

THE USAGE OF THE PRESENT PERFECT IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

Laura Jade Martin¹

Patrícia Barone Lopes²

Valquíria Baldasso Moro³

Patricia Helena Rubens Pallu⁴

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the differences between the usage of the present perfect by British and American speakers in oral English. The history of the English language and its journey across the Atlantic have been briefly analyzed in order to better understand the reasons behind the use of the present perfect in present day English. Grammar textbooks and theories from scholars, regarding both British and American English, have been compared to assess the similarities and differences between the two. To further analyze the subject, real examples of fictional, formal and informal discourse have been compared and crosschecked with grammar theories. The ways in which the usage of the present perfect varies between British and American English has been categorized. Although the difference was slight, it was found that, in the examples analyzed, the present perfect was more frequently used in British English. Therefore, it was concluded that the hypothesis is relevant, however, to obtain more precise results, a study in a scientific environment, where the speakers would be subjected to exactly the same situations, should be conducted.

Keywords: English. British. American. Present Perfect Usage.

¹ Undergraduate Arts Degree student of Letras – Português e Inglês at FAE Centro Universitário, Curitiba, Brazil. *E-mail:* laurajademartin@yahoo.com.au

² Undergraduate Arts Degree student of Letras – Português e Inglês at FAE Centro Universitário, Curitiba, Brazil. *E-mail:* patsbarone@yahoo.com.br

³ Undergraduate Arts Degree student of Letras – Português e Inglês at FAE Centro Universitário, Curitiba, Brazil. *E-mail:* vbaldassom@gmail.com

⁴ Supervised by Professor Patricia Helena Rubens Pallu. Masters in Letters. Fae teacher – University Center. *E-mail:* patricia.pallu@fae.edu

INTRODUCTION

This paper has been elaborated by undergraduate students from the English-Portuguese literature and teaching degree at FAE Centro Universitário in Curitiba, Brazil. The main objective of this study is to explore the differences between the usage of the present perfect by British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) speakers in oral English. To achieve this, four specific objectives have been defined: to provide a brief history of the English language and language evolution in general; to explore the rules behind the usage of the present perfect; to analyze the oral usage of the present perfect and to compare the previous mentioned rules with the oral English analyzed.

With more and more people learning English as a foreign or second language, the importance of this topic is current and worldwide. This paper is written in English to reach a further number of readers because it is important to be aware of the differences between BrE and AmE whether as language instructors, students or even language enthusiasts. It is also important to understand the possible pragmatic and semantic consequences when opting for certain structures.

The guiding hypothesis behind this study is that BrE and AmE use the present perfect differently especially in oral English. It is of general understanding that these two types of English differ and it is assumed that Americans tend to opt for the past simple in many situations where Brits would use the present perfect. To prove this hypothesis, this paper is separated into six main topics with subtopics.

Firstly, language evolution and the question of how language is passed from one generation to another is approached going back to the roots of human communication, with just sounds, to the evolved symbols then to syntax and, lastly, to the more complex structures. This topic briefly explains the scientific interest of trying to understand how these languages started and when they began to diverge.

Secondly, to better understand the general difference between BrE and AmE, a concise history of the English Language, up to modern English, is provided. More specifically, at what time the present perfect appeared in Britain, how it evolved within the territory and then its journey to the United States of America are traced.

Thirdly, the grammatical aspect is explored through various subtopics: tense and aspect are explained and differentiated; the different forms and pronunciation are explained and the function and current rules behind the usage of the present perfect are provided. Since the terminology to define the different situations in which the present perfect should be used is extremely varied, several sources have been analyzed. By using renowned grammar books, text books, sites and comments from grammarians,

from both BrE and AmE, an ampler view of the different situations in which the present perfect should be used is presented. To further specify the different situations in which the present perfect should be used, four categories have been delimited according to LEECH (1987).

Fourthly, a corpus study from American and British native speakers is presented. In this section, for a thorough study, three different genres will be analyzed to present different oral situations. Those being: constructed English, informal conversation and formal discourse. The fictional BBC TV series “Episodes” provides constructed English with both British and American actors and characters. The script approaches the cultural and language differences between the nations and their dialogues will be examined to observe the usage of present perfect by all characters.

The talk shows “Ellen DeGeneres” and “The Jonathan Ross Show”, hosted by an American woman and a British man respectively, present informal conversations with other native English speakers from both the United States of America and the U.K. These transcripts will be analyzed, highlighting the differences and similarities between the present perfect usages from all speakers when in a casual and lighthearted surrounding.

To present formal discourse, news from BBC and CNN radio will be analyzed to also highlight the present perfect usage or lack thereof. These programs, besides the use of formal English, also guarantee the mention of recent events which is one of the four categories of the present perfect usage.

In succession, the findings of the present perfect usage in oral English by American and British speakers will be categorized into the four categories as understood by Leech (1987) which are: state up to the present; indefinite past; habit-in-a-period-leading-up-to-the-present and resultative past. This will clearly illustrate in which situations the usage merges or diverges by BrE and AmE speakers.

Finally, the results of the analysis will be exposed and the conclusion as to whether the hypothesis that BrE and AmE speakers use the present perfect differently, especially in oral English, will be disclosed. This study hopes to immediately shed light on the usage of the present perfect and to invite language professionals and students to reflect upon the importance of its usage and to question its significance in the classroom.

