the auxiliary *have* could be used with all the lexical verbs only in late Old English. Noticing frequent instances of the periphrastic perfect with past-time modifiers as well as the coordination of perfective forms with the preterite in the same temporal context, he concludes that before the Early Modern English period the periphrastic perfect did not express any aspectual meaning but was instead a "pure tense equivalent" (Denison 1993, 352). Carey (1994), however, does not find similar instances and thus claims that the perfective forms attained the modern perfective meaning already in Middle English. In her sample, periphrastic constructions occur exclusively with modifiers such as *now* or *when*, which define the time at which the event is finished and not the time of the event itself.

On the other hand, Brinton (1988, 99–102), claims that the periphrastic perfect already functioned as an established category even before the appearance of the earliest English texts and it remained virtually unchanged throughout the Old English period. She notes that constructions *have* (+ object) + past participle, understood as possessive in meaning, were infrequent in Old English, and views the change in the position of elements as a sign of semantic change rather than its cause.

As can be seen, the origins of the perfect aspect in English is a question still much disputed. The wide variety of approaches and opinions on this matter seem to indicate that more data are needed to clarify the issue of the source and actual use of perfective constructions in Middle English.

4. Perfect in Modern English

The present perfect is interpreted as means of conveying the meaning of a past event with a certain relation to the present moment, which is described by Comrie (1976, 52) as "the continuing relevance of a previous situation". However, in contrast to the pluperfect, or the past perfect, the present perfect is quite a complex category and can be used in a range of various functions. Those were identified by Huddleston and Pullum (2002) as the "continuative perfect" (3a), "experiential perfect" (3b), "resultative perfect" (3c), and "perfect of present relevance" (3d), all of which are exemplified by the sentences below (adapted from Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 141–146):

(3a)   She has lived in Berlin ever since she married.
(3b)   His sister has been up Mont Blanc twice.
(3c)   They've gone away.
(3d)   I've discovered how to mend the fuse.

Though far from being exhaustive, the list in (3) can offer the general idea of the wide semantic range and complexity of the category of perfect aspect in the contemporary English.

On the other hand, the function of pluperfect, or the past perfect, is far more limited. The past perfect typically describes events and actions that happened before a certain point of reference in the past. Apart from that there are also future perfect constructions expressing future acts that will probably be completed prior to a reference point located in the future (Comrie 1976, 52-53). All of the perfective forms are built in practically the same way, differing only in the tense of the auxiliary verb HAVE, as in *we have seen the film* vs. *I had known her before she came here.*

5. Perfect auxiliaries in Old English

In Old English it was possible to use both auxiliaries *be* and *have* in perfective constructions. As Łęcki (2010, 155) points out, transitive verbs were typically combined with *have*, whereas intransitive mutative verbs generally preferred *be*. Although Łęcki uses, as a rule, the terms "transitive/intransitive (mutative)" to refer to those two groups of verbs, this choice may seem problematic, as, for example, the term "intransitive" traditionally implies the lack of the object. Such an implication creates an unnecessary confusion over constructions such as *I have eaten* or *I have said*, which are quite often found in Middle English texts. Phrases of this kind do not require any object, yet they can only be used with *have*.

As evidenced in McFadden and Alexiadou (2006, 239), Old English strongly preferred *be* as an auxiliary for forming perfective constructions with verbs of motion and change of status, at least in the case of *come.* Out of the 93 instances of *come* used in the perfective meaning found by the authors in their corpus, there was none where the main verb combined with *have*. Such results suggest that in Old English it was obligatory to choose the auxiliary *be* for verbs of motion and change of status and *have* for the remaining ones, as it is nowadays the case with many modern languages.

In the same study it was found that the verb *come* started to be used with HAVE-perfects only in Middle English. Consequently, constructions like *have + come* gradually increased in number to the point they constituted approximately 26% of all the occurrences of *come* in the perfective form. Although this is quite a significant proportion, which cannot be discarded as involving single exceptions

or mistakes, it is nevertheless still relatively small compared to the almost threefold majority of BE-perfects. To investigate more closely the decline in the frequency of BE-perfects and their eventual disappearance, further research is needed, based on the corpus of Modern English texts.