1 LANGUAGE EVOLUTION

Despite our understanding of the world, how it works and all the cognitive neuroscience development, we still know very little about languages, where they came

from, how we acquire them and how they develop. Kirby explains that “to some it may be a surprise that, despite rapid advances in many areas of science, we still know relatively little about the origins and evolution of this peculiarly human trait” (KIRBY, 2003, p. 18). To fully understand the evolution of languages it is necessary to gather efforts from different disciplines, as cited below:

[...] this is an interdisciplinary game, played by biologists, neurologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, computer scientists, philosophers, and more—as well as, or maybe I should say a good deal more than, by linguists (BICKERTON, 2005, p.1).

The study of language evolution has been an issue since 1859, when Charles Darwin published his book “The Origin of Species”, and different theorists started their research on the subject. We must understand how our brains and minds work; how language is structured and what is used for; how early language and modern language differ from each other and from other communication systems (KIRBY, 2003, p.18).

At that time, there were so many contradictions that the “Société de Linguistique de Paris” felt compelled to impose a ban on all discussions on the origins and evolution of language (KIRBY, 2003, p. 18). This ban forbade any type of research or scientific discourse for more than a century and the studies only took place decades after. Kirby explains that “the scientific interest in language evolution was rekindled with the conference on ‘Origins and Evolution of Language and Speech’, sponsored by New York Academy of Sciences in 1975” (KIRBY, 2003, p. 19). However, it gained strength only in the twentieth century, but was still a “far too vast and complex (and vague) concept for anyone to say anything sensible about it” (BICKERTON, 2005, p. 1).

Hypotheses assume that communication between humans started just with sounds and evolved to symbols then syntax and, lastly, the structures started to get more complex. As explained by Bickerton, it is hard to see how any developments in the sound system would have selected for more words and longer sentences, and equally hard to see what, in the absence of more than things to say, would have selected for more advanced phonology (BICKERTON, 2005, p.3).

Research has been done on BrE and AmE to try to understand how these languages started and when they began to diverge. There are theories to state when the language started to diverge between these two countries, but “the historical details are not completely clear or adequate, and we shall probably never have sufficient data to solve some continuing disputes, not to mention the permanent critical lack of data from preliterate periods” (PAGLIUCA, 1994, p. 15).

As it is known, British usage of present perfect is effective, making the acquisition of the present perfect by English-speaking children by social interaction. The findings of Cromer (1968) and Nussbaum and Narremore (1975) indicate that the form does not achieve significant use in American children until about age 5. In Britain, however, Fletcher (1981) and Gathercole (1986) report frequent use by 3-year-olds, and I will report data from British 2-year-olds (PAGLIUCA, 1994, p.120).

Furthermore, “the present perfect is first used, by both child and mother, with telic verbs in contexts where the completion of one action provides the grounds for a subsequent action” (PAGLIUCA, 1994, p.122). Pagliuca explains that the expressions chosen by the speaker to express their feelings is a pragmatic factor. Presuming grammatical choice is influenced by the environment, it can be inferred that “when the child hears the same verb in two grammatical frames, both referring to a past state with resultant consequences, he or she has no recourse but to try to differentiate the forms on discourse pragmatic grounds” (PAGLIUCA, 1994, p.122).

The distinction between simple past (SP) and present perfect (PP) is a fairly recent development in English. Since the distinction was not clear-cut in British English (BrE) when the first settlers arrived in America, its scarcity in American English (AmE) has been interpreted as an aspect of colonial lag. Data from late Modern English indicate that this is not really the case. The long-range, corpus-based study by Elsness (1997) shows that the PP increases over time but starts decreasing again from the second half of the eighteenth century. This development is led by AmE, but the decrease starts from a higher level than in BrE (HUNDT, SMITH, 2000, p.45)

Although British grammarians have shown their dislike against the use of past simple instead of present perfect, researches diverge when it comes to language evolution, some corpus studies have shown a decrease in the usage of present perfect but others would say the opposite. As explained by Hundt and Smith, “we find comments pointing in the opposite direction: reports of the PP being combined with temporal adverbials that clearly indicate past time reference” (HUNDT, SMITH, 2000, p.46), but Elsness (2009, p.242), points at a regional difference, namely that the decline is slowing down in AmE and that BrE is approaching the level of AmE. In other words, the two national varieties appear to be converging in their usage of the present perfect.

2 GRAMMAR

As established, the English language has many variations, which range from meaning to form, from one continent to another. British and American English diverge

in many ways with one of the great grammatical differences being the use of the present perfect. Despite being used in both AmE and BrE, the present perfect is considered to be less used by Americans than their British counterparts.

According to Sabine Iatridou's account of the 1990 Hornstein study, both the present perfect and the past tense express temporal precedence, but in different ways. The past simple expresses it between the speech time and the reference time and the present perfect expresses it between the event time and the reference time (IATRIDOU, 2003, p.154).

Adverbial classes are another difference between the present perfect and the past simple tense. According to Iatridou, there are compatible and non-compatible adverbs, for example "yesterday cannot go with the present perfect, but can go with the past simple, just like since can go with the present perfect but cannot go with the past simple" (IATRIDOU, 2003, p.154) and there are still adverbs that can go with both such as already.

According to Michael Lewis in his book *The English Verb an Exploration of Structure and Meaning* the present perfect talks about past time looked at from the point "now". "The most important thing to understand about the present perfect or present retrospective is that it is a present form. It is always essentially grounded at the point "now", the moment of speaking" (LEWIS, 1986, p.76).