The present study, however, is confined to the Middle English period, covering time span from 1100 to 1500, with the aim of addressing the issue of the perfect auxiliary selection mainly in synchronic terms. The following sections provide and analyze the statistical data drawn up from the corpus, regarding the number of HAVE-perfects and BE-perfects, as they are called in Łęcki (2010), used with verbs of motion. Next, the data are studied according to the linguistic context in which such perfects are found.

6. Distribution of HAVE-perfects and BE-perfects in Middle English dialects

Table 1 shows the number of the occurrences of specific constructions in particular dialects of Middle English. The statistical data presented in the table were collected using a corpus analysis software program AntConc® 3.2.4w (Anthony 2012), and only texts with a clearly specified provenance in the corpus were taken into account. Texts specified as written in the London dialect were incorporated into the East Midland dialect:

Table 1. The number of perfective constructions in Middle English dialects

Dialect	Number of texts	*have*		*be*	
		come	*go*	*come*	*go*
East Midland	51	91	106	745	226
West Midland	9	5	2	17	6
Northern	9	13	9	41	34
Southern	6	0	0	14	5
Kentish	3	0	1	7	6
Total	78	109	118	824	277

On the basis of the data presented in Table 1, some observations can be made. First of all, it seems clear that Middle English still favours BE-perfects when it comes to the two most frequent verbs of motion, i.e. *come* and *go*. Since the discussion based on absolute values can be misleading, the same data are presented as percentage values in Table 2, which shows more clearly that the preference for the auxiliary *be* seems to be especially strong in the case of the verb *come.*

Table 2. The percentages of perfective constructions with *have* (+ *come* and *go*)

Dialect	All perfective constructions with *come*	% of *have* + *come*	All perfective constructions with *go*	% of *have* + *go*
East Midland	836	10.9%	332	31.9%
West Midland	22	22.7%	8	25%
Northern	54	24.1%	43	20.9%
Southern	14	0%	5	0%
Kentish	7	0%	7	14.3%
Total	933	11.7%	395	29.9%

The data show that in total the auxiliary *have* is more readily accepted with *go* than with *come*, where it constitutes only slightly more than one tenth of all perfective forms. Such a result may imply that one of those verbs of motion behaves in a special way when it comes to selecting a perfect auxiliary. If this is true about *come*, it would mean that the results obtained by McFadden and Alexiadou (2006) cannot be directly applied to all verbs of motion and change of status.

However, after looking at each dialect separately, it can be noticed that such a significant difference in preference for a specific auxiliary between *come* and *go* is only seen in East Midland and, to a lesser extent, in Kentish. Unlike the latter, which constitutes only a small part of the whole corpus and as such elicits a scarce amount of data, the former, as a predominant part of the corpus, greatly influences the total result. The rest of the dialects do not show any major differences in this regard, although this may follow from a small number of perfective forms of the two motion verbs found.

The data in Table 2 indicate that all dialects are more prone to select *be* for perfective constructions of *come* and *go*. West Midland and Northern much more frequently than East Midland accept *have* as an auxiliary for *come* and slightly less often allow for combing *have* with *go*, which eventually effaces the difference in the behaviour of those two verbs of motion, as mentioned earlier. Although the two southern dialects do not show virtually any instances of HAVE-perfects of *come* and *go*, the sample available in the corpus may well be too small to make any justifiable generalizations about those two varieties.

For these reasons, i.e. the very limited number of perfect forms found in most of the dialects and different tendencies in East Midland (and Kentish) as compared to the rest of the varieties, only data elicited form the East Midland dialect are taken into account when analyzing the possible factors influencing the distribution presented in Tables 1 and 2.

7. Factors of modality and counterfactuality

In the previous studies of perfect auxiliaries in Old and Middle English it has been suggested that the factors of modality and counterfactuality strongly encourage the use of *have* as an auxiliary even though it is not too readily combined with verbs of motion and change of status (Rydén and Brorström 1987). As a thorough discussion of counterfactuality and its relation to modality can be found in McFadden and Alexiadou (2006, 242-243), only a brief characterization of these categories is presented here.