The terminology to define the different situations in which the present perfect should be used is as varied as the books that provide it. Geoffrey N. Leech, in his book *Meaning and the English Verb*, explains that describing the present perfect as "past with present relevance" or "past involving the present" may hold a great deal of truth, however it is too vague. He differentiates the use into four categories to which this study has numerated and will use as a base reference.

2.1 CATEGORY 1 – STATE UP TO THE PRESENT

The first situation is to describe the state up to the present for which Leech brings three examples: "I've lived in this neighborhood since I was a kid (and this is where I'm living now). We've known each other for years. That house has been empty for ages" (LEECH, 1987, p. 43). He describes the verbs in these examples as "state verbs" which are of an undefined time-span and thus, the state to which they refer could possibly continue into the future. Leech mentions briefly that the past tense would be acceptable in AmE only in the first example, in the others it would change the meaning making the periods complete and pertaining only to the past. He offers another example, this

time with an absence of an adverbial of duration. In “we have lived in London” it can be deduced that this doesn’t actually indicate a state, despite the verb “live”, but shows a “completed happening in the indefinite past” which brings us to the second category.

2.2 CATEGORY 2 – INDEFINITE PAST

Leech describes this function as referring to “some indefinite happening (or happenings in the past)” or more clearly as “at least once before now” (LEECH, 1987, p.44). The examples offered are: “Have you been to Brazil? He’s a man who has experienced suffering. I’ve known love, but not true love. All my family have had injections against measles” (LEECH, 1987, p.44). The indefinite meaning (not knowing when nor specifically how many times) is often reinforced adverbially, especially by ever, never or before. It is possible, in this category to mention the number of events adverbially “I’ve been to America three times”, however if an adverbial of time is used to specify the exact moment of the happening the present perfect becomes inappropriate and is normally replaced by the simple past. For example, instead of “I’ve been to America last summer” the past simple “I went to America last summer”. Leech highlights that the indefinite past meaning of the present perfect rarely occurs without adverbial reinforcement, but when it does, “the auxiliary tends to be stressed and the whole clause tends to imply some kind of reservation”. As in “I have eaten lobster (... but I can’t say I enjoyed it)”. Or in “I have played tennis (...but not very often)” (LEECH, 1987, p.44).

Here, a sub-category of the indefinite past is introduced as “recent indefinite past”. This indicates the proximity of a past event and is usually used with adverbs such as just, already, recently and yet. Leech mentions that omitting adverbs such as recently and just scarcely change the meaning as they are used to emphasize the “nearness” of the event as in “Have you seen my car keys (recently)?” He mentions a variation between BrE and AmE here:

In AmE, the recent indefinite past is frequently expressed by the Simple Past Tense: Did your sister phone yet? (which would be unusual for a British speaker in the context). But the Present Perfect is also used here in AmE – and British speakers show signs of beginning to follow the American use of the Simple Past (LEECH, 1987, p.45).

2.3 CATEGORY 3 – HABIT-IN-A-PERIOD-LEADING-UP-TO-THE-PRESENT

In this category Leech refers to a habit as being a state consisting of repeated events. As in the “state up to present” category, this habit may continue through the present into the future. In this category “even verbs” are used to illustrate the habit. The examples given here are: “Mr. Phipps has sung in this choir for fifty years. I’ve always walked to work. The news has been broadcast at 10 o’clock for as long as I can remember” (LEECH, 1987, p. 45). An adverbial of duration is usually necessary, otherwise the sentence could fall under indefinite past as in “Mr. Phipps has sung in this choir.”

2.4 CATEGORY 4 - RESULTATIVE PAST

In this category the present perfect is used to refer to the result of a past event that is operative at the present. The resultant state is usually implied and often it is necessary to understand the context to be able to deduce the meaning. In the following examples (LEECH, 1987, p.46) the implication is shown in brackets.

- “The taxi has arrived.” (We can go.)
- “She has been given a camera.” (Now she can take photos.)
- “I’ve recovered from my illness.” (Now I’m well again.)
- “Someone has broken her doll.” (The doll is now broken.)
- “I’ve had a shower.” (I’m clean now.)
- “He’s cut his hand with a knife.” (The cut is still there, i.e. has not yet healed.)

It is particularly important to highlight the difference between the usages of gone and been in this category. There are two perfect forms of the verb go: have gone and have been. The difference in meaning between them is that the first is resultative, indicating transition into a current state of absence, whereas the second is indefinite past (or habitual). He has gone to America implies he is still there; He has been to America implies that he has since returned (or at least that he has since left America (LEECH, 1987, p. 46).

2.5 CATEGORIES BY OTHER AUTHORS

Due to the complexity of the present perfect, other grammar books of both AmE and BrE have been compared with Leech’s categories and the following has been observed. “Close-up”, an AmE course book published by CENGAGE, presents the present perfect under Leech’s categories one, two and four and expands slightly.

We use the present perfect simple for something that started in the past and has continued until now, something that happened in the past, but we don't know or don't say exactly when, something that happened in the past and has a result that affects the present, actions that have just finished, experiences and achievements. Time expressions that are often used with the present perfect are: already, ever, for, for ages, just, never, once, recently, since, so far, twice, three times, until now, yet, etc. (HEALAN, 2012, p.163).

Mary Ellen Muñoz Page, provides her readers of "English as a Second Language" with Leech's categories one, two and three. When you use the present perfect, you deal with now (up to this moment) as the deadline and the action has or has not already taken place. The present perfect is used for the following. An action that took place at some indefinite time in the past, an action that happened more than once in the past and an action that began sometime in the past and continues up to this moment (PAGE, 2010, p. 209).

Oxford's New English File, a BrE course book, presents all four of Leech's categories. Explaining the present perfect as being used in the following ways.

To talk about past experience when you don't say exactly when something has happened; with already, just and yet; with superlatives and the first, second, last time; for finished actions (no time is specified) which are connected in some way with the present; with how long and for/since (with non-action verbs) to say that something that started in the past is still true now and when we say/ask how much we have done or how often we have done something until now (OXENDEN, 2008, p.132).

The Cambridge dictionary website description of the present perfect falls under Leech's categories one and two, informing that the present perfect is used to show things that have happened in a period of time up to now and also in unspecific time sentences. "I have never been to Australia" and "Have I already asked you that?" are the examples given.

The site also brings to light some differences between BrE and AmE, highlighting that despite many of the differences being with vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling, there are some differences in the way grammar is used with fewer differences in writing than in speaking. The Cambridge website states that the "present perfect is less common in AmE than in BrE. AmE speakers often use the past simple in situations where BrE speakers use the present perfect, especially with words such as already and yet" (CAMBRIDGE, 2015).

It is explained that the example of the BrE usage of the present perfect in unspecific times such as in the example would retreat to the past simple tense in AmE "Did I already ask you that?" Also the BrE "Have they picked the golf team yet?" would be more common as "Did they pick the golf team yet?" in AmE.

3 ANALYSES

This section is composed of a corpus study of American and British native speakers. For a thorough study, three different oral genres have been analyzed; constructed English, informal conversation and formal discourse. The fictional TV series “Episodes” provides constructed English with both British and American actors and characters. The talk shows “Ellen DeGeneres” and “The Jonathan Ross Show”, hosted by an American woman and a British man respectively, present informal conversations with other native English speakers. Finally, to present formal discourse, news from BBC and CNN radio has been analyzed. The findings of the present perfect usage have been separated into AmE and BrE and categorized into the four categories as understood by Leech (1987) which are: state up to the present; indefinite past; habit-in-a-period-leading-up-to-the-present and resultative past.

3.1 SERIES

The first season of the fictional TV series “Episodes” was analyzed to show constructed English. Written by Americans David Crane and Jeffrey Klarik and produced by the independent British company Hat Trick Productions, Episodes is a comedy show that produces an interesting balance between British and American English.

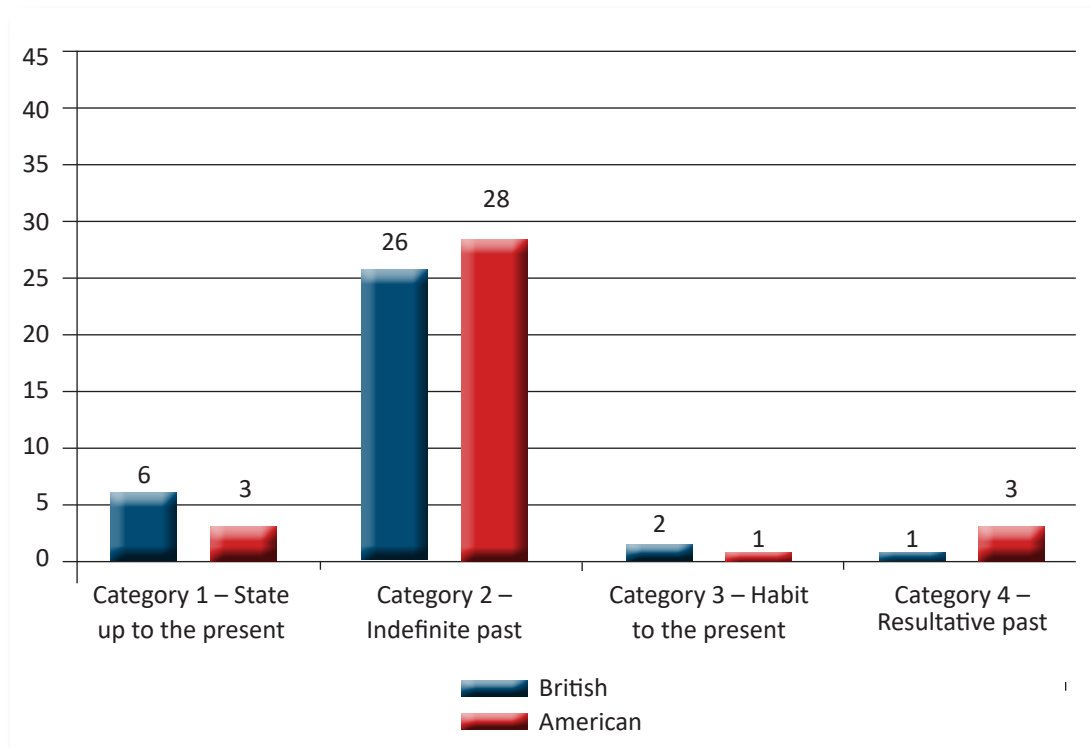
The plot is quite simple. The first season, comprised of seven episodes, is about British screenwriters, Sean and Bev, who move to Los Angeles, the USA, after accepting an offer to do an American version of their already successful British sitcom. The couple soon learn that they will not only have to adapt their beloved script, but they will also have to conform to American showbiz and the futility it represents.