According to the authors mentioned earlier, counterfactuality, in contrast to modality, is based on semantics rather than grammar and describes a situation "where the implication is clearly that the proposition being considered does not (or did not) hold" (McFadden and Alexiadou 2006, 242). To put it simply, modality is defined by the presence or absence of a modal verb, and thus it is expressed grammatically. But whether the verb is counterfactual (or has counterfactual semantics) or not depends purely on semantics. This means that counterfactual verbs, regardless of their grammatical form, describe actions and events which did not actually happen, yet they are not explicitly negated by linguistic devices. Sentences of this type occur in the *Innsbruck Corpus* quite frequently, and some examples of those are presented below:

(4a)   But and if he **would have comen** hither he mght [sic!] have been here…
(*The History of Reynard the Fox*, p.100, l.34-35)
and iff I hadde ben in sewerte that Castr weer hadde ageyn, I **wolde have comen** homewards thys daye. (*The Paston Letters*, vol. 2, p.131, l.5–7)
(4b)   …in case Edwarde with his companye **had aryved** ther… (*The Paston Letters*, vol. 2, p.95, l.10)

This category may seem very close to the class of the so-called unreal conditionals (*I would **have bought** the shoes, if they were not so expensive*), yet it is clearly wider, since it comprises also counterfactual wishes (*I wish I **had bought** these shoes*) or phrases which do not have a conditional *if*-structure (*I would **have bought** them, but they were too expensive*). Although in all the cases the verb *buy* is used in the perfective form, just as in typical affirmative sentences, it is clear that the act of buying in question has never actually happened in the situations just described.

Obviously, in many instances the notions of modality and counterfactuality will overlap, as in (4a). Here, the semantics of the phrase is clearly counterfactual (i.e. contrary to the actual event), but the verb is undoubtedly used in a modal context, i.e. combined with the modal verb *would* and the perfective auxiliary *have*. Such a tendency of those two factors to overlap is the reason why the sum of perfective constructions appearing in a modal context and those in

a counterfactual context may often be larger than the total number of the actual instances of perfective constructions. To put it simply, a single occurrence of a perfective form can be sometimes counted twice: first, as an example of modality and second, as an instance of counterfactuality.

On the other hand the mere presence of the modal verb does not necessarily imply that the action described has not happened, as can be seen in (5). The sentences in question describe events that took place at a certain point in the past, yet the verbs are modified by a modal verb. Similarly, there are examples of perfective constructions denoting counterfactual acts but without the presence of any modals in the sentence, cf. (4b).

(5) …and whanne the prioure had done his foule delit, he rose, and **wolde haue gone** his waye, and the fyre light sodenly in the chemeney, and the good man sawe hym goo oute. (*The Book of the Knight*, p.79, l.17–19)
And whan they **wolde have comyn** agayn aback, the duke Naymes sawe com a ferre Reynawde and Mawgys… (*The Four Sons of Aymon*, p.171, l.21-22)

Table 3 presents the data elicited from the East Midland texts, according to the factors of modality and counterfactuality.

Table 3. Auxiliary selection according to modality and counterfactuality

	come		*go*	
	have	*be*	*have*	*be*
Modal	25 (27.5%)	8 (1.1%)	35 (33%)	2 (0.9%)
Counterfactual	39 (42.9%)	0 (0%)	14 (13.2%)	0 (0%)
All perfective constructions	91	745	106	226

As can be seen, the auxiliary *be* appears in modal and counterfactual contexts extremely rarely. Only about 1% of all BE-perfects appear in the modal context, with no distinction to the main verb. Moreover, in the analyzed corpus there was no instance of BE-perfect used in counterfactual context. On the other hand, out of all HAVE-perfects, generally much less frequent when it comes to verbs of motion and change of status, even more than 40% are found in a modal context.

Slightly changing the perspective on interpreting the data contained in the Table 3, it is also possible to say how strongly HAVE-perfects are preferred over BE-perfects when it comes to selecting the auxiliary for modal and counterfactual contexts. It may be, therefore, deduced that when willing to use a perfective form of *come* or *go* with the modal verb, Middle English writers chose the auxiliary *have* in the vast majority of cases, even though they would strongly prefer *be* in non-modal context. Even more strikingly, *have* was always selected when the perfective construction was used in the counterfactual meaning.

This evident reluctance to combine the auxiliary *be* with verbs appearing in one of the contexts specified above might be considered one of the reasons for, or factors contributing to, the gradual decline in the number of BE-perfects up to the point of their almost complete disappearance from English.

8. Factor of tense

The past perfect has been said to be the structure that "highlights the perfectivity of action" (Kytö 1997, 52) and as such it was considered a circumstance which may have favoured the use of *have* in perfective constructions. And this tendency was seen as possibly having contributed to spreading the auxiliary *have* at the cost of *be* over time.

Both the present perfect (6a) and the past perfect (6b) forms of motion verbs could be used in Middle English with either *be* or *have*, as evidenced by the data derived from the *Innsbruck Corpus*:

(6a) Lo! my frend **is commen**. (*An Alphabet of Tales*, p.333, l.3)
      Here **hath come** dyuersse hawkys, but they be so dere that no man byethe hem but my Lordd… (*The Cely Letters*, p.175, l.20-21)
(6b) So on a tyme when hur husband **was gone** of pilgramege in-to a fell land…
      (*An Alphabet of Tales*, p.221, l.4-5)
      …he was purposid als tite as he **had commen** home, to hafe slayn his maister.
      (*An Alphabet of Tales*, p.282, l.19-20)

Although semantically all the sentences above refer to an event that occurred in the past, it is the grammatical tense of the auxiliary verb that is taken into account in the present discussion.

In her study of the influence of tense on the auxiliary selection in perfective constructions, Kytö (1997) presents data which show a slight tendency to choose *have* more readily in past than in the present contexts. The research, however, includes texts from a very extended period of time, namely from Late Middle English to the end of the 20th century. The present study, on the other hand, confined to one dialect of Middle English, appears to lead to a contrary conclusion, as presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Auxiliary selection according to tense

	come		*go*	
	have	*be*	*have*	*be*
Past perfect	34 (37.36%)	405 (54,36%)	26 (24,53%)	121 (53,54%)
All perfective constructions	91	745	106	226

As is evident from Table 4, the corpus data do not confirm the hypothesis that the past tense encourages the use of *have* to a greater extent than the present tense. In fact, the numbers seem to support the opposite claim. Although both auxiliaries are used quite often in both tenses, the past forms apparently prefer *be* as an auxiliary, since they constitute more than half of all BE-perfects found in the corpus, compared to significantly lower percentage in the case of HAVE-perfects. This is especially visible for *go*, which appears in the past context in only one-fourth of all its occurrences with *have*.

Such surprising results may also be, at least partly, due to the predominance of prose epic texts in the corpus used for this study, which might have distorted the obtained data. For that reason a more thorough research in this matter, possibly based on a more balanced corpus, could be useful. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in her research, Kytö included all the perfect constructions used in modal and/or counterfactual contexts. The data in Table 4, on the other hand, involve no such cases. This fact, apart from a different time span of the texts analyzed, can also be considered a reason why the results obtained in this study are so different from those in Kytö.

9. Other factors

Apart from modality, counterfactuality and tense, previous researchers point out a number of other factors as possibly influencing the selection of a perfect auxiliary by favouring *have* over *be* even with verbs of motion and change of status. Among those are, for example, progressiveness, negation, the perfect infinitive as well as several other, linguistic and non-linguistic, factors (Rydén and Brorström 1987; Kytö 1997).