The main characters are the British couple Sean and Bev, the American actor Matt and their American agent Carol. The cast represents the same nationality on and off screen, accrediting the dialogues with genuine British and American English.

The transcripts have been confirmed with the actual dialogues on the show and the occurrences of present perfect, and lack thereof, as in accord with Leech have been studied. The examples from the transcripts are categorized in the following table.

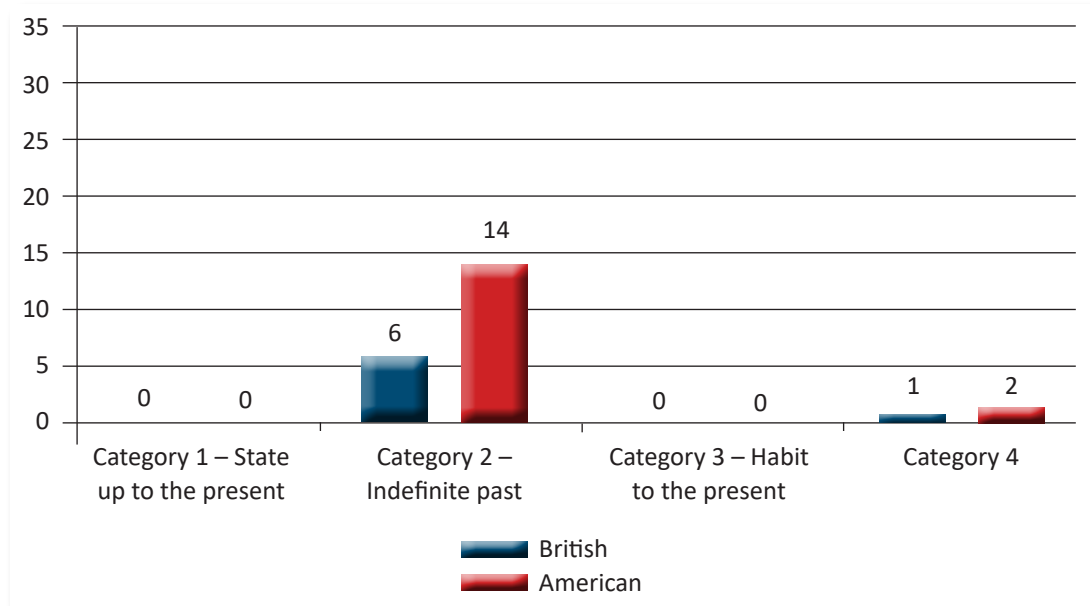
To more clearly illustrate how the usage of the present perfect merges or diverges between BrE and AmE these occurrences are shown in the chart below.

GRAPH 1 – Usage not in accord with Leech



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

GRAPH 2 – Usage not in accord with Leech



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

As the charts illustrate, both British and American characters use the present perfect in all four categories as according to Leech. The British characters use the present perfect in category 1, to describe a state up to the present, more often than their American counterparts do.

The present perfect was the most used by both speakers in category 2. The American characters used the present perfect on two more occasions than the British did. However, both opted for the past simple at some stage in this category. As the second chart shows, the American characters chose not to use the present perfect more than the British did.

Situations for categories 3 and 4 barely arose. There were only three occurrences for category 3, habit to the present, which were all in accord with Leech. The American characters used category four slightly more than the British as can be seen in both charts. The misuse of this category was also caused by using the past simple tense by both British and American characters.

3.2 TALK SHOWS

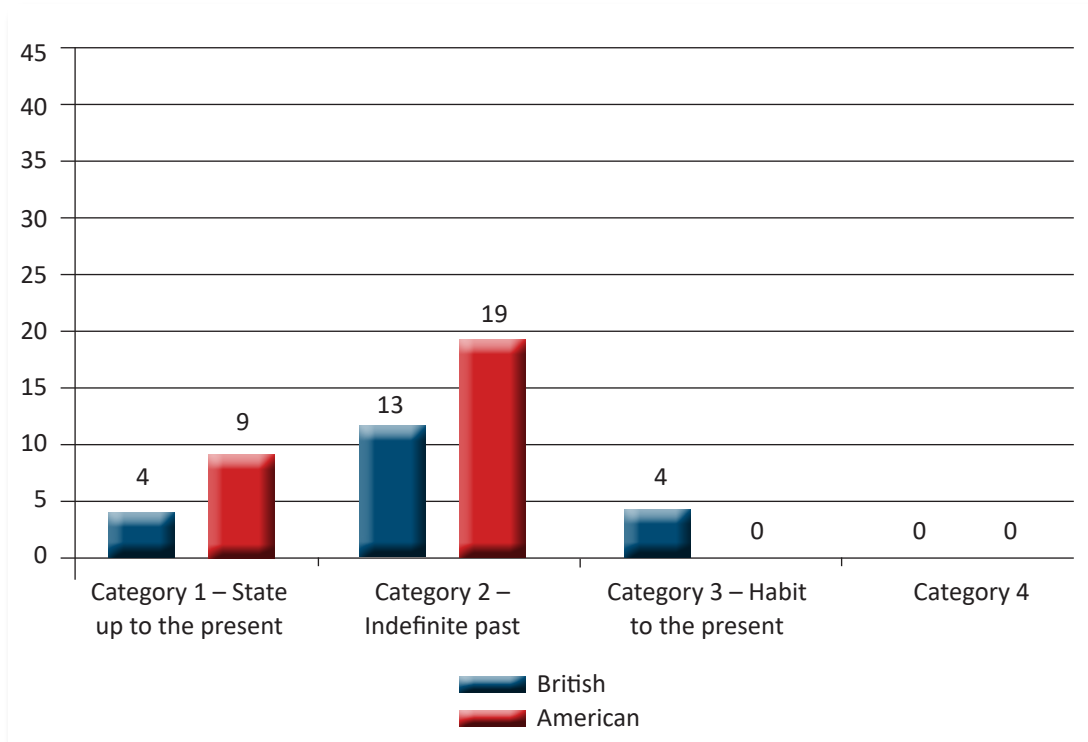
Talk shows were selected as one of the study objects to analyze the use of the present perfect in AmE and BrE due to the fact that they present real spoken language and free conversation, which can bring an authentic use of the language, including the use of the perfect. As shown in this concept.