Since the number of structures combining perfectivity with progressiveness occurring in the corpus turns out to be extremely small, it is impossible to make any conclusive statement concerning the influence of progressiveness on the auxiliary selection in perfective constructions. For this reason, only two more linguistic factors are briefly analyzed in the present paper. Both infinitives (7a) and negatives (7b) can be used with either of the two auxiliary verbs, as exemplified by the sentences below:

(7a)   (…) the whiche men was seyde **to be comen** of gentel kynde, but withyn a litel while aftur they were more famosid with malice and wickydnes. (*Speculum Sacerdotale*, p.14, l.34–37)
Another tyme it happed that he rose erliche, and he wende to haue take a litell poke atte hys beddes fete, **to haue gone** to the market iij myle from hys hous, forto haue brought home fisshe; (*The Book of the Knight*, p.80, l. 12–15)

(7b)   I promyse you that the fawte & the treyson that he hathe doon, **is not com**
thorugh his malyse, but thorugh evyll counseylle. (*The Four Sons of Aymon*,
p.290, l.12–14)
I **haue not comen** to callen ryghtful men bot synners to penaunce. (*Speculum
Christiani*, p.112, l.10-11)

The actual distribution of the two auxiliary verbs *be* and *have* with the factors
mentioned above is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Auxiliary selection in infinitive and negative contexts.

	come		*go*	
	have	*be*	*have*	*be*
Infinitives	18 (19,78%)	2 (0,27%)	27 (25,47%)	1 (0,44%)
Negatives	27 (29,67%)	33 (4,43%)	16 (15,09%)	7 (3,1%)
All perfective constructions	91	745	106	226

The data presented clearly indicate that, for *come* and *go*, both contexts
promote the selection of *have* as the auxiliary verb. This tendency is especially
strong in the case of perfective infinitives, which is comparable to the effect of
modality and counterfactuality discussed earlier. As can be noticed, BE-perfects
appear in infinitive contexts extremely rarely, in less than 0.5% of all their occur-
rences in the corpus. The percentage of infinitive HAVE-perfects is, on the other
hand, considerably higher, as they constitute about 20–25% of all instances of
perfective forms in the case of the verb *have*.

Similar, although a slightly weaker effect, can be detected in the nega-
tive contexts of periphrastic constructions. Here, however, the use of negative
BE-perfects is not as strictly avoided as in the case of infinitive contexts. Approxi-
mately 3-4% of all BE-perfects were used in negative sentences, compared to
about 15% and 30% of negative HAVE-perfects for *go* and *come*, respectively.

The overall figures presented in Table 5 may suggest that both infinitive and
negative contexts quite strongly promote the use of *have* as an auxiliary verb
in perfective constructions with verbs of motion and change of status. Thus, in
further research, both of them should be taken into account as plausible factors
responsible for the spread of HAVE-perfects and the eventual eradication of
BE-perfects from the English language.

10. Conclusions

Although the lack of space prevents a lengthy and detailed discussion of the problem outlined in the present study, a number of conclusions can already be made on the basis of the previous argument.

First, it seems clear that Middle English still strongly preferred the auxiliary *be* in the perfective constructions of verbs of motion and change of status, such as *come* and *go.* This situation is evident in all dialects, although a small number of texts written in dialects other than East Midland may allow for questioning some of the obtained data. The change in the preference for *be*, which eventually occurred before the currently spoken English was formed, appears thus to have taken place later than the Middle English period. The exact time of this change, nevertheless, still requires a closer examination.

Secondly, the categories of modality and counterfactuality were found to be the factors significantly influencing the selection of a perfect auxiliary as they strongly favoured *have* over *be.* The correlation between modality and counter-factuality, however, needs to be studied more carefully. The data obtained in the present study seem to suggest that counterfactuality might have been the decisive factor in later development of the perfective aspect category.

Thirdly, several other linguistic categories may have had some impact on the choice of the perfect auxiliary, one of which was the past tense. Although, contrary to expectations, the past tense turned out to prefer *be* over *have*, also here more research is needed to investigate this issue. The two other factors mentioned in the present study, namely infinitive and negative contexts, also show quite a significant influence on the auxiliary selection, clearly favouring *have* over *be*.

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