A talk show is a television or radio program in which the host discusses various topics with a series of, or group of, guests, normally selected because they have a degree of celebrity through movies, music, entertainment, sport or politics. The program is generally recorded in front of a studio audience. The first talk shows were mainly broadcast on Sundays and focused primarily on political and social issues (QUESTIA, 2016).

In order to highlight the differences between AmE and BrE, an American and a British talk show were chosen, the American show Ellen DeGeneres and the British show The Jonathan Ross Show. Both shows are a mix of celebrity interviews combining comedy, musical guests and human-interest stories.

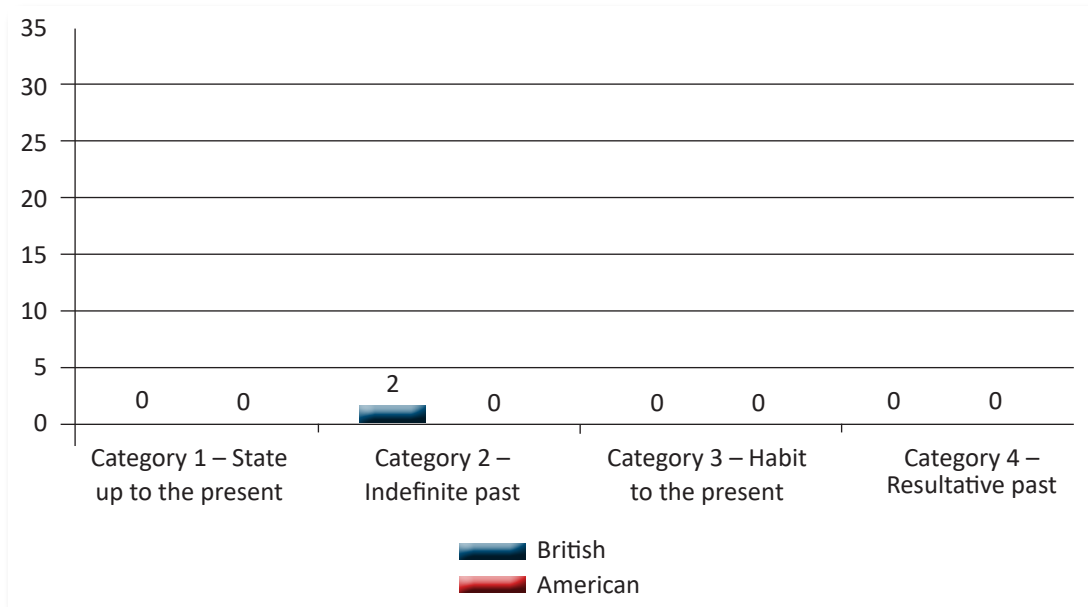
The transcripts were analyzed in pursuance of the present perfect occurrences or lack of, according to Leech categories. The examples from the transcripts are categorized in the following table. To clarify how the usage of the present perfect contrasts between BrE and AmE these occurrences are shown in the chart below.

GRAPH 3 – Talk shows - usage in accord with Leech



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

GRAPH 4 – Talk shows - usage not in accord with Leech



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

In accordance with the charts, both British and American speakers use the present perfect only in three categories according to Leech. The American speakers use the present perfect in category 1 to describe a state up to the present more often than their British speakers do.

Category 2 of the present perfect was the most used by both speakers. The American speakers used the present perfect in more occasions than the British did, and both used the past simple at some moment in this category. As in the second chart, the American speakers chose not to use the present perfect more than the British did.

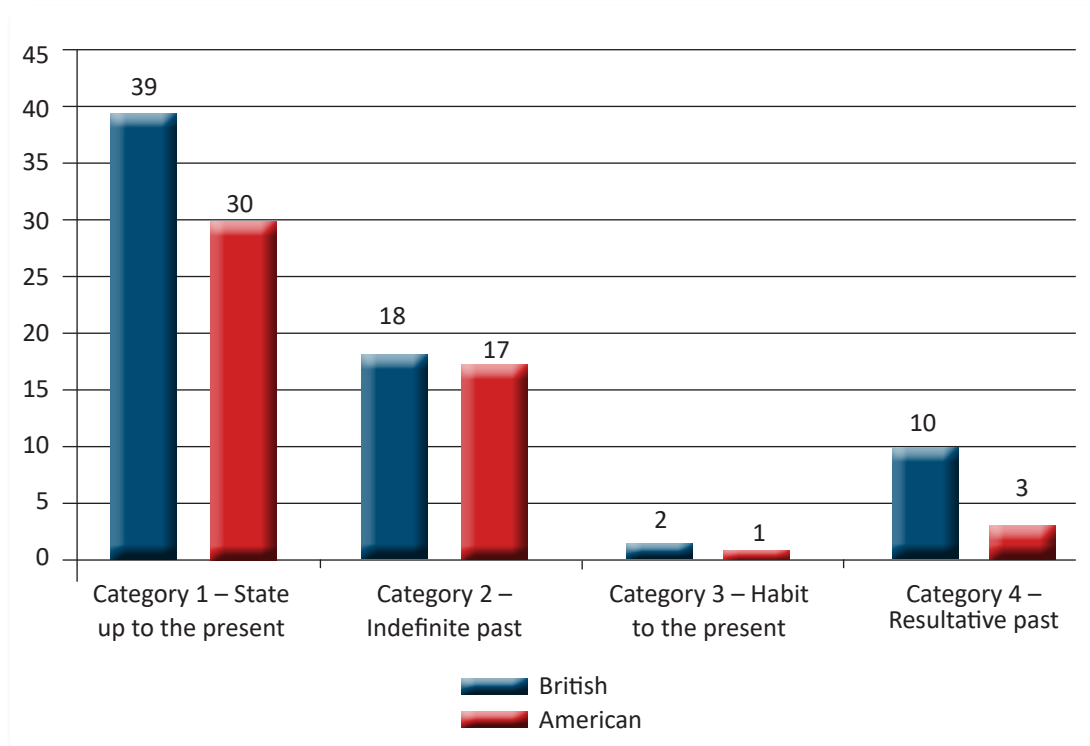
As noticed in the charts, categories 3 and 4 hardly appeared. There were only four occurrences for category 3, habit to the present, which were all in accordance with Leech. There were no occurrences in category 4 because there were no situations referring to resultative past.

3.3 BBC AND CNN RADIO NEWS

This analysis aims to classify the current usage of present perfect tense on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable News Network (CNN) radio news. These two broadcasting corporations were chosen because they are among the largest and most well-known in the English-speaking world. CNN was founded in 1980 and is responsible for delivering information. Whilst the BBC, a public service founded in 1920, produces T.V. and radio shows as well as creating content for the Internet and print.

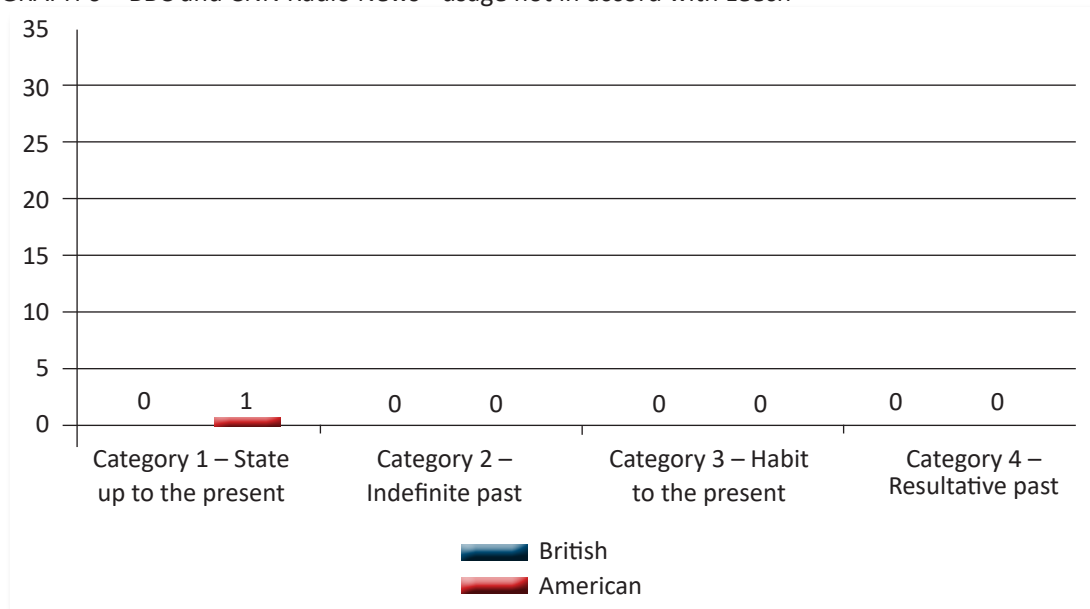
As it can be seen on the graphs below, British and American used the present perfect roughly the same amount of times. Although British still use a little more, especially when it comes to resultative past. Furthermore, the second graph shows that there is only one misuse of the present perfect by Americans, in which, interestingly, they mixed the past simple and the present perfect. The examples from the transcripts are categorized in the following table. To clarify how the usage of the present perfect contrasts between BrE and AmE these occurrences are shown in the chart below.

GRAPH 5 – BBC and CNN Radio News - usage in accord with Leech



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

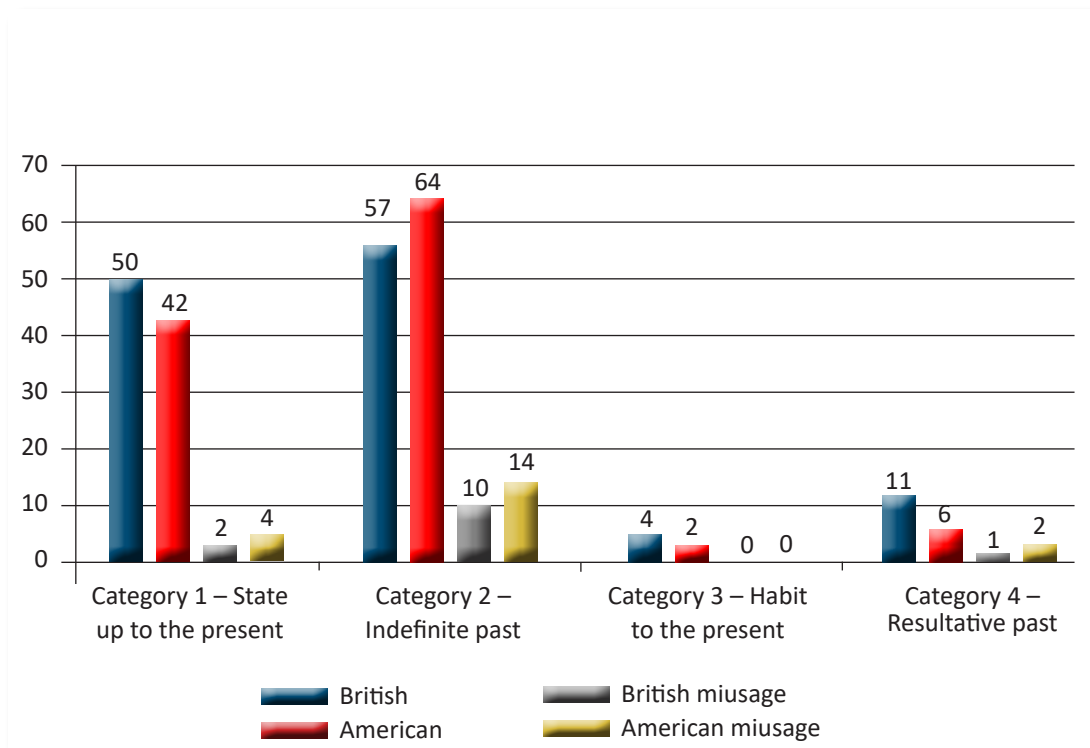
GRAPH 6 – BBC and CNN Radio News - usage not in accord with Leech



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

To better understand the findings, all the occurrences from the three sources have been compared in the following chart, divided into BrE and AmE usage in accord (or not) with Leech.

GRAPH 7 – Final Results



SOURCE: The authors (2016)

From the results, the most used categories by both AmE and BrE were by far category one which is used to describe the state up to the present, and category two used to refer to the indefinite past. The British speakers used categories one, three and four more frequently than the Americans, however, the difference is not noteworthy. It's possible to see that there are indeed more occurrences in BrE in accord with Leech than in AmE with 122 and 114 usages respectively. Although, it could be argued that there were more situations which required the usage of the present perfect structure when the British speakers were talking than when the Americans were. It is, however, interesting to note that in terms of usage not in accord with Leech there were more occurrences in AmE than in BrE with 20 and 13 respectively. Therefore, it could be assumed that the British possibly show a higher familiarity with the structure.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this project was to explore the differences between the usage of the present perfect by British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) speakers. Our guiding hypothesis was that BrE and AmE use the present perfect differently, especially in oral English. In order to prove this hypothesis, four specific objectives were defined and developed.

Firstly, we provided a brief history of English and language evolution in general to show how the language has transformed over the years. This concise study of evolution helped to better understand the English language in general and showed the differences in its development in various countries.

Secondly, the rules behind the usage of the present perfect according to different authors were explored. Language and grammar textbooks from both British and American sources were analyzed to see the theory behind the usage of the present perfect in Present Day English. To further specify such differences and to state in which situations the present perfect should be used, four categories were delimited according to LEECH (1987).

Thirdly, we analyzed the oral usage of the present perfect through radio news, television programs and television shows from both British and American sources and divided the occurrences into Leech's four categories. These specific sources were chosen to approach different types of discourse. Varying from informal to formal discourse, each program shows a distinction of the usage of the language depending on the cultural background and the occasion in which it is used.

Fourthly, we used the information found during the analyses and compiled various graphs that show the usage, or misuse, of the present perfect in the four categories as provided by Leech in British and American English.

Throughout these analyses, obvious differences appeared from the very beginning. From the graphs, we could conclude that, although the results did not show as big a difference as we expected, there was a notable difference between the two. British speakers appear to use the present perfect in accord to the rules stipulated by Leech more than Americans do except for category two. Americans, besides having more occurrences not in accord with Leech, also tended to manipulate their speech in such a way that it was possible to use the past simple rather than the present perfect.

There was an obvious difference between the use of categories, both British and American speakers made more frequent use of categories one and two, while categories three and four were rarely utilized. British speakers, as our hypothesis suggests, did in fact have a slightly higher rate of usage of the present perfect as a whole, however, the difference was considerably lower than first expected.

Interestingly, the occurrences in the chart not in accord to Leech, provided a curious outlook as to how Americans possibly deal with the present perfect. They had more occurrences in every category in this chart, which suggests that although their usage is almost as frequent as the British, this structure might not be as natural to them, hence the apparent “misusage”.

In order to obtain more precise results, a new study could be conducted in a scientific environment, where the British and American speakers would be subjected to exactly the same situation in the same quantity to see for which structure they would opt.

